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MACEDONIA

The past year was marked by two significant political events: the failure of Macedonia to be invited to become a NATO member and the early elections that followed this failure. Macedonia was the only country of the so-called Adriatic group, which also includes Albania and Croatia, left without an invitation for NATO membership. Greece successfully blocked the country's accession because of the conflict over the name "Macedonia," or in the words of Greek foreign minister Dora Bakoyannis, Macedonia's "intransigent stance and its actions of an irredentist and nationalist logic." The Macedonian government, led by the right-wing VMRO-DPMNE, organized early elections to capitalize on the resentment of the population over NATO's rejection. The elections achieved their objective for VMRO-DPMNE.

During this political turmoil, the government heavily used paid political advertising in the media to support its causes, a trend noted in 2007 that escalated this past year. With this, the government became the biggest single advertiser on the market. Additionally, an already crowded television market saw 17 new satellite television licensees. But media observers saw the ultimate blow to media independence and freedom of expression delivered by the courts at the end of the year when several journalists and other media writers were found guilty of defamation and had fines of €5000 to €30,000 imposed in a country with an annual per capita income of slightly over €6000.

The MSI shows that the trend of falling scores for Macedonia continued, driven by the huge fines and enormous number of current lawsuits in front of the courts, further fragmentation of the market, and financial dependency of key media on the government advertising that resulted in pro-governmental coverage. All objectives suffered dramatic drops in their scores. Whereas last year each objective had a score of between 2.10 and 2.50, putting Macedonia in the early stages of "near sustainability," developments there compelled panelists to reevaluate the sustainability of the media sector. This year, objective scores ranged from 1.61 to 1.93, and the average of 1.71 indicates that Macedonia has regressed into an "unsustainable, mixed system."

MACEDONIA AT A GLANCE

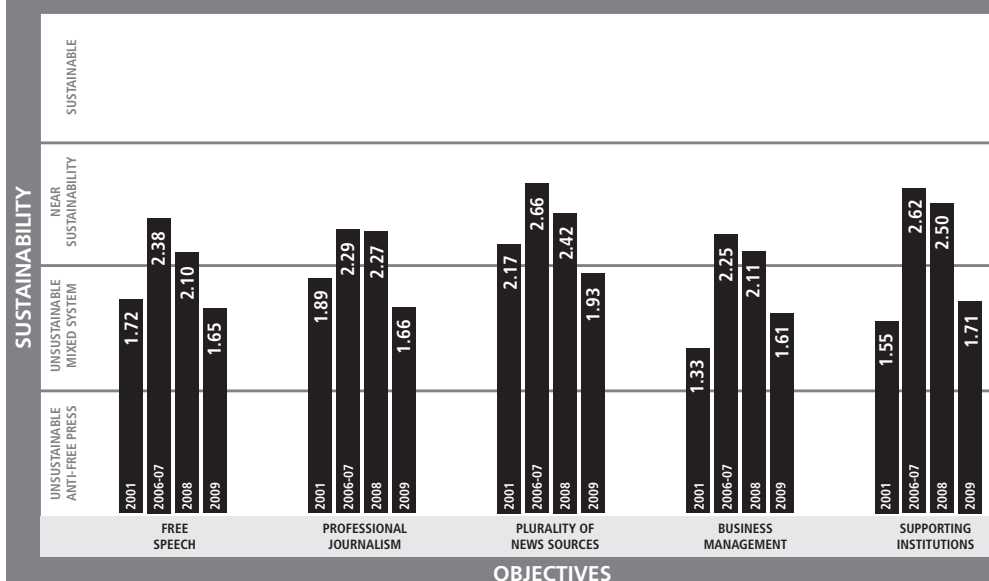
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 2,061,315 (July 2008 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Skopje
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Macedonian 64.2%, Albanian 25.2%, Turkish 3.9%, Roma 2.7%, Serb 1.8%, other 2.2% (2002 census, *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Macedonian Orthodox 64.7%, Muslim 33.3%, other Christian 0.37%, other 1.63% (2002 census, *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages (% of population):** Macedonian 66.5%, Albanian 25.1%, Turkish 3.5%, Roma 1.9%, Serbian 1.2%, other 1.8% (2002 census, *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2007-Atlas):** \$7.052 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2008)
- > **GNI per capita (2007-PPP):** \$8,510 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2008)
- > **Literacy rate:** 96.1% (male 98.2%, female 94.1%) (2002 census, *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Branko Crvenkovski (since May 12, 2004)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** Print: approximately 600 daily, weekly, biweekly, monthly, and periodical editions; Radio: 70; Television Stations: 56 (*Broadcasting Council, 2007*)
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** Total average daily circulation is 293,234 copies nationwide
- > **Broadcast ratings:** top three television and radio stations: TV A1 (23.7%), TV Sitel (13.3%) and TV Kanal 5 (7.7%); Antena 5 (24%), Radio Ros Metropolis (7%) and Channel 77 (3%) (*Broadcasting Council, 2007*)
- > **News agencies:** Macedonian Information Agency (state-owned), Makfax (private), NetPres (private)
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** Gross annual advertising revenue is \$313.2 million in the media sector, from which \$254.2 million in television, \$19.3 million in print media (daily newspapers and magazines), and \$16.2 million in radio (*Broadcasting Council, 2007*)
- > **Internet usage:** 29.4% of the households use internet, (State Statistical Officials, first quarter of 2008)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: MACEDONIA



Annual scores for 2002 through 2005 are available online at http://www.irex.org/programs/MSI_EUR/archive.asp

Unsustainable, Anti-Free Press (0-1):

Country does not meet or only minimally meets objectives. Government and laws actively hinder free media development, professionalism is low, and media-industry activity is minimal.

Unsustainable Mixed System (1-2):

Country minimally meets objectives, with segments of the legal system and government opposed to a free media system. Evident progress in free-press advocacy, increased professionalism, and new media businesses may be too recent to judge sustainability.

Near Sustainability (2-3):

Country has progressed in meeting multiple objectives, with legal norms, professionalism, and the business environment supportive of independent media. Advances have survived changes in government and have been codified in law and practice. However, more time may be needed to ensure that change is enduring and that increased professionalism and the media business environment are sustainable.

Sustainable (3-4):

Country has media that are considered generally professional, free, and sustainable, or to be approaching these objectives. Systems supporting independent media have survived multiple governments, economic fluctuations, and changes in public opinion or social conventions.

OBJECTIVE 1: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Macedonia Objective Score: 1.65

The score for this objective reached its lowest point since the MSI began in 2001 and lost 0.45 compared with last year. Panelists scored several indicators much lower than last year, with the most severe drop found in Indicator 6 (libel laws). Panelists also returned much lower scores for Indicator 2 (broadcast licensing), Indicator 5 (guaranteed independence and legal advantages for state media), and Indicator 7 (access to information).

The panelists agreed that certain indicators of this objective point to a solid legal framework that protects freedom of expression in writing. Yet, they pointed out that such standards are inconsistently implemented and respected, often with a negative impact on the media. For instance, Goran Momirovski, a reporter for A1 TV, observed, "There is a constitutional article that guarantees the confidentiality of sources used by journalists, but when you are facing a trial you have to disclose them in court proceedings."

The panelists expressed concern that even though many media freedoms were systematically attacked by the government, the general public did not react. "The public is mesmerized by the government's campaigns. This is a populist model of ruling the country. The government's approach to the media is a populist one, and the objective is not to promote the values of a liberal democracy but to mobilize the masses on the ground behind the government's policies," stated Sasho Ordanoski, editor at ALSAT TV.

Licensing was also an issue that affected the scoring this year due to the issuing of 17 new licenses for satellite television, a highly controversial move that panelists felt had the potential to ruin the market. While the procedural aspect of the licensing process appeared in line with legal requirements, the issuing of so many was undertaken without consideration of the television marketplace. All of applicants that had fulfilled the criteria were awarded licenses. Panelists noted that this "television-station inflation" was one of the major factors hurting professional journalism. "The newsrooms have dissolved. They consist of two to three seasoned journalists, and the vast burden of everyday jobs has fallen to the rookies. There is a problem even with the technical staff. There simply are not enough trained cameramen and editing personnel. The situation is absurd; we have the TV stations with state-of-the-art equipment and no one who really knows how to operate it," according to Vasko Popetreski, a journalist with Channel 5.

Panelists also stressed that through the licensing policy, certain media owners are able to concentrate vast media power and have the potential to become an obstacle to freedom of expression and professionalism because of their links to the government.

Business regulations and the tax code do not differentiate media from other types of businesses, with the exception that print media pay a 5 percent VAT instead of the standard 18 percent. In general, media operate in a poor economy, which greatly influences their economic independence and sustainability.

Panelists expressed some alarm at the number of threats and violence that journalists face. In a high-profile case, Goran Gavrilov was the victim of an attempted assassination in January 2008. The case went to court, and the accused was freed due to the lack of evidence. But the case is now in front of the Macedonian Supreme Court. Gavrilov is considering the possibility of starting a procedure in front of the European Court of Human Rights.

Public media, such as Macedonian Radio-Television (MRT), have editorial independence guaranteed by law, but the law does not function to actually allow this independence. In reality, according to panelists, the government has control over public broadcasters, and it uses those outlets heavily for self-promotion. The primary means of control is direct budgetary control, which it leverages into the ability to place senior staff, as well as to induce generally friendly coverage. While the law does not favor public broadcasters (indeed, the legal limit on the advertising time imposed on MRT is one of

LEGAL AND SOCIAL NORMS PROTECT AND PROMOTE FREE SPEECH AND ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION.

FREE-SPEECH INDICATORS:

- > Legal and social protections of free speech exist and are enforced.
- > Licensing of broadcast media is fair, competitive, and apolitical.
- > Market entry and tax structure for media are fair and comparable to other industries.
- > Crimes against journalists or media outlets are prosecuted vigorously, but occurrences of such crimes are rare.
- > State or public media do not receive preferential legal treatment, and law guarantees editorial independence.
- > Libel is a civil law issue; public officials are held to higher standards, and offended parties must prove falsity and malice.
- > Public information is easily accessible; right of access to information is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Media outlets have unrestricted access to information; this is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Entry into the journalism profession is free, and government imposes no licensing, restrictions, or special rights for journalists.

the most restrictive in Europe), government officials do prefer to show up on talk shows or current-affairs programs of public broadcasters rather than those of private broadcasters.

Libel is still a criminal offense, and the burden of proof is on the journalist; there is no indication that this will change soon. Even proving truth is not necessarily a successful defense, as there may be penalties for damaging reputation. In the past year, the number of libel cases against journalists increased, according to the panelists. For the first time in Macedonia, there were fines for defamation above €1,000 (from €5,000 to €30,000). In addition, guilty verdicts in criminal libel cases are used as the basis for civil suits, and judgments can run upward of €25,000 or more. That a substantial number of the plaintiffs were either government officials or officials from the ruling parties' worried the panelists, who saw this being used to silence critical coverage. Even the prime minister was involved in one highly controversial lawsuit in 2008 that ended with a fine of €30,000 against a *Dnevnik* columnist.

An additional problem was the limited availability of sources and information on crucial policies and on the topics that are not in the interest of the ruling parties. Naser Selmani stressed that "members of parliament had been denied crucial information on many issues. What could be expected for us journalists?" The access to sources and information is highly controlled, and governmental information is usually delivered through certain media persons who are not journalists. "This is also normal for the populists. They want to communicate directly with the masses on the issues that *they* want to communicate, not on the issues that are legitimate agenda items of the society. Like Hugo Chavez, who has the TV show named *Allo Presidente*," observed Ordanoski.

Journalists rarely make use of the access-to-information law that does exist. They find it inadequate for their work due to procedural limits with the law. In addition, the government often fails to respond to some of the crucial requests under the law. For example, Alfa TV tried to get information on the cost of the governmental media campaigns using the access-to-information law and failed. This greatly discourages journalists from attempting to gain information using the law, so they still rely heavily on anonymous sources.

There is no governmental or other interference to the media to access international news. However, similarly to past years, the panel complained that the financial situation in the media is such that subscription to foreign news services is very rare. Some of the media resort to using YouTube for source material even though the video quality is not suitable for broadcast.

Access to the journalist profession is free and unhindered.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Macedonia Objective Score: 1.66

The level of professionalism among journalists dropped again this year. Every indicator recorded a setback in the scores given by the panelists. Only Indicators 6 and 7 (technical facilities and niche reporting, respectively) did not suffer a loss of more than 0.30. Furthermore, all indicators received a score relatively close to the overall objective score. While none was a clear laggard, none clearly outperformed this new disappointing score, either.

The panelists noted that the main overlying causes for the drop are the ownership structure of the media and increasing governmental influence on the media market. Most media are dominated by a sole owner, with few shareholder companies or shared ownership. Additionally, many of these owners control multiple media outlets in the print and broadcast markets. With this structure, owners directly influence the editorial policy of the news and current-affairs programs. Journalists feel that they create a high level of job insecurity for the editors and journalists in order to ensure coverage is according to the owner's viewpoint.

Panelists noted that reporting is not marked by professional or ethical standards. Interestingly, this has led certain journalists to file a lawsuit against the professional and ethical commission (Council of Honor) within the Association of Journalists of Macedonia (AJM), complaining that the commission defamed them by judging their reporting as unethical. "I am astonished at the nonprofessional approach of our colleagues. Some of them are not even aware that they are making terrible mistakes, and when we react, they sue us," said Naser Selmani, journalist at *Vest* and member of the AJM Council of Honor. The Council of Honor reacted over 30 times in the past year on breaches of the Code of Ethics and professional standards. AJM also noted corruption in the profession itself and organized seven debates about corruption among journalists and published a booklet "Journalists against corruption." Despite these actions, the self-regulation process is not highly recognized by the journalists themselves as a tool for improving the profession.

Panelists also indicated that since media outlets are politically biased, this reflects on the everyday work of the common journalist. In practice, journalists are exposed to the pressures in a multitude of forms—financial, professional, and political. They feel they are under constant threat of losing their jobs and are pressured by the owners to report according to the political interests of the outlet.

"In order to have fair and unbiased reporting, you need to have an independent editorial process. In three out of five major TV station in Macedonia, you do not have that. And I'm afraid that it is impossible to implement such a concept with the ownership structure," Popetreski of Kanal 5 said.

The wave of the high court fines discussed above has led to a rise of self-censorship, according to the panelists, and the feeling that the space for open criticism is smaller each day.

Journalists do cover the main events in society, but they have problems in gathering information, especially with the governmental institutions. Government officials establish a preference for certain media that are highly approving of their policies and to certain media personalities as a tool to approach the public. They avoid public appearances with media that they feel may end up criticizing their work. This applies to access to information. According to the panelists, there is a clear discrimination against certain media on this basis. As a result, the news is full of unattributed sources.

Last year, the Macedonian media sent foreign correspondents to Brussels to cover the NATO accession process. Although that matter is now closed for the time being, most of these correspondents continue to report on other European issues from Brussels, adding depth to the international reporting that Macedonians may read.

There was a significant shift with regard to entertainment programs versus news and public affairs. As mentioned above, the government officials have increasingly preferred to avoid current-affairs programs or serious talk-shows and now prefer to use light entertainment shows to communicate with society.

JOURNALISM MEETS PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF QUALITY.

PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM INDICATORS:

- > Reporting is fair, objective, and well sourced.
- > Journalists follow recognized and accepted ethical standards.
- > Journalists and editors do not practice self-censorship.
- > Journalists cover key events and issues.
- > Pay levels for journalists and other media professionals are sufficiently high to discourage corruption.
- > Entertainment programming does not eclipse news and information programming.
- > Technical facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news are modern and efficient.
- > Quality niche reporting and programming exists (investigative, economics/business, local, political).

Journalists' salaries are not high enough to prevent bribery and typically range from €200 to €400 per month.

The new television stations and forthcoming digitalization process has infused the newly created media with modern equipment. Certain new concepts were introduced in the Web-based distribution of news, but the process is in its infancy yet in Macedonia, according to panelists. The basic equipment is still relatively old in most media. However, owing to the foreign investment in print media over the past few years, print media outlets often have modern equipment at their disposal.

Except in the economy, sports, and entertainment, there is no significant sustained niche reporting in the broadcast media. Magazine-style programs that focus on entertainment news from Macedonia and worldwide have grown at the larger television stations, often aired after the newscasts. In the print media, there are several new specialized magazines, and the major newspapers have established regular supplements on health, cars, entertainment, and youth topics.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

Macedonia Objective Score: 1.93

The score for Objective 3 fell by almost half a point, compared with last year. Dramatic drops occurred in nearly every indicator; only Indicators 6 and 7 (transparency of media ownership and media reflect a broad spectrum of social interests, respectively) remained essentially unchanged. However, Indicator 6 was again one of the worst performers among individual indicators, receiving a score nearly three-quarters of a point lower than the overall score. Indicator 3 (state media reflect the views of the political spectrum) also performed particularly poorly, with a score nearly a point lower. Only Indicator 2 (citizen access to media) received a score more than a half point higher than the average.

The problems facing plurality of news sources were summarized in the words of one of the panelists, Roberto Belicanec of the Media Development Center, "This indicator is based on the values of a liberal democracy. In this moment we will have to examine it from our perspective. Yes, there is a multitude of media, but the effect of that multitude is not a free flow of information. On the contrary, it makes the market unsustainable, which leads to the financial corruption of owners by politics, which leads to pressure on the journalists. The second effect, namely, there is not enough of a trained labor force—neither among the journalists nor among the technicians—leads to poor professionalism. And

the third effect is that the public is confused and cannot distinguish the message from the noise.”

Television remains the chief source of news for the public, followed by print and then radio.

National newspapers and television stations are available and affordable. Additionally there are growing numbers of Internet-based media initiatives. From that perspective, one can say that citizens have unrestricted access to the news sources. The problem arises from the previously mentioned factors, which mean the market is politicized and marked by a low level of professionalism.

Citizens have access to both local television and international broadcast media via extensive cable networks and, since October 2008, through the IPTV platform offered by T-Home. Consumers can receive bundled service of IPTV, ADSL Internet, and telephone. The only restriction is the affordability of the monthly subscription. In this moment, the penetration of these networks is between 55 and 60 percent with a very slow growth rate. The major problem remains their accessibility in rural areas. Regarding print, foreign printed media (except Serbian and Croatian) are available only in the capital, Skopje, in a few locations. The rest of the citizens may access them via the internet. Internet fees for broadband have fallen substantially, and the increase of the broadband users had been noted in the past year. However, large portions of the population still cannot afford it.

The panelists judge state-owned MRT to be biased to the government and its policies. For instance, panelists noted they had been rebroadcasting one interview with the

prime minister for six to seven times in one week in various timeslots, just to ensure that everybody would have a chance to see it. The public service is in deep crisis. The system that was to secure independent financing was not established, and now it is dependent on direct state financing. The resulting bias resulted in its lowest ratings in history but also resulted in the flight of professional journalists to other media. In this moment, any reform of the public broadcasting station (PBS) is on hold, as there are no serious attempts to continue with the changes that were foreseen with the broadcasting law.

Macedonia has three news agencies: one state-owned and two private. One agency is fully Web-based. All are functioning satisfactorily and are mostly used by the smaller media. However, panelists noted that the usage of these news agencies is in decline.

Other broadcasters produce their own news programs. However, they are marked by a high level of interference of the owners in the editorial process, which has not been the case in previous years, at least not on this large scale, according to the panelists.

Despite the regulation that limits media ownership, the situation on the ground is completely different. There are a couple of large media groups in the country, yet the official ownership documents serve to confuse ownership. “Velija (the owner of A1 TV) had publicly stated that he removed Branko Geroski (editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Spic*) from his position because they could not agree on the editorial policy of the newspaper. The owner of a TV station is sacking the editor-in-chief of the newspaper that he does not own? That is a children’s story,” said Selmani, implying that Velija indeed controlled *Spic*. The problem is that implementation of the law is very shaky. “The broadcasting council should open up an investigation and include other agencies, such as the antimonopoly body that does have means and competencies to find out who the real owners are, and then to revoke their licenses,” Belicanec said.

Macedonia has three major media groups that are either under the same ownership or have established synergy. WAZ group consists of three major daily newspapers, one weekly, a distribution network, and a printing plant. A1-Vreme group is the most powerful private group, with a national terrestrial television station, a national satellite television station (A2), three national newspapers, one weekly (1E), and a distribution network. Vecer-Sitel-Cetis group owns a national newspaper, a national television station, and a printing plant.

Macedonia also has minority-language media in print and in broadcast as well as a special channel on MRT that broadcasts in a variety of minority languages. The minority media face sustainability problems because their audience is so small.

MULTIPLE NEWS SOURCES PROVIDE CITIZENS WITH RELIABLE AND OBJECTIVE NEWS.

PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES INDICATORS:

- > A plurality of affordable public and private news sources (e.g., print, broadcast, Internet) exists.
- > Citizens’ access to domestic or international media is not restricted.
- > State or public media reflect the views of the entire political spectrum, are nonpartisan, and serve the public interest.
- > Independent news agencies gather and distribute news for print and broadcast media.
- > Independent broadcast media produce their own news programs.
- > Transparency of media ownership allows consumers to judge objectivity of news; media ownership is not concentrated in a few conglomerates.
- > A broad spectrum of social interests are reflected and represented in the media, including minority-language information sources.

There is a private national television station in the Albanian language that strives to improve its rating through bilingual programming. Mainstream media do pay attention to the minority communities even though at times minorities are treated in a prejudiced manner.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Macedonia Objective Score: 1.61

Most of the decline in this objective was due to significantly lower scores in four indicators: Indicator 1 (media outlets operate as efficient businesses), Indicator 2 (media receive revenue from a multitude of sources), Indicator 5 (independent media do not receive government subsidies), and Indicator 6 (market research). The other three indicators remained much the same as last year in terms of their scores. Indicator 3 (the advertising market) was the only indicator to receive a score notably higher than the overall objective score, while Indicator 5 received a score almost a point lower.

The year was marked by inflation of the number of media outlets, thanks to the new broadcast licensees and heavy advertising activity by the government. While the effects of government advertising spending have been problematic in terms of the independence of the key media outlets, the effects of the new licenses have yet to be seen on the market. For some panelists, it was a move that will further hurt professionalism and sustainability of the market, while others hoped it could lead to alternatives to owners who tried to impose their political and economic interests in their outlets' reporting.

In general, management skills are at a low level. The media companies are usually run by their owners, and departments within are not well differentiated. MRT management is virtually non-existent, according to panelists. In the past two years, they have changed managers four times. There remains no transparency in their financing and spending despite oversight by parliament. According to the law, the basis for their financing is a broadcast tax, but its collection in 2007 was only 1 percent.

In general, media operate in a difficult economy. A small but steady growth in their revenues over the years has been noted, but it remains insufficient for substantial investments in their production capacities. However, that changed last year due to the increase in government advertising. The government claimed that its total spending from the state budget on the campaigns was around €7.7 million. But this does not necessarily include both the advertising done through individual ministries and that done by other

public sources controlled by the government. In general, this phenomenon has greatly influenced the way the media operate. In one moment, the poor market was flooded with government money, and the nature of news coverage had changed. "We should always bear in mind that government does not use the advertising as advertising only. The public is mature enough to recognize a 30-second spot as propaganda. So they are not buying advertising time; they are buying the newscast," Belicanec said. Therefore, official subsidizing of the media does not exist, but the huge amount of governmental advertising is playing a similar role.

Past panels have reported that local television stations also miss out on revenue in the form of payments from cable operators who carry their channels. The addition of IPTV has not changed this situation, and local television is carried by this service free of charge.

In terms of advertising agencies, panelists reported that no substantial agencies exist in Macedonia; most media market and sell advertising directly.

In general, all panelists agreed that increased government advertising and direct subsidization of MRT had produced coverage favorable to the government in the media. This is especially evident in the broadcast media. There has been no law that regulates government advertising. An exclusion is in effect only during election periods.

Media owners who attended the panel discussion complained that advertising and measurement agencies do not work professionally because both types of agencies are thoroughly focused on the capital-based media and mostly on television. All attempts to diversify them to radio and other media have failed. Introducing PeopleMeters in the market in 2007 had

INDEPENDENT MEDIA ARE WELL-MANAGED BUSINESSES, ALLOWING EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT INDICATORS:

- > Media outlets and supporting firms operate as efficient, professional, and profit-generating businesses.
- > Media receive revenue from a multitude of sources.
- > Advertising agencies and related industries support an advertising market.
- > Advertising revenue as a percentage of total revenue is in line with accepted standards at commercial outlets.
- > Independent media do not receive government subsidies.
- > Market research is used to formulate strategic plans, enhance advertising revenue, and tailor products to the needs and interests of audiences.
- > Broadcast ratings and circulation figures are reliably and independently produced.

left out radio, and it remains without a rating system on which they may base the selling of advertising time. They also blamed this situation on the behavior of other owners who are unable to see the broader picture and their own interests in the long run. “We were in a situation for BBC to pay for the latest research for radio ratings, and when they asked our radio owners to contribute for the research and to share the data, except two national radio stations—Metropolis and Channel 77—none of the radio stations accepted the offer,” said Nebojsa Karapejovski, owner of Radio Plus Forte from Tetovo and TV Menada. BBC conducted the research and shared the results with those stations that contributed.

The rating system is under constant dispute. Some of the main television stations simply do not accept it as relevant fact-finding research. They constantly complain about the sample and the packaging of the data. The agency—an affiliate of AGB-NIELSEN—has not tried to gather all of the interested parties to open up a discussion on the credibility of the system.

Some progress had been made in all media in the sense that they are trying to develop their programming according to ratings, but it is in a rudimentary form. Lack of a deep understanding of ratings and how to apply them to their outlet remains widespread. This is a major shortfall of the current management at the television stations.

The situation in the print media is similar. The circulation figures remain generally unknown, and no auditing takes place. Newspapers tend to hide the numbers from each other and to present their advertisers with higher circulation than actually exists. “We spy on each other in order to have some orientation where we stand. There are a couple of printing presses, and there we try to get the number of printed copies. How much is sold is almost impossible to find out,” said Sasho Kokalanov, editor-in-chief of *Dnevnik*.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Macedonia Objective Score: 1.71

In short, the year was marked by the collapse of the Association of Private Electronic Media of Macedonia (APEMM). As a result, the score for Indicator 1 fell by roughly two points. All other indicators suffered from lower scores as well, although not nearly as dramatic. Indicator 1 also scored more than a point less than the overall score. All other indicators scored near the overall score, with the exception of Indicator 7 (apolitical channels of media distribution), which received a score more than a point higher.

APEMM was in agony for the past two years; it was losing its focus and was unable to balance the interests of its members. Panelists felt that the organization, which had been highly visible and relatively successful, died because of an inability to reconcile competing interests of the major media owners. The collapse of APEMM added to the previous collapse of the Association of Print Media. Therefore, there is no association of media owners that is able to articulate the needs of the media in front of the public or in front of state institutions.

From the journalists’ perspective, the Association of Journalists of Macedonia (AJM) is functioning, with ups and downs. Panelists noted that its ethical commission has taken a more active stance, with their reactions more frequent than in the past. AJM appears to be stable for the moment, but complaints of its performance may be heard throughout the journalistic community. Criticisms mainly address the inactivity in the everyday protection of journalistic freedoms. Robert Popovski, a panelist and AJM’s president, issued an explanation and *mea culpa* on behalf of AJM. “AJM had been in debt, and we had to stabilize the organization. We lost a great deal of energy in that. Second, in order to enable AJM to be more active and efficient, we should have our strategies widely accepted by our colleagues. We are aware of our weaknesses, and therefore I had to score a 1 on our own account,” he said, referring to his relatively low score for Indicator 2.

Media and other NGO’s also had to downsize activities, not because of the lack of need but mostly because of the lack of finances. The donors are leaving the region because of its general stabilization, but unlike the other countries of the region, Macedonia had shown the signs of reverse processes. Donors for now are not showing signs of rethinking their

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS FUNCTION IN THE PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA.

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS INDICATORS:

- > Trade associations represent the interests of private media owners and provide member services.
- > Professional associations work to protect journalists’ rights.
- > NGOs support free speech and independent media.
- > Quality journalism degree programs that provide substantial practical experience exist.
- > Short-term training and in-service training programs allow journalists to upgrade skills or acquire new skills.
- > Sources of newsprint and printing facilities are in private hands, apolitical, and unrestricted.
- > Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, Internet) are private, apolitical, and unrestricted.

policy, and local fundraising possibilities either do not exist or may result in losing the independence of such organizations.

Regarding formal journalism education, the situation is little better in terms of the choice of schools. Such programs do not have any equipment for practical work. Attempts were made to restart student radio, but the university pulled its funding. Overall, the graduates do not meet the expectations of the media. "People with all sorts of diplomas had shown up in the newsrooms—journalism diplomas, communication diplomas—and yet we are end up with the editor writing their texts," noted Kokalanov.

With regard to journalist training, the Macedonian Institute for Media offers a one-year journalism course covering general topics that is considered to be of acceptable quality. Funding for the program is shared between students and donors.

Printing plants capable of printing high circulation are privately owned. Most of the newspaper companies own their own printing presses and distribution networks. Access to these facilities is unrestricted in a legal sense. However, for purely financial reasons, the biggest newspapers have created a closed, largely unregulated system of printing and distribution. Panelists feel they impose price barriers for any newspaper outside of their system that wants to use their facilities and networks. While the intent is financial and not aimed at freedom of expression, shutting out other voices effectively does limit freedom of speech, panelists noted.

Transmitters are owned by the television stations for moment, but the state is pushing the concept of digitalization, which will make the issue less clear and potentially shift some control to telecommunications operators that will build up the transmitting network. There is no legal framework at present that will enable unrestricted access of the media to these networks.

List of Panel Participants

Aco Kabranov, editor-in-chief, ALFA TV, Skopje

Vasko Popetrevski, editor-in-chief, Kanal 5, Skopje

Sasho Kokalanov, editor-in-chief, *Dnevnik* daily newspaper, Skopje

Robert Popovski, president, Association of Journalists of Macedonia, Skopje

Naser Selmani, editor, *Vest* daily newspaper, Skopje

Goran Momirovski, reporter, A1 TV, Skopje

Ljubica Mangovska, editor-in-chief, Tera TV, Bitola

Sasho Ordanovski, general manager, Alsat-M TV, Skopje

Nebojsa Karapejovski, editor-in-chief, TV Menada, Tetovo

Roberto Belicanec, program director, Media Development Center, Skopje

Goran Gavrilov, general manager, Kanal 77, Stip

Moderator and Author

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