

**Money. Power. Stereotypes.  
Does gender equality  
in the media really matter?**

**International Comparative Gender Study  
in Georgia, Moldova and Russia**

Russian Academy of Sciences (ISESP RAS)

## PREFACE

Journalism is facing multiple challenges in our time. The transformation of the advertising market with social media tech giants taking over the scene, is probably the single most important factor challenging the continued production of quality journalism. On the other hand, the new media climate has spurred renewed commitments to the core principles of journalism: relevance, accuracy and impartiality. “Quality journalism” and “original journalism” are being promoted in a way that was not seen a few years ago. But the changes go deeper, there is also a distinct call for journalism that is fair and representative, from a democracy aspect but also because it has proved to be good business.

Representation in content is of course key in this discussion, but it is closely related to diversity in the media industry as such. Who is making the decisions on what to cover and who is covering different beats? Do different groups of staff have access to the same benefits and do they have equal chances to climb the career ladder? In this unique comparative study, we take a closer look at gender aspects of working conditions in the media in four countries, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Belarus, with the aim of informing the discussion on how gender is related to the development of the industry and journalism itself.

**One interesting trend to follow** is the feminisation of the journalism profession. The trend is global but especially prominent in the countries covered by this study: the findings indicate that the gender balance is shifting in Moldova and Georgia, whereas women are now dominating among media professionals in general in Russia and Belarus. According to the experts interviewed this is not a result of a growing sector with more women coming in but rather about an outflow of men. It seems like the journalistic profession has become less attractive (to men) due to economic restraints (lower wages) and political pressure that makes it harder to exercise independent journalism. Judging from the gender ratio in enrollment for higher education in journalism and communication (over 70 per cent women in some European countries), this trend is likely to carry on. If the curve of this graph will not change we will (again) end up with a skewed gender balance and need to consider possible implications for diversity of voices and what stories are told.

The study also confirms that women are taking on more of decision-making roles, especially in regional and in independent media (in Georgia and Moldova there is no gender asymmetry according to the study). However, there is still a gender gap when it comes to distribution of power in national media with high circulation/audience, likely related to the fact that the most influential media are still most often managed by men. Interestingly enough, female respondents in Moldova had low career expectations, although in practice the study indicates that women have better chances of building a career in the media than men. In Georgia, on the other hand, female media professionals are often overqualified, and show the most dissatisfaction with their jobs.

**The much-debated issue of sexual harassment at work** is also covered by the study. In Russia on average three out of ten of the respondents claimed to have experienced sexual harassment in job related environments. Overall, the results of the survey indicate that

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the journalistic profession is quite dangerous for women, because they risk being subjected to sexual harassment literally everywhere, by colleagues or superiors at the office, as well as while reporting on the ground. One interesting difference between the countries is that Russian journalists are less likely to see sexual harassment as a violation of human rights and personal dignity, but consider it to “just be a way to make noise in mass media”.

**All this data shows a multifaceted reality** that needs to be carefully observed and acted upon. With a joint mission of producing good journalism, women and men can work together and strengthen each other. Sometimes exclusive media products might be useful to change persistent imbalances, but most of all we need journalism of high quality that can guide us all through an increasingly complex world.



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## METHOD

The study, the main conclusions of which you hold in your hands, was conducted by The Institute of Social and Economic Studies of Population at the Russian Academy of Sciences (ISESP RAS) on behalf of Fojo Media Institute, Linnaeus University (Sweden) with organisational support from ANRI-Media (Russia), Media Development Foundation (Georgia) and Association of Independent Press (Moldova). In addition, Fojo would like to express gratitude to the Belarusian Association of Journalists (Belarus), for assisting in conducting a similar study in Belarus in 2016. Despite the fact that it was not included in this comparative study, the results of the 2016 study allow us to draw parallels with the situations in Belarus.

The study was conducted by the researchers from ISESP RAS using the following methodology:

- Mass survey (questionnaire) distributed among employees in the media sector in Georgia, Moldova and Russia.
- Expert survey in form of in-depth structured interviews with selected representatives of the media sector in Georgia, Moldova and Russia.

The mass survey was carried out on the basis of random targeted selection, using the “snowball” method (the sample group is said to grow like a rolling snowball. As the sample builds up, enough data are gathered to be useful for research). The respondents of the survey were media managers and journalists from media in Georgia, Moldova and Russia.

The total amount of respondents participating in the study was 648:

- in Georgia: 126 respondents: 64 women and 62 men
- in Moldova: 84 respondents: 53 women and 31 men
- in Russia:
  - in 2016 - 312 respondents: 170 women and 142 men
  - in 2018 - 126 respondents: 83 women and 43 men

The questionnaire for the mass survey consisted of 36 questions. The report was written by Russian researchers on the basis of the survey results and in-depth interviews with experts.

The comparative study, carried out in Georgia, Moldova and Russia in 2018, aimed to distinguish common and specific aspects of gender-related issues identified with employment in the media industry of the three countries, as well as to determine the nature of the differences. The study made it possible to reach a number of conclusions regarding the situation in mass media in Georgia, Moldova and Russia, and to identify the factors that determine the main differences related to the employment of mass media employees, their salaries, opportunities of career growth and professional self-fulfilment, work mobility etc.

# I.


According to the experts we interviewed during the study, modern mass media face a number of problems, which could be defined as systemic. These are not directly linked to the questions of employment of the journalists who participated in the study, but they define them to a large extent. These factors, in both the environment and the atmosphere, which affect the social and professional relationships of mass media employees in Georgia, Moldova and Russia, were found to be quite common.

**1. A similarity between Georgia and Moldova**, which is not shared with Russia, is the existence of political powers and governmental organisations which actually compete with each other (a president and a parliament in Moldova, a former government and a current one in Georgia) and divide amongst themselves the most influential mass media outlets. As a result, there is competition among different mass media outlets, controlled by the competing elites, that broadcast on TV and have therefore access to a relatively wide audience. In Russia, there was a similar situation in the 1990s. According to Moldovan and Georgian experts, however, the competition among the political elites does not appear to result in stories regarding important social issues being carried by the largest mass media outlets. Pressing issues are rarely reflected. On the contrary, reality is being distorted. According to the experts, mass media controlled by the competing political sides have changed from being sources of information into propaganda outlets. The same picture was portrayed by Russian experts regarding the media outlets there that reach a wider audience.

**2. The internet has become a source** of alternative information, and the experts acknowledge the possibilities that are provided by information technology and the World Wide Web. However, experts from all the countries studied also point to severe flaws in the internet, such as major opportunities to spread unverified or even intentionally deceitful information. During the interviews, the existence of fake websites and fake news, which are used as a tool of political warfare, came up on numerous occasions. The downside of the speed of information exchange and the existence of a multitude of competing “news makers” is the decline in the quality of news.

**3. A noticeable difference between Russia**, on the one side, and Georgia and Moldova on the other, lies in the financing of certain mass media by foreign players, which was mentioned on numerous occasions by both Georgian and Moldovan experts as important to their independence.

Apparently, such mass media can be independent from the politico-economic elites



of their own states. However, one can hardly speak of full editorial autonomy of such mass media outlets when they are in critical dependence (in the words of our experts) on financing provided by international foundations and embassies. Rather, one can say that due to, on one hand, economic conditions that do not allow mass media outlets to rely exclusively on their own income from subscribers and advertisers, and on the other hand, the weakness of a civil society that has allowed the elites and governmental structures (which have their own interests, which rarely coincide with the interests of society) to control mass media, journalists in these countries face a difficult choice of which “hand” will “feed” them.

Thus, the general situation within the media sector of these three countries is similar in many ways (though not completely), and is defined firstly, by radical technological shifts, and secondly, by the socio-political process. As regards the latter, it is possible to say that political and governmental elites who pursue their own goals first and foremost gained control over mass media in all three countries because of the absence of a strong civil society. As a result, the agenda which is relevant for the population is poorly represented in the mass media that reach a wider audience.

## II.

The analysis of the common and specific problems regarding employment, salaries, opportunities for career growth etc. which were identified during the study in Georgia, Moldova, and Russia, reveals the existence of the following tendencies:

**1. A common trend in all three** of the countries studied is the feminisation of employment in the media sector, and this process continues because, according to the statistics and the data from our experts, the majority of journalism students today are women. According to most of the experts who were interviewed, as well as the respondents who participated in the large-scale survey, the feminisation of the media sector is much more connected to a substantial decrease in male employees within the media sector than an increasing number of women. Experts and respondents are convinced that the primary reasons are low salaries and a decline in the prestige of the journalistic profession.

However, despite the increasing employment of women in the media sector, the general tone and the agenda are still being set by men, because they occupy most of the executive positions in mass media. Moldova is an exception. Experts there have recently noted changes, as more women come to occupy executive positions.

*“...despite the increasing employment of women in the media sector, the general tone and the agenda are still being set by men...”*

**2. The survey has indicated that youth** and employees of the most productive ages (30-44 years) prevail in the age structure of those who are employed in media (data from research in 2018): from 46.0% in Georgia and 49.2% in Russia to 55.4% in Moldova. The number of young people aged under 29 in the Georgian mass media is 31.5%, dropping to 24.0% in Russia and 19.3% in Moldova. Apparently, such age structures cause a fairly high sociological and professional mobility of mass media employees in the countries studied. Overall, experts have noted that journalism is becoming younger.

**3. The 2018 study revealed** that the gender specificity of the professional staff of those employed in all three countries is practically identical: the percentage of women who work in mass media with a relevant degree - in journalism, philology or linguistics - is higher than the percentage of men. Almost 90% of women in Georgia and Moldova have a relevant degree, while in Russia this figure is just 63.5%. Men enter the media sector with a non-relevant degree much more often than women. For example, half of the men employed in the media sector in Russia do not have a relevant degree, one-

third of those in Georgia, and 20.0% in Moldova. It is possible to assume that it is harder for women to enter the media sector labour market than for men, for whom the doors open even without relevant education. However, it is possible to suggest an alternative hypothesis: the complexities of the information involved require expertise in other fields. As a result, the value of a journalistic education on its own declines.

According to the experts, there are certain age-related peculiarities involved in gaining employment within the media sector. For example, in Russia it is very difficult to get a job in the media sector for a recent graduate without experience, while in Moldova it is possible to build a media career, especially on independent platforms, quite quickly due to a high level of job migration and the limited number of employees on the market. As a result, it is possible to meet an editor-in-chief who is 22-25 years old.

The results of the study have shown that the media job position structure in the three countries did not display a general gender asymmetry: on all levels, from the ordinary creative employees up to editors-in-chief, executives and top managers, including the middle range executives, men and women were represented evenly in the results. At the same time, leadership representatives of the largest media holdings and companies, where, according to the experts in Georgia, the highest positions are still occupied by men (approximately 60-70%) did not participate in our study, while the leadership of regional and independent mass media outlets consists of a large number of women, which has been reflected in our study.

In the previous study which took place in Russia in 2016, a significant gender imbalance was detected on both lower and higher levels of the professional ladder: Among the female respondents 47,3% categorized themselves as being in “ordinary creative positions”, compared to 32,4% of the men, while 47,5% of the men identified themselves as “top executives” compared to 34,1% of the women<sup>1</sup>. According to the experts, in Russia the highest positions in the major mass media were divided up long ago, and it is almost impossible now to become an executive of a major mass media outlet. As a rule, editors-in-chief move from one mass media outlet to another, and there are almost no new names on that level.

**4. Research in the mobility** of mass media employees in the countries studied has shown that ascending mobility is more widespread in the media sector than descending: within the past five years 23.0% in Georgia, 25.3% in Moldova, and 21.4% in Russia received promotions. Descending mobility is less frequent (around 6-7% in each of the countries). Opportunities for career growth through vertical mobility for men and women in Georgia and Russia are approximately the same. In Moldova, women climb the career ladder even more often than men: 37.2% of female respondents and just 20.0% of male respondents have received a promotion within the past 5 years. In this the research has uncovered a certain paradox between negative expectations for the future mobility of Moldovan female journalists compared to men, and an objective picture of a vertical mobility, reflected in Moldova, which has shown that women have a higher opportunity to build a career than men. It is possible to assume that

<sup>1</sup> The respondents were asked to identify which one of the following three categories they belonged to: “ordinary creative positions”, “middle management” or “top executives”.



the low expectations of Moldovan female journalists regarding their opportunities are connected to the stereotypical idea that building a career is not for women. This example shows how conservative stereotypes and views have a negative impact on women's perception of their opportunities and prospects. In Russia, many more women (46.5%) compared to men (35.4%) hope to climb the career ladder. In Georgia, both men and women are equally optimistic about their future, and around 44% of them expect a promotion. Probably, the reason is that the Georgian mass media employs younger people.

Plans and forecasts regarding a presumed horizontal mobility within the next 5 years are approximately the same for Georgian and Russian men and women: almost two-thirds of them plan to stay in their organisations and around one-third plan to move to another media organisation. In Georgia, on the other hand, a majority of women (63.0%) intend to start working at another media organisation, and this number is higher than in the case of men (48.9%). Only 12.0% of respondents from Georgia and Russia plan to leave the media sector for good, while in Moldova the number is even lower, 3.6%.

It is possible to assume that the intention of the majority of respondents to stay in the media sector is connected to the absolute majority of women and men (around 90%), who work in mass media in each of three countries, being satisfied with their jobs. In this matter, Georgian female journalists are the only ones to stand out, because 21.9% of them are dissatisfied with their jobs. The reasons why more than every fifth female journalist in Georgia who has responded to the survey is dissatisfied with her job can be linked to 46% of the Georgian women in the study saying that they are overqualified for the work they perform, so they feel underappreciated or even discriminated against because of their gender. Neither men nor women in the other countries studied show such a significant discrepancy between the level of their qualifications and the work they perform.

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**5. The study of the impact of gender** characteristics on career prospects in the media sector has shown that the line between those who have prospects and those who do not, does not lie within the gender (men/women), but is actually a reflection of the level of government loyalty. Thus, for example, Moldovan experts assume that overall gender does not have an impact on career growth in the media sector, and, they say, no one creates specific barriers to executive roles for women in particular. But when the major mass media outlets are controlled by the government, the most important requirements for promotion in mass media are political views and loyalty to the current political powers. Since in politically controlled mass media the main positions are usually given to men, consequently it is men who build careers more often and more successfully. Meanwhile, among top executives of the independent mass media, both men and women (more often in fact, women) are represented. This observation from an expert about the demarcation line between politically controlled and independent

mass media, and the career prospects for women and men that are conditioned by it, represents an important finding of our research.

**6. The study of the gender aspects** of the subject choice opportunities for the employees within the media sector, or the so-called “glass walls”, has shown that this is closely linked to the previous issue. As the power elites constantly fight for power and make a gigantic effort to maintain it, they need the powerful propaganda tool of mass media, and therefore a substantial number of the journalists in the media industry in the countries studied are participants in this massive system. In Georgia and Moldova, around a quarter of all journalists work in political journalism, while in Russia the number is slightly lower - approximately one in five. The gender ratio of political journalists in these countries differs: in Georgia and Moldova there is gender parity, while in Russia men prevail in this area (63.0%). However, when questioned women did not express a desire to increase their presence within this framework. The intention of the majority of journalists to leave the political environment can be explained, on one hand, by the younger staff working in the media industry, which mainly consists of millennials, who have a different value system than the members of older generations. Their commitment to individual freedom of choice does not really meet the “compulsory” character of the work, as indicated by their managers.

The survey in Georgia disproved a widespread opinion that women are the ones who “get” social journalism. Men and women there are engaged in social issues on an equal ratio (50% to 50%). An even higher number of Georgian female journalists who participated in the survey would like to move to the social area. In Russia and Moldova, the situation is different. According to our study, every third Russian female journalist, among those who participated in the survey, is engaged in social issues. The division of those who deal with social issues in Moldova is even more asymmetrical in terms of gender as 75% of those who cover social issues are women.

The study carried out in Russia in 2016 showed a significant percentage of female journalists expressed a wish to leave the sector, and the study in Moldova, which took place in 2018, also revealed that a significant percentage of women expressing similar intentions. According to the opinion of the experts from Moldova and Russia, there is a paradoxical situation in mass media, when journalists of both genders do not want to deal with social issues, despite the fact that people care first and foremost about these questions. This is related to the lack of actual independence, in which social questions are reduced to a level which does not permit a deep and complex analysis of the social issue. As a result, this becomes secondary for the mass media, and is not well-remunerated.

Thus, the study has indicated the existence of a gender asymmetry in the distribution of journalists among thematic assignments in Russia and Moldova. To be precise: political journalism is rather for men, while social journalism is for women. Apart from that, it was discovered that many journalists in all three countries who are engaged in political journalism would like to leave the field. A different set of topics seems to appeal to them, which can be evidence of “glass walls” not only for women,

but for men as well. In Georgia, a different distribution of journalists among thematic assignments was found, compared to Moldova and Russia, but there is a similar desire to shift among many journalists there. Overall, the majority of both women and men are working in the area they prefer, based on their high level of satisfaction from working in the media sector.

**7. Responses received during the survey** in the three countries indicates that hostility against mass media employees is a relatively widespread phenomenon. This issue is more serious in Moldova, where almost two-thirds of respondents say they have faced hate, threats and persecution with varying regularity. In Russia, where more than 60% of respondents have stated that they have had to deal with negativity aimed at them because of their professional activities, occupies an intermediate position, close to Georgia, which is in third place. The majority of respondents who had to deal with any kind of hostility, have faced it sporadically - once or from time to time. Nevertheless, it should be noted: almost one in 10 respondents working in mass media in the countries studied has been subjected to moral pressure to some degree. In all these countries, certain gender differences are detected: overall, women have to deal with hostility related to performing their professional duties, slightly less often than men.

These differences are expressed the least in Moldova, where an almost equal percentage of mass media employees, both male and female, (30 respectively 33%) say they have never faced any kind of hostility. The most significant difference between men and women among respondents who have answered “no, never” is in Georgia: 50.0% of women and 34.5% of men. In Russia there is a smaller difference: the number of women who have never faced any kind of hostility is 11% higher than the number of men who chose the same answer. However, in Russia and in Georgia there are more women than men who have often faced hostility. Concerning those who connect hostility towards mass media employees and their gender, those who assume there is such a connection are a minority in all three countries - around 9-13%. Meanwhile, in Russia there were no male respondents who thought this way. Only women reported feeling gender-related hatred there. In Georgia and Moldova there are little gender differences among 7-15% of respondents of both genders, who assume that such a connection exists. In Georgia, there were more women (15.0% against 10.5% men) who had this opinion, while in Moldova, there were more men (13.3% against 7.7% among women).

**8. Gender discrimination and career growth opportunities** in the media sector have been the central point of our study, and these were explored in several ways. This allowed us to obtain a number of new results regarding the issue of gender equality in the media sector, and to make several important conclusions. The fact that the majority of respondents from all three countries deny the existence of

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gender discrimination in the media sector can be a testimony to its absence, as well as to low sensitivity of journalists towards the issues of gender inequality, perceiving it rather as a norm, than as discrimination. In Georgia and Moldova, more than half of all respondents (58.2% and 57.8% respectively) deny the existence of gender discrimination, and in Russia the figure was even higher - 62.5%. At the same time, a definite gender imbalance was revealed among the opinions of men and women on this matter. The largest gender gap in answers to this question was discovered during the study in Russia and Moldova. In the former, 75.0% of Russian male journalists think that there is no discrimination in the media sector, while just 52.9% of female journalists would agree. In Moldova, 70.0% of men deny the existence of gender discrimination, but only 50.9% of women share this opinion. Georgia displayed the same configuration of opinions, 63.8% men deny the existence of discrimination (less than in Moldova and Russia), while 53.1% of women think there is no discrimination in the media sector

These discrepancies in opinions on discrimination in the media sector between women and men can be explained, first and foremost, by the fact that all over the world women's labour rights and professional interests are violated more intensely and more often than men. Therefore, it is natural that women are more sensitive to the issue than men. In addition, the majority of women know this not by hearsay, but from personal experience. This is the reason why there are 1.5-2 times more women than men among those respondents who acknowledge that there is discrimination in the media sector. In Georgia, 24.1% of male journalists and 35.9% of female journalists acknowledge gender discrimination, in Moldova 23.3% of men and 37.7% of women, and in Russia the corresponding figures are 12.9% and 33.1% (the latter is 2.5 times the former). As seen from this data, the largest number of women who acknowledge the existence of gender discrimination (from all three countries) is in Moldova (37.7%), which can be a sign of certain problems with the labour and professional rights of women in the media industry in this country.

The results of the analysis of the most discriminatory aspect of labour for women in the media sector have shown a wide range of rights violations. Women mentioned the same areas of discrimination as most painful in all three countries - salary issues and limited opportunities to occupy executive roles. From 40.0% to 45.0% of women noted the existence of discrimination. This has demonstrated again that the "glass ceiling" and the gender gap regarding salaries for women who work in the media sector are the most disturbing. Men in all three countries also named the "glass ceiling" (gender limitations on the opportunity to occupy executive roles) as the most important problem. Male journalists in Georgia and Moldova considered this kind of gender discrimination twice as serious a barrier than do women (in Georgia and Moldova, 84% respectively 83,3% for male journalists, compared to 40,0% and 37,1% for female journalists)

Such an exaggerated male perception of all women aiming to become executives may indicate how painful their perception is of competition with women for high level positions. A similar situation was reflected regarding career growth opportunities, where male journalists from all three countries (especially Georgia) attached a slightly

greater importance to this issue than did women (around 50% of men and around 40% of women).

At the same time, the study has indicated that limitations regarding opportunities to obtain interesting assignments, related to topics that the employee is interested in, as well as opportunities to go on interesting work trips, are obvious to a significant number of women (17.1% in Georgia, and 27-28% in Moldova and Russia). Meanwhile, men rarely notice this issue, and consequently the evaluation from women is 2-4 times higher than among men (only 4.0% in Georgia, 7.4% in Russia, and 16.7% in Moldova). The survey responses concerning discrimination have indicated that opportunities for access to financial and power-related resources in the media sector are significantly more limited for women than for men in all three countries. An expert from Georgia confirmed this conclusion. He believes that gender equality regarding access to power resources in the media sector does not exist, because women tend to work as journalists, editors, and producers, while men prevail on the level where decisions are made. He adds that the issue of gender inequality is the same in other areas of Georgian society, so, in his opinion it is necessary to tackle it on the societal level instead of focusing on the one particular area of media.

**9. Data analysis on the attitude** of respondents towards the proportions of male and female representation in teams and executive positions, has allowed us to disprove a widespread stereotype that most employees prefer to have men as leaders and colleagues instead of women. The study has shown that both male and female journalists were the most tolerant toward the gender of a projective manager in Moldova and Georgia. In these countries, more than 70% of male journalists and around 80% of female journalists have stated in their survey answers that they did not care about the gender of their managers. Russian journalists turned out to be the least tolerant toward the gender of the projective manager: only 38.9% of female journalists and slightly more than a half of male journalists (51.8%) agreed with the statement that they did not care about the gender of their manager.

An interesting difference appeared in the answers from the respondents in different countries to the question of their preferences regarding their manager's gender. In Georgia both women and men, while in Moldova only men, accepted female leaders (between 15% and 24%), while Moldovan female journalists, as well as Russian journalists of both genders, were the least willing to work with female managers (by 5.9% to 9.6%), thus they preferred to have a male leader much more often than did Georgian journalists (15.7% of female journalist in Moldova compared to 51.5% of female journalists in Russia who would prefer to have a male manager.) In our opinion, the negative attitude of Russian women towards female leaders can be interpreted as misogyny, a tendency about which it has recently become very popular to write. Apparently they support the gender stereotype that a man must be the leader, but they also may simply want some

*“In our opinion, the negative attitude of Russian women towards female leaders can be interpreted as misogyny.”*

gender diversity in an intensely feminised sector, as Russian mass media is today. Thus, the results of our study not only disprove the existence of certain gender stereotypes, but also indicate the necessity to provide a higher level of education on matters of gender equality both to journalists in particular, and the population in general. There are reasons to assume that employees within the media sector have significantly more opportunities to affect public opinion in this area, than do those who work in other fields. But prior to that, many still need to learn how to be gender sensitive.

Our study has disproven a myth about a negative idea of female teams. In regard to choosing colleagues, compared to the aforementioned situation regarding managers, respondents - both men and women in the different countries (including Russia) - expressed a high level of tolerance. The majority of them answered that the gender of a colleague did not matter to them.

**10. Within the framework of this comparative study**, issues of hiring and labour rights violations, as well as social guarantees for mass media employees was researched. It was shown that these violations demonstrate a clear gender bias. In Moldova and Russia, more men than women (86.7% and 90.7% respectively) work under employment contracts, which guarantees social security to an employee. A significantly lower number of women occupy socially protected positions (75.5% in Moldova and 85.4% in Russia). The difference between men and women who work in conditions with social security, is quite tangible (12.0% and 5.3% respectively). In Georgia, there is no gender asymmetry in these aspects of employment, and the number of women and men, who work under employment contracts is almost identical (76.0%), but the indicator itself is the lowest of all three countries studied. It indicates that one in seven Georgian journalists works in conditions of irregular employment without social guarantees. Irregular employment can be voluntary (as freelancers) or forced (or unstable). In mass media independent journalists, who are not part of regular editorial teams, work under civil law instead of employment contracts, as well as through verbal agreements. The difference between freelancers and those who work under conditions of irregular employment is crucial. The former are generally highly professional journalists, who cooperate with different media outlets on their own terms. The latter are usually those whom employers do not want to hire, so they are forced to work under civil law or verbal agreements with their salaries informally “in an envelope”. These two kinds of irregular employment do not provide any kind of social benefits of employment, such as paid vacation, maternity leave, paid sick leave etc.

The study has shown that in Georgia, almost one in 5 employees in the media sector works under conditions of irregular employment: 18.9% of men and 22.2% of women. In Moldova the number of such employees is lower, but the gap between men and women who work under the least advantageous employment conditions turned out to be larger, with 11.0% of men and 17.0% of women holding socially unprotected jobs. Finally, in Russia the lowest number and the smallest gap between the employment of men and women were detected: 7.0% of men and 9.8% of women. As seen from these comparisons, more women than men work under conditions of socially unprotected

employment in all three countries. The prevalence of women in socially unprotected positions indicates that men are less likely to accept unfavourable working conditions in the media industry in the three countries studied.

This deprives women who work in mass media of social employment guarantees now, and of prospects for receiving at least a minimally acceptable level of pension benefits in the future.

**11. The study of the prevalence** of gender stereotypes is extremely important, because in most cases they are the basis of discriminatory practices towards women and men in the labour sector and in society in general. Despite the fact that life in modern society changes quickly and radically, the ideas that the majority of people, and to some extent journalists, have about the role of women and men in society and the family remain unchanged, and are based on traditional gender stereotypes. In the study the most widespread gender stereotypes regarding career prospects for men and women have been reviewed. Specifically, these are expressions such as “family is more important than work for women”, “women themselves do not tend to build careers” and so on.

The results of the study allow us to make a number of important conclusions on how widespread and deep traditional gender stereotypes are in the minds of journalists in Georgia, Moldova, and Russia.

First, if one ranks the countries studied, Georgia would take first place, as the country with the highest level of freedom from the aforementioned gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes are the least widespread there. Moldova would follow, while Russia would occupy the last position with the highest representation of conservative ideas regarding the role of women and men in society and in the family.

Secondly, gender stereotypes regarding the quality of work and career aspirations of women are decreasing among the minds of journalists under the influence of real facts. Journalists (both men and women) from all three countries deny the stereotypes that women do not tend to build careers, or do not want to assume authority and occupy executive roles. The majority of respondents from all countries, around 90%, answered in a survey that they do not share this opinion. At the same time, stereotypical ideas regarding the family roles of women and men turned out to be the most tenacious, and the majority of men and women share these views. For example, “family is more important than work for women” turned out to be the most popular gender stereotypical statement among journalists. In Georgia, 28.3% of women and 13.0% of men supported it, in Moldova half (50.0%) of both women and men, and in Russia 58.2% of women and 64.9% of men.

Thirdly, the study has indicated that women had more conservative views regarding the majority of suggested stereotypes than men. Consequently, it is possible to assume that women are the ones who carry gender stereotypes, and who broadcast and reproduce them in mass media more often than men.

The majority of experts from Georgia and Moldova have supported this conclusion.

**12. The study was also focused on** studying the personal experience and awareness of journalists, and their personal and professional positions regarding the issue of sexual harassment. Women are the victims of sexual harassment in the majority of cases. According to the results of the survey, sexual harassment is the most widespread in Russia, with 28.9% of the women and 9.3% of the men surveyed saying they have been victims. This indicator is 1.5-2 times higher than the data from other countries studied: 17.0% of women and 3.3% of men in Moldova and 12.5% and 3.4% respectively in Georgia reported that they had been the victims of sexual harassment. Such a noticeable difference in the survey results between the countries studied can have a twofold interpretation. Firstly, this problem is more serious in Russia than in the other countries, which is possible to assume, considering how widespread and deep gender stereotypes regarding the role of women in family and society are in the minds of Russians. Secondly, this topic stopped being taboo for Russian journalists and is being openly discussed after the incident between the Russian mass media and the State Duma regarding sexual harassment at work, as a result of which, RBC has withdrawn their journalists from the State Duma, and a number of other independent Russian mass media outlets have supported them. The survey results have indicated that first and foremost, employees who occupied higher positions were guilty of sexual harassment (according to 28.6% in Georgia and Moldova, 24.1% in Russia) in all three countries, as well as those with whom they have contacted during their professional activities (28.6% in Georgia and Moldova, 20.7% in Russia). Respondents from all three countries have given third place as sexual harassers to the leaders of organizations (14.3% in Georgia, 21.4% in Moldova, 13.8% in Russia).

The highest number of colleagues guilty of sexual harassment at work is in Russia at 24.1%. This indicator is 2-3 times higher than in Moldova and Georgia. Such a significant difference in opinion between women and men is impossible not to notice. For example, in Georgia and Russia, men thought that their colleagues were guilty of sexual harassment 2-3 times more often than women were. Overall, the results of the survey indicate that the journalistic profession is quite dangerous for women, because they risk being subjected to sexual harassment literally everywhere - from their colleagues at work and in the office of their manager, as well as while performing their professional duties. It is therefore necessary for the journalistic community of all three countries to find some mechanisms to protect the honour and dignity of female journalists.

The analysis of responses to questions about attitudes towards the subject of sexual harassment at work has identified major differences in opinions on between Russian journalists on one side, and Georgian and Moldovan on the other. One in five Russians (21.6%) does not see sexual harassment as a violation of human rights and personal dignity, but considers it to just be a way to make noise in the mass media. Russian male journalists chose this answer in the survey seven times more often than their colleagues in Georgia (3.5%), while in Moldova, no male journalist chose this answer. Likewise, Russian female journalists expressed an opinion that the topic of sexual harassment was a reason to make noise in mass media more often (8.1%) than their female colleagues in



Georgia (6.5%) and Moldova (2.0%). Apparently, during a recent confrontation between journalists and the State Duma on the matter of sexual harassment, every journalist had to choose which side of the “barricades” he/she was on, and an answer to this question turned out to be traumatic. Hence, a certain inconsistency, which is apparent in the answers of Russian journalists on this particular subject.

The comparative study in Georgia, Moldova and Russia allows us to assert that the majority of the problems which have been detected in the media sector are based on the socio-economic and socio-political situations, and affect all employees - all women and men of these countries, and are not a specific trait of mass media.

Therefore, in order to provide gender equality in terms of salary, career opportunities and professional self-fulfilment for women and men, it is advisable first and foremost to pay attention to solving these universal problems. With this goal in mind, these are the **recommendations for Georgia, Moldova and Russia**:

- to create conditions for achieving gender equality and promoting women to the level where decisions are made;
- to facilitate an increase in the equality of rights and opportunities for women and men in all areas of social life and state governance;
- to facilitate freedom of speech and provide a higher level of independence of mass media from the influence of government and business;
- to facilitate the creation and strengthening of a strong civil society, which is capable of resisting the power of oligarchs and political elites;
- to assist in the creation of programmes directed toward the education of citizens, who are capable of solving the aforementioned and numerous current problems of their societies.

Solutions for society's universal problems are impossible without initiative and activity on other levels, which is why among the strategies which would facilitate the elimination of general inequality and could be realised on the level of professional journalistic unions in Georgia, Moldova and Russia, the following can be included:

- to organise a wide distribution of information about the results of this study and the identified common and specific issues of the employees within the media sector in Georgia, Moldova, and Russia through the online websites of the journalistic organisations of these countries;
- to organise roundtables, workshops, discussion platforms and forums online for the discussion of the issues of gender inequality, identified in the comparative project;
- to identify and, whenever possible, to neutralise the reasons and factors behind the emergence of gender inequality in media organisations in their countries and regions;
- to organise workshops and training programmes, aimed at teaching methods of social and labour rights defence, studying labour legislation, and enabling the successful achievement of the individual and collective defence of rights in the field of social and labour relations;
- to organise events in Georgia, Moldova and Russia aimed at increasing sensitivity towards the issues of gender inequality in society among journalists and other mass media employees;

- to assist in the objective coverage of the female role in society and family life in the mass media outlets of Georgia, Moldova, and Russia through print, broadcast, and digital media. To achieve this goal it is necessary to add permanent coverage segments and radio programmes, dedicated to women who are successful in politics, science and business;
- to increase the number of publications which facilitate the change of public consciousness regarding the issues of social and professional roles of women and opportunities for their self-fulfilment;
- to organise activities aimed at the elimination of stereotypical images of women and men in the content that is being created by the mass media, and which consequently consolidates gender inequality;
- to organise mass media campaigns in order to change public opinion and behavioural and social norms, based on stereotypes that reproduce general inequality;
- to organise and host informative and educational events, aimed at gender education and clarification of the role of discriminatory stereotypes, with the goal of better understanding their nature and negative impact on all aspects of the family and social life of men and women;
- it is necessary for the journalistic communities in Georgia, Moldova, and Russia to create a framework, possibly within the ethics commissions that already exist, where one could submit complaints regarding sexual harassment at work, as well as to find ways to develop mechanisms of protecting the honour and dignity of female journalists.