**Europe**

The word ‘journalism’ has French origins. ‘Jour’ means daily in French and its usage originated during the French revolution when newspapers were extensively used and often the only way to shape public opinion. The professional description of the word ‘journalist’ has been attributed to Journal of Sçavans, published in Paris in 1665. In England, the profession was a familiar one in the 18th century. Thus, it is no accident that Europe has often been considered the birthplace of journalism. The end of the 18th century saw consensus of what journalists did and the term ‘journalist’ gradually replaced more general nomenclature like “Zeitungsschreiber” which meant ‘newspaper writer’ in German or the Italian “novellante” which means novelist or writer.

The newspaper as we know it today was not long in coming. Around 1601, in France and England we see the publication of single but long news accounts. A similar type in Spain called “relaciones” was popular. In Italy and Germany, similar copies were circulated among different groups. Around 1600, the idea of using printing for such material grew in Germany. The development of the printing press in the Germany and the growth of education in the 19th century gave fillip to the press that we see today. As access to education grew and materials for publishing became cheaper, political parties started sponsoring newspapers at national and state levels. The invention of automatic typesetting in the 1880s made publication of morning newspapers possible. Entrepreneurs entered the field nudging out political parties and ensured that the press became a business enterprise. By 1815 magazines were flourishing in Paris and Germany as well as other European countries.

**Nature of European Journalism**

Europe, second smallest of the world's continents, comprises 44 countries, like the United Kingdom, Spain, Russia, France, Spain, and Germany, among others, like Hungary, Belarus, Serbia, and Switzerland. Russia is the most populous region and has nearly 15 per cent of Europe’s total population. Media in Russia are mostly state-run or owned by companies with closely linked to the Kremlin. Unlike other European countries, Belgium may not have a single public broadcasting organization but its diverse French, German and Flemish populations are served by different private and public media companies. Like Belgium, media in Brussels reflects its diverse populations and cultural communities control programming rather than federal authorities.

Europe today has some of the most innovative media organizations like the Dennik N in Slovakia, the Swedish Dagens Nyheter, MediaPart in France and the BBC in the UK. Multiple countries, languages and different ways of life makes Europe seem like a complex maze of culture and politics. A 2006 study (Williams, 2006) emphasized that that the biased approaches that considered the Anglo-American model of journalism as the ultimate way to practice journalism had led to scholars portraying the European model of journalism as regressive and old-fashioned; a model of how journalism should not be practiced. European journalism was described as “regressive, resistant to giving up the old ways” (Williams, 2006; 2). As the Worlds of journalism: Journalistic cultures around the globe (2019), says, the Baltic, Central, and East European countries follow general western ways of journalism practice. Hungary is an exception, and its media has been described by the Freedom House as “partly free.” Mancini (2000) has said that “Italian journalists are advocates, linked to political parties, and very close to being active politicians themselves.” For journalists in Europe objectivity and political neutrality are hard given the “fragmented panorama in which a greater number of political forces act and in which even the slightest shades of meaning in a story risk stepping on the positions of one of the forces in the political field” (Mancini, 2000: 273). Unlike the US, European journalism has strong roots in the literary world where, for example, influential journalists during the 19 century France were novelists like Victor Hugo, Balzac, and Emile Zola. In Germany after world war 1, the 1874 Reich press law and social developments gave rise to a press where opinion were valued and where corporate interests also worked on influencing editorials. Journalists in Europe more than other countries work in permanent positions. Europe supports rich traditions of internships and journalism education.

Journalistic styles, forms and roles are influenced and shaped by the society, politics, and culture within which the profession is understood and practiced, and this is reflected in the journalism and journalistic institutions in Europe where press freedom is always a priority. Journalists in Western Europe may not have as much editorial autonomy as journalists from Netherlands, Latvia, and Estonia, but recent trends towards reducing excessive negative in news and moving towards more constructive reporting are welcome trends. Yet as Pew Research (2020) has shown that despite the pandemic, Europeans considered climate change a major threat, but most European media did not have clear policies to cover the topic. The European Journalism Observatory with six partners comprising the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Poland, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom has criticized media in Europe for not having a clear editorial policy on covering climate change.

**State of journalism in Europe**

Like other countries in the world, journalists in Europe face harassment, financial troubles, online trolling, and other assaults. The **European Federation of Journalists (EFJ),** the largest organization of journalists in Europe, say that, journalism in Europe is under threat from authoritarian governments, changes in organizational structures and revenue streams that may not always be effective. Appointed in 2019, the European Commission, established during European elections, and in accordance with recommendations from Reporters Without Borders, is focusing on ensuring a safer professional atmosphere for journalists. This is an executive branch of the European Union and its duties range from proposing and implementing legislation besides upholding EU treaties.

This has come in the wake of increasing censorship in certain countries like Hungary and Poland. In Poland, restrictions on the judiciary have inhibited press freedoms and journalists can be imprisoned for defamation for years. The coronavirus has further complicated the scenario especially in Eastern Europe. Eastern Europe is formed by countries like Cyprus, Georgia, Armenia, Belarus, Bulgaria, and Greece among others. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán in Hungary assumed full control of the government citing the coronavirus and has enacted laws that give Hungarian courts and laws the means to pressure independent media. In 2020, Montenegro (105th) and Albania (84th) lost two places on the Freedom Index each fell two places after journalists were unfairly detained under laws designed to fight misinformation. Authorities actively campaigning against media rights, has seen in Bulgaria the arrest of journalists who are prolific government critics like Silvia Velikova which has emphasized the lack of freedom in the sphere of public broadcasting. Media freedom is high in France, but journalists routinely face police harassment. During the 2018 Yellow Vest Protests, reporters were attacked by angry protesters and police armed with tear gas shells. Murders are not uncommon. Slovakian journalist Ján Kuciak and Daphne Caruana Galizia in Malta lost their lives in the line of duty. In Ireland, Lyra McKee was killed in 2019. Her death prompted the establishment of the National Committee for the Safety of Journalists by the UK government to create and implement a national action plan of safety to protect journalists and hold those who threaten reporters accountable. Recently, the European Parliament passed the whistleblower protection framework which was formally adopted to serve as important legal protections for investigative and public focused journalism. Approaches outlined in the Code of Practice on Disinformation executed by the European Commission, and the statutory network provisions in the German Network Enforcement Act have been considered but critics say that they may not make real difference to stem issues.

Thus, the Platform to Promote the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists (2019) has said that media freedom in Europe in under extreme threat with countries like Hungary and Poland precipitously losing ground since 2015. For example, the media in Russia is diverse with state owned as well as corporate controlled entities and while the constitution does provide for press freedom the government covertly exercises censorship through the application of various laws and bureaucratic decrees. Even stable societies like Norway face huge instances of online harassment. Sweden, Demark, and Finland, who rank highly in the Freedom Index, also battle online aggravations.

A 2019 report from Reuters institute for the study of journalism, states that for journalism to thrive in Europe, organizations and journalists need “freedom, funding, and a future.” The report also recommends that media organizations must embrace the promises offered by mobile and digital platforms that are gradually being embraced globally, and to refrain from championing a non-digital print oriented past. But financial issues have stymied efforts.

**Media Ownership**

The European debt crisis from the end of 2009 has brought about financial crisis that has significantly affected the press in Europe and have led to concentrations of media ownership which threaten the existence of independent journalism. In Slovakia, the Penta Investments, a financial group, in Slovenia, within a decade has taken over many print and digital media outlets. Petr Kellner, the wealthiest man in the Czech Republic, recently bought the Central European Media Enterprises (CME) giving rise to concerns of increasing influence by CME which already owns many television stations in Eastern Europe. This is seen in Bulgaria as well where the New Bulgarian Media Group (NBMG) increased its hold into the market, extending control over six newspapers and much of the print media distribution grid. The Union of Publishers in Bulgaria have raised concerns about its negative repercussions on media freedom and the functioning of independent media in the country.

Revenue have declined and the European newspaper industry has lost an estimated €33bn in 2019 in annuities. This has led to cutbacks by media organizations that has negatively impacted investigative, development and science journalism. The move towards digitization has had negative effects and effected a greater concentration of ownership in the media and in the process influenced media plurality. While there are concerns about this centralization of media and media ownership, there is also hope that digitization will also lead to greater access of information among the public and in the process increase diversity. The general focus of Europe’s media has been national markets. Yet certain companies have grown and moved beyond national borders which have led to concerns about weakening public service broadcasts and an increase of profit-oriented media programming.

These are important issues to consider because media in Europe is defined by public faith in public broadcasting. As Pew Research (2018) has shown in countries like Sweden and Germany public media is greatly trusted with 39% of Swedes choosing SVT/Radio and 37% of Dutch adults naming Nederlandse Publieke Omroep (NPO) as their broadcaster of choice. In the UK, 48% adults choose the BBC. The Pew Research report also shows that Italians (65%) and Spaniards (57%) while preferring public news media trusted them to a lesser degree.

Europe has its share of dominant media conglomerates. In 2016, the European Audiovisual Observatory reported that Liberty Global, Deutsche Telekom, Orange, Sky, Viasat and Vivendi are among the 15-strong group that dominated television in the European Union. This scenario is dominated by US based media channels like 21st Century Fox, AMC Networks, Discovery Communications and NBC Universal. BERTELSMANN AG is among the top ten global media groups operating in Europe. The Luxembourg based RTL Group is another international media company that operates 68 television channels and 31 radio stations in Germany, France, and other European countries. In the publishing scenario, Gruner + Jahr, headquartered in Hamburg, Germany, is among the largest.  There is no specific legislation in Europe that controls or tries to mediate media ownership.

**Community media**

Europe is no stranger to concepts of community media and EU audiovisual regulation recognizes the importance of diversity and ethnic inclusivity. The European Council recognizes the importance of community media as an important venue of content rooted in regions and supports its inclusivity and ability to encourage intercultural dialogue. The Council of Europe is an important public space that seeks to facilitate the collection and dissemination of information on serious concerns about media freedom and safety of journalists in Council of Europe member States, that are guaranteed by Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Its partner organizations include the Reporters Without Borders, the International Federation of journalists, the European Federation of journalists and the Association of European journalists.

As Europe gets increasingly diversified, the Council of Europe study Spaces of Inclusion - Needs of refugees and migrants in the domain of media communication and on responses by community media (2018) has explored media use and need of migrants and refugees. As the study has shown community media spaces can provide for different opportunities of self-representation through various formats and encourage their inclusion in local media. There is also awareness that such media in many lack legal recognition, funding, and participation. The European policy agenda is very cognizant of the roles played by such media and recent debates in the Council of Europe and the European Parliament have focused on developing frameworks that will enable the growth and development of such media. But critics say that inconsistent efforts are slowing development and that more sustainable regulation needs to be put in place. The Netherlands, Switzerland, Hungary, Ireland, and the UK recognize community media as a distinct third sector of broadcasting, as important media that is a welcome addition to commercial and public service media.

**Important changes**

 In Europe over the years, certain important positive changes are influencing journalistic practices. Gender disparities was, for long, an important area of concern. Studies done in 2015 showed that 41% of reporters and presenters in Europe were women. Print had the smallest percentage of women with 34%. In 2018, surveys revealed “widespread gender-based discrimination” and a lack of opportunities and sexual harassment and bullying. Organizations and states were extremely reluctant to address the issue. But as the 2019, *Worlds of journalism: Journalistic cultures around the globe* shows, many more women now are journalists in Europe with important increases marked in states that were formerly a part of erstwhile Yugoslavia and the USSR. Women made up more than 60 per cent of the workforce Latvia, Russia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Moldova, and more than 50 percent in Estonia, Croatia, and Serbia.

But media in Europe is facing new challenges. As the European Federation of Journalists have reported rising digital shifts in the media sphere in Europe has brought about increasing pressures on traditional business models. Ensuring accessible training and protecting fragile media freedoms is clearly the need of the hour to safeguard independent journalism and increase public trust in media.

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Further Readings

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