

Ethical orientations of Russian-speaking journalists in Estonia

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ABSTRACT

This study explores ethical orientations and ethical distortions that can be spotted with some Russian-speaking journalists in Russian-language journalism in Estonia. The article builds upon the assumption that a number of external indicators and institutional factors such as editorial policies as well as the political and economic background have a major influence on the ethical orientation of the journalists in Estonia. The study, employing the concepts of media accountability and journalism culture, utilizes both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The qualitative semi-structured individual interviews were used to understand and explain the implicit reasons, opinions, and motivations of the Russian-speaking journalists in Estonia. The quantitative research then enables the quantification of the journalists' attitudes, opinions, behaviours, and other defined variables – and generalizes the results from a larger sample of actors.

KEYWORDS

Russian-speaking journalists – ethical orientations – journalism culture – media accountability – Estonia

1. Introduction

The subject of media acting according to ethical norms in European democratic countries is very important and relevant. Whereas in Nordic countries there is a long history of democratic media, post-communist countries which gained independence in the 1990s do not have such extensive experience regarding independent media. In this context, it is very important to analyze to what extent these countries managed to adapt the principles of independent democratic media.

After 1991, Estonian media oriented themselves towards the media model of Nordic countries also called *democratic corporatists system*. The description of such a type of the system was proposed by media scholars Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini in their monograph *Comparing Media systems: Three Models of Media and Politics* (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). According to these authors, the democratic corporatist model may be described in terms of external pluralism especially in national press, historically strong party press, shift toward neutral commercial press and a politics-in-broadcasting system with substantial autonomy (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 67). For Estonia's Russian-language media, it took a longer time to reorient, looking for a media model enabling to combine democratic media traditions with the traditions

of Russian journalism. However, because of economic pressures, commercialization and media concentration in Estonia, Russian-language media have also oriented themselves towards the democratic corporatist model.

The topic of the role of Russian-language journalism in Estonian society has recently appeared with its professional standards and its links to political parties and the influence of politics on journalism was largely covered by the scholars. Jufereva and Lauk (2015) point out that Estonia's Russian ethnic minority population emerged mostly through Soviet colonization in the post-WWII era. The Soviet migration policy resulted in Estonian and Russian-speaking communities living side by side, using different informational channels and having little in common. Up to 71% of Russian-speaking people consider Estonian-produced Russian media as their primary source of information on Estonian issues (Vihalemm, 2011: 159).

The general question addressed by this study is how successful Estonia's Russian-language media were in implementing the democratic corporatist model principles in the context of ethical orientations of Russian-speaking journalists. In this regard, this study shows that a certain number of institutional factors – such as the editorial policy as well as political and economic background – importantly influence the work of the Russian-speaking journalists in Estonia. Moreover, I also explain which ethical distortions may be detected in Russian-language journalism.

The article is organized as follows: First, the conceptualization of *journalism culture* developed by Thomas Hanitzsh (2007) is outlined in order to depict the main dimensions of ethical orientations of the Russian-language journalists in Estonia. Secondly, I explain the concept of *media accountability system* (Bertrand, 2000) and its link with the ethical orientations of journalists. Afterwards, a brief description of the Russian-language media system in Estonia follows. To finish with, I explain the data and method of the research.

The main research questions of this study are:

1. What are the general ethical orientations of Russian-speaking journalists in Estonia?
2. Which ethical distortions may be detected in Russian-language journalism?
3. Which factors influencing professional performance of Russian-speaking journalists in Estonia can be considered as the most important?

2. Ethical orientations and norms of professional journalists

In this study, I analyze what ethical orientations are followed by the Russian-speaking journalists in Estonia. Media scholars confirm that influence of politics and economy on the work of journalists became much more obvious (Harro-Loit and Saks; 2006; Hanitzsch, 2007; McQuail, 1997). Consequently, the autonomy of journalists is dramatically challenged by external forces, which contributes to the recent trend towards a destabilization of journalism's boundaries. Over the years, the journalistic field has been losing more and more of its autonomy (Hanitzsch, 2011, p. 479-480). Furthermore, media concentration and a modest job market has made the ideology of professional independence extremely vulnerable since journalists tend to be less loyal to their professional ideals than to the ideology of their employer (Harro-Loit & Saks,

2006, p. 313). Hanitzsch (2007, p. 477) points out that relatively little professional autonomy was found in contexts with rather strong corporate and commercial influences. Harro-Loit and Saks (2006, p. 313) report that media organisations that operate in small media markets (like Estonia) are especially vulnerable to the intervention of promotional materials, as media organisations are eager to maximize advertising revenues.

Epp Lauk (2008, p. 59) recently confirmed that a common understanding of the quality of journalism is closely related to the basic values of a free and democratic society. In this type of society, the general values of the journalistic profession are impartiality, objectivity, providing public service, ethics, validity, independence and autonomy. The image of a “detached watchdog” dominates the journalistic field in most western countries (Splichal & Sparks, 1994; Deuze, 2005; Weaver, 1998; Hanitzsch, 2007, 2011; Plaisance, Skewes & Hanitzsch, 2012).

Simultaneously, some scholars point out that substantial differences between national journalistic cultures exist (Weaver, 1998; Donsbach & Patterson, 2004; Berkowitz, Limor, & Singer, 2004; Shoemaker & Cohen, 2006; McQuail, 1997). Plaisance, Skewes and Hanitzsch (2012, p. 651), who studied ethical orientations of journalists in 18 countries, confirm that journalists’ ethical orientations differ according to the national media system. In order to explain these differences, Hanitzsch (2007) proposed a concept of journalism culture in terms of three essential constituents (institutional roles, epistemologies, and ethical ideologies), further divided into seven principal dimensions: interventionism, power distance, market orientation, objectivism, empirism, relativism, and idealism. Hanitzsch claims that such deconstruction of the concept of journalism culture allows tapping the existing cultural diversity of journalism:

Journalism culture becomes manifest in the way journalists think and act; it can be defined as a particular set of ideas and practices by which journalists, consciously and unconsciously, legitimate their role in society and render their work meaningful for themselves and others.

(Hanitzsch, 2007, p. 369)

The power distance refers to the journalist’s position towards power in society. Adversarial journalism has a long tradition in liberal democracies, often understood in terms of serving as the “fourth estate” or as countervailing force of democracy. Journalists of this type posture themselves as “watchmen” or “watchdogs” and as agents of social control. The other extreme end of the power distance dimension is a form of journalism that positions itself as “loyal” to those in power. The market orientation is high in journalism cultures that subordinate their goals to the logic of the market; it is low in cultures that produce the news primarily in the “public interest”. In journalism cultures prioritizing the public interest, the audience is clearly addressed in its role of citizenry. It is assumed that the primary purpose of journalism is to provide citizens with the information they need to be free and self-governing (Kovach & Rosentiel, 2001).

The concept of interventionism introduced by Hanitzsch (2007, p. 372–375) reflects the extent to which journalists pursue a particular mission and promote cer-

tain values. There is a dividing line between two types of journalism: on the one hand, the interventionist, socially committed, and motivated, and, on the other hand, the detached and uninvolved one, dedicated to objectivity and impartiality. For the purpose of the present study, I focused on the first element of journalism culture proposed by Hanitzsch – on institutional roles. It comprises three principal dimensions: interventionism, power distance and market orientation. As a number of media scholars point out, institutional roles have a major importance for the organizational forces and journalists' work and decisions; moreover, institutional roles are more powerful than individual factors, such as ethical values and beliefs (Plaisance, Skewes & Hanitzsch, 2012; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Patterson & Donsbach, 1996; Zhu et al., 1997; Voakes, 1997; Kepplinger, Brosius & Staab, 1991; Berkowitz, Limor & Singer, 2004; Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

Plaisance, Skewes and Hanitzsch (2012, p. 644) note that professional ethics is firmly believed to be an essential curricular component in journalism education. The authors claim that professional education as well as perceived levels of professional influence and membership in professional organizations (e.g. journalist unions) may therefore have a positive effect on idealism and may be negatively linked to relativism. These scholars find that measuring individuals' orientation to different moral philosophies, conversely, has enabled researchers to tie degrees of idealism and degrees of relativistic thinking to proclivities to view ethical questions in certain way. Idealists generally express greater concern for avoiding harm to others and generally reflect a Kantian sensibility that emphasizes moral obligations. Less idealistic individuals tend to believe that some degree of harm is unavoidable, reflecting a more utilitarian outlook.

3. Media accountability and social role of journalists

For the study, I consider useful to refer to the concepts of *responsibility* and *accountability* of media and journalists. I consider that the concept of media accountability, developed among others by Dennis McQuail, represents an analytical grid applicable on situation in the Estonian journalism.

Lauk (2008, p. 59-60) points out that press freedom is definitely a fundamental element in democratic media reform. Society grants the media both the freedom of expression and free access to information. The prerequisite is that journalists enjoying these freedoms uphold moral values and norms of professional ethics. On the other hand, freedom of expression, however, is not necessarily directly correlated to responsible and ethical performance of media as the situation in several newly liberated countries demonstrates.

Since the 1940s the concepts of media's social responsibility and accountability has been articulated in order to maintain the balance between the business, politics and media (Bertrand, 2000). This concept develops the means for monitoring the quality of media performance and the institutionalized media accountability instruments (Bertrand, 2003, Eberwein *et al.*, 2011). In the frames of the discussions on the possibilities to limit the power of the media and put them at the service of society, the scholars have reflected on the means of accountability of media.

McQuail (1997) proposes an essential distinction between notions of media *responsibility* and *accountability*. He points out that these terms are often used interchangeably, but it is useful to distinguish them (1997, p. 515). However, responsibility refers essentially to obligations which are attributed, in one way or another, to the media, and relating to the issues just outlined. As for accountability; it refers to the process by which media are called to account for to meet their obligations. Hodges puts it simply:

The issue of *responsibility* is the following: to what social needs should we expect journalists to respond? The issue of *accountability* is as follows: how might society call on journalists to account for their performance of the responsibility given them. Responsibility has to do with defining proper conduct; accountability with compelling it.

(Hodges, 1986, p. 190)

McQuail favours a practical description of the concept of media responsibility, and defines it as the “obligations and expectations that society has regarding the media” (McQuail, 2000, p. 11). He distinguishes between four types of responsibility: assigned, contrasted, self-assigned and denied responsibilities. *Assigned responsibilities* are obligations established by law, which the media must meet. *Contrasted responsibilities* arise from self-regulated agreements between the press or broadcasters on the one hand and society or politicians on the other in regard to the desired conduct of media. *Self-assigned responsibilities* indicate voluntary professional commitments to maintaining ethical standards and public goals. Finally, McQuail refers to *denied responsibilities* in order to refute accusations of irresponsibility that are thought to be undeserved or inapplicable:

A full consideration of media accountability has to take account of all four categories [...] Accountability follows on from responsibility and I leave the content of media responsibilities behind and concentrate on the means by which they might be ‘enforced’.

(McQuail, 1997, p. 516)

At the same time, media scholars (Bardoel & Haenens, 2004; McQuail, 1997; Tettey, 2006) pointed out that media responsibility may be located on different levels: in the media institution as a whole, in the ownership, in the organization and its management, in the professional employee, in the individual author and performers, in society as a whole. McQuail (2000) defines four accountability frames: law and regulation; the market; public responsibility and professional responsibility. Bardoel and Haenens (2004, p. 9) refer to Bardoel (2000, 2001), who slightly remolds that typology into the following four media accountability mechanisms:

Political accountability, which refers to formal regulation stipulating how broadcasting companies and newspapers will be structured and how they function;

Market accountability or the system of supply and demand in which the free choices of the public are given free reign and consideration of efficiency also play a role;

Public accountability, which is linked to the media's assignment of maintaining more direct relationships with citizens, in addition to their relationship with the market and the state; and

Professional accountability, which is linked to ethical codes and performance standards used within the media that should help counterbalancing any excessive dependence upon politics and the market.

Other media scholars (Fengler et al., 2015; Bardoel & H'Haenens, 2004) confirm, that "media accountability" and "social responsibility in the media" are back to the European political agenda. They ask: "How can we ensure a free and responsible press across Europe?" (Fengler et al., 2015, p. 1). The same question is relevant for Russian-language media in Estonia, as Russian-speaking journalists have been facing pressure from various economic and political powers.

Media scholars (Russ-Mohl 1994; Bertrand 2000; Hafes, 2000; Bardoel & D'Haenens, 2004; Fengler et al., 2015) consider various media accountability instruments (MAIs) enable to ensure journalistic quality and demonstrate responsibility towards various stakeholders. Bertrand's (2000) concept of media accountability systems includes professional codes of ethics or conduct that govern journalists associations. In 1947, five accountability-oriented expectations were proposed by the Commission on Freedom of the Press (Hutchins Commission). The requirements are stated as follows:

Today our society needs, first, a truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning; second, a forum for the exchange and criticism; third, a means of projecting the opinions and attitudes of the groups in the society to one another; fourth, a method of presenting and clarifying the goals and values of the society; and, fifth, a way of reaching every member of the society by the current of information, thought, and feeling which the press supplies.

(Hutchins Commission, 1947, p. 20–21)

The conclusions of the Hutchins Commission led to the basis of elaboration of the *social responsibility theory* formulated in 1956 by Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm in their *Four Theories of the Press*. The social responsibility theory recognizes that the importance of the press in modern society makes it absolutely necessary that an obligation of social responsibility be imposed on the media of mass communication. A number of media scholars (Metzgar & Hornaday, 2013; Pickard, 2010; Christians & Nordenstreng, 2004) studied the role of media in democratic society and they showed how should that role be regulated. They stand that responsible and accountable media and journalists should remain independent from government and business and serve society instead.

Our study will focus mainly on professional accountability, as it aims to outline journalists' views on ethical issues in their profession. In this study I seek for mechanisms of media accountability influence ethical orientations of Russian-speaking journalists in Estonia.

4. Russian-language media and media's accountability mechanisms in Estonia

Due to the historical and political events, there are two media systems in Estonia, one of which is Estonian and the other one Russian-language. Jufereva and Lauk (2015, p. 55), who studied minority language media and journalists in the context of societal integration in Estonia, point out that the historical and political contexts of Russian-language media in Estonia differ from those of Western European countries. During Estonia's independence between 1918 and 1940, only 8.2% of population were ethnic Russians. The Russian-language press emerged in Estonia in the 19th century, and during the interwar period over 100 titles of newspapers and magazines existed at least for some time. However, for nearly five decades of post-WWII Soviet regime, the proportion of Russians increased to 30.3% and that of other minority nationalities to 8.2%. The shared language of those of non-Estonian origin was Russian. In addition to the Russian-language newspapers and broadcasts produced in Estonia, media existing throughout the Soviet Union were widely distributed and consumed.

After Estonia regained its independence in 1991, commercial broadcasters were founded, state-owned print media were mainly privatized, state radio and television companies became public service broadcasters. Jõesaar, Jufereva and Rannu (2014, p. 260) pointed out a significant difference in the development of Estonian and Russian-language commercial media – the inclusion of private capital. Estonian media enterprises developed mostly with the help of western investments as Scandinavian media companies generally became the owners of these enterprises. However, no investments have come from abroad into Russian-language media. They were rather owned or created by local non-Estonian entrepreneurs. Eventually, the new private investors faced economic difficulties leading to a dramatic decline of Estonia's Russian-language press during the economic recession of the late 1990s and to its actual collapse in the economic crisis of 2008–2011 (Jufereva & Lauk, 2015).

In 2016, in Estonia there were four Russian-written weeklies, one newspaper issued three times a week, ten internet-portals, four Russian-speaking private TV-channels which issued Estonian news and programs, one public service TV channel and one public service and six private radio channels in Russian language. According to *Integration Monitoring 2011*, 71% of Russophone population listened to the Estonian public service channel Radio 4 (Vihalemm, 2011, p. 162) and over 80% of the Russophone population regularly watched PBK (Pervyi Baltijski Kanal [First Baltic Channel]), which is attainable in the Baltic states. Along with PBK, other Russian TV channels are the main information source for 75% of the Russophone population (ibid., p. 165). According to *Estonian Society Monitoring*, there have not appear any changes in the Russian-speaking population's opinions on the importance of media channels as sources of information since 2011. At the same time, the Russian-speaking population rather prefers local radio channels, newspapers and news portals to Russian-language newspapers, radio stations and news portals. Estonian Public Broadcasting (ETV) is considered to be the most important among Estonian-language channels.

Moreover, there are significant generational differences in media consumption – television (both PBK and Russian-language news programmes produced in Estonia) and Radio 4 are mostly important to the older generation. Younger generations

are ever more clearly oriented towards online media, including those in Estonian. The importance of social media as an information source is higher among the Russian-speaking population than among ethnic Estonians. About 45% of the Russian-speaking population follows the Estonian-language media on social networking sites. About two thirds of them also follow the Russian media and local Russian-language media, but one third clearly prefer the Estonian media. A third of the Russian-speaking population then falls mainly within the sphere of influence of the Russian media, and a quarter follows the media very little.¹ In September 2015, Estonian Public Broadcasting launched ETV+, a television channel in Russian language, aiming to become important source of information for the Russian-speaking population in Estonia.

Both media systems – the Estonian- and the Russian-language system – operate within the same regulatory mechanisms. Statutory rules regulate the broadcasting and advertising sectors while the written press relies on self-regulation. Estonia is one of the rare post-Communist countries where state regulation remained minimal and confined itself only to *Broadcasting Act* (1994) (cf. Lauk, 2008, p. 60). In December 1997, the Estonian Newspaper Association passed a *Code of Press Ethics*. The broadcasters promptly approved it. This code has served as a source document for the press councils. Estonian Public Broadcasting has its own set of principles “good practice”, on which the employees of Estonian Public Broadcasting have agreed. The existence of the *Code of Press Ethics* itself does not guarantee the quality of reporting or prevent violations of ethical norms. Lauk (2008) argues that Estonian media owners, publishers and executives strive for their sole right to define “good journalism” and decide how to interpret and apply the principles of the *Codes of ethics*.

Moreover, Lauk and Jufereva (2010, p. 31) who explored the efficiency of self-regulation in the Baltic States, suggest that due to the imbalance between market forces and regulation within the conditions of immature civic and media cultures, the media in Baltic countries have developed a unique form of “reversed” censorship. Lauk stated as follows:

The example of Estonia, a “model” of transformation to a democratic free-market economy, demonstrates that in one of the “freest” of environments the media elite have developed an abusive “simulation of self-regulation” to protect their self-serving interests and pursuit of profit. Where state media policy remains extremely liberal and civic and political cultures are undeveloped, the social responsibility model of journalism does not work.

(Lauk, 2008, p. 59)

Because of dissensions on principles of self-regulation, two press councils have existed since 2002. The majority of mainstream media organisations (including online media and TV broadcasters) only recognise *Press Council of Estonia* (*Pressinõukogu*) affiliated with the Estonian Newspaper Association and chaired by Jevgenia Vära, the editor-in-chief of Russian-language newspaper *Postimees na russkom jazyke*. The original *Estonian Press Council* (*Avaliku Sõna Nõukogu*) works jointly with the

¹ See http://www.kul.ee/sites/default/files/kokkuvoteim_2015_en.pdf.

Journalists' Union, still finding cooperation with some media outlets and channels.² In 2014 *Pressinõukogu* discussed 51 complaints, whereas *Avaliku Sõna Nõukogu* only nine.

In addition to the above mentioned mechanisms of media accountability and self-regulation, the Estonian National Broadcasting has employed an ethical advisor – an ombudsman, whose task is to deal with the viewers' and listeners' complaints and to make the broadcasting organisation more transparent for the public by explaining the programming policy and to watch over the adherence of the ethical principles of journalism in broadcasting (Lauk, 2008: 63).

5. Data and Method

For the purpose of this study, I have combined qualitative and quantitative research methods. The qualitative semi-structured individual interviews were used to understand and explain the implicit reasons, opinions, and motivations of the Russian-speaking journalists in Estonia.

The interviews were conducted with the following logic: the questions were divided into three groups, each group corresponding to a particular research question. The first group of questions helped me to understand what factors contribute to the formation of the professional ethics of the Estonian Russian-speaking journalists. The answers to the second group which I describe deal with practices of professional ethics. Finally, the third group of questions was devoted to the interdependence between professional ethics and politics in Estonia. The survey using standardized questionnaire thus allows understanding fully the internalized normative perspective of the interviewed journalists. Also, it helps us to seize the influence between mechanism of media accountability and ethical orientation of the Russian-speaking Estonian journalists and to understand ethic values and norms of social actors.

Tab. 1: Themes and questions applied in the survey

Theme	Questions
1. The ethical sources of Russian-speaking journalists in Estonia.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By which ethical sources were you guided in you work? • What determines the ethical convictions of journalists? How are they formed? • What is more important to you: the ethical standards of the journalist or the editorial policy of your media? • Could you give the examples of a conflict between ethical standards of journalists and editorial policies? (A conflict of conscience, the conflict at the level editor and journalist)? • Have you ever had to compromise with their ethical beliefs while working? Do you know examples of your colleagues?

² See http://ejc.net/media_landscapes/estonia.

Theme	Questions
2. The violations of ethic by Russian-speaking journalists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What kind violations of ethical norms and standards have you come across in your professional practice? ● Have you personally committed this kind of violations? ● Why did you commit ethical violations? ● What was the reaction of editors, colleagues and audiences on violations of ethic? ● What kind of reasons makes a journalist to commit ethical violations in the work?
3. Ethical violations and pressure of the political actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Do you feel the pressure or influence of political forces on the Russian-language journalism in Estonia? ● Can you give any examples of this kind of pressure or influence? ● How do you evaluate the level of political corruption in the Russian media in Estonia? ● Is this kind of pressure permanent or temporary? ● Personnaly, have you ever had the experience of corruption of the ethial norms? ● Do you know the cases of corruption of the political order among your colleagues?

The respondents for the interview were chosen according to the following criteria: Journalists working for online news media with an attendance of minimum 60,000 unique users per week; journalists working for national print media with a circulation of over 7,000 copies; journalists working for radio stations with no less than 96,000 listeners per week; journalists for the most popular Russian-speaking TV channel with audience share of 16.5% per month.

Tab. 2: Profiles of the interviewed journalists

Gender and age	Position	Type of media
Male 37	Reporter	Online portal
Male 55	Editor-in-chief	Online portal
Female 35	Reporter	Online portal
Female 35	Reporter	Weekly
Male 38	Reporter	Weekly
Male 50	Editor-in-chief	TV-channel
Female 33	Reporter	TV-channel
Male 30	Reporter	TV-channel
Male 45	Reporter	Radio station
Female 45	Editor-in-chief	Radio station

The second, quantitative research was used to quantify attitudes, opinions, behaviours, and other defined variables – and generalize the results from a larger sample of actors. I quantified the problem by way of generating numerical data. This data was transformed into useable statistics. More exactly, a standardized questionnaire was employed. In January and February 2011, this survey was conducted among Estonian Russian-speaking journalists.

This period was chosen because of the biggest number of complaints against media outlets in Estonia in comparison with other years (107 in total). Though majority of the complaints was raised against Estonian media outlets, several dealt with controversial publications in Russian-language media.

The questionnaire was hand-delivered to 140 journalists who worked full time in the editorial offices of Russian-language media outlets (the press, news portals, radio and television) with a 71% response rate. The SPSS programme was used for data analysis. Some results of the 2006 survey of 120 Russian-speaking journalists are used for the purpose of comparison. Additionally, from November till December 2015, in-depth interviews were conducted with ten journalists with different work experience and careers length.

So our method represents an inductive approach that starts with the observations and proposed the theories towards the end of the research process as a result of observations. This selected research methodology has allowed us to understand the constraints on the standards and ethics professionals of Russian-speaking journalists in Estonia.

6. Professional responsibilities of Russian-speaking journalists

According to the results of our survey, the majority (52%) of Russian-speaking journalists are in their 30s or 40s, with career spanning less than 20 years, which reflects the generation shift among journalists that took place in the early 1990s (cf. Lauk, 1996). Only 17% of them have experience of working as journalists in the Soviet period and their number is constantly decreasing. Moreover, the Estonian journalistic field seems to feminize gradually: currently there are 58% female and 42% male journalists. A similar situation can be seen even in the Russian-language media – while in 2006, parity existed between male and female journalists, by 2011 the proportion had remarkably changed in favour of women (62%). As the data from the 2011 survey show, more than half of the Russian-speaking journalists worked at the time in online outlets. Most of them worked in the capital (where the majority of Estonian mass media is concentrated) and in northeast Estonia (where 78% of the population speak Russian as their native language).

As data from this research suggest, professional self-identification and commitment to the profession are relatively weak among Russian-speaking journalists. About 36% of them see their journalistic job as temporary, only as a stage in their careers. Only 14% of the respondents answered a decisive “no” to the question whether they have considered switching to another field, while nearly one fifth answered a clear “yes” and another 21% have seriously thought about it. About the same number of journalists thought they could easily lose their current job and only a little more than a third (36%) had more positive view of their future. The majority of Russian-speaking journalists (83%) are not members of the Estonian Journalists’ Union, whereas those who are belong to the generation aged 50 and above. The number of members among Russian-speaking journalists decreased, as in 2005 23% of them were the members of this journalistic organization (cf. Jufereva, 2006). Perhaps the fact that the Union does not have much authority among Estonian journalists in general (Harro-Loit and Loit, 2014) partly explains this situation. However, Russian-speaking journalists have not established their own organisation either. Einmann (2010, p. 26) points out that membership in the professional organization and perception of professional ideology influence on the perception of professional roles of journalists.

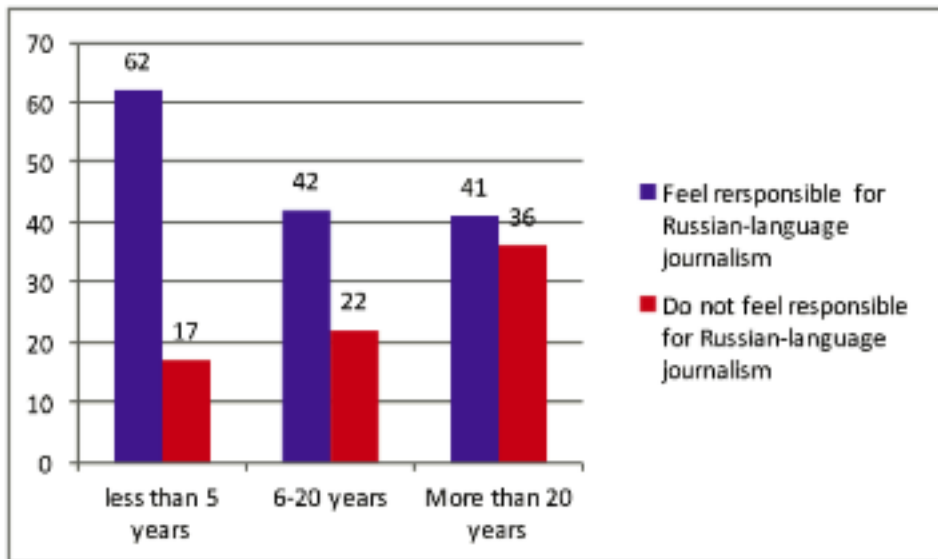
A code of ethics is another important element of journalists’ professional self-identification. However, 30% of Russian-speaking journalists are not familiar with the Code of Ethics of Estonian Journalism. Another indicator of professional identity is a certain responsibility of a member of a “guild” for one’s professional community and for one’s own actions. However, for majority of the Russian-speaking journalists, personal ambitions and loyalty to their employers seem to be more important than any sense of professional fellowship. Similar attitudes are observed even in other European countries – a survey of journalists conducted in in a 2011–2012³ in 14 coun-

³ Online survey conducted in 2011–2012 as part of a EU-funded research project “Media Accountability and Transparency in Europe (MediaAcT)” among journalists in 12 European countries (Austria, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Spain, Switzerland) and two Arab countries: Jordan and Tunisia; with a total of 1,762 respondents. The project’s homepage: www.mediaact.eu.

tries indicated that 95% of its respondents stressed responsibility for their own actions and conscience, and over 80% for their publisher.

Our research indicates that almost all of the Russian-speaking journalists feel responsible for their own work and for the performance of their editorial office. Half of them feel responsible for the work of whole Russian-language journalism in Estonia. In comparison with 2005, the sense of responsibility for the Russian-language journalism among the Russian-speaking journalists grew, as in 2005 only 43% of journalists felt responsible for Russian-language journalism (Jufereva 2006).

Fig. 1: Sense of responsibility of the Russian-speaking journalists for Russian-language journalism as whole % of respondents (N=100)



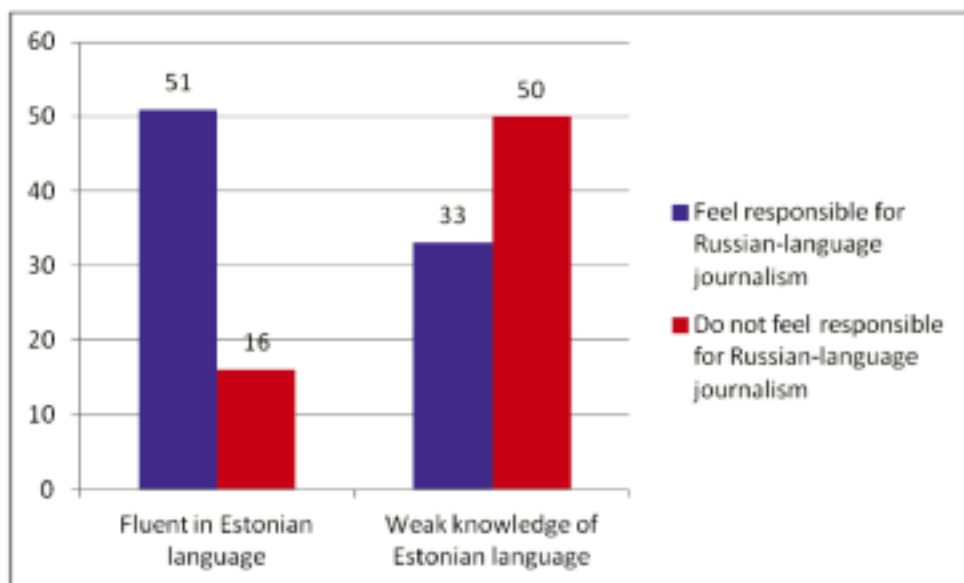
The younger journalists with short working experience share a greater sense of responsibility for the whole Russian-language journalism, whereas more experienced journalists are not so preoccupied with the sense of such responsibility (see Fig. 1). It is remarkable that among journalists with working experience longer than 20 years, there was the highest percentage of those who do not feel any responsibility for the work of Russian-language media at all.

Our data also indicated that perception of responsibility among the respondents is influenced by their education. Journalists with higher journalistic education (58%) feel responsible for the performance of Russian-language journalism (see Fig. 2). Also, the knowledge of the Estonian language influences the perception of responsibility towards the performance of Russian-language journalism among journalists. Journalists fluent in the Estonian language (51%) feel responsible for Russian-language journalism (see Figure 2). 50% of those journalists who have weak knowledge or do not speak the Estonian language indicated that they do not feel responsible for Russian-language media at all. Thus, it is possible to conclude that younger journalists

with higher journalistic education and fluent Estonian have a stronger feeling of journalistic mission and sense of responsibility.

This suggests that professional training at universities promotes better understanding of the societal roles of journalism and those with higher journalistic education share the same values as well as highlight the significance of minority-language journalism. Among journalists with other than journalistic higher education, 30% feel no responsibility for the work of Russian-language journalists at all, whereas among journalists with higher journalistic education only 12% share the same attitude.

Fig. 2: Sense of responsibility of the Russian-speaking journalists for Russian-language journalism as whole % of respondents (N=100)



7. Ethical values and distortions of Russian-speaking journalists in Estonia

The study showed that the main ethical distortion of Russian-language journalism is political bias. Russian-language journalists pointed out that lobby of political parties and biased information are the main ethical problems of Russian-language journalism. 51% of journalists pointed out that often one's name has been consciously profaned and citations have been distorted in Russian-language media.

A journalist with 20 year of professional experience (male, 40) put it in the following way:

Violation of one's reputation in Russian-language media could occur for two reasons. First, because of a low level of journalistic professionalism. Secondly, we can't exclude that such cases could occur because of pressure of political forces. The cases of violation of one's reputation become more frequent in the period of election campaigns. The latter can indicate quite a low level of political culture

in Estonia and insufficient independence of journalists. This situation is suitable both for Estonian and Russian-language journalism.

It is possible to say that in comparison with 2005 (Jufereva 2006), the whole picture of ethical distortions among the Russian-language journalists has not been changed a lot. In 2005, majority of journalists indicated ethical violations and publication of confidential information. In answers to the open-ended questions, violations such as publication of uncontrolled information, violation of author's rights, or the absence of different positions or biased information were mentioned.

Moreover, Russian-language journalism can be seen as a political battlefield that has been used by politicians or in their interests. One of the interviewees, an editor of a weekly (male, 50) expressed it in the following way:

One can clearly see that major publications support the politics of one or another party, which is especially obvious in pre-election period. It is during that period articles that one can consider as a political order are being published. A journalist cannot refuse to follow the editorial policy, otherwise, he or she may simply be fired. This is why conflicts between their own ethical norms and the editorial policy are not infrequent among journalists.

Almost one third of the respondents said that they know some journalist that took a bribe. The situation changed to the better in comparison with 2005. In one of the previous studies, I have pointed out that 63% of Russian-language journalists in 2005 claimed that this is possible to bribe them and 33% witnessed bribes being accepted (Jufereva, 2006). In the survey conducted in 2011, only 23% reported that they witnessed it at their present job. This study revealed that more than half of journalists with longer working experience (more than 20 years) witnessed their colleagues accepting the bribe. Only several of the respondents with short working experience witnessed such cases. The data at the same time show that that journalists with other than journalistic higher education witnessed more frequently "bribe cases" in comparison with those with higher journalistic education. One may conclude that higher journalistic education influences ethical perceptions of journalists.

8. Conclusions and discussion

In the case of Estonia, the work of the Russian-speaking journalists strongly influenced by "power distance" – there is an obvious dependence of Russian-language media on the Estonian political forces, and this political influence can be specifically traced in the period of election campaigns. For example, the number of complaints from the public about material in the media grows drastically in the period of election campaigns. In 2011, at the time of Estonian presidential and parliamentary elections, the number of such complaints hit the record – 107 complaints in total were filed.

The journalists participating in this study agree that there is an element of conflict in their work between their ethical beliefs and the editorial policy. In order to secure their work position, the journalists may need to compromise with their con-

science. It is obvious that the biggest number of politically motivated articles is published during pre-election period, primarily intended to harm political adversaries' reputation. The Russian-speaking journalists included in the sample indicated such ethical violations like publishing biased information (83%), lobbying of political forces (82%), the absence of the source of information (74%), and distortion of their reputation (55%).

As for *accountability* of the Russian-speaking journalists, they feel responsible for their own work (98%), for the work of their editorial office (85%) and for Russian-language journalism in general (48%). However, only 29% of them feel responsible for Estonian journalism as whole. Similarly to their Estonian colleagues (cf. González-Esteban, García-Avilés, Karmasin & Kaltenbrunner, 2011), the Russian-speaking journalists do not show a strong connection to journalistic professional organization and do not consider it as an institution of high authority. In McQuail's terms (2000), for the Russian-speaking journalists there are inherent *self-assigned responsibilities*, which indicate voluntary professional commitments to maintaining ethical standards and public goal.

The analysis of the Estonia's Russian-speaking journalists' ethical orientations and accounting principles of Russian-language media showed that though the journalists' supervisors and managerial staff proclaim their orientation towards to principles of Democratic corporatists system, in reality it is not always attained. In case of the Estonian- as well as Russian-language media in Estonia, the political influence on media content is still quite significant. That suggests that Estonian media are still in transition from post-communist media to democratic corporatist system.

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