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PRESSURE ON MEDIA - DEMOCRACY UNDER QUESTION

VIEWPOINT

Every society that takes care of its own democracy, actually cares about freedom of expression. There is no democratic society where freedom of expression is not a clearly defined goal, which should be daily confirmed.

Nowadays, freedom of expression is much more than the basic concept: individual right, freedom to express your own opinion and to hear someone else's opinion. This freedom today may not exist, cannot be accomplished if it does not mean media freedom, freedom that occurs as an integral element of every communication channel.

Freedom of expression is a necessary prerequisite for creating public, and precisely for that "product": free thinking public, "natural environment" is necessary, in which a government "by the people for the people" is created. This democratic government is possible, because it is through freedom of expression (which is the freedom to seek, to produce, to spread and receive information) that people, the *demos*, can articulate their interests, set their requirements to the government and control the government in the execution of public works.

So, the creation and functioning of the public is possible to the extent that the media freely or autonomously, and in accordance with professional

standards and socially acceptable market behaviour, not only manage to inform the public, but also manage to control the government. Hence, it is no accidental at all that freedom of expression in the last two hundred years is a valuable starting “point” in any “political agenda”. This freedom has been constantly threatened, decreased, attacked, but also expanded and promoted, it is in constant “technological development” and its social and political architecture is given in the philosophical concept of negative and positive freedom, which is a generally accepted standard of civilization¹.

Transitional democratisation in Southeast Europe, especially in the Balkans in recent decades is particularly rich in examples of media non-freedom. We were (are) witnesses of the inflow of new print media, new radio and television stations, which completely changed the media scene. But one cannot put a sign of equality between the plurality of the media on one hand, and the increased media freedom and / or increased democracy, on the other hand. The summarising of the results so far suggests that expectations were exaggerated. “Minus conditions” occur in countries that were positive examples: such are the events of the media scene in Hungary, in 2011 and 2012. In parallel, some countries, especially those in the Western Balkans, have not managed to improve and make the improved media scene stable. Early transitional “freedoms” unfortunately remained at the level of exception, freedom of expression, freedom of the media failed to become a rule.

DOWNHILL

In this respect, Macedonia has the role of a “negative champion”, a country from the bottom of the list! Series of analyses and assessments already alarming, even dramatically, point to serious problems in the context of freedom of expression. This condition is not visible only from the inside, but also from the outside.

Macedonia, although a candidate for membership in the European Union since 2005, still receives serious critical remarks in the annual reports of the European Commission about the media scene and media freedoms. The latest report from October 2012 stated²: “... Further efforts are needed to ensure that these standards

¹ Negative freedom is understood as freedom or relief from the pressures of government, “the government will not prevent” when public expression and media are concerned, and positive freedom means liberty, the existence of institutional capacities, “the government has a task to enable them to exist and work “and hence the real possibility, due to the government arrangement, for free public expression. In this respect, freedom is not only non-interference, but also guaranteed non-interference and guaranteed possibility for public expression. In the modern sense the dual concept of negative - positive freedom was defined by Isaiah Berlin, in the middle of the last century.

² see: THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA 2012 PROGRESS REPORT Brussels 10.10.2012 SWD (2012) 332 final Chapter: 2.2. Human rights and protection of minorities page 14

(referring to the key judgments of the European Court of Human Rights – our note) are consistently applied. Simultaneously, there is a constant concern for the lack of pluralism and self-censorship. Thus far there is no active body for self-regulation in the media. The Broadcasting Council should demonstrate that it practices a non-discriminatory and transparent approach. There is a continuing concern for the large segment of advertising campaigns funded by the government, which are placed in media that support the government.” In addition, experts in this kind of international diplomatic communications state:” In general, the media sector is mentioned as one of the weakest, in an otherwise generally positive report ... “.³

And many other, established international organisations focused on monitoring and evaluation of media freedoms in their reports clearly indicate the growing problems of the media scene, that is, the reduction of the freedom of the media in Macedonia, they particularly emphasise the “downward line” in the last three or four years.

Amnesty International in the “Annual Report 2012”, in the section about Macedonia, under the title “Freedom of Expression “ begins the assessment with the following observation: “The freedom of expression of journalists and independent media workers were increasingly limited by the interference of the authorities, ranging from direct intimidation to control of the advertising companies.”⁴

A similar assessment was also given by the international, that is, the European Federation of Journalists, which in the jointly issued statement (7 July 2011) in support of the campaign for media freedom and journalists’ rights in Macedonia state: “Macedonian journalists are under enormous pressure from politicians and from media owners and recent events show that the country has reached a point where it just becomes unbearable to work freely in journalism.”⁵

This “intolerance” becomes a special challenge for SEEMO⁶ (MOJIE), and, as stated in their report, it was decided that the mission in Macedonia (4-6 October 2011) is to be conducted several months earlier than it was originally planned, just because the more frequent reactions from international institutions on the developments in the media scene in Macedonia. ⁷ SEEMO in its report identifies areas with dominant problems, such as: media ownership and influence over editorial policy, violation of professional standards, the status of the MRT, which is

³ see: Politicka Mislja, Skopje, No. 38, June 2012, issued by: Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Democracy Institute „Socieatas Civilis“ „Media and Freedom of Expression“, Chimek Anja, page. 9

⁴ see: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/macedonia/report-2012>

⁵ see: <http://europe.ifj.org/en/articles/ifj-and-efj-support-campaign-for-independent-journalism-and-pluralism-in-republic-of-macedonia>

⁶ South East Europe Media Organisation, within IPI – International Press Institute

⁷ see: [seemo.org/files/Media Scene in Macedonia edited.pdf](http://seemo.org/files/Media_Scene_in_Macedonia_edited.pdf) - Report on the SEEMO Press Freedom Mission to the Republic of Macedonia

more a state than a public service and dependence of MRT of government funding, the role of campaigns funded by the government in print and private broadcasting media, as well as, numerous lawsuits for insult initiated against journalists and disproportionately high punishments compared to the average journalists' wage. The report emphasises that this state has had a negative trend in the past two years, and the result is "divided journalists and divided society." In its conclusions, the Report accepts the assessment of "Freedom House" that "Macedonia is partly free" and adds that the media scene is not pluralistic, whereby it explains: "... political, economic and legal pressure on the media leads to self-censorship." It all leads to the undeniable conclusion that in such conditions the public is left with no information of public interest.

The grades given in the Media Sustainability Index⁸ prepared by IREX⁹ on the media scene in Macedonia go even into more detail. "Media Sustainability Index" (MSI) is a regular annual report produced on the basis of standardised methodology. Grades are given on certain dimensions¹⁰ of the media scene, from 0, as the lowest, to 4, as the highest grade. Areas are evaluated numerically, and this quantification is a result of a series of qualitative evidence, statements, descriptions, arguments and conclusions. Here are the quantitative assessment of individual areas and a choice of the qualitative descriptions of these grades:

- *Freedom of speech (1.49)* "The guarantees for freedom of expression ... in the Constitution and media laws are insufficient This is largely due to weak law enforcement, selective activities against media that are critical of the government, as well as the ineffective and very troubled judicial system. ... the freezing effect is reflected in the growing self-censorship."¹¹

- *Professionalism in journalism (1.47)*. The policy on political parties to avoid certain media "... deepens the polarisation of the media. Such a practice narrows the possibilities for the basic standards for media balance and stimulating of significant debate in the society to be met." Parties and the media have responsibility for "displacement of democratic processes in society and heated polarisation ... panellists agree that the level of respect for journalistic ethics is fairly low."¹²

- *Plurality in the news (1.52)* Media pluralism is "nominal", it only exists in the number of media, "... but there is no plurality of views." And when it comes to

⁸ see: irex.org/system/files/u105/EE_MSI_2012_Macedonia.pdf Such regular annual reports are produced on the basis of standardised methodology

⁹ International Research Exchange Board, founded in 1968, is an international non-profit organisation, particularly active in the area of education and media, as well as in other sectors.

¹⁰ For each of the stated areas there is a list of indicators which are analysed, assessed in a panel discussion, attended by representatives of the professional media public, that is, of certain areas of the media scene.

¹¹ see: irex.org/system/files/u105/EE_MSI_2012_Macedonia.pdf , page. 89-90

¹² see: also, page 90-92

information on the network, the situation is the same, also on the Internet “ most of the content comes from traditional media and pro-government views dominate, on the network, as well. The public broadcaster strongly promotes the views of the government, not only within informative, but also through other programmes.”¹³

- *Business Management (1.20)* The media industry indicates sub-standard business management. “Generally speaking, media are struggling to diversify income, but the underdeveloped economy and low purchasing power of citizens largely cancels such efforts. ... State funded advertising is also a problem. The government is among the five largest advertisers and there are no laws regulating this practice.”¹⁴

- *Supporting Institutions (1.93)* It was estimated that the extinction of industry media associations (of electronical and of printed media) is due to the low awareness among media owners, as well as the cessation of donor support. On the other hand, trust was expressed in the newly established journalists’ trade union, having in mind “its efforts, exerted energy” articulated positions and provided assistance. Although it is emphasised that the Association of Journalists of Macedonia (AJM) “initiated a formal dialogue with the authorities on the rights of journalists,” the controversy of the whole process is simultaneously highlighted. It was estimated that the work and efforts of other NGOs, despite the ones already mentioned, “remain idle, faced with the strong government will to push through their own “agenda” in the media.”¹⁵

Consequently, the “dark clouds create a black horizon”, create the overall assessment of the media scene in Macedonia – 1:52.¹⁶ According to the methodology, the descriptive assessment from 1 to 2 index points reads: “*Unsustainable mixed media system*”, and the content of this assessment is: “*The country minimally meets the objectives, with segments of the legal system and the government, contrary to a free media system. Perceived progress in defence of media freedom, increased professionalism and management of new media can be too short to be considered as sustainable.*”¹⁷ In the IMO, it was stated in the very beginning that the total grade (1.52) for 2011 is the lowest grade so far, from the beginning (2001) of the measurements in Macedonia. This assessment (1.52) is smaller for more than one index point compared to 2005, when the total grade was 2.58, which is the highest grade that the Macedonian media scene has received within the IMO.

¹³ see: also, page 92-93

¹⁴ see: also, page 93-94

¹⁵ see: also, page 94-95

¹⁶ see: also, page 87

¹⁷ Naturally the content of the assessment is general and applies to the group of countries at the same level, it is not a description of a particular country, nor for Macedonia. It should be emphasised to avoid twisting specific, clearly negative, critical assessments of Macedonia relating to the second part of the general formulation “Progress perceived...” which actually does not refer to Macedonia - IMO has not seen any progress in Macedonia.

A similar critical approach in the evaluations of media freedom in Macedonia is noted in the “Index of Press Freedom in the World 2011-2012,” prepared by Reporters without Borders (RWB).¹⁸ Macedonia is on 94th place, and from the region less free are the media in Albania – 96th and Montenegro – 107th. Balkan and Macedonian media conditions are described as: “... use of media for private or criminal interests, unfair competition in very small markets and self-censorship among a growing number of poorly paid journalists.”¹⁹ The disaster continues, or rather, the disaster becomes even greater! According to the latest report “Index of Press Freedom in the World in 2013,”²⁰ of Reporters without Borders, Macedonia, this time, is on the 116th place, which is the worst place compared to all the countries in the region and the assessment is that the bad examples from Hungary and Italy are followed and that “... The Macedonian Assembly is preparing to make “censorship legal,” repeatedly treating journalists in the “hot and cold manner”, who are often left alone without protection.”

Although these opinions are from different sources, there is an emphasising noticeability of their critical approach and consent: the Macedonian media scene is more characterised by non-freedom, rather than freedom.

In contrast to that, in the Macedonian Constitution a range of liberties are guaranteed, which directly or indirectly, constitute the freedom of expression. Article 16 of the Constitution reads:²¹

“The freedom of belief, conscience, thought and public expression of thought is guaranteed.

The freedom of speech, public address, public information and the free establishment of institutions for public information is guaranteed.

The free access to information, the freedom to receive and convey information is guaranteed.

The right to respond in the public media is guaranteed.

The right to correction in the public media is guaranteed.

The right to protection of the source of information in the public media is guaranteed.

Censorship is prohibited. “

¹⁸ see: <http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2011-2012,1043.html>

¹⁹ According to “The development of media ownership structure in the Republic of Macedonia: Trapped democracy”, issued by Transparency Macedonia, editor MA. Saso Ordanoski 2012, p. 99, in Macedonia the index of the freedom of the press of RWB has seen “disasterous decline” from the 34th place in 2009, to the already indicated 94th place for 2011/12 Moreover, this is the worst position since 2003, when RWB included Macedonia in the freedom index for the first time.

²⁰ see: <http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2013,1054.html> or http://fr.rsf.org/IMG/pdf/classement_2013_gb-bd.pdf accessed on 31 January 2013

²¹ The underlining is from the author.

Such guarantees are overallly in the “spirit” of positive freedom. The non-interference of the government is a supposed condition and the projected norm is that the government, the state, according to the guarantees will establish opportunities, will meet the prerequisites for free public expression. Hence, it is quite evident that there are serious contradictions, almost two separate worlds. The government neither makes sufficient efforts, nor manages to achieve results that would be “realistic image” of the freedom of expression provided by the Constitution. On the contrary, the displayed assessments identify the government as one of the main reasons for non-freedom. This discrepancy becomes a kind of a “black hole” that swallows everything.

In the Macedonian media reality the indicated freedoms of the Constitution “simply” disappear and the defining of the current state on the media scene is in particular “sealed” with the events of 24 December 2012 in the Macedonian Assembly. “Asking” reporters with the help of physical persuasion to leave the gallery: their usual position in the plenary hall of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia is contrary to the constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression and since the current Constitution was adopted, it is a precedent of introducing open censorship.²² Moreover, this act is not only contrary to the Constitution, but it is also a criminal act, because revocation or restriction of “... human rights and freedoms stipulated by the Constitution, law or ratified international agreement ... shall be punished by imprisonment from three months to three years ... “. ²³ Finally, such an act is contrary to the basic principle of each Assembly, and it is the publicity in the operation. Even in the Rules of Procedure of a “censoring Assembly”, as the Macedonian Assembly on 24 December 2012 was, it was written that “The sessions of the Assembly and other bodies are public.” ²⁴ In fact, adopting a decision that would exclude the public from the work of the Assembly, from the session, at which the budget for 2013 was being adopted, would be a precedent from international

²² The removing of journalists caused disapproval not only by the domestic but also by the foreign public. Thus, the International Federation of Journalists and the European Federation of Journalists, in a statement from 31 December 2012 join their members: The Trade Union of Journalists and Media Workers of Macedonia and the Association of Journalists of Macedonia, condemning the decision to remove the journalists from the plenary hall, before the budget debate, point out that journalists “deserve an apology and a promise that such a measure should not be repeated.” <http://europe.ifj.org/en/articles/ifj-condemns-media-ban-in-macedonia-parliament> (accessed on 30 January 2013)

²³ see: Criminal Code consolidated version 2004, <http://www.pravo.org.mk/documentDetail.php?id=233> пристапено на 21.01.2013

²⁴ see: <http://www.sobranie.mk/?ItemID=ACC6DA520871404DAC43337AA45027A5> Rules of Procedure of the Assembly of RM, consolidated version Article 2. In the same Article a possibility was given that the Assembly could work without the presence of the public, but provided that there is a decision of the working bodies or the Assembly. No working body or the Assembly has adopted or announced such a decision.

volume. The adoption of the budget in each country is a political process of high public interest, which automatically implies providing maximum publicity in the decision-making process.²⁵

PUBLIC IN THE CONDITINS OF NON-FREEDOM

But is it possible for the media which work under unbearable conditions of non-freedom to pursue their two primary functions: to provide control over the government, and to provide articulation of the interests of the public? That is, what publicity is possible in terms of non-free public, media expression? Under conditions of pressure, under conditions of censorship and self-censorship, the media become an instrument in the hands of the government and/or the owners. The media no longer inform, but they serve to control, mobilise and manipulate the public!²⁶ They do not allow the public to establish their own “agenda”, but impose the government-party “agenda” to the public, creating black and white political awareness, binary public, which is divided into “those who are with us” and “those who are against us.” Critics state that the public is trapped in the “party servility” and it almost does not show “civic initiative and integrity.”²⁷ That is, under conditions of party divided public: “... social mobilisation in defence of freedom of expression is possible only in the context of biased political manoeuvring and is not an indigenous value in society.”²⁸

Hence, taking into account the given assessments of the alarming media non-freedom, one of the central points of the public opinion research was to provide empirical data on the degenerative processes, which have not only affected the media,²⁹ but it is realistic to expect, that they have also affected the public in

²⁵ Because of all these “violations” the determining of the criminality of the removal of journalists from the plenary hall is a vital challenge for the democracy in the Republic of Macedonia. Therefore, it is of the same, essential importance to see the outcome of the lawsuits announced by Naser Selmani - President of AJM, in the interview with Radio Free Europe (<http://www.makdenes.org>) broadcasted on 13 January 2013.

²⁶ The media manipulation is especially in the focus of the analysis by Zarko Trajkovski “Mama Mia: Framing Without Shame”. See <http://www.plusinfo.mk/mislenje/753/ANALIZA-Mama-MIA-vramuvanje-bez-sramuvanje> (accessed on 17 February 2013)

²⁷ See Political Thought, Skopje, No. 38, June 2012 issued by: Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Institute for Democracy “Societas Civilis” “Media as an Illegal Political Factor” Drtkovski Goce, p. 13-14)

²⁸ See: Media Sustainability Index: [irex.org/system/files/u105/EE_MSI_2012_Macedonia.pdf](http://www.irex.org/system/files/u105/EE_MSI_2012_Macedonia.pdf) , page. 89

²⁹ Regarding the current conditions or deevolution processes in the journalistic profession (from a later date) there is an illustrative column by Branko Geroski “Journalism or a Big Stinky Nothing?” published on 10 February 2012 on www.plusinfo.mk see: <http://www.plusinfo.mk/mislenje/749/Novinarstvo-ili-edno-golemo-smrdeno-nishto>

the Republic of Macedonia.³⁰ Consequently, research attention was centred on the relations in the triangle: media-public-government or two key elements.³¹ On the one hand, the relationship: media-public and in this respect, above all, the confidence of the public in the media; and, on the other hand, the evaluations of the public on the (non)freedom or pressure on the media and the views of the public on the sources of such pressure.

Confidence is undoubtedly a key element in the relationship media – public, but also an extremely compound, complex concept. Confidence should not be confused with the size of the audience. Number refers to the quantitative side, and trust to the qualitative side of the relationship media – public. Trust is a concentrated reflection of the editorial policy of the medium, to the qualities, such as: objectivity, analytical, and critical approach. The trust also reflects the ability of the medium to articulate different, even conflicting social interests, but also to identify the public interest and appropriately to such communication activity, the public to be able with its own dynamics and in a democratic manner to create “social common denominator.”

The first question, in this part of the survey, asked respondents to express the extent of their own (dis)agreement with the view: “*The media in Macedonia can be trusted.*”³² The received data leave no possibility of doubt: the majority of respondents did not agree with this position: 23.1% - “totally disagree” and 46.7% - “disagree”. On the opposite side are the negligible 4.2% who “completely agree”, that is, 26% of respondents who “agree” that the media in Macedonia can be trusted.

On a theoretical and principle level (dis)trust is often seen as a direct confirmation of the functionality of democracy.³³ Such distrust means criticality, awareness of necessity of publicity and control and, of course, awareness that the powerful, precisely because of their power, should not need be trusted (much). But when mistrust is in such a large volume: two thirds of respondents (69.8%) do not believe in the media and when it has such a high intensity: almost every fourth respondent “totally does not believe” (23.1%), then undoubtedly *the public and democracy*

³⁰ This thesis was the direct cause to ask questions on the relation media - public in the public opinion survey. Also, some of the above mentioned events and evaluations, have occurred after the field data collection, but the continuing negative trend is a further reason and evidence about the correct and current research focus.

³¹ Given the limited resources, and given the different structure of the problem of public opinion research, rationality imposed a choice of a smaller number of key problems or questions about the media.

³² Wishing to avoid the suggestion of criticism in evaluation or criticality to be “response” to the question, the proposition in this and in the next question was worded positively. Hence, the critical approach in the answers received in that manner has enhanced authentication.

³³ see: *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 59, No.2, Cambridge University Press, 1997, „Trust, Distrust and Scepticism: Popular evaluations of civil and political institutions in post-communist societies“

are seriously threatened. The media have no credibility with the public, in their audiences, or differently said, the public does not have (its) media to believe in!

It is worth to stress, that the current, two-third distrust in the media is larger than the average mistrust in EU countries. Namely, according to public opinion surveys in the EU Member States, mistrust in the media ranges from: 35% for the radio; from 42% to 46% for TV; from 51% to 52% for newspapers, and from 39% to 41% for the Internet.³⁴

As mentioned previously, the following question in this context referred to the respondents' evaluation of non-freedom of the media. Respondents had to express the extent of their own (dis)agreement with the statement, which was again positively worded: *"The media in Macedonia are not under pressure and are able to report freely."* The disagreement again dominates: 44.6% - *"disagree"* and 26.7% - *"totally disagree"* with this position. In contrast to those who answered *"agree"* (22.8%) or *"completely agree"* (5.9%) with the statement: *"The media are not under pressure and are able to report freely."*

No matter how terrible these data are, they are certainly not surprising. In fact, in terms of "unbearable media non-freedom" the only possible outcome or result is *"robbed public"* and *"compressed media."*

Where are the reasons for this situation?³⁵ Hence, the last question in this context asked respondents to indicate the source from which the greatest pressure on the media comes, and on such a basis to record the "causal side" of non-freedom. *Three commonly indicated sources of pressure, are "the government" – 39.8%, "the government and the owners" – 28% and "the owners" – 14%. Incomparably less numerous are those who think that the pressures on the media come from the "opposition" – 4.3% or "the opposition and the owners" – 2.8%. However, 11.1% of the respondents answered that "the media are free and not under pressure."*

The indicated structure of responses shows that the public, as opposed to all the "twists" and the daily exposure to a number of media manipulation, has kept its "own common sense" and quite rationally identifies the "tandem" from which the greatest pressures originates: the government and the owners. Also, it should be emphasised that the public, although a victim, is not dead! The obtained data show that respondents are rational and critical, which suggests that although the public is "voiceless": it does not have its "own" media, that is, it shows enormously low trust in the media, the public is still not "mindless", it manages to create its "own" reality other than the media constructed reality.

³⁴ see: Standard Eurobarometar EB72-2009, EB74-2010, EB76-2011

³⁵ The issue is certainly not new, in fact within the professional and expert-scientific media public it is consistently one of the central issues. However, given our research it was quite relevant, to address this question to the respondents in order to become familiar with the views of the citizens, the general public.

And before the end, we shall lay down another research data and explanation for these findings and indicate the cornerstone of bipolarity among respondents. The answers to all three questions show great stability, insignificant statistical differences according to different socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, such as gender, age, education, ethnicity, whereby, however, one important feature significantly affects the responses, it is: the political orientation of respondents (see Table 1).

Table 1		POLITICAL ORIENTATION			
		Supports a party that is part of the government	Supports a party that is part of the opposition	Does not support any party	TOTAL
How much do you agree that the media in Macedonia can be trusted?	I completely agree	6.5%	2.7%	3.6%	4.2%
	I agree	39.1%	20.9%	21.5%	26.0%
	I disagree	37.2%	50.5%	49.9%	46.7%
	I completely disagree	17.2%	25.8%	25.0%	23.1%
How much do you agree that the media in Macedonia are not under pressure and are able to report freely?	I completely agree	7.7%	3.3%	5.9%	5.9%
	I agree	36.4%	16.5%	18.5%	22.8%
	I disagree	35.2%	47.3%	48.1%	44.6%
	I completely disagree	20.7%	33.0%	27.5%	26.7%
According to you, the media in Macedonia suffer the greatest pressure from the:	Government	25.3%	51.6%	42.7%	39.8%
	Opposition	4.6%	3.8%	4.3%	4.3%
	Owners	18.0%	3.8%	15.4%	14.0%
	Government and owners	24.5%	33.0%	28.0%	28.0%
	Opposition and owners	5.7%	1.6%	1.8%	2.8%
	The media are free, they are not under pressure	21.8%	6.0%	7.7%	11.1%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

As the table shows, the political orientation structures in a bipolar way the surveyed individuals: the supporting of a government party or an opposition party strikingly determines the differences in the answers of respondents, whereby, it is clearly evident that those who support a party that is part of the government are on one side and the rest of the respondents are on the other side: those who support a party that is part of the opposition or do not support any party. Simultaneously, in particular, the answers of those who support a party that is part of the government deserve “zoomed” attention. Within this group of respondents, collectively speaking, the majority: 54.55% - disagree that the media can be trusted, 55.9% disagree that the media are able to report freely and that the greatest pressure comes from the government – 25.3% and from the government and the owners – 24.5%. Apparently, although it is certain that the “party dioptré” manages to discipline the answers of these respondents, it still fails to completely distort the perception of reality.

Hence, the question that deserves full and constant research attention is: when and how, this undisputedly major segment of respondents, of the public, will be able to articulate its own interests, the public will obtain “its” (more) free media and democracy its (more) free public.