

LATVIA – ESTONIA – LITHUANIA – NORWAY – LATVIA – ESTONIA – NORWAY – LITHUANIA

The Baltic Media World

Edited by Richard Bærug

VIDZEME – TARTU – KAUNAS – BERGEN – VIDZEME – TARTU – BERGEN – KAUNAS



Map of Northern Europe

The Baltic Media World

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Introduction

The window is wide open. Come on in and take a sharp look at the Baltic media world.

This publication takes the reader to the North of Europe and focuses on the development of the media industry in the Baltic countries and Norway. The three Baltic countries – Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia – have recovered from fifty years of Soviet rule and are well-known today as political and economic success stories, with the highest GDP growth in Europe. This publication places a comprehensive, comparative and critical focus on the many aspects of the media world in these three countries and compares them to the situation in one of the neighbouring Scandinavian countries which remained free and independent in the post-war period – Norway.

This focus on the Baltic countries and Norway will reveal problems, traditions and characteristics linked to global media development, as well as to local reactions to the recent historical past. As Halliki Harro-Loit remarks, “one reason for the ultra-liberal media policy [in the Baltic countries] might be the long tradition of political censorship [during the Soviet occupation period]”.

The aim of the publication is to reveal problematic topics and show in a very open and honest way how these topics are being handled in the Baltic countries and Norway. Little in the way of comparative literature has been published on these topics before. The publication should be of great help to all those who are interested in media developments in the Baltic and Scandinavian countries in particular, and in Europe in general.

The publication is a collection of articles on recent media development in the Baltic countries and Norway. Special attention is devoted to accountability systems and media ethics, hidden advertising, systems of media control and state intervention, media ownership, editorial censorship and the professionalisation of journalism, cultural stereotypes, internet debates as well as media modernisation and journalism cultures.

“One of the most palpable aspects of modern media ethical systems is that there is not much in the way of ethics in them,” writes Lars Arve Røssland in his article on “Accountability Systems and Media Ethics, Landscapes and Limits”. He uses the media ethics systems in Norway, Sweden and the Baltic countries as background material in his search for the border lines that are drawn and the definition of what we call media ethics today. In his attempt to be an observer and not a judge, he fully realises that somebody might ask if there is no need for clear norms.

Halliki Harro-Loit and Aukse Balčytienė’s article on “Media Accountability Systems: Ecological Viewpoint” is a natural follow up of Røssland’s article. They describe the accountability system in the three Baltic countries and Norway and analyse the efficiency of self-regulation mechanisms as a part of a media quality control system. They focus on specific issues such as the very weak accountability system in Latvia and the peculiar situation of two press councils in Estonia, as well as on broader issues such as the minimum of journalistic culture that is needed in order to tolerate external criticism.

“In the Baltic countries [...] external criticism [...] is very often interpreted by media organizations as a threat to their freedom”, Aukse Balčytienė writes in her article about “Types of State Intervention in the Media System in the Baltic States and

Norway". She compares the relationship between the state and the media in the three Baltic States and Norway. She discusses the types of state intervention in the media, as well as different shades of that relationship as manifested in the media cultures of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Norway. Furthermore, she tries to answer the question of why state regulation seems to be weaker in the Baltic States than in Norway.

There are articles both on more general as well as more specific aspects of the media world in the four countries. Richard Bærug, in his article on "Hidden Advertising and TV Journalism in the Baltic Countries and Norway," attempts to provide a more comprehensive insight into one aspect of media behaviour in one of the media sectors – the TV industry. By using various methods and interviewing a series of TV journalists in Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Estonia, he lets the journalists reveal the scale, the differences and the reasons for the existence of so-called hidden advertising in the TV industry in all four countries.

A unique overview of the media economy in the Baltic countries and Norway can be found in Halliki Harro-Loit's article on "The Baltic and Norwegian Journalism Market". The article focuses mainly on developments over the past 15 years in the press, radio, TV, news agencies and online news market. An essential question is who owns what and how various types of ownership influence the media market. While Norway has a separate state authority to deal with media ownership issues, press ownership regulation and legislation are almost absent in the three Baltic countries. Expansion into the Baltic media market has become an important direction in the internationalisation process of large Scandinavian media companies. An important question is to what extent they have brought or have been forced to bring along the professional media standards that are used at home.

In his article on "Editorial Censorship in Baltic and Norwegian Newspapers" Ainārs Dimants focuses on the decision-making process in the editorial boards of Baltic and Norwegian newspapers, looking at the way in which pressure from owners, as well as economic and political groups, might influence news production. Interviews with 82 newspaper journalists in Latvia, as well as journalists in Estonia, Lithuania and Norway, make up the basis for his conclusions. Dimants tries to find out the extent to which loyalty to owners, unstable financial situations, national ownership, a shortage of transparency in ownership matters, as well as other issues, stimulate internal censorship and self-censorship among journalists and editors.

Hilde Arntsen, in her article "Staging the Nation? Nation, Myth and Cultural Stereotypes in the International Eurovision Song Contest Finals in Estonia, Latvia and Norway," examines the representation of nationhood, cultural stereotypes and myth in what has been referred to as the most popular TV show in Europe. In 2002 and 2003 the show was staged in Tallinn and Riga, while in 1996, it took place in Oslo. Arntsen takes a comparative look at how the three small countries of Estonia, Latvia and Norway used the show to present their countries and national identities to an enormous international audience, partly in pursuit of political and commercial goals.

The Internet is the medium which Maria Golubeva studies in her article "EU Accession Debate on the Internet in the Baltic States: 'Own Heterogeneous Messages?'" She tests the extent to which certain media consumers in the Baltic states are receptive to an elite discourse. This she demonstrates by analysing the extent to which the discourse of a news article or editorial commentary is reproduced by Internet users in their comments and discussions. She compares the content of the online debate on EU accession between Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian users of the *Delfi* Internet portal. She tries to explain why it appears that the Latvian-speaking audience in Latvia accepts the elite discourse more readily than Russian-speaking audiences in Estonia and Latvia and more than Lithuanian-speaking audiences in Lithuania.

"Popular journalism is dangerous for the ideology of genuine democracy as it positions the audience in the place of spectators instead of active participants", Auksė Balčytienė writes the closing article on "Media Modernisation and Journalism Cultures in the Baltic States and Norway". She analyses economic and technological impacts on media development. The author raises the question of whether freedom of the press eventually could become freedom of press owners instead of citizens.

How has “market journalism” taken root in Lithuania and the other Baltic countries? How do new technologies change news production and colonise the electronic space? Her key question is whether media commercialisation and technological innovation have led to democratisation in the Baltic States and Norway.

This book has certain limits. Indeed, as very little comparative research has been done concerning the media in Northern Europe, much of the available space in this publication has been used for description. The book is directed towards an international audience, and therefore the media experts have sought to describe facts and to provide information which otherwise would be of limited availability to a foreign reader. Moreover, it should be noted that some articles are not equally focused on all the four countries.

The principal goal of the publication is not to judge, but to understand. Which factors shape the development of the media in the four selected countries? It is the hope of the authors that “The Baltic Media World” will become a useful resource to media scholars, journalism and communications students, policy makers and the media industry.

The publication has been supported financially by the Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway. The intention has been to strengthen the network between successful, non-capital universities in the Baltic countries and Norway. The authors are journalism teachers and media researchers with different links to Vidzeme University College (Latvia), University of Tartu (Estonia), Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania) and the University of Bergen (Norway).

About Comparisons Within the Media

Auksė Balčytienė

A common understanding in contemporary media studies is that the homogenisation of media systems is becoming a worldwide trend.

After a careful analysis of changes in the national media, quite a few scholars (Hallin, Mancini, Chalaby, Bennet, Høyer) have recently announced that the media systems in different countries are becoming increasingly alike with their distinguishing structural features slowly disappearing (Bennet 2000; Chalaby 1996; Hallin & Mancini 2004; Høyer 2001). Gradual diffusion of the news paradigm into national journalism discourses across many European countries, an ongoing process of “commodification of news” and commercialisation of content in the contemporary media, rapid shifts in political communications towards market-oriented politics, and many other processes which have affected public communications over the past century have contributed to the fact that the media systems in contemporary countries are becoming more and more similar.

Some media scholars have gone even further in indicating specific factors which accelerate the process of convergence (i.e., homogenisation through adoption of specific characteristics) of transnational media. For example, according to Peter Humphreys, national media systems are likely to converge because of two things, namely 1) the application of universal commercial logic in news production and 2) the diffusion of technological innovations in the local media (Humphreys 1996). Other scholars focus more deeply on analysing news selection and management processes. Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini emphasise that “a powerful trend is clearly underway in the direction of greater similarity in the way the public sphere is structured across the world. In their products, in their professional practices and cultures, in their systems of relationships with other political and social institutions, media systems across the world are becoming increasingly alike” (Hallin & Mancini 2003). So the general understanding is that economic logics makes the media similar to some extent, but there are still certain cultural differences which make media performance different in different cultural regions.

A scholar widely known for his insistence that the impact of the national setting on the culture of journalism must be assessed is James Curran, who has recently called for the need to “de-Westernise” media studies, i.e. to apply not the normative approach to the assessment of media performance (“how the media should behave”), but the empirical approach instead (“how do the media perform their functions in reality”) (Curran & Myung-Jin 2000).

Studies have documented that changes have taken place within the media of all countries with more or less similar results. For that reason, increasing numbers of scholars are discussing the process of convergence which affects the development of many media systems worldwide. In many respects, this is most obvious in the trend toward the commodification of news and a lower level of understanding journalism as representing interests and constructing social relations.

The comparative research perspective is particularly interesting for several reasons. Contemporary media systems are rapidly changing with many challenges affecting national journalism structures and culminating with more or less similar results, such as for instance increased commercialisation of the media or changes in news production and presentation.

The articles in this book have been written specifically for international audiences. The logic of the comparative overview rests on the idea that a purely national focus is too limiting. Thus the development of the media in one of the Baltic countries is compared and contrasted with the changes that are taking place in the media of neighbouring countries, particularly the other Baltic States and Norway.

In describing the specifics of national journalistic culture, the primary goal is not to judge, but to understand. All three Baltic countries have small media markets, but all three have similarities (especially as a result of the five decades of Communist rule which they experienced in the 20th century), as well as significant differences in their histories. There are some overviews on media development in the Baltic States, but so far very little has been done to compare the occurrence of phenomena and to judge the results from a comparative perspective.

The decision to apply qualitative description of journalistic culture and to compare the levels of media modernisation was inspired by several media scholars.

Hallin and Mancini, for example, argue that one of contemporary criticisms towards media literature is the fact that it is highly ethnocentric (Hallin & Mancini 2004: 1–21). The literature on media development tends to describe the occurrence of a phenomenon in a single country. There is a lack of a broader cultural perspective. In addition, researchers also suggest that because of the Americanisation of journalism studies, the journalistic culture in countries with less developed traditions of media research and analysis has suffered a natural lack of attention. The role of the media in such countries as the U.S., France, Germany or Great Britain is well documented, but the problem is that by referring mainly to the experience gained from the analysis of media in a single country, textbooks promote a view that the model of media development is universal.

Only recently have scholars begun to criticise the tendency in journalism training to borrow from the literature of other countries (in many cases this involves books on the Anglo-American culture of journalism) and to treat that borrowed literature as though it could be applied without any problems anywhere (see, for e.g., Hallin & Mancini 2004: 1–21). In the absence of knowledge and understanding of why the media are as they are, journalism in countries which lie outside the interest of well-known scholars, therefore, has been continuously criticised for supposedly not performing in the way that they are meant to perform.

As Hallin and Mancini have argued, this has happened mainly because studies of journalism have always been of a normative nature. On the one hand, this is because of their rooting in professional education, when in fact it is more important to reflect on what journalism should be, rather than to analyse it in detail. On the other hand, strong impact comes from media research traditions that exist in the relevant country. In Lithuania, for example, journalism textbooks rely on an approach that is taken from historiography: newspapers, news bulletins, books, etc., are carefully calculated and documented without any further assessment of the phenomena themselves. For example, textbooks do not ask questions about the particular role of the literary press in the development of a civil society in Lithuania, or why traditional Lithuanian newspapers are not concerned with investing into Internet development. Moreover, when it comes to the definition of journalistic genres, for example, the scheme that is used in the Lithuanian textbooks is very much affected by the *prescriptive attitude* (Marcinkevičienė 2004). In other words, local authors argue about what the journalistic genre should be (neutral, balanced), rather than analyse the genres that are actually used in the Lithuanian media in reality.

It has been argued that the prescriptive view is affected by the theoretical approach to journalism assessment. Journalism in Lithuania is discussed mostly in textbooks and reference books. There is a lack of research studies which analyse and describe the culture of Lithuanian journalism. In this respect, the prescriptive approach is not adequate; without real life analysis, it adds much confusion in the understanding of journalism's culture.

In summary, the culture of journalism and media research is bound to traditions and may be similar or different in neighbouring countries. Only in Estonia among the three Baltic countries is there a tradition of sociological media and

audience research, and it has been present since the 1960s. In Lithuania, by contrast, journalism has always been associated with the field of literature, thus, it is only recently that important questions on comparative analysis have been raised.

This comparative perspective toward the media in four selected countries forces us to assess those aspects of news production cultures requiring a type of explanation which only *qualitative* description (e.g., done by national media experts) is able to provide. The main argument of the articles is based on the idea that different media models are rooted in broader differences in the political, economic and social structure of particular societies, which means that new developments (and the shift of focus in the media toward profit-making orientation is a fairly new phenomenon everywhere) will reflect those cultures. This is an argument that is made by James Curran¹ and many of his followers. He posits that one cannot understand the news media without understanding the nature of the state, the system of political parties, the pattern of relations between economic and political interests and the development of the civil society, among other elements of social structure. According to Curran, media institutions evolve over time; at each step of their evolution, past events and institutional patterns inherited from earlier periods influence the direction that they take.

We assume that the function of the media is to support democratisation, to ensure that different opinions and voices are heard, and to guarantee the freedom of speech. In this respect it is interesting to observe how media modernisation affects the professionalisation of journalism. The goal in this comparative view is not only to analyse the media models according to the normative ideal of democratisation. Rather, it is much more interesting to analyse the journalistic cultures which have endured throughout the historical development of media as institutions within particular social settings.

These articles attempt to provide descriptions of the contemporary media which, it is hoped, will help the reader better to understand how the functions of the media have changed, what role the media actually play in political, social and economic life, and what patterns of relationships they have with other social institutions. For example, if commercialisation of the media is the strongest universalising factor, then it is interesting to ask: What are the effects of the arrival of market-driven logic in the media in different national settings? Who controls whom: an economic reasoning controls news content, or maybe the audience itself contributes to the occurrence of changes in their media? In other words, we attempt to understand the circumstances under which commercialisation leads to media independence and the professionalisation of journalism and when it fails to achieve this. As will be seen, tendencies in different countries are fairly similar, but the reasons for the appearance of a phenomenon may be very different.

A reader may wonder why this book presents an assessment and qualitative comparison of the media in the Baltic countries and Norway in specific.

By focusing on media development in small markets, the authors seek to open the floor to discussions about the national characteristics of the media. Until recently there has been very little comparison between small country media that has been published for international readers.

The media markets in all four countries are small and linguistically restricted. The Norwegian case is different, because developments in the Baltic states have taken a different direction, one that is unfamiliar and unknown to the Scandinavian countries. The comparative approach, however, is nevertheless relevant if assessed from a *current* and broad developmental perspective of the role of public communications in contemporary society.

A very natural approach, one which exists in many international books on the Baltic media, is the tendency to treat the three Baltic countries as one region. However, this is not a viable approach. As will be demonstrated, very clear differences still exist in the media of the three countries, and these can be attributed to differences in national, political and social contexts.

¹ See, for example, Curran, James & Myung-Jin, Park (2000) *De-Westernizing Media Studies*, London: Routledge; Curran, James (2002) "Media and the Making of British Society" – in *Media History*, Vol. 8.2.

Scandinavian capital is present to a very significant degree in all Baltic media. Three media firms, particularly Schibsted (Norway), Bonnier (Sweden) and Orkla Media AS (Norway), are going strong in the Baltic media markets. Orkla has a strongest position in Lithuania, Bonnier is much stronger in Latvia, where it owns the national daily *Diena*, while Schibsted is the strongest in Estonia, where it owns both print and broadcast media. It is therefore interesting to observe whether homogenisation has been observed as a result of international investments (in this case, Scandinavian) or whether this is just an outcome of the liberalised media market.

From today's perspective, when stabilisation of Baltic media has been achieved and when the media in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia have stepped onto the road toward further development, change and professionalisation, a comparative approach seems very relevant. How are we similar to other European states, and how are we different? Has the presence of Scandinavian capital in the Baltic media had any cultural impact on how journalists perform their jobs? Do the Scandinavian models of media self-regulation, when applied in Lithuania and Estonia, help the media there to achieve consolidation?

These articles are based on the notion that journalism is a social phenomenon. It is not something finite and fixed; it is not a constant. Journalism is changing as a result of complicated processes such as the influence of political and economic factors on the institution that is the media, and on the relationship between the media, as a public institution, with other social institutions, e.g., governments. It is also evident that the media are substantially affected by the technical revolutions that have occurred, and this is especially evident in the age of electronic innovations. The authors seek to systemise the media evaluation methods which have been described by Western theoreticians and, based on the effect which the political culture has on the media, to highlight the most distinct features of contemporary journalism in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Norway.

Despite these processes of media homogenisation, there has been a great deal of discussion about the keywords which explain changes in media landscapes worldwide. The statement that the media are undergoing "Americanisation", increased "commodification" and "Westernisation" – are just a few popular metaphors that are widely used in East and Central European countries (Jakubowicz 1995).

Indeed, the idea that media development can be understood as a process of Americanisation is still very much alive. American programming strongly influences many media markets, especially those of film, music and television. Scholars argue that in terms of the kinds of media structures and practices that are emerging and of the direction of change in the relationship between the media and other social institutions, national media systems are developing toward forms which first evolved in the U.S.

"The U.S. was once almost alone among industrialised countries in its system of commercial broadcasting; now commercial broadcasting is becoming the norm. The model of information-oriented, politically neutral professionalism that has prevailed in the U.S. and to a somewhat lesser degree in Britain increasingly dominates the news media worldwide. The personalised, media centred forms of election campaigning, using techniques similar to consumer product marketing, that again were pioneered in the U.S., similarly are becoming more and more common in European politics" (Hallin & Mancini 2003).

Today, a new definition has been created to assess rapid changes in the world's media systems. It is convergence. A closer look at the definition of convergence, therefore, reveals the concept's multidimensional nature.

The word "convergence" (the act of approaching the same point from different directions) is best in describing the processes which take place in the contemporary world of media systems. The definition of convergence is very broad. In media economics it is applied when speaking about the merger of a few companies in order to survive competition. In this context, vertical or horizontal integration would be more common term, but convergence, in principle, is a process which refers to the integration of several previously separate parts (or functions) into one unit.

This term is also used to explain the approaching possibilities of modern information technologies – computers, telecommunications and printing – from the technical perspective, even as multidimensional media products are being created, e.g., interactive television or interactive online newspapers.

The term “convergence” is also often used to describe important marketing solutions, such as the partnership of press and television, in order to achieve the best business results. Luckily, cross-media ownership in the Lithuanian and Latvian media is still rare, so the Lithuanians and Latvians have not yet experienced the consequences of media business convergence as obviously, for example, as the Estonians have done. On the one hand, media convergence is a positive trend: economically, the consolidation of editorial functions in different media (when newspaper journalists present their comments on television, for instance) is efficient. But, on the other hand, a common ownership structure speeds up the homogenisation of news production.

“Convergence” can also be used when discussing assimilation processes in such areas as the strategies that are applied by both popular, as opposed to quality journalism.

Given this form of reasoning about the convergence of media systems, it is important to assess several consequences of the assimilation of business models, and these must be taken into proper account.

Business language is universal. With the continuous increase in media concentration, e.g., when smaller dailies are bought by larger ones, the same business solutions begin to be implemented not just on the national scale, but on the periphery, as well. On the one hand, when several public information structures are managed by the same company, they are in a position to exchange information in a more effective way, to implement technical renovations, and to remain competitive. But on the other hand, in the face of fierce competition, followed by the survival of only the largest companies, the influence in Lithuania, for instance, of such large enterprises as the Lietuvos rytas UAB, Respublikos grupė UAB or Achemos grupė UAB seems certain to increase, the variety of information seems certain to decrease, and, as a consequence, democracy might suffer.

Apart from homogenisation of content, another consequence of global media convergence is the convergence of culture. With business expanding, the products of national culture are transferred, as well. Theoreticians (Herbert Schiller) have reason to speak about the overall invasion of American culture which is rapidly spreading not only through the universal media business language, but also with the help of a very popular means of public information-television (Schiller 1976).

In summary, the media in different cultural settings are affected by changes in information technologies, as well as by the logic of the libertarian media market. Although, because of similar tactics applied in the national media, there may be no wholesale transformation of the media landscape, there certainly will be changes in how journalists produce, distribute and use the news. The media have clearly shifted their orientation from the political field toward the market. Hence it is interesting to assess the results of applying the two universalising factors to changes in the Baltic and the Scandinavian media. What changes and what remains unchanged when their journalism becomes affected by commercialisation?

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Accountability Systems and Media Ethics: Landscapes and Limits¹

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1. Introduction

The second day finally something happened. Someone raised his hand for a question: “Do you think that journalists who give false information should be sentenced to death?” I do not remember my answer, but I did not understand why they would ask such a question. Now I understand. The question was related to the TV-reporter who sent his propagandistic report on the then Soviet television. It reflected the national anger against his actions, and the journalists’ anger at a traitor. I now also realize what had happened. My audience simply could not grasp the meaning of what I was saying. I was speaking from a totally foreign world. I used words in another meaning than those to which they were accustomed. [...] Their hardest lesson to learn I found, was this: There are no correct answers to many ethical questions. I used some of my lessons to describe difficult decisions I have been forced to take in my career. I did not tell them what I decided on, but asked them to give their answers. The solutions they gave were often very one-sided, like those you would get in class discussions in a secondary school. Then they asked me for the correct answer. There is no correct answer, I had to say... and they were always very disappointed. This is of course what you must expect when people have been living under conditions where they always were given the “correct answers”, and never were expected to discuss them. But what happens when the authorities disappear, and there is no one to give the right answers? Some are happy to finally be able to follow their own heads, and do not have to write the opinions of others. However, most people seem to become very insecure, and look for new authorities to give them new correct answers (Rimehaug 1992: 158–159).²

The aim of this article is both obvious and ambitious. It seems obvious that the way the media in a country handles criticism has consequences for the press ethical discussion in the country. There is, however, no easy way to show this.

The systematical way in which criticism is handled is often called the country’s *accountability system*. An accountability system is identified as the way the media is accountable to society at large. An overview of the accountability systems in Norway, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania can be found in Halliki Harro-Loit’s article in this volume. In this article the focus is changed, somewhat, in that the systems are termed *media ethical systems*. Which parts of the accountability systems are also part of the *ethical systems* and which are not? Ethics can be defined as reflections on or theories about moral, where moral means “the ways” – the actual behaviour of a specific group. Usually a system has at least an ethical element in the shape of a written Code. The implementation of the system does not, however, need to be very ethical.

¹ The writer of this article is in debt to all of my colleagues on “The Baltic Media World” project. Vital background information for this article is given by Auksė Balčytienė in Lithuania, Halliki Harro-Loit in Estonia and Maria Golubeva, Richard Bærug and Ainārs Dimants in Latvia. In addition Hilde Arntsen has read and commented. They all deserve thanks for their contributions. The responsibility for the article is, however, solely my own.

² Erling Rimehaug, the editor of the Norwegian daily *Vårt Land*, reflecting on his own teaching of journalists in Lithuania shortly after the climax of the struggle for independence from the Soviet Union.

To rephrase: In Halliki Harro-Loit's article it is possible to grasp the landscapes of the systems. In discussing the systems as *ethical systems*, it should be possible to see the limits, or more precisely, the limitations of the systems as ethical.

One of the most palpable aspects of modern media ethical system is that there is not much ethics about them. A cross comparison of the media ethical systems of different countries soon enough shows that what is considered as *media ethics* is not clear cut and unproblematic. No matter how it is defined and where the line is drawn, it is defined *somehow* and drawn *somewhere*. That somehow and somewhere is, in a sense, a main focus in this article, where the media ethical systems in Norway, Sweden and the various Baltic countries make up the background material. More than a study of what is *in* the systems, it is a study of what is *not*. More precisely the *differences* between the systems are highlighted. The minor question is *why* the systems differ; the major question is *what does it entail – in an ethical sense?*

A better understanding of the differences could, firstly, be grasped in taking a look at the development of the Norwegian system. It shows how the building of a media ethical system reduces the role of ethics.

2. Bureaucratisation and the Development of a System: The Norwegian Case

The Norwegian Press Council was first established in 1928 by the Norwegian Press Association. It took, however, two years until it treated its first case. In 1936 a code of ethics was introduced, based on a Swedish example. The first six years, then, the members of the council treated the cases (which were only a few) only based on the members' own common sense. It was, however, a combination of a *common* sense and a professional sense of what was deemed to be journalistically "good" or "wise" to do. Up to 1972 the council consisted of three well-respected members of the press. Then members of the public were introduced. At first they were two out of seven members, from 1993 this was changed to three members from the public and four from the press, which is the situation today. It is important to note that the so-called members of the public are not just anyone. The members are picked out and appointed by the Press Association. What is wanted is "respected and rather well-known people" (Rössland 1995: 88). In 2004 the members of the public were a professor of theology, a rather high-profiled cinema director in Oslo and a well-known philosopher. The deputy members of the public in 2004 was one former photo model (and for a short time the girl-friend of the Spanish crown prince), one former Minister of Environment and an associate professor of philosophy. It would probably be more correct to call them *lay members*, since they at least are *not* press people.

The early council was characterized by being relatively open and flexible in the way cases were handled. The decisions made by the early council were just sent the parties, the decisions weren't made public until 1949. Today's council is relatively juridical and bureaucratized. What has happened along the route is that the council and the code – the system – has gained more and more respect. More and more people, both inside and outside the press, know about the system. This has been achieved in various ways. Perhaps the most important factor was a focused marketing of the press council in the first half of the 1990's. Big advertisements informing about the council and the system were put in a wide range of newspapers. A logo for the council was made and presented in the advertisements. After a short while, a number of newspapers started to include the logo and a paragraph on the council in every issue.

The decisions made by the council are respected by the involved media. When you want to raise a complaint against a medium two conditions must be met: Firstly, there is a time limit of three months from the publication of the material you want to complain about, secondly, you must be directly involved in the matter or you must get the authority by someone involved to be given the right to complain. If the secretariat finds good enough reason to have the complaint handled by the council, the process starts. The complaint is sent to the medium involved for comment. After that, the one who complains get a chance to respond and then a final opportunity for comment is

given to the medium. The secretariat can stop the complaint at every stage and only some cases reach a final hearing in a council meeting.³

The short version is: The system is working.

But as what *kind* of a system is it working?

Today's system has achieved its respect and authority via the juridical route. This means that vital changes and improvements of the system have been done by strengthening those parts of the system that are clearly related to the court of justice. Changes are made by the Press Association ("Norsk Presseforbund"). They have, however, often been made after the press as a whole has been heavily criticised for its performance. More specifically: The "rule book" has been developed and further improved. That means that the code of conduct has been repeatedly revised. The first revision was done in 1956, twenty years after the code was established. The new version was much more comprehensive than the first one. New demands were made on the protection of sources and the right to reply, and the division between news and comments was underlined. The version of 1966 got three new paragraphs: one about not mixing editorial material and advertisements, one about the journalist's personal responsibility and the third about the level of details in crime reporting. The version of 1975 meant a strong focus on the right to privacy, even for people involved in serious crime. Later versions have in more detail focused on the journalistic responsibility and integrity and on the balance between the duty of information and the right of privacy.

The other side of this development is that the council more often bases its decisions on paragraphs in the code. For instance, in the case 019/04 from 2004, against the newspaper *Glåmdalen*, the council reached the decision that *Glåmdalen* had broken "good press conduct". The decision ended like this [translated by LAR]: "The council refers to the Code of Ethics, point 4.6, which states: 'Do not identify deceased or missing persons before the closest kin is informed.' – This kind of referring to the Code is done more and more often. Another type of referring is done to precedents. Now and then the council makes "Statements of principle" upon various issues, issues that are especially important or often occur before the council. Later, these statements will be used in the same manner as the Code in the mentioned example: "Like the Council described in the 'Statement of principle' on..."

Today's juridical, or bureaucratized, council functions in a context in which the structural frameworks for the journalistic work is, professionally speaking, clearer than it used to be in the council's early days. The entire press situation, both internally in the press and externally towards important institutions outside the press, is more *defined*. Both lawyers and politicians – two of the most important relevant groups outside of the press – are interested in how well the system works in terms of the quality of the treatment of the cases before the council. And yes, the treatment of the cases is more clear-cut and more predictable than it used to be in the early days. This is undoubtedly good in the sense that it has led to more respect for the system both internally and externally.

Several similarities can now be found between the system of law and the media ethical system. The *principle of contradiction* – that both parties should be given the opportunity to present their arguments before a decision is made – was introduced to the council in December 1948. There is, as already mentioned, a clear tendency for the council to lean more and more on the *principle of legality*. A court of law should always refer to the legal authority on which it bases its decisions; the

³ Up to the 1990s the council treated only complaints on print media. Complaints on radio or television had to be sent to the Complaints Commission for Broadcasting ("Klagenemnda for kringkastingsprogram"). This commission was regulated by law, its members appointed by the government. The press organizations were always very sceptical towards this institution and the commission never achieved the same authority and status as "PFU", the press council did. During the first half of the 1990s the broadcast media became members of the Norwegian Press Association. As a parallel process the Press Council started to treat cases against broadcast media. The Complaints Commission for Broadcasting was formally closed down in 1998. Today, the Press Council, PFU, can treat complaints against any journalistic medium, including journalistic activity on the Internet.

press council does this more and more often. One of the most prominent researchers on media ethics in Norway over the last decades, pin-points what this entails:

Principally speaking neither the Code of Ethics nor the Press Council can decide on what is ethically “allowed”, but this word is nevertheless often used by members of the press. This suggests that a juridical way of thinking is sneaking in [...]. If it is getting successful, it could contribute to ‘legalization’ in the sense that everything that is not mentioned in the Code of Ethics, is allowed, ethically speaking. This, in turn, would mean that each journalist could reject ethical responsibility by referring to what is ‘allowed’ (Raaum 1999: 144–145. Translation by LAR).⁴

Such legalization as described for the Norwegian system would, then, entail both a gain and a loss. The positive side is already mentioned as being a much more respected council and system. The *openness* from the early days of the first press council is, however, lost. The open and flexible early council based its deliberations on the assumption that the dilemmas did not come with clear-cut answers. The dilemmas were just that: complicated problems which needed to be looked into carefully and conscientiously. The result was often several pages of showing the council’s uncertainties and careful deliberations. The parties often did not get the desired answer: This is wrong or this is right. Instead, the council would show under which circumstances the question to be decided *could* (but not necessarily so) be seen as not so wise and under which circumstances it *could* (but not necessarily so) be seen as wise or, at least, understandable.

What is lost in the transition from the unstructured and not so bureaucratized council to the juridical and bureaucratized system is not the ethical dimension *per se*, but the essence of this dimension: an on-going reflection and discussion of the dilemmas of modern journalism among journalists and editors opposed to the craving for clear-cut answers to these dilemmas, given in as exact laws and decisions as possible. To rephrase: In the course of changes in the Code of ethics, the clauses have been added and made more precise or exact. In addition to the main code (“Vær Varsom-plakaten”), there is an important amendment in “Tekstreklameplakaten” (The code on the mixing of journalism and advertisements.)

The value of the old Norwegian press council was not only that it indicated the beginning of the process towards the current well-functioning and respected system. Equally important was its contribution to the on-going professional debate. It has, through its careful deliberations in writing, given good arguments for and against in various cases. The pros and cons have functioned as foundations for the continuous professional debate on how to perform journalism in a good and proper manner in a modern society.

The goal of the modern council is to reach one of three possible decisions in each case: that the case before the council represents a *breach of good press conduct*, that it is *not a breach of good press conduct* or that it is somewhere in-between; that the medium should be *criticized*. The old council, consisting of ‘three prominent gentlemen of the press’ aimed at contributing to a better press in general, which, of course, is a much wider ambition.⁵

An example from the present Norwegian situation may clarify the matter. In December 2002 a former Minister of Health in the Norwegian cabinet committed suicide. The background was three weeks of constant focus in the media on his moral actions after leaving the cabinet. If ethics was a main concern for the media ethical system, this should definitely be a case for it. As it turned out, the Norwegian press council, PFU, had no way to deal with this case. The criticism was about several media’s coverage and over a period of three weeks. Besides, it had to do not only with the coverage but also with how the journalists and photographers had behaved towards the former minister and his family. The Code deals with this

⁴ Odd Raaum repeats his point in a debate in the Norwegian professional journal for journalists (*Journalisten*) in May 2004. It’s remarkable, he says, that the member of the press council and philosopher, Henrik Syse, thinks that all present in the council find the discussed case “deeply unethical”, but that this does not mean that the medium in question can be said by the council to have broken “good press conduct”. This smacks of legalism, Raaum says (*Journalisten*, 14 May, 2004).

⁵ A more in-depth description of the development of the Norwegian accountability system can be found in Røssland 1999.

issue, but the council would not have any means of finding out which charges were true and which were not. In the final analysis, the most discussed media ethical issue in Norway in 2002/2003 could not be treated by the press council. Instead the Press Association in Norway asked three researchers to look into the case, resulting in the report “3 uker i desember” (3 weeks in December) in May 2003 (Hjeltnes, Brurås & Syse 2003). The newspaper *Dagbladet* was criticized in the report and *Dagbladet* wrote the following comment: “We are now in the very special situation that the body that is supposed to be the authoritative one in press ethical questions – The Press Council (PFU) – has not dealt with what is commonly understood as one of the most problematic cases for Norwegian media.”⁶ (*Dagbladet*, 15 May, 2003). In the article, *Dagbladet* concludes that “this is an intolerable situation.” Another way to look at it is that the case illustrates the limits of the Norwegian system, but also alternative ways to handle cases in the public sphere when these limits are reached. One of the limits is that normally only a party directly affected by what has been publicized can complain to the council. Another person may complain on such an involved person’s behalf, but this must then be authorized by this latter person. A final possibility for a complaint to be raised is for the general secretary of the Press Association to make a complaint on his own initiative. This is, however, only done in a handful of cases. The general secretary has not enough resources to supervise the Norwegian media and fear heavy criticism from within the press itself for unfair treatment if he uses his right to initiate complaints too often.

The next paragraph briefly discusses the difference between developing and introducing a system of self-regulation and the consequences for the systems’ ethical dimension.

3. Developing vs. Introducing a System

The Norwegian accountability system is 75 years old. The only major interruption in its development was World War II in the system’s earliest phase. When comparing with the systems of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, the situation is clearly different: The systems have been established much faster than in Norway. The assumption to be made, based on the Norwegian experience, is that these systems will be much less *ethical* and much more *legal*.

All the Baltic media systems are products of being part of new political democracies. The new democratic culture in the Baltic countries started at the very beginning of the 1990s. Much democratic infrastructure has been developed in short time. So, whereas the infrastructure of the media systems in Scandinavia – including the system of self-regulation – has *developed* in a back and forth contest, both with internal factors and external factors to the press, during the last century, the infrastructure of the media systems of the Baltic countries has been *introduced*.

This is a very important distinction. Because what now seems as wise and good solutions in the Norwegian media system, for instance, has looked quite differently at other stages in its development. Today the accountability system in Norway is widely accepted as a well-working system both inside the press and at the outside. This has, by no means, been the case during all of its history. Its acceptance is for a considerable part based on the development of a professional culture among journalists in Norway. The main essence of the development is rather new, reaching its peak just after the end of the party press period at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s.

Of course, the systems in the Baltic countries are nowhere copied from any other country. The Latvian system is mostly related to the Norwegian, the Estonian to both the Norwegian and the Finnish and the Lithuanian to the Swedish. A good example of the difference between what the system *looks like* and how it *works*, will be a short comparison between the Swedish system and the *Lithuanian*.

⁶ In Norwegian: “Vi står nå i den spesielle situasjon at det organ som skal være det autoritative i presseetiske spørsmål – Pressens Faglige Utvalg (PFU) – ikke har vurdert det som oppfattes som en av tidens største problemsaker for norske medier.”

On the surface they look quite similar. They both have a council to treat complaints, they both have an ombudsman and they have Codes of ethics. There are, however, important differences. Whereas the Swedish system is hailed as one of the best-functioning in all of Europe (e.g. Raam 2003),⁷ the Lithuanian is described as weak and close to non-functioning (Balčytienė 2004). This cannot be explained by the difference between a press-funded ombudsman in Sweden and a government funded one in Lithuania, for instance.⁸ Instead, explanation must be sought in the “introduction model” in Lithuania and the “development model” in Sweden. The Lithuanian system is inspired by the Swedish, although the Code seems to be made without any obvious link to the Swedish. However, it should be remembered that the background of the code is less relevant. The Norwegian code was directly inspired by the Swedish when it was introduced in 1936. Then it took three decades until the Norwegian code was an integrated part of the Norwegian system. In most cases the Norwegian press council did not explicitly use its own code in the treating of complaints. The Norwegian case shows how the different parts of the system must “come together” over time. As Odd Raam has pointed out, comparing one country’s ethical code to another country’s seems as a study of incommensurable entities (Raam 2003: 76). And this is the case even if the codes look alike.

What happened in Norway was that new versions of the Code of ethics were made more relevant, at the same time that both internal and external pressure resulted in the council leaning more and more on some sort of legal authority in its decisions. An obvious way to do so was by appealing to its own Code of ethics.

In Lithuania, then, when a journalist or a medium is the subject of complaint from an individual or an organization, the Ethics Inspector (the ombudsman) weighs the nature of the complaint, basing his judgment on the 63-item Code of Ethics. The inspector may reject the complaint, or he may call on the editors or owners of the media or the media organization either to make a retraction or offer the wronged party a chance to respond. If the media organization refuses to do so, the case proceeds to the full Ethics Commission, which will make a final decision that the media organization must comply with. The Lithuanian Code of Ethics is voluminous and it is used: the legalistic tendency seems clear. In addition, both the council and the ombudsman have direct links to the government: The ombudsman is appointed by the government and the press council is regulated by law. The system is considered as ineffective. Because the media don’t care about the decisions, they have no motivation to comply. It is, however, most likely that ways of improvement will be sought in making it even more legalistic. A prediction might be that this would lead to making the model even closer to the Swedish. In Sweden a complaint is firstly directed towards the ombudsman. He helps to decide if the case can be treated without further action or if it must be directed towards the council. If the case is left to decide for the council, a commentary from the ombudsman is most often given to the case. If the ombudsman thinks the case is not worthy of treatment in the council, the person who complains can him- or herself decide to send it directly to the council. In Sweden, unlike the Norwegian case where a decision is the final outcome of a case, a medium decided to have broken good press conduct must pay an “expedition fee”. This is used as part of the financing of the work of the ombudsman and the council. Newspapers with a circulation up to 10 000 pay SEK 10 000, while bigger newspapers pay a fee of SEK 25 000. The differences between Lithuania and Sweden are not big on the surface, but the Lithuanian system is still seeking the recognition and status that the Swedish system has been given both in Sweden and from the outside.

The introduction model is even clearer in *Latvia*,⁹ where there is a code but no council. There is a radio and television council, but no council for the press. All internal codes of media ethics, which several editorial boards in Latvia have, suffer from lack of supervision. The Latvian Code of Ethics (adopted at the Conference of the Latvian Union of Journalists, 28 April 1992) is clearly inspired by the Norwegian code (“Vær Varsom-plakaten”). There are notable differences, such as point 6.3, which is clearly Latvian: “The journalists of Latvia, having respect for the national values of other nations, should esteem the history, culture, national symbols, independence and freedom of Latvia.” The main impression is, however, that the

⁷ Sweden had the world’s first press council and also the first press ombudsman in the world.

⁸ The link to the government in Lithuania is also seen in that the ombudsman is accountable to the parliament (Seimas) once a year.

⁹ On the Latvian system see, for instance, Dimants (2004).

Latvian Code is clearly related to the Norwegian. The Latvian model seems, on the one hand, to have a mere symbolic function, since it has no supervising body. On the other hand, this could reduce the legalistic influence and promote ethical discussions, based on the Code, among journalists in the various media in Latvia. The solution of “house rules” in the daily *Diena* and the news department of *Latvian TV* could be one way to promote the ethical dimensions instead of the legal. This latter type of codes could contribute even more to real ethical discussion since it is “home made” to a greater extent than the overarching code, which is ‘borrowed’ from Norway.

The problem of supervising the Code and the lack of a body to treat the big media ethical issues in Latvia is evident. In the period prior to the local governmental elections in Latvia in March 2001 it became clear to most people, both media experts and regular media consumers that radio, TV and newspapers were full of reports and articles where candidates from some political parties were given much more opportunities to get their message across with little or no critical remarks and questions from the interviewing journalists than candidates from the remaining political parties. This pattern was confirmed by independent media research. Little doubt was left that some political parties had paid or provided services to the media companies or to the journalists directly for getting this extra coverage right before Election Day.

A key point in the Latvian Code of Ethics states that the editorial board should guard their integrity, so that they may be free to act independently of any persons or groups who would like to exercise their influence. As the pre-election media behaviour was believed to be in clear contraction to the announced journalistic integrity, some people awaited a reaction from the Latvian Union of Journalist. However, no reaction came, as it had been incapable of responding to previous journalistic actions not in line with the adopted code of ethics. Moreover, analysing the behaviour of the Latvian Union of Journalists in the period from 2001 up to the end of 2004 it has become quite clear that the policy of the Latvian Union of Journalists is not to react to any journalistic actions that are not in line with the content of the Code of Ethics. The National Radio and TV council – when publicly pressured – more or less willingly commenced a debate on the media behaviour in radio and TV in the pre-election period and as a result made some amendments to the law on Radio and TV and some more focus on issues related to hidden advertising. For the writing press, however, due to the passivity of the Latvian Union of Journalists and the absence of any other nation-wide press organization, no press organization tried to follow up on the issue. Some debate among journalists took place and more awareness about the issue emerged in certain journalistic circles.¹⁰

Estonia has both the Estonian Press Council (EPC), dating from 1997, and the Estonian Newspaper Association’s Press Council, from 2001. In addition, Estonia has its own broadcasting council. The Code of ethics is from 1997. So, for Estonia, the picture is that a full system has been *introduced*. Like in the other Baltic countries, what remains is to develop a professional journalistic culture.¹¹ In Norway and Sweden this development took place alongside the developing of a system of self-regulation.

4. Accountability Systems, Ethics and a Professional Culture

A foreigner entering the U. S. media scene in the 1980s was amazed by the attention devoted to media ethics in books, reports, periodicals, cover stories, columns, workshops, conferences, college courses, even movies. In contrast, he also observed that the media with the vastest resources on earth (constitutional, human, financial, technological) did a poor job of serving their society (Christians, Ferré & Fackler 1993: v).

Of the American media ethical system it can be said that it does not exist. There is no national system. Only one state has had a press council that has lasted for some time. Minnesota News Council was founded in 1971 and still exists. There

¹⁰ For this description of the Latvian situation I am in debt to Richard Bærug.

¹¹ See Harro 2001.

are several codes, but no overarching one. One of the more interesting differences can be seen in research literature on media ethics in the U.S. The literature is clearly more on *ethics* proper than much northern European literature. The American literature is discussing ethical dilemmas for journalist John or journalist Kate, using classical moral philosophical literature as its basis.¹² Norwegian literature, for instance, has focused much more on the system, how it works, and its relation to the state.¹³ In Britain, the issue of privacy has been hot for a couple of decades. However, the discussion has not so much been on the ethical aspects of protecting privacy versus right and duty of information. Instead, what has been the issue is to what extent criticism of the media for intruding on privacy would (or should) lead to political measures towards the media. Sir David Calcutt's report on the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) in 1993 is a relevant example (Calcutt 1993).

Comments on the systems of the Baltic countries seem to focus on the shortcomings of the system. They pay little, or no, attention to ethical aspects. On the other hand, development of a professional journalistic culture is of key interest in the Baltic countries. We are talking about the transition from anti-soviet attitudes and anti-soviet journalism to journalism in a "free" environment.

Severe lack of trust in parliamentarians and political parties add to this rather gloomy picture. On a more positive note, however, mass media enjoy considerable respect. For many people, mass media seem to represent their guardian against corruption and cronyism among public officials and political leaders (Duvold & Berglund 2003: 256).

After the collapse of communism, the escape from the system of censorship has been the main priority for the media in the Baltic countries. This is clearly not a climate for making a media ethical system work a top priority. In Norway, the historical aim was firstly to establish the press council as a vital instrument for the process of professionalization in the press, and secondly it has been used as a way of showing relevant critics (politicians, lawyers) that the press has a well-functioning system of self-regulation. The juridical background is the Freedom of Speech Act in the Norwegian Constitution from 1814. This Act has historically also made up the basis for press freedom in Norway. In the political debate the actual interpretation and implementation of the Act can always be open for discussion. In 1999 the Commission on Free Speech finished its work, resulting in a report suggesting changes in the Act from 1814 (NOU 1999:27). The responsible media politicians have not withdrawn the press subsidies, not made a specific press law and not introduced an ombudsman. However, the Norwegian press has experienced a real *threat* of one or more of these things happening. To avoid this, the press – through its organizations – has made changes and tried to improve the system. This could be called the PR way of changing an accountability system. This is not enough: the system must be shown to work in other capacities. So, for instance, while the trend of commercialization is widely recognized in both the Baltic countries and Scandinavia, the pressure it represents on the content of a country's media could be different according to the ability of the accountability system to deal with the big media ethical issues of the present situation.

The civic consciousness in the Baltic countries is necessarily not the same as in the Scandinavian. At the same time, a distinction must be made between giving the press a role in a democratic society and how this role is internalized both among members of the media and among the population in a country. The media have several roles. What is in focus here is the Enlightenment-born key role in democracy. This role is regarded as central in Scandinavia – as in a lot of other countries. The role itself, and the form of this role, have been developed over many years and in specific national circumstances. In Norway, the importance of the Constitution of 1814, the establishment of the political parties in the 1880s and the independence from Sweden in 1905 are some of the extremely important factors in understanding the role of the media. Another is the experience during World War II. The role is

¹² e.g. Klaidman & Beauchamp (1987). The problematic basis for the American perspective is, however, the idea of the journalist as an independent moral actor.

¹³ When Johan O. Jensen, at the time leader of the Norwegian Press Council, introduced the Norwegian System at the Baltic-Norwegian Conference on the Media's role in a Changing Society in October 1991, he didn't suggest a single link to anything ethical *per se*. He still called his speech (and later article) "Press Ethics in Norway – A Report on the Present Situation" (Jensen 1992).

established in the society at large and in the minds of the population over a long period of time. The public demand quality standards and journalists who work in accordance with a role in a democratic society.

The media in a country must earn such a role in people's consciousness. The way the media take part in building a democratic society is very likely to influence the image of the media and, in turn, the media's self-image. Because, the media does not just need respect in society, it needs *self respect*. This is a vital criterion for a successful process of professionalization, and, in turn, a well-functioning system of media ethics. A solid foundation was made by journalists in all three Baltic countries during the last years of the 1980s, leading up to the subsequent independence from the Soviet Union.¹⁴ However, to build a professional journalistic culture – connected to a democratic society – it is important to develop the ethical dimension of professionalism, not only the legal one.

Both the objectives of journalism and the public interest will be served if journalists learn to weigh and balance competing considerations in their work, rather than leaving such balancing to the courts or leaving it aside completely as if it were a purely legal matter (Klaidman & Beauchamp 1987: 11).

Objectivity, accuracy, balance, to mention a few, are central concepts of professional journalism in a democratic society. Building a professional culture is, among other things, to intersubjectively recognize the importance of such concepts. A profession's code tells practitioners who and what they are. In describing the defining interest of the profession and its implications for practice, it supplies a vocabulary for intra-professional argument, self-criticism, and reform. It not only supplies a vocabulary, but it helps *create* the community of users (AJA 1997: 1).

In using the *introduction* concept about the systems in the Baltic countries, it looks as if the history of democratic experience in the various countries' past is overlooked. In a way this past is overlooked. The main point is, of course, the difference between developing a system in a, more or less, unbroken process and the introduction of it. Introducing elements in a system can be done both in borrowing from other countries and in borrowing from another period in your own country's past. For instance, the national movements in Latvia of the 19th century made people understand that mass media are the means of communication, interrelation and mutual understanding rather than propaganda (Dimants 2004). In addition, experiences of the media's role during Latvia's first independence (1918–1940) are, necessarily, part of the background in the building of a modern democratic role in today's Latvia. There is, however, a clear difference between such experiences and the, more or less unbroken, developing of a system.

Of course, the system of media ethics does not function in a vacuum. The Norwegian case has shown that the most important relation historically has been between the system – the council – and the education system. The first press council in Norway had clearly a role as educator of the press, in trying to make the good journalist – in all relevant senses of the word “good”. Journalism schools were introduced slowly, but steadily, after World War II and the council's role as educator was reduced. Both the council's and journalism school's education should lead to a higher level of reflection:

Ethics exist to provide guidelines, but not to take decision-making away from the individual. It is, precisely and thoroughly, to give the necessary preconditions for rational deliberation and choice, nothing more. Sometimes these will be simple, at other times difficult to the point of being crippling. Ethics is not, however, to take the excitement out of life. It is to help us administrate it (Thomassen 1992: 139).

This goes, of course, also for journalistic ethics. A system of treating complaints can never take away the need for both individual and collective reflection on good press conduct.

¹⁴ See for instance Bartasevičius 1992.

5. Concluding Remarks

The Lithuanian leading daily, *Lietuvos rytas*, published 190 articles about suicide in 2001, many of them obviously problematic (Balčytienė undated). Journalists would be asking: how should we cover suicides? What are we allowed to do? Another way to ask would be: how should we cover suicides given the role we want to play in a democratic society? Yet another: What is the ethical way of dealing with the phenomena of suicide and what is the ethical way of covering (or not covering) *this* suicide? The ethical dimension of such issues should always be present in a well-functioning system – alongside the legal dimension.

A system must be introduced from somewhere: from history, from other countries, or a combination. After being introduced, however, the developing starts. It can develop in the direction of a complete failure in every meaning of the word; it can turn into a well-functioning legalistic body but with not much contribution to a real ethical debate. An ideal development could lead both to a system working as a system and, at the same, being a solid basis for a professional debate. Developed in this latter manner the newer systems of the Baltic countries could very well turn into ideal models for the older systems in Scandinavia quite soon. The Baltic systems, as newer systems, could, for instance, be faster to incorporate ethical dilemmas connected to new media technology than the old print press based Scandinavian systems. In Lithuania, journalists in 2004 entered the phase where it is explicitly stated that the ethics code (from 1996) is not sufficient for the current situation. One of the reasons given is the arrival of IT.

Accountability systems can make very important contributions to the development of a professional culture. It is vital that this contribution is not solely legalistic or public relation decorations meant for the public eye.¹⁵ Instead, the system must give journalists and other media professionals sound and up-dated arguments as a basis for an on-going ethical and professional discussion. The answer is not written ethical rules in itself, but the internalization of these rules. At worst, written rules can be unethical in their effect. Rules can be used to avoid personal decision making (cf. Black & Barney 1985). Journalists wishing to develop a professional culture do not primarily need clear cut answers, but a conscious mind about central dilemmas in the journalistic practice.

When a system is developed, it goes through natural phases of fights for respect and developing of a (hopefully) natural balance between juridical elements and retaining a basis for real ethical discussion. The dilemma in introducing a system is often that between making a system, quickly, that looks good without having the necessary respect to make it really function among the practitioners. In Lithuania, the system – having in part been inspired by the Swedish – looks nice enough on the surface, but it lacks a vital element: the respect of the members of the press.

¹⁵ In his studies of press councils and press codes, the British ethics expert J. Clement Jones found “a strong thread of self-interest and of self-preservation” as the motivation behind them (Jones 1980:16).

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Media Accountability Systems – An Ecological Viewpoint

Halliki Harro-Loit and Auksė Balčytienė¹

1. Introduction

The concept of “media accountability” is quite often treated as a synonym for a “self-regulation system.” We propose that *accountability* has a wider meaning and that it therefore attempts to answer this question: What are the levers in a certain society which motivate media organisations to invest in quality and to protect freedom of speech?

The first priority for most media organisations is to earn a profit in order to survive. While media concentration is currently increasing, the liberal marketplace (one which involves competition among various players) is no longer the most efficient guarantee of journalistic quality. This is especially true in the three Baltic countries, where the market is relatively small, and the problem of “cheap journalism” becomes inevitable.

It is important to remember that press freedom and freedom of expression are not one and the same. Press freedom belongs to press units and is basically a negative freedom – freedom from outside interference or control. This is a freedom at the libertarian level, and it is in the hands of media owners and managers, with only sporadic bits of freedom filtering down to the lower ranks of journalists (Merrill 1989: 67). Some corporations in media markets where democratic traditions have not been in place very long (as is the case in the Baltic States, for instance) may create a situation in which the power of the “Fourth Estate” exceeds that of any other structure in society.

We propose that an information policy which really aims to create an “accountable media environment” and the free flow of information should take into consideration all regulative means which apply to the media and the conventions which determine the professional culture. In other words, we propose an *ecological approach* toward the analysis of accountability, and we claim that an accountability system can work efficiently only if each of three factors – a legal framework, media self-regulation and public control – are *well balanced* against the others (Diagram 1).

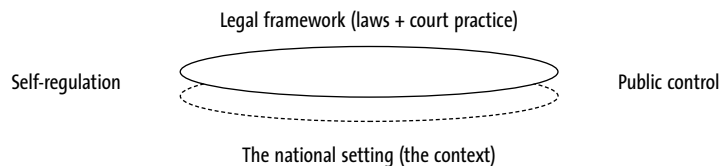


Diagram 1. The three factors and the national setting.

Source: For more on this, consult, e.g., Balčytienė, Auksė (2004): Reklama ir informacija žiniasklaidoje: susieti ar nepriklausomi? (Advertising and information in the media: intertwined or independent?), paper delivered at the international conference “Media Regulation in the Age of the Net”, Vilnius, 10 December, 2004.

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It goes without saying that news organisations and journalists are subject to their country's laws. If they violate the law, they are taken to court. Court practice, the cost of legal proceedings and the compensation for damages – all of these can have a decisive effect on the extent to which legal media policies in a certain country are dominant. In other words, excessive costs create a situation in which only rich people can make use of legal protections against the misuse of media. When compensations are too low, it is not worth taking a case to court. Excessive damages can also have a chilling effect – prompt self-censorship which may damage the economy of a media organisation or be used as a means to earn easy money.

Most Western countries have adopted media accountability systems. There is a rather cynical understanding to say that at least to some extent, self-regulation (or the accountability system) is an excuse to refrain from legislating media behaviour (Christians & Nordenstreng 2004:18).

Advanced *media criticism* can be a tool for quality control if carried out by professional and independent analysis (e.g., academics) or by the ombudsmen of newspapers (some newspapers in the United States have an in-house ombudsman, and the Danish newspaper *Politiken* has created a similar position). In addition, the *professional culture* of individual journalists is certainly one of the most believable guarantees for journalist accountability, but that is a factor which is efficient only if the individual independence and responsibility of a journalist are protected (e.g., through trade unions) and properly evaluated on the job market.

In the light of an ecological approach, each of these factors has its own unique role in the chain, and they all must be balanced against one another. Legal restrictions alone are counterproductive, not only because ethics are more extensive than law (“the concept of ethics covers a broader field than the concept of law” (Sawant 2003:17)), but also because court proceedings can be too expensive and too slow, while excessive punitive damages can bankrupt a media organisation or restrain free speech through the process of self-censorship. At the same time, however, if there is no legislative threat at all, ethical practice may be treated as a way of keeping the audience on the media organisation’s side (Sanders 2003:30).

Kaarle Nordenstreng pinpoints another area of antagonism which makes ecological analysis important: “The idea that the media are responsible to the general public made up of citizens is widely accepted [...] On the other hand, journalists, not to mention media owners, are anxious to remain independent, at least regarding the state, and therefore they are reluctant to accept laws which concretise their abstract responsibility” (Nordenstreng 2003).

Self-regulation systems are a widely accepted means in regulating the relationship between media and the society. According to Nordenstreng, it is important to monitor the state of self-regulation in a critical way: “Actually, self-regulation can and should be justified not only on the basis of defensive strategies on the part of journalists and media, but first and foremost seen through the public interest” (Nordenstreng 2003:4).

This article is aimed at describing the accountability system in the three Baltic States and in Norway, analysing efficiency of the self-regulation mechanisms as an element in the media’s quality control system.

2. Legislation

In various countries, these legal areas can overlap. Most European countries, for instance, have broadcasting laws. In addition to regulating licenses (a unique regulatory area), a broadcasting law might also regulate advertising on radio and television. If there is also a general advertising law, then there is certainly some overlapping. There might also be other laws which regulate the advertising of specific products (drugs, gambling, etc.). Television advertising is also regulated by international agreements and conventions such as the Convention on Transfrontier Television.

Hence, in order to analyse the legal regulation of the mass media and of public communications, we propose to divide legal regulations into eight categories:

- 1) Special media laws (press laws, media laws, broadcasting laws, etc.);
- 2) Regulation of commercial speech (regulation of advertising);
- 3) Legal regulation of the media market and competition (including the supervisory system);
- 4) Legal protection of individual rights (defamation, privacy, fair trial);
- 5) Legal regulation of the provision of information (access to information, regulation of databases, state secrets, confidential data, etc.);
- 6) Legal regulation of elections (e.g., regulation of political advertising);
- 7) Laws on copyright (intellectual property);
- 8) Laws concerning blasphemy, obscenity and public morality.

When it comes to legal arrangements, the situation in each country is different. Latvia and Lithuania, for instance, have special media laws – the Law on the Press and Other Means of Mass Information in Latvia, and the Law on Provision of Information to the Public in Lithuania. Estonia and Norway, by comparison, have only a broadcasting law.

This is a conceptual difference. Either media organisations have special status (rights, responsibilities) and there are areas of intersection with other legal acts, or media organisations are treated equally with other institutions in society. Latvia's press law, for instance, sets out a list of information which cannot be presented in the media. Section 7:

“Publication of information which is an official secret or other secret specially protected by law, which promotes violence and the overthrow the prevailing order, which advocates war, cruelty, racial, national or religious superiority and intolerance, and which foments the commission of a crime, shall be prohibited.

Materials from pre-trial investigations shall not be published without the written authorisation of the prosecutor or the investigator. Publication of materials which violate the presumption of innocence shall not be permitted in the reporting of judicial proceedings. During open court hearings, journalists may make recordings by means of technical devices if these do not hinder the course of judicial procedures.

Publication of the content of correspondence, telephone calls and telegraph messages shall be prohibited without the consent of the person addressed and the author of the correspondence, calls and messages, or the author's heirs.

Use of the mass media to interfere in the private lives of citizens shall be prohibited and punished in accordance with the law.

Publication of information which impinges upon the honour and dignity of natural persons and legal persons or which slanders them shall be prohibited.

Publication of information about the state of the health of a citizen shall be prohibited without the citizen's consent.

Publication of business secrets and patent secrets shall be prohibited without the consent of their owners.”

Each of these sections requires one or more additional legal acts to provide definitions of such concepts as “state secret”, “slander”, “business secret”, etc. In Estonia, for instance, a legal definition of defamation is included in the Law of Obligations. The way in which a defamatory statement is disseminated is linked to the question of the extent of damage that has been caused.

The law also limits media power in a more elaborate way. Latvia's Law on the Press and Other Means of Mass Communication, Section 22:

"A mass medium may decline to state the source of information. Where the individual who has provided the information asks that his or her name is not to be stated in the mass medium, the request shall be mandatory for the editorial board. An information source shall be disclosed only at the request of a court or prosecutor."

On the one hand, it appears that legal protections seem to protect whistleblowers to a better degree than do codes of ethics, but on the other hand, the formulation might nevertheless cause disagreement. In a small town, for instance, an individual might quite easily be identified without the publication of his or her name.

In Estonia, *advertising* is regulated in accordance with the same "over-regulation" schema. There is a special advertising law, there is a special section of advertising in the broadcasting law, and there are relevant sections in various other laws and legal acts. Legal restrictions, it must be said, are implemented very rarely.

In addition to an advertising law, Latvia also has restrictions on political advertising and campaigning (the Law on Radio and TV Agitation Prior to Local Government Elections, and the Law on Pre-election Agitation Prior to National Parliamentary Elections). There is also a separate law to restrict the sale, advertising and use of tobacco products.

Norway has the most elaborate *regulations concerning the media market and ownership*. Only Norway has a special institution which oversees the implementation of the law (see more on this in *The Baltic and Norwegian Journalism Market*). In Lithuania, too, media are required to provide annual information to the Ministry of Culture about their owners. There are no sanctions for those that don't, however, and few media outlets obey this requirement.

Legal protection of the *rights of individuals* is usually spread out among different laws. Mostly these are defamation laws and laws to protect individual privacy. In the latter part of the 1990s, Estonian laws in the area of individual rights, particularly the right to protect one's own honour, were revised. The protection of honour and privacy is now regulated by the new Law of Obligations, which was approved in October 2001 and took effect at the start of 2002 (Harro 2002:236). Until the turn of the century, defamation could lead to criminal or civil proceedings. Estonia's new penal code, however, does not cover the issue of defamation.

Norwegian legislation provides for criminal and civil causes of action in the case of defamation or an infringement of the right to privacy. Criminal charges for defamation, however, are rare and of no practical value (Wolland 1993:121).

Regulation of public and private information is well elaborated in all four countries. Each has a special law to provide access to administrative documents – the Act on Public Access to Documents (Norway), the Public Information Act (Estonia, adopted in 2000), the Freedom of Information Law (Latvia, adopted in 1998), and the Law on Provision of Information to the Public (Lithuania). Personal data are protected by the Privacy Act (Norway, 1978), the Personal Data Protection Act (Estonia, 1996, and Latvia, 2000), and the Law on the Legal Protection of Personal Data (Lithuania).

The situation in the three Baltic countries is summarised in Table 1.

The table shows that all four countries have adopted laws to cover all of the area of our analysis, but it is also true that legal coverage varies in the different categories. This is true when it comes to the regulation of media ownership in Norway and the Baltic States, and to the regulation of political campaigns and advertising.

Category	Lithuania	Latvia	Estonia	Norway
Special media laws	Law on Provision of Information to the Public (the law covers both print and the electronic media)	Law on the Press and Other Means of Mass Information		
	Law on National Radio and Television	Radio and TV Law	Broadcasting Act, Telecommunications Act	Broadcasting Act
Regulation of commercial speech	Law on Advertising, Law on Competition, additional legal acts	Competition Law, Advertising Law, Law on Restriction of the Sale, Advertising and use of Tobacco	Advertising Act (as well as several other legal acts on broadcasting, gambling, pornography, works which promote violence or cruelty, etc.)	Advertising Law Broadcasting Act
Legal regulation of media markets and competition (supervisory system)	Law on Competition			Act on Acquisition of Newspapers and Broadcasting Enterprises (the Media Ownership Act)
Legal protection of individual rights (defamation, privacy, fair trial)	Law on Legal Protection of Personal Data	Law on Protection of Personal Data	Personal Data Protection Act, Law of Obligations	Penal Code, Privacy Act, Act on Rights in Photographic Images
Legal regulation of the spread of information: access to information; regulation of databases, state secrets, confidential data, legal protection of personal data	Law on Provision of Information to the Public Law on the Protection of Minors Against The Detrimental Effects of Public Information	Freedom of Information Law Law on State Secrets	Personal Data Protection Act, State Secrets Act, Databases Act, Public Information Act, Code of Criminal Procedure, Code of Misdemeanour Procedure, norms in other legal acts	Act on Public Access to Documents
Legal regulations concerning elections	Law on Elections	Law on Agitation on Radio and TV Prior to Local Gov't Elections, Law on Pre-election Agitation Prior to National Parliamentary Elections	Parliamentary Election Act § 81, Local Government Election Act, both of which prohibit campaigning on election day	

Table 1. Examples of laws. This table does not cover the 7th and 8th of the aforementioned categories of laws, because the constitutions of all four countries deal with freedom of expression, personal rights, fair trial and the like.

3. Supervisory System and Court Practice

The costs of a legal case are usually sufficiently high to discourage all but the well-to-do (Colliver 1993:269). Potential plaintiffs must think about whether it is worthwhile to bring a case to court. Laws in this area are also implemented by various *supervisory bodies* (more on this in “Types of State Intervention in the Media System in the Baltic States and Norway”, elsewhere in this volume).

Here it is important to mention the fact that many aspects of the law could never be implemented in the absence of an efficient supervisory body. This institution requires a constant and professional monitoring system, as well as resources to launch legal proceedings in those cases where there is serious suspicion that a media organisation has violated the law. In Estonia, for instance, advertising rules are occasionally violated, but the Consumer Protection Office has launched only a few cases against television stations in the last three or four years. The office says that it needs citizens to file complaints. The problem in that case is that most people are not capable of discovering violations of the law. By contrast, Norway’s Media Ownership Authority considered 26 acquisitions in 2003, according to the authority’s annual report for that year.

In order to assess the role of legal regulations in a certain country, therefore, legal actions that have been taken against the media must be taken into consideration. Sadly, data about court practice in the four countries are inconsistent.

Both in Lithuania and Estonia, the number of individual lawsuits against the media has declined. According to the Lithuanian Ministry of Justice, for instance, the number of court cases related to the misrepresentation of people in the mass media (i.e., cases which deal with the defence of honour) numbered 134 in 1998, 147 in 1999, 11 in 2000 and 106 in 2001, as opposed to 209 in 1992, 371 in 1993, 421 in 1994, 637 in 1995 and 620 in 1997 (Meškauskaitė 2004).

The electronic database of Estonia’s court system did not provide data about actions taken under the Law of Obligations. In 1996, Toomas Liiva analysed 18 lawsuits that had been filed against mass media organisations in 1994 and 1995 (Liiva 1996:1). There were approximately four or five such cases per year in the latter half of the 1990s (as reported by Harro-Loit, 2000). According to Helge Østbye, there has been a slow increase in the number of libel cases and the like that have been brought against the media in Norway, and the fines that are applied to guilty parties have become more severe. In this sense, the courts have gradually become more important for the media (Østbye 2000).

Before analysing the way in which these different laws are implemented, we would have to conduct a case analysis, and the scope of this article does not permit this. It must be remembered here that the way in which a legal act is implemented discloses much about its nature. Legal acts can be “sleeping,” or they can be involved in several legal cases, thus permitting interpretation.

Plaintiffs in such lawsuits can recover actual damages (e.g., loss of business) and/or immaterial damages in most cases. In most European countries, damages tend to be modest. Colliver provides data from 1993 – France between \$8 000 and 20 000, Norway between \$8 000 and \$24 000, and Sweden between \$3 000 and 12 000. In 1995 in Estonia, three cases ended with damages being awarded to plaintiffs, and damages were assessed at between EEK 5 000 and 25 000 (EUR 320 to EUR 1 600).

The record in damages awarded in Estonia was set in the Põrõtsheva case in 2002 – EEK 200 000 (EUR 12 800). Tammiste (Tammiste 2004) and Harro have counted up 10 cases in all since 1994 in which media organisations have been ordered to pay damages.

4. Architecture of the Accountability System

Most *self-regulation systems* consist of codes of professional conduct or ethics, media councils (in regional or national media organisations), and/or the institution of an ombudsman (in national organisations). In some countries, there is the practice of so-called co-regulation. Laws make it mandatory for media organisations to observe rules about good and proper conduct.

In order to evaluate the efficiency of accountability systems, we shall analyse the system which exists in the three Baltic countries and in Norway. We will ask four questions: What is the architecture of the accountability system? What mechanisms have been built into the system to assure that the accountability system is not just an excuse to refrain from legislating the media, but is also a true means for quality control? Is the system transparent for the public? What is the motivation for the industry to take part in the accountability system?

The three Baltic States have experienced fairly similar developments in the political and the professional context over the last 15 years. The history of Norway's accountability system, by contrast, dates back to 1928, when the Norwegian Press Council was first established. It was reformed in 1972 to include members of the public and to permit newspapers to present their side of an issue more completely (Picard 1998:49) (see Table 2).

Category	Norway	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania
National ethics code	Code of Ethics, 1936, revised each decade since the 1950s; Editor's Code, 1953	1997	1992	1996
Individual media with ethics codes	<i>NRK</i> ; <i>VG</i> , <i>Bergens Tidende</i> , <i>Dagbladet</i> et al.	<i>Äripäev</i> (1994)	<i>Diena</i> (1992/96), Latvian TV News Department (1999)	None
National media (press) councils	Press Council (1928)	Estonian Press Council (1991/97), Estonian Newspaper Association Press Council (2001)		Ethics Commission of Journalists and Publishers (1996)
Other councils			National Broadcasting Council of Latvia	Radio and Television Council of Lithuania (monitors the electronic media)
Ombudsman				Inspector of journalist ethics
Co-regulation = good conduct <i>de jure</i>		Broadcasting Law requires editors to follow rules of good conduct, <i>Äripäev</i> includes ethics code in employment contracts	<i>Diena</i> includes ethics code in employment contracts	

Table 2. The Norwegian and the Baltic accountability system

4.1. Codes of Ethics

According to Christians and Nordenstreng, journalistic codes of ethics should be viewed as a true means for regulating the media (Christians & Nordenstreng 2004:18,19). This means that one must look at the main focus of the codes.

There is no room in this paper for detailed text analysis of the various ethics codes, but we shall point to some of their most important features insofar as accountability systems are concerned.

Table 2 shows that there are national codes of professional ethics in all four countries. Estonia and Latvia drafted their codes on the basis of examples from a variety of European countries, but the Nordic pattern prevails. The Latvian Union of Journalists wrote up a code of ethics in the early 1990s, but the union does not unite the majority of working journalists in Latvia, and most Latvian journalists do not think much of its activities, and so there has been no serious attempt to ensure the implementation of the code's requirements.

As the national code of ethics is not effective in Latvia, the ethics codes of individual organisations are a distinctive feature in the accountability system. The Latvian daily newspaper *Diena* and the News Department of *Latvian Television* (the public broadcasting channel) both have codes of ethics and professional standards.

Diena put its code on paper in 1992, and it became a component of employment contracts in 1996. A violation of the code of ethics, in short, is a violation of the employment contract. This can, therefore, be seen as a form of "co-regulation."

The editor-in-chief of *Diena*, Sarmīte Ēlerte:

"Each new employee receives a folder in which we have collected the so-called attachments to the code of ethics – short descriptions from the practice of *Diena*. For instance, when we reported that [the film producer] Juris Podnieks had drowned before his body had been found, we wrote an explanation afterward to say that we can write about a person's death only after it has been confirmed. Another explanation deals with the way in which we write about children who have suffered from violence, another deals with the fact that when writing about crimes, the journalist must not mention the nationality of the arrested individual if it is not pertinent. We have explanations about the boundaries in respecting private life, as well as about ways of avoiding hidden advertising when writing about companies (the story must make it clear why the company has been selected). We repeat again and again the story of two journalists who were fired because they violated the code of ethics – one in 1991, when he was offered money for writing a specific story, the second in 2002 when he tried to win better terms from his bank by mentioning that he is a journalist at *Diena*." (Ēlerte 2004).

In Latvia, however, there is no council or any other formal body to discuss cases of ethics. The News Department of *Latvian Television* introduced its code of ethics in 1999. According to news director Gundars Rēders, the stimulus for introducing the code was a report from a regional television station which was shown on the main nightly news programme, *Panorāma*. The story concerned a six-year-old boy who had accidentally shot a friend with his father's gun. The report showed a close-up of the boy, and this led to protests and debates in the press. It became clear, according to Rēders, that there had to be a unified code of ethics that would be observed by everyone who produces reports for *Panorāma* and other news programmes.

At *Latvian Television*, as at *Diena*, the ethics code is a part of employment contracts. The editorial board of the News Department evaluates the work of its journalists in terms of the code of ethics, among other issues.

These are two companies which are, in general, thought by Latvian journalists to have the toughest policies on media ethics. The possibility of a journalist getting away with what would be considered unethical media behaviour at the Northern

European scale has been reduced to a minimum. *Latvian Television* and *Diena* are considered to be good examples of self-regulation, but there are also other newspapers which have established codes of ethics.

Following criticism of media coverage (hidden advertising) in advance of the 2001 local elections, six dailies (*Dienas Bizness*, *Čas* and others) announced that they had adopted a new press code of ethics for themselves. Discussions with journalists who work at these newspapers suggest that the code is not being implemented in the everyday work of the dailies, which creates the impression that the code was adopted primarily for PR reasons. This shows that the key issue is not the existence of a code of ethics, but rather the implementation of the standards and principles of the code and the willingness of journalists to stick to them.

The Lithuanian code is the longest of the four national codes, with 63 paragraphs. At this writing, a new version of the code was being developed and discussed among journalists, publishers and the public. The new proposed version had even more paragraphs. One can interpret this as meaning that the amending of the code of ethics indicates the professional consolidation of Lithuanian journalists, particularising journalistic practice in an imperative way. The Lithuanian code is implanted by an ombudsman and a media council.

The Code of Ethics of the Estonian Press was adopted in December 1997 after much discussion and amendment. Estonia's practice of introducing self-regulation was in contrast to practices in several other post-Communist countries (e.g., Slovenia and Latvia). The Estonian media first established a council and then adopted a code of good practice. The code, which has not been amended, has six sections which, to a certain extent, describe the main goals of the document – general provisions, independence, sources, editorial guidelines, right of reply, and advertising.

One clause in the Estonian code must be seen as conceptual:

Article 1.4.: "A journalist shall be responsible for his or her own statements and work. *Media organisations* shall undertake to prevent the publication of inaccurate, distorted or misleading information."

According to this clause, the main responsibility rests with the *media organisation*. The practical outcome is that in most cases, the editor-in-chief writes up an explanation for the council, but the accused journalist does not. In one case a journalist is known to have been upset by this procedure, because he was not even aware of the original complaint. For comparison's sake, we can note that the last paragraph of the Norwegian code of ethics says that "each editor and employee is responsible for being familiar with the standards of ethics of the press and is obliged to use these."

In comparison to Lithuania's code, Estonia's is fairly general, and some clauses leave moral choices up to the journalist. For instance, Article 4.7 says that "when covering crime, court cases and accidents, the journalist shall consider whether the identification of the parties involved is necessary and what suffering it might cause to them." A close reading of the code, in other words, reveals an antagonistic approach to the position and responsibility of the individual journalist. With reference to the word "suffering", it might be added that Article 1.5 of the Estonian code says that "no individual shall be *groundlessly harmed* without there being sufficient evidence that the information regarding that person serves the public interest." This rule has been used most frequently to protect individuals.

In addition to the national code, the business daily newspaper *Äripäev* has its in-house code of ethics. That document includes some elements that are specific to business and financial journalism.

. . .

In sum, these codes of journalistic ethics seem to highlight one and the same values, but their status and functions differ. In-house codes seem to be a part of co-regulation, while national codes appear to be designed for public dialogue. As we

have seen here, a brief discourse analysis reveals more diversity among the different codes than does a “common reading”, and so an analysis of the implementation system and of cases that have been considered will help us to understand the function, status and efficiency of the codes.

4.2. Implementation: Councils and Ombudsmen

Latvia, unlike Estonia, Lithuania and Norway, has no press council or any other structure to deal with the relevant tasks. There have been suggestions in Latvia that a press council be established, but there has been nothing more than debates among some journalists about the need for a structure which would evaluate media performance in the area of ethics. Latvia has no media ombudsman. In late 2003 and early 2004, some politicians, in alliance with clergymen and others, activated a debate on the need for introducing ethical standards in the form of a law. This initiative was severely criticised by leading media organisations. By the summer of 2004, it appeared that the initiative had disappeared.

All three other countries have councils, and Lithuania also has an ombudsman.

The Estonian Newspaper Association established the country's Press Council in 1991. The Estonian Press Council (EPS) was modelled on a similar organisation in Finland. The Lithuanian system, for its part, has mostly been influenced by the system in Sweden. Estonia, it might be added, is in a very peculiar situation – it has had two councils since 2003. This will be discussed later in this paper.

Six criteria have been selected to evaluate the functioning of these self-regulation systems:

- 1) Coverage (national or in-house ombudsman; channel-based or cross-media evaluation council)
- 2) Composition (representatives of media organisations, the public, academic bodies)
- 3) Funding (national budget, independent fund, professional organisations)
- 4) Sanctions (publication of decisions, withdrawal of published information, monetary fines, mandatory public announcements)
- 5) Causes for accepting or rejecting a case
- 6) Decision making procedures

This is not an exhaustive list, but it does provide sufficient grounds for assessing the role of the various councils.

The category of “coverage” concerns the scope of the media which are assessed. “Composition” refers mostly to the extent to which the public are involved in the debate over media and communications ethics. Financing is important if the state is involved, because then it becomes important to examine how the council is protected against political interference.

The category of “sanctions” is vital, because this is the main criticism against the self-regulation system – that it is toothless. The final two factors have to do with the efficiency and transparency of the system. Any organisation which deals with complaints may try to avoid complicated or uncomfortable cases. It is necessary, therefore, that the system provide a very clear definition of which cases are handled, which ones are not, who makes the decision and what is the possibility for appeal. At the Estonian Press Council, which was established in 1991, the executive secretary, the chairman and the deputy chairman draft an adjudication. In this, the EPC differs from the operations of the Press Council (PC) which was established in 2002. In short, before we can assess the role, status and efficiency of any council as a quality control mechanism, it is important to analyse everyday practice from various aspects (for more on this, see “Accountability Systems and Media Ethics: Landscapes and Limits” by Røssland, elsewhere in this volume).

How are the self-regulation systems functioning in the four selected countries?

In Norway, the Press Council is made up of three representatives of the public and four of the media – seven people in all. The Council is funded by the Norwegian Press Association. Individuals, organisations, institutions and public authorities can complain to the Council. It can also take up matters at its own initiative. The time limit for filing a complaint is three months after the alleged offence.

In Estonia, member organisations delegate representatives to the Estonian Press Council (10 members, three of whom come from the Union of Journalists). The EPC is funded through membership fees. Here, too, complaints can be filed, or the Council can consider cases at its own initiative. The EPC does not examine cases which have already been considered by the courts or are being investigated by the police, ones which have nothing to do with media matters, ones in which the complaint is indecent, or ones in which the complaint is anonymous.

The Press Council, by contrast nine members, three of whom come from outside the press, and each member has a deputy (the Association of Estonian Newspapers). Private individuals and legal entities can complain to the PC about materials in the press (excluding advertising). The PC declines complaints if court proceedings are pending in the relevant matter, if the complainant cannot be identified, or if the complaint does not concern the breach of good journalistic practices. When there is doubt about whether a complaint falls under the authority of the PC, the decision is taken by the organisation's chairman, deputy chairman and executive secretary. The first step when a complaint is received is that the executive secretary tries to negotiate a settlement between the complainant and the publication.

In Lithuania, Parliament appoints an inspector of journalist ethics for a five-year term, doing so on the basis of a recommendation from the Commission of Journalists and Publishers. The inspector must be a Lithuanian citizen, possess an excellent reputation, have a higher education and be possessed of the competence that is required in the performance of his or her duties. The inspector is a state official and answers before Parliament. The inspector's work is financed from the national budget, and every private individual or legal entity can turn to the inspector with a complaint about materials that have been published or broadcast. When a journalist or a media outlet is the subject of a complaint, the inspector weighs the nature of the complaint on the basis of the 63-item Code of Ethics.² The inspector may reject the complaint, or he may call on editors or media owner to retract information or offer the wronged party a chance to respond. If the media organisation refuses to do so, the case then proceeds to the full Ethics Commission of Journalists and Editors, which makes a final and binding decision. The members of the Commission are appointed by various media and public organisations (12 members in all). The Commission is funded through the Fund for the Support of the Press, Radio and Television.

Countries, institution	Coverage	Composition	Funding	Sanctions
Norway	All types of media	9 members		
Estonia, EPC		10 members	Membership fees	
Estonia, PC		9 members	Association of Estonian Newspapers	Announcements in the accused newspaper
Lithuania, inspector (ombudsman)		1 inspector	National budget	Announcements on public radio, decisions published on the Internet
Lithuania, Ethics Commission of Journalists and Publishers		12 members	Fund for the Support of the Press, Radio and Television	

Table 3. A summary of the self-regulation systems in the various countries

² The website of the inspector includes information about how a complaint is to be written. See <http://www.Irs.lt> (accessed 27 November 2003).

4.2.1 A Case Study: the Estonian Press Council – History and Crisis in 2001–2002

The first press council in Estonia was established by the Association of Newspapers. The Estonian Press Council was subsequently reorganised in 1997 by six media-related organisations – the Newspapers Association, the Association of Broadcasters, the Association of Media Educators, the Journalists Union, national public radio and television, and the Consumers Union. The Network of Non-Profit Organisations and the Council of Churches joined the EPC in 1999.

After the reorganisation of the EPC in 1997, it was financed by membership fees. Media organisations paid more than non-media organisations did. Each organisation could contribute as many representatives as the general assembly of member organisations permitted. Usually the proportions between non-media and media representatives were 50:50. Complex cases demanded analytical experience, and so the personnel of the Estonian Press Council rotate through staggered terms. Some people have served on the Council for two or four years, while others have served for eight or 10 years.

In order to guarantee more objectivity and impartiality, the Council does not discuss drafts of adjudications, instead formulating these collectively through discussions among members. Adjudications are published on the Council's Web site. The relevant news media are obliged to publish or air the full text of the adjudication within seven days' time. Publishers, however, appear to be rather sensitive to criticism. In several cases they have ignored the commitment to publish the Council's adjudications. In others, publishers have changed the text of the adjudication.

Increasing dissatisfaction among publishers and the editors of the six largest newspapers eventually developed into a conceptual conflict between the Estonian Press Council and the Estonian Newspaper Association (ENA). In late 2001, the association accused the chairman of the Council of being authoritarian. The members of the Council issued their disagreement with this accusation in December 2001, and the ENA announced that the activities of the Council should be shut down. Activities were paralysed for the next five months. Finally the system was split up into two different councils. Broadcasting organisations withdrew their participation in self-regulation altogether. The irony here is that the Broadcasting Act orders them to observe the rules of good conduct anyway. Three Internet service providers (Delfi, Tele2 Eesti and Eesti Telefon) which operate news portals informed the Press Council in December 2002 that they recognise it as the self-regulatory body of the media.

There is one well documented process which enables us to analyse the motives and positions of media self-regulation in Estonia. In the summer of 2000, the leading Estonian weekly, *Eesti Ekspress*, which is a member of the Estonian Newspaper Association, refused to publish the Estonian Press Council adjudications on three separate occasions. In two other instances, it published the adjudications imprecisely. In April 2001, *Eesti Ekspress* published an exculpatory adjudication with a photograph of the complainant. The Estonian Association of Media Educators, which is represented on the Council, filed an inquiry with the Estonian Newspaper Association about this fact, but the association declared the Estonian Press Council to be incompetent and accused its chairman of mismanagement (Harro & Lauk 2003).

The Estonian Press Council continued adjudicating complaints, but it has increasingly become a provider of expert opinion and evaluations of the quality of media content and performance. The Union of Journalists and several other public organisations have remained faithful to the "old" Estonian Press Council, while the organisation of employers – the Estonian Newspaper Association – set up a new one entirely.

4.2.2. The Lithuanian Accountability System: Problems and Prospects

In Lithuania, the structural arrangements of the self-regulation system (e.g., the existence of the institution of the inspector, the publication of decisions, etc.) appear to be all in order, but there is an important question about the system's efficiency. Do the media observe ethical conduct? Do the public care about this in the media which they consume?

The fact is that codes of ethics are a contract which allows parties (in this case, journalists and the state) to resolve conflicts without the involvement of the authorities. The question is, however, whether journalists are observing the written agreement and whether the code of ethics is at all effective.

In most cases, according to studies, audience reaction to violations of journalistic ethics is apathetic. Audiences cannot discuss ethics, because most people are not familiar with the relevant issues. Audience studies have shown that respondents will easily answer the question of what kind of a person a professional journalist should be (“non-intrusive, polite, moderate, fair to the viewers, not accusing someone before the courts have done so, not using profanities, etc.”).³ Respondents are also happy to talk about those characteristics among journalists which are negative – intrusion into the personal lives of individuals (as, for example, the television programme “Be Tabu” (Without Taboos) has done), repetition of commercially beneficial topics, intrusiveness, presentation of only one party’s opinion, mocking people, encouraging criminal behaviour (i.e., by presenting criminals as heroes), violence in children’s programming, etc.).

The situation with public control over media performance, in other words, is not as simple as may seem at first glance. There are some voices from above (the self-regulatory bodies of the media, complaints by certain intellectuals), but the fact is that most Lithuanians do not see any major problems in the media. Why, in fact, should the media care whether those who read or watch them are happy? The truth is that media professionals themselves are the audience segment which should look critically at the journalistic products which are produced. Reflexivity in the profession must become an integral component in the education of journalists. Only then will it be possible to talk about consolidation and professional maturity in Lithuanian journalism.

Some steps have been taken in this direction, and journalists and the public are reaching a level of consensus. Media professionals themselves acknowledge that self-regulation within the industry is weak, and in many respects they look at journalistic wrongdoing “through their fingers.”

In conclusion, Lithuania was one of the first post-Communist countries to adopt laws on the self-regulation of the media. Legislation which covers this issue includes the Law on the Provision of Information to the Public, the Law on Lithuanian Radio and Television, the Law on Telecommunications, and others. Parliament has ratified the Resolution of the European Council on Journalistic Ethics. Journalistic and publishing organisations have reached agreement on adopting the Lithuanian Journalists and Publishers Ethics Code.

It is one thing, however, to set up an institution, it is another thing entirely to make it work. The self-regulation mechanism as such is ineffective. There have been very few cases in which the media have been sanctioned for publicising private data (one case involved the newspaper *Lietuvos rytas*, which disclosed the personal data of a drugs addict with HIV). Journalists lack a sense of self-responsibility, and the professional culture suffers.

Public debates on media policy are non-existent, and little in the way of incentive comes from journalists and the media industry when it comes to critical media discussions. The audience is uninformed about key human rights concerns, is uncritical about media performance, and is reluctant to speak up. Non-governmental media organisations are too few in number (one is the Lithuanian Journalism Centre, which was established by the OSF in 1995). Those that are in place do not regularly cover the critical issues of media performance.

3 Study conducted within the PHARE Research Programme, study results accessed from the Web site of the Radio and Television Commission of Lithuania, <http://www.rtk.lt>

5. Conclusions: Accountability System – a Guide for the Good, a Dead Letter for the Bad?

There is insufficient data to provide for a full analysis of each link in the accountability system in the Baltic countries and Norway. The infrastructure in terms of laws, codes and a monitoring system seems to be in place in Norway. The monitoring system is less developed in Latvia. The Lithuanian legal and self-regulation systems seem to be well developed, but experts say that they do not function in terms of quality control. The Estonian system reflects the main problem in quality control very well. According to Antonio Pasquali:

“In many cases deontological codes, wrongly called codes of ethics, implicitly pursue freedom on behalf of professional groups, corporations, employer associations, trade unions and guilds. These codes replace society’s watchdog function with internal self-surveillance rules. [...] The codes implicitly address the claim to the Leviathan state: Do not interfere in our activities; we prefer to set our own rules. We do not accept sanctions imposed by others who do not understand our profession or by those who may have contrary pursuits” (Pasquali 1997:27).

Although not enough research has been done on court practice in the area of lawsuits against the media, it appears that media organisations in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania do not face enough of a legal (and economic threat).

The students at the University of Tartu each year conduct monitoring and case analyses of several ethical and legal problems on the basis of published media texts (potential lawsuits, breaches of codes of ethics, etc. – some 20 to 25 cases each year). Within the last three years, according to the students, damages that have been caused to individuals have become more severe. It may be that the students have become wiser, but the fact is that there are more and more cases where defamation or invasion of privacy has been obvious. As was stated before, there is not much sense in pursuing a lawsuit. Hence, press freedom is becoming less balanced against individual rights and personal rights. The same could be said about the other two Baltic States.

Latvia’s system is very weak, and Estonia has the peculiar situation of two different councils (one mostly representing senior editors, the other representing members of the public and individual journalists), and this suggests that it might take a decade or more to turn the self-regulation systems into components of accountability systems.

The efficiency of accountability systems, however, is still up in the air in a number of countries where there are longer-standing democratic traditions. The Australian media researchers Sampford and Lui have expressed the view which we called “ecological” in the introduction to this paper. They write:

“A bare code of ethics without the support of laws that impose sanctions will become a “knave’s charter” – a guide for the good and a dead letter for the bad. [...] Even the best co-ordinated set of mutually reinforcing ethical and legal rules can be undermined if those who are supposed to be guided by those rules work within unsupportive institutions” (Sampford & Lui 2004:92).

Hence, it is a question of media literacy and media policy as to whether there is a public watchdog to control the everyday performance of the media. It is largely a matter of journalistic culture whether media organisations are able to withstand external criticism. And it is a matter of organisational culture whether media organisations tolerate the critical opinion of an in-house ombudsman or anyone else.

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Types of State Intervention in the Media System in the Baltic States and Norway

Auksė Balčytienė

1. Introduction

Following a political breakthrough in the late 1980s, a tradition was born in the newly democratic countries – to look towards the West for models of media development. Consequently, a huge wave of know-how was transferred from Western countries to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Apart from the normative idea that journalism has to be objective, neutral and fact-based, few publications were produced which emphasised, for example, specific features of the national media. The “Return to the West” of the Baltic countries’ media was indicated, while at the same time emphasising the peculiarities of the national setting (the culture of politics and journalism) in which a new phenomenon – the development of a free press – was beginning to take place.¹

In the course of just fifteen years (as a result of political, economic and social influences), the Baltic media have changed tremendously. The practice of censorship was abolished, and different voices in society were liberated (a political factor). The monopolistic structures of the press and broadcasting were removed, and strong competition between media players took place – accordingly, the media changed their focus from a political approach to a market-oriented approach in terms of news production (an economic factor). In addition to political and economic impact, general changes in society have had a significant influence on the media. A new audience has been born, which, for example, is less concerned about using the media for political socialisation (as in the period of political breakthrough, 1987–1990), but has a pragmatic approach to information consumption (more about this in Balčytienė’s article on media modernisation elsewhere in this volume).

It has turned out, however, that efforts to import Western media models were not without drawbacks. For instance, a decade after self-regulation models were introduced in the Baltic media (e.g., in Lithuania in 1996 and in Estonia in 1997: in 1991 – the council, in 1997 – a code of ethics),² it became evident that the imported model of self-regulation does not work without being supported by strong traditions of democratic journalism and adequate political culture in society, or that changing the title of Lithuanian Radio and Television from state-owned into national radio and television does not automatically create a public service broadcaster. In fact, the scope and spectrum of ongoing problems in the Baltic media confirm that the philosophy of “professional journalism” (as understood in the Anglo-American tradition) has succeeded only partially. Why this is so? Where are the roots of the conflict?

This article focuses on one aspect of comparative research, namely, the relationship between the state and the media in four selected countries. The main goal of the article, therefore, is to discuss types of state intervention in the media, as well as different shades of that relationship, as manifested in the media cultures of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Norway.

¹ For a history of journalism in the Baltic States see, e.g., Høyer, Svennik, Lauk, Epp, & Vihalemm, Peeter (1993) *Towards a Civic Society: The Baltic Media’s Long Road to Freedom*, Tartu: Baltic Association for Media Research/Nota Baltica.

² There is no press council (only an ethics code) in Latvia.

The role of the state is reflected in public information and communications policies in different ways, but it manifests itself most clearly in three aspects. The differing roles that the state plays as owner, regulator and funding provider for the media are clearly rooted in more general differences in the role of the state in society.³ The question then concerns the difference between restricted (or passive) or more active state intervention in the media. For instance, a general understanding exists that because of the totalitarian past in the Baltic countries, the reaction to any type of state intervention in the media will be a much more sensitive topic in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia than in Norway. In discussing steps in the development of legal regulations in Lithuania, Laimonas Tapinas from the Institute of Journalism at Vilnius University says that many were a result of conscious decision-making in order to gradually destroy the power of the state over the media (Tapinas 1998). The first step was to close down the Department of Media Control (an institution within the Ministry of Internal Affairs which registered new publications from 1990 until 1996), and then to grant the power of self-regulation to the media.

In Lithuania (as well as Estonia and Latvia), the tradition of limiting state intervention has remained in place until the present. External criticism,⁴ for instance, is very often interpreted by media organisations as a threat to their freedom. The situation is indeed complicated, and journalistic professionalism suffers because of that. On the one hand, openness and accountability are values declared by the media; but on the other hand, the logic of the market is priced, thus leaving rhetoric about transparency to be used mainly for defensive purposes (more about this in Harro-Loit's article on media accountability elsewhere in this volume).

In many European countries (especially in Scandinavia), the media have traditionally been seen as social institutions first and foremost, and only recently has a new concept – of media as business – entered the public debate. It is, therefore, interesting to assess how this new type of development varies in the four selected countries and what problems arise from it. Which are the top priority guidelines in media policies in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia? What is the spectrum of reasons for the inability to find a consensus between the policy makers (the state) and the logic of the market in the Baltic countries? Are there any attempts to involve more market-oriented policies in the Norwegian media?

2. State and the Media

The state intervenes in shaping the media in any society, but the forms and shades of this intervention are different. For instance, the tradition in Europe has been that the media (especially public service broadcasting) are seen as a social institution for which the state has serious responsibility.⁵ The level of state intervention is manifested in the public information policy in several ways, for instance, in the values which are promoted, in the types of subsidies (direct and indirect), in the regulation of the media industry, and in power sharing among various councils to regulate the broadcast sector.

³ See, e.g., Chapter 2, "Comparing Media Systems" – in Hallin, Daniel & Mancini, Paolo (2004) *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*, Cambridge University Press.

⁴ The word "external" here refers to media criticism which is expressed by other actors in the public sphere than the media.

⁵ The Council of Europe (<http://www.coe.int>) has adopted a number of recommendations which contain, among other things, important statements on public service broadcasting and the responsibility of the state for creating favourable legal, institutional and financial conditions that are needed for a PSB to be able to perform its obligations. It has been only a few decades since PSBs were de-monopolised in Europe: in some countries competition in broadcasting is more recent than in others (e.g., in Greece, private broadcasters were established only in late 1980s). In the Baltic States, too, competition in broadcast market arose place only in 1990s, when private television stations were established alongside national television stations: in Lithuania this happened in 1993 (when TELE-3 was established, now it is known as TV3 and is owned by the Modern Times Group).

In Lithuania, the Law on Provision of Information to the Public (first accepted in 1996, new amendments as of 1 May, 2004)⁶ says that there is an institution authorised by the government to co-ordinate the implementation of national policy in the sphere of public information provision. Since 2001, this governmental institution has been the Ministry of Culture.⁷

Its functions are to summarise the practice of applying laws and other legal acts which regulate the provision of public information in co-operation with organisations of public information producers and disseminators. The ministry draws up drafts of laws; it also provides legal consultation and assistance regarding the provision of information to the public. It organises conferences, seminars and practical training on issues related to the provision of public information; it also co-operates with appropriate foreign institutions and international organisations which function in the sphere of providing public information.

The information policy seeks to increase the openness and transparency of the media (as is indicated in Article 24 of the law), as well as to enable the widest range of views to be put forward in the media (diversity of the media), providing conditions under which they can have an equal chance of attracting public attention. The Ministry of Culture also looks at whether the media recognise the requirements to protect minors from the detrimental impact of information (the Law on Protection of Minors Against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information, adopted in 2002). The ministry also participates in the implementation of the EU's audiovisual policy.

Concerning transparency of the media, Article 24 of the law states that owners, producers and disseminators of public information are obliged to submit data to the ministry once a year, by March 30, regarding the shareholders or co-owners of the enterprise.

They must indicate the names and surnames (titles) of such shareholders, their personal identification number (registration number), the portion of assets held or the number of shares and number of votes as a percentage. Data submitted by public information producers and disseminators must be published in the "Official Gazette" by 15 May of that year.

In theory, Article 24 ensures the principle of open access to accurate information which indicates who owns and controls the media, but in practice, very few media outlets adhere to this requirement.

The law also requests the press to publish circulation figures, but many media outlets do not comply with this request either. Indeed, circulation figures are found in dailies, but these are the publishers' claims: there is no independent organisation to audit newspaper circulation in Lithuania (the Association of Publishers is the only organisation which audits magazines). The exception in the print media is the business newspaper *Verslo žinios*, which makes its economic data available (editorial costs, distribution costs and production costs, as well as other types of income such as book publishing and income from subscriptions and newsstand sales). The availability of economic data makes a media organisation transparent; such information is vital to advertisers, too.

Significant changes in this respect (concerning who owns what in the media in Lithuania) are expected to take place soon, because the fourth version of the Law on Companies, which is harmonised with the requirements of the relevant EU laws, came into force in 2004.

Placing information about a private company in official registers is one of the new requirements which is expected to increase transparency of these businesses. The former register of companies was not functioning to a sufficient

⁶ Law on Provision of Information to the Public, <http://www3.lrs.lt/c-bin/eng/preps2?Condition1=170831&Condition2=> (accessed 04.11.2004).

⁷ Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania, <http://www.lrkmlt.lt/index.php?Itemid=19150> (accessed 04.11.2004).

extent; it was not properly co-ordinated. In November 2003, the Lithuanian government passed a decree to set up the Register of Legal Persons (in other countries it is called the Business Register of Companies or the Corporate Register). Beginning in January 1, 2005, each company has received a new certificate of registration. Every company is obliged to submit company details, information about subsidiaries and representative offices in Lithuania and abroad, and the names of persons who have the authority to act on behalf of the company. It is required that all public companies (AB), limited liability companies (UAB), co-operatives, as well as agricultural companies, now must register their annual reports. All of the information about a company that is in the possession of the register will be publicly available.

In Latvia, information policy mainly involves direct subsidies to cultural publications, as well as the protection of juvenile rights against the detrimental effect of media content. According to a policy statement from the Ministry of Culture in 1995,⁸ the media (both print and electronic) are “all encompassing and most influential distributors of culture in society, the media have an immense influence on language culture in society, etc.” Furthermore, according to information provided on the ministry’s Web site, by subsidising *Latvian Radio* and *Latvian Television*, the state makes them responsible for putting cultural policy into practice. The state does not dictate the contents of programming, but it does determine directions and tasks, such as the necessity to present Latvian concerts, theatres, exhibitions, book publishing presentations, etc., thus making cultural achievements accessible in peripheral regions.

The question of media transparency is not a concern of the state in Latvia. Ilze Nagla and Anita Kehre (2004) have argued that lack of transparency in the patterns of media ownership is a serious issue, and the situation has not significantly improved since the period of the predominantly shadow economy of the early 1990s. Although partial information about owners can be obtained from the Company Register, a lack of publicly available and updated information about the real owners of different media companies is the main drawback in the Latvian media market.

In Norway, media policy is the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs. Various aspects of the Norwegian media situation have been reviewed by several publicly-appointed commissions since the 1980s. Support for newspapers with a poor financial base has provided a lifeline to many newspapers that would otherwise have disappeared. The technological and political framework for the media sector, however, has changed so rapidly that it has been difficult to implement long-term planning or clear-cut political development of public information policy.

The Norwegian Mass Media Authority is the overall regulatory and supervisory agency for the media sector. The Mass Media Authority’s areas of responsibility include the distribution of support to newspapers and allotment of concessions for local radio and television broadcasting activities. The agency is also responsible for monitoring advertising activity in Norwegian public broadcasting. Another institution – the Norwegian Media Ownership Authority – was founded to monitor the development of media ownership. Its data bases collect all known data about the owners of media companies (every owner who holds 5% or more of a single company is registered in order to make this market transparent to the public).⁹ The Ministry of Church and Culture is, in terms of administration, superior to this authority, but there are rules which prevent political acting and decision making by the authority itself:¹⁰ the ministry shall not “issue general instructions about the handling of the law” or “orders relevant to the authority’s practice in single cases”. Another means of prevention is a legal process in the case of complaints against single decisions, as opposed to a political review. The third point is that there is no leadership in this process that is delegated politically or by the government.

⁸ Ministry of Culture of Republic of Latvia Web site, <http://www.km.gov.lv/UI/main.asp?id=11059> (accessed 04.11.2004).

⁹ The media directory: <http://www.eierskapstilsynet.no/database>, the Norwegian Media Ownership Authority: <http://www.eierskapstilsynet.no>.

¹⁰ The description follows Syvertsen, Trine (2003) *Eierskapstilsynet – en studie av medieregulering i praksis. Paper til den nordiske medieforskningskonferansen i Kristiansand* (Media Ownership Authority – a study about media regulation in practice. A paper to the Nordic Media Research Conference in Kristiansand), August 2003.

In general, the information policy statements indicate guidelines under which the role of the state is being officially defined. These guidelines are related to media ownership transparency (as in Lithuania and Norway), attempts to correct “market failure”¹¹ by subsidising publications or programmes of cultural content (as in all three Baltic States), or by lowering market entry barriers to newspapers or programmes that otherwise would have disappeared (as in Norway).

Do the media themselves care about media policy?

Comprehension of the principles which stand behind existing self-regulation institutions sheds light on the issue. For instance, an interesting situation exists in Lithuania, where the system of media self-regulation comprises not only a press council (as in Estonia and Norway), but also an ombudsman (as in Sweden and Denmark). According to the law, the Inspector of Journalist Ethics (the ombudsman) is a state officer who supervises the implementation of the Law on Provision of Information to the Public.

The Parliament (Seimas) appoints the Inspector of Journalist Ethics for a term of five years, upon the recommendation of the Commission of Journalists and Publishers. It is required that the inspector be a citizen of the Republic of Lithuania, of excellent reputation, with a university education and the competence required in the performance of duties. The inspector is a state officer accountable to the Seimas. In 2001, the writer Romas Gudaitis, who replaced Danielius Mušinskas (also a writer and journalist), was appointed to the position of inspector.

In his review article, “Developing Democratic Public Communications” (“Demokratinės visuomenės informavimo kultūros plėtros gairės”), which was also the annual report which the inspector presented to the Seimas for the period of 2001–2002, the ombudsman outlined major principles for the media in terms of moral and ethical norms. According to the text of the report:

“Public information only serves the purposes of an open civil society if the media propagate respect, help, and care for people; sympathy for those who are suffering; and if they praise the good, honourable, and industrious qualities to be found among Lithuania’s citizens. People’s consciousness, independence, creativity, duty, responsibility – the best media examples are distinguished by highlighting these values.

Unfortunately, this sphere can also propagate asocial behaviour (violence; coercion; criminal activity; manipulation, deceit, ridiculing of people; general destructiveness, etc.), when individualism, egocentrism, disrespect of people, exploitation of people and parasitism are glorified.

When it is observed that such things could be reported much more briefly, not on the front pages of newspapers, without pictures, previews and TV broadcasts, the objection is heard that this, in fact, is the “real Lithuania.”

We reserve the right to doubt this. No one will dispute the right to think and believe that Lithuania is a land of beautiful, industrious, and honourable people.”¹²

In contrast to the institution of ombudsman, another institution of media self-governance in Lithuania – the Ethics Commission of Journalists and Publishers – is constructed upon the idea of corporatism. It assigns responsibility to the institutions of civil society when it comes to the functions which otherwise might be exercised by the state. The commission consists of 12 members appointed for a term of three years, and the chairman, who is elected for a term of one year, organizes the work of the commission.¹³

¹¹ “Market failure” is created in a situation, when the media, because of commercialism and increased concentration, create gaps of information for certain groups of people. The situation may be corrected through, for example, subsidies to the cultural or minority press.

¹² The original document can be accessed at: <http://www3.lrs.lt/owa-bin/owaexpl/inter/owa/U0113703.doc> (accessed 04.11.2004).

¹³ Ethics Commission of Journalists and Publishers, http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter/w3_viewer/ViewTheme?p_int_tv_id=2756&p_kalb_id=1&p_org=0 (accessed 04.11.2004).

The members of the commission are appointed by the Human Rights Centre of Lithuania, the Lithuanian Psychiatric Association, the Lithuanian Conference of Bishops, the Lithuanian Association of Periodical Press Publishers, the Lithuanian Radio and Television Association, the Lithuanian Cable Television Association, the Regional Television Association, the Lithuanian Journalists Union, the Lithuanian Society of Journalists, the Lithuanian Centre of Journalism, Lithuanian National Radio and Television, and the Lithuanian branch of the International Association of Advertising.

The Ethics Commission deals with the development of the professional ethics of journalists, and it examines violations of professional ethics. The commission also looks at press publications, film, radio and television programmes from the perspective of pornographic, erotic or violent content. Despite the fact that the model seems to be intact, however, the self-regulation is generally non-effective. The mainstream media ignore the decisions made by the commission (there can be no financial sanctions against the media), and the only way to publicise the decisions is to announce them on the Internet and on the national radio station LR1.

It is difficult to assess whether media themselves support the state information policy. An assumption can be made that the media operate under their own logic, which is strongly market-focused. On one hand, the media declare adherence to principles of self-regulation, but, on the other hand, they seldom observe principles of accountability (in many countries, e.g., in Germany, press councils are popularly defined as “toothless tigers”). In addition, the culture of sharing among media associations is weak in Lithuania. Media monitoring is performed by a few organisations, namely the Radio and Television Commission (which grants licenses to private broadcasters and monitors their adherence to license rules) and, to some extent, by the Lithuanian Journalism Centre (which is an NGO). There have been no systematic studies on how the print media are performing.

The context is similar in Latvia, where media monitoring is partly carried out by the Radio and Television Council (insofar as TV and radio programmes are concerned) and by the Soros Foundation, which engages in media monitoring during pre-elections campaigns. In Estonia, there is no institution to monitor media content systematically, and it so happens that media owners do change the profile of broadcasting.

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Generally speaking, there seems to be a lack of consensus in the decision-making process on both sides – the state and the media. The state’s information policy is built on paternalistic logic, which implies care for people. The media, in contrast, are suspicious of state intervention (e.g., criticism of media performance), and so they sympathise with the logic of the liberal market.

As the media industry is sceptical about information policy, its freedom is distorted by commercialism. Many effects, such as media commercialism, liberal laws, lack of professionalism (journalistic autonomy) and lack of public debates on media performance, create favourable conditions for populism in the media. In Lithuania, for instance, debates regarding the necessity to change the status of the public service station by freeing it from commercial and even political battles occur on very irregular basis (e.g., when parliamentary elections approach); debates are restricted to populist issues that do not arrive at any resolutions.

All of these arguments (lack of media monitoring and public polemics on media performance) make clear the obvious drawbacks in policy implementation when an adequate balance cannot be struck between state policy, public reflection and the goals of the media. The need arises, therefore, for a more careful analysis of the type of state intervention in the media which exists. This should help us to understand power relations in terms of which institutions intervene into the media and how deeply they do so. Hence it is interesting to clarify the three versions of state intervention, namely the role of the state as: 1) owner, 2) regulator and 3) provider of funds to the media.

Each of the three aspects will be reviewed separately.

2.1. State as Owner: the Role of State in Broadcast Governance

In Lithuania, when people speak about relations between the media and the government, the issue of public broadcasting station stands out. Because the broadcaster is a public body, it involves power sharing of the same type that exists in the political system. This relationship varies across countries, and it is interesting to assess the spectrum of variation, asking whether a particular model applied in a concrete political setting indeed functions without severe fluctuations.

Although in the mid-1990s there was a shift of audience attention toward commercial broadcasting,¹⁴ *LTV (Lithuanian Television)* still has a reach of 44.6% (although its share is only 11.9%), and remains in third place among the four terrestrial channels with national coverage. A typical public opinion poll confirms that 67% of Lithuanians are satisfied with the content of *LTV* programming.¹⁵

The Law on National Radio and Television (the LRT law) sets out the procedure for the founding, administration, activity, re-organisation and liquidation of LRT,¹⁶ as well as its rights, obligations and liabilities. According to the law, LRT (*LTV – Lithuanian Television* and the *LR – Lithuanian Radio*) is a public, non-profit institution, which belongs to the state.

The mission of LRT clearly involves a public service ethos.

The mission says that in preparing and broadcasting its coverage, the LRT must be guided by the principles of objectivity, democracy and impartiality, ensure freedom of speech and creative freedom, and reflect diverse opinions and convictions in its broadcasts, allowing individuals of various convictions to take part and voice their views. Human rights and dignity must be respected in the broadcasts, and the principles of morality and ethics must not be violated.

The LRT law also calls for a search for diversity in programming. A variety of topics and genres must be ensured, and the broadcasts must be oriented towards the various strata of society and people of different ages, various nationalities and convictions. Biased political views must not be allowed to predominate in the programmes. Information that is presented in LRT information broadcasts and commentaries must be balanced, and it must reflect various political views, while opinions and factual news must be authorised, substantiated and comprehensive.

The functions of the general meeting of LRT are assigned to the LRT Council. The members in the council are appointed by three different bodies, namely the president of Lithuania (four members), Parliament (the Seimas) (four members), and the following organisations, which appoint one member each (four members in total): the Lithuanian Science Council, the Lithuanian Education Council, the Lithuanian Creative Artists Association and the Lithuanian Conference of Bishops.

These institutions have no right to recall members of the council, even if elections result in a change in their political leadership. This rule was implemented deliberately, taking into consideration the fact that the LRT Council members are appointed for staggered terms in office. This system helps to avoid any shift in political balance as a result of elections. The council is funded (compensated for meetings and administrative expenses) from three sources: 1) the state budget, 2) income obtained from state taxes on the services that are provided to the public

¹⁴ According to status and ownership, the Lithuanian television sector falls into the following four major groups: 1) *LTV, TV2* (public-state funded broadcaster with advertising allowed), 2) *LNK, TV1* (UAB “MG Baltic Media” – 85% and Amber Trust S. C. A. – 15%), 3) *TV3, TANGO TV* (Modern Times Group), and 4) *BTV* (“Achemos grupė” UAB). The seven television channels share more than 95% of the Lithuanian television market.

¹⁵ According to its share, in fact, the popularity of the public service broadcaster is no different in other European countries, where the range is between 30 and 50 percent (12% in Greece).

¹⁶ *LRT* presently employs approximately 600 people (it had 1,200 employees in January 2001). The station receives about 90% of its funding from the Lithuanian government (in 2003 it amounted to 37 million litas). In 2000, the total projected budget for *LTV* was approximately 39.4 million litas. A license fee or tax which every television buyer would have to pay has been proposed as a future source of income for *LRT*.

by LRT, and 3) income received from the transmission of radio and television broadcasts, advertising, publishing and sponsorship and other income from commercial and economic activity. The council appoints the director general of LRT for a five-year term.

Two aspects have to be mentioned with respect to the rules of the LRT Council. On the one hand, the distribution of powers involves proportional representation, as members are nominated by the political majority and the opposition in the Seimas. On the other hand, there is also the intention of representing the public in the sense that the control over the governance of LRT is distributed among four social groups (scientists, educators, cultural workers and the church). In principle, the rules on the membership of the council serve a politically diverse society (as in Germany). The LRT Council shapes the state's strategy in terms of the content that is broadcast on LRT. It also supervises how public television and public radio do their job, looking at whether the law and other requirements are being observed.

Concerning LRT's mission, its popularity and the rules on the membership of the LRT Council, everything seems to be intact. But why do people still say that "the question of LRT" remains unresolved? What aspects of the media-state relationship remain to be considered?

As a matter of fact, the roots of the conflict lie within a complex web of subtly hidden interests on the part of politicians and the television business, too. One may say that future prospects for Lithuania's democratic development will depend on how successfully society can deal with its public service broadcasting. This can be called a test for a new political culture and form of democracy in Lithuania.

Many problems with LRT have been on the agenda since the 1990s. There seems to be an inborn conflict within the current model of the public service broadcaster itself: 15 years ago the broadcaster simply adopted a new name (that of a public broadcaster), but it used the same state-subsidised pattern of financing. Despite the fact that LRT declared its new mission and a new concept of programming, with responsibility for educating and informing the national audience, it remained structurally unchanged for a decade (until 2000). LRT had escaped the radical reforms which the print media had undergone in the early 1990s; *LTV* also enjoyed its exceptional position for quite a few years, as in early 1990s, there was minimal competition in terms of private broadcasters. This had far-reaching and painful results, however: the conservative attitude of LRT provided enough time for the newly emerging commercial television stations (*LNK* and *TV3*) to take full advantage of the opportunity to conquer their audience share.

The chickens came home to roost in 2000. LRT fell into grave financial difficulties, as the financing which it received from the state was gradually decreasing and turned out to be insufficient to pay salaries and maintain the technical equipment.¹⁷

There have been discussions for a long time about the need to determine a suitable model for the public broadcaster after liberating it from state influences (e.g., by abolishing state financing) and economic influences (such as advertising). Nothing changes, however, when elections and political speech-making are over. Even though LRT is financed from the national budget (it usually gets 80% of its budget from the state), during the last several years this broadcaster has received less than one-half of planned government assignments. A subscription fee, which has been introduced in many European states in order to finance the activities of public TV, would help to deal with decreased government financing. In addition to the

¹⁷ During emotional debates regarding the future of *LRT* there were even suggestions that it might be purposeful to privatise it. According to the Lithuanian Free Market Institute, attempts to force *LRT* to perform the role of the public broadcaster must include financing reform, refusing donations, no subscription fee, and financing its activity from advertisements. The institute argues that public financing is a violation of free competition conditions and does not encourage *LRT* to improve the quality of its programmes and become a public broadcaster in the eyes of the viewer and not the law. No radical change takeoff that type ever took place. Only some essential but unpopular reforms such as the lay-off of professional staff from 1,200 people to 600 were implemented in 2002.

subscription fee, other methods might be developed which would guarantee independent financing, e.g., in Estonia there is no subscription fee, but this decision was taken only after considering the additional funds which would be needed for fee administration in the small country.¹⁸

In Lithuania, the decision on the introduction of a subscription fee has been continuously postponed. *LTV* is attempting to overcome this financial hardship by earning income from advertising, and for any broadcaster, this is a necessity in the present time.¹⁹ Advertising on public television, however, is not appreciated by other TV business competitors (the commercial television stations *LNK*, *TV3* and *BTV*), and they have placed pressure on politicians, asking that they ban the broadcasting of commercials on *LRT*.

Thus in the context of various conflicting actors (politicians and businessmen) and their interests, the politicians are simply lacking willpower. They don't want to lose popularity among the electorate by suggesting the introduction of a subscription fee; in addition, politicians do not want to lose their influence on the national television, as well. Politicians are forever declaring the need for such a broadcaster by stressing its public and educational mission, but at the same time they avoid resolute decisions that are needed to ensure the political and financial independence of the station. As elections approach, politicians avoid unpopular moves. This means that the topic is being discussed each year, but in vain. The Seimas is reluctant to find a solution for a number of political reasons. On one hand, the introduction of an additional tax would meet with opposition in society.²⁰ On the other hand, certain politicians are obviously interested in this vague situation, when the public broadcaster is being depressed by its liabilities and pressed by commercial channels to withdraw from the market, thus depriving it of additional opportunities to balance its financial situation. Moreover, the existing situation makes it possible to exert influence over the national broadcaster, and those in power to criticise the content of programmes on the basis of their one-sided political will.

The Chairman of the Seimas Education, Science and Culture Committee, along with some of the Seimas members in the coalition that is in power, finding themselves unable to influence neither the *LTV* administration, nor the *LRT* Council in terms of the desired direction, and having no legal powers to recall and replace them with new ones, have launched several campaigns against *LRT*. Typical claims address the quality of programming, but there have also some very strict political proposals, such as the idea of modifying the *LRT* law so as to make it possible to dismiss *LRT*'s top management and making it subject to the control of the political majority. Luckily, none of these aspirations have succeeded.

Once again, the Law on National Radio and Television contains a number of provisions which reliably protect the institution against direct political influences (as reflected in principles of *LRT* Council membership). The *LRT* Council – the highest-ranking governing institution at *LTV* and *LR* – formulates the state strategy in terms of programming, supervises the implementation of the *LRT*'s tasks and of the requirements which are created for broadcasters in to the law, approves long-term and annual plans for *LRT* activity, and establishes the procedure of public competition for the post of *LRT* director general. However, the lack of financial independence restricts the *LRT*'s self-sufficiency and this enables the aforementioned and outdated political aspirations. Since the 1990s, *LRT* has had no fewer than 14 directors general, and none has remained in place for the officially designated five-year period. This instability has certainly affected the work atmosphere at *LRT*. It also has had an impact on public opinion: the idea persists that the public service broadcaster remains intertwined in political and economic intrigue.

¹⁸ Since the summer of 2002, the Estonian public broadcaster *ETV* has been supported by government funds and the fee that is paid by commercial broadcasters. Advertising on *ETV* is banned.

¹⁹ Each year the funds granted from the state budget to *LRT* gradually decreased: in 2002, 35.5 million litas were provided, while in 2001 – 43 million litas granted. The number of *LRT* employees was halved in 2002 – from 1,143 to 657.

²⁰ Today television is free and available to everybody. In several public polls dealing with the leisure activities of Lithuanian population, watching television is indicated as a top priority, leaving other activities such as reading newspapers and books, gardening or spending time outside, far behind. The audience of *LRT* is mainly pensioners in the age group 55-90, hence any additional tax would certainly be met with protest and discontent.

In summary, an adequate funding mechanism and an environment to enable the public service broadcaster to independently fulfil its remit remain to be further negotiated in Lithuania.

In Latvia, the situation with public service broadcasting is similar, but not entirely. *Latvian Television* broadcasts on two channels. The first channel is the national channel and broadcasts only in Latvian. According to its mission, it is charged with ensuring as much broadcasting of local, national and foreign news as possible, along with commentary, popularisation of cultural values, programmes for various groups in society (children, teenagers, etc.), and entertainment. The priority for *LTV II (LTV 7)*, by contrast, is to produce educational shows and programmes for minority groups and various social groups (Brikše, Skudra & Tjarve 2002). As far as funding for public broadcasting organisations and their administration is concerned, the public service broadcasters (*Latvian TV* and *Latvian Radio*) have not been distinctly separated from the state, which has failed to introduce licence fees and a truly public supervisory council (Dimants 2004).

Estonia is among the few countries in Europe where public broadcasting television has just one channel. Estonians do not pay license fees for *ETV*. The budget of Estonian Television receives allocations from the state, as well as fees that are paid by the two commercial stations (*TV3* and *Kanal 2*). Advertising on *ETV* was abolished in the summer of 2002.

In Norway, the *Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK)* is wholly owned by the state. The *NRK* is financed through fixed license fees. The *NRK* launched Norway's first national radio broadcasts in 1933, and until the 1960s, its efforts were largely concentrated on expanding the technical infrastructure so as to make radio and, after 1960, television broadcasts available throughout Norway. In the 1980s the emergence of the first local radio stations, as well as new cable and satellite channels, dissolved the *NRK*'s longstanding monopoly. The *NRK* continues nonetheless to maintain a dominant position in Norwegian broadcasting. In 1988, local radio stations were granted permission to finance their activities through advertisement revenues, and in 1993, the first nationwide advertising-financed television and radio channels, respectively *TV2* and *P4*, were established.²¹ The channels which are financed by advertising are more clearly targeted toward popular entertainment than is the *NRK*, and they feature a greater number of programmes produced outside of Norway. The highest governing body – the *NRK Board* – has nine members (six are appointed by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and three by the employees of the *NRK*).

2.2. The State as Regulator

Concerning the question of who controls the media economy, the role of the state as a media regulator discloses itself in several ways: 1) the state has a hand in specifically designed institutions which grant licenses for broadcasting, and 2) the state also regulates the media market by setting limits on the amount of advertising and concentration of ownership in the media.

In Lithuania, according to the Law on Provision of Information to the Public, persons who desire to engage in broadcasting and/or re-broadcasting activities must obtain a license from the Radio and Television Commission of Lithuania (The RTCL).²² The Service of Communications regulation²³ of the Ministry of Internal Affairs says that available frequencies are to be announced at the end of each quarter of the calendar year.

The Radio and Television Commission of Lithuania consists of 12 members. The members are appointed by the following institutions: The president of the (one member of the commission), Parliament (the Seimas) (three members of the Commission), the Union of Composers of Lithuania, the Lithuanian Association of Journalists,

²¹ <http://www.norvegija.lt/facts/media/broadcasting/broadcasting.htm> (accessed 04.11.2004).

²² Radio and Television Commission of Lithuania, RTCL <http://www.rtk.lt> (accessed 04.11.2004).

²³ <http://www.rrt.lt> (accessed at 04.11.2004).

the Union of Writers of Lithuania, the Union of Cinematographers of Lithuania, the Union of Journalists of Lithuania, the Lithuanian Association of Press Publishers, the Lithuanian Theatre Union, and the Lithuanian Union of Artists.

In issuing licenses, priority is accorded to broadcasters who undertake the responsibility to produce original broadcasts of a cultural, informational or educational type, to ensure the correct and unbiased presentation of information, and to respect personal dignity and the right to privacy. Article 31 of the Law on Provision of Information to the Public states that the commission may suspend a license for up to three months if the person holding the license fails to implement or systematically violates the conditions of the license (e.g., fails to pay license fees on time). The commission is financed by the private broadcasters (each month private broadcasters must contribute 0.8% of their revenues from advertising and other commercial processes to the commission).

The Radio and Television Commission also monitors the performance of private broadcasters and checks whether the stations adhere to license principles. The problem, however, may be with the funding model of the council, as it is supported through fees from private broadcasters.

In Latvia, the National Broadcasting Council (also called the Radio and Television Council) has nine members, all of them are appointed by Parliament (the Saeima). The council is financed by the state.

The Estonian Broadcasting Council supervises public radio and television (*ETV*). It has nine members. Parliament (the Riigikogu) appoints five members of the Broadcasting Council from among MPs on the basis of the principle of political balance. The Riigikogu also appoints four members of the Broadcasting Council who are recognised specialists in those fields of activity which are related to public broadcasting functions. The council is financed by the state. In Estonia, the Ministry of Culture grants licenses to commercial broadcasters and also monitors their performance.

In Norway, the Mass Media Authority is an administrative body under the Royal Ministry of Cultural and Church Affairs. Its Broadcasting Division is responsible for processing applications for licenses for local radio and television, satellite broadcasting, monitoring advertisements and sponsorship in broadcasts, imposing sanctions, etc. The director general is appointed by the ministry.

When it comes to the role of the state as a regulator of advertising in Lithuania, the media are regulated by two laws – the Law on Advertising and the Law on Provision of Information to the Public. The law restricts advertising time on television to a maximum of 12 minutes per hour.²⁴ Hidden and misleading advertising is banned, as is advertising which violates moral principles; advertising must be distinctly different than other types of information, etc. But, according to the Inspector of Journalist Ethics, hardly any Lithuanian television station is observing these requirements.²⁵ Many promises have been made by TV owners to the effect that they will supervise the volume of advertising on television, but these have turned out to be only words: the limitless broadcast of advertising not only irritates viewers, but also distorts the advertising market. Statistics show that in just one year, the amount of television advertising increased by 22.6%, from 1 627 million seconds in 2002 to 1 995 million seconds in 2003.

It is, indeed, not only financial sanctions against the media which can be used to protect viewers from the undesirable influence of an unrestricted flow of ads. It has been argued, for instance, that transparency and openness of decisions made by the LRTC is one aspect of taming private broadcasters (all decisions are made public on the LRTC's Web site). The question remains, however, whether private broadcasters care about dissemination of decisions that have been taken against them. Assumptions are being made that with stricter regulation of television advertising (e.g., with proposals to ban political advertising) more money could flow into the press, radio and Internet markets. Many European countries regulate political

²⁴ The main principles on television advertising are enshrined in the European Convention on Television without Frontiers.

²⁵ A report for 2003 by Romas Gudaitis, the inspector of the ethics of journalists and publishers. Internet access: <http://www.lrs.lt> (accessed 04.11.2004).

communication: some ban paid advertising, some limit the length of campaign periods. Some regulate the time provided to politicians on public service and commercial television.

In Lithuania, the necessity to review regulations on advertising received attention after a scandal concerning politicians who accepted bribes was echoed in the media. In the summer of 2004, three Lithuanian MPs were accused of accepting bribes from industrial groups for their help in adopting various laws at the parliamentary and municipal level. Subsequent discussions in the media focused on the need to regulate political advertising, to reassess the model of party financing (which until then had been very liberal), and to use other means to prevent political corruption. As a result – while many countries are facing a trend toward looser regulation of political advertising, the young democracies may soon experience a shift from a liberal regime toward a more restricted one.

Competition legislation is another area in which regulation is important. In Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, competition legislation applies to the media sector in the same way as it applies to all other economic sectors. The purpose of competition legislation is to secure the effective use of society's resources by creating conditions for honest competition. The provision of information, however, is not only business, and so a number of countries have introduced special regulations to secure diversity, as media pluralism is not a primary goal of competition legislation.

In none of the Baltic countries are there laws to regulate media concentration or cross-media ownership, but in Norway the situation is different. The state seeks to “to advance the freedom of the press, the real possibilities of expression and a well-rounded media supply” and the means to reach this aim is the regulation of media ownership. In Norway, a single owner may not control more than 33% of daily newspaper circulation, or reach more than 33% of the radio or TV audience at the national level. At the local or regional level, this means that media users have access to few or no alternatives to express themselves.

2.3. The State as Media Financer

The third aspect – systems of subsidies for the media, as well as taxes on media products – is another important issue concerning the state's impact on the media. In this way the role of the state as provider of funds to the media is revealed. Through subsidies, states intervene in the economics of a competitive market to provide additional resources.

State aid takes a variety of forms. In Lithuania, the most widespread state support is for the media, which promotes the needs of linguistic or ethnic subcultures. The state supports the cultural and educational activities of public information providers through the Fund for the Support of the Press, Radio and Television, and the Seimas approves the budget of this fund annually. Sources of money for the fund are direct state grants (subsidies), funds contributed by legal or natural persons, revenue from the license tax on broadcasters registered in the Republic of Lithuania, interest on fund money kept in banks, and other legally obtained funds. The cultural and educational activities of the media are supported in accordance with public tenders that are based upon the programmes that are submitted to the fund.

The founders of the fund are the professional organisations such as the Lithuanian Architects' Union, Lithuanian Artists' Union, Lithuanian Photo Artists' Union, Lithuanian Film Artists' Union, Lithuanian Composers' Union, Lithuanian Writers' Union, Lithuanian Folk Artists' Union, Lithuanian Theatre Union, Lithuanian Scientists' Union, Lithuanian Journalists' Union, Lithuanian Cable Television Association, Lithuanian Radio and Television Association, Lithuanian Periodical Press Publishers' Association, Regional Television Association, Lithuanian Bar Association, Lithuanian Journalists' Society, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education and Science. Each of the co-owners appoints one member to the fund's council, and the council is in charge of the fund's activities.

Institution / Organisation	Type of selected project	Budget (Litas) ²⁶
<i>Literatūra ir menas</i>	Cultural weekly published by the Union of Writers of Lithuania	35 000
<i>Krantai</i>	Cultural magazine	40 000
<i>7 Meno dienos</i>	Cultural weekly	75 000
<i>Žurnalistų žinios</i>	<i>Journalists News</i> (project "European Integration of Lithuanian Media")	45 000
<i>Archiforma</i>	Architectural magazine published by the Union of Architects of Lithuania	20 000
<i>Metai</i>	Almanac published by the Union of Writers of Lithuania	200 000
<i>LNK</i> (private television station)	<i>Kalbos patarimai</i> (Language Practicum) a TV programme	35 000
Pilietinės minties institutas (Free Thought Institute, public institution)	<i>Atgimimas.lt</i> (http://www.atgimimas.lt) a news portal	12 000

Table 1. Selected projects both in print and audiovisual media supported through the Fund for the Support of the Press, Radio and Television (2003)

Over the last five years, press-related projects were awarded the largest amount of funding. In 2003, the fund granted support to 109 projects – 52 press, 31 audiovisual and 26 Internet-based media applications (see Table 1).

The National Culture Capital Foundation of Latvia²⁷ provides support mostly to the cultural press. In Estonia, there is no special fund, but a cultural weekly and several journals receive subsidies from the government. There are two kinds of subsidies for the Estonian press – an annual subsidy provided by Parliament to cultural publications, and subsidies provided by the government for the distribution of newspapers in rural areas. As Taivo Paju (2004) has claimed, state subsidies to the largest Estonian political parties can also, to a certain extent, be regarded as support to the press: for instance, the largest party Keskerakond (Centre party) publishes a weekly in which it propagates socio-democratic ideology.

In Lithuania, in contrast to Estonia, the Law on Provision of Information to the Public says that “state and municipal institutions and agencies (except for scientific and educational establishments), banks, political parties and political organisations may not be the producers of public information and/or participants therein, but they may publish non-periodical informational publications intended to inform the public of their activities, unless specified otherwise by law”.²⁸

In Norway, there is no distribution of decision-making among various institutions: the Mass Media Authority is the overall regulatory and supervisory agency for the media sector, which distributes press support to newspapers, allots licenses for local radio and television broadcasting activities, and is also responsible for monitoring advertising activity in Norwegian public broadcasting.

²⁶ 1 Euro = 3.45 litas.

²⁷ The National Culture Capital Foundation (Latvia) <http://www.kkf.lv> (accessed 04.11.2004).

²⁸ <http://www3.lrs.lt/cgi-bin/preps2?Condition1=238746&Condition2=> (accessed 04.11.2004).

3. Discussion

This section provides a summary of the main issues in national public information policies and assesses types of state intervention – as owner, regulator and financier – in the four selected countries.

On one hand, in all countries, the corporatist way of thinking is manifested in information policies, where the role of the media as a *social institution with obligations to society* is expressed.

In Lithuania, for example, the tradition of public responsibility is reflected in the public information policy. The official Web site of the Ministry of Culture²⁹ indicates that the media annually are required to deliver data to the ministry on the subject of who owns shares in the media and how many shares that person or entity owns. It also says that cultural and minority publications may apply for direct state support through the Media Support Foundation. The Ministry of Culture also monitors whether the principles of the Law on the Protection of Minors Against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information are observed by the media. Aside of the ministry, the Inspector of Journalists' Ethics, too, strongly stresses the social role of the press. According to him, the media are not just a private enterprise. Rather, they are a social institution with moral responsibilities to the audience.

In short, the corporatist approach to the media in Lithuania is reflected in attempts to strike a *balance* among the various political and social actors. This is manifested:

- 1) In state information policy, which has an emphasis on cultural (national) values such as the need to preserve the national language, to support and popularise the cultural heritage, etc, and also attempts to require transparency on the part of the media,
- 2) In the mission of public service broadcasting,
- 3) In the rules and procedures of two broadcast councils (the LRT Council deals just with public service broadcasting, and the Radio and Television Commission deals with private broadcasters),
- 4) In the annual reports of the inspector of ethics (the ombudsman) to the Seimas, etc.

On the other hand, regulations which are applied to the Baltic media are very liberal, which shows that liberal thinking endures in the information policies of the three Baltic States. There are no laws to restrict media concentration or to limit cross-media ownership, but in Norway the situation is different.

So which types of state-media relationships can be found in the four selected countries?

In all four countries, the state plays a role as media owner through participation in broadcasting activities. In terms of different forms of broadcast regulatory authorities, the following conclusion can be drawn.

In Lithuania, Estonia and Norway the “politics-in-broadcasting”³⁰ model persists. The governing bodies of broadcasting organisations include representatives of the country's main political parties and of social groups which are affiliated with them. Lithuania and Estonia have developed mechanisms to protect their PSBs from control by a political majority. The Norwegian system is autonomous, and mechanisms exist for distancing broadcaster decision-making from the political

²⁹ <http://www.lrkmlt/index.php?ltemid=19150>

³⁰ According to the COE definition (<http://www.coe.int>), the governing bodies of broadcasting organisations include representatives of the country's main political parties and the social groups which are affiliated with them (e.g. as in Germany, Denmark and Belgium).

powers.³¹ The formation of PSB councils is based on the logic of “internal pluralism”, which puts an emphasis on the co-existence of different views as represented through representatives of different social groups (as in Lithuania) or media professionals (as in Estonia and Norway). The internal pluralism helps limit the expression of partisan views. The Latvian model of broadcast governance is closer to “politics-over-broadcasting”.³² According to Dimants (2004), the Latvian state has more mechanisms to intervene in broadcaster decisions, for instance, by appointing council members.

The ethos of liberalism in the Baltic media market is manifested in liberal laws regarding media concentration. None of the three Baltic countries has a law on cross-media ownership (again, the situation in Norway is different), and media concentration is regulated according to business competition law.

According to the Lithuanian Competition law, “a dominant position in the market” refers to a company which controls more than 40% of the relevant market segment (the same definition exists in Latvian and Estonian law). So, for instance, if the Radio and Television Commission of Lithuania establishes that one of the four biggest TV stations has more than a 40% share of the television market, it can address the Competition Council, which may then start an investigation.

Regulation of political advertising is a third major issue (next to regulation of media concentration and cross-media ownership). A significant increase in political marketing campaigns has brought the issue of stricter regulation of political advertising in the media to the foreground, the aim being to prevent political corruption in Lithuania and Estonia.

Concerning the role of the state as media financier, its intervention in the Baltic media economy is marginal. It is mostly cultural publications which are subsidised to correct “market failures” and to fill the gaps of information which exist in terms of less commercially attractive issues.

In conclusion, the picture concerning interrelationships between the state and the media is complex. Present difficulties may be related to differences in state policy (e.g., the protection and promotion of national values) and the model of journalism (which is based on the concept of a free market) that the media apply to themselves. Inability to find common ground among the actors in the public sphere keeps media from professionalisation.

It is our assumption that the conflict arises between two different modes – *imitation* on the one hand and *tradition* on the other. The media seek to stress that the provision of information is a business (competition is a newly adopted quality), while the state seeks to protect people from undesired influences such as market orientation through increasing commercialism (protection is an enduring element of tradition).

A quality element in this as yet unchanged and complex situation is that conditions may be established for something entirely new and unique to be born.

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In summary, the three Baltic States resemble the tradition found in the countries with a *liberal corporatist model* to a greater (Lithuania and Estonia) or a lesser degree (see Table 2).

Which media system characteristics are imported from which cultures and which characteristics endure from the tradition of the Baltic countries’ journalism – that remains to be assessed in future research studies.

³¹ NRK is a joint-stock company, but the state owns all the shares. The Ministry for Cultural Affairs is the institution which takes decisions on strategic questions, including the appointment of six of the nine members of NRK’s board (including the chairman and vice chairman). Three board members are elected by the employees of NRK. Important strategic questions such as the license fee are also discussed in Parliament. The director of broadcasting is now appointed by the board of NRK, not by the government (as was the case before).

³² State institutions are authorised to intervene in broadcaster decisions – as in Greece and Italy, as well as in France in the past.

Categories		Lithuania	Latvia	Estonia	Norway
Public information policy	Pluralism, diversity & other democratic values	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Transparency of the media (state institutions request provision of media ownership data)	Yes	No	No	Yes
The state as owner of the media	Public service broadcasting, PSB	<i>Lithuanian Radio and TV</i>	<i>Latvian Radio and TV</i>	<i>Estonian Radio and TV</i>	<i>NRK</i>
	The administrative body	The LRT Council	The National Broadcasting Council	The Estonian Broadcasting Council	The <i>NRK</i> Board
	(number of members on the board; rule of governing bodies)	(12 members on the board; balance between various political and social actors = corporatism)	(9 members; all of them are appointed by the Parliament)	(9 members on the board; balance between various political and professional actors = corporatism)	(9 members; balance between various political and professional actors = corporatism)
The state as regulator of the media	Granting licenses to private broadcasters	Radio and Television Commission of Lithuania (the RTCL) ³³ (12 members on the board; balance between various political and media professional actors = corporatism)	The National Radio and Television Council ³⁴	The Ministry of Culture	The Mass Media Authority ³⁵
	Regulation of political advertising	Yes	No	No	Yes
	Regulation of media concentration & cross-media ownership	No	No	No	Yes
The state as financer of the media	Indirect subsidies				
	Direct subsidies		Tax exemption to publications		
		Cultural, educational and minority media to correct "market failure"			Different types of media
Type of relationship		Different levels of liberal corporatism			Democratic (social) corporatism

Table 2. State-media relationships in the Baltic States and Norway: a comparative approach.

³³ The Radio and Television Commission of Lithuania, <http://www.rtk.lt/en/about/about/>

³⁴ The National Radio and Television Council, <http://www.nrtv.lv/en/index.php>

³⁵ The Mass Media Authority operates under the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, <http://www.smf.no/sw225.asp>

In terms of power arrangements, Norway (as well as the other Scandinavian countries), belongs to the *democratic (or social) corporatist tradition*.

How does “social corporatism” differ from “liberal corporatism”?

According to Peter Dahlgren, *corporatism* signifies a tendency toward a high degree of organisation (and co-ordination) among interest groups. It involves the delegation of much decision-making to elites within the spheres of economics, politics and labour. The efficacy of corporatist arrangements is an important part of their democratic legitimacy: group interests are synchronised on a society-wide basis (Dahlgren 2002). Hence, according to Katzenstein (cited in Hallin and Mancini), “social corporatism” is characterised by particularly strong welfare states, while “liberal corporatism” involves more market-oriented thinking.

There are at least two important aspects of “liberal corporatism”:

- 1) Strong protection of press freedom,
- 2) Liberal regulation of the media.

These two aspects are manifested in the Baltic States through the existence of media self-regulation institutions (institutionally much stronger in Lithuania and Estonia, but weaker in Latvia), a low level of media regulation, and the existence of public information policy focused on attempts to correct “market failure”. But in practice, because of inability to reach consensus and a common ground between the state information policy and the market-oriented intentions of the media, a conflict arises. As a regulator, the state in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia has not engaged in any interventions to modify the market (to regulate cross-media ownership and concentration, to impose stricter regulation on political advertising, etc.), at least not yet.

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It has not been my goal to discuss which type of state intervention is better or worse. As I mentioned earlier, the goal was not to judge, but to understand.

I attempted to demonstrate the similarities as well as differences among the four countries and to explain which of the phenomena under discussion create which type of relationships. Because of different traditions in building media-state relationships, many aspects of the media systems are different. Indeed, there exists a variety of media models, each of which has very specific historic, political, economic and cultural conditions in terms of its origin.

In order to understand how the media function, it is necessary to comprehend the culture of journalism, which has developed under the influence of the national political culture. This connection is very important, because political culture influences the work of journalists and editors. It is because of differences in political cultures that journalism in different European countries is highly varied.

The variations in terms of the contexts in which journalism develops make it very difficult to grasp types of state-media relationships, but several conditions – 1) the multi-party system in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, 2) the corporatist structures of various institutions (broadcast councils and press commissions), and 3) active memories of the Soviet past with strong media supervision, – do not permit any discussion about present difficulties as a threat to the democratic system or the idea of pluralism.

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Hidden Advertising and TV Journalism in the Baltic Countries and Norway¹

Richard Bærug

1. Introduction

Monitoring of media behaviour prior to 2001 local government elections (Bærug 2001) and 2002 parliamentary elections in Latvia (SFL & Delna 2002) gave indications that hidden advertising, frequently referred to as surreptitious advertising, might be a rather widespread phenomenon in the Latvian media industry. It was questioned whether this phenomenon could be considered more or less unique in a broader Baltic-Scandinavian context.

The author defines hidden advertising as positive or negative reporting done by journalists about commercial goods and services, companies, people, organisations, institutions and other entities in return for pay or other agreed services, not as a result of a journalistic evaluation. In hidden advertising, the audience characteristically is not informed about the existence of the payment or provision of services to the journalist or the media company.

Unlike hidden advertising, regular advertising and commercials, including “TV shops”, are separated visually and with sound effects from other journalistic material to make it clear to the audience that this is advertising and not journalism.

According to Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian laws, hidden or surreptitious advertising on radio and TV is illegal. European press codes of ethics, including the Latvian, Estonian, Lithuanian and Norwegian press codes of ethics, are negative toward mixing advertising and news reports.

Article 22 of the Latvian Law on Radio and Television states that “hidden advertising and hidden teleshops are prohibited.”²

Article 8 of the Lithuanian Law on Advertising states that “advertising must be clearly identifiable. Should there exist the likelihood that due to its form of presentation, the consumers of advertising may not recognise the advertisement disseminated in the public information media, such advertising must be marked with the word ‘Advertisement.’ Surreptitious advertising shall be banned.”³

Article 8 of the Estonian Advertising Act states that “surreptitious advertising is prohibited”.⁴

¹ The author of this article would like to thank Maria Golubeva and Ieva Valaine from Vidzeme University College (Latvia), Helene Bøe Unneland, Lars Arve Røssland and Hilde Arntsen from the University of Bergen (Norway), Halliki Harro-Loit and Kertu Saks from the University of Tartu (Estonia) as well as Auksė Balčytienė and journalism students from Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas (Lithuania) for their significant contribution to this article.

² Radio & Television Law of the Republic of Latvia, <http://www.nrtp.lv/en/Law.doc> (accessed on 12 December, 2004).

³ Lithuanian Advertising Law, <http://www3.lrs.lt/c-bin/eng/preps2?Condition1=117415&Condition2=> (accessed on 12 December, 2004).

⁴ Estonian Advertising Act, http://www.legaltext.ee/en/andmebaas/ava.asp?tyyp=SITE_ALL&ptyyp=I&m=000&query=Advertising+Act&nups.x=30&nups.y=16 (accessed on 12 December, 2004).

Section 5.4. in the code of ethics adopted at the Conference of the Latvian Union of Journalists in 1992 points out that “there should be strict boundaries between the advertisement and the author’s material. The latter should not imitate advertisements, as such publications create doubts about the objectiveness of the editorial board, as well as about the independence of the mass media.”⁵

Section 2.6. and 2.7. of the code of ethics of the Norwegian press (*Vær Varsom plakaten*) states that journalists must reject any attempt to break down the clear distinction between advertisements and editorial copy. Advertisements intended to imitate or exploit an editorial product must be turned down, as must advertisements which undermine trust in editorial integrity and the independence of the press. Moreover, journalists must never promise editorial favours in return for advertisements. Articles are published exclusively as the result of editorial considerations.⁶

Section 6.1. and 6.2. in the code of ethics for the Estonian press states that advertisements and promotional materials shall be clearly differentiated from editorial material. Moreover, journalists and regular outside contributors may not air commercials within their programme, or write promotional articles under their own name in the same publication.⁷

Section 34 and 35 in the code of ethics of Lithuanian journalists states that mass media shall clearly distinguish commercials, advertising and commissioned articles from the work of journalists and it shall be forbidden to publish commercials by covering them up with impartial information. The journalist must not receive compensation for concealed advertising.⁸

Over the past five years there have been rumours in Latvia, but little or no facts to confirm a widespread belief that it is possible to become a guest in TV programmes by paying or providing certain services without informing the TV audience about the existence of the payment or services. Moreover, there has been a lack of data on this possible practice in Estonia, Lithuania and Norway, as well.

The objective of this study is to obtain more information about the existence and scale of such practices in Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania and Norway, as well as to collect the viewpoints of TV journalists in Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania and Norway on this topic.

Based on the findings in this article, the underlying reasons for such media behaviour will be analysed. This paper will test the extent to which current media behaviour in the Baltic countries is a result of a combination of the continuation of Soviet media behaviour, involving an absent or fragile system of journalistic integrity, standards and ethical principles, and the increasing process of global commercialisation of mass media.

2. On Data Sources and Methods

With the objective of investigating the views of Latvian, Estonian, Lithuanian and Norwegian TV journalists viewpoints on the possibility that guests can appear on TV programmes by paying or providing other services (compensation) without informing the audience that this is happening, interviews were conducted with a total of 11 Latvian TV journalists (five

⁵ Code of Ethics of the Latvian Union of Journalists, <http://www.uta.fi/ethicnet/latvia.html> (accessed on 12 December, 2004).

⁶ Code of Ethics of the Norwegian Press (*Vær Varsom plakaten*), <http://www.uta.fi/ethicnet/norway.html> (accessed on 12 December, 2004).

⁷ The code of Ethics for the Estonian press, http://www.asn.org.ee/english/code_of_ethics.html (accessed on 12 December, 2004).

⁸ Code of Ethics of Lithuanian journalists, <http://www.uta.fi/ethicnet/lithuani.html> (accessed on 12 December, 2004).

female and six male journalists), 10 Norwegian TV journalists (4 women and 6 men), 4 Estonian TV journalists (two apiece) and 10 Lithuanian TV journalists (five apiece). Moreover, a total of 28 Latvian TV journalists, 14 Norwegian TV journalists and 20 Lithuanian TV journalists filled out a questionnaire about the subject. These interviews and surveys were conducted between May 2003 and November 2004. The people interviewed and questioned in writing represented a good range of the television channels in Latvia, Norway and Lithuania. In Latvia, a total of eight people from or linked to Latvian TV (channel 1 and channel 7), five people from or linked to *LNT*, seven people from or linked to *TV3*, five people from *TV5* as well as three people from a regional TV station were interviewed or answered the questionnaire. Among the people interviewed in Norway, four represented the channels *NRK1* and *NRK2*, three represented *TV2*, one represented a production company which makes programmes for *TV3*, and another two represented *TVNorge*. In Estonia, three of the four interviewed people represented production companies which make programmes for TV channels in Estonia, and one person represented *TV3*. In Lithuania, of the 10 people who were interviewed, two represented the *LNK* channel, two – the *LTV* channel, two were from *TV3*, two were from different regional TV stations, and two were from a cable TV station.

In the questionnaire, people were asked to cross out only one answer for each question.⁹

2.1. The Use of the Control Method in Latvia

A questionable control method was used in one of the countries – in Latvia – to test if the answers given by the journalists in interviews and questionnaires gave a full and honest picture of the situation. Taking into consideration the rather touchy issue and that it would be understandable that not all the journalists interviewed and filling out the questionnaires would feel comfortable with giving full and honest answers, the author considered it necessary to use a control method that could test the results of the interviews and questionnaires. This in the author's mind justifies the use of such a control method in this case.

Consequently, in order to gain the most precise and complete data on how widespread is the practice in Latvian TV channels to accept payment or other services from individuals, organisations, companies, institutions or other entities that want to take part in a TV programme without informing the audience of the existence of this payment or service provision, the author decided to make calls to the TV programmes. The person who called presented himself as a representative of a foreign company which would like to take part in a TV programme for public relations reasons. The caller wanted to know the price that the company would have to pay. It was stated that the company at this stage would not like to make regular commercials, that the company was evaluating the prices from various TV programmes, and that the company at the current stage would not like to reveal its name. The callers contacted the majority of news programmes, talk shows, discussion programs and other programmes where it would be possible and not unnatural for the producers to have a company representative as a guest or produce a story about him or her. A total of 34 programmes were called in the five major Latvian TV channels: *LTV1*, *LTV7*, *LNT*, *TV3* and *TV5*. The calls took place in the time period between January 2002 and May 2003.

⁹ If two answers were crossed out for one question, the value of the answer was processed as 0.5 instead of 1. If three answers were crossed out for one question, the value of the answer was processed as 0.33 instead of 1. If two answers were crossed out and the most important answer was marked with 1 and the other answer with 2, then the value of the first answer was processed as 0.67 instead of 1, and the value of the second answer was processed as 0.33 instead of 1. If three answers were crossed out and the most important answer was marked with 1, the second most important answer marked with 2 and the third most important answer marked with 3, then the value of the first answer was processed as 0.57 instead of 1, the second answer was processed as 0.29 instead of 1 and the third answer was processed as 0.14 instead of 1.

3. Findings

3.1. The Scale of the Practice

The results of the questionnaires filled out by TV journalists in Latvia, Norway and Lithuania can provide a first impression of the scale of the practice – how widespread is the phenomenon in the TV media market in Latvia, Norway and Lithuania that it is possible to become a guest in a TV programme if you pay or otherwise compensate.

The TV journalists were asked to mark the percentage of TV journalists in their home country who might be willing to produce stories on people who pay themselves or for whom somebody pays or otherwise compensates, so that the person can take part in the TV programme.

The answers varied greatly. 32% of Latvian TV journalists thought that between 21 – 40% of the TV journalists would be willing to do this. The same percentage, however, thought that between 61 – 80% of the Latvian TV journalists would be willing to do this. Fewer (21%) of the Latvian TV journalists thought that the right figure is between 0 – 20% of the TV journalists, even fewer (1%) – between 41 – 60%. None of the Latvian TV journalists thought that 81 – 100% of the journalists would be willing to do this.

The majority (64%) of Norwegian TV journalists believed that between 0 – 20% of their colleagues would be willing to engage in this process, 29% of the Norwegian journalists answered between 21 – 40% of Norwegian TV journalists, and only 7% thought that between 41 – 60% of the Norwegian TV journalists would be willing to do this. None of the Norwegian TV journalists marked higher figures.

Lithuanian TV journalists gave very diverse answers to the questions. The largest percentage of TV journalists in Lithuania (35%) thought that between 61 – 80% of the TV journalists in Lithuania would be willing to do this, 20% thought that fewer than 20% would do, 15% – between 81 – 100%, 15% – between 21 – 40% and 10% thought that between 41 – 60% of the journalists would be willing to do this.

There is a clear difference in the answers given by the Latvian, Norwegian and Lithuanian journalists. In particular, the Lithuanian TV journalists, but also the Latvian TV journalists, were far more likely to believe that their colleagues would be willing to produce stories with people who pay themselves or for whom somebody pays or otherwise compensates than Norwegian TV journalists believed that their colleagues would be willing to do so.

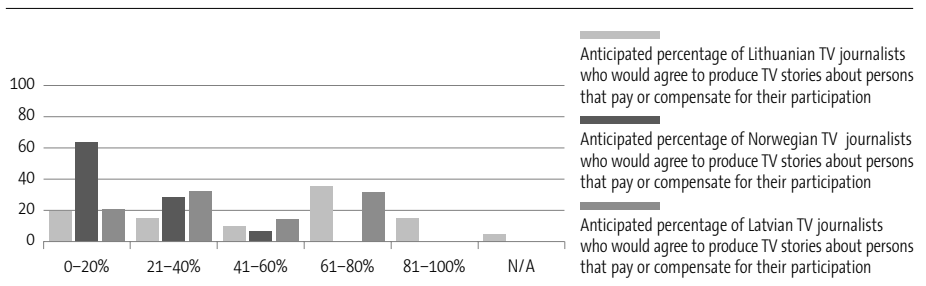


Figure 1. The anticipated number of TV journalists who would agree to produce TV stories about persons who pay or compensate for their participation. Answers given by Lithuanian, Norwegian and Latvian TV journalists to the question: “As far as you are concerned, what percentage of TV journalists in your country would agree to produce stories with people who pay themselves or for whom somebody else pays or compensates so that the person can participate in the TV programme?”

These figures should be compared to results from the calls conducted in the control method carried out in Latvia only.

3.2. Findings Using the Control Method

By calling key people in most of the news programmes, talk shows, discussion programs and other programmes in Latvia where it would be possible and not unnatural for the producers of the TV programme to invite guests in the studio or produce a story about people, it was possible to clarify which TV programs in Latvia do and do not accept the practice that people, organisations, companies, institutions or other entities can pay or provide services if they want to take part in a TV programme without informing the audience about the payment or service provided. As mentioned above, these calls were made by persons who presented themselves as representatives from a foreign business company and asked how much it would cost for their business representative to be interviewed and shown on the programme. Representatives of the 34 TV programmes answered in very different ways. Some people were shocked and angry over such calls, other people listed the prices right away. Some people were hesitant, asked for more information or did not give any clear answer. The answers to the question if it would be possible to be included in the programme by paying were categorised as “yes”, “probably yes”, “maybe”, “probably no” and “no”.

Representatives from 19 TV program in Latvia (56%) gave answers that was interpreted as a clear “yes” or a “probably yes” answer. 1 representative gave such an answer that it was impossible to interpret the answer as a “yes” or a “no”, consequently it was categorised as “maybe”. 41% of the TV program representatives answering the call gave a clear or rather clear “no” answer.

	Yes	Probably yes	Maybe	Probably no	No
<i>LTV1</i>	2	4	10	2	5
<i>LTV7</i>	6	0	0	0	0
<i>TV3</i>	0	0	0	0	4
<i>TV5</i>	3	0	0	0	1
<i>LNT</i>	3	0	0	0	2
In all	15	4	1	2	12
In percent	44%	12%	3%	6%	35%

Table 1. Attitude of Latvian TV programme representatives toward participation of people in their programme in return for payment and without informing the audience about the existence of the payment.

Answers given by TV programme representatives from the five major TV channels in Latvia to the question if it would be possible to appear on the programme by paying and not informing the audience about the existence of the payment.

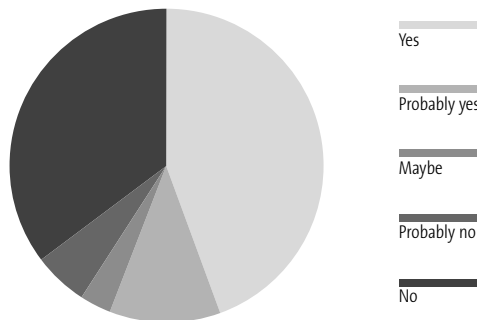


Figure 2. Attitude of Latvian TV programme representatives toward participation of people in their programme in return for payment and without informing the audience about the existence of the payment.

Answers given by TV programme representatives from the five major TV channels in Latvia to the question if it would be possible to appear on the programme by paying and not informing the audience about the existence of the payment.

The main objective of the control- method, i.e., the aforementioned calls, was to create a realistic overview of the situation in the TV media market in Latvia on the issue of participation in TV programmes against payment without informing the audience about the existence of the payment. However, as a secondary result, the author also gained information on the price of taking part in the TV programmes. The prices were stated in various ways – in seconds, in minutes, per three minutes, for a short clip, for being a guest, for being the general sponsor, for the whole programme, for a month. The prices varied greatly from LVL 60 (EUR 91) for a three-minute story to LVL 1 200 + VAT (EUR 2 145) for a two-minute story.

3.3. Findings from Questionnaires and Interviews

Questionnaire answers further confirmed how widespread the described practice is. 46% of the TV journalists in Latvia said that they have produced stories involving people who paid or were paid for or otherwise compensated for. Another 43% answered that they have not produced such stories. Finally, 11% answered that they “cannot answer this question”. Given the possibility that these 11% had produced such stories, but did not feel comfortable in admitting this, the author estimates that the correct percentage of those who have produced such stories among the journalists who filled out the questionnaire is between 46% and 57%, and most probably closer to 57% – which again is very close to the 56% figure that was gained from calling the TV programme representatives.

If it is anticipated that there would be the same correspondence between the results of the questionnaires and the control method, i.e., the calls, if the process had also been carried out in the other countries, then the conclusion would be that approximately 14% of the TV journalists in Norway and 50% of the TV journalists in Lithuania are willing to produce TV stories in which people who pay or are being paid for or otherwise compensated for can take part. It should be stressed, however, that this estimate is not based on firm data.

What we can confirm is that 86% of the TV journalists in Norway and 50% of the TV journalists in Lithuania who filled out the questionnaire said that they have not produced stories of this type.

These answers strengthen the impression that the mentioned phenomenon is more wide-spread in Lithuania and Latvia than in Norway, but the phenomenon exists in Norway, as well.

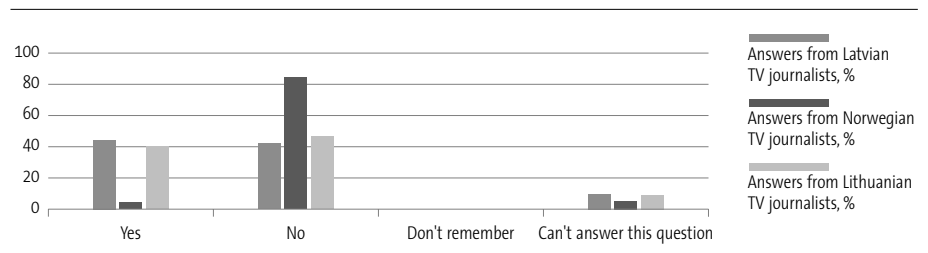


Figure 3. TV journalists who have produced TV stories involving persons who pay or are paid or compensated for, so that they can take part in TV programmes.

Answers given by TV journalists to the question: “Have you ever produced stories in which the people taking part have paid or have been paid for or otherwise compensated for by somebody else so that they can take part in the TV programme?”

Asked if they know about other TV journalists in their country who agree to let people who pay or provide other services take part in TV programmes, 93% of the TV journalists in Latvia answered “yes” and 7% “no”. In Norway, 36% of the TV journalists answered “yes” and 64% “no”, and in Lithuania, 65% of the TV journalists answered “yes” and 35% “no”.

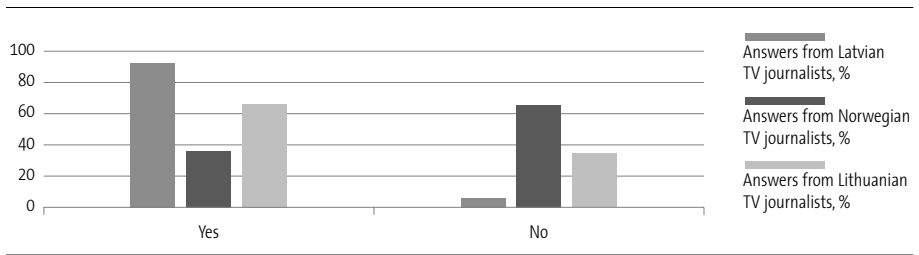


Figure 4. TV journalists who know about other TV journalists in their country who offer people a chance to take part in TV programmes in return for pay or other services.

Answers given by TV journalists to the question: "Do you know about other TV journalists in your country who offer people a chance to take part in TV programmes in return for pay or other services?"

TV journalists in Latvia and Norway are likely to rate competing TV channels more critically than their own TV channels. 64% of respondents in Latvia and 71% in Norway responded that the possibility for people to take part in TV programmes on their own TV channel is smaller than on the competing TV channels, and nobody in Latvia or Norway responded that the possibility at their own channel is bigger. In Lithuania, however, 40% responded that the possibility for people to take part in TV programmes on their own channel is bigger than on the competing TV channels, only 15% answered that it is smaller. 45% in Lithuania, 29% in Latvia and 21% in Norway responded that they "don't know", 4% in Latvia and 0% in Norway said that the possibility is the same as elsewhere, and 4% in Latvia and 7% in Norway did not answer the question.

Keeping in mind this evaluation, the TV journalists' evaluation of the tendencies in the various TV channels can nevertheless give us valuable information.

Asked on which TV channel in Latvia they think there are the most frequent instances when a guest can take part in a TV programme by paying or by providing other services, 39% of the TV journalists in Latvia mentioned *Latvian Public TV Channel 7*. The channel that was mentioned least often in Latvia was *TV3* – only in 3% of the answers. 35% of the TV journalists in Norway mentioned *TV3* in Norway and 32% – *TVNorge* as the Norwegian channels where this phenomenon is most frequently seen. The channel that was mentioned the least – or, more precisely, never mentioned by TV journalists in Norway was *NRK2* (0%). 21% of the TV journalists in Lithuania mentioned *LNK* and *TV3* in Lithuania as the Lithuanian channels where this phenomenon is most frequently seen. Nobody mentioned *LRT*.

Asked on which TV channel the TV journalists think the situation exists least often, 27% of the TV journalists in Latvia mentioned *Latvian Public TV Channel 1*, and 23% spoke of *TV3*. The channel that was mentioned least often by TV journalists in Latvia was *TV5* (1%). In Norway, 33% mentioned *NRK1* and *NRK2*. The channel that was mentioned least often by TV journalists in Norway was *TVNorge* (2%). In Lithuania, 65% mentioned *LRT*, but nobody mentioned *BTV* and *TV3* in Lithuania.

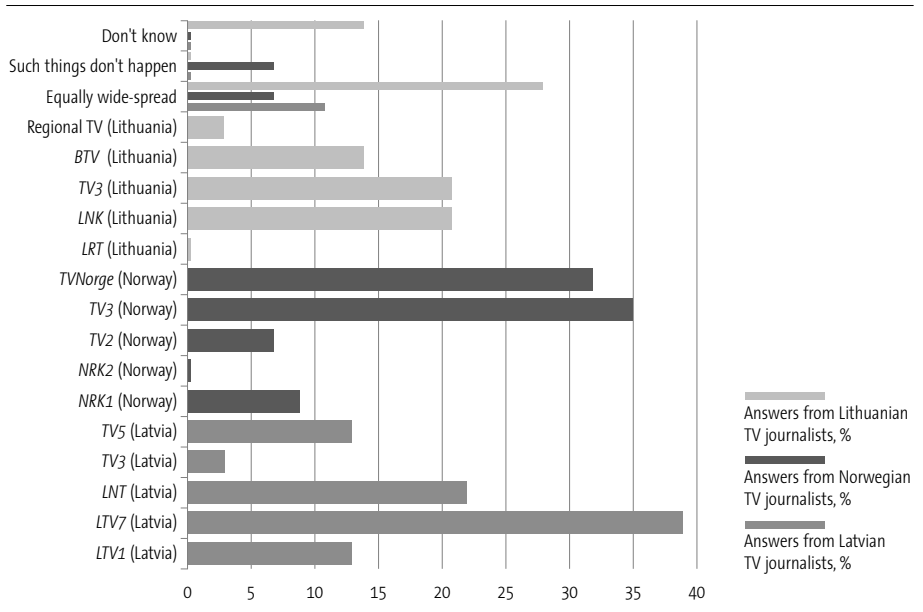


Figure 5. TV channels where the practice is most frequent.
TV journalists' answer to the question: "In your opinion, on which of these TV channels in your country is it most frequently possible for guests to take part in a TV programme by paying or by providing other services?"

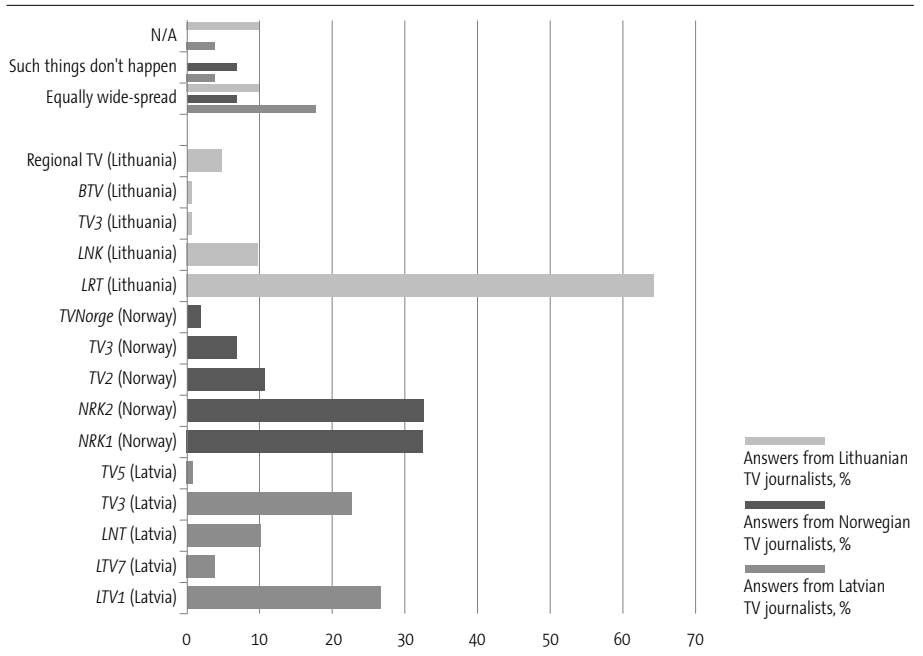


Figure 6. TV channels where the practice is least frequent.
TV journalists' answer to the question: "In your opinion, on which of these TV channels in your country is it least frequently possible for guests to take part in a TV programme by paying or by providing other services?"

4. Development Tendencies

According to the answers from the TV journalists in Latvia and Lithuania, the scale of the phenomenon in Latvia and Lithuania seems to have experienced an increase over the past three years. 43% of the TV journalists in Latvia and 70% of the TV journalists in Lithuania hold this opinion. However, quite a few answers from the TV journalists in Latvia show that the practice has remained unchanged (32%) or become less pronounced (18%) over the past three years.

The TV journalists in Norway mostly chose to believe that the situation has remained unchanged for the last 3 years (43%). However, a total of 29% considered the scale of the phenomenon to have increased over the past three years.

The TV journalists' answers were also quite varied when it came to evaluating developments over the past three years on the main TV channels. 43% in Latvia – the highest percentage – claimed an increase in the practice over the past three years for *Latvian Public TV Channel 7*, compared to 18% – the lowest number – with respect to *TV3* in Latvia. 29% – the highest number – claimed a decrease in the practice over the past three years on *Latvian Public TV Channel 1*, compared to 4% – the lowest number – who claimed a decrease on *TV5* in Latvia. 36% in Latvia – the highest number – said that the situation has remained unchanged on *TV3* in Latvia, as compared to 14% – the lowest number – on *Latvian Public TV Channel 1*.

In Norway, 36% – the highest number – claimed an increase in the practice over the past three years on *TV3* and *TVNorge*, as compared to 0% – the lowest number – on *NRK1* and *NRK2*. 14% – the highest number – claimed a decrease in the practice over the past three years on Norwegian *TV2*, as compared to 7% – the lowest number – with respect to *NRK1*, *NRK2*, *TV3* and *TVNorge*. 43% of respondents in Norway – the highest number – said that the situation has remained unchanged on *NRK1*, *NRK2* and *TV2*, as compared to 21% – the lowest number – who said so about Norwegian *TV3*. It should be noted that 36% – the highest number – answered that no such practice exists on *NRK1* and *NRK2*, as compared to 14% – the lowest number – who claimed that no such practice exists on *TVNorge*.

In Lithuania, 40% – the highest number – of the TV journalists claimed an increase in the practice over the past three years on *LNK* and *TV3*. 10% – the highest number – claimed a decrease over the past three years on *LRT* and *LNK*. 25% – the highest number – said that the situation has remained unchanged on *LRT*, as compared to 15% – the lowest figure – on *BTV* and *LNK*. 25% – the highest number – claimed that no such practice exists on *LRT*, as compared to 10% – the lowest number – who said that no such practice exists on *LNK*, *TV3* and *BTV*.

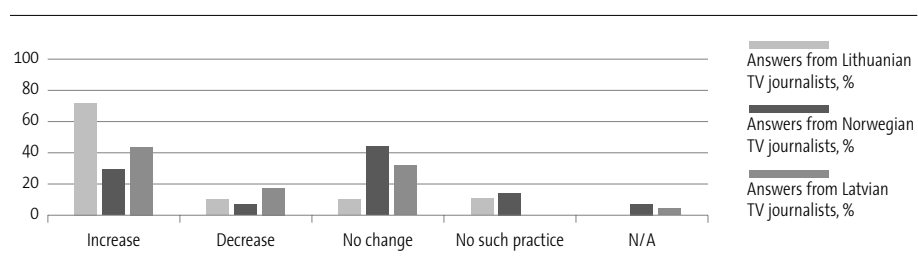


Figure 7. Development of the practice on TV channels in Latvia, Norway and Lithuania.

Latvian, Norwegian and Lithuanian TV journalists' answer to the question: "The practice that guests can take part in TV programmes in your country by paying or by providing services has a) increased over the past three years, b) decreased over the past three years, c) remained unchanged over the past three years, d) does not exist".

	Increase	Decrease	No change	No such practice	N/A
<i>LTV1 (Latvia)</i>	39	29	14	0	0
<i>LTV7 (Latvia)</i>	43	18	21	0	11
<i>LNT (Latvia)</i>	32	18	29	0	14
<i>TV3 (Latvia)</i>	18	14	36	4	18
<i>TV5 (Latvia)</i>	25	4	32	7	21
<i>NRK1 (Norway)</i>	0	7	43	36	14
<i>NRK2 (Norway)</i>	0	7	43	36	14
<i>TV2 (Norway)</i>	7	17	43	21	14
<i>TV3 (Norway)</i>	36	7	21	21	14
<i>TVNorge (Norway)</i>	36	7	29	14	14
<i>LRT (Lithuania)</i>	25	10	25	25	15
<i>LNK (Lithuania)</i>	40	10	15	10	25
<i>TV3 (Lithuania)</i>	40	5	20	10	25
<i>BTV (Lithuania)</i>	35	15	15	10	25

Table 2. Development of the practice on specific TV channels in Latvia, Norway and Lithuania.

TV journalists' answer to the question: "The practice that guests can take part in TV programmes on the TV channels in your country by paying or by providing services has a) increased over the past three years, b) decreased over the past three years, c) remained unchanged over the past three years, d) does not exist".

5. Explanations of the Practice

A key question in this project has been to clarify what the TV journalists consider as the most likely explanation for the practice.

In the questionnaire, 43% of the TV journalists in Latvia considered the low salary level of journalists in Latvia to be the main factor in explaining the practice that guests can take part in TV programmes by paying or by providing services. Slightly fewer of the TV journalists in Latvia – 39% – spoke to a lack of understanding of media ethics amongst TV journalists in Latvia as the main factor. Among the TV journalists in Norway, the explanations of the practice were much different. None of the TV journalists in Norway considered the low salary level to be the main factor. Most TV journalists in Norway (54%) said that a lack of understanding of media ethics amongst journalists is the main factor. 25% of the TV journalists in Norway claimed that the fact that journalists in Norway follow world tendencies is the main argument, while this idea was not mentioned by any of the TV journalists in Latvia. Most Lithuanian TV journalists (38%) thought that "a good understanding of the specifics of TV" among TV journalists is the main factor. 25% of the TV journalists in Lithuania argued that a lack of understanding of media ethics amongst TV journalists is the main factor.

Realising that the questionnaires could hardly provide a full illustration of the explanations for this practice, this issue was in sharp focus during the interviews.

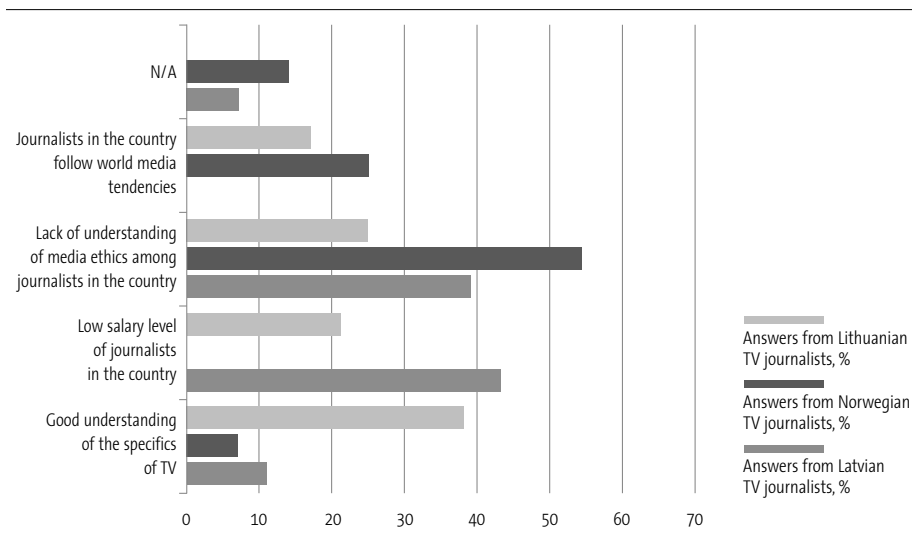


Figure 8. Explanations of the practice.

TV journalists' answer to the question: "The practice that guests can take part in TV programmes in your country by paying or by providing services is explained by ... (please choose only the factor which, in your opinion, is the most essential)."

The financial issue has many aspects. As pointed out by many Latvian TV journalists, it is hard to survive on a regular salary.

"Television is a serious instrument through which you can immediately reach your audience, and it is a big goal. There are people who are interested in opening up their wallets to pay for their participation or that of others on TV. Journalists are not the wealthiest part of society. Consequently, there are people who pay and people who accept the money," said a TV journalist from a media company which produces programmes for *Latvian Public TV*.

Another *Latvian Public TV* journalist added:

"Low salaries are an explanation, but it is not always that those with the lower salaries are those who attract [such money]. There is not a direct link there."

Most of the TV journalists in Lithuania mentioned money and financing as explanations for the practice in their country.

"Commercial TV has no other support, so it's the only way to earn some extra money and keep programmes alive", said a TV journalist in Lithuania.

"It helps both TV and the journalists. Sponsors support some programmes, there is nothing bad in that", said another TV journalist in Lithuania.

"It is an additional source of money", argued another TV journalist in Lithuania.

One Latvian TV journalist opposed the idea that low salaries are to blame.

"This is not a question of low salaries. Just as with traffic police officers, the journalist has a choice to either stay and work on the basis of the salary that is paid to him – because this is your profession and your call –

or to leave. Of course, many people don't think that one should work at the place which you feel is calling them. They justify their actions by saying that salaries are low. That is disgusting and stupid," said a *Latvian Public TV* journalist.

The financial issue is of importance not only for the individual TV journalist in Latvia and Lithuania, but also for the TV channels.

"Financial problems are one factor which explains the practice. Possibly this has more to do with public television", said a *TV3* journalist from Latvia, then adding: "The lack of transparency (in public TV) is to my mind what makes it impossible to evaluate whether everything there is done in the interests of the public. At the commercial televisions the fact is that the business interests of the owners and the bosses are very diverse. There is always somebody who wants to benefit from that. There the principle usually is – "I wash my hands of the matter.""

A TV journalist from an Estonian TV production company pointed to the lack of finances.

"The lack of finances influences programme quantity and quality. The law demands a certain amount of self-production but sets limits on advertising. Both demands are eased by permitting the paid format on air. This allows us to broadcast self-produced programmes and to ask for additional advertising money from the companies which do not buy expensive air time", he said.

The financial issue plays a role for TV journalists in Norway, as well. A TV journalist from *TV2* in Norway said that one of the factors which explains why there is hidden advertising on TV is that many of the programmes which the TV channel broadcasts are not produced by the channel. Consequently, the channel doesn't have control over the agreements which underpin the process. You can have sponsor agreements of which the channel is unaware, and these agreements might be in a spoken, not a written form. The journalist gave a hypothetical example:

"We provide NOK 100 000 for this programme, and then we want our logo on the programme."

Another TV journalist in Norway, one who is working for a production company, said that special programmes are often made possible only because of external financing. He was convinced that the *NRK* channel encourages companies which produce documentaries to find somebody to finance the programmes.

A Norwegian journalist from *NRK* stressed that the problem is that television productions are so expensive that one must find external financing.

A Norwegian journalist from *TV2* said that *NRK* once showed a documentary about the *Tusenfyrd* amusement park which afterwards turned out to have been financed by the park itself. This case led to new rules at *NRK*.

A Norwegian TV journalist from *TVNorge* also touched upon the financing issue.

"To me it seems that the production companies [which produce TV programmes for the TV channels] sit down and think about which [programme] might attract support, and then they work in that direction," he said. He believes, in other words, that a TV channel will be more likely to select a cheaper production where financing is in place than a production that has not found the necessary support.

Another journalist from *TVNorge* mentioned the fact that staff cuts and greater economic pressure mean less investment in investigative journalism and self-produced stories. In such a situation, it becomes easier to accept offers from PR offices and other external forces.

The argument that a weak economy in a company stimulates an unlucky match between those who are responsible for revenue and those who produce the journalistic product was mentioned by a Norwegian TV journalist from *NRK*, as well. He pointed to an imaginary example:

“This week it is possible for us to produce something positive about this or that, because now we have this series of articles or this advertising campaign.” He holds the opinion that there are a few journalists who are not honourable. He believes that you cannot blame those who try to place hidden advertising on the programmes, because it is the journalists and the editorial staff who bear the responsibility .

A journalist from *TV2* in Norway believes that hidden advertising exists, because all editorial decisions that are taken by the commercial channels take into consideration the need to earn money and to achieve high audience numbers.

The Norwegian TV journalists who were interviewed had not heard about specific cases in which somebody had paid money to become a guest on a TV programme, but as one Norwegian TV journalist from *NRK* put it, he is “not so naïve as to believe that it has not happened.” However, services provided to journalists by somebody who wants exposure on a TV programme are a well-known phenomenon.

Another Norwegian TV journalist who works for a production company doesn't think that there is direct payment, but adds that there is money which is channelled into the production environment or in commercials.

He said that there is no individual person who earns money from this. “That would be called bribery, and that is not legal,” he said.

The journalist said that he is so strict about this that he doesn't even accept a cup of coffee from the interviewee. He thinks that the ethics of journalism are somewhat in bad shape and that the cards are often shuffled.

Payment of travel-related costs and free tickets – that was something that was mentioned by several TV journalists in Norway. One Norwegian journalist from *TVNorge* mentioned the *Qvart* (music) festival and the *Hemsedal* ski resort.

“The sort of payment which we are discussing is unclear, it is not the same as with the pharmaceutical companies which simply make a bank transfer of money, but when the *Qvart* festival sends out invitations to journalists and reporters and offers them various nice things, then that is a sort of payment. Then there are programmes which are linked quite directly to commercial products, and there the issue is profit for the owners, the programmes are not linked to good purposes [as such],” he said. The *TVNorge* journalist also said that journalists have had relations with the *Hemsedal* ski resort during the skiing season. He believes that when journalists get free passes to the skiing centre and get all practical things which they need in order to be there and to produce winter reports, then this is on the borderline of an unacceptable payment.

The Lithuanian TV journalists who were interviewed said that there are different types of agreements or discounts provided for those who pay for participation on a TV show.

“Yes, I know about such discounts. Everything depends on the programme format, the channel and the audience that is reached by the programme or channel. A programme is a TV product which can be sold,” said a TV journalist in Lithuania.

“It depends on what kind of customer you have. If it's a politician, then the payment comes from the party budget. If it is a private company or person who needs to be advertised, then there are a lot of ways to earn money or provide discounts,” said another TV journalist in Lithuania.

“Some of the journalists get money, some get travel or products, some gain an office when they need it,” said another Lithuanian TV journalist.

A Norwegian TV journalist who works for a production company said that he gets irritated when he sees connections.

“Some years ago two of the world’s largest cruise ships were launched, and there were many journalists who were invited to go on the first tour. They got to travel for a couple of days. After the tour there were lots of articles. That is advertising.”

He also mentioned the concept of *‘launching journalism’* as a type of hidden advertising problem in Norway. Talk shows often present guests who have just published a book or released a record, and they get a chance to promote this. The journalist added, however, that much of this appears to be rather innocent.

A Norwegian journalist from *TVNorge* mentioned performance pressure as a factor in explaining the practice. He thinks that the factor which contributes toward turning hidden advertising into a phenomenon is that those who accept hidden advertising are successful. It becomes more and more important to do well in the media and more dangerous and more expensive not to do well.

Many TV journalists in Latvia referred to the failures of *Latvian Public TV*.

“My opinion is that *Latvian Public TV* deliberately promotes this practice with its strategy,” said an independent journalist who works for *Latvian Public TV*. She continued: “These songs of sorrow and unpleasant stories which are being presented to us are nothing more than theatre, and maybe somebody here actually believes that it doesn’t happen. If I, as an independent producer, were to sell the [3 minute-long] advertising slot for the highest price – which is not possible – but even if I did it in theory, and then if I were to pay the television station and the people who take part in creating the programme, then I would end up losing LVL 100 (EUR 150). However, if I turn the programme into six “commercial stories” at the standard price, well, then I earn money. Luckily, I have a sponsor, so I don’t have to produce the “commercial stories”. But for the LVL 900 (EUR 1 350) [which you theoretically can earn from three minutes of ads], you can not produce the programme, shoot the video, pay the salaries, put together a half-hour long film and then also pay taxes to the state on top of all of that. Never in your life. Never!”

“As soon as they (the independent producers) have direct contact with the advertising environment, then the advertising environment understands that they have direct access to the authors and those creating the programme – and then the problems start. I know that as an independent producer you can have very tough fights with sponsors to explain to them that the fact that they are sponsoring a programme does not mean that somebody will speak nicely about them during the programme. Many sponsors expect that,” explained a *Latvian Public TV* journalist.

“I presume that if our advertising people had been working wisely at that time (in the beginning of the 1990s), then they could have kept *Latvian Public TV* in a good position. If only they hadn’t let those advertisers disappear so easily,” said a *Latvian Public TV* journalist.

A TV journalist from a production company in Estonia which produces TV programmes for TV channels in Estonia reported that the programmes which they produce are commissioned by TV channels for an agreed sum of money, and the sale of advertising slots, be it for commercials or for the so-called “supporters”, is the playground of the TV channel itself. Correspondingly, the sponsors have no influence on the programme content. He also said, however, that things might be different at other production companies.

“There are several smaller [TV production] companies which have specialised in producing commercial formats. These typically deal with cooking, beauty, interior design, travelling, wine and other such issues, and in that case the channel does not pay the producer. On the contrary, the producer pays the channel to get these programmes on air. This cost and the production cost are covered by the producer, who then sells the programme to companies and to general supporters piece by piece, in return for showing their products or brands. This practice is not made clear for the viewers in any way. It is not communicated to the viewers that all such programme type are covered piece by piece by the sponsors, and the program content is influenced by them *very strongly*,” stated the TV journalist from the production company in Estonia, then continuing:

“In the case of prime time entertainment, such sponsorship appears relevantly rarely. An exception is, for instance, the *Urmas Ott* talk show, which unquestionably advertises one hotel and one car brand. And, of course, all the journalistic-entertainment shows are under continuous pressure from PR people. For instance, *Kevel* and its successor, “*Console*,” have received dozens of offers to tackle topics which are obviously useful to certain companies. Money as such is offered in very rare cases, however,” he said.

“In very many cases the producers have agreed with companies on reduced prices for services, or they receive them free of charge – services like transport, equipment, clothing for the program hosts – and in return the company is mentioned and thanked in the final part of the programme, and the logo is shown. This practice is known to the channels. Our company has never faced a situation where such a deal has created (a situation in which) the supporters can interfere with the programme’s content. Obviously such deals are made, because program budgets are very low and do not allow producers to buy such services at normal prices.”

“A separate topic is *ETV (Estonian Public TV)* as an advertising-free channel and its policy in these matters. On the one hand, even supporter logos are forbidden, but on the other hand, the channel permits obvious advertising in the programmes so as to ensure financial or other kinds of material support. For example, there is the case of “*Laulukarussell*”, which, as a children’s programme, is a very telling case. The prizes for the singers come from companies, and the show devotes a lot of time to showing the brands and products,” said the TV journalist from a production company in Estonia.

Several TV journalists in Latvia said that *TV3* is the only TV channel in Latvia which pays for the work that is created by independent producers in the country.

“*Latvian public TV*, by contrast, offers the independent producers not money, but advertising minutes,” said an independent journalist who works for *Latvian public TV*.

A lack of control from top management at the TV companies, as well as the National Radio and Television Council, were mentioned as factors which explain the situation.

“At the moment there is no interest [in controlling the situation]. It is [thought] better to allow it, because then there is less in the way of dissatisfaction with low salaries. The top management of the television are interested in closing their eyes so that the producers stay, so that they don’t create disorder”, said a *Latvian public TV* journalist.

“The TV stations have let this happen, because there are absolutely no controls and no sanctions on the part of the broadcasting corporation”, said a *Latvian public TV* journalist.

“I am afraid that this is a question of the extent to which top management at the television stations understand that the task of the media is not only to earn money, but also to fulfil a certain social responsibility,” said a *Latvian public TV* journalist.

“For years I have not seen the Radio and Television Council doing anything in this area. At the end of the day, the law on radio and television requires them to observe elementary principles. It is obvious, that the law is being violated,” said a *Latvian public TV* journalist.

Traditions and attitudes among journalists are important reasons in explaining the situation, according to many TV journalists in Latvia.

“In some ways the principles of competition perhaps function a little bit differently than in the West. Everyone lives more or less in his or her own cave and according to his or her own principles. In a sense there is enough hard and tough competition, maybe the principles of journalism have evaporated in this situation. Everyone fights more for his or her own existence and is less eager to debate, to get involved in professional journalism organisations and to think about how ethical somebody else’s action might be,” said a journalist who produces programmes for *TV3* in Latvia.

“I feel that it is a pity that the scheme which was recently disclosed with respect to relations between *LNT* and the Rīga City Council created so little fuss. In that case we have to think about the ability of journalists to evaluate the situation, about their interest or lack of interest in producing repeated stories about it. There is an entire scheme on how the money is transferred, including e-Rīga, Rīga News, street poster ads, possibly the scheme goes even further,” said a *TV3* journalist in Latvia.

6. TV Audience Trust and Media Literacy

Majorities of the journalists who were interviewed – 57% in Latvia, 40% in Lithuania and 36% in Norway – believe that the TV audience in their country *sometimes* understands that guests on TV programmes occasionally pay or provide services in return. 25% of the Latvian and Lithuanian TV journalists and 14% of the Norwegian TV journalists believe that the TV audience in their country *often* understands this, and 18% of the TV journalists in Latvia, 25% of the TV journalists in Lithuania and 29% of the TV journalists in Norway believe that the TV audience in their country *seldom* understand this. No Latvian TV journalists believed that the Latvian TV watchers *never* understands or *always* understands that guests on TV programmes occasionally pay or provide services in return. 10% of the Lithuanian TV journalists and 7% of the Norwegian TV journalists who were interviewed, however, believe that the TV audience in their country never understands the practice. 14% of the Norwegian TV journalists said that the practice does not exist in the first place.

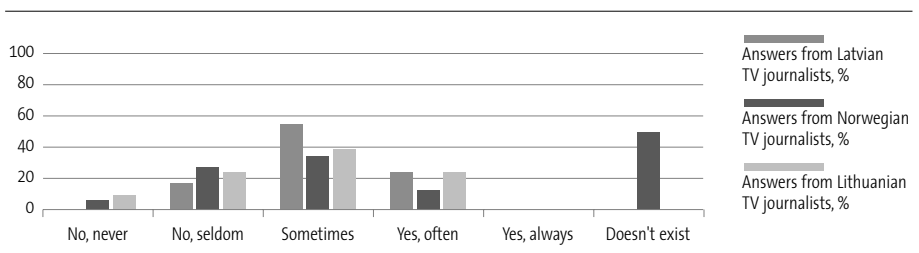


Figure 9. The anticipated understanding of the practice among TV audiences in Latvia, Norway and Lithuania. Latvian, Norwegian and Lithuanian TV journalists’ answer to the question “Do you think that the TV audience in your country understands that guests appear on TV programmes in return for payment or other services?”

In interviews, several Latvian, Norwegian and Lithuanian TV journalists expressed the suspicion that many people don't understand what is going on.

"From conversations with relatives and neighbours I have come to see that it is difficult for them to understand that we are independent producers and that the television station does not pay anything for what we produce. Then I start to explain it all. In most cases they are not capable of telling when there is a person sitting in front of them who has paid for the ability to present his viewpoint. I am afraid that most people don't grasp what is going on," said a TV journalist from a media company in Latvia which produces programmes for *Latvian public TV*.

A Norwegian TV journalist who works for a production company believes that audiences do not discover hidden advertising in news programmes. He thinks that in news programmes, current affairs shows and documentaries, the viewer's opinion is that the content must be true, and that makes the practice of hidden advertising especially dangerous.

Several TV journalists emphasised the nuanced difference between a simple and a more sophisticated approach.

"During the pre-election campaign, most people understood what was going on," said one regional TV journalist in Latvia.

"The more sophisticated cases are hard to understand for a non-expert," said a TV journalist from *TV3* in Latvia.

"I saw one such programme which focused on the Ķekava Parish, about one year ago. At that time there were people who had disagreements with the local government there. It was precisely during this period that I saw a glamorous report on *LTV7* about how nice it is to live in Ķekava, how everything there is developing. Later, several newspapers reported that not everything is in order, that there are problems with various private owners. There you have the difference between the sophisticated report and the clear language," the Latvian *TV3* journalist said.

But audiences often trust also more dubious cases.

"It is so obvious on the programme "Dzīvīte," where a representative from a drug company sits there and explains how good his drugs are. People believe it, as well. That's the most horrible thing that these programs do. It can backfire so that people start not to believe any programme at all," stated a regional TV journalist in Latvia.

Many TV journalists in Lithuania expressed the thought that since most people do not understand hidden advertising, it has no influence on TV viewers' trust toward TV in general.

"Hidden advertising can decrease the audience's trust if hidden advertising is clearly seen, but nobody can see it clearly," said a TV journalist in Lithuania.

Sometimes audiences believe that they know what is going on. A Norwegian *TV2* journalist explained that the editorial staff at *TV2* has received many reactions from viewers who find that there are many guests on the programmes who work for the same channel. They accuse the TV station of self-promotion.

Some TV journalists in Lithuania said that there are a few people who understand the practice.

"Even if everybody thinks that nobody will notice hidden advertising, there is a group of people who are aware of it. This can cause them to change their minds about TV," a TV journalist in Lithuania thought.

Even though one Latvian TV journalist could not understand why this practice should influence audience trust, several other journalists expressed concerns about the very negative impact which such practice can have on audience trust in TV in general.

Even though public opinion about the media is “not so terrible, it is moving in the negative direction one step at a time.” (*Latvian public TV journalist*).

A Norwegian TV journalist from *NRK* thought that viewers don't understand what is going on very well, but if somebody were to discover the situation, it would ruin all trust. As far as news programmes are concerned, he believes that such programmes would be killed if viewers were to discover hidden advertising in the news.

Most of the TV journalists in Lithuania believed that hidden advertising has not affected news programmes in their country. As one TV journalist in Lithuania put it:

“I think that news is the only programme left without hidden advertising”.

A Norwegian TV journalist from the *NRK* channel said that she knows of the practice of hidden advertising from all the places where she has worked. She thinks that people would become angry if they were to find out that there is hidden advertising and that they would feel sorry if they learned how everything functions.

As one TV journalist from *Latvian public TV* put it:

“At the end of the day, they (the audience) become negative about everything. At that moment I start to question any kind of TV story. I know that we, who understand a lot but still not everything, we do not always understand when something is paid for. That is what is dangerous.”

“In one part of the population the belief that everything is paid for is deeply rooted. They call and argue that somebody certainly paid us for saying that, even when nobody has done so in return for our producing that report”, said a regional TV journalist in Latvia.

“Almost every other person whom I call when preparing for my TV programme asks me how much will it cost, will they have to pay for their participation in my programme. If well known figures in business, politics or public administration, people who can be leaders themselves, begin to think that they can be seen in the media only when they pay, then they don't trust TV anymore, because they think that it is not their skills or status that determine whether they are seen on TV, instead it is the money that is paid,” explained a *Latvian public TV* journalist.

Distrust can also result in people not watching TV programmes any more. As the regional TV journalist in Latvia explained:

“I remember that last year I watched the program “Savai zemītei”. There was a very positive interview with a representative of the company “Latvijas Finieris”. It was so clearly shining through that it [the interview] was paid for, but there was no information on that aspect. Consequently, I no longer watch that programme.”

Public understanding of the issue has, according to one journalist from *LNT* in Latvia, a serious impact on the continuation of the phenomenon.

“How to get rid of it all? It is a market issue, where there is demand, there is supply. If society sees it all and accepts it, then the supply will stay. It will not lessen if society does not become more educated. In any case, the more educated the public, the sooner we will succeed in getting rid of this problem.”

7. TV Journalists' Attitudes

A majority of the TV journalists who filled out the questionnaire – 86% in Norway, 67% in Latvia and 55% in Lithuania – had a negative attitude towards the practice. 30% of the TV journalists in Lithuania and 19% of the TV journalists in Latvia thought the practice where guests can take part in TV programmes by paying or by providing services is acceptable, but none of the Norwegian TV journalists found the practice acceptable. 15% of the Latvian and Lithuanian TV journalists and 14% of the Norwegian TV journalists thought the practice *maybe* is acceptable.

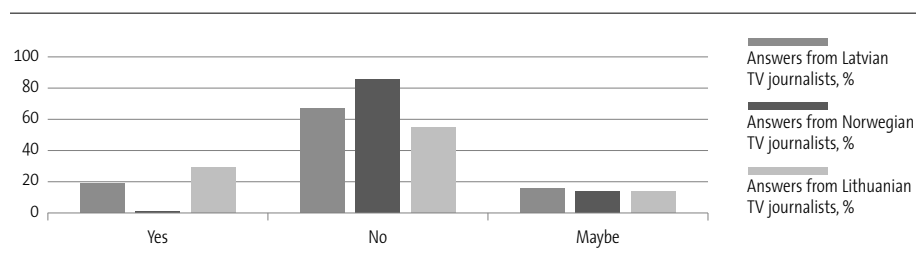


Figure 10. TV journalists' attitudes towards the practice.

TV journalists' answers to the question: "Do you think that the practice that guests can take part on TV programmes by paying or by providing services is acceptable?"

"It's extremely sad that many (journalists) have accepted this as a rather normal thing," said a journalist at *Latvian public TV*. "If there is one person in this market who wants another system, then he has to change his occupation if he does not want to become a victim of the system. That's the problem," he said.

"It is catastrophe, it's nonsense, it ought not to be like this," said another TV journalist from *Latvian public TV*.

Many of the interviewed TV journalists in Lithuania had a more tolerant attitude towards the practice.

"I can tolerate it, as long as hidden advertising is not on the news channel," said a TV journalist in Lithuania. Others had a similar opinion:

"I tolerate it, because I get money for that." "Journalists get money for that, so it's job like any other job."

"It's my job, so I just do what I have to do," said another TV journalist in Lithuania.

One TV journalist in Lithuania had a split attitude:

"For me as a TV employee, it's a good chance to earn some money, but as a TV watcher I could be negatively minded."

Some of the TV journalists in Lithuania had a completely different opinion.

"I cannot tolerate it! It's journalistic prostitution," said one.

"It's not legal. It's against journalistic ethics. I will never tolerate it," said another TV journalist in Lithuania.

"I learned this at university. NO hidden advertising! So I am free and I have a clear conscience," said another TV journalist in Lithuania.

A Norwegian journalist from *TVNorge* stated that the viewer is fooled when somebody gets coverage at somebody else's expense. Additionally, he believes that the journalist sells his integrity when this happens.

A *TV2* journalist from Norway said that journalistic content and advertising must be kept separate, that a journalist must never put himself in a situation which might raise doubts about the integrity of the journalistic content.

A Norwegian journalist from *NRK* said that journalistic objectivity is broken, and the trust that people have in the journalist is totally ruined.

Some had a more divided attitude, another *NRK* journalist from Norway among them. He said that in principle he is against hidden advertising, but it is possible to differentiate a little bit. One thing is news and current affairs programmes which demand integrity, but when it comes to those programs which are completely sponsored, maybe it is possible to be a little more relaxed on the rules and principles. At the same time he said:

“If you can buy the integrity of the journalist, you fuck around with the whole fundament.” He also believes that it is wrong to fool the TV audience.

Another TV journalist from *NRK* in Norway had a double attitude toward hidden advertising. She said that first you have the idealistic attitude and second you have the practical attitude. If you work for a media company and you have to fill three hours of broadcasting, or you are supposed to deliver material non-stop to your editor in a network environment, then it happens. It is not a situation somebody wants to be in, but it is a result of time pressure in practical work.

“The production pressure is too high. There are too few journalists who don't have the time to work independently. I believe everybody does it, but with a very shameful feeling in their mouth”, she said. She is aware of the practice of hidden advertising at all of the places where she has worked. She has experienced such calls frequently, but never experienced somebody saying that if you do this, then you will get money. The journalist said that it is one thing if a little festival gets in touch because it needs coverage, but what she reacts more to is ministries which cleverly try to sell the arrival of a minister somewhere. She believes that hidden advertising is the result of laziness and time pressure.

A journalist from *TV2* in Norway said that the advantage of hidden advertising is that when a company hands out prizes, it is OK that they don't have to buy these prizes if they show them during the programme.

Some journalists also felt uneasy about situations in which they are not sure whether money is involved. A TV journalist from *TVNorge* in Norway admitted that even though it is not possible to buy your way right into the media, there are problematic matters in relation to public relations offices and information bureaus. He said that it is difficult to be against the practice that somebody calls and offers information. He gets calls every week from people who want to sell themselves to the TV programme. News tips are evaluated if nobody is paid. He claimed that it is possible to look through suggestions from PR offices and find topics that are legitimate journalistically, but he saw this as being problematic nonetheless.

Asked to state why those TV programmes which *allow* the participation of people in return for pay or services do so, the majority of TV journalists both in Latvia (71%) and in Norway (57%) supported the answer that “only in that way it is possible to ensure the financing and presentation of the TV programme.” 25% of the TV journalists in Latvia, but only 7% of the TV journalists in Norway, thought the answer that “it is a good way for those behind the TV programme to earn more” was the most proper answer. 4% of the TV journalists in Latvia and 13% of the TV journalists in Norway picked the argument that “it happens all over the world” as their answer. The TV journalists in Lithuania thought that three factors were equally important (29%) – “it is a good way for those behind the TV programmes to earn more”, “only in that way it is possible to ensure the financing and presentation of the TV programme”, and “it happens all over the world.”

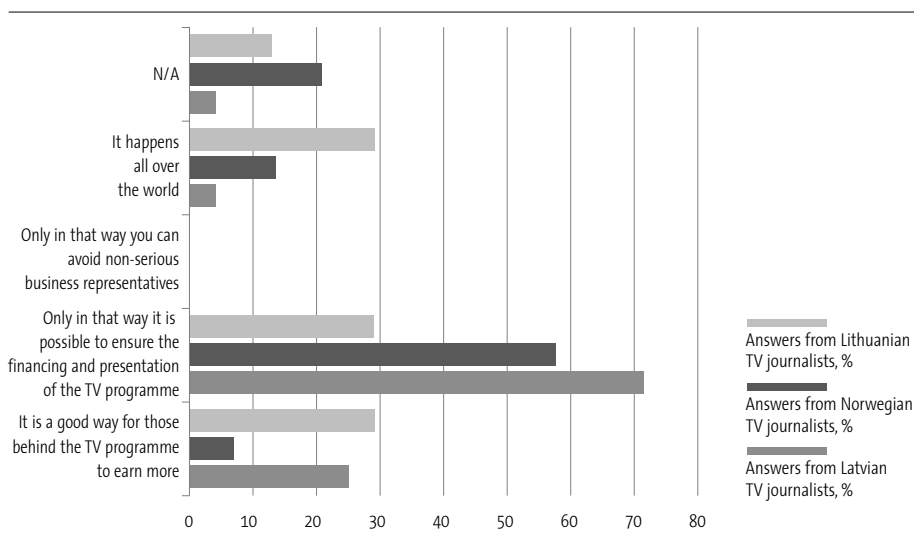


Figure 11. Factors behind the decision to allow the practice.

TV journalists' answers to the question: "Many of those who produce TV programmes which allow the participation of people in return for pay or services do so because ... (please pick only the most important factor)."

Even though the interviews reflected a wider choice of arguments in favour of the practice, the argument that was repeated most frequently was linked to the question of professional survival.

"The product is expensive. The financing is not sufficient. It is a dead-end situation," said a *Latvian public TV* journalist.

"It helps the programmes to survive. A lot of programmes are sponsored in this way," a TV journalist in Lithuania said.

"It's capitalism. It helps some channels or programmes to survive," said another TV journalist in Lithuania.

"Everything depends on the TV budget. Less money, more tolerance for such practices," said another TV journalist in Lithuania.

"If the television channel cannot make the ends meet in other ways, then of course we can discuss the situation of having to choose between facing big losses and going bankrupt, as opposed to continuing this practice. In that case I would not be the one who raises my hand and says, OK, come on, let's give up, let's close shop," said a journalist who produces programmes for *TV3* in Latvia.

"My heart hurts, but without support from the City Council, we would not survive financially," explained a TV journalist from a regional TV station in Latvia.

"Unfortunately the situation is that there comes a time when a financial crisis starts, the sponsor leaves or something happens. For the programme to exist, one has to make use of this [practice]. We have done it ourselves, only with one pre-condition. If somebody suggests a topic to us and sponsors the programme, we want to stay independent. Well, we invite him, we respect his viewpoint or the viewpoint of his

recommended people, but point one is that we must have the right to show the opposite viewpoint, as well, and point two, the topic must be one which corresponds to the specifics of our programme. If that is not the case, then you can bring a wagon of money and we will still say no,” said a TV journalist who produces programmes for *Latvian public TV*. After a while the journalist added: “Even at that moment when we say that we want to reflect the opposite side, then to a certain degree my objectivity is being restricted anyway.”

One TV journalist in Latvia linked the practice to the protection of domestic products.

“Earlier I worked in a “commercial” way, but I have to say that we have never done something against our consciousness, shown people whom we don’t respect. As a matter of fact, it is Latvian entrepreneurs, about whom we should maybe produce stories. Just so, and about their products, as well. To my mind, one should sell as many products of Latvian origin as possible. One has to do everything possible so that we can keep our entrepreneur, don’t you think?” asked a TV journalist from *Latvian public TV*.

A similar argument was mentioned by a TV journalist from a production company in Norway. He said that what is positive in hidden advertising is that one can produce more Norwegian drama. But he added that it is important that journalistic freedom be maintained.

The TV journalist in Latvia who expressed the most positive attitude towards this practice presented several arguments in favour of it.

“One factor could be promotion. This maybe relates more to live broadcasting, because then the person is as he is – natural. And through his participation he can explain, clarify and show the benefits of a product or service,” said a TV journalist from *LNT* and *TV5* in Latvia. “Another argument, for instance, is that we have an issue or a discussion, where something negative is discussed, something is not done. And we have this person x whom we expect to provide answers as to why. It is exactly the same, the answer is real, both if it is prepared in advance or it is like an explanation from that person about what is going on. Then we have a clear situation, either that person doesn’t know, he is not competent, if he doesn’t want to say it, or he says it, well there are various possibilities”, she continued, and added:

“It is so, if a competition is announced, there are, let’s say, 10 companies which have the same services, and they all want to take part in the provision of services. And then the so-called tender is organised, where you also have a participation fee. In order to take part in a project or a bid for tenders for larger services, you have to pay a participation fee, and then the evaluation committee sits down, evaluates and (announces) that it will select exactly this company to provide the services. That is participation in return for money, as well,” the *LNT* and *TV5* journalist in Latvia concluded.

Asked to state why those TV programmes which *do not allow* the participation of people in return for pay or services do so, the majority of the TV journalists in Norway (60%) and Latvia (52%) supported the answer that “the practice cannot be merged with media ethics standards”. For TV journalists in Lithuania, however, the most important factor – mentioned by 33% – was that “in return for money, one can make advertising”, while 29% argued that “the practice cannot be merged with media ethics standards” as the most important. 24% of respondents both in Norway and Latvia and 17% in Lithuania picked the answer “it makes it difficult to ask critical questions”, 21% in Lithuania, 20% in Latvia and 17% in Norway opted for the statement that “it gives the journalists the possibility to pick guests for the programme independently from their ability to pay”, and 4% in Latvia, but 0% in Norway selected the answer “in return for money one can make advertising” as the most appropriate answer.

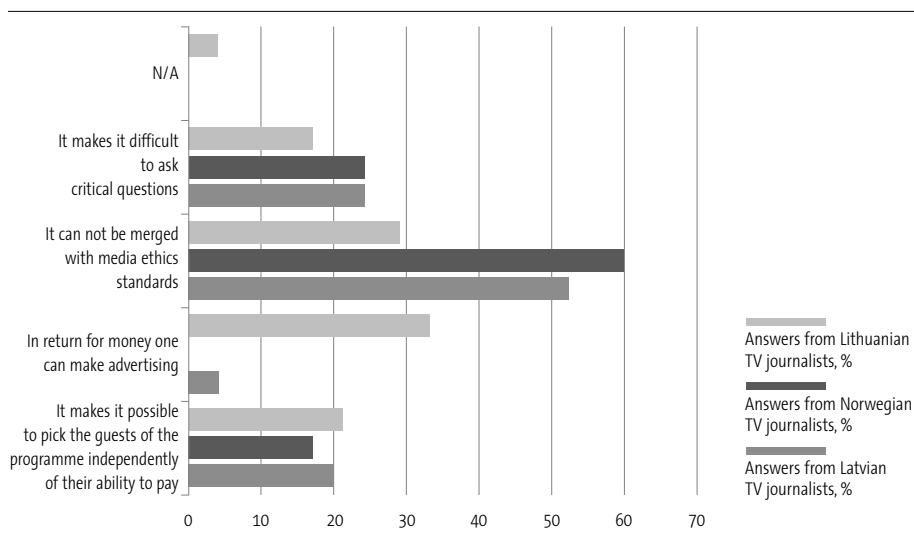


Figure 12. Factors behind the decision not to allow the practice.

TV journalists' answers to the question: "Many of those TV programmes which do not allow the participation of people in return for pay or services do so because ... (please pick only the most important factor)".

Arguments related to media ethics were central when TV journalists were interviewed and asked about arguments against such a practice.

"Journalistic ethics are a holy thing. The ethical standards should be held as high as possible, in particular in a society such as ours, where – bearing in mind that democratic practices have not developed very strongly – there is a wish to see a conspiracy everywhere. Then the media harm themselves irreversibly by engaging in such a practice, because it lessens the trust of the audience toward the work of the media," said a *Latvian public TV* journalist.

"People lose trust, the credibility of the news will disappear for the TV audience, if a person shows up and you can see clearly that he has paid. You will automatically lose your audience. Journalists themselves become biased and look at matters in a non-objective way. In the end it all comes down to the fact that the information is not credible, and the information is not objective," said a TV journalist from *LNT* in Latvia.

"If the TV audience grows accustomed to a situation in which a TV programme on gardening presents a spade only from one producer of spades, if the audience considers this to be normal, then I presume that the audience will also start to watch very carefully the programme that is hosted by Domburs (host of a discussion program focusing mostly on political issues) and think that probably he also does the same, people will think about how much they get paid for that," said a *Latvian public TV* journalist.

"Quality and objectivity suffer," stated another TV journalist at *Latvian public TV*.

"TV is an opinion-maker, and by engaging in hidden advertising, it does not respect the audience, because opinion is constructed," said a TV journalist in Lithuania.

"The market economy is the most important thing for these people (those who favour hidden advertising). They don't pay attention to objective journalism and provide influenced information. They think that the audience is silly and cannot understand it [hidden advertising]," said another TV journalist in Lithuania.

“Old people in particular cannot come to a clear understanding about what is truth and what is not on TV. It’s not fair,” said another TV journalist in Lithuania.

“It’s against the ethics code! Hidden advertising doesn’t respect the audience. It’s a lie,” said another TV journalist in Lithuania.

Some TV journalists in Lithuania argued that hidden advertising eliminates boundaries.

“Hidden advertising shows the way to a condition in which you don’t feel any limits. It’s a big risk for corruption without consciousness”, the TV journalist said.

“There are no boundaries, you just want to earn money, and you don’t pay attention to ethics or morals,” said another TV journalist in Lithuania.

The TV journalists did not hide the negative effect which the practice has had upon them as journalists.

“I feel like a prostitute when I am on my way to the interviews that somebody has paid for”, said a regional TV journalist in Latvia.

“It is a degradation of journalists and disinformation in society. Then we can arrive at the weakening of democracy,” said a TV journalist from TV3 in Latvia. “It is degradation of journalists because the journalist gets used to working only in return for money, not taking into consideration what he should do, but only obeying some kind of order in return for money. That means that his initiative, his creative freedom, his wish to get to know something actually disappear, and he does only what the sponsor tells him to do. This weakens democracy because society does not receive unbiased information. It doesn’t learn what it must learn because somebody places restrictions on the process. See, to this point we will report, but further on we will not report. And due to this, they will lose the possibility to evaluate whether the information that they get is honest or not, if it is true. And then they cannot draw any conclusions, and they can not be politically active,” she continued.

Many TV journalists also pointed out the negative effect which the practice has on the prestige of the media.

“It ruins the prestige of the media. The audience and the interviewed people look at the media as a corrupt body,” said a *Latvian public TV* journalist. He continued: “Corruption occurs when somebody gets something not because he is the best and the most proper one, but because he has made a deal. Consequently, to my mind, we can draw an equality mark between this practice and corruption – starting from a situation where only one producer of drugs and spades can present its viewpoint, and moving on to much more serious political and political-economical matters.”

“Given that this practice, broadly speaking, is the same as bribery, we can definitely define it as corruption,” said another journalist at *Latvian public TV*.

One TV journalist in Lithuania did not see anything negative in the practice.

“It’s impossible to find arguments against such a practice. Everybody does it, so nothing should be changed,” said the journalist.

8. The Continuation of the Practice

Both the TV journalists that were in favour of and those who spoke against this practice were asked how the practice best could be strengthened or how it could be put to an end.

Among those TV journalists who were in favour of the practice, the largest part of TV journalists in Lithuania (20%) favoured changes in legislation to allow for such practice. Some TV journalists in Latvia (11%) and 2% of the TV journalists in Norway said that the practice should be institutionalised, and 7% of the TV journalists in Latvia and 2% of the TV journalists in Norway thought that there should be changes in legislation, as well as changes in the media code of ethics which would permit and be in favour of this practice. The interviews did not reflect any new ways of strengthening the practice.

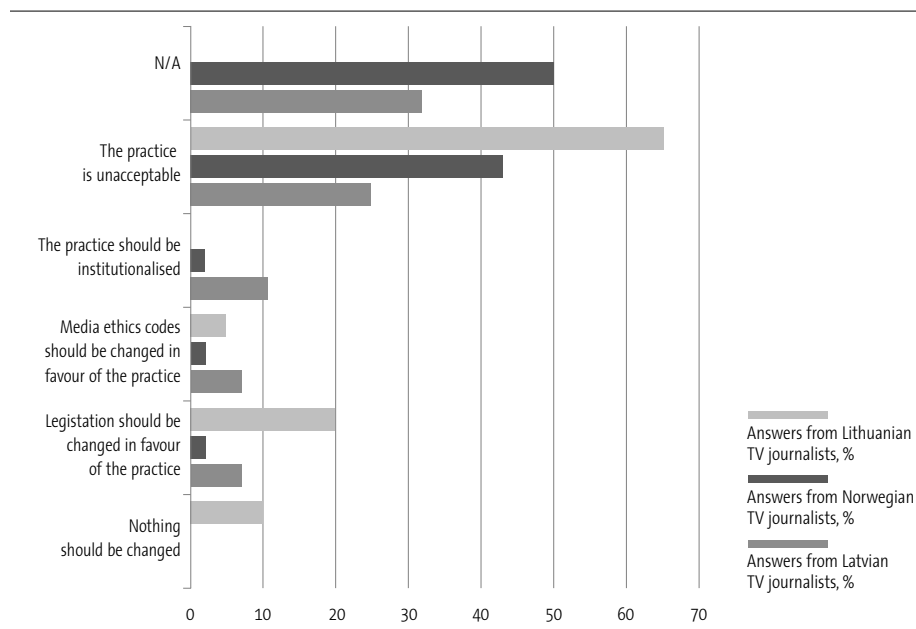


Figure 13. How to strengthen the practice?

Answers by TV journalists to the question: "If you think that this practice is acceptable, how, could it be strengthened?"

The answers revealed significant differences among Latvian, Norwegian and Lithuanian TV journalists on the factors which could bring the practice to an end. As many as 64% of the TV journalists in Norway, 27% of the TV journalists in Lithuania, and only 7% of the TV journalists in Latvia said that "stricter controls on the part of top management at the TV channel" would be the key instrument in bringing the practice to an end. 27% of the TV journalists in Lithuania and 21% of the TV journalists in Latvia thought that a functioning journalists' organisation, one which on a thorough and regular basis would deal with issues of media ethics, would be the key instrument in bringing the practice to an end. 22% of the TV journalists in Latvia and 15% of the TV journalists in Lithuania argued that stricter legislation would be the key instrument in bringing the practice to an end. Changes in the education of journalists were mentioned by 14% of respondents in Norway and Latvia and by 12% in Lithuania.

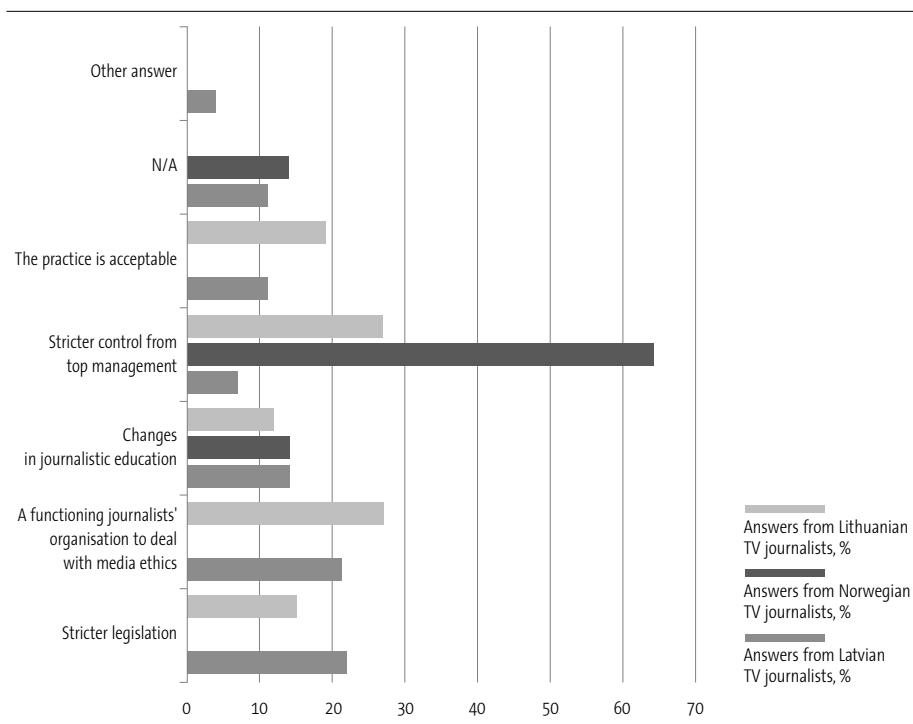


Figure 14. How to bring the practice to an end?

Answers by TV journalists to the question: "If you think that such practice is not acceptable, how, in your opinion, can it best be brought to an end?"

The interviews with TV journalists in Latvia showed that issues of stricter controlling mechanisms and system changes at television companies are the most important in bringing the system to an end.

"The practice will continue if it is not controlled in a stricter manner," said a TV journalist from *LNT* in Latvia.

"The National Radio and Television Council could, on a regular basis, push the alarm button at each signal and present this issue with a big bang. I think that then people would be a little bit more afraid of these things. I have not heard that the council has been doing this recently. Maybe they quietly call those people and make them feel a little bit ashamed, tell them, how dare you, issue a reprimand, and that's it. I think it should be a little bit more public, and then colleagues would discuss among themselves the idea that you see who is sitting over at that desk, that is the one who took the money. That would be a much more effective way, I think." "In many cases it would be enough for the journalist to be chastised publicly, in other cases there could be legal sanctions and fees", said a TV journalist from a media company which produces TV programmes for *Latvian public TV*.

"The practice will just continue, and journalism will cease to exist", stated another TV journalist at *Latvian public TV*.

"The continuation will depend upon the situation that exists in television. I don't know in what way the restructuring of television, the programmes, the activities will be if the broadcasting schedule is shortened. It is hard to say what our top management think," said a *Latvian public TV* journalist.

“There are financial shortages”, said a TV3 journalist in Latvia.

“State television should commission and pay for programmes from the independent producers on a competitive basis,” said a TV journalist from a media company which produces a TV programme for *Latvian public TV*.

“I agree that *Latvian public TV* with the policy of not paying independent producers for their programmes promotes this practice and, by extension, corruption, as well. The next question is why don't they pay?”, said a journalist at *Latvian public TV*.

The opinions of the TV journalists in Norway were slightly different.

A *TVNorge* journalist said that the obvious answer to what might hinder the continuation of the practice is attitude. Additionally, the job must be made more post-controllable, the journalist must avoid working in a vacuum where he relates only to himself and a peripheral boss.

Another *TVNorge* journalist thought that a critical attitude toward PR offices might partly help to get rid of hidden advertising.

A *TV2* journalist in Norway said that one way of avoiding hidden advertising would be to diminish the pressure to have celebrities on the programmes, to move away from the pressure to have very well-known people. She said that all record and film companies have control over their artists, and they don't participate in a TV programme if it is not to increase sales. Consequently, it is promotion of the artists that takes place each and every time they appear on television.

A Norwegian TV journalist from *NRK* believes that stronger reactions, including prison sentences, can stop the development of the practice.

“If you were put in prison for doing it [accepting hidden advertising], then I think that even the professional and academic journals and those who lay in the grey zone would pull themselves together”, he said.

He stressed that there is no control over his staff of journalists, but added that as soon as someone is discovered, that person loses the job. Moreover, he said that there is an awareness among his staff that one can easily end up working in the interests of the source:

“You have developed a close contact, or you feel a human responsibility, they (the sources) have done much good for you, made it possible for you to do what you do, and you pay back by not having to overload (them) with shit.”

Just like the questionnaire answers, the interviews also indicated that more attention should be paid to education.

“Very many journalists ask, but why can't you do this? I think that a person who has studied in a normal way (worked and done an internship), who works for a journalistic publication that is normal in a democratic state would not ask such a question. It must not be so that young journalists come out of the universities and don't know why you cannot simply produce a programme in return for money. Here I am speaking precisely about the young journalists. The difference between those who have studied only at the University of Latvia and those who have studied a little bit abroad, even if it has been only a month or two, is major. When it comes to the criteria according to which journalists work in general, to their tasks in society, all of this is much clearer to them (those, that have studied abroad). They have a different spark in their eyes, they know why they can't, why they have to look after state and local governmental institutions, why they are not supposed to get a piece of land from a private company and then make a programme or write a story about the private company”, said a TV journalist from *TV3* in Latvia.

A TV2 journalist in Norway also touched upon the education aspect. She said that many of those who work at the channel don't have a journalistic background, and they don't know what the "Vær Varsom" (Be Careful) – poster¹⁰ means. Moreover, she believes that a strong leader can help solve the problem.

A TV journalist from NRK in Norway believes that the only way to get rid of hidden advertising is to have a thorough discussion about it. She thinks the problem is institutionalised in Norway.

"We are so dependent on people sitting and scratching each other's back", she said. She has heard "that there are some journalists at *Dagbladet* and *VG*¹¹ who every day call TV3 and ask if they have something for them." She gave an example. "Synnøve Svabø had the premiere of a new programme, *Synnøves Duell*. The same day as the programme was to be aired for the first time, it was [written] on the front page of *VG* that somebody had masturbated on her at Buckingham Palace. I called TV2, and they said that they were so sorry that this had been presented on the front page of *VG*. I called and talked to the former information advisers, who said that they had made the calculation that the front page of *VG*, in terms of advertising costs, in practice, is the same as 37 000 TV viewers. A front page in *VG* or *Dagbladet* corresponds to several thousand crowns in market value. It is the best marketing for whatever is on that page. This is a story which TV2 planted at *VG*, and of course they deny it."

A majority of the Lithuanian TV journalists interviewed said that it is not possible to stop the practice.

"The market dictates the need for hidden advertising, so it is not possible to stop," said a TV journalist in Lithuania. Other TV journalists supported the view:

"It's impossible [to bring the practice to an end], because of market economics."

"No laws can stop it, so there are no chances to stop it."

Even though the majority of TV journalists in Lithuania didn't believe the practice could be stopped, some mentioned legislation, control and education.

"There are no chances to stop it. Maybe by making laws stricter," said a TV journalist in Lithuania.

"It would be possible to stop it with censorship or dictatorship", added another Lithuanian TV journalist.

"Maybe it could be stopped by laws or strict observation," thought another TV journalist in Lithuania.

"Laws or the education of journalists should be changed," was the answer given by another TV journalist in Lithuania to the question of what factors might lead to the ending of this practice.

A Lithuanian TV journalist noted that there has been no court trial in Lithuania over the issue of hidden advertising, so nobody is afraid of placing hidden advertising on TV.

Another Lithuanian TV journalist suggested that the practice should become legalised.

"We have to change the legislative basis and legalise it [the practice of hidden advertising], then it would be clear how to work with the advertising market".

¹⁰ Guidelines for Norwegian journalists on how to behave in tricky ethical or journalistic situations, developed by the Norwegian Press Association

¹¹ *Dagbladet* and *VG* are the names of two of the largest Norwegian national newspapers.

The positive attitude of private companies and politicians towards the practice was mentioned, as well.

“Private companies and politicians will do everything to get to the audience through TV, so this preserves hidden advertising.”

9. The Start of the Practice

Half of the TV journalists (50%) in Latvia and 40% of the TV journalists in Lithuania thought that the practice that guests can take part in TV programmes by paying or by providing services started in the period right after Latvia and Lithuania regained their independence (1991–1995). 36% of the TV journalists in Latvia and 30% of the TV journalists in Lithuania thought it started a little bit later, between 1996 and 2000. Only a few (4%) in Latvia and nobody in Lithuania believed that it started in the Soviet period or in the awakening period (1988–1991, i.e., the period leading up to the restored independence of the two countries).

TV journalists in Norway divided their answers rather equally between the various time periods, the most – 18% – argued that the practice started in the period after 2001.

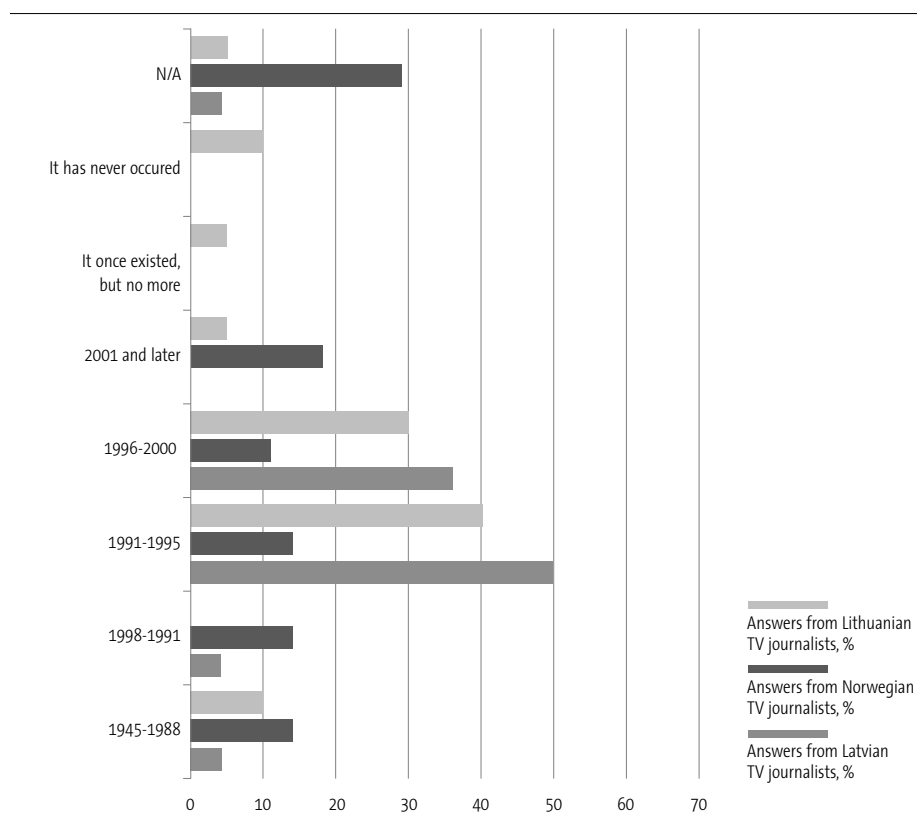


Figure 15. The start of the practice. TV journalists' answer to the question: "The practice that guests can take part in programmes by paying or by providing services started in our country in ..."

A TV3 journalist in Latvia talked about developments in the 1990s.

“At the beginning of the 1990s there were certain cases in which journalists approached business people and said, “I will produce a positive story about you, and you will pay me LVL 10 (EUR 15)”. I think that before 1995, there was no scheme, it had not become a norm, those were just separate cases. Later, *Latvian public TV*, Channel 7 (the second channel), started to fill all of its (so-called) author-programmes with fabricated stories of this type,” she says.

A *Latvian public TV* journalist linked the period to a process of diminishing values.

“The craziest time was between 1991 and 1995, everything was in chaos, one could not understand what was going on, everything was for money and there you had the soil for the major corruption. Those were interesting times which caused a lot of harm both in terms of this issue, but also in terms of education. A rather horrible generation of people who were in school at that time has emerged, it was completely empty, some sort of reduction of values took place, and these are young people who don't know what is good and what is bad. Maybe that applies to those who completed their journalistic education, as well. I think that now, at least modestly, there is some understanding of what you dare to do, what you don't dare to do. This is being regulated, including in the area of legislation,” he says.

TV journalists in Estonia did not think that the practice of hidden advertising has increased, even though some said that PR and advertising pressure has become both stronger and weaker.

“Five years ago it so happened that I produced a promotion programme. It was more common back then”, said a TV journalist in Estonia and continued: “The main promotion subjects were mobile phones, cars or grocery products such as alcohol during the Bacardi Feeling festival in 1998 or drinks during the Fizz Super star program in 2002”, she stated.

“It [the hidden advertising practice] started with the launching of commercial TV and with monetary reform,” she continued.

“It seems that the proportion of hidden advertising has become smaller, but there still exist many so-called niche programmes, in which the business aim is hidden advertising,” said a TV journalist from a production company in Estonia and continued:

“I worked at *Kanal 2* (a TV channel in Estonia) as a self-produced programme director from 1999 until 2001 and at that time the PR and advertising pressure was much stronger (than now). Some companies wanted to get programmes on topics that would interest them on screen.”

This viewpoint was opposed by another TV journalist in Estonia.

“Of course the PR and advertising pressure has become bigger, as PR activities have gradually been growing up,” said a journalist at TV3 in Estonia.

Many TV journalists in Lithuania thought that the practice increases year by year.

“Hidden advertising has existed a long time. It maybe started with political advertising, but now product advertising is seen more and more frequently because of capitalism and market economics,” said a TV journalist in Lithuania.

“It (hidden advertising) already existed in the time of the Soviet Union. Political advertising came earlier than the hidden advertising of offices or products,” said another TV journalist in Lithuania.

10. The Link with the Soviet Period

Most Latvian TV journalists didn't see a direct link between the Soviet period and the current practice of having guests on TV programmes who pay for their participation. However, an indirect link was identified by several.

"The Soviet period was different; there were greenhouse conditions for journalists. They did not have to think about where to earn some extra money, how to avoid the law on hidden advertising and so on," said a TV journalist at *Latvian public TV*.

He added: "It's logical that journalists during Soviet times got used to orders from above and from the outside, whom to interview and so on. Maybe because of this, many journalists don't understand the social responsibility [which they have]."

"The parallel with the Soviet period is propaganda. That fact that you present only one side, one viewpoint, the favourable viewpoint," said a *TV3* journalist in Latvia.

"The Soviet period created this massive building with uneconomic facilities. The Soviet period did not, however, create this practice directly," said a *Latvian public TV* journalist.

11. Conclusions

This paper intended to show the scale and reasons for the described practice in the Baltic countries and Norway and to test the extent to which the current media behaviour in the Baltic countries is a result of a combination of a continuation of Soviet media behaviour, involving absent or fragile journalistic integrity, standards and ethical principles and the increasing presence of global commercialisation of the mass media.

Based on the calls which were made in Latvia and on what TV journalists in Latvia, Lithuania and Norway reported, the author concludes that the practice of guests taking part in TV programmes by paying or by providing services exists in Latvia and Lithuania and, to a lesser degree, in Norway. The scale of the phenomenon can – based on the calls and what the TV journalists said – be estimated to involve half of the TV journalists in Latvia and Lithuania, that is, around 50% of the TV journalists in Lithuania and between 50 and 60% of the TV journalists in Latvia are willing to accept guests on their programme who pay or provide services in order to participate and at the same time do not inform the TV audience about the existence of the payment or services that have been provided. This also means that between 40 and 50% of TV journalists in Latvia and around 50% of TV journalists in Lithuania are not willing to do so. The corresponding figures for TV journalists in Norway indicate that between 10 and 15% of the TV journalists are willing to accept hidden advertising, and, accordingly, between 85 and 90% are not. It should be noted that in Norway, direct payment is a rare case, but the practice of hidden advertising – in various forms – is nevertheless pretty much alive. The number of interviewed TV journalists in Estonia is too small to draw any conclusions regarding the situation in Estonia. The fact that many TV journalists in Latvia and Lithuania are willing to accept the situation, does not, however, mean that the TV journalists support such a practice. The findings show that about 2/3 of the TV journalists in Latvia and a little bit more than 1/2 of the TV journalists in Lithuania do not support it. It seems like there is more correspondence between those that engage in and support the practice in Lithuania than in Latvia. In Latvia the number of those that do it, but don't support it, seems to be slightly higher.

The author concludes that the described practice is equivalent to hidden advertising, since a person, organisation, company or other entity is advertised without informing the audience that this is advertising. Consequently, the practice is illegal according to media law in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. Moreover, the practice is contradictory to the norms we find in most press or media codes of ethics in Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Norway, the rest of Europe and beyond.

The author concludes that the majority of journalists in Latvia and Lithuania understand the problem, but they lack the capacity to unite and change the system. As regards Latvia, the National Broadcasting Council, as well as the top management of the TV stations, with the possible exception of TV3, are more passive than active in dealing with the issue.

The difficult economic situation that Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia have experienced for more than a decade can only partly provide an explanation to the situation. The author concludes that in the case of Latvia, it is instead the fear of taking unpopular decisions about reorganising and possibly narrowing the operations of *Latvian public TV* in order to be able to pay for programmes created by independent producers that has been stimulating the blossoming of the practice.

As pointed out by TV journalists in the Baltic countries, the Soviet period did not create this practice directly. However – as reflected in answers from TV journalists in Latvia in particular – there are indirect links between the Soviet period and the practice. The Soviet practice of not primarily serving the interest of the public, but that of somebody else, was, for a certain number of TV journalists, something that implied that alarm bells are not activated when somebody from outside or above tries to influence and hamper journalistic and editorial independence. The confusion of values, experienced by many people in the time during and right after the change in regime and system, can also be considered as an indirect influence on the current situation from the Soviet period.

The commercialisation of the mass media, the author concludes, have created new challenges for TV journalists and exacerbated potential weaknesses. Thus they can be considered as an indirect link to the current situation.

The author agrees with interviewed journalists that the way to proceed in order to promote journalistic and editorial independence and a clear separation between journalism and advertising is a combination of the creation of a functioning organisation of journalists (especially in the case of Latvia) which on a regular basis deals with matters related to media ethics, tougher control from the top management of TV stations (Latvia, Lithuania and Norway), as well as improved education in the field of journalism, as well as media studies (especially in the case of Latvia and Lithuania). The author does not believe that stricter legislation is needed. Rather, a more efficient implementation of the current legislation would be needed.

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The Baltic and Norwegian Journalism Market¹

Halliki Harro-Loit

1. Introduction

The aim of the present article is to give an overview of the media economic situation in the Baltic States and Norway from the point of view of microeconomics (specific markets, owners and market structure). In addition we would like to discuss some of the tendencies concerning the media economy in the context of critical political economy (CPE) in an approach defined by Peter Golding and Graham Murdock:

“CPE differs from mainstream economics in four main respects. First it is holistic. Second, it is historical. Third, it is centrally concerned with the balance between capitalist enterprise and public intervention. Finally, and perhaps most important of all, it goes beyond technical issues of efficiency to engage with basic moral questions of justice, equity and public good” (Golding & Murdock 1991, cited from: 1999:155).

Although most of the media economic tendencies in contemporary democratic societies are universal, one can pinpoint a number of differences between the media market in the Baltic States and Norway.

First, the Norwegian media owners are “national owners” in Norway, in the Baltic states the Norwegian companies Schibsted and Orkla Media are foreign investors as well. Secondly, state intervention in media economics in the Nordic countries has been quite high since the 1960s (Picard 1988). Traditionally *transparency* and *social responsibility* are the ideological basis for media regulation. In the Baltic States the newly acquired political freedom brought along a liberal market model. None of the Baltic States has imposed press ownership regulation and subsidies are paid only for a few cultural publications and public service broadcasting.

One reason for the ultra-liberal media policy might be the long tradition of political censorship: the state and politicians are treated as the main threat to freedom of speech (Tammerk 2004; more on this, read also in “Types of state intervention in media in the Baltic States and Norway”, in this volume). In addition, there has been little public and academic debate concerning the changes in the media market, the role and responsibility of the owners and concentration. Public access to information about media companies is limited.

Hence we should ask: what is the result of media concentration in any of these countries? What is or should be the role of (Nordic) media owners in the Baltic States? And vice versa: does transnational ownership influence the media economy in Norway? To what extent does the specific size of the market and the political context influence the diversity of media content? What are the negative and positive effects of concentration on journalism in a certain country?

¹ This article has been written in cooperation with Ragni Serina-Zlotos and major contributions from Ainārs Dimants, Richard Bærug and Auksė Balčytienė

In the context of the present article we limit our research to the products that have a strong link to the specific language-based and geographic market as well as news production (book-publishing, videos, music industry and telecommunication systems are excluded from the analysis). The research focus here is on the traditional journalism market: newspapers, magazines, radio and TV stations (+ national TV production companies). The language-based market characteristics enable us to classify all four journalism markets as “small ones”.

Some transnational media networks cover the entire Baltic region: the news agency *Baltic News Service (BNS)* and the online only news portal *Delfi* (with its sister portals in the Russian language in Latvia and Estonia, but not in Lithuania), also the *TV3* television network with *Power Hit Radio*, *Star FM* (Swedish Modern Times group) – the business newspapers *Äripäev* in Estonia, *Dienas Bizness* in Latvia and *Verslo žinios* in Lithuania) in each of the Baltic States.

The present article has certain limits, as the economic data are not equally available in all four countries. According to Mario Oetheimer (2003) transparency is a basic pre-requisite for the control of anti-concentration provisions (particular important in the context of multinational multimedia groups and complex company structures). Transparency in the press sector may be guaranteed by legislation requiring disclosure of information on shareholding, interests in other media, financial data etc. Media companies are economically not transparent in all three Baltic States.

The business papers are exceptional: *Äripäev* (in Estonia, *Dienas Bizness* in Latvia and *Verslo žinios* in Lithuania) belong to Bonnier Group. The business paper in Estonia is the only newspaper that makes its economic data accessible. For example: editorial costs, distribution costs and production costs, other income (for example book publishing, conferences), income from subscriptions and newsstand sales etc.

2. The Media Markets

2.1. The Norwegian Media Market: History of Development

After World War II the traditional party press, the mostly family-based ownership structure and the *NRK* public service broadcasting monopoly remained the same for some time. From 1960 until 1980 Norway was ruled by the social democrats and media subsidies emerged during this time. The parliament decided, for example, to give certain newspapers subsidies (Helgesen & Gaustad 2002). Those decades are nowadays in hindsight seen as the “age of innocence”. Østbye thinks that there had been a certain variety of media, since one owner mostly owned one newspaper company, the state-owned monopoly *NRK* was democratically controlled and there was also a variety of larger, medium-sized and smaller book publishers. (Østbye 2000: 45) Nevertheless the first steps towards concentration of ownership were taken. In the cities there were highly competitive markets with two to four newspapers with different points-of-view. During the post-war decades the smaller, so-called “no.2 papers” were closed, bought up or merged with others, due to the strong competition in the advertising market. The larger papers on the local market often received the most advertisements. At the same time, the content of the larger newspapers was homogenised and they got disconnected from the political parties, in order to get access to a larger local public and market. On the other hand, new businesses were started in the districts, so that the number of papers grew. All these facts are leading Østbye to the conclusion, that the early concentration on the Norwegian newspaper market was not because of the development of newspaper chains, although today’s largest actors started quite early with the first merges. But more because of the growing part of the all-Norwegian paper circulation: first the regional and then the papers in single copy sale had a steady larger share of the circulation. If the five largest newspapers had 1/4 share of circulation in 1952, then in 1999 their share increased to 1/3.

In 1981, when the *NRK* monopoly ended, there was only one radio and one TV channel in Norway. The following years were a quite lively period for the Norwegian media landscape. Media became interesting investment objects, instead of

being driven for mostly ideological reasons all the previous years.² Three groups developed that later became the most important for the Norwegian media market: A-Pressen, the Schibsted Group and the Orkla Media Group. While the first two had a long history on the newspaper market and grew in to chain and multimedia ownership, the Orkla Media Group was founded as part of the large Orkla Group, which had its tradition in mining in Norway but was also engaged in a variety of other industries.

The A-Pressen group was founded to control and help the newspapers in the labour movement after a proposal of 1937 and played an important role in restarting all the “traditional” labour papers after the Nazi occupation. In the following decades the papers were bound to the party and the national Labour Union, and they shared editorial content as well as the means of production for example in order to subsidise the smaller and weaker. Østbye refers to the A-Pressen of those days as acting as a group, although most of the newspapers were formally independent having their own local owners. In 1989 the A-Pressen formally became a trust, while not every associated paper agreed with this decision. While the Labour Union held all the stocks in the first years, new actors such as international investment banks and the Norwegian importer of VW-cars arrived on the scene in 1993/94.

The Schibsted group has its roots deep in the Norwegian press history, being founded as the newspaper company *Aftenposten* by a printer in 1860. For decades that was the only business, until later larger book publishing activities were added. Until 1981 the *Aftenposten* had the highest circulation of any daily newspaper in Norway. When Schibsted acquired the tabloid paper VG in June 1966, they of course could not have known that this would guarantee their “pole position” on the newspaper market until today. The paper, started in the post-war years, owed the company money and the choice was whether to take them over or to lose the money for certain. VG is today the most popular tabloid and single copy sale newspaper.

The state monopoly of broadcasting finally ended in the 1980s. Local Radio and TV stations were opened, and privately owned stations on the national level also became possible.

2.2 The development of the media market in the Baltic States: from transition to development

The Baltic media economy underwent a change of economic paradigm since the end of the 1980s. The Estonian media researcher Taivo Palju (Paju 2004) has used the following periodisation concerning the changes in the Estonian media market:

- I period (1989–1995): establishment of the first privately owned media enterprises, birth of the advertising market, privatisation and commercialisation of the periodicals and channels that already existed during the Soviet time
- II period (1995–1998): tough competition and the formation of corporations
- III period (1998–2000): huge losses, economic crisis, foreign investments
- IV period (since 2000): stabilisation concerning the Estonian language media market, negotiations between corporations, convergence of different media and telecommunications.

This periodisation pinpoints three important issues. First, up to 1998 the Estonian media market was blooming and competition among newspapers was especially tough (price wars, subscription campaigns etc.). Secondly, since 1998 foreign ownership became dominant. In 1996 advertising expenditure increased by 20%, 22.8% in 1997 and 15.9% in 1998. However, in 1999 advertising expenditure decreased by 13%. Since 2000 advertising expenditure has grown steadily (World Press

² Discussion about media being seen as “stock exchange” or “cathedral” (Østbye 2000:58f).

Trends 2004: 139). Thirdly, although Palju does not mention it, today we can assert that the process of concentration began in 1998. For example from 1999 up to 2003 the number of daily titles has decreased by 35.29%, non-dailies titles have decreased by 6% (World Association of newspapers-World press trends 2004:137).

As in other post-socialist countries, the sectors within Estonia's media market witnessed great fluctuations in the 1990s and then towards the end of 1990s the Estonian media landscape stabilised (see also Saks 2002: 187–206). Since the beginning of the 1990s until 1998/99 press and television stations invested and lost money. The decade is sometimes labelled as a “money-burning” period. Spending cuts started since 1998/99.

In neighbouring Latvia some similar and some different development trends can be observed.

- I period (1985–1987) is characterised by the first signs of democratisation, openness and weakening of the media censorship system. Some free and independent press issues are published, however illegally. (Brikše, Dūze & Šulmane 1993:227f)
- II period (1988–1991) is characterised by the collapse of the communist press and the liberalisation of the media market alongside with a popular and journalistic drive for state independence. Newspapers change names and enjoy very high circulation numbers despite little advertising, but relatively high purchasing power. Soviet military occupation cannot stop the free press and the establishment of independent media, partly with foreign investment.
- III period (1992–1996) is characterised by a sharp decline in circulation for the press as prices rise dramatically, more foreign investments, privatisation of the media. Liberal media laws are passed. The advertising market develops both in public and private media.
- IV period (1997–2004) is characterised by concentration of ownership, surreptitious advertising and the rapid development of online media. An alternative (private) distribution channel for the press is developed. There are increased discussions on digitalisation and the licence fee to finance public service radio and TV. More nationwide private TV and radio channels are developed. There is rapid economic development.

On the Latvian media market there were relatively good economic times for the old newspapers and magazines that had managed to reform as well as for most of the new press publications up till 1992. For instance, the circulation numbers of the main established dailies published in Latvian and Russian; *Neatkarīgā Cīņa* and *SM Segodnja* dropped from 183 000 and 173 000 in 1992 to 90 000 and 65 000 respectively in 1993. The same pattern was seen among weeklies. *Lauku Avīze* went from 316 000 in 1990 to 130 000 in 1993 and *Literatūra un Māksla* went from 104 000 in 1990 to 5 000 in 1993. Two of the most popular new weeklies and monthly magazines during the fight for independence period, *Atmoda* and *Avots*, simply did not come out in 1993. (Høyer, Lauk & Vihalemm 1993:348f). This change on the market were caused by a series of factors; Russian economic sanctions in February 1992, shortage of and more expensive paper, the price of newspapers thus frequently increased by more than ten times. As independence was established and tougher economic times came, most people had to review their priorities.

In 1991 the Soviet authorities made several attempts to crush the free press in Latvia. During January 1991 the Press House in Riga that used to house most newspapers and the main printing plant was occupied by Soviet forces. The same happened in January and August 1991 with the national TV and radio. Even though one of the main dailies *Diena* one day was printed in Sweden and shipped to Latvia for distribution and the studio of the first private, independent radio channel, 102,7 FM, in August 1991 operated out of Oslo in Norway, mostly the Latvian media succeeded in finding ways to print and transmit their media products elsewhere in Latvia. And those that tackled these changes best gained a competitive advantage in the media market.

Most of the Latvian press was privatised as the Soviet period ended. For instance, *Diena*, a daily established by the Latvian government in 1990, started its privatisation process in September 1991. The paper's employees decided to establish their own shareholding company and attract a foreign investor. (Brikše, Dūze & Šulmane 1993:243). *Diena* became the first paper in Latvia to focus seriously on advertising to achieve sound economic results that would ensure editorial independence. Unlike *Diena*, many other Latvian newspapers, radio and TV stations have not managed to attract the necessary amount of advertising and have become very vulnerable to influence from outside. Many newspapers, radio and TV channels are thus sponsored by political and economic groups that want to get their message across.

Throughout the periods, quite different from other countries in the world, female management dominance in the press market in Latvia has been maintained. According to results from a sociological study in 1998 involving 318 journalists in Latvia, a total of 56.3% of the leaders of media organisations were women. (Šulmane 2000:76). As per December 2004 a total of 5 of the 8 national dailies have female editors-in-chief (*Diena*, *Latvijas Avīze*, *Dienas Bizness*, *Chas (Čas)* and *Telegraf*).

Concerning changes in the Lithuanian media market, several distinctive periods – liberalisation, diversification and concentration – must be considered.³

Liberalisation (1987–1989). New themes penetrated the print as well as broadcast media. Distinctive characteristics of this sub-period are the arrival of new titles and the diversification within the Lithuanian newspapers market. The electronic media (Lithuanian television) played a significant role in the political mobilisation of the public. The principal role of the media was to serve national emancipation, so the media worked as a political instrument for the newly born national movement *Sąjūdis*.

Diversification (1990–1995). A distinctive feature of this phase is privatisation and commercialisation of newspapers (those that existed during the Soviet time). It was a “closed” privatisation, which was realised without open tenders. Instead, the shares were divided among the people who had worked at the newspaper. New owners lacked money and, most importantly, knowledge of how to be competitive in a newly created market. So the media organisations experienced changes of ownership and economic hardships of various kinds. New privately owned media enterprises and new newspaper titles were established, and gradually the advertising market was born.

Competition (1996–2003). This period is marked by a steep decline in newspaper titles, circulation and the growth of newspaper production costs (the price increased). Foreign capital arrived into the newspaper market: *Kauno diena* was bought by the Norwegian Orkla Media AS. The formation of corporations was an answer to strong competition within the newspaper market. The national daily *Lietuvos rytas* established regional supplements for the cities of Vilnius and Kaunas. *Lietuvos žinios* announced itself as a national tabloid (in 1998), which was a new business concept at the time.

An entirely new type of diversification of newspapers took place in 2003 and continues until now. The national tabloid *VL: Vakaro žinios*, published by Respublikos grupė UAB, has entered the dailies market by fighting aggressively for the position of the most read and also the cheapest daily in the country. In response, the largest national daily *Lietuvos rytas* established a tabloid newspaper *Ekstra žinios* for just 0.49 Litas per copy. Moreover, with convergence between print and telecommunications media increasing, *Lietuvos rytas* decided to have a face-lift on the Internet and to provide no more free news online. Access to the Internet newspaper is only by subscription (the strategy is mainly directed towards international readers). The papers published by Respublikos grupė UAB, in contrast to *Lietuvos rytas* UAB, keep away from any online experiments.

³ For more information see, for example, Balčytienė, Aukšė (in press): Understanding national characteristics of Lithuanian media.

To conclude, the period 1988–1992 is especially important in Lithuania. An enormous expansion of the press market took place to reflect the ideological diversity of the time. Therefore, this period is called *revolutionary*, and the next phase (1993–2003) is *evolutionary*.

3. Size and Wealth of the Markets

3.1. Suppliers and Products

According to the dual nature of the media market, the size of the market is characterised by the potential consumers (audience) of a certain product and the potential amount of advertising revenue. In order to provide a comparative description of the four different media markets, the authors of the present article present three tables using the available data.

Country	Mil. Inhabitant	Total advertising expenditure / mil EUR
Estonia	1.4	58.0 mil EUR
Latvia	2.3	73.6 mil EUR
Lithuania	3.4	75.9 mil EUR
Norway	4.5	1 884.6 mil EUR

Table 1. Population and total advertising expenditure.

Advertising expenditure	Estonia 2003 EUR	Latvia 2003 EUR	Lithuania 2003 EUR	Norway 2003 EUR
Newspapers	25.7 mil / 44%	24 mil / 32.4%	23.2 mil / 30.56%	875.8 mil / 30.56%
Magazines	6.9 mil / 12%	10 mil / 13.5%	9.6 mil / 12.61%	141.3 mil / 12.61%
TV	14.8 mil / 26%	24.8 mil / 33.5%	31.6 mil / 41.63%	610.6 mil / 41.63%
Radio	5.2 mil / 9%	9.3 mil / 12.4%	5.5 mil / 7.26%	88.0 mil / 7.26%
Outdoor display	3.6 mil / 6%	4.1 mil / 5.5%	4.9 mil / 6.49%	72.1 mil / 6.49%
Internet	1.8 mil / 3%	1.4 mil / 1.9%	1.0 mil / 1.41%	96.8 mil / 1.41%
Total	58.0 mil EUR	73.6 mil EUR	75.9 mil EUR	1 884.6 mil EUR

Table 2. Division of the advertising expenditure between different channels and market share (sources: EMOR Estonia, TNS BMF Latvia. The numbers for Norway are from medienorge.uib.no, source: AC Nielsen Reklame-Statistikk.)

In Estonia, total advertising expenditure is steadily growing (12% compared with 2002) (in Latvia – 6% compared with 2002). The market share of TV and Internet is increasing (TV: from 24% in 2002 to 26 in 2003; in Latvia – stable around 33.5%. Internet: from 2% in 2002 to 3% in 2003 (in Latvia – from 1.2% to 1.9%). In Estonia the advertising space in newspapers grew by 16% but advertising expenditure grew only by 9%, which means that there is a strong price pressure.

It is important to note that the public service TV in Estonia does not compete for advertising, while two out of the four public radio channels do compete on the advertising market (until 31 December 2004).

	Estonia (product, circ./avge. audience)	Latvia (product, circ./avge. audience)	Lithuania (product, circ./avge. audience)	Norway (product, circ./avge. audience)
National quality dailies / middle market dailies	<i>Postimees</i> 64 000 circ / 219 000 <i>Eesti Päevaleht</i> 36 000 / 146 000 <i>Äripäev</i> (business) 20 200 / 78 000 <i>Molodjohz Estonii</i> 10 000 / no data <i>Estonia</i> 6 000 / no data	<i>Diena</i> 59 333 / 311 000 <i>Latvijas Avīze</i> 53 350 / 267 000 <i>Vesti Segodnja</i> 29 674 / 187 000 <i>Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze</i> 40 000 / 124 000 <i>Čas (Chas)</i> 23 400 / 124 000 <i>Dienas Bizness</i> (busin.) 12 000 / 67 000 <i>Biznes&Baltija</i> (busin.) 12 000 / 49 000	<i>Lietuvos rytas</i> 40 200 / 671 400 <i>Lietuvos žinios</i> 17 900 / 171 900 <i>Verslo žinios</i> (business news) 10 000 / 52 400	<i>Aftenposten</i> ⁴ 256 639 / 718 0004 <i>Dagens Næringsliv</i> (business) 69 262 / 297 000
National tabloids	<i>SL Õhtuleht</i> 65 000 / 283 000 <i>Vesti Dnya</i> 6 500 / no data	<i>Vakara Ziņas</i> – circulation: no data / readership: 62 000	<i>VL: Vakaro žinios</i> No data <i>Ekstra žinios</i> No data	<i>VG</i> 380 190/1 367 000 <i>Dagbladet</i> 186 136 / 809 000
National weeklies	<i>Eesti Ekspress</i> 44 200 / no data <i>Maaleht</i> 42 900 / no data <i>Sirp</i> (cultural weekly) 4 800 / no data <i>Õpetajate Leht</i> 4 100 / no data <i>Terviseleht</i> 5 100 / no data <i>Eesti Kirik</i> 2 300 / no data <i>Eesti Spordileht</i> 4 400 / no data <i>Delovyje Vedomosti</i> 5 100 / no data <i>Den za Dnyom</i> 14 300 / no data <i>Molodjohz Estonii</i> <i>Subbota</i> 10 100 / no data	<i>Ieva</i> 70 700 / no data <i>Privātā Dzīve</i> 76 700 / no data <i>Subbota</i> 44 100 / no data <i>Vesti</i> 37 523 / 144 000 <i>Nedēļa</i> 9 000 / no data <i>Ljubljū</i> 16 000 / no data	<i>Ekstra</i> No data <i>Veidas</i> No data <i>TV Antena</i> No data	<i>Se & Hør</i> 258 620 / no data <i>Hjemmet</i> 236 630 / no data <i>Her og Nå</i> 193 104 / no data <i>Norsk Ukeblad</i> 153 655 / no data <i>Familien</i> 148 529 / no data <i>Morgenbladet</i> (quality weekly) 8 255 / no data
Regional dailies (up to 3 times per week)	7 largest are <i>Pärnu Postimees</i> 15 600 / no data <i>Sakala</i> 11 000 / no data <i>Meie Maa</i> 8 000 / no data <i>Põhjarannik/</i> <i>Sev.Poberezhje</i> 8 000 / no data <i>Võrumaa Teataja</i> 5 600 / no data <i>Virumaa teataja</i> 8 600 / no data <i>Lääne Elu</i> 4 900 / no data	7 largest are: <i>Rīgas Balss</i> 20 000 / 88 000 <i>Kurzemes Vārds</i> 16 000 / 54 000 <i>Druva</i> 9 000 / 36 000 <i>Zemgales Ziņas</i> 8 700 / 43 000 <i>Liesma</i> 9 000 / 33 000 <i>Bauskas Dzīve</i> 7 800 / 32 000 <i>Talsu Vēstis</i> 7 500 / 30 000	<i>Kauno diena</i> 39 000 / 177 700	7 largest are <i>Aftenposten</i> 256 639 / no data <i>Bergens Tidende</i> 90 087 / no data <i>Adresseavisen</i> 86 570 / no data <i>Stavanger Aftenblad</i> 70 101 / no data <i>Drammens Tidende</i> 45 271 / no data <i>Fædrelandsvennen</i> 45 125 / no data <i>Romerikes Blad</i> 38 377 / no data

Nb of free papers	7	5	0	18
News agencies	<i>BNS</i>	<i>BNS</i> <i>LETA</i> <i>AFI</i> (pictures)	<i>BNS</i> <i>ELTA</i> To some extent business news online agency <i>VZ Online.lt</i>	<i>NTB</i> <i>Scanpix</i> (pictures)
National radio channels	4 public radio channels: <i>Vikerraadio</i> <i>Raadio 2</i> <i>Klassikaraadio</i> <i>Raadio 4</i> (in the Russian language)	7 channels: <i>LR 1</i> : 12.6% <i>LR 2</i> : 26% <i>LR 3 Klasika</i> : 0.6% <i>LR 4 Doma laukums</i> : 7.3% <i>Radio SWH</i> (private): 7.6% <i>Star FM</i> (private): 4.9% <i>Latvijas Kristīgais Radio</i> (private): 1.6%	<i>M1</i> <i>M1 Plius</i> <i>Lietus</i> , <i>Radiocentras</i> <i>RC 2</i>	4 channels (2003): <i>NRK P1</i> : 28% <i>P2</i> : 5% <i>P3</i> : 7% <i>P4</i> (private): 19%
Nb of local radios stations	7	29 ⁵	No data	263 licenses local radio: 12% others: 2%
National TV channels	<i>ETV</i> <i>TV 3</i> (private) <i>Kanal 2</i> (private)	<i>LTV 1</i> : 11.6% <i>LTV 7</i> : 3.4% <i>LNT</i> (private): 37% <i>TV 3</i> (private): 32.1%	<i>LRT</i> <i>LNK</i> (private) <i>TV 3</i> (private) <i>BTV</i> (private)	<i>NRK 1</i> ⁶ : 36.6 <i>NRK 2</i> : 3.4 <i>TV 2</i> (private): 32.9 <i>TV Norge</i> (private): 9.3
Regional TV channels	No regional TV	<i>TV 5</i> : 7.4% <i>TV Dzintare</i> <i>Daugavpils TV</i> <i>Rēzeknes TV</i> <i>Kuldīgas TS</i> <i>TV Miljons</i> <i>Ventspils TV7</i>	<i>TV 5</i> <i>Pūkas TV</i> <i>KRT</i>	10 local programs within public broadcaster <i>NRK</i> ⁸ , 23 local broadcasting licenses ⁹
News portals (portals that produce news by themselves to some extent)	<i>Delfi</i>	<i>Delfi</i> <i>TVnet</i> <i>Apollo</i>	<i>Delfi</i> <i>Omni Laikas</i> <i>Bernardinai</i> <i>E-biz</i> <i>Akiračiai</i>	Different news portals, owned by newspapers or TV channels

Table 3. Media products/number of organisations or stations; circulation and audience (number or share of the market). Sources: EMOR – Estonia; TNS BMF Latvia. In the case of Latvia, circulation numbers published by the papers themselves are in italics) Norway: The circulation number regarding Norway is always from the Norwegian Media Ownership Authority, <http://www.eierskapstilsynet.no>.

In the table one can see some important differences between the three Baltic media markets.

- 4 This number is from [medienorge.uib.no](http://www.medienorge.uib.no) via TNS Gallup and it refers only to the morning release of the paper on weekdays, which has the largest number of readers except on Saturdays, where the number of readers is higher.
- 5 Local and regional radio stations, data from Latvian National Broadcasting Council, <http://www.nrtp.lv/lv/radio.php> (accessed on 22 December 2004).
- 6 Data: Week 18/ 2004, from: TNS Gallup via <http://www.uib.medienorge.no>
- 7 Additionally there are 17 TV stations classified as local, but some have in reality a regional profile, data from Latvian National Broadcasting Council, <http://www.nrtp.lv/lv/tv.php> (accessed on 22 December 2004).
- 8 Number from 2002, <http://www.uib.medienorge.no>
- 9 Number from June 2004, the Mass Media Authority via <http://www.smf.no>

The Estonian local media market seems to be too small to support local radio (7 stations in Estonia compared with 29 in Latvia). In addition, the total circulation numbers of national dailies in Estonia are in the same calibre with the regional newspapers in Latvia and Lithuania.

There is also no regional TV in Estonia. Hence it is possible to conclude that although all the four media markets qualify as “small” ones, the Estonian media market remains so small that the regional media remains marginal and national dailies dominate; the major national dailies in Estonia have higher circulation than the Lithuanian and Latvian national dailies.

3.2. The Press Market

Norway is still among the countries with the most newspaper titles per inhabitant. This may be due to the geographical dimensions of the country and its settlement. A widespread country with few cities, wide regions with small townships. A general tendency is that the city newspapers die out, while new places in the region get a daily paper, says a report from Ivar Andenæs (2002:9). Not less press titles, but less places with local competition, is his conclusion. On the other hand, newspapers are starting up in places, which did previously did not have a local paper. However, Andenæs points out that the general tendency is towards less newspaper reading and the number of papers per household is declining. And while the Norwegians used to spend an average of 40 minutes of their day for reading newspapers in 1995, they spent only 31 minutes in 2001.

In its latest development report, the Media Ownership Authority¹⁰ gives a total of 223 newspaper titles, which together had a daily circulation of 3 164 823. It registered four new papers, while two local newspapers merged into one. According to the statistics of the Mass Media Authority¹¹ the newspapers made a total profit of 880 801 000 NOK in 2002, including the subsidy. In 2000 the daily press earned 1 334 307 000 NOK.

But since all these changes, the daily press had to change their focus. They formed joint ventures for advertising to give their advertising customers better possibilities and a larger public, thus attracting more of them. And they play an important role in the concentration development on the media sector. (Andenæs 2002:9ff)

It was quite common for a long time to read “ukeblader” in Norway, a kind of weekly periodical intended for the whole family. But in recent years these formerly very popular papers have seen a decline in circulation. At the same time the press market became more diverse and special interest magazines were introduced. This is reflected in the figures: While 27 different titles had a circulation of 2 328 000 in 1991, 53 different titles shared a total of 2 646 000 editions in 2003. Although the number of titles nearly doubled, the circulation did not increase by more than around 320 000. So if one compares the development of the circulation in the weekly “ukeblader”, this effect is easily to see. Apart from “Familien”, which saw quite stable development, and “Her og Nå”, which is a new title from 2002, the circulation went down.¹²

In Estonia, the competition between two national dailies is remarkable. *Postimees* (owned by Eesti Meedia,) and *Eesti Päevaleht* (owned by Ekspress Group) are newspapers with very small product differentiation. The last one is still losing money, although less than three years ago: 2001 – minus 14.7 mill, 2002 – 6.6 mill, 2003 – 4.9 mill. The market of weeklies is not competitive: the market leader is *Eesti Ekspress* and the other national daily *Maaleht* (Rural Newspaper – local owners) is quite a different product and is oriented to a different market. Most of the regional newspapers are in a monopoly situation but the advertising money for local media (especially for local radio) is small.

¹⁰ <http://eierskapstilsynet.no/om/aarsmelding/endeligsmelding31.doc>

¹¹ <http://medieforvaltning-no.inforce.dk/graphics/SMF/Rapporter/Presse/Dagspressen.pdf>

¹² Numbers from the association “Norsk Ukepresse”, quoted by: <http://www.medienorge.uib.no/main.cfm?ID=93&Medium=Ukepresse>

Until 2000 there was quite an unusual situation: two rival national tabloids (similar products) were competing on the Estonian newspaper market. They merged in June 2000, into one tabloid *SL Õhtuleht* (50% owned by Eesti Meedia/Schibsted and 50% by the Ekspress Group. It should be mentioned that the two tabloids were merged while Bonnier owned the second tabloid). *SL Õhtuleht* has the largest readership among newspapers: 302 000. The tabloid has increased its profits from 10.2 mill in 2001 to 18.0 mill in 2003.

The Russian language newspaper market is competing partly with the media of Russia and partly with Estonian news products. Hence the Russian language newspaper (two national dailies and several weeklies, all together 7 titles + various other type of newspapers) business models are different from the Estonian newspaper market. According to Jaksoobson (2003:219) 60% of Russian-language publications are owned by private media companies, 11% are owned by other private enterprises and 29% by public institutions, municipalities, political parties and different organisations. It is important to note that the Russian language media co-operates with the Russian media in several ways. There has been an increase in special Baltic issues and news bundles (composed in Russia) mixed with local news and published in Estonia (Jaksoobson 2004:221).

In 1997–2000 the two dominant players on the magazine market were Ekspress Group and Eesti Meedia. The result was that several magazines had “sister” versions and product differentiation was very small. In summer 2000 the two competitive media companies established the joint company Ajakirjade Kirjastus (AK) (50% belongs to the Eesti Meedia/Schibsted and 50% belongs to Ekspress Group). The company published 20 titles in 2004 with 2/3 of the Estonian magazine market. The largest niche belongs to women’s, home and garden magazines.

According to data from Baltic Data House and BMF¹³ 48% of the population between 15 and 74 years in Latvia read one of the national dailies once per day. However, 97.5% of the inhabitants of Latvia in the same age group have read at least one of the 268 currently published press publications in Latvia.

Latvia does not have a system of subsidising newspapers to ensure No.2 newspapers in cities around the country. With a few exceptions there is mostly only one newspaper in each smaller town.

The national dailies can be grouped by language and profile. Among the national Latvian-language dailies in Latvia competition is tough between *Diena*, *Latvijas Avīze* (formerly *Lauku Avīze*) with *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze* as a good number three. Whereas *Diena* and *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze* have shown full transparency regarding ownership, this is not the case regarding *Latvijas Avīze*. There are strong indications that in reality *Latvijas Avīze* is owned by the company Ventbunkers that is linked to the Ventspils Nafta, which owns the publishing house Mediju Nams, which owns *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*. Among these dailies, only *Diena* annually publish their financial results in a transparent way. *Diena* is partly owned by Bonnier in Sweden.

The two largest national Russian-language dailies in Latvia, *Vesti Segodnja* and *Chas (Čas)*, are owned by two major competing publishing houses Fenster and Petits. Fenster owns 75% of Litera that again fully owns *Vesti Segodnja*. Petits owns 100% of *Chas (Čas)*. Unlike the other national Russian-language daily *Telegraf*, *Vesti Segodnja* and *Chas (Čas)* do not resemble standard national quality papers in either form or content. They are rather more like the yellow scandal tabloid papers with little or no separation of news and comment. *Telegraf* is owned 100% by a local private businessman Valerij Belokonj. These Russian-language dailies not only compete among themselves, but also with Russian newspapers that have developed partly Latvian and Baltic editions like *Komsomolskaja Pravda (Komsomolskaja Pravda Baltic)* and *Moskovskij Komsomolets (MK Latvija)*. The national Russian-language dailies in Latvia do not have a reputation for publishing their financial results in a transparent way either.

¹³ <http://www.bmf.lv/?lang=lv&fullarticle=true&category=showuid&id=2092> (accessed on 26 December 2004).

Latvia has three major national business dailies, *Dienas Bizness* in Latvian and *Biznes & Baltija* and *Kommersant Baltic* in Russian. *Dienas Bizness* is a part of the Swedish Bonnier group, *Biznes & Baltija* is owned by AS Masu mediju centrs Bizness & Baltija while *Kommersant Baltic Daily* is fully published by Fenster and is distributed together with *Vesti Segodnja*. Their financial results are not published.

The concentration of ownership in Latvia press took off in 1997 when JSC Diena started to purchase a series of Latvian regional and local newspapers.

3.3. The Television Market

NRK (the public service broadcaster) has two national television channels, and TV2 has one national commercial channel. The number of national TV channels in Norway has grown, and the actors on the private market changed in the years from 1988. However, since 2002 the number and the actors have been stable with 6 national channels. In 2002 the Mass Media Authority counted 10 regional TV stations, 26 local stations for a broad public and 30 “other” local stations.

In Estonia, the market situation was most competitive until 2001, when three commercial national televisions were operating. In the 1990s commercial television was generally making losses, the most unprofitable years were 1999 and 2000 (Šein, 2004:176). By 2001 one of them – TV 1 – went bankrupt and along with banning advertising on public television (effective as of July 2002) and setting up licence fees for commercial televisions, the total number of national private channels was legislatively limited to two.

Currently, Estonia has one public TV broadcaster and two commercial TV broadcasters: TV 3 (100% MTG Broadcasting) is economically the most successful and earned about 30 mil kroons in 2003, while Kanal 2 (100% Schibsted ASA) lost about 3 mill. kroons. However, the losses of Kanal 2 have been steadily decreasing. There are a number of independent television production companies, 10 of them belong to the Association of TV producers. Most of them, however, do not possess any studios or even recording equipment.

Internet television is taking its first steps, providing asynchronised and archived access to the output of terrestrial televisions (*tv.ee* for Kanal 2 and TV 3, <http://www.itv.ee> for Eesti Telesioon). There are 42 cable TV providers, the licences of two operators cover the entire country. The licences of most of the others are for small areas of coverage. In total 79 licences have been issued for cable operators. Some of them also produce their own programming (11 broadcasting licences). Digital television test broadcasting (DVB-T – digital video broadcasting – terrestrial) was started by the broadcasting transmission company Levira in June 2004. While the public TV is also available on digital channel, the managers of private televisions have adopted a wait-and-see attitude towards digitalisation.

Since NTV-5 broke the state monopoly on television and became the first private, independent TV channel in Latvia in 1991, competition between public and private TV companies has intensified. It was crucial for the private companies to gain the rights to transmit their programmes on a national scale by receiving a national terrestrial broadcasting licence. These were granted to LNT in 1996 and TV3 in 2001.

Consequently, in Latvia there are 3 television companies operating on a national scale. The two private TV companies TV3 and LNT provide one channel each while the public television, LTV, broadcasts two channels, LTV1 and LTV7. Except for LTV1 they all provide programmes both in Latvian and Russian, LTV7 also in other languages spoken in Latvia. All the programmes of LTV1 are in or translated into Latvian. There are 24 regional and local TV channels in Latvia. In the beginning of the 1990's, *Latgale TS* – the regional TV in the eastern part of Latvia emerged as a very strong player with broadcasting in several languages including Latgalian. After the turn of the century TV5 has taken over as the strongest regional TV station. TV5 broadcasts for the Riga region, but has made attempts to become a nationwide channel by broadcasting via satellite

to cable TV networks in various Latvian cities. Viasat Broadcasting that like TV3 is owned by Modern Times Group, also uses the cable TV network to send its new product channel 3+ in Russian to all the Baltic countries. LNT has accused its rival of unfair competition and brought the case of channel 3+ to the Latvian Competition Council in March 2004. LNT with the support of LTV and TV5 (TV Rīga) argued that channel 3+ operates in Latvia without a broadcasting or retransmission licence as foreseen in the Latvian Radio and TV law and can thus offer advertising at a lower price since 3+ does not pay the annual state fee for broadcasting permission. 3+ transmits the programme of TV3 with Russian subtitles and additional commercials. The Competition Council, however, decided in October 2004 in favour of 3+, TV3 and Viasat Broadcasting. Based on evidence from the National Broadcasting Council that 3+ was already licensed in one EU country (UK) to make and distribute its programme in the Baltic states, the Competition Council decided to end the case.¹⁴ The head of LNT has not denied that LNT also has plans to go Baltic.¹⁵

Several Russian channels in Russia compete with the channels in Latvia for audiences and advertising money. Several Russian-based stations show commercials for the Latvian market and the 1. *Baltiiskij kanal* makes programmes in Russian from Latvia, as well.

There are certain questions regarding ownership issues of the key TV stations in Latvia. The ownership structure of LTV (publicly owned) and TV3 (owned by Modern Times Group that also owns the radio station *Star FM* in Latvia) is well known. The situation is less clear regarding LNT and TV5. According to the company register of Lursoft, LNT has four owners: SIA Bete (26%), SIA Polsat Baltic (11%), Polsat Media B.V. (49%) and the private person Jānis Āzis (14%). LNT representatives have confirmed that in 2003 the shares of Bete and Jānis Āzis were sold to “Baltic Media Holding” registered in the Netherlands. However, LNT has not confirmed that Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation is the owner of “Baltic Media Holding” and parts of Polsat, as often mentioned in the press.¹⁶

The Riga channel TV5 has close cooperation with LNT regarding location and human resources. However, officially the owners of LNT and TV5 are not the same. In autumn 2001 it was reported that the Estonian company OO Ootaja, which is owned by another Estonian company LHV, bought the shares of TV Rīga that TV5 belongs to. 75% of the shares were bought from SIA Grafton Entertainment and 25% of the shares from Skonto.¹⁷ SIA Grafton Entertainment owns one of the leading news portals in Latvia called *Tvnet*.

Advertising is allowed on all channels. There have been some initiatives from the commercial TV side, but no serious discussion on abolishing advertising on public service TV, as is the case in Estonia. The two public channels are financed mainly from advertising and state subsidies. Frequently the idea of introducing a licence fee to finance public TV, a fee that all TV users should pay, has popped up, but it has always been rejected by the majority of politicians before elections. No politicians seem to enjoy the thought that he or she is introducing or defending something that ordinary people should pay for.

In 2000 the JSC Digital Latvian Radio and Television centre was established in order to implement a digital television broadcasting network in Latvia and to enable digital TV programme reception in 97% of territory of Latvia by the end of 2006.¹⁸ However, it is questioned whether this deadline will be met since the digitalisation process was partly stopped by the Repše government in 2003 due to worries that some of the major contracts may have been awarded illegally.

In Lithuania, according to status and ownership, the TV sector falls into the following four major groups: 1) LTV, TV2 (public-state funded broadcaster with advertising allowed), 2) LNK, TV1 (owned by UAB “MG BALTIC” – 85% and Amber

¹⁴ Latvian Competition Council’s website: http://www.competition.lv/Alt/LAT/L60kplem/L_arhivu/N66_0410.doc (accessed on 27 December 2004).

¹⁵ <http://www.financenet.lv/news/company/index.php?id=73672> (accessed on 27 December 2004).

¹⁶ http://www.baltkom.lv/index.php?cms_tree_ID=300&cms_lang=LAT&cms_news_ID=1072

¹⁷ *Eesti Päevaleht Online*, http://www.epl.ee/artikkel_90380.html (accessed on 27 December 2004).

¹⁸ Digital Latvian Radio and Television Centre website: <http://www.dlrtc.lv/eng/index.php> (accessed on 27 December 2004).

Trust S. C. A. – 15%), 3) *TV3*, *TANGO TV* (owned by Modern Times Group), and 4) *BTV* (owned by Achemos grupė UAB).¹⁹ The seven television channels share over 95 percent of the Lithuanian television market, and their reach is *BTV* (43.8%), *LNK* (59.9%), *TV3* (57.8%) and *LTV* (48%) accordingly.

3.4. The Radio Market

In 2003 there were four national channels in Norway, 15 regional and 267 local (with licences) radio channels. Among the national channels one was private, *P4*. The channel has been profitable although profits have fallen during recent years. In 2000 the profit was 104 millions, while in 2003 the profit was about 6 millions. Another private channel – *Kanal 24* started broadcasting nationwide in the beginning of 2004. The number of local radios that made a profit in 2002 was: 128.

In Estonia only the public services have been defined as having national coverage. The four public radio channels are: *Vikerraadio* (mainly talk radio), *Raadio 2* (radio programme mainly targeted at young audiences; provided advertising up to the end of 2004), *Raadio 4* (the Russian language radio channel) and *Klassikaraadio* (mainly classics). Most of the commercial radios with a coverage area larger than local have been issued 'regional' licences, while their actual coverage varies from national (coverage up to 70 – 80% of the entire territory) to local (one region covered with two transmitters). Those among them covering most of Estonia could thus be classified as 'semi-national'. Private radios mainly play music. *Radio Kuku* defines its format as talk radio. Two radios provide Christian content.

As mentioned earlier, advertising was permitted on the public broadcasting channels *Raadio 2* and *Raadio 4* in Estonia until 31 December 2004. As of January 2005 public service broadcasters are no longer players in the advertising market. Unlike the case with television, private radio stations still do not pay a licence fee.

At the end of 2004 links to four Internet radios could be found (*RadioBar.fm*, *BeFree*, *Uunonet*, and *24x7*). At the time of checking (December 2004) only the latter two were providing output. *Uunonet* plays mainly urban music (different from the terrestrial *Uuno*), *24x7* is targeted at youth and also provides some talk programmes.

Since the state's radio station monopoly was broken by the first independent commercial station 102.7 FM in August 2001, Latvia has seen a rapid increase in the number of radio stations. At the end of 2004 there were 7 channels with national coverage and 29 regional and local radio stations. The public broadcaster *Latvijas Radio* has four of the seven nation-wide radio channels.

At the end of 2004 it was possible to listen to all 7 national radio channels through their websites. However, only 35% of the regional and local radios provided such services; that is nearly all the radio channels in Rīga as well as Radio 3 in Cēsis in Northern Latvia.

Latvijas Radio has four public radio channels. *Latvijas Radio 1* is a traditional public service broadcaster channel with a broad news and entertainment profile. *Latvijas Radio 2* plays Latvian music only interrupted by short news programmes every hour, *Latvijas Radio 3 Klasika* plays classical music while *Latvijas Radio 4 Domskaļa Ploščad* provides programmes in Russian. According to TNS/BMF *Latvijas Radio 2* (31%) and *Latvijas Radio 1* (21%) have the most radio listeners when the weekly radio audience in Latvia is measured, closely followed by the leading private radio station, *Radio SWH* that 20% listen to at least once per week.²⁰ *Radio Star FM* is the second most popular private radio station, which 16% listen to at least once a week according to the same TNS/BMF research from the summer of 2004.

¹⁹ "Radio and Television in Lithuania: A Comprehensive Guide to Broadcasting Sector 2003–2004", <http://www.rtk.lt/downloads/LRTK-en.pdf>.

²⁰ <http://www.bmf.lv/?lang=lv&fullarticle=true&category=showuid&id=2078> (accessed on 27 December 2004).

When *Radio SWH* was awarded a licence to develop a nationwide broadcasting network, they set up studios in 5 cities outside Riga; in Valmiera, Rēzekne, Jēkabpils, Daugavpils and in Liepāja. These studios produce their own local news programmes and attract local advertisers. With its own news department and 120 employees this private station has become a serious competitor to the public broadcaster. 50% of *Radio SWH* is owned by the TV company *LNT*, 35% by Zigmārs Liepiņš, the president of *Radio SWH* and the remaining 15% by two employees of the station. As the second most popular private radio station, *Radio Star FM* is owned by the Modern Times Group, which owns the television company *TV3* as well, we can conclude that the same public and private owners dominate the Latvian radio and TV markets.

However, unlike the TV market, where both private stations have a larger audience than the leading public channel, *Latvian public radio* has managed to keep its leading position in the Latvian market.

In Lithuania there are 47 radio stations (46 – commercial and 1 public – Lithuanian radio, broadcasting two radio programmes *LR1* and *LR2* nationwide). The largest commercial radio stations fall into the following major groups based on ownership: 1) *M1, M1 Plus, Lietus, Laluna, Raduga*, 2) *Radiocentras, RC2, Relax FM, Ruskoje Radio Baltija*, 3) *Pūkas, Pūkas-2*, and 4) *European Hit Radio, Super FM*.

3.5. “Only News” Market: News Agencies and Online News

According to research carried out by EMOR in 2004, a total of 52% of the Estonian population (aged between 6 and 74) use the Internet. In Latvia 27% and in Lithuania 29% of the population use the Internet. According to data from TNS Gallup/Medie Norge, in Norway a total of 73% of the population older than 13 years used the Internet in October 2004.²¹

Regarding online only projects in Norway, the top is the online version from the most popular tabloid newspaper, VG. Then comes the MSN page, and in third place is the website of the next popular tabloid: *Dagbladet*. The private TV2 follows in fifth, the Oslo newspaper *Aftenposten*’s web version in seventh and NRK in ninth place.²² Another important point is that the private use of the Internet is increasing. Nevertheless most of the online media is still not profitable. Schibsted claims, that its net newspapers are profitable, but does not take the editorial content into consideration.²³

After the *Estonian* national News Agency went bankrupt in February 2003, the only national news agency is the *Baltic News Service*. National services have survived in Latvia (*Leta*) and Lithuania (*Elta*).

When considering Internet portals and the news market, it is important to distinguish between those organisations that produce original news and those who work as second-hand news suppliers (select and present by using their specific environment). Most of the Estonian newspapers have an online news production system. Basically two different models are in use: a special department or system where each staff journalist should produce news also for the online part. Estonia has only one Internet portal that produces some news by itself called *Delfi* that had an average of 114 000 users per day in 2004 according to data from EMOR. In 2003 *Delfi* was bought by the Norwegian company Findexa.

Besides online newspapers, there are three other popular Internet news portals in Latvia, *Delfi*, *Tvnet* and *Apollo*. To a limited extent they produce their own news material, but mainly the breaking news stories are taken from the *LETA* news agency and to a lesser degree from other news agencies and newspapers. *Tvnet*, whose owners have had a close link to the owners of the private TV channel *LNT*, is an exception in the sense that they often publish video news taken from some of the TV channels in Latvia.

²¹ http://www.medienorge.uib.no/Main.cfm?ID=266&Medium=IT&vis_resultat=YES

²² http://www.tns-gallup.no/arch/_img/198273.ppt

²³ Schibsted’s Website: <http://www.schibsted.no/no/nyemedier/resultatnettaviset/>

Like *Delfi*, *Tvnet* and *Apollo*, many of the online newspapers like *Neatkarīgā Ritā Avize*, *Latvijas Avize*, *Chas (Čas)* and *Rīgas Balss* also update their sites with news reports from the news agencies, mainly from *LETA*. Once per day these newspapers publish on their website the same articles as in their paper edition. Some online newspapers like *Diena* publish the articles of their paper edition once per day only – without any updating from the news agencies. Several Russian-language newspapers like *Vesti Segodnja*, *Telegraf* and *Kommersant Baltic Daily* have chosen to publish their main news in the Russian-language edition of *Delfi* in Latvia. Of these newspapers, only *Kommersant Baltic Daily* has its own website too. The business daily *Dienas Bizness* has a more active approach and publishes its own reports online throughout the day.

Of the radio and TV stations in Latvia, only *Latvian public TV* publishes written news online. However, the news is not updated during the day although it does publish texts and some pictures from the main evening news programme *Panorāma*. This news programme may also be watched online live or as a video. The main news programme may also be viewed on the private television company *LNT* website. Visiting the *Latvian public radio* website it is possible to listen to news programmes not only live, as with the private radio stations, but also from recordings. The news and other programmes can be freely accessed online and they are archived for at least 6 months.

Unlike the Internet news portals, the online newspapers and online radio and TV stations, one of the news agencies, *BNS* charges Internet visitors for reading their news. Some of the online newspapers charge a subscription fee for viewing past archived articles, but otherwise the news service is free. The other key news agency in Latvia, *LETA*, has chosen to make the main news available to visitors free of charge. However, a more extensive news service is, as in the case of *BNS*, for paying clients only.

The most popular site among the five most visited *Lithuanian* websites is *Delfi*, which is not related to any traditional media. Having little original journalism, the project attracts more than 130 000 daily visitors. In Lithuania, original journalism is published online in order to create alternative space for those, whose voices are not heard in the traditional media. Writings in *Omni Laikas* (<http://www.omni.lt>), *Bernardinai*, *Ore* or *Akiračiai* are perfect candidates to be considered as alternative Internet space. The publishing office of *Omni Laikas* (about 30 000 unique visitors access the web site on a daily basis) considers the comments of experts and opinions of the journalists the strongest feature of their project. Perhaps this is the key to recognising the national characteristics of the Lithuanian Internet.

Estonia		Latvia		Lithuania	
<i>Neti</i>	200 000	<i>Delfi</i> (news portal)	113 000	<i>Google</i> (search engine)	178 000
<i>Delfi</i>	114 000	<i>Tvnet</i> (news portal)	49 000	<i>Delfi</i> (news portal)	171 000
<i>Hot</i>	101 000	<i>One</i> (mobile service portal)	48 000	<i>Lietuvos rytas</i> (newspaper)	107 000
<i>Everyday</i>	94 000	<i>Tele2</i> (mobile service portal)	46 000	<i>One</i> (mobile service portal)	106 000
<i>Google</i>	81 000	<i>Google</i> (search engine)	46 000	<i>Takas</i> (internet provider)	66 000

Table 5. Number of daily visitors to websites: According to TNS ENOR Gallup (December 2003 – Feb 2004): In the case of Estonia only *Delfi* produces news.

The development of new Internet content does not pay off even with the abundant number of users. In other words, some Baltic Internet projects have been declared insolvent (e.g., *Tvnet* in Lithuania). Even the powerful media admit that their online projects are not viable, because it is absolutely unclear how to charge for the information online, how to solve legal and ethical dilemmas of interactive communication, etc. Some media companies use the subscription model (the news agency *BNS* in Latvia and the business newspaper *Verslo žinios* and national daily *Lietuvos rytas* in Lithuania).²⁴

²⁴ About the development of the Internet media in Lithuania see, for example – in Baičytienė, Auksė (in press) *Understanding national characteristics of Lithuanian media*.

4. Ownership (National and Multinational Companies)

The general tendency is that the Estonian media market is most concentrated and dominated by the Nordic media companies (more than the Lithuanian market). In Latvia the main foreign company on the newspaper market is Bonnier, but the ownership structure is most unclear in Latvia because of the many associated companies.

Both in Latvia and in Estonia the Russian language press ownership is different from the Latvian and Estonian language ownership. Russian language press is less concentrated, less stable and in Estonia it has direct relations with media companies in Russia (Jakobson 2004).

4.1. The Largest Actors on the Norwegian Market

4.1.1. Schibsted ASA

This group with its roots in newspaper and book print industry has today many different activities in the media market and has a high share of the daily circulation in newspapers at the same time. The two largest newspapers in Norway belong to Schibsted, and they hold stocks in many of the large and medium-sized papers in Norway. In numbers, Østbye has this to say: "If we include the regional newspapers, the group accounts for more than half the total Norwegian newspaper circulation and *Aftenposten* and *VG* alone account for almost 40 per cent of the newsprint" (Østbye 2004:158).

Schibsted also owns two of Sweden's largest newspapers, *Aftonbladet* and *Svenska Dagbladet* and is involved in the Estonian media. It has several photo and news agencies in Scandinavia, as well as free papers in Europe. Schibsted also works in these sectors: Weeklies, Comics, Television, Film and Film distribution, Video, Internet and Mobile Services.

In Norway, Schibsted owns parts of two of the three national privately owned TV stations. It owns a third of *TV2*, but is about to sell its 49.3% share of *TV Norge* to Broadcast Norge, a holding of SBS Broadcasting S.A. It has a share of 25% in *TV Hordaland* and has considerable interests in many regional newspapers and regional TV stations. Furthermore, the company is involved in TV production companies, subsidiary companies of *TV2* and some special interest channels as well. Schibsted also has 50% share of Sandrew Metronome AB, which has film rights and works with distribution for the Nordic Countries. This company also runs cinemas in Denmark, Sweden and Finland and manages the advertising shown in these cinemas. It is also involved in film production as is the other Schibsted-owned company in this sector, *Metronome Film AB*.²⁵

Schibsted is also engaged in Estonia, where they are a majority owner of the Eesti Media Group, the largest media group in Estonia.

4.1.2. Orkla ASA – Orkla Media ASA

The investment company Orkla works in many markets. In media it is engaged in different publishing houses, telecommunications, the newspapers *Dagbladet* and *Adresseavisen* and a special interest supply on the Internet with financial information. It holds the Orkla Media ASA, which has first and foremost its basis in print products but also has shares the newest nationwide radio channel, *Kanal 24* as well as local radio and TV stations.

²⁵ A list of companies and activities belonging to Schibsted ASA can be found in the *medienorge 2002* report. This chapter is based on that and a double check with the company's website.

It owns partly or totally, many local newspapers in Norway, which, according to their own claims²⁶, all have the No.1 position in the local market. At the same time they are engaged in local distribution companies for advertising and they own a large share of the Norwegian news agency *NTB*. In the market for weekly papers in Norway they are represented by the publishing house *Hjemmet Mortensen*, where they publish 36 different papers with a weekly circulation of 912 000 papers (15 weeklies in Sweden, 3 in Finland).²⁷ *Hjemmet Mortensen* has book clubs and special interest publications. They own or share different distribution companies and together with *A-Pressen* and *Aftenposten* (*Schibsted*) *Mediapost AS*, they founded a company to arrange newspaper distribution and to do the marketing for the newspaper distributors.

Through the ownership of the Danish *Berlingske*, *Orkla Media* is active on the Danish media market as well with big national papers, local newspapers, local free of charge papers and various Internet, news agency, magazine and distribution activities. In Sweden *Orkla Media* has shares in one newspaper so far: *Norrländska Socialdemokraten* with 49%.

The company is also very active in Central and Eastern Europe: *Orkla Press AS* holds shares of 11 daily newspapers in Poland including the largest national paper. According to the *Orkla Media* website, the others are top local papers. It has a 40% shareholding in the leading company for the selling of advertisements. Moreover, *Orkla* owns a regional paper in Lithuania, *Kauno diena*, and holds 50% of the Ukrainian regional paper *Vysokij Zamok*.

Orkla Media owns companies dealing with direct marketing, which contain different special interest offers on the Internet.

4.1.3. *A-Pressen*

From its origins *A-Pressen* was intended to support the local newspapers linked to the labour movement in Norway (as described in part 2). Today the Media Ownership Authority lists 34 companies in Norway where *A-Pressen* has ownership interests; four of them are TV companies with different aims. The *medienorge-report* from 2003 lists some 50 different newspapers that belong to the group. All of them are linked to the life of the locality in which they are produced. Many of them are Nr. 2 papers supported by the press subsidy.

ANB is a kind of a news agency, which is run by *A-Pressen* newspapers. They exchange content through *ANB*, but the office produces its own articles and photos as well. Then the *A-Pressen* chain owns 23 printing houses; 13 of them belong to individual newspaper houses and ten of them are organized as separate companies. *TV2* is also partly owned by *A-Pressen*. The company has some different initiatives to distribute advertisement and announcements. Moreover, it works on the new media market of mobile services and Internet.

A-Pressen is active in Russia through two different media trusts and the company holds shares in *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, the largest daily paper in Russia as well as some other newspapers.²⁸

A-Pressen is owned by *APR Media Holding*, and this company in turn is owned by the Institution "Fritt Ord" (45.2%), the *Telenor Broadcast Holding AS* (44.8%) and the "Landsorganisasjonen LO", which is the nationwide labour union in Norway.²⁹

It seems like *A-Pressen* has gone through a very special development: Founded initially to help newspapers of the labour movement support each other on a collective basis, it has now become a powerful chain of local newspapers. The website

²⁶ <http://www.orkla-media.no/>

²⁷ <http://www.orkla-media.no/>

²⁸ <http://www.a-pressen.no>

²⁹ <http://www.eierskapstilsynet.no>

states how important it is, that nearly every part of the business makes an 11 per cent profit on turnover. It no longer invest in markets to help or support, but for growth and profit possibilities. In 2003 A-Pressen made a profit of 80 million NOK, while the turnover was 2 441 million NOK.

4.1.4. Internationalisation of Ownership in Norwegian Media

The media capital in Norway is “globalised” to a certain degree. Some investment banks hold shares in two of the three largest players: Schibsted is mainly owned by several different investment companies; four of them are Norwegian investors, the Folketrygdfondet, Vital Forsikring AS, Orkla ASA and Blommenholm Industrier.

But then there are names like the State Street Bank, JP Morgan Chase Bank, Fidelity Funds, Mellon Bank. All of them hold under ten per cent of the share.

We find the same situation in Orkla ASA, which owns Orkla Dagspresse AS and Orkla Media and holds shares in the second largest tabloid paper, *Dagbladet*. There are a couple of Norwegian investors, and foreign investment banks; again JP Morgan Chase and State Street, but also Franklin Mutual Advisers or Capital Research.

Another actor on the Norwegian market is in a very special situation: Scandinavian Broadcasting System (SBS). It has its seat in Luxemburg, but broadcasts the TV channel TV Norge, which also broadcasts various programmes from local TV stations owned by various media or newspaper houses.

Then there are the other big Nordic media companies, which have a quite important influence, and all of them work in Norway.³⁰ Important to the market of news production in Norway is the Danish Egmont company that owns 1/3 of TV2. Therefore Egmont has an indirect engagement in radio station P4. The company is also active on the market for weeklies, magazines and books and their distribution. The Swedish MTG has an interesting place in the Norwegian media market. It broadcasts TV3 from England via Satellite to the Norwegian market. Much of its profits derive from advertising regulations being stricter in Norway. Norwegian broadcasters are not allowed to target children with advertisements but being based in the UK where the rules are less strict and carrying a number of children’s programmes, TV3 controls a large part of the advertisement market for children. Then it has other media businesses such as ZTV in Norway as well as shares in the nationwide private radio P4.

The Danish company Aller is active on the market for weeklies and radio.³¹

4.2. Main Companies on the Baltic Media Market:

Two media companies dominate the Estonian media market, namely Eesti Meedia (as of 1998 owned 92.5% by Schibsted, 7.5% Future Foundations) and the Ekspress Group.

Eesti Meedia owns the following media organisations: the national daily *Postimees* (100%); the national tabloid *SL Õhtuleht* (50%), the Ajakirjade Kirjastus Magazines Publishing Company (50%); the regional newspapers *Pärnu Postimees* (100%); *Virumaa Teataja* (56%), *Sakala* (50%), *Järva Teataja* (50%), *Valgamaalane* (50%), the TV channel *Kanal 2* (100%) and *Radio Tartu* (100%) as well as the printing plant *Kroonpress* (99%), the delivery company Ekspress Post (50%) and EM photo (50%).

³⁰ This shows a figure in a report from Medienorge. Medienorge: *Store medieeigarar* (Big media owners), Mediefakta 2/ 2003.

³¹ Description follow Medienorge: *Store medieeigarar* (Big media owners), Mediefakta 2/ 2003.

The Ekspress Group owns the following media organisations: the national daily *Eesti Päevaleht* (50%), the Ajakirjade Kirjastus Magazines Publishing Company (50%); the weekly *Eesti Ekspress* (100%), the national tabloid *SL Õhtuleht* (50%), the free paper *City Paper* (in three different cities) and the distribution company Ekspress Post (50%), Medipresa (25%) and the printing plant Printall (95%), the journals *Moteris* in Lithuania (95%) as well as 38% of the mobile service company Verstellson Mobile.

Additionally, among important owners in Estonia are the Bonnier Group (business daily), the MTG/Modern Times Group (TV3), Mediainvest Holding (radios) and the USA Metromedia International Radio group Trio.

Among radio owners the following companies are strong in the market: Trio Group (*Raadio Kuku, Raadio Uuno, Raadio Uuno Pop, Raadio 100 FM, Raadio Elmar, Raadio Uuno Pluss, Internet Portal Uuno.ee*), Mediainvest Holding (*Star FM, Power Hit Radio*) and Sky Media (*Sky Plus, Sky Radio, Russkoe Radio, Radio Mania, Energy FM*).

In Latvia, the main owners in the Latvian media market are: Petits, Bonnier, Fenster, Santa, Lauku Avīze, Mediju Nams, Rīgas Vīļņi, Latvijas Neatkarīgā Televīzija (LNT) and Modern Times Group.

Petits Ltd. owns the free advertising papers *Rīgas Santīms, Reklama, Latvijas Reklāma* and 2 TV programme weeklies as well as a series of publications published in Russian such as the daily *Čas (Chas)*, the weekly magazine *Subbota*, the women's weekly magazine *Ljublu*, the monthly magazine *Arhitektura i dizain Baltii* and the tourism magazine *Baltijskij sezon*. Petits is owned by a local private person, Mr. Aleksejs Šeiņins.

The Swedish JSC Bonnier Group owns 100% of Diena-Bonnier Ltd. that publish the business daily *Dienas Bizness* as well as 63% of JSC Diena that owns the largest Latvian daily *Diena* and the magazine publisher Mediju grupa Tops (coverage 7.2%).

JSC Diena owns 30% of all local newspapers: 51% of the shares in the local newspaper *Bauskas Dzīve* (Bauskas Dzīve Ltd.), 100% of the shares of *Zemgales Ziņas* (Zemgales Ziņas Ltd.), 99.64% of the shares in *Kursas Laiks* (Kursas Laiks Ltd.), 80.33% of the shares in Dzirkstele Ltd. that publish the local newspapers *Dzirkstele, Alūksnes Ziņas* and *Ziemeļlatvija*. JSC Diena owns 51.6% of the shares in the local newspaper *Staburags* (Staburags Ltd.) and 100% of the shares in Reģionālā prese Diena Ltd. that publishes the newspaper *Ogres Ziņas*. In one local newspaper JSC Diena is not the majority owner, it owns 34% of the Novadu Ziņas Ltd. that publish the local newspaper *Neatkarīgās Tukuma Ziņas*.

Fenster Ltd. owns 75% of Litera VS Ltd., that owns the Russian-language publications: daily *Vesti segodnja*, the weekly *Vesti*, the weekly magazine *7 sekretov*, the weekly magazine *Kommersant Baltic* as well as TV programmes, crossword papers and ads papers.

Mediju nams Ltd. is owned 100% by JSC Ventspils nafta – the oil transport enterprise. Mediju Nams owns the daily *Neatkarīgā Rīga Avīze*, the daily *Rīga Balss* and the tabloid *Vakara Ziņas*. Mediju Nams moreover owns the weekly sports magazine *Sporta Avīze*, the culture weekly *Forums* as well the monthly magazine Junisports, the Russian-language monthly magazine *Baltijskij kurs* and three local newspapers *Jelgavas Avīze, Ogres Vēstis* and *Tukuma Zīpotājs*. Moreover, the daily *Latvijas Avīze*, formerly *Lauku Avīze*, owned by JSC Lauku Avīze (coverage 19.8% together with other publications of this publisher – weekly magazine *Praktiskais Latvietis* etc.) has, according to media reports³² in reality taken over by JSC Ventbunkers, which is the owner of Ventspils nafta and one of

³² For comparison see: Rulle, B. (2002) "Lētas VN akcijas izdevīgas īpašniekiem: Valstij esot pasīva mazā akcionāra lomā, privātiīpašnieku vadītā Ventspils nafta audzējusi biznesa muskuļus" (Cheap VN shares are attractive for the owners: The state has a passive small shall holder role, the private owners-governed Ventspils Nafta has grown business muscles) – in *Diena*, 11 July; Arāja, D. (2003) "Ventspilnieki atklājas kā Lauku Avīzes iespējamie īstie īpašnieki" (The Ventspils people are revealed as the possible true owners of Lauku Avīze) – in *Diena*, 19 June, pp. 1, 4.

the so-called Ventspils Group of companies, considered to be controlled by the mayor of Ventspils, Mr. Aivars Lembergs. The publications of both companies together have a coverage of 33%.

Santa Ltd. is the largest Latvian magazine publisher that owns the women's weekly magazine *Ieva*, the yellow press weekly magazine *Privātā Dzīve*, women's monthly magazine *Santa*, the monthly men's magazine *Klubs* and some special interest magazines.

Rīgas Viļņi Ltd. owns the weekly TV programme magazine *Rīgas Viļņi+*, as well as the women's monthly *Pastaiga*, news magazine *Nedēļa* and youth magazine *Mērķis*.

JSC Latvijas Neatkarīgā Televīzija (LNT) owns the national TV channel *LNT* and 50% of the radio JSC Radio SWH that again owns the national radio channel *Radio SWH* as well as two regional radio channels *Radio SWH+* (in Russian language) and *Radio SWH Rock*. According to the media³³ in 1999 the JSC Latvijas Neatkarīgā Televīzija came under the control of the private Polish TV company Polsat and in 2003 it became the focus of interest of media magnate Rupert Murdoch.

The Swedish JSC Modern Times Group owns 100% of TV3 Ltd. that has the national TV channel *TV3* and 100% of Star FM Ltd. that has the national radio channel *Star FM*.

In Lithuania, the main media power players are Lietuvos rytas UAB (mainly print media), Respublikos grupė UAB (print media), Achemos grupė UAB (cross-media), and MTG (a pan-Baltic consortium in broadcast media with owners from Sweden). There are also some smaller media owners (e.g., Hubertas Grušnys in the radio market and Kęstutis Pūkas in the regional radio and TV market: Hubertas Grušnys owns three national radio stations M1, M1 Plius and *Lietus*, as well as regional radios *Laluna* and *Raduga*, while Kęstutis Pūkas owns regional television *Pūkas TV* and national radio channels *Pūkas*, *Pūkas 2*).

Lietuvos rytas UAB (4 main share holders: G. Vainauskas 40%, V. Strimaitis 19%, A. Budrys – 14% A. Kumža 10%) – publishes the largest national daily *Lietuvos rytas*, a regional paper *Panevėžio rytas*, supplements for the cities of Vilnius (*Sostinė*) and Kaunas (*Laikinoji sostinė*), a tabloid newspaper *Ekstra žinios*, as well as several magazines (*Ekstra*, *TV Antena*, *Stilius Plius*, *Kompiuterija*). The closed stock company Respublikos grupė UAB publishes the national dailies *Respublika* and *VL: Vakaro žinios* (tabloid newspaper), as well as a regional daily *Vakarų ekspresas*. It also has a publishing house and a distribution and subscription companies (in the same way as Lietuvos rytas UAB).

Cross-media concentration has just started and the best example in this respect is the Achemos grupė UAB. It owns the national daily *Lietuvos žinios*, a regional daily *Jonavos žinios*, one private television station (*BTV*) and several radio channels (*Radiocentras*, *RC2*, *Ruskoje Radio Baltija*), as well as 2 publishing houses.

The closed stock company Kauno diena UAB (Orkla Media 100%) owns Kaunas' city and regional newspaper *Kauno diena*. The closed stock company Verslo žinios UAB (the Bonnier Group: Dagens Industri 80% and R. Barysas 20%) owns the business daily *Verslo žinios* and an online news agency *VZ Online* (<http://www.vz.lt>). MG Baltic Media owns the national television channel *LNK* and regional television *TV1*, plus the national news agency *Elta*. The Modern Times Group AB from Sweden owns the national TV channel *TV3* and the regional *Tango TV* as well as the radio station *Power Hit Radio*. Rubikon Apsakaitos Sistemos UAB owns regional television channels in Kaunas and Vilnius (*TV5* television network). The Norwegian company Schibsted has its main investments in women's magazines.

³³ See e.g.: Kasparāns, G. (2003) "Polijas avīzes raīzējas par preses brīvību" (Polish newspapers worried about press freedom) – in *Diena* 11 January, p.9; Galzons, E. (2003) "Mediju barons lūkojas uz LNT: LNT pagaidām negrib atklāt, cik lielu ietekmi iegūs Rūperta Mērdoka kompānija" (Media baron looks at LNT: LNT so far doesn't want to reveal how big influence the Rupert Murdoch company will get) – in *Diena*, 9 August, p. 4.

5. Economics and Media Regulation

The media market is usually guided by such regulatory means as ownership restrictions, systems of subsidies, broadcast licencing systems, various types of advantages (tax rates, postal rates, telecommunication rates, transportation rates), price regulation, and advertising regulation and restrictions. One can only speak about active regulation if there are special laws and a system of enforcing those (+ monitoring capacity).

5.1. Legal Framework for Media Production and Ownership in Norway

Different authorities are working with the legal framework of the media system in Norway: The “Consumer Ombudsman and the Market Council”³⁴, the “Norwegian Competition Authority”³⁵ and the “Norwegian Post and Telecommunication Authority” are responsible for relations with consumers, other markets or the infrastructure of media distribution.

The following three institutions deal directly with the medias: The “State Film Authority” supervises the films being released on the market and is responsible for ensuring compliance with the laws on showing violence and pornography.³⁶ The “Mass Media Authority”³⁷ has two divisions: The broadcasting division manages the application process for broadcasting licences and the press division allocates press subsidies for newspapers in difficult market positions (“No. 2 newspapers”, newspapers of the Sami minority and newspapers in the northern parts of Norway). According to the MMA direct press subsidies “amount to about two per cent of the total turnover of the press”. The print media are supported by the state indirectly too in that they do not have to pay value added tax. Helge Østbye claims that the subsidy could only slow down the post war monopolisation process in the local markets, although it was intended to maintain variety in the newspaper market.³⁸

The most recently founded regulatory body is the “Norwegian Media Ownership Authority”.

5.1.1. Eierskapstilsynet

The “Norwegian Media Ownership Authority” was founded in 1999 on the basis of Act No. 53 of 13 June 1997 to monitor the development of media ownership. It systematically maintains a database of all known information about the owners of individual media companies. Every owner with at least a five percent share in a single company is registered in order to make this market transparent to the public.³⁹ An individual owner may not control more than 33% of the daily newspaper circulation or reach more than 33% of the Radio or TV audience.

Although the Ministry of Churches and Culture is in terms of administration superior to this Ownership supervisory authority, there are some rules that prevent political interference in the work of the Authority.⁴⁰ The ministry shall not “give general instructions about the handling of the law” or “orders in relation to the authority’s practice in single cases”. Another means of preventing political interference is an autonomous legal authority for complaints against individual decisions instead of a political review. The management is not delegated politically or by the government.

³⁴ <http://www.forbrukerombudet.no>

³⁵ <http://www.konkurransetilsynet.no/>

³⁶ <http://www.filmtilsynet.no/Lover>

³⁷ <http://www.smf.no/sw225.asp>

³⁸ comp. Østbye 2004:163f.

³⁹ The media directory: <http://www.eierskapstilsynet.no/database/>, the Norwegian Media Ownership Authority: <http://www.eierskapstilsynet.no/>

⁴⁰ Description after Syvertsen, Trine: *Eierskapstilsynet – en studie av medieregulering i praksis. Paper til den nordiske medieforskningskonferansen i Kristiansand* (Media Ownership Authority – a study about media regulation in practice. A paper to the Nordic Media Research Conference in Kristiansand), August 2003.

None of the national acquisitions have been questioned, while Syvertsen writes, that it prevented the further expansion of the largest actors on the Norwegian market. In the regional and local markets 11 acquisitions were questioned by the authority. But the next step of economic evaluation led the authority in six of these cases not to intervene, because a purchase would have been the only way to ensure the further reasonable running of the business.

In a report on the practice of media regulation of this authority, Syvertsen collected data from the work of the authority from 1 January 1999 until 30 April 2002. Finding only five incidences of intervention (in relation to 40 cases a year) by the authority, the author comes to the conclusion that the Eierskapstilsynet has a position somewhere between being “hard” and “soft”. The Media Ownership Authority works together with parties involved in the acquisition process, but it is up to the authority “to initiate and control the process”. According to the law, the authority is not allowed to make any intervention without a formal trial to arrive at a solution together with the involved companies. Doing this, the authority must trust the different parties to disclose all the relevant material, which leads Syvertsen to the conclusion, that the media companies with open communication as their aim and background could have greater influence on the outcome of the discussion than the other parties (Syvertsen 2003:6f). But she also mentions critically that the authority did not analyse the possible relation between the content of media products and did not consider the arguments that came from the media companies themselves. (Syvertsen 2003:13)

5.1.2. Recent Developments

Østbye gives a general critique on the realisation of media policies in Norway. In his opinion the shortage of “a well integrated area, guided by overall principles” has led to “ad hoc” decisions from different political areas. In the early 1980s the new Ministry of Culture was made responsible for many media regulation policies, “but the convergence process has again divided the responsibility between the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Transport and Communications” (Østbye 2004:163).

Regarding the Media Ownership Authority, he writes that besides “probably” hindering Schibsted from “taking over some of the regional newspapers”, the “Act and the Authority have not proved efficient in preventing the continued concentration of ownership in the media”.

He also sees problems with the legislation mainly, “that it covers only a few media (newspapers, radio and television) and that it does not take into consideration multimedia concentration” (Østbye 2004:165).

While this report was being written, there has been discussion about a new Act on media ownership. On 4 June 2004 the Ministry of Churches and Culture proposed the following amendments to the Act:⁴¹

- the limit for ownership on the national level be increased from 33 to 40% it introduces the idea of “multimedia ownership” with companies owning more than 30% in one sector being prohibited from owning more than 20% of companies in other media sectors;
- no longer intervention on local markets;
- intervention on regional markets stays in principle, but with defined geographical markets, borders, and multimedia borders;
- the law is widened to include the electronic media;
- co-operation agreements (cartels) can have the same consequences as acquisitions
On the ministry’s website there were some more details on the new law;⁴²
- the limit of ownership in the regional circulation of daily newspapers is set to 60% multimedia ownership;

⁴¹ <http://www.eierskapstilsynet.no/regelverk/dbaFile954.html>

⁴² <http://odin.dep.no/filarkiv/212219/OTPO304081-TS.pdf>

- If the owner has ownership in two markets, the limits are set to 30% in the first, 20% in the second market;
- If the owner is active in three different markets, he is allowed to hold 20% in each market.

5.1.3. Owners' Reactions

The last two points and the definition of ownership regions caused anger among the largest media owners and confusion, for example, amongst the ministry lawyers. The reaction was quick to follow. Already on 5 June 2004 the daily *Dagens Næringsliv* wrote of the first reaction from the Schibsted Group, that they claimed the law to be a “Lex Schibsted” and a hostile economic policy. A representative from the Ministry of Culture found out later that day that the ministry lawyers thought that multimedia ownership was permissible where owners have 40% in one market and 20% in the other two markets.

According to *Dagens Næringsliv*, Schibsted CEO Kjell Aamot was more pleased after hearing this new information, since calculations of the Media Ownership Authority say that the Schibsted group could own eight of Norway's largest newspapers without reaching the limit on a national level (Agedal 2004).

More angry were the representatives of the other two of the three largest actors on the newspaper market: “However the regions are defined”, Alf Hildrum, Chief Executive Officer from A-Pressen, would be disappointed about the limits on the regional level. He was also very critical of the limits on co-operation agreements. The representative from Orkla Media expressed his hope, that the Norwegian Parliament will change and improve the general conditions for newspaper owners.⁴³

5.2. Ownership Regulation in the Baltic States

In Baltic States there is no specific law regulating media concentration. The broadcasting laws have only some regulations regarding radio and TV ownership issues. However, in theory, the media companies should be treated in the same way as other companies that are regulated through the Competition Law.

The Baltic laws on competition state that 40% of the turnover is the maximum of how much of a business sector that may be owned by one company or group of companies linked to each other. The Competition Council will rule on cases that could pose a threat to the free market, that is, where the existence of a monopoly-like situation could deform the market in a negative way.

However, the Competition Law in Latvia for instance, says nothing about media specific issues. The law does not say how this 40% should be calculated. For example, what data should be used to calculate the share of the market among newspapers, the number of newspapers, the number of printed copies on weekdays, the number of readership or something else. The law does not clarify if national and local newspapers should be counted separately or together. The law does not state how many times per week a newspaper must be published in order to be considered a daily newspaper. It is, moreover, not defined by the law if language specific (e.g., the Latvian-language and the Russian-language) newspapers should be calculated together or separately. It is natural to conclude that the absence of clarification on such issues reflect not only the unawareness of the legislators of the specifics of the media industry, but even more, the absence of thinking of the possible need for limiting the concentration of ownership in the media sector.

In Estonia, the Broadcasting Act sets restrictions on media concentration – e.g. a broadcasting licence cannot be issued to a company that would in this way obtain media monopoly or become the simultaneous owner of radio, television and print media. However the absence of clear legal definitions for the terms used in this regulation has made the provisions

⁴³ “Restriktivt” og “utkantfiendtlig”. *Dagens Næringsliv*, 5 June 2004.

declarative and they have never been applied. In Latvia, the Radio and Television Law has one section on restrictions of concentration and monopolisation of electronic mass media. The laws says that a person who is the sole founder of a broadcasting organisation or whose investment in a broadcasting organisation ensures control of it, or the spouse of such a person, may not own more than 25 per cent of shares (capital share) in other broadcasting organisations. Political parties are not allowed to establish broadcasting organizations.⁴⁴

6. Concentration (Vertical and Horizontal Integration, Cross-Ownership)

Vertical (a firm controls different aspects of production, distribution and exhibition of its products), horizontal and diagonal integration is taking place all over the world. On the one hand media companies currently extend their activities beyond traditional journalism: book publishing, printing, further education, all kinds of commercial publications. On the other hand research has shown that cross-ownership of newspaper and television outlets increase the similarity of coverage and of contents presented to the public (Gormely 1977, here referred according to Carlos Ruotolo 1988: 119).

In Estonia *Kanal 2* and *Postimees* (both belong to Schibsted) sometimes have co-operation projects. For instance, they co-operated before the parliament elections in 2003 (Palju 2004) and newspaper journalists now and then present the news on television.

The development of large media groups might possibly contribute to a wider range of products. (Doyle 2002:27) But according to Gillian Doyle (2002:17) for smaller markets, a particular concern is the availability of resources to support indigenous as opposed to less expensive “imported” content. Ironically, this may lead to a choice between diversity amongst suppliers and diversity of content.

Although cross-ownership + diagonal integration provides possibilities for efficient production and synergy, there are certain factors that diminish content diversity and quality. The following aspects must be identified:

- 1) Journalists and the job market: the same journalists work for different channels and journalists should be loyal to several employers (this will be discussed later);
- 2) Regional/local news and programmes concerning these regions that are not attractive to the advertisers (see: the *Tartu Radio* case in Estonia later in this article);
- 3) Weak competition does not motivate investment in quality;
- 4) Strategies applied by various PR companies (especially in political communication) put everyday journalistic practice under constant pressure;
- 5) Weak professional journalistic culture and very little public discussion on media quality.

The homogeneity – diversity of content is a very complicated topic: today research has shown that the media industry has a tendency to produce news chains and use a lot of secondary sources (Lund 2002) regardless of the concentration but with a general tendency to produce efficiently. Hence, although the present overview focuses on concentration, the authors would not claim that the content diversity problem could be reduced to the level of concentration.

The Norwegian Media Ownership Authority lists 225 newspapers in August 2004. Only one of the five newspapers with the highest circulation does not fully or partly belong to Schibsted ASA. That is *Dagbladet*, the second largest popular tabloid paper besides VG. But this paper belongs to Orkla AS.

⁴⁴ <http://www.nrtplv/en/Law.doc>

Paper	Coverage	Circulation	Ownership
VG	Nationwide	380 190	Schibsted ASA 100%
Aftenposten	Nationwide	256 639	Schibsted ASA 100%
Dagbladet	Nationwide	186 136	Dagbladet AS / owned by Orkla Media
Aftenposten Aften	Oslo	155 366	Schibsted ASA 100%
Bergens Tidende	Hordaland	90 087	Orkla Media 28.5% / Schibsted ASA 24.4%
Adresseavisen	Sør-Trøndelag	86 570	31.9% Schibsted ASA / 17.2% Orkla Media AS
Stavanger Aftenblad	Rogaland	70 101	31.5% Schibsted ASA / 38.8% Others
Dagens Næringsliv	Nationwide	69 262	Norges Handels og Sjøfartstidenes AS ⁴⁵ 100%
Drammens Tidende	Buskerud	45 271	100% Orkla Media AS
Fædrelandsvennen	Vest-Agder	45 125	25% Schibsted ASA / 50.6% Others

Table 6. Ten largest Norwegian newspapers, region, (number of copies sold) and how much the largest actors in the newspaper market own.

So just one newspaper of the ten largest does not belong wholly or partly to Schibsted ASA, Orkla Media AS (or A-Pressen).

Of the 225 listed newspapers in the Media Register, the circulation of 15 papers is not mentioned (some are free of charge, some did not supply data for some reason). 155 papers have a circulation of under 10 000 copies per edition. About 102 have a circulation under 5 000 sold copies. It is quite singular, that such a large number of papers with such low circulation are able to survive, and that is very typical for the Norwegian newspaper structure. Many of the small papers belong to the larger regional papers, which again are often partly or fully owned by one of the largest actors on the market. Others are driven by local owners such as local investors or the local administration. The demand is quite high, because the Norwegians in the provinces like to read local papers and to get news about what is happening in their neighbourhood. So the subscriptions and the press subsidies help the small papers to survive. Small changes in these regulations would change the newspaper structure radically.

Although there are also other actors on the market such as foreign investment banks or foreign media companies (representing globalised capital) or the Norwegian former state monopoly (today mostly TV distribution, and engagements with shares in media), the concentration of ownership historically began in the newspapers. And the three largest actors in the market today still have their base in the newspaper business.

In Estonia, Eesti Meedia simultaneously owns radio and television channels, magazines, a printing plant and distribution system.

Cross-media ownership in Estonia already exists on the national level, although it has had a great impact on local level too. In order to discuss some problems of cross-media ownership and concentration in the Estonian context, the Tartu case seems to be most suitable. In Tartu (the second largest city with around 100 000 inhabitants in 2003) the traditionally local paper *Postimees* (Eesti Meedia) became unofficially national already during Soviet times (then called *Edasi*). In 1997 its main office moved to Tallinn and only one department for the production of the local supplement was left in Tartu. The local radio of Tartu (*Tartu Raadio*, started in 1991) was also bought by Eesti Meedia. In August 2003 Eesti Meedia purchased 34% of the Trio Radio Group, as well. The oldest local radio *Tartu Raadio* was affiliated to *Radio Kuku*, the full-time service was replaced by some locally broadcast inserts. By March 2003 also the local morning show as well as some

⁴⁵ The "Norges Handels og Sjøfartstidenes AS" is partly owned by Dagbladet AS (20.5%), three other investors have roundabout 15% each of them. An insurance company holds 5.1%, and others: 30.6%.

other longer programmes were cancelled and replaced by the syndicated programme from the main office. The most probable cause for closing down the popular local programme was to avoid overlapping of formats of *Tartu Raadio* and *Kuku*. One could argue that losing one local morning programme does not mean that local journalism has disappeared. Especially if the public radio and television local studios remain. Still the most problematic aspect concerning concentration on a regional level is that, slowly and obliviously, the local forum becomes marginal. Some local production usually remains and the local news is produced mainly for the national audience.

Currently *Postimees* has a special staff of 13 journalists that produce the local supplement *Tartu Postimees*. They also produce journalistic material for the “main” paper. After the shutdown of Tartu Radio the local studio with three reporters remained, but now they produce information from Tartu and South-Estonia for the national audience. The Tartu studio of the public radio (7 local journalists) produce 1 hour of extended news programming each day for the listeners of South-Estonia as well as short news 4 times per pay for the national audience and two radio magazine programmes for the national audience). In addition, the Tartu department of public TV produces some hours of programming for the national audience.

Currently Tartu does not have a free paper. According to Nuust (2003) a common advertising department with *Postimees* was one of the reasons why the free paper for Tartu called *Tartu Börs* (established by the Eesti Meedia corporation in 2000) that became very popular, but did not earn money was closed in 2001. The advertising department was primarily concerned with attracting money for the main paper.

Most of the 13 traditional regions (administrative units) have one regional newspaper and very few have a local radio station. There are two exceptions (the largest Pärnu and the smallest Hiiumaa – which have two regional papers). In addition, free papers are issued in the three largest towns of Tallinn, Tartu and Pärnu.

Of these 15 papers one (the biggest, circulation 16 000) belongs to the Eesti Meedia 100% and 4 belong to Eesti Meedia 42 – 56%. Hence we can conclude that AS Eesti Meedia owns a chain of regional newspapers.

In Latvia, the JSC Diena is the dominant owner of regional and local newspapers. According to TNS BMF Latvia, local newspapers in 2003 had an 8% share of the advertising income in print media which itself has a 45.8% share of all advertising expenditure. The link between the regional and local newspapers and the national newspaper *Diena*, also owned by JSC Diena, gives the company opportunities to offer a better package to advertisers. Although JSC Diena owns not only newspapers, a subscription and distribution centre, as well as a printing house, the company has not moved into the radio and television business. However, *Diena* has shown that even without having joint ownership structures it is possible for a newspaper to co-operate with certain radio and TV stations on various social and sales promotion projects. In December 2004, for instance, the daily *Diena* and the television channel *TV3* carried out a joint project called Latvia's Pride that focused on quite unknown people that had done something good for other people and that Latvia could be proud of. In a similar way during the same period, *Latvian public TV*, the daily *Latvijas Avize* and the news portal *Apollo* invited their viewers, readers and Internet users to take part in a poll to find the top 100 personalities in Latvian history. Sometimes the co-operation coalitions among Latvian media companies are different. One could possibly claim that a situation where no TV or radio station in Latvia owns or has the same owner as any of the largest newspapers – or vice versa – ensures that the media companies from one sector can choose co-operation partners from another media sector more freely than in a situation where there would have been ownership links across the sectors.

As mentioned above, there are ownership links in Latvia between the two private national television broadcasters and the two most popular private national radio broadcasters. *TV3* is owned by the same company as *Radio Star FM* and LNT owns half of *Radio SWH*. Moreover, LNT shares resources with *TV5* that is linked through its former owner Grafton Entertainment to the Internet portal *Tvnet*. There is a link from the website of *TV3* to *Radio Star FM*. *Tvnet* has online TV links to LNT, *TV5 (Riga Online)* and *Latvian public TV*, but not to *TV3*.

When in June 2003 it was reported by the daily *Diena* (Arāja 2003) that the competing daily *Latvijas Avīze* (then *Lauku Avīze*) had possibly been bought by the Ventspils-based company Ventbunkers, speculations started that this might in the long run result in a merger between *Latvijas Avīze* and *Neatkarīgā Rītā Avīze* and their staff if the owners considered the argument of saving money as more important than the importance of having two instruments of public influence. Ventbunkers has ownership relations to Ventspils Nafta that owns Mediju Nams, which in turn owns *Neatkarīgā Rītā Avīze*. Until 24 December 2004 *Latvijas Avīze* has made no confirmation of its ownership relations to Ventbunkers and both newspapers and their staff exist as separate entities.

In Lithuania, the Achemos grupė UAB operates as a powerful cross-media consortium. The best illustration of horizontal (or mono-media) concentration is the case of several commercial radio stations (*M-1*, *M1 Plus*, *Lietus* and *Laluna*) with only one owner, or a publishing company such as Respublikos leidiniai UAB (The Respublika Group) that publishes the third largest national daily *Respublika*, has shares in regional newspapers (*Vakarų ekspresas* for Klaipėda city with 300 000 inhabitants), and publishes the national tabloid *VL: Vakarų žinios*. Lietuvos rytas UAB, the publisher of the largest national daily, has shares in the regional newspaper *Panevėžio rytas*, TV magazine *TV Antena*, weekly *Ekstra*, etc. As a matter of fact there are media owned by large capital groups such as Achemos grupė, which owns the national daily *Lietuvos žinios*, radio stations *Radiocentras*, *RC2*, etc., or the new Lithuanian business conglomerate MG Baltic which partly owns the Lithuanian news agency *ELTA* and one of the strongest commercial TV channels *LNK*. The arrival of industrial capital into the Lithuanian media is an interesting phenomenon indeed. On the one hand, this may be prompted by other goals than to become a profitable media company, yet, on the other hand, this may also indicate that the media is becoming a profitable area to invest in (esp. television).

7. The Role of Foreign Owners

As was mentioned in the introduction, the internationalisation of media companies is a normal trend of the media economy. Foreign companies operate in the Baltic media market and Baltic owners extend their activities across borders too. In Norway Schibsted has moved into Sweden and Estonia, and into Switzerland and Spain through the free newspaper joint venture 20 Minutes Holding AG. Orkla Media has moved into Poland, and further into Lithuania and the Ukraine. In 1997 Orkla Media moved into Sweden and in 2000 into Denmark. A-pressen has moved towards Russia (Helgesen 2002:126).

Traditionally the role of the owners should be passive. Owners should not interfere with editorial policy. This situation works well in a market where the interest of public sphere is strongly supported by media policy. In an ultra liberal media market the non-intervention results in maximising profit and hence the very passive role of the owner might become harmful for the media. Why? It is perfectly normal when the owner wishes to get profit. But the executive powers in a news organisation rule. What is the motivation of top management?

As it was stated before, the role of foreign capital is different in the three Baltic States. In Lithuania the press is still owned mainly by the national owners, in Estonia the Ekspress Grupp (Hans Luik) controls less than 1/3 of the dailies' market, but almost half of the weeklies' market.

National commercial television market is mainly controlled by Scandinavian capital. In the radio market local owners of Trio LSL Rein Lang and Hans Luik sold their shares first to Metromedia and the rest in 2003 to Eesti Meedia (Schibsted). Trio LSL along with the Sky Media (still owned by national capital, operates *Sky Plus*, *Sky Radio*, *Russkoe Radio*, *Radio Mania* and *Energy FM*) is the largest commercial radio group in Estonia. The two control 50% of the total radio advertising market. The third big company is Mediainvest Holding (owned by MTG, operates *Star FM* and *Power Hit Radio*).

In summer 2003 Estonian newspapers published several articles on the impact of foreign owners and increasing concentration. On 16 August *Eesti Päevaleht* asserted in its editorial that the owners certainly do not give orders to the editors but employees acquire an intuitive understanding of what is acceptable and what is not and this leads to self-censorship.

Even though it is not fully clear who owns what in the Latvian media industry, the national media is mainly Latvian-owned, while the regional and local media has a higher proportion of foreign ownership through Bonnier shares in JSC Diena that directly or indirectly owns ten regional and local newspapers all over Latvia. The leading radio and TV stations as well as the leading Internet news portals are owned fully or partly by foreign capital. There are no media debates or other indications that show that the foreign owners, unlike national owners, make attempts to influence the editorial line of the media company. Foreign capital often seems to ensure that there is no interference in the editorial line. It is hard to imagine for instance, that the newspapers partly owned by Bonnier could publish 1-page interviews with the owner or a favourite of the owner on election days or on other key occasions as it happens in, for example, the nationally owned dailies *Telegraf* (Fast & Vigman 13.10.2004) and *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze* (Dreiblats 05.10.2002).

8. Vulnerable Job Market

According to the two journalist organisations in Norway, the Norwegian Journalists Union (NJ) and the Norwegian Editors Union (NR), there are about 9 670 active journalists in Norway, whose main profession is journalism. The Norwegian Editors Union has 670 registered members, which have the status of responsible editors or chief of the editorial unit. In the NJ there are nearly 9 000 organized journalists, which is – according to the description of the organisation⁴⁶ – the main body of journalists in Norway.

The public broadcaster NRK (radio and TV) mentions a total number of 3495 employees in 2003. Radio P4 has 86 employees, and private TV station TV2 had 504 employees in 2003. TV Norge had 81 and TV3 – 38 employees in the same period. But one has to handle all these numbers carefully: The companies do not differentiate between journalists or editors and other employees, and the organisations may not have all journalists, reporters, researchers, freelancers and editors as members. Tore Sjølie from the NJ wrote in August 2004, that many freelancers are organized in the NJ.

In spring 2004 there was a two-week long strike in the Norwegian newspapers. The journalists struggled for their pensions, which were formerly paid by the company they worked for in addition to their state pension, but now this should be changed to being covered by funds. They were striking for better working conditions, and better contracts for the younger journalists.

Many journalists in Norway are employed, while the smaller newspapers in the districts often work with freelancing hobby-journalists, who cover the broad spectrum of topics on the countryside for little reward. There are many small papers and, according to Tore Sjølie, no organisation seems to have an overview of how many journalists are working like that.

In Estonia, the journalistic job market, by contrast, was adversely influenced by free market impacts. The job market has been decreasing from an estimate of 1500 in 1995 (Laik 1996:94) to approximately 1000 in 2003. Although the number of journalists was decreasing, the overall number of personnel in the newspapers increased in the 1990s due to the enlargement of marketing, advertising and technical departments. For instance, the overall staff number of the largest national daily *Postimees* increased between 1999 to 2001 from 144 to 153 employees (Saks 2002:197) and subsequently to 159 in 2003 (<http://www.postimees.ee>). The current data from the paper's own website indicates 84 journalists including photographers (<http://www.postimees.ee>).

Various reasons have caused the shrinkage of the journalistic job market. The first redundancies took place in public TV and radio in the middle of the 1990s. In *Estonian public TV* the number of journalistic staff was 100 in 1995 but by 2000 it had decreased to 67. (Shein 2002: 61). According to the archive of Estonian Radio, the staff was 161 journalists in 1993. By 1996 the number had decreased to 64. In 2003 there were about 90 journalists working in public radio.

⁴⁶ Numbers from an e-mail of Tore Sjølie from 16 August 2004, or see http://www.nj.no/Om_NJ/; data for NR: <http://www.nored.no/>

The economic downturn of 1998/99 forced the editorial offices of newspapers to reduce their personnel costs. In 1999 the personnel costs at Eesti Meedia were reduced by 20% (Korv 2001). The situation was not any better in the second largest daily *Eesti Päevaleht* where there were 92 journalists in 2001 (Saks 2002:203) and 77 in 2003 (<http://www.epl.ee>). The reduction of personnel costs was proportionately greater for the regional editors outside Tallinn (Mötsar & Vedler 1999).

Cost cutting since 1998 was not the only cause of the loss of journalistic jobs. Many of the larger employers have either effected geographical production transfers or even disappeared from the market. *Postimees* (the largest Estonian daily) transferred its main staff from Tartu to Tallinn (the capital) in 1998 in a move that seriously damaged the journalistic job market in Tartu. *Õhtuleht* and *Sõnumileht*, two of the tabloids, merged in 2000 causing a reduction in journalists from 60 to 30. A similar number of journalistic jobs was lost when one of the two Estonian news agencies went bankrupt in 2003 (EALL 2003) According to data provided by the World Association of Newspapers, the total number of journalists working for dailies was 496 in 2002 and 503 in 2003.

The fluctuations and loss of approximately 10% of workplaces within the last 5 years in a job market where about 1000 places exist, creates a similar effect to the situation in Poland described by Goban-Klas:

“Paradoxically, freedom of the press did not bring greater independence for journalists, at least not for most of them. ... The fear of losing their job pushes journalists to accept any working conditions and, perhaps worse, to follow orders from their managing editors” (Goban-Klas 1996:31, 32).

As was already mentioned, the particular character of the media market in Lithuania rests on several specific indicators, such as a national ownership structure (meaning that most of the media, in the print sector at least, is owned by Lithuanian capital), a small media market in both population and economic terms, etc. The economic factor, therefore, affects freedom of communication. Pressures from the media owners, the process of media concentration and the lack of jobs create a very dichotomous situation – the media is free from state censorship but it is not free from self-censorship. On the one hand, this forces journalists to comply with owners’ interests but, on the other hand, this may also create favourable conditions for understanding that professional consolidation of journalists is a necessity. The development of a strong professional union may be the only favourable solution to problems that journalists have to face at the present day.

The problems that the Lithuanian journalists have to deal with seem to be shared by their colleagues in Latvia and Estonia too. As a result of severe media concentration in Estonia, the job market for journalists is continuously tightening, so they are more concerned with loyalty to their employers than with commitment to their readers, sources or professional organisations.

9. Some Concluding Remarks

A comparative analysis reveals that Norway and Lithuania have mostly nationally owned media, while Latvia is somewhere in between and Estonia is strongly oriented towards foreign ownership of the media. Concerning concentration, Lithuanian and Latvian media would be somewhere in between, but Norwegian and Estonian media would be very concentrated, especially in the press sector.

Nordic capital dominates in all three Baltic States, but Lithuania has less foreign investments than the other two. The media owners are mainly from Lithuania.

The media market in Norway is quite wealthy and, when it comes to local newspapers, it has a complex structure with many different and small owners. But the larger and more profitable newspapers are mostly driven by a few owners, and

the largest media with the largest audience or highest circulation are owned by just a few companies, and the market activities happen on a higher level: actors from the Nordic countries and other foreign actors are investing in the Norwegian media market.

The Norwegian media market is transparent and the further concentration process is controlled by the state. The Baltic media market is ultra liberal and data is inconsistent. Especially the Estonian job market of journalists is so small and so concentrated in the capital city (Tallinn) that journalists usually do not have job alternatives. In addition, the trade unions do not play a significant role in the Baltic States. Hence, concentration does not only affect diversity, it also increases the journalist's need to be loyal to the employer.

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Editorial Censorship in Baltic and Norwegian Newspapers

Ainārs Dimants

1. Introduction

The aim of this research was to analyse decision making in the editorial boards of media and the pressures exerted by media owners – the practice of editorial censorship in the newspapers of Baltic countries and Norway.

Special attention here is given to the development of media ownership in the Baltics and the impact of foreign capital on editorial autonomy and establishing of editorial instruments to provide quality of media work. The methodology of the research is based on a synthesis of a functional structural system-theory and a Rational Choice theory, which makes it possible to analyse the role and effectiveness of both – structures and actors. The main method of the empiric research is the deep standardised interview with journalists and editors.

The majority of interviews with journalists and editors were realised and recorded in Latvia (see farther), in other countries – with some free select journalists/editors, who are experienced in political/business matters, display a socially responsible attitude from the point of view of journalistic professional standards, and work in the biggest national dailies in Estonia, Lithuania and Norway.¹ Each interview was absolutely separate. A special questionnaire was designed – questions and their succession for interviews were prepared.

The most important questions focused on the ideological position of the newspaper, to what extent the position is determined by the publisher, whether the ideological principles of the newspaper are defined in any document and publicly announced and how do these principles manifest themselves in the newspaper's work and influence the journalist's functions. Moreover, the questions tried to find out whether and how the publisher intervenes in the daily work of the editorial staff, if the editorial board is independent from the publisher, especially from the publisher's purely commercially based influence on the content of the newspaper.

During the course of the research, I conducted 82 standardised and in-depth interviews with Latvian editors and journalists (38 from national newspapers and 44 from the regional or local press). Some of the interviews were recorded anonymously if the respondent so desired. All of the interviews were recorded on tape and have been stored in that medium. They have also all been transcribed onto paper.

As a researcher, I agree with the functionally structural system theory of Niklas Luhmann, which says that the basic function of media systems – self-observation of societies – is possible only if the mass media system is a *permanent* system with permanent logic about its functioning. This is particularly applicable to the positions which newspapers take in terms of reflecting events in news and commentary. This is a position which is flexible in accordance with ideological or normative

¹ I would like to thank the communication students Teiksmā Buševa and Laura Jēgere (Vidzeme University College), as well as media student Nils Pedersen (University of Bergen) and public communications students from Vytautas Magnus University and media researchers Aukšė Balčytienė (Vytautas Magnus University), Halliki Harro-Loit (University of Tartu), and Lars Arve Røsland (University of Bergen) for the cooperation in carrying out the interviews.

factors, but it is inevitable, because even if a paper strictly aims at neutrality, certain conflicts of values cannot be avoided (Luhmann 1960). An important selection criterion here is the editorial line – how is it determined? Is it determined by the publisher or the editorial staff, particularly the editor-in-chief? Is it instead informally determined by all staff members (Ruß-Mohl 2003)? An absence of internal press freedom or editorial autonomy is a manifestation of a media system which has not yet been fully separated from the existing political system. In other words, the issue here focuses on who or what sets the agenda of the media and on how this happens.

Research in the past (Eiropas Zona 1999; Kalniņa, Liepiņa & Slišāne 2001) has shown that there is good reason to be concerned about internal censorship and self-censorship in the Latvian news media. This situation is prone to abuse by political and economic forces which, while remaining anonymous, interfere with editorial independence and autonomy in terms of setting out the agenda for the mass media. It is in the public interest to strengthen editorial autonomy and to weaken any purely political or commercial effects on media content. At the same time, limitations on the freedom of the press cannot be seen as an interference of the internal quality mechanisms of newspapers, provided that such mechanisms are aimed at improving the quality of the media product that is offered to the public. In this case, quite on the contrary, self-supervision must be seen as a co-operative and voluntary step toward carrying out the public responsibilities of the mass media.

Working with two assistants, the researcher conducted in-depth and standardised interviews between June and December 2003 with editors and journalists (editors-in-chief, editors of newspaper sections, commentators and reporters) from a variety of newspapers. The process involved Latvia's five leading daily newspapers – *Diena*, *Latvijas Avīze* (known as *Lauku Avīze* until December 2003), *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*, *Vesti segodnja* and *Chas* (the latter two are published in Russian) – based on audience cover data.² Interviews were also conducted with people from a selection of regional and local newspapers, taking into account their ownership, particularly in terms of major media concerns. These included *Million* (in Russian) in Daugavpils, *Kurzemes Vārds* in Liepāja, *Novaja gazeta* (Russian) in Jelgava, *Zemgales Ziņas* in Jelgava, *Druva* in Cēsis and *Liesma* in Valmiera. These are Latvia's largest regional and local newspapers. Also included were *Jelgavas Rīta Avīze* (now known as *Jelgavas Avīze*) in Jelgava and *Ventas Balss* in Ventspils. At each newspaper, the plan was to interview the editor-in-chief, at least two section editors who deal with political issues, two commentators (provided that the newspapers had commentators), and three reporters – eight people in all from each newspaper. A total of 104 interviews were planned, and 82 were conducted (in the remaining cases, individuals declined to be interviewed, and at some newspapers, including *Jelgavas Avīze* and *Novaja gazeta*, there were fewer than eight editorial employees). This is unquestionably a sufficiently representative cohort to obtain a sense of the situation.

The newspaper *Diena* is published by the stock company “Diena”, in which 63% of shares are owned by the Swedish stock company “Bonnier”. The stock company also holds 100% control over SIA “Zemgales Ziņas”, which publishes an eponymous newspaper, and over *Novaja gazeta*.

Latvijas Avīze is published by the stock company “Lauku Avīze” which, according to information in the news media (Rulle 2002; Arāja 2003; Rulle & Arāja 2004), actually belongs to the stock company “Ventbunkers”. It is one of the companies in the so-called “Ventspils group”, which is believed to be largely controlled by the chairman of the Ventspils City Council, Aivars Lembergs. In the Latvian Company Register, however, the only owner of the stock company “Lauku Avīze” is shown to be its board chairman, Viesturs Serdāns.

Another company from the “Ventspils group” – the stock company “Ventspils nafta” – holds 100% control over SIA “Mediju nams”, which publishes *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze* and *Jelgavas Avīze*. *Vesti segodnja* is published by SIA “Fenster”, *Chas* – by SIA “Izdevniecības nams Petits”, *Million* and *Ventas Balss* – by a single individual, although formally the two papers are

² <http://www.bdh.lv/default.asp?lang=v&id=1088>

also published by a limited liability company, and *Kurzemes Vārds*, *Druva* and *Liesma* – by limited liability companies which are co-owned by employees of the relevant newspapers.

During 2004 interviews were carried out outside Latvia. In July 2004 the news editor and two journalists of the two biggest national dailies in Norway – *Aftenposten* and *VG* – were interviewed. Both are owned by “Schibsted”. In October 2004 two editors and three journalists with several years of practice in four of the major Lithuanian dailies as well as one business newspaper (owned by “Bonnier” group) were interviewed. From the Estonian press answers of October 2004 were obtained from the biggest national daily *Postimees* (“Schibsted”) and the business daily *Äripäev* (“Bonnier”).

2. The Editorial Line of Newspapers

I will first give an overview of the results from the larger study in Latvia and then compare these results to the interviews conducted in Norway, Estonia and Lithuania.

2.1. The Editorial Line of Newspapers in Latvia

The study conducted in *Latvia* showed that the structure of ownership has a serious influence on editorial autonomy. Western (eq. Scandinavian) investors are positive participants in this process, because they support editorial autonomy. Latvian investors have been active in shaping policy (with a few exceptions in the regional and local media, and that is particularly true for those newspapers which are owned by their own journalists). The most vivid example in this case is *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*. Interviews made it clear that its publishers see the paper as a political instrument, not as a long-term project in the media business. When it comes to Russian publishers, journalists and readers, most of the process is dominated by an ethnic and/or non-Western European culture. Their interests and activities in publishing and reading newspapers are generally speaking influenced by their comparatively lower level of integration into Latvia's society. Newspapers that are financed by Western investors (*Novaja gazeta*) are more likely to support the integration of the society, emphasising primarily those things which bring people together. The problem for regional and local newspapers, for their part, is often their excessively close link to local governments.

The study also demonstrated, however, that there are two other decisive factors in determining editorial autonomy. First of all, there is the matter of the financial independence of the newspaper. Does the newspaper make a profit? Is it a long-term project for the publisher in the media business, or is it just an instrument in pursuit of narrowly defined political and economic goals in areas such as the privatisation of state-owned properties? The first step here is a ban against hidden advertising at the level of individual journalists, as well as the entire newspaper and publishing company. In the long term, hidden advertising provides no advantages to publishers or newspapers, because it affects the believability and trustworthiness that is the most important capital of a newspaper. By extension, it also affects the finances of the paper.

Second, there is the position which senior editors, and particularly the editor-in-chief, take with respect to editorial autonomy, editorial line and the criteria which govern the quality of journalism. Do they understand that these are absolute prerequisites if a newspaper is to be successful from the perspective of society, not just business? High professional standards in journalism are better upheld at those newspapers where there is professional and regular quality management within editorial structures. Elsewhere, one finds weak understanding of such basic concepts as censorship, self-censorship and self-control. It has to be said that there have been structural problems within editorial structures and in relations with the management or publishers in some of those media outlets which belong to Western investors, too.

I have chosen to keep and show an extensive number of comments from the interviews carried out since this can give a very valuable and more comprehensive understanding of the differences and the situation in the various newspapers in Latvia.

2.1.1. Editorial Line of National Newspapers in Latvia

2.1.1.1. Editorial Line in *Diena*

The people interviewed in the largest daily in Latvia; *Diena*, could not all clearly formulate the ideological position of the daily, but nobody stated that this position is defined or influenced by the owners of the newspaper. On the contrary, the interviews reflected the assumption that there is a clear editorial independence in the newspaper and this might be a result of the journalistic tradition in the origin country of the main owner; Sweden. At times the editorial staff has decided to take a position in certain political issues and communicated this quite clearly to the readers.

“We identify ourselves with a liberal and democratic system of values. That has certainly appeared in the political suggestions that we make in terms of stating those parties which people should or should not vote for. That has appeared directly in pre-election articles. *Our position has never been influenced by the publisher.* When it comes to the *vision and mission* of the newspaper *Diena*, these are developed by the newspaper’s board, as well as by the board of the stock company, which represents the publishers. The strategic documents were drafted in 2000. In 1997 and 1998, the newspaper formulated nine elements that are known as the goals and responsibilities of *Diena*. The owners and founders of *Diena* have never attempted to influence the paper or insist on specific co-ordinates of values. The traditions of Scandinavian publishers have historically provided for enormous editorial independence. That is one of the cornerstones in the principle that is freedom of speech. Any attempt to influence the positions of the newspaper on important issues could not be a part of this culture of operations among our publishers. Latvia is an example of this. The Bonnier family owns two newspapers – *Dienas Bizness* and *Diena*. There have often been diametrically opposing views in *Dienas Bizness* and *Diena* with respect to how Latvia should develop”, said Sarmīte Ēlerte, editor-in-chief of *Diena*.

“We certainly do not defend the principles of an authoritarian state. Competition among various entities promotes development more rapidly than a situation in which there are authoritarian instructions, in which the state regulates economic development and determines what is to be developed and what is not to be developed. Our newspaper upholds this principle, and if you read our newspaper regularly, then it should be evident to you. We fight against corruption in all of its manifestations, particularly in terms of political corruption. A free market can survive only in a country where the rule of law prevails. Latvia needs a civil society which is able to organise itself. To be sure, this idea about the civil society lead to the next issue – NGOs. That is a segment which we really defend. We want the sector to develop more intensively in Latvia”, said deputy editor-in-chief Māra Miķelsone.

“This is also a way that readers can check the extent to which the things that we say are in line with these principles. No one – no individual, no organisation – can ever be objective. We can, however, try to be as varied as possible, and that is what we do” stated Pauls Raudseps, editor of the commentary section.

Commentator Askolds Rodins was not sure about this:

“I think that the position is defined somewhere, I believe that it is so”.

The answers from two reporters who asked to be anonymous did not differ much.

“Yes, the fact is that we are a centrist newspaper. Is there a legal document to that effect? I do not know, I cannot tell you whether it is so or not. As is the case in any company, it is important to set out a goal. Only in pursuit of that goal can you achieve results”, one reporter said.

“That’s a question that you should pose to the management of the newspaper. I do not know whether the ideological position of *Diena* is set out in legal documents. I do not wish to speak about areas with which I am not completely familiar”, the other reporter said.

2.1.1.2. Editorial Line in *Latvijas Avīze*

The interviews with people working for *Latvijas Avīze* showed that the ideological position is more communicated to the journalists through meetings, where positions in some articles are discussed, than in any document that is open to the public, as well. Most of the people interviewed said that the newspaper is a nationalist and conservative newspaper. At times it has supported one political party. It was admitted that there is no firewall between the editorial staff and the publisher or owner regarding the editorial line.

“We have not set out any ironclad political programme which in one way or another coincides with the programme of a party or a political force. We do not want to say that we have a principle that can never be changed. My personal position is that we must not denounce a political force, we must denounce specific things which it does. If the political force is wise, then I don’t care whether it’s in government or opposition. Our newspaper’s internal position, one which employees must know, is that we are a nationalist and conservative newspaper. I really do not want us to stick entirely to the nationalist line, however. I think that the future of the newspaper lies in the kind of newspaper that it already is. Within the European Union, I think that there will be greater confrontations over the European constitution, about things like that. All of the contradictions are becoming more detailed, *the issue of sovereignty* will be one such matter. Latvia does not need to accept things that it does not need. In this context, I think that *Latvijas Avīze* will differ from the others”, Voldemārs Krustiņš, chairman of the newspaper’s editorial council said.

“We are a nationalist and conservative newspaper which defends basic national values and identities. We make that clear in the subscriptions catalogue for the press, we make it clear in our advertising. This idea was developed by Voldemārs Krustiņš, and over the last few years it has become more stable, more expansive. My work is influenced by this fact in the sense that it helps me to organise and plan my work. If you know the overarching and basic goal of the newspaper, then you know which areas of events should be the focus of your attention. That helps in setting out priorities”, said editor-in-chief Linda Rasa.

“*Lauku Avīze [Latvijas Avīze]* has a very distinct nationalist line. We oppose pro-Russian parties, we oppose any liberalisation of laws on education and citizenship. We do not believe that the process of naturalisation should be made any easier, that the exams should be made easier. We also take a position against whingeing and wailing. We do not support whingeing pensioners, for instance. We also write about farmers who have achieved a lot with their work, determination and ambition, not with whingeing about the idea that nothing is any good. There is no piece of paper which says that we support nationalist values, but if you work here, you get the sense of the position. Those who work here largely agree with it. Sometimes my position may be a bit more moderate, and then I have to make my way between that which my bosses want and that which I want. Krustiņš, for instance, has a very strict position. Any letters or statements from pro-Russian MPs are lies, as far as he is concerned, but I would call it tendentious information. If I put that into the paper, then I have to listen to him saying ‘Again with the tendentious information! Lies, lies, lies!’ But I try to write as I see fit”, said journalist Ilze Kuzmina both agreeing and disagreeing with the firm professional backbone of the newspaper.

“Our focus is on national pride, national identity and national values, now, of course, in the context of European Union values. In this process of globalisation, *Lauku Avīze [Latvijas Avīze]* distinctly stresses national values, those things that are of importance to the Latvians. I think that the direction, the trend has been specified by the publisher. This position, this overall impression of our newspaper, is promoted by the everyday work of the editorial structure.

We have meetings, we discuss the positions that are taken in important articles, we discuss the direction which interviews should take”, said Dace Terzena, editor of the newspaper’s supplement “Mājas Viesis” (Guest at Home).

“We are a nationalist and conservative newspaper. That is evident in the newspaper’s contents and in our staff meetings. I think that our readers understand it, we don’t have to set out that position in any concrete form. We have no concrete model in splitting off the editorial structure from the publisher, although the situation is changing gradually. The publisher is more interested in financial issues, although he also attends our staff meetings, of course (and here I am speaking of Viesturs Serdāns). Editorial and content issues are left largely up to the editorial council, but I would not say that these areas are strictly kept separate from one another”, said Māris Antonēvičs, the paper’s political editor.

“As far as I am concerned, the word ‘ideological’ applies specifically to ideology. I work mostly in the area of economic and social issues, and there is not much ideology there. Sometimes perhaps I conclude that something should happen in this way or that way, but in most of my work, that is not the case. To be sure, we do have an overarching line with respect to the subjects that we cover. That is clearly where the ideological position influences articles that have been specified by the publisher. I cannot tell you whether the publisher has formulated the ideological position in documents of some kind”, stated commentator Ivars Andīņš.

“Perhaps it changes from time to time, but it is always there. I think that our newspaper’s guidelines have not been publicly declared. I think that they are very evident in articles, in our major commentaries. To a certain extent, our ideological position has been determined by the publisher. We hold regular meetings. We are not forced to do specific things, however, it is all discussed at the meetings”, said a section editor who chose to be anonymous.

“You know, I have seen nothing in writing. *Lauku Avīze* [Latvijas Avīze] has made it absolutely clear that we will help this government, this New Era-led government, to work. The newspaper might just as well take the opposite ideological position – we must get rid of this government and then accept, let us say, a government that is led by the People’s Party – and then work in that direction”, said journalist Māra Libeka and to a certain extent admitted that an ideological direction is replaced with politics.

“It is, of course, determined by our management, and we strictly observe and implement those policies. The management is our board chairman, basically it is also the chairman of the [editorial] council”, admitted journalist Iveta Tomsone.

2.1.1.3. Editorial Line in *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*

Interviews with people working for *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze* revealed different viewpoint on what is the ideological position of the newspaper; the news editor was not aware of whether any ideological positions have been formulated. It was not denied that there is influence from the owners, not only on the editorial line, but also on the daily work. Partly this was explained by thankfulness to the current owners “Ventspils nafta”, which rescued the newspaper from a financial disaster.

“We do not take the side of those who are in power, we try to influence those who are in power in serving the public interest. We criticise all governments so as to force them to act. To be sure, the position of the newspaper has been agreed with the publisher, but the position as such, of course, comes from the editorial structure. It has emerged through discussion, through the need to offer this product in the market. The principles are available, if you are interested in them, but they do not contain specific sections. The situation has never been formulated in a completely separate document, it emerges in the context of our development plan and our business plan”, said editor-in-chief Aldis Bērziņš, about whom it must be noted that he served in that position only until the government of Prime Minister Indulis Emsis (Green and Farmers Alliance) took office in March 2004.

“We do not have a conscious and institutionalised moral position, no set of such principles, but we do have traditions that have existed for years now. Pluralism is the main thing, we allow different kinds of people to express themselves on the basis of the same rules. We do not apply any clichés, any ideological insistence. We are an open stage to a certain extent. We want to uphold the atmosphere of independence to an even greater degree, and that is because of our shareholders, the reputation that we get because of those shareholders. Shareholders always influence political positions, of course, and there are contradictions here. It would be very hard to spit in their direction, however, because if you look at it realistically, then the desire of “Ventspils nafta” to buy the “Preses nams” publishing house rescued our newspaper from financial disaster”, stated commentator Dainis Lemešonoks, thus not really agreeing with the editor-in-chief.

“Our ideological programme says that we must reflect things that are happening and the possible consequences of those things in an all-encompassing, objective, hopefully competent and convincing way, one that is accessible to people, one that attracts their interest. I think that this might be the ideological programme for *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*. I’m not saying that our editorial structure is completely free of the publisher, but no one, thank God, has ever tried to regulate me. The editor-in-chief and I hold similar views, but sometimes his judgments are quite different from mine”, stressed commentator Viktors Avotiņš.

“We harshly criticise, we look at what people are doing. This position is a part of our newspaper’s concept, it was designed by the owners, managers and employees of the paper”, said the Economics editor Rolands Pētersons giving a statement closest to the boss’ thinking.

“I am not aware of whether any ideological positions have been formulated”, admitted News editor Māra Matisone.

“We have declared in our editorials that we stand for the protection of everyone, particularly of those segments of our society which are weakly protected. We are a socially oriented newspaper”, emphasised journalist Aija Lulle.

“We mostly try to defend the common man, the interests of businesspeople”, said journalist Gunta Skrebele.

2.1.1.4. Editorial Line in *Vesti Segodnja*

The people interviewed in the newspaper *Vesti segodnja* had difficulties in describing any ideological position set out in any specific document. As a newspaper published in the Russian language, it was said that the interest of the Russian society is a key issue. The interviews revealed that the owner has a strong influence on the editorial line and gives his recommendations, especially what is related to the business section of the newspaper.

“We focus mostly on the interests of the Russian society, and that is true for political reasons. Most of our readers are Russians. At the same time, however, we also write about Latvians, because they have more problems than the Russians do. We pay more attention to the government”, stressed editor-in-chief Aleksandr Blinov.

“I have felt no guidelines in our publication. We focus on what is in demand in the marketplace, the things that are of interest to our readers, that are of use to them. The publisher (Andrej Kozlov) tells us what he wants to see as our owner, and that is where we must put our emphasis. That doesn’t happen very often, however, and it is offered as a wish, not an order. The only section with which he works more closely is the business section”, said the news editor Aleksandr Shunin in a more specific answer.

“I don’t know whether the position is set out in any documents. I have never seen any such documents”, stated a reporter who wished to remain anonymous.

“It is meant for the Russian speaking audience”, stated reporter Jekaterina Pevneva on her newspaper’s position.

“Without ideological principles, no newspaper can operate. Our newspaper’s position is determined by the publisher”, responded the reporter Igor Mejden.

2.1.1.4. Editorial Line in *Chas*

The interviewed people in the newspaper *Chas* gave contradictory information on the influence of the publisher on the editorial line. It was not denied that the publisher can influence on the content. The newspaper being published in the Russian language has its own positions on some issues, like the EU issue and the education reform issue. In defining the direction of the newspaper, much attention is paid to the fact that most of the readers are Russian-speaking people in Latvia.

“I think that we try to take a specific and balanced position. Our newspaper has its own position on European Union issues, for instance, on education reforms. Readers must receive full information about a situation, readers must come up with their individual conclusions, however. I think that the position of any newspaper is specified by the publisher, that is the publisher’s right. The editorial structure, however, can operate quite freely. Before elections, for instance, the newspaper decides how neutral its position is going to be”, said news editor Elena Titova.

“Of great importance is also the fact that we are the Russian press. I think that this direction has been determined by the publisher”, added journalist Roman Koksharov.

“In terms of politics, it means offering deeper and more extensive explanations, explanations from all aspects, the aim is not just to inform. *Our course, our direction? It is clear that we are Russians who live in Latvia. Less in the way of ideas, more in the way of practical approaches*”, stated the political editor Darja Zhdanova.

“We are concretely oriented toward the middle class and the upper class, and that is why we have more advertising than *Vesti segodnja* does, even though theirs is the higher circulation. I have a fairly draconic contract with the employer, I have lost absolute freedom. We have agreed that in the worst case, if the publisher hates something, then he has the right to eliminate some of my text. He does not, however, have the right to dictate terms to me, to issue orders”, said the commentator Leonid Fedosejev.

“In selecting and reporting the news, we always keep in mind the reader, the things that are of importance to him. This includes citizenship issues, education reforms, relations with Russia. We Russians speak the same language here as do Russians in Russia, we are very close to them in terms of culture. I am a citizen of Latvia, but the Russian culture is closer to me. No child selects his parents, and I could not choose my native language and culture. Relations with Russia, and that includes political relations, are very important to me as a journalist, and I see an echo of this in my readers. Our publisher is very close to Western standards, luckily enough he does not interfere, he does not tell us what to publish and what not to publish. Approximately three years ago, a booklet was published which set out what we are, who our readers are”, explained journalist Andrej Mamykin.

2.1.2. Editorial Line of Regional and Local Newspapers in Latvia

2.1.2.1. Editorial Line of *Druva*

The interviews with people working for *Druva*, the newspaper in the city of Cēsis in the northern part of Latvia pointed out that the newspaper does not have an ideological position. More than half of the journalists are owners of the newspaper, which is not uncommon for many regional and local newspapers. The interviews seemed to make clear that the newspaper

as such does not have a joint editorial line, viewpoints are more reflected by the individual journalists, who also are owners. Put in other words, it could be stated that the owners, who often are journalists, often influence on the viewpoints expressed in the newspaper.

“Our ideological position is most evident in advance of elections, and we try to define that position in advance, stressing our neutrality. If an article is bought by others, then we always print it with the notation “paid publication”. In that case, the information is provided not by the newspaper, but by someone else. As is the case with many regional newspapers, several of the newspaper’s journalists came together to establish a limited liability company. A total of 11 or 12 people came together to come up with the overall tone. The publisher is not an independent person. The situation is peculiar – more than 50% are journalists and also publishers”, said editor-in-chief Dina Kļaviņa.

“Each correspondent has his or her individual viewpoint. We do not express the views of the editorial structure, of the publisher”, confirmed Verners Rudzītis who is the chairman of the board of the company SIA “Druva”.

“*Druva* does not have an ideological position, no such position has been defined. Before elections or major campaigns, however, we discuss and reach agreement on what we will do so as to ensure that all parties have equal rules of the game, how we will ensure self-censorship in relation to *hidden advertising*. *Druva* has no *hidden advertising at all*”, said commentator Andris Vanadžiņš.

“I think that *Druva* tries to be politically neutral, and sometimes it is *toothless when it comes to the local government*, toward failures on the part of the City Council, because that is *not of financial advantage*. There are only limitations during election campaigns, when you are not allowed to speak up on behalf of a party. That is seen as the position of the entire newspaper”, stated journalist Laura Pablaka.

“The second page of the newspaper is called “Viewpoints, Commentaries”, and that is where all of this appears. The “Journalist’s Column” appears there. *The journalist does not represent the views of the newspaper, although that is how the readers perceive it. Our statutes say that Druva is an independent publication*”, added journalist Sarmīte Feldmane.

2.1.2.2. Editorial Line of *Liesma*

The editor-in-chief and reporters in the newspaper *Liesma* in the northern Latvian city of Valmiera confirmed that the ideological position has not been defined in any document. The newspaper has set out some priorities, but these are not often discussed. One reporter thought that the monopoly situation, which the newspaper enjoys in the city, does not demand any clearer ideological profile, and that it would be sad if the newspaper had a definite and declared ideological line.

“This position has not been declared in any document. We have set out priorities, and we stick to them, but we do not declare them, we do not discuss them all that often. We have written up our *priorities*, and we reached agreement on this a few years ago. In everyday circumstances, the priorities are manifested in the way that we choose those that seem to be of the greatest importance to us. We determine that on the basis of these priorities, and that determines whether an article will be published sooner or later, where it will be placed on the page, etc.”, said the editor-in-chief Antra Lāce.

“Undeniably the editor looks at these things. Whether or not he considers an event to be more important than another event – that is his subjective criterion”, said a reporter who wished to remain anonymous.

“The ideological position has not been defined in documents or in our contractual relations”, said the reporter Jūlijs Cukurs.

“It would be a sad thing if *Liesma* had a definite and declared ideological line. Of course, the director of SIA “Imanta” (the *Liesma* publisher) can tell you that perhaps you should not have done that, the editor can say that you have not written the story quite properly, but that is OK, it’s just a matter of differing views”, said the reporter Andris Briedis, who thought the monopoly situation of a local newspaper does not demand any clearer ideological profile.

“I certainly think that one of the most important missions here is objective information”, was the viewpoint expressed by the reporter Valentina Brūniņa.

2.1.2.3. Editorial Line of *Zemgales Ziņas*

The viewpoints expressed in the interviews with people working for *Zemgales Ziņas*, the main newspaper in the city of Jelgava in southern Latvia, partly differed. One reporter understood that the newspaper’s ideological position is publicly declared on the commentary page of the newspapers. However, others claimed that the newspaper does not have an ideological position and that the viewpoints on the commentary page more reflect the viewpoints of the individual journalist than the newspaper’s ideological position. Overall, the interviews showed that the publisher does not influence the editorial staff, only in the sense that it has demanded political neutrality. Interviews indicated that it could be more problematic with the influence of the advertising department on the editorial staff. One journalist considered that a lack of an ideological position makes it hard for the newspaper to be consistent and that everyday work is rather chaotic.

“We try to select the middle ground, one that is more or less centrist. That doesn’t mean that we defend the views of one party or another, that we follow along with. We try to take a healthy and objective view at matters, *making use of the prism of what is important to our readers*. We are absolutely neutral in politics. No one from above dictates our views. *Our publisher has influenced our position only in the sense that he has demanded this political neutrality*. We have a column called “ZZ Commentary”, and sometimes when one of our employees has a radically different view from the majority of his or her colleagues, then he or she writes a column called “Viewpoint”. That is not our commentary. Each individual has the right to hold his or her own views, and at our newspaper, no one is forced to accept anyone else’s views”, said editor-in-chief Ligita Timma.

“Our main position is that we write about those things that are necessary for our readers, the things in which they are interested. We write about important aspects of our city’s development, as well as about our region’s development”, stated news editor Inga Bērziņa.

“Sadly, *Zemgales Ziņas*, does not have a such position, and I think that this is a bit of a problem in our work. We are not really consistent, everyday work is quite chaotic. It all depends on the wishes of the journalist who has collected the facts – the journalist writes as the journalist wishes to write” explained economics editor Aija Rone.

“*I myself put in place* the main criteria. If I look at an issue, I look to see whether I have reflected all of the possible viewpoints”, said commentator Edgars Sauka.

“Sometimes a permanent and major advertiser visits the publisher, the advertiser asks for help, he says that he needs advertising or something. It happens, and it is idiotic, let us say. Sometimes it happens if you look at the advertising policy. Sometimes the Advertising Department dictates terms, although the reader has to know that the priority is that he must know about the latest information, about local products and such. There is a grey area in our newspaper, and the reader cannot differentiate between news and advertising articles. During election campaigns, anything can happen. The publisher has declared the principle that we must primarily write about those companies which pay, not about other ones”, stressed reporter Anna Afanasjeva.

“The principles on the basis of which decisions are made are that our commentary section is the most important one. If you read the commentary, you can usually see what is most important not only here, but in all of Latvia. The ideological position is publicly declared in the newspaper, on the commentary page. Our boys are active, the different views are heard and received, and I think that it is fairly heterogeneous, at least they try to make it so. There has been response from the readership, too. The specification of an ideological position is a matter of the publisher’s policies, yes. There have been times when we have been told yes or no, you can do that, you can’t do that, you should look at this thing but not at that thing”, said a reporter who wished to remain anonymous without explaining what kind of ideological position there is.

“We have talked about the idea that our newspaper may be the one which *lacks* such a position. No, the position has not been publicly declared, sadly it has not been declared. I think that is the thing that we lack, although the editor, of course, takes decisions in this area. The newspaper does not have its concrete position, we present the position of our commentators, of course. My view, my position has to be expressed in relation to concrete and specific events or occurrences. It is absolutely clear that it is my view, although I know that my colleagues agree with me”, said the reporter Eģita Veinberga:

2.1.2.4. Editorial Line of *Jelgavas Avīze*

The interviewed editor-in-chief and reporters in *Jelgavas Rīta Avīze* in the city of Jelgava south in Latvia said that their ideological position is similar to the one found in *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*, to which it is closely linked. However, a document where this position is explained in *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*, the editor-in-chief of *Jelgavas Avīze* has not seen. It seems that politically this does not mean to support, but more to work against two political parties.

“*Jelgavas Rīta Avīze* is a supplement to *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*, and so our ideological position is similar. Of course, we defend democratic values. I have never seen a document in which *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze* has declared its position”, admitted editor-in-chief Maija Laizāne.

“The idea is that we come together with *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*, and it is a parallel position”, said reporter Kristīne Langenfelde.

“*Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*, just like “Preses nams”, does not think much of the People’s Party, while *Diena* likes the People’s Party. Supposedly *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze* doesn’t like the People’s Party, doesn’t like the First Party, it doesn’t like these political groupings”, noticed reporter Zane Auziņa.

2.1.2.5. Editorial Line of *Kurzemes Vārds*

The interviews with people working for the *Kurzemes Vārds* in the city of Liepāja in western Latvia revealed that the newspaper does not have an ideological position that has been formulated or documented somewhere. Since many of the journalists are owners of the newspapers, it can be stated that there is no strict border between editorial staff and owners.

“Our newspaper’s ideological position has not been formulated or documented anywhere. Ours is an independent newspaper, so we can feel free in expressing any view at all”, said deputy editor-in-chief Edgars Lūsēns.

“The newspaper has some 25 owners, mostly existing and former journalists. Sadly, no principles have been put on paper. Agreements and plans of action in relation to controversial or problematic issues usually emerge through discussions. Usually this happens during our morning planning meeting, when journalists meet with the editor. I think that if we made our position clear, that might help us to avoid fruitless discussions from time to time”, explained the journalist Ints Grāsis.

“During election campaigns we do declare that we are politically neutral”, journalist Sarmīte Pujēna added.

2.1.2.6. Editorial Line of *Ventas Balss*

During the interviews with people working for the newspaper *Ventas Balss* in Ventspils west in Latvia, nobody stated that they have or have published their ideological position. It was said that the newspaper tries to avoid any conflicts with the local government because this could have a very negative impact on the future for the newspaper.

“Our owner clearly wants us to reflect the lives, achievements and activities of the people of Ventspils”, said the executive director Ilze Meiere.

“In a comparatively small town, it is hard to take the side of someone specific”, stated the journalist Pēteris Neimanis.

“I don’t think that we lead public thought in any way. I’m more inclined to believe that the ideology of *Ventas Balss* was more influenced by our former editor. She was editor during Soviet times, she was still editor after the restoration of independence. *The only thing is that we try to avoid any conflicts with the local government*, because otherwise either a new newspaper would be set up, or there would be attempts to torpedo us. That doesn’t mean that we never write anything negative or positive. We just don’t try to create a fuss on purpose”, stated the journalist Līga Gabrāne.

“It is very important to learn to think positively and to ensure that you are in good form”, said the journalist Ilona Kursīte.

2.1.2.7. Editorial Line of *Million*

Based on interviews with people working for the Russian-language newspaper *Million* in the city of Daugavpils in the eastern part of Latvia, it became clear that the newspaper does not have a clear ideological position. What was mentioned was that the newspaper focuses on the interest of pensioners. According to the people interviewed, the newspaper is edited by the owner.

“Our goal and our mission is to set a sample, to offer advice”, said the executive secretary Zoja Abrazevich.

“I work on the basis of the principle that a newspaper is a source of information and fact, not a weapon”, disagreed a journalist who wished to be anonymous.

“We defend pensioners, because many of them subscribe to *Million*. Our work is based on their needs and desires. We want the government to index pensions differently, because right now the situation is wrong. People with small pensions receive small increases in the pensions, the larger the pension, the larger the increase. Our newspaper is published and edited by Grigorij Nemcov, he specifies our direction, our ideology”, thought the journalist Svetlana Kozhanova.

2.1.2.8. Editorial Line of *Novaja Gazeta*

The editor-in-chief and reporters working for the newspaper *Novaja gazeta*, which is published in Russian in the city of Jelgava in the southern part of Latvia, gave in the interviews no information that the ideological position of the newspaper is published. It was stressed that one of the directions of the newspapers is to preserve the “Russianness”. The newspaper has a page where opinions are expressed, but these reflect the opinions of the individual journalists and not the newspapers as a whole.

“One of our jobs is to preserve the “Russianness”. We want our newspaper to associate with something Russian in the good sense of the word – nothing chauvinistic, but in this specific way. It has been declared that ours is a newspaper that is published in Russian, which helps people to preserve their Russian nature. I hope that the time will come when differences exist only in the area of culture, in nothing else. There will be different songs and dances, for instance, but nothing more”, said editor-in-chief Andrej Muravjov.

“I know that Latvian and Russian newspapers have different audiences, and that means that we deal with specific issues. As far as I know, this ideological position has not been expressed in documents, in public. At least I have never seen any such document”, confirmed the reporter Albina Zenevich.

“We have a special column that is called ‘Thoughts’, and there we can express our position on one matter or another. The thing is, though, that this column represents our personal positions. All kinds of things happen each day, they’re organised by one political party or another. We try to watch from the sidelines. Let the events speak for themselves, we just reflect them”, thought the reporter Jelena Shaladajeva.

2.2. The Editorial Line of Newspapers in Norway, Estonia and Lithuania

The number of newspapers investigated outside Latvia was small compared to the number of newspapers investigated in Latvia. However, interviews with key persons in newspapers in Norway, Estonia and Lithuania can give us some ideas about differences and similarities.

Both observed dailies in Norway – *Aftenposten* and *VG* – have an ideological position that is determined by the publisher, defined in a document and if not publicly announced, at least publicly available. This is different from the Baltic newspapers studied.

For *VG* the ideological position is announced in the founding statement, which is made available on their homepage.³ It states that *VG*’s purpose is to be a politically and financially independent newspaper. *VG*’s goal is stated to be to build bridges between oppositions in society and moderate political conflicts that do not originate in ideological differences. It also states that the newspaper builds upon humanistic ideals and basic democratic values.

In *Aftenposten* the ideological principles of the newspaper are defined in a few lines expressing the newspaper’s goals, which state that it is a conservative, liberal newspaper.

The ideological position of both newspapers was originally defined and determined by the publisher, but all informants, both journalists and editors, are quite clear on the fact that it does not have any influence on the newspapers work or on their functions.

“So as far as journalists are concerned, the newspaper’s ideological position has no influence on their daily work. *If one with the question means that we have a political agenda, that we should write a lot about this because we want to change it, then as far as I know, it is not so*”, said journalist Berit Simenstad, who has been working as a journalist in *Aftenposten* for more than 16 years and holds a seat in the newspaper’s board of employees.

“All pages but the editorial is my responsibility, and I have *no bias in any political direction*, so the goal of my work is defined out of ordinary journalistic principles, like showing all sides of a case, having the highest possible information level, and of course *trying to avoid any propaganda or campaign journalism*”, said the news editor Ola Bernhus in *Aftenposten*.

³ <http://vginfo.vg.no/sider/forstesider.php?aid=308>

From the interviews with people working for newspapers in Lithuania, it became clear that none of these dailies have an ideological position or mission defined or declared in any official document or on their website. However, they are all supposed to implement a national code of ethics for journalists and publishers.

A journalist from a tabloid newspaper explained that there is no exclusive political trend that is supported in the newspaper, but there are still some political groups that the publisher has a liking for. According to the journalist social democrats and new political parties, including populists, have the major support of the newspaper.

According to a journalist from the biggest general interest national daily in Lithuania both editors and journalists can not belong to any political party. This is defined in the employment contract.

The Estonian business newspaper *Äripäev* promotes liberal economic views.

“This is more of a tradition that is reflected in editorial columns, and not concretely determined or written in some document. Thus, this ideology is not publicly announced. The ideology is mainly an issue for editorial pages. This does not concern news”, said a person working for *Äripäev*.

Based on the interviews one can assume that the general tendency is that Norwegian newspapers more than Baltic newspapers have an ideological position published in a document available to the public. To a certain extent, one can say that the editorial staff of some Baltic newspapers have more freedom to form a looser and not documented ideological position than their Norwegian counterparts, where the publishers seem to have a greater say in this matter. At the same time, more open and transparent playing rules, that is clarity regarding ideological position, more observed in Norwegian newspapers, can help avoid manipulations and unexpected influence from the publishers on a day-to-day basis. Finally, it should be repeated and stressed that the limited number of people interviewed in Lithuania, Estonia and Norway does not give us the possibility to draw any comprehensive conclusions about the differences and similarities.

3. Support for the Interests of Narrow Political and Economic Groupings

Does the publisher intervene in defining the topics to be reviewed and the newspaper contents in general, as well as in other daily work of the editorial staff, and how is the intervening shown?

First I will give an overview of the results found from the interviews with people working for newspapers in Latvia, then I will compare that to the results from the interviews conducted with people working for newspapers in Norway, Estonia and Lithuania.

3.1. Support for the Interests of Narrow Political and Economic Groupings in Newspapers in Latvia

The situation in *Latvia* seems to be more complicated, what relates to the direct intervention of the owners in the daily work of the editorial staff because the owners of some newspapers are involved in the political process in itself.

3.1.1. Support for the Interests of Narrow Political and Economic Groupings in National Newspapers in Latvia

3.1.1.1. Support for the Interests of Narrow Political and Economic Groupings in *Diena*

The interviews with various people working for the daily *Diena* did not give any reason to believe that the owner intervenes in the daily work of the editorial staff or that the newspaper supports any narrow political or economic grouping. However, one journalist admitted that he might be less harsh in his comments about something that is worth to criticize, if he personally likes the person being criticized.

"I don't think that liberal and democratic principles can be unified with the interests of any narrow group. Irrespective of the needs of the moment, we say that 2% of GDP must be given to the army, because Latvia must join NATO. Latvia must join the European Union. Parliamentary democracy is the best system for Latvia's development. We have always opposed the idea that the Latvian president should be popularly elected. The Latvian language is the state language. An integrated society. Tolerance in any issue. We support liberal politics – the less authority the state has, the less right it has to influence public matters, and particularly the national economy, the better it is for society", stated the editor-in-chief Sarmīte Ēlerte.

"Journalists must not represent any interests other than the right of the public to learn the truth about events that seem to be of importance and interest to them. The way in which people interpret things – that is a different matter", said the deputy editor-in-chief Māra Miķelsone.

"You will not find a single political party in Latvia which we have not criticised. There are issues with respect to which we support those who move them forward, but that emanates from our principles, not from the idea that we support that specific party or that specific individual. *There is no party that we have never criticised* over stepping back from these principles", explained the commentary editor Pauls Raudseps.

"If I have to say something bad about someone who I personally like for one reason or another, then I will do so, of course, but my comment will not be as harsh as would be the case if I didn't care about the individual or did not like him", admitted the commentator Askolds Rodins.

"That is one of the main reasons why I can work here – I don't have to write about narrowly drawn interests", said a reporter who wished to remain anonymous.

"Someone from outside of our newspaper could probably offer you a more certain statement about this", said the reporter Jara Sizova.

"No, our newspaper certainly does not support any narrow political or economic grouping. I can say that. I believe that the floor at our newspaper is open to absolutely everyone" said a reporter who wished to remain anonymous.

3.1.1.2. Support for the Interests of Narrow Political and Economic Groupings in *Latvijas Avīze*

Even though several people interviewed in *Latvijas Avīze* tried to distance themselves from the ownership issue, they gave indications that the newspapers might belong to somebody in Ventspils. However nobody stated that they had felt any direct or indirect influence from that side in the daily operations of the newspaper. It was confirmed in the interviews that the newspaper has at different times supported various political parties, both the People's Party (Latvian: Tautas partija) and New Era (Latvian: Jaunais laiks) were mentioned, but many journalists denied the idea that they support the interests of narrow or economic groupings.

"You know, *Latvijas Avīze* can be called Ventspils newspaper, a Bonnier newspaper, an Abramovich newspaper, whatever, depending on how this other person expresses her views. I could suspect that *Diena*, for instance, serves the Swedes, the Bonnier family or some other entity. I do not do so, you know. I am interested in what they support and what they oppose. It may be, after all, that the interests are good and honest, or perhaps they are the interests of Bonnier or [Aivars] Lembergs. An oligarch? A fraud? I think that he is a person with a great mind. Let anyone point to anything which will prove that [*Latvijas Avīze*] represents the views of Ventspils. The newspaper represents the views of the public, because readers easily can tell whether you are writing on behalf of [Andris] Šķēle or Lembergs. Our audience is not stupid, people immediately see the interests that are served.

Right now there are disputes over who owns the newspaper. I'm not interested in that, of interest to me is the content, the differences between one newspaper and another. We have focused little on privatisation, because our audience consists of people who privatise small things, they don't care who privatised the Latvijas Krājbanka bank. The Ventspils group has largely been identified with Aivars Lembergs for all of these years. I am convinced that changes are taking place there, that the group is not a homogeneous structure. To claim that the group, that all of its participants have interests that are absolutely equal, that always coincide – no, that is not the case. I cannot deny that Šķēle was involved with *Lauku Avīze* as a political figure. There were no financial links at all. I can tell you that *Lauku Avīze* has never been financially dependent on anyone. If there is advertising, then it is honestly bought. No one has any privileges. I think that this is why we have survived for all of these years, because *we have demonstrated to people that we have no unpleasant background interests at our newspaper*. I think that this is the key to our success that we have not done anything of that sort. *We are read by various kinds of people, and that is the best guarantee.*

The only possible change is that the newspaper is turning into a *more extensive stock company*. Presently, in the form of Viesturs [Serdāns], *it is very narrow*, the stock company needs to expand. But I don't want to tell you about this, I don't know. When I sold my own shares, I announced that I would have nothing more to do with the financing of the newspaper. When I left my job, the treasury of *Lauku Avīze* had one million lats. It is published six times [per week], and at the expense of *Lauku Avīze* itself. Profits decline, of course, but no one finances us, there are no subsidies. We have no loans.

There was only one instance with [Aivars] Lembergs got a gold pin from us. When we didn't have any money, then Lembergs – and thanks to him – gave us 10 million roubles. We repaid that money honestly, with interest, in three months' time, it was not charity. Lembergs did it, *he demanded no political benefits in return*, and I respect him for that. If someone wants to buy *Latvijas Avīze*, then he will have to buy it as it is", stated Voldemārs Krustiņš, the chairman of the editorial board.

"No one could have any doubt that before the last parliamentary election, we clearly supported New Era. We do not try to criticise them, our position is supportive in various articles – commentary and news alike", openly said the editor-in-chief Linda Rasa.

"Probably we do support such interests. We don't know anything specific about Ventspils, but there are things to suggest that it might be the case. When I speak to colleagues at *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*, I see that support for economic groupings is very specific there. Perhaps that's because everyone knows it, so there is no reason to hide anything. I don't feel that in my own work, I've never been ordered to write a story differently. Sometimes, when I remember that we supposedly belong to Ventspils, I wonder whether I will be sacked for writing something good about the First Party of Latvia, for instance. Nothing of the sort has happened", said the journalist Ilze Kuzmina speaking about her experience.

"There are moments when there are radical shifts in the life of the state, the government, the national economy, and then the newspaper must express its positions. We ask our readers questions every day. What do you think? What would you do? What is your attitude? We publish all of these things. Certainly our sympathies are evident. I think that it cannot be denied that we try to support New Era, its efforts, its desire to do something on behalf of the public – not blindly, but we do give such support", said Dace Terzena, the editor of the "*Mājas Viesis*" supplement.

"We represent our readers", was the laconic answer from the political editor Māris Antonēvičs.

"Absolutely not, definitely not. That can be done by *newspapers which have not decided to recoup their own investment*", the commentator Ivars Andriņš answered to the question whether the newspaper supports any narrow political or economic groups.

“No, we do not support the interests of narrow political groups, this doesn’t affect my job specifically. I cannot deny that our newspaper paved the way for the People’s Party in the elections, but that time has passed, it is no longer the case. Support shifts, but stable values remain – patriotism, national feelings. I think that this is evident in all issues of *Lauku Avīze* [*Latvijas Avīze*]” said a section editor who wished to remain anonymous.

“Absolutely not. I don’t care whether this newspaper belongs to Lembergs or anyone else, just as long as I am freely allowed to express my views, views which correspond to the views of management. I have no reason to claim the contrary”, said the journalist Māra Libeka.

“No, absolutely not”, was the short answer from the reporter Iveta Tomšone.

3.1.1.3. Support for the Interests of Narrow Political and Economic Groupings in *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*

The interviews with people working for the newspaper *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze* revealed very different views. Even though some tried to deny that what is written deliberately favours some political and economic groups or the owners, many people interviewed admitted that they don’t represent a free press. As the editor-in-chief puts it, there is no such thing as a free and independent press, everything is based on economic, business and political interests. A journalist said that the owners want to receive something in return and they want to receive it immediately. Another journalist said that he will not degrade the company for which he works. It was said that the influence from the owners is dependent upon the subject covered. Some positions in business and politics are defended because as one journalist put it, this has to do with the interests of economic groupings of their owners.

“We have never taken a position on behalf of the interests of a political force or economic group, we have never written that they are positive, that they are doing good work. We look for mistakes, we want to force them to do good work. If they’re already doing good work, we want them to do better work. That is why we take a critical position”, said former editor-in-chief Aldis Bērziņš apparently not speaking of his publishers – the stock company “Ventspils nafta”, which represents an economic grouping, and, by extension, about Aivars Lembergs. Lembergs has never been criticised in the newspaper, and this means that he is a *taboo subject*.

His successor and current editor-in-chief, Armands Puče said: “Lots of people still have not come to understand that just as there is no such thing as a free lunch, there is no such thing as a free or independent press. [...] There can never be an independent press, because everything is based on economic, business or political interests. [...] someone pays for the process [...], the publisher counts on his political or economic goals. [...] It used to be that the most important owner was ‘Glavlit’ (the Soviet-era institution which ensured that state secrets were not published in the press). Relations with that institution were based on so many different scenes that they could easily compete with contemporary scenes which deal with ‘the publisher’” (Puče & Terzens 2004:16,18). In response to the more direct question “How would you react if some morning you found that a clever journalist has published true information, but has submitted that which is advantageous to the publisher for your acceptance?”, Puče had this response: “I cannot avoid the situation, my job involves controls of that kind, that is why I am paid a salary” (Puče & Terzens 2004:18).

“The press market to a certain extent is upheld by the fear among the political elite that we might end up with just one daily newspaper. When our newspaper was independent, it did not do very well economically, and then along came some shareholders who were prepared to subsidise, to invest. Logically they want to receive something in return, and they want to receive it immediately”, said the commentator Dainis Lemešonoks, who also pointed to the political and economic interests of the publishers, not to the profits of the newspaper:

"I think that *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze* is not completely neutral. Each newspaper in Latvia has an owner, and Latvia is a fairly party-based country. It is in vain to hope that media that are owned by someone will be holy and faultless. To be sure, *their interpretation of politics is in one way or another dependent on the owner*. At *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*, I have never been told what to write. I know that I am employed by a specific employer, and I will not degrade the company for which I work. If I do not like something, if I find myself facing *excessive censorship*, then I shall have to leave. As long as that does not happen, I can only blame myself for *self-censorship*. I pay too much attention to the newspaper's conjuncture. I have to remember that the owners of the newspaper are who they are, but I don't have to service them, I have felt no such pressure", said the commentator Viktors Avotiņš and added:

"*Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze* plays the role of the socialised press. We represent the little guy, we try to represent him to a certain extent. Positioning is a normal phenomenon, it makes sympathies clear. *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze* leans more toward New Era and the Farmers Union, even though *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze* is also not antagonistic toward the Social Democrats in Riga", Viktors Avotiņš said.

"I think that we represent the interests of the public, of our readers, but *something is always hushed up, or in any event information touches upon the positions and interests of the owner in one way or another*. That applies only to specific subjects, however, the interests of the owner do not affect other articles. Open the newspaper, and yes, throughout the newspaper you will see a defence of specific interests. There are *subjects, however, such as Laksa* (Arnolds Laksa, then an MP and a former president of Latvijas Krājbanka, which the Ventspils group tried but failed to privatise), *which we monitor, because to a certain extent this has to do with the interests of economic groupings or our owners*", expressed the journalist Baiba Lulle.

3.1.1.4. Support for the Interests of Narrow Political and Economic Groupings in *Vesti Segodnja*

The interviews with people working for the newspaper *Vesti segodnja* gave contradicting answers, but indications that it is a fairly independent newspaper. It was said that the owner frequently consults with the newspaper. At the same time it was stated by the editor-in-chief that the economic argument prevents the newspaper from supporting a certain political or economic group. At the same time one of the reporters admitted that they try to defend the interests of the Russian-speaking audience.

"No, I don't think that we do. We have an *owner who allows us to follow the policy of independence, because he knows very well that otherwise he will not be able to sell copies of the newspaper. He looks at this issue purely from the economic perspective*. It would be a different situation if we stopped dealing with him entirely, if we started publishing pictures of naked ladies on the cover. Then he would tell us that we are not working properly", said the editor-in-chief Aleksandr Blinov.

"No. It's hard for me to explain this. Let's stop there – it's very hard to explain it. I really don't know", was the less convincing answer from the news editor Aleksandr Shunin regarding the issue of support for certain economic or political groups.

"No, we are a fairly independent newspaper. No one pays us for anything, no party does, Moscow does not, as people sometimes claim. We have an *owner who consults with us quite frequently*. The point here is not a political set of marching orders, the discussion focuses on how we can improve the quality of the newspaper, that's all", said the executive editor Aleksandr Kazakov.

"Well, given that I told you that we focus mostly on the Russian audience, then I suppose that this means that the answer to your question is yes. *We try to defend the interests of the Russian speaking audience*", said a reporter who wished to remain anonymous.

3.1.1.5. Support for the Interests of Narrow Political and Economic Groupings in *Chas*

The interviews with journalists from the newspaper *Chas* gave indications that the newspaper supports some political and economic groups. At the same time respect was expressed for the owner and publisher; with his journalistic background he would understand a variety of arguments.

“Publishing a newspaper is a business, and that means that there are certain economic and political priorities in the process”, said the journalist Roman Koksharov.

“In this sense perhaps we are one of the few newspapers to earn money with the information that we sell and the advertising that we receive. We live on the basis of that which we sell”, said the commentator Leonid Fedosejev.

“Perhaps it appears that someone is defended more than someone else, but that represents the sympathies of the individual journalist. The publisher (Aleksej Shejnin) is the most professional journalist. He entered this business from journalism circles, so I can put the arguments of a journalist on the table, and he will understand me. Perhaps he will not accept my arguments, but he will understand them. I can produce counter-arguments for the publisher every day, and I do”, the journalist Andrej Mamykin stressed.

3.1.2. Support for the Interests of Narrow Political and Economic Groupings in Regional and Local Newspapers in Latvia

3.1.2.1. Support for the Interests of Narrow Political and Economic Groupings in *Druva*

The interviews with people working at the newspaper *Druva* in Cēsis gave indication that the newspaper actively supports the political leadership in the local government.

“Economic and political interests are manifested through the fact that the owners of the newspaper have interests in economics or politics, and they dictate those interests, they implement them through the media. *Journalists themselves are most of the owners of the newspaper Druva.* There are probably temptations – big money for hidden advertising, that kind of thing. I have been offered money for articles, but there is a good mechanism here. *The Advertising Department of our newspaper watches closely to make sure that we don't take bread out of their mouths.* If they suspect something, then there is a discussion”, said the commentator Andris Vanadžiņš.

“We seem to try to support local businesses. If a new store is opened, if a new company is launched, then we print a photo report at no cost at all. Businesspeople are aware of this, they count on their first advertisement being that kind of thing. *We have close cooperation with the [Cēsis] City Council, the District Council,* so less often do we say anything bad about them. *It's almost as if we have joined hands in pursuit of a single goal*”, the journalist Laura Pablaka told about the identification of the newspaper with the local government.

3.1.2.2. Support for the Interests of Narrow Political and Economic Groupings in *Liesma*

The conclusions from the interviews with people working for the newspaper *Liesma* in Valmiera was that journalists, who often also are among the owners of the newspaper, through selection of news give some indirect support to certain political and economic bodies or people that they have sympathy for.

“Absolutely not, because we are *financially independent, and our newspaper earns a profit*. Approximately one-half of our profits come from advertising, the rest comes from circulation. That is our specific situation, we are basically independent”, said editor-in-chief Antra Lāce.

“We try not to represent any such interests. *We try to support the interests of the public, but we suffer from the fact that we receive very little information in return*”, said a reporter who asked to speak anonymously.

“We ourselves decide on what to report, what not to report, we consult amongst ourselves. That is *because the journalists themselves are the publishers*”, said the reporter Jūlijs Cukurs.

“To be perfectly honest then there have probably been occasions when we have supported a company or an individual. Sometimes afterward I feel ashamed, I am sorry that this has occurred”, said the reporter Andris Briedis in a self-critical way.

3.1.2.3. Support for the Interests of Narrow Political and Economic Groupings in *Zemgales Ziņas*

One remark from a reporter in the newspaper *Zemgales Ziņas* in Jelgava suggested that the journalist gets influenced from close contacts with certain business people.

“Such support is manifested through articles. If you’re in the sphere, in the area of economics with one and the same businesspeople, then you want to lean in their direction to a certain extent. Perhaps that is not the best thing for the reader, but there is such support, yes”, said a reporter who wished to remain anonymous.

3.1.2.4. Support for the Interests of Narrow Political and Economic Groupings in *Jelgavas Rīta Avīze*

The editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Jelgavas Rīta Avīze* in Jelgava denied that the newspaper give support to any political or economic grouping.

“Definitely not. If media represent such interests at all, then they are, of course, financially dependent on these groupings, then they represent the interests of such groupings”, the editor-in-chief Maija Laizāne said.

3.1.2.5. Support for the Interests of Narrow Political and Economic Groupings in *Kurzemes Vārds*

From the answers given in the interviews by the people working for the newspaper *Kurzemes Vārds* in Liepāja it is difficult to find something that directly implies that the newspaper should support certain political or economic groups.

“We are a newspaper for Liepāja”, said the deputy editor-in-chief Edgars Lūsēns.

“We feel for ordinary people, not government officials or businesspeople”, thought the journalist Ints Grāsis.

“We are published in two languages, because ever since Soviet times, there has been a significant proportion of Russian speakers in Liepāja. Demand dictates lots of what we do”, explained the journalist Sarmīte Pelcmane.

“Near our port, there was some terrible stench in the air which had an unfavourable influence. An economic group was standing behind that process, but we started to speak up, and eventually the issue even ended up in court”, said the journalist Sarmīte Pujēna.

3.1.2.6. Support for the Interests of Narrow Political and Economic Groupings in *Ventas Bals*

The interviews with people working in the newspaper *Ventas Bals* in Ventspils showed a degree of loyalty from the newspaper to the local city government. It was admitted that the situation for the newspaper would have been different if there were more than one influential political party in the city. Criticising the city council with their business network could bring the newspaper's operation to an end.

"The situation would be different if more than one political party were in power in Ventspils. The [Ventspils City Council] election was won only by people from one party, and it is hard for me to tell you what would happen if Ventspils were a multi-party town", the executive director Ilze Meiere revealed.

"This is a regional newspaper, and our functions differ from those of the national press. We can afford to be less official, less critical", the editor-in-chief Gundega Mertena thought.

"We are told that we only write good things about the City Council and about [Aivars] Lembergs, but readers don't know how to find the fact that we write about all kinds of things. If they [not he] have failed to do something, then we do not close our eyes. We write the truth", said the journalist Pēteris Neimanis:

"Because we are very loyal vis-à-vis the local government, and the government is closely linked to the leading taxpayers, 'Ventspils nafta', the port, etc., then automatically there is one grouping, decisions are taken in a harmonised way. I think that the fact is that if we criticised them properly, then we would not survive", the journalist Līga Gabrāne admitted.

"If you are asking about the people of Ventspils, then they also do not oppose or fight against [those interests]. We are all in one town, many of us know one another, and that could affect our relatives, our family members. We can't afford to do the things that they do in Riga", said the journalist Laimdota Sēle.

"Sometimes we have heard readers saying that we are a Lembergs newspaper, but that is not really the case. The life of our town is simply very closely linked to the work of the City Council, and that work is positive. Why should we write anything else? We write about what is happening, and 'sadly', it is positive", said the journalist Ilona Kursīte.

3.1.2.7. Support for the Interests of Narrow Political and Economic Groupings in *Million*

The people interviewed in the newspaper *Million* in Daugavpils were convinced that the newspapers did not need to support any political or economic group.

"No. Our publisher is also our editor, and our only interest is to make sure that the newspaper can exist" the executive secretary Zoja Abrazevich answered to the question whether the paper supports the interests of some political and economic groupings.

"Basically the position for Million is that we don't need to support the interests of any political or economic grouping – unlike other newspapers, where you can really feel someone behind the throne, someone who is interested in, for instance, the privatisation process", said the journalist Boris Lavrenov.

"No, because we are independent. The publisher is also the editor, and I don't think that anyone else finances us. We can afford to do that, therefore", said a journalist, who wished to remain anonymous speaking about financial independence as a prerequisite for editorial autonomy.

"We allow everyone to have a say", said the journalist Svetlana Kozhanova.

3.2. Support for the Interests of Narrow Political and Economic Groupings in Newspapers in Norway, Lithuania and Estonia

All of the informants in Norway were quite clear on the fact that such intervention never happens. *This issue is also addressed in Editor's Agreement, a general contract that deals with the independence of editors from owners, which both VG and Aftenposten have signed.*

"We have a very *professional ownership*, "Schibsted" would never dare, so I can safely say that this never happens", said the news editor Ola Bernhus in *Aftenposten*, commenting on the possibility of the newspaper to support certain interests of political and economic groups.

All informants stated that the editors work totally independent from the publishers. Both editors agreed that the Editor's Agreement adequately addresses these issues, and that no other contract is necessary.

There is also a *general contract stating issues relating to different aspects of press ethics*. It is implemented as the working standard by both *Aftenposten* and VG. The rules are written in the Codes of Conduct at VG, as well. Both *Aftenposten* and VG have ethical in-house rules or guidelines that each employer should follow.

According to a journalist from a Lithuanian tabloid newspaper, the newspaper has so-called "commercial" articles. He said that *during the elections, political scandals and on other important occasions the publisher forms the position of the newspaper*. If the newspaper has a *commercial contract with political parties and any other organisations or business groups*, most of the newspaper's attention is naturally paid to these groups according to the journalist. *The journalists can often not choose topics because they are already determined by the publisher and his commercial interests.*

"We do not publish commercial articles if that person or enterprise hasn't signed the contract with our commercial department. We regard ethical norms in our newspaper", confirmed an editor of a national daily in Lithuania.

A journalist from a strong national daily in Lithuania had his opinion about the *unprofessional commercialisation*:

"Sometimes I see that certain topics are not published even if they dominate in other newspapers. This is some kind of business. You can find these topics in our newspaper only if the publisher signs commercial contracts with enterprises or politicians. *We do not write about the things until these enterprises advertise in our newspaper. So these are no taboo themes – it is a policy of our newspaper.*"

The situation looks better in the eyes of the editor of a national business daily in Lithuania:

"The publisher holds 72% of the newspaper stocks. The rest of them belong to the *editor-in-chief*. Sometimes he adjusts the topics of the newspaper, but he *never orders to write the things that he has an interest in*. Every morning all editors have a meeting and they discuss topics and themes, and decide what information is the most important on that day. We seek to use the Swedish principle that journalists have to give account of how much time per year they spend on special courses and on improving their skills. We have certain requirements for the provision of information and the control of truthfulness, and special rules for journalists to use at least two sources of information, etc."

According to the journalist of the largest national daily in Lithuania, the owner and the editor-in-chief in this newspaper is the same person.

"We also have internal code of ethics. *We have to write so that we would never be blamed for hidden advertising*", the person said.

The editor of a national daily in Lithuania supplemented:

“The owners of the newspaper are only interested in financial things, the problems of business. Editors are autonomous to decide what to publish. The publisher and the editor are strictly separated from each other.”

The situation in Estonia could possibly differ from the one in Lithuania.

“The publisher of *Postimees* is considered by most of the editorial staff to be the major authority on journalism in Estonia. He was the previous editor-in-chief of the paper and often people turn to him for advice or bring their problems to him. Would that be considered as a sort of excessive influence that the publisher is having on the editorial staff? Some would say yes, but I would strongly disagree”, said senior editor Priit Pullerits in the Estonian daily *Postimees*.

“There is no kind of intervention by the publisher. The independence is not fixed in contractual relations. *The middle-management level editors are those who make the final decisions.* In *Äripäev* the decision making is done by a team named Pentagon. An executive news editor, layout designer, photo editor and copy editor all sit around the same table. The news editor leading Pentagon is called Saddam. Pentagon works on a rotating basis. There is the *Äripäev* code of ethics, also the written news criteria and online news criteria. Complying with the standards is routinely controlled every day and stimulated by the salary”, said a person working for the Estonian business daily *Äripäev*.

It is difficult to compare the results of the interviews with people working for newspapers in Latvia to the result of the interviews conducted with people working for newspapers in Norway, Estonia and Lithuania because the interviews in Latvia were more extensive. If I were to draw conclusions from the few interviews done in Norway, Estonia and Lithuania, it is possible to see a tendency that there seems to be more likely that newspapers in Latvia and Lithuania are willing to support narrow interests of political and economic groups than in Norway and Estonia. It should, however, be noted that there are great variations in the answers given by the Latvian and Lithuanian newspapers staff members on this topic, as well.

4. Concluding Remarks

There seem to be grounds to conclude that western investors, especially from Scandinavia, are the biggest supporters of editorial autonomy of the mass media in all four countries.

It seems that only those newspapers (*Diena*, *Latvijas Avīze* and *Chas*), which more than others accept and implement the examples of Western journalism and try to follow them, have a more or less formulated editorial line in Latvia. In other Latvian newspapers the editorial line is not formulated in a consistent way. Nevertheless, most of the respondents accept the necessity or desirability of it.

If I were to give any recommendations based on my research, it would be that the influence of narrow political interests on the work of the press should most of all be limited in Latvia, but the influence of narrow commercial interests – mainly in Lithuania. In the majority of the newspapers in both countries the acute problem is the direct involvement of the publisher in the daily work of the editorial staff and therefore the intervention of narrow commercial interests on journalism. This involvement and interventions should be limited, the rules or the games should be known to everybody, including the media consumers.

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Staging the Nation? Nation, Myth and Cultural Stereotypes in the International Eurovision Song Contest Finals in Estonia, Latvia and Norway¹

Hilde Arntsen

In the same way as the EU applicants Estonia and Latvia won the Eurovision Song Contests in 2001 and 2002 respectively, and thus took a giant leap away from their histories as satellite states to the former Soviet Union, and in so doing proved in a popular cultural manner to the entire Europe that they are on their way to becoming just as ordinary and modern as any other European country, this will in due course also be the case with (the 2003 winner) Turkey.²

The above commentary in the Norwegian regional daily newspaper *Bergens Tidende* on Turkey's 2003 victory in the Eurovision Song Contest indicates that there might be some connection between the said contest and the realm of real-life politics despite popular criticism to the contrary. It indicates that the manner in which the host countries stage the international finals is significant not only in its own right, but that it might serve as a manner of achieving a goal of a different order. It can be seen as an attempt to put the participating countries on the map, to improve their public image or to enhance tourism. The Eurovision Song Contest, – the international song competition arranged annually by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and its member broadcasters since 1956, has been criticised for being an expensive exercise in commercial popular culture without any real significance, for featuring mediocre participants playing substandard popular music, and for being an event most people love to hate. On the other hand, it has also been praised as an international contest in popular culture where national artists might receive their initial gusts of international exposure.³ In competitions, participants are supposed to be competing on equal terms, and in the best of worlds small contestants might have the theoretical opportunity of defeating large and powerful contestants. In a competition of popular songs, therefore, a song coming from a small country might make the publics in powerful countries listen, and perhaps even dance, to a different tune. Hypothetically, the powerful countries and other political and cultural entities might possibly change their attitudes about the small, and no longer insignificant, country. This seems to be the rationale behind the staging of the countries hosting the international final in the years studied in this article.

The Eurovision Song Contest has held its international finals in Estonia, Latvia, and Norway three times in the ten years covered by this project, Tallinn (2002), Riga (2003), and Oslo (1996).⁴ Hence, this article will focus on the staging of the host nation in the three international Eurovision Song Contest finals in question with a view to analyse their representation of nation, cultural stereotypes and myths. This will be done concentrating on the opening sequences, the so-called video post

¹ The author would like to thank the National Library of Norway for video tapes (unfortunately for viewing only) of the international finals in 1996, 2002, and 2003, and Kate Augustad in the Department of Information Science and Media Studies for a videotape copy of international 1986 Eurovision Song Contest final in Bergen. Thank you to Marius Bratten for providing background information to the world of Eurovision Song Contest. Particular thanks are due to fellow project member Lars Arve Røssland for constructive comments in our initial discussion about this project and on the article in draft form. Needless to say, the faults of the article remain with the author.

² My translation from Norwegian of a commentary article by the cultural editor in *Bergens Tidende*, Jan Nyberg, on 27 May 2003, page 44.

³ The most well known example of this initial step on the rise to international fame is when the Swedish pop group ABBA won Eurovision Song Contest in 1974 with the song "Waterloo" which became an international hit and was key in the group's rise to fame.

⁴ The international finals in Eurovision Song Contest have been held in the Nordic – Baltic region quite a few times since its inception in 1956, but only the three held in the Baltic states or Norway during the past decade (1996, 2002 and 2003) have been chosen for this article, because of the time frame covered by the current project (1994–2004). The international finals previously held in the region are: Copenhagen, Denmark (1964), Stockholm, Sweden (1975) Gothenburg, Sweden (1985), Bergen, Norway (1986), Malmö, Sweden (1992), Stockholm, Sweden (2000) and Copenhagen, Denmark (2001).

cards, i.e. the segments introducing the song entries from the participating countries, and what is commonly referred to as the intermission, the period in the broadcast when all the competing songs have been performed and before the voting process has been concluded. Theoretically, concepts will be drawn from Stuart Hall (1992 and 1997), Benedict Anderson (1983), and others within the Cultural Studies tradition. The body of literature dealing with the Eurovision Song Contest has served as a way into an unknown world (for instance Ericson 2002; Mogen 2000; Pedersen 1996; Tunaal & Wattne 1997).

The Setting

The geo-political position and cultural situation of the various Baltic states have throughout history meant that they have occupied a position of simultaneously being “the West of the East, and the East of the West” (Lauristin & Vihalemm 1993). It has been argued that the Baltic states during the era of the Soviet Union, “acquired the image of a foreign land”.⁵ To individuals and countries in the West, however, the Baltics appeared both as one single cultural entity, and one belonging to the Soviet block, i.e. the East. Although the three Baltic states’ relations with the Soviet Union differed and changed throughout the various epochs of the Soviet occupation, cultural life, sports, and environmental protection were among the areas that enjoyed greater freedom.⁶ After the Baltic states broke loose and achieved their independence from the then Soviet Union in 1991, their formerly more or less secluded position vis-à-vis the West came to an end, and the ties to the East were reduced. The three Baltic states embarked on different ways to make their psychological entry back into the western European realm. The media are key players in such processes of change, and the media proved vital in the independence process in the Baltic states (see for instance Høyer *et al* (eds.) 1992 and 1993). Profound changes in media structures in the three Baltic states have taken place since independence, some of which the project “The Baltic Media World” attempts to trace. The fact remains, that the Baltic states are situated in the border areas of Europe, and despite their 2004 entry into the European Union, are struggling to be included in the common understanding of what constitutes the European common public space.

Norway is also a country on the outskirts of Europe, and a country that has opted to stay outside the EU to uphold its cultural and political specificities. Independence from Danish rule was achieved in 1814, although Norway quickly entered into a union with Sweden which lasted until 1905. The media situation in Norway has thus enjoyed a long time of freedom. The model of public service broadcasting which enjoyed a monopoly situation until the early 1980s is significant. It can be argued that Norway has attempted to use its outside position to create an exotic image of breathtaking scenery and a high level of technological development to attain both political and tourism goals. As we shall see, this can also be found in the international Eurovision Song Contest final broadcast from Norway.

This article takes this dual position of the Baltic states as belonging to *both* East and West, and Norway as being firmly planted in the Western realm, as the starting point when studying how small countries such as Estonia, Latvia and Norway, in a position outside the European Union yet within the European cultural community, present themselves to international television audiences.

The Eurovision Song Contest: A Few Notes on its History

The Eurovision Song Contest was launched in 1955 by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), and the first international final was held on 2 May 1956 in Lugano Switzerland, with seven participating countries.⁷ Part of the initial rationale behind the competition was to create an opportunity for the EBU members to join in an entertainment project across national

⁵ Lauristin and Vihalemm further argue that during the period of thaw in the relations with Moscow (from 1956 to 1968), the “authorities in Moscow tried to make the Baltics a sort of display-window for the West, demonstrating through developments in the region how much more humane, open and Western the Soviet Union had become” (Lauristin & Vihalemm 1993:30, in Høyer *et al* (eds.) 1993).

⁶ It is important to keep in mind that the Baltic states’ relations to the Soviet Union did not only change in time, but that it differed among the three Baltic states as well.

⁷ At that time it was called the “Eurovision Grand Prix”. This name is still its commonly used name in Norway.

and cultural borders. What was initially intended to be a single competition, became a success and was subsequently made into an annual event. Over the years, the contest has changed its format, its rules for participation, its on-stage rules such as rules for in which languages the participating songs can be performed, and greatly expanded the distribution of the international final around the world. The EBU guidelines for the Eurovision Song Contest international finals pose strict limitations of what can be done during the live show broadcast to a great number of nations chiefly in Europe, but recently also to countries in Asia. Nevertheless, it will be seen that the broadcasters in question solved the access to a global audience in different manners, and that they managed to place key elements of national exposure into the international broadcasts.

The Eurovision Song Contest can thus be seen as an early instance of entertainment programme cooperation that has taken place across national borders. It is now broadcast far beyond the EBU member states.⁸ Thus, it has become an illustration of processes of globalisation and international trade in television formats. In fact, it emerged as a format in TV production even before the concept of the format appeared in the media business and in media research.⁹

The number of participants in Eurovision Song Contest has increased from the start in 1956. With time, restrictions in the number of participating countries have become necessary, and different ways of qualifying rounds for participation have been tried out. Four countries (Spain, Germany, France and United Kingdom) are now, however, guaranteed participation each year, so as to secure public interest and sufficiently large audience figures in the biggest European markets. Norway has participated in the contest since 1960, and the three Baltic states joined a few years after their independence. Norway was for a long time infamous for its frequent zero point result, and it was often argued that the best Norway could hope for was a few points from its neighbour country of Sweden.¹⁰ Indeed, the Norwegian commentator in the international finals often concluded his words of welcome with the following wish: “and may the best song win, and may we beat the Swedes”. Norway has won the international final twice, in 1985 when Norway secured the first place with the “La det swinge, la det rock’n roll” (Let’s swing, let’s rock’n roll), and with “Nocturne” by the group Secret Garden in the final in Dublin, Ireland in 1995. The first ever Eurovision Song Contest victory to the Baltic states went to Estonia in 2001 when Tanel Padar, Dave Benton and 2XL won in Copenhagen with the song “Everybody”. In the 2002 final in Tallinn, Marie N singing the song “I Wanna” won for Latvia and thereby secured that the competition remained in the region for another year.

The analysis here rests on the fact that it is customary for the hosting institutions to seize the opportunity of presenting the host country to the international television audience, as well as presenting the participating artists and their home countries. As such, the international final show may be seen not so much as an exercise in international (or lately global) media representation, but as a showcase of the host nation presented to the international audience.¹¹ The practice of

⁸ Eurovision Song Contest has often been seen as an European competition, and it has been criticised that non-European states compete along with European states. It is therefore worth noting that non-European states may compete in Eurovision Song Contest as long as their broadcasting corporations are members of the European Broadcasting Union, EBU. For instance, Israel is a long-standing participant in the Eurovision Song Contest because the Israel Broadcasting Authority is a member of the EBU, although the country is not a European nation. Morocco joined the competition in 1980, and Egypt in 1981. The recent years’ inclusion of new participating countries, such as Turkey, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Rumania, etc. has brought the history of Eurovision Song Contest into a new stage in terms of competition size, musical styles and voting procedures. (<http://www.eurovision.tv/ebu/history.htm>)

⁹ Literature on processes of globalisation and the medium of television tend to concentrate on the global distribution of news and entertainment programmes such as soaps and reality shows. See for instance Barker, Chris (1997) *Global Television*, or Herman, Edward & McChesney, Robert (1997) *The Global Media: The New Missionaries of Global Capitalism*.

¹⁰ Allegations of voting for geographical neighbours, political allies, regional voting tactics and members of various diasporas voting for their countries of origin have surfaced throughout the history of the Eurovision Song Contest.

¹¹ The national finals also contain this element of showcasing. For instance, the Norwegian national final in 2003 broadcast intermission entertainment with the Norwegian band “Cheezy Keys” featuring the Latvian flag together with Cossack uniforms, balalaikas, and other symbols first and foremost associated with the long years of Russian rule. This was not taken lightly in Latvia. Indeed, it caused intense critical debate, and the head of the *Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation* had to issue a formal letter of apology to the Latvian ambassador to Norway, Normunds Popens. <http://nrk.no/nyheter/kultur/2589734.html> (6 March 2003). Allegedly intended as a humorous intermission entertainment in the Norwegian national Eurovision Song Contest final by playing on the stereotypes that Norwegians have about Latvia, the entertainment entry did not manage to toe the delicate line between humour and blunder, and ended up with offending Latvians, in particular the older generations. A decade after independence, it is quite understandable that this caused criticism among Latvians, and indeed caused some damage to Norway’s public image among Latvians.

presenting the subsequent entry's country by means of a "video post card" featuring both the artist and the country in question was introduced in 1990, and quickly became a central feature of the international finals. It can be argued that this tradition was broken when Estonia in 2002 chose to present various aspects of Estonia instead of presenting the various participating countries in the video post cards. The country, or the imagined community of the nation, behind the artist or the host broadcasting corporation are in any instance of key significance, and we will now turn our eyes to the national level being presented in Eurovision Song Contest.

Representing the Nation

The three Eurovision Song Contest finals analysed here celebrate the inclusion of the host nations in the community of European states. Estonia, Latvia and Norway are all relatively young as independent nations, they are geographically seated on the outskirts of Europe, they are relatively small in terms of populations, and they have all gone through recent national debates of whether to become a member state in the European Union.¹² Estonia and Latvia became member states in the EU on 1 May 2004, while referendums returned a no vote in Norway both in 1972 and in 1994. In Eurovision Song Contest, however, these countries participate because broadcasting corporations in these countries are EBU members. The link is therefore made between the broadcasting corporation and the nation, in such a way that the image made by and the song produced by the said broadcasting corporation together represent the nation in the Eurovision Song Contest. The participating song entries are selected in national competitions prior to the international final. In most instances during the past few years this has taken place through a process of a national televote, or a combination of televote and a national jury.¹³ Nevertheless, these processes take place within the realm of the state and the broadcasting corporations. This combination of levels can best be made sense of by applying Benedict Anderson's concept of the nation as an imagined community (1983), as the national level here combines images of national character, national tastes in popular music, national image on an international market, with the formal requirements of the broadcasting corporations and vote procedures limited by state boundaries.

Other key concepts in this regard are the one of myth and stereotypes coupled to the level of the nation, in terms of creating or maintaining the image of nation in the minds of the members of the said nations. For the purposes of this article, it is necessary to expand this to include the minds of the international audiences watching the Eurovision Song Contest finals.

Representations of Cultural Stereotypes

The 47th international final of Eurovision Song Contest held in Tallinn in 2002, features, as do most international Eurovision Song Contest finals, plenty of images of nationally significant landmarks, people, and culturally significant locations in the hosting nation. Furthermore, they include representations of aspects of the national, or majority, culture(s). Thus, the Tallinn final features the use of cultural types and stereotypes through representations of the nation, the nation's culture(s) and its relationship with the rest of the world outside the nation's borders. This section will focus on the representation of *inclusion* and *exclusion* in the Eurovision Song Contest international finals. The subsequent section will deal with representations of *myths of origin*.

The stereotype is an ambiguous theoretical concept, and it is often used rather loosely. What do we mean when using such a widely cited and diverse concept? Richard Dyer in *Stereotyping* (1977) distinguishes between *typing* and

¹² Please see Maria Golubeva's article in this volume for a discussion of the EU debate on the Internet in the various Baltic states.

¹³ The voting procedure in Eurovision Song Contest has changed over the years and among the participating countries. For several years, each participating broadcasting institution appointed a national jury to award points to the participating entries. The system of televote has now been adopted in most countries eligible to vote in the contest.

stereotyping. Typing, he argues, is central for making sense of the world, for placing elements we perceive into classificatory schemes that render them meaningful and understandable. Typing is then identifying certain broad and general categories in the object or notion we are trying to make sense of, and classifying them accordingly. Typing is key, and indeed necessary, to the production of meaning. We make sense of the world in terms of certain wide categories, or types. According to Dyer, a type is “any simple, vivid, memorable, easily grasped and widely recognized characterization in which a few traits are fore grounded and change or ‘development’ is kept to a minimum” (Dyer 1977:28, quoted in Hall 1997:257). Stereotyping also concerns such “simple, vivid, memorable, easily grasped and widely recognized characterization” but goes further to reduce everything to those traits, exaggerate and simplify them, and more importantly, fix these traits without change or development. Stuart Hall summaries this first categorisation of stereotypes as such: Stereotyping “reduces, essentializes, naturalizes and fixes ‘difference’” (1997:258). Secondly, stereotyping includes a strategy of ‘splitting’, i.e. “closure and exclusion. It symbolically fixes boundaries, and excludes everything which does not belong,” argues Hall (1997:258).

This second feature of stereotyping is central in the maintenance of social and symbolic order. It helps individuals make some sort of categorisation of what is acceptable and what is not considered to be acceptable. According to Stuart Hall, it builds a “symbolic frontier” between the insiders and the outsiders. This feature of stereotyping goes beyond merely making the world understandable and thereby helping people cope. It thus helps tie together fragmentary publics into imagined communities. Stuart Hall explains that the stereotyping “facilitates the ‘binding’ or bonding together of all of us who are ‘normal’ into one ‘imagined community’; and it sends into symbolic exile all of them – ‘the Others’ – who are in some way different – ‘beyond the pale’” (1997:258).

For the purposes of understanding how stereotypes work in Eurovision Song Contest, it is this second feature of stereotyping which is of key significance, lumping what is considered normal (the Us) into one imagined community, with more or less clear differences from the others (the Them).

Hall even points out stereotyping’s third feature, as it typically occurs where there are “gross inequalities of power” (Hall 1997:258). In this manner, stereotyping typically occurs towards individuals, groups, cultures or nations that are considered subordinate. Thus, stereotypes of individuals in distant cultures or of individuals in other social and class positions, flourish. Studies of such a nature can be found within popular culture, advertising and journalism.¹⁴ There are thus certain key terms which are needed to understand the Eurovision Song Contest analysed here: How stereotypes work, how they combine to establish myths, and how both stereotypes and myths are used in attempts to present the imagined community of the host country to the international television audiences.

With the television production of the Eurovision Song Contest finals, the opening sequences are of key importance in setting the scene and in attempting to grab the audience’s attention. Specifically, they are key in making the first favourable presentation of the host country. Indeed, in these first moments of the television show, it is its characteristics as a television production that matters, not that it also is a show performed on a stage in front of a physical audience. For that matter, it can be argued that Eurovision Song Contest is significant only as a television broadcast, not as the show performed in the physical auditorium. Ericson (2002) argues that the Tallinn final exists first and foremost as a media event (Dayan & Katz 1988 and 1992) received by the international television audience, and that the show does not primarily exist as a physical show performed from a stage in front of a live audience in the Saku Suurhall in Tallinn. Let us have a look at the opening sequences of the Tallinn Eurovision Song Contest final in 2002, to illustrate this point.

¹⁴ See for instance the recently published collection *News of the Other: Tracing Identity in Scandinavian Constructions of the Eastern Baltic Sea Region* (edited by Kristina Riebert, Nordicom 2004) for a discussion how stereotypes make their way into Scandinavian journalism about the Eastern Baltic region.

A dark male voice over starts as if beginning to tell a fairy tale: "Once upon a time, in a land far, far away."¹⁵ A young girl is captured by the camera while walking towards a book in the basement of a stone fortress. She opens the big, bound and ornamented book, and on the first page she sees the picture of the tower of another fortress. The photo is transformed into a video clip, which enlarges to fill the screen. On this fortress stands a young man who shouts out into the air "You, you, you, are you ready?" Audience members who watched the international final from Copenhagen the previous year might recognise this question from the Estonia's winning song "Everybody". This present-day young man thus addresses the international television audiences, although he appears to be addressing the city people actually gathered below the fortress, as well as the audience in the city and the symbolic audience well beyond the city limits.

Let us have a closer look at the subsequent series of clips where all people seen are dancing or otherwise moving to the beat of the music. Underneath the tower where the young man is shouting out his rhetorical question we can see crowds of city strollers, a young woman in Medieval-style dress holding a golden ball, a child in a stroller, people honking their car horns in a car queue and people whistling to the music while they are checking their mobile telephones. We see politicians in the town hall, a young woman biking in the forest, an elderly couple dancing among the trees and a young couple on the beach, footage of a traditional Estonian tall building, a lighthouse on the coast, sunset in the forest, morning mist on the moors, cherry blossoms, and another medieval folk dress clad woman, an elderly man and a child walking in a forest area, images of super tankers in the harbour, ships and office buildings in the harbour and city skyline with a church tower in the middle, images of the old city in Tallinn, a castle in the city, and finally hip-hop youngsters doing breakdance in the city streets among a cheering crowd. After this seemingly endless sequence of happy images, the camera focuses on the concert hall where the final is being held, and the superimposed logo of the Eurovision Song Contest Estonia 2002 fills the screen. The two Estonian artists who secured the previous year's victory to Estonia enter the stage while singing their winning entry, and the crowd cheers them on.¹⁶

By using Roland Barthes' understanding of myth, we see that the television programme has commenced by combining images of young people, beautiful architecture and scenery, and thus constructed the myth of Estonia as a young, dynamic and modern country with picturesque countryside and a buzzing industrial and business life. How is this achieved? Central to Barthes' understanding of myth is the combination of various elements carrying key connotations which together constitute a complex conglomerate of signifying images: In the first order of signs the elements of the visual image and the concepts they represent combine to further link up with larger, more encompassing, ideological elements at the second level (Barthes 1952). Thus, images of contemporary youths, Estonian industry and harbour activity combine with charming countryside to signify that Estonia is a modern country deserving a place in Europe, even a place in the European community.¹⁷ Thus, the myths identified through the opening sequence of the 2002 Eurovision Song Contest final can be said to be one of *inclusion*; inclusion of Estonia into the community of the EBU member states, into the community of European states in the EU and in Europe in general, and inclusion into the community of Western popular music competitions such as the Eurovision Song Contest. This is achieved by including live transmissions from Hamburg (Germany), Granada (Spain), London (United Kingdom) and the Tallinn Town Square, during the show. Clips from these places show audiences gathered to watch the transmission from Tallinn, thereby representing the international audience in front of their television sets, and representing the imagined and real community in which the international final took place. At the same time it is important that this inclusion also takes care to present what is special to Estonia, that which makes the country stand out from the crowd. Henceforth, images of *exclusion* are central to the image of Estonia presented here, in how to delineate between Estonia and the rest of the world.

¹⁵ Voice over from the opening sequences of Eurovision Song Contest 2002 in Tallinn, Estonia, produced by *Eesti Television*. Tape made available for viewing only by the National Library of Norway. All subsequent quotes and interpretations from the Tallinn final are taken from this video.

¹⁶ According to Marius Bratten, image producer in the show in Tallinn 2002, there was considerable political pressure to include the previous year's winners in the opening sequence. Bratten, 6 June 2004.

¹⁷ Estonia became a member state of the EU on 1 May 2004, in a ten country-inclusion in the EU. Latvia and Lithuania also joined the EU at this date.

Another illustration of the exclusion theme is how Norway staged its opening sequences in 1996 in line with the notion of Norway as a different, or particular, country.

Norway: The Different Country (1996)

The opening sequences of the international final broadcast from Norway in 1996 also start by physically flying over the country before the camera enters the concert hall.¹⁸ The camera moves as if it is flying over a snow-covered river until we see an old Norn from Norse mythology dancing around in a circular enclave delimited by signposts with Norse mythological symbols at the top. The moon moves overhead, large and close by. The white long hair of the Norn shines in the light from the bonfire that occupies centre stage in the enclave. The flames rise towards the dark night sky. People clad in stone-age style clothes, or rather rags, are dancing around a fire. Some are carrying drums and some are hoisting their arms, some playing on Viking-style brass horns, one is holding an elk's horn and skull, while singing and chanting incomprehensible words. These images whirl together in a galaxy formation, and when focus is regained we see a group of Vikings preparing to set out on a crusade, a Viking ship being dragged over ice-covered river in a wide angle shot of snow-covered mountains, blue sky and blue sea. The Norn reappears, this time under the dark starry night sky, and sparks from the bonfire rise towards the sky. From an imaginary position up there in the darkness, we see a metal structure opening below us, and the view of Oslo city by night appears, before the camera moves into the concert hall.

Together, these images form a story of Norway in some mythical age long ago, when the Norwegian Vikings reigned in Northern Europe and priestesses prepared the Vikings for their fights by means of mythic rituals. The images are rugged and the camera moves in and out as if flying among these people of days gone by, who are presented in such a way that they seem to be an original and untapped source of inspiration and strength for the people of Norway. Presented in this way, the images appear to be central to the self-understanding of Norwegians, just as the images in the international final ten years earlier had showed breathtaking scenery all across the country (and some images rather far from the concert hall where the show was staged), images well known from brochures tantalising tourists to travel to Norway. These television images can also be seen as belonging in a tourist commercial, but of a different kind. In this 1996 final, however, the focus is not on beautiful Norway. It is rather on the mythic, spiritual, original, or authentic Norway with cultural roots which might seem raw, unruly, and even uncivilised, but which are combined in such a manner as to be seen to be on par with the best of civilisations in mainland Europe. In short, the opening sequences attempt to present Norway as a place of authentic origin, a place different from anything else. Why do we find this in a competition of contemporary popular music such as Eurovision Song Contest? Would the directors behind the international final not take care to present the host country as a lively place to be, as a good place to take the next vacation, and as a great country to give your votes to?

Representing Norway as the different country by means of images of beautiful scenery, Viking mythology and artistic creativity underpins the image of Norway as different, set apart from the rest of Europe, as the exotic land curiously inhabited by Vikings and simultaneously claiming a place in the world of popular music. How do the Viking images go together with the Oslo nightline as a buzzing city? The answer is, they do not naturally fit together, of course, but are *made to fit* together by the juxtaposition of images. Norwegian otherness, easily associated with the original, authentic, pre-modern Viking myth, nature where nature and people are in harmonious co-existence, reflect the ambivalent Norwegian character of simultaneously being the Land of the Vikings, the Land of the Midnight Sun, and a modern high-tech creator of jobs and investment opportunities. Note that it is not the stereotypical representation of Norway as a remote country that is at odds with the rest of Europe that is being held forth. Rather, up from the volcanic heaps appears Norway's one-time number one export article within pop music, Morten Harket, the lead singer of A-Ha, the band that rose to international fame in

¹⁸ The opening sequence is directed by Stein Leikanger, with music by the Norwegian contemporary composer and musician Knut Reiersrud. Leikanger was then a copy editor and commercial advertising director, but has subsequently directed feature films.

the mid-1980s, and now a musician in his own right. After singing one of his own songs, commercially available on the record market, Harket assumes the role of the show host making the connection from images of Norway's nature to the high-tech stage in the concert hall in downtown Oslo. That the show is broadcast from Oslo Spektrum, the combined sports stadium, concert arena and conference centre, further attempts to link the event to contemporary Norway. Harket as an internationally known artist links the Eurovision Song Contest to the commercial world of pop music outside of the Eurovision Song Contest tradition.

This way of conceptualising nation and national identity presupposes that there is at least some sense of common or public agreement about the ideals of the nation, that the dominant way of representing the nation not only ascribes to the national unity, but that this ideal is a good one. In democratic nations, alternative images may invariably come to the fore, while in other societies, the ideology of national identity and national interest may be reinvented to suit the interests of political party in power. There is a danger of similar things happening in all societies, but even more so in young nations with high stakes in the game of inclusion in the world community of globally adept, commercially viable, and democratically sound places so invest, travel and so on. Any representations of national identity are therefore a structured representation where the dominant version of the nation is evident, and alternative or minority discourses may be relegated to the background.

Estonia: A Modern Fairy Tale (2002)¹⁹

Central in the exercise to present the particularities of Estonia are the so-called video post cards that introduce each new song entry. Consistent with the opening sequences and the programme hosts' comments that life in Estonia is like a fairy tale, these post cards start with the dramatisation of a fairy tale and ends with a slogan about Estonia. The programme hosts, one woman opera singer and one popular male actor, emphasise this: "Estonian history is like a fairy tale, too, with a happy ending. Just like tonight's show."²⁰

Let us have a closer look at the first fairy tale post card, introducing the initial entrant Cyprus by means of the Oriental tale of Aladdin, the ghost in the lamp: A bartender is dusting his bar counter when he notices a tea pot on the shelf behind him. He takes it down, cleans it, and in so doing, invigorates the ghost in the lamp. The ghost, – indeed several of them, fly and dance above the dance floor and join the crowd having a party. Seeing this, the bartender enthusiastically mixes drinks and juggles the tea pot from one hand to the other in pure joy. Of course, the inevitable happens, he loses the grip on the tea pot, it falls to the floor and breaks into several pieces. At this very moment the magic of the dance floor dissipates, the dancing bodies vanish as they were ghosts as well, and of the two ghosts who had been flying amid them only one lonely ghost is left. The bar tender immediately seizes the opportunity, grabs a high stemmed glass, fills it up with the drink he had just been shaking while dancing, and gestures to the ghost to join him at the bar. When the ghost approaches, it has been transformed into a young woman, and the bartender once again seizes the opportunity, and touches and kisses her. The scene closes with the superscript "Anything can happen in Estonian clubs..." appearing on the screen.

What does the Oriental tale of Aladdin have to do with Estonia? Instead of starting with a fairy tale that is more firmly grounded in the cultural roots of Estonia itself, the opening with the Oriental tale signifies that the country ascribes to the library of common world culture, possibly that the Oriental or Slavic roots of the Estonian culture is also part of this heritage. Moreover, it signifies that Estonia occupies the position of simultaneously belonging to the West and the East.

¹⁹ The theme of Eurovision Song Contest in Tallinn was "a modern fairy tale" as argued by Marius Bratten, responsible for directing the Tallinn television show, in the Norwegian tabloid daily *Dagbladet* 18 April 2002. Bratten comments: "I am happy that they [Estonia] has had the opportunity to present themselves. Eurovision Song Contest has great cultural, physiological and financial significance for the country, and it means a lot to their pride". Bratten also directed the television show from Riga in 2003.

²⁰ Programme host at the 2002 Eurovision Song Contest finale in Tallinn.

Presumably, it is a well known tale to audiences across Europe, it ties to the human desire to be loved, and to the search for places of luck where such love can be found. The underlying suggestion seems to be – come to Estonia, and find a sweetheart. Individual desires and general cultural heritage are combined.

Presenting the host country by means of video postcards is not uncontroversial in terms of the Eurovision Song Contest tradition, as it has often been the country of the next entry which has been presented. The hostess of the 1986 final in Norway gives the rationale for using images and aspects of the host country in this manner: “When we, at long last, have you as our guests, we would like to give you something of the very best we have to offer, glimpses of our extended country, reflected through the camera lens and through artistic temperaments, and as picture postcards to the participating countries.”²¹ In Oslo in 1996, each entry was introduced by a video post card containing the artist in his or her home country, followed by a sequence of Norwegian scenery, folklore or contemporary life, and concluded with a wish of good luck from a person of authority in the artist’s home country.²² The fairy tale twist in the video post cards from the 2002 final in Tallinn then staged various aspects of Estonia both in the realm of the mythic and in the realm of a contemporary and modern country. They thus combined national themes with elements of supposedly extra-national themes as can be found in the fairy tales. These, we know, transgress the national and cultural barriers that determine the competition and that determine the cultural and political landscape of contemporary Europe.

The intermission act appearing between the song entries and the voting procedure furthermore traverse the boundaries of the pre-modern and the ultramodern by means of yet another myth of creation. The dance and music act entitled “Rebirth”, performed by a dance group and the Estonian Television’s Children’s Choir follows images of a meteor seen on its way to the Earth and Estonia “some 3000 years ago. When the dust settled and the sun returned, our land was reborn. So begins our real life fairy tale of Estonia.”²³ Once again, the international final boasts both myths of origin and fairy tales linking the world of the mythic and the world of the real. What seem to be lacking in both the international finals analysed so far is a certain ironical distance, however, bearing in mind the fact that the Eurovision Song Contest has a mixed reputation of mockery and fascination.

The Humorous Twist in Rīga (2003)

The final in 2003, in Riga, solved the dilemma of staging the nation in a different manner. Significant sites for this staging are the opening sequence and the video postcards introducing each entrant. The beautiful scenery we have been accustomed to seeing in the opening sequence was this year replaced by clay animation in bright colours. Under a space theme, the opening images are as if taken in outer space, moving towards a galaxy. On a colourful clay planet sprinkled with flowers, two clay figures appear, wander towards one another and meet in an endearing kiss. A beating heart in red clay makes the transition to the concert hall in Rīga where red blinking stage lights marks the start of the show. The two hosts, Renārs Kaupers and Marie N, continue the humorous twist, claiming that the audience all know what to expect from Eurovision Song Contests, for instance that “the hosts always make a bombastic entrance in outrageous costumes”.²⁴ They then throw off their colourful oversized coats with fake fur, and watch them being pulled off the stage, to the audible amusement of the crowd in the concert hall. Even the selection of the two hosts is commented on with a smile, indicating that this year’s final will do things differently. At the moment in the introduction when the beautiful images of the host country tend to be shown, the woman host, Marie N (the winner of previous year’s international final) holds up a real post card of Riga,

²¹ Åse Kleveland, in Eurovision Song Contest 1986 in Bergen, Norway.

²² The 1986 finale boasted exotic images such as a reindeer and snow sled race among the Sami, the ethnic minority population in Norway. Snow, children wearing the Sami traditional costume of reindeer fur, reindeer racing and crowds cheering, and other images of ethnic origin attempt to set Norway apart as an exotic country in the north of Europe.

²³ Hosts in the 2002 international final in Tallinn.

²⁴ Hosts in the 2003 international final in Riga.

saying she would like to show beautiful Riga. Of course, neither the crowd in the concert hall nor the television audience can see anything at all from the image on this post card. Hence, the Latvian producer of the Eurovision Song Contest does not skip showing footage of beautiful Riga altogether, but solves this with a commented walk-about in Riga mixing personal comments from the two hosts about the sites. It is no coincidence then, that they stop in front of some of the well-known (tourist) landmarks in Riga, such as the cathedral, the building The Three Brothers, and the Monument of Freedom. What is more remarkable is that they link up with the winner of the initial international final from 1956, Lys Assia representing Switzerland and now broadcasted from Cyprus, and a video link to the Mir space station, getting greetings from space. Elton John at a concert in Vienna, Austria, provides the evening's greeting on a more serious note, urging the audience to remember people suffering from HIV. Live coverage from audiences watching the Eurovision Song Contest from various places around Europe is intercepted at various times in between the competing entries. The cameras take us to Cyprus, Hamburg (Germany), Suria (Spain), Manchester (UK) and to the town square in Riga.

The colourful and playful atmosphere carries over into the video post cards which take on a character of music videos because of a flexible and hand-held to the camera movements moving around and in and out from the artist. The artists are filmed walking around Riga, moving around the shipyards, playing at an open air museum, fishing in the river, or being in a football stadium, etc. Indeed, presenting the Russian t.A.T.u duo, the images show the conflicts during the rehearsals, instead of images of Riga.

The clay animations, complemented by clay flowers resembling the country flag of the next musical entry, and the video post cards represent a humoristic take on the seriousness of the live show, and make Latvia stand out among the previous year's finals. The clay animations stage Riga as a centre of animation creativity, and present the country as contemporary, forward-looking, and ready to add skills, not just scenery, to the international stage. Admittedly, the animation was chosen because it was relatively inexpensive, and more importantly a time-effective way of solving the time-consuming task of providing tourist images from around the country. Because of changes in the artistic leadership team far into the preparation stages of the international event, opting for clay animation was one way of solving the time squeeze.²⁵ Thus, the videos presenting the artists focus on the fun and the humour during the rehearsals, rather than on the character of the host nation.

The Show We Love to Hate

Eurovision Song Contest is an example of European popular culture, while at the same time it is also part of national understandings of popular culture. Cultural distinctions are, according to French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1984), closely associated with class distinctions, and it is possible to associate the Eurovision Song Contest representations of national character and identities with the concept of taste, class and celebration of national characteristics. In a transnational television production such as the Eurovision Song Contest, the links to a taste hierarchy may become discernable, while the regional characteristics elevated as national characteristics may accrue to a different hierarchy of class and taste.

In Norway, as in a number of other European countries, the Eurovision Song Contest has long been a target of scorn and mockery in the media and among the general public. Despite this, it remains high in the ranking lists of audience figures year after year. For instance, the 2003 international final in Riga drew the attention of 87 per cent of the Norwegian TV audience, while the runner up on the coverage statistics was Slovenia with 70 per cent of the market share during the broadcast.²⁶ It is often claimed that when Sweden hosted the international final in 1975 the radical cultural elite criticised it so harshly that the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation did not dare participate the following year. The Eurovision Song Contest is thus not only an expensive international entertainment event showcasing national identities, it is also associated

²⁵ This is confirmed by creative director Marius Bratten, in a seminar talk on 6 May 2004 at the Nordic TV Days 2004 in Bergen.

²⁶ http://www.nrk.no/programmer/tv/Eurovision_Song_Contest/2804669.html Accessed on 6 February 2004.

with particular cultural values and stereotypes, which make it an easy target of mockery and scorn. Some song entries opt to make use of this dual character of the Eurovision Song Contest, and some hosts of the international finals do likewise, as we saw with the broadcast from Riga.

Yet, passing the Eurovision Song Contest into a corner may be too simplistic. The countries which have entered the competition for the first time during the last decade, do perhaps not have this dual relationship with the contest. During Soviet rule, watching the Eurovision Song Contest in Estonia became one small but not insignificant way of defying the occupation. Small groups of people gathered for instance in Tallinn, turning their TV aerials to pick up TV-signals from Helsinki. The authorities must have seen between the fingers about this kind of activity, but it is nevertheless interesting in this double attraction of the Eurovision Song Contest: It was for Estonians a window on the western world, and it is for the participants a showcase to represent itself to the world. That broadcasting institutions and governments regard the expenses involved with hosting the international finals as expenses toward tourist income and putting their countries on the world map is beyond question. At the same time, it is no secret that some countries regret their artists winning the Eurovision Song Contest, as that means that the country in question will host next year's international final. For instance, after Estonia won the 2001 final, there was considerable debate in the country about the expenses of hosting this event, initially considered too costly for *ETV* and the country. After Malta (the runner-up) offered to host the final on their behalf, the Estonian government guaranteed US\$ two million, and thereby secured next year's international final.²⁷

International Formats, Global Distribution and National Stereotypes

It might be seen as a paradox that the entertainment programme Eurovision Song Contest, which has had a spelled out European perspective, not only has ventured into international distribution beyond Europe, or 'gone global'²⁸ but that in the international finals it is the national cultures which are being showcased. Ericson (2002) argues that the international finals in Tallinn and Riga were designed for Estonia and Latvia to "symbolically conquer a place in Europe" (Ericson, quoted in Bolin, 2003:43).

The Eurovision Song Contest International finals have been criticised for instances of camaraderie, neighbour country sympathetic voting, and lately of ethnic voting after the start of the phone voting among the general public. This resonates with the notion of cultural stereotypes.²⁹ It is important to note here that such allegations have surfaced often. Moreover, such voting has often been expected. For instance, it is by many Norwegians expected that Sweden should award points to the Norwegian entry. Norway has on a number of occasions not received any points at all in the international finals, where the fact that Sweden did not give Norway any votes seem to have been harder to accept that not getting any votes from the other participating countries.

Concluding Remarks

As with all cultural analyses, interpretations are open ended. The analysis presented here is thus one way of conceptualising and understanding the international finals of Eurovision Song Contest. Central to the argument is the proposition that the three broadcasting institutions, *Estonian Television (ETV)*, *Latvian Television (LTV)* and *Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation*

²⁷ http://www.nrk.no/programmer/tv_arkiv/Eurovision_Song_Contest/Eurovision_Song_Contest_2001/1049935.html. Accessed on 6 February 2004.

²⁸ I do not define recent Eurovision Song Contest finals as *global* media events. The EBU is, however, using the word *global* when writing about Eurovision Song Contest.

²⁹ For instance, it was argued that the Turkish Diaspora throughout Europe was instrumental in securing Turkey's victory in the 2003 final in Riga. This has also been used to explain the 2002 victory, see *Aftonbladet*, 25 May 2002: <http://www.aftonbladet.se/vss/noje/story/0,2789,168530,00.html>

(NRK), in producing the international finals of Eurovision Song Contest seized the opportunity awarded them through winning the competition the previous year, and made the Eurovision Song Contest finals into significant sites for presenting the nation in question to the international audience. In so doing, the Eurovision Song Contest finals are both part of a global format adapted to a local (i.e. national) context, and a presentation of local content to the global media situation and cultural stage, thereby presenting the local (nation) as a product that can be bought by tourists who travel, global investors, etc. in the global marketplace. The three international finals under investigation here solved this challenge in different ways, however.

In a cultural and political perspective, the hosting of the international Eurovision Song Contest finals can be seen as statements made with the hope of attaining a particular political or commercial goal by means of an international event within commercialised popular culture. Hosting the Eurovision Song Contest can thus be seen not only as media events, but as civic rituals nations engage in when they have qualified to enter the European cultural scene. To do so, they must present their country as worthy of international attention and worthy of their self-defined public image constructed through and for the Eurovision Song Contest. They must present themselves as “just as ordinary and modern as any other European country”³⁰ as well as something exclusive. Music contests within commercialised popular culture are designed to transgress the national and cultural borders. Yet, they have to make use of the nation as a key element in the presentation to the international audience. Therefore, the nation has to be staged to suit that purpose.

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³⁰ Jan Nyberg in *Bergens Tidende*, 27 May 2003, p. 44.

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Interview

TV producer Marius Bratten, in Bergen, 6 June 2004.

EU Accession Debate on the Internet in the Baltic States: 'Own Heterogeneous Messages'?¹

Maria Golubeva

The aspect that the author suggests researching comparatively, taking empirical evidence from all three Baltic States, is the modelling of political content of internet debates on current political issues: the modes of expression and the linkages between the discourse of online debates and the discourse of the political elite and mainstream media.

According to Eric Kluitenberg, 'The decentralised media and communications model that the Internet introduced in the beginning of the nineties, is dissipating quickly under the pressures of commercialisation, and (even worse) government control over 'harmful content'.' Kluitenberg argues that the way to avoid manipulation by increasingly sophisticated 'medialised propaganda' on behalf of private interest or state structures is 'the radical opening of the media-landscape for a multiplicity of uses' or 'consciously opened mediascape', which will constitute an integrated electronic space where large numbers of people will create their own heterogeneous messages' (Kluitenberg 1999). The concept of 'own heterogeneous messages', used by Kluitenberg, can be interpreted in terms of communicative democracy (as defined by Iris Marion Young), giving access to political debate to members of diverse social, ethnic or cultural groups, while allowing them to retain their own forms and culture of communication (Young 1995). It can also be interpreted in terms of generating alternative discourses and setting public agendas different from those of the political elite and the mainstream media.

The question remains, to what extent the content of 'own heterogeneous messages' in electronic debate environment (at least, on commercially-based internet fora) is in fact rather an extension of the same discourse which is set by the media owners and ruling political elite.

Methodology

The present study applies elements of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to selected texts of news articles, commentaries and edited discussions published on the Baltic States' most popular commercial news and discussions website, *Delfi*, and to the online commentaries of the readers reacting to those editorially selected materials. The commentaries form online discussions, and it is commonly assumed that, according to the editorial policy of *Delfi* hosts, very little editorial censorship is applied to those.

The texts selected for initial analysis are from the Latvian-language and Russian-language versions of <http://www.delfi.lv>, as well as the Lithuanian-language version of <http://www.delfi.lt> (Lithuania) and the Russian-language version of <http://www.delfi.ee> (Estonia). *Delfi* is one of the most widely used news and discussion portals in the Baltic States.

News articles, interviews and commentaries published on *Delfi* during the months preceding the referendum on EU membership in these countries, which had EU accession as their theme (declared in the title), were analysed as examples of elite discourse of

¹ The author is grateful to Auksė Balčytienė for providing translation of Lithuanian texts analysed in this paper.

EU membership, using Van Dijk's categories of analysis. The online commentaries of the readers generated as a response to these articles were then analysed using the same categories. In the Latvian case, the discourse analysis will be followed by a comparison of the discursive frameworks of articles and online commentaries on Latvian *Delfi*. This is done with the help of content analysis, identifying thematic collocations with the topic 'EU' in the articles and in online commentaries. In the end a wider comparison between the content of online debate on EU accession between Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian *Delfi* will be made.

According to Van Dijk, discourse analysis becomes critical when it examines the relationship between language and power, especially focusing on the texts created by politicians and mainstream media. Using categories of analysis developed by Van Dijk for this purpose – such as *access control*, *presuppositions*, *justification strategy* (Van Dijk 1993: 263, 270, 272) – it is possible to identify the ways in which a debate constructs power relations and reproduces a particular vision of social reality. Texts created by politicians and mainstream media can be analysed and then compared to the texts generated by the 'open' online discussions in order to see, whether indeed the Internet in this case serves as a medium to construct alternative discourses, challenging power relations constructed by elite.

The genre of a news article, similarly to that of a political party program, implies unidirectional communication. The communicative act performed by the news journalist/web editor is directed towards the readers of the news portal, who can comment the news using a predetermined format, potentially subject to editorial censorship, which does not change or influence the content of the news article itself. The readers commenting on the news have no voice in the news article's discourse. This implies that the concept of social and political reality in the news text is only that of the journalist/ editor/ politician or other elite actor, not that of the reader or participant of the ensuing Internet discussion. The fact that many news articles are taken from a news agency is not significant in this case, since we are dealing with an editorial choice anyway.

The extent towards which the discourse of a news article or editorial commentary is reproduced by the readers in their comments/discussions of the article shows to what extent they are receptive to the elite discourse. The categories of access control, presuppositions, and justification strategy can be used as elements of analysis. *Access control* is the extent to which a text can speak of other participants of the political scene and of the rest of society in general without including any opposing voices and ambiguities. In other words, access control is control by the authors of a discourse of others' access to its authorship, the control of the 'we' category of the text (Van Dijk 1993: 270). *Presuppositions* are beliefs or concepts accepted in the texts as axioms which do not need further explanation or discussion – i.e. are held by the authors to be self-evident.

1. Latvian-language and Lithuanian-language *Delfi*: Degrees of Dissent

Access control to EU accession discourse among the texts published on the *Latvian-language Delfi* can be illustrated by two examples.

The first is from the article *Latvia's Intelligentsia Urge to Vote 'For'*.² The article describes a public event held in the Latvian Society House (a *lieu de memoire*³ of Latvian national discourse, deeply symbolic in the context of national knowledge). The first paragraph reads:

Today in the Latvian Society House many well-known people led by poetess Māra Zāļīte signed a document urging Latvian society to take part in the referendum on September 20 and to say 'yes' to Latvia's membership in the European Union.

² *Latvijas inteliģence aicina balsot par*, visited on 04.09.03.

³ The concept of *lieux de memoire* was first introduced by Pierre Nora (1989) – in Nora, P. (ed.) *Between Memory and History: Les lieux de memoire*, Representations 26.

The second paragraph renders a fragment of the document, adding that it was also signed by the Prime Minister Einars Repše. The third paragraph lists some of the prominent participants of the event, who signed the document: beginning with the President's spouse, followed by the chairman of the Intelligentsia Union, a pastor (of the Lutheran Church, the leading denomination in Latvia), a sociologist, an actor, two conductors, a cardinal and others, all presented according to their occupation in a more or less generalised way (thus, "scientist" rather than "biologist"), creating a notion of broad social representation. Further on, quotations from several prominent participants of the event are followed by the enumeration of more 'anonymous' groups supporting the initiative: an organisation representing disabled people and their friends, youth organisations, rural intelligentsia, organisations for retired. Thus, the notion of 'intelligentsia' is constructed, as both broadly representative and inclusive (the list of attendees included the chairperson of the Employers' Association, the chairperson of the National Military Union and a well-known businessman), hierarchical in its social build-up, and solid in its support for Latvia's EU membership. Taking into account that academics, writers and other representatives of what is traditionally termed 'intelligentsia' in Latvia were among the most active authors of the discourse of endangered identity in the Latvian media for years preceding the EU accession who often constructed a negative image of Europe as hostile to local 'authentic' culture, (Golubeva & Ieleja 2004) the text of the article actively undermines the existing image of at least some 'intelligentsia' as opponents of the EU and reinforces the unity of the intelligentsia, political elite, and the nation. The nation itself is constructed in the text in essentialist terms, using *presuppositions*, as in the following quotation from one of the speakers, inserted without comments in the article: '(T)he Latvians [as an ethnic group], being hard-working, adaptable and quick, can become stable business partners for the EU entrepreneurs'.

The second example of access control among the editorially selected texts on <http://www.delfi.lv> is a textual rendering of a TV discussion concerning Latvian sovereignty in the EU. The participants were: the editor of the Latvian *Delfi* portal, a parliamentary official, two academics (one of those also an active member of a major political party), a leader of a Eurosceptic organisation and the head of the Lawyers' Association, also representing 'Eurosceptics'.⁴ At a certain point in the discussion, the latter defines the circle of those among whom the debate on the EU membership is taking place: 'Both sides use very similar arguments. Both love Latvia, both are for its independence, for [ethnic] Latvian values, for all that follows from this.' The sentence is a typical presupposition – first, assuming that the circle of debate encompasses only ethnic Latvians, as if other groups present in the country have no say in it, and second, assuming that there is clear set of preferences 'following from this'. The access to the EU membership debate thus is circumscribed and closed on a particular group, in which a plurality of opinions about things which are of real importance is not permitted.

The readers' online commentaries generated by these two articles differ to the extent of their adherence to the same discourse. Among the commentaries about the first article, many use irony, especially ironic allusions to history (e.g. a reader using the name of a Latvian Communist Party leader from the 1980s to identify himself or herself) – the majority of the first 20 commentaries in fact use one or another rhetoric device to undermine the notion of authority constructed by the article's text. Sometimes this is done by directly challenging the authority or representativity of the elite group unquestionably constructed in the article as "intelligentsia": e.g. "None of those mentioned are really celebrities or authorities". On the other hand, the discourse of the online commentaries often is based on the same *presuppositions* as the discourse of the article: the notion of "intelligentsia" itself is received uncritically. The critique is directed instead at deviations from a presupposed norm. Thus, one online commentary expresses discontent at the fact that the event described in the article took place in the Latvian Society House: 'They could have chosen another building – the Congress House (built in the 1980s for Communist Party Congresses – M.G.)'. Thus by metonymy (Congress House – politics, hostile to Latvian independence), the event is implied to be a betrayal of (supposedly clear) national interests. Access to the discourse of the EU accession is also restricted by the authors of many commentaries to a particular ethnic group – even the choice of "historical" nicknames appeals to the national knowledge of ethnic Latvians, partly excluding other potential participants of the debate.

⁴ *LTV diskusija – vai zaudēsim suverenitāti?*, visited on 05.09.03.

The commentaries following the second article are more varied. Some use presuppositions and very violent access control: 'Patriotic movements in Latvia are gaining strength. Skinheads will knock out not only Russians but also all those who will crawl in from Europe.' (*presuppositions*: skinheads are patriots, patriotic activity is to be directed against immigrants), others attempt to diversify the discursive framework of the debate by questioning some basic presuppositions of the article (e.g. that the EU will reduce Latvia's sovereignty): 'You can put this sovereignty on a shelf and keep it behind closed doors. You will speak Latvian, if you want, and will buy Latvian milk and bread. What's the problem?'. In general, there is greater discursive polyphony in the comments following this article: the reason possibly being the polyphonic structure of the article itself (textual rendering of a discussion with several speakers).

An example of access control limiting debate of relevant EU-related issues, this time not to a particular group of participants but to a particular set of values is the article rendering a speech by the then Minister of Education on a 'new ethical basis for Europe'. The article first states that Minister Kārlis Šadurskis, well-known in society for his wish to renew Christian doctrine teaching in schools, believes that 'Europe has to search for a common ethical base', then summarises the Minister's statement that Europe is characterised by rationalism and belief in progress that may have 'destructive consequences'. The access to the category of 'ethical' is thus denied to what is seen as excessive rationality and secularism. This time the reaction in the online commentaries is much more openly critical of the discursive framework set by the article. The majority of first 20 commentaries either ironically or directly oppose the Minister's competence to define what is ethical: e.g., 'Yes! Let us all join the Good News (a religious movement)', or 'Don't you try to force my children and grandchildren to study religion!'

Access control is also frequently exercised by omission: social and political groups not allowed access to the discourse may simply be never mentioned. In the case of the articles dealing with Latvia's EU accession, published on the Latvian-language version of <http://www.delfi.lv> between 1 and 7 September 2003, one of the groups consistently left out of the 'we' category of EU discourse are the ethnic minorities. While direct or indirect references to political pressures from the EU or Russia concerning Latvian inter-ethnic policies were a stable component of the EU accession discourse, no direct or indirect references to the presence of minorities among the 'we' category of this discourse can be found in the articles, with the only exception of an entrepreneur, Vitālijs Gavrilovs, being among those who signed the intelligentsia's appeal to the nation.

Some of the commentaries following other articles contain other interesting examples of access control and presuppositions: thus, a commentary following an article about farmers' support for EU accession states that 'all Latvians are farmers – at least the reasonable ones, who judge wisely and act intelligently'. This also leaves out ethnic minorities (supposed to be predominantly city-dwellers). Other examples of excluding minorities through access control in online commentaries is the frequently used presupposition that ethnic Russians and Russia are closely linked to crime: e.g. 'There is much more money behind the 'against' campaign than behind the 'pro' campaign. This is Russia's money and criminal money', or 'I earn money by my professional skills, not by buying and selling as in Russia, or by racket'.

On the whole, it is difficult to summarise the types of access control and presuppositions used in the Latvian *Delfi* commentaries: unlike the articles, they are broader in the scope of perspectives seen as legitimate for this particular debate by some of the participants. The only category of debate participants left out in the articles and commentaries alike and not seen as constituting the 'we' of the EU accession discourse, is the Russian-speaking minority – though in the commentaries access control is mostly implicit, generated through the use of allusions which are a part of national knowledge of ethnic Latvians, rather than by direct exclusion. Allusions to names, monuments and events connected with history or traditional culture of a culturally homogeneous group are all part of the 'cultural' or 'national' knowledge. 'National knowledge', which is expected of everyone who belongs to a nation, is generally acquired through the national system of education and the mass media.⁵ In Latvia, where a separate system of education for the native speakers of Russian has existed for decades,

⁵ For a comprehensive theoretical treatment of 'national knowledge', see Van Dijk, Teun A. 'The Discourse-Knowledge Interface', in Weiss, G., Wodak, R. (eds.) *Theory and Interdisciplinarity in Critical Discourse Analysis*, 2002.

many elements of national knowledge are in fact specific to each linguistic group. As a result, the online debate in Latvian is non-transparent to the native speakers of Russian, even though they may have linguistic and political competence as citizens. Thus, we may conclude that the EU accession discourse in Latvian online commentaries is also implicitly exclusive, but less directly so than in the articles.

In the second stage of the Latvian case study a sample content analysis of articles and online commentaries on issues related to the European Union was conducted. The purpose of the content analysis was to establish the frequency with which the same thematic collocations appear in the news articles and edited commentaries published on *delfi.lv* and in the readers' commentaries reacting to these articles (within the space of one short commentary). The thematic collocations noted in the samples were:

1. EU and growth of home economy (may be specific: jobs, etc.)
2. EU and decline of home economy (may be specific: prices, etc.)
3. EU and decline of agriculture
4. EU and development of agriculture
5. EU and security from Russia
6. EU and increased influence of Russia (on local politics, economy)
7. EU and decrease in crime (may be specific: drugs, etc.)
8. EU and increase in crime (may be specific: drugs, etc.)
9. EU and social safety
10. EU and social insecurity
11. EU and protection of ethnic culture (may be specific: language, etc.)
12. EU and deterioration of ethnic culture (may be specific: language, etc.)
13. EU and increased control over instability (economic, political)
14. EU and loss of control (sovereignty, own economic policy, etc.)
15. EU and sexual permissiveness
16. EU and Christian values
17. EU and "return to Europe"
18. EU and immigration

The purpose of comparing the frequency with which these thematic collocations appear in the published articles and in the readers' commentaries following the articles is to see which of these collocations seem relevant to the participants of the online debates and to compare their agenda with that of the mainstream media and with the accession agenda voiced by politicians. The 'positive' or 'negative' meaning of collocations is not important, because what we are trying to find out is whether the discursive framework for discussing a significant political issue – in this case, the country's EU accession – is the same, i.e. that the same themes and thematic collocations are constructed as 'relevant' in the context of one political topic both in the elite discourse (mainstream media, politicians) and in the discourse of online Internet debate.

Thematic collocations in articles and commentaries: Latvian-language version of <http://www.delfi.lv>

Table 1. Overview of articles and online commentaries on issues related to the European Union at *Delfi* internet portal between 1 and 7 September 2003. (page 163)

Article (either news, commentary, or discussion), 1-7 September 2003	Thematic collocations with EU accession	Readers' comments (total)	Thematic collocations with EU accession (first 20 commentaries)
<i>LTV discussion – this time about welfare after EU accession</i> (announcement about the topics and speakers in the discussion)	EU and decline of home economy EU and growth of home economy	222	EU and decline of home economy (6) EU and loss of control (1) EU and increased influence of Russia (1) EU and increased crime (1) EU and growth of home economy (2) EU and decline of ethnic culture (1)
<i>Benefit from EU accession- industrial property protection</i> (based on a Ministry of Justice press release)	EU and decrease in crime	52	EU and decline of home economy (5) EU and social insecurity (2) EU and loss of control (5) EU and growth of home economy (1)
<i>Fear of the Euro – who profits?</i> (commentary)	EU and decline of agriculture EU and decline of home economy	156	EU and growth of home economy (2) EU and security from Russia (2) EU and decreased crime (1) EU and loss of control (1) EU and decline of home economy (1) EU and increased influence of Russia (2)
<i>Verheugen says the vote should not be a vote on the government</i> (news)	EU and growth of home economy EU and increased control over instability EU and social safety	106	EU and decline of home economy (1) EU and loss of control (5) EU and social insecurity (1)
<i>Latvian intelligentsia invites to vote 'for'</i> (news)	EU and increased control EU and growth of home economy EU and "return to Europe"	237	EU and loss of control (3)
<i>The farmers are united 'for'</i> (news)	EU and development of agriculture	44	EU and decline of agriculture (3) EU and loss of control (3) EU and social insecurity (1) EU and decline of home economy (1)
<i>Why I may have to vote for EU willy-nilly</i> (commentary)	EU and loss of control EU and decline of ethnic culture	2226	EU and loss of control (2) EU and increased control over instability (1)
<i>The Minister: Europe has to search for a common ethical base</i> (news)	EU and Christian values EU and protection of ethnic culture	57	EU and loss of control (1) EU and social insecurity (1)
<i>LTV discussion – shall we lose sovereignty?</i> (a textual rendering of a TV debate)	EU and loss of control (11 cases of thematic collocation) EU and increased control over instability (13 cases of thematic collocation) EU and growth of home economy EU and protection of ethnic culture EU and social insecurity EU and decline of agriculture EU and development of agriculture EU and sexual permissiveness	447	EU and loss of control (7) EU and increased control over instability (2) EU and decline of home economy (2) EU and immigration (1) EU and increase in crime (1)
<i>EU will not pose new demands on minority issues</i> (news)	EU and security from Russia EU and growth of home economy EU and increased control over instability	73	EU and increased influence of Russia (4) EU and security from Russia (2) EU and loss of control (6) EU and decline of ethnic culture (1) EU and immigration (3) EU and decline of home economy (1)

If by discursive framework we understand a circumscribed choice of thematic collocations which are regularly used in speaking or writing about a particular topic (in this case the EU accession in Latvia), our sample of one week's articles should give us some idea (though not conclusive, since the sample is small) whether the articles and the online commentaries operate within the same discursive framework – i.e., whether both set the same discursive boundaries to the list of topics seen as legitimate in this context and put the same emphasis on topics considered most legitimate.

As can be seen from the table, in 7 out of 10 cases the online discussion operated, for the most part, with the same notions which were collocated with the topic 'EU' in the published articles. Thus, if the article spoke of the EU and growth of home economy, the comments would be about the EU and either decline or growth of home economy, and if the article was about the EU and the growth of Latvian agriculture, the commentaries for the most part would deal with the effect of the EU on Latvian agriculture, though they may predominantly see it declining rather than growing.

The notions collocated with the topic 'EU' regularly in many online discussions independently of the theme set in the article were *control* (in such contexts as sovereignty, loss of control over national economy, decision-making in Brussels) and the *influence of Russia* (seen as either decreasing or increasing as a result of EU accession). In the first case, this coincides with the high frequency of the theme of control in the articles themselves (5 out of 10 mention one or several of the 'control' issues). In the second case, the number of times when the notion of Russia is collocated with EU accession is much higher in the online commentaries than in the articles. The vision of EU as a protection from Russia and the focus on the Latvians' chances of controlling the future of the country are two major macrosemantic categories in the Latvian political discourse since the regaining of independence – hence their prominence in the online debate independently of the discursive framework set by the articles themselves.

On the whole, it can be seen from the table that the diversity of thematic collocations with the topic 'EU' is much greater in the online commentaries than in the articles themselves. However, this need not necessarily mean that the creation of 'own heterogeneous messages', unrestricted by the agenda set by elite discourses, is taking place in the online discussions on <http://www.delfi.lv>. The thematic collocations with a political topic (EU accession) are taken from the same repertoire of choices as in the elite discourse of mainstream media (the selected articles serving as example). The difference is in the more diverse evaluations of the same theme, not in the choice of criteria by which to evaluate. While the wide use of irony, allusions and metonymy in the commentaries may serve as evidence of a more imaginative discursive practice, there is no substantial subversion of elite discourses. Consequently, though the authors of online commentaries seem by comparison much more Euroskeptical than the elite (one can note the predominance of positive associations with EU accession in the articles and the predominance of negative associations in the online discussions), they write and speak about the EU in the same terms.

The case of *Lithuanian-language version of Delfi* (<http://www.delfi.lt>) illustrates a more critical acceptance of political elite discourse – however, it remains unclear, to what extent the Lithuanian example is different because of the domestic controversy over president Paksas' impeachment, that raged in the country parallel to the referendum debate. Thus, an article, written by BNS, about Lithuania signing the EU accession agreement (a story of 40 paragraphs, considerably lengthy for *Delfi*),⁶ provoked 518 commentaries reflecting, for the most part, a general dissatisfaction with President Paksas. Following the description of the signing of accession treaty in Athens, the article comes to a few paragraphs of interview with Paksas, who says that the accession has demonstrated that democracy will expand towards East, that dynamism and prosperity will come to the Baltic region, and that "our neighbours in the East" (Russia) will also benefit from the expansion. The article mentions also the declarations on the expansion of job market; on the support for Lithuania to join the Schengen Treaty, on EU funding following the closure of the Ignalina power station.

⁶ <http://www.delfi.lt/archive/index.php?id=2209859&ndate=16.04.2003&categoryID=2045412>, visited on 2 August 2004.

Part of the commentaries provoked by the article represent a critique of the accession as such, with occasional elements of irony: 'It was Soviet Union, and now it will be the EU, unions and unions.... Maybe this will one will be better. It is interesting, against whom are getting united? Against Russians? This is great, that it (the EU) is not a red regime! It will be blue with yellow stars.' Sometimes the irony is followed by a more direct negative evaluation of the government's attitude: 'But the Lithuanian politicians like humor. There was not yet a referendum, it is not yet clear what the nation will say, and they are signing the documents, it's a land of fools.' Often the on-line commentaries reflect the tense political polemic on the home front: 'Stupid idiots, they were afraid that with Paksas there will be no way to join the EU. But we are joining. By the way, if you think that only peasants have voted for Paksas and that Klaipėda or Šiauliai (towns in Lithuania – M.G.) are villages, think again'.⁷ This quotation illustrates also a subversion of (presumed) attempt to limit access to the political sphere to the inhabitants of Kaunas and Vilnius, traditionally perceived as 'more sophisticated' than the inhabitants of the rest of Lithuania.

A common feature of many Lithuanian (similar to some Latvian) commentaries is a statement of general skepticism concerning democratic rule in the respective countries: 'Stop crying – the government will spit on the results of referendum, if people will say "no" – the government will declare that this is not significant, because everything is decided. We can drink champagne because the politicians have established places for themselves in Brussels already'.⁸ Another example of the same attitude criticizes electoral behaviour as incompetent: 'Most people will not vote for EU, because they hate the authority. But I'm sure, when the Parliament elections come they again will vote for the same politicians'.⁹ At the same time, the online debate demonstrates a certain belief in the democracy of the chosen medium: thus, a participant of the debate on the accession treaty article praises the portal *Delfi* for being a citadel of *Sąjūdis* (movement for national revival that fought for independence from the Soviet Union) in the time of Paksas rule. This is accompanied by a critique of the major state medium – The Lithuanian Television, accused of broadcasting 'small talk' of Lithuanian journalists from Athens instead of letting their audience hear what other countries' leaders have to say.¹⁰ Dissatisfaction of what is perceived as Lithuanian politicians' incompetence is also expressed through commentaries concerning their appearance on TV and their poor English. Compared to the Latvian case, there is less emphasis on the economic effect of EU enlargement and much more on the domestic political controversy. Some participants recognize as much: 'Are you not bored with the same stuff after each article commenting again and again on the President's elections???? How long can that continue? You sad, sad people. You have to learn to loose finally. Paksas was elected as president so live with that.'

Similar to Latvia, on the Lithuanian *Delfi*, the debate on EU accession operates with elements of cultural memory – not only references to the Soviet period, but also allusions to much earlier episodes of history, such as a commentary that 'Lithuania once lost everything by signing the union of Lublin with Poland in 1569'.

The tone of articles rendering government messages on the accession in Lithuania is positive and assertive – similar to the Latvian case, e.g.: 'A. Brazauskas: with EU accession at least 30 years everything will be all right in Lithuania',¹¹ and, as in Latvia, in many cases the content of the article is in fact a description of an episode of the EU information campaign: e.g., "The Eurobus comes to Druskininkai".¹² Articles without references to major political figures, however, receive very few commentaries.

⁷ Comments to *ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Comment to 'A. Brazauskas voted "For" for Lithuania's admission to EU', 5 August 2003 at 08:45.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Su istorijimi i ES Lietuvoje bent 30 metu viskas bus tvarkoje*, 17 April 2003.

¹¹ <http://www.delfi.lt/archive/index.php?id=2212998&ndate=17.04.2003&categoryID=2045412>, visited on 2 August 2004.

¹² *Eurobusas atvyksta i Druskininkus*

¹² <http://www.delfi.lt/archive/index.php?id=2265279&ndate=30.04.2003&categoryID=2045412>, visited on 2 August 2004.

It is worth noting that also in the case of Lithuanian *Delfi*, one of the thematic collocations with the EU appearing in commentaries independently of the topic set in the article is the relationship with Russia. Another is general dissatisfaction with politicians, often rendered via (emotionally charged) statements on the Paksas controversy. Because of the latter, the commentaries in EU accession debate on the Lithuanian *Delfi* are much more subversive of the elite discourse in the articles than the commentaries in the parallel debate in Latvia, even though many commentators support EU accession as such.

2. Latvian and Estonian Russian-language *Delfi*: Dissent as a Norm?

Compared to the Latvian-language version of Latvian *Delfi*, the online commentaries posted on the Russian-language version (<http://rus.delfi.lv>) are more openly subversive towards the elite discourse represented in news articles. The choice of articles published on this version is not necessarily a mirror image of the Latvian-language version: the editors of *Delfi* model the content according to their concept of respective audiences. One of the topics of sustained interest for the Russian-speaking audience of Latvian *Delfi* (also in the period preceding the referendum) remained the reform of minority schools, planned for September 2004. An article relating the statements of Kārlis Šadurskis, Minister of Education in September 2003, connecting protests against the reform with a secret wish of (unnamed) political opponents to undermine the outcome of the referendum, exhibits a particularly stringent case of access control. The minister's statement limits the purpose of the protesters to 'solely political struggle with one main purpose: to form a risk of negative result of the referendum'.¹³ The actions of the protesters are thus, by omission, equated to actions against the national interests of Latvia. The readers' commentaries to these articles reveal not only a considerable variety of attitudes towards the reform as such, but also a broad repertoire of ironic and more direct reactions to the minister's discourse. Commentaries make use of historical parallels ('Šadurskis is a good follower of communism. He follows the principle: who is not with us, is against us...'; 'This is the Young Communist League and Communist party experience – the constant inclination to accuse those who think differently as traitors, using Bolshevik clichés') and more direct personal attacks aimed to undermine the weight of politician's statements ('If you have no common sense, go to your farm to breed pigs').¹⁴

A characteristic feature of the Russian-language debate on Latvian *Delfi* is the simultaneous acceptance of what Norman Fairclough terms 'powerless subject' position (Fairclough 1999) and violent reaction to this position. Many participants in the on-line debate use nicknames such as 'alien', 'drunk' or 'pessimist', thus demonstratively excluding themselves from political mainstream, and make statements concerning the inability of 'the people' to influence government decisions (e.g. '11% of sheep will be enough for them to shear us all').¹⁵ At the same time, many commentaries contain rude language directed at 'those in power' or direct accusations of incompetence, e.g. 'Those in power did not give a single clear answer (in a radio programme – M.G.) to the questions of a simple working person about the EU'.¹⁶ An alternative use of Internet debate space emerges also in the announcements of the Headquarters for the Defence of Russian Schools (the 'shtab'), posted among the commentaries following articles on related and unrelated issues.

The subversion of elite discourse in the commentaries posted on the Russian-language version of the Latvian *Delfi* does not always take place on the level of critical analysis of dominant discourse, problematising the rhetoric used to reproduce existing power relations. Instead, some commentators, using relatively limited set of epithets, allusions and other rhetoric devices, establish an alternative stringent access control, e.g.: 'People don't want to join the EU where they will lose the little that they managed to gain in the 12 years of humiliation'; 'those experts (who state that support for the EU is growing – M.G.) are

¹³ Šadurskis: *deistvija protivnikov reformy obrazovaniya – kompanija protiv ES*, <http://rus.delfi.lv/archive/index.php?id=6163663>, visited on 20 January 2004.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ <http://rus.delfi.lv/archive/article.php?id=6192301&com=1>, visited on 20 January 2004.

¹⁶ <http://rus.delfi.lv/archive/article.php?id=6182734&com=1>, visited on 20 January 2004.

snobbish people whom nobody knows'.¹⁷ The legitimacy of pro-EU opinions in such commentaries is fundamentally excluded – as is the legitimacy of anti-EU opinions in official texts. These attempts to establish alternative access control become understandable if put in the context of traditionally oppositional discourses of the Russian-language press in Latvia. The negative attitude towards the discourse of the (ethnically Latvian) political elite, especially in the area of foreign policy and ethnic policy, is regularly present in these media. (Kruks & Šulmane 2000) The practice of Latvian Russian-language media to make habitually critical remarks concerning every aspect of 'official' policies can be described as *discursive practice of non-citizenship* – a strategy aimed at a large segment of the population, mostly Russian-speaking non-citizens, representing a reaction of journalists and media owners to the ethnic aspect of existing power relations.

Similar tendency is visible in the commentaries posted on the Russian-language version of Estonian *Delfi*. While Estonia demonstrates a somewhat lesser extent of ethnic polarisation, due to a less clear-cut ethnic character of political parties and media, and lack of radically polarising policies such as the Latvian reform of minority schools, the presence of discursive practices of non-citizenship is obvious also here.

A vivid example of a news article with strong polarizing potential is the article published on Estonian *Delfi* in July 2003: 'Deputy of parliament invited EU to condemn communism' (349 commentaries). The majority of commentaries posted on the Russian-language version condemn the deputy's idea. Of these, some include negative comments on the economic effect of the EU accession, and some express general dissatisfaction with government policies and personal qualities of political leaders, e. g.: 'When you, ladies and gentlemen in the government, will have provided the people (I mean common people, not those in power) with economic welfare, then you can condemn communism. Otherwise you have robbed the people, provided them with drugs and joblessness, with the pennies you pay to retired people... and now you are washing dirty linen in public.'¹⁸

Similar reactions follow another publication stating a politician's official position on EU-related issue of high domestic priority: an article about the Estonian Minister of Population Stating that the EU will not solve the problem of citizenship.¹⁹ This article, followed by 304 commentaries, contains statements that provoked predictably negative reaction of many commentators, e.g. 'Minister added that it will be a shock for many non-Estonians when they wake up from their illusions and understand that no one will automatically grant them citizenship when Estonia joins the EU'. This statement is almost identical to similar statements made by Latvian politicians before the referendum concerning non-citizens in Latvia. The minister added that after this 'news' many Russian-speaking inhabitants may change their attitude towards the EU. As in the case of the Russian-language *Delfi* in Latvia, not all authors of commentaries limit themselves to critique of concrete statements in the text. Many commentaries are short exclamations using rude lexis, and some are general statements on the policies of Estonian government. The elite discourse of citizenship is criticized using the same rhetoric devices as are often used in the Russian-language media in Latvia: 'I have lived in this country for 40 years. Should I now pay the last pennies you give me, to get Estonian citizenship? In Raidi (cemetery in Kohtla-Järve) I will be accepted also without citizenship.' The use of 'you' in the latter quotation is particularly interesting – it denotes 'the government' or 'the state', reproducing the discourse of state/government as (unjust) distributors of goods, and population as passive and wronged recipients. Some commentators also make statements on the powerlessness of Estonian policy-makers in the face of the EU: 'When they are told, they will give us passports.' Parallel to that, a critique of transparency/ legitimacy of political decision-making processes is present in some commentaries, e.g. 'Today in the morning they said on Radio 4 that in Greece the decision of joining the EU was made by the government, and so should it be here – this government's, not people's business.' The same author concludes: 'So there is no point to say that annexing Estonia to the USSR without referendum was bad.' Also here, historical allusions are made, though these are more likely to evoke historical memory common to all post-Soviet space, e.g. comparing criticized politician to the Nazi Müller. Radical political language is used (as also in commentaries on Latvian *Delfi*): e.g., 'genocide in Latvia and Estonia' (about policies regarding ethnic minorities in these countries).

¹⁷ <http://rus.delfi.lv/archive/article.php?id=6182734&com=1>, visited on 20 January 2004.

¹⁸ <http://rus.delfi.ee/archive/article.php?id=6018593&ndate=1058734800&categoryID=309647>, visited on 20 January 2004.

¹⁹ <http://rus.delfi.ee/archive/article.php?id=6036621&ndate=1058994000&categoryID=309647>, visited on 20 January 2004.

Also on Estonian *Delfi*, articles on EU accession information campaign appeared in the months preceding the referendum and evoked contradictory reactions. While some remained almost without attention from commentators (e.g. Euroskeptics on the beach, 22 July²⁰), others – like the news article quoting *BNS* about the wish expressed by pro-EU organizations to see information concerning Euroskeptics' funding sources²¹ – received more attention. The rhetoric of online commentaries was varied and revealed no monolithic Eurosceptic attitude among the readers (e.g. a reader using nickname Cremlin posted the commentary 'We will not make public the sources of Europhobic funding'). Some commentaries, both in support and against EU accession, used extended analytical arguments, while others reproduced uncritically the arguments present in political discourse, e. g.: 'You are against joining the EU because you would like Estonia to join the Commonwealth of Independent States'.

The question remains, does the Internet in the Baltic States reinforce the existing order of top down communication or not? While recognising that the sample of articles and online comments analysed in this article is not representative enough to make conclusive statements, some regularities seem to emerge and would merit further research.

A greater divergence of discourses between the texts generated by political elite and the texts generated by online debate seems to be present in the case of Russian-language *Delfi* in Estonia and Latvia, as well as in the case of Lithuanian *Delfi*. As can be concluded from the above descriptions, both the Latvian and the Estonian cases of Russian-language *Delfi* represent more critical reception of elite discourse than the Latvian-language version of the same portal. At the same time, the audience of Lithuanian-language version is equally critical of elite discourse, though, it can be hypothesized, for a different reason.

All of these examples seem to suggest that more heterogeneous messages and alternative uses of public debate space take place in the cases when an alternative discourse is organized – for example through alternative media and alternative agenda of opposition parties, as in the case of Russian-speaking audiences in Latvia and Estonia and in the case of Lithuanian audience during the Paksas presidency in Lithuania. Where no major organizational forms for alternative discourses are in evidence – as in the case of Latvian-speaking audiences in Latvia – the acceptance of elite discourse is much greater, also in the seemingly free spaces of online Internet debates.

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²⁰ <http://rus.delfi.ee/archive/article.php?id=6027826&ndate=1058821200&categoryID=309647>, visited on 20 January 2004.

²¹ <http://rus.delfi.ee/archive/article.php?id=6028940&ndate=1058907600&categoryID=309647>, visited on 20 January 2004.

Media Modernization and Journalism Cultures in the Baltic States and Norway

Auksė Balčytienė

1. Introduction

The tendency of media to become very competitive and increasingly market oriented appears to be a phenomenon manifested in many countries. In addition to commercial imperatives, a very powerful force on changes in the media comes from the rapid diffusion of new technologies in the newsrooms with new news production routines and new formats deriving from that.

The widely discussed commercialism of the media is, in fact, strongly related to social changes. One important argument for media commercialisation is the idea that the centrality of organized social groups and importance of loyalty and solidarity to group interests is giving way to greater individualism (Hallin & Mancini 2003). As many scholars claim, a mass audience changes into a new audience with personalized interests (Hallin & Mancini 2004) and the media re-orient itself towards producing news and information as a “saleable product”. The arrival of interactive technologies, too, contributes to the process of personification: it provides means to personalised experience for information consumers.

In this article the process of media modernisation is analysed from two perspectives, namely the economic and technological impact on media development. On the one hand, the article seeks to demonstrate that the business-inspired attempt to “sell” news to the audience affects the development of the media in a small market. On the other hand, the article seeks to assess the diffusion of technological innovations as another powerful force towards media homogenisation. Bearing in mind these two perspectives, the crucial questions, therefore, are: Has economic liberation brought more democracy to the Baltic States? Have technological innovations, in principle, changed how journalists do their job and communicate with audiences?

The article begins with an assessment of economic and technological factors as the main universalising forces in the modernisation of media systems worldwide. It applies a “what has happened” approach and describes the major structural changes that recently took place in the Lithuanian media. It then talks about the diffusion of new technologies and their impact on conventional media development. Although the tendencies of media development are similar in many countries worldwide, the results are different due to national characteristics of journalism cultures.

The article is written from a Lithuanian perspective with comparative data from three other countries, namely Latvia, Estonia and Norway. The article aims at a systematic comparison between the four selected countries. It intends to identify and explain differences and similarities between the media with respect to the particular phenomenon (e.g., media modernisation and the culture of journalism), being analysed. Hence, the emphasis here is on theory building and theory testing with the four countries themselves acting as cases.

2. Commercialisation in Context: the Economic Aspect of Changes in the Media

Since the re-establishment of independence in the Baltic countries in 1991, the media economy in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia has gone through a change of paradigm. The newly acquired political freedom brought along a libertarian media model, which promotes liberalism and little regulation.¹

This section of the article describes and gives an account of what has recently happened in the media in the Baltic Region.

2.1. Media Structure

The Lithuanian media market is among the smallest in Europe.² Various commentators agree that the media transformation in Lithuania culminated around the year 2000, when the first signs of its resemblance to Western media were manifested (Balčytienė 2002). Interestingly enough, the Lithuanian media has reached a phase of consolidation, but at the same time the market remains vulnerable, too.

Concerning print media development, there were 354 newspapers and 395 magazines published in 2002. Out of a total number of 354 newspapers, 19 were published in Russian, 6 in Polish, 5 in English, 4 in German, and the rest in the Lithuanian language. However, the Lithuanians are not the most ardent newspaper readers in the world. According to the World Press Trends (2003), the newspapers' reach in Lithuania is 50.5 percent, which is low compared to the reach in the Nordic countries (Sweden – 88%, Norway – 86%, Finland – 86%), Germany (77.3%), or even Latvia (63.5%) and Estonia (58.2%). Only in Italy (40.1%), Hungary (30.1%), Poland (31.7%) and the U.K. (33%) the newspapers' reach is much smaller.

In the print media sector, the process of concentration where several outlets are held in the hands of few national and/or foreign owners is one example of press market stabilization. Another indicator of stability is the tendency of the press to repeat the model, where quality and popular (tabloid) journalism become separated and quality, mid-market or tabloid types of press appear.

As far as newspapers' concentration is concerned, there is yet room for change in Lithuania. With competition getting stronger the likelihood of a large number of owners and publishers remaining decreases: media concentration is a natural and inevitable process, especially in a small media market. It is expected that the popular form of press concentration when large newspapers merge or buy smaller newspapers will take place in the not so distant future. At the moment the media is owned mainly by Lithuanian capital but powerful media groups from Norway (Schibsted and Orkla Media in newspapers) and Germany (Bertelsmann in magazines and book publishing) have already been investigating the market of dailies for a while, but no major changes, apart from the purchase of *Kauno diena* by the Norwegians (Orkla Media) in 1998, have been observed yet.

In Lithuania, press competition is very keen. The press operates according to the logics of the market; it has to be profitable. It has to reform in order not to lose significant position and, simultaneously, to offer the reader something new. Apart from its Lithuanian ownership, another distinctive characteristic of the press is that dailies (e.g. *Lietuvos rytas*, *Kauno diena*, *Lietuvos žinios*) follow a so-called "middle" trend, blending popular and quality journalism in the

¹ According to "The Four Theories of the Press", which remains a seminal book for media students, the motto of libertarian media is to create a market of free ideas. Libertarian media criticizes the ones in power; besides, the professionals working in this type of media are free to choose the topics for the journalistic researches.

² The Lithuanian media market is small in both economic and linguistic terms. Its GDP in 2003 was 15 897 million (EUR), the annual growth 8.9% and the GDP per capita – 4 602 EUR. The unemployment rate is 11% and the average salary 350.11 Euros. By the Census 2001 data, Lithuania's population (3.4 million) was of 115 different ethnicities (Lithuanians made up 83.45%, Poles 6.74%, Russians 6.31%, other 3.5%). The majority of Lithuanians (96.7%) indicated the Lithuanian language as the mother tongue, which is regarded as an indicator of high level of ethnic and linguistic self-consciousness. The Russian language is spoken by 60%, English by 17%, Polish by 9%, German by 8%, and French by 2% of the population of Lithuania.

same edition. A purely tabloid daily is *VL: Vakaro žinios* (published by Respublikos grupė UAB), which takes second position within the top 5 most read Lithuanian dailies, thus representing a mass circulation press. Worries, however, exist that this position may soon be threatened: *Ekstra žinios* (published by Lietuvos rytas UAB, which competes aggressively with Respublikos grupė UAB) has recently entered the tabloid market offering a cheap newspaper with a lower language level and shorter stories aimed at a mass audience. It is also expected that *Ekstra žinios* may take the sensational stories from *Lietuvos rytas* (the biggest national daily published by Lietuvos rytas UAB) leaving space for politics, the economy and culture in the original one. Altogether, further development of the press market indicates a rapid divergence of dailies into several directions of tabloid, middle market or quality press.

In the broadcast sector the end of restructuring was marked in the mid 1990s by the appearance of public service (LRT) and private broadcasters such as TV3, LNK and BTV.

Despite the existing duality of public and private media in the broadcast sector, some vulnerability within the Lithuanian television market persists. Until recently foreign owners were the main investors in the television market. Today this is no longer the case. At the end of 2003, *LNK*, one of the strongest private TV channels, was bought from Swedish Bonnier Media by Lithuanian investors (MG Baltic Media), and *BTV* (then *TV4*) was bought from Polish investors by the Achemos grupė UAB in summer 2004. Another important change to take place at the same time was a process of television channels' "multiplication". Three national TV stations (out of 4) have established sister channels³, which shows that television stations are keen to apply business strategies so far used only in the press market (when the same media company seeks to cover the needs of different types of audience). In addition, the TV business reflects the economic growth in the country and this is indicated in the dynamics of revenues of private broadcast stations. Another new tendency is the convergence of several regional television stations into an integrated television network operating under the same management logic.⁴

On the Internet, reform resulted in significant commercialisation of electronic space, where fee-based news services have been introduced.

One of the first to "capitalise" the Lithuanian Internet was the online version of business daily *Verslo žinios* (in 2002) with general interest national daily *Lietuvos rytas* introducing online subscription in Spring 2004. Despite some innovations, the Internet media does not make use of all the new medium's capabilities. Few online newspapers offer interactive possibilities (e.g. to contact journalists and editors, to participate in polls, or to send a news story by e-mail), although they allow readers to take part in online debates. Another observation is that Lithuanian online newspapers tend to follow a strategy of content re-purposing: they re-publish news stories from a print newspaper on their home pages instead of devoting more screen space to breaking news, services or online advertising. In this respect there is much to be done: if newspapers do not want to be eaten by their free online equivalents, the editors should think how to profit from being online. Despite some conservativeness, the Internet media is acknowledged as an equal partner among its print and broadcast brethren.⁵ The Lithuanian Internet eventually took on the characteristics of a classical medium, albeit with gaps in content available for people of certain ages, social status or level of education.

³ *TV3* opened *Tango TV* (in 2002), *LTV – TV2* (in February 2003) and *LNK – TV1* (in December 2003). In Spring 2004, the audience of the newly established channels was 1,6% (*Tango TV*), 0,6% (*TV2*) and 1,4% (*TV1*).

⁴ "Rubikon", which is a consortium of business companies, has bought two large regional television stations in Vilnius (Vilniaus televizija UAB) and Kaunas (AR TV UAB).

⁵ One important indication concerning the acknowledgement of the Internet as an equal player in the communications arena is the information policy harmonization, which indicates that all legal acts for conventional media apply to the Internet media, too. In March 2003 the Lithuanian Parliament (Seimas) enacted the "Regulation Regarding Distribution of Information of Restricted Content in Publicly Accessed Computer Networks", which prohibits distribution on the Internet information forbidden by print and broadcast media laws. It relates to all content, including journalism, distributed online. The regulation declares that online news producers are fully responsible for online content (including public forums and commentaries produced by readers), and may be sued for inappropriate speech produced by online visitors.

Altogether, the Lithuanian media has good reason to expect challenges and changes. Despite the increasing number of new players (dailies, TV channels and web sites), the advertising market is growing and has not yet experienced drastic fluctuations. For instance, compared with 2002, advertising on television in Lithuania increased to 13.7 percent in 2003.⁶ The advertising in the media has increased because of complex reasons, but the growth of business, development of combined advertising strategies by the media and marketing organizations, and the significant increase in importance of political advertising are the main contributing factors. Indeed, favourable conditions for the media to concentrate, merge and expand geographically may continue for some years. However, it may happen that new newspapers or television channels will be closed down or sold to new investors as quickly as they were established.

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Without paying attention to what may happen in the future, the current situation is different from that experienced by the Lithuanian media just a few years ago. At the end of the 1990s, when the Lithuanian economy was drastically affected by the Russian crisis, the media were in a desperate search for recipes of how to survive the hunger for money and many began negotiations with foreign investors. In contrast, today the Lithuanian and foreign investors themselves are very eager to invest in the local media.

From an economic perspective, there seems to be at least three significant aspects of media systems homogenisation in the Baltic States and Norway: 1) attempts by the media organizations to produce news which is “saleable”, 2) diversification of media products to address different audience needs and 3) investment into product improvement through new formats and content types.

Let us review the three aspects and discuss whether similar strategies are being observed in other countries.

2.2. About “Commodification”

There is general agreement that the intensification of commercial imperatives has been among the most significant changes in the Lithuanian media.⁷ There are clear signs of commercial logic moving to the fore and one can trace shifts in news values to an easier, more popular trend, towards popularisation. When asked about this development, editors express the belief that crime, sex and scandal are the topics that sell, while, for example, those of domestic culture receive minimal interest.

In assessments of the Lithuanian media, an understanding persists that the media market is small, therefore, there is no reason to expect that a newspaper can make business by journalism alone. To compete with the new media (television and the Internet) newspapers need to be popularised.⁸ International studies confirm that commercialism has diminished the importance of public service. An emphasis on commercial gain has an effect on the role of the journalist too.

Picard (2004), for example, claims that “the responses of managers are affecting journalistic quality, producing practices that diminish the social value of newspaper content and that divert the attention of newspaper personnel from journalism to activities primarily related to the business interests of the press”. The outcome is worrying – exploiting market potential promotes a growing conflict between the role of newspapers as servants of readers and the exploitation of readers to seek additional commercial gain. Also, Picard argues that these trends have

⁶ Television revenues have the largest share among all media sectors in Lithuania (this is not the case in Latvia or Estonia).

⁷ “Prieš šimtą metų ir dabar”, (A Hundred Years Ago and Today) *Žurnalisty žinios*, 5, 2004.

⁸ According to a popular Lithuanian journalist, “in the 21st c., the newspaper, which competes with television, radio and the Internet, cannot allow itself to be boring as many of the Scandinavian and German newspapers are. A newspaper is a commodity. If you are convinced that you need to inform and educate a reader, then perhaps it is better to be an instructor or a philosophy teacher, but you may only publish a newspaper when you acknowledge that the reader, no matter how knowledgeable he/she may be, is always right”.

occurred simultaneously with the public's increasing disaffection, loss of trust and reduced credibility in the press. Increasing commercialisation may be among reasons why the public trust in media institution has dropped in the Baltic States.⁹

One outcome of increased media competition is not difficult to predict – it obviously leads to homogenisation of content. The repercussions of the ad war and the shift towards popular topics and entertainment can be seen in the content of news broadcasts. For instance, two strong competitors on the Lithuanian TV market – private television stations *TV3* and *LNK* – both include popular talk shows during prime time, and both have crime news “*Dienos kriminalai*” (The Day's Criminals) in their half-hour long evening news broadcasts. Homogenisation is also reflected in the lists of top 5 programmes of Lithuanian television channels. To avoid being scooped by the competition, television stations seem to make a conscious effort to cover similar stories, show popular round table discussion programmes or television games. Strong competition makes television dependent on advertising share, which in turn depends on audience share. An obvious result¹⁰ of fierce competition among various media firms is the growing commercialisation of content, whereby analytical discussions with plurality of opinions are replaced by popular themes, life-style stories or general interest texts.

The economic logic of television stations has affected political communications too. Today the media (especially television) is assuming many of the information functions that political parties once controlled. Television is a primary source of information: the visual medium makes it easier to communicate events and issues through personalities.

In the past few years Lithuania has witnessed a series of political scandals that have revolved not around the political issues, but around the personal morality of politicians. Politicians have abused their power for personal gain. They have violated morality so the cases have turned into moral scandals, which were echoed in the media. Some of them, e.g. the impeachment of the elected president Rolandas Paksas, or the case of three Lithuanian MPs accused of accepting bribes from industrial groups for their help in adopting various laws at the parliamentary and municipal level, will be remembered as “case-studies” in both political history and the further development of the media as the Fourth Estate.

But the political actors have learned to deal with the media. The political events become pre-planned and “staged”, and an important concern whether this helps citizens arises. The arrival of new genres may, perhaps, provide an answer to this concern. Convergence of journalism and popular culture (e.g., TV programmes of political satire) is not always a bad thing. On the one hand, popular journalism introduces and opens-up new topics for public discussion. Yet, on the other hand, with marketing and popularisation of politics, different journalistic values emerge. Popular journalism is a threat to genuine democracy as it positions the audience in the place of spectators instead of active participants.

The audience, too, contributes to the arrival of soft programming. Once in tune with political and social changes, people started to look for more entertaining broadcasting once the country's political and economic situation had stabilized.

Rapid growth in hours of television consumption can be an indicator of rapidly changing socio-economic conditions too. At present, Lithuanians watch television for an average of 3 hours a day. In contrast, Estonian people spent almost four and a half hours (4 hours and 24 minutes) in front of a TV set, and Latvians accordingly 3 hours and 53 minutes. The statistics show that in Estonia, the time spent watching television has grown in the last five years by an hour a day on average. The Estonian version of the internationally known game show “Who wants to be a millionaire?” (aired in all three countries by commercial TV channel *TV3* (the Modern Times Group group from Sweden)), has become most popular in Estonia, where 26.8% of people watched it in February. In Lithuania 15.6% and in Latvia 9.5% of people on average followed the hunt for a million.

⁹ In 2004, 50% of Lithuanians expressed trust in the media while a decade ago the numbers were significantly higher (68%).
¹⁰ It is very difficult to prove empirically the fact, which is rather a commonly held assumption, that commercialisation leads to decline in the public sphere.

The fight for their share of audience is noticeable in the increase in the number of popular television talk shows and quiz shows, weekly lotteries and games. Statistics confirms that there was a steady increase in television games produced originally by Lithuanian producers or adapted from foreign programmes during a decade (1992–2001). In 2003 alone, the increase in all kinds of television games and reality television was three times more than during the previous years. Indeed, both television games and reality shows are on the annual agenda of television stations. This is a kind of “gaming mania” on the Lithuanian television – attempts are being made to introduce different television voting possibilities through mobile telephones, the viewers are encouraged to send SMS messages and vote during live television shows, etc. Apart from the direct economic revenue from SMS calls, the media also get an indirect profit: SMS helps to sell brands of television and radio programmes (e.g., the radio station *M-1* has a “service” for its listeners whereby the title of popular song may be received via SMS).

2.3. About Segmentation

The mere fact that the amount of informational products and the technologies transmitting them has increased, does not constitute that people live in a well-informed and open-eyed society. Following the collapse of communism, escape from the system of censorship imposed by the Soviet regime was a priority for media organizations. A decade later, new tasks for the media are emerging. Commentators warn that public information is “packed” to persuade and entertain, the audience’s attention is manipulated and the communication is pre-planned and artificially constructed. Furthermore, recent developments in the sphere of political communications in Lithuania prove that the information explosion and the rise of techniques for information management (especially in political marketing) have become a striking feature of contemporary life and its risks have to be understood, identified and taken seriously.¹¹

The contemporary Lithuanian media market is fairly concentrated, competitive and owned mainly by Lithuanian capital. A qualitatively different feature in the Lithuanian media market (as compared to Latvia and Estonia) is the tendency of local industry groups to invest in the media. This type of economic expansion will certainly bring even more competition and concentration in the local media. Although no clear indications exist regarding the influence of new owners on media content, some signs were noticed by the media themselves: the Lithuanian News Agency *Elta* (owned by business capital “MG Baltic Investment”) was accused of being biased in its reports on the privatisation of AB “Stumbras” by the same company, and the editor of the regional daily *Panevėžio balsas* allegedly misbehaved in the eyes of its new owner AB “Ekranas”, which manufactures colour picture TV tubes.¹²

With cross-media ownership increasing, it is becoming obvious that there is little regulation concerning ownership and concentration of the media in Lithuania, Latvia or Estonia. With regard to media concentration, the most common variety in Lithuania is vertical concentration, i.e. when the same company owns and controls several stages in the news production process.

For example, the business concept of Lietuvos rytas UAB supports the arrangement of verticality. Its business is spread across different activities such as printing plant, newspaper delivery company, strong national daily (*Lietuvos rytas*) and national tabloid (*Ekstra žinios*), several regional newspapers, a TV magazine (*TV Antena*), a weekly (*Ekstra*), a basketball team (“Lietuvos Rytas”) and other businesses. Respublikos Leidiniai UAB, too, owns several national and regional newspapers, and a printing plant.

Apart from vertical or horizontal concentration, cross-media ownership is gathering pace too and a clear “winner” in this respect is Achemos grupė UAB. The company represents industrial capital among strong media players.

¹¹ The consequences of political marketing in the Presidential Elections of 2002 became clear after a scandal hit the administration of the elected President Rolandas Paksas in November 2003.

¹² “Egzaminas MG Baltic”, *Verslo žinios*, 17.12.2003; “Laisvam žodžiui – magnatų aukso svoris”, *Žurnalistų žinios*, Nr. 2., 2004.

It owns the national daily *Lietuvos žinios*, several national and regional radio stations (*Radiocentras*, *RC2*, etc.) and the national television channel *BTV* as well.

As far as media segmentation is concerned, two opposing developments can be observed in Lithuania. With media aiming at the mass market (commercial radio and television channels, some magazines and popular newspapers), there is a trend towards homogenisation of content. At the same time however, there is a tendency towards specialisation in the radio, magazine, and television markets. An obvious indication of the booming Lithuanian economy and the sufficient buying power of the people is the strong position of the so-called “advertiser friendly” newspapers and magazines, especially designed for women of different ages.

Women of all ages have always been a desirable segment of firms producing consumer-oriented commodities such as cosmetics, fashions or lifestyle products. In fact, the top five popular magazines in Lithuania are designed for women. Other market leaders in the magazine sector are the titles related to the construction business, such as *Mano namas* (My House), *Naujas namas* (New House), *Centras* (The Centre, a journal for interior design), etc. This is not surprising at all, if one knows that the building industry has been a leading industry in Lithuania for a long time.

Obviously, these trends show that so called “market journalism” proliferates.

2.4. About Product Improvement

Confronted with rapid changes and increasing competition in all sectors of business, the Lithuanian media have invested extensively into product improvement, differentiation and customisation. The newspapers have had a face-lift and a new layout, while extra supplements, TV magazines and inserts have become “more trendy”. But the media in the new democracies not only imitates business models but has also had to deal with the consequences of a free market. As a matter of fact, its experience of how to survive in a severe economic conditions can be transferred to other countries too.

For example, in the 1990s in Lithuania, new newspapers were published in tabloid format even though their content was serious. To publish quality journalism in tabloid format was a deliberate and strategic decision in other post-communist countries too. Simply speaking, smaller format newspapers were cheaper to print. During the economic transformation of the early 1990s there was a lack of paper, so editors tried to save space for information, which was vitally important then. Now the situation has changed. Newspapers no longer face a lack of paper, but the small (compact) format of dailies has remained. The newspapers of today have brighter front pages and their headlines and subheadings stand out and the photos are eye-catching.

International developments show that the broadsheet and tabloid formats converge in the sphere traditionally understood as being conservative and least open to changes, namely the broadsheet newspapers.¹³ In many countries the decision to adopt a smaller format (or to publish a new compact newspaper in addition to the broadsheet daily) is a new step, which is taken by the industry in response to the rapidly changing situation in the European newspaper market. The three business newspapers in the Baltic States (*Verslo žinios*, *Dienas Bizness*, *Āripāev*) all published by the same Swedish Bonnier are also published in compact format.

But, as it was argued at the beginning of the article, the reasons to adopt an innovation (e.g., to change a newspaper into a smaller format) are different in different national settings. Scandinavian publishers, for example, have reduced the format

¹³ Studies confirm that in Germany, for example, the compact format was introduced only recently (*Die Welt Kompakt*). In Lithuania, *Lietuvos žinios*, *Respublika*, *Kauno diena*, and some regional papers too, and in the foreign countries – *The Times* and *The Guardian Weekly* (U.K.), *El Pais* (Spain), *Aftenposten* (Norway), *Latvijas Avīze* (Latvia) and *Postimees* (Estonia) – are published in compact format.

of newspapers because of economic reasons: according to the editors, the advertising costs much less in a smaller format, so this practice may appear favourable for business companies that want to be advertisers. In Estonia, in contrast, it is argued that the change of format is consistent with the arrival of a new generation of readers. The market driven Estonian printed press has re-oriented its content from the old to the new audience. Audience studies in Estonia confirm that reading dailies has become a characteristic feature of the higher societal strata, which shows that a newspaper is not an all-inclusive medium anymore (previously in Estonia reading patterns had developed on the same lines as the Nordic countries), but it is read mainly by the new elites.

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To sum up, as the market consolidates in the field of public communications, the conditions are created for reflecting various interests. The libertarian model of media with its principles of competition, pluralism and freedom of expression confirms that all citizens have the right to express their opinions and receive information without any restrictions. While this may be true in theory, practice reveals something different.

The Lithuanian case shows that, in the information space of guided by competition and market laws, the danger arises of so-called “profitable speaking”. As media professionals themselves say, the freedom of the press eventually becomes the freedom of press owners instead of citizens’ freedom. Eventually the information guaranteeing the quickest profit for the media company becomes the most important and stops serving the needs of the citizen. This way information becomes a commodity that matches the interests of those who manage the information instead of serving the needs of a wider public.

The more the media organization is interested in profit, the more opportunities its journalism has for becoming “market journalism”. This is dangerous for democracy, because eventually the free press may degenerate, i.e. become dependent on advertisers, on PR companies, on orders from an imagined audience or simply rely on the media owners’ interests. Ultimately, this commercial virus may infect the whole information space and no genre differences will be left, because the information producers may rapidly notice that they need to present production to which a common denominator may be applied – more of the same, i.e. lotteries, games, documentary programmes stimulating the emotions of ordinary people, chat, and reality shows of various types.

Why this is so? Has the libertarian media model been somehow misused? What can be done to correct the “market failure”?¹⁴

Some ideas will be contemplated in the last section of this article where journalism culture is described.

3. Technological Challenges and Innovations in Journalism: Another Universalising Factor

With regard to the structural changes in contemporary media it is also interesting to assess how another drive – the technological – has transformed public communications, and what position the conventional media in Lithuania take in this respect.

Because of rapid digitalisation and technological convergence in the media industry, the whole of public communications is being globally restructured. Technological convergence is already taking place in the newsrooms: the Internet and mobile telecommunications are rapidly penetrating the traditional media sector affecting the selection, editing and dissemination of news. The organizational structure of media companies is changing alongside the merging of editorial office departments and the search for more flexible and integrated ways of information presentation, such as cross-media reporting or use

¹⁴ “Market failure” is created in a situation, when the media because of commercialism and increased concentration, creates gaps of information to certain groups of people. The situation may be corrected through, for example, subsidies to the cultural or minority press.

of cross-promotion techniques. Interactive communication too, provides the audience with more opportunities to personalize information, i.e. to select only what is important and can better serve their needs. This raises a new set of concerns and questions: Who will benefit from the increased informatization? Do more media mean a better-informed and more active audience? Does more information mean more democracy?

As far as taking advantage of the Internet is concerned, the media of post-communist countries had the same starting position as their western counterparts.¹⁵ The opportunities afforded by the new technologies turned into another challenge for the young democracies. The media of these countries had to decide whether to take part or reject the experiment of the new technologies shortly after starting to gather the fruits of pluralistic communication and not knowing how to address the arising political, economical and legal public information problems. Some media (e.g. business daily *Verslo žinios* or the public service broadcaster, the *LRT*) obviously understood that Internet projects were an opportunity for media organizations to change and renew, to digitalize content and to merge newsrooms. While in other media, each step was taken with trepidation: in many cases Internet projects were likened to advertising tricks and distant investments into the future, rather than a possibility to serve the interests of the readers (as citizens) better.

In Lithuania, the use of the Internet and penetration of mobile telephones has tripled in recent years.¹⁶

Rapid computerization was speeded-up by several important steps, which were undertaken in 2000. The unexpectedly high growth of Internet users was due to the liberalization of the telecommunications market (the arrival of new Internet providers apart from Lithuanian Telecom) and to marketing strategies by major Internet providers.¹⁷ But it was not the audience themselves nor the media (which historically had a mission of standing at the forefront of political and social changes) that were the “icebreakers” in promoting the idea of the Information Society. Internet diffusion was actively initiated through the “Langas į ateitį” (“Window to the Future”) alliance, which is comprised of three forces: the Internet providers concerned with a wider market share, banks promoting electronic banking and the government introducing ideas of electronic government and electronic democracy.

But new technologies are being used for making profit, too. It has been a concern of how to capitalise the Internet since the first newspapers decided to go online, yet many of Lithuanian online newspapers are maintained by their print companies and do not show online revenues.

The Lithuanian newspapers adopted some of the most popular online business models. The first model is only concerned with ads, so the online newspaper delivers information for free (national daily *Lietuvos žinios*). Traditionally, the second model requires readers to register. In Lithuania, there are no Web sites that would require the readers to register, thus providing such demographic information as age, sex, interests etc. – everything that can be later used for marketing purposes or in the worst case, even sold to interested parties. And the third model is subscription. Today two Lithuanian online newspapers (*Lietuvos rytas* and *Verslo žinios*) operate under subscription. Other dailies offer some sections for free, but only in early afternoon hours starting at 11 a.m. (regional daily *Kauno diena*). People who subscribe to a paper version usually get free password to read online news too (*Verslo žinios*). Some producers hope that in this way the newspaper is safe from cannibalisation. Others expect revenues from subscription and online ads.

¹⁵ Both in post-communist and in the Western European countries, online public information projects began forming approximately at the same time, i.e. in the mid 1990s.

¹⁶ In 2004, 29 percent of 3.4 million Lithuanians (aged between 15–74) were users of the Internet, and 80 percent of the population had mobile telephones. Statistics confirm that 23 percent of households have computers at home, of which 8 percent are connected to the Internet. There exist several dozens of active online projects of Lithuanian origin on the Internet: 55 Lithuanian newspapers distribute their electronic versions, broadcast stations run their home pages on the Web and many radio stations can be heard via the Internet.

¹⁷ The number of DSL users grew following the introduction of flat rates for unlimited access time. In January 2004 the service cost 22,32 Euros per month, still unaffordable for those earning an average monthly salary of 350,11 Euros.

Although expenditure on online advertising is low, it is growing rapidly.¹⁸ The most active online advertisers are telecommunications (one third of all online advertising) and financial investment companies and the ones that offer consumer products. Predictions are being made, that in 2004 the investment in online advertising activities will be 5.5–6 mln. Litas. In Latvia, the online advertising market there grew only by 10 percent, although the general economics picture in Latvia is as positive as it is in Lithuania. According to experts, in Lithuania, this was affected by flexible price policies. Techniques, which are used to design advertising online¹⁹, had an impact too. Also, online advertising grew because the audience has increased.²⁰

How will this affect beliefs about the possibilities of new technologies to bring online democracy, participatory communication and equal opportunities?

There is evidence that the new information technologies do not just specify time and space concepts, providing possibilities for the audience to take part in information development processes, but they also allow greater social control. According to this view, the new technologies provide new instruments and develop subtly hidden and extremely exact ways of collecting more specific information about users of informational content. Indeed, getting to know the expectations of the audience is advantageous for those who own the media. Possession of very accurate data provides excellent conditions for increasing profit. With television for instance, the telemetry technology²¹ (introduced in Lithuania in 2002) has replaced the less effective diary principle, where the viewer had to follow and register the time spent in front of the television. This helps the media owners to reveal the potential viewer groups of certain television programmes not only by sex or age, but also by social status. In the Internet media everything is even simpler: the computer medium never “lies” and registers exactly when, from where (even from what country) and during which part of the day there was an inquiry for one or another kind of information. The result of calculations is stunning: as is evident from registered readers’ visits to the *Lietuvos rytas* website; the most popular items of this daily are the horoscopes and crime related news.

Some time ago a strong rhetoric for the electronic public sphere was supplemented by less optimistic concerns.²² Nonetheless, the interactive nature of the Internet does indeed offer the online media the potential to cultivate civil society, to stimulate new discussions, to address grassroots needs and to become societal in scope. Despite some positive developments, the most widespread form of online media production is the mainstream news site, generally offering a selection of editorial content and a minimal form of participatory communication. Journalists seem motivated to use interactivity as well as other new features on a much wider scale, but media organizations themselves are less keen. Editors’ thinking of online newspapers as a form of “charity to the reader” does not seem to be socially empowering or societal in scope.

As the traditional press in Lithuania shows modest interest²³ in new technologies, the available niche in public information is taken by new arrivals, such as online news only projects (e.g. *Delfi*, *Omni Laikas*, *E-biz*, *Bernardinai*, *Akiračiai*). The most

¹⁸ In 2003 in Lithuania, as compared to the previous year, the growth of online advertising was 146.67% and was 3.7 million Litas. In contrast, the advertising in conventional media grew by 12% and was 261.8 mln. Litas.

¹⁹ New creative solutions for ads were introduced, which are no different from designs produced in economically and technologically more advanced countries, such as the U.S. or the Scandinavian countries.

²⁰ According to the market research company “TNS Gallup”, 600 000 adult users access the Internet at least once per month. This audience is certainly those who have good salaries, live in the cities and use the Internet at work.

²¹ Special technology records when and on which channels a viewer accesses a TV programme.

²² Mobilisation theories claim that use of the net will facilitate new forms of civic engagement worldwide and level the playing field for political access. In contrast, reinforcement theories suggest that use of the net will strengthen, but not radically transform, existing patterns of political communications and democratic participation.

²³ A recent survey of the Internet press in Europe confirmed that Lithuanian dailies follow a traditional approach to the Internet. They tend to regard the Internet as a convenient place for publishing their information. For instance, *Lietuvos rytas*, *Kauno diena* and *Lietuvos žinios* assign substantially less space for advertising on their websites than the online press in other countries. The Lithuanian dailies use the same business model on the Internet as in the traditional press, i.e. it is mostly concentrated on the presentation of the news. Meanwhile the Internet is known for providing readers with advertising and varied services, which might not be directly related to internet journalism (such as city guides, where one can read how to spend a weekend and etc.), but develops the conditions for attracting more readers in the hope that they will become regular visitors of the site.

popular among the top 5 most visited Lithuanian websites is *Delfi*, which is not related to any traditional media. Although *Delfi* has little original journalism, the project attracts more than 130 000 daily visitors, mainly because of online commenting possibilities. In Lithuania, original journalism is published online in order to create alternative space for those, whose voices are not heard in the traditional media (in this respect the comments of surfers on *Delfi* are disregarded). For instance, the editors of *Omni Laikas* (which has more than 30 000 readers per day) consider comments of experts and opinions of contributing publicists the strongest feature of their project, so perhaps this is a key to recognizing the Lithuanian Internet. Another indicative national feature of the Lithuanian Internet is active audience participation in online debates.

In short, the technology is a strong force towards media systems convergence. But the influence of technology cannot be separated from the contexts in which technologies are being applied. Technological innovations have a big impact on the modernisation of journalism, but the standardising power of technologies cannot be overestimated either. In Lithuania, for example, the question of whether to apply new technologies in news production and delivery is based on careful short-term profit calculations. In other countries, other motives may guide the development of hybrid media.

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As has been demonstrated, both economic and technological factors bring about similar tendencies in national media systems. The Baltic media are clearly re-orienting towards the world of business. New technologies too, quickly penetrate the media industry, thus changing news production routines and colonizing the electronic space. But, as practice shows, the reasons for the same tendency may be very different in different national settings.

4. Towards Professionalisation?

The application of the two universalising factors (economic and technological) has different consequences because of traditions and values, as well as the attitudes that exist in professional media communities in different countries. So our main concern, therefore, is: does economic restructuring and technological renovation, in fact, lead to democratisation?

Concerning economic development, the Lithuanian media attempts to reorient itself towards business imperatives. The owners are concerned with rapid financial gains and “new criteria” seem to have replaced all others: as fast as possible, as much as possible, and as funny as possible.²⁴ Little concern is given to the fact that the hunt for a profit has, in principle, only a short-term effect, and unprofessional journalism is indeed the fastest path to financial ruin. Another worrying issue is that by increasingly concentrating on commercial imperatives, the press may become populist. Hence, concerning the question where do they stand politically, the Lithuanian newspapers give a very complicated impression. In many ways the press serves those in power. In contrast, national-level newspapers in Latvia often have clear political alignment.

For example, the Swedish-Latvian owned *Diena* is pro-EU, pro-NATO, rightwing (in the Latvian understanding of the term), and always critical of “pro-Moscow” politicians – in fact, actively generating the tags of “pro-Moscow” and attaching them to politicians. Another newspaper, *Latvijas Avīze*, working mostly with rural readers (though not exclusively), has nationalist leanings and mostly gives profiles of politicians of this alignment. The style is more Soviet-style propaganda. The Russian-language *Vesti Segodnja* also uses Soviet-style propaganda, but from a different side of the spectre – openly pro-Moscow. There is a dearth of unbiased political commentary – perhaps to some extent *Neatkarīga Rīta Avīze* and *Telegraf* could be considered more neutral in their political commentary, but they (especially the former) have serious failings in other areas of journalistic ethics.

²⁴ For comparison, see interview with Dainius Radzevičius in “The Impact of Media Concentration on Professional Journalism”, OSCE 2003.

The populist media is somewhat similar to populism in politics. It is based on the interests and opinions of ordinary people. It plays upon people's fears and prejudices in order to achieve economic (and sometimes even political) success.

In Lithuania, the Constitution and the Law on Provision of Information to the Public declare the essence of provision of information: although the principles are not many (as declared in Article 3 of the Law and the press code), but practice confirms that it is not simple for journalists to adhere to them.

According to the press code of Lithuanian journalists, public information must be presented in the media correctly, accurately and in an unbiased fashion. It also requires journalists to present various opinions, especially when the questions discussed are controversial: unimportant and misleading information and events shouldn't be presented as significant or sensational. Journalists or publishers shouldn't misuse their power, etc.

Despite the values explicitly stressed in the code, many journalists consider freedom of expression as an invitation to unrestrained and gutter journalism. So the Lithuanian self-regulation mechanism, which was originally borrowed from Sweden, has turned out to be close to non-functioning. A problem is that the accountability system is weak and self-regulating institutions are ineffective (more on this in Balčytienė, in this volume).

There are only a few cases of sanctions for publicizing private data (e.g., *Lietuvos rytas* for revealing personal data on an HIV addict). Debates on media policy do not exist and little incentive is given by journalists and the media industry to participate in critical media discussions. And, finally, the audience is uninformed about key human rights concerns, is uncritical of media performance, and is reluctant to voice its opinion. Media non-governmental organizations are too few (e.g. The Lithuanian Journalism Centre established by the Open Society Fund in 1995) and do not cover the critical issues of media performance.

Altogether, a big problem in Lithuania (Latvia and Estonia as well) is that the media, although being a watchdog of society, tolerates very little criticism towards itself. External criticism towards the media is implicitly understood as a danger to press freedom. In Lithuania, for example, there is little public debate about changes in the ownership of media (who owns what?), the media's function and the public interest.

Another comment regarding the misbehaviour of the media is related to the media and state relationship. In Lithuania the state has a hand in self-regulation: the ombudsman is accountable to the Parliament (Seimas) and the Ethics Commission of Journalists and Publishers is financed through the Media Support Fund, which is also financed by the government. The problematic aspect here is that criticism against the media coming from these institutions is often treated as a threat to press freedom. Because of the memories of the totalitarian past when the media was regarded as the mouthpiece of the Soviet government, contemporary media is suspicious of state intervention (more on this in Balčytienė, in this volume).

So it becomes obvious that the Nordic model of self-regulation does not work without strong traditions of democratic journalism and adequate political culture in society. The audience too, is not critical of the media – the majority of Lithuanians do not see big problems in the media. Indeed, why should the media care, if its consumers are happy?

On the one hand, the historical aspect in the explanation of the high level of trust Lithuanians place in their media tends to stress the cult of book smugglers when the press in Latin letters was banned in the second half of the 19th century. On the other hand, however, the lack of critical thinking by the audience may be a key to the phenomenon of innocent loyalty. According to some experts, people believe that journalists are more knowledgeable and have more information, thus, they understand things better than ordinary people (Ališauskienė 2001).

Generally speaking, there is a lack of tradition in maintaining a critical discourse on anything in Lithuania. Lithuanian political culture has peculiar national features. Historically there is a clear orientation towards the family, apolitical individualism, and national patriotism – characteristics of a subordinate political culture. This type of political culture features residents' orientation towards political institutes without a major responsibility. Emotions prevail while evaluating political phenomena. This type of culture creates conditions for sensationalism to flourish.

As a matter of fact, the economic logic of the media forces journalists to comply with owners' interests, but this may also create favourable conditions for understanding that professional consolidation of journalists is a necessity.

With media owners occupied solely by profit concerns, journalists themselves have to take care of social security issues through active participation in professional associations and unions. Although there are large variations in the degree of journalistic autonomy across different media, in general, the salaries of the majority of ordinary journalists in Lithuania are far below those in public office, employees of financial institutions or business companies. Social guarantees for journalists are particularly meagre causing much stress to journalists facing questions of how to survive in a competitive market in the future. In Latvia too, an important aspect of media culture concerns the status of journalists.

There is a great disparity in salary levels for journalists. Publishers of newspapers and TV companies (state and private) have different systems of remuneration for journalists' work – from the Western-level salaries of leading journalists of one national-level newspaper and perhaps a few TV journalists (talk-show hosts), to tax evasion in some media and irregular payments linked to that. The salaries can be very low (e.g. regional media, Russian-language national-level media), and TV journalists and producers sometimes have no stable salary at all – they have to rely on money they themselves manage to raise (also through surreptitious advertising) for their programmes.

Recently the Union of Journalists of Lithuania announced an initiative to make amendments in the media laws to guarantee the independence and autonomy of journalists as well as other workers in the public communications sector. According to the initiative, a separation has to be made between a journalist and a media worker, whereby a journalist belongs to a professional union and has received training or journalistic education. This should ensure the professional status of journalists. This should also help to start a social dialogue between employers and employees.

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The argument that the Lithuanian is a small market has become an unquestionable fact widely used by publishers to defend media commercialisation and all its consequences. A good example of publisher's rhetoric is: "the Lithuanian market is too small therefore, there can not be a critical mass of readers for quality press ...; the circulation of a newspaper (e.g. tabloid *VL: Vakarų žinios*) is growing, so the conclusion is that the audience needs what we write". But statistical data speak against this type of rhetoric. Newspapers and television stations are mushrooming, thus, the market is far from being small. In fact, it is not the market alone but also the editors and journalists are responsible for the content being produced.

It is largely a matter of a distinct political culture, i.e. values and attitudes relating to openness, whether a media organization 1) takes its performance seriously (observes the requirements of the law to provide information on the ownership and respects decisions taken by the ethics commission)²⁵, 2) is keen to discuss media quality questions, and 3) is concerned with professionalization.

²⁵ In Lithuania, according to the Law on Provision of Information to the Public, the media have to declare their ownership annually: provide data on changes in ownership structure, circulation etc.

It is one thing to establish self-regulation institutions (by importing models from foreign countries with old democratic traditions) and a completely different thing to make them work.

The Lithuanian media has completed the preparatory phase towards transformation – the media has freed opinion. Yet much remains to be done to achieve the phase of consolidation, which deals with a certain political culture of media professionals that further leads the media to a completely different status of professional autonomy and journalistic independence.

5. Concluding Remarks

Both economic and technological factors have had a great impact on media modernisation in the countries of the Baltic Region. In the sphere of media economics, very similar business solutions are being applied in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Norway. The article has demonstrated that there exist similar tendencies of media development (commercialisation is one of them) in different countries.

Technological improvements also has a considerable impact on the convergence of media systems. Technological restructuring is obvious in the newsrooms where computers, mobile telephones, integrated news desks for cross-media reporting have replaced traditional technologies such as tape recorders and typewriters.²⁶

The article demonstrates that due mainly to characteristics of a national setting (historical development of journalism and the media) the same phenomena may occur in different shades in different countries. Contemporary media systems in the four countries are a result of historical experience and traditions and it is tempting to reveal these unique national features while searching for similarities and differences between the Lithuanian and foreign media. Indeed, there is no pure and universal model of European journalism, but there exists a tendency of media development, which can be recognized and discussed when talking about news production in Lithuania and neighbouring countries.

Comparison reveals the specific character of the media market in Lithuania. The national characteristics of the Lithuanian media may be regarded as the following:

- 1) the regulation of the media is very liberal, but accountability is weak,
- 2) the media has a national ownership structure (meaning that most of the media is owned by local capital).

These two factors affect freedom of communication. It appears that the media is free from state censorship, but it is not free from self-censorship. In the hunt for revenue the media produce populist journalism and becomes entrapped in various intrigues. The media also tend to misuse the criticism levelled against itself. They argue that by criticising the media, the external powers want to suppress the freedom of the press. Apart from the initiatives from the Journalists Union, ordinary journalists themselves are slow to bring issues of their professionalism to a wider public.

Another observation is that, in Lithuania, private business invests heavily in the media. Whether this signals the arrival of other interests than just the business of the provision of information in the near future remains to be seen. It may be that in the media, as in any other business, change is natural, that the many newcomers are concerned with economic investment and want to have a profitable business (or want to make the business profitable and then sell it).

²⁶ There exist empirical studies that confirm that the Internet has had an impact on how journalists perform their tasks. Technological convergence has made an impact on how news is being managed, and what kind of multi-media content is being produced and disseminated to the public. Despite some positive changes, Lithuanians (and their media, too) are slow and conservative in introducing innovation. On the one hand, the technological equipment is a reality and an integral part of everyday life but, on the other hand, the technological empowerment of newsrooms has also had a negative effect on the older generation of professionals.

In conclusion, when discussing media modernisation, a principal concern should be whether media commercialisation and technological innovation lead to democratisation. On the one hand, media commercialisation is widely criticised, yet on the other hand, what seems to be needed in countries of young democracy, is an open debate on the types of regulation needed to protect public communications from undesirable impacts. Indeed, there is no need to stop media commercialisation. One can say that it is a bad thing, but what then are the alternatives?

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