

The Current State of Political Journalism in Finland

The scope of the Finnish political journalism is wider than before, but the emphasis and the hierarchy of the political reporting is still based on a rather traditional set of norms and values. This was the conclusion reached by a research project on the current state of Finnish political journalism conducted by the University of Turku. The material of the project consisted of a large sample of Finnish daily newspapers, periodicals as well as electronic media including the internet.

The results of the project also show that the different media outlets have different priorities in their reporting. The television journalism emphasizes the economic news whereas the daily newspapers pay more attention to the function of the political system. The tabloid papers take regularly a more critical stance towards the politicians and politics than the television news or the daily newspapers. The tabloid press also publishes more articles concerning the private lives of politicians.

The most important factor defining the media coverage of the politician is his/her political position. The prime minister gets by far the largest amount of media attention among politicians. The political position does not only define the amount but also the quality of the media coverage. The ministers were able to garner a large amount of publicity in connection with the topical political issues whereas the opposition politicians had difficulties attracting media attention concerning political matters of the day. A good example of this was the media attention given to the opposition leader Jutta Urpilainen, who got relatively little media attention with reference to important policy issues.

Political scandals show the both extremes of the political journalism

Political scandals represent merely a small part of the political journalism, but the reporting on political scandals show both the best and the worst of Finnish political journalism. The study concluded that the failures and excesses of political journalism during political scandals contribute to the public assumption that the political journalism in Finland is of low quality.

The Current State of Journalism -project has published a final report on the most important findings of the research project in Finnish. The report reviews the current state of Finnish political journalism as well as analyses the most common accusations claiming that the political journalism in Finland has succumbed to entertainment, personification and superficiality. In the concluding chapter of the report the researchers of the project outline three scenarios for the future development of the Finnish political journalism.

The report has been edited by Ville Perna, Mari K. Niemi and Ville Pitkänen. The editors and the researchers are working in the Centre for Parliamentary Studies at the University of Turku.

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