

INDICATOR 4: PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING AND SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS THAT UNDERPINS FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, PLURALISM AND DIVERSITY

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SUMMARY

Analysis of the status of journalism as a profession in Croatia takes place in the context of the extremely difficult circumstances of the world recession processes, so the usually complex situation for the average journalist in Croatia (the instability of work engagements, the dictates of advertisers and pressure from media owners for profit, unsigned collective agreements, the absence of editorial statutes, underpayment of many journalists who have multi-year part-time positions in their newsrooms, the frequency of the "escape of journalists" from traditional media to *on-line* or the *blog-sphere*), has put further pressure on the position of the journalistic profession. In this context, considering the question of education, training, workshops, improving acquired knowledge or emphasis on lifelong education programs, especially in this profession does not come at the right time, because, in short, it is important just to survive. However, the issues of continuous professional development, training and education are exactly proportional to the level of professionalism in the field of journalism. In this sense, indicator 4 is trying to determine the state of educational structures, ways in which permanent or ad hoc training sessions for journalists are implemented and finally, how journalists realize and protect their basic labour rights as a precondition to even be able to consider investing in education, and in this respect, to send their requests to media owners and publishers.

Data regarding the education of Croatian journalists organized by the Croatian Journalists' Association (HND) show that the number of higher-educated journalists is slightly higher among members of this professional organization in relation to journalists with secondary education. This analysis establishes an illogical state – that while more university level studies and other higher educational institutions have dedicated themselves to training future journalists – this fact has in no way contributed to an improvement of vocational education structure in the newsrooms or in the membership of the leading professional organization.

In addition to basic higher education, in every profession, thus including journalism, there is a need for constant additional training. But in a time where there is significant change in practical journalism, which some even call a revolution – the convergence, i.e. unifying of different media technologies to create entirely new products – the need for training, workshops or improvement is imperative. According to available data, such training is insufficient in Croatia or such additional forms of education are reserved only for selected journalists and editors of major media outlets. Since the introduction of the Journalism Workshop in 1998 by the Croatian Journalists' Association, the quantity and forms of professional development have been significantly reduced. Foreign donations, which financed most of this form of vocational training, are no more, and in the meantime, publishers have not recognized the need to finance and continue with these programs resulting in the fact that in 2008 the International Centre for the Education of Journalists noted only six programs for journalists. To illustrate, earlier the annual average for these programs was around 30.

Judging by the number of university studies and colleges for the education of journalists in Croatia today, we can conclude that there is an undoubtedly huge interest in registration by

new generations of students. For example, all Croatian universities (Zagreb, Zadar and Dubrovnik) closed the registration of the new generation of students during the summer enrolment period. It is the same in other private higher education establishments, despite the high tuition fees. Enrolment was also completed in record time. Despite difficulties in finding employment, bad reputation and the perception of journalism and journalists, young people still find the call to journalism attractive. Without going into detailed curricula of existing studies, it is obvious that a future study of the motives of studying journalism at the national Croatian level would give answers to some of the questions that have been raised regarding the appeal of the field to students. The sobering of students of journalism regularly begins when they join the newsroom where problems of Croatian journalism today are reflected most strongly.

In addition to the Croatian Journalists' Association as the main professional organization, the Union of Croatian Journalists occupies a key position in the fight for the position of journalists. The Union of Croatian Journalists as well as the Croatian Journalists' Association, is aware of the general poor media environment in which journalists operate today. Through successive warnings about the problems that face journalists, the journalists' union can only partly sensitize the public about the subject, but in the long-term employers and media owners – primarily through the protection of journalists' rights through the frame of collective agreements – can contribute to shifts for the better and guaranteed social security.

Finally, the role of a functioning civil society, which should be the strongest and most loyal partner of the journalistic profession in promoting media freedom and media credibility, is important. What is worrying is the fact that the media, probably because of a desire to increase (today!) their very modest editions, engage in speculation and distortion of information which reduces their indispensable role in the development of democracy and the users' trust of the media. Hence the role of civil society organizations and nongovernmental organizations that through constant monitoring and warning could contribute to the quality of media content by raising public confidence in the media.