

FOREWORD

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS – RESEARCH, EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY

PROF. DR. VESSELINA VALKANOVA

Dean of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication

This volume collects the reports from the Jubilee International Scientific Conference “Communication and the Media of the XXI Century: Educational and Professional Challenges”, organized by the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication on October 27 and 28, 2022.

The Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication celebrates the 70th anniversary of the establishment of its bachelor and master programs in Journalism at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”. The academic education in journalism in Bulgaria started in the academic year 1952-1953, when the program of Journalism was established at the Faculty of Philology at Sofia University. Later, this program was transformed into a separate Faculty at Sofia University – the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication.

The international conference entitled “Communication and the Media of the XXI Century: Educational and Professional Challenges” was organized and held with the assistance of the media partners – the Bulgarian National Radio and the Bulgarian News Agency, of the academic partners – the University of Vilnius, Lithuania, the University of Bucharest, Romania, the University of Nis, Serbia, the “Shota Rustaveli” University in Batumi, Georgia.

82 participants from 16 universities and institutions in the country and abroad took part in a plenary session and panels:

- “Transformations of Media Literacy”,
- “Communication and Digital Turn”,
- “Cultural and Psychological Particularities in the Communicative Process”,
- “Journalism and War – Discursive Practices and Educational Challenges”,
- “Media Professional Practice and Education: Contemporary Debates”,
- “Contemporary Aspects of the Theory of Media and Communication”,
- “Political and Ethical Dimension of the Freedom of Speech”,

- “Changes in the Roles of Social Media and Future Perspectives of Media”,
- “Communication as an Industry”,
- “Transformational Effects in the Field of Mass Communication in Times of Crisis”.

In the working panels, teachers and researchers from Bulgarian universities and institutions discussed a wide range of issues with their colleagues from foreign higher schools from 7 countries: the University of Klagenfurt, Austria, the University of Vilnius, Lithuania, the University of Bucharest, Romania, the University of St. St. Cyril and Methodius” in Slovakia, ELTE University in Budapest, Hungary, Eastern University in Kentucky, USA.

The 70th anniversary of the beginning of journalism education in Bulgaria is an occasion for a satisfying assessment of the achievements of dozens of scientists, teachers and thousands of graduates of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, who during the past seven decades contributed to the authority of Bulgarian academic education and to the building of high professional standards and ethical rules.

Both the current volume and all scientific and educational forums organized during the academic year 2022/2023 at Sofia University – FJMC, are dedicated to this important anniversary for the Bulgarian professional, scientific and academic community.

Following the solid academic tradition of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” – an institution in science and education in Bulgaria, the oldest academic program of FJMC – Journalism, has already prepared several thousand highly qualified specialists for the media from more than 50 countries. Today, in addition to the four bachelor’s majors, the Faculty offers dozens of master’s and doctoral programs and postgraduate qualifications, training highly qualified specialists who are welcome in all areas of media and public communication.

We owe gratitude to all colleagues from the departments of FJMC, from Sofia University, to our part-time colleagues, to guest lecturers, to practitioners and to lecturers from abroad for their dedication and attention to teaching students both in journalism and public relations, book publishing and communication management, to the faculty in our master’s and doctoral programs. There are hundreds of scientists who, with their research, monographs, articles and research, develop the academic field of communications, journalism and the media, for the benefit of students, doctoral students and young teachers, but also of the professional collegium – journalists, editors, publishers, managers in communications.

70 years in the educational and scientific field of the Journalism program is a significant tradition for FJMC, for media and communications education, for the professional community throughout the country. An anniversary that makes us re-

flect on achievements and challenges, to look for new perspectives in research and educational activities.

A look back at the academic tradition of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication shows that both from the creation of the Journalism academic program and from its establishment as an independent unit of Sofia University in 1974, the Faculty offers students from Bulgaria and many other countries training in modern and important for the functioning of public communication specialties not only in the bachelor's and master's degrees, but also in successful doctoral programs in the fields of journalism, media, public communication, publication activities, creative industries, advertising and communication management.

During these 7 decades, the key words that summarize the educational, scientific and research activities of teachers, researchers, doctoral students and students, are: quality and striving for high academic results. The training is oriented towards practice, seeks to respond to the complex and dynamically changing conditions of the modern professional environment by training highly qualified specialists, while at the same time the academic community has always adhered to higher standards and has always had a focus not only to practice, but also to research and scientific programs.

To achieve the goals of the training – teaching solid knowledge and skills for the achievement of effective professional and social realization of the graduates in the field of journalism and media, our collegium strives to seek continuous renewal of curricula and programs, to attract to its teaching staff a team of researchers and scientists, young and educated academic additions, as well as distinguished professionals from the field of media and communication. It is in the combination of educational practices with current scientific research and the publication of scientific results that the academic profile of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication has been built over the years as a leader in the scientific and professional direction of public communications and information sciences in Bulgaria and a reputable center of education and science in Europe.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the academic development of educational institutions and especially universities is faced with a number of social challenges, structural and educational transformations. Higher education institutions are undergoing radical transformations driven by the need to digitize education and training processes. The university system strives to overcome this situation in order to be competitive and continue to provide high-quality education in the context of digital transformation and technological innovation.

In general, journalism and communication education is oriented towards teaching specific knowledge and skills, combined with practical training, very important for students' realization.

The academic staff of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication welcomes the academic dialogue in the disclosure of new and in-depth research in the problems of media and communication.

The philosophy of teaching and research in journalism and media at the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” is connected with the high social responsibility of the journalistic profession and its role in social systems, with the functions of the fourth power and with the role of journalism as an independent institution, with media influence and the trust of the public.

I hope that international meetings and conferences will continue to bring together media and communications researchers in the future, to synthesize new ideas in public communications and information sciences, to enable scientists from Bulgaria and abroad to compare achievements, to expand their knowledge in the scientific field, to seek interaction with frontier scientific fields, to disseminate original and contributing research in the scientific field “Media and Communications”.

It is through the discussions, the free exchange of opinions, through the renewed educational and scientific programs and in a creative and collegial environment that we can build prepared professionals with an active civic position – thinking, seeking the truth and defending the public’s right to reliable and non-manipulated information.

*Prof. Dr. Vesselina Valkanova,
Dean of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication*

16 February 2023