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The Reuters Institute at the University of Oxford recently published a report about the challenges of fostering newsroom diversity and attracting talent in three European countries – Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The report is emphatic that profound social and political changes have reshaped our societies, making them more diverse. At the same time, technological advances fundamentally changed the way we consume information. It asks: do traditional media know how stay relevant in this world of fast-paced change?

Titled [\*Are Journalists Today's Coal Miners?: The Struggle for Talent and Diversity in Modern Newsrooms – A Study on Journalists in Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom\*](#)

, this report aims to answer this question. Its authors – Alexandra Borchardt, Julia L

Ück, Sabine Kieslich, Tanjev Schultz, Felix M. Simon – interviewed leading news executives and heads of journalism schools in Germany, Sweden and the UK.

They explain that most of their respondents are aware that profound changes on the global level have affected their local and national media landscape.

“The role of media in society is changing; the legitimacy of traditional news organisations is being questioned. Journalists have lost their status as news’s exclusive gatekeepers while the economic base of many newspapers is eroding. Journalists must reach out to audiences that are becoming more and more diverse while newsrooms must be made attractive to a young and diverse talent pool who will have to be convinced that the news business still has a bright future. In the wake of Brexit, the 2016 US presidential election, the migration crisis, #MeToo and a range of other events, the news industry seems to have finally woken up to the lack of diversity within their ranks and how this lack affects their position in society and their ability to represent societies fairly and accurately.”

But, recognising that they must become more diverse in order to stay relevant is only the first step. So far, most media have failed to act on this.

The report highlights that the issue of newsroom talent is first on most stakeholders’ minds. Big media players based in cities have no problem attracting talented journalists. But, smaller regional and local players admit to experiencing a talent shortage. This problem is most pronounced in Sweden and the least in the UK. In addition, media groups – big and small – find it increasingly difficult to attract tech expertise necessary to keep afloat of the digital revolution due to competition from the tech and banking industry.

In contrast, the respondents were much less united in their attitudes to diversity.

First, their attitudes varied based on the type of diversity. Most respondents agreed that greater diversity of political opinion was required in the contemporary newsroom. Likewise, “the lack of journalists with a rural background due to the floundering of local journalism” was identified as an emergent diversity problem.

When it comes to women and migrants, the picture is more mixed. A fair number of stakeholders reported no problems attracting women into journalism, not in the least because it is becoming “less attractive for men.” Despite that, the gender gap persists.

Hiring and retaining candidates from a diverse ethnic or migrant background proves more challenging. The report identifies three major hurdles:

1. Many stakeholders, especially in Sweden and Germany, claim that people of a migrant background lack sufficient mastery of the national language. [In my opinion, this is a case of false perception];
2. Some claimed that family and culture played a role. “When a family sacrifices a lot to move to a foreign country, they often prefer their children to engage in something that is seen prestigious and stable, for example becoming a doctor or lawyer.”
3. Respondents also claimed that there was a problem with such journalists due to the lack of adequate support infrastructure within the organisation.

While most respondents claim to be in favour of promoting diversity of this kind, the report casts serious doubts on their sincerity:

“The German students who participated in group discussions didn’t see any convincing efforts on the part of media organisations or journalism programmes to increase and manage diversity. They perceived most of it as lip service or tokenism. This differs from the perception of the industry, where many said that, while they were not doing enough to foster diversity, they – in their view – were already doing a lot.”

Despite such reassurances, “surprisingly few organisations have specific programmes in place to tackle the problem” of the lack of journalists with immigrant backgrounds.

Read the report in full, [here](#) . To read more about newsroom diversity, click [here](#) .