



# CZECHIA

## Risks and Opportunities Related to Media and Journalism Studies (2000–2020). Case Study on the National Research and Monitoring Capabilities

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### Executive Summary

The Country Case Study focused on the nation's potential to monitor the four domains. Given the small size of both the Czech academic field and the media industry, and the expected small number of resources, our team decided to gather the data in an “everything we can find” manner. We focused on published academic texts, student theses, and media industry data.

In general, the analysed texts are uneven in terms of:

- 1. Saturation of time periods** – Until 2010, academic publications were sporadic, and authors were initially foreign academics; later, industry data were gradually systematised and slowly became inaccessible and monetised;
- 2. Thematic density** – Focus on individual topics was more a reflection of authors' and media organisations' individual interests than a systematic strategy of the field and industry;
- 3. Thematic breadth** – The small size of the academic field and the limited number of associated academics and students did not allow for coverage of even the core disciplinary topics over a longer period; the limited size of the media system has not created a sufficiently competitive environment for data to be accessible or for a relevant professional association to emerge; and
- 4. Quality** – Scholarly texts tended to be theoretical or descriptive, and only in later years did they build on empirical data, plus relevant industry data became inaccessible.

This list is a set of risks that concern our monitoring capabilities and the quality of the sources.

## 1. Introduction

Our Country Case Study of the media system of Czechia focused on the national potential to monitor four domains: 1. Legal and Ethical Regulation; 2. Journalism; 3. Media Usage Patterns; and 4. Media-Related Competencies. Therefore, we proceeded from the collecting and processing of “data points” to the evaluation of data and sources. Data was gathered in an “everything we can find” manner, due to the small size of the related Czech academic field, the small media industry, and the expected dearth of resources. We focused on the following: 1. Published academic texts (i.e., articles, books, book chapters, reports); 2. Student theses; 3. Media industry data; and 4. Data from Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs). The four sources of data reflect the main bodies of research (and media education) in Czechia, which are conducted at universities (e.g., mainly Charles University, Masaryk University, and Palacký University), research centres (e.g., the Czech statistical office), NGOs (e.g., One World at Schools), and the media industry (e.g., statistics from the public service media, private holdings). The connection among individual bodies

is insufficient because the communication and the sharing of the data is non-transparent and often non-existent.

### 1.1. The main traditions and turns in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and current situation of the media research and monitoring system

In general, the analysed texts are uneven for several reasons. First, the saturation of time periods – until 2010, scholarly research publications were produced rather sporadically (e.g., Jiráček, 1997; Kaplan & Šmíd, 1995) and the authors were initially foreign academics (e.g., Jakubowicz, 2007; Gross, 2002; Gulyás, 2001; Wachtel, 1996); on the other hand, the industry data were slowly systematised and gradually became inaccessible and monetised. Second, thematic density – the concentrated focus on individual topics was more of a reflection of the authors' and media organisations' individual interests than a systematic strategy of the field and industry; Third, thematic breadth – the small size of the academic field and the limited number of academics and students did not allow for coverage of even the core disciplinary topics, nor for a long time period, and the limited size of media system has not created a sufficiently competitive environment for data to be accessible or for a relevant professional association to emerge; and, fourth, quality – scholarly texts tended to be theoretical or descriptive, only in later years did they built on empirical data and, on the contrary, relevant industry data got largely inaccessible. Criticism of the academic field, where authors are not especially research-oriented and texts do not reach the necessary quality, did emerge, albeit to a small extent: the editors of the only domestic professional journal, *Media Studies*, pointed out in 2008, two years after the journal was founded, that they were facing the lack of potentially publishable articles (Macek & Reifová, 2008).

### 1.2. Explanations of any other structural peculiarities that may be important for the report

On a more general level, this reality corresponds to the main shifts in the 21st century and the current media situation in Czechia, including: the gradual establishment of university departments since the early 1990s; the establishment of grant support for research (i.e., the Grant Agency of Czechia was established in 1993 and the Technology Agency of Czechia started to provide grants for social sciences in 2017); the gradual development of research about the media (i.e., the establishment of the Publishers' Union in 1991, the beginning of the verification of the amount of copies sold of the press in 1993, the launch of research on readership, listenership, and viewership in 1994); the changes in media laws (i.e., new laws from the early 1990s, an amendment to the broadcasting laws in 2001, an amendment to the press law in 2013); the development of grant support for the media; and the establishment of the Foundation for Independent Journalism in 2016. A more comprehensive overview of the development of the media system can be found in national Case Study 2, which is specifically focused on the contextualizing aspect of the national cases.

We analysed a total of 709 texts. We searched for them in university databases and online (i.e., Google, Google Scholar, library databases), using keywords and the names of experts and the names of organisations (e.g., professional, non-profit). We assessed the relevance by analysing their content and assessing their relationship to the project domains.

The academic publications, by virtue of their topics and time of creation, all reveal the above-mentioned specificities of the media studies field in Czechia between 2000 and 2020. We found 370 relevant texts<sup>10</sup> that focused mainly on the general analysis of the media system, journalism education, journalists, and journalistic work.

<sup>10</sup> There were 172 texts among the scholarly publications in the *Journalism* domain; 158 in the *Media Usage Patterns and Media-Related Competencies* domain; and 40 in *Legal and Ethical Regulation* domain. There were

Even the student theses show that the tradition of Czech media science research has been building in a more concentrated way since 2010, because, in the first decade of the 21st century, there were only isolated examples of Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctoral theses. Later, the topics of the theses logically followed the most represented themes of academic texts, as they correspond to the priorities of their supervisors. Moreover, most doctoral theses in the Czech academic tradition are translated into some type of academic output, most often into continuous articles and a final book. However, there are not many such research-oriented theses in the Czech field; there were just 256 in our sample.<sup>11</sup>

The fewest traceable and publicly available topics are in the data produced by the media industry itself and by the NGOs that focused on media analysis, with only 8312 in the Czech context in the analysed sample.

### 1.3. The main institutions/bodies and actors of media/ communication/ journalism research, monitoring and education

With focus on the agency of different actors in propelling certain risks and opportunities at the outlined critical junctures, these are the groups with either specific knowledge of the Czech media development or with a long professional history: (1) media industry representatives (e.g., media owners, media managers, journalists, journalists' professional unions); (2) communication researchers and lecturers; (3) media analysts and analytical companies; and (4) NGOs. In this sense, we also selected our communicative partners for expert interviews.

Continuously researched data according to a consistent method are sporadic – either they are part of international projects (e.g., *The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism*; *Worlds of Journalism*; *Monitoring Media Pluralism*) or they are part of industry data, such as readership and viewership.

While looking at the data, it is obvious that the sources often originate in one of the three<sup>13</sup> main departments of media studies and journalism in Czechia. Each department has a slightly different set of sources, which is influenced by the topical specialisation of each individual department. For example, the *Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism at Charles University in Prague* (<https://iksz.fsv.cuni.cz>) has the longest tradition. The first publications, which were rather descriptive and theoretical, were produced there and focused on the general transformation of the media landscape, media history, and the post-socialist transformation of the media. Later, researchers began to focus on media and politics, political communication, journalists, media literacy, and television series. By contrast, in the last 10 years, the *Department of Media Studies and Journalism at Masaryk University in Brno* (<https://medzur.fss.muni.cz>) has established itself with studies of audience research, especially in relation to the internet and new media (besides the department's researchers, there are also researchers in the *Interdisciplinary Research Team on Internet and Society* ([www.irtis.muni.cz](http://www.irtis.muni.cz))). Researchers also work on history, journalistic professional roles, local journalism, and cultural research. The emphasis is mainly on empirical research based on sociology and psychology. The *Department of Media and Cultural Studies and Journalism at Palacký University in Olomouc* ([www.kmksz.upol.cz](http://www.kmksz.upol.cz)) is more theoretical at its core.

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dozens of other texts focused on outlier topics, like content analysis; textbooks; historical analysis; texts focused on PR and marketing, IT development, games, zines, and literature.

<sup>11</sup> Among the students' theses were 100 in the *Journalism Domain*; 105 in the *Media Usage Patterns and Media-Related Competencies Domain*; and 51 in the *Legal and Ethical Regulation Domain*. There were other dozens of research theses focused on outlier topics – content analyses.

<sup>12</sup> Among media industry data were 20 in the *Journalism Domain*; 31 in the *Media Usage Patterns and Media-Related Competencies Domain*; and 32 in the *Legal and Ethical Regulation Domain*.

<sup>13</sup> There is also one department at a private university, *Department of Media Studies, Metropolitan University Prague*, which continues the tradition of the Charles University Institute in terms of staff and themes. However, it has not yet been very prolific in the production of research-oriented projects or texts.

Only a few examples of empirical research can be found. There is a strong branch that conducts historical research, but the audience research is lacking.

#### 1.4. The funding system of media research and monitoring (public, private, project-based etc.)

This is tightly connected to the financing and “human resources” of media research. Czechia (due to its small size) lacks the “human resources”, which is only enhanced by the “non-permeability” of different bodies of research (e.g., industry and academia). The situation is exacerbated by financing. Academics are dependent on institutional financing for their research, which can cover only a small amount of their needs (especially in large studies). In addition, there are two main grant agencies. The *Grant Agency of Czechia*, established in 1993, awards grants in the social sciences, among other things, for primary media research. The *Technology Agency of Czechia*, founded in 2009, also offered a new grant programme for social sciences in 2017, but it is oriented towards applied research. Researchers can apply for grants offered by both groups; however, the success rate is generally quite low for projects in the social studies and humanities (i.e., around 20-30 %, Hladík, 2021). Additionally, one can apply for international grants, such as *Horizon2020*, *Proof of Concept*, and others, which are only rarely won in our field of study. This situation is unfortunate and poses a risk for future media research that might be very limited due to the lack of financial opportunities.

#### 1.5. The national research database and most important journals

The gathered data shows that the most relevant national research journals in the field (and connected to the field) are *Mediální studia* (Media Studies), *Sociologický časopis* (Journal of Sociology), and *Sociální studia* (Social Studies).

## 2. Publications, data sources and main monitoring actors of legal and ethical regulation domain

Research on media ethics and media law is still rudimentary in the Czech academy. So far, there is no original theoretical work or empirical monograph that summarises the basic problems within the Czech environment. The closest is Václav Moravec's *Proměny novinářské etiky* (The Transformations of Journalistic Ethics, 2020), which is more of an eclectic collection of various topics than a systematic survey.

Research in the field of media law in Czechia is fragmented and concentrated mainly in the law faculties of large universities. Significant space is devoted to new information technologies (Moravec, 2013), *copyright* in the digital environment (Myška, 2020; Polčák et al., 2018), and the issue of personal data (Míšek, 2020). At the *Institute of Law and Technology of the Faculty of Law of Masaryk University* in Brno, there is a team (<https://cyber.law.muni.cz/en>) that is researching the legal context of new technologies and the digital environment; they also publish a specialized journal, the *Masaryk University Journal of Law and Technology*.

### 2.1. Freedom of expression

Moravec (2020) presents the key theoretical issues of the normative perspective — journalism ethics (e.g., objectivity) — and provides specific examples from the Czech news media. The book widely employs a legal perspective rather than in-depth ethical discussion. It serves more as a textbook than a monograph. However, it concludes with a chapter about the history of Czech media ethics (including *codes of ethics*, *media councils*, *ombudspersons*, and the *freedom of ex-*

pression), which is highly informative. The core of the recent scholarly research lies in the historical perspective (e.g., *media ownership, media councils, freedom of expression*), especially the development of self-regulation (Moravec et al., 2003; Osvaldová, 2011; Waschková Císařová, 2015), but also the general perspective (Končelík et al., 2010; Pouperová, 2013).

International organisations, such as *Reporters Without Borders* and the *Ethical Journalism Network*, have reported about Czechia. A 2021 report by the Ethical Journalism Network found that there has been a significant erosion of press freedom over the past five years in Czechia, mainly due to the concentration of *media ownership* and its link to politics (i.e., *freedom of expression*).

## 2.2. Freedom of information

Media law is also significantly represented (Sokol, 2001; Rozehnal, 2015) as an informative compendium that presents the main principles of Czech media law in the form of textbook (including *defamation, the protection of sources, access to information/sources, copyright protection, and normative perspective*).

## 2.3. Accountability system

In media ethics, there are mainly partial theoretical contributions, which are often based either on a very general perspective or on an attempt to bring to the Czech environment a topic that has not been fully treated academically, but also smaller empirical studies or commentaries focused mainly on the issues of diversity, stereotyping, or sexism (Urbániková, 2020; Hanych & Andreska, 2020; Motal, 2015; Štětka, 2007). In general, it can be stated that academic interest in media ethics in Czechia after 2000 is marginal, unsystematic, and eclectic, and often reflecting only general problems and taking an exploratory form. New topics related to the online environment or emotional labour are also emerging (Kotišová, 2019).

A much larger amount of empirical material has been provided by student theses (i.e., Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral theses – see e.g., Metyková, 2006), which provide case studies and address the theoretical problems of selected and topical issues (i.e., terrorism, war photography) on the surface of expert interviews (i.e., normative perspective, media accountability). This fact shows both the students' interest in ethical issues and the lack of willingness of academics to conduct research within their existing projects. It can, thus, be assumed that the exploratory material is provided by the students through their theses, rather than coming from organic and systematic study in an academic setting.

In Czechia, media ethics are dealt with either by regulators (e.g., *Broadcasting Council, Czech Television Council, Czech Radio Council, Czech Press Agency Council*), by professional organisations (e.g., *Syndicate of Journalists, Association of Regional Journalists, International Press Institute, Union of Publishers, Advertising Council*), and, marginally, by academic institutions. Recently, in 2021, the first academic team that was directly focused on media ethics was established at *Masaryk University – Centre for Media Ethics and Dialogue* (CEMETIK, [www.cemetik.cz/en](http://www.cemetik.cz/en)), which is led by Jan Motal. Another highly respected theorist of media ethics is Václav Moravec, a long-time journalist, who works at the *Department of Journalism, Charles University*. The *Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University*, cooperates with the *European Journalism Observatory* (<https://cz.ejo-online.eu>), occasionally publishing reports or articles on media ethics. In 2020, a new ethically oriented media studies programme was established at *Sts Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology, Palacký University*. Other academics and professionals engage in partial analyses or public commentary on media ethics, but this is not systematic (e.g., researchers from the *Faculty of Medicine, Charles University*, published a report on the representation of people with mental illness in the Czech media, Nawková, et al., 2010).

As data, from an institutional perspective, the decisions of *the media councils* and the *Ethics Committee* of the *Syndicate of Journalists of Czechia* (a member of the *International Federation of Journalists*) are available (as a normative perspective, including the code of ethics). The documents of the media councils have an administrative character (i.e., they have a special legal status and cannot be considered, strictly speaking, as analyses that reflect an empirical state of reality and they are rather normative statements that are meant to regulate this state). In this sense, they should be treated with caution and taken as material for analysis rather than the results of the analysis itself.

The reports of the Ethics Committee do not usually manifest as an analysis, but as an assessment of the compliance of the case submissions with the *Syndicate's Code of Ethics* (*Stanoviska Komise pro etiku Syndikátu novinářů ČR*). It should be noted that this is often a formal approach. The decisions do not present independent arguments, but mainly refer to the norms, with very little recourse for new or expanding interpretations (e.g., in the case of a journalist using the recording of a phone call without the knowledge of the respondent, the commission only states that the journalist should always introduce themselves on the phone – this can be considered as basically missing the point, see *Stanoviska Komise pro etiku Syndikátu novinářů ČR*, report from 12/9/2007). The reports often describe technical and organisational matters (i.e., that a given submission was made, the editorial office was contacted, the case was solved or adjourned), but usually they do not provide any plausible generalisation and provide only apodictic statements of legal wording. It is noteworthy that the materials often contain a simple transcript of the editorial office's statement on the complaint about the journalists' actions, with a note that the commission "takes note of the statement and sends it to the complainant". In such a case, the Ethics Committee is merely acting as a mediator for communication with the media and has, essentially, resigned from its original role.

Moreover, the Ethics Committee is selective in its assessment of media ethics (e.g., it refuses to deal with tabloid cases). It usually advises complainants to go to court (e.g., breach of contract by employers). This is also notable because here the Ethics Committee is completely resigned to the union nature of the syndicate, and it does not actively fight for the rights of journalists in the workplace. At the same time, excluding tabloids from their evaluation creates a double standard in the application of ethical criteria (as though ethics did not apply to them). The Ethics Committee is also very cautious in commenting on opinion journalism, as though it does not apply to the criteria of ethical journalism (e.g., conflict of interest, fair criticism). In the cases that have resonated very strongly with civil society and media professionals (e.g., the xenophobic articles in the newspaper *Prostějovský večerník* or the manipulative coverage of refugees by TV Prima in 2016), the Commission limited itself to very brief statements, without giving the cases the importance that they deserved and without being able to take a nuanced and informed position about them. In this sense the Ethics Committee's materials are not representative and do not reflect the real debate on ethics in the public and among journalists themselves. Their value for assessing the state of the media in Czechia is, therefore, low. Thus, these materials should be understood to be evidence of the very limited and legalistic approach of the Syndicate of Journalists of Czechia to ethical issues, rather than a truly normative and reality-reflective analysis. It is extremely difficult to abstract from the corpus of data any general principles that define the behaviour of journalists and editorial offices beyond what is already in the Code of Ethics or the law. At the same time, the relatively low level of engagement and independence in the judgement of the Ethics Committee, which relies either on the norms or the explanations given, is remarkable.

Other analyses by Czech NGOs (e.g., *People in Need*) are also available, especially on the topics of migration and the representation of ethnicity (i.e., *media responsibility*). The *Foundation for Independent Journalism* produces a media rating, which is an important indicator of media quality in relation to ethical and legal issues. Since 2006, the non-profit organisation *Oživení* (Revival)

has been systematically working on the issue of municipal media and, in 2013, based on its activities, the law was changed to regulate the rules for the activities of these media. In 2014, the organisation published a major analysis of municipal media (Kameník & Kužílek, 2014). This analysis concluded that the law had only a minimal impact on reality.

### 3. Publications, data sources and main monitoring actors of journalism domain

Describing the state and transformation of the media system was a key topic of scholarly studies around 2000 (e.g., Jiráček, 2000). It was conceived as an account of recent history and follows the tradition of Czech media and journalism studies as a field oriented towards historical essays (e.g., Šmíd, 2004; Moravec, 2003; Köpplová & Jiráček, 2001). At the same time, however, these texts are difficult to access because they are mostly part of conference proceedings or chapters in domestic or foreign scholarly books, both of which are hard to find as online resources and, paradoxically, even more difficult to find in libraries. On the other hand, foreign authors have paid concentrated attention to the Czech media, mostly from the broader perspective of the transforming media systems of Central and Eastern Europe, since about the mid-1990s (e.g., Jakubowicz, 2007; Gross, 2002; Gulyás, 2001; Wachtel, 1996; Kettle, 1996).

Unsurprisingly, Czech student theses focus on the analysis of changes in the media system (e.g., Červenková, 2011); the analysis of different types of journalism, including investigative, citizen, and online forms (e.g., Nedomová, 2018); the transformation of journalistic work (e.g., Ďuríčková, 2016; Ježková, 2019); and new trends in journalism (e.g., Vilímcová, 2017).

#### 3.1. Market conditions

More sophisticated texts written by Czech authors on the transformation of the media system have appeared with the passage of time, like with the approaching anniversary of the Velvet Revolution (Waschková Císařová & Metyková, 2015; Volek, 2009; 2011; Škop & Ondrášik, 2011; Foret et al., 2008), although some of these texts are mainly descriptive (e.g., Jiráček & Köpplová, 2008a; 2012; 2020).

The general theme of Czech media and journalism is also reflected in more narrowly focused texts: *local media and journalism* (e.g., Waschková Císařová, 2013; Metyková & Waschková Císařová, 2020; Fleissner & Müller, 2016); photojournalism (Šimůnek, 2011; Lábová & Láb, 2009); computer games (Švelch, 2008); radio and television (Hanáčková et al., 2016; Lapčík, 2012); cinematography (Szczezanik et al., 2015); creative industries (Szczezanik & Vonderau, 2013); and book production (Kirkosová, 2015). Some of these were results of international comparative projects (e.g., Šmíd, 2007).

More specifically, publications on the relationship between the qualities of democracy and the qualities of media, particularly *media ownership* and its consequences, have been based on the European Research Council (ERC) project *MDCEE – Media and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe*, which is based at the University of Oxford (see Štětka, 2011). These covered the development of the Czech media system (e.g., *market conditions*) through analyses based on empirical data and longer-term attention, and offered comparisons with other CEE countries in terms of ownership (e.g., Štětka, 2010) through the lenses of the status of media in democratic societies (e.g., Štětka, 2011; Jebril et al., 2013; 2015; Štětka & Örnebring, 2013) and the mapping of the functioning of public service media (Bajomi-Lazar et al., 2012).

In the last five years, authors have also emphasised topics related to the relationship between media and democracy (e.g., Hannah, 2019; Kim, 2016), which are key to our theme of deliberative communication, including: the analyses of media development in illiberal democracies of

CEE countries (Surowiec & Stetka, 2020); disinformation (Stetka & Mazák & Vochocová, 2021); and political participation (Vochocová et al., 2016; Švelch & Vochocová, 2015). Since 2016, long-term data on the plurality of Czechia's media system have been based on the international comparative project *Monitoring Media Pluralism* (Štětka & Hájek, 2017; 2020; 2021; Štětka et al., 2016).

The industry has, in recent years, produced descriptions of the *market conditions* or analyses of *media ownership* (e.g., Mediaguru, 2020; Czech Statistical Office, 2014), but it offers a more focused analysis of the media primarily through the lens of audience measurement only (see the *Media Usage Patterns and Media-Related Competencies* section below).

Other producers of more focused industry analyses are industry and professional associations. Unfortunately, the *Syndicate of Journalists of Czechia* does not play this expected role (for criticism see e.g., *Legal and Ethical Regulation Domain*). Some partial analyses (e.g., *Nadační fond nezávislé žurnalistiky*, 2018) are produced by the *Nadační fond nezávislé žurnalistiky* (Foundation for Independent Journalism), which also repeatedly assesses the quality of Czech media (*Nadační fond nezávislé žurnalistiky. Rating médií*). A critical reflection on the Czech media market, thus, remains primarily the responsibility of foreign organisations (e.g., Reporters Without Borders 2020; 2016; the European Federation of Journalists, 2019; the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism).

### 3.2. Public service media

Only partial information is available for *public service media conditions*, like in the analyses for councils or annual reports (e.g., Czech Radio Online Activity Statistics, 2018; 2019; Czech Television Broadcasting Data 2013-2021; Czech Radio Council Annual Reports; Czech Television Council Annual Reports). Unsurprisingly, this is not available for private media, with exceptions such as *Economia's Editorial Independence Council* (see *Economia* 2020).

### 3.3. Production conditions

Production conditions is a scarcely covered topic in our realm. We can find some sources reflecting on investigative journalism and its autonomy (Stetka & Örnebring, 2013), and more studies on foreign correspondents (Kotissova, 2019; Nečas & Vochocová, 2010; Láb, 2014).

### 3.4. Working conditions

More focused and relevant research attention has been paid to journalists themselves (e.g., their *working conditions, organisational conditions, professional culture and competencies*), the transformation of their work (Jirků, 2020; Szczepanik, 2015; Metyková & Waschková Čísařová, 2009), and the extent of their professionalisation. This topic was addressed by a research project in 2003 that focused on Czech journalists (e.g., Volek & Jiráček, 2006; Volek, 2007) and later continued by another developing project (e.g., Volek & Urbániková, 2017; Urbániková & Volek, 2018; Moravec et al., 2015).

#### 3.4.1. Intra-organizational diversity

Other authors have then focused on either a specific group of journalists, such as: members of a particular newsroom (Gillárová et al., 2014; Čuřík, 2014a; 2014b); women (Urbániková, 2020; Vajbarová, 2017; Jiráček et al., 2011); the different generations of journalists (Moravec et al., 2015); specialised journalists (e.g., camera reporters; Waschková Čísařová & Metyková, 2020); foreign correspondents (Kotišová, 2019; Láb, 2014); and cultural journalists (Kotišová, 2021). They also focused on the implications of ownership transformation for journalistic work (Kotissova & Waschková Čísařová, 2021; Hájek et al., 2015; Němcová Tejkalová et al., 2015) and pho-

tojournalists' work and practices (e.g., Štefaníková & Láb, 2018; Láb et al., 2016). Recently, the focus has been mainly on new trends in journalism (e.g., "the robotic reporter", Macková & Moravec, 2020). In 2012, the *Worlds of Journalism* project (<https://worldsofjournalism.org>) started to map concentrated and long-term data on Czech journalists, which has resulted in research reports (e.g., Rugar et al., 2021; Němcová Tejkalová & Láb, 2016) and scholarly articles (e.g., Němcová Tejkalová & Láb, 2019; Němcová Tejkalová et al., 2017).

### 3.4.2. Journalistic competencies, education, and training

Authors also took a descriptive approach to the topic of *journalism education and training* in Czechia. Starting with texts that describe the establishment of disciplines at individual universities (e.g., Pavelka, 2003) or summarising the topic historically and for a foreign audience (Jiráček & Köpplová, 2009; 2011), the authors have come to reflect on the development of a university education for journalists (Motal, 2012; Jiráček & Köpplová, 2013; Končelík, 2013). Jakub Končelík (2013) summarises the topic in the most detailed way, although it is based on a historical perspective. He provides information about the university departments that were current at the time, the number of students studying at each, and the basic differences. However, a more analytical reflection on this topic in the Czech context is lacking.

### 3.4.3. Professional culture and role perception

The topic of professional culture and the perception of individual roles of participating actors has been discussed in relation to a trust towards journalists (Moravec, Urbáníková & Volek, 2016) or professional identity of Czech journalists (Jirků, 2020). The professional identity was also a subject for comparison with foreign knowledge (Urbáníková & Volek, 2018). An important angle taken by some of the researchers, highlights the self-perception of journalists and their role/position (Jiráček & Köpplová, 2008b; Volek, 2010).

## 4. Publications, data sources and main monitoring actors of media usage patterns

The topics of media usage pattern appear on many different levels and in various shapes in Czech academia. The research is highly fragmented, and the academic works cover a large range of topics, some of them influenced by interdisciplinary perspectives (e.g., cultural studies, psychology, fan studies, game studies).

### 4.1. Research and monitoring that reflects access to the media and diversity of viewpoints in media system

Contrary to the previous themes, Czech media audiences are well-researched topics with several teams from different universities "chipping in". Both qualitative and quantitative research provide a substantial number of highly specialised but also representative data about Czech audiences. Czechia is part of the multinational research network EU Kids Online IV (2014-21), which generates a substantial number of articles and reports about audiences. There are also rich veins of research about audience participation (i.e., *media usage conditions and structure*) in various internet communities (e.g., Štětka & Šmahel, 2008; Macek et al., 2015; Macková et al., 2014; Macháčková & Šerek, 2017). The media practices of audiences, such as piracy and many others, in the context of entertainment media (e.g., movies) also reflect *media user preferences* and *the state of access to media, diversity in the media system, and the functionalities of media* (e.g., Baslarová, 2014; Macek, 2015; Macek & Zahrádka, 2016; Karger & Jansová, 2021). The media practices of foreign audiences of Czech media (Kim 2020) or the newest topic of media practices during the COVID-19 pandemic (Van Aelst et al., 2021) are also well-researched. More

theoretical works about audiences (Reifová & Pavlíčková, 2013) are supplemented by research into the audiences of television series and movies; however, these mainly include textual analyses (Reifová, 2020). A recurring topic in this context reflects the socialist past and the socialist-based nostalgia connected to the re-runs of classic productions (Reifová & Hladík, 2013). This research highlights the specific socio-political and cultural backgrounds of media production and, consequently, media audiences that are important to include in any related inquiry.

Beyond academic discourse, several projects and efforts gather and publish data about *media users* and *media usage*, in general. While listing the sources, we offer only the names of the projects because they are easily accessible on the internet. Citing individual reports would be redundant. Readership and radio audiences are researched in the national research of *Media Project*. The *Foundation for Independent Journalism* often publishes various reports about media performances, journalistic performances, and other similar events. The public service broadcaster *Czech Television* annually publishes different reports about viewership and the popularity of its content, and reports on the quality of the content evaluated by external agencies. Weekly reports of the viewership from the major broadcasters in Czechia are available from *Nielsen Admosphere*. More specific research on media literacy, sexist advertisements, and other categories is accessible at *CVVM*, *RRTV*, and private companies, such as *Focus* and *Media Tenor*. The question of the accessibility of such data and its consequences is discussed in the text below.

## 4.2. Relevance of news media

As is apparent, the question of what audiences do with their media is recurrent and relevant. This is also true when we look at more specific research that is highly influenced by its core interdisciplinarity. A strong position holds that the study of audiences is connected to the psychological angle through which the research investigates *user's skills* (e.g., *privacy and data protection skills, use of media, media technology*) in the context of the following: the excessive use of the internet (e.g., Mikuška et al., 2020; Faltýnková et al., 2020); eating disorders related to media use (Šmahelová, 2020; Drtilová, 2021); cyberbullying and digital safety (Dědková et al., 2021); sexuality online (Ševčíková et al., 2019); and the influence of using (health) applications (Elavsky et al., 2017). Political science is another angle through which audiences are analysed (Vochocová, 2018; Castro et al., 2021).

The last of the more visible perspectives that concern audiences, and their media usage is reflected in the research into active, convergent media users who partly become producers of the media content that they were assumed to only consume. That current research touches upon the following: YouTube influencers/celebrities (Sedláček, 2016); media fans (Macháčková & Blinka, 2009; Jansová, 2020); and gamers (Buchtová et al., 2012). While the investigation into fans and gamers is often connected to international psychological perspectives, this is true only for the gamers so far (Blinka et al., 2016). Similar research brings attention to the changes in the make up of the audience, in general, which fittingly reflects the changing media environment and the accessibility of different media content (e.g., from on-demand services).

Produserism is closely connected to graduate work that deals with journalists who use qualitative interviews to preserve the journalists' perspectives. In this context, students cover the following: changes in the journalistic profession in the digitised environment (Hilbertová, 2016); the influence of AI on journalism, in general (Kubín, 2020); civic journalism in the context of ethics (Firbacherová, 2012); the objectivity of journalists (Cajthamlová, 2017); work-life balance (Kuzmová, 2016); and entertainment journalism (Jínová, 2020).

### 4.3. Trust in media

*Trust in media* (and, consequently, often the *relevance of news and public service media*) is a strong “branch” in the academic research (e.g., Volek & Urbániková, 2017; Macek et al., 2018; Macháčková & Tkaczyk, 2020). Shifting our focus to the student theses, we see quite a distinct (and unsurprising) tendency to follow the dominant research areas of the respective universities and departments from which they originate. Generally, graduate work often deals with new media practices and audiences that are defined both as consumers and producers of media content. This is apparent in the interest in civic journalism (Minařík, 2015); broader “prosumer” topics (Fraj, 2018); and the interest in fans and their creative practices (Paraiová, 2021). The influence of media on its audiences is also one of the recurring themes that are addressed through a rich array of different angles (Loušová, 2019), like with specific topics about the influence of advertisements on the consumer (Vrbicová, 2013). Other common issues are the consumption and *trust in media* (Procházková, 2020) and media practices that are connected to entertainment media (Maca, 2019).

## 5. Publications, data sources and main monitoring actors of media-related competencies domain

The most relevant data sources and the umbrella topics of *media literacy and media education* (representing *users’ cognitive and communication abilities/competencies*) are mainly theoretical works that provide an introduction to the problem, instructions on how to understand media, and related themes. Jan Jirák, Radim Wolák, and Markéta Zezulková stand out with several works (e.g., Jirák & Wolák, 2008; 2010; Jirák & Zezulková, 2019).

Czech authors, however, also participate in more extensive international reports that present opportunities for actual research and comparisons of different media landscapes (e.g., McDougall et al., 2018). *Media education* is also analysed regarding other topics, such as political communication (Křeček, 2007) or family participation in this type of education (Sloboda, 2013). While dealing with media literacy more particularly, Czech authors manifest a tendency to focus on different age groups (and socio-demographic groups, in general) with higher risks for underdeveloped media skills, such as among seniors (e.g., Jirků, 2006; Reifová & Fišerová, 2012; Lipková et al., 2017); generation Z (Koudelková, 2019); or children (Moravec, 2010; Ševčíková et al., 2014; Slussareff, 2019).

Only a small number of the mentioned works that deal with literacy stem from the actual research of audiences. More often, the conceptualization of the topic is based on the literature review of existing work or document analysis. This tells us little about the actual state of *media literacy* in Czechia; fortunately, industry sources partly supplement such research (see below).

### 5.1. Normative sources

Various NGOs also offer additional data, including about activities related to *media usage*. For example, *One World in the Schools* (Jeden svět na školách) is known for organising workshops in *media literacy*. They also offer audio-visual content for these purposes. Focusing on the research, they offer various analyses, such as the media literacy of high schoolers and the state of media education in schools (e.g., JSNS 2018b, 2021a).

## 5.2. Assessment of media related competencies among citizens

The previous text suggest that the question of media literacy has been addressed mainly with a help of NGOs and their activities. However, in the current digital world a question of digital literacy inevitably arises too. The inequity of the access to a technology seems to be one of the pressing topics in this context (Lupač, 2015; Helsper & Šmahel, 2020). The international perspective is being employed here as the topical importance is recognized internationally (Biggins, Holley & Zezulková, 2017). Cognitive abilities and various approaches to skill assessments, same as the impact on individuals (e.g., from a health point of view) are dealt with mainly in the interdisciplinary research of media studies and psychology (e.g., Černíková, Šmahel & Wright, 2018).

## 6. Analysis of Research and Monitoring Capabilities and Quality

The accessibility of scholarly material (in all of the considered domains) varies throughout Czech academia and it can be considered a risk. While peer-reviewed and indexed articles are available in general, books, book chapters, and other sources are different. This is worsened by the fact that each university has a different system for showcasing (and, consequently, making available/researchable) the publications. The accessibility of industry/business materials is potentially the hardest issue because a lot of material is behind pay walls. The visible and accessible documents vary in their quality. One has to wonder how many documents exist, such that it is hard to establish how successful the collection of reliable data sources for our purposes would be.

While assessing the accessible scholarly data, we can pinpoint several teams from various departments and universities. For example, media literacy topics has a strong tradition at *Charles University* and research into audiences with interdisciplinary backgrounds has been established mainly at the *Masaryk University* (see above). Considering the publications and their quality, it must be said that they do not provide a sufficient picture for the ethical problems of the Czech media and their validity is low, also because they are methodologically biased towards legal issues. Bachelor's and Master's student theses should be treated with caution, as they are not standard academic papers that have undergone a peer-reviewed process and they have not been published; these theses should be seen as open to further testing. Media council documents should be seen as material for further analysis; they are of a normative regulatory nature.

There is enough material to frame the development of self-regulation in Czechia and to compare it to foreign countries in basic outlines; however, based on academic literature, it is not possible to make any authoritative judgement on the state of media ethics in Czechia.

Scholarly texts tended to be theoretical or descriptive. Later years built more relevantly on empirical data, both qualitative and quantitative. On the contrary, the more the industry research has developed, the more closed the industry data became to the public. Nevertheless, there is a relative abundance of credible and reliable texts to work with for further analysis, although thematic and knowledge gaps remain.

### 6.1. Comparative analytical overview on other sources and access to these sources

The concentrated focus on individual topics was more a reflection of the authors' and media organisations' individual interests than a more systematic strategy within the field and industry, which can also be considered as a risk. The small size of the academic field and the limited num-

ber of academics and students did not allow for coverage of the core disciplinary topics nor over a longer period. The limited size of the media system has not created a sufficiently competitive environment for data to be accessible or for a relevant professional association to emerge.

There are enough experts for our selected domains, so it is relevant for the Czech media system to complement the lack of academic and industry data coverage with expert interviews. After this literature review, we can identify the key experts from academia and industry who have long-standing knowledge and experience in the development of the field.

## 6.2. Monitoring capabilities and the quality of data and knowledge

In terms of the recency and continuity of data, until 2000 and in the first years of the 21st century, scholarly research publications were produced sporadically or by foreign authors. On the other hand, the industry data were gradually systematised and became inaccessible and monetised. Both trends can be understood as challenges.

Continuously researched data according to a consistent method are sporadic – either they are part of international projects (e.g., *The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism*; *Worlds of Journalism*; *Monitoring Media Pluralism*) or they are part of industry data, such as readership and viewership.

## 7. Conclusions

Our literature review allowed us to map the national potential to monitor our project's four domains and to point out the main risks and opportunities for the monitoring capabilities and its quality.

The following aspects are opportunities:

1. We are able to gain the basic data about the media system, individual agents, and specific problems of media development in Czechia;
2. The number of sources is increasing;
3. The quality of sources is increasing; and
4. The number of reflexive content producers is growing.

The risks are that the analysed texts are problematic in terms of quantity and quality:

1. **The saturation of time periods** – Until 2000 and the following several years, academic publications were sporadic, and the authors were initially foreign academics; later, industry data were gradually systematised and slowly became inaccessible and monetised;
2. **Thematic density** – Focus on individual topics was more a reflection of the authors' and media organisations' individual interests than a systematic strategy of the field and industry;
3. **Thematic breadth** – The small size of the academic field and the limited number of associated academics and students did not allow for coverage of even the core disciplinary topics over a longer period; the limited size of the media system has not created a sufficiently competitive environment for data to be accessible or for a relevant professional association to emerge; and
4. **Quality** – Scholarly texts tended to be theoretical or descriptive, and only in later years did they build on empirical data, plus relevant industry data became inaccessible.

The data from the media academia and industry, in our view, makes it possible to highlight specific gaps in the research landscape in Czechia. We are, thus, able to give recommendations for future research initiatives. In the limited space of the Czech academia and industry, and with the limited number of people involved in the generation of reflections upon media development, the following are crucial to consider and implement:

1. The mutual cooperation of all actors (i.e., academia, industry, NGOs) with additional emphasis on interdisciplinary research;
2. The systematisation of topics and methods used, including for the long-term perspective;
3. The long-term perspective could lead to a gradual "densification" of the topics and a more systematic support (i.e., institutional and financial) for elaboration; and
4. There is a lack of deeper reflection on the ethical and legal aspects of media development, the working and organisational conditions of journalists, and journalistic competencies.

These results and consequential recommendations will be even more clear in the contextualization of the second case study.

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## Expert interviews

- Academic 1. (2022). Expert interview on the topic of Critical junctures of Czech Media Landscape development.
- Burgr, R. (2022). Expert interview on the topic of Critical junctures of Czech Media Landscape development. (Academic)
- Černý, A. (2022). Expert interview on the topic of Critical junctures of Czech Media Landscape development. (Industry representative)
- Industry representative 1 (2022). Expert interview on the topic of Critical junctures of Czech Media Landscape development.
- Jiráček, J. (2022). Expert interview on the topic of Critical junctures of Czech Media Landscape development. (Academic)
- Kubíčková, J. (2022). Expert interview on the topic of Critical junctures of Czech Media Landscape development. (Industry representative and academic)
- Orság, P. (2022). Expert interview on the topic of Critical junctures of Czech Media Landscape development. (Academic)
- Osvaldová, B. (2022). Expert interview on the topic of Critical junctures of Czech Media Landscape development. (Academic)
- Strachota, K. (2022). Expert interview on the topic of Critical junctures of Czech Media Landscape development. (Representative of NGO in the field of media education)
- Šmíd, M. (2022). Expert interview on the topic of Critical junctures of Czech Media Landscape development. (Academic and industry representative)

