

# The professional routine of the Albanian journalist: A look at a day of work

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## INTRODUCTION

In general, when speaking about the professional activity of journalists in their daily work in research, the focus is on the organization of the newsroom by hierarchy and beats. Analyzing journalism practice is important for several reasons. Among these, the most important is to identify who is really a journalist today. The one who moderates, the news anchor, the one who “uploads” information online, the one who selects and broadcasts music on Radio or TV rarely has journalism education. For the most part, they are persons who specialize in various areas: technical, administrative, editorial, etc. and so the definition of terminology as to who is a journalist needs to be clarified. Through their research, journalists offer to public opinion useful and important information on various fronts, such as political, social, economic, cultural, etc. Theoretically, they reflect reality and process it through the informative and analytical means available to them and disseminate it through television or radio stations, the print press, and online media. Naturally, the challenge of the Albanian journalist today is for him to clearly dissociate himself from the press office employee, who does not report independently but under the influence of the policy of the institution he/she represents.

How can one describe the daily practice of a journalist in our country? This paper does not take upon itself to process this practice theoretically, but rather provide quantitative data obtained on the basis of a spring 2012 *face to face* survey with Albanian journalists across the country, a total of 295 persons. More concretely, responding to the survey were 123 TV journalists, 28 radio journalists, 108 print media journalists (daily and weekly newspapers and magazines), 19 journalists from news agencies, and 28 from online media. The obtained data was analyzed through the statistical program SPSS 20.

Relevant to this study are particularly those questions related to technical aspects of the daily journalistic routine. The list of activities journalists were asked about was long, starting from search and research on daily stories to Web maintenance, editing press releases, video editing, etc. The activity related to online media, in view of technological developments and its spread in Albania, took up an important part.

Journalists were asked about these activities in view of the fact that they make up the essence of the daily role of a journalist. The aim was to draw a detailed profile of the Albanian journalist’s work. Information obtained with regard to the daily activities of journalists helps not only describe the importance that each of these activities bears in daily work, but also to better comprehend changes in journalism in recent years. Given that such a study was never conducted in Albania before, data for comparative purposes will have to be used only in coming years.

## JOURNALISTIC ROUTINE: THE PRODUCTION PROCESS

The survey indicates that journalists spend most of the time in their daily work for search/research, an average of 2 hours and 51 minutes (171 minutes). Drafting and preparation of texts or materials for publication take up an average of 2 hours and 5 minutes (125 minutes). Meanwhile, the editing of press statements takes up 54 minutes. Selection of additional information for stories is conducted in an average of 1 hour and 11 minutes (71 minutes), which is almost the same as the time of contact with the public through letters or the Web – 1 hour and 12 minutes (72 minutes). Journalists’ administrative activities, such as meetings, newsroom meetings, etc., take up considerable time every day – about 1 hour and 4 minutes (64 minutes); technical activities such as layout (97 minutes), programming and production (91 minutes). It is striking that technical and administrative activities (newsroom meetings, etc.) take up almost just as much time as collecting information does.

## JOURNALISTIC ROUTINE: THE WEB

The survey finds out that the internet is used intensively. Asked about daily internet use, 293 Albanian journalists responded they spend an average of 6 hours and 17 minutes on the internet, of which 289 journalists use it for journalistic research for about 4 hours and 42 minutes. Given that we did not explicitly ask what they mean by internet search (online) in the framework of their profession and general online search, there is no way of knowing precisely whether online research is an added value of daily research or simply replaces it.

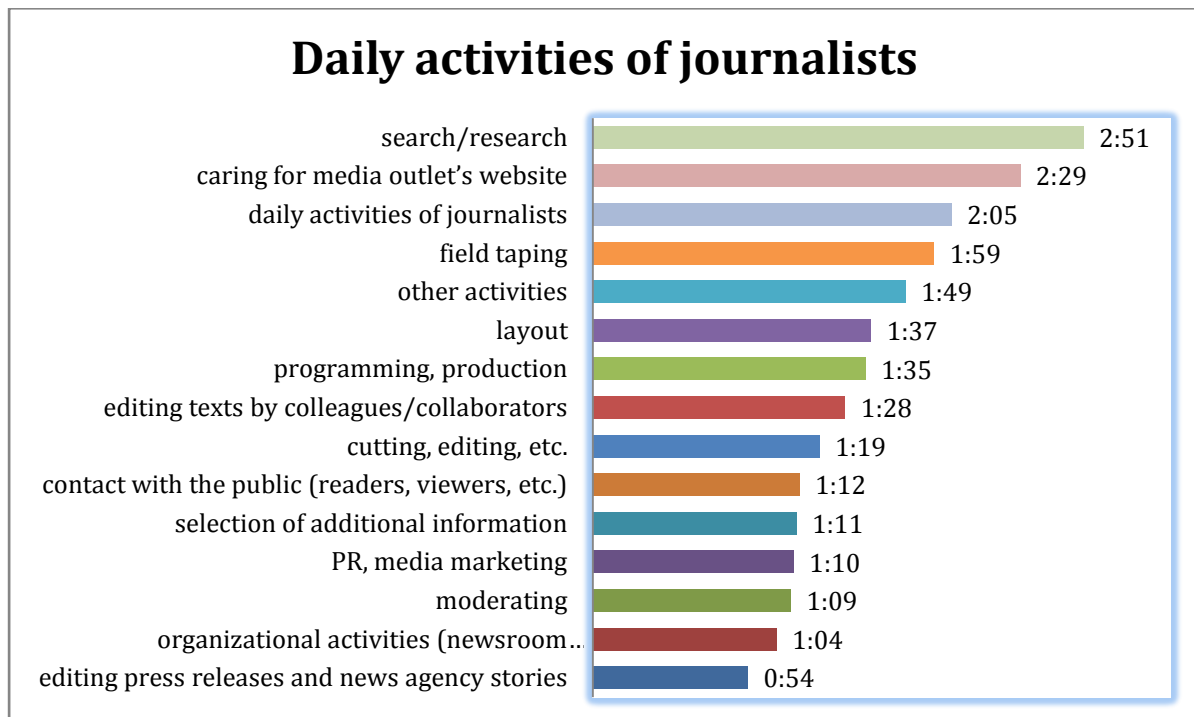
To the question about how much time they spend taking care of their media outlet’s website, journalists responded an average of 2 hours and 29 minutes (or 149 minutes). As it can be seen, this activity is the most intensive after the search and research for information and news. This is stated by about 1/3 of the respondents. One does notice the difference in drafting texts (compiling) by 24 fewer minutes. Yet, this data may lead to misleading conclusions as one shortcoming of the survey is that it doesn’t definitely establish what is “taking care of the website of the media outlet” they work in.

**Table 1: Time spend per day (on average)**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Average value	Standard deviation
Daily activity: search/ research	273	0:20	12:00	<b>2:51</b>	1:46
Daily activity: taking care of media outlet’s website	73	0:10	12:00	<b>2:29</b>	2:45
Daily activity: drafting/editing journalistic texts	283	0:02	8:00	<b>2:05</b>	1:46
Daily activity: field taping	80	0:10	4:00	<b>1:59</b>	1:05
Daily activity: other	14	0:30	8:00	<b>1:49</b>	2:00
Daily activity: layout	33	0:10	5:00	<b>1:37</b>	1:20
Daily activity: programming, production	12	0:30	5:00	<b>1:35</b>	1:20
Daily activity: editing texts by colleagues/collaborators	149	0:05	12:00	<b>1:28</b>	1:42
Daily activity: cutting, editing, etc.	101	0:10	8:00	<b>1:19</b>	1:14
Daily activity: contact with the public (readers, viewers, etc.)	129	0:05	8:00	<b>1:12</b>	1:14
Daily activity: selection of additional information	262	0:03	8:00	<b>1:11</b>	1:14
Daily activity: PR, media marketing	35	0:10	7:00	<b>1:10</b>	1:26
Daily activity: moderating	62	0:05	6:00	<b>1:09</b>	1:01
Daily activity: organizational activities (newsroom meetings, other meetings, etc.)	234	0:05	8:00	<b>1:04</b>	0:58
Daily activity: editing press releases, news agency stories	221	0:02	8:00	<b>0:54</b>	1:13

## JOURNALISTIC ROUTINE: DIFFERENCES INSIDE THE PROFESSION AND APPROACH TO PR

It is particularly striking that journalists who work for news agencies (online and public Albanian Telegraphic Agency) spend much more time looking for information, 3 hours and 16 minutes (196 minutes), followed by print press colleagues (182 minutes), and radio journalists (164 min). Journalists working for TV spend 2 hours and 40 minutes looking for news. It is no surprise that journalists working for online media outlets spend an average of 2 hours and 32 minutes (152 minutes) per day, given that they use information published previously by the mainstream media as a reference point.



Furthermore, asked about how much time they spend with their audiences – readers, listeners, viewers, etc. – journalists responded there was an average of 1 hour and 12 minutes (72 minutes), which is a little more than the time journalists spend on PR, meaning the advertising of the media outlet they work in: an average of 1 hour and 10 minutes (70 minutes). Here, too, it is interesting that print media journalists have the highest average time in doing PR for their medium (98 minutes per day) as opposed to colleagues working for online media who use an average of only 27 minutes a day to advertise the media outlet they come from. How can this difference be explained? One possible explanation could have to do with the decline of the print press vis-à-vis the electronic one. It is no coincidence that journalists working in TV stations have an average time of 57 minutes and those in radio stations have a time of 40 minutes, given they are the most followed by the public. On the other hand, figures should not be misinterpreted as a role may be played also by the fact that online media and radio for instance or news agencies use ready information from the print press of the day and from news editions.

**Table 2: Daily activity of journalists by media**

	Type of media															
	Daily newspaper		Weekly newspaper		Magazine		TV		Radio		News agency		Online News portal		Total	
	Average value	Median	Average value	Median	Average value	Median	Average value	Median	Average value	Median	Average value	Median	Average value	Median	Average value	Median
Search/research	3:06	3:00	2:30	2:00	3:13	3:00	2:40	2:00	2:44	2:00	3:13	3:00	2:51	3:00	<b>2:51</b>	<b>2:00</b>
Drafting/editing journalistic texts	2:30	2:00	1:39	2:00	2:30	2:00	1:30	1:00	2:47	2:00	1:27	1:00	3:28	3:00	<b>2:05</b>	<b>1:30</b>
Selection of additional information	1:17	1:00	0:52	0:40	1:01	1:00	1:01	0:45	1:58	1:00	1:06	1:00	1:21	1:00	<b>1:11</b>	<b>1:00</b>
Editing press statements and news from news agencies	0:43	0:30	0:41	1:00	0:40	0:30	0:49	0:30	1:32	1:00	0:43	1:00	1:13	1:00	<b>0:54</b>	<b>0:30</b>
Editing texts by colleagues/ collaborators	1:35	1:00	1:04	1:00	3:06	2:00	1:16	0:30	1:40	1:00	0:51	0:35	1:16	1:00	<b>1:28</b>	<b>1:00</b>
Organizational activities (newsroom meetings, other meetings, etc.)	1:22	1:00	0:56	1:00	1:15	1:00	1:01	0:40	0:48	0:30	0:52	0:30	0:45	0:30	<b>1:04</b>	<b>1:00</b>
Contact with the public (reader, viewer, etc.)	1:08	1:00	1:11	1:00	0:51	0:45	1:04	0:30	1:04	1:00	1:22	1:00	2:01	1:00	<b>1:12</b>	<b>1:00</b>
Caring for media outlet’s website	2:12	2:30	0:30	0:20	2:00	1:00	1:45	1:00	0:48	1:00	6:15	6:15	4:11	4:00	<b>2:29</b>	<b>1:00</b>
PR, advertising the media outlet	0:37	0:30	0:35	0:35	3:48	4:00	0:57	1:00	0:40	0:30	1:00	1:00	0:30	0:20	<b>1:10</b>	<b>1:00</b>
Layout	1:14	1:00	3:08	4:00	1:07	1:00	1:45	2:00					2:10	2:10	<b>1:37</b>	<b>1:00</b>
Field taping	1:00	1:00					2:04	2:00	1:30	1:00	1:30	1:30			<b>1:59</b>	<b>2:00</b>
Cutting, editing, etc.							1:15	1:00	1:51	2:00	1:15	1:15			<b>1:19</b>	<b>1:00</b>
Moderating			0:15	0:15			1:07	1:00	1:27	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:20	0:20	<b>1:09</b>	<b>1:00</b>
Programming, production					1:00	1:00	1:15	1:15	1:00	1:00	2:30	2:30	1:35	0:45	<b>1:35</b>	<b>1:00</b>
Other	4:00	4:00			1:45	1:45	2:05	1:00			0:50	1:00	1:30	1:30	<b>1:49</b>	<b>1:00</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N- total number of respondents.</li> <li>• Minimum – minimal value of time (in minutes) in responses by categories</li> <li>• Maximum – maximal value of time (in minutes) in responses by categories</li> <li>• Average value – arithmetic value or average time used</li> <li>• Standard deviation</li> </ul>																

Meanwhile, one notices that the category “editing press releases and news agency stories” has the lowest time: 54 minutes. On the one hand, this figure could indicate that it has become a routine for journalists to obtain information from official sources or news agencies; on the other hand, it points to a significant problem: releases from news agencies or the press offices of various institutions are processed in such a way as to be ready for publication in the media. An analysis conducted by journalism students in the Master level

at the Tirana Department of Journalism and Communication with the main 8 newspapers<sup>1</sup>: Shekulli, Koha Jonë, Mapo, Tema, Standart, Shqiptare, Shqip, Panorama, produced interesting results. About 47% of stories produced in these media “originate from or are sponsored by public relations offices or press offices” (ibid). The areas with the most impact from public relations offices and press offices were: social with 56%, economic with 52%, and current affairs (crime, courts) 42%.

If we were to add the average number of hours used every day by journalists where responses were the most representative, e.g. over 50% of the respondents (a total of 295), then we can find out the average number of hours that most journalists devote.

Let's look once again at the categories of daily activity:

- 1) search/research (171 min, N= 273);
- 2) drafting/editing journalistic texts (125 min, N=283);
- 3) selection of additional information (77 min, N=262);
- 4) organizational activities (newsroom meetings, other meetings, etc.) (64 min, N=234);
- 5) editing press releases and news agency stories (54 min, N=221) and
- 6) editing texts by colleagues/collaborators (88 min, N=149).

On average, a journalist conducts his daily activity for approximately 479 minutes, or 9 hours and 39 minutes. Such a result indicates that in a given week, the Albanian journalist may do more than 40 hours of work. This figure is backed up by other previous surveys conducted with field journalists. I would like to point to a survey conducted by Ilda Londo and the Albanian Media Institute, according to which over 54% of Albanian journalists work for more than 40 hours per week. Affected by this situation were particularly journalists of the print media, mainly the daily newspapers, which come out throughout the week without leaving time for journalists to relax or calm down from the intensity.<sup>2</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

We can say that looking at the distribution of daily work hours of Albanian journalists, one notices that there is a tendency to devote a lot of time to new media, dictated by technological developments. Furthermore, there appears to be a problem with the ratio of hours that journalists spend to collect and draft information and news and the hours they need to carry out administrative and technical duties inside the newsroom. As may be seen in the tables and graphic, the division of work in the newsroom is no longer the property of journalists, but also the other professionals working there and that makes even more difficult the definition of the term “journalist.”

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<sup>1</sup><http://al.ejo-online.eu/715/marredheniet-publike/nga-journalism-ne-churnalism---mbi-gazetarine-e-marredhenieve-me-publikun#more-715>

<sup>2</sup> Londo, Ilda (2008): Albania, in: „Labor Relations and Media: Analyzing Patterns of Labor Relations in the Media of SEENPM Member Countries“, CHIȘINĂU/MOLDOVA, p. 82.