

FINLAND

High Professional Ethos in a Small, Concentrated Media Market

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Finland is a small country (population 5.4 million), characterized by political and socio-economic structures typical to the Nordic welfare model. The small size of the media market together with a distinct language area contribute to a relatively concentrated media system with well-integrated professional norms and high reach of the main national news media. The Finnish media system is usually considered to represent the “democratic corporatist model” in terms of Hallin and Mancini’s (2004) categorization. Characteristics of the model include strong state intervention, reconciled with well-developed media autonomy and professionalization.

In Finland, the media have historically been seen to fulfill an important societal function and until recently the structure of the media market has remained rather stable, reflecting a relative balance of interests. This is supported by governmental policy driven by consensus, rather than major political and economic conflicts (see Nieminen 2010). Recent media policies, however, have been influenced by the general trends of de-regulation and marketization, including the rise of commercial broadcasting, the relative decline of the role of public service broadcasting, and cuts in press subsidies and other forms of state intervention (see Herkman 2009; Nieminen 2010). There are also signs of a shift from consensual to a more antagonistic model, which is reflected, for instance, in the commercial media companies’ attacks on public service broadcasting.

The Finnish media system is still characterized by a strong literary culture, and the number of newspapers and readership figures, although declining, are still among the highest worldwide. All print media represent two-thirds of the total media revenue in Finland, while the share of newspapers alone constitutes around one-third (Finnish Mass Media 2010, p. 38). Newspapers alone account for almost half of all media advertising, which is well above the average in the EU countries (*ibid.*, p. 21).

Despite the high number of newspapers and magazines published in Finland, the market is relatively concentrated, with three big companies or chains controlling almost two-thirds (63 %) of the circulation of daily newspapers. Most regional and local markets are dominated by one leading newspaper with little direct competition.

Development of the electronic media also reflects the shift from mutual cohabitation to a more market-driven environment. New commercial radio and television channels have been gradually introduced since the mid-1980s, and even though the status of public service broadcasting remains strong, it no longer dominates the broadcasting market². After the digital switchover in 2007, both free and pay-TV channels have proliferated, but the market has remained fairly concentrated, with the channels owned by *YLE*, *MTV3*, and *Nelonen* together controlling around 90 % of all viewing. There are very few regional or local television channels in Finland, and they are of little significance. In radio, the public service channels account for 52 % of total radio listening, while all private stations together account for 48 %. National chains own many of the local commercial channels (Finnish Mass Media 2010).

The Internet has challenged the stable position of media institutions in recent years. Nearly 80 percent of the population uses the Internet regularly (Eurostat 2010), and it is increasingly important also as a source of news, especially for younger generations. Since the 1990s, the promotion of the information society has also had a central position in Finnish governmental policies.

The journalistic culture in Finland is characterized by a strong professional ethos and an established self-regulatory system, organized around the *Council for Mass Media*, which represents all main interest groups and oversees the commonly agreed upon ethical codes. In comparison to many other countries, the news media still enjoy a relatively high public esteem and trust (Karppinen et al. 2010). According to recent studies, media professionals are today mostly well educated and share a rather uniform commitment to common professional norms (Jyrkiäinen 2008). The overwhelming majority of journalists are also members of the *Finnish Union of Journalists*.

News media sample

In addition to general observations, six organizations, representing different types of media, were selected for closer analysis and interviews. The sample media include one national, one regional, one local and one tabloid newspaper, as well as the leading public and private broadcasting companies. The online services of the sample media were included in the analysis when applicable. In addition, we have interviewed the president of the Union of Journalists, the Director of editorial issues of the Finnish Newspapers Association, and consulted some independent academic experts.³

Table 1. The news media sample

| | Media type | Ownership | Interviewee |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Helsingin Sanomat | Daily newspaper | Sanoma Group | Former long-term editor-in-chief |
| Turun Sanomat | Daily regional newspaper | TS Group | Editor-in-chief |
| Iltalehti | Tabloid (5 times a week) | Alma Media | Editor-in-chief |
| Borgåbladet | Local newspaper (Swedish language) | Konstsamfundet (foundation) | Editor-in-chief |
| YLE | PSB Company | PSB | Director of News |
| MTV3 | Commercial broadcasting | Bonnier | Editor-in-chief (news) |
| Union of Journalists | | | President |
| Finnish Newspapers Association | | | Director, editorial issues and communication |

Indicators

Freedom / Information (F)

(F1) Geographic distribution of news media availability 3 POINTS

The mainstream news media are accessible throughout the country and there are no major regional divides.

Newspapers, broadcasting and online services are widely available nationwide. The reach of newspapers, in particular, is internationally high. It is estimated that some 90 % of all newspapers sales are based on subscriptions and home delivery. Early morning delivery is available to around 90 % percent of the households (Finnish Newspapers Association 2010). In 2008, a total of 201 newspapers were published in Finland, 53 of those being dailies.

All daily newspapers had an online edition in 2008, while around 75 % of all other newspapers (i.e., mainly local and regional papers) were present online (Finnish Mass Media 2010, p. 175). Thus far, the online editions have had most of their content available for free. Daily free papers are mainly distributed in the larger cities.

The switchover to digital broadcasting initially raised some concerns about equal availability of the services in all areas of the country. In 2008, the technical reach of the digital television network was already at 99.96 % of the population. The digitalization has also increased the supply of free television channels in terrestrial households to 11 channels, compared to just four basic channels carried in the old analogue terrestrial networks. The penetration of digital television equipment in 2008 was 90 %. Around one half (48 %) of the households had cable television and only 6 % had satellite television. One-quarter of all households subscribed to

pay channels, a significant growth from some 5 % in the early 2000s (Finnish Mass Media 2010, p. 50-56).

In 2008, there were 54 private radio channels in Finland, one of which had nationwide coverage and nine of which were near-national. Major cities typically have ten or more local commercial channels available, whereas national and regional public radio channels are available all over the country, in line with the legal obligation of the YLE to provide services for all citizens on equal terms. On average, depending on the area of residence, there are around 15-20 radio channels available to the public in a given location (Kemppainen 2007).

Radio and television contents are also increasingly available online. The most extensive and wide-ranging online television and radio service, *YLE Arena*, makes public service radio and television programs produced by *YLE* available online. The main commercial broadcasters have their own respective online services, which include both free and premium content.

Until recently, broadband connections have not been easily available in some of the more remote areas of the country, but since 2010, the provision of broadband access has been included in the universal service obligations for telecom operators. The penetration of Internet access in 2008 was around 76 % (Finnish Mass Media 2010, p. 50). The operators defined as universal service providers (26 operators) must provide every residence and business with access to a reasonably priced and high-quality connection (at least 1 Mbit/s). The aim of the broadband project is also to provide all households with the permanent fibre-optic or cable network (100 Mbit/s) by the end of 2015, in part with public support (Ministry of Transport and Communications 2010).

(F2) Patterns of news media use (consumption of news) 2 POINTS

The mainstream news media reach a very high proportion of the population in Finland.

According to international comparative studies, the Finnish public seems to be reasonably well informed. For instance, one study examining the connections between media systems and citizens' awareness of public affairs cites Finland as an example of a media system characterized by a high level of both news consumption and public knowledge of current affairs (Curran et al. 2009).

Table 2. The daily reach of different media in 2008

| | All | Male | Female | 10-24 | 25-44 | 45-59 | 60- |
|------------|------|------|--------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| Newspapers | 78 % | 77 % | 78 % | 56 % | 76 % | 86 % | 88 % |
| Television | 90 % | 91 % | 90 % | 87 % | 88 % | 93 % | 93 % |
| Radio | 74 % | 75 % | 72 % | 65 % | 75 % | 78 % | 75 % |
| Internet | 60 % | 63 % | 57 % | 76 % | 79 % | 61 % | 25 % |

Source: Finnish Mass Media 2010, p. 51.

The main evening news broadcasts of both public service broadcaster *YLE* and its main commercial competitor *MTV3* rank among the most watched programs. At most, the main news broadcasts reach over one million viewers and over a 40 % share of total viewing during the program (Finnpanel 2010a). All leading television channels provide a steady feed of news and current affairs broadcasts during prime-time, which also seems to promote a high level of “inadvertent” news exposure (see Curran et al. 2009, p. 22). In radio, *YLE Radio Suomi*, which broadcasts hourly news bulletins, is the most popular channel with a 38 % national listening share (Finnish Mass Media 2010, p. 88).

High newspaper readership remains one of the main characteristics of the Finnish media system. The leading newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* has a circulation of 400,000 with around 950,000 daily readers. On average, Finnish people read eight different periodicals and three different newspapers (Levikintarkastus 2009). A sense of concern remains within the industry regarding young readers, among whom newspaper reading is continuing to fall. Of people over 45 years of age, more than 80 percent read newspapers daily, and the average reading time is 35 minutes per day. Of people under 24, only some 56 percent read newspapers daily and their average reading time is less than 15 minutes (Antikainen et al. 2010).

With up to 2 million weekly visitors, the sites of tabloid newspapers and the commercial broadcaster *MTV3* are the most popular websites in Finland, ahead of *Helsingin Sanomat* and *YLE* (TNS Metrix 2010). The Internet in general is increasingly important as a source of information and news, especially among young people: in a survey conducted in 2007, the Internet was the most important source of daily news for 37 % of the people under 25, while television and newspapers clearly remain the dominant news media for older people (Karppinen et al. 2010).

Table 3. Top 12 Finnish news websites

| | Visitors/week | Rank among all websites |
|-------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| Iltalehti | 1 937 156 | 1 |
| Iltä-Sanomat | 1 823 956 | 2 |
| MTV3 | 1 722 725 | 3 |
| YLE | 1 245 148 | 6 |
| Helsingin Sanomat | 1 236 527 | 7 |
| Kauppalehti | 655 093 | 11 |
| Taloussanomat | 643 954 | 13 |
| Sub.fi | 571 855 | 15 |
| Aamulehti | 262 947 | 23 |
| Kaksplus | 245 515 | 25 |
| Nelonen.fi | 206 301 | 26 |
| Uusi Suomi | 204 722 | 27 |

Source: Finnish Mass Media 2010, 218.

(F3) Diversity of news sources

2 POINTS

The diversity of sources is seen to have increased with the Internet, but the influence of PR material and recycling of other media's material are identified as threats in some sectors.

The Finnish News Agency (STT) is a national news provider jointly owned by 41 media companies. With the notable exception of the public broadcaster YLE, which quit subscribing to the services of STT in 2006 and chose to invest more in its own news service, almost all leading news media subscribe to its services. In addition to YLE and STT, there is a smaller news service called UP News Service, which is historically associated with the Social Democratic Party and now provides news for about a dozen newspapers, and a financial news provider Startel, owned by the Sanoma Group. The leading news media also follow the main international news agencies.

The position of the national news agency in Finland is fairly dominant in defining the news agenda and providing content especially for smaller regional media, which rely heavily on wire services. In our interviews, the editors-in-chief of the leading national news media, which have more resources for their own news gathering, tended to emphasize the role of STT as a provider of background information or a baseline for their own news gathering.

It was suggested in the interviews that the influence of the national news agency has slightly diminished recently. Some of the respondents believed that the decision of YLE to quit using STT services has improved the overall diversity of sources in the Finnish media. At the same time, some representatives of commercial news media were hostile to the decision and saw it as compromising the viability of the commercial news media. Many respondents suggested that their own organizations had sought to invest more in their own news gathering instead of news agency material.

The Internet is widely seen to diversify sources, although it was suggested that the recycling of news items produced by other media has become more common in the Finnish media, as issues, subjects and points of view increasingly circulate from one outlet to another. The increasing influence of the PR material was also acknowledged by the respondents as a potential problem. According to a recent survey among Finnish journalists, 62 percent of journalists agreed that the use of PR material is increasing in the Finnish media because of decreasing resources available for in-house news gathering (Jyrkiäinen 2008, 57).

The leading national news media typically have their own network of national and foreign correspondents and a network of stringers and other freelancers. In 2010, the public service broadcasting company *YLE*, for instance, has a network of some 25 domestic offices, nine foreign news correspondents, and some 20 other freelance contributors abroad. The number of foreign correspondents is comparable to other leading national news media (*HS*, *MTV3*). Some of these resources are shared between multiple media organizations. The number of correspondents in all media examined has remained more or less stable in recent years. The resources available for foreign news were generally seen as adequate, although it was suggested that foreign news and EU affairs are areas where the dominance of news agency material is most evident and the diversity of sources was seen as the biggest problem.

There is a clear trend towards closer editorial cooperation and syndication within newspaper chains and even between independent newspapers. While this can be seen as decreasing the diversity of news sources, the newspapers involved are mostly regional papers with little overlap in their circulation (Finnish Mass Media 2009, p. 22). Some of the respondents thus denied the notion that the trend would necessarily diminish the diversity of sources, because co-operation can also mean greater diversity in the content of an individual regional newspaper.

A number of editors-in-chief noted that the principle of using multiple sources is mainly followed in their news gathering. Some respondents acknowledged that Finnish journalism generally tends to rely too much on elite sources, such as government officials. A number of interviewees also called for a more critical attitude toward the Finnish economic elite and big corporations. As expected, none of the editors-in-chief considered the selection (or omission) of sources on political grounds to be a problem.

(F4) Internal rules for practice of newsroom democracy 2 POINTS

Individual journalists seem to enjoy a high level of autonomy in daily journalistic decisions, but formal procedures to ensure internal democracy are few.

Assessments of the extent of internal democracy practiced in the newsrooms were somewhat ambivalent. It was argued that individual journalistic autonomy is strongly

entrenched in the Finnish journalistic culture. However, the independence and autonomy of individual journalists is generally guaranteed by journalistic culture rather than organizational structures or formal procedures.

The editors-in-chief and experts emphasized the individual autonomy of journalists in choosing and framing news topics. The leading editors generally co-ordinate the work of the newsroom, but they rarely interfere with the individual journalists' decisions concerning how news items are portrayed and framed. While some considered the Finnish journalistic culture markedly individualistic, others emphasized the significance of internal deliberation and discussions within the newsroom.

On the other hand, there are few formal procedures to ensure internal democracy within the newsrooms. While values such as impartiality and autonomy are on a general level documented in codes-of-ethics and editorial guidelines, in practice they are ensured more effectively through journalistic culture and professional norms, rather than written guidelines.

A newsroom council does not have a formal status in any of the selected media outlets, and editors-in-chief and other leading positions are normally appointed by the management without any requirement to incorporate journalists. The newsroom may be consulted informally, and there are some cases in which staff objections have influenced the decisions of management. Aside from rules on the level of individual organizations, the majority of journalists are members of the *Union of Journalists*, whose task is to defend and supervise its members' interests through collective bargaining.

(F5) Company rules against *internal* influence on
newsroom / editorial staff

2 POINTS

The autonomy and independence of the newsroom is generally regarded as a central value in the Finnish journalistic culture.

The ethical guidelines for journalists, published by the *Council for Mass Media in Finland* (2005), state that: "Decisions concerning the content of communication must be made in accordance with journalistic principles. The power to make such decisions may not, under any circumstances, be surrendered to any party outside the editorial office." All leading news media are committed to these guidelines, and according to the interviews with the *Union of Journalists* as well as editors-in-chief, the principle of journalistic autonomy enjoys high esteem not only among journalists, but even among the publishers and owners of media companies.

Some problems and causes for concern did surface, however. In some cases, the posts of the editor-in-chief and publisher have recently been combined, which has raised some public concerns about the blurring of journalistic and financial deci-

sions. The new editor-in-chief of *Helsingin Sanomat* also acts as the publisher of the paper. Similar arrangements apply for the tabloid *Iltalehti* and the local newspaper *Borgåbladet*. The dual roles were seen as potentially problematic, for instance, when making financial decisions that affect the work of the newsroom. However, in all cases, the editors-in-chief assured that the management and owners never interfere with individual news items or editorial decisions.

The practical organization of the separation of the newsroom from the ownership largely depends on the type of media organization in question. In some cases, such as the commercial broadcaster *MTV3*, the separation is explicitly mentioned in the company values or other formal documents. In many cases, however, there are no formal rules on the separation of the newsroom from the management, outside of the general professional code-of-ethics.

Most editors-in-chief acknowledged that they have regular discussions with the management, but that both sides have equal respect for the principle of journalistic autonomy. There are still known cases within the profession where the owners have exerted at least indirect influence on the editorial line of a newspaper in individual cases. While influence from the ownership is considered an exception in the Finnish media, it cannot be ruled out.

A study conducted on the corporate correlation between Finnish television and tabloid papers also found some indirect corporate influence. The tabloid newspaper owned by the Sanoma Group produced more positive publicity to its own television channel, while the tabloid paper owned by Alma Media slightly privileged *MTV3* in these sections of its tabloid paper (Herkman 2005). The corporate correlation, however, applied only to the entertainment sections of the papers, and not the core journalistic sections.

There is generally no formal representation of journalists in the board of media companies. Of the sample media corporations, none had journalists on the board of the company. Advertising departments are, as a rule, strictly separated from the newsroom and do not interfere with the journalistic work. However, in the case of the local newspaper examined, the small number of personnel made it evident that there is contact and even co-operation between the newsroom and the advertising department.

In the case of public service media, the independence from the state owner is a permanently contested question in terms of both organizational structures and individual news issues. The independence from the government and political parties is emphasized on all levels of the legal definitions, company values, and internal editorial guidelines of *YLE*. In practice, *YLE* continues to enjoy a high level of political independence in its editorial decisions, and there is no evidence of any direct influence by the government.

(F6) Company rules against *external* influence on newsroom / editorial staff

2 POINTS

Direct influence by external parties on newsroom decisions is not seen as a major problem.

All editors-in-chief interviewed insisted that there is no interference by individual advertisers or any other external parties. Many of the editors-in-chief acknowledged that they are regularly contacted by external lobbyists, but that any attempts to influence journalistic decisions are categorically rejected. In line with the previous indicator, most interviewees considered the level of journalistic autonomy and integrity to be fairly high. Strong professionalism was also seen as the most effective safeguard against external influence.

The leading news media all have multiple income streams and a multitude of advertisers, none of which are in a dominant position. Many editors-in-chief also maintained that a strong economic position in part ensures that no single external party can exert influence. It was suggested by some respondents, however, that the degree of external influence may be higher on the local level and in smaller media organizations, which rely more heavily on few major local advertisers. The editor-in-chief of the local newspaper examined acknowledged that tensions occasionally emerge between the editors and local advertisers or authorities, but it was denied that external parties would succeed in directly influencing editorial decisions.

Sponsoring agreements and various forms of product placement have recently become more common in commercial television. Their influence on the contents of current affairs or news programming was strongly denied, although it may be problematic to strictly define current affairs. In case of newspapers, the editors-in-chief insisted that even those sections that contain product reviews are produced entirely on journalistic criteria.

As noted above, the independence of the public service company from any external parties is emphasized on all levels of the public service remit and internal company values (see indicator F5). The government sets the level of the license fee, in line with the criteria set for fulfilling the public service mandate. Thus far, decisions on the level of funding have been made on a long-term basis, but the proposed transition to direct budget funding has raised some concerns that the level of funding will become more susceptible to changes from one year to another.

(F7) Procedures on news selection and news processing 2 POINTS

Stylebooks that include guidelines on the processing of news items are becoming more common, but their significance is still limited.

According to a recent survey among journalists, formal rules and procedures for processing news items have recently become more common in Finnish journalism. Often this development is associated negatively with “industrialized” and standardized forms of news production (Jyrkiäinen 2008, p. 9). Concurrently, it has also been suggested that there has been a gradual shift from a traditional individualistic journalistic culture towards more emphasis on co-operative news processing in Finnish newsrooms.

Defined stages for a news item before it is published are more common in periodicals, whereas daily news and online news, in particular, are usually published as quickly as possible with minimal processing.

Most of the media organizations have some type of stylebook, and these vary from simple instructions on layout and format to comprehensive guidelines that include values, ethical guidelines, and internal practices for news selection. In most cases, the guidelines are only for internal use, although the idea of making such documents publicly available has also gained some support. *The Finnish News Agency*, for instance, has a comprehensive stylebook freely available on its website. The company values and editorial guidelines that include both the ethical guidelines and the practical instructions of public broadcasting company *YLE* are also publicly available. *Turun Sanomat*, *Iltalehti* and *MTV3* have comprehensive internal stylebooks. Those media that currently do not have a unified stylebook, including *Helsingin Sanomat*, reported that they were currently preparing such documents. Most editors-in-chief considered a stylebook to be necessary, but also noted that questions of news values and selection ultimately hinge on the journalistic culture and professional skills of each journalist.

In-house training for new journalists on the job varies. In newspapers, training typically consists of one-day training, which focuses on practical matters and less on journalistic principles or news criteria, whereas the electronic media houses have training programs of up to one week. Regular in-depth discussions on the past and forthcoming decisions on news values were highly valued by all respondents, but according to a recent survey of journalists, the general sentiment among Finnish journalists still seems to be that there is a need for more deliberation. According to the survey, most journalists also receive surprisingly little feedback from their superiors and colleagues. More feedback and meetings to discuss past decisions and published stories also ranked as the main method to improve journalists’ workplaces (Jyrkiäinen 2008, p. 33, 35).

Equality / Interest mediation (E)

(E1) Media ownership concentration national level

2 POINTS

The national media market is relatively concentrated with a handful of companies dividing the market in each sector.

Finland does not have any specific regulation of media ownership concentration, aside from general competition rules. The dominant position of the biggest media company, *Sanoma Group*, in particular, is a distinctive feature of the Finnish media market. The net revenue of the Sanoma corporation in 2008 was 3,030 million, while the total market volume of all mass media in Finland was 4,424 million. Much of the *Sanoma Group*'s revenue, however, comes from its operations abroad. In Finland, the *Sanoma Group* controls around one-third of both total newspaper circulation and magazine circulation. The group also owns the broadcasting company *Nelonen Media*, whose channels have around 15 % of the audience share, and the biggest publishing house in Finland (45 % market share). Its other activities include movie theaters, online services, press distribution, and learning solutions.

The position of *Helsingin Sanomat* as the only (de facto) national, quality newspaper is in practice dominant, with no real rivals. As a result of takeovers and mergers, the market share of the biggest newspaper houses has steadily grown since the 1990s (Finnish Mass Media 2010, p. 169). The consolidation of newspaper ownership into chains is also expected to continue at both national and Nordic levels. The most intense competition currently takes place between the two evening tabloids *Ilta-Sanomat* and *Iltalehti*.

The market shares of the top three companies (CR3) have been calculated on the basis of circulation (newspapers) or share of total viewing/listening (television and radio). As indicated in Table 4, the market share of the top three companies is relatively high in almost all sectors of the media, indicating a relatively concentrated market.

Table 4. Market share of top three companies in different media

| | Top three companies | Market share |
|------------|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| Television | Yle, MTV3, Nelonen | 90 % |
| Newspapers | Sanoma, Alma Media, Keskiuomalainen | 50 % |
| Radio | Yle, Radio Nova, SBS-Iskelmä | 71 % |

Source: Finnish Mass Media 2009, The Finnish Audit Bureau of Circulations.

Table 5. Market share of top three outlets

| | Top three channels/papers | Market share |
|------------|---|--------------|
| Television | TV1, MTV3, TV2 | 64 % |
| Newspapers | Helsingin Sanomat, Aamulehti, Turun Sanomat | 41 % |
| Radio | Radio Suomi, Radio Nova, Yle1 | 57 % |

Source: Finnish Mass Media 2009, The Finnish Audit Bureau of Circulations.

The data on media ownership are transparent for the most part. Most of the large media companies are publicly traded. There is also a website, *Medialinnakkeet*⁴, that provides detailed information on changes in ownership, economy and employment issues in the media sector. Major changes in ownership are also reported in the media.

(E2) Media ownership concentration regional (local) level 1 POINT

Apart from newspapers, the leading news media in Finland are nationally oriented. There are no significant regional or local television channels.

Regionally, there are 28 regional newspapers with practically no competition in their own market areas. Most of the local newspapers, around 150 altogether, also have a relatively stable position in their areas with no major rivals. Many of the regional newspapers also are owned by one of the national chains. Despite the high number of newspapers published per capita, the market for regional media is therefore relatively concentrated.

The only competition these regional newspapers face is against the nationwide newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* and other national news outlets. Statistics on the circulation of newspapers by regions are not currently available, but based on the total circulation of newspapers published within a given region some CR3 calculations can be made.

Table 6. Newspaper concentration in some regional marketplaces

| Region | Top three newspapers | Regional market share |
|----------------|--|-----------------------|
| Finland Proper | Turun Sanomat, Salon Seudun Sanomat, Auranmaan viikkolehti | 70 % |
| Kainuu | Kainuun Sanomat, Ylä-Kainuu, Kuhmolainen | 81 % |
| Uusimaa | Helsingin Sanomat, Ilta-Sanomat, Iltalehti | 65 % |

Source: The Finnish Audit Bureau of Circulations, Finnish Newspapers Association.

Television channels in Finland are almost exclusively national, so regional concentration does not apply. *YLE* has regional news broadcasts for eight areas on their national channels *TV2*, and news in Sámi on *FST5*⁵. Commercially operated regional or

local television channels are few, small-scale, and limited to some cities only (e.g., cable-operated *Turku TV*; local Swedish-language *När-TV* in rural Närpes region).

In radio, *YLE* has 20 Finnish-language, five Swedish-language, and one Sámi-language regional channels with designated windows on the frequencies of *YLE Radio Suomi* and *YLE Radio Vega*. In addition to public service channels, there is one national, nine near-national, and 44 local or regional commercial radio channels (Finnish Mass Media 2010, p. 93). In larger markets, such as the Helsinki region, there is competition between ten or more local commercial radio channels, but more remote areas are served only by *YLE* and a few mainstream commercial channels. A handful of non-profit, public access radio channels (*Läbiradio*, *Radio Robin Hood*) operate in some cities with limited resources.

The field of local radio stations has also seen considerable centralization in recent years. The ownership of regional and local radio has consolidated into national networks or chains, such as the German *SBS Broadcasting*, which has diminished the proportion of genuinely local programming. The number of Internet radio channels has proliferated, but they do not yet hold a major share of total listening. Regional audience shares are currently available only for the Helsinki region, which also has the broadest supply of radio channels. The audience share of the top three radio stations in the Helsinki region is 47 %, somewhat below the national market share (57 %) of the top three radio channels (Finnpanel 2010b).

(E3) Diversity of formats

3 POINTS

Formats of news presentation have proliferated especially online, and nearly all major news formats are widely available in Finland.

All leading news media provide a variety of news formats from traditional newspapers and broadcast news to various online and mobile news services. In addition to independent newspapers, there are party affiliated newspapers (although with diminished influence) and financial news outlets. All leading newspapers have online editions and most also offer mobile news services. With online versions, even newspapers now increasingly offer video content on the Internet. Online news services also typically include RSS-feeds, blogs, surveys and other interactive content. Many of the main news media also offer news feeds in various social media platforms.

There are no Finnish 24-hour news channels⁶. Public and main private broadcasters, however, broadcast news bulletins on their main channels throughout the day. Both *YLE* and *MTV3* have around a dozen daily news bulletins, a morning news show and financial news. Both also have a teletext service, comprehensive online news services and mobile news, which are continuously updated. Despite the emergence of online news, the broadcast teletext pages of *YLE* in particular remain very popular, with over 2 million regular viewers.

In addition, *YLE* offers a variety of different types of documentary and current affairs programs on radio and television. All of the current affairs programming on both radio and television are also available online. In addition to the traditional news providers, independent news aggregators have gained popularity recently. The most popular Finnish news aggregator *Ampparit.com* is one of the most frequently visited websites not owned by any of the large media corporations.

(E4) Minority / Alternative media

2 POINTS

The supply of media in Swedish and Sámi languages is extensive in relation to the size of the population in Finland, but other minority and alternative media are limited.

Compared to most other European countries, Finland remains ethnically homogenous. Although immigration to Finland has increased, the proportion of the foreign-born population (2.5 %) is much below the EU average (Eurostat 2009). In addition to the official languages Finnish (91 %) and Swedish (5 %), the constitution specifically mentions Sámi, Romani and users of Finnish sign language (alongside a vague reference to “other groups”) as minorities with a right to “maintain and develop their own language and culture”.

With its own established media institutions, it can be stated that the Swedish-language media in Finland constitutes an institutionally complete media system (Moring & Husband 2007). This includes 11 daily regional and local newspapers, one nationwide public service television channel (*FST5*), two public service radio channels (*Radio Vega*, *X3M*), and a number of periodicals.⁷

The public broadcaster *YLE* is obliged to provide services also in Sámi, Romani and sign language, and when applicable, in other languages used in Finland. The supply of products in the Sámi language include television news broadcasts (*Oddasat*), a regional radio channel (*YLE Sámi Radio*) and an online news portal. *YLE* also has a 24-hour digital radio station (*YLE Mondo*), which broadcasts news in eight different languages. There are also online news portals in English and Russian.

The Ministry of Education allocates some public subsidies to minority and alternative media. Some 500,000 euro is annually allocated to minority language newspapers and magazines. These include Swedish-language newspapers and some periodical publications in Sámi and Romani languages. In Russian, there is a monthly paper (*Spektr*) and a private radio channel (*Radio Sputnik*) that is available in Southern Finland. In addition, there is an English-language weekly newspaper, *Helsinki Times*, and a free monthly magazine, *SixDegrees*, aimed at the immigrant population.

Overall, while media services for recognized “old minorities” in Finland are relatively extensive, few media services are available for immigrants in Finland. The representation of ethnic minorities also remains marginal in the workforce of

mainstream media houses. Some new initiatives have been recently launched by immigrant groups to fill the gap (see UJF 2010). *Panorama Television* and *Monivisio* provide news and current affairs programs to immigrants in various languages online and in public access radio with EU and NGO funding.

The Ministry of Education also allocates subsidies to cultural and opinion journals, which “maintain public discussion about culture, science, art or religious life”. In 2010, some 1 million euro was allocated to 133 journals (Ministry of Education and Culture 2010). Non-profit actors have a presence in print media and magazines, but in television and radio alternative media outlets are few and they receive little public support. Some public access and community radio stations exist locally (see above), but in television, the increasingly competitive marketplace has left little room for experimental initiatives. Alternative media outlets of civil society organizations and other non-profit actors are thus increasingly confined to the Internet.

(E5) Affordable public and private news media

3 POINTS

The prices of media services in relation to household income are affordable.

Finland is a comparatively rich country characterized by a general high cost of living. In relation to the average household income (€24,696 per income recipient in 2008), the prices of mass media are generally not exceptionally high. On average, Finnish households spent €1,241 (4.1 % of total consumption expenditure) on mass media (excluding telecommunications) in 2006. The share of mass media of all consumption has slightly declined since 1995 (Finnish Mass Media 2010, p. 51).

The average price for an annual subscription to a daily newspaper is €225, while the annual subscription to the largest newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* is currently €269.⁸ Newspapers also offer various discounts for students, weekend-only subscriptions and combinations of print and online editions. Most newspapers continue to offer at least parts of their content online for free. Free newspapers, distributed in public transportation, are available in larger cities.

The annual television license fee was €231 in 2010. Broadband connection fees have remained more or less stable during the past few years. According to the regulatory authority, the average monthly price for a 1 Mbit/s connection in 2010 was €31 (Ficora 2010), but the prices appear to be cheaper in more densely populated areas, where leading telecom operators currently provide a 8-10 Mbit/s connection for around 25-30 euro. Basic social security (income support) in Finland covers basic media use (telephone, newspaper subscription and TV license), but not broadband connection.

(E6) Content monitoring instruments

1 POINTS

There are some attempts to develop more systematic instruments for media content monitoring, but they have yet to become fully institutionalized or widely publicized.

The Journalism Research and Development Centre of the University of Tampere has sought to develop an observation system, *Annual Monitoring of News Media (2006-2012)*, to survey news media output and reveal ongoing trends in the Finnish news media (Suikkanen & Syrjälä 2010). The objects of the analysis include subject matters, people featured by age and gender, the geographical perspective of items, and material on violence and sexuality. In addition, various research projects have developed tools for monitoring reporting on individual issues, such as ethnicity and racism in the media.

The Ministry of Transport and Communications publishes an annual report on Finnish television programming (Lehtinen 2010). Instead of issue monitoring, however, the report focuses on quantitative analysis of the television output and diversity, based on different program types. A similar type of overview has also been commissioned to produce a description of the programming supply of the license-dependent radio channels in Finland (Ala-Fossi & Haara 2010).

Outside these systematic monitoring instruments, discussions on the content of journalism take place in academic studies and professional journals, but for the most part these do not constitute continuous monitoring instruments. A number of commercial media monitoring services also keep track of reporting on specific issues for subscribing clients, but their results are not publicly available. Overall, the status of regular content monitoring in Finland seems to be improving, but existing instruments have yet to become fully institutionalized or well-known.

(E7) Code of ethics at the national level (structure)

3 POINTS

All leading news media have committed to the common code of ethics.

The *Council for Mass Media* is a self-regulating committee established in 1968 by the publishers' and journalists' unions. Its task is to interpret good professional practice and defend freedom of speech and publication. According to the interviews, the status of the guidelines is fairly strong and they are well known within the profession.

The Council is exclusively a self-governing body, although about one third of its funding comes from public funds. Anyone is free to file a complaint about a breach of good professional practice in the media. If the Council establishes a violation, it issues a notice that all organizations that have signed the charter of the Council are obliged to publish without delay. Practically all Finnish news media have signed the

Charter. The Council can also issue general policy statements. In 2008, the Council received 222 complaints, of which 95 were investigated and 24 led to a notice of violation. All the resolutions are also available on the website of the Council. Occasionally the resolutions have also incited public debate on media ethics.

Despite periodic criticism directed at the effectiveness of the existing self-regulatory practices, the system is strongly established and remains known among journalists. The system has occasionally been criticized for being too reactive and rigid, failing to initiate enough debate on truly fundamental issues, and for leaving out new online actors that compete with traditional professional journalism. In response, the Council has expressed its wish to also initiate debate on important ethical issues in addition to merely reacting to complaints.

In addition to the *Council for Mass Media*, the *Union of Journalists in Finland* also states that it has a special responsibility to defend journalism and its ethical rules. Alongside its 18 member associations, the Union organizes various courses and other activities to disseminate good journalistic practices. It also publishes the biweekly professional journal *Journalisti*, which sustains debate on journalistic practices and ethics. The Guidelines for Journalists include provisions regarding the accountability of the media to civil society, stating that: “A journalist is primarily responsible to the readers, listeners and viewers. They have the right to know what is happening in society” (Council for Mass Media 2005).

(E8) Level of self-regulation (performance)

2 POINTS

Self-regulation is based on the ethical guidelines whose application varies from media to media.

According to the interviews, the ethical guidelines generally enjoy relatively high esteem and are well known, although some concern was expressed about the younger generation of journalists. Problems of increasing workload and time pressure are typically identified as threats that may compromise ethical standards. In a survey of Finnish journalists, over half of Finnish journalists believed that the ethical standards and autonomy of journalists would decrease in the future (Jyrkiäinen 2008, p. 50).

The right to reply and corrections are guaranteed on the level of both the code of ethics and media law. As noted above, all media organizations are also committed to publishing the notices of the *Council for Mass Media*. Most news media also have their own internal guidelines in one form or another. Mostly, these guidelines are used to complement the *Guidelines of Journalists* and to give more detailed instructions on the practices of the media organization in question.

Most media organizations also have more general mission statements, which almost invariably refer to democratic values, independence, balance, pluralism, and so forth.

Some individual media organizations in Finland have experimented with the use of an independent Ombudsman, but the practice has not become widespread and none of the editors-in-chief interviewed considered it necessary. One respondent claimed that there is no need for an independent Ombudsman to deal with complaints, in part because of the effective national system, but also because editors-in-chief themselves are easily accessible to the public in Finland.

Most media in the sample also claimed to exercise some form of organized process of self-criticism. Resolutions of the *Council for Mass Media* are typically discussed together with the journalists involved and sometimes with the whole newsroom. Some of the respondents also spontaneously acknowledged that recent debates on crisis reporting and political scandals have led to more in-depth discussions on ethics within the newsrooms. Overall, most respondents regarded the current system of self-regulation as serviceable but not perfect. For many, further development of ethical norms and practices is also primarily a matter of professionalism and journalistic culture, rather than written rules, which were largely seen as adequate already.

(E9) Participation

2 POINTS

Audience participation in the news process is increasing, but there was some skepticism about the productiveness of all new forms of participation.

Many of the respondents noted that increasing citizen participation is inevitable, but finding productive and meaningful ways for the people to take part in the news process is still “up in the air” in many organizations. One respondent noted that the aim of participation is not to support citizens’ self-expression per se, but to support the media organizations’ aims of gaining valuable content that enriches journalism. Many respondents also suggested that they find unmoderated online discussion forums largely unproductive, but that the process of finding more consequential ways for people to participate is still unfinished.

Most Finnish media have also augmented traditional audience surveys with new methods of audience panels and social networks to discover the views and preferences of their audiences (Jyrkiäinen 2008, p. 10). In line with this, respondents invariably noted that media organizations today are generally more receptive to the preferences of the public than before.

The newsroom of the local newspaper *Borgåbladet* is always open to the public, and according to the editor-in-chief, it is fairly common for local citizens to step in with an idea for a news story. In case of larger media, the newsrooms are generally not open to the public. Most of the media, however, organize public debates and other local events that are open to the public. All news media also encourage readers to suggest ideas for news stories.

All newspapers examined also have a section for readers' letters in their print edition, and forums for online discussions and/or possibilities for people to comment and initiate discussion on news stories. The Internet sites of news media typically also contain surveys, feedback features and other interactive content. The discussions forums of all leading national media generally attract a great deal of commentary, especially in relation to more controversial topics.

The leading news media utilize user-generated content mainly in the form of photographs sent in by readers. For many respondents, publishing user-generated content was not a value in itself, but it would need to be justified on journalistic grounds. Overall, the comments and views of the public are quite widely available in a variety of formats. Examples of more robust ways of incorporating citizens in the news process, however, are still lacking.

(E10) Rules and practices on internal pluralism

2 POINTS

Internal pluralism is encouraged and valued, but aside from general professional guidelines and values, there are few formal rules.

None of the media in the sample were officially associated with a particular party or an ideology, but like almost all other leading news media, they subscribe to the ideals of independence, balance and pluralism. Most of the editors-in-chief emphasized that they do not believe in "quota-journalism", stipulated by detailed rules, but that they see balance and pluralism as more general values that guide journalism. These values are also typically enshrined in the general professional guidelines and mission statements. Internal debate between different perspectives is also considered to be a routine part of the journalistic work.

In newspapers, the official line of the newspaper is expressed in the editorials, but according to the editors-in-chief interviewed, the editorials do not in any way guide news selection or otherwise limit the range of perspectives. *Helsingin Sanomat* and *Ilta-Sanomat*, for instance, have a policy of encouraging internal pluralism, including opinions that diverge from the main editorial line.

In some of the media, there are more explicit rules for providing equal space for all candidates before the elections or for regulating the opportunities of candidates to act as columnists. *YLE* also claims to constantly monitor the political and regional balance in its reporting. Others noted that balance is monitored through audience feedback and internal discussions.

All respondents insisted that the readers' letters sections are open to all sides, and that it is an intentional aim of the section to initiate debate between different perspectives and bring forward diverging views. The proportion of letters published range from around 20-25 % in *Helsingin Sanomat* to practically all letters submitted

in the local newspaper *Borgåbladet*. The respondents did note, however, that some limits to curtail the most contentious material, such as racist views, may be necessary.

Control / Watchdog (C)

(C1) Supervising the watchdog “control of the controllers” 1 POINT

Organized media criticism in general is seen as lacking in Finland.

Public discussion about the role of the media as such is not difficult to find even in the media themselves. Recent events in Finland have also generated public debate on the role and performance of the media. The reporting of violent crimes and crises, for instance, has initiated debate on journalistic ethics and a proper code-of-conduct. The political campaign funding entanglements and frequent sex scandals around notable politicians have also intensified the debate on the increasing power of the media, and strained the relations between the politicians and the media. Occasional media criticism is aired by civil society organizations, individual politicians, and other actors. A number of books have recently been published in Finland about “the power of the media” (e.g., Uimonen 2009; Kunelius et al. 2010). In this sense, media criticism and public debate does exist and they even seem to have become more prominent recently.

More institutionalized arenas for media criticism and the evaluation of media performance include the weekly professional journal *Journalisti*, published by the Union of Journalists, and the annual *Yearbook of Journalism Critique*, which features longer articles on topical issues by both researchers and journalists. Universities have also launched research projects and organized seminars that aim to bring together academic and professional perspectives on the media.

Many of the respondents suggested, however, that academic critiques are often perceived to be too detached from the realities of news journalism and thus have only limited value from the point of view of journalists. Blogs and websites that discuss media performance exist, but none of them have gained wider significance. Most of the respondents failed to name any notable media blogs in Finland. There are also some television and radio programs dedicated to the media criticism, mainly on public service channels. Their focus is more on journalistic self-reflection, and they rarely feature outside observers.

Some respondents noted that specialized forums for “media criticism” can seem somewhat contrived. Instead, it was suggested that good media criticism needs to be spontaneous and issue-driven, rather than institutionalized or too organized. On the other hand, it was also suggested that journalists in general are not very open to external evaluation. This is accentuated by small professional circles, which seems

generate a culture in which journalists are reluctant to criticize each other. The flip-side of the strong professional ethos thus seems to be somewhat inward-looking and closed professional circles.

(C2) Independence of the news media from
power holders

2 POINTS

Independence of the Finnish news media from power holders is generally strong.

In general, journalists are not granted a special status in the Finnish law, except for legislation which specifies the responsibilities of editors-in-chief. The confidentiality of sources is guaranteed in the freedom of speech act⁹ and in the professional code-of-ethics. Recent government motions to modify the strong protection of sources or privacy regulations, although unsuccessful, were mentioned by many respondents as worrying trends from the perspective of the media.

While the press and public broadcasting in the 1960s and the 1970s had close connections to the political establishment, this political parallelism has declined notably. Many studies have noted that leading news media have become politically more independent (Herkman 2009). The significance of party affiliation has also strongly decreased in the news media. While newspapers affiliated with a specific political party still exist (largely due to state aid to political parties), their significance has been steadily decreasing and almost all leading news media organizations now emphasize political independence.

There are few non-media companies among the owners of the leading news media. Most national media outlets are owned by one of the major media conglomerates, while most local newspapers in Finland are owned by a relatively small company, families or other private individuals with historical roots in publishing.

Rather than ownership or other direct economic ties, respondents suggested that problems of independence in relation to powerful economic actors arise from the strict information management and lack of openness by large corporations who are not bound by the same transparency requirements as public authorities. Many of the respondents also noted that journalists themselves should be more critical and that more resources are needed to fulfil the watchdog role also against private companies and economic power holders. One respondent also suggested that independence is a specific problem in areas such as culture and sports, where journalists in a small country tend to develop close relations to their sources.

(C3) Transparency of data on media system

2 POINTS

Relevant information about the media system is generally available, but not necessarily easily accessible.

Basic information about the media system is provided by the regulatory authorities. The data and publications about market structures and various aspects of content monitoring are generally available to all citizens. According to the law regulating public service broadcasting, *YLE* is required to provide an annual report of public service offered to the regulatory authority, which then gives a statement to the government. These reports or statements are not easily accessible to the citizens.

Various forms of information about the news media are also provided by universities, research institutes, and professional organizations like *The Union of Journalists*. A website co-established by the Union, *Medialinnakkeet*, offers detailed information particularly on changes in ownership, economy and employment issues in the media. Information on media ownership is for the most part openly available, especially as many media companies are now publicly traded. Major changes in the media markets are also reported in the mainstream news media and the financial news. *Helsingin Sanomat*, which is owned by the *Sanoma Group*, has also adopted a policy of publishing a standard acknowledgement of ownership connection whenever it reports on the companies that are owned by the same parent company.

(C4) Journalism professionalism

3 POINTS

The news media are characterized by a strong professional ethos and a high level of unionization.

According to recent studies, journalists and media professionals are mostly well educated and share a basic commitment to common quality standards (Jyrkiäinen 2008). Together with local unions and member associations, *The Union of Journalists* is active in organizing various meetings and further education for journalists. According to the respondents, the professionalism among journalists in Finland is high, and professional and ethical rules are generally well established. The increasing time pressure, however, is seen as a chronic problem that threatens to decrease the time available for in-depth journalism and professional deliberation.

According to a recent survey among Finnish journalists, the increasing workload and time pressures were considered to be by far the biggest problems facing journalism today, while technical skills and multi-media requirements were identified as the most significant area where journalists felt that demands have increased. According to the survey, the number of staff in relation to the amount of content produced has also decreased, which means that there is less time available for writing and plan-

ning a single news item. Overall, there is a clear concern among journalists that the increasing demands will ultimately decrease the quality of journalism and hinder the possibilities for in-depth investigations and creativity (Jyrkiäinen 2008).

While the overload of journalistic capacities was widely acknowledged as a real problem in the interviews, many respondents also noted that the resources and tools available for providing quality journalism are still better than ever before. The tension between increasing demands and limited resources thus seems to have become a permanent situation in journalism. One interpretation of the developments is that there is an increasing divide between quality media, which strive to uphold and develop high professional standards, and increasingly routinized bulk journalism that is gaining ground especially online.

(C5) Journalists' job security

2 POINTS

There are few specific legal provisions that apply only to journalists, but general legal provisions and labor contracts give journalists strong occupational protection.

The Union of Journalists aims to improve the financial and professional position of its members and their work conditions, and to supervise their interests on the level of both collective bargaining and individual organizations. The labor agreements are extensive and terms of employment are generally complied with. The labor agreement also includes ethical counts.

General legal provisions on employment and labor contracts give journalists with permanent contracts, like any other occupational groups, strong protections against dismissal because of personal convictions or any other arbitrary reasons. Collective labor agreements also specify periods of notice. The employer must always be able to demonstrate a financial or production-related reason for termination of employment contracts. The Union has also taken several dismissal cases to courts, which have generally ruled in favor of the journalists by awarding compensations or damages for undue dismissal.

According to the interviews, a professional practice of allowing journalists not to write against their personal convictions is also widely followed in the news media. The proportion of freelancers has increased, and currently around 12 % of the members of the *Union of Journalists* are freelancers. The use of short-term contracting varies between sectors of the media, but in general, short-term contracts, internships or freelance contracts are currently the only way of entering the profession.

As expected, the editors-in-chief interviewed did not consider the increasing proportion of freelancers or the use of short-term contracts to be a major problem in their organization. In *Helsingin Sanomat*, for instance, it was alleged that some 95 % of the content is produced by permanent staff. Some 200-300 jobs were

slashed in the media sector because of the economic downturn. According to the Union of Journalists, the unemployment rate among journalists is currently around 4-5 %, although many of those who have lost their jobs become freelancers and do not show up in the statistics.

(C6) Practice of access to information

2 POINTS

The existing law provides extensive access to public information, but problems remain in practice.

Finland has a long tradition of open access to government files, starting from the world's oldest freedom of information law that was enacted in 1766, when Finland was part of Sweden. The current law, known as *The Act on the Openness of Government Activities* (1999), is considered to provide citizens extensive access to public information. In practice, there are some reports of differences between the principles and practices.

The Act states the principle that all documents are public unless there is a specific reason for withholding them enacted in another law. There are no privileges for journalists in accessing public information. Instead, everyone has the right to access any official document in the public domain held by public authorities and private bodies that exercise public authority. Those asking for information are not required to provide reasons for their request or to verify their identity unless they are requesting personal or otherwise classified information. The law specifies 32 categories of secret documents that are exempt from release according to a variety of potential harm tests depending on the type of information.

The journalistic experiences of the freedom of information legislation and the use of official documents have recently been examined in a research project (Kuutti 2009). In an "accessibility test" designed to assess the behavior of individual officials to information requests, officials were often slow to reply and reluctant to provide the information requested (ibid.). Problems seem to arise from inconsistent legal interpretations of public and non-public issues, from negative attitudes of the authorities providing information requested, and partly from the journalistic practices.

In some cases, journalists are not aware of their rights to access information. In the interviews with editors-in-chief and experts, it was also suggested that rather than the legislation, more critical questions have to do with the skills and resources of journalists to find and access relevant information. The interviews also suggested that journalists often face problems in gaining information about issues in preparation, which hinders public evaluation of the forthcoming plans of the authorities. Overall, most respondents acknowledged that the existing law gives journalists and the general public relatively broad access to public information.

(C7) The watchdog and the media's mission statements 2 POINTS

The importance of the watchdog role is widely recognized by Finnish media organizations.

The watchdog function seems to enjoy a very high level of importance in the rhetoric of the editors-in-chief. Most of the respondents considered the watchdog role to be among their main functions, if not the most important one. It was also suggested in the interviews that the importance of the watchdog function has recently become increasingly central in the Finnish media.

Most news media have a mission statement of some kind that typically contains references to the freedom of speech, political independence, pluralism, and other democratic values. According to Lehto's (2006) study of the historical development in the written editorial principles of all Finnish daily newspapers, some changes have also taken place in the principles. The notion of "objective journalism", for instance, has disappeared from the documents, while references to the watchdog function and the aim to criticize and evaluate official decision-making have become increasingly prominent (Lehto 2006, p. 413). Overall, it is argued that the development of mission statements indicates that the newspapers have turned their allegiance from political parties and the establishment to the readers.

Most of the editors-in-chief interviewed acknowledged that mission statements have little practical meaning, but it still seems that the watchdog function is strongly entrenched in the dominant professional ideology. As an example of the watchdog role, a number of respondents referred to the ongoing attempts to uncover the campaign funding connections behind leading politicians, which have remained in the headlines of the Finnish media for over two years now and which have also led to a new campaign funding law.

(C8) Professional training 2 POINTS

The importance of continuous professional training is broadly acknowledged, but not all journalists take full advantage of the opportunities available.

All of the respondents considered journalism training to be increasingly important, but resources and practices seem to vary across media organizations. In principle, most of the respondents considered the resources for training to be adequate. The problem in many newsrooms is that individual journalists don't have the opportunity or time to leave their daily duties and take part in training. According to a recent survey among journalists, a little over half of the journalists thought that possibilities for professional training should be improved. In line with our interviews, many

journalists thought that there is enough education available, but not enough opportunities in practice to participate in the training offered (Jyrkiäinen 2008, p. 26, 33).

The Union of Journalists and The Federation of the Finnish Media Industry have agreed on recommendations to advance professional training. The unions agree that education should be diverse, attended regularly, and that part of it should consist of training outside the journalist's own workplace. There is also a chapter on the education programs in the collective labor agreement.

In many instances, journalists can take paid leave for further education. In the selected media organizations, various forms of training are in use. The largest media organizations, like *YLE* and *Helsingin Sanomat*, have their own internal resources for professional training. Most news organizations also use outside consultants or experts for internal training. Much of the regular professional training focuses on technical skills, creative writing, and other professional skills. For more extensive knowledge training, media organizations tend to rely on universities and other places of journalistic higher education. Opinions differ on the recent developments. Some respondents estimated that the total volume of professional training has increased recently, while others noted that there has been a temporary decline owing to the economic downturn.

(C9) Watchdog function and financial resources

2 POINTS

The leading news media give priority to their own material and also seek to undertake investigative journalism.

Most respondents claimed that the resources for investigative journalism are adequate, but that more needs to be done to make investigative journalism part of everyday journalistic culture. Many respondents also noted that journalists themselves should be more daring and active in pursuing their own ideas and investigative stories.

The editors-in-chief interviewed maintained that ad hoc provisions for in-depth investigations are available when necessary.

Public service broadcaster *YLE*, which also has a specific investigative group, has exceptional resources for investigative journalism in the form of documentaries and other current affairs programming. Some newspapers, such as *Helsingin Sanomat*, have also experimented with independent units dedicated to investigative journalism. According to the editors-in-chief interviewed, however, this has not been workable, as it has disconnected the unit too much from the daily process of news gathering. Instead, it was suggested that investigative journalism should be integrated with daily news gathering. The local newspaper *Borgåbladet* had a practice of permanently freeing one journalist from all other duties to pursue investigative journalism and in-depth reporting.

The Finnish Association of Investigative Journalism (*Tutkiva*) was founded in 1992 to promote critical and thorough reporting in the Finnish media. The association tries to facilitate investigative journalism by spreading information and good practices about research methods, principles of transparency, sources and source criticism by organizing discussions and training, and also by awarding an annual prize for investigative journalism.

Summary

On the basis of the above criteria, the overall assessment of the performance and structure of the Finnish mainstream media is fairly positive. In an international comparison, the equal availability and reach of the main news outlets remain on a high level. The challenges, such as increasing market pressures, declining news consumption among young people, and increasing workload and haste in journalistic work, are similar to those of most other countries. Despite these trends, many respondents were surprisingly optimistic, noting that the preconditions for providing quality journalism in Finland have in many respects also improved.

The legal preconditions for freedom of expression and access to public information are generally considered adequate, although some concern about possible changes to the protection of sources and privacy regulations was expressed. Professional ethos among journalists in Finland also remains strong, and it is reflected in established ethical guidelines and professional norms, the position of the Union of Journalists, and relatively good resources for professional training. Issues that were discussed more critically include lack of organized media criticism, the need for a more daring and critical journalism, and somewhat inward looking professional circles. The independence of the news media from political power holders was generally considered strong, but many respondents called for a more critical attitude toward private companies and economic power holders.

The perspectives of the respondents represent the views of experienced leading editors and thus represent rather traditional views of the democratic role of the media. New ways of engaging with public issues that fall outside the scope of institutional journalism, however, are largely beyond the scope of this report, and their influence on the relationship between the media and democracy in Finland remains to be discussed.

Notes

- ¹ In addition to the authors, Pekka Torvinen has contributed to the report by assisting in data collection. The research for the report was funded by the Helsingin Sanomat Foundation.
- ² In 2008, the share of public service broadcasting was 45 % of all television viewing. From 1950s until the early 1990s, the public broadcaster YLE rented airtime to the commercial programming of MTV, which left behind a culture of mutual cohabitation that has changed only recently.
- ³ The following persons were interviewed: Janne Virkkunen, editor-in-chief, *Helsingin Sanomat*; Kari Vainio, editor-in-chief, *Turun Sanomat*; Kari Kivelä, editor-in-chief, *Iltalehti*; Stefan Holmström, editor-in-chief, *Borgåblader*; Atte Jääskeläinen, director of news, *YLE*; Merja Ylä-Anttila, editor-in-chief, *MTV3*; Arto Nieminen, president of the *Union of Journalists*; Pasi Kivioja, director of the *Finnish Newspapers Association*.
- ⁴ <http://www.medialinnakkeet.com>
- ⁵ Co-produced by YLE, Swedish Television SVT, and Norwegian Radio NRK
- ⁶ The 24-hour news channel YLE24 was terminated in 2007.
- ⁷ As another official language of Finland, Swedish is granted the same position as Finnish in the legislation, and in that sense it is not a minority language per se.
- ⁸ All data collected from the respective websites of the newspapers (12 months, automatically renewable subscription).
- ⁹ Act on the Exercise of Freedom of Expression in Mass Media, <http://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/2003/en20030460.pdf>

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