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Monitoring capabilities over risks and opportunities for media-related deliberative communication in Greece in the twenty-first century

ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to examine the information and knowledge available for diagnosing the potential for mediated deliberative communication in Greece. The article reviews existing structures, research and data sources and assesses their capacity to support the monitoring of media developments and the risks and opportunities deriving from the latter for deliberative communication. It explores the main features of the research and data collection activities carried out in four areas considered to exert an influence on the media's contribution to deliberative communication: media law and ethics, journalism, media usage and media users' competences. The research shows that considerable differences exist across the four areas reviewed regarding the availability and comprehensiveness of the research conducted and data. This impacts on capacities for monitoring and evaluating with

KEYWORDS

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1. <https://rsf.org/en/index> (accessed 6 December 2022).
2. See 'Critical exploration of media related risks and opportunities for deliberative communication: Development scenarios of the European media landscape', MEDIADELCOM, <https://www.mediadelcom.eu/> (accessed 6 December 2022). The contents of this article are the sole responsibility of the authors.

equal rigour risks and opportunities regarding deliberative communication across the four areas examined. The research underlines the need for more institutionalized and adequately funded domestic research structures for boosting oversight capacity. It also points to the need to systematize and diversify data collection processes as well as to improve the accessibility of the available research data and findings.

1 INTRODUCTION

Democracy requires a vibrant public sphere where opinion about public matters can take shape (Habermas 1989). Processes of deliberative communication based on critical debate and the unrestricted exchange of ideas are central to the very concept of the public sphere. These processes provide citizens with knowledge, expose them to different perspectives and inform their attitudes towards social and political issues (Barabas 2004). As such, they help 'ensure that the public's policy preferences, upon which democratic decisions are based, are informed, enlightened and democratic' (Page 1996: 1) and that societies can hold decision-makers to account. Obviously, in contemporary societies, deliberative communication is largely mediated. By providing the main platform where issues gain visibility and views and interests are expressed, the media play an important role in deliberative communication processes. However, they also structure the terms and contents of communication. The literature on political communication attests to the different ways in which the media shape what citizens discuss and therefore think about, and how they position themselves on, different issues (Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007).

Greece is a small media market and represents a media system whose development has been thoroughly shaped by strong state intervention marked by politicized procedures and the instrumentalization of commercial media (Hallin and Papathanassopoulos 2002). This explains why Greece is considered to adhere to the Mediterranean media-system model identified by Hallin and Mancini (2004). Throughout the twentieth century, the Greek press was an important venue for political antagonism, and newspapers were clearly partisan (Hallin and Mancini 2004). Following the fall of the military dictatorship in 1974, democracy was restored and Greece became a republic. Nonetheless, political parallelism persisted in the press (Kalogeropoulos et al. 2021). The deregulation of broadcasting in the late 1980s put an end to the state's monopoly over broadcasting (Papathanassopoulos 1990), expanded the media market and diversified media supply, but it did not erase the multiple dependencies between media and political elites. The advent of online media in the early 2000s and the profound economic recession that Greece underwent after 2008 presented the media with a whole new set of conditions: they had to operate in an increasingly converged environment with constrained resources. The World Press Freedom Index ranked Greece 108th out of 180 countries worldwide in 2022, from 70th place in 2021. This ranking is the lowest of any EU member state.¹

This article examines the information and knowledge available for diagnosing the potential for mediated deliberative communication in Greece. It originates in the MEDIADELCOM research project, which aims to develop a diagnostic tool providing a holistic assessment of the risks and opportunities concerning deliberative communication through the media in Europe.² MEDIADELCOM is normatively based on the premise that the (pre)conditions

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for deliberative communication include both structural conditions *and* factors relating to the actions and the behaviour of actors that create, produce and receive media content in the context of the deliberative process. These (pre) conditions are (1) guarantees of plural information for all, (2) free and equal access to communication arenas, (3) impartiality and (4) genuine processes for the exchange of views (Nord and Harro-Loit 2023). Requirements of equal access to communication venues go hand in hand with requirements of equal access to varied information on matters of common interest. If these requirements are met, deliberative communication still requires a willingness on the part of the participants to join in the dialogue, which must also be founded on the open exchange of views and impartial and rational attitudes. There can be no participation in deliberative communication – with different viewpoints tried out, weighed and reflected upon – if such (pre)conditions are not met.

Building on this framework, MEDIADELCOM focuses on four key areas which have a bearing on the media's deliberative capacity: media law and ethics, journalism, media usage and media-related competences. Media law and self-regulatory practices for ethical journalism provide the structural and contextual conditions for the dissemination and exchange through the media of information on matters of common concern. Professional journalism has the potential to serve the public's need for plural and impartial information. Patterns of media usage are key to assessing the extent to which citizens have adequate and equal access to diverse sources of mediated content. They also reflect users' perceptions concerning trust in the media and the media's ability to operate in an impartial manner. The level of citizen media competences relates to the public's ability to engage in the process of exchanging views and ideas.

On this basis, this article reviews existing structures, research and data sources in Greece and examines their capacity to support both the monitoring of media developments and the risks and opportunities for deliberative communication that arise from these developments across the four areas of media law and ethics, journalism, media usage and media-related competences. It is thus centrally concerned with the *monitoring capabilities* within each domain for assessing the *status quo* and detecting potential risks and opportunities for deliberative communication. The review covers the period since the turn of the twenty-first century (2000–21). Relevant publications and data sources have been identified through Greek university libraries, databases maintained by public bodies, media regulatory authorities and commercial media research agencies, as well as via online journal searches using keywords relating to key aspects of the four areas covered. The body of material collected is by no means exhaustive. It nonetheless provides an organized collection of research and data sources that avail themselves to the analysis of media-related risks and opportunities for deliberative communication in Greece.

2 MONITORING CAPABILITY IN MEDIA LAW AND ETHICS

Media law and ethics are grounded in guarantees of freedom of expression and information. Any laws addressing contemporary media ecosystems must be congruent with free speech and freedom of information. Freedom of expression is a basic right in a democracy and a *sine qua non* condition for deliberative communication (Psychogiopoulou and Kandyla 2023). There can be no deliberative communication if participants are not able to express themselves freely. Domestic constitutions in the EU Member States safeguard freedom of

3. ECtHR, *Bladet Tromsø and Stensaas v. Norway*, appl. no. 21980/93, par. 65; *Fressoz and Roire v. France*, appl. no. 29183/95, par. 54; *Pedersen and Baadsgaard v. Denmark*, appl. no. 49017/99, par. 78; *Stoll v. Switzerland*, appl. no. 69698/01, par. 103; *Axel Springer AG v. Germany*, appl. no. 39954/08, par. 93.
4. ECtHR, *Stoll*, par. 104.

expression, as do the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the Charter of Fundamental Rights (CFR) of the European Union. Article 10 ECHR and Article 11 CFR unambiguously assert that everyone has the right to freedom of expression. Both articles explain that free speech protects the right to voice opinions, views and ideas and to receive and impart information. Freedom of information is thus a corollary to freedom of expression and has two dimensions: an active dimension, i.e. the right to impart information, and a passive dimension, i.e. the right to receive information. The significance of both dimensions for deliberative communication cannot be emphasized enough: deliberative communication presupposes the ability of participants to both provide *and* receive information on matters of common interest freely.

Freedom of expression and freedom of information must imbue regulatory action targeting the media, but they are not absolute: the state may intervene on a number of grounds which are considered legitimate, to justify restrictions on free speech and freedom of information in the public interest. Restrictions can generally be allowed, provided that they pursue a legitimate aim, that they are prescribed by law and that they are necessary and proportionate to the aim pursued. Seen from this angle, any attempt to examine the nature and depth of the protection provided to freedom of expression and freedom of information requires verification that the legal framework and regulatory standards create an enabling environment for the exercise of each of these freedoms through the media. To illustrate, rules regarding defamation, disinformation or the protection of one's personality should not impose overly broad restrictions on freedom of expression. Similarly, domestic laws should seek to reconcile the right to respect for private life and to personal data protection with the rights to freedom of expression and access to information. Other factors considered relevant when monitoring the legal protection afforded specifically to freedom of information include the protection of journalists' sources, the protection of whistleblowing through the media and the transparency of media ownership structures, which is key to assessing the credibility of the news one receives and the range of vested interests that can influence the provision of news. Laws and regulations, where available, that seek to counter legal intimidation in the form of *strategic lawsuits against public participation* (SLAPPs), namely abusive lawsuits which seek to silence public watchdogs, including journalists, and constitute a growing threat to freedom of speech and freedom of information, should also receive attention.

Free speech guarantees are complemented by the 'duties and responsibilities' inherent in the exercise of free speech and the consequent obligation to exercise freedom of expression 'responsibly' (Psychogiopoulou 2014: 28). On several occasions, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has ruled that the safeguards afforded by Article 10 ECHR to journalists reporting on issues of general interest are subject to the condition that they are acting in good faith and on an accurate factual basis and that they provide 'reliable and precise' information in accordance with 'journalistic ethics'.³ Concerns about 'responsible journalism' appear to be acquiring particular prominence currently, 'given the influence wielded by the media in contemporary society', since they do not solely inform the public, but 'can also suggest by the way in which they present the information how it is to be assessed'.⁴ Monitoring compliance with media ethics thus has distinct implications for deliberative communication (Kreutler and Fengler 2023). This section examines the monitoring capabilities in Greece with a focus on media law and accountability instruments and their ability to support the exchange of ideas and free

journalistic speech in line with the ethical responsibilities that are inherent in such speech.

Primary sources in the legal and ethical domain, such as legal texts, self-regulatory rules and case law, are widely available through databases held by various institutions and bodies (some of which are behind a paywall), the official gazette of the Hellenic Republic, specialized journals, the *Diavgeia* portal and others. Information on the decision-making practice of regulatory authorities such as the National Council for Radio and Television (NCRT) – the media regulator in Greece – can also be found online. Secondary sources, mostly literature on media law, communications law and ethics, are authored by academics and practitioners and mainly appear in Greek language books and journals.

The presence of experts in media law and communications is strong and has been increasing lately. This is due to the impact of new technologies and digitalization, which has diversified scholarship. It is also due to increased participation in international and EU-funded research projects in the area of interest and the variety of undergraduate and postgraduate courses in media law, communications law, human rights, etc. offered by a range of university faculties, in addition to law faculties, in Greece. The EU institutions have also developed a key interest on aspects of media freedom and pluralism and the monitoring of media policy developments. The Media Pluralism Monitor (MPM)⁵ and the EU mechanism for the Rule of Law⁶ are seminal activities in the field; both cover Greece. Monitoring of the state of media freedom in the country is also carried out by international non-profit organizations such as Freedom House and Reporters Without Borders.

The legal literature offers a systematic analysis both of the domestic legal framework and its interpretation, and of the nature and scope of the protection granted to freedom of expression and the right to information. Scholars researching freedom of expression have shown a steady interest in Article 14 of the Constitution (henceforth Const.) (see indicatively Chrysogonos and Vlachopoulos 2017; Dagtoglou 2012; Karakostas 2010; Vlachopoulos 2017), which safeguards free speech and the freedom of the press, as well as the ECHR and, more recently, the CFR, which also incorporate provisions on freedom of expression. They have also worked towards a better understanding of Article 15 Const. This declares that radio and television ‘shall be under the direct control of the State’, with the aim to ensure *inter alia* the ‘objective and on equal terms transmission of information and news reports’. Scholars have noted that direct control of this sort must be exercised exclusively by the NCRT (Contiades 2016; Dimitropoulos 2017; Tsevas 2009), which is constitutionally protected as an independent administrative authority. Although its ability to fulfil its remit has been questioned in the past (Contiades 2016; Oikonomou 2004, 2017; Psychogiopoulou et al. 2014a; Tsevas 2009), in recent years, the NCRT has sought to re-establish itself as an authoritative body that is able to regulate the media effectively.

Article 14(1) Const. protects freedom of expression ‘in compliance with the laws of the State’, which enables the legislator to delimit free speech and reconcile it with other protected rights and interests. In this respect, the literature has mostly focused on the interaction of free speech with the right to freely develop one’s personality, the right to private life and the right to the protection of personal data. Regarding the right to free development of one’s personality, legal experts have examined both the civil law provisions on which claims for injuries to one’s honour and reputation can be based

5. See <https://cmpf.eui.eu/media-pluralism-monitor/> (accessed 6 December 2022).
6. See https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/upholding-rule-law/rule-law/rule-law-mechanism_en (accessed 6 December 2022).

7. Such as the contribution of the disputed expression to a debate that is in the public interest, the wider limits of acceptable criticism of politicians and public figures, the distinction between facts which can be proven and value judgements which are not susceptible of proof, the fact that a sufficient factual basis is also required for value judgements, contextualizing the disputed expressions, etc.
8. Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation) (2016) OJ L 119/1.
9. Art. 5(1) of the Code of Administrative Procedure (Law 2690/1999) and Art. 1(1) of Presidential Decree 28/2015.
10. Art. 5(2) of the Code of Administrative Procedure (Law 2690/1999) and Art. 1(2) of Presidential Decree 28/2015.

and the criminal law provisions concerning insult, defamation and slanderous defamation. Studies have occasionally pointed to deficiencies in judicial reasoning, including non-compliance with the criteria developed by the ECtHR for balancing freedom of expression with other rights and interests (Akrivopoulou 2015; Tsakyrakis 2011; Tsalaganidis 2020).⁷ The literature probing the relationship between free speech and the right to respect for private life has explored numerous issues, ranging from the protection of the private life of public figures to the publication of information obtained via illegal means (Alivizatos 2010, 2018; Tsevas 2013; Vrettou 2013). Domestic legislation on the protection of personal data has also received consideration. Before the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR),⁸ studies reported balanced decision-making overall by the Data Protection Authority (DPA) (Lytras 2013), despite domestic legislation giving outright precedence to the protection of personal data over press freedom (Akrivopoulou 2017; Panagopoulou-Koutnatzi 2016; Tsevas 2013; Vrettou 2020). Since the adoption of the GDPR, scholars have focused on the efforts of the Greek legislator to restore this balance (Panagopoulou-Koutnatzi 2019; Skondra 2020; Vrettou 2020).

In recent years, the research has also engaged with the combined study of legal and extra-legal factors affecting free speech and press freedom in Greece (Papadopoulou and Maniou 2021; Psychogiopoulou and Kandyla 2021; Serafeim 2012). The use of the legal framework to exert pressure on journalists through abusive proceedings, known as SLAPPs, has also started to garner attention (Media Freedom Rapid Response 2021). Studies have further developed an interest in issues concerning disinformation, in particular Article 191 of the Criminal Code, which penalizes the dissemination of ‘false news’ (Spiropoulos 2019). Although limited case law in the past did not indicate an expansive interpretation (Florou 2020; Spiropoulos 2021) to the detriment of journalistic speech, the provision was amended in 2021 to target anyone who publicly or via the internet spreads or disseminates false news that is ‘capable of causing concern or fear to the public or of shattering public confidence in the national economy, the country’s defence capacity or public health’. Committing the crime repeatedly through the press or via the internet is an aggravating factor, and the publisher or owner of the media outlet responsible also faces criminal liability. The modified provision has been criticized by advocacy institutions and domestic journalistic associations (Article 19 2021; ESIEA 2021; Media Freedom Rapid Response 2021) for its vague wording, which could undermine critical journalism.

Concerning protection of the right to information, scholars have paid attention to Article 5A Const. This proclaims that ‘[a]ll persons have the right to information, as specified by law’ and also safeguards the right to participate in the information society (see indicatively Chrysogonos and Vlachopoulos 2017; Contiades 2001; Dagtoglou 2012; Karakostas 2010; Kiki 2013; Papachristou et al. 2006; Vlachopoulos 2017). Consideration has also been given to Article 10(3) Const., which recognizes the right of access to information and documents held by public authorities, and relevant legislation. The latter (Andrikaki 2010; Detsaridis 2006; Lazarakos 2006) provides any ‘interested person’ with the right to be informed of administrative documents created by public services.⁹ It also allows any person demonstrating a ‘special legal interest’ to be informed of private documents held by public bodies.¹⁰ The right to access administrative documents does not apply when the requested document concerns a third party’s private or family life. Moreover, domestic

authorities can refuse a request if access could substantially obstruct investigations being carried out by judicial, administrative, police or military authorities. However, secrecy provisions remain and domestic authorities can deny access when the requested document refers to Cabinet discussions. This has led to assessments which find the domestic legislation to fall short of standards of maximum disclosure (Global Right to Information Rating 2015). Scholars have also delved into the implications of the protection of third-party personal data for access to administrative documents (Grivokostopoulos 2021; Igglezakis 2020; Veneris 2017; Vlachopoulos 2018, 2019).

Other studies have addressed factors relevant for the effective exercise of the right to information in both its active (*to inform*) and its passive (*to be informed*) dimensions. Researchers have, for instance, discussed domestic rules relating to protecting the confidentiality of journalistic sources (Kargopoulos 2008; ELSA 2016). They have also argued for clearer and more comprehensive provisions on the disclosure of news media ownership structures (Psychogiopoulou and Kandyla 2021) and deplored the absence of a targeted whistleblower law (OECD 2018b; Transparency International 2013).¹¹

Issues of media ethics have received less scholarly attention. Nonetheless, the extant research provides adequate accounts of the frailty of the instruments in place to ensure ethical conduct by media organizations and journalists. This frailty is most clear in two areas. First, in line with the constitutional provision that broadcasting be under the 'direct control of the state', ethical standards for journalism in the audio-visual media are prescribed by decree. Responsibility for monitoring compliance has been assigned to the NCRT. However, scholars have criticized the manner in which this authority has performed its role (Rigou 2017), noting that it has exhibited an overly legalistic attitude which relies on sanctioning (Contiades 2016; Kamtsidou 2005). Second, Greece lacks a press council. Professional self-regulation takes the form of journalistic codes of practice enforced by journalists' unions.¹² The disciplinary councils of the latter examine allegations of code breaches and can impose sanctions. Studies have identified several shortcomings which impair the effectiveness of this system. The main one is that the responsibility for observing the principles of the code in everyday practice is solely placed on (unionized) journalists and not on the media houses that publish their stories (Deliyanni 2004; Psychogiopoulou et al. 2014b). At the same time, the Greek media have generally refrained from setting up their own formalized accountability instruments, such as organizational codes of conduct and ombudspersons. Against this background, it is hardly surprising that empirical research finds that ethical standards are little respected in media coverage (Komninou 2017).

11. At the time of writing, Greece had not yet transposed the European Union's Whistleblower Directive (Directive 2019/1937), which recognizes direct disclosures to the public as worthy of protection under conditions.
12. There are five regionally organized unions: the Journalists' Union of Athens Daily Newspapers (ESIEA), the Union of Journalists of Daily Newspapers of Macedonia-Thrace (ESIEMTH), the Journalists' Union of Thessaly, Central Greece and Evia (ESIETHSEE) and the Journalists' Union of the Peloponnese, Epirus and the Islands (ESIEPIN). The Periodical and Electronic Press Union (ESPIT) represents journalists who work for magazines, non-daily newspapers and online news media. In 1998, all five ratified the *Code of Conduct of the Journalistic Profession*, which was initially drafted by ESIEA.

3 MONITORING POTENTIAL IN JOURNALISM

The starting point for the examination of the capabilities for diagnosing the potential for mediated deliberative communication in the area of journalism is the concept of sustainable journalism (Berglez et al. 2023). Sustainable journalism encompasses the economic conditions that can support or, conversely, hinder the capacity of journalism to supply quality news and to promote an informed dialogue in society on matters of common interest. Consequently, attention needs to be paid to the capabilities for monitoring both the private media market in terms of size and structure, and the state of public service broadcasting. Sustainable journalism also encompasses factors relating to

13. See <https://www.mfrr.eu/> (accessed 6 December 2022).

the production conditions and professional working practices which have a bearing on journalists' ability to perform their roles with professionalism and impartiality. Sociocultural diversity within the profession also warrants attention, given its potential to encourage media coverage of diverse viewpoints and ideas.

In the field of journalism, academic research clearly stands out among the related primary sources. The volume of research attests to the institutionalization of journalism and media studies as an academic discipline in Greece. Indeed, much of it is anchored within the relevant university departments: the Department of Communication, Media and Culture at the Panteion University, the first of its kind in Greece, established in 1990; the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki; the Department of Communication and Media Studies at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens; and the newest, the Department of Communication and Digital Media at the University of Western Macedonia. This is complemented by research conducted by Greek scholars working abroad across Europe. Moreover, scholars in the field are embedded within international networks, publish in international journals and in many cases carry out research within the framework of international and European collaborative projects. In a domestic context characterized by inadequate opportunities for funding, these projects have been important for sustaining the research output.

Alongside academic studies, reports produced at the initiative of EU bodies such as the MPM and by international NGOs with EU support, such as the Media Freedom Rapid Response,¹³ provide relevant information. In addition, several entities engage in gathering data that are relevant to journalism. Public bodies and independent authorities collect and make available data and statistics on areas that come under their remit. The NCRT, for instance, maintains the register of TV and radio broadcasters, which reflects media market structures. In addition, professional associations such as journalists' unions and media industry associations collect information on their memberships.

While not specifically addressing media-related risks and opportunities for deliberative communication in journalism, the extant research and available data are pertinent and provide several relevant insights. A number of studies have analysed market conditions and the economic sustainability of journalism in Greece. They have looked at the state of the market at the turn of the twentieth century in the context of the clientelist relations between the political system and the media which allowed a plethora of private media outlets to persist despite their not being sustainable (Papathanassopoulos 2011; Psychogiopoulou et al. 2012; Skamnakis 2006). Many outlets operated at a loss and were maintained as a tool by which their owners, a handful of industry magnates and influential businessmen, could exercise political pressure (Leandros 2000). In addition, the impact of the financial crisis on the media market and the resources available for journalism has not gone unnoticed. Studies have highlighted how the crisis led to the closure or bankruptcy of even historic media houses (Karadimitriou 2020; Papathanassopoulos 2020). At the same time, several new digital-native media were launched. The emergence of new 'alternative' media outlets set up as cooperative enterprises by groups of journalists who had lost their jobs has also been analysed (Touri et al. 2016; Siapera et al. 2015). The potential of these outlets to provide independent news and narratives to counter those of mainstream media journalism has been noted (Boucas and Iosifidis 2020; Papadopoulou 2020). Indeed,

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research has found that mainstream media kept offering one-sided coverage on bailout-related news during the period of the crisis (Doudaki 2015; Mylonas 2014).

The state of public service media (PSM) is a topic of ongoing academic interest. A number of studies have focused exclusively on the Greek PSM, ERT, its evolution over time and its political independence. Here again, research tends to adopt a longer-term perspective and a media-systems approach, noting that Greek governments have been thoroughly unwilling to shield ERT's independence with appropriate legal safeguards (Papathanassopoulos 2010, 2014; Psychogiopoulou and Kandyla 2013). The government's abrupt decision to shut ERT down in June 2013 on the grounds that it cost too much at a time when the government needed to cut public spending in order to comply with the terms of its bailout deal has also been addressed in the literature (Fouskas 2013; Iosifidis and Katsirea 2014; Papadopoulos and Gazi 2021). Yet, studies note, while ERT was subsequently re-established by the successor government, issues relating to the Board's independence from ruling parties have not been adequately dealt with (Iosifidis and Papathanassopoulos 2019).

Production conditions in the newsroom is one of the topics that has started to attract attention in scholarly research over the last decade. In line with international scholarship and technological developments, the primary focus of the studies to date has been the impact of digitalization on journalistic routines and practices. Studies suggest that up until the late 2000s, multi-platform delivery and other technological affordances associated with digitalization and convergence were not fully developed among Greek newspapers (Doudaki and Spyridou 2014). Journalists were reluctant to capitalize on the potential digitalization provided to engage in innovative news production practices (Spyridou et al. 2013). More recent studies show that digital resources have gained currency in Greek newsrooms. For instance, online news media make use of audience metrics and employ web analytics to check the visibility of their stories online (Giomelakis and Veglis 2020; Giomelakis et al. 2019). The impact of digitalization and new production practices on the professional competences needed for journalism has also been examined. Research has found that Greek journalists perceive digital skills to be essential and believe that they are competent users of new technologies (Giannakouloupoulos and Kodellas 2005). However, they feel that they have insufficient knowledge and resources to engage in data journalism (Veglis and Bratsas 2017).

Issues related to journalists' working conditions have been extensively studied, particularly since the outbreak of the economic crisis. Studies show that the crisis exerted powerful pressures on the labour market for journalists and increased precarity. Mass redundancies took place, sending the unemployment rate for journalists skyrocketing to 50 per cent in 2017, while journalists who managed to keep their jobs had to accept pay cuts (Skamnakis 2018: 12; Papathanassopoulos 2020). Short-term contracts and the use of freelancers have become pretty much the norm (Papathanassopoulos et al. 2021: 219). The crisis is further credited with increasing job insecurity and making journalists more vulnerable to ownership interventions (Iordanidou et al. 2020). Research has also looked at the safety of Greek journalists. The latest Mapping Media Freedom report (Media Freedom Rapid Response 2021) lists 22 incidents of threats and attacks against journalists in Greece. Worryingly, Greek journalists are not free from intimidation and abuse in the workplace. Based on a survey of a representative sample of journalists conducted in 2010,

14. Directive (EU) 2018/1808 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018 amending Directive 2010/13/EU on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the provision of audiovisual media services (Audiovisual Media Services Directive) in view of changing market realities (2018) OJ L 303/69.
15. See Arts. 52–54 of Law 4339/2015.

Kodellas et al. (2014) found that almost one in five journalists had experienced physical victimization in the workplace.

While the aforementioned studies cover aspects of journalism in Greece, the potential for monitoring developments in this area and the risks and opportunities facing journalism is impaired by the lack of systematic, large-scale surveys of the journalistic workforce, its diversity and training paths. That said, Greece participates in several international comparative studies, such as *Worlds of Journalism*, which cover issues related to journalists' autonomy and perceptions of their role (Dimitrakopoulou 2017).

4 MONITORING POTENTIAL IN MEDIA USAGE

In the area of media usage, the attention shifts to monitoring capabilities regarding the deliberative communication potential of media audiences and the citizenry (Kōuts-Klemm and Jansová 2023). The emphasis is largely on factors pertaining to media access and to media consumption: while the former is of a structural nature and mostly revolves around the media options available to the public, the latter has a behavioural dimension. Media consumption is not only viewed as a result of personal preferences and habits but also seen as inherently linked to trust in the media and users' perceptions concerning media quality and impartiality. Both elements – media access and media consumption – are closely associated with deliberative communication. Plurality in media outlets and types of media is an essential precondition for an environment that supports access to varied information on matters of common interest. No media outlet can purport to cover alone the full range of news and viewpoints available. Media consumption reflects the ways in which citizens view and engage with the media, and is therefore of importance when it comes to monitoring access to diverse and impartial sources of mediated content.

Sources of relevance to media usage are mostly those with quantitative data regularly compiled by market research entities and other similar bodies. They are complemented by data collected by the media regulator and public authorities, including domestic statistical authorities and European bodies (such as Eurostat and the EU institutions with their Eurobarometer surveys), and academic research, which is expanding due, in the main, to digitalization. The advent of digital media and the emergence of alternative news operators have diversified the media on offer, affecting media usage in unprecedented ways. This has led to new research directions to explore, with scholars increasingly engaging in research pertaining to digital-native outlets and to social media.

Data on media access gathered by commercial bodies and public authorities cover traditional media markets quite well. For instance, they include audience and readership data as well as data on the outlets available. Data concerning newspapers are compiled by the Registry of the Regional and Local Press, which is maintained by the General Secretariat of Communication and Information (GSCI). In the wake of the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive,¹⁴ the NCRT has taken steps to introduce a comprehensive registry of non-linear audio-visual media services, alongside the information it collects on linear audio-visual media services. Moreover, in 2015, a Registry of Online News Media was established under the auspices of the GSCI.¹⁵

Eurobarometer (2021) data on media consumption show that, in the period 2020–21, the daily use of TV (on a TV set and through the internet)

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stood at 73% and 14%, respectively; the daily use of radio and the written press stood at 42% and 11%, respectively, while 79% used the internet on a daily basis and 64% made use of social media specifically. The ratings for ERT tend to rank below those of commercial operators. Data from the European Broadcasting Union (EBU 2020) indicate that citizens consider ERT to be subject to comparatively high levels of political pressure. For EBU's Net Trust Index, the majority of citizens in Greece (54%) have low or no trust in the media (EBU 2020). Eurobarometer (2021) data and data from the Hellenic Statistical Authority (2021) appear to confirm this.

An important part of the scholarly research into aspects of news media consumption derives from collaborative research conducted in Greece and abroad. Thus, according to 2021 data on Greece from the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (Reuters Institute) at the University of Oxford, 89% of respondents consume news through the internet and more than two-thirds (69%) through social media specifically; 67% get their news through TV and 22% through the press (Reuters Institute 2021). Studies show that the internet is the medium which attracts young people to news most successfully (Demertzis and Armenakis 2000; Spyridou and Veglis 2008). They also attest to high rates of alternative digital news consumption (Kalogeropoulos et al. 2021). Data from the National Centre for Social Research shed light on the demographics of Greek internet users and avoiders. The latter are mostly married (69.7%) women (57.7%); they belong to the 65+ age group (59%), they do not have a job (84.1%; 61.7% are retired), and they have a family income of up to €1000 per month (60.2%) (Tsekeris et al. 2020).

Overall, research at the Reuters Institute depicts high levels of media avoidance and distrust. According to 2021 data, only 32 per cent of respondents said that they trust the news (Reuters Institute 2021). Research suggests that alternative news consumption is associated with lower levels of trust in news (Kalogeropoulos et al. 2019, 2021). Lack of trust in the news is mostly attributed to perceptions of the news being biased, of the journalism being low quality and of the content confusing, sensationalist and misleading (Kalogeropoulos et al. 2021).

Academic research sheds light on particular dimensions of media usage in Greece. As a matter of fact, Greece lacks a comprehensive long-term media usage study covering the entire media sector that would have enabled an analysis of the *longue durée* and sensible comparisons to be made across various media segments – traditional and new. Market media research, scattered across private companies, focused on selected media sectors and employing different methodologies, compounds this problem. As a result, any cross-media monitoring potential regarding patterns of media usage can only be limited.

5 MONITORING POTENTIAL IN MEDIA USERS' COMPETENCES

The examination of the monitoring potential in the area of media users' competences focuses on two dimensions at, respectively, the structural and individual level (Gálik et al. 2023). The first considers the institutional and policy choices made in relation to media literacy and education at the national level. The second focuses on the skills and media literacy competences of the individual media user. Clearly, both dimensions are critical for deliberative communication: media literacy and education policy can enhance the ability

16. See https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=isoc_sk_dskl_j&lang=en (accessed 6 December 2022).

of media users to think critically about the news and information they receive through the media, while users' competences reflect citizens' *actual* abilities to navigate the changing media environment and make informed choices within it.

In the field of the competences of media users', the key sources available are the official documents produced by the public bodies involved in the design and implementation of media literacy measures and actions. These include the Hellenic Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, as well as the GSCI and the Ministry of Digital Governance. The former takes charge of media literacy education in formal schooling and teacher training, while the latter two deal with media literacy as a lifelong learning skill within the context of audiovisual, media and digital policies. The National Centre of Audiovisual Media and Communication (EKOME), established in 2015 as the 'national hub' for media, film and digital literacy within lifelong learning, and now operating under the auspices of the GSCI, publishes its strategic plan (EKOME 2018) and all the documents describing its past and future media literacy activities on its website.

Research into media users' competences is, nonetheless, rather limited. Many of the extant studies have been conducted within the framework of European and international projects and research networks (see, for instance, Andriopoulou et al. 2014; European Audiovisual Observatory 2016; Voros 2015). Providing an account of the actions undertaken by public bodies since the early 2000s, they note that Greece still lacks a comprehensive media literacy policy. In formal education, for instance, media literacy is not fully integrated into the curriculum. Elements of media literacy are included as a cross-curricular optional subject under the 'Flexible Zone of Inter-Curricular and Creative Activities Programme' in primary and secondary education (EMEDUS 2014; Voros 2015). Digital skills education is present in the curriculum across years as a stand-alone subject, while ICT is increasingly integrated into the learning process (Eurydice 2012). However, many schools suffer from infrastructure impediments related to connectivity and ICT technical support (European Commission 2020). Moreover, research suggests that in-service teacher training in media and digital literacy is not provided systematically (DIMELI4AC 2019).

Data for mapping and assessing the competences of media users are not systematically collected by public institutions. Some data are collected through European and international surveys such as Eurobarometer, Eurostat and PISA surveys and can provide a basis for monitoring, though they cover only a limited set of dimensions. Moreover, the data suggest that the literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills of the population in Greece are rather poor. According to the OECD's adult skills survey, Greece ranks relatively low in terms of information-processing skills (OECD 2015). As regards literacy, measured as the ability to understand and respond appropriately to written texts, 26.5 per cent of adults in Greece were found to have poor skills. The performance of school students is also alarming. In the 2018 PISA study, the mean reading score of Greek students was 457 on the PISA scale, which is below the OECD average of 487. A downward trend has also been noted: the average reading performance achieved by students at 15 seems to have peaked in 2009 and has been in steady decline since (OECD 2018a). When it comes to digital skills across the population, levels have improved, though Greece is consistently below the EU average.¹⁶

6 CONCLUSION

This article has sought to shed light on the monitoring potential of the research community and the various public and private bodies involved in data collection on media-related risks and opportunities for deliberative communication in Greece. For that purpose, it has explored the main features of the research and data gathering activities carried out in four areas considered crucial for communicative interaction and the open exchange of views and ideas on matters of common concern: media law and ethics, journalism, media usage and media users' competences. The premise is that research and data collection in these four areas can safeguard and support the capacity for monitoring the state of – and opportunities and risks for – enhanced participation in public debate, whereby different viewpoints can be discussed and reflected upon.

Overall, research and data collection in the four areas studied are rarely associated with a risks and opportunities rationale with reference to deliberative communication. The literature reviewed does not usually employ a risks and opportunities approach to or focus on deliberative communication. Rather, analytical frameworks that centre on other perspectives tend to be chosen. Still, the body of research and data sources available covers several aspects that are important for deliberative communication. This is so in all the areas examined, even if the volume and depth of the resources available vary.

Considerable differences indeed exist across the four domains reviewed regarding the availability of research and data sources for the analysis of risks and opportunities for deliberative communication in Greece. In the field of law, most of the legal areas germane to the identification of risks and opportunities for deliberative communication receive consideration, but research into media ethics is far less developed. In the field of journalism, scholarly research is well established but goes hand in hand with piecemeal efforts aimed at empirical data collection. Illustratively, there are scant data on journalism demographics in Greece and an absence of large-scale comprehensive surveys of journalists. Concerning media usage, mounting academic interest in distinct aspects of media consumption, mostly triggered by digitalization, has not rectified the dispersal of data collection across commercial research bodies and the lack of a long-term, all-encompassing media usage study that would facilitate cross-media analysis. As for media-related competences, this is the field in which research and data sources are less developed. The focus is on aspects of media literacy and education policy, with no efforts made to map and assess the skills and abilities of media users.

The heterogeneity of the research and data sources available in the four areas of interest naturally impacts on capacities for monitoring and evaluating with equal rigour the risks and opportunities for deliberative communication across the four. Whilst personal academic interests and business needs might explain the focus on particular dimensions of research and data collection, contextual factors concerning research support and funding are also pertinent. Domestic funding opportunities in the field of media studies and communications are limited and therefore unable to cope with what has gradually become a broad and complex research agenda. Some international and EU-funded projects may shed light on key elements of this wide-ranging agenda, but their thematic focus and chosen methodologies do not always favour the identification of broader trends. Empirical data collection, on the other hand, provides only a partial picture, given the absence of a

comprehensive and cohesive approach to data collection across public and private bodies.

The review of the literature underlines the need for more institutionalized and adequately funded domestic research structures for strengthening the capacity for monitoring risks and opportunities concerning deliberative communication through the media in Greece. It also points to the need to reinforce and diversify data collection processes. Moreover, ensuring the sustainability of research and systematizing data collection efforts could support continuity in analysis and therefore a more robust and acute assessment of what works and what does not work encouraging evidence-based policy-making for enhancing deliberative communication. Auxiliary structures for organizing and storing research findings and data to make them easily transferable and searchable could also prove particularly helpful. A repository bringing together all the available academic and empirical data resources relevant to the identification of risks and opportunities for deliberative communication through the media in Greece could substantially boost knowledge sharing. By making resources across the four studied domains available and accessible, an intermediation structure of this sort could provide incentives for – and steer – analysis and evaluation, thereby bolstering monitoring capacity.

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