

#ReForMediaMKD

**THE STRUCTURAL POSITION OF FEMALE
JOURNALISTS IN THE MACEDONIAN MEDIA**

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1. INTRODUCTION

Gender equality reflects the respect for human rights, democracy and social justice in a society. In that respect, free media, editorial independence and freedom, media pluralism and gender equality in the media are prerequisites for ensuring the advancement of women in the newsroom, and their adequate representation in the media content.

In Macedonia there is a legal framework guaranteeing gender equality and representation in all areas of society, including the media. The international recommendations that address this issue have been integrated into the legislation. However, the general worldwide trend that despite the fact that women are more numerous in the newsrooms, the editorial, managerial and executive positions in the media are dominated by men is reflected in practice. Research shows that this is also reflected in the media products, where there is gender asymmetry in terms of represented opinions and consulted protagonists. The reasons for this situation are complex and should be sought in the individual, organizational, social and cultural factors in society.

The aim of the research is to determine the position of women in the media structure in Macedonia, considering their representation in various levels of the governing structures of some of the most influential media in Macedonia, their educational background, opportunities for professional development, as well as their economic and security standing. Although we have encountered difficulties in collecting data, all these elements made it possible to get a general idea of the position and role of women working in the media industry.

The survey was conducted from May to October 2018. For this purpose, we have used analyses, research and data from relevant international and domestic sources as our reference sources. We also did 13 interviews with journalists and media workers from influential editorial boards in Macedonia, and a survey which was distributed to 10 media, on which we received the response from eight of them.

2. THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN THE INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC LEGISLATION

The number of international documents regulating gender equality in all segments of society is substantially greater, however these principles mainly rely on the postulates of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,¹ the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action.

The Convention, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1979, is still considered as an international "law" for women's rights. This Convention provides the basis for achieving equality between men and women by providing equal access and opportunities for women in the political and public life - including the right to vote and stand for election, the right to education, health and employment. It is the only agreement that affirms the reproductive rights of women and highlights the culture and tradition as

¹ UN Women, "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women", 1979. Available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>.

influences that determine gender roles and family relations. This document recognizes the rights of women to seek, change or retain their nationality and the nationality of their children, and by accepting it, the states should take appropriate measures against all forms of trafficking and exploitation of women.

The strategic objective of the Platform for Action² adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, in September 1995, is to ensure better participation and access of women to expressing and decision-making in and via the media and new technologies of communication, and to promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media. Macedonia is among the countries that have committed to implementing the Platform for Action.

In 2013, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)³ conducted a survey on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration, with a focus on women and the media, which included 99 media organizations from 28 EU member states. The results showed that despite being more numerous in the media, women held 32% of the highest decision-making positions in the media in the 27 EU countries, although there were countries where the percentage was higher (40% -50% in Estonia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovenia, Finland and Sweden). On average, only 25% women sat on the managerial boards of all surveyed media, and their representation was better in the public compared to the private media. The reasons for the low representation of women at decision-making positions, the researchers point out, lies in the individual (necessary skills and knowledge required for senior management positions); the organizational (male culture included working environment where women find it difficult to advance to more senior positions) and the social factors (the impact of the wider context - the social, political and economic structures that shape the individual and organizational behavior).⁴

In November 2015, the organization UN Women, dedicated to gender equality and strengthening the role of women, published data from research that portrays women in the media on its website.⁵ “You could go to a film, switch on the TV, tune in to the radio, turn the pages of a magazine, or surf online. Regardless of your choice of media, you’d have a good chance of encountering stereotypes that perpetuate gender discrimination”, writes the preface to the infographic as a snapshot of gender inequality in the media. According to the data, in 9% of the stories in the news on the radio and on the TV for promoting issues related to gender (in)equality, 4% speak of gender stereotyping, and only one in four people represented in the news is - a woman. Only 27% of the top management positions in the media belong to women, and the remaining 73% are men, according to a study that covered 522 media in 59 countries.⁶

The UNESCO global gender-sensitive indicator framework⁷ for 2012 indicates how to achieve gender equality in the media. Some of the guidelines are: through greater participation of women in the managerial positions and on management boards, and senior positions in the media such as chief editors-in-chief, editors, heads of department, heads of desks and so on. Among other things, the frameworks endorses the existence of systems for monitoring and evaluation of gender equality in the workplace, and collective agreements are recommended to have a provision for protection from sexual harassment and bullying, and all complaints should be resolved.

The Macedonian Constitution guarantees the right to gender and economic equality of all citizens in society. These rights are enshrined in the national legislation and other strategic documents and the Law on Equal Opportunities (2012), the Law on Prevention of Discrimination (2010 with the amendments of

² UN Women, “*Platform for Action*”, 1995. Available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/media.htm>.

³ EIGE, “*Advancing gender equality in decision-making in media organisations: Main findings*” 2013. Available at: <http://eige.europa.eu/node/352>.

⁴ EIGE, “*Advancing gender equality in decision-making in media organisations: Main findings*” 2013. Available at: <http://eige.europa.eu/node/352> pg.9.

⁵ Unwoman.org, 2018. Available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/multimedia/2015/11/infographic-women-and-media>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ UNESCO, “*Gender-sensitive indicators for media: framework of indicators to gauge gender sensitivity in media operations and content*”, 2012. Paris: UNESCO. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002178/217831e.pdf>.

2014),⁸ the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, as well as the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2013-2020⁹ are part of the legislative framework in this area.

The Law on Equal Opportunities¹⁰ regulates the equal participation and treatment, as well as the exclusion of discrimination on any basis, direct and indirect prohibition of gender based harassment and sexual harassment, and advocates the full equality of men and women, and gender perspectives into mainstream society. This Law (Art. 17) regulates the implementation of these principles in the media, i.e. they should contribute to developing and raising awareness of equal opportunities and to the equal participation of women and men in the creation of programme concepts and content. In the public portrayal and representation in the media, every person, regardless of their gender should be displayed in an inoffensive, respectful and honourable manner. The role of ensuring the control and supervision is given to the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, which has a responsibility to prepare an analysis of the gender issues in the programme concepts and content of the media.

The *Strategy for Gender Equality 2013-2020* states that the media have particular importance in a democratic society, because they, as opinion-makers, help in creating or dissolving stereotypes and prejudices.¹¹ This paper focuses on a series of strategic areas, such as human rights, decision making processes, health, social care, education, economic empowerment, women and violence, women and the media, peace and security, and other gender related topics.

The *Strategy* recommends increased presence in the media by at least 30% women as experts and political figures which would reflect the minimum threshold of the state regarding women's participation in political life. It also recommends introducing topics that directly affect the issues of equal gender representation in the decision-making structures and overcoming gender stereotyping in the culture and public discourse, as well as introducing gender equality topics relevant for Macedonia: economic equality/inequality which refers to the difference in wages between men and women, domestic violence against women, and trafficking in underaged girls, especially in the minority ethnic communities, etc.. In light of these recommendations, the fact that the document refers to the need of raising awareness among journalists and editors regarding the topics of gender equality is especially important about this text.¹²

As a result of the responsibilities arising from the legal framework and strategic priorities, the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services conducted a series of activities related to gender in the media, such as research, workshops and publications. The 2017 survey¹³ analyzed the treatment given to gender issues in the daily-news broadcast and the manner in which women and men are represented in the programme concepts and content of the national television broadcasting services in the Republic of Macedonia. The findings suggest that the TV companies allocate very little room for topics that are considered important for gender issue. Out of a total of 973 articles included in the sample, only 28 referred to the topics that are part of the areas covered by the *Strategy for Gender Equality 2013-2020*. The analysis of the central news shows a "strong gender asymmetry (A/N with the exception of certain television stations) in respect of the opinions treated as relevant by the TV stations. In the analyzed articles, in addition to the male or female journalist/reporter, 18 statements were given by men and only five by women."¹⁴ The research confirms the findings that in most television stations women are more often in the role of journalists that prepare articles, and men are more frequently the news editors. The findings also indicate a strong predominance of

⁸ Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, *Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination*, 2010, Skopje: MLSP. Available at: <https://www.pravdiko.mk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Zakon-za-sprechuvane-i-zashtita-od-diskriminatsija-Prechisten-tekst-14-10-2015.pdf>.

⁹ Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, *"Strategy for Gender Equality 2013-2020"*, 2013 Skopje: MLSP. Available on: www.mtsp.gov.mk.

¹⁰ Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, *Law on Equal Opportunities*, Skopje: MLSP. Available at: <http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/ZEM%205%2009%202011%20L.pdf>.

¹¹ Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, *"Strategy for Gender Equality 2013-2020"*, 2013 Skopje: MLSP. pg. 23. Available at: www.mtsp.gov.mk.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ AAAMMU, *"Gender in television programmes - research results in 2017"*, 2018 Skopje: Institute for Social Sciences and Humanities - Skopje covering AAAMMU. Available at: www.avmu.mk.

¹⁴ Ibid.

male interlocutors, which according to the analysis “in a certain way erases the image of women from the public life and their participation in politics”, and there is a distinctively noticeable lower number of articles relating to women’s sports in the sports news.

3. REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATIONS STUDY PROGRAMMES

The number of students who enroll in study programmes in journalism and communications in recent years has abated in almost all universities in Macedonia. What is characteristic is that these departments have always been more attractive to women.

Statistics show that journalism studies at the Faculty of Law in Skopje and at the University “Goce Delchev” in Shtip, are more often selected by women, rather than by men.

In the academic year 2016/2017, out of the total of 84 students enrolled at the Department of Journalism at the Faculty of Law, 47 were women. At the Department of Journalism at the University in Shtip, out of a total of 22, as much as 18 students were female.

Compared with several years ago, in the academic year 2011/2012¹⁵ and 2012/2013,¹⁶ although the number of enrolled students was different, the ratio of enrolled men and women was once again in favour of women. Out of the 216 students enrolled at the Faculty of Law in that school year, 142 were women, while at the University in Shtip - out of 27, there were 19 female students.

Only at the State University in Tetovo fewer women chose journalism as a future profession. In the 2016/2017 academic year, out of the enrolled 39 students, 17 were women. The situation was similar in the 2011/2012 academic year, when the ratio was 35 male students versus 26 female students.

However, it should be underlined that there are many journalists working in the newsrooms in Macedonia whose primary profession is not journalism, as they have completed different higher education studies other than journalism. Also, most of our interlocutors in this study have higher education, one has an MA, and another one is currently working towards graduation from the university. The formal education of most of them is not journalism. They are lawyers, economists and communication specialists.

Despite the large number of media existing in Macedonia, a total of 80 graduated journalists are registered as unemployed and looking for a job in the Agency for Employment, i.e. in the employment centres in 18 cities. The largest number of unemployed journalists are in Skopje - 44, followed by Kumanovo with five, Shtip with four, Prilep, Veles and Ohrid with three, two in Berovo, Bitola, Delchevo, Kriva Palanka, Strumica, Tetovo and one in Valandovo Gevgelija, Demir Hisar, Kratovo, Resen and Sveti Nikole.

4. WOMEN IN THE NEWSROOMS IN THE OWNERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES IN THE MEDIA

Macedonia does not deviate from the general worldwide trends where female journalists outnumber their male counterparts in the media. The fact that the number of female journalists in all televisions has grown in the period from 2012 to 2016 only speaks in favour of this.

Research on gender representation in the media in Macedonia - ownership, managerial/decision-making positions in newsrooms has so far been implemented only in the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media

¹⁵ State Statistical Office, *Students enrolled in the academic year 2011/2012*, 2013. Skopje: SSO. Available at: <http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/2.4.13.15.pdf>.

¹⁶ State Statistical Office, *Students enrolled in the academic year 2012/2013*, 2014. Skopje: SSO. Available at: <http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/2.4.14.14.pdf>.

Services. In terms of employment, there has been an upward trend of working women in the television industry - from 686 in 2012 the figure has risen to 956 in 2016.¹⁷ The number of employed men in this segment of the media industry has been growing with the same pace. However, the male employees have dominated in the stated period.

In 2017, the percentage of women in the audiovisual media industry was 39%, compared to 61% of their male counterparts, a similar ratio that has existed for many years. Most women were working as journalists, and most men worked as technical and support staff.

Research¹⁸ shows that in 2017, women working in the media included in the survey, were more frequently journalists that prepared the news, with the exception of MTV2 and Alsat-M. On the other hand, the male protagonists were more common with respect to giving statements in the news related to certain strategic areas, in comparison to women.

Table 1. News stories and features prepared by male and female journalists and reporters

TV STATION	NUMBER OF NEWS STORIES AND FEATURES PREPARED BY FEMALE JOURNALISTS	NUMBER OF NEWS STORIES AND FEATURES PREPARED BY MALE JOURNALISTS
MRT1	48	35
MRT2	14	32
Alsat – M	36	43
Alfa	64	14
Kanal 5	100	19
Sitel	77	77
Telma	51	28
Total	390	248

Source: AAAMMU, "Gender in television programmes", 2017.

Although studies show that women have a harder time advancing in the media and journalism profession worldwide, the experience of our interlocutors in the Macedonian media are more moderate.

"Gender has had no impact on my career advancement. My professionalism and skill was the only thing that counted", said Ana Anastasovska, editor of the web edition of the daily newspaper *Sloboden Pechat*.¹⁹

Snezhana Lupevska-Sozen, a journalist and editor in *TV Telma*, also believes that gender was not an obstacle for her career: "On the contrary, in Macedonia the number of successful women in journalism is more considerable than the number of successful men", said this female journalist and author of the TV show "Kod", considered as an epitome of the most successful investigative reporting projects in Macedonia for more than 10 years.²⁰

The editor-in-chief and manager of *TV Koha* from Tetovo Mevaip Abdiu says that women employed in television are "not only privileged, but they have a special status when it comes to their career advancement."

¹⁷ AAAMMU "Presentations on gender and media", 2015, 2016, 2018. Skopje: AAAMMU. Available at: www.avmu.mk/презентаци-на-марина-трајкова/?print=pdf.

¹⁸ AAAMMU, "Gender in television programmes", 2017. Skopje: AAAMMU. Available at: www.avmu.mk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Истражување-родови-2017-1.pdf

¹⁹ Interview with Ana Anastasovska, editor of the web edition of the daily newspaper *Sloboden pechat*, 15 July 2018.

²⁰ Interview with Snezhana Lupevska-Sozen, a journalist and editor at *TV Telma*, 23 June 2018.

“They are the main pillars of the information and debate shows in television. The general manager of the company is a woman, as are the anchors of the morning programme, the afternoon show, the show on health and the presenter of the main news”, said Abdiu.²¹

In his 15-year long career, Vlado Apostolov, a journalist with *BIRN/Prizma*, has had more female editors-in-chief than male, and even more female journalists and reporters than male colleagues.

“I really cannot say whether women invest more effort to reach those positions than men, which is somehow generally accepted. We do not discuss this topic in the media and among us journalists, and probably that is the problem. However, come to think of it, we can say that there are very few women media owners and media managers. Probably these are the positions women have a difficult time reaching”, says Apostolov.²²

And exactly this conclusion *has been confirmed by the AAVNS research on “Gender and the Media: ownership, decision-making and reporting”*²³ according to which the executive and managerial positions are still dominated by men. This situation is described with the term “glass ceiling”, introduced by Katherine Lawrence and Marianne Schreiber, which marks the barrier between the middle management and top management positions, i.e. the most difficult gap to overcome for anyone who aspires to be a leader.

In 34 media in Macedonia 100% of the ownership is in the hands of men, while women have full ownership in only four media. In five television stations, women have an ownership share between 0.07% and 66%. Men dominate as managers and as executives, and even as editors-in-chief.

Research shows that only in 2012 and 2014 the number of male editors in all television stations was smaller compared to the number of female editors, 67 versus 68, and 61 versus 65, respectively. In other years, the number of male editors was dominant.

The managerial positions in television stations were dominated by men in the period from 2012 to 2016, and the most drastic was the gap in 2016, where there were 52 media executives/managers and only 11 media were managed by women.

“Experience shows – the bigger the media, the less chance women have to get a managerial position. However, given the fact that journalism is becoming a more ‘feminine’ profession, as it is considered less profitable, women are becoming equal in the number of managerial positions. This does not happen as a result of equality, it is a result of the lack of men in the newsrooms”, said Tamara Chausidis, president of the Independent Union of Journalists and Media Workers.²⁴

The reasons behind the lower number of women in managerial positions in the media are very complex and should be sought in the individual, organizational and sociological factors. As Masha Durkalikj, journalist and author of the publication “*Nejziniot glas odeknuva/Her voice echoes*” states “society generally does not favor fostering women’s capacities and capabilities, and a change in that state would imply an actual far-reaching change in society, which is, by all means, impossible.”²⁵

“As long as the patriarchy faithfully serves the oppression, discrimination and inequality, the responsibility would fall in the backyard of people who practice this type of behaviour” said Durkalikj, emphasizing the cultural aspects that determine the position of women in all spheres of life and work .

²¹ Interview with Mevaip Abdiu, editor and manager of *TV Koha* from Tetovo, 20 June 2018.

²² Interview with Vlado Apostolov, a journalist with *BIRN/Prizma*, 18 June 2018.

²³ AAVMU, “Gender and the media: ownership, decision-making and reporting 2012-2016”, Skopje 2018: AAVMU. Available on: www.avmu.mk/презентации-на-марина-трајкова/

²⁴ Interview with Tamara Chausidis, a journalist with *BIRN/Prizma* and president of the IAJMW, July 20, 2018.

²⁵ Chausidis Tamara, “*Journalism - female profession managed by men*”, Skopje: IUJMW. Available at: <https://ssnm.org.mk/vesti/но-винарство-женска-професија-со-кој>.

5. ECONOMIC SITUATION OF WOMEN IN THE NEWSROOMS

The State Statistical Office has no specific data on the salaries of male/female journalists, because this profession is not singled out as a separate activity. Therefore, the data in this study are based solely on the statements of journalists and reporters who have participated in the survey conducted for this study and they cannot be seen as definitive and official data.

At the state level, the data from the Survey on the structure of earnings of employees of the State Statistical Office for 2014²⁶ reveal that the gender pay gap at the national level was 12%, i.e. women earned 12.5% less than men, or annually that would amount to 33 days when the woman was not effectively paid.

According to the Ministry of Finance, in 2017,²⁷ based on the reported earnings in the PRO from the media sector, a total of 5.403 persons have received their income (except the wages, all types of income are covered) from printing newspapers, publishing newspapers, magazines and periodicals, broadcasting radio and TV programme and internet portals. The analysis indicates that the average monthly income from this business was MKD 17.646 net income, and the maximum was 6.9 million (EUR 10.000 per month). Moreover, 40% of employees had an income below EUR 200, and 54 people generated an average income of EUR 2.733 per month.

The impression from interviews with interlocutors conducted for the purpose of this research is that the salaries of male and female journalists and reporters, as well as male and female editors-in-chief are generally equal and range from MKD 20.000 to MKD 40.000. In two cases, this amount is higher and is connects with the editorial or managerial function the two of our female interlocutrs have.

The opinion of Tamara Chausidis, president of the IUJMW, is that the salaries of journalists are generally small and that there is no difference whether they are women or men. According to the survey conducted by the Union²⁸ in July and August 2017, almost 45% of Macedonian journalists have received salaries lower than the national average, which was MKD 22.808, 85% had a salary of less than EUR 500 a month.

The findings reveal another big difference - between the salary of the journalist and the salary of the editor, especially in television. The salary of the journalists was around the average - between MKD 19.000 and MKD 24.000, and the salaries of the editors ranged from MKD 40.000 to MKD 50.000, with the exception of the editors whose incomes reach up to MKD 120.000.

Otherwise, the survey conducted for the purposes of this research suggests that employers generally respect the fundamental rights as required by law, such as the payment of salaries, maternity leave and paid vacation. Some media do not pay for the holidays, working on weekends and overtime.

According to the respondents participating in the survey, the number of female journalists and reporters employed for an indefinite and definite period (usually annual contracts) is equal, but they all agree that their their legally guaranteed rights are respected.

The President of the IUJMW, Tamara Chausidis, said that generally, there was a growing number of fixed-term contracts or royalty arrangements. They have not received formal appeals with respect to the rights specified in the law, such as, for example, maternity leave or vacation. According to the IAJMW, women employed for an indefinite period of time enjoy those rights, but the problem is

²⁶ State Statistical Office, "Press release - Structure of earnings of employees", 2014. Skopje: SSO. Available at: <http://www.stat.gov.mk/pdf/2015/4.1.15.99.pdf>.

²⁷ IUJMW, "Monthly salaries in the media under 300 euros", published on 1 September 2017. Available at: <https://ssnm.org.mk/komentari/платите-во-медиумите-под-300-евра>.

²⁸ IUJMW, Survey IUJMW wage in the media sector, 2017, Skopje: IUJMW. Available at: www.ssnm.org.mk/komentari/платата-во-медиумите-заглавена-под-пр.

that there is a rapid decrease in the the number of permanent employees. “However, when you are working with a three or six month contract, there is no need of pressure, since everyone is aware that their job will not wait for them if they allow themselves the ,luxury‘ of getting pregnant”, says Chausidis.

According to the Union, the data are worrying, as more than half, or about 54% of media workers and journalists are not permanently employed, i.e. they do not have indefinite contracts. Of these, 35% have fixed-term contracts and 19% are working part-time, which means that there is a possibility for one in five people in the media to be fired at any moment.

6. OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN IN THE NEWSROOMS

The opportunities for further professional development and advancement of female journalists and editors in newsrooms of the media in Macedonia, do not differ at all from the opportunities for men. The IAJMW believes that they are equally as bad for everyone, due to the conditions and the atmosphere in society in general in which the media operate.

The opportunities for further training of journalists are mostly reduced to participation in seminars, workshops, conferences and similar events. They are mostly supported by their management, and there are cases when journalists are encouraged to participate in such events, but later receive more responsible tasks. However, several of our interlocutors say that they have never been on a training about gender equality, for example, although they have heard that such trainings have been organized.

Although journalism is increasingly referred to as “female profession”, the study of the European Institute for Gender Equality (2010) found that women find it much more difficult to advance in their career. Women, especially in small media, have often faced the situation where they had to do everything – they worked as journalists, video editors and they were even asked to make the coffee, while being paid only for one job.²⁹

According to the experience and claims of our interlocutors, in their newsrooms, everyone is doing their job. But, even when it comes to additional obligations, they are not related to gender. Both sides say that they have heard of cases where certain obligations have been imposed, but they couldn't give any specific examples.

For Vlado Apostolov, this is not exclusively a “women’s issue”, the general situation in the media requires a person to be responsible for “hundreds” of things: “In *Prizma*, this has not been the case, but other media have workers who are not journalists, and work in marketing and procurement, and at the same time plan the newspaper on their PC or do other similar stuff”, says Apostolov.

From the statements of our interlocutors the impression is that not only journalists, but media professionals in general sometimes perform more tasks. This, according to their claims, is not due to gender segregation, but to the small number of employees in the newsrooms.

“Given that the number of employees in the company is small, each of us sometimes does technical and administrative work, but I see this as part of the job, because each of us thus contributes to doing a better job. Otherwise, I know cases where women employed in the media have been responsible for the technical part of the job which they had to do, even against their will, starting with making coffee to organizing the documentation and performing the duty of a personal assistant, which is entirely contrary to the ethical, moral and professional standards”, says Meri Jordanovska from *BIRN/Prizma*.³⁰

²⁹ Chausidis Tamara, “*Journalism - female profession managed by men*”, Skopje: IUJMW. Available at: <https://ssnm.org.mk/vesti/нови-нарство-женска-професија-со-кој>.

³⁰ Interview with Meri Jordanovska, a journalist with *BIRN/Prizma*, 20 September 2018

Snezhana Lupevska-Sozen concluded that “unfortunately, journalists perform other duties, not because of the gender division, but due to the small number of employees in the newsrooms and the inability for a single worker/journalist to invest his/her energy in doing only one task”. As an example, she mentions the case where a journalist should be a producer, and an assistant cameraman, and sometimes even a driver.

In the local *TV Koha* Tetovo, journalists have the option of doing extra work, outside the news, as an opportunity for additional earnings. “Apart from their journalist work, women are not obliged to perform other tasks that are not in their job description, unless they voluntarily agree to work outside working hours, as marketing agents, and they receive an additional payment for any concluded and signed marketing agreement. This has happened frequently in our television”, says Mevaip Abdiu, owner of *TV Koha*.

As a result of the small number of employees in the newsrooms and the lack of staff, journalists – regardless of whether they are male or female – often cannot afford any lengthy absences from work, even when it comes to training, further education or career development. This puts many of the journalists in a position to perform other tasks on a daily basis, which in turn is the reason many of them cannot specialize in one area. The result is an additional restriction of journalists in their career development towards higher positions in the newsroom, and consequently a reduction of the quality of media products.

7. WORKING CONDITIONS AND SAFETY OF WOMEN IN THE NEWSROOMS

Research³¹ shows that the safety of journalists in Macedonia in 2018 was improved compared to the previous year. For example, six attacks on journalists were registered in 2018, in comparison to the previous year, when that number was 18. Otherwise, out of the total of 52 recorded attacks on journalists in the period from 2014 to 2018, 12 cases affected female journalists, according to the Register of the Association of Journalists of Macedonia.³² Although it was noted that the police, the judiciary and the prosecution were more effective in carrying out their duties, the practice of impunity continues, especially when it comes to attacks by the police.

The impression of our female interlocutors in this research was that journalism is not a secure profession at all”, especially given the fact that ‘security’ does not refer solely to physical security, but it also refers to discreditation, personal insults and sexism”.³³

For Dushica Mrdja, journalist and news editor in TV 24, 27 April 2017, will be a date that will remind her of how the profession she has chosen, could actually be dangerous. She was one of the reporters who directly faced the violence of the “bloody Thursday”, when the crowd stormed the Assembly. Such situations in Macedonia are not common, but those are not the only problems when security is in question.

“Journalism in Macedonia is not a secure profession. There are always threats, pressures, lawsuits, regardless of whether they are by officials in the executive, legislative or local government. Personally, I have had rude and sexist comments by some of the political party supporters and useful idiots, as well as personal insults by public figures which were close to one or another political establishment in a given period. In the television building, we feel safe, but outside, in Macedonia, it is never safe for the critical journalist”, says Mrdja.³⁴

Vlado Apostolov from the portal Prizma indicated to the same event, 27 April 2017, as an example in talking about the safety of female journalists: “If you see the testimonies, you will notice that 90% of the journalists there were women. Now, whether this has to do with the assessment of newsrooms or with the

³¹ AJM, Indicators on the level of media freedom and journalists’ safety in Macedonia, 2018. Skopje: AJM. Available at: <http://safejournalists.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Indicators-on-the-level-of-media-freedom-and-journalists-safety-in-Macedonia.pdf>.

³² AJM “Cases of violation of the rights of journalists”, 2019. Available at: <http://znm.org.mk/извештаи/случаи-на-повреда-на-правата-на-новин-12/>.

³³ Interview with Meri Jordanovska, a journalist with *BIRN/Prizma*, 20 September 2018.

³⁴ Interview with Meri Jordanovska, a journalist with *BIRN/Prizma*, 20 September 2018.

fact that more women are tasked to work in the Assembly, I do not know. But it is a matter of debate as well, does this mean that there are more female reporters? What about their career advancement?"

The insecurity of the journalistic profession has been confirmed by journalists who have had critical views of the government, or who work with investigative journalism. Meri Jordanovska is among the journalists who have criticized the rule of VMRO-DPMNE, as a result of which she was the target of insults and public discreditation by representatives, and also supporters of the then government.

"In my career I have faced numerous pressures, which have not always been in the form of lawsuits. The most terrible were the threats and attacks trying to discredit me as a person, a woman and a journalist in cases when I published a major story, or a story concerning a certain person, which placed me on the front pages of the then pro-government media, while VMRO-DPMNE was in power, claiming that "SDSM had bought me an apartment", and that I am a traitor, Sorosoide, and even personal insults in which I have been called abusive words on sexist grounds. Those defamatory texts of the portals with vague ownership continued to be quoted on national televisions, without checking the facts and without asking the second party", says Jordanovska.³⁵

Snezhana Lupevska-Sozen, which since 2001 has been working on one of the most successful projects of investigative journalism in Macedonia, the TV show "Kod" agrees with her female colleagues that the profession is not safe, not only for them personally, but for their families.

"The lawsuits, intimidations, attacks and threats are regularly present in my line of work, and the attempts of censorship, and the censorship itself. We do not have any protection in terms of our security, or the security of our families, neither at home, nor at work", said Lupevska-Sozen.

Our interlocutor Irena Mulachka, from the editorial staff of the weekly newspaper Focus confirms that journalists are often the target of threats and pressures for lawsuits, and many have already had several lawsuits. "However, the best in the whole situation is that the editorial board is always behind the journalists, by providing both moral and a financial support", said Mulachka.³⁶

Threats and pressures come through social media and often anonymously. Arta Tahiri, a journalist and editor in *TV Alsat-M*, and Ana Anastasovska from the web edition of *Sloboden Pечат* confirmed that they have received threats on the social media and from certain portals without impressums.

"I have had such political pressures, asking why you wrote this or that or, who ordered this? and I suffered personal insults on the social media and on some of the so-called portals for published texts and views", says Anastasovska.

The Independent Association of Journalists and Media Workers does not distinguish between bad working conditions for men and women journalists in any aspect – regardless of whether it is a question of security or whether they work in large and influential media. They say that conditions are equally bad for everyone. This attitude is shared even by their colleagues Lirim Dulovi from *Koha* and Goran Temenugov from *TV Alsat-M*. "The conditions for female journalists are the same as the conditions for their male counterparts. There have been cases where a male journalist had been sent due to the expected risk on a certain event. However, those are exceptions", says Temenugov, editor in *TV Alsat-M*.³⁷

Mevaip Abdiu from *TV Koha* from Tetovo, in turn, believes that women in the region they come from, have a more privileged situation in terms of security "in our region, a female journalist has a special treatment, and I can safely say that the doors of all institutions are open for them. So in terms of security, I believe that women journalists are safe".

Regarding the safety of female journalists within the individual newsrooms, none of the interlocutors,

³⁵ Interview with Meri Jordanovska, a journalist with *BIRN/Prizma*, 20 September 2018.

³⁶ Interview with Irena Mulachka, a journalist at the weekly magazine *Fokus* June 13, 2018.

³⁷ Interview with Goran Temenugov, editor of the economic section in *TV Alsat-M*, 15 June 2018.

most of them with careers longer than 10 years, have faced or were witnesses, or have heard of a case of sexual harassment in the work place. And Tamara Chaushidis confirms that no such case has been reported in the association, but at the same time adds that this is a open secret.

“Although there are no reported cases, we have certain information about serious situations of blackmailing young female journalists to provide sexual favours if they want to advance in their careers. But, until there is an atmosphere of fear that if you speak out you will be stigmatized and victimized twice, no girl or woman would speak publicly”, said Chaushidis.

Harlem Désir, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, was part of the Southeast Europe media conference, held in May 2018 in Struga. The conference took place just days after the Montenegrin journalist Olivera Lakić was the target of an armed attack.

“In recent months, several journalists were killed in Europe, i.e. Daphne Galizia in Malta, Jan Kuciak in Slovakia, and the people behind these attacks have not been brought to justice. Such is the case here in the Western Balkans as well. First you have to reject any covering of the case and put all the power of the state in the service of the investigation of the attack on the journalist to be able to find justice for Olivera Lakić”, said Désir.

But journalists alone cannot face violence because it is the job of the authorities, which should guarantee the safety of journalists in each country of the region. Competent institutions should investigate every attack, and not just to punish the perpetrator of the attack, but the one that ordered the attack.

In a survey on the state of journalism conducted by AJM³⁸ in 2014, involving 92 journalists, they said that in the relationship with the government, religious organizations and large companies often face public discrediting, public insults, hate speech and undermining of the presumption of innocence. Moreover, 35% of them believe that there is systematic monitoring coupled with constant threats, and 62% believe that political parties encourage the most fear and threaten with retaliation for a published news story as opposed to the religious communities that least affect the context.

In December 2017, the MoI and the AJM signed a Memorandum of Cooperation, in which increase of the security of journalists occupies a central place. The memorandum foresees a protocol for notification about high risk events that should allow journalists to report from these events without compromising their safety.

CONCLUSION

The Macedonian legislation integrates all international documents and recommendations that ensure the prerequisites for gender and economic equality of all citizens in different social spheres, including the media. However, the practice in the past decades shows that legal and strategic documents that promote the principle of equal opportunities and equal participation of women and men in the creation of programme concepts and content, or the appropriate portrayal in the media of any person regardless of their gender, have not been adequately implemented.

According to studies, the central news on many TVs demonstrates a “strong gender asymmetry” of the opinions, of the sources consulted or the people preparing the news. Female journalists outnumber their male counterparts in the media, but the editors, the directors and managers are dominated by men. Although journalism is considered as a “female profession,” women find it much more difficult to advance in their career. Although our interlocutors agree that gender should not be the reason or the obstacle for career advancement, they have no particular explanation as to the small number of media owners or media managers. The reasons should likely be sought in the individual skills and other knowledge required for

³⁸ AJM Survey on the state of journalism, 2016. Skopje: AJM. Available at: www.znm.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Анкета-новинари-ЗНМ-септември-2014.pdf.

senior management position, the working environment which is more inclined toward men, the cultural factors that restrict women to advance to more senior positions, and the impact of the wider context - social, political and economic structures. This is supplemented by the fact that small and poor markets, such as Macedonia, where there are many media that have a difficulty surviving the tough market, the newsrooms are small and resources are scarce. Due to the small number of editorial boards, newsrooms, the media workers sometimes perform several different tasks, which are reflected in their opportunities for advancement, further education and specialization.

Proportionally with the number of female journalists in the newsrooms, the number of women enrolling in the study programmes in journalism is also greater in comparison to their male counterparts. However, according to statistics, this also is not a prerequisite for career advancement, especially having in mind that there are many male and female journalists in the newsrooms that have not graduated journalism, media and communications.

Journalism as a profession is becoming increasingly unattractive to the younger generations, which contributes to the low wages and insufficiently safe working conditions. In the absence of accurate statistics, interviewed journalists said that the salaries of journalists are generally small and that there is no difference whether they are women or men. The salaries of male and female journalists and reporters, as well as the salaries of the male and female editors are equal, and range from MKD 20.000 to MKD 40.000s. The fact that 54% of media workers and journalists are employed with a permanent contract, while 19% have fixed-term contracts, means that there is a possibility for one in five people in the media to be fired at any moment.

Although the safety of journalists, at least according to statistics, has been generally improved in 2018, the interlocutors in the survey still believe that journalism is not a secure profession, citing as examples not only complaints but also discrediting, personal insults, sexism, intimidation, threats and censorship.

Due to the inability to cope with the situation on their own, reporters need a strong engagement from the competent institutions that should ensure the safety of journalists, by investigating every attack, and punishing the perpetrator and the person who commissioned the attack.

The structural position of journalists and other women working in the media industry in Macedonia should be promoted so as to ensure the opening of opportunities for professional and career development, improving the economic and security conditions of work, and eliminating the social and cultural prejudice against women employed in the media or represented in media content.

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Arta Tahiri, a journalist and editor in *TV Alsat-M*, 15 June 2018

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Goran Temenugov, editor of the economic section in *TV Alsat-M*, 15 June 2018

Dusica Mrdja, journalist and news editor in *TV 24*, 20 September 2018

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Mevaip Abdiu, editor and manager of *TV Koha* from Tetovo, 20 June 2018

Meri Jordanovska, journalist with *BIRN/Prizma*, 20 September 2018

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