



# Yle self-regulation system and attacks on Yle journalists

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# Regulations and guidelines are there to enable, not to inhibit





# Finnish Broadcasting Company

- Not there to serve the Government
- There for the benefit of readers, listeners and viewers
- Funded out of taxation (Communication Tax)
- Administrative Council (appointed by Parliament)
  - Does not have the right to decide on content
  - Content under control of responsible editors
    - **journalistic independence**

# Act on the Exercise of Freedom of Expression in the Mass Media

- In the application of this Act, interference with the activities of the media shall be legitimate only insofar as it is unavoidable, taking due note of the importance of freedom of expression in a democracy subject to the rule of law.



# Responsible editors at Yle



# Media self-regulation

- We have a very good media self-regulation system
- Anyone who believes that there has been a breach of good professional practice by the press, radio or television may bring this to the attention of the Council for Mass Media (CMM)
- Most of the Finnish media - including Yle - has signed the Council's Basic Agreement, under which the Council can directly handle any complaints that concern them.

# Media self-regulation system

- Complaints need not concern the complainant directly, but cannot in certain cases proceed without the consent of an injured party.
- Press, TV, radio, internet – platform free
- Free of charge
- [https://www.jsn.fi/en/Council\\_for\\_Mass\\_Media/the-council-for-mass-media-in-finland/](https://www.jsn.fi/en/Council_for_Mass_Media/the-council-for-mass-media-in-finland/)



## Council for Mass Media

FRONTPAGE

CMM

GUIDELINES FOR JOURNALISTS

HOW TO COMPLAIN

- If the CMM establishes that good professional practice has been breached, it issues a notice which the party in violation must publish within a short space of time.





# Guidelines for Journalists

- Professional status
- Obtaining and publishing information
- Rights of interviewer and interviewee
- Corrections and Right of Reply
- Privacy and public interest



# Yle

- Ethical Guidelines for the Production of Programmes and Content
- <https://yle.fi/aihe/artikkeli/2016/04/02/ethical-guidelines-production-programmes-and-content>



# Head of Journalistic Standards and Ethics

- helps our journalists to maintain such high ethical standards that breaches of good professional practice do not occur; and if they do occur, they do not do so without justification.
- helps (in an advisory role) responsible editors **to defend freedom of speech and Yle's basic values**

# Head of Journalistic Standards and Ethics

- helps journalists answer questions if viewers are dissatisfied with content in relation to journalistic ethics
- trains journalists
- takes part in public discussions of journalistic ethics
- helps responsible editors and journalists make sure that they follow the law, ethical guidelines and other company policies in the production and publication/broadcast of Yle content.



# **Attacks on Yle journalists**

# Human beings have always been **good and bad**

- internet and social media present new opportunities for us to express our essential natures
- journalists too have embraced social media
- out there, there's a lot of good - but also a lot of bad
- one expression of the bad is hate speech

# Hate Speech – Freedom of Speech

- There is no universal definition of hate speech
- The concept is still widely disputed - especially with regard to its relationship to **freedom of opinion and expression**, non-discrimination and equality
- Can be understood **as offensive discourse** targeting a group or an individual based on who they are –in terms of race, religion, gender, other identity factor

# Hate Speech – Freedom of Speech

- Journalists can be the target
- **We must accept fact-based and justified feedback**
- We **do not have to accept** feedback which is too personal, threatens our lives or well-being, or is offensive in the wrong way
- The aim of some of those using hate speech will be **self censorship** – limitation of our freedom of speech



# Do journalists receive hate speech? Evidence from Finland

- Ilmari Hiltunen has extensively studied external harassment of journalists
- He will defend his doctoral thesis at the end of this month

# Hate speech towards journalists at Yle

- In 2019 Hiltunen conducted an extensive survey of Yle staff
- Incidents of insults and hate speech were **up**
- More than **half of journalists / content providers** had been the target of hate speech
- Hate speech was **regularly** experienced by 21% of respondents - up from 17% in the previous survey
- <https://yle.fi/aihe/artikkeli/2019/12/18/vihapuheen-maara-ylen-journalisteja-kohtaan-on-lisaantynyt>

# Hate Speech – Self censorship

- In 2021 almost a third of journalists stated that they do not like to do stories about certain issues, and almost one in six said that they would avoid certain stories altogether out of fear of hate speech
- Issues included immigration and refugees, minorities and equality, environment and environmental economics, gender and gender minorities, religion and climate change
- <https://journal.fi/mediaviestinta/issue/view/8472>

# Is there hate speech towards journalists: evidence from Finland

- *Viha ja julkisuus*, a joint study conducted by the universities of Tampere and Helsinki is currently being completed
- the study targets **researchers, municipal councillors, journalists, and other workers**
- The study considers hate and harassment from both sociological and legal perspectives
- Key finding: **22 percent of journalists experience hate and harassment on a monthly basis and 8 percent on a weekly basis.**
- So there is Hate Speech in Finland, and it easily leads to self-censorship. Freedom of Speech is narrowing.

## Government study: Online Hate

### *The networks, practices and motivations of the producers and distributors of hate speech*

- Hate speech can be generated both casually and systematically
- It is ideologically, affectively, and performatively motivated
- There are few organised producers
- Their audiences share their messages, multiplying their visibility
- Anonymous accounts are created for single use
- While the number of **hate crimes** has decreased, the number of **hate speech crimes** has increased
- Criminalised hate speech is mostly perpetrated by individuals
- A small proportion of the perpetrators are highly connected and influential in far-right movements
- <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/164244>

# Hate speech is part of the job. What do we do in Yle?

- Provide training
- Go through important related issues with staff
- Involve our legal and security departments
- Provide mental support
  
- Take extra care with topics that tend to provoke hate speech - not by failing to publish stories, but by learning how to prepare better
  
- Talk, talk, talk - with colleagues and the editorial community

# Hate speech is part of the job. What do we do?

- Support for freelancers through the *Jokes* support fund.
- <https://www.jokes-saatio.fi/journalistien-tukirahasto/>
- Fund helps journalists who have been subjected to repeated threats, long-term persecution and other forms of harassment because of their work.
- Provides legal advice
- Provides crisis therapy

# Changing legislation

- 2021: **illegal threats** are a crime subject to official prosecution in situations where the threat is directed at a person **because of their work**
- prosecutor can file a charge of illegal threat if the act is directed at a person in customer service or administrative tasks, healthcare and social work, commercial work, teaching tasks or judicial and police administration.
- covers threats against researchers, journalists or artists, along with municipal councillors and Members of Parliament.
- it does not matter if the illegal threat is made at the victim's workplace or by e-mail or on social media.

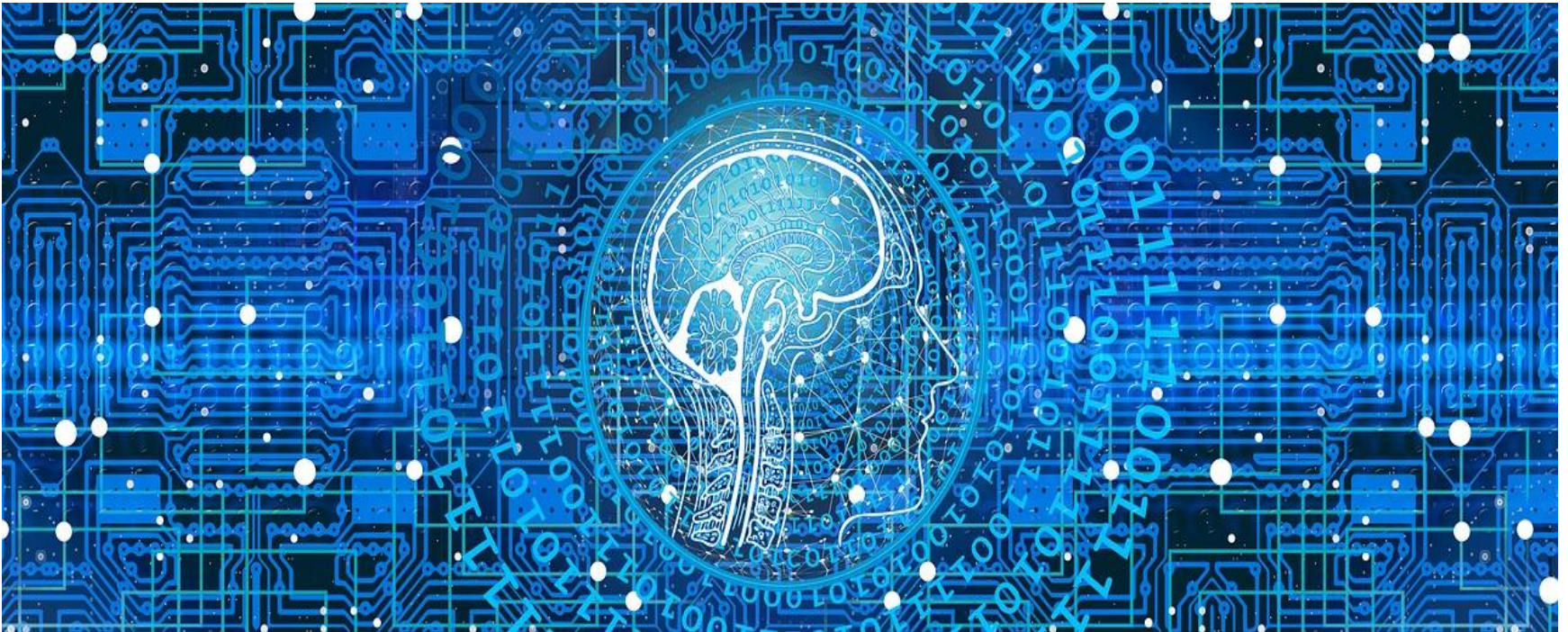


# Positive developments

- Is Finland changing from a "unified culture" into a more diverse one?
- Is this an increasingly **democratic development?**
- Different views on issues are being aired
- Social media brings these views out into the open more effectively
- Journalists are not so much gatekeepers any more

# Good journalism

- Do your own job as well as you can
- Once the story is published, it's out there



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Democracy  
Dies in  
Darkness

The Washington Post

*Democracy Dies in Darkness*