Report from an international scientific conference CEECOM 2023: Threats, Challenges and Opportunities in the Changing Central and Eastern European Media Environments, Brno, June 29–30, 2023

Rafał Leśniczak
Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw
r.lesniczak@uksw.edu.pl
ORCID: 0000-0003-0099-4327

The 14th international scientific conference in the series Central and Eastern European Communication and Media Conference, entitled Threats, Challenges and Opportunities in the Changing Central and Eastern European Media Environments, took place in Brno on June 29–30, 2023. Its organizer was the Department of Media Studies and Journalism at the Masaryk University in cooperation with ECREA Central and East European Network.

The aim of the conference was a scientific reflection on the current problem in the region of Central and Eastern Europe, threats and challenges facing the countries of the region, as well as reflection on the potential future development of the region and the opportunities facing them. The specific issues raised included: digitalization of society and its consequences in the global, national and individual dimensions; fragmentation and polarization of new information environments; declining trust and increasing politicization as well as raising pressure and political interference with the autonomy of journalists; the growing discrediting of professional media practicing deontological journalism by non-liberal, populist and radical political actors.


During the plenary session, two keynote speakers presented their papers: Katalin Fehér from the Budapest University of Public Service and Lenka Waschková Cisařová from the Department of Social Sciences of the Masaryk University of Brno. In her paper entitled AI-mediətization in
Peace and War the Hungarian media scientist identified trends, practical implications and threats related to artificial intelligence technology in the economic and social dimension, taking into account geopolitical conditions. In Prof. Fehér’s opinion, in the European Union there is still mistrust among business investors and policymakers regarding the implementation of research projects on artificial intelligence. In turn the Czech researcher, in her paper The Journalist as a Human in Today’s Media, reflected on the contemporary implementation of the deontological principles of journalism. Prof. Waschková Císařová drew attention to the anthropological dimension of interpersonal communication, which should take into account the non-negotiable values.

The two-day conference also featured a panel discussion on youth digital activism and the creation of protest art (Youth digital activism across borders – round table discussion and activist-led protest art-making workshop) and 16 panel sessions. It is worth indicating the titles of individual panel sessions, which illustrate the scope of specific issues addressed in conference discussions. These include: Communicating War, threats and opportunities of social media (RO of social media), specifics of media in Central and Easter Europe (CEE media specifics), Digital and Specialized Journalism, Social media communication, threats and opportunities in media development in Central and Eastern Europe (RO in CEE media development), Political Communication and Propaganda, digital transformation (Going digital), CEE media systems, Populism, Decolonization, Journalists, Disinformation and Polarization, Public service media, Science Communication and Covid, and Media in Europe.

Polish media scientists who presented their own research at the conference included:
– Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska, Katarzyna Konarska (University of Wrocław),
– Agnieszka Szymańska, Małgorzata Winiarska-Brodowska, Weronika Świerczyńska-Głownia, Weronika Saran, Jacek Kołodziej (Jagiellonian University in Kraków),
– Weronika Salek, Olga Dąbrowska-Cendrowska, Natalia Walkowiak (Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce),
– Ewa Nowak-Teter, Jakub Nowak (Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin),
– Rafał Leśniczak, Krzysztof Stępiński (Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw),
– Agnieszka Węglińska (Lower Silesian University),
– Rafał Klepka (National Education Commission Pedagogical University in Kraków),
– Katarzyna Bąkowicz (SWPS University),
– Damian Guzek (University of Silesia in Katowice).

Conferences in the Central and Eastern European Communication and Media Conference series, usually organized annually, are aimed at integrating media and communication scientists from Central and Eastern Europe. These meetings, of which this year’s conference in Brno is a part, raise wide-ranging research issues, offering audiences both empirical and review presentations. What is also important, their discussion part enables mutual exchange of scientific experience, acting as a starting point for new research projects and international cooperation.

The organizers of the Brno conference successfully managed the uneasy task of preparing and implementing a scientific meeting covering diverse research areas. The media experts from Brno took care to respect the principle of equality and inclusiveness in the mutual relations of CEECOM 2023 and made sure that the speakers’ papers were assigned to appropriate thematic sessions. The advantage of the Brno conference was the coverage of the conference events in social media.

The previous editions of CEECOM, starting from 2008, took place in Książ, Bratislava, Prague, Kaunas, Wrocław, Zagreb, Tartu, Ljubljana, Szeged, Sofia, twice in Kraków and twice...
in Brno (once in cooperation with the center in Telc). Undoubtedly, scientific meetings of media experts from Central and Eastern Europe play an important role in building and cementing the discipline of social communication and media sciences, and identifying specific research areas.