

## HABILITATION BOARD DECISION ON THE NOMINATION FOR APPOINTMENT TO ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

<b>Masaryk University</b>	
<b>Faculty</b>	Faculty of Social Studies
<b>Procedure field</b>	Media and Journalism Studies
<b>Applicant</b>	Mgr. et Mgr. Marína Urbániková, Ph.D.
<b>Applicant's home unit, institution</b>	Department of Media Studies and Journalism, Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University
<b>Habilitation thesis</b>	Public Service Media in Uncertain Times: Normative Ideals, Institutional Struggles, and Public Perceptions

### Board members

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**prof. PhDr. David Šmahel, Ph.D.** (FSS MU)

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**doc. PhDr. Irena Reifová, Ph.D.** (Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University Prague)

**Univ.-Prof. Folker Hanusch, PhD** (Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Vienna)

### Evaluation of the applicant's scholarly/artistic qualifications

The research focus of Dr. Marína Urbániková is primarily in the field of media and journalism studies, with a particular emphasis on research of journalistic profession and public service media. In addition to this core specialization, Dr. Urbániková has worked in interdisciplinary research teams, including participation in an ERC project in the field of law. As a result, her publication record includes not only research on media and journalism studies, which remains her main scholarly interest, but also contributions to legal studies.

To date, Dr. Urbániková has published 17 articles indexed in the Web of Science database, including papers in leading journals such as Journalism and Journalism Studies (Q1 in WoS). She has received 114 citations in Web of Science (excluding self-citations) and 403 citations in Google Scholar. She is a co-author of three books and 11 book chapters, eight of which she authored as the first author. In addition, she has published 12 research reports as the first author. Her publications and overall publication record were evaluated by the committee as excellent for her career stage.

Dr. Urbániková served as the principal investigator of the GAČR project “Re-conceptualizing the Role of Czech Public Service Media: Expectations, Challenges and Opportunities” (2022–2024) and has recently been awarded a new GAČR project, “(Re)Connect: Restoring the Declining Relationship Between the News Media and the Public” (starting in 2026). She has also participated in two ERC projects led by Prof. Kosař in the field of law, through which she demonstrated her ability to work in interdisciplinary research.

Notably, Dr. Urbániková has also solid international collaboration. She has co-published, for example, with Prof. Marko Milosavljević (University of Ljubljana), Prof. Rodríguez-Castro (University of Santiago de Compostela), Dr. Goyanes (Universidad Carlos III de Madrid), and Dr. Hiltunen (Tampere University). In 2024, she was awarded the *Max Gressly and Florian Fleck Visiting Scholarship*, under which she served as a visiting researcher at the Department of Communication and Media Research at the University of Fribourg (Switzerland). Since 2021, she has authored reports on Slovakia as part of the Media Pluralism Monitor project run by the European University Institute and funded by the European Commission. These reports serve as the primary source of information on media-related issues for the European Commission's annual Rule of Law Report.

In Dr. Urbániková's work, the third role of her research—the impact on society—is particularly strong. She serves as chair of the *Endowment Fund for Independent Journalism*, a board member of the *Council of the Journalism Award* in the Czech Republic, a co-founder of *Women in Media*, and a member of the *Network for the Protection of Democracy*. She also served as an academic representative in the Public Service Media Working Group at the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic in 2024 and 2025. She regularly collaborates with public service media organizations in the Czech Republic, sharing scholarly expertise and providing analyses on requested topics. For her societal contributions, she received the Ivo Možný Award for Societal Contribution (2025).

**Conclusion:** The applicant's scholarly/artistic capabilities **meet** the requirements expected of applicants participating in a habilitation procedure in the field of Media and Journalism Studies.

### **Evaluation of the applicant's pedagogical experience**

Marína Urbániková is very experienced teacher, she has been teaching at the Department of Media Studies and Journalism since 2012 when she started to teach the course “Methods and Techniques of Media Research.” Her focus is on methodologies, theoretical introductions in media and communications, advanced theoretical courses for graduate students, as well as on practical academic skills. She was teaching courses such as “Statistical Data Analysis,” “Academic writing,” introductory courses “Mass Communication Theory” and “Media and Communication Studies,” or “Czech Media System in an International Comparative Perspective.” She also teaches two courses at Charles University. As indicated by students' evaluations at Masaryk University and from the feedback of her department's programs guarantors, quality of her teaching is consistently high.

Dr. Urbániková is also a very successful mentor of students. She has supervised 25 successful diploma and 8 bachelor theses. She also co-supervised Klara Smejkal who graduated at Masaryk University in 2025 with a doctoral thesis “Audience Expectations, Evaluations, and Trust in Czech Public Service Media in a Fragmented Media Environment.” Currently, Dr. Urbániková is supervising one doctoral student at Masaryk University and one at Charles University.

**Conclusion:** The applicant's pedagogical capabilities **meet** the requirements expected of applicants participating in a habilitation procedure in the field of Media and Journalism Studies.

### **Habilitation thesis evaluation**

The habilitation thesis of Dr. Urbániková entitled “Public Service Media in Uncertain Times: Normative Ideals, Institutional Struggles, and Public Perceptions” was evaluated by three

external reviewers: Prof. Kate Wright from University of Edinburgh, Prof. Hilde Van den Bulck from Drexel University and Prof. Melita Poler Kovačič from University of Ljubljana. All reviewers concluded that the thesis meets the requirements expected of habilitation theses in the field of Media and Journalism Studies.

Prof. Kovačič noted that the thesis is a “significant and timely contribution to the ongoing scholarly debate” and the thesis “attests to the originality, relevance, and quality of the author’s research and provides convincing evidence for her academic competence”. She raises several questions, such as:

- 1) You identify the integration of artificial intelligence and the implementation of personalised recommendation algorithms as an important topic for future research on public service journalism, and you highlight several challenges associated with these developments. Some of these challenges fall within the ethical domain, raising new concerns about the implications of AI integration for editorial quality and other aspects of journalism. Several scholars (e.g., Porlezza et al., 2022) have already presented case studies on the governance of AI in selected public service media organisations. How do you perceive the role of journalism and media self-regulation, as well as external regulation, in sustaining the mission of public service media (journalism) in the context of the increasing use of AI in newsrooms?
- 2) You note that most previous studies have focused on perceived autonomy or influence without specifying the concrete manifestations of interference. This observation suggests a need for more methodologically innovative approaches. Could you elaborate on potential methodological approaches that would allow researchers to move beyond the study of perceived influence and towards assessing actual influence?

Prof. Bulck concluded that the thesis “demonstrates scholarly maturity, international orientation and a clear capacity to conduct independent, high-quality research. It confirms the candidate’s position as an established researcher in the field of media and communication studies, which has also been evident in her participation in conferences and scholarly bodies. The thesis consistently shows both a distinctive empirical focus and a conceptual orientation.” She also raised two questions:

- 1) Integration and future development: The habilitation brings together normative perspectives, institutional analyses and audience research. How does the candidate see these three perspectives informing one another more directly in future work and what would a more fully integrated model of public service media legitimacy look like?
- 2) Normative frameworks and context: Much of the normative framework used in the thesis draws on Western European conceptions of public service media. To what extent does the author believe that the Czech and Slovak experiences call for an adaptation or rethinking of these dominant normative models, particularly in contexts marked by democratic fragility and political pressure?

Prof. Wright entitles the thesis “outstanding” and she wrote that she had “no hesitation in vouching for the quality, originality and significance of this deeply impressive and coherent body of academic research.” She also stated several questions, such as:

- 1) Why do you argue that universality is such a distinctive, core feature of PSM journalism? How does AI threaten that?
- 2) Can you explain what you see as being the tension between advocacy and universality?
- 3) How and why should PSM promote national and European identity? What would happen if they did not?

Based on its review of the three evaluation reports and the habilitation thesis, the committee reached a very positive assessment. The thesis presents original research and constitutes a significant contribution to the fields of media studies and journalism.

**Conclusion:** The applicant's habilitation thesis **meets** the requirements expected of habilitation theses in the field of Media and Journalism Studies.

#### **Secret ballot results**

Number of board members	5
Number of votes cast	5
Number of votes in favour	5

#### **Board decision**

Based on the outcome of the secret vote and following an evaluation of the applicant's scholarly or artistic qualifications, pedagogical experience and habilitation thesis, the board hereby submits a proposal to the scientific board of the Faculty of Social Studies of Masaryk University to

appoint the applicant associate professor of Media and Journalism Studies.

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> January 2026

prof. PhDr. David Šmahel, Ph.D.



signature