

# PORTUGAL

## Impoverished media struggling for survival

Joaquim Fidalgo

### Introduction

The Portuguese media landscape has been strongly influenced by its political, economic, cultural, and social evolution during the last decades of the twentieth century and the first decades of the twenty-first century. Five main factors should be considered. First, the small size of the country (with a population of 10.3 million), associated with a very low rate of news media consumption, makes it difficult for media outlets to achieve enough scale to be viable. Second, the economic weakness of the country (an annual gross domestic product per capita of EUR 18,550 compared with the EUR 28,630 average for EU/28 countries; Eurostat, 2019) leads to low purchasing power for media consumers and little advertising for the media industry. Third, there has been a rather brief experience of life in a democracy, after almost half a century (1926–1974) of political dictatorship where basic rights – freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom of association – were either forbidden or strictly controlled. Fourth, the long-standing tradition of a centralised society is very dependent on the state and has low levels of autonomous social dynamism and tends towards solving problems at the macro-level of the law, but not necessarily at the micro-level of actual practices. And fifth, economic, cultural, and technological development in the country has been quick in more recent years, particularly after joining the EU in 1986.

The legal and regulatory framework for the media still bears marks of the revolutionary period in the country between 1974 and 1975, when democracy was reinstated and important changes occurred. For some years, the state was the owner of virtually all of the media as a result of the nationalisation of the main industries. In the 1980s, when the democratic regime stabilised and began to emulate Western European patterns, all print media was privatised again and new commercial projects also emerged. Nowadays, the presence of the state as a shareholder in the media is limited to public television and public

radio, as well as to the national news agency, as was the case a decade ago in the previous Media for Democracy Monitor (MDM) report (Fidalgo, 2011).

Because of this political evolution, the legal framework for the media is different from that of other countries with a liberal tradition, with many laws: Press, Radio, and Television Laws, a public broadcasting service (PBS) Law, a Journalist Statute, Electronic Communications and Advertising Laws, a Law for the Regulatory Entity for the Media, and so on. The state has been very present in terms of media regulation, although the effective respect for the laws is frequently doubted, a situation unchanged from 2011 (Fidalgo, 2011).

The importance granted to this sector is evident when we look at the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic itself. Freedom of expression and freedom of information have constitutional validity (art. 37), as do freedom of the press and the mass media (art. 38), the obligation of media regulation through an administrative entity (art. 39), and the rights to reply, to rectify, to respond politically, and to have access to broadcast time (art. 40). The obligation of the state to offer a national public service of radio and television is also a constitutional norm. Some rights of journalists – the right to participate in the “editorial orientation” of the news media they work for, the right of access to official information sources, the right to elect newsroom councils, have constitutional dignity as well. Politically, Portugal is considered a stable parliamentary democracy.

**Freedom in the World 2021:** status “free” (Score: 96/100 in 2020, down from 97 in 2018) (Freedom House, 2021).

**Liberal Democracy Index 2020:** Portugal is placed in the Top 10% bracket – rank 18 of measured countries, down from 7 in 2019 (Varieties of Democracy Institute, 2020, 2021).

**Freedom of Expression Index 2018:** rank 16 of measured countries, down from 11 in 2016 (Varieties of Democracy Institute, 2017, 2019).

**2020 World Press Freedom Index:** rank 10 of 180 countries, with a score of 11.83, up from rank 14 in 2018, with 14.17 (Reporters Without Borders, 2020).

**Media Pluralism Monitor 2020:** the risks to media pluralism in Portugal were considered low for eight indicators, medium for eight indicators, and high for four indicators. The four high-risk indicators are the universal reach of traditional media and access to the Internet, news media concentration, online platform concentration, and access to media for minorities (Cádima et al., 2020).

Looking at the media landscape in more general terms, television consumption is very high in Portugal, but more for entertainment than for information. Since 1992, public television has coexisted with two private channels, with one of these leading in audience share. There is also an increasing number of channels distributed by cable and paid for by subscription. The cable network

presently covers 88 per cent of Portuguese households, reaching circa four million inhabitants (ANACOM, 2020a).

Radio has both a national and a regional, local presence. The liberalisation of the sector occurred in the late 1980s, with hundreds of stations launched after. Many of them did not survive and at the local level, only a few have their own information service. The public service is present in radio through three different channels, but the Catholic Church owns the leading radio group.

Newspapers have modernised only recently. In keeping with global trends, their circulation rates have been falling, although the subscriptions for online editions are rising. Apart from the five daily national newspapers, and one online-only news outlet, Portugal also has three daily sports newspapers and one economy daily. The biggest daily newspaper sells 76,056 copies a day, according to data from 2019, compared with 129,219 copies in 2010 (APCT, 2020).

Computer and broadband usage are fast developing, with 76.2 per cent of the population regularly using the Internet. Most media companies have been investing in their websites, usually associated with a specific title (a newspaper, a radio, or television channel), but with informational content that goes beyond that.

### *Covid-19*

The Covid-19 pandemic had a strong impact on all Portuguese media. On the one hand, media consumption rose to levels never seen before, especially in television and online news. Newspapers almost lost their paper editions, because the general confinement rules for everybody during three months made it impossible to go out to buy a paper copy, and many newspaper shops were closed for weeks. In December 2019, the four main dailies together had an online reach of 10.4 million, and in April 2020, they had increased their reach by 23 per cent to 12.8 million, according to NetAudience data (Marktest, 2020a). Disregarding the paywalls they had put in place, they all decided to give free access to all content related to the pandemic. While they did this, they also tried to increase their online subscriptions by running marketing campaigns and offering more discounts than usual, thus convincing people of the importance of having good timely information, particularly during crises like this. Many of them had good and necessary results. With sales of print copies strongly decreasing and advertising virtually disappearing from their pages, as most industry and commerce was inactive, media outlets were hard-pressed to keep the business running and pay their workers. Most companies were forced to put a lot of journalists in temporary unemployment – with the state paying a part of their salary – while almost all of the newsroom was required to work from home, using computers, smartphones, and Skype or Zoom to keep in touch with each other.

According to a report by the Regulatory Entity for the Media (ERC, 2020) focusing on the first two months of Covid-19 impact, “global revenues of all media decreased sharply” in March and April 2020, with “one-third of media companies reporting losses between 61 and 80%” (Martins et al., 2020: 5). The same report states that about 30 per cent of local newspapers had to suspend their print editions.

In May 2020, given the crisis and the losses faced by news media in advertising revenues, the government decided to grant them emergency aid. A total of EUR 15 million was distributed to national and local media (television, radio, press, online) in the form of advertising campaigns paid in advance. There was some controversy about the criteria used by the government to allocate different amounts to various media outlets. Two online publications that would have received a small amount of money and are known as very critical of the present government, led by the Socialist Party, even refused those advertising campaigns, in pursuit of total independence from political power.

In the meantime, a couple of studies and surveys were launched, either by journalist institutions (Journalists’ Union, Commission of the Journalists’ Professional Chart) or by research centres at universities, trying to evaluate the seriousness of the impact of the pandemic on news media and to understand the challenges caused by the pandemic to journalism. One of these recently published studies concluded that almost all journalists were forced to leave the newsroom and work from home, many of them had their income reduced, the trend of precariousness in the labour market worsened, and the fear of losing one’s job is now much higher among journalists (Camponez et al., 2020).

### *Leading news media sample*

The general, quantitative data underlying this report refers to the whole country and all news media. Some more specific qualitative data was gathered among a sample of media companies intended to be representative of the Portuguese situation (in terms of mass media primarily devoted to news and information). In these cases, data and opinions were gathered through access to internal documents and personal interviews with the editors-in-chief. Interviews with members of different newsrooms also took place, to obtain data from the “rank-and-file” journalists and their practical experiences. The interviews were conducted in late 2019 and early 2020. In addition to representatives of the media industry, I conducted one more formal interview with the president of the journalists’ union [*Sindicato dos Jornalistas*], the only national professional association of this kind.

There were four main criteria for our choice of interviewees: a balanced presence of public and commercial media (which applies to television); a guaranteed presence of different types of media (newspaper, radio, television,

online); a focus on the most relevant media in terms of news and information; and a balanced presence of popular (audience-driven) and quality (elite-driven) media. No regional or local news media were chosen for this sample, because they are not relevant in the country's media landscape given the existence of dozens of very small newspapers or radios with a very low reach. Additionally, some daily newspapers labelled as “national” are actually regional, with their circulation concentrated either in the northern or southern half of Portugal.

**Table 1** Sample

| Media  | Media type                        | Financing                               | Reach                | Circulation (2010)                                 | Circulation (2019)   |
|--|-----------------------------------|---|----------------------|--|--|
| Correio da Manhã                                     | Daily newspaper                   | Commercial<br>(Cofina group)            | National,<br>popular | 129,119<br>(only paper)                            | 77,768<br>(76,056 – paper<br>1,712 – digital)                          |
| Expresso   | Weekly newspaper                  | Commercial<br>(Impresa group)           | National,<br>quality | 110,257<br>(109,057 – paper<br>1,200 – digital)    | 88,116<br>(57,519 – paper<br>30,597 – digital)                         |
| Público  | Daily newspaper                   | Commercial<br>(Sonae industry<br>group) | National,<br>quality | 35,137<br>(34,246 – paper<br>891 – digital)        | 34,781<br>(17,786 – paper<br>16,994 – digital)                         |
| Observador   | Online-only<br>newspaper          | Commercial<br>(Observador<br>group)     | National,<br>quality | (launched in 2014)                                 | 6.7 million unique<br>visits; 51.3 million<br>page views (Jan<br>2020) |
| RTP 1  | Main public service<br>TV channel | Public – PBS<br>(State)                 | National,<br>mixed   | Share: 24% (third<br>position in the<br>ranking)   | Share: 12.5% (third<br>position in the<br>ranking)                     |
| Sociedade<br>Independente de<br>Comunicação<br>(SIC) | Main private TV<br>channel        | Commercial<br>(Impresa group)           | National,<br>popular | Share: 28.7% (first<br>position in the<br>ranking) | Share: 19.2% (first<br>position in the<br>ranking) <sup>a</sup>        |
| Rádio Renascença                                     | Main radio station<br>(group)     | Commercial<br>(Catholic<br>church)      | National,<br>mixed   | Share: 39%<br>(group).                             | Share: 34.8%<br>(group). Share of its<br>first channel: 6.5%           |

<sup>a</sup>SIC reached the first position in the ranking of free to air television channels at the end of 2019, with a global share of 19.2 per cent (followed by *Televisão Independente* (TVI), with 15.6% and RTP1 with 12.5%). Therefore, I decided to include it in the sample, while TVI – the previous leader – had been the choice in the previous report (Fidalgo, 2011).

Source: Marktest, 2019a, 2020b; APCT, 2020

Regarding online media, the leading positions in Portugal are consistently occupied by the online versions of traditional print media. In the last few years, the situation has changed a little, with the 2014 launch of an online-only news outlet *Observador* that has since accrued relevance. Because of that, I

decided to include it in the sample. When it comes to traditional newspapers, I looked both at their print and online editions, thus taking into consideration the online flow of information that is increasingly important for them in terms of subscription revenue.

## Indicators

### *Dimension: Freedom / Information (F)*

(F1) Geographic distribution of news media availability 3 POINTS

Relevant news media are generally available to all citizens.

IN 2011  
3 POINTS

Newspapers are generally accessible all over the country, and the online editions have some of their content accessible for free. There are 403 newspapers in the country, compared with 732 in 2010, but most of them are very small (Pordata, 2019). In terms of consumption of publications (newspapers and magazines), circulation figures decreased from 62.1 printed copies per inhabitant in 2010 to 22.6 printed copies per inhabitant in 2018. There were 231 daily and weekly newspapers in 2010 – now there are no more than 142. As for daily general newspapers, only five have national distribution. Three dailies are devoted to sports, and one daily concentrates on economy and finance. There are also 13 regional or local dailies, but they produce only around 2,000–3,000 copies and have relatively low public impact. One relevant weekly newspaper and two weekly news magazines are also worth recording. All these publications have an increasingly important online presence.

According to a recent study by Markttest (2020c) about cross-media use in 2019, eight of ten Portuguese inhabitants (older than 15) have used one or more news media, either in print or digital form. Maximum coverage in paper editions is 60 per cent, while it is 56 per cent in digital editions, but most readers use both platforms. Still, according to the same study, there is a clear trend, with more readership increasing for digital editions than paper editions.

As in 2010, the main open access, free-to-air television channels (two public – RTP1, RTP2 – and two private – SIC, TVI) can be watched all over the country, either by terrestrial digital television or through cable packages. Three more thematic public channels – RTP3 (news), ARTV (Parliament), and RTP Memória – are also available to everybody. The commercial channels are free, while the public ones are subject to a monthly tax of EUR 2.85 per household (EUR 1.00 for families with very low income) which is compulsorily collected with the energy invoice.

In terms of cable television, in 2009, 78 per cent of households were served by cable, and 66 per cent of them (ca. 2.5 million people) subscribed to cable

television and therefore to several dozens of channels, most of them broadcasting from abroad. In 2019, those figures went up, and presently, 88 per cent of Portuguese households are served by cable or similar. The total number of residents that actually pay for a subscription of cable television is 4.1 million (ANACOM, 2020a). There are four major pay-TV operators, with the following market shares: NOS/ZON (40.1%), MEO (39.6%), Vodafone (16.3%), and NOWO/MásMóvil (3.9%). The three main television operators in Portugal also have a 24/7 channel specifically devoted to news and information: RTP3, SIC Notícias, TVI 24. There is another 24/7 channel, Correio da Manhã TV (CMTV), distributed through cable, and almost entirely dedicated to news and information.

National radio stations are typically accessible all over the country, either because they cover the entire territory or because they are broadcast in channels of regional or local stations. Their current investment in online distribution is strong as well. In 2018, there were 329 radio stations, of which 6 had a national reach, 5 regional, and the others were all local (ERC, 2018).

Considering the Internet, more than 66.9 per cent of the population (aged 16–74) use a computer regularly, and 76.2 per cent use the Internet (see Tables 2 and 3). These figures vary significantly according to age: in the younger group (16–24 years old), the percentage of regular users of a computer increases to 94 per cent. The broadband penetration rate rose from 50.3 per cent of households in 2010 to 78.0 per cent in 2019 (ANACOM, 2020a).

**Table 2** *Households with computer and Internet access (per cent)*

|  | 2010 | 2019              |
|--|------|-------------------|
| Households with connection to Internet | 53.7 | 80.9 <sup>a</sup> |
| Households using broadband             | 50.3 | 78.0              |

<sup>a</sup>In families with children aged 15 or less, this percentage goes up to 94.5%.

**Table 3** *Population 16–74 years old using computer and Internet (per cent)*

|   | 2010 | 2019 |
|---|------|------|
| Regularly use a computer                                  | 55.4 | 66.9 |
| Regularly access the Internet <sup>a</sup>                | 51.1 | 76.2 |
| Regularly use the Internet to participate in social media | –    | 80.2 |

<sup>a</sup>A total of 84.1 per cent of the users access the Internet through portable equipment, mostly smartphones.

Source: INE, 2019; Pordata, 2020

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

Consumption of news is less than that of entertainment or fiction, especially given the overwhelming presence of television. Accessing news through social media is an increasing trend.

IN 2011  
2 POINTS

Television has an overwhelming presence in the country, with a total reach of 84 per cent of the population over four years old (about 8 million people; see Table 4).

**Table 4** Reach, rate, and share of television, 2009, 2019 (per cent)

|                | Reach |      |       | Rate |      |       | Share |      |       |
|----------------|-------|------|-------|------|------|-------|-------|------|-------|
|                | 2009  | 2019 | Dif.  | 2009 | 2019 | Dif.  | 2009  | 2019 | Dif.  |
| SIC (private)  | 63.4  | 46.3 | -27.0 | 3.2  | 3.9  | 21.9  | 23.4  | 19.2 | -17.9 |
| TVI (private)  | 64.7  | 40.0 | -38.2 | 3.9  | 3.2  | -17.9 | 28.7  | 15.6 | -45.6 |
| RTP1 (public)  | 63.1  | 38.6 | -38.8 | 2.4  | 2.6  | 8.3   | 24.0  | 12.5 | -47.9 |
| RTP2 (public)  | 49.8  | 13.1 | -73.7 | 0.3  | 0.3  | 0.0   | 5.8   | 1.5  | -74.1 |
| Pay TV - Total | 34.4  | 57.4 | 66.9  | 2.6  | 7.7  | 196.2 | 18.2  | 37.6 | 106.6 |
| Others         | –     | 42.6 | –     | –    | 2.4  | –     | –     | 11.8 | –     |
| Total TV       | 81.2  | 84.0 | 3.4   | 14.5 | 20.4 | 40.7  | 100   | 100  | 0     |

*Comments:* Reach = Total audience (the percentage of people who watched the channel for at least one second). Rate = Average audience (total number of seconds spent by the population watching the channel versus the year under analysis). Share = Percentage of the TV-watching population watching each channel (average for the year).

Others refers to other uses of television, for example, videogames and pre-recorded programmes.

*Source:* Marktest, 2009, 2020b

In 2009, every citizen spent an average of 3 hours and 29 minutes per day watching television. In 2018, these numbers went up to 4 hours, 43 minutes, and 35 seconds (ERC, 2018). However, news and information still do not have a very strong presence in the programming of the main channels, when compared with entertainment and fiction, particularly in comparison to popular Portuguese and Brazilian “telenovelas” (see also Fidalgo, 2011).

In spite of this, the evening news bulletins of the three main chains (TVI, SIC, and RTP1), all broadcast at the same time (20:00), are still usually among the top ten programmes every week (as was the case a decade ago; see Fidalgo, 2011). Both leaders (TVI and SIC) have audience rates around 10–13 per cent (ca. 1 million people). These news bulletins, however, are very often a mix of a few hard and many soft news items, entertainment, and *fait-divers*. They last for about one and a half hours, particularly in the two private-commercial

channels, SIC and TVI. Since information programmes (debates, interviews, news magazines, etc.) virtually disappeared from the free-to-air channels, the evening news bulletins got longer and longer, including for those genres that would previously be part of specific information programmes (Lopes, 2007).

In the last ten years, there was a very strong increase in pay-TV (distributed by cable), largely exceeding all the open access channels, as can be seen in Table 4. Today, the four free-to-air channels have a total share of 48.8 per cent, compared with 81.9 per cent in 2009.

It is important to note that in cable television, there are now three chains exclusively devoted to news and information: SIC Notícias (SIC group), TVI 24 (TVI group), and RTP3 (RTP group – PBS). There is also a fourth one mostly devoted to the news, CMTV. This is owned by Cofina, the group that owns the popular daily *Correio da Manhã*. This means that the three main players in free-to-air television also have a smaller news channel on cable television, although with comparatively low audience rates, with an average of 1 per cent for RTP3, 1.5 per cent for TVI 24, 1.8 per cent for SIC Notícias, and 4.1 per cent for the popular CMTV. It is perhaps because of this that the time devoted to news and information in the four main free-to-air television channels is not very high. It is 27 per cent in RTP1, 17 per cent in RTP2, 18 per cent in SIC, and 19 per cent in TVI (Markttest, 2020b).

Compared with television, newspapers have a lower reach. Still, according to Bareme Imprensa (Markttest, 2019b), a total of 76.8 per cent of Portuguese people aged 15 or more, circa 6.6 million, had some contact with newspapers or magazines in 2019. The average audience rate for newspapers was 50.3 per cent in 2019, corresponding to 4.3 million people. Despite this, Portugal consistently continues to be in the list of European countries with lower rates of press readership. The figures for the main newspapers show important losses between 2009 and 2019 in terms of circulation (see Table 5). The same does not occur in terms of audience, because more and more people read the online versions.

**Table 5** Newspapers' circulation and audience, 2009, 2019

|   | Total circulation   |                    |          | Audience                      |      |          |
|---|---|--------------------|----------|-------------------------------|------|----------|
|   | (number of copies sold per edition, paper and digital – subscriptions included) |                    |          | (% of the population over 15) |      |          |
|   | 2009  | 2019               | Dif. (%) | 2009                          | 2019 | Dif. (%) |
| Expresso (quality weekly)                       | 111,000   | 88,116             | - 20.6   | 7.7                           | 4.9  | - 36.4   |
| Sol (quality/popular weekly)                    | 45,000  | n.a. <sup>a</sup>  | –        | 3.0                           | 1.1  | - 63.3   |
| Correio da Manhã (popular daily)                | 122,000   | 77,768             | - 36.3   | 12.4                          | 10.7 | - 13.7   |
| Jornal de Notícias (popular daily)              | 91,000  | 45,571             | - 50.0   | 12.1                          | 9.6  | - 20.7   |
| Público (quality daily)                         | 37,000  | 34,781             | - 6.0    | 4.5                           | 4.8  | 6.7      |
| Diário de Notícias <sup>b</sup> (quality daily) | 34,000  | 7,628 <sup>b</sup> | - 78.0   | 4.1                           | 2.9  | - 29.3   |
| I Informação (quality, popular daily)           | n.a.  | n.a. <sup>a</sup>  | –        | –                             | 0.9  | –        |
| A Bola (sports daily)                           | n.a.  | n.a. <sup>a</sup>  | –        | 9.4                           | 8.1  | - 13.8   |
| Record (sports daily)                           | 73,000  | 32,433             | - 55.6   | 10.1                          | 7.5  | - 25.7   |
| O Jogo (sports daily)                           | 30,000  | 17,432             | - 41.9   | 6.3                           | 5.8  | - 7.9    |
| Destak (free daily)                             | 99,000  | 55,000             | - 44.4   | 5.5                           | 1.6  | - 70.9   |
| Jornal de Negócios (economy daily)              | 11,000  | 10,297             | - 1.0    | 2.0                           | 1.7  | - 15.0   |

<sup>a</sup>These newspapers do not belong to APCT (participation is voluntary), and therefore do not show their numbers.

<sup>b</sup>The daily *Diário de Notícias* now has only one paper edition on Saturdays, being online-only on the other days.

Source: APCT, 2020; Marktest, 2009, 2020b

The websites of traditional newspapers rank among the most visited in the country in terms of news. They keep growing very fast, but the fact that measurement criteria have changed recently doesn't allow for comparisons with years before 2018. Their reach is rather high too, as can be seen in Table 6.

**Table 6** Access to online sites of newspapers

|                                       | Mar. 2018<br>Visitors<br>(millions) | Mar. 2018<br>Reach<br>(%) | Dec. 2019<br>Visitors<br>(millions) | Dec. 2019<br>Reach<br>(%) |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Correio da Manhã (popular daily)      | 1.852                               | 21.6                      | 3.198                               | 37.4                      |
| Jornal de Notícias (popular daily)    | 1.753                               | 21.5                      | 2.782                               | 32.5                      |
| Público (quality daily)               | 1.874                               | 21.9                      | 2.532                               | 29.6                      |
| Expresso (quality weekly)             | 1.666                               | 19.5                      | 2.076                               | 24.3                      |
| Diário de Notícias (quality daily)    | 1.770                               | 22.2                      | 1.898                               | 22.2                      |
| Record (sports daily)                 | 1.172                               | 13.7                      | 1.851                               | 21.6                      |
| O Jogo (sports daily)                 | –                                   | –                         | 1.258                               | 14.7                      |
| Jornal de Negócios (economy daily)    | 1.180                               | 13.8                      | 1.249                               | 14.6                      |
| Sábado (weekly newsmagazine)          | 0.819                               | 9.6                       | 1.161                               | 13.6                      |
| ZeroZero (online-only sports website) | –                                   | –                         | 1.016                               | 11.9                      |

*Comments:* Two relevant publications, as the sports daily *A Bola* and the online-only newspaper *Observador*, are absent of this ranking because they refuse to be audited in this index (NetAudience/Marktest)

*Source:* Marktest, 2020a

As for radio, the total reach was 57 per cent of the population over 15 in 2009; it is now 60 per cent (Marktest, 2009, 2020b). However, the radio station almost exclusively devoted to news (TSF) has an average audience of 3.3 per cent, which is about 250,000 people. The time spent listening to the radio seems to be stable over time: 3 hours and 15 minutes per day in 2010, and 3 hours and 8 minutes in 2019 (Marktest, 2009, 2020b). However, there are changes concerning the places where people listen to the radio, now listening to it less at home and more in the car (72.4% of the total) and through the Internet (15.7%) (ERC, 2019c: 124). I should add that, presently, there are 329 radio stations active in the country, of which only 6 are national in range, 5 regional, and the rest local with many of them accessible only through the Internet (ERC, 2019c: 125).

With this media consumption landscape, I can say there is a fairly high interest in news and information in the country. According to data from the *Reuters Institute Digital News Report* (Newman et al., 2019: 102–103), 61 per cent of Portuguese people say they are “very much” or “much” interested in news, and 25 per cent say they look for news more than six times a day. Inversely, 41.5 per cent say they are tired of the high quantity of news they continuously face. Portugal also scores very high in the Reuters report rankings on trust in news: 58 per cent of Portuguese people say they trust in the news most of the time (only Finland scores higher with 59%), although only 27 per cent trust news when it comes to them via social media (Newman et al., 2019: 20–21).

Television continues to be the main source of news and information (58%), followed by the Internet (30.9%, including social media), with radio and press far behind (5.8% and 3.8%, respectively). The relative importance of television is much higher among older people, while younger people increasingly prefer the Internet and social media as a source for news. The main way people access online news is through social media (26.3%), which is higher than access through news websites (20.4%). One of the reasons to do so is to escape any direct payment. Only 7.1 per cent of Portuguese people admit to having paid for online news in 2018. This was one of the lowest figures among the 38 countries monitored by the *Digital News Report*, with the average being 13 per cent. Not surprisingly, 47.2 per cent of Portuguese people regularly use a news aggregator, with Google News used more than any other (36.1%). All this helps explain why news outlets are having more and more problems with their business, since they lose money in two ways: they are selling their product or service to fewer people, and they have less advertising because advertisers tend to prefer platforms such as Google, Facebook, Instagram, and so on.

The way to access news is also changing rapidly: 62.3 per cent of users prefer to do this using a smartphone (only 34% in 2015), while 57 per cent use a computer (78% in 2015) (Cardoso et al., 2019).

The overwhelming presence of television has relevant consequences for the business, too, as its share of advertising is much higher than the share for newspapers, radio, or even the Internet (see Table 7). Although things are changing in this domain, with growing advertisement on the Internet, they are not changing rapidly enough to affect television's market share.

**Table 7** *Distribution of advertisement among media (per cent)*

|                                    | 2010 | 2019 |
|------------------------------------|------|------|
| Share of advertisement in TV       | 75.4 | 81.9 |
| Share of advertisement in press    | 14.3 | 4.1  |
| Share of advertisement in radio    | 4.0  | 2.4  |
| Share of advertisement in Internet | –    | 8.0  |
| Others (billboards, posters, etc.) | 5.8  | 3.6  |

Source: Markttest, 2010, 2020b

### (F3) Diversity of news sources

1 POINT

IN 2011  
1 POINT

There is little diversity of news sources, with a high dependency on a single national agency. Some investigative journalism is present, but not on a large scale.

There is only one news agency (in which the state is a major shareholder), and its presence as a news source for the media continues to be very relevant. Agência de Notícias de Portugal (Lusa) has newsrooms in Lisbon and Oporto, regional delegations in all the districts, as well as some presence abroad, such as in former colonies, Portuguese-speaking countries, and major European capitals. Besides the provision of news and photos, the agency has recently also started providing its clients with audio and video as well, thus increasing its presence across media.

It is not uncommon for journalists, following orders from above, to hide the fact that a piece of news has Lusa as its source by either not quoting the source or rewriting the source material to make it look original. This trend increased in the online sections of media companies, where most of the newsrooms are composed of very few – and very young – professionals, which causes most of the journalistic work to be no more than desk work. Because the speed of publication is the first rule in many information websites, the importance of the agency in breaking news is huge, turning it into “the biggest agenda-setter in the country”, to quote one of the editors I interviewed. There is also a relatively high interdependence among most of the news media. Morning newspapers usually set the agenda for television and radio news bulletins in the morning, evening television newscasts often set the agenda for newspapers the next day, and all of them are permanently watching what the competitors diffuse through social media to catch up. It is a so-called circular circulation of information, with news media frequently talking to each other about the same issues.

As for news from abroad, the dependence on international news agencies is also high. Having their own full-time journalists working abroad is rare among Portuguese news media. The public broadcast, RTP, is more present than any other media outlet and has some correspondents in Brussels (to cover EU-related issues), plus one or two in Paris, Madrid, Washington, Rio de Janeiro.

Two other trends are widespread: the high dependence on institutional, official sources, and the increasing ability of public relations (PR) organisations to get their material placed as news. A study on the origin of political news in the four main Portuguese dailies (Ribeiro, 2009) showed that about 60 per cent of news items originated directly from PR material or communication agencies rather than from the media themselves. As one leading PR manager then said, “For better and for worse, news sources are installed in the newsrooms” (as cited in Souza, 2008). The situation has not changed much in this respect since the last MDM report (Fidalgo, 2011).

In recent years, some efforts have been made to have more first-hand news and information, with more investment in investigative reporting, either for large features or for medium pieces of work to be included in daily television newscasts. As told by the editors I interviewed, the news media in our sample try to have one or two journalists permanently free from day-to-day agenda needs in order to be able to investigate. Two of them even have a small team permanently devoted to investigative reporting. Some newspapers are also involved in international cooperation, particularly the weekly *Expresso*, which is part of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists. This network has been responsible for important public revelations recently, such as *Panama Papers*, *Paradise Papers*, *China Cables*, *Luanda Leaks*, and so on. Still, all these efforts are relatively minor when compared to the larger picture of news, which is more similar than it is different, with the same sources used across media. There now exist devoted social media teams in all newsrooms who closely follow discussions on social media platforms. This leads to the growing influence of social media in the process of agenda-setting, which further hampers the originality and autonomy of news outlets.

Considering the diversity of news sources in terms of gender, we see that the strong male presence in the public sphere is also reflected in the Portuguese media landscape. A study by the Regulatory Entity for the Media (ERC, 2019b), covering the years 2015–2017, analysed gender diversity of news sources in the prime time news bulletins of the main television channels – RTP1, RTP2, SIC, TVI, and CMTV. The results showed that 69–75 per cent (according to the different channels) of those sources are male, while only 24–29 per cent are female (the rest have both or are not identifiable). In this study, the regulator urged television channels to pay more attention to these issues, particularly when reporting on “social contexts where *women* are present, but that are consistently represented in the news by *men* [emphasis original]” (ERC, 2019b: 67).

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

Several laws and mechanisms for journalists’ democratic participation exist, but they are not always followed in practice. IN 2011  
2 POINTS

The formal involvement of journalists in newsroom decisions has been law since the 25 April 1974 revolution that brought democracy to the country. The Constitution states the right of journalists to elect newsroom councils, as well as their right to have a word in the editorial orientation of the news media. The underlying concept is that media activity is not just a business like any other (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001), only regulated by the supply-and-demand market laws. On the contrary, it deals with a public good of great importance

for social and political life, nourishing democracy, and stimulating citizenship. For this reason, journalists are expected to actively work to guarantee that the media meet their social responsibilities. Furthermore, because the media deal with sensitive issues concerning the fundamental rights of citizens, they are supposed to adopt serious principles and standards of ethical behaviour. Journalists must be especially committed to these, even when they conflict with management priorities (Fidalgo, 2008a, 2011). The permanent tension in the journalistic field between the “cultural pole” and the “commercial pole” (Bourdieu, 2005), with a clear over-valuation of the commercial dimension in recent times (Garcia, 2009), makes participation in newsroom democracy even more delicate.

All news media with at least five journalists must have a newsroom council. And most of them have it, even if their function is sometimes confined just to formal consultations. There are two known exceptions in our sample: the leading radio station Rádio Renascença and the leading popular daily *Correio da Manhã*. The newsroom council must be consulted when a new editor-in-chief or deputy editor-in-chief is appointed, but, unlike in the first years after the democratic revolution, that is now a non-binding opinion. As for media in the public sector (public television, public radio, and public news agency), the appointment of editors-in-chief (made by the board) must have the favourable opinion of the ERC after a formal hearing. Apart from this, regular meetings of the newsroom council with the editor-in-chief take place in order to discuss the editorial orientation of the medium and discuss internal problems that may arise. In most media in our sample (*Público*, *Expresso*, RTP, SIC), there is a dynamic tradition of involving the newsroom council in all the relevant decisions, such as when a journalist is appointed in a leading position, when new journalists are to be hired or when some controversy arises involving the outlet. The editors-in-chief interviewed for this report give great importance to this relationship and participate monthly in the council meetings. The council is elected by the newsroom, but the editor-in-chief is formally its president.

The weekly *Expresso* has a detailed Code of Conduct and the daily *Público* has a Style Book that goes far beyond the technical standards of newsmaking. It is an important instrument of accountability because it is often quoted when readers present their complaints to the newspaper’s ombudsperson. There is also a Style Book in public television (RTP).

Since July 2019, *Expresso* also has a special recommendation for all its journalists regarding their individual participation on social media (Expresso, 2019). The newspaper suggests that journalists do not separate their personal and professional profiles, in order to have “a coherent management of the online journalist’s identity and in accordance with the ethical principles” of the profession. It also recommends that journalists “be aware if the expression of their opinions compromises their independence”.

Some democratic control by journalists in the newsrooms still exists. However, the economic and financial problems of the media industry put a great deal of pressure on the newsrooms, which threatens journalists' jobs and contributes to their demobilisation, as was the case a decade ago (see Fidalgo, 2011). On the other hand, with the importance given by all media to online breaking news and follow-ups (even if they will later be developed in the traditional editions), time to debate is increasingly reduced in the newsroom, as several journalists interviewed in this research project revealed. With a downsized labour force and an increased demand for news on different platforms all the time, meetings are reduced to a minimum, and time to discuss or reflect on what is being done has almost disappeared.

Internal rules to promote female journalists' careers or their access to managerial positions do not exist at all. All the editors-in-chief from our sample (six editors-in-chief and one deputy editor-in-chief) insisted in their interviews that discrimination of female journalists is not an issue in their newsrooms. All these seven editors are men, although five of them have female journalists in their managing teams; and in intermediate leading positions (editorial departments) there is a fair balance in terms of gender.

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

2 POINTS

IN 2011  
2 POINTS

The degree of independence of the newsroom against ownership is high in leading media, but weak in small news outlets.

Portuguese laws formally guarantee the independence of journalists from the owner as well as the exclusive responsibility of the editor-in-chief over the content of the publication. Those laws, starting with the Portuguese Constitution itself, also establish the right for journalists to “participate in the editorial orientation” of the media they work in (art. 38). Some media reinforce these laws and guidance through internal rules. The question, then, is what happens at a more informal level in the daily routines of journalistic choices.

All of the editors interviewed for this report insisted there is complete independence of the newsroom from the ownership and management. In its first issue in 1990, the quality daily *Público* even published a text, endorsed by both the editorial board and the owner, in which a formal commitment to independence was made. Rádio Renascença is in a special situation, as it is property of the Catholic Church and makes it clear that it is a radio station “with a Christian inspiration”. Nevertheless, the editor-in-chief does not think this puts editorial independence at stake, because the station clearly distinguishes between what is “pluralism of information” and what is “a doctrinal inspiration”.

The issue of independence of the public broadcasting service (PBS) in relation to the government remains a permanent matter of debate in Portugal, especially with television. Their editors-in-chief pledge that the information area is completely independent of the government, but opposition parties occasionally raise doubts about this, especially since the board of PBS was, until six years ago, directly appointed by the government. An important change occurred in 2014, when the Parliament approved a law (nr. 39/2014) that created a General Independent Council for Rádio e Televisão de Portugal (RTP), to “de-governmentalise” public television and radio (Assembleia da República, 2014). This council is composed of six members: two appointed by the government, two appointed by the Opinion Council of the PBS, and two co-opted by the previous four. All of them are supposed to be “outstanding personalities with relevant professional experience and personal credibility”, guaranteeing adequate diversity in terms of regional origin, culture, and gender. Its main task is to supervise and monitor the fulfilment of contractual obligations by the public service radio and television. The appointment of the managing board is one of its main tasks, to ensure more independence from the government, its operational owner.

Independence from the marketing and advertisement departments of media companies is also a rule, although no one denies some timid attempts to break it. There is an increase in stories that are strongly informed by the commercial interests of advertisers. But those directly involved usually deny them, as it would harm their credibility.

The golden rule of separation between the editorial area and the commercial or management area is a strict one; nevertheless, problems of self-censorship occasionally arise. As one of our respondents confessed, “when we work in a company owned by an important group, of course we don’t forget that situation and, even in a non-explicit way, that tends to influence our choices”. This “can be felt at different levels of the newsroom”, beginning at the top and going down to the “individual work of some journalists”. Similar revelations were made by various journalists interviewed for a book, published in 2015, intended to discuss the increasing risks and menaces that affect this professional group in Portugal (Lopes, 2015).

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

1 POINT

IN 2011  
1 POINT

Although news media generally receive revenues from a multitude of advertisers, they are increasingly permeable to advertising formats, allowing some confusion between the editorial and commercial areas.

Portuguese news media, in general, continue to face a serious problem of economic survival, because the audience rates and circulation figures are generally very low, making advertising their major (or unique) source of income – a situation largely the same as it was for the 2011 MDM (Fidalgo, 2011). But the advertising market itself is small, given all the existing competitors, which puts them all under enormous pressure, as they must accept either some unpleasant advertising formats or significant price reductions. In recent years, it is more and more common to find intrusions of advertising in the editorial area. Despite this, all the editors interviewed in our sample strongly deny any abusive interference from external parties. Independence from advertisers is rather common in the bigger or more important news media, but the same does not apply to smaller companies (regional or local newspapers and radio stations), where the fight for survival often compels them to make some commercial deals with an editorial counterpart.

Regarding sponsorship, some newspapers now have the good practice of informing readers whenever their reporters travel by invitation of some company or institution. And a lot of examples of sponsored content or content marketing are increasingly marking the landscape of newspapers' pages and websites. The most relevant news media now have specific departments to develop commercial products in a journalistic form (so-called infomercials and advertorials), trying to gain some extra credibility for being confused with real news. This content is usually labelled as “sponsored content”, but sometimes in very soft or subtle ways, confusing readers, as is the intention.

Public advertising, on the other hand, is not relevant enough to compromise the independence of news media. In 2018, the total amount of advertisement with a public origin was EUR 1.3 million, compared with EUR 915,000 in the previous year. National media received 77 per cent of it, and regional or local media the other 23 per cent. Television, as usual, got the largest share, with EUR 595,000, followed by the press (EUR 350,000), the radio (EUR 262,000), and the digital arena (EUR 32,000). Values are relatively low, as we can see, and they are strictly scrutinised, in order to ensure the transparency of the whole process. A law issued in 2015 establishes the rules to be followed in these processes and the obligation for all public institutions and departments to record what advertisement services are bought, from whom, and at what price. This information must be sent to the Digital Platform of the State Institutional

Advertising, monitored and managed by the Regulatory Entity for the Media (ERC, n.d.).

In May 2020, due to the serious crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, which brought about serious losses for news media in advertising revenues, the state decided to grant them emergency aid. A total of EUR 15 million was distributed to different media (television, radio, press, online) in the form of advertising campaigns paid in advance. There was some controversy about the criteria followed by the government to allocate the different amounts to the various media. Two online publications refused those advertising campaigns, claiming to do so in the pursuit of total independence from the state.

After all, the big problem here seems to be the economic weakness of Portuguese media companies. There is strong competition and decreasing advertising revenues, with more and more revenue taken up by global online distributing platforms like Google, Facebook, YouTube, and so on. In such a scenario, it becomes easier for advertisers to get what they want, and if they don't, there is a high likelihood that a competitor will.

(F7) Procedures on news selection and news processing 1 POINT

Rules and standards for news processing exist, but they are not always present in day-to-day routines. The pressure of online breaking news and the dependence on clicks by the audience, as well as the permanent presence of social media, leaves almost no room for debates.

IN 2011  
2 POINTS

Again, this indicator must be balanced between what is formally prescribed in some newsrooms and what the day-to-day routines actually show. Furthermore, it must be balanced between what the editors say about the allegedly existing procedures and what the rank-and-file journalists have to say on the subject. The former guarantee that clear procedures are generally followed, and the latter complain that teamwork and collective dynamics in the newsroom are disappearing. The economic crisis, the decreasing circulation figures, the downsizing of most newsrooms – all of these things seem to favour a climate of uncertainty, demobilisation, and fear of losing one's job, which reinforces an individualistic approach to work and a disinterest in more collective initiatives.

The leading reference newspapers, such as *Público* and *Expresso*, have defined extensive internal rules for selecting and processing news. They are commonly respected and seem to be very useful, for example, in the process of integration of new journalists. However, this should be regarded as more of an exception than a rule.

In the past two decades, the role of press ombudsperson in recalling the principles for news processing, and in adding a reflective voice to the speed

of journalistic routines, has been important (see also Fidalgo, 2011). Three of the major dailies (*Jornal de Notícias*, *Público*, and *Diário de Notícias*) used to have an ombudsperson, but presently none of them has one. They only exist in Public Service Radio and Television.

## (F8) Rules and practices on internal gender equality 2 POINTS

Employment conditions are basically equal between men and women, although there is still a lower presence of female journalists in senior managing positions, which causes some gender pay gaps.

Currently, women journalists in Portugal form 41 per cent of the total cohort of journalists (2,094 of 5,124), with men forming the remaining 59 per cent (3,030 of 5,124) (CCPJ, 2020). But the percentages change if we look at younger groups: 57 per cent of journalists 20–40 years old are women, with 43 per cent men. Accordingly, there is a clear majority of male journalists if we look at older groups: 64 per cent of journalists 40–70 years old are men, and 36 per cent are women. The trend is clearly changing in favour of women, as can be seen in journalism schools, where female students are the overwhelming majority. In the news media in our sample, no one has specific rules or internal formal orientations in order to guarantee a balanced newsroom in terms of gender. However, all the editors interviewed claim that is not an issue and there is no discrimination at all, be it in terms of professional careers or of pay. The fact is, all these seven editors-in-chief are men, although there are women in their managing teams and many women in intermediate managing positions too. The increasingly important presence of women journalists in the Portuguese newsrooms is not reflected in leading positions.

Regarding gender issues in general, it's important to refer to a law approved in 2018 (law nr. 60/2018), which defined a series of measures to promote equality of payment between men and women (“equal pay for equal work”), with an obligation for companies to make regular reports on similar opportunities for both sexes (Assembleia da República, 2018). These similar opportunities, together with non-discrimination of payment, are part of the Labour Code in use in the country and are mandatory for companies in general. At the same time, a Commission for Equality in Work and Employment was created with the mandate to observe these issues and to receive eventual complaints by workers being discriminated against.

The government also decided to publish an annual barometer of gender discrimination. The first one was published in June 2019, with data gathered through 2017, and showed that the gender pay gap was 14.8 per cent. This refers to the difference between the average pay for men and women, in general

national terms, regardless of sector, level of qualification, or seniority in the job. If these items are taken into account, there is still a gender pay gap of 11.2 per cent in favour of men. There was not much difference in the data gathered in 2018 for the same barometer, the gender gap reduced from 14.8 per cent to 14.4 per cent, always in favour of men. In terms of money, the difference results in average monthly pay of EUR 1,034.9 for men and EUR 886.0 for women – a difference of EUR 148.9 per month. The barometer shows a bigger gender gap in highly qualified jobs (20.9%) and in senior management positions (27.3%). The situation in Portugal is slightly better than the situation in other EU countries, where the gender pay gap stood, on average, at 16 per cent in 2017 (EIGE, 2019a). There are big differences in European countries, ranging from a minimum of 3.5 per cent in Romania to a maximum of 25.6 per cent in Estonia.

There is no specific data about gender gaps in media, but two studies show us the situation in public television (RTP) and the public news agency (Lusa). The report from RTP (2019), *Report for gender equality, citizenship and non-discrimination*, focuses on a total of 1,709 workers, of which 1,026 are men and 683 are women. The larger professional category of journalists [jornalista – redactor] has 371 people (201 women and 170 men). In terms of pay, there is a slight gap in favour of men: the average monthly pay in the whole company (including journalists and non-journalists) is EUR 2,547.32 for men and EUR 2,419.48 for women, which the board considers “not a significant discrepancy”. The conclusions in the report from the national news agency Lusa are different (Casaca et al., 2019). In a total of 186 journalists (2018 data), 98 are women and 88 are men. 66.72 per cent of male journalists do not have any leading position (editor, deputy editor, coordinator, etc.), but this percentage goes up to 73.20 per cent when it comes to female journalists. The pay gap is also relatively higher, as the average monthly pay is 18.06 per cent lower for female journalists than for males (EUR 2,170.69 vs. EUR 2,649.04). The report suggests that this gap happens because there are some discrepancies in terms of gender within the same professional categories, and because women occupy positions less associated with higher pay. It seems that promotions in professional careers tend to be faster for men than for women. Only 5 per cent of women hold positions in the highest levels of their profession, compared with 22 per cent of men. And the same occurs with leading management positions: 26.35 per cent of women journalists occupy those positions, against 34.09 per cent of men. Because such positions usually involve some extra pay, the gender gap tends to be bigger.

In recent years, Portugal has taken some legal measures to guarantee more equality in terms of gender. In politics, for example, since 2019, all lists of candidates in elections for the Parliament, for the European Parliament, or for municipal councils must have a minimum of 40 per cent women and men (the

previous limits of the “parity gender law” were 33%). These same limits also apply, since 2019, to the appointment of senior management positions in the Civil Service. Now, at least 40 per cent must be women, compared with 32 per cent in 2015 and 37 per cent in 2018. In public companies managed by the state, boards must also include at least 33.3 per cent women, according to a law approved in 2018 (Governo, 2019).

The positive evolution of Portugal in this issue can be confirmed in some international rankings, such as the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE, 2019a). When compared with the EU countries, Portugal ranks 16<sup>th</sup> in the European Institute for Gender Equality list, with 59.9/100 (less 7.5 than EU average). It improved 5 points between 2015 and 2019: “Portugal is moving towards gender equality at a faster rate than the EU, narrowing the distance to the EU’s scores over time” (EIGE, 2019b).

#### (F9) Gender equality in media content

1 POINT

There is an overwhelming dominance of male actors and protagonists in the news.

A study by media regulator ERC (2019b), regarding the information programming of the four main free-to-air television channels (RTP1, RTP2, SIC, TVI), showed that 75 per cent of the news protagonists were male and 15 per cent were female, in 8 per cent of situations there were both male and female actors, and in 2 per cent no clear identification was possible. Furthermore, the only categories where women were more present than men as actors were “family issues” (a prevalence of 85% of women), “public figures and celebrities”, and “doctors and health technicians”. All other categories largely featured male actors, particularly “political actors”, where men formed 90 per cent of the group. There is an interesting gender bias similarity among all the television channels. The presence of women as protagonists or actors in the news was only 15 per cent in RTP1, 16 per cent in RTP2, 14 per cent in SIC, and 16 per cent in TVI. The study analysed a total of 7,206 news and features programmes.

The media regulator (ERC) has been paying attention, in recent years, to the issue of gender discrimination in the media, monitoring content in the main news media, particularly in television. In 2018, an analysis was conducted of the main newscasts in prime time, specifically looking at gender diversity and pluralism of the protagonists of news. These results show an even higher prevalence of men than the previous study (2015–2017), as can be seen in Table 8.

**Table 8** *Protagonists of television prime-time news by sex, 2018 (per cent)*

|                     | Telejornal<br>(RTP1) | Jornal 2<br>(RTP2) | Jornal<br>da Noite<br>(SIC) | Jornal<br>das 8<br>(TVI) | CH Jornal<br>20H<br>(CMTV) |
|---------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Male protagonists   | 79                   | 80                 | 81                          | 76                       | 81                         |
| Female protagonists | 14                   | 15                 | 13                          | 16                       | 13                         |
| Both sexes          | 5                    | 3                  | 4                           | 6                        | 4                          |

Source: ERC, 2019b

Portugal is involved, along with 120 countries, in the Global Media Monitoring Project, which began in 1995 and is preparing its sixth edition this year (Martins, 2020). It monitors news published in a single day, based on a set of pre-defined indicators, in order to ascertain how gender inequalities and discrimination are present in the media, either through its sources or through its actors. Similarly, the media regulator ERC is also part, since 2014, of the Gender and Media Group that operates within the Network of Mediterranean Regulatory Entities and analyses gender discrimination in the news, and particularly issues of gender violence.

## (F10) Misinformation and digital platforms (alias social media)

2 POINTS

There are a number of fact-checking mechanisms in some newsrooms, as well as monitoring initiatives regarding “fake news” and disinformation. The need to deal carefully with social media is a major concern in most news media.

According to the *Reuters Institute Digital News Report* (Newman et al., 2019), Portuguese people show a rather high level of trust in the news (58%), but this percentage goes down to 26.7 per cent when that news comes to them through social media. This is increasingly relevant because more and more people in the country choose social media as their primary source of information. In 2019, 81.2 per cent still referred to television as their main source for news, but the figure was very close to the Internet and social media together (79.8%). For comparison, the print press is selected as a primary source of information only by 36.2 per cent. The most popular social media in Portugal, Facebook, is regularly used by 76.9 per cent of citizens, and 52.9 per cent of them specifically use it to get news. 23.8 per cent do the same with YouTube, 20 per cent with Facebook Messenger, 14.8 per cent with WhatsApp, and 11.7 per cent with Instagram.

In global terms, 74.7 per cent of the respondents in the *Digital News Report 2019* say they are concerned with the veracity of what they see on the Internet,

compared with 71.3 per cent in 2018. This is the second-highest percentage among the 38 countries covered by the report, the highest being Brazil (85%) and the lowest being the Netherlands (31%). This shows how fake news and disinformation are a matter of great concern in recent years, and a couple of initiatives have appeared to deal with the problem. One of them is the project Monitoring of Propaganda and Disinformation in Social Media, launched by MediaLab (2020), a specialised observatory at an institute integrated into the University of Lisbon (CIES\_Iscte). They generate weekly reports about political disinformation in social media and they also cooperate with the national news agency (Lusa) in a fact-checking project, supported by the EU and the European Parliament: Combat to Fake News – A Democratic Question (Lusa, 2020). Another well-known fact-checking initiative is the website *Polígrafo*, launched and run by a team of journalists, defining itself as “a journalistic online project whose main purpose is to find the truth – and not the lie – in the public space” (Polígrafo, 2020). They call themselves “the first fact-checking Portuguese newspaper”, and received much more visibility after they made a partnership with leading television channel SIC and began broadcasting a 30-minute weekly programme on prime time.

Since 2019, *Polígrafo* has been a partner of Facebook’s international fact-checking programme. Another Portuguese publication, the online-only *Observador* (one of the news media from our sample) is also a partner of Facebook’s International Fact-Checking Network, an initiative developed in collaboration with the Poynter Institute (Pinheiro, 2019). *Observador* regularly publishes a section called “Fact Check”. Investigative journalism has also been interested in what lies behind fake news and their fabricators. A journalist from the daily *Diário de Notícias* has been publishing very relevant information about this, and recently published a book (*Factory of Lies*). In this book he reveals that in Portugal, there are presently “more than 40 websites creating lies” that are diffused through social media, particularly Facebook, with its 3.5 million Portuguese users (Pena, 2019: 12).

All the editors interviewed for this research project showed much concern about the serious problems of disinformation and “fake news”, especially in social media. They all now have special teams to deal with those networks (which they also use as distributors of their own news) and to pay attention to “what’s going on” in Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, but none of them has any particular internal rules to manage the issue of disinformation.

(F11) Protection of journalists against (online) harassment 3 POINTS

There have been no such situations in the country; it is not an issue (at least for now).

To our knowledge, there have been no cases of online harassment involving journalists. Furthermore, the editors and journalists interviewed, as well as the president of the Portuguese Journalists' Union, confirmed they do not have notice of such situations. Nothing is previewed in the journalists' labour contracts on this particular issue, but it is not difficult to forecast that both the media company and the union would guarantee legal help and protection if necessary.

The only situations of some kind of harassment against journalists have occurred in the coverage of football games or activities. In some cases, directors of a certain club try to prevent a journalist from accessing its facilities, with the argument that they are biased and unfriendly. In other cases, similar attitudes are taken by organised groups of fans, threatening the free presence of journalists in the area and trying to condition their professional work. When this eventually happened, both the outlet they work for and the Journalists' Union gave public and juridical support, and no serious consequences came from the incidents.

*Dimension: Equality / Interest Mediation (E)*

(E1) Media ownership concentration national level 2 POINTS

There are three or more competitors for every area. There is some concentration in a few media groups, but various relevant titles still exist outside those groups.

IN 2011  
2 POINTS

Four big groups (Impresa, Global Media, Cofina, and MediaCapital) control a large share of television and radio stations, newspapers, magazines, and online news sites (see Table 9). The state has an important position too, as does the Catholic Church. The continuing situation of a small market and low news-consuming habits makes it more difficult for single companies to invest in a news medium and survive (see also Fidalgo, 2011).

There are three competitors in open access television: the State owns RTP1, RTP2, and RTP3; one Portuguese media group owns SIC; and a foreigner media group, the Spanish PRISA, presently owns TVI. All these companies also have paid-for channels, distributed through cable, devoted to news and information 24 hours a day. The Cofina group also owns a news channel distributed through cable – the popular CMTV.

**Table 9** The main media groups in Portugal, 2019

| Group                                   | Media  |
|---|--|
| Global Media<br>(part. Chinese capital) | <p><i>Daily Newspapers:</i> Jornal de Notícias; Diário de Notícias; O Jogo (sports); Açoriano Or. (reg.); DN Madeira (reg.)</p> <p><i>Weekly newspapers and news magazines:</i> Notícias Magazine; Evasões+</p> <p><i>Online news:</i> All newspapers, newsmagazines, TV, and radio stations also have online editions</p> <p><i>TV (cable):</i> SporTV (participation)</p> <p><i>Radio:</i> TSF – Rádio Notícias</p> <p><i>Others:</i> Advertising in sports events; Television transmission rights (football); Printing; News agency (part.); Newspaper distribution</p> |
| Impresa                                 | <p><i>Weekly newspapers and news magazines:</i> Expresso (weekly); Blitz (online)</p> <p><i>Online news:</i> All newspapers, newsmagazines, TV, and radio stations also have online editions</p> <p><i>TV (open access):</i> SIC</p> <p><i>TV (cable):</i> SIC Notícias (news); SIC Radical; SIC Mulher; SIC Internacional; SIC Caras</p> <p><i>Others:</i> News agency (part); Printing; Newspaper distribution</p>   |
| Cofina                                  | <p><i>Daily Newspapers:</i> Correio da Manhã; Record (sports); Jornal de Negócios (economy); Destak (free)</p> <p><i>Weekly newspapers and news magazines:</i> Sábado (newsmag.)</p> <p><i>Online news:</i> All newspapers, newsmagazines, TV, and radio stations also have online editions</p> <p><i>TV (cable):</i> CMTV (news)</p> <p><i>Others:</i> Newspaper distribution; Printing; Various industrial companies outside media</p>   |
| Media Capital (Spanish capital)         | <p><i>Online news:</i> All newspapers, newsmagazines, TV, and radio stations also have online editions; MaisFutebol (sport)</p> <p><i>TV (open access):</i> TVI</p> <p><i>TV (cable):</i> TVI 24 (news); TVI Ficção; TVI Reality; TVI África</p> <p><i>Radio:</i> Rádio Comercial; M80; Rádio Cidade; Smooth</p> <p><i>Others:</i> Plural Entertainment (TV producing company)</p>   |

Source: ERC, 2010, 2019c

There are three major cable television suppliers: NOS (40.1% market share), MEO (39.6%), Vodafone (16.3%), and a smaller one, NOWO/MásMóvil (3.9%) (ANACOM, 2020a).

There are four competitors in the national generalist daily press. One media group owns two (*Jornal de Notícias* and *Diário de Notícias*) of the five existing newspapers – plus one of the three sports dailies. There is now only one competitor in the market of generalist free dailies (*Destak*), but these newspapers have virtually disappeared from the Portuguese media landscape anyway.

In radio, there are more than three competitors at the national level, and many more at the regional and local levels. As for Internet, there are also three major competitors in the market, with the same operating cable, since virtually all Internet clients are also cable television and mobile phone consumers, subscribing to the popular triple-play or fourth-play packages.

In 2018, Impresa group sold all its magazines to a new group (Trust in News) and Cofina group tried to buy Media Capital group, owner of the free-to-air television channel TVI and the cable TVI24, which raised fears of excessive concentration, but the deal failed. Presently, a new businessman with interests mostly in the area of tourism bought a share of 30 per cent of TVI, and there are rumours (still not confirmed) that he will buy the majority of the shares and take over the company. The Spanish group PRISA has repeatedly showed its desire to sell their participation in the Portuguese television sector.

Apart from these groups, there are, on the national level, the following relevant news media:

- national television channels (RTP1, RTP2, RTP3, ARTV) and national radio stations (Antena1, Antena 2, Antena 3) belonging to the state, Public Broadcasting Service (PBS);
- the leading national radio group (Rádio Renascença), owned by the Catholic Church;
- the most influential daily newspaper (*Público*), owned by an industrial group (Sonae);
- the most influential online-only news medium (*Observador* – site & radio), owned by a number of private investors (it was launched in 2014);
- the leading sports daily (*A Bola*), owned by private investors;
- one national daily (*i Informação*) and one national weekly (*Sol*), owned by a non-aligned private investor;
- and the first news magazine (*Visão*), owned by a small media group (Trust in News).

Some attempts were made in the past to pass a law against media concentration, but they never succeeded, with the argument that it was not an urgent problem and that “a broader political consensus” on that matter should be reached. In spite of this, whenever a group or a company wants to buy a news outlet, they must have the approval of the Regulatory Entity for the Media (ERC) and of the Competition Authority.

In 2015, the so-called transparency law for the media was approved, forcing every media outlet to regularly provide information about their owners, major shareholders, financial results, and so on (for further information on this, see Indicator C3 – Transparency of data on leading news media).

## (E2) Media ownership concentration regional (local) level 3 POINTS

Ownership concentration at the regional level is very low, with many dozens of small newspapers belonging to different owners

IN 2011  
3 POINTS

Regions are not a political entity in Portugal. In spite of that, considering the geographical scope of the publications, there are many regional and local newspapers, but they are generally very small. For the thirteen existing dailies, circulation rates are usually between 3,000 and 5,000 copies. For the weeklies, which are much more common at the regional level, there are hundreds, but these are usually small, rather traditional, and not very professionalised, with only a dozen exceptions. Many of them are now moving online too, and digital editions are replacing paper in some cases.

There are also many local radio stations, but all of these very small too; most of them do not even have a newsroom or information services. There are no regional television stations, because they are not allowed by law, which some consider “a serious democratic shortcoming” (Cádima, 2009). The exceptions are some local web-TV stations, distributed over the Internet, and two regional channels of the public television for Madeira and Azores.

One of the biggest national media groups (Global Media) owns two regional newspapers, one in Madeira Island, another in the Azores islands. There are two regional groups of some importance at this geographical level, both in the centre of the country – Adriano Lucas and Sojormedia. The first owns four small dailies (one online-only) and one weekly. The second owns one small daily, six weeklies, two regional radio stations, and a regional web-TV. But this does not signify much concentration in a landscape where regional and local titles can be counted in the hundreds.

Regional newspapers play an interesting role in terms of local information, but also (or mostly) in terms of creating community bond. Many people who left their hometown to work and live in other regions, or immigrants that live

abroad, often subscribe to their small local newspapers in order to keep in touch with their roots. An interesting percentage of inhabitants say they have some regular contact with regional or local press: 14.5 per cent of them, according to the *Digital News Report Portugal* (Cardoso et al., 2019).

### (E3) Diversity of news formats

1 POINT

There is an increasing homogenisation of formats, leading to less diversity in the public offer.

IN 2011  
1 POINT

Although time devoted to news and information has been increasing in free-to-air television programming, the presence of entertainment and fiction is still much stronger, particularly in commercial channels. The fiction consists largely of popular soap operas referred to as “telenovelas”, originating in Brazil but now being produced in Portugal with great public success. This trend is clear when we look at the comparative shares – measured in terms of airtime devoted to each item – offered by the main channels (see Table 10).

**Table 10** Diversity of thematic areas in television (per cent)

|                                  | SIC<br>(commercial) |      | TVI<br>(commercial) |      | RTP1<br>(public) |                   |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|------|---------------------|------|------------------|-------------------|
|                                  | 2009                | 2019 | 2009                | 2019 | 2009             | 2019              |
| News and information             | 14.8                | 17.6 | 15.4                | 18.7 | 26.1             | 26.6              |
| Fiction                          | 30.3                | 22.3 | 30.1                | 25.4 | 19.2             | 11.8              |
| Entertainment                    | 14.7                | 28.0 | 16.2                | 22.8 | 29.7             | 31.5              |
| Sport                            | 1.3                 | 0.3  | 2.5                 | 0.3  | 5                | 2.3               |
| General culture<br>and knowledge | 3.1                 | 2.1  | 1.9                 | 1.7  | 4.2              | 4.6               |
| Children and youth               | 6.1                 | 1.0  | 2.3                 | 0.0  | 1.5              | 1.6 <sup>a</sup>  |
| Others                           | 11.4                | 4.6  | 8.8                 | 6.1  | 3.3              | 3.4               |
| Advertising                      | 18.3                | 24.0 | 22.9                | 24.9 | 11.2             | 18.0 <sup>b</sup> |

<sup>a</sup>The public service television has relevant programming for children and youth but concentrates it in its second channel (RTP2), also an open access channel. Its airtime devoted to this target was 29.1 per cent of the total in 2019.

<sup>b</sup>RTP1 has legal limitations concerning the amount of time dedicated to advertisement: no more than six minutes per hour (the commercial channels may have until twelve minutes per hour). The other open access channel of the public service, RTP2, has no advertisement at all, except for the (not paid) announcement of cultural products and services.

Source: Marktest, 2009, 2020b

News and information programmes in the main television channels are almost reduced only to the evening newscasts (20:00). Other news formats (interviews, debates, in-depth reporting, etc.) remain very much absent, except for some specific situations in public television (RTP1 and RTP2). Besides this, the evening news bulletins, as said before, include a great deal of soft news, *fait-divers*, shocking reporting, and trivial subjects.

Each of the three main television stations also has a channel exclusively devoted to 24/7 news and information: SIC Notícias (a subsidiary of SIC), RTP3 (a subsidiary of RTP), and TVI 24 (a subsidiary of TVI). There is a fourth channel, CMTV, belonging to the media group Cofina, that is also devoted mostly to news with a rather popular or sensationalist tone, which leads this segment. However, all of them are distributed through cable and are paid for, which means they reach about two-thirds of Portuguese households, and all with low audience rates, when compared with the free-to-air channels. This limitation notwithstanding, those channels have a more diverse set of news formats, including many debates, extensive interviews, political commentaries, and special features.

The online editions of traditional media, in particular, are developing more innovative news formats online, and multimedia approaches such as infographics, podcasts, and videos are expanding.

As for newspapers, the trend goes more towards popularisation, soft news, and light products, even among quality papers. The differences between newspapers are not as evident as they used to be. The free dailies grew very quickly in the years 2006–2008, but they have been quickly decreasing in circulation and now only a small and rather irrelevant one, *Destak*, is left (see also Fidalgo, 2011).

#### (E4) Minority/Alternative media

1 POINT

Relatively little attention is paid to minorities in the mainstream media, and they have little media of their own.

IN 2011  
1 POINT

There are 480,300 foreigners living in the country. The largest group (105,400) comes from Brazil, which means they have no linguistic barriers to accessing the national media. The same is true of other communities coming from former Portuguese colonies such as Cape Verde, Angola, and Guinea, which together have 69,100 residents in Portugal. But, in recent years, the percentage of immigrants from Eastern European countries has grown rapidly. For example, there are presently 29,200 Ukrainians and 30,900 Rumanians. The Chinese community is also relevant, with 25,300 residents. In terms of European citizens, the larger shares come from the UK (26,400) and France (19,700). Dozens of other nationalities are present in Portugal, but with relatively low figures (SEF, 2019).

There are a couple of newspapers written in foreign languages (in some cases, bilingual), but they are not relevant in the media landscape, since circulation figures are at most in the hundreds. They were usually created by the foreigner communities' associations, of which there are about 40 in Portugal, according to the High Commission for Migration, a public institution directly dependent of the Presidency of the Ministers Council (ACM, 2020a). There is also a Commission for Equality and Against Racial Discrimination, created by law in 2017 (ACM, 2020b).

There are sometimes complaints made by those communities regarding the way immigrants are misrepresented and mistreated by the mainstream media. A study funded by ERC and conducted by a group of scholars concluded that between 2003 and 2008, the visibility of immigrants in the mainstream media was usually associated with “crime” and “social transgression” (Férin, 2009: 124). Moreover, the news reporting on those issues tends to give a voice to police, security forces, and institutional sources, rather than to immigrants' associations or common people from these communities of foreigners (Férin, 2009). More recently (2018), ERC conducted another study about sociocultural diversity in the media between 2015 and 2017 and concluded that only 3 per cent of the news in the prime-time newscasts in open access television had some references to immigrants, refugees, or exiled people in Portugal (ERC, 2019b). According to the study, they are the central focus of a piece of news especially when there is some negative situation, such as a crime or illicit behaviour.

This same study also monitored the presence of different religious themes in prime-time television news and found that only 6 per cent of their airtime had some reference to these themes. There is a clear prevalence of Catholicism, which made up 66 per cent of the references, contrasted with Islam (18%) and Judaism (8%). When talking about Catholicism, a central actor of that news is Pope Francis. The study shows that when Islam is in the news, it most often has some connection with armed conflicts or terrorist attacks (ERC, 2019b).

All the open access television channels, either because of the public service remit (RTP1 and RTP2) or because of the concession contract they signed (SIC and TVI) have an obligation towards pluralism and diversity in their programming. Specifically, they must pay attention to cultural diversity and the interests of minority groups and are subject to the scrutiny of the media regulator (ERC). In 2018, ERC concluded that RTP1 devoted to these specific areas a total of 9 hours, 56 minutes, and 7 seconds of airtime, while SIC had 103 hours, 25 minutes, and 51 seconds (about 1.5%), and TVI had only one weekly programme dedicated to minority groups. The channel that pays most attention to these themes (RTP2) is the one with less audience share, and much of the time devoted to them has to do with time offered to different religious programmes (ERC, 2019c).

A pluri-annual plan was set up in 2017 by the regulatory entity regarding people with disabilities or special needs, with specific obligations for the main television operators on subtitles in Portuguese and sign language. This implies that a minimum of 20 hours a week of a diverse set of programmes must have subtitles, and a minimum of 12 hours a week plus one full newscast a week must be delivered in sign language too. The conclusion made by ERC shows that all television channels not only fulfilled, but also largely exceeded, those obligations.

The enormous increase of the Internet's reach, and particularly the strong development of weblogs and social media, brought new possibilities for various minorities (political, religious, sexual, cultural, etc.) to have their own information flows, although not ones as visible as those in mainstream media.

### (E5) Affordable public and private news media

1 POINT

IN 2011  
2 POINTS

Prices are decreasing and much free content is available, but the cost of news media is still relatively high for an average household. In the sensitive area of telecommunications (cable television, Internet access, mobile phone), prices are increasing, while they are decreasing in most other European countries.

Considering that the gross domestic product per capita in Portugal is around EUR 18,550 (Eurostat, 2019), the amount spent on basic news media, in a scenario like the one shown above, is fairly high, although the evolution in the last ten years shows some important reductions (see Table 11). But spending about EUR 80 per month (or EUR 50 per month if you choose digital subscriptions) for access to the main media and the Internet means it is a significant expense in a country where the minimum salary, legally prescribed, is now EUR 600 a month (it was EUR 450 in 2009), and the average monthly income is slightly higher than EUR 1,000.

Prices for a print newspaper copy vary between EUR 1.10–1.20 for weekdays and EUR 1.50–1.70 for Saturdays and Sundays, when there's usually an extra supplement or magazine. The weekly *Expresso* costs EUR 4 and the newsmagazine *Visão* costs EUR 3.50. But paper editions are being sold less and less, while digital editions rise, and with much more competitive prices. You can subscribe to the digital edition of the main dailies for less than EUR 80 per year, which is about EUR 0.20 per day. All the newspapers now have more-or-less generous paywalls. Part of the content is open<sup>1</sup> and another part (usually the most required pieces of reporting) is “premium”, which means it must be paid for, be it as a single purchase or through subscription.

**Table 11** *Prices of news media and access (EUR)*

|  | 2010  | 2019  |
|--|-------|---|
| Annual subscription to a quality daily newspaper (Público)                     | 320   | 384 (paper + digital); 78 (digital)                   |
| Annual subscription to a weekly newsmagazine (Visão)                           | 130   | 96.20 (paper); 76.80 (digital)                        |
| Annual subscription to broadband access 12 MB (average: 20x12)                 | 240   | –   |
| Annual subscription to general Cable TV (average 100 channels)                 | 348   | –   |
| Annual subscription to Cable TV + Internet (100 MB) + Telephone (Fix / mobile) | –     | 420 (package)   |
| Annual tax for Public Service of TV and Radio (compulsory) -                   | 22    | 34.20   |
| Total  | 1,060 | 934.40 (print and digital) /<br>609.00 (digital only) |

*Source:* Elaboration by the author, according to information available on the companies' websites.

Prices for Internet access and cable television together are not very high, but they are higher than they should be if we compare them internationally. The National Authority for Communications (ANACOM), which regulates electronic communications in the country, recently published a comparative study showing that prices for telecommunications in Portugal went up by 7.7 per cent between 2009 and 2020, while they went down 10.4 per cent in the EU countries (ANACOM, 2020b). This puts Portugal among the European countries where telecommunications are more expensive, holding the 25th position in the ranking of the EU 28 countries in prices for broadband mobile access, and a position between 11th and 18th in mobile voice service and mobile Internet access.

The reason for this, according to ANACOM, is the fact that all the operators focus on selling triple-play or fourth-play packages (cable television + Internet access + telephone or mobile) that include more services than an average consumer needs. For example, all packages include telephone, when the vast majority of people do not use it any longer, preferring the mobile phone. Moreover, all packages include 120 or 200 television channels, when the average consumer regularly sees only a very small part. All packages offer up to 2,000 or 3,500 minutes of conversation on the mobile when the average doesn't go much beyond 200 minutes. Some packages even include 1,000 minutes of international calls, when, according to ANACOM data, the average use is only five minutes. This means that consumers buy more than they need, and pay more than they should, because of this "package logic" that is actively pursued

by all the operators in the market. The very aggressive marketing campaigns of those operators, offering interesting monthly packages that cost EUR 29.99 or EUR 34.99 (usually with a fidelity clause that obliges you to stay 24 months with that specific operator) end up being seductive, and consumers accept them as a seemingly good deal.

## (E6) Content monitoring instruments

2 POINTS

There are different monitoring instruments and they are publicly available, but some complaints about their inaction or passivity arise now and then.

IN 2011  
3 POINTS

Four main entities regularly deal with media monitoring issues. First, there is the ERC (Entidade Reguladora para a Comunicação Social [Regulatory Entity for the Media]), an official regulatory body for the media, with its members elected by the Parliament by a minimum majority of two-thirds of votes. Apart from other activities (licensing, regulating, sanctioning), ERC also has a monitoring function to check whether the general rules and obligations are fulfilled, such as in the PBS, as well as in the open access private television stations, also obliged by a concession contract. Besides its annual report, including a great deal of data on the media field, it regularly publishes information through its website and social media. It also launches and sponsors, in partnership with universities, relevant studies on specific issues about media activity and performance.

Second, there is Obercom (Observatório da Comunicação [Communication Observatory]). Although private, this observatory has great involvement in public institutions connected with the media and uses state facilities to carry out its work. The most important associations and media companies are partners. It regularly publishes dossiers with a detailed description of the media business in Portugal and leads (or funds) studies and research projects aimed to achieve “better knowledge of the communication area”. It also publishes an online scientific refereed journal. It is the national partner for the *Reuters Institute Digital News Report*.

Third is Marktest, a private company responsible for monitoring activities regarding media audiences and audiometric, either in television or radio, the press, or the Internet. The results of its monitoring work are regularly used when anyone wants to describe the state of the media, for its reception and audience (both offline and online). Some major figures from its findings go public regularly, but the detailed information must be paid for.

And finally, there is APCT (Associação Portuguesa para o Controlo de Tiragem e de Circulação [Portuguese Association for the Control of Printing and Circulation]), also a private entity, created by the voluntary association of the press companies and designed to permanently monitor the number of

copies printed, distributed, and sold. Membership is voluntary, but almost all relevant print media have joined it.

Two other entities have some activity concerning media content and journalistic work. The first is the Commission of the Journalists' Professional Chart (CCPJ, 2020), responsible for the journalists' professional licence, which is a legal obligation in Portugal, and for the scrutiny of their incompatibilities. The other is the Journalists Union (SJ, 2020), whose Ethics Council frequently brings to the public comments and recommendations about questionable media content.

Besides the regular activity of these institutions, some media monitoring work comes from research groups at universities and individual or collective blogs concerned with the media business. Not to mention the increasing debate over these issues in social media, particularly Facebook. Well-known Facebook pages such as "Os Truques da Imprensa Portuguesa" (with 199,000 followers) or "Uma página numa rede social" (75,000 followers) regularly scrutinise what is published by the mainstream media and publish some of the most interesting critical reflections on the subject.

Despite all these monitoring entities, now and then public discussions arise about the apparent "impunity" of non-ethical behaviour in journalistic work, particularly in popular, sensationalist newspapers and television channels (as is the more common case of CMTV). Although the regulatory entity ERC has the power not only to monitor but also to condemn and to sanction in material terms misbehaviour in media coverage, the fact is, this rarely happens. ERC usually prefers to issue a public critical note and to advise the media in question to be more careful in the future, instead of punishing them.

(E7) Code of ethics at the national level

2 POINTS

A national Code of Ethics exists, but not all leading media respect it.

IN 2011  
2 POINTS

There is a Code of Ethics for journalists, prepared under the responsibility of the national Journalists' Union – the only national association of journalists in the country. Within the Journalists' Union, there is also an Ethics Council.

The Code is well known, but the fact that it was created in the context of the Journalists' Union, along with the fact that Portuguese journalists are not obliged to join the Union (only ca. one-third are members), raises frequent questions about its reach and jurisdiction. In 2007, this situation changed by the initiative of the government. Apart from the Union – where an Ethics Council continues to exist – there is now a national commission presided over by a judge that has the responsibility to grant journalists' professional credentials. No one can work as a journalist in Portugal if they do not have the professional card

(Carteira Profissional de Jornalista), which must be renewed every two years and which depends on some legal conditions. Since 2007, this Commission also has disciplinary powers regarding journalists' ethical duties. This means that, under the new law, a journalist, regardless of whether they belong to the Union, can suffer sanctions if they prove to have disrespected the Code of Ethics.

Although this Commission is composed entirely of journalists, half of them are elected by the professional group and the other half are appointed by the media companies. The new system still raises strong debates among Portuguese journalists. Most of them would prefer ethical questions to be treated by the journalists themselves, on an autonomous, self-regulatory basis, and not by a Commission imposed by law – a model of what some scholars call “regulated self-regulation” (Schulz & Held, 2004). On its behalf, the government argued that this measure was taken simply because the journalists' professional group did not prove, over time, to be capable of dealing with this problem autonomously.

There is no Press Council in the country. Anyone who wants to complain about media ethical abuses must address either the Regulatory Entity for the Media (ERC) or the Commission of the Journalists' Professional Chart (CCPJ).

All the professionals interviewed for this report, both editors and journalists, agreed that the Code of Ethics is generally well known and a relevant reference in newsroom debates. In some cases, media outlets developed their own Codes of Conduct, which reference the norms of the national Code of Ethics but go into more detail to regulate journalists' practices and routines, calling attention to more concrete issues (see Indicator E8 – Level of self-regulation). This is the case for the daily *Público*, the weekly *Expresso*, the newsmagazine *Visão*, and the news agency Lusa.

## (E8) Level of self-regulation

1 POINT

Some self-regulation mechanisms exist on the level of the main news media, but their presence is less visible than in the past.

IN 2011  
2 POINTS

As explained above, there is not a national self-regulatory entity (like a Press Council), although there are several self-regulation instruments in the leading news media.

Every media outlet has an Editorial Statute, with a mission statement emphasising their independence from political and economic powers, their respect for people's fundamental rights, their commitment to democratic values, and their attachment to journalistic ethical principles. However, these are, in most cases, just formal statements with very general intentions. Some of these outlets have more detailed internal accountability mechanisms. This is the case, for exam-

ple, with *Expresso*, which has a Code of Conduct dealing with such issues as objectivity, accuracy, plagiarism, identification of information sources, error correction, limits to gifts offered to journalists, and journalists' exposition in social media. *Público* has a Style Book that has a first part devoted entirely to ethical questions, journalism social responsibility, conflict of interests, and so on. RTP has an Editorial Statute that underlines the particular responsibilities of a public service television, namely their obligation to promote pluralism and diversity.

Three dailies (*Público*, *Diário de Notícias*, and *Jornal de Notícias*) had an ombudsperson for several years (the first one appeared in 1997), but the position is vacant now in all cases. According to our interviewees, financial constraints have forced media outlets to invest less in these instruments of quality control. Since 2006, there have also been news ombudspersons in public television and public radio.<sup>2</sup> They are both still active, with a broadcasting time every week prepared under their exclusive responsibility.

The right of reply is a legal and even constitutional obligation and is usually respected by all, with no need for judicial measures.

## (E9) Participation

2 POINTS

People are not particularly encouraged to participate in the news process, in spite of some improvements in the online context, where the possibility for commentary is generally available.

IN 2011  
1 POINT

The traditional section of letters to the editor remains the most common way for people to participate in the news process (see also Fidalgo, 2011). It exists in every newspaper, sometimes augmented with other small sections where the readers' opinions or active participation, either with texts or with photos or videos, is welcome.

The Internet and the development of these newspapers' online editions continue to strongly expand opportunities for public participation, with comments on the news, voting in daily opinion polls, and so on. The newspapers are open to these forms of participation and encourage them, but in a rather disorganised way, as they do not usually promote real public discussions or debates, and they do not have regular contacts with the readers. Of course, there are cases where the "commentary boxes" that follow the news turn to unpleasant or nasty debates among readers with different opinions. The strategy of dealing with these commentaries varies among different media outlets. In most cases, comments are moderated, either automatically by software that prevents the use of some words, or by the readers themselves who apply voluntarily to self-regulate. When more sensitive issues come to the news,

media sometimes decide to close the commentary boxes, to prevent the hateful discourse or similar abuse.

Since most media are now also present on social media (particularly on Facebook and Twitter), with pages that are updated almost by the minute, there are increasing opportunities for the public to comment on all the issues that are in the news.

Some national radio stations (TSF, Antena Um), as well as a cable television channel (SIC Notícias) have daily forums open to the public, to discuss a given subject according to the news of the day. But not all of them agree with this. The leading Radio Renascença is against forums in which “anyone can say anything”. In fact, now and then these forums are used by organised groups or even by political parties to distribute their propaganda in a seemingly spontaneous way.

In public television and radio, an Opinion Council represents different areas and social groups. They are asked to give their opinion about PBS strategy programming, and in some situations, they have a binding vote, such as in the appointment of a new ombudsperson for television and radio.

The editors interviewed for this report are generally rather sceptical about user-generated content. In spite of interesting promises about so-called citizen journalism some years ago, they now tend to limit the participation of the public only to very specific situations, for instance, if no journalists could reach the place where events occurred. In general, readers and viewers “should be regarded as information sources, not as potential journalists”, as one editor-in-chief told us.

### (E10) Rules and practices on internal pluralism

3 POINTS

Internal pluralism is fairly well promoted in the main news media, and they give voice to various groups.

IN 2011  
3 POINTS

In Portugal, there exists no tradition for news media to endorse publicly a political party or a presidential candidate. All of the main media insist on independence as their supreme value, promising to offer their audience all the relevant perspectives on any issue under debate. The lack of any kind of institutionalised external pluralism is thus fulfilled by internal pluralism, both in the newsroom and in the set of outsiders invited to regularly write opinion columns. Notwithstanding this general position, the fact is that we sometimes listen to complaints by the public against bias in the media, to the point of suggestions that everything would be more transparent if those in the media assumed a clear political position instead of dubious independence.

The leading news media, except the online-only *Observador*, are usually very open to different voices in the op-ed pages, thus stimulating the politi-

cal debate. Additionally, journalists also have the opportunity to analyse and comment in different ways.

News media still tend to be critical of the government and of the ruling party, following a tradition of counter-power that is usually associated with journalism and with its watchdog function. The opposite occurs when it comes to the PBS, or even to the national news agency. There is a consistent suspicion that the government tends to get better coverage by these media outlets because they depend directly on public funding (an attitude largely the same as in 2011; see Fidalgo, 2011).

The ERC systematically monitors the existence or absence of political pluralism in the PBS news bulletins and has concluded several times that there is some over-representation of the government and its supporting party (the Socialist Party) in the news, apparently at the cost of the main opposition party (the Social-Democrat Party) which is often under-represented. More recently, in its report about political pluralism on the main television channels in 2018, ERC generally concluded that this trend remains. In fact, daily information programmes tend to give between 17.0 and 23.5 per cent of their time to government and its supporting party, while the other five parties represented in Parliament get between 10.0 and 24.1 per cent, according to different newscasts and channels (ERC, 2019a). As for political parties not represented in Parliament, their time doesn't go beyond 0.1 to 0.3 per cent of the time dedicated to news.

The results of this monitoring activity are present in the minds of the editors of public television, as I was told by different sources from the newsroom. There is nowadays more concern in PBS when it comes to deciding what to cover in the political agenda, with an effort to balance the journalistic relevance of the issues with the need to respect the "quotas" of broadcasting time defined by ERC in terms of "reference values" for each political party.

### *Dimension: Control / Watchdog (C)*

(C1) Supervising the watchdog "control of the controllers"

2 POINTS

IN 2011  
2 POINTS

There are institutionalised mechanisms to control media performance as a watchdog, but these issues are not very present in public debates.

The Regulatory Entity for the Media (ERC) must guarantee that the news media respect everyone's rights, act with independence, fairness, and accuracy, allow the exercise of the right of reply, respect pluralism, promote diversity, and so on. In this context, it acts as a clear control mechanism of media performance, either on its initiative or because of complaints received from the public. It

started working in 2006, though there was another institution with a similar purpose before. There are political controversies about its statute – since its members are appointed by the Parliament according to nominations supported by the biggest political parties – and about the need for media regulation that is contested by some media owners and editors according to an increasingly disseminated neoliberal ideology. However, the fact is that some more attention is being paid to media performance and to the media’s complex roles in contemporary societies.

Journalistic work is also monitored and controlled by the CCPJ, which has jurisdiction over good practices and ethical standards in the media. As explained before (see Indicator E6 – Content monitoring instruments), an Ethics Council exists within the Journalists’ Union (SJ), often nurturing and fostering the public discussion of media performance and journalistic work.

Besides this, the general landscape concerning news monitoring and debate within the journalistic community remains not very promising. The Journalists’ Club publishes a bi-monthly magazine (*Jornalismo e Jornalistas*) and regularly updates an online site devoted to media and journalism issues, where some interesting debates arise from time to time. A couple of blogs made by journalists (individual or collective) also exist. Nowadays, a dozen of them are the most consistent, attentive, and stimulating instruments for media analysis and media criticism. As explained before, some Facebook pages devoted to media scrutiny and criticism are very popular these days, gathering thousands of followers.

The role played by universities that offer journalism courses and journalism or media research centres is relevant as well. Some of them have been responsible, during recent years, for the publication of dozens of books dealing with media issues. Most of the former press ombudspersons also published books with a selection of their public interventions that are often used in schools and training institutions for journalists. This means that the discussion of these questions is now more open to the public than it used to be when these books circulated only within the academy. Besides this, some observatories of media performance also play a relevant role in this intersection between the academy and the audience.

(C2) Independence of the news media from powerholders

2 POINTS

IN 2011  
2 POINTS

Various laws and regulations guarantee some independence, but real practice shows some difficulties.

The Journalist Statute, which is actually a law approved by the Parliament, grants journalists a set of important rights and guarantees to protect their

activity. The most relevant are the right to independence and “free creation and expression” (containing the so-called consciousness clause), the right “to participate in the editorial orientation” of the media, the right of access to “official sources of information” and to “public places”, and the right to “professional secrecy”, which means they are allowed to not disclose the identity of their sources (a shield law) (Assembleia da República, 1999).<sup>3</sup>

This does not mean, however, that problems do not arise now and then. For example, the separation of the editorial area and management is not respected in all situations. In 2009, a weekly news bulletin of the leading television channel TVI, which had gained a reputation for being very strongly against the Portuguese prime minister, was terminated by a direct order coming from the board of managers, and not by the editor-in-chief. This was considered illegal by ERC, but the fact is that the news bulletin did not show up again.

There seems to be a feeling among most journalists that due to the precarious situation that many of them are in, it is not easy to defend those rights. Keeping silent and trying not to raise too many questions is apparently an option more and more followed by journalists, particularly when media companies are economically weak or when journalists are young interns trying to get a more stable job.

In terms of diagonal concentration or cross-media ownership, there are also several situations to consider:

- The owner of the reference daily *Público* is one of the biggest businesspersons in the country (SONAE group), whose major assets are supermarkets and shopping centres.
- Global Media, the owner of the dailies *Jornal de Notícias*, *Diário de Notícias*, and *O Jogo* (sports), as well as of SporTV (cable), has important interests in the advertising industry, in the football industry, and transmission rights for football games.
- Cofina, the owner of the dailies *Correio da Manhã*, *Record* (sports), *Jornal de Negócios* (economy), and *Destak* (free), has various interests in different industrial areas.
- The owner of the leading radio station, Rádio Renascença, is the Catholic Church, which also owns several small regional newspapers.

Despite all this, the idea is that journalistic independence from these private interests is the general rule, rather than the exception. However, it is also true that some self-censorship temptations (or real actions) are sometimes reported privately by reporters, particularly in a time of great economic difficulties in the media industry, with companies downsizing their workforce or just closing.

## (C3) Transparency of data on leading news media

3 POINTS

Information on news media exists and is easily accessible, namely after the creation of a “Transparency Portal”.

IN 2011  
3 POINTS

Every news medium is legally obliged to publish regularly the list of its main shareholders, but this is not always a guarantee of full transparency, either because of cross-ownership or because of financial investors who are difficult to identify. Nowadays, however, as the main news media of the country are concentrated in the hands of four or five well-known groups, the question of ownership is not a disputed issue. Moreover, most of the Internet sites of those news media usually provide some information about all the other media belonging to the same group.

The Regulatory Entity for the Media (ERC) made the first step in this field in 2010, through the creation of a “Database for the Transparency of Media Ownership”. Later, in 2015, a further step further was taken with the Parliamentary approval of the so-called “transparency law” for the media. This obliges every media outlet and group to regularly provide information about its owners, major shareholders, financial results, cross-ownership, and so on. It took some years for this law to be implemented, but in late 2019, the results of the initiative finally came to the public. A “transparency portal” now exists on ERC’s website, and this information is open for public consultation (ERC, 2020a). There is, however, some doubt about the total transparency of media ownership. In a couple of situations, major shareholders are presented as individuals, but some inside information suggests they may be just a front for other (local or foreign) investors who don’t want to be identified. The regulatory entity promises to try to uncover these situations, but so far, one or two remain under suspicion.

Another transparency mechanism has to do with advertisement made by public institutions in the media, both national and local. All contracts in this domain must be publicly accessible, with information about all the actors involved and the amounts of money paid for them (ERC, 2020b). A “transparency portal” within this scope is managed by ERC, and its annual report details how much advertisement was bought by public institutions, and where it was placed. In order to prevent abuse or malpractice, there is some strict regulation about the fair distribution of state advertisement among national and local media, to guarantee equal treatment to all titles.

## (C4) Journalism professionalism

2 POINTS

IN 2011  
2 POINTS

Professional ethos is not too strong in absolute terms, considering the heterogeneity of the professional group. Professionalism is sometimes compromised by a lack of resources.

Following the classification of media systems by Hallin and Mancini (2004), Portugal belongs to the “polarised pluralist model” which has as one of its main characteristics a relatively low level of professionalisation of journalists. This means a low degree of professional autonomy, some weakness in the definition and implementation of distinct professional and ethical norms, and a relative lack of public service orientation. These traits do apply to the Portuguese situation, although with nuances (Fidalgo, 2008b; Santos, 2010).

During most of the twentieth century, because there was no freedom of expression or association, journalists’ professional organisations had no autonomy at all. In such conditions, it was particularly difficult for them to implement their specific ethical values and professional norms, and this contributed to a “weak professional culture” (Correia & Baptista, 2007). Things changed quickly after 1974, when democracy prevailed. One of the first laws to be put into practice was a new press law. Journalists organised themselves in a now free and autonomous strong national union and were able to convince political powers to make laws on a large set of items considered very important to journalistic work. If the instruments of journalistic professionalisation had been absent before, they were now conquered by the professional group, although more because of pressure on the state rather than because of a dynamic autonomous process. However, dependence on a very centralised state, which is typical of “pluralist polarised systems”, continued in the country.

Portuguese journalists have important laws to protect their activity as well as their Code of Ethics, but they were never able to put into practice an efficient and consensual mechanism of self-regulation. The existing Ethics Council works in the context of the union, but many of the 5,124 professional journalists that existed in May 2020<sup>4</sup> (see Figure 1) do not belong to it (according to the president of the Journalists Union, only about one-third of professional journalists are members) and, therefore, tend not to acknowledge its jurisdiction.

**Figure 1** Number of professional journalists by gender, 2009–2020

Source: CCPJ, 2020

The teaching of journalism is very recent as well, as it only appeared at a Portuguese university for the first time in 1979. But it then developed very fast, and nowadays journalism courses (usually integrated into communication sciences courses), as well as master's degrees, are very popular in the country and are present in all relevant universities, both public and private. If we look at the group of actual professional journalists (5,124, of which there are 3,030 men and 2,094 women), it is relevant to notice that 43 per cent of them hold a university degree (bachelor's, master's, or PhD). This number goes up to 69 per cent if we include those who began a university course but never finished it. Female journalists with a university degree are 61 per cent (87% if we include unfinished university courses), while male journalists with a degree are 31 per cent (57% if we include unfinished university courses). This data confirms the idea that there are more young female journalists, and more old male journalists who come from a time when no course was taken to become a journalist (CCPJ, 2020; Subtil & Silveirinha, 2017).

Journalists are a rather heterogeneous professional group and still have not succeeded in putting forward a strong collective dynamic. Some progress in recent years is partly counterbalanced by the negative economic situation in the media industry, which pushes journalists more towards proletarianisation than professionalisation. A 2016 survey among journalists (with 1,494 valid respondents) confirmed this increasingly difficult situation for the professional group: 80.6 per cent of them received less monthly pay than EUR 1,500 net, 57.3 per cent got less than EUR 1,000 per month, and 11.6 per cent less than EUR 500.<sup>5</sup> The average monthly income for the respondents was EUR 1,113,

which is, even for a poor country like Portugal, a very low pay. This is particularly worrying if we remember that most of the journalists have a university education and the work they do holds significant responsibility (Crespo et al., 2017). In this scenario, it is not surprising that 48.8 per cent of the journalists feel very unhappy with their labour conditions, and 64.2 per cent confess to having already considered leaving the job. In recent years, many journalists decided to exchange journalism for another job in the area of communication such as public relations, press attaché, communication manager, marketer, and so on, because they are usually much better paid, even though they have a lower status in terms of social recognition (Fidalgo, 2019).

### (C5) Journalists' job security

1 POINT

There is a relatively high level of job security in the legal framework, but the economic crisis and the weakness of media outlets make job security much more fragile in practical terms.

IN 2011  
2 POINTS

Portuguese journalists do not have many reasons to complain about job security when it comes to legal dispositions. However, in practical terms, the structural economic weakness of most media industries and the economic and financial crises play a major role when it comes to assessing their effective security. The legal guarantees aside, according to multiple sources, the day-to-day routine in media companies shows that things continue to become increasingly difficult for journalists, and this leads to silence and resignation rather than to confrontation and a struggle for one's rights (see also Fidalgo, 2011). "It's better to try to avoid problems than to be involved in a long process in a court of law", as a seasoned journalist at a major newspaper said.

In the last decade or so, all of the most important Portuguese news media downsized their newsrooms, dismissing dozens of journalists – some of them, but not all, through friendly negotiations. As we can see in Figure 1, between 2009 and 2020, the number of professional journalists decreased from 6,673 to 5,124, which means a reduction of 1,549 journalists (a drop of 23%). Not all of these are now unemployed, as some of them probably switched to another job, but some hundreds lost their jobs for sure, given the frequent news we read about media companies downsizing their labour force, especially in the newsrooms (official numbers are not available). Even among those who are still working, many complain about their precarious situation. In the aforementioned study sponsored by Obercom (Crespo et al., 2017), only 56.3 per cent of respondents said they have a permanent labour contract and, therefore, legal job security. This means that all the others (nearly half of the respondents) have a more-or-less precarious labour condition. A total of 17 per cent are freelancers,<sup>6</sup> 10.5

per cent have a short-term contract, and 16.4 per cent have a “collaborator” status, which means no labour contract at all and no regular salary because they are paid according to the work they do. These last ones are the first to be “fired” because they have no formal link to the company they work for.

The fear of being the next to lose one’s job spreads among journalists and inculcates a more passive outlook. With this scenario, it is increasingly difficult for young people to find a new job in the media (Miranda & Gama, 2019). The competition is very strong because hundreds of them graduate from universities every year. Many of them will work as interns for three months with no pay, and then again as interns in another newsroom, again with no pay. “It’s good to make the curriculum and to be prepared for a permanent job when it comes”, they hear frequently. Therefore, it is not difficult to find someone who will accept precarious labour conditions (Graça, 2007), usually in the form of short-term contracts or no contracts at all. Legal job security does not help much in these situations.

This said, it is important to acknowledge that some important legal protections are in place for journalists, particularly those related to the *clause de conscience*, according to which no one may be forced to write something against their convictions and ethical norms, and no one may suffer any kind of punishment for not doing it.

## (C6) Practice of access to information

2 POINTS

No legal barriers exist to accessing public information, with a law guaranteeing access to public documents, but access is sometimes difficult in practice.

IN 2011  
2 POINTS

According to the Journalist Statute (Assembleia da República, 1999: art. 8), the right of journalists to access information sources must be guaranteed by the organs of public administration, and whoever refuses that access may be legally prosecuted “with urgency”. This applies not only to journalists, but in the name of “transparency of public affairs”, everyone has the right of access to administrative documents from the public sector, with “no need to invoke any particular interest” (Assembleia da República, 2007).

Because the law is sometimes disrespected, or because the interpretations of what falls under the category of restricted information may be divergent, a special commission works next to the Parliament (since 1995) as an instance of appeal. Every year, about 400 complaints are brought to this Commission of Access to Administrative Documents, several of them presented by journalists.

Traditionally, the Portuguese public administration tended to be closed off and kept most of its documents secret, but this behaviour is slowly changing. Sometimes, journalists complain that public administration, although not for-

mally forbidding access to this or that information, raises practical problems of consultation, making them seek what they are looking for among hundreds of files. This is why the work of the aforementioned Commission is important.

(C7) The watchdog and the news media's mission statement

1 POINT

IN 2011  
1 POINT

News media only indirectly refer to the watchdog function in their mission statements.

An analysis of the Editorial Statute of the different news media points to the main idea of independence.

Radio Renascença emphasises the Catholic affiliation of the station and, therefore, insists mostly on Human Rights and the defence of all human beings' dignity. It also insists on the need for pluralistic, comprehensive, objective, and honest information, with respect for journalistic professional standards and journalism ethics.

RTP's mission statement stresses the particular social responsibility of a public television station, together with the need for "accurate and independent" information. Independence from any kind of power is emphasised, because the station must be committed only to "its duty to inform citizens".

*Público* insists it is completely independent from any kind of political or economic powers, considering itself responsible to its readers and nobody else. It underlines that "the existence of a well-informed and active public opinion is a fundamental condition for democracy and for the existence of an open, dynamic society".

*Expresso* refers to the issue of independence from any powers including "its advertisers". It insists that news media should not serve any particular interests; they should always be "autonomous institutions through which the citizens [...] can look for all the information they need to make their choices".

*Correio da Manhã* underlines "total independence" from all "powers and interests", whether economic, political, religious, or professionals. Furthermore, it states it will be "firm" in condemning any "abuse of power".

*SIC* defines its main purpose as the diffusion of quality programming, "independent from political or economic power, and from any doctrine or ideology". The information it produces "will be fair and accurate", which means "distinguishing between news and opinions". "Responsibility" and "tolerance" are referred to as other guidelines for its information, with "exclusion of any incitement to the practice of crimes or the violation of fundamental rights".

*Observador*, an online-only newspaper (now also running a radio station), defines itself by two main characteristics: "independent" and "free". The Edito-

rial Statute says that the publication does not have any political programme, but “has a view over the country and the world”. It aims “to contribute to a well-informed and active public opinion”, “valuing controversy and open discussion”.

Only indirectly do the news media refer to their watchdog mission or to their commitment to investigate and control the different powers present in society.

## (C8) Professional training

1 POINT

Journalists’ training is not a high priority among leading news media, except for technical skills attached to the new convergence efforts.

IN 2011  
1 POINT

All the editors interviewed for this report assign “a great importance” to journalism training, which does not necessarily mean that activities devoted to journalism training are part of the companies’ routines. Most of the training offered to journalists has to do more with skills than knowledge. Because these media outlets use new technologies more and more, and several of them are involved in multimedia projects, they must update their staff to meet the new industry requirements. Sometimes they organise internal sessions for this training, or they hire specialised training companies or universities to provide a course. In recent years, special attention is being given to Big Data and ways to manage and publish it in engaging ways. For example, interactive infographics are one of the most developed techniques.

Continuous training sessions for journalists are sometimes organised by entities outside media companies, as with the Centre for Training of Journalists or the Journalists’ Union. For example, courses on legal matters, war coverage, and education, have already taken place in recent years. However, they do not occur regularly or depend on the direct commitment of the news media themselves. In this field, the situation is rather poor, with the single exception of new skills training required to use new technologies or by the convergence trend occurring in most media outlets.

RTP, the public service television operator, has a permanent training centre with a very regular and diverse set of practical courses.

Although the companies don’t offer as many training opportunities as they would like, many journalists invest in their own training, either in specific areas they want to improve their expertise or in university courses, with many applying to master’s or doctoral courses in communication sciences. In the survey referred to above (Crespo at al., 2017), 60 per cent of respondents said that in the last five years, they had been involved in some training activity, either by their initiative (40%) or by the initiative of the company they work for (15.3%). The Centre for Training of Journalists and the universities are the institutions most often referred to as training institutions.

(C9) Watchdog function and financial resources

2 POINTS

Journalistic investigation has some priority, but the number and extent of investigations are limited by financial means.

IN 2011  
1 POINT

The financial situation of the Portuguese news media remains generally rather weak and seems to be much worse in 2021 when compared with 2011, though the dramatic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic are still to be fully evaluated (Martins et al., 2020; see also Fidalgo, 2011). Economic survival is their first priority, because most of them actually lose money every year, and the situation is evolving negatively. A small market, not much advertising, low rates of news media consumption, and an increasing presence of free Internet sites all help to explain the crisis. When it comes to budget cuts and downsizing measures, the first area to suffer is usually human resources. With smaller newsrooms, news media have increasing problems to invest in investigative reporting, because such reporting takes more time and more money.

Several editors interviewed for this report complained about this situation, saying “we have limitations as far as material resources are concerned, but we try not to depend too much on news agencies” (Rádio Renascença) and “the ambition and mission of a newspaper like ours would require many more resources, both human and material” (*Público*).

The views of *Expresso* and *Correio da Manhã* (both with a better economic situation) are more optimistic, saying “we have enough resources for our work, including our own investigative reporting” (*Expresso*) and “we have all the necessary resources to produce our model of newspaper. Never has an investigative story been abandoned due to lack of material resources” (*Correio da Manhã*). Even in television channels, as heard from both the public RTP and the private SIC, some room for investigative work developed in recent years, because longer format pieces of reporting with 10–15 minutes are now common and have good audience results in the evening newscasts. They also have weekly programmes and corresponding teams specifically devoted to investigation. Furthermore, the participation of Portuguese media in some of the recent international networks of investigative journalism also increased the attention given to these issues and brought interesting public support. All the recent political and economic scandals in the country have been uncovered and publicly denounced by journalists.

In general terms, and looking further than our sample of leading news media, the fact is that Portuguese newspapers, television, and radio stations still depend a great deal on news agencies. Investigative reporting is not as extensive as it should be and tends to be concentrated mostly in four or five news outlets. Coverage of international affairs, except for football games and very big disasters, is also mostly dependent on news agencies as well. Again, the small dimension of Portuguese media outlets and their lack of resources is responsible for this.

## Conclusions

In political terms, the relatively recent conquest of democracy, after a long period of dictatorship and isolation from the outside world, helps to explain the strong presence of a centralised state and the absence (or fragility) of autonomous social dynamics. Accordingly, the existence of important progressive laws is not always strong enough to counterbalance the weight of practices and day-to-day routines.

In economic terms, the structural weakness of the Portuguese media industry, worsened by the 2008 financial crisis and by the 2020 pandemic, makes it difficult to run a profitable business and guarantee good conditions for journalists to do their work.

The ongoing changes in the traditional media business model, with advertising severely decreasing (or moving to technological distribution platforms such as Google or Facebook) and with sales also affected by the generalised trend of audiences to consume free-of-charge information on the Internet, endanger the survival of most media outlets. The alternative of more media concentration and larger conglomerates is not good news for freedom, pluralism, and diversity of information.

The popularity of the Internet and the multiplication of social media networks brought new challenges to the media industry in general, and to journalism in particular, changing habits of news consumption, but also of news production. These are increasingly conditioned by outside agendas, vertiginous rhythms, and audience likes.

In cultural terms, a long history of low literacy and low reading habits is responsible for very low rates of media consumption, with the exception of television, although the fast development of the Internet may help to change things.

Media in Portugal have made an important contribution to democracy and given precious help to consolidate democracy itself. However, there still seems to be a great deal to do to guarantee that this contribution goes beyond the formal aspects of media functioning and pays attention to such issues as quality of news and information, media literacy, public participation, and commitment to citizenship.

### Notes

1. During the first months of the Covid-19 pandemic, all Portuguese newspapers decided to give free access to all content directly or indirectly related with the disease and corresponding healthcare.
2. The existence of a news ombudsperson both in public radio and in public television is mandatory by law, since the approval of the last version of the Law on the Public Service Broadcasting in 2006. Although television and radio belong to the same public company, there is an ombudsperson for each medium.

3. This traditional right to journalists' professional secrecy was changed in the last revision of the Statute. The right to not disclose the identity of information sources is still granted in general terms, but an exception is previewed in the Penal Code. This means that if and when a judge in a court of law decides that the identity of an information source is essential to pursuing justice, the journalist may be compelled to reveal it. Nevertheless, the journalists' Code of Ethics plainly states that those professionals must not disclose the identity of their sources. Because of this, one journalist has already been convicted in court because, in spite of an order given by the judge, he insisted on protecting his sources.
4. The number of journalists has decreased in recent years (see Figure 1), but it grew very quickly during the previous three decades: between 1987 and 2006, it increased from 1,281 to 7,402 professionals, most of them (ca. 60%) with some academic degree in journalism or communication sciences (Fernandes, 2008). It should also be noted that only 19.8 per cent of them were women in 1987, but the figure was about 41 per cent in 2006 – and this same percentage continues nowadays (41% women journalists, 59% men journalists) (Salim, 2008; CCPJ, 2020).
5. Another survey of journalists, made in 2015 and involving 806 valid respondents, reached similar conclusions, with 55.4 per cent of the inquired confessing to receiving less than EUR 1,000 per month (Miranda & Gama, 2019).
6. This percentage must be read with caution, because, according to the Journalists' Union sources, the real freelancers (journalists who choose to work with that status) are very few in Portugal – and always have been. Many of these “freelancers” are actually collaborators, with no labour contract, usually working for a specific media outlet, but preferring to be free in order to get an opportunity in another company, if one appears.

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