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## POPBACK Interviews - Supporting documents

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## POPBACK INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

### METHODOLOGY: DATA COLLECTION, SAMPLING AND CODING SCHEME

We conducted in-depth interviews with seasoned and experienced professional journalists and editors in four analysed countries, from January to August 2022. All interviews were conducted in their native languages in person or online. Interviews generally lasted between 1 and 1,5 hours.

Our selection criteria focused on journalists with a minimum of 10 years of tenure in prominent national or regional news outlets. Hence, our approach discerned the changes occurring within the field during periods of authoritarian-populist governance and the associated struggles. The final sample exhibits considerable diversity across age, gender, and professional positions, encompassing journalists at all levels from reporters to editors to higher decision-making roles such as editor-in-chief and executive managers. Our sample encompasses a diverse range of media, including 83 journalists from broadcasting, print, and online outlets. This comprehensive approach has provided us with valuable data for understanding the various methods of political information control.

Country	Interviewed journalists ( <i>n</i> )	Female ( <i>n</i> )	Male ( <i>n</i> )	Broadcasting ( <i>n</i> )	Print/online ( <i>n</i> )	Only Online ( <i>n</i> )	Age (60+) ( <i>n</i> )	Managerial Position ( <i>n</i> )
Austria	16	11	5	5	11	/	3	3
Hungary	15	5	10	2	4	8	5	8
Slovenia	20	11	9	6	11	3	7	7
Turkey	32	12	20	9	10	19	11	12
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>31</b>

The questionnaire was standardized and pre-tested in two pilot interviews in each each country. After each interview, standardised interview notes as well as a full transcript in native languages were created by the interviewing researchers. Interviews were transcribed in national languages and coded to interpret the data, using computational tools (NVivo and MAXQDA). Coding scheme was based on 4 levels of analysis - individual level, routines level, organizational level and institutional level – each level consisting of specific sub-codes (see below), to capture how and why control mechanisms experienced by the professional journalists in selected countries expand broadly and encompass an ever larger space of journalistic work. To ensure analytic rigour, we held weekly online coding sessions, discussing and refining coding categories to standardize them.

## **Coding scheme: Levels of Analysis**

### **1. Individual level**

- IND01: Discreditation of individual journalists
  - ❖ accusations, insults, "exposing"
- IND02: Threats/attacks on individual journalists – offline
  - ❖ rhetorical attacks, insults, physical attacks, ...
- IND03: Threats/attacks on individual journalists – online
  - ❖ harassment, lynching, ...
- IND04: Legal action against individual journalists
  - ❖ lawsuits, prisoning, punishing, ...
- IND05: Gender specific (sexual orientation and identity based) harassment

### **2. Routines/Practices level**

- ROU01: Self-Censorship
- ROU02: Censorship
  - ❖ from editors, from managers, from politicians, ...
- ROU03: Political complaints/interventions in reporting
  - ❖ phone calls from politicians, demanding revision, ...
- ROU04: Political-media affiliations
  - ❖ partisanship of journalists, buddies, relatives, friends, joint travels with politicians, private invitations of journalists, private "background" (off-record) conversations between journalists and politicians, instrumentalization...
- ROU05: Access to journalistic sources
  - ❖ access to parliament, access to interviews, access to public information/records...
- ROU06: Changed interview practices with politicians
  - ❖ mass interviews, interview avoidance, demand to authorize interviews, prohibition of certain questions, ...
- ROU07: Resistance or coping mechanisms
  - ❖ professional & international support networks, audience/reader support, alternative funding opportunities, journalistic stand against pressures/threats, personal and ethical motivations for resistance, negotiation for autonomy, alternative media platforms against information control, alternative ownership practices, etc.

### **3. Organisational level**

- ORG01: Media ownership changes
- ORG02: Owner interventions
  - ❖ owners limit journalistic work, pushing for entertainment content, channelling political ideologies...
- ORG03: Changes in top management
  - ❖ political appointments, ...
- ORG04: Changes of editors & editorial lines
  - ❖ sacking, partisan journalism/message production

- ORG05: Sanctions (as pressures) coming from the direction of editors and/or management
  - ❖ blocking promotions, no wage rise, no monetary rewards, repositioning to other departments (for critical journalists) even firing, exclusion, banning....
- ORG06: Financial pressures on media organizations employed by politicians
  - ❖ defunding organizations, cutting subsidies, funding of public broadcaster, media/sponsor funds, donations, bribery, ...
- ORG07: Discreditation of media organizations
  - ❖ whole outlet is banned from events/press conferences, outlet is publicly discredited...
- ORG08: Changing working conditions
  - ❖ no reporters on the ground, no cameramen, limited time for fact-checking, impact of digitalisation on content...

#### **4. Institutional level**

- INS01: Changing political communication practices
  - ❖ extensive PR-staffing in ministries, prepared content, strategic political agenda setting, orchestration of politicians in media...
- INS02: Regulatory changes
  - ❖ press subsidies, taxes, competition law, licensing, accreditation...
- INS03: Advertising
  - ❖ Private and Public advertising, ad-dependency, influence of advertisers on reporting, ...
- INS04: Corruption
  - ❖ Deals between politicians and editors/owners, bribery ...
- INS05: Foundation of Party-owned outlets
  - ❖ to circumvent critical journalism, new online blogs owned by parties, ...
- INS06: Polarization
  - ❖ "Friend vs enemy" journalists, polarization of the mediascape, no such thing as apolitical journalism