

Deliverable 4.3.a
Final report
June 2025

Minority journalists and press councils in Europe

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This publication is produced with the financial support from the European Commission grant under DG for Communications Networks, Content and Technology.

The content of this publication does not reflect the official opinion of the European Union.

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Introduction

The purpose of this study is to identify obstacles and opportunities met by minority journalists related to professional ethics and to evaluate the way minority journalists perceive these obstacles and opportunities.

In this study, journalists of color, queer journalists, and journalists with disabilities are referred to as minority journalists. Wirth defines minority group as “any group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination” (1945: 347). However, we must emphasize that those groups are not born minorities, but rendered as such by social processes of othering, that aims at maintaining a relation of power of the majority group over the minority group (Guillaumin, 1972). Therefore, the term “minoritized journalists” could have also been used. We decided to refer to the journalists as “minority journalists”, a term most frequently used in scholarly works, out of clarity.

General objective

Identify how the (self) assignment of minority journalists questions ethical standards as instituted through media councils and other organizations/associations in countries with contrasting contexts in relation to social constraints (RSF Index 2022).

Specific objectives

- Identifying the professional ethical challenges faced by journalists of color, queer journalists, and journalists with disabilities.
- Identifying their perceptions of these challenges.
- Determining whether they make special use of the tools provided by press councils (e.g., code of ethics) or by other associations.

The research project was conducted at the Laboratoire de Pratiques et Identités Journalistiques (LaPIJ) of the Centre de recherche en sciences de l'information et de la communication (ReSIC) of Université Libre de Bruxelles by Elena Louazon, Marie Fierens, Florence Le Cam and David Domingo.

The study consists in focus groups in seven different countries, organized by the following researchers:

- **Ireland:** Kevin Rafter, Dublin City University
- **France:** Elena Louazon, Université libre de Bruxelles
- **Greece:** Lambrini Papadopoulou, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
- **Norway:** Vilde Ellingsberg, University of Bergen
- **Spain:** Daniel Ortín, Blanquerna University
- **Bulgaria:** Vera Slavtcheva-Petkova, University of Liverpool
- **Poland:** Jacek Mikucki, Warsaw University

Methodology

The study was initially planned to be conducted in eight European countries, chosen based on the Reporters Without Borders Index (RSF, 2022) and its sociocultural criteria. RSF's criteria assess social constraints arising such as media denigration and attacks, considering factors such as gender, class, ethnicity, and religion. The selected countries range from the top to the bottom of the ranking, and have been selected for their sociopolitical diversity and accessibility.

1. Norway (2/180)
2. Ireland (4/180)
3. France (18/180)
4. Poland (36/180)
5. Spain (39/180)
6. Hungary (95/180) -- Despite the efforts, no focus group was eventually undertaken in Hungary due to organizational challenges.
7. Bulgaria (97/180)
8. Greece (103/180)

Experts in each country were invited to hold focus groups with 5 to 7 minority journalists in their respective countries. They were responsible for participant recruitment and organization of the focus groups. The ULB team created an interview guide for the discussions, which was provided to the local experts.

Focus groups and individual interviews

Given the difficulties in coordinating the attendance of all journalists, local experts opted to conduct online focus groups, sometimes supplemented by individual interviews. The table below provides an overview of these focus groups and individual interviews. The composition of each focus group is detailed at the beginning of each synthesis in the results section.

Country	Date(s) focus group	Date(s) individual interview	# journalists
Norway	13/12/2023	23/01/2024 and 26/01/2024	7
Ireland	24/01/2024 and 29/01/2024	/	5
France	17/01/2024	/	6
Poland	18/12/2023	/	5
Spain	06/03/2024 and 08/03/2024	/	6
Bulgaria	09/05/2024	/	5
Greece	13/02/2024 and 28/02/2024	26/02/2024	6
			Total = 40

Ethical considerations and data analysis

The project received approval from the ULB Faculty's ethical committee. All participating journalists signed an information and consent form, and their identities have been anonymized.

All focus groups were recorded, and transcripts were generated in the original language using *MyGoodTape* software. These transcripts were translated into English using *DeepL* and reviewed by local experts. Subsequently, the ULB team analyzed these English transcripts and produced one synthesis per country from an inductive perspective, addressing the research objectives. Each synthesis adapts to the specific dynamic of the local focus groups and has its own structure.

Results

Voices of journalists

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BULGARIA

Vera Slavtcheva-Petkova, University of Liverpool
& David Domingo, Université libre de Bruxelles

This report is based on one focus group conducted online on 9.5.2024.

Pseudonym	Online/ offline	Gender	Age	Minority group	Type of media outlet	Status	Education	Years
BG1	Online	Female	54	Ethnic minority	Press	Employee Full time	Journalism	/
BG2	Online	Female	46	LGBT+	Photojournalist	Freelance	Philosophy	/
BG3	Online	Male	44	Ethnic minority	Online private	Editor-in- chief		/
BG4	Online	Male	48	Ethnic minority	Online private	Owner	Turkish philology	12
BG5	Online	Female	50	LGBT+	Online	Author	Philosophy	10

Two of the participants had some journalistic practice already as teenagers, in a newspaper in a minority language, but most started later in their lives, in some cases after jobs teaching at school or university level. BG1 is the only one who studied journalism, having developed a vocation for the profession very early, collaborating as a teenager in the local newspaper.

BG5 taught philosophy at the university for a decade before becoming a journalist and actually entered the profession doing a blog that ended up documenting corruption at the university, which led her to quit her job and join two online investigative journalism projects. BG2 did not have journalistic training either, and participated in several cultural journalism projects before focusing on a career as a freelance photojournalist.

Journalists belonging to an ethnic minority group were adamant to assume that identity as a matter of fact: *“how I feel it doesn’t matter at all because I come from that minority group and I am who I am. That is a fact, I have no way of denying it and I have no intention to deny it”* (BG4). They also feel that the majority group has historically underlined the cultural boundaries between them: *“But professionally, I have always felt that my colleagues, the ethnic Bulgarians, separate us from them”* (BG3). He explains that a “very small part” of majority journalists was very aggressive against him in the press conferences, pretending that he was a foreigner, when he is actually born in Bulgaria from a family established in the country for generations, which considers Bulgaria their motherland, simply having a minority background and language, and working for a newspaper writing in that minority language. *“But eventually the distrust on this part of the colleagues in question was overcome”*. The experience of discrimination repeated when he moved to the capital, where it also faded away over time. Another participant saw an evolution after the fall of communism: *“After 30 years of democracy, I think things are more calmly realized by people, much easier to live with the differences”* (BG1). He recalls that in his newspapers there are people from multiple ethnical minorities. The participants recall that the political elite has been quite open to make an inclusive public space, acknowledging the diversity of religions in the country, and that has helped. BG4 recalls that there is even a term in Bulgarian “commishulok”, which can be translated as “domestic tolerance”, that encapsulates the climate of ethnic tolerance: *“Our grandparents have taught us from childhood that the difference between Christians and Muslims is a big as the layers in the onion, that is to say, it is almost negligible”*. The case of a journalist belonging to the Turkish ethnic minority in Bulgaria has a twist, because his critical reporting about the authoritarian turn of Erdogan in Turkey was criticized by members of his own community as unacceptable. In mainstream media, participants perceive a “glass ceiling” for ethnic minority journalists to climb up to positions of responsibility.

The two LGBT+ journalists in the focus group acknowledged that many colleagues of their community do not come out publicly, which they have done. In any case, they preferred to separate their personal identity from their professional identity, indicating that they fight for their rights as citizens (same-sex marriage is not recognized in Bulgaria), but do not feel discriminated in the newsroom.

“As a journalist I have never gotten any different treatment to make me feel any different ... If I accept myself as part of a minority group, it’s in terms of human rights, not strictly professional rights” (BG5).

“I freelance, I have a sense of choosing who I work with and working with people who accept me” (BG2).

They both are publicly open about their sexual orientation, and that has led to social media harassment. In one case when she published a book on “modern Bulgarian families” challenging the traditional values, and on the other case more related to her coverage, as she has denounced corruption and defended migrants, but her sexuality is targeted as well in the attacks. BG2 says to have coped well with it as she came out quite late in her life, and BG5 diminishes it as “*trolling*” connected to pro-Russian campaigns that do not really feel personal. *“Everything in Bulgaria is politics”*, she concludes.

The focus group participants did not feel that their coverage was constrained by their identity, on the contrary: *“Journalists who belong to minority communities look to not report on them as much”*. One of the participants considers that more tolerance in society can be achieved with *“more education and a better life in terms of wealth, because I think poverty is a big obstacle”*. Another colleague, thinking more specifically of journalists, disagreed, indicating that the “dependency of much of the media is something that cannot be compensated for with education and training” of the journalists. *“If the political sentiment is to maintain homophobia, to maintain xenophobia, [those views] will be supported [in the media] regardless of how educated the journalists are, unfortunately”*.

According to the participants, the media council and the media regulatory body in Bulgaria do not elect their members taking into account representation of different minorities, but rather by criteria like ethical self-awareness, gender balance, or age diversity. They find the code of ethics a very robust guideline for the respect of minorities, even if *“in reality not all media in Bulgaria respect it”*.

Participants could not think of formally organized efforts to support minority journalists in Bulgaria. *“It’s more like networks of acquaintances and friendships with colleagues”*. But they appreciated the idea of fostering solidarity between journalists: *“We have to self-organise”*, but not only minority journalists: *“In Bulgaria, journalism itself is a minority group, because there is a lot of pressure, be it external (political, economic) or internal, based on beliefs”*. They think the Association of European Journalists is the one that is more inclusive.

Journalists think there is space in the Bulgarian mediascape for more presence of ethnic minority issues, either through specialized media, but also within mainstream media, who tend to neglect the minorities.



FRANCE

Elena Louazon, Université libre de Bruxelles
& Florence Le Cam, Université libre de Bruxelles

The participants were recruited by email and WhatsApp, after having obtained their contacts through first-level acquaintance links ('do you know anyone who?'), second-level links (recommended person is not available but knows people) and sometimes third-level links (the person recommended by the recommended person is not available but knows people). This method resulted in a relatively high rate of non-response. A standard email/message setting out the broad guidelines was sent to all the people contacted, along with details about anonymity and the format of the conversation. For those who agreed and showed a strong interest, the consent form was sent and retrieved, although it seems that the journalists had not really read it.

A request was made to the Association of Anti-Racist and Racialized Journalists (AJAR) but not to the Association of LGBT Journalists (AJL). It was not considered appropriate to approach trade unions or any other journalists' association.

Apart from two, the people who took part have never expressed any public or militant position in relation to the issue of diversity in journalism. On the other hand, and in a way that was neither planned nor desired, four of the six participants had, in the course of their lives, gone through diversity programs likely to give them a greater sense of legitimacy in raising these issues, but also to make them very aware of their position and the institutional uses made of their experiences. The impact of this 'career as a diver' on their approach to journalism and ethics was specifically discussed.

Of all the journalists surveyed to take part in this focus group, it appears that the average age of the names put forward is fairly young, around 30, and not very stable in employment. This is partly a bias linked to the recruitment method, but it is probably not the only factor and reflects certain demographic realities within editorial departments.

However, the heavy news coverage in France at the beginning of January in connection with a ministerial reshuffle increased the under-representation of people aged 35 and over in the French focus group: the three people in this age group who had agreed to take part, with permanent contracts, were requisitioned to cover this last-minute news item. The result is a very young panel, concentrated at the start of their careers.

Pseudonym	Online / offline	Gender	Age	Minority group	Type of media outlet	Status	Education	Years
Collin	Online	Male	20 -25	Disability	Podcast and Online	Freelance	School of journalism	2
Thibault	Online	Male	30 -35	Disability	Public radio	Contemporary contract	School of journalism	5
Sonia	Online	Female	30 -35	Non-white	Public television	Contemporary contract	School of journalism	7
Samia	Online	Female	25-30	Non-white	Press agency	Permanent contract	School of journalism	8
Zac	Online	Non-binary	25-30	Non-white and queer	Online	Freelance	School of journalism	6
Audrey	Online	Female	30 -35	Non-white and queer	Press, national	Contemporary contract	School of journalism	5

The focus group lasted almost two hours. The journalists present immediately grasped what was at stake and felt concerned by the ethical issue. The link between the two parts of the grid was even made directly by the journalists, starting with the 3rd question.

Paradoxically, however, it was very difficult to talk about ethics in its formalised sense, i.e. press councils, ethics guides, charters, etc., and the actions of these institutions. In France, the Conseil de déontologie et des Médias is still new, and is not as well established as in other countries, notably French-speaking Belgium. Journalists did not know the CDJM, or knew it only by name, and were not at all familiar with the EFJ and IFJ.

This seems to be an issue that is not specific to the six people interviewed but rather something that characterizes the structuring of the journalism space in France. The notion of an ethics guide, a deontological council, did not appeal to them. To formulate an answer, they turned to the only thing they knew: the unions.

Finally, the views expressed by the journalists seem to be very strongly influenced by the rigid French social and educational stratification, the logic of competitive examinations, which for some of them conditioned their entire schooling right up to their entry into journalism.

The story of **how the participants became journalists** is based on traditional arguments: the desire to write ("*this thing of telling stories, of telling the world a bit, of telling the story of life, and particularly of those who don't necessarily know... who don't necessarily have the opportunity to tell it themselves with such resonance. That's what got me into journalism. It made me want to stay*" (FG-France)), to have a social role ("*I think it's great to tell stories, to put things down on paper, to carry weight and perhaps influence the way I change things or not. But at the same time, I do this job with a progressive approach, and for me that's important*" (FG-France)), but also the fact that this is a voice that emerges during adolescence after a diversity of desires. One of the participants put the vocation of childhood, or at least very early in a person's life, at a distance: "*Afterwards, I don't think I had any great ambitions. It was more a response to a personal need, in fact, rather than a contribution to society. It fulfilled what I wanted to do with my life and what corresponded more or less to my character*" (FG-France).

Thibault recalls that he first loved radio, before wanting to be a journalist. But as a visually impaired person, he says that he devised his strategy by trying, in France, to follow the so-called ideal path (as it also constitutes a narrative in the professional world of French journalism) by preparing for studies in political science and then sitting the competitive exams at recognised schools. Zac, for his part, says he discovered journalism as a student in Montreal, in a queer activist environment: "*I went into journalism with a bit of an anti-journalism mentality, in the sense that I was very angry at journalists and what they didn't cover. And in fact, we saw ourselves as journalists who were going to talk about things that others weren't going to talk about [...] But I also came out during the Manif pour tous. So I also had some media experience of who I was... I very quickly realized that the media weren't talking about me, or they were talking about me very badly. That's pretty much how I got into journalism*" (FG-France).

The professional integration of the participants is marked by the fact that some of them take part in equal opportunities programs, which exist in France to encourage more diverse access to the so-called Grandes écoles. The most important thing for Samia is to have been able to take the same competitive entrance exams as the others: "*And for me, it was really super important to take the same competitive entrance exams so that I wouldn't be seen as a bit of a second-class student afterwards*" (Samia, FG-France). The group is mentioned as a factor that acts as a foundation and helps to build a certain amount of confidence ("*But still, the fact of having a group and people who are more or less like us because we were all different, but also people who might have had this lack of legitimacy, frankly, that helps*" (Samia, FG-France), even if the mental burden and social pressure weigh heavily. Sonia recalls, "*I felt that it was an additional burden, and in particular it was very difficult because I had the impression that I had been chosen, I was in the top 20, I wasn't allowed to be average, I wasn't allowed to have a bit of a slump, I had to be irreproachable*" (Samia, FG-France). Apart from these programs, there are many obstacles to the professional integration of minority journalists. The CV is presented as one of the first. Colin writes 'visually impaired' in large letters to avoid misunderstandings. Jokes from colleagues and battles to get a suitable job are recurrent. The pitfalls also come in other, more editorial forms, insisting on "not overdoing it" on LGBT subjects, for example.

The desire to get involved in specific issues comes up several times. Zac is very clear about his professional orientation: "*I want to be a journalist on race and racism. That's difficult because there's no position, there's no consideration of these issues, so it's a bit difficult to bring these subjects to the fore*" (Zac, FG-France). Trying to get certain issues into the media is the result of regular battles, but this sometimes allows us to establish ourselves as experts (Sonia, FG-France). The mobilization of one's identity is sometimes used in the profession. This is the case of Samia, who explains that despite the enormous defiance she can sometimes encounter in her dealings with sources, the fact of being non-white in certain places or for certain subjects allows access to certain populations who are less used to responding to the media. Zac also talks about the richness of multilingualism, which helps to build trust with sources.

The feeling of assignment is also extremely strong. Zac, after a trying experience, no longer reveals any clues about his gender identity. "*When I started in journalism, I announced at my first big placement, at the Paris office of AP, that as it was in English, I was using the pronouns 'they and them', non-binary pronouns. So I thought 'well, I'll give it a go'. But I'm NEVER doing it again! Never again do I announce that I'm non-binary, because it's too boring, just people's reactions [...] I don't want to be the subject, in fact, but so it's a bit editorial, then the editorial that sticks to your identity because you're identified*" (Zac, FG-France).

Audrey agrees with Zac on this point. She defines herself as a cis-lesbian, racialized woman, "even if it doesn't necessarily show, there's a kind of white passing that weighs on you too" (Audrey, FG-France). She points out that newsrooms are extremely standardized and normative workplaces in which power is associated with white heterosexual men. And the ways in which identity is assigned affect the way in which their subjects can be perceived. Accusations and the use of activism as an argument are regular occurrences. Others "will judge your subject as militant when it is not necessarily so, or will question the subject because it is linked to who you are, and will inevitably ask you to justify yourself" (Audrey, FG-France). Samia said that she didn't want "to be accused of being an activist" (Samia, FG-France), and Sonia reacted by saying that "it's the joker card to treat us a bit like activists" (Sonia, FG-France). It's extremely difficult to turn these assignments into recognised expertise. "When I talk about racism, I'm an activist. Why shouldn't we use the word 'expert' at that point? Because it's a subject we know, a subject we've worked with, we have contacts on the inside" (Sonia, FG-France). But the feeling is that they have been hired as an "archetype" and that they can't move beyond this version of themselves that is constructed in the workplace. The effects are varied and mainly concern self-censorship on certain subjects, on proposals, on opinions on certain subjects, but also a form of smoothing out of their identities (Samia, FG-France). But minority journalists do not encounter these criticisms and assignments in the same way. On the contrary, Thibault feels that he has been able to propose stories on visual disability because his colleagues have been fairly positive about the subject. The mental burden that all of them recall, however, is that as minority journalists, they are under pressure to be "always on top", to do more and better than their colleagues in order to transcend their assignments. According to Colin, another skill that needs to be developed is the ability to explain one's disability.

Faced with the difficulties encountered internally, **the managerial discourse on diversity in media companies** leads to obvious criticism on their part: "You're hired to be a face and I've felt that a lot in TV, you're hired to show off your face and associate it with a medium in the mode 'look how beautiful we are and how we're the colors of the rainbow and we're a pretty Benetton ad'. But at what point do you listen to my ideas and what I have to contribute? [...] I call it window-dressing diversity" (Sonia, FG-France). This discourse also involves issues of quotas, particularly for people with disabilities. This is the story of Colin, who on several occasions at the start of his career felt, and was told, that he was a gift to human resources. And yet, his situation did not lead to a quicker integration into the world of work. As a result, economic conditions and job insecurity do not help young journalists to assert and assume certain positions. While Audrey's professional situation has improved, she can testify to being able to advance more issues, and notes that as a freelancer, the balance of power for her has changed.

Questions about **the relationship with ethics** lead to a variety of arguments. Zac is very clear. For him, who helped found the Association of Anti-Racist and Racist Journalists, he and his colleagues have "*a special place and a special role to play in developing a certain journalistic ethic on subjects relating to race and racism*" (Zac, FG-France). In this context, he says that he has developed a particular approach to sources: a certain sensitivity and a pedagogical approach to journalism in order to compensate for the practices of colleagues who build up a relationship with the field in which individuals are "*But mistreated in the sense of 'mistreated', in a single word*" (Zac, FG-France). As the journalists in the focus group testify, they arrive "*with the burden, once again, of representing much more than ourselves*" (Sonia, FG-France), and the concepts of objectivity and recognition by the newsrooms of their own subjectivity are open to question. Sonia believes "*In fact, objectivity is simply theirs. There is a kind of denial of subjectivity that is quite abysmal*" (Sonia, FG-France). And the struggle to recognize other ways of telling the real story is a tough one: "*If I want to be ethical in my work, by representing the part of French society that I am obliged to represent in spite of myself, because of my breaking into this milieu, journalism becomes a combat sport, and that's what's a shame*" (Sonia, FG-France). While professional or editorial standards sometimes seem set in stone, it is up to the individual to apply his or her personal ethics. Samia believes that each journalist must also personally decide on his or her attitude and relationship with sources, with a sort of "mental diversity list", as Thibault tries to summarize it.

In this fixed context of editorial ethics, Colin notes that in most of his previous professional experiences it was his colleagues who did not respect ethics, who went to people who looked like them, who interviewed users rather than strikers, etc. He adds: "*And so that made me think that it was my colleagues who did not respect ethics. I think it's going to be very, very complicated to make any progress*" (Colin, FG-France). An argument shared by Sonia, who makes the link with possible consequences for the relationship with the public: "*it's rather the overall ethics and the lack of questioning about the coverage of major conflicts which, I think, can have an impact on diversity, on the media's relationship with people*" (Sonia, FG-France). When asked about recourse to trade unions or associations, the informants agreed that there was a feeling of suspicion towards the institutions. Zac nevertheless uses them to advance the debate on racism in the media. Thibault summed up his feelings at the end of the focus group: "*I have the impression that when you are an LGBT person or a person of race, you have a much more political approach to this question of journalism, of ethics... I find this thing really interesting, to see that depending on your diversity, you are going to position yourself, have to position yourself differently. Particularly on the subject of disability, there's a bit of a self-righteous side where everyone thinks it's great. But when it comes to discrimination, there's immediately a trial of intent, and I was there, but to see you say it here, it makes me cringe*" (Thibault, FG-France).



GREECE

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This report is based on two focus groups and one individual interview, all conducted online. The following table includes the date of their realization, the socio-professional profiles of the participants, and their assumed affiliation to a minority group. Their names have been anonymized.

Pseudonym	Online/ offline	Gender	Age	Minority group	Type of media outlet	Status	Education	Years
GR1	Online	Female	30	Health issues	Website Private	Employee	Political sciences	12
GR2	Online	Male	30	Gay	Website and magazine Private	Employee	Journalism	5
GR3	Online	Male	50	Gay	Website and TV private	Employee	Law	30
GR4	Online	Male	35	Immigrant	Website Private	Employee	Political sciences	2
GR5	Online	Female	40	Health issues	Press officer	Employee	Social sciences	22
GR6	Online	Female	40	Racialized	Newspaper	Employee	Social and political sciences	15

Belonging to a minority group

The concepts of “groups”, “communities”, and “minorities” have been discussed spontaneously by the participants. For one LGBTI journalist, separating society in terms of communities prevents the formation of common ground.

“I would hate to see our society break down into communities. That is, yes, resist communities, yes, exchange views, yes, promote the commons. But that doesn't mean that society has to break up into small little pieces. Because we belong to the same set. Because if we think we belong to a different community, society will direct us to a different community.” [GR3]

“I don't know how many of these minorities that we're talking about are real minorities, because minority refers to a very small part of society. I believe that communities are not them so much, just not known. The communities are not that small. Small is what it looks like.” [GR3]

A disabled journalist nuances this statement by adding that not all members of society have the same rights. She first refers to the various groups that compose society.

“We are part of the same society, but we don't have the same rights, nor the same opportunities, nor even the same dignity very often. And I'm not talking about the three of us, I'm talking about the whole.” [Anna, FG1, Greece]

She then further develops her conception based on her personal experience as a disabled journalist.

“Not every community is treated the same. [...] My people, my people, my community, are in the closet [...]. They won't say they have any harm because they are afraid or ashamed.”
[Anna, FG1, Greece]

Another journalist prefers to use the term “group” rather than “minority”.

“I agree with the term minority interferers, but we can call it groups, there's nothing wrong with that.” [Alexandros, FG1, Greece]

GR4 feels uneasy about the term “minority” in relation to immigrants and prefers the term “community”.

“The concept of minority methodologically, that is, I don't know if this concept is correct in the political part, it's certainly not, that's why I'm saying that I don't belong to a minority because it's another legal excuse. [...] I mean, minority has other legal characteristics, which in the case would be very dangerous. Community is better anyway.” [GR4]

GR6 believes that being a woman is a more significant issue than being a person of color.

“The bigger issue is that I’m a woman, it’s not that I’m black.” [GR6]
“I don’t belong to a community.” [GR6]

Minority groups, human rights and social rights

One journalist argues that the rights of minority groups should not be seen as isolated rights but rather as human and social rights that are relevant to society as a whole.

“At the end of the day I think all people have a problem, sorry, they just don’t show it. [...] And I believe that we should indeed deal with these issues and we should highlight these issues. I personally dream of a society that suddenly does not make such a distinction. I mean people are people, they have every right to make their own choice [30:50] and it ended there. I don’t care if I’m called gay or straight right now. I want there to be a person across the street from me who doesn’t maintain whether I’m going with a man or a woman. So that’s the thing to not think about. Not because I’m at a weak point of things socially, but because it’s simply not our business, we don’t care.” [GR3]

“Suddenly they got a punch in the face. I’m not saying this politically, I’m saying it purely from a human rights perspective. They got a punch in the face that you know this is the situation and there are people coming out and saying I’m gay, I have my relationships and we’re done.” [GR3]

“So you either have the human right or you don’t. [...] These are all fake questions. It’s a very conservative society that still exists.” [GR3]

GR4 is on the same line.

“it has to do with social rights” [GR4]

Journalism, a highly competitive profession

The profession of journalism is regarded as highly competitive by all participants. Consequently, They consider it as challenging to discuss professional solidarity, whether among journalists in general or between those from minority groups.

“Our industry is terribly competitive. We are judged by our signature, by our image, proportional to what medium each and every one of us is in.” [GR1]

“There is absolutely no relation [between journalists LGBTI] [...] On a media level the main thing that exists, if we’re honest, is competition.” [GR3]

“it’s a competitive profession, very competitive I would say, [...] obviously there are employers and situations that are a bit more suspicious at the beginning” [GR4]

"It's a very competitive profession and that means, first of all it's a male dominated profession. [...] women in the profession, in journalism, they are not promoted by the system of journalism" [GR6]

Some journalists temper their judgement by acknowledging a form of solidarity among journalists, despite the competition.

"There's solidarity and support and competition. [...] It's both personal and collegial if you have to characterize it. And antagonistic." [GR2]

"It may be a competitive profession, but at the same time there are people who are progressive anyway, who show solidarity and help" [...] So, yes, there is an element of solidarity beyond competition." [GR4]

The feeling of shame is an aggravating factor in the invisibilisation for disabled journalists.

"we have colleagues who have impairments either physical or mental. But if they don't say it, we can't have a support network actually." [GR1].

"there are very few, or journalists with a disability or a chronic condition, but those of us who know each other will at least talk, we will help each other either with knowledge or with a promise of support." [GR5]

Diversity among minority groups

In the highly competitive journalistic environment, not all minority groups are treated equally. According to an LGBTI individual, journalists with disabilities particularly struggle.

"I think there's a bigger problem with disability, [...]. So it's harder to get a job. For us, gay men especially, and gay men with eyelids, let's say, we don't have such a big problem in journalism. Let's not fool ourselves. In disability we'll find different ways of saying you're not doing your job, what GR1 said that she's often away, she needs a lot of leave, that's my opinion, without going beyond the shoes." [GR2].

A disabled journalist indeed explains that this specific struggle pertains to their method of working and to their work environment.

*"When you're a disabled person and, de facto, your working hours are not as productive" [GR1].
"99% of the time I wouldn't be able to get hired." [GR5]*

"it's a competitive profession, very competitive I would say, [...] obviously there are employers and situations that are a bit more suspicious at the beginning" [GR4]

“It’s a very competitive profession and that means, first of all it’s a male dominated profession. [...] women in the profession, in journalism, they are not promoted by the system of journalism” [GR6]

Journalists with disabilities or health issues encounter limitations due to the need to visit hospitals or undergo treatments.

“I entered the profession ten years before I started having health problems, so to speak. [...] When disability and chronic illness came along it was another scout for me and for employers.” [GR5].

The professional environment must be adjusted to enable them to remain productive.

“if I go out in the field now, there’s nothing for me, it’s going to be too hard. Because I’ve seen from other colleagues who have tried, people with disabilities to work and they’ve lost their jobs because the building wasn’t accessible, the computer wasn’t accessible” [GR5]

This presents an obstacle and takes time; however, the fact that disabled individuals are legally protected from dismissal helps them continue to persevere [GR1].

GR3, an LGBTI journalist, denounces the lack of public policy in favour of including disabled persons in the workforce.

“I mean a social policy would say you might as well have people with issues particularly for health and the state to help you, the state in case you get sick, in case there is an outbreak of the form of the disease and so on and so on and so on, the state to cover these expenses and so on. Well, that doesn’t exist of course.” [GR3].

According to GR1, her “social group” – disabled persons – possesses the particularity that its characteristics have not been conceptualized in public discourse, which prevents progress in their professional inclusion process.

“Many colleagues discuss it without knowing anything about the matter. [...] everyone has an opinion. [...]. Because physical harm they won’t talk, they don’t have an opinion at all. If it’s a psychiatric issue, they all have. And they do diagnoses.” [GR1]

Her colleagues' discourses sometimes make her feel “very, very uncomfortable” [GR1] and contribute to a growing sense of shame.

“I’m scared and ashamed. No one should be afraid and ashamed of their life.” [GR1]

GR5 shares her thoughts and feelings.

“the fact that everyone thinks you can’t do anything, and they have no idea what you might have. The stigma is huge.” [GR5]

GR1 differentiates the attitude from colleagues towards disabled individuals and the LGBTI community persons.

“So unlike colleagues, homophobia is a thing that suggests hatred towards the person, because it's bad to be gay, if you're disabled it's a shame, especially if you're young. Something devastating has happened to your life and how you continue to breathe.” [GR1]

This attitude prevents disabled colleagues from developing themselves at work, especially those who suffer from mental impairment.

“In my work environment there are people who are disabled, but who are full in the closet. They don't say it, they're too scared. They've said it to me because I'm also disabled, but I'm a very publicly disabled person, I'm also an activist. People, colleagues who have epilepsy or other impairments, and they haven't even told our bosses. Especially those who have a mental impairment. It's a huge taboo in the industry because they are automatically seen as not being able to understand what the job is”. [GR1]

[...] They're afraid to be judged, they're afraid to seek help or find community because they often don't want to accept it. [GR1]

This reality has created a taboo surrounding mental illness, in particular.

“Mental impairment is huge taboo, more so than physical impairment because you can't easily steal the physical.” [GR1]

GR1 rejects the compassion expressed by their colleagues

“Compassion is an attitude that prevents you from evolving. Because automatically they don't see you as capable of doing things, you mean.” [GR1].

She feels there is considerable ignorance among her colleagues and that little progress is being made

“They don't have the knowledge tools and they're certainly a little behind.” [GR1]

The difficulties faced by LGBTI journalists are different.

“The biggest obstacle I think is myself. That is, thinking about what others will say about me.” [GR2].

“Here I will agree with a general point that Alexander said, that we are actually dealing first and foremost with ourselves. That is, de facto, if you belong to this category, you must first of all come to terms with yourself” [GR3]

Both GR5 and George blame the journalists and media in the stigmatization of ["their group".]

"I think that right now in Greece, in the Balkans, in Greece, people with disabilities and chronic disabilities still carry, carry a huge stigma and journalism and the media play a big role in that. In the repetition of prejudices and stereotypes." [GR5]

The racism piece from the mainstream media is a whole PhD and many books have been written and should be written in the future." [GR4]

From tolerance to the acceptance and integration of minority groups

An LGBTI journalist, around 50 years old, observes a positive evolution in Greek society towards LGBTI individuals.

"Concerning the LGBTI community and so on, I believe that during this time there was also an evolution of Greek society. Starting in the decade, the late 70s and 80s, that was definitely a problem." [GR3].

"I was born 60 so many years ago. The situation was different. [...] there was a complete ignorance of this whole thing." [GR3]

He points out a form of acceptance, although not yet true tolerance, and elaborates on the distinctions between the two notions.

"Acceptance is another, and it's another thing that it doesn't differentiate you from others". [...] "As well as I know that, [...] behind my back something can be said and which will reduce me and reduce my ability to evolve just because of my own identity." [GR3]

"[...] if a man [colleague] says I have gay friends, he will tell you at the same time that he is married to a woman, so as not to be misunderstood." [GR3].

He states that he is "not satisfied with tolerance" [GR3], but he also mentions that the attitude of his colleagues does not affect him.

"Look, in the [professional] space that I'm in, I don't think it's affecting me at the moment to be honest. [...] "I think I've gone to a stage where I don't care what the other person is. I purely don't even care what they are. I just don't care." [GR3].

Another LGBTI journalist maintains a low profile at work to prevent potential tensions.

"Clearly I'm not arguing [at work] and clearly I'm not arguing because I'm keeping a low profile". [GR2]

George, who immigrated to Greece, also notes a positive evolution within his ["group"], even though much more needs to be done.

"Look, the truth is that yes, there are difficulties and not only for me personally, because it is a social phenomenon in terms of the part of children of migrant origin, but the truth is that at the same time steps are being taken, because in a process of integration and inclusion. This is also reflected in the field of work and other social fields anyway." [GR4]

"The prejudices that were built up over decades are slowly being deconstructed by reality itself." [GR4]

He states that this evolution is linked to the emergence of a collective claim.

"there has been a public discussion, there are collectives that claim and put forward the demands of inclusion, integration [...] and so on. So this whole condition of collective assertion creates conditions for integration into working life more easily." [GR4]

He highlights two factors that could explain this positive evolution: the education of immigrants and their political integration.

"education has broken many barriers and many taboos and prejudices that existed in previous years because they are [children] with systematic knowledge with specialization and so on so there are obstacles for sure but as far as the journalism part is concerned, it has helped a lot [...]. [...] and especially after 2015, where massively too many children of immigrants got Greek citizenship, [...] because political integration is the height of the process of inclusion in a society and all this political condition has helped them to have visibility and that is reflected politically, socially and professionally. [GR4]

But he highlights that Greek society still has a long way to go.

"Greek society has not reached a process, if I may use the term, full inclusion, full integration, [...] where the children of immigrants [...] don't face any issues of, let's say, exclusion or discrimination. Some steps have been taken obviously more steps need to be taken." [GR4]

"there are also conditions for stereotypical perceptions to slowly shrink." [GR4]

GR5 observes a positive evolution regarding disabled individuals in society at large, but, according to her, this progress does not extend to the journalistic profession specifically.

"In general, while there has been a great improvement in terms of stereotyping of the disabled, over the last 20 years or so in Greece, the journalism industry is in a different era. It remains the same stigmatizing, from the 1960s for people with loneliness to work in this space". [GR5]

Professional ethics and “minority” issues

All journalists believe that journalists from minority groups should address issues concerning their communities, as they possess greater knowledge and sensitivity towards these topics.

“[...] we will treat these issues with more sensitively and more knowledge.” [GR3].

“I mean the issues of the community are best known by people who are active and mobilized through the community.” [GR1] “I think generally any part that is minority related should be covered people who belong to minorities or at least are friendly or in solidarity. These are delicate issues” [GR1].

“They [my colleagues] have no idea what's going on in my community. [GR1]

For GR1, “It's necessary”:

“Being in a social group and covering the issues of the group might even be considered inspiring rather than anti-[ethical]. It's a job that should be done by people who know how to do it.” [GR1]

GR4 and GR5 emphasize their hands-on experience with this issue, which they thoroughly understand.

“if you're a child of immigrants it's much easier to bring up a social agenda or talk about social exclusion, social rights issues” [GR4].

“because I had it very much in my family and I had experienced the stigma from my childhood in terms of people with [...] disabilities. I was chasing it very much and that's how I had it made and a wallet and it just so happened that when that position opened up and I was able to work in those organizations.” [GR5].

GR2 affirms his professionalism, applying the same standards to LGBTI matters as he does to all others.

“I've applied the same tools that I apply to reporting, whether it's on LGBTQ issues, whether it's agricultural, whether it's financial, whether it's business. And I try to be a professional journalist, regardless of the subject matter.” [GR2]

GR4 does not claim to be objective, as he believes that objectivity does not exist.

“I don't believe in neutrality and objectivity. [...] Because if there was objectivity, we wouldn't be arguing, there wouldn't be an exclusion, we'd all be equal and the issue we're discussing would be over. So not only am I not afraid of that but on the contrary I want it to show what my view is on the specific issues.” [GR4]

Another journalist suggests that the question of professionalism is not the most appropriate one when discussing reporting on issues pertaining to their own community.

“So I mean I’m saying that reality comes along and hits you in the face. Because yes, and I said it from the beginning, I’m not satisfied with tolerance. So You either have the human right or you don’t.

[...] These are all fake questions. It’s a very conservative society that still exists. So I don’t have a problem if I’m a professional [...].” [GR3].

He believes that addressing such issues presents an opportunity to highlight these groups and advocate for human rights.

“In our work lately we’ve been given a great opportunity to get these messages across. And I reiterate that these are human rights messages and clearly we have to promote them and give them the weight.” [GR3].

[...] recent political developments have given us the right to raise and I think that’s a positive thing. Suddenly they got a punch in the face.” [GR3].

GR4 talks about a “moral obligation”.

“It can reach more people. I personally feel a moral obligation, [...] I feel a moral obligation, because [children] have no voice, the truth is, they were unseen and in the backyard of society, to bring up such issues [...].” [GR4]

None of the interviewed journalists has ever been accused of partiality when covering issues related to their own community.

“It’s never been done, no one has ever told me. In the beginning when I was originally working as a journalist, I had this anxiety anyway, if I’m a professional, otherwise.” [GR2]

Representation of minority groups in professional associations

The minority groups to which the interviewed journalists belong are not currently officially represented in professional journalism associations. Some link this situation to the current crisis that the profession undergoes.

“In the era of the crisis in the last 14 years after 2015 there is, from what I see, a huge shrinkage of this part of the collectives.” [GR4]

“the journalists’ union has almost, what do you call it, disintegrated.[...] the industry has broken”. [GR4]

Nonetheless, journalists assert that minority groups must be included in professional spaces associations.

“In all professional sectors, people with disabilities should be represented, because we are much poorer people and much more unemployed and unemployable.” [GR1]

“I think that there should be a quota in some way, that is, people who belong to minorities, to marginalized social groups or who are subject to racism should have a voice in our trade unions and to educate our colleagues and to be able to somehow claim basic rights. [GR1]

“I think it would be a very, very good idea to make a big campaign by the union to all journalists so that we don't forget because a generation ago it would be a bad idea but no there isn't.” [GR3]

Except for GR6, who states that since there are no journalists of colour, they do not require any representation.

“There are no journalists of color. I haven't met any. [...] As long as there are none, I don't think there's an issue [about representing them]” [GR6]

GR1 emphasises the importance of representing disabled people and other minority groups to improve professional solidarity.

“I don't know any other openly disabled people.” “I don't know any other openly disabled people.

“It's a health issue with us. You can't hide for too long, it will literally kill you. So solidarity networks are a very, very basic thing. It's a key thing because the first thing we have to eliminate is the taboo the trolling and the fear. One of the fears is the fear of being fired. My community is protected by the law. The LGBT community is protected by the law, but less so than we are. In the sense that we also have a doctor's note that says you can't fire us. A LGBT person can be fired for any other reason.”

[GR1]

“There's no visibility so I would love to have it but there isn't. That's why we need a disability labor movement and representation and so on.”[GR1].

According to GR5, the issue resides more in the actions taken than in the representation.

“There is representation in the Trade Union of the Disabled, there are tools, there are tools, there have been codes of [ethics], there have been workshops, there have been conferences.[...] Nothing has arrived. Really nothing. The situation is desperate.” [GR5]

“And we've done, I remember, with some other colleagues, some outcries about some very bad incidents [...] for things that are heard in the mails and said which is the purest stigmatizing speech of the 1920s and she hasn't done anything.” [GR5]

Journalists emphasized that Greece has a weak associative journalistic landscape.

"I think it's important to clarify what we're referring to, because in Greece we only have the journalists' associations, other countries have press councils. So, we are necessarily talking about the associations to which each and every one of them belongs." [GR2]

"The journalists' union has almost, what do you call it, disintegrated. [GR5]

"I know for a fact that even a disciplinary body that exists is not working. [...] almost nothing works in the journalists' union space, and I think that yes, there should be and training should be, and education should be, and reform should be, and seminars should be, and we don't mean everything, but for a start, at some point, the unions should be reconstituted." [GR5]

"That's the crucial thing. The journalists' unions are broken. Really what we're talking about now, not to say it's a luxury, which it obviously shouldn't be". [GR5]

Main issues to be tackled

Journalists emphasize the importance of addressing the issue of minority groups [GR3].

"I think can be a big campaign on a European level for these things. So that he could get to this. [GR3].

George also emphasizes the importance of "collective demands, structures, etc." [GR4]

*"I think the part of collective expression is more crucial than the part of education." [FG2, Greece]
"the most important thing is to create a collective expression" [GR4]*

"To get into social life in general and into public life to have a voice. [...] So I think that the main thing is to break a phobia that existed and to join both the journalism part and in general. [...] because as equal citizens and so on, these kids have a lot of things to say beyond immigration, I mean, and as citizens in general. [GR4]

"And I think that when the fearfulness is broken, that will be reflected in the perceptions of society in general in general." [GR4]

GR5 concurs and forecasts a crisis if no collective organization emerges.

"I see a worse crisis coming, especially in 2025 and beyond, unless there is a collective organization of journalists and more people from minorities of any kind emerge in there. [...] That is to educate ourselves, more to educate our colleagues, but first, we need to organize ourselves in the existing institutions and associations and unions, so that we can reverse the climate in the sector. [...] So I see no other way also than collective representation and struggle." [GR5]

Journalists also emphasize the essential need to eliminate hate speech [GR3].

"I think there should be no tolerance for hate speech, tolerance of human rights violations at the state level and at the workplace level. I think that should be very important." [GR3]

This can occur through education for all journalists, regardless of whether they consider themselves part of a specific group or not.

"I've heard of volunteer seminars for journalists. [...] Anyone who wants should be able to have access to such seminars and there should be more. [...] Either they're LGBT or they're not part of that community. Then it has to be about non-sanctuary, then it has to be about all the hate speech and discrimination that some groups have had in society." [GR2]

This must be done in a new professional environment, as the current working conditions are not good.

"There's underemployment, [...] bad conditions, [...] no disciplinary body, [...] no collective body, [...] everyone is on their own, [...], very low wages, [...] crappy labor contracts." [GR5]



IRELAND

Kevin Rafter, Dublin City Universit
& Florence Le Cam, Université libre de Bruxelles

Two focus groups were organized in Ireland. During the first one, the participants made a lot of references to an event that happened few months earlier, the 2023 Dublin Riot. This tragic event was used by the far right to denounce immigration, and participants in the focus group positioned themselves in that context.

Pseudonym	Online/ offline	Gender	Age	Minority group	Type of media outlet	Status	Education	Years
A-FG1	Online	Male	Under 40	Journalist with disability	Newspaper (private)	Full time	Journalism	7
C-FG1	Online	Female	Under 25	Journalist of color	Newspaper and radio (private)	Freelance	Journalism	2
B-FG1	Online	Male	Under 30	Journalist of color/queer	Newspaper (private)	Full time	English and French	3
C-FG2	Online	Female	Under 30	Journalist of color/queer	Newspaper (private)	Full time	Media studies	8
A-FG2	Online	Male	Under 40	Journalist of color	Radio Website	Freelance	Public relations	20

The story of **their desire to become journalists** goes back to their youth, to the desire to "make stories and write stories" (C-FG1-Ireland) or "*I think it started out as a way of like explaining things in a simpler way for people I feel like that's the basic side*" (C-FG2-Ireland). Even if this desire write was initial, some did not think it would lead them to journalism: "*I didn't really know that I wanted to be a journalist, I suppose, until I got involved with student journalism in Ireland*" (B-FG1-Ireland). Others wanted to become lawyers, for example, but were unable to study in Nigeria (A-FG2-Ireland).

The **visibility of minorities** in Irish newsrooms is one of the entry points for the discussion. Thus, for A "*minorities as defined exist within the newsroom. But too vanishingly and unfortunately, small capacity*" (A-FG1-Ireland). And for B, this had an effect on the way she envisaged her integration into the professional practices of her host country, Ireland. Her choice was to put herself in the shoes of others, journalists and audiences alike, even if the situation gradually changed: "*It was: what do white Irish people care more about and how do you tell their stories rather than telling the stories of people of color, immigrants? And it's only very recently that we have seen that shift in narrative to tell the story about immigrants, especially with the rise of far-right narratives against immigrants in Ireland. We have seen a shift towards telling the good stories about immigrants.*" (B-FG1-Ireland).

The **mobilization of her identity** may be fortuitous and linked to current events and subjects in the news. As a result, B recounts her difficulties, and in particular a stance that tries to oscillate between respect for professional standards, particularly that of objectivity, and the desire to make her voice and her knowledge of the subject heard. She says: "*working as a person of color in a newsroom is difficult, I have to say, because you're there not only trying to write, be objective about what is happening everywhere, but especially when you're seeing a lot of anti-immigrants hate happening, you're trying to be as objective as you can be. But also, there is a small part of you trying to be like, I need to voice my concerns. But how do I do that in an objective sense? So, I would have to say there is that balance that the newsroom is lacking when it comes to writing the story about the migrant, about the immigrant*" (B-FG1-Ireland).

And covering these subjects seems to her to fall within the scope of her identity, trajectory and experience: "*I would, I find myself being able to write about that because I'm more informed about it because it's stuff that's actually happening to me and my friends*" (B-FG1-Ireland). And C-FG1 echoed her comments, saying: "*for example, most of the articles I've made on my projects, especially in college, are leaning towards immigration or anything that is like any story that relates to me or any of my friends*" (C-FG1-Ireland). Her colleague C-FG2 also said that she sees few minorities in her newsroom and that on certain subjects "*I feel like I should be the one to write something or pitch something*" (C-FG2-Ireland). The journalism situation in Ireland is difficult and entry conditions are precarious. For A-FG2, this means an even greater cost for journalists from minority groups: "*It's one sector that the minorities really need to, to work harder. Let's say three times, because generally, even for the Irish people, getting in there, it's not easy*" (A-FG2-Ireland).

And this cost is broader, it also concerns the possible consequences of violence against foreigners. A-FG2 said that she was "trying to protect my mental health now" and that this was one of the reasons why she was now working in the lifestyle sector, which she also linked to her previous experiences and her desire to no longer have to deal with information that concerned her as a minority group.

C-FG1 is therefore **critical of the way in which the mainstream media tend to cover issues relating to minority groups** (and immigration in particular), presenting only the negative aspects of the issues and excluding coverage of positive events or actions. Coverage choices also depend on the composition of the newsroom at any given time. B-FG1 recalls a story: *"If I had not been working that day if I had not put my hand up that story would have been further left out that day [...] there are those moments where I feel like I have to stand up because if I don't that story is just going to be forgotten"* (B-FG1-Irland). Identity also put the brakes on certain subject proposals made by C-FG1, a journalism student who wanted to cover events organized by racist and anti-immigrant sections of society, and who was reminded by her teacher of the risks she was taking as an immigrant and as a woman by covering these subjects. This also affects certain relationships with sources, as A-FG2 recounts: as a producer, she could receive certain reactions of astonishment or disappointment from her guests (linked to her identity), and C-FG2 testifies that she was subjected to online violence by Internet users. But she was relative in her comments, pointing out that she comes from India, where such practices are common, and insisted: *"obviously I've experienced this in India as well and it's just sort of like ... oh this comes with the job"* (C-FG2-Irland).

What's more, this mobilization of identity, which can be felt as an **assignment** by others, can be a mental and professional burden. C says: *"It's a lot of pressure because there's no precedent. There's nobody else I can look to be like, how did you deal with that? I have to go through at least two more stages of conflict before I can make something happen"* (C-FG2-Irland). However, she added that she did not feel that she had been singled out in her workplace: *"where I work, I've never felt like I've been looked at differently because I'm a minority. Because I've always had the same opportunities, at least so far. But I don't... I feel like if it were where it needs to be, there would have been more people like me"* (C-FG2-Irland). However, A-FG2 said that she had never felt specifically assigned to cover a particular subject.

The **relationship with ethics is centered on questions of objectivity**. C recounts a discussion she had with another journalist colleague of Palestinian origin. The latter told her that she had been asked to put aside her personality and her origins in order to remain as objective as possible. But the situation and this request to split her personality affected her so much that she talked about leaving the media (C-FG1-Irland). The Focus Group 1 participants were very critical of the actions of the press council, which seemed -to them- to be inactive in the face of the proliferation of hateful media coverage. However, B said that she would like to benefit from any discussions on ethics and professional practices. She says: *"And I would have liked, if there is a space, I would have liked to be able to use that space because I believe there are a lot of times there are situations that my white, cis white male journalists, friends are not able to answer. And there are questions that would be much, much more, easier to be answered by immigrant journalists. And there aren't many immigrant journalists in Cork, to be honest"*. (B-FG1-Irland). But the professional institutions remain far removed from the concerns of minority groups for all the participants in focus 1 and 2: *"But the fact is that because of how long the narrative of journalists in Ireland being white men for a really long time that has always been the case there hasn't been an opportunity for other groups to be welcomed into the workforce"* (B-FG1-Irland). And she called on the institutions to reflect on the words used, particularly when dealing with issues relating to immigration and minorities in general.



NORWAY

Vilde Ellingsberg, University of Bergen
& Florence Le Cam, Université libre de Bruxelles

Participants were recruited through email when it was publicly available and through their LinkedIn profile if they did not have a public email address. They were all sent the project description as part of the information about the project. There was high interest for the project among the journalists contacted. Only one of the journalists were not interested in being a participant in the study. Some others could not make it due to a busy work schedule. In the end, a focus group with 5 participants was organized on December 2023, and two individual interviews were conducted in January 2024.

Most of the participants have shown some sort of activism or been outspoken on behalf of their minority group through their job or through their personal social media accounts. The sample thus consists of (mostly) people who are comfortable speaking of these issues publicly.

In the search for participants, we noticed that many of the previously outspoken journalists from a minority group had changed their career from journalism to working for an organization dedicated to bettering the life of people of that minority group.

Pseudonym	Online/offline	Gender	Age	Minority group	Type of media outlet	Status	Education	Years
N1	Online	Female	40-45	Ethnic minority	National TV Public	Full-time employee (leadership)	Informatics	15-20
N2	Online	Female	30-35	Ethnic minority	National newspaper Private	full-time employee	Journalism	5-10
N3	Online	Female	30-35	Ethnic minority	National newspaper Private	full-time employee	Journalism	5-10
N4	Online	Male	25-30	Queer	National TV Public	Full-time employee	Comparative politics	3-5
N5	Online	Female	50-55	Queer	Magazines, journals and press	Freelance	Journalism	20-25
N6	Online	Male	50-55	Disability	National channels and information for deaf people	Full-time employee (leadership)	Political science	30-35
N7	Online	male	60-65 years	Disability	National Radio	Formerly full-time employee (retired)	Journalism	40-45

There are **many ways of defining identity**. For example, N2 defines herself as "a Norwegian Somali. But in my job, I think I'm a minority" (N2, FG-Norway). A Brazilian participant who arrived in Norway in her twenties took a very long time to feel integrated, to learn the language and to become a journalist. In this sense, her "*identity dilemma*" seems different to people of foreign origin who were born or arrived in the country at a young age. Self-identification as a minority is also a question of sexual orientation. N4 explains: "*I do feel like a minority, but I don't feel that it has defined my work, or me in my journalistic role, in any way whatsoever*" (N4, FG-Norway). But this is not the case for everyone. Lene, for example, says: "*I'm not read as part of a minority unless I say so myself, or in some way. Tell them that I'm queer. So I can go in and out of that minority status in a way*" (N5, FG-Norway). Definitions also intersect. N6 talks about being perceived as a linguistic and cultural minority because he is hard of hearing.

The **narrative of the desire to be a journalist** emphasizes the pleasure of writing, of meeting people, or of the role attributed to journalism: "*I like to, like, think that I can help change the world in some way*" (N3, FG-Norway). Chun managed to study journalism rather than public relations thanks to minority quota policies at Norwegian universities, as did N1. Luck is another factor. N4 was studying politics and got to know the student media, which introduced him to the profession and made him love it. He also links his choice to his personality: "*I'm also a very impatient person, so for me, journalism has been absolutely fantastic. The fact that no two days are the same, and that I've had the opportunity to do so many different things*" (N4, FG-Norway). External events can also influence the decision to become a journalist. N2, who was planning to become a policewoman, changed her mind after the terrorist attack on an island that left many young people dead. She rethought her career choices and decided that she was rather "*extra good at seeing and understanding people*", that she had been enjoying documentaries for years, and that journalism was the way forward. The desire to tell small but moving stories, to take an interest in those who are never given the microphone, also contributes to the choice of career (N5, FG-Norway) or to be interested in sound (N7, I-Norway).

For the three racialized journalists in the focus groups, **professional integration** was also helped by measures to support diversity in media companies, mainly NRK, the Norwegian public service. The issue of **quotas** on entry to the profession, which seems to be applied in Norway, is the subject of debate. But it has enabled N3 to get a permanent job in journalism. N2 agrees, but takes a step back, arguing that she has had many experiences and that NRK's practices could/should also be applied elsewhere, which is not the case. Chun also recalls how little account was taken of the skills he had previously acquired (he already had a degree in journalism) before being accepted onto the NRK programs: "*you come in as one of those "Okay, you're a foreigner who doesn't know journalism, so now we're going to learn journalism", because you're going to be like ... Yes, you haven't been educated. And it's ... it was very strange*" (N3, FG-Norway). But for N1, quotas are just a way in, which means that in the following years she will have to demonstrate her qualities and skills anyway, so as not to be doubted by her colleagues (because of the quotas).

Entry can also be helped by working in the specialist media, particularly queer media for N5 and N3, who explains: *"It opens up the media industry in many ways because you feel that you can apply there because it's a safe environment"* (N3, FG-Norway). But you still need to be familiar with this specific world, which is not the case for Kristian, who from where he lives did not have access to these niche media, nor was he in an environment open to discussion on these issues. Inclusion also raises a whole series of practical conditions that are necessary for certain minority groups, as is the case for Magnus, and which give rise to uncertainty: *"It's hard to take things for granted. It's hard to know for sure that you'll get an interpreter for parent-teacher meetings, or interviews, or courses, or whatever you choose to attend. And then there's always the uncertainty of whether it will happen or not"* (N6, I-Norway).

Belonging to a minority group **confronts journalists with processes of assignment** from the outside that they regularly observe: *"what's so incredibly nice about being multicultural is that you have a number of limitations that you don't necessarily set yourself, but you get from the outside"* (N3, FG-Norway). This assignment can also come from sources who have high expectations of a journalist who looks like them: *"Society has an expectation of me, for example, or because I'm a Norwegian-Somali, they often think that I'm their spokesperson, so I have to write things for them and about them in a positive way"* (N2, FG-Norway). But for the most part these assignments come from the media company, which may have strict rules for its journalists: not to take part in Pride or anti-racist demonstrations. This was the case for N2, who attended an anti-racist march and was unable to write about racism afterwards for some time: *"I was disqualified. Then of course I complained because I understand that I can't write about the particular march I went to, but to say to a person with a multicultural background, who perhaps knows more about racism than anyone else, and who can write about it in a completely different way, that I can't work on racism again. In a way, I would have... If they hadn't turned round then, I would have quit"* (N2, FG-Norway). But the subpoenas are difficult to circumvent. N2 continues: *"I'm very anti-racist, but I'm also anti-racist because I'm black. If I had met a very racist person, I would of course be professional in my job. But I do realize that I had to prepare myself. And not because I won't be able to be professional, but because I know that no matter what, that person will see me as anti-racist"* (N2, FG-Norway).

The same situation was encountered by Kristian, who was banned from taking part in a Pride event. As a result, their personal identities sometimes seem more important than that of the journalist or come first: *"That they see us first and foremost as foreigners, and then as secondary journalists. Because they're able to distinguish between you as a queer and you as a journalist. It's like... I don't know if it makes sense, but it's kind of not true because it's like... Nobody thinks that about Martin, who's straight and Norwegian and white. Yes, but you're Martin, you're a journalist, while I'm like 'Chun, you're Chinese, and you're a journalist'"* (N3, FG-Norway). On the contrary, participation in one's community could be transformed into the construction of useful expertise for journalists and the media: *"If I had made a name for myself in the Norwegian-Somali community, taken part in discussions, been invited to chair a meeting or whatever, I would have been recognized by the community and received feedback from the community. Which I could later use to create journalism. I'm just saying. By being so strict, the industry is strangling itself of good ideas"* (N2, FG-Norway).

Belonging to a minority group can **enable you to deploy certain specific skills**. Kristian recounts how, during a terrorist attack in a gay bar, his identity enabled him to feel and convey the emotions of the people around him, and to do so in a credible way. *"I feel that the minority sensibility has perhaps also been an advantage in certain situations"* (N4, FG-Norway). The presence of minority journalists in the professional world is seen as an opportunity and an asset for the media. N3 says: *"And our perspectives, and the way we think, with a kind of exclusion, or with a kind of minority experience. That's something we haven't seen in journalism as clearly as we have now"* (N3, FG-Norway). Magnus, a deaf journalist, confirms: *"I think it can contribute new perspectives, of course, new ways of looking at things, contribute with issues, questions ... that perhaps the majority haven't thought about. It really depends on how much emphasis you place on the disability"* (N6, I-Norway). These skills can be many: finding people and stories that other colleagues wouldn't find, thinking about things a bit differently (N4, FG-Norway).

But they can also be unused. For example, Maria does not feel that her Brazilian origins play any role in her work as a journalist, and that she makes very little use of her origins in her work, particularly because colleagues who are also of Brazilian origin cover the country's news for Norway. N3, who is of Chinese origin, has decided never to cover her country of origin from a political point of view. For a long time, she says, she followed the advice of one of her teachers not to write too much about 'foreigners'. But she gradually realized that on multicultural subjects, on the contrary, she had to do his job, because no one else would. Harald did the same with subjects relating to people with reduced mobility: *"like I don't want to cover this because I struggle with it myself [...] I'm a bit of an old-fashioned journalist who thinks that journalists shouldn't be involved in parties or organizations. So, I've sort of... I've probably covered a few disability-related issues over the years, but... Not that I can remember having related to myself"* (N7, I-Norway).

In general, **they receive little recognition** from their superiors or colleagues. The difficulty of finding sources, getting them to talk, and carrying out an investigation seem to give them little visibility. Instead, they are called upon to talk about racism or their career paths. N3 said that she had experienced difficult reporting, the consequences of which were far removed from the realities experienced by her colleagues: *"And I've received threats of violence. I find that a lot of my colleagues don't realize what I'm talking about sometimes"* (N3, FG-Norway). The opportunities for pursuing these issues and receiving support are also highly dependent on individual working conditions and the hierarchy at the time. For N3: *"But then it's entirely on an individual level how lucky you are in your manager, and how much empathy or sympathy he has for the things you're passionate about"* (N3, FG-Norway). But hierarchies are often unrepresentative of minority groups, as Maria points out: *"But of course, it's different to have leaders who are themselves part of a minority in some way, and who have it in their bones that this is something that should be prioritized or who see..."* (N1, FG-Norway). (N1, FG-Norway). The consequences for people with motor disabilities are another aspect that can lead them to exclude themselves from the organization (N7, I-Norway).

For N3, **commitment** is essential: "*I think it makes me a better journalist to be engaged in the things I care about. But also, to be conscious of that engagement, of course*" (N3, FG-Norway). This engagement takes several forms, including the ability of journalists to delve into subjects with which they themselves disagree. "*I think that being a journalist has given me the opportunity to talk to some people who are on this side. Who I really disagree with and who disagree with me. But... That's kind of why I'm a journalist*" (N5, FG-Norway). But this commitment is also part of the ways in which minority groups are assigned. Asked about the dilemmas posed by their identity when covering certain events, Chun replies: "*But this question has come up all the time, and I think it's very interesting when people are like 'Yes, but if you're queer, can you cover pride? Because then you're incompetent. But you straight people cover straight people every day*" (N5, FG-Norway).

But the coverage of certain subjects can cause them **dilemmas that provoke a kind of identity crisis**, when, for example, a subject reveals an inglorious side of their group. And the accusation of being an activist is an inherent component for some, like Magnus: "*We must be credible and neutral on all sides of the issue. And should not ... not engage in some activism. We shouldn't be too personal or too involved. It can be a challenge because you experience it first-hand. Not getting an interpreter, for example. You can feel it yourself. So, you just have to raise that awareness. That's all.*" (N6, I-Norway). These dilemmas raise multiple ethical questions: "*Who are you? who do you stand for? Who are you loyal to? Are you loyal to the journalistic principles, do they conflict with being loyal to the group that most strongly represents your identity? These are typical issues that will arise. Are you first and foremost a journalist ... and then deaf?*" (N6, I-Norway).



POLAND

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This synthesis is based on one focus group conducted online on 18/12/2023. The following table includes the socio-professional profiles of the participants and their assumed affiliation to a minority group. The focus group has been translated into English by the interviewer. He noted that it was difficult to reach and persuade journalists of color and those with disabilities to participate in the focus group. "To be honest, there are very few of them in the media in Poland." He also noted that "On the day of the research, a transgender journalist and a journalist with a disability withdrew from the study due to being infected with coronavirus."

Pseudonym	Online/ offline	Gender	Age	Minority group	Type of media outlet	Status	Education	Years
POL1	Online	Female	44	LGBT	Online media Private	Employee full-time	Journalism	20
POL2	Online	Male	33	LGBT	Press	Employee full-time	Journalism	12
POL3	Online	Female	34	Journalist of color	Press	Employee full-time	Sociology	9
POL4	Online	Male	36	LGBT	Radio	Employee full-time	Graphic design	10
POL5	Online	Male	34	Journalist of color	Press	Employee full-time	/	9

Various minorities

Some minority groups experience varying levels of representation. As noted by [POL3], the queer community gained notable visibility during the presidential election campaign, with the Law and Justice party leveraging the defamation of LGBT individuals as part of its strategy, alongside their somewhat better integration in the media. In contrast, ethnic minorities and immigrants often struggle with representation in mainstream media, especially on immigration issues, as they commonly arrive lacking proficiency in Polish and the capital needed to effectively participate, particularly linguistic skills. *"This is some super minority of minorities"*

Beyond these particularities, participants believe they have developed a heightened sensitivity and awareness regarding social injustices in general.

The gay minority in Warsaw – media, city, and generation

Some journalists interviewed suggest that perceptions of the gay minority in Warsaw are influenced by media and generational factors. As noted by [POL1] and [POL2], Warsaw hosts many editorial offices that are supportive of gay journalists and advocate for gay rights. This positive outlook spans beyond just the media and also encompasses the advertising and entertainment industries, as highlighted by [POL2]. [POL1] further highlights that the workplace environment plays a significant role in these dynamics element.

"I work in a specific company, well, and industry. I think such quite artistic strongly, so people are very used to it... You could actually go to work with a plume in your ass, and no one would be surprised."
[POL1]

[POL2] agreed as he encountered more difficulties as a gay journalist in Kozalin than in Warsaw.[POL2]. Nonetheless, the circumstances are less than perfect. As [POL4] expresses: *"I kind of disagree that this situation in the media looks so good"*. He elaborates that the experience largely depends on the type of media in which journalists work and shares that he has encountered some homophobic attitudes.

"I, for example, have been in 3 different editorial offices. In one of them, I encountered elements that were not that kind of aggressive homophobia. In the sense that it was not aggression or violence, but let's say it was such homophobia on the level of derision, mockery, such a bit of discrediting. We all know a little bit about what's behind it. So, I encountered this despite the fact that we were in 2022, and this was Warsaw, the center of Warsaw. So, the fact that, apparently, there is no acquiescence to it does not mean that such actions, such behavior, do not occur here."

[POL4] encountered different situations based on the media environment, ranging from homophobic behaviors to a professional atmosphere free of such issues. [POL2] concurs, stating that *"It all depends on what kind of editorial board it is"*, noting that:

it's relatively rare for a person with sensitivities, I don't know, more of that rainbow sensitivity, I would say, to work in right-wing or far-right media. I believe that this atmosphere is certainly lacking, and it should be emphasized that in Warsaw, in editorial offices with a right-wing orientation, the environment can indeed differ." [POL2]

[POL4] adds that accepting gay journalists also hinges on generational factors.

"I also met with people who declared some left-wing affiliation, in the sense of left-wing identity, and at the same time, they were no strangers to using homophobia or any other such chauvinism. More often, I would bet on the fact that in the media, at least as I saw it, this is a generational problem and not quite often a political or ideological one."

Conscious and unconscious pathways into the profession

For [POL1], her minority status did not influence her decision to become a journalist. In contrast, [POL4] believes he may have unconsciously chosen this profession due to his affiliation with the gay community, although he did not make this choice consciously. [POL3] asserts: *"I don't think I wanted to fight for anything; I just wanted to write [...] then it turned out that somehow there must be at least to some extent connected with this identity."* [POL5] entered the profession with a clear intention: to fight. The desire to write became more apparent later on.

"I became a journalist during the revolution in Ukraine in 2013 or 2014. [...] The wave of the revolution inspired me. I wanted to write and was passionate about it. Amidst the revolution, I wished to contribute in some way, perhaps leaning towards citizen journalism. Yes, perhaps during that revolutionary wave, I thought I wanted to fight, but later, I realized that I wanted to write well and perform my duties effectively." [POL5]

For [POL2], the impetus to combat injustice arising from his experiences as a gay man compelled him to pursue a career in journalism, allowing him to *"do everything in [his] power to expose such processes."*

Obstacles of being "minoritized", also as a woman

[PO3L] talks about her practice of reviewing colleagues' articles that she feels misrepresent the experiences of visual minorities. Her attitude may attract some backlash. She shared an instance of a conversation she had, regarding this.

"We were talking about various things and drank wine. And he said, for example, that I'm a bit oversensitive, that I kind of represent this minority and that I have kind of my conviction about it. I think that I'm not oversensitive (laughs). It's just that there are so few of us that no one else will do it, as I won't do it, because it would already have to be written by someone quite outside, a reader. That is a completely different position."

She asserts her commitment to accurately representing marginalized minorities in the media. *"It's just that it was more like my kind of crusade, i.e., a mini crusade, of some kind of spreading a little bit of awareness"* [POL3]. The other journalists feel somewhat concerned by the minorities' issues but do not claim a clear commitment.

As a "woman of color", [POL3] doesn't see her "ethnic difference" as an obstacle to anything. On the contrary, *"Sometimes quite the opposite. It seems to me that this is exemplified in how people remember me better for different reasons"* [POL3]. [POL3] notes that more than her "ethnic difference," being a woman *"is somewhat more of a problem in general"*. [POL4] agrees *"It is indeed the case that discrimination against women in the workplace is much more condoned and accepted in the sense that it is much less noticeable than against any other minorities."* [POL4] [POL1] also notes that *"guys help each other, but girls make it harder for each other"* [POL1]. [POL3] agrees with this statement. *"For example, I am much more likely to encounter discrimination against women in the workplace than discrimination based on any sexual traction or appearance."* [POL1] According to the participants, these issues are noticeable in discussions and relate to promotions and pay [POL3]. She also evokes *"some kind of protectionism"* and *"position of power and dominance"*. *"You feel, for example, that people listen to you less than someone else."* [POL3]

But she also underlines that it is an impressionistic feeling.

"These are such hard to track impressionistic things. I feel that you just have to talk about it more as a mood, a perception of different situations, and not super-concrete things where you can easily stigmatize someone for discriminating against you and treating you differently because these are often just small things in breaking through." [POL3]

[POL4] confirms.

"women [...] as far as my editorial team is concerned, are indeed a minority. Because for a group of 20 men, there are a few women. Literally, they are indeed a minority, and on top of that, they are discriminated against quite regularly."

[POL4] He also reports a *"quite a high-profile story of dismissals due to homophobia used against co-worker"*, at a TV station. *But if these issues happen, they are not public. As a rule, it is from some second hand. That is, it's never a spin on documents or decisions."* [POL4]

"These are very soft things [...] it's not that I can catch someone on it [...] These are the things that can't be proven. They are more like impressions, so it's hard to get anything concrete here. They might as well come from, as it were, my self-doubt, for example." [POL3].

"It is not that everything can be written down in some kind of good treatment book. That it's not just about that; it's about fighting the gender pickup and tracking these differences." [POL3]

How “minority journalists” and “minority issues” are treated by and within their media

[POL4] shares their experience at a media outlet covering an equality parade for the first time. According to him, the coverage aimed solely at demonstrating media support for the LGBT community by positioning the broadcasting vehicle near the parade. However, beyond this visual tactic, there was no genuine willingness from the media to engage in discussions or raise awareness about the event and its topic.

Numerous media organizations have various initiatives dedicated to minorities [POL5]. [POL1] states, *“there are trainings on tolerance towards other employees, how to behave, how not to behave and so on.”* Furthermore, [POL2] highlights the establishment of a diversity department that administers the Polish Diversity Award, along with written guidelines for engaging with non-binary individuals.

Future and ethics

[POL2] advocates for integration over separation of minorities within journalism. “I don't know if such categorization is necessary. Since we want to be considered part of society, it seems to me that simply such integration related to the profession is enough” [POL2]. [POL4] notes significant societal changes over the past 10 to 15 years, advocating for grassroots efforts to address discrimination promptly rather than top-down regulations.

The participants express a desire for practical implementation rather than mere formalities. *“Well, we are not able to create one Association of Journalists in Poland, so what about creating one code of ethics.”* [POL4]



SPAIN

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Two focus groups were organized online on 6/3/2024 and 8/3/2024, with 3 participants each. The transcription was translated to English by the interviewer.

Pseudonym	Online/ offline	Gender	Age	Minority group	Type of media outlet	Status	Education	Years
ES1	Online	Male	54	Journalist of color	Press Private	Employee Full-time	Law & Journalism	28
ES2	Online	Female	28	Queer	Digital newspaper Public	Employee Full-time	Journalism & Political Science	5
ES3	Online	Male	29	Disabled	Unemployed	Unemployed	Journalism & Political Science	10
ES4	Online	Male	28	Queer	Radio Public	Employee Full-time	Journalism	8
ES5	Online	Female	27	Journalist of color	TV Public	Employee Full-time	Journalism	5
ES6	Online	Female	27	Journalist of color & Disabled	Private Digital newspaper	Freelance Part-time	Journalism	5

Beginnings, opportunities and obstacles

Many participants in the focus groups have shared an intense passion for journalism since their childhood. They do not express hardships when talking about the origin of their careers, on the contrary, they feel that they have been lucky, and most do not mention feeling minorized in those beginnings, and evoke in some cases very inclusive media companies, very open for diversity (indicating subsequently that these diverse spaces are “the exception”). A racialized journalist and one wearing a veil remember feeling surprised to see journalists like them on television, as they were so few. At the same time, at first, they do not mention specific opportunities or challenges arising from their identity, on the contrary: *“I don't think [identity] has any bearing on our profession.”* Later in the discussion they highlight a “relative” advantage of being a minority: sources tend to remember them, as they are the odd one out, the only blind journalist they know, the black journalist. The Muslim journalist has a visual deficiency, and she thinks that the accessibility for her disability has been a bigger challenge than being accepted for wearing a veil. For her, getting a job was always a bigger challenge than once enrolled. Another racialized journalist feels that her socio-economic background, lower than the one of most of her colleagues at the public television, has played a bigger role than the color of her skin in her problems to feel she fit in. Only when asked by the moderator, some admit having been discriminated. In one case, one journalist was bullied by a racist colleague, and expresses that he could cope with it with the support of the company and other colleagues. In another, the black female journalist evokes having heard derogative comments, and had to defend taking care of her hair herself as the professionals at the television station did not have the expertise. And the journalist wearing a veil expressed that in a previous company she got tired of being asked questions everyday about her religion, having to explain her difference constantly, and felt singled out.

Participants see economic insecurities in the beginning of their careers as a usual hardship in the profession. Later in their careers, they are persuaded that their identity may have blocked them from climbing into the newsroom hierarchy. For a blind person, the feeling of challenge is more structural, always present: they need to be convincing in job interviews, reassuring their future bosses that they can do the job, and afterwards the set-up for everyday work is still complicated. For a queer woman the problem was men not accepting her subject propositions or men pushing her to cover feminist issues. She felt discriminated as a woman, not necessarily because of her sexual orientation. She has resisted consciously and explicitly against discrimination all her career.

One of the journalists explained the strategies they put in place to anticipate and neutralize discrimination:

“In this case sometimes it also happens that if there is someone who has some prejudices, a little bit more closed-minded than they should be, and they meet someone with my characteristics, they might feel a little bit... strange, they don't know how to treat me. So, I anticipate that. I use humor, I use a form of... even to intercept him, before he makes the mistake of making an inappropriate comment or making an inappropriate joke.”

Specializing in their identity

The participants acknowledge that they are very few in the newsrooms, a minority, and one explains that this is not always comfortable. But they consider that there are differences in terms of visibility: belonging to the LGTBI community is not ascribed unless explicitly vindicated. When deciding what topics to work on, they tend to refuse being limited by their identity. The blind journalist does not cover topics on disability, and is satisfied with that decision, but recalls once proposing a related subject and being refused for not being attractive enough to the audiences. The queer journalist made an effort to work on political journalism to bring a different perspective than the dominant white male middle-age, which would not be possible if focusing only on feminist issues.

"Sometimes I have detected and tried to move away a little bit from being kind of pigeonholed in the coverage of these issues. It's not something that's happened to me a lot, but I think I've been a little bit vigilant that it doesn't happen. So, I haven't specialized in these issues, although I have covered some things."

Nonetheless, when events touch close to their identity, they feel the responsibility of making sure that their media covers them in a respectful way, as explained by the black male journalist:

"It's even a vindication when some episode happens that is related to some racial conflict. Intervene, ask if you give me the possibility to vindicate or to give my point of view considering that I can be useful. I can help the community we live in, the society in general, by presenting the point of view of a racial conflict from my side. I try to bring calmness and stability to this kind of circumstances. They don't ask me to."

The racialized female journalist explains that her colleagues come to her for advice on news items related to racial tensions, and she appreciates that they let her take the lead in covering them if she offers to.

In this context, most of them vindicate being a journalist as any other, and they admit that to do that they try to avoid conflict with their peers: they try not to write "outrageous things" and are careful in what they write. *"When you are part of a minorized collective, you need to learn to be as a chameleon, to adapt to the environment in order to survive"*, says the racialized female journalist. The journalist wearing a hijab avoids topics that feel painful to her, like wars, because she feels she cannot be "neutral" treating them, but has never been accused of being biased, *"only that an article was too opinionated, so I told them to publish it in the opinion section as is"*. As a contrast, the racialized female journalist has seen an evolution in her relationship to the profession as a minority: *"over time, my journalism has become more a fight for [social] transformation"*.

Code of ethics and identity

The dynamics of the two focus groups in Spain were very different regarding the code of ethics. In the first one, the journalists agreed that their relationship to the professional codes ruling their profession is quite skeptical, but they do not link that attitude to their identity:

"So, the code of ethics, for example, is always going to demand that a journalist be independent when that is practically impossible. Because an independent journalist is not going to be able to survive. An independent media cannot survive. It needs advertising and the advertising will be provided by the big companies that are in the pay of and in the hands of the big political powers. So, from that point of view, I think that a code of ethics, as I said, is more fireworks than a practical utility."

"Codes of ethics have a very long history, they are very old, they are dinosaurs."

In the second group, the consensus was that the code of ethics was a very useful tool, "a guide", for any journalist, and criticized that many colleagues did not seem to have good knowledge of it. One of the journalists indicates that she uses the code as a reference to make decisions, to be firm with protecting her sources, for example. *"Not that I reread it often, but I have it in my mind, I share the ethical values, and it is not an effort"*. Another journalist keeps a PDF copy at hand on her computer and gets back to it sometimes.

In both focus groups they do not perceive a need to make explicit mention of minorities in the code, but in the second one, a journalist evoked that it was useful to defend her positions: "I can say it is not me as a racialized journalist who defends this, it is what the code of ethics states". The journalist wearing a hijab agrees: *"Even if the code of ethics feels to me quite generic, it is applicable to all persons, there is no distinctions, no privileges, and the values apply to all situations and therefore contribute, at least a little, to protect minorities"*. In the first focus group they insisted in them being outdated:

"[Codes of ethics] are made at a time when there was probably no... well, I don't know whether to say sensitivity or there wasn't as much open discussion of these issues as there is now. And I think in particular on the LGTBI issue in general, it doesn't particularly protect, but well, I do think that shielding a little bit then the independence of the media, the work of journalists, yes that's a little bit implicit because it protects. Well, I don't know, it's like a cover for LGTBI people in this case, but without saying it openly. But I don't feel like it's unprotected either."

Most of the participants do not feel that their identity poses specific ethical challenges. "In fact, I feel I am the best person to cover issues [related to my identity]", reflects the racialized female journalist, but at the same time she admits feeling "pain" because most of the coverage is negative news and she feels they reinforce stereotypes she tries to fight against, and feels impotent not finding the way to change the hegemonic narrative, lacking the time or the skills.

For her, it feels like a little victory to change the word “migrant” for “person”: “*I celebrate having the chance to be there ... a conscientious journalist ... doing pedagogy, sharing it with my peers*”. Another also acknowledged that covering news about the implications of conservative policies that would affect their personal lives is uncomfortable, because the personal and professional become blurred, especially when discussing it with colleagues. The importance of language and educating other colleagues to use respectful formulations is underlined by several of the participants.

The role of media councils in protecting minorized journalists was not directly addressed by the most participants in the focus groups, but they reflected about the possibility of creating an association of minorized journalists, which does not exist in Spain. Some do not see the need for organizing as minorized journalists. Others would welcome it, if in journalists’ unions there was a commission for “inclusion”, and a place to discuss ethical dilemmas. One of them highlights that when small groups of racialized journalists have mobilized to propose protocols to the associations of journalists, there have been very fruitful results, and she would expect even more impact if these initiatives were stable. The veiled and disabled journalist reflects: “*while the world has evolved, and society is deconstructing [many prejudices], the journalistic profession is very influenced by old prejudices, an old vision of the world*”. Without an organization, she continues, each person acts at their small level, but the changes are hard to achieve.

The only reference to a media council was made in the second focus group, with the prudence of “*not being sure if it is just my perception*”, and the journalist shared that she felt that the Catalan media council does not seem very aware of the challenges of minorized journalists. She indicated that for issues of racism there may be more awareness, but not on other areas such as disabilities. She suggested that engaging minorized journalists in media councils would help change this situation. Another journalist reacted to this agreeing that on questions of racism there seems to be an awakening of the media council and of journalism in general to recognize the diversity of society.

One of the journalists had participated in a European project that put her in touch with other racialized journalists, and she thinks it will be very useful to make that more systematic, some sort of mentorship for young people entering the profession by journalists belonging to the same minority.

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this report was to explore the working conditions of minority journalists in seven European countries (Bulgaria, France, Greece, Ireland, Norway, Poland and Spain), and to understand any ethical issues they encounter in the day-to-day exercise of their profession.

This conclusion does not propose a comparison between the results (as organized above by country). "Comparison occurs in social inquiry whenever observations about one or more aspects of a given case are considered in relation to observations about other cases or theoretical models" (Hall, 2005: 391). Our data are not large enough "to establish systematic similarities and differences between observed phenomena and, possibly, to develop and test hypotheses and theories about their causal relationships" (Berg-Schlosser, 2001: 2428). This is the first reason. The second is the highly collective nature of this research, which relies on specific national expertise. This expertise is invaluable, and it would be detrimental if it were to be distilled without considering the full complexity of each situation. Furthermore, the very nature of our methodology, the focus groups, raises questions about the group effect on the discourse collected. For us, this methodology has been very fruitful in being able to cross-check the feedback from journalists from different minority groups. Nevertheless, we must not minimize any concerns about scientificity (Touré, 2010; Hicks & Warren, 1998) and recognize that they were above all a way of delving into the collective and individual representation of the work of a few journalists in each country.

Our results do, however, allow us to highlight three central issues that seem to us to be relatively cross-cutting:

- 1.the major obstacles encountered by minority journalists, which are also reconfigured according to national contexts;
- 2.identity issues, which oscillate between objective resources and structural constraints;
- 3.and, finally, issues of professional ethics and deontology.

The fourth section offers some thoughts on the role of press councils as outlined in the focus groups and suggests a few avenues that could be fruitful for the future.

Minority journalists face major obstacles, shaped by national contexts

Across all the countries studied, journalists report that they are facing significant structural obstacles. These challenges share common roots in experiences of marginalization. However, they manifest differently depending on national contexts, local media environments, each country's social stratification, the specific approaches to equality, diversity, and inclusion implemented in each setting, as well as each respondent's life trajectory.

From the very beginning of their careers, minority journalists describe encountering inequalities linked to their country's social—and especially educational—stratification. In France, Spain, and Greece, journalists from working-class backgrounds highlight the difficulties they faced in accessing training programs, which they describe as elitist and governed by selective admission processes. Notably, in two countries (France and Norway), a significant number of participants were able to enter the profession thanks to diversity, inclusion, or equal opportunity programs available during their studies or at the start of their careers. These initiatives often shaped their journalistic perspectives on minority-related issues. However, several journalists also noted that these programs placed an additional symbolic burden on them.

Once employed, many minority journalists report experiencing various forms of violence—some subtle, others more overt—which can sometimes amount to discrimination. This report documents instances of mockery, sexist, racist, or homophobic jokes, as well as condescending or paternalistic attitudes. As mentioned, the nature of exclusion varies by national context. It also differs depending on the demographic characteristics of minority reporters. Journalists with disabilities, for example, report facing material and organizational barriers to inclusion: inaccessible facilities, inadequate tools, lack of support policies, and a sense of having to manage everything themselves just to be allowed to work as journalists. Racialized journalists more often mention stereotypes, jokes, and mockery, difficulty having their lived experience recognized as expertise, and a strong suspicion of bias or activism when addressing racism. In two countries (Greece and Poland), racism was described as less visible due to the near absence of racialized individuals in newsrooms. LGBT journalists also report being presumed biased or activist and struggling to have their expertise acknowledged. Some also mention having to conceal their identities to avoid violence and tensions. In certain countries, journalists reported clear rejection and latent homophobia within newsrooms, even those that claim to be progressive (Poland, Greece).

These experiences are often accompanied by feelings of loneliness or even isolation. Being the only non-white, queer, or disabled journalist in a newsroom can create constant pressure to perform, to represent, and to educate colleagues. This mental burden is especially heavy given the already demanding nature of the profession, marked by precarity, competition, and intense workloads. In this regard, their experiences echo findings from the literature in other countries not included in this study, particularly the United States (Oh & Min, 2023; Jackson, 2022; Meyers & Gayle, 2015; Gross, 2001; Shafer, 1993; Aarons, 1991), but also Sweden (Hultén, 2009), Belgium (Verhoeven, 2024; Louazon, 2024) and the United Kingdom (Toesland, 2023; Douglas, 2022; Magrath, 2020).

Being a minority journalist: a possible resource facing structural constraints

Across all the countries studied, the social identity of minority journalists emerged as a significant issue. In the interviews, their identity was sometimes described as a source of stigma and tension, but also as a wellspring of knowledge and expertise.

For many of the journalists interviewed, their minority identity was perceived and described as a professional asset. It enables them to approach certain topics with heightened sensitivity, a nuanced understanding of the issues, and a closeness to sources that is often lacking among their colleagues. This lived experience was seen as a strength that enhances the quality of media coverage, particularly on topics such as discrimination, human rights, migration, or LGBT issues. Some journalists even believe they are better positioned to address these subjects with accuracy and nuance.

However, this valorization of identity often clashes with professional norms, biases, and routines that tend to reduce their lived experience to a non-neutral standpoint. The ways in which newsrooms manage journalists' minority identities vary widely—not only between organizations but also across countries. Several journalists reported being confined to covering topics related to their identity, which limits their professional scope and career progression. Conversely, others described a complete disregard for their lived experience, especially when news events affect their communities.

One of the most striking findings is that, across several countries, journalists' identities appeared sometimes to be used to discredit them. When they cover issues related to their own experiences, they are frequently accused of lacking objectivity or engaging in disguised activism. These accusations—often implicit—are particularly harmful, as they undermine their professional competence and reinforce their marginalization. Many journalists denounce a double standard of objectivity: objectivity is granted to majority journalists, while their own subjectivity is systematically viewed with suspicion. That's why this supposedly universal norm of objectivity is perceived by some minority journalists as a dominant social construct that renders minority experiences invisible and prevents their recognition as legitimate expertise.

This tension often leads to forms of self-censorship: avoiding certain topics to not be perceived as activists or refraining from pitching stories they care about for fear of being discredited. This self-censorship is frequently internalized, shaped by past experiences of rejection or suspicion. Several journalists spoke of the need to “smooth out” their identity, avoid conflict, or censor themselves to avoid being labeled as activists.

In response to these challenges, forms of solidarity have emerged among minority journalists, often through personal relationships or informal networks. These support systems can be valuable, but they remain fragile, non-institutionalized, and unevenly distributed depending on the context. In some countries, associations or collectives are beginning to take shape (such as in France and Spain), but their reach remains limited.

A consensus on journalistic standards, but a detached relationship with ethics ?

The fieldwork carried out in the focus groups revealed a major difficulty in generating a collective discussion on ethics. It is sometimes mentioned in the margins, sometimes in a roundabout way. Most of the informants spoke collectively about their career paths, the issues at stake in their identity, and the assignments they experience. Ethical issues did not all have the same impact on the collective discussions in the focus groups. They also refer to different levels: collective or personal ethics, and sometimes the two intertwined. What was missed in the focus groups also relates to two central elements: on the one hand, the history of self-regulation and the importance of ethics institutions in each country, and on the other, journalists' individual knowledge of self-regulation, standards and conceptions of ethics. Nevertheless, by cross-reading the focus group summaries, we can retain several points.

The focus groups show a relatively transversal defense of collective professional standards. These can have three meanings. The first refers to the need, for some, to adopt and respect standards when it comes to covering news about minority groups. What is at stake here is the ethics that can be applied to media production, and therefore to the day-to-day coverage of events. In line with the debate on 'diversity' as 'an ethical issue' (Whitehouse, 2008), these comments are a reminder that there is nothing more important for journalists than to pay attention to lives that are different from their own, by respecting people, taking an interest in what they experience and, above all, trying to show the diversity of the population. However, not all informants refer to this. The second sense of these standards focuses on the normative discourse on several central values that recur as a leitmotif in the focus groups. Objectivity, respect for sources and attention to the terminology of the words used provide minority journalists with a foundation of practical procedures that they say they use as standards in the exercise of their work. The third meaning of professional standards is sometimes placed at a distance from the formalization of these standards in guides or codes. These codes are sometimes judged to be too abstract, out of touch with the reality of day-to-day practice, and in any case difficult to apply in practice. The recounting of these difficulties is perhaps reinforced in the context of a collective discussion such as a focus group.

The focus groups thus continue to show that there is a fairly broad intercultural consensus around standards of truth and objectivity, for example (Hafez, 2002), while at the same time showing that some minority journalists try to challenge some of these standards, particularly those of objectivity, by defending a situated subjectivity (Schmidt, 2024).

The discussion of values and standards that do not consider the multiple identities of journalists highlights a twofold constraint for minority journalists: being recognized for their specificities while sometimes having to adhere to common standards.

The focus groups also reveal that personal, and therefore individual, ethics play an important role in collective discussions. Some informants rely on their personal experience to construct production standards which, in their view, have an influence because they share identities, ways of being and living. In this case, journalists use their personal experience to reinforce their sense of personal ethics in the broadest sense. Or on the other hand, because they share these ways of being, they use their personal ethics to distance themselves and not cover certain news stories to which they might seem too close. Their personal ethics then act as border guards, distancing them from certain subjects.

Obviously, this leaves in the shade all the influence of media organizations on ethics and ways of producing content, the limits not to be crossed, and the sometimes-paradoxical injunctions encountered in the exercise of the profession (Coleman & Alkhafaji, 2021; Fierens et al, 2023). Nor do the focus groups consider differences in career paths, age, length of career, and the status of the journalist (freelance, salaried, etc.), all of which also play a role in understanding and managing ethical issues at work (Mathisen, 2019). However, several focus groups revealed a lack of awareness of the roles and tools offered by press councils. In several countries, such as France, the press council's actions are not well known. Instead, professional associations and even trade unions are recognized as players that can potentially act on diversity, inclusion, and equality. Generally, professional structures are perceived as not being very inclusive, and as pushing people to imagine new structures for journalists from minority groups or to join existing structures of this type.

What could media councils do?

In discussions dealing directly with ethics, but more frequently in the invocations of the transversal values of journalism (in particular its standards), the construction of one's legitimacy as a journalist is at stake in the focus groups. They present themselves as belonging to the group, but also as singular professionals in journalism, with their own trajectory and belonging to one or other or several minority groups. The discussions show that these values contribute to the symbolic recognition not only of the issue of diversity in the media (both in terms of content and in newsrooms), but also of the issue of diversity in the day-to-day lives of minority journalists (whether they distance themselves from it or claim it as their own). As a result, **when these values are enshrined in charters or codes, they can serve as working tools, and in so doing, through their mobilization, serve the legitimacy of minority journalists in their choice of writing, angle, sources, etc.** In this way, the press councils that produce these standard-setting texts and discuss these values are of practical use to journalists in their day-to-day work.

Nevertheless, the focus groups revealed that these press councils sometimes struggle to reach journalists. The visibility of their actions, their documentation and even their role does not always seem to be so clear to the participants. Confusion with associations, or with internal charters, or even with principles of personal ethics, is prevalent. While some press councils around the world (such as in French-speaking Belgium, Finland, Portugal and Quebec) reinforce values such as tolerance and diversity as professional standards (Rotili, 2022), the participants in our study mentioned almost nothing of the sort in their respective countries. Yet press councils are an important player in the debate about the profession. They reflect on changes in the identities of professional groups, looking in particular at general issues around the changing face and status of journalists (with influencer journalists, for example), changes in the media themselves (blogs, collective websites, branded media, etc.) or the introduction of technologies (such as AI). They also work on the potential effects of media productions on the public, which is why the latter lodge complaints. They can also play a part in certain issues such as SLAPPs (Fierens, et al, 2024). **Thus, providing food for thought on journalists from minority groups, on media coverage of minority groups, reflecting on certain diversity injunctions of media companies, while taking into account the subpoenas to which journalists are subject, could enable press councils to position themselves in their role as "Goalkeeper of Freedom of Expression"** (Poposka, 2024).

The focus groups clearly show the issues of discrimination, assignments and the difficulties that minority journalists sometimes have in finding a position. They also show how journalists distance themselves from the issues and use ethics as a tool to legitimize themselves. They also shed light on the choices made by individuals who do not consider themselves to be different. Despite the diversity of the views expressed, the situations experienced and the different interpretations, **press councils could benefit from positioning themselves as allied institutions.** Allies, because these institutions would ensure the diversity of their membership, for example. Allies, because they could form equal groups (e.g. of minority and non-minority journalists) to reflect together on certain values or ethical standards. Allies, because they would make it possible to reflect on the relationship between knowledge, the actions that are taken, the meaning that is given to them, and the stance adopted (Nassif-Gouin, et al, 2024).

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