

Abstract

This paper provides a comparative analysis of the first year of the media debate on coronavirus involving trade unions. An analysis of the media debate reveals the position and role of trade unions both on the subject of coronavirus and in society in general. We chose trade unions in Russia and the Czech Republic for comparison. We analysed the discussion in Russian and Czech media sources. The findings of the content and network analysis are complemented by the results of interviews with trade union members in Russia and the Czech Republic. The study highlights the bargaining and deliberative role of trade unions in the Czech Republic, which tend to act in concert. However, in Russia the division between traditional and alternative unions has become even more pronounced during the pandemic. The study shows that traditional and alternative trade unions have different methods and approaches to dealing with situations and bargaining in tripartite contracts. In both the Czech and Russian discussions, there is a model of biocommunicability - public sphere. The model assumes that information about health is useful because it facilitates collective decision-making about public interest, where both citizens and policy makers make decisions. The model suggests that health issues are open to debate, even for conflicting parties. In the Czech debate, the model takes on a more hierarchical character, as government and trade union representatives are more often present in media discussions. In Russia, however, the public sphere model tends towards active intervention and state presence. The paper concludes with a discussion of possible applications of the results and possible directions for further study of the topic.