

Media Councils in the Digital Age. Survey results

Research report

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This research was carried on thanks to the European Commission through the grant for the project *Media Councils in the Digital Age* funded by DG Connect.



Introduction

This report presents the results of a research project aimed to ask the opinion of journalists and other relevant stakeholders about how media councils could adapt to the challenges of the digital age.

The results obtained are based on two surveys conducted between August and November 2020 among journalists and members of the board of media councils from nine countries. More specifically, survey to journalists was distributed among a network of contacts of the European Federation of Journalists and affiliated journalists' unions in selected countries: Austria, Belgium (Wallonia and Flanders), Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Poland, and Spain. Finally, 454 valid questionnaires were received. Number of questionnaires received by country was very irregular and non-valid comparative analysis was possible to carry out.

Survey to members of the board of the media councils was distributed by the research team among the members of boards of the media councils from the same countries except Poland and Italy. Members of the board from Austria, Belgium (Flanders and Wallonia), Finland, Germany, Ireland, and Spain (includes media councils from Spain, Catalonia, and Andalusia) answered the questionnaire. 61 valid questionnaires were received.

A third survey was also distributed among media companies and editors-in-chief from the same targeted countries. Research team selected the three main in terms of audience print newspapers, radio stations, TV stations, and online news media from each country. Although the questionnaire was distributed in three different waves in order to obtain as much answers as possible, the number of responses obtained was very low, preventing a valid analysis of the results. Despite the difficulty to interpret the lack of collaboration of media companies, it could be a sign of lack of interest on media councils, at least in some countries. The overall situation with covid-19 outbreak might have also affected the low response level in some of the surveys.

The objective of the research was to analyse how journalists see the job of media councils and self-regulatory bodies, how these bodies are affected by the digital age, and how they can adapt to the new ethical challenges.

This report has three main sections:

- Results from survey among journalists
- Results from survey among members of the board of the media councils
- Comparative analysis and conclusions.

Survey about self-regulation bodies and challenges of digital age

Journalists

Survey.

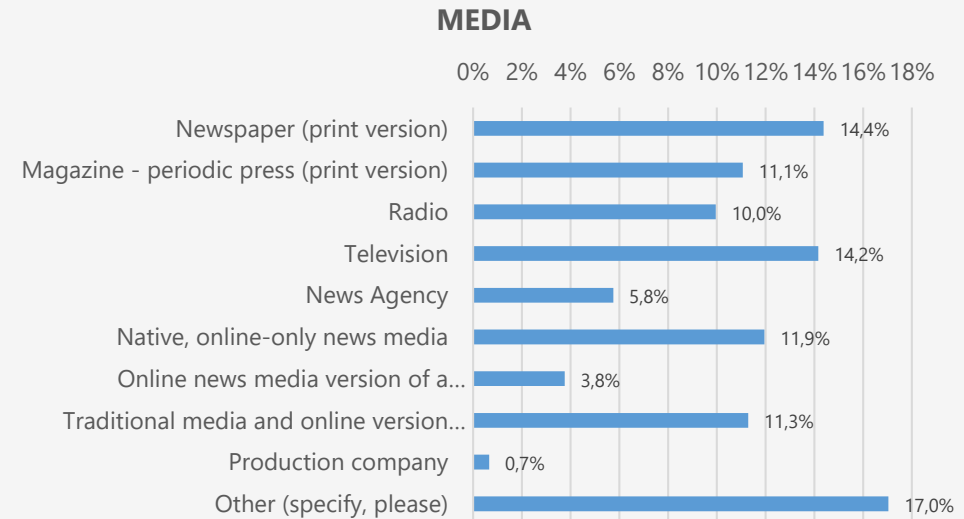
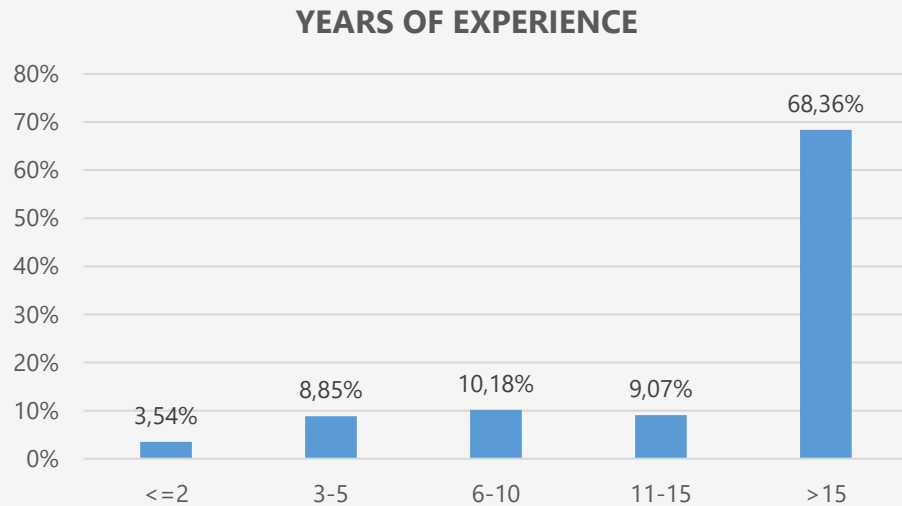
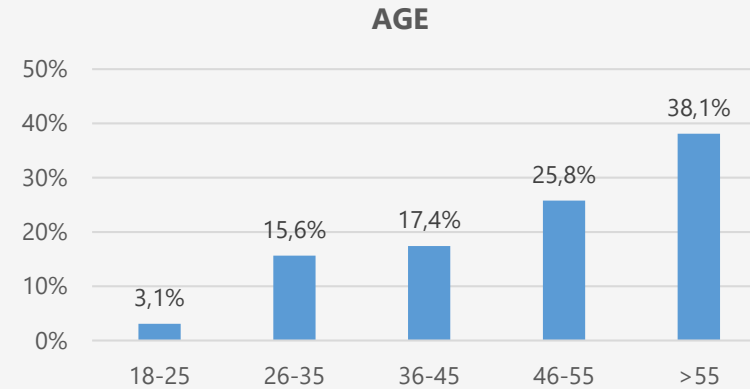
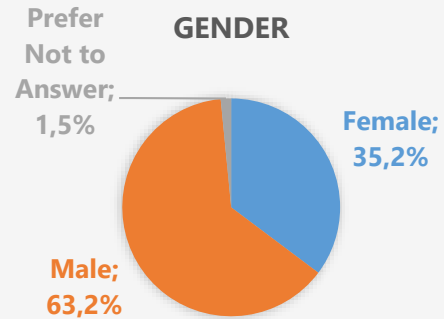
Results based on a survey to 454 journalists conducted from August to November 2020.

Questionnaire was distributed among EFJ networks.

Journalists participants are from: Austria, Belgium (Wallonia and Flanders), Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Poland, and Spain.



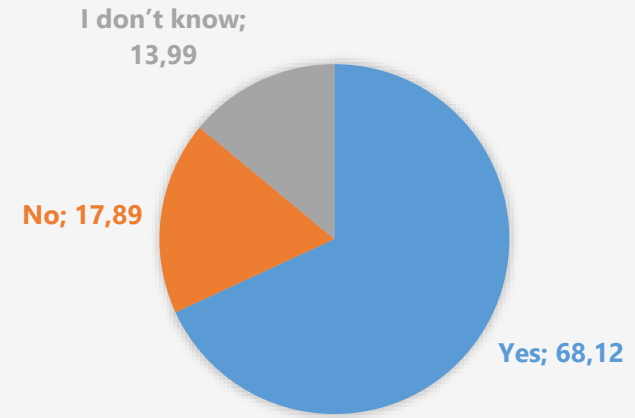
Sociodemographics



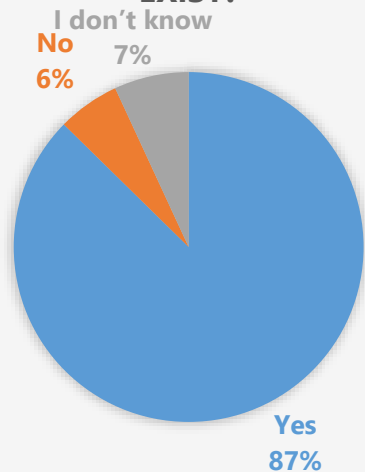
Media councils - Knowledge

- 1 Most of the respondents know the national media council (68,12%), however, for a relevant number of them media councils are unknown or they think don't exist.
- 2 Respondents think that media councils should exist, and only 6% don't.

DOES YOUR COUNTRY HAVE A PRESS OR MEDIA COUNCIL?



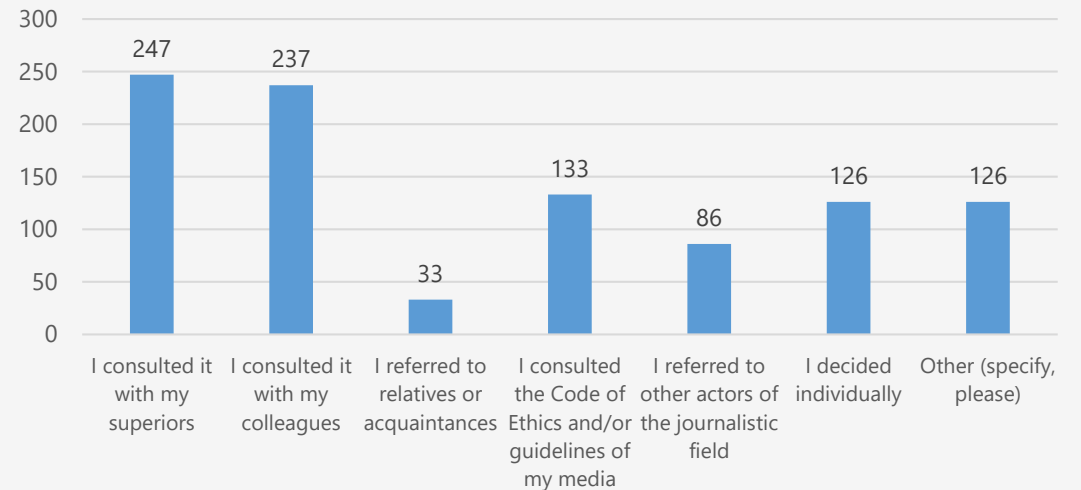
DO YOU THINK THAT MEDIA COUNCILS SHOULD EXIST?



Ethical dilemmas

- 1 Consult with superiors is the most frequent practice to face ethical dilemmas, followed by consult colleagues.
- 2 Referring to media councils have a low importance in facing ethical dilemmas (86), but journalists consult the Code of Ethics (133).
- 3 No significant differences by gender, age and years of experience

WHEN YOU HAD AN ETHICAL DILEMMA IN YOUR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE, WHAT DID YOU DO?

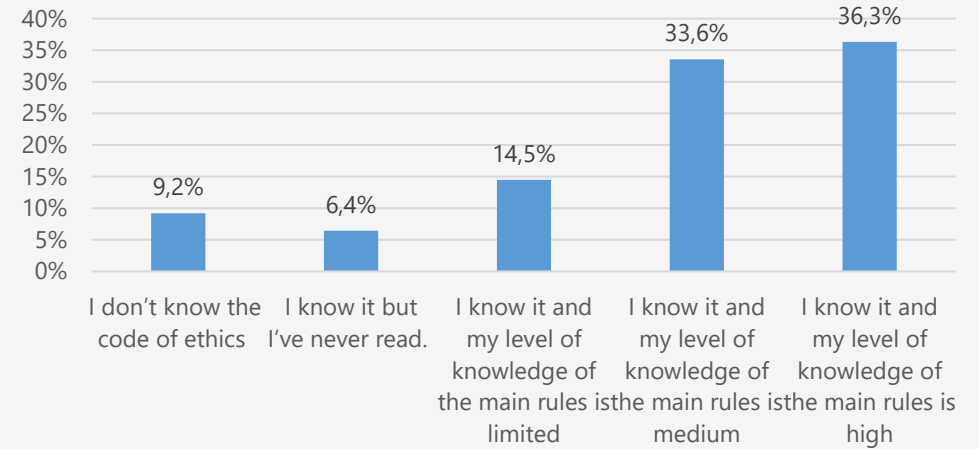


*More than one answer was possible

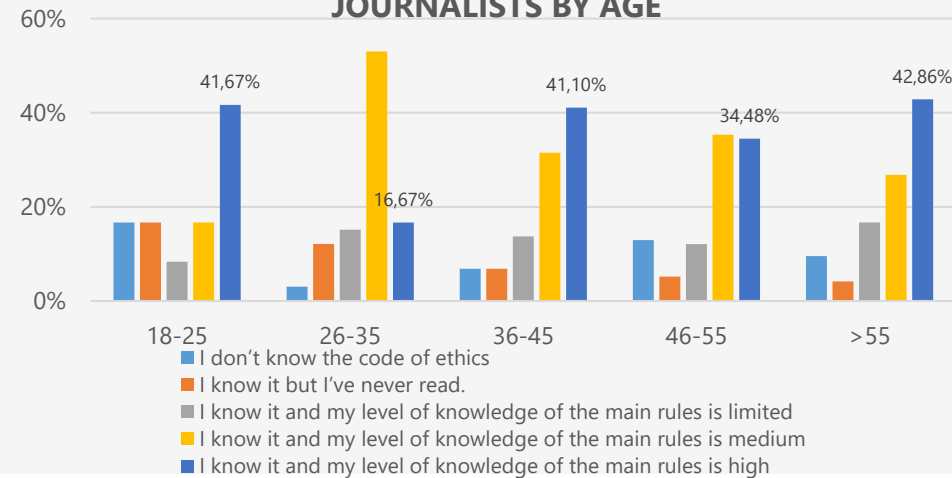
Knowledge of the code of ethics

- 1 Most of the respondents have a medium or high knowledge of the national Code of Ethics
- 2 Young journalists have a high level of knowledge of Code of Ethics. Surprisingly, this is also the group of age with the least knowledge
- 3 There are not significant differences by gender. However, men have slightly minor knowledge than women

DO YOU KNOW THE CODE OF ETHICS FOR JOURNALISTS USED IN YOUR COUNTRY?



KNOWLEDGE OF CODE OF ETHICS FOR JOURNALISTS BY AGE

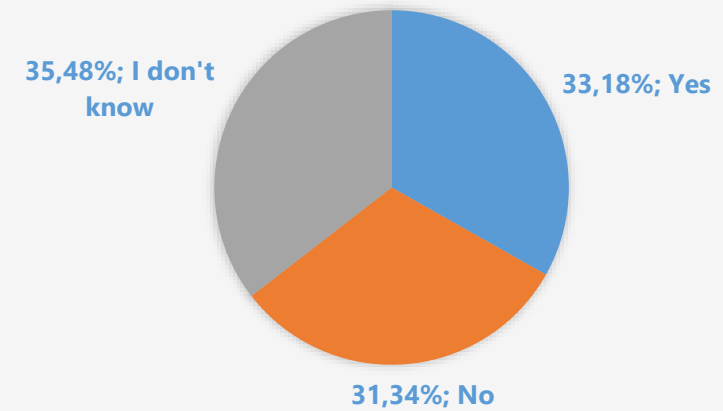


Code of Ethics and the digital

1

Only 1 out 3 respondents thinks that Code of Ethics are adapted to respond new ethical challenges arising from digitalisation and the emergence of internet

CODE OF ETHICS OF YOUR COUNTRY RESPONDS TO NEW ETHICAL CHALLENGES ARISING FROM THE DIGITALIZATION

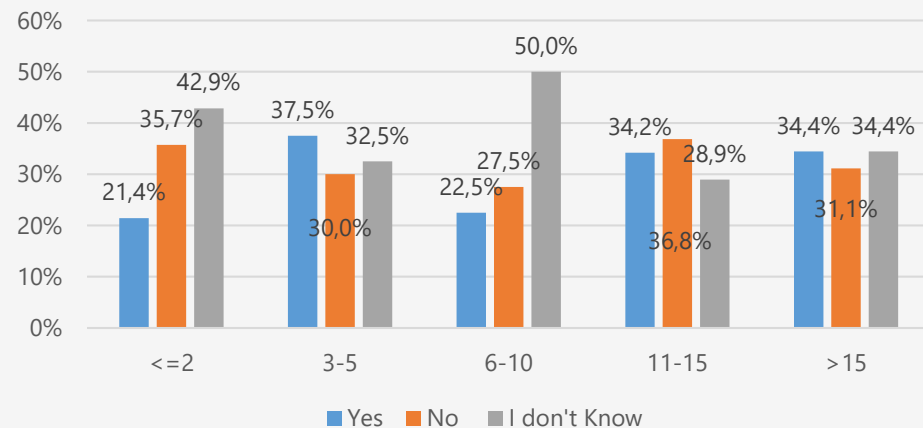


Code of Ethics and the digital

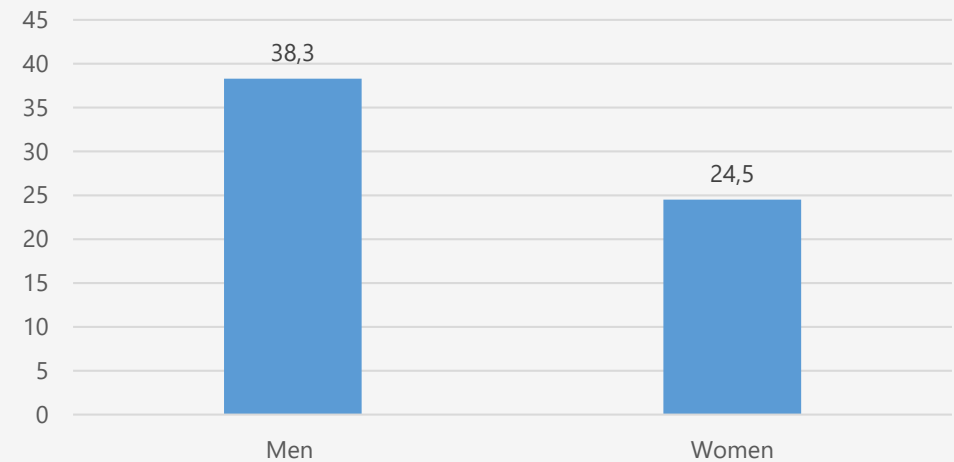
1 Women journalists consider that Code of Ethics are less adapted to respond new ethical challenges than men are

2 Journalists with 3-5 years of experience is the group more confident in the Code of Ethics

CODE OF ETHICS ADAPTED TO DIGITAL ETHICAL CHALLENGES BY YEARS OF EXPERIENCE



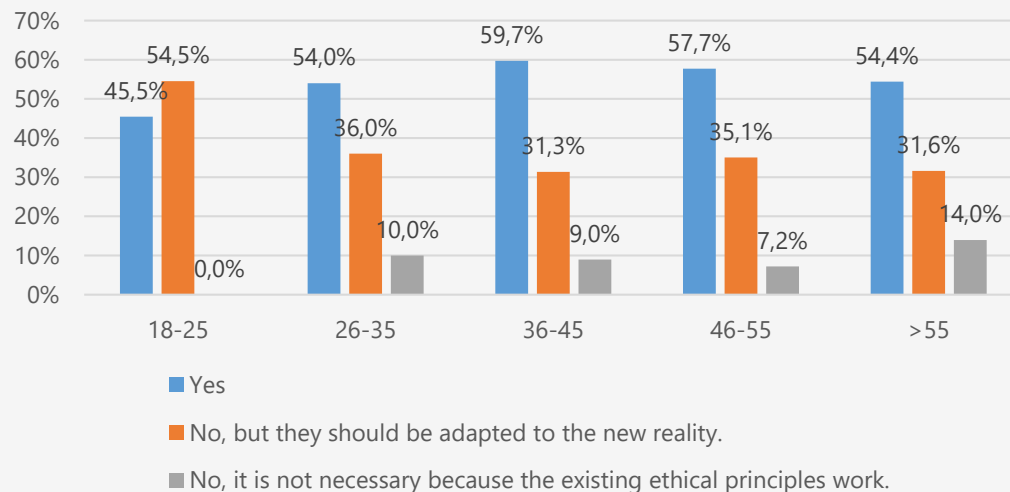
CODE OF ETHICS ADAPTED TO DIGITAL ETHICAL CHALLENGES BY GENDER (ANSWER=YES)



Ethics principles and the digital

- 1 Most of the respondents think that digitalisation requires new ethical principles
- 2 There are not significant differences by gender and age. However, young journalists assert more frequently than other age groups that digitalisation doesn't require new ethical principles

DO YOU THINK THAT THE INTERNET AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES REQUIRE NEW ETHICAL PRINCIPLES? BY AGE

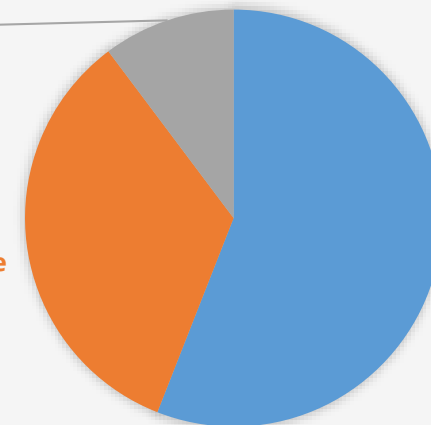


DO YOU THINK THAT THE INTERNET AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES REQUIRE NEW ETHICAL PRINCIPLES?

No, it is not necessary because the existing ethical principles work.;...

No, but they should be adapted to the new reality.; 33,8%

Yes; 56,0%



Daily practices and ethical challenges

1 To check the information before its publication is the practice that media value most from respondents daily work

2 To publish as soon as possible and to attract traffic are two practices valued by media from respondents daily work. Both can pose an ethical challenges in certain circumstances

WHAT DOES THE EDITORIAL HIERARCHY IN YOUR MEDIA VALUE MOST FROM YOUR DAILY WORK?

	Not valued	Valued a little bit	Neither agree nor disagree	Valued	Very valued
To publish the news as soon as possible	3,3%	11,1%	14,8%	42,9%	27,9%
To attract traffic/audience	2,5%	7,5%	13,4%	41,2%	35,4%
To check the information before its publication	1,4%	10,3%	14,8%	32,0%	41,5%
To consult all sources involved before publication	6,7%	11,7%	16,7%	37,6%	27,3%
My independence from the editorial line of the firm	11,4%	9,2%	26,7%	32,0%	20,6%

Daily practices and ethical challenges

- 1 Journalists consider that they are responsible for the new content arising from digitalisation
- 2 Journalists strongly agree that they must ensure the quality of linked content in their stories

DO YOU CONSIDER THAT WHEN A JOURNALIST INCLUDES EXTERNAL LINKS (HYPERLINK) IN A PIECE OF NEWS, S/HE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:

	Strongly disagree	Fairly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Fairly agree	Strongly agree
The accuracy/veracity/credibility of the linked information	6,9%	10%	10,3%	40%	32,8%
That the linked page does not contain illegal content	4,2%	7,5%	10,3%	34,7%	43,3%
That there is no conflict of interest when referring a commercial page	7,8%	12,5%	16,7%	31,2%	31,8%

Daily practices and ethical challenges

1

Journalists strongly agree that they must ensure the quality of embedded content in their stories

DO YOU CONSIDER THAT WHEN A JOURNALIST INCLUDES “EMBEDDED” EXTERNAL MATERIAL IN HER/HIS OWN PIECE OF INFORMATION, S/HE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:

	Strongly disagree	Fairly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Fairly agree	Strongly agree
The accuracy/veracity/credibility of the embedded information	4,5%	6,4%	10,3%	35,1%	43,7%
That the embedded information does not contain illegal content	3,1%	6,7%	7,5%	32,9%	49,9%
That there is no conflict of interest when embedding a commercial page	6,1%	11,9%	14,7%	31,4%	35,8%

Daily practices and ethical challenges

- 1 Journalists strongly agree that they must ensure the quality of user generated content used in their stories

DO YOU THINK THAT WHEN A JOURNALIST INCLUDES MATERIAL GENERATED BY THE AUDIENCE (PHOTOGRAPHS, VIDEOS, TEXTS ...) IN HIS/HER OWN NEWS, HE/SHE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:

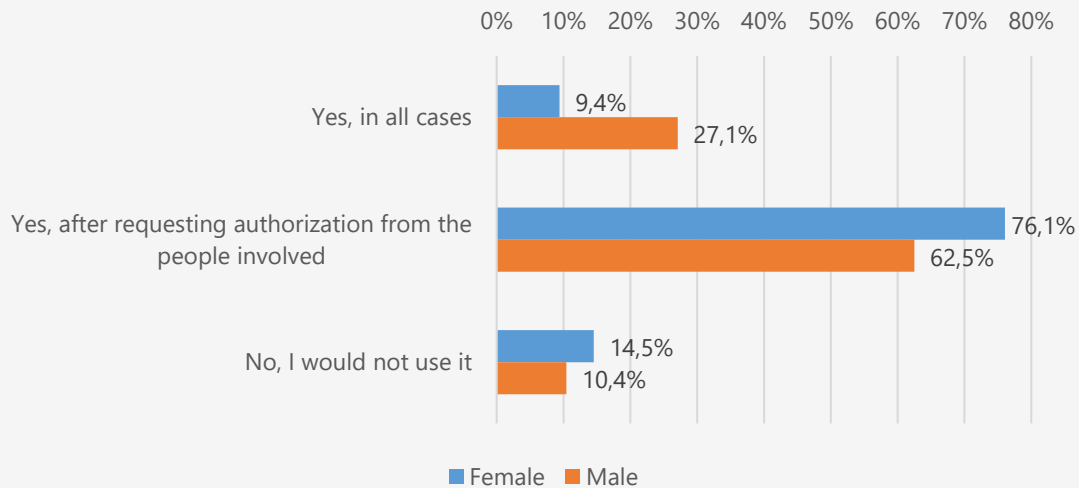
	Strongly disagree	Fairly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Fairly agree	Strongly agree
The accuracy/veracity/credibility of the UGC included	1,9%	6,1%	6,9%	33,1%	51,9%
That the material included does not contain illegal content	1,7%	6,9%	6,4%	29,4%	55,6%
That the material included does not contain illegal content	1,9%	2,5%	12,8%	28,3%	54,4%

Ethics principles and the digital

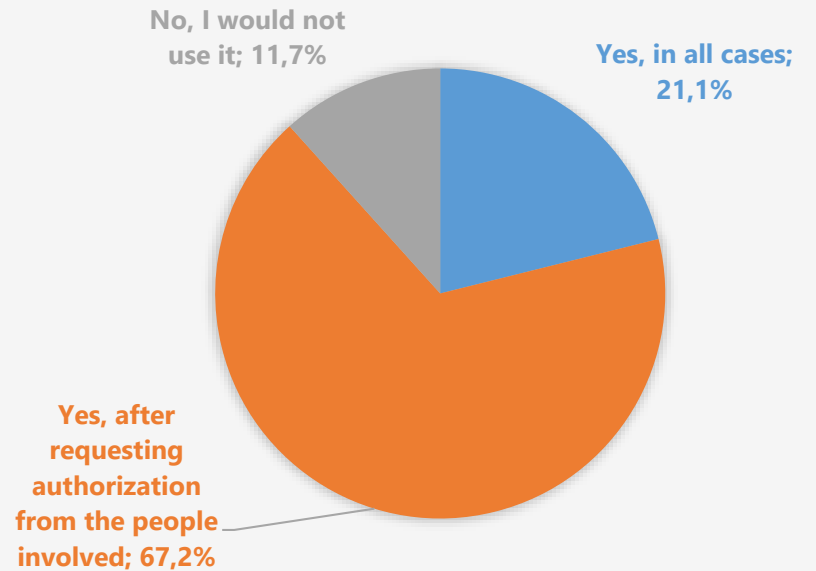
1 Public content available on personal profiles on social networks can be used in a story after requesting authorisation (67,2%)

2 Women journalists are more cautious in using public content available on personal profiles than men journalists are

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT PUBLIC CONTENT AVAILABLE IN PERSONAL PROFILES ON SOCIAL NETWORKS CAN BE USED DIRECTLY IN A PIECE OF INFORMATION?

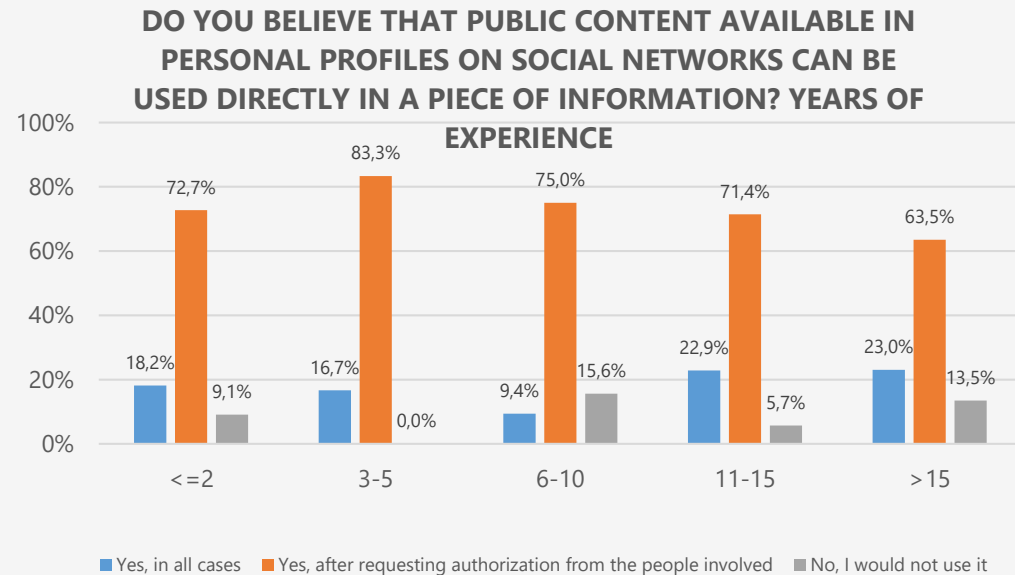


DO YOU BELIEVE THAT PUBLIC CONTENT AVAILABLE IN PERSONAL PROFILES ON SOCIAL NETWORKS CAN BE USED DIRECTLY IN A PIECE OF INFORMATION?

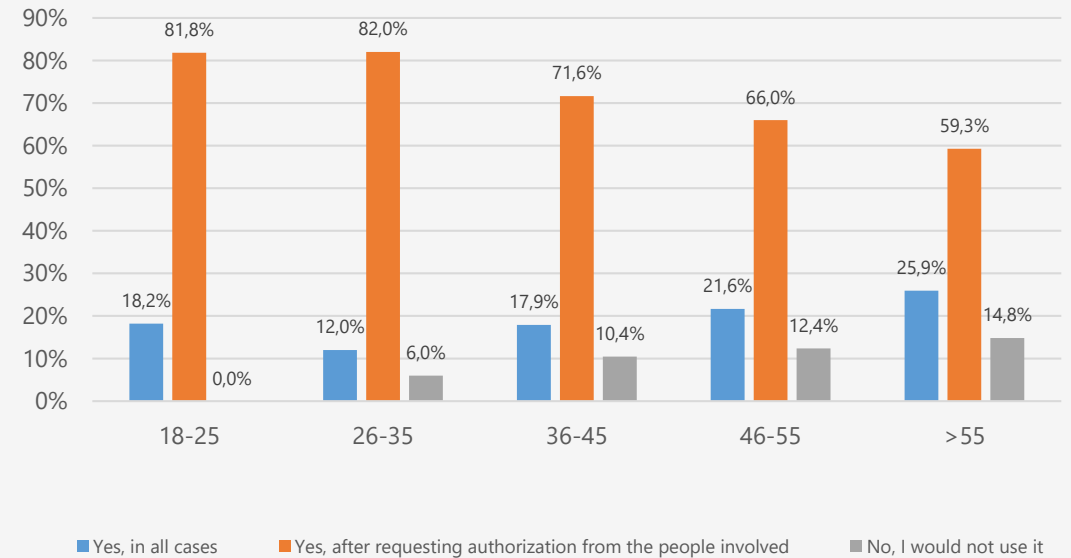


Ethics principles and the digital

- 1 All age groups think that public content available on personal profiles can be used for a story, however older journalists have a greater diversity of opinions
- 2 Similarly, more experienced journalists also have a greater diversity of opinion. They are more likely to use that content in all cases.

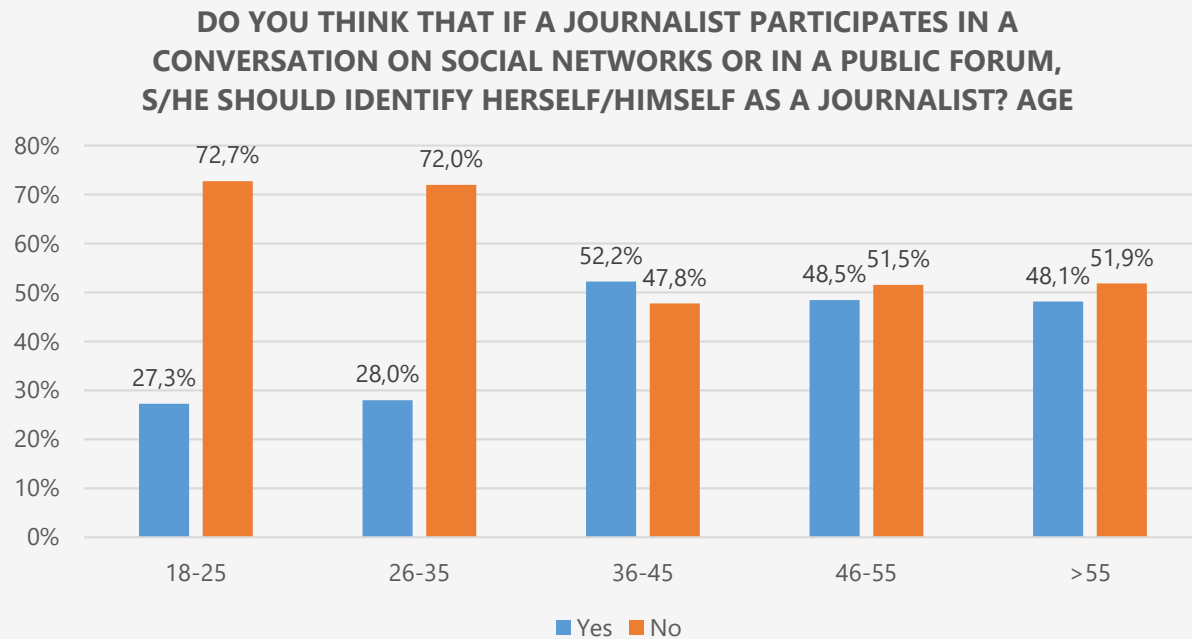


DO YOU BELIEVE THAT PUBLIC CONTENT AVAILABLE IN PERSONAL PROFILES ON SOCIAL NETWORKS CAN BE USED DIRECTLY IN A PIECE OF INFORMATION?

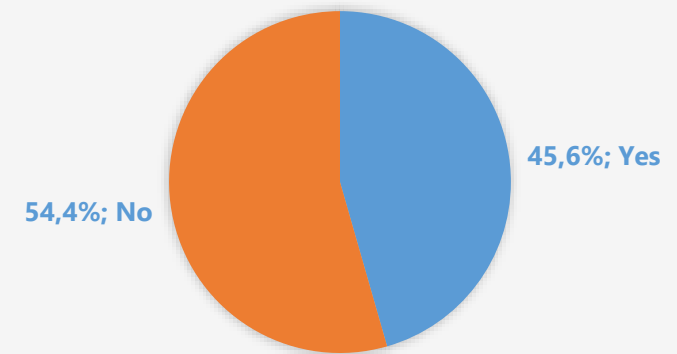


Ethics principles and the digital

- 1 Most of the respondents consider they should not identify as a journalists in public conversation on social networks
- 2 Young journalists are less likely than older ones to identify themselves as journalists on social media



DO YOU THINK THAT IF A JOURNALIST PARTICIPATES IN A CONVERSATION ON SOCIAL NETWORKS OR IN A PUBLIC FORUM, S/HE SHOULD IDENTIFY HERSELF/HIMSELF AS A JOURNALIST?



Ethics principles and the digital

- 1 The use of social networks by journalists generates very diverse opinions, particularly regarding the professional vs private use of them
- 2 Journalists consider that they should be able to give their opinion through social networks on any subject, not only on the topics of news they published

IF A JOURNALIST HAS A PROFILE ON SOCIAL NETWORKS, IN WHICH S/HE IDENTIFIES HERSELF/HIMSELF AS A JOURNALIST, S/HE CAN...

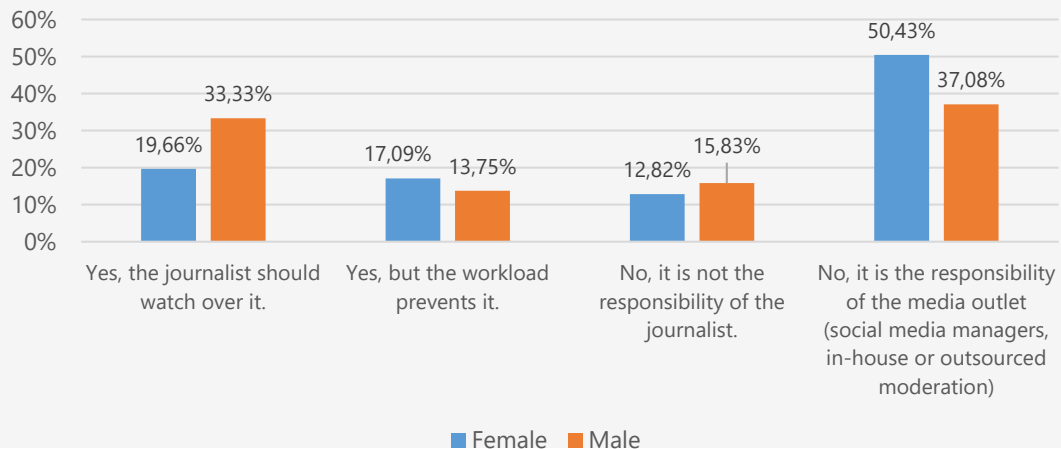
	Strongly disagree	Fairly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Fairly agree	Strongly agree
Use that profile to pronounce her/his personal political and ideological positions.	22,8%	23,1%	16,1%	22,5%	15,6%
Use that profile to pronounce his/her opinion on current news.	8,6%	12,8%	16,1%	35,6%	26,9%
Use that profile only for professional purposes in relation to the news that s/he is preparing or has already published and express his/her opinion on it.	16,39%	25,28%	23,06%	23,33%	11,94%
Use that profile only in relation to the news that s/he is preparing or has already published without expressing his/her opinion on it	19,44%	27,22%	21,39%	18,33%	13,61%

Ethics principles and the digital

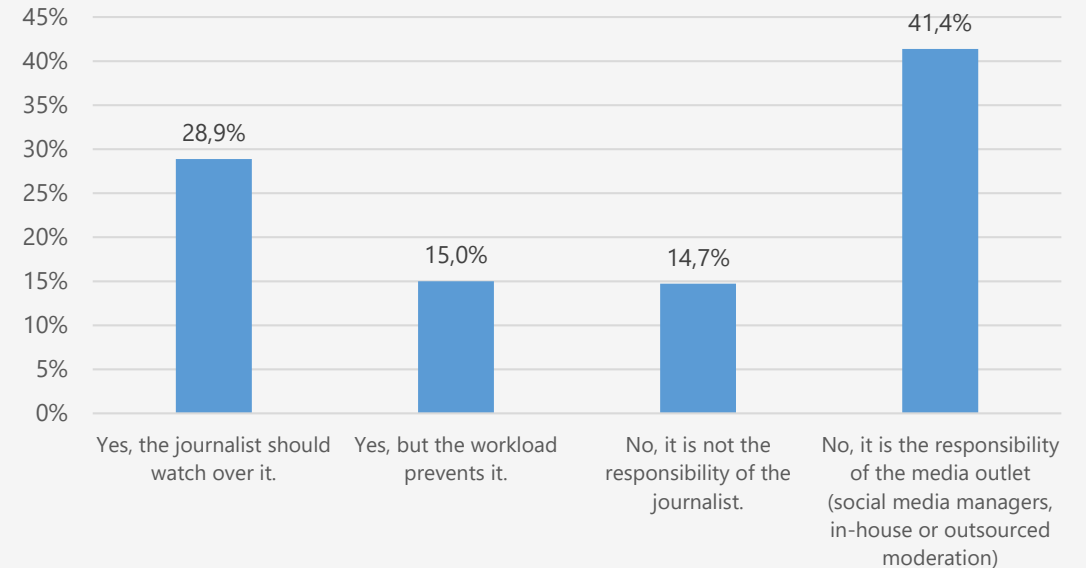
1 41,4% of respondents consider that ensure comments on news quality is not the responsibility of the journalists, but of the media outlets

2 Women journalists consider more frequently than men journalists that ensuring the politeness of comments on news is the responsibility of the media outlets

DO YOU THINK THAT A JOURNALIST SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE COMMENTS PUBLISHED BY HIS/HER READERS [IN ONE OF HIS/HER PIECE OF NEWS] ARE RESPECTFUL/POLITE? BY GENDER



DO YOU THINK THAT A JOURNALIST SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE COMMENTS PUBLISHED BY HIS/HER READERS [IN ONE OF HIS/HER PIECE OF NEWS] ARE RESPECTFUL/POLITE?



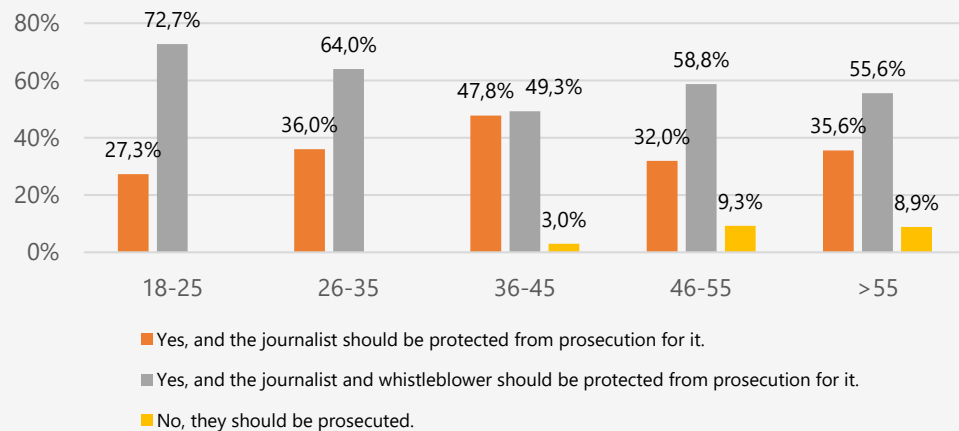
3 Age and years of experience affect what journalists think about ensuring politeness of comments on news. Younger and less experienced respondents consider that it's media outlets responsibility.

Ethics principles and the digital

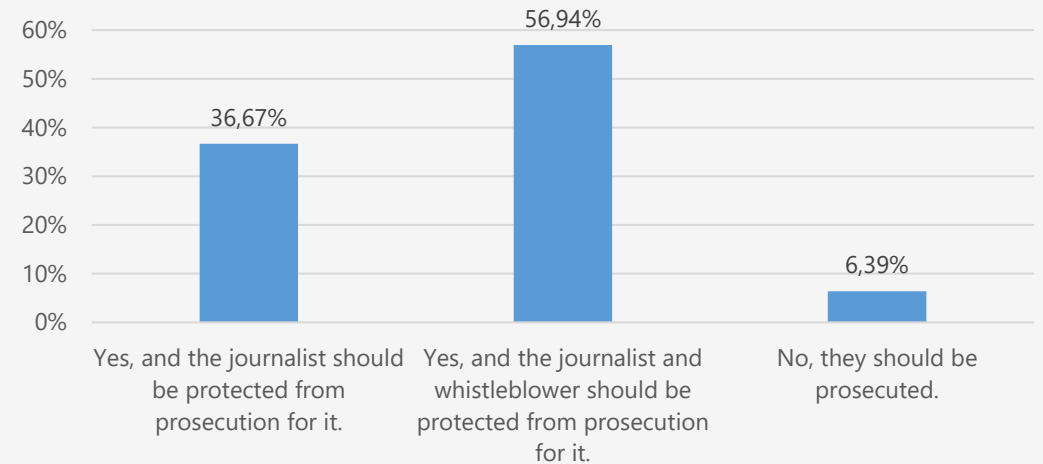
1 Most of the respondents find acceptable to publish relevant information provided by whistleblowers, and both journalists and whistleblowers, should be protected.

2 Young and less experienced journalists find more acceptable than other groups to publish relevant information provided by whistleblowers, and both journalists and whistleblowers should be protected.

DO YOU FIND IT ACCEPTABLE FOR JOURNALISTS TO PUBLISH RELEVANT INFORMATION OF PUBLIC INTEREST PROVIDED BY WHISTLEBLOWERS OR LEAKED ANONYMOUSLY? - AGE



DO YOU FIND IT ACCEPTABLE FOR JOURNALISTS TO PUBLISH RELEVANT INFORMATION OF PUBLIC INTEREST PROVIDED BY WHISTLEBLOWERS OR LEAKED ANONYMOUSLY?

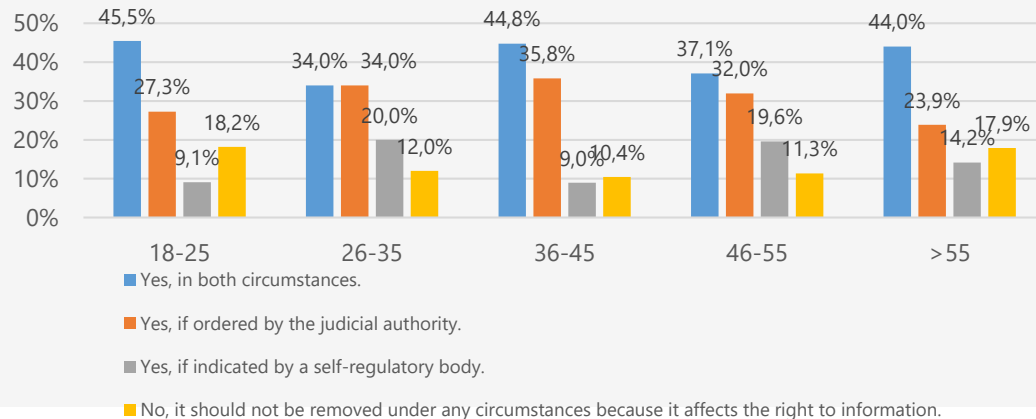


Ethics principles and the digital

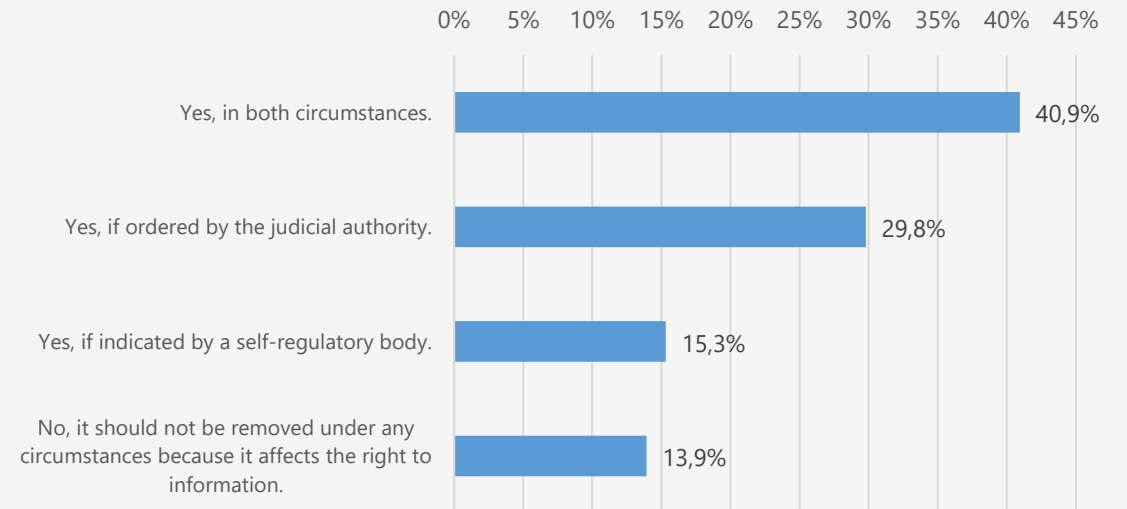
1 Most of the respondents find appropriate to delete stories sanctioned by judicial authorities or by self-regulatory bodies

2 There are not significant difference by gender and age and deleted stories is the most frequent answer, however, young and older journalists are more favourable of don't remove sanctioned stories because it affects the right to information

DO YOU CONSIDER APPROPRIATE THAT, IF A PIECE OF NEWS THAT YOU HAVE PUBLISHED IS SANCTIONED BY THE JUDICIAL AUTHORITY OR ETHICALLY CONDEMNED BY A SELF-REGULATORY BODY, IT MUST BE PERMANENTLY DELETED?



DO YOU CONSIDER APPROPRIATE THAT, IF A PIECE OF NEWS THAT YOU HAVE PUBLISHED IS SANCTIONED BY THE JUDICIAL AUTHORITY OR ETHICALLY CONDEMNED BY A SELF-REGULATORY BODY, IT MUST BE PERMANENTLY DELETED (RIGHT TO BE FORGOTTEN)?

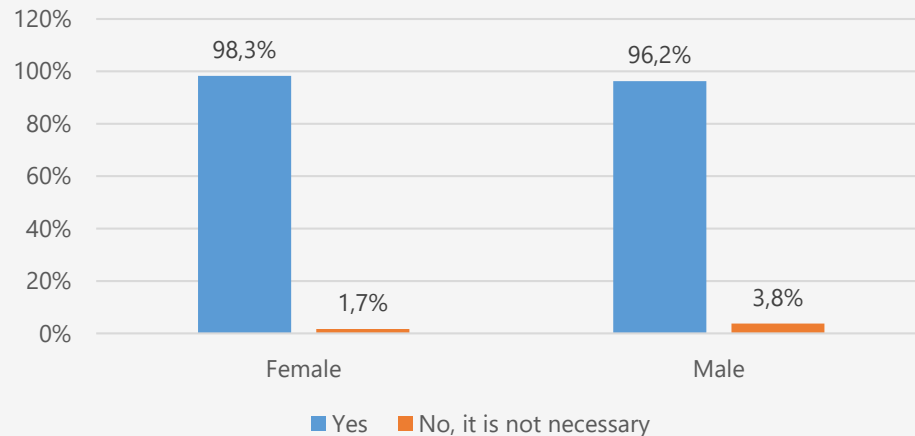


Ethics principles and the digital

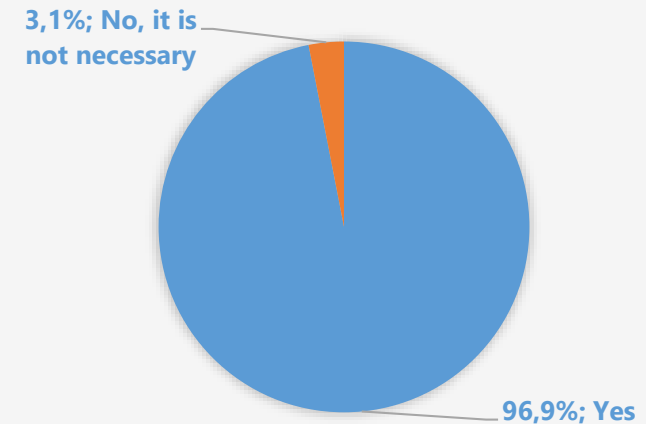
1 96,7% of the respondents think that content produced by robots should be identified as such

2 There are not significant differences by gender, age, and years of experience. There are not significant difference by gender,

DO YOU THINK THAT THE INFORMATION PRODUCED BY ROBOTS SHOULD BE IDENTIFIED AS SUCH?



DO YOU THINK THAT THE INFORMATION PRODUCED BY ROBOTS SHOULD BE IDENTIFIED AS SUCH?

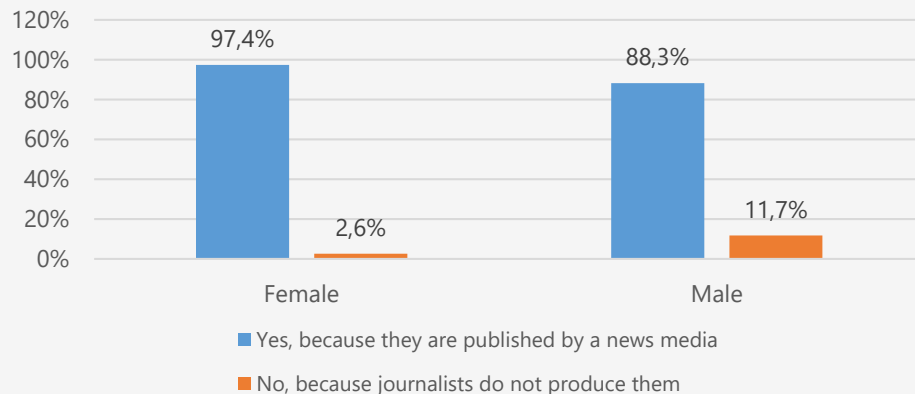


Ethics principles and the digital

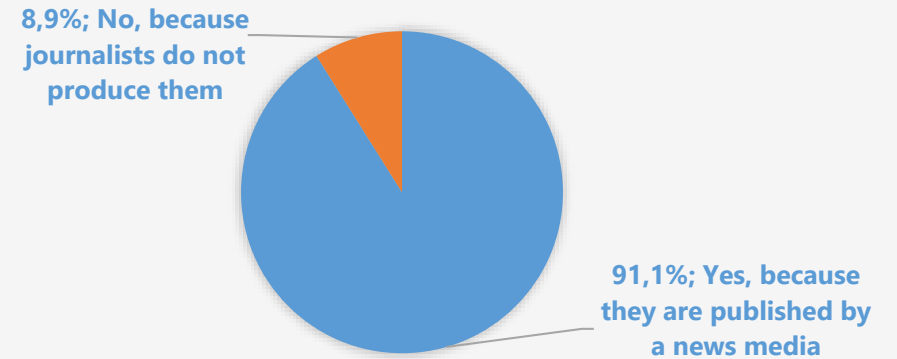
1 91,1% of the respondents think that content produced by robots should be governed by the same ethical standards applicable to journalists

2 Women journalists are slightly more favourable to consider that content produced by robots should be governed by the same ethical standards applicable to journalists.

DO YOU THINK THAT THE INFORMATION PRODUCED BY ROBOTS SHOULD BE GOVERNED BY THE SAME ETHICAL STANDARDS APPLICABLE TO JOURNALISTS?



DO YOU THINK THAT THE INFORMATION PRODUCED BY ROBOTS SHOULD BE GOVERNED BY THE SAME ETHICAL STANDARDS APPLICABLE TO JOURNALISTS?

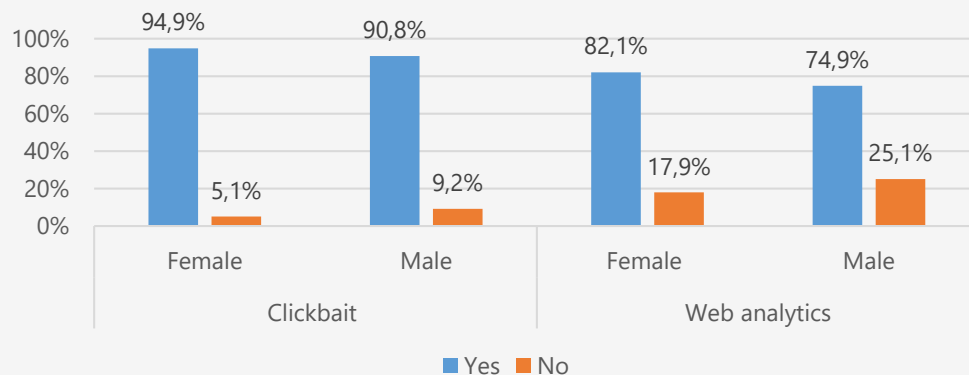


Ethics principles and the digital

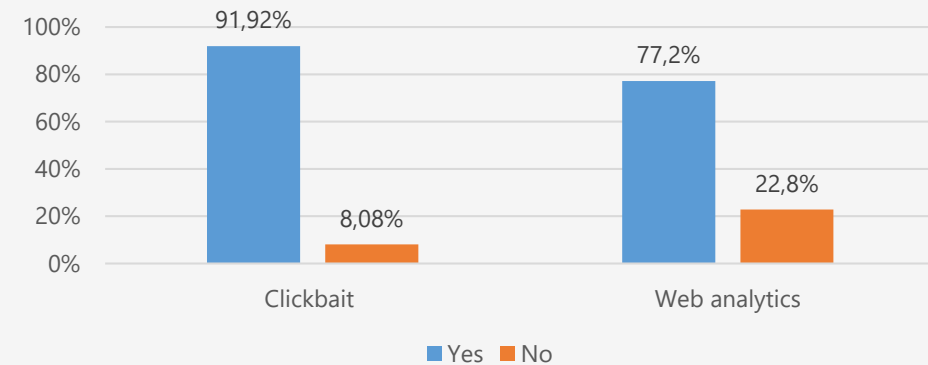
1 Most of the respondents consider that clickbait and web analytics dilute some journalistic principles. Clickbait practices are considered more debatable than web analytics.

2 Women journalists tend to consider these practices more critical than men journalists, particularly web analytics.

DO YOU CONSIDER THAT THE FOLLOWING PRACTICES DILUTE THE JOURNALISTIC PRINCIPLE OF PUBLIC INTEREST AND REPLACE IT WITH OTHER INTERESTS THAT ARE ETHICALLY DEBATABLE?



DO YOU CONSIDER THAT THE FOLLOWING PRACTICES DILUTE THE JOURNALISTIC PRINCIPLE OF PUBLIC INTEREST AND REPLACE IT WITH OTHER INTERESTS THAT ARE ETHICALLY DEBATABLE?



3 There are not significant differences by age and years of experience, except for young journalists. 45,5% of them don't consider web analytics as debatable practice.

Ethics principles and the digital

- 1 Fact-checkers are considered necessary, and they complement the work of journalists.
- 2 Fact-checkers are not considered ideologically biased.

RATE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS REGARDING FACT-CHECKERS

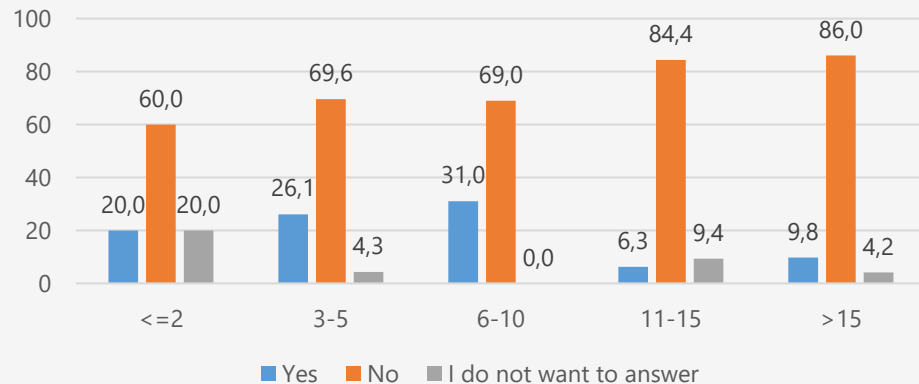
	Strongly disagree	Fairly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Fairly agree	Strongly agree
They are unnecessary; checking the information is a function of the journalist.	23,7%	25,6%	14,2%	20,9%	15,6%
They are necessary and complement the work of journalists.	6,7%	7,0%	14,5%	38,7%	33,1%
They are necessary, but they are ideologically biased.	13,6%	17,3%	42,1%	21,4%	5,6%

Ethics principles and the pandemics

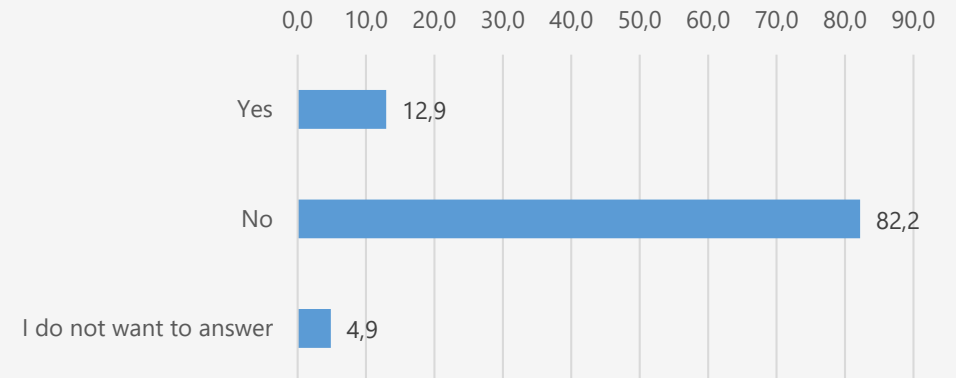
1 Most of the respondents did not encounter any ethical problem during the Covid-19 pandemics.

2 Young and less experienced journalists tend to encounter less ethical problems than other age and experienced groups. There are no significant difference by gender.

DID YOU ENCOUNTER ANY ETHICAL PROBLEMS AS A JOURNALIST DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS?



DID YOU ENCOUNTER ANY ETHICAL PROBLEMS AS A JOURNALIST DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS?



Survey about self-regulation bodies and challenges of digital age

Media Councils' members

Survey.

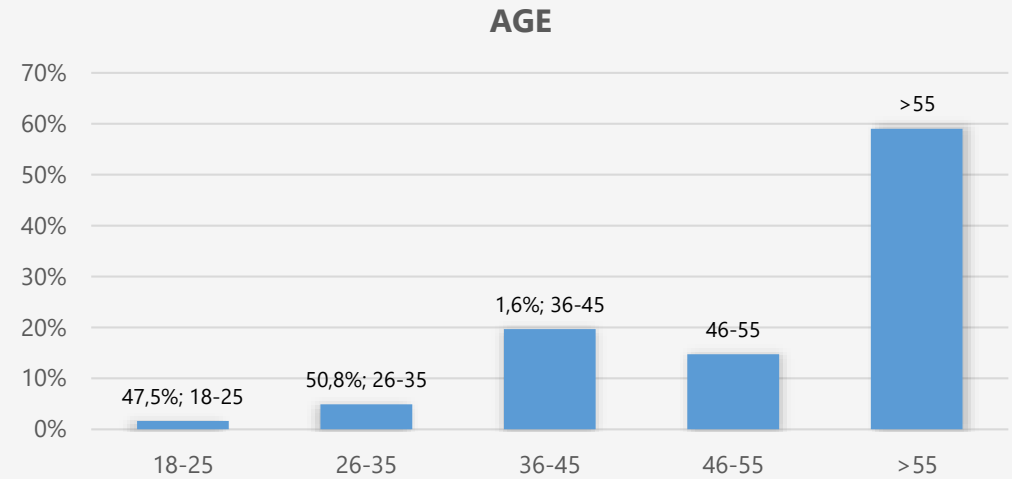
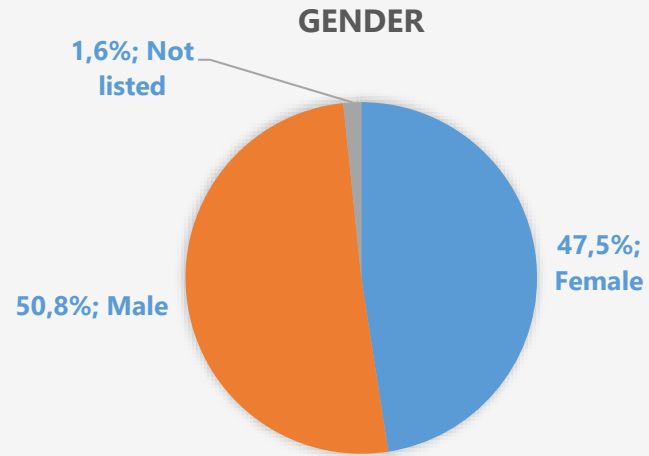
Results based on a survey to 61 members of the boards of media/press councils from 6 European countries: Austria, Belgium (Flanders and Wallonia), Finland, Germany, Ireland, and Spain*.

Survey was conducted from August to November 2020.

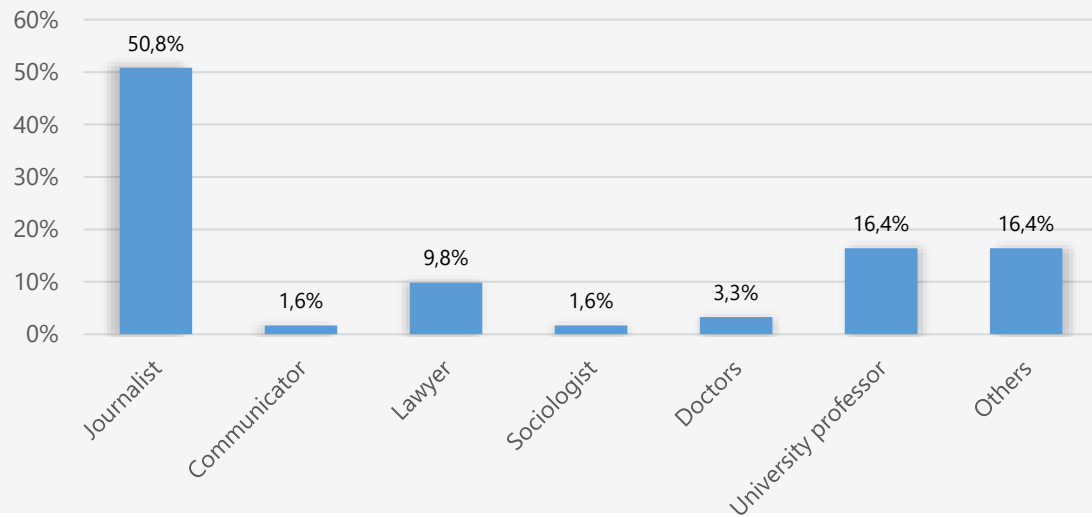


* Includes Consell de la Informació de Catalunya, Comisión de Arbitraje, Quejas y Deontología, and Comisión de Deontología y Garantías del Colegio Profesional de Periodistas de Andalucía

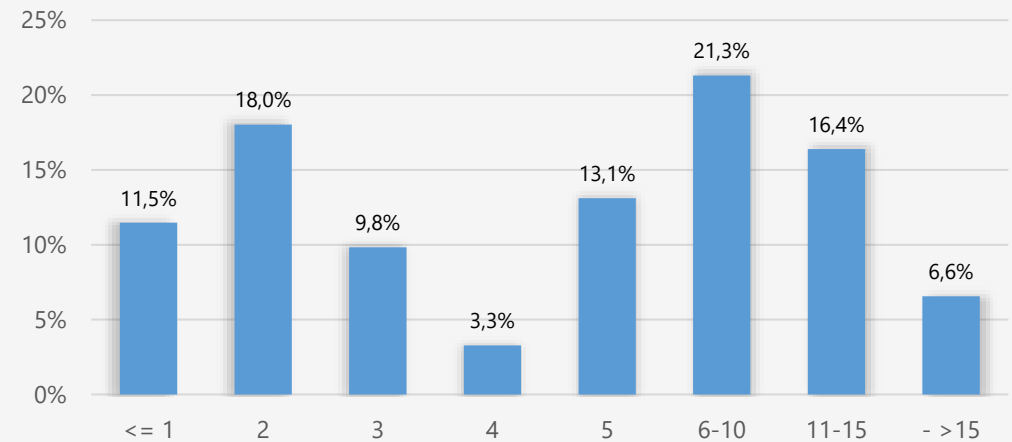
Sociodemographics



PROFESSIONAL PROFILE OF MEDIA COUNCIL MEMBERS

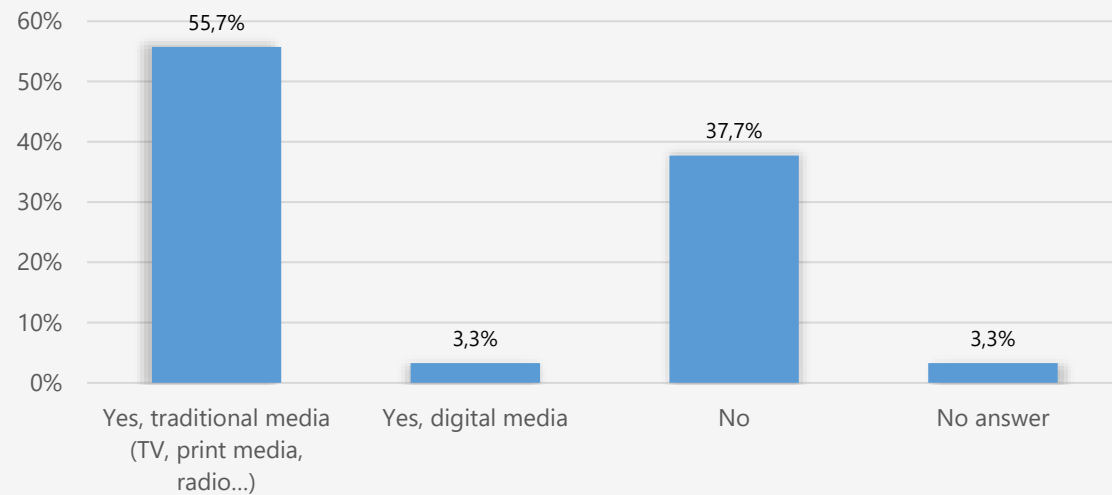


YEARS OF EXPERIENCE AS A MEDIA COUNCILS MEMBERS

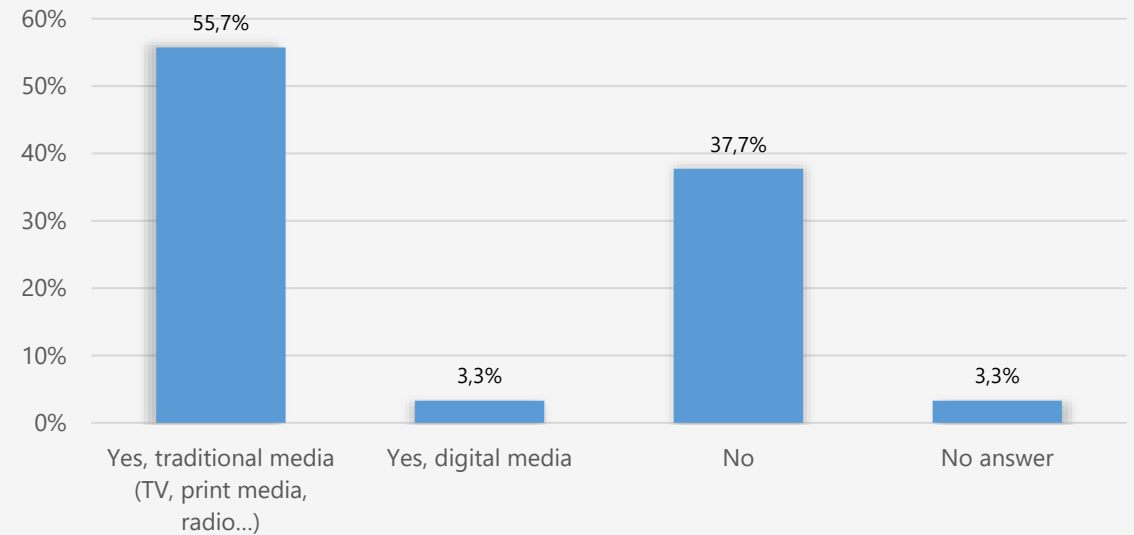


Sociodemographics

EXPERIENCE AS A JOURNALIST OF MEDIA COUNCILS MEMBERS



MEDIA COUNCILS MEMBERS AS A REPRESENTATIVES OF...



1

Profile. Members of the board of the media councils are both men and women aged more 65 with professional experience as journalists in traditional media.

Media councils - Knowledge

- 1 The level of knowledge of the existence of media councils among journalists is in average 2,5 in a scale from 1 to 5, according to the opinion of the members of the media councils

LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE AMONG JOURNALISTS OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE MEDIA COUNCILS

1. Nothing	2	3	4	5. Very much knowledge
7,0%	26,3%	22,8%	28,1%	15,8%

- 2 There are significant differences between countries. Journalists from Finland and Ireland are those with a higher knowledge of the existence of media councils. Being journalists from Flanders and Spain those with lower levels of knowledge.

	1. Nothing	2	3	4	5. Very much knowledge
Austria	0,0%	60,0%	20,0%	20,0%	0,0%
Finland	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	25,0%	75,0%
Flanders	33,3%	33,3%	22,2%	11,1%	0,0%
Germany	0,0%	0,0%	37,5%	62,5%	0,0%
Ireland	0,0%	0,0%	25,0%	0,0%	75,0%
Spain	9,1%	54,5%	18,2%	18,2%	0,0%
Wallonia	0,0%	25,0%	33,3%	41,7%	0,0%

Media councils - Knowledge

- 1 Media councils members consider the opinion of journalists regarding media councils to be quite positive. On a scale from 1 to 5, it scores 3,6.

PERCEPTION ABOUT THE OPINION OF JOURNALISTS REGARDING PRESS COUNCILS

	1. Negative	2	3	4	5. Positive
Perception about the opinion of journalists regarding press councils	0,0%	1,8%	42,1%	49,1%	7,0%

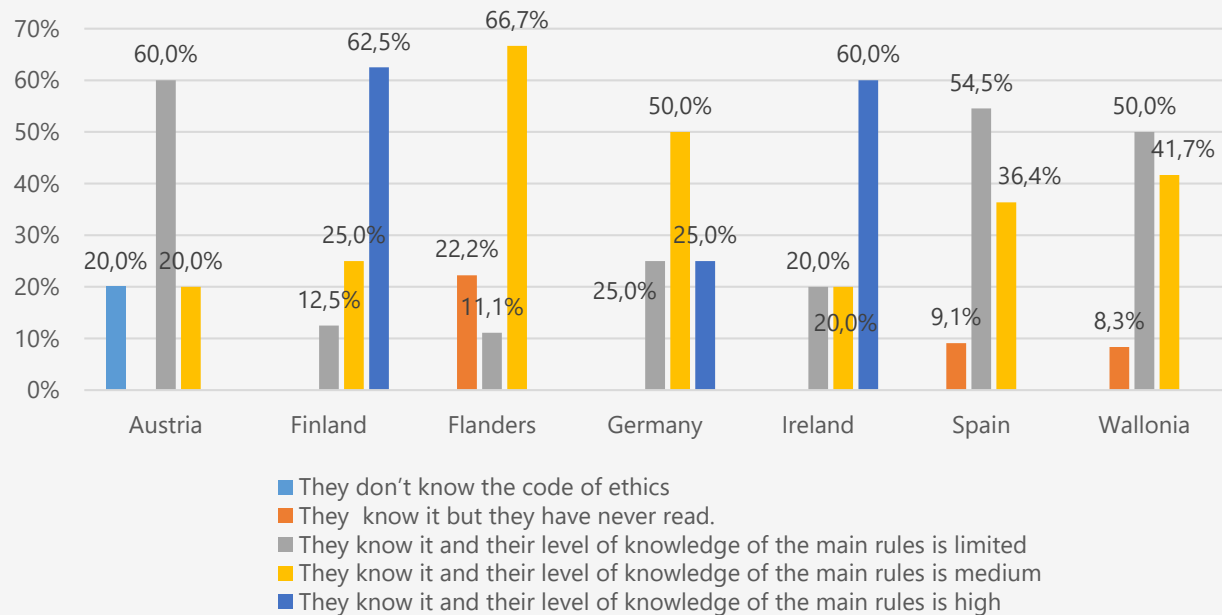
- 2 There are significant differences between countries. Perception about the opinion is more positive in Finland, Flanders and Ireland. Conversely, journalists from Spain and Wallonia have worse opinion regarding media councils, according to board members' view.

	1. Negative	2	3	4	5. Positive
Austria	0,0%	0,0%	40,0%	60,0%	0,0%
Finland	0,0%	0,0%	12,5%	62,5%	25,0%
Flanders	0,0%	0,0%	22,2%	77,8%	0,0%
Germany	0,0%	0,0%	50,0%	50,0%	0,0%
Ireland	0,0%	0,0%	25,0%	25,0%	50,0%
Spain	0,0%	0,0%	90,9%	9,1%	0,0%
Wallonia	0,0%	8,3%	33,3%	58,3%	0,0%

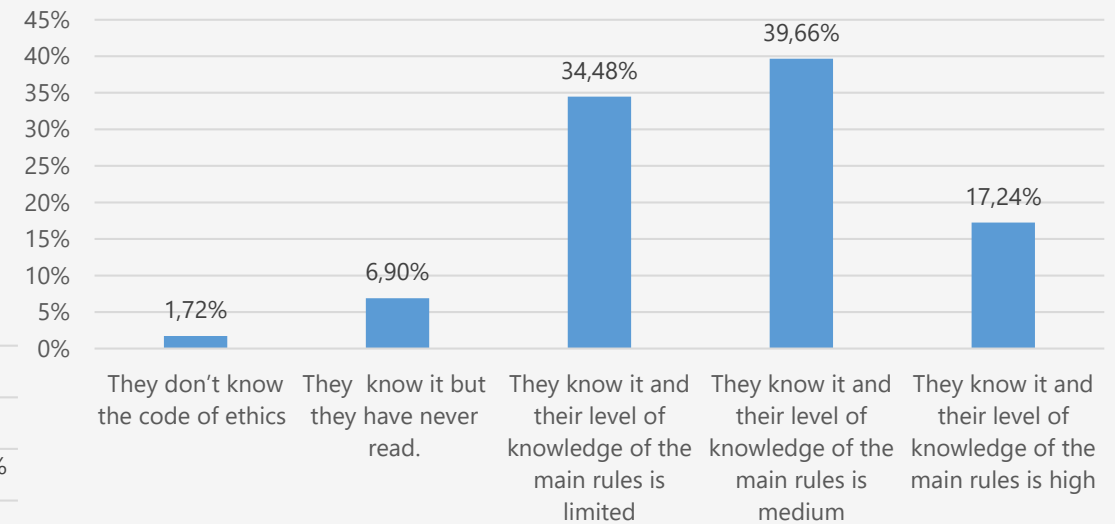
Knowledge of the code of ethics

1 Media councils members mostly perceive journalists know the national code of ethics and their level of knowledge is medium.

2 Coherently with previous questions, journalists from Finland and Ireland are perceived as those with the highest level of knowledge. In Austria, Spain and Wallonia is where journalists would have a limited knowledge of the code of ethics.



PERCEPTION ABOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF JOURNALISTS OF THE CODE OF ETHICS

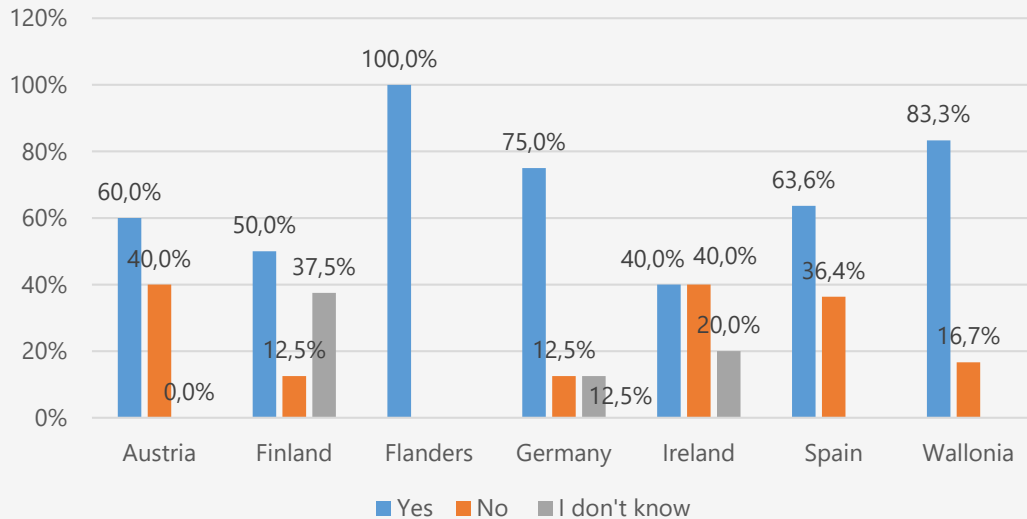


Code of Ethics and the digital

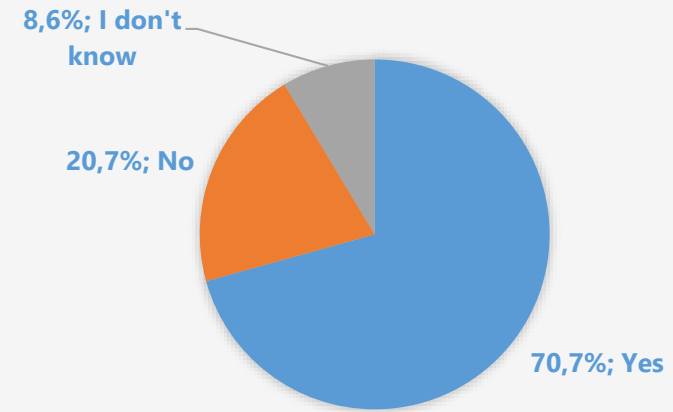
1 Most of the respondents consider that the national code of ethics responds to new ethical challenges arising from the digitalisation.

2 Responders from Flanders, Wallonia, and Germany consider that their codes of ethics are adjusted to respond to the new digital ethical challenges.

CODE OF ETHICS RESPONSE TO NEW ETHICAL CHALLENGES



CODE OF ETHICS RESPONSE TO NEW ETHICAL CHALLENGES

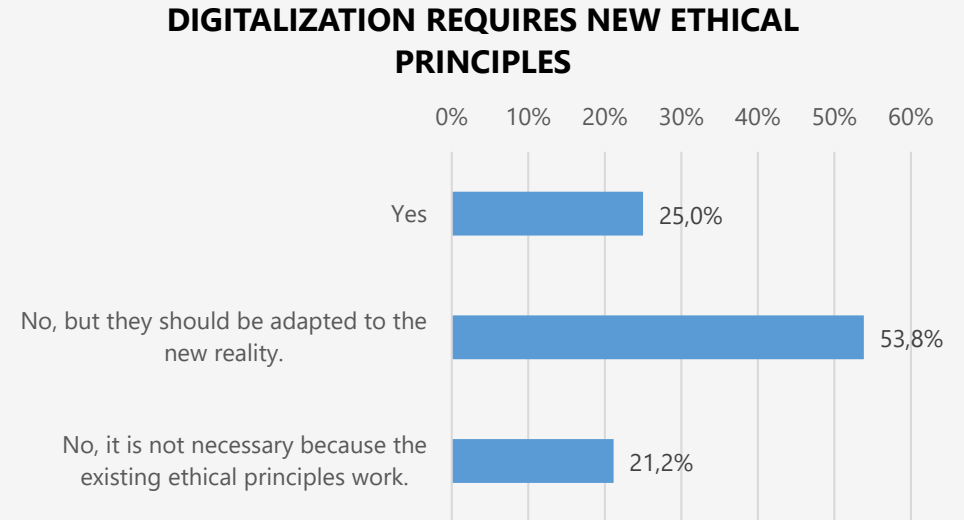
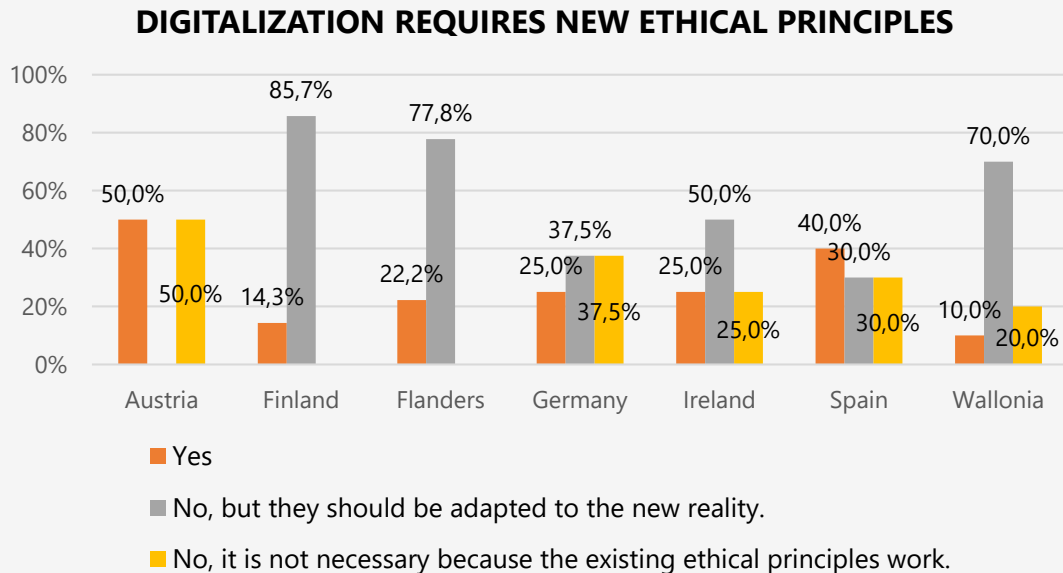


3 Those responders from Austria, Ireland, and Spain are less confident about usefulness of national codes of ethics.

Code of Ethics and the digital

1 Half of the respondents think that digitalisation and IT require the adjustment of ethical principles to the new reality.

2 Respondents from Finland, Flanders and Wallonia mainly think that new ethical principles are not necessary, but the existing ones need to be adapted.



Daily practices and ethical challenges

- 1 Media councils members strongly agree that journalists must ensure the quality of linked content in their stories.
- 2 Avoiding illegal contents and conflict of interest are the main principles that journalists have to ensure.

DO YOU CONSIDER THAT WHEN A JOURNALIST INCLUDES EXTERNAL LINKS (HYPERLINK) IN A PIECE OF NEWS, S/HE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:

	Strongly disagree	Fairly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Fairly agree	Strongly agree
The accuracy/veracity/credibility of the linked information.	7,7%	11,5%	9,6%	38,5%	32,7%
That the linked page does not contain illegal contents	7,7%	7,7%	3,8%	25,0%	55,8%
That there is no conflict of interest when referring to a commercial page	5,8%	7,7%	0%	28,8%	57,7%

Daily practices and ethical challenges

- 1 Media councils members strongly agree that journalists must ensure the quality of embedded external content included in their stories.

DO YOU CONSIDER THAT WHEN A JOURNALIST INCLUDES “EMBEDDED” EXTERNAL MATERIAL IN HER/HIS OWN PIECE OF INFORMATION, S/HE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:

	Strongly disagree	Fairly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Fairly agree	Strongly agree
The accuracy/veracity/credibility of the embedded information.	3,8%	3,8%	13,5%	30,8%	48,1%
That the embedded information does not contain illegal contents	3,8%	3,8%	5,8%	26,9%	59,6%
That there is no conflict of interest when embedding a commercial page	3,8%	3,8%	3,8%	26,9%	61,5%

Daily practices and ethical challenges

- 1 Media councils members strongly agree that journalists must ensure the quality of User Generated Content (UGC) included in their stories.
- 2 UGC used by journalists in their stories must guarantee compliance with deontological standards.

DO YOU THINK THAT WHEN A JOURNALIST INCLUDES MATERIAL GENERATED BY THE AUDIENCE (PHOTOGRAPHS, VIDEOS, TEXTS ...) IN HIS/HER OWN NEWS, HE/SHE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:

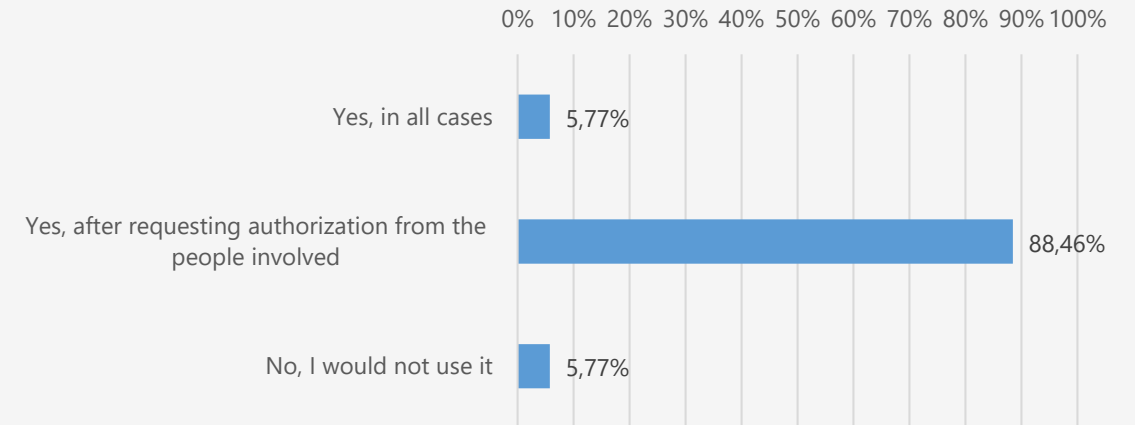
	Strongly disagree	Fairly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Fairly agree	Strongly agree
The accuracy/veracity/credibility of the included information	3,8%	3,8%	13,5%	30,8%	48,1%
That the material included does not contain illegal content	3,8%	3,8%	5,8%	26,9%	59,6%
That the material included does not violate the deontological standards	3,8%	3,8%	3,8%	26,9%	61,5%

Ethics principles and the digital

1 Public content available on personal profiles on social networks can be used in a story after requesting authorization (88,46%).

2 There are not significant differences between countries.

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT PUBLIC CONTENT AVAILABLE IN PERSONAL PROFILES ON SOCIAL NETWORKS CAN BE USED DIRECTLY IN A PIECE OF INFORMATION?



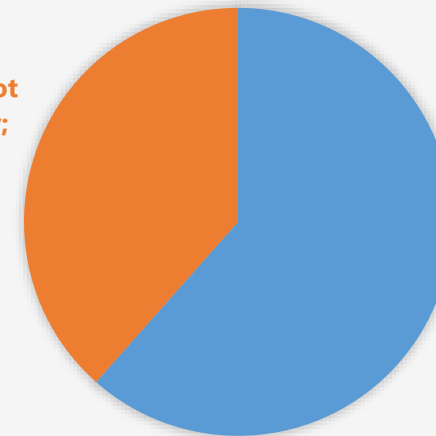
Ethics principles and the digital

1 Most of the respondents consider journalists should identify as journalists in public conversation on social networks.

2 These results are opposite to those obtained in a similar survey with journalists, which consider that they should not identify as journalists in public conversation on social sites (54,4%).

DO YOU THINK THAT IF A JOURNALIST PARTICIPATES IN A CONVERSATION ON SOCIAL NETWORKS OR IN A PUBLIC FORUM, S/HE SHOULD IDENTIFY HERSELF/HIMSELF AS A JOURNALIST?

No, it is not necessary;
38,5%



Yes, s/he must always identify herself/himself;
61,5%

Ethics principles and the digital

- 1 The use of social networks by journalists generates very diverse opinions, particularly regarding the professional vs private use of them.
- 2 Media councils members consider that journalists should be able to give their opinion through social networks on any subject, not only on the topics of news they published.

IF A JOURNALIST HAS A PROFILE ON SOCIAL NETWORKS, IN WHICH S/HE IDENTIFIES HERSELF/HIMSELF AS A JOURNALIST, S/HE CAN...

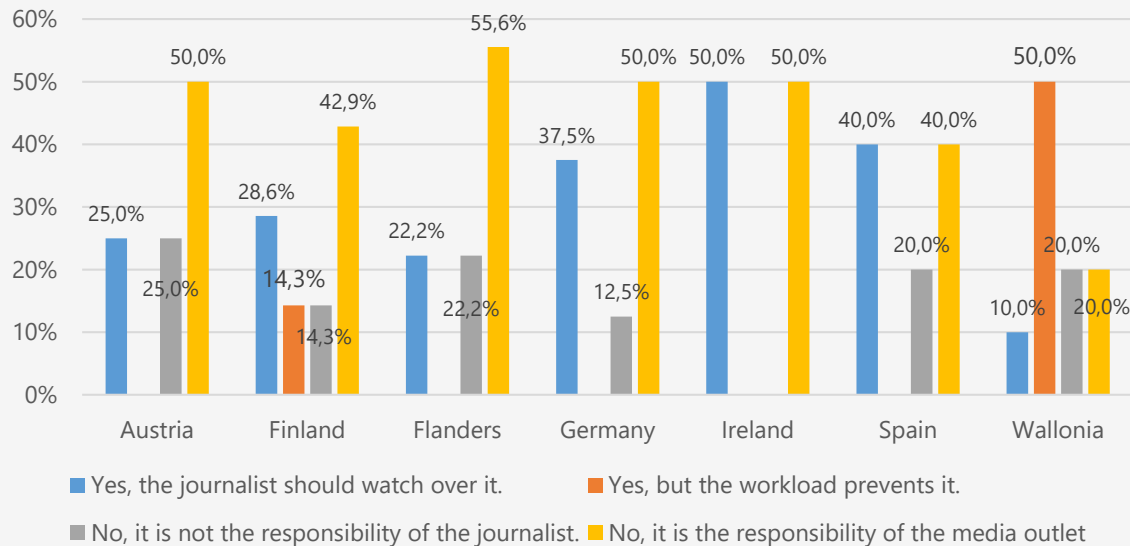
	Strongly disagree	Fairly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Fairly agree	Strongly agree
Use that profile to pronounce her/his personal political and ideological positions.	17,31%	19,23%	15,38%	36,54%	11,54%
Use that profile to pronounce his/her opinion on current news.	11,54%	7,69%	11,54%	51,92%	17,31%
Use that profile only for professional purposes in relation to the news that s/he is preparing or has already published and express his/her opinion on it.	21,15%	34,62%	17,31%	9,62%	17,31%
Use that profile only in relation to the news that s/he is preparing or has already published without expressing his/her opinion on it	21,15%	26,92%	26,92%	13,46%	11,54%

Ethics principles and the digital

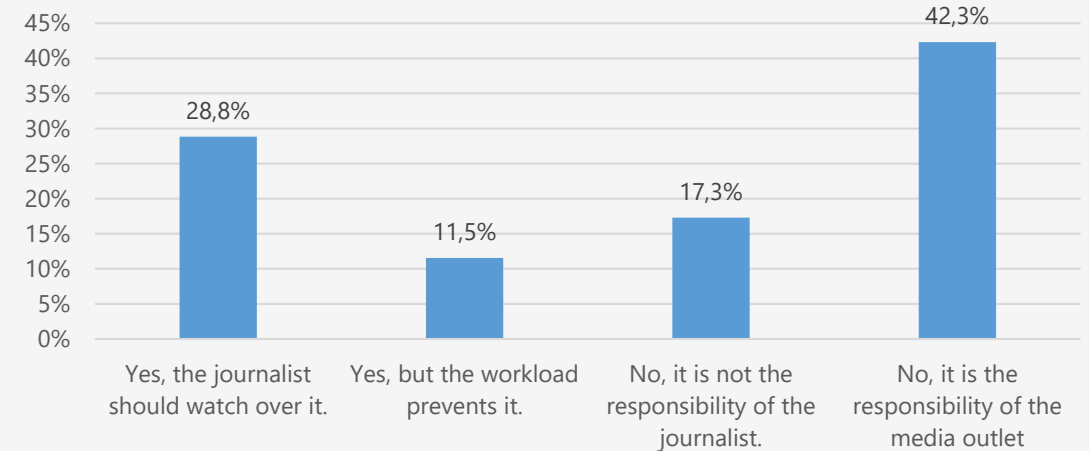
1

42,3% of respondents consider that ensuring comments on news quality is not the responsibility of the journalists, but of the media outlets.

DO YOU THINK THAT A JOURNALIST SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE COMMENTS PUBLISHED BY HIS/HER READERS [IN ONE OF HIS/HER PIECE OF NEWS] ARE RESPECTFUL/POLITE?



DO YOU THINK THAT A JOURNALIST SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE COMMENTS PUBLISHED BY HIS/HER READERS [IN ONE OF HIS/HER PIECE OF NEWS] ARE RESPECTFUL/POLITE?



2

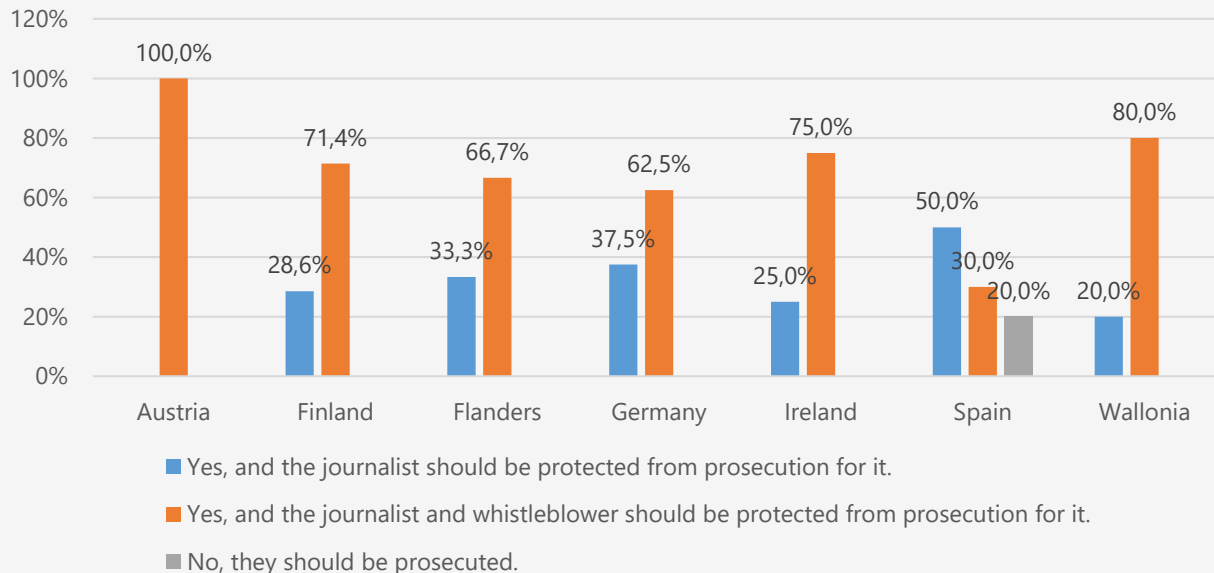
Results are similar for all countries surveyed, except for Wallonia, when most of the respondents think that journalists should ensure the quality of comments on news, but workload prevents it.

Ethics principles and the digital

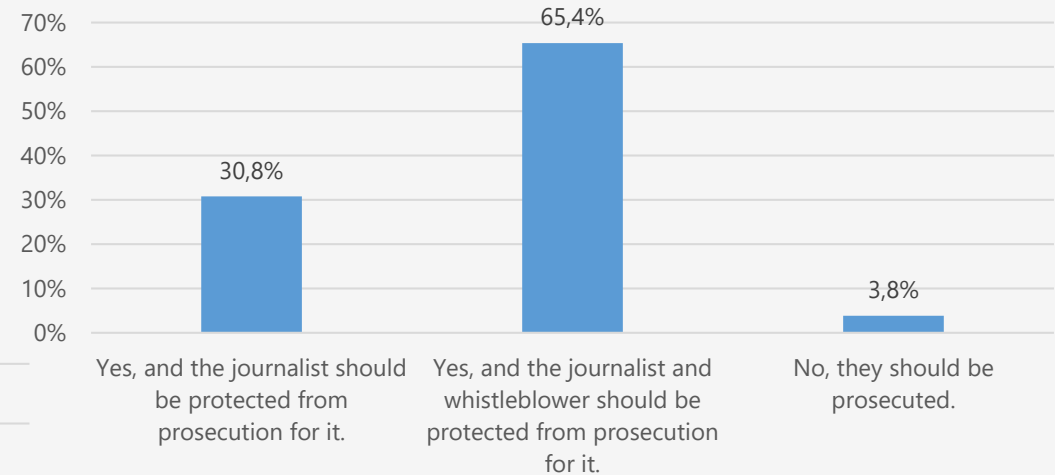
1

Most of the respondents find acceptable to publish relevant information provided by whistleblowers, and both journalists and whistleblowers should be protected.

DO YOU FIND IT ACCEPTABLE FOR JOURNALISTS TO PUBLISH RELEVANT INFORMATION OF PUBLIC INTEREST PROVIDED BY WHISTLEBLOWERS OR LEAKED ANONYMOUSLY?



DO YOU FIND IT ACCEPTABLE FOR JOURNALISTS TO PUBLISH RELEVANT INFORMATION OF PUBLIC INTEREST PROVIDED BY WHISTLEBLOWERS OR LEAKED ANONYMOUSLY?



2

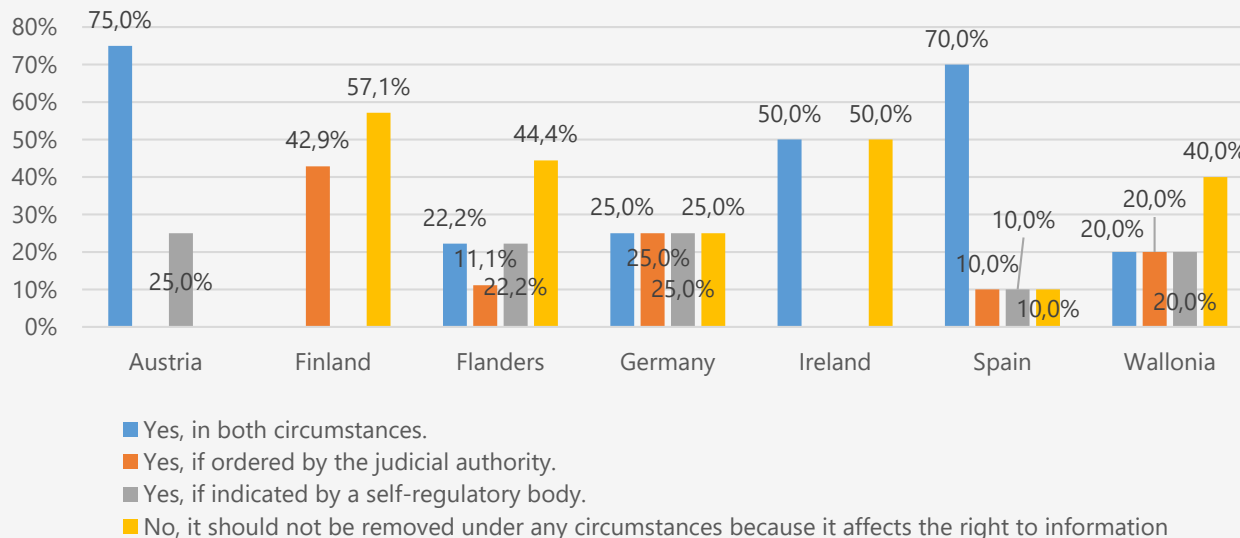
All countries show similar results except Spain, where the most common answer is that only journalists should be protected, and 20% of respondents consider that journalists and whistleblowers should be prosecuted.

Ethics principles and the digital

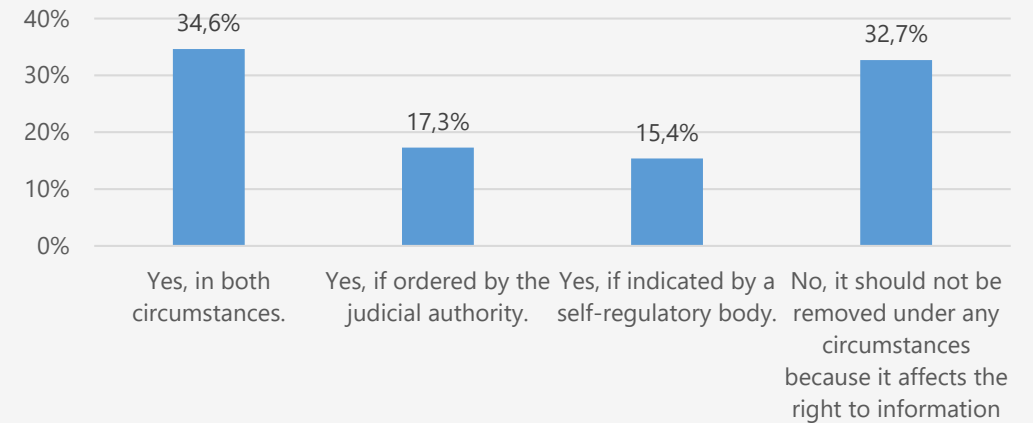
1

There is not a clear position on this topic, averages are similar for those find appropriate to delete stories sanctioned by judicial authorities or by self-regulatory bodies, and those which consider that content should not be removed.

DO YOU CONSIDER APPROPRIATE THAT, IF A PIECE OF NEWS THAT YOU HAVE PUBLISHED IS SANCTIONED BY THE JUDICIAL AUTHORITY OR ETHICALLY CONDEMNED BY A SELF-REGULATORY BODY, IT MUST BE PERMANENTLY DELETED (RIGHT TO BE FORGOTTEN)?



DO YOU CONSIDER APPROPRIATE THAT, IF A PIECE OF NEWS THAT YOU HAVE PUBLISHED IS SANCTIONED BY THE JUDICIAL AUTHORITY OR ETHICALLY CONDEMNED BY A SELF-REGULATORY BODY, IT MUST BE PERMANENTLY DELETED (RIGHT TO BE FORGOTTEN)?



2

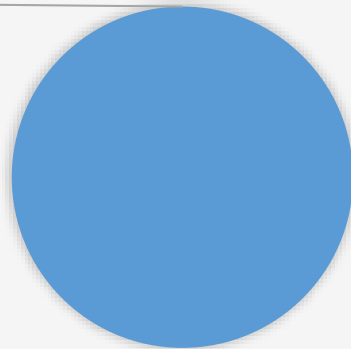
There are significant difference between countries. In Austria and Spain most respondents find appropriate delete content if it is sanctioned. In Finland, Flanders and Wallonia the most frequent answer is that contents should not be removed because it affects the right of information.

Ethics principles and the digital

- 1 98,1% of the respondents think that content produced by robots should be identified as such.
- 2 All the respondents think that content produced by robots should be governed by the same ethical standards applicable to journalists.

DO YOU THINK THAT THE INFORMATION PRODUCED BY ROBOTS SHOULD BE GOVERNED BY THE SAME ETHICAL STANDARDS APPLICABLE TO JOURNALISTS?

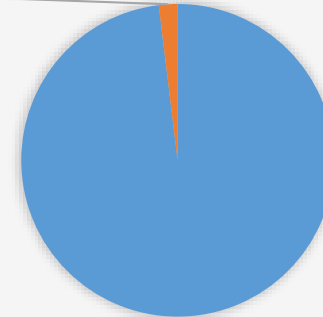
No, because journalists do not produce them



Yes, because they are published by a news media;
100%

DO YOU THINK THAT THE INFORMATION PRODUCED BY ROBOTS SHOULD BE IDENTIFIED AS SUCH?

No, it is not necessary.;
1,9%

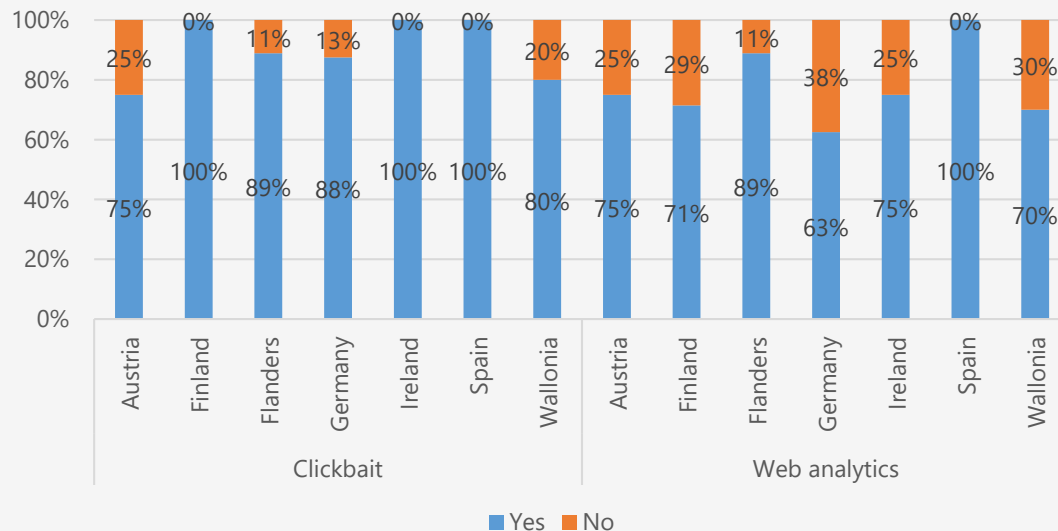


Yes.; 98,1%

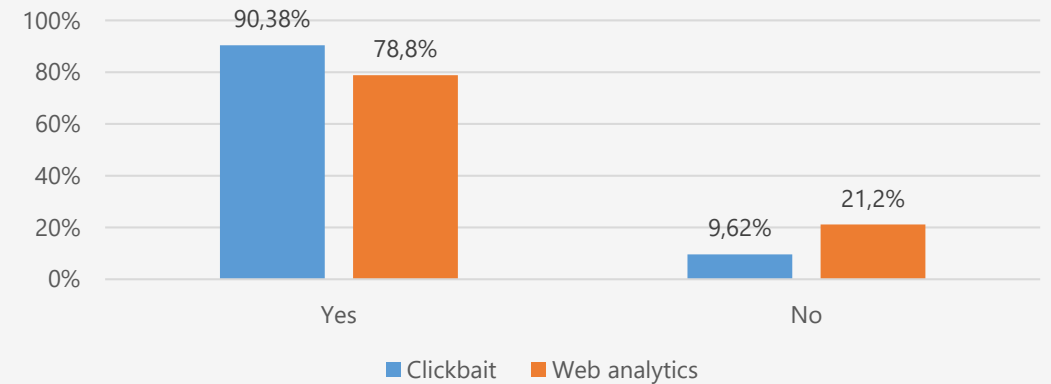
Ethics principles and the digital

- 1 Most of the respondents consider that clickbait and web analytics dilute some journalistic principles. Clickbait practices are considered more debatable than web analytics.
- 2 Media council members from Ireland and Spain consider Clickbait dilutes the principle of public interest.

DO YOU CONSIDER THAT THE FOLLOWING PRACTICES DILUTE THE JOURNALISTIC PRINCIPLE OF PUBLIC INTEREST AND REPLACE IT WITH OTHER INTERESTS THAT ARE ETHICALLY DEBATABLE?



DO YOU CONSIDER THAT THE FOLLOWING PRACTICES DILUTE THE JOURNALISTIC PRINCIPLE OF PUBLIC INTEREST AND REPLACE IT WITH OTHER INTERESTS THAT ARE ETHICALLY DEBATABLE?

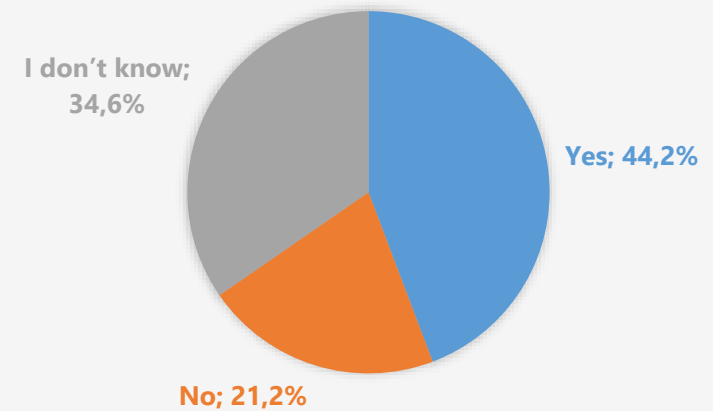


- 3 Web analytics is mainly considered to dilute the journalistic principle of public interest by respondents from Spain and Flanders, being those from Germany, Wallonia and Finland the least critical with this practice.

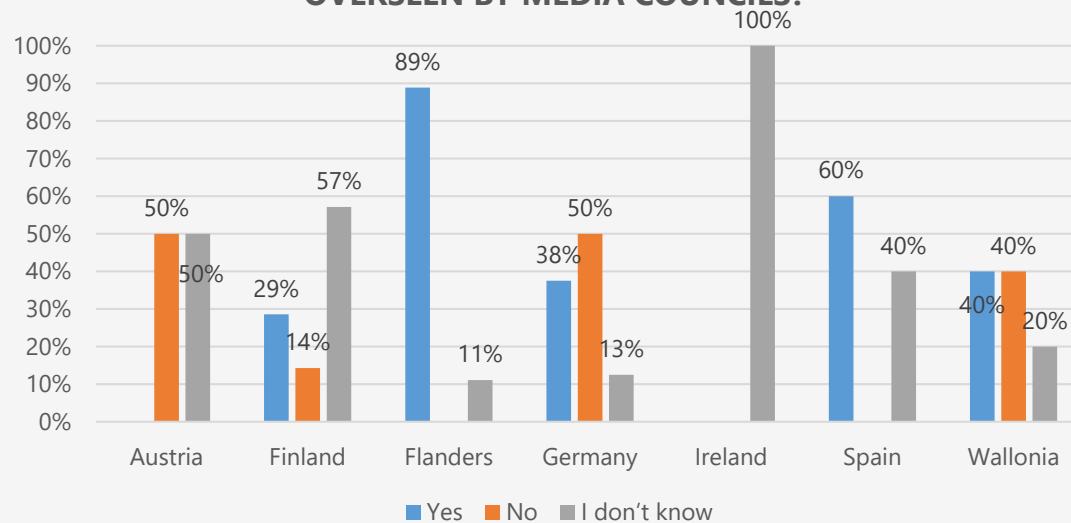
Ethics principles and the digital

- 1 Most of the respondents think that fact-checkers must be overseen by media councils, however there is a relevant number of respondents that don't know.
- 2 There are significant differences among countries. Although respondents from Flanders mostly think fact-checkers must be overseen by media councils, in most of the countries this is a question to be solved.

DO YOU THINK THAT FACT-CHECKERS MUST BE OVERSEEN BY MEDIA COUNCILS?



DO YOU THINK THAT FACT-CHECKERS MUST BE OVERSEEN BY MEDIA COUNCILS?

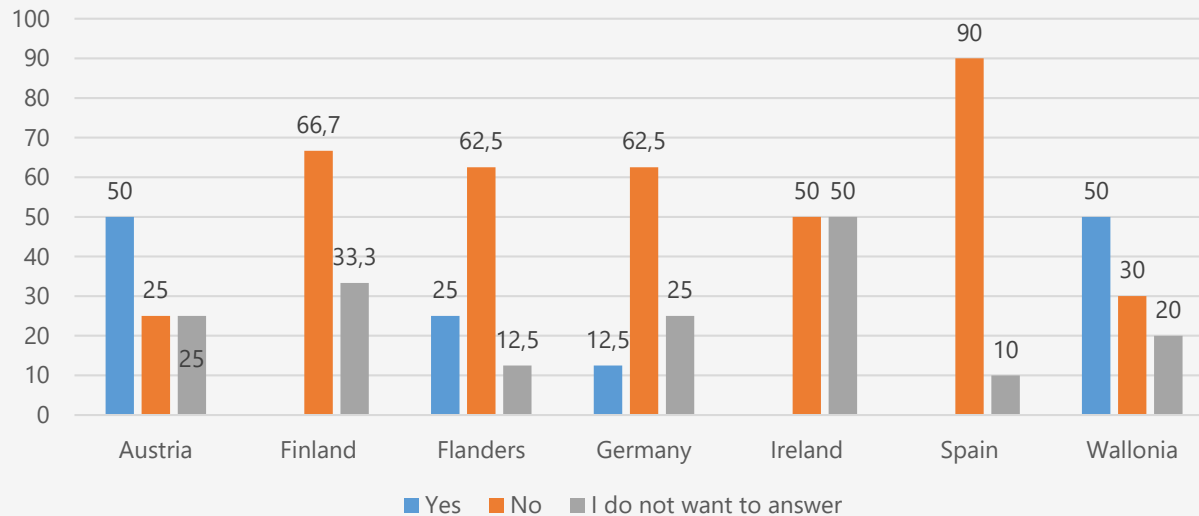


Ethics principles and the pandemic

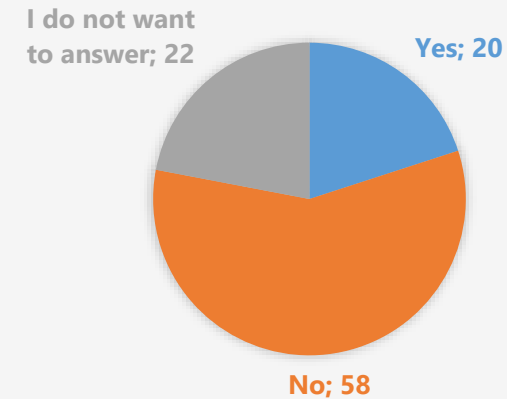
1 Most of the respondents did not receive more complaints during the Covid-19 pandemics than before.

2 Only in Austria and Wallonia respondents think that media councils received more complaints during the Covid-19 pandemic than before.

HAVE THE PRESS COUNCILS RECEIVED MORE COMPLAINS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC THAN BEFORE?



HAVE THE PRESS COUNCILS RECEIVED MORE COMPLAINS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC THAN BEFORE?



Comparative analysis and conclusions

Research results shed light on how journalists see the job of media councils and self-regulatory bodies, how these bodies are affected by the digital age, and how they can adapt to the new ethical challenges. In the following lines, we aim to summarize some of the results obtained from both surveys, as well as from a comparative approach from them.

Knowledge of media councils

68,12% of journalists surveyed assert that they know the existence of their national media council. Interestingly, media councils' members of the boards have the perception that the level of knowledge among journalists is lower, 2,5 in a scale from 1 to 5, but their opinion about the media councils is quite positive. It's worth highlighting that for a relevant number of journalists surveyed (30%) media councils are unknown or they think don't exist.

Knowledge of code of ethics

Most of the journalists consider that they have a medium or high knowledge of the national Code of Ethics. The results contrast with those obtained among the members of the media councils, who consider that journalists have limited or medium level of knowledge of the national codes of ethics. It's worth underlining that perception of level of knowledge is very different depending on the country.

Code of Ethics and digital challenges

Are codes of ethics adapted to respond to new ethical challenges arising from the digitalisation and the emergence of the Internet? The answer to this question is quite different depending on the stakeholder surveyed. While members of media councils mostly consider that the national code of ethics responds to new ethical challenges arising from the digitalisation (70,7%), only 33,18% of journalists surveyed share this view.

Coherently, there are important differences regarding if the digital requires new ethical principles. While members of the media councils assert that new ethical principles are not necessary, but their adjustment to the new reality, journalists mainly answer that new ethical principles are required.

Insofar as it is acceptable to consider that the members of the media councils have a higher degree of the codes of ethics, it would seem necessary to strengthen the communication related to how the ethical principles should be applied in the digital context.

Daily practices and ethical challenges

The questionnaire used for the surveys includes a common set of questions for both groups regarding ethical challenges in daily professional practices in the digital realm. Among others, respondents were asked about the responsibility for the new content arising from digitalisation (i.e. hyperlinks, embedded content, user generated content, comments on news...) as well as the use of social network sites, and the appearance of new actors like whistle-blowers and fact-checkers.

Both groups, journalists and media councils' members, show similar results regarding if journalists are responsible for the external content and user generated content used in their stories. They consider that journalists are responsible for this sort of content, they must ensure accuracy, quality and legality of content linked, embedded, and generated by the audience when used in news stories. In spite of this common view, media councils' members tend to place greater responsibility on journalists.

Regarding the use of the content obtained from social media sites, results are quite similar. However, media councils' members mostly defend that if a journalist participates in a conversation on social networks or in a public forum, s/he should identify herself/himself as a journalist. This view is 16 points lower among journalists, who consider it's not necessary the identification.

An interesting point is the private use of social media by journalists. While some media companies, like the BBC, force staff to maintain impartiality on social media, both if they are using social networks professionally or personally, others don't regulate their use. In this sense, journalists surveyed have very diverse opinions, however

they tend to be more indulgent than media councils' members in the usage of social media for expressing a personal opinion on matters of politics and ideological position. Although their use should be not limited to the professional field.

Significant differences has been observed regarding if a piece of news that have been published is sanctioned by the judicial authority or ethically condemned by a self-regulatory body, it must be permanently deleted (right to be forgotten). While journalists mostly consider that in these circumstances the story must be deleted, media councils' members have more diverse opinions. Those that defend the opposite view arguing that it affects the right of information are similar in percentage than those that defend that the story must be deleted.

Finally, participants were asked for new activities arising from the digitalisation like the use of robots in journalism, clickbait and web analytics. Both groups of participants share similar opinions in this regard. Content produced by robots should be governed by the same ethical standards applicable to journalists. Most of the respondents also

consider that clickbait and web analytics dilute some journalistic principles, and clickbait practices are considered more debatable than web analytics.

*

The results of the research show a fairly common view among journalists and members of the media councils regarding the ethical challenges arising from digitalisation. However, different views are identified in certain aspects that indicate the need to encourage dialogue between the different stakeholders involved, between journalists and the media and between journalists and media councils, on the most controversial issues.

Among the aspects in which there is a greater disparity of opinions, it is worth highlighting those referring to the use of social networks to express political and ideological opinions, the right to be forgotten and ethical responsibility regarding the use of UGC, and the quality of the comments on news. In addition to fostering dialogue around these issues, there is a need to promote a more general debate on what ethical principles should be adapted to the new digital reality and what other principles need to be included. Here ethical concerns arise

about the use of practices such as clickbait and web analytic, and how they should be developed without diluting journalistic values and the public interest.

In the background of this debate, there is concern about why an important part of journalists considers (or does not know) that deontological codes do not respond to the challenges of digitalisation. A frank and open discussion between all parties involved should help answer this and other questions that arise in the light of the results obtained.

This research was carried on thanks to the European Commission through the grant for the project *Media Councils in the Digital Age* funded by DG Connect.

