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MEDIA AND POLITICS

The media play a major role in the public in the Republic of Macedonia, as well as, in all other modern societies. Electronic media are very influential and guide and build the public opinion. Citizens build their own political views by watching the programmes, primarily on national TV stations and channels. Over the past two decades, various TV stations and programmes have had various impacts on the public. Modern public can not be imagined without a strong media support. However, the trust of citizens in the media is often reflected by the confidence that citizens have in some of the policy options, of the political parties, as well as of the civil society. All stakeholders of the policy in one country, as is the case with the Republic of Macedonia, interact through the media with the public and seek support for their policies. Therefore, the responsibility of broadcasters with national coverage is increasing and defines their programme content. Therefore, one often asks the question about citizens' trust towards national TV stations. The question: "In which of the following Macedonian television stations, when reporting

on political issues, do you have the most confidence?” the highest percentage of citizens said they have no confidence in any TV station with near 27%. This means that every fourth respondent has no trust in television reporting on political issues. Greater confidence among the actual televisions, according to respondents, is given to Alsat with 16.5% and Kanal 5 with 15%. The second group of broadcasters with less confidence are Sitel with 12%, Alfa with 10%, and MTV and Telma with 7%. The fact about the confidence in 24 Vesti TV with 6% is interesting, given that this TV has existed for only one year. Apparently the struggle and competition to gain the trust of the citizens in reporting on political issues is great. According to the independent variables, younger respondents have more confidence in Alsat and Kanal 5, while older again in Kanal 5 and MTV. The ethnic variable is for Alfa and Kanal 5 among Macedonians, while the trust in Alsat among Albanians is convincing. Citizens who support the ruling coalition mostly watch Alsat, Sitel, Kanal 5, while those who support the political opposition watch Alfa, Kanal 5 and Alsat.

At the same time, the confidence by citizens in print media is also quite interesting. For a long period of time, print media were perceived as “more serious” journalistic products and suggested the topics debated in the public. Although throughout the time, print media are slowly losing the battle with the electronic media and the Internet, they are still influential, but to a much lesser extent. These media also experience transformation in the appearance and the impact of the political centers of power. The question: “In which newspaper do you have the most confidence when reporting on political issues?” the highest percentage of citizens said that they have no confidence in any newspaper with 47%, which is a sign that fewer people today believe in and are informed by newspapers. This means that every second respondent has no confidence in newspapers for reporting on political issues. Dnevnik has the highest percentage of trust in newspapers with 14%. Far behind Dnevnik are Koha with 8%, Vecer, Utrinski Vesnik and Nova Makedonija with 7%. Less confidence is shown for Focus with 5%, Journal with 3% and the smallest confidence was shown for Den with 1%. For a longer period of time, Dnevnik has been the most trusted newspaper by the citizens regarding political issues. According to the independent variables, younger respondents have more confidence in Koha and Dnevnik, while older people in Dnevnik and Utrinski Vesnik. The ethnic variable is in favour of Dnevnik among the Macedonians, while the confidence in Koha among Albanians is understandably convincing. The citizens who support the government have more confidence in Dnevnik, while the citizens who support the opposition have most confidence in Utrinski Vesnik. Koha is equally trusted by citizens who support both the position and the opposition.

Apart from the political issues, the media are often influential in many other areas. Often the impact is in the negative direction. The media have always been pointed out by citizens as one of the factors that negatively affect interethnic relations. For that purpose, in the survey citizens were asked to identify which television deteriorates interethnic relations the most. Here, we will not present a list of the specific televisions, since it is not the purpose of the research. We will only mention that the majority of respondents (66%) identified one of the televisions, which confirms the thesis that in the awareness of citizens media really represent such a negative factor. Interestingly, among Albanian population the number of people who identified a television is much higher (over 80%) than in the Macedonian population (59%). Thereby, along with the power of televisions despite the imposition of the political agenda in the public and the influence on the attitudes of the citizens, it can be seen that they can also have direct negative impact. In this case we referred to the interethnic relations in Macedonia. Although statistical differences by the ethnicity variable are observed, the data suggest that televisions have equally negatively affect on all social groups when it comes to ethnic relations.

Which factors worsen interethnic relations the most?	Macedonians	Albanians
The citizens themselves by their prejudice	14,7%	13,3%
Ruling political parties	28%	44,8%
Opposition political parties	16,9%	11,3%
Media	15,9%	19,8%
Religious communities	10,5%	1,2%
I don't know	14,1%	9,7%
Total	100%	100%

INTERETHNIC RELATIONS

Citizens are also divided as to which political factors worsen inter-ethnic relations. Moreover, for a long period there has been a lack of self-criticism in the assessment of the role of the citizens themselves. The answer that the prejudice of the citizens is the most important factor in the deterioration of interethnic relations barely exceeds ten percent among all ethnic groups. Generally speaking, the largest differences occur in terms of ethnicity and political affiliation of citizens. Logically, citizens who are in favour of an opposition party, see the responsibility in the ruling parties (55%) and vice versa - supporters of the government (30%) believe that precisely the opposition is to blame for the deterioration of interethnic relations.

In terms of ethnicity, the biggest difference is between Macedonians and Albanians, as shown in the following table:

CITIZENS FROM THE NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

For decades now, the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, had the feeling of threat by the neighbouring countries. Thereby, the ranking list has changed depending on the current policy, even though, Greece has consistently had the first place (in varying percentages). That is also the case in this study, where to the question: “Which of the neighbouring countries has the greatest negative impact on the situation in Macedonia?” the following answers were obtained:

- Greece - 68%
- Serbia - 17%
- Kosovo - 7%
- Bulgaria - 4%
- Albania - 4%

Thereby, there are striking differences between Macedonians and Albanians, as seen in the following table.

Which of the neighbouring countries has the greatest negative impact on the situation in Macedonia?	Macedonians	Albanians
Serbia	2%	56%
Bulgaria	5%	2%
Kosovo	9%	0%
Albania	6%	0%
Greece	79%	42%
Total	100%	100%

Notably, the Macedonians are mainly influenced by the current political situation in which the Greek-Macedonian dispute is predominant, while ethnic inclinations prevail among Albanians.

Other differences between social groups are not statistically relevant.

WHICH OF THE NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES HAS THE GREATEST NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE SITUATION IN MACEDONIA?

Republic of Macedonia, as a relatively young democratic state that gained its independence twenty years ago, still has a succession of open issues with the neighbouring states who argue its identity, language and culture. On the other hand, multiethnicity, multiculturalism and multiconfessionality, as one of the main features of the Macedonian society greatly influence the determining of overall relations in the country, but also in the creation of the attitudes of citizens in relation to neighbouring countries.

Hence, the answers to the question: *Which neighbouring country has the greatest negative impact on the situation in Macedonia* vary depending on the ethnicity of the respondents.

Of the total number of respondents even 68.2% of them believe that Greece is the country that has the greatest negative impact on the situation in Macedonia, Serbia was indicated by 16.5% , Kosovo by 7%, Bulgaria by 4.4% and Albania by 3.9%. As much as 56% of members of the Albanian community believe that Serbia is the country that has the greatest negative impact on the situation in Macedonia. This is not a surprising information, given the antagonism between Albanians and Serbs, arising as a result of the Kosovo issue. As opposed to them, 78.6% of respondents of the Macedonian majority indicated Greece. It is interesting that the citizens of the Turkish community also indicated Greece in a high percentage (59%), which confirms the loyalty to the state of this community, as well as, the traditionally tense Turkish-Greek relations. However, the percentage of those members of the Turkish community (30.8%) who think that Serbia is the neighbouring country with the most negative impact on the situation in Macedonia, is also noticeable.

Not only ethnic, but also the religious background of citizens has great influence in creating their views on the neighbouring countries. Thus, significant differences are observed in the respondents' answers depending on their religious affiliation. 78.6% of respondents belonging to the Orthodox religion believe that Greece has most negative affect, and only 1.6% indicated Serbia. Among respondents belonging to the Islamic religion the percentage of those who have given their response by indicating Serbia and Greece is identical - 47.8%.

The fact that the vast majority of respondents belonging to the Orthodox religion pointed Greece even though it is a state in which Orthodoxy is dominant, inevitably leads to the fact that in the background of the answer to this question is the dispute with the name of our country, and the blocking of our entry into the Euro-Atlantic structures by our southern neighbour.

From the analysis of the responses it can be concluded that the creation of the attitudes of citizens in relation to neighbouring countries is closely correlated with their ethnic and religious affiliation, and depending on the traditionally bad / good relations that their ethnic community has with individual neighbours in a historical context.

PROVIDED THAT YOU USE SOCIAL NETWORKS (FACEBOOK, TWITTER...), IN WHICH SEGMENT ARE YOU MOST ACTIVE?

We live in the era of information and communication technologies that completely changed the manner of our everyday communication and functioning, thereby redesigning our overall socio-cultural milieu to an almost unrecognisable extent.

With the emergence of ICT we experienced a major transformation thanks to the two primary features of these technologies: enabling rapid and greater access to information, dissemination of information and the method of communication. ICT eliminated the spatial and time barrier.

Networking has become one of the main features of the method of communication and connection between people, regardless whether friendly or professional communication is concerned. So, connecting through social networks, people not only communicate, debate and share information of various kinds, but they also create so-called virtual communities. Some of the social networks have over 100 million active participants: Facebook (1 billion users), Twitter (500 million), Skype (145 million), LinkedIn (160 million), Dropbox (100m) etc.

In the Republic of Macedonia, social networks and networking has become part of the culture of our daily communication. However, given that a relatively new type of information and communication technologies is concerned, certain variations in terms of the percentage of users in social networks are expected, according to the age of respondents, level of education and socio-economic status.

42.4% of the respondents do not use social networks, 41.7% use them for the purpose of socialising, entertainment and games - 15.2% and only 0.75 for political organising (commenting on political issues, organising protests and so on.) As age increases in the age group of respondents, so does the percentage of those who use social networks decline. In the age group 18-29 years of age, only a small percentage of 14.3% do not use social networks. The next group of 30-39 years of age - 24.8%, and already for the next group of 40-49 years of age, the percentage increases to 44.3%. Dramatically increasing of the percentage may be observed in the group of 50 to 65 years of age and it is 70.7%.

This information is expected, given that the younger generation, as the greatest user of social networks, was practically born and raised in the era of ICT. Hence, for them this kind of communication, debate and organising is almost the only known way. As their age increases, there is a growing gap between the older generation and ICT, hence the number of users of social networks reduces.

The level of education also has an impact on the percentage of users of social networks. Even 96.3% of respondents with incomplete education do not use social networks, with primary education - 77.4%, with high school education - 39.9% and with higher and university education - 26.6%.

In terms of the socio-economic status, more than 70% of pensioners, housewives and farmers do not use social networks. The percentage of the unemployed who use social networks for socialising, entertainment and games is 55.4%. 49.8% of the employees in the private sector use them for socialising with friends, and 18.9% for fun and games. Seen in percentages, the state in the public sector (budgetary institutions) is almost identical.

From the given results it is noticeable that in the largest percentage, social networks in the country are used for socialising, entertainment and games. For political organising, commenting on political issues, organising protests and the like, the percentage is negligible, almost non-existent. This indicates a low level of democratic awareness among the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, as well as the absence of civic activism.