

## Foreword

How do we get to grips with the diverse dynamics and roles played by journalism around the world? This is the question this anthology seeks to probe. It does this by taking general debates about journalism and investigating their shape in three countries – Tunisia, Bangladesh and Norway. What the collection shows is how different societies, seen in part through the eyes of journalism students, engage with the issues of the universal and the particular.

For UNESCO, with 195 Member States, this dialectic between universal principles and national diversities is intrinsically part of the dynamic of the Organisation. As the UN agency that deals with media issues, the relationship between the general and the particular is notably relevant to our work concerning journalism.

The starting point for UNESCO, as indeed should be the case more broadly, is the universal human right of freedom of expression. We note that this right encompasses each individual's entitlement to impart, as well as to seek and receive, information. From this, we infer that it therefore inherently entails two dimensions: press freedom and freedom of access to information. As set out in our study *World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development*, UNESCO has elaborated on press freedom further by specifying the importance of (legal) freedom, (economic) pluralism, and (self-regulatory) independence for the media.

In this perspective, journalism is a specialized and voluntary exercise of free expression. What makes journalism specific is the universal aspiration to meet certain professional standards and its operation via an ethic of public interest.

In a time when more and more journalism takes to digital channels, and in a time with an abundance of information, social media and interpersonal news, the importance of keeping focus on the uniqueness of journalism should go without saying, even given different cultural inflections of the practice. This is one reason why UNESCO is developing indicators for assessing the digital environment within which journalism takes place. Accordingly, the indicators cover four fields hugely relevant to journalism: Rights, Openness, Accessibility and Multi-stakeholder participation (ROAM).

To conclude: at the present time, journalism is under intensified threat. Some threats originate in economics, many others in politics and social life. This is why

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attention to the questions discussed in this anthology is valuable. If we are going to preserve journalism as a universal beacon, and indeed strengthen it going forward, the more knowledge we have about diversities in practice, the better our strategies can be.

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