

# MONITORING MEDIA PLURALISM IN THE DIGITAL ERA

## APPLICATION OF THE MEDIA PLURALISM MONITOR IN THE EUROPEAN UNION, ALBANIA, MONTENEGRO, THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA, SERBIA & TURKEY IN THE YEAR 2020

Country report: The Republic of North Macedonia

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**Research Project Report**

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# 1. About the project

## 1.1. Overview of the Project

*The Media Pluralism Monitor (MPM) is a research tool designed to identify potential risks to media pluralism in the Member States of the European Union and in candidate countries. This narrative report has been produced on the basis of the implementation of the MPM carried out in 2020. The implementation was conducted in 27 EU Member States, as well as in Albania, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey. This project, under a preparatory action of the European Parliament, was supported by a grant awarded by the European Commission to the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom (CMPF) at the European University Institute.*

## 1.2. Methodological note

### Authorship and review

*The CMPF partners with experienced, independent national researchers to carry out the data collection and author the narrative reports, except in the case of Italy where data collection is carried out centrally by the CMPF team. The research is based on a standardised questionnaire developed by the CMPF.*

*In The Republic of North Macedonia the CMPF partnered with Snezana Trpevska and Igor Micevski (Research Institute on Social Development - RESIS), who conducted the data collection, scored and commented on the variables in the questionnaire and interviewed experts. The report was reviewed by the CMPF staff. Moreover, to ensure accurate and reliable findings, a group of national experts in each country reviewed the answers to particularly evaluative questions (see Annexe II for the list of experts). For a list of selected countries, the final country report was peer-reviewed by an independent country expert.*

*Risks to media pluralism are examined in four main thematic areas: Fundamental Protection, Market Plurality, Political Independence and Social Inclusiveness. The results are based on the assessment of a number of indicators for each thematic area (see Table 1).*

<b>Fundamental Protection</b>	<b>Market Plurality</b>	<b>Political Independence</b>	<b>Social Inclusiveness</b>
Protection of freedom of expression	Transparency of media ownership	Political independence of media	Access to media for minorities
Protection of right to information	News media concentration	Editorial autonomy	Access to media for local/regional communities and for community media
Journalistic profession, standards and protection	Online platforms concentration and competition enforcement	Audiovisual media, online platforms and elections	Access to media for women
Independence and effectiveness of the media authority	Media viability	State regulation of resources and support to media sector	Media Literacy
Universal reach of traditional media and access to the Internet	Commercial & owner influence over editorial content	Independence of PSM governance and funding	Protection against illegal and harmful speech

Table 1: Areas and Indicators of the Media Pluralism Monitor

## **The digital dimension**

*The Monitor does not consider the digital dimension to be an isolated area but rather as intertwined with traditional media and existing principles of media pluralism and freedom of expression. Nevertheless, the Monitor also extracts digital-specific risk scores and the report contains a specific analysis of risks related to the digital news environment.*

## **The calculation of risk**

*The results for each thematic area and indicator are presented on a scale from 0 to 100%.*

*Scores between 0 and 33%: low risk*

*Scores between 34 to 66%: medium risk*

*Scores between 67 and 100%: high risk*

With regard to indicators, scores of 0 are rated 3% while scores of 100 are rated 97% by default, to avoid an assessment of total absence or certainty of risk.

**Disclaimer:** The content of the report does not necessarily reflect the views of the CMPF, nor the position of the members composing the Group of Experts. It represents the views of the national country team that carried out the data collection and authored the report. Due to updates and refinements in the questionnaire, MPM2021 scores may not be fully comparable with previous editions of the MPM. For more details regarding the project, see the CMPF report on MPM2021, soon available on: <http://cmpf.eui.eu/media-pluralism-monitor/>.

## 2. Introduction

- **Country overview, minorities, languages.** The total population of North Macedonia is estimated to be around two million inhabitants<sup>[1]</sup>, while the territory comprises 25,713 square kilometres. The ethnic structure in the country (Census 2002) is as follows: 64.17% are Macedonians, 25.17% Albanians, 3.5% Turks, 2.66% Roma, 0.48% Vlachs, 1.78% Serbs, 0.84% Bosnians and 1.04% belong to other ethnic groups. The official language spoken in the whole territory is the Macedonian language. In 25 out of a total of 80 municipalities and in the capital Skopje, the language used by at least 20% of the citizens (Albanian) is also an official language.
- **Economic situation.** According to the World Bank<sup>[2]</sup>, the economic growth of the country achieved in 2019 was quickly upturned as the pandemic unfolded. The economy is facing a recession of 4.1 percent, which is the biggest drop since 2001. Public and publicly guaranteed debt increased to 59.5 percent of GDP in June 2020. Despite government support to mitigate the pandemic's impact, 17,690 people had lost their jobs by June 2020. The unemployment rate, at 16.7 percent, increased for the first time since 2011. The Corruption Perception Index for 2020 put North Macedonia on the worst ranking since 2001 and on the bottom of the Western Balkans list<sup>[3]</sup>.
- **Political situation.** North Macedonia's political landscape is deeply polarised. Since the 1990s, political power has oscillated between coalitions led by the two main parties: the leftist SDSM and the right-wing VMRO-DPMNE. Almost all governments have included one or more Albanian parties as a coalition partner. Early parliamentary elections were held on July 15, 2020, and North Macedonia's Parliament elected a new government led by the Social Democratic Party (SDSM). The coalition government includes representatives from the Albanian DUI party. Since Greece and North Macedonia reached the historic Prespa Agreement in June 2018, the country made two crucial foreign policy developments: in March 2020, it joined NATO and the Council of the European Union decided to open accession of negotiations with North Macedonia, subject to endorsement by the European Council.
- **Media Market.** The media market is very fragmented. In the TV sector, there is public service (5 TV channels) and 45 private TV channels. The dominant platform for receiving TV is cable (61.7%), followed by IPTV (23.7%), DVBT (9.9%), Internet (4.4%) and satellite (3.1%). In the radio market, there is public service (3 channels), 67 private radio stations and 4 non-profit stations. In the print media sector, there are: 5 daily newspapers, 2 weeklies, 11 other periodicals. There are between 150 and 200 digital native news media. New technologies have completely changed the audience's leisure time.<sup>[4]</sup> Almost 80% of the audience is informed from the internet: 89% from social networks, 55% from news aggregators, 48% from the web sites of digital native news media and 37% from the web sites of domestic TV stations.
- **Regulatory Environment.** Amendments to the Criminal Code have been announced by the Ministry of Justice to ensure greater safety for journalists in their work. In addition, draft amendments to the Law on Civil Liability for Defamation and Insult have been prepared by a working group of the Ministry of Justice in order to make the provisions of this law more favorable to journalists, in terms of reducing penalties for non-pecuniary damage. The regulatory body and the media organisations expect also changes in the media legislation in order to comply with the EU directives and to introduce new rules that will encourage the development of the media sector.

<sup>[1]</sup> According to the data from the last Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in 2002, the

Republic of North Macedonia had 2.022.547 inhabitants. The State Statistical Office estimated that on December 31st, 2019 the country had 2 076 255 inhabitants.

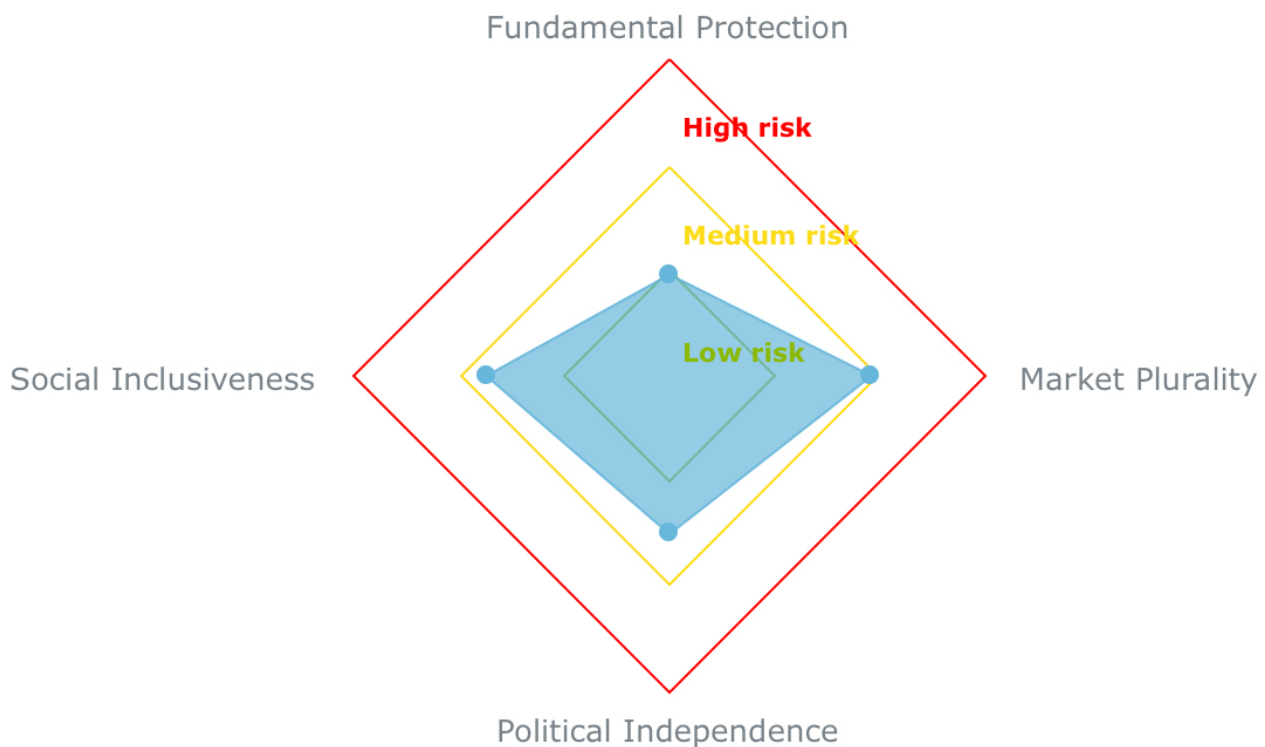
[2] World Bank in North Macedonia, *Recent Economic Developments*, Oct 13, 2020. Available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/northmacedonia/overview#3>

[3] European Western Balkans, *Transparency International: Corruption is on the rise in the Western Balkans*, February 4th, 2021. Available at: <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2021/02/04/transparency-international-corruption-is-on-the-rise-in-the-western-balkans/>

[4] Daily, of the total population aged 16+, 83.1% watches traditional TV, 72.2% uses mobile for internet, 38.5% uses computer for internet, 33.8% uses computer for work, 24.5% listens to the radio, 10.9% plays video games, 8.8% reads a book, 5.5% reads a newspaper. *Mapping the levels of media literacy in North Macedonia among population age 16+*”, commissioned by the OSCE Mission in Skopje and the Agency on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services. Available at: [https://mediumskapismenost.mk/media/2020/05/Survey-Report-MK\\_12-5-20-%D0%B7%D0%B0-%D0%B2%D0%B5%D0%B1.pdf](https://mediumskapismenost.mk/media/2020/05/Survey-Report-MK_12-5-20-%D0%B7%D0%B0-%D0%B2%D0%B5%D0%B1.pdf)

### 3. Results from the data collection: assessment of the risks to media pluralism

#### The Republic of North Macedonia: Media Pluralism Risk Areas



JS chart by amCharts



The situation of media pluralism in the Republic of North Macedonia has generally improved compared to the assessment made in 2016. However, some old risks have not been overcome yet and new ones have emerged: the spread of misinformation, the dominance of social networks and the absence of redress mechanisms to tackle these new challenges.

**Fundamental Protection (32%).** Legal safeguards for Freedom of expression exist and were mainly respected. The authorities refrained from restricting the right to free speech even during the pandemic. However, there are still some risks: whistleblowers are not protected in practice, journalists' working conditions are bad and online harassment as well as hate speech against journalists increased.

**Market Plurality (64%).** Ownership concentration and transparency of digital news media is not legally regulated. The digital news media face fierce competition from social networks, but competition and regulation policies lag behind technological development. Total revenues of media are in decline, especially of local broadcasters, newspapers and digital news media which worsened the journalists' economic status and made them more vulnerable to pressures.

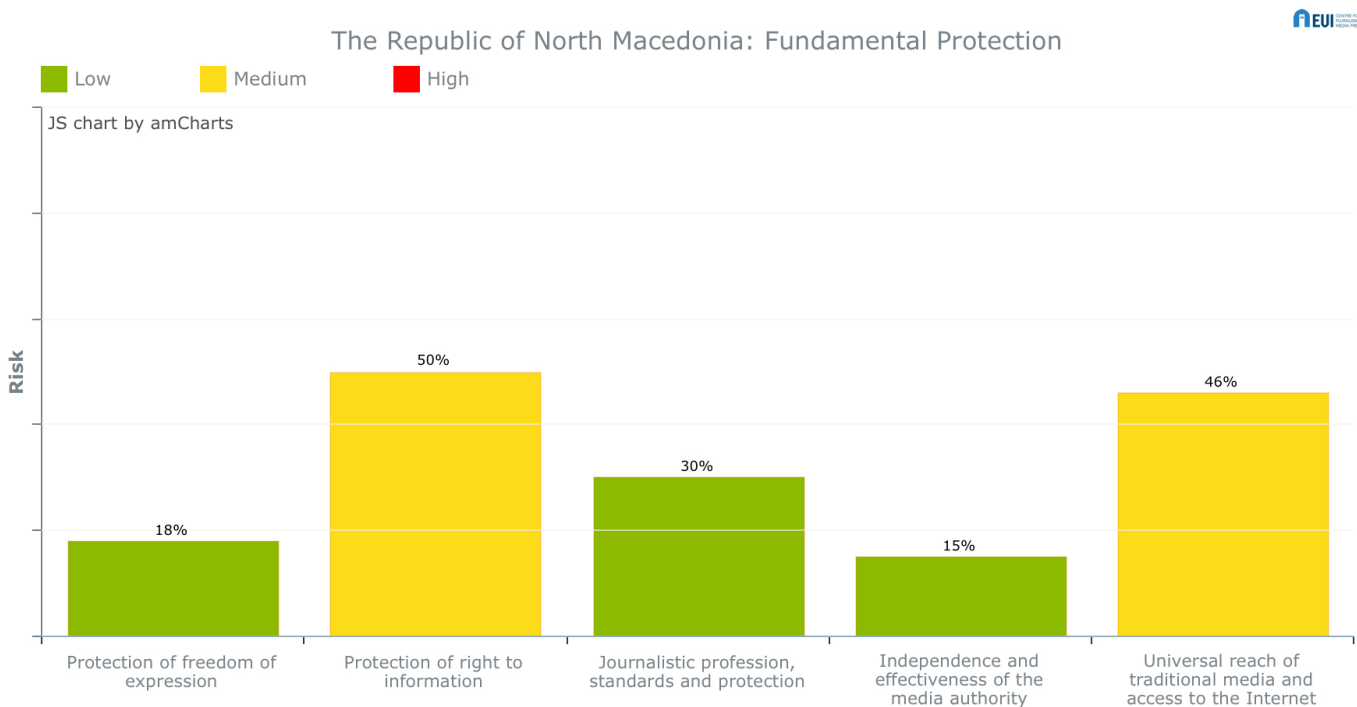
**Political Independence (50%).** No visible links exist between media and politicians, but political parallelism is a typical feature of the media system. The biggest audiovisual media are in close connections with politicians in power to pursue their commercial interests. The Government refrained from state advertising, but party-political advertising during elections, funded from the State Budget, is a serious risk. The funding of the PSM is not securing its stability and independence.



*Social Inclusiveness* (58%). Smaller ethnic communities do not have appropriate access to the public and private broadcast media. The access of local communities to quality programmes is endangered because community media are underdeveloped, while local and regional media are unsustainable. Media and digital literacy skills of the population are low and media literacy is not part of the formal curriculum.

### 3.1. Fundamental Protection (32% - low risk)

*The Fundamental Protection indicators represent the regulatory backbone of the media sector in every contemporary democracy. They measure a number of potential areas of risk, including the existence and effectiveness of the implementation of regulatory safeguards for freedom of expression and the right to information; the status of journalists in each country, including their protection and ability to work; the independence and effectiveness of the national regulatory bodies that have competence to regulate the media sector, and the reach of traditional media and access to the Internet.*



The indicator **Protection of freedom of expression** is assessed with lower risk (18%). Legal safeguards for the protection of freedom of expression, both offline and online, are incorporated in the Constitution and laws, the restrictions are clearly defined and pursue a legitimate aim as foreseen in Article 10(2) ECHR. The general assessment is that these safeguards were respected in practise: there was a growing surge of disinformation during the pandemic, but even then, the state refrained from attempts to restrict one’s right to free speech. Legal remedies to which the citizens can address in cases of infringement of this right do exist, but some risks for their effectiveness emerged during the lockdown because most of the court proceedings were postponed.

The risk for the **Protection of right to information** indicator is 50%. This right is recognised in the Constitution and in the Law on Free Access to Information of Public Character 2019, the restrictions are clearly defined in accordance with international standards and there is an appeal mechanism which is quite effective<sup>[1]</sup>. However, the main risks here arise from the fact that although the country has adopted a good legal framework to protect whistleblowers, it is still not implemented properly; there were no awareness-raising activities and the number of filed reports to the respective bodies was very low<sup>[2]</sup>.

The indicator **Journalistic profession, standards and protection** scores a risk of 30%. Journalists and

their associations are much freer and are not subject to political pressures in comparison to the period before 2016. Also, the number of serious physical attacks on journalists and the media is lower compared to the past years[3] and there were no killings, arbitrary arrests or imprisonments of journalists. The protection of journalistic sources is recognised and is mainly respected in practise and the data protection law incorporates the derogation regarding freedom of expression and journalistic activities. Several risks are still present: there is no anti-SLAPP framework, the journalists' working conditions are very unfavourable[4], online harassment and hate speech against journalists have increased and redress mechanisms for this problem are weak or inefficient[5].

The risk is lowest (15%) for the **Independence and effectiveness of the media authority**. The appointment procedures for its members are designed to minimise the risk of interference, its competences and sanctioning powers are clearly defined, appeal mechanisms exist and are quite effective. The general assessment is that the regulator used its powers in an independent and transparent manner. It is a public body open for cooperation with the CSOs and other stakeholders, especially in its efforts to increase media literacy among citizens and to improve the access to the media for people with sensory impairments. Still, risks exist because from 2018 onwards, the Government allocated less funds to the regulator than the envisaged percentage in the Law for the work of the regulator and the procedure for appointing new members of the Council was blocked in the Parliament due to disagreement among the main political parties.

The indicator **Universal reach of traditional media and access to the Internet** scores at 46%. The universal coverage of the PSM services is legally guaranteed and their transmission is secured through DTT transmitters, cable networks and IPTV platforms. According to the State Statistical Office the broadband internet is widely available – nearly 80% of the total number of households have access to internet, while 70% to fixed broadband connection[6]. However, the average Internet connection speed in North Macedonia is still much lower than in many other countries, which increases the risk measured for this indicator. According to the Worldwide Broadband Speed League 2020, North Macedonia is ranked at the 109th position, with a mean download speed of 11.48Mbps.

[1] For example, according to a comprehensive monitoring conducted in 2020 by the NGO Center for Civil Communications, out of 460 requests for access to documents from public institutions, only 60 did not provide at all or only partly provided the requested documents. After the lodged complaints to the Commission for Protection of the Right to Free Access to Information of Public Character, almost all these institutions positively answered and provided the requested documents. *Analysis of the Implementation Track Record for the New Law on Free Access to Public Information*, available: <https://www.ccc.org.mk/images/stories/aspen.pdf>

[2] According to an analysis published by the CSO Forum-CSID: citizens are not sufficiently aware that there is a legal right to report corruption to both public and private organisations; there is almost no will on the part of the authorities or companies to appoint internal persons to which the employees can report corruptive practises; while the Anti-Corruption Commission receives only few reports from whistleblowers (in 2019 the number was 12). *For whistleblowers to exist, there must be someone to hear them*, 360 stepeni, December 30th, 2019. Available at: <https://360stepeni.mk/za-da-ima-svirkachi-treba-da-ima-i-koj-da-gi-slushne/>

[3] For example, according to the Association of Journalists, in 2015 there were no threats to security, but there were 6 physical attacks on journalists, 3 cases of forced seizure of journalists' equipment and one physical attack on a media outlet, as well as 7 verbal attacks on journalists and media. See more: Indicators on the level of media freedom and journalists' safety, December 2016. Available at: <https://safejournalists.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Indicators-on-the-level-of-media-freedom-and-journalists-safety-2016.pdf>

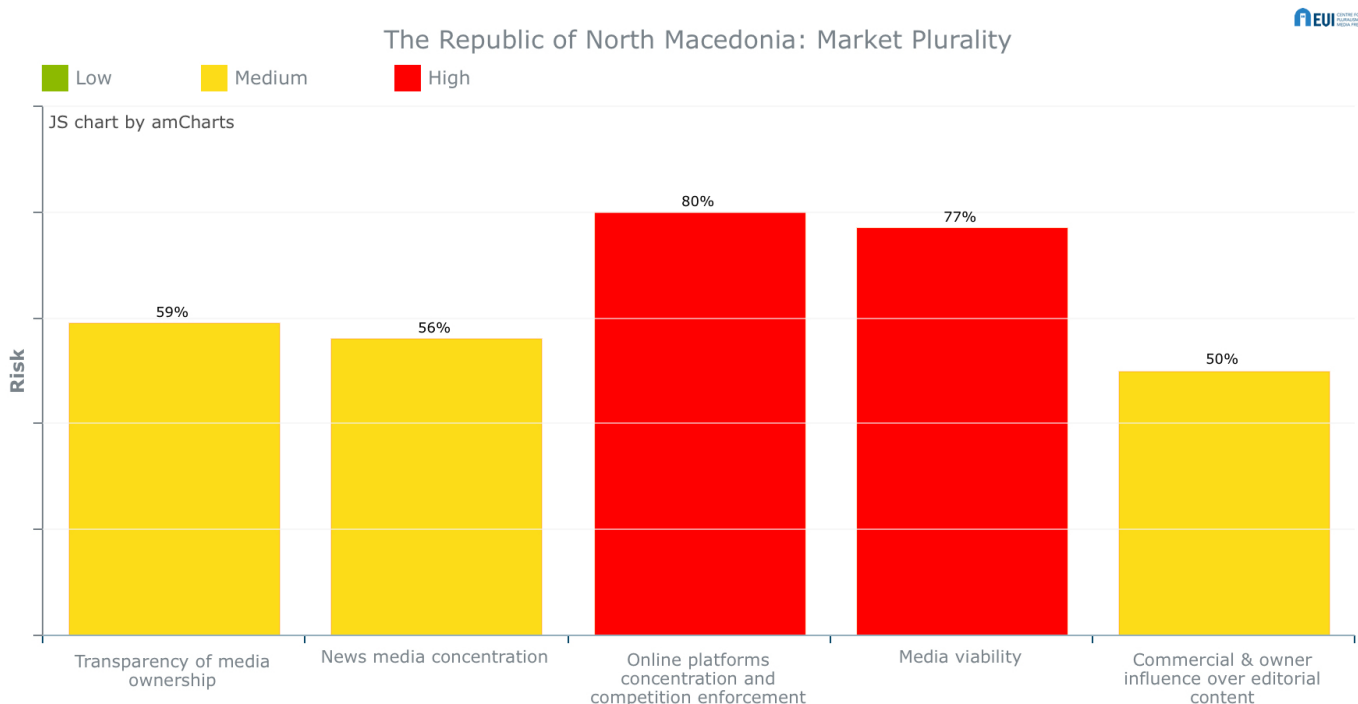
[4] Based on a survey conducted in June 2020 among 150 journalists and media workers, the Independent Union of Journalists and Media Workers stated that: most of the journalists earn between 250 and 350 euros, 17% answered that their salary was reduced, 73% answered that they need additional financial help, 48% that they need psychological support and 62% that this way of life and work affects their mental health. *Media owners not interested in talking about workers' rights*. Available at: <https://360stepeni.mk/ssnm-mediumskite-rabotnitsi-na-udar-od-korona-krizata-gazdite-nezainteresirani-da-zboruvaat-za-toa/>

[5] “This causes investigations to take too long even when it comes to obvious cases that can be easily proven. For example, former AJM President Naser Selmani received threatening messages on Facebook. The person who threatened even publicly admitted that he did it, but the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Ministry of Interior cannot clear up this case even after a year and a half. This inefficiency of the institutions leads to a situation where attackers are encouraged to attack journalists because they know that justice will probably never reach them.” Interview with Dragan Sekulovski, Executive Director of the Association of Journalists of Macedonia, conducted on November 17th, 2020.

[6] State Statistical Office, Usage of information and communication technologies in households and by individuals, 2020. Available at: [https://www.stat.gov.mk/pdf/2020/8.1.20.31\\_mk.pdf](https://www.stat.gov.mk/pdf/2020/8.1.20.31_mk.pdf)

### 3.2. Market Plurality (64% - medium risk)

The Market Plurality area focuses on the economic risks to media pluralism, deriving from lack of transparency and concentration of ownership, sustainability of the media industry, exposure of journalism to commercial interests. The first indicator examines the existence and effectiveness of provisions on transparency of media ownership. Lack of competition and external pluralism is assessed separately for the news media (production of the news) and for the online platforms (gateways to the news), considering separately horizontal and cross-media concentration; the concentration of online advertising market; and the role of competition enforcement. The indicator on media viability measures the trend of revenues and employment, in relation with GDP trends. The last indicator aims to assess risks to market plurality posed by business interests on production of editorial content, both from commercial and owners influence



The indicator on **Transparency of media ownership** scored with medium risk - 59%. Although the Law on Media 2013 contains obligations for ownership transparency of the audiovisual and print media, there is no

legal obligation for digital news media<sup>[1]</sup>. Ownership data is regularly published by the audiovisual and print media, and the regulatory body may impose sanctions in case of non-compliance. Also, most of the members of the voluntary Registry of Professional Online Media in the country comply with their ethical obligation to publish such data on their websites. What was a risk with this indicator is that there was no explicit legal obligation for all media to disclose the names of the ultimate owners<sup>[2]</sup>.

The **News media concentration** indicator also scored with medium risk – 56%. Although the indicator scores a medium risk, a growing concern is linked to the fact that there are neither legal provisions that impose restrictions on the concentration of ownership for digital news media outlets, nor is there a relevant body that monitors this issue. The Law on Media No. 184/2013 contains detailed rules for the broadcasting sector and prohibits the concentration between broadcasting and daily newspapers. The body that monitors and sanctions the non-compliance with these rules is the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services. These legal provisions are assessed as very restrictive and obsolete; hence they present an obstacle to the development of the media sector which is very fragmented and economically unsustainable<sup>[3]</sup>.

The highest risk (80%) is scored for the indicator **Online platforms concentration and competition enforcement**, which stems primarily from the side-door access to information and the lack of competition and regulation tools to address this problem<sup>[4]</sup>. More specifically, a large part of the audience, especially younger groups, is being informed by their friends' posts on social networks, thus being highly exposed to misinformation, manipulations and fake news which spread during the pandemic. Next, digital news media face strong competition from news aggregators and social networks<sup>[5]</sup>, while there is no development in the competition and regulation policy to address these challenges. So far, there have been no cases in which the relations on the digital advertising market have been examined in terms of competition between the platforms and the digital news media.

Very high risk (77%) is scored also for the indicator **Media Viability**. It is certain that the economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has further contributed to declining revenues in all media sectors. However, it is difficult to assess the real risks in this domain due to the lack of precise data for the revenues in different media sectors. The available data for the audiovisual sector already indicated a decreasing trend - in 2019, it decreased by 0.76% compared to 2018, while in 2020 a bigger decline was expected due to the pandemic crisis.<sup>[6]</sup> The revenues of local broadcasting and daily newspapers are also in continuous decline. In the online sector as a whole there is an increase in advertising revenues; However, digital native news media attract less revenues than entertainment digital media, news aggregators and social networks. This negatively reflects on the already poor economic status of journalists<sup>[7]</sup>. The unions reported about salary cuts in some media outlets (up to 30%), but the support measures during the pandemic appear to have eased the situation<sup>[8]</sup>.

The indicator **Commercial & owner influence over editorial content** scores at 50%. The Law on Media No. 184/2013 does include provisions which protect the working position of the journalists<sup>[9]</sup>, but, in practice, most journalists work in insecure and precarious conditions, sometimes journalists do not even have a signed work contract. Media are also obliged to ask the newsroom for opinion before the appointment of editor-in-chiefs and to adopt a general act which regulates the relations between media publisher, editors, and journalists. Only few private media comply with this obligation. The rules of the Code of Journalists are designed to prevent commercial and business influences on journalists. However, it often happens that, in practice, owners' commercial interests play a decisive role in shaping the editorial policy.

<sup>[1]</sup> The first version of the Law on Media from November 2013 also covered online media, but the

journalistic and media community took the position that they should not be subject to media legislation due to the possibility for the Government to use the law to put pressure on critical online journalism. Today, online media are subject to strong self-regulation, a Register of Professional Media has been established and guidelines for ethical reporting of online media have been adopted which contain an obligation for transparency of the ownership of online media. See Law No. 184/2013, [https://avmu.mk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/LAW\\_ON\\_MEDIA\\_as\\_published\\_in\\_the\\_Official\\_Journal.pdf](https://avmu.mk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/LAW_ON_MEDIA_as_published_in_the_Official_Journal.pdf)

[2] The media regulator itself investigated available data in the Central Registry and published the data about ultimate owners of the audiovisual media on its web site. This risk will be reduced in future because on January 27, 2021, the Central Registry of RNM established a Registry of Real (including ultimate) Owners. All legal entities, including the private media, are obliged to submit data in this Registry.

[3] For example, at the television market, there are 45 private TV stations, and the total revenues in 2019 were 2,289.04 million denars. The market share of the Top 4 TV stations amounted to a total of 1,794.86 million denars, which is 78,4% of the total revenues. On the other side, the audience share of the top 4 TV stations in 2020 was 47.9% (Source: Nielsen Audience Measurement). On the radio market, there are 68 radio stations, the total revenues in 2019 were 143.91 million denars, while the market share of the top 4 radio stations was 62.58 million denars, which is 43,5% of the total revenues in the sector. There are no measurements for the radio audience in the country.

[4] This is elaborated in more details in Chapter 4. Pluralism in the online environment: assessment of the risks.

[5] According to a study conducted by the RESIS Institute for the needs of the media regulator, the estimation is "that of the total budget for digital marketing in the country, almost half is distributed among domestic online portals, while the other half flows out to Google and Facebook". *The Impact of the new media on the formation of public opinion and on the operation of traditional media*, May 2020. Available at: <https://resis.mk/attach/Vlijanieto-na-novite-mediumi-vrz-formiranje-na-javnostno-misljenje-2020.pdf>

[6] A study commissioned by the regulator concludes that in 2020 the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic caused significant cuts in advertising budgets and that national television stations themselves stated that advertising revenues in 2020 had decreased by about 30% in relation to 2019. *Study to determine the justification for announcing a public competition for granting a license for television broadcasting at the state level through digital terrestrial multiplex*, December 2020. Available at: <https://avmu.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Studija-za-utvrdivanje-na-opravnost-za-objavivanje-javen-konkurs-za-dozvola-za-TV-na-drzavno-nivo.pdf>

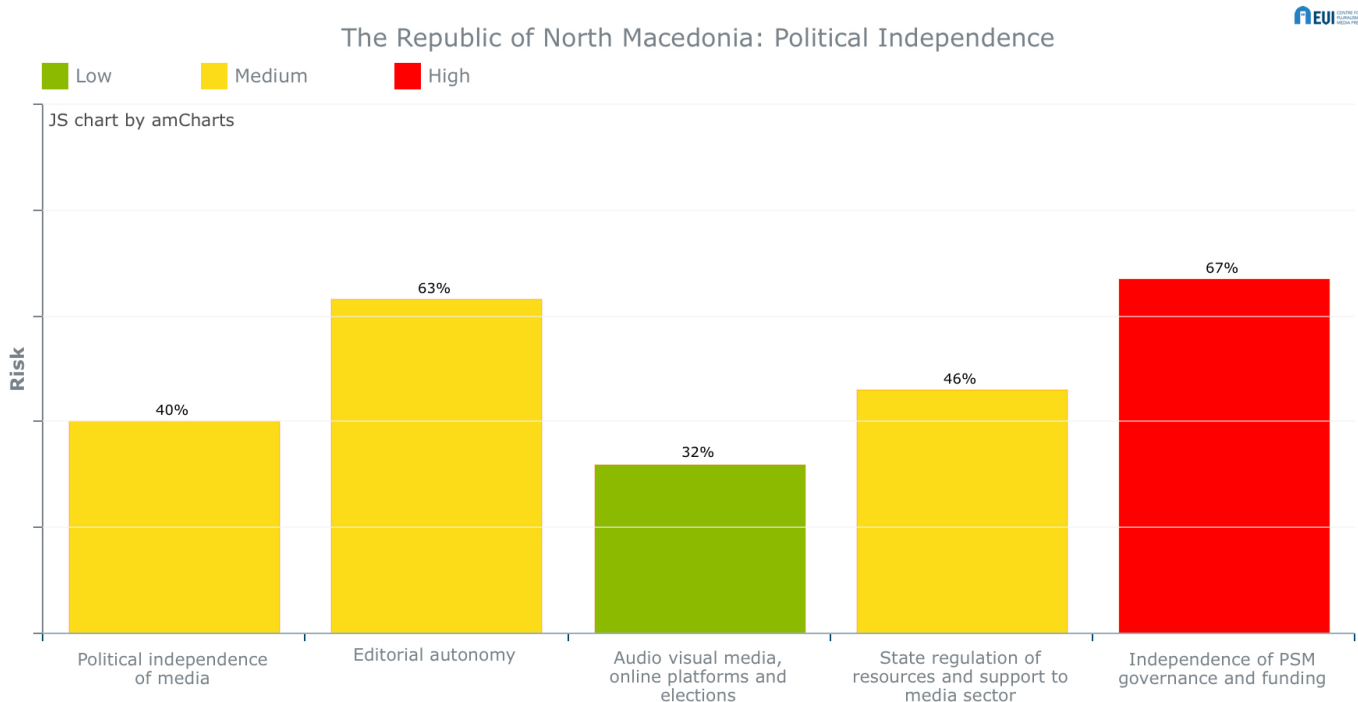
[7] There is no precise data on the total number of employed journalists in the country, but according to the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, the audiovisual sector alone employs about 1,061 journalists and editors, so together with those working for various print and online media, the total number is estimated to 1,300 journalists.

[8] For example, the Government issued a Decree on reimbursement of contributions to the salaries of journalists employed in the media, as well as a Decree on covering a part of the salary of each employed journalist in the amount of 14,000 denars. But those measures were of limited duration, so it remains to be analysed to what extent these measures improved the overall situation of the media. Interview with Darko Duridanski, representative of the Independent Union of Journalists and Media Workers, conducted on October 19th, 2020

[9] Article 11 of the Law on Media 2013 stipulates that the employment contract of the journalist may not be terminated, his/her salary may not be decreased or his/her position in the Editorial Board or Desk may not be changed, or his/her other rights determined in the Labour law may not be reduced due to the expression of his/her position, in case it is in accordance with the professional rules of journalism.

### 3.3. Political Independence (50% - medium risk)

The Political Independence indicators assess the existence and effectiveness of regulatory and self-regulatory safeguards against political bias and political influences over news production, distribution and access. More specifically, the area seeks to evaluate the influence of the State and, more generally, of political power over the functioning of the media market and the independence of public service media. Furthermore, the area is concerned with the existence and effectiveness of (self)regulation in ensuring editorial independence and availability of plural political information and viewpoints, in particular during electoral periods.



The indicator **Political independence of media** is scored at 40% risk. Legal provisions to prevent a conflict of interest between media owners and state officials, party groups and politicians exist only for the audiovisual media. From a formal point of view, there is no visible conflict of interest, i.e. examples of media owners being members of political parties are rare, so the risk here is not very high. However, the owners of some of the most influential media outlets have been establishing ever since various types of connections with the (ruling) political parties in order to achieve their interests, so political parallelism is still a typical feature of the media system[1].

The indicator – **Editorial Autonomy**, is scored at 63%, at the limit between medium and high risk. Legal safeguards aimed at preventing political influence on the appointment of editors in audiovisual and print media exist[2], while for the audiovisual media the independence of editorial policy is one of the basic principles stipulated in the Law[3]. However, it is commonly known that editors-in-chiefs of most influential media are in close affiliation with media owners and pursue their political and business interests. The Code of Journalists contains rules according to which the distance from political actors is binding on journalists, but this provision is often violated, especially by online media.[4]

The indicator **Audiovisual media, online platforms and elections** is assessed with the lowest risk of 32% in this area. The law imposes precise obligations to the public broadcaster to present different political views and attitudes during and outside the election process. On one hand, the news programmes of the public broadcaster have been significantly improved and have not been subject to political influence in the last few

years[5], although the PBS still lacks analytical and critical approach in both daily news and current affairs programmes. On the other hand, commercial broadcasters failed to reflect political pluralism during the parliamentary elections in 2020[6]. A serious risk here is that the existing legal rules for the allocation of party-political advertising do not provide equal conditions for all political contenders. Another risk is the absence of transparency of political advertising on online platforms.

**State regulation of resources and support to media sector** is assessed with 46%. The spectrum allocation is well regulated in the law and effectively managed by the regulator. The Government is implementing a programme to support print media: in 2020, 11 daily and weekly newspapers were awarded a total of 30 million denars (aprox. 484,000 euros)[7]. In order to mitigate the effects of the pandemic, the Government provided direct subsidies to all media for social security contributions to the salaries of journalists and media workers. In addition, indirect subsidies were introduced for audiovisual media[8]. State advertising is not appropriately regulated and in 2020 the Government still refrained from this practise, which was not the case with the local municipalities[9].

The highest risk (67%) is assessed for the **Independence of PSM governance and funding**. In the past years, the election of its management and supervisory bodies was highly influenced by the ruling parties. Therefore, the procedure for their appointment was improved, but it was locked in the Parliament, due to the lack of 'political' consensus. The funding of the PBS is still not securing its stability and independence. The budget allocated to PBS was eventually reduced to around 0,5%, although the necessary amount for its efficient functioning was estimated to be 1%. As a result, the revenues of the public broadcasting service have been declining for the past five years, and in 2020 they were reduced by about 5.7 million euros compared to 2015.[10]

[1] The issue of political parallelism has been subject of several studies published over the past years. For example, see more in: Macedonian Institute for Media, *Ownership and Financial Models of most Influential TV Channels in Macedonia, Croatia and Slovenia*, 2017; Micevski, I. and Trpevska, S. 'What the Macedonian phone-tapping scandal tells us about clientelism in the media', in *International Journal of Digital Television*, 6(3), 2015; Trpevska, S., 'Country report for Macedonia', in *Media Ownership and its Impact on Media Independence and Pluralism*, Peace Institute, Ljubljana, 2004.

[2] Article 10 of the Law on Media 2013 stipulates that the media publisher is obliged to adopt a general act which will specifically regulate: the composition of the Editorial Board; rights and obligations of the Editor-in-Chief, the editors and the journalists; the mutual rights and obligations between the media publisher, the Editor-in-Chief, the editors and the journalists; the manner and procedure for appointing and dismissing the Editor-in-Chief. In addition, Article 8 of the same Law stipulates that before the appointment or dismissal of the Editor-in-Chief the media publisher is obliged to ask the Editorial Board for opinion.

[3] Article 61 of the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services 2013 stipulates that 'autonomy, independence and accountability of editors, journalists and other authors involved in the creation of programmes and editorial policy' is one of the basic principles in conducting broadcasting activity.

[4] The Complaints Commission of the Council for Media Ethics has received around 140 complaints in 2020, out of which around 10% were related to the violation of Article 14 of the Code which reads: 'Reporting on political processes, especially elections, must be impartial and balanced. The journalist must make professional distance from the political entities.'

[5] According to the monitoring conducted by the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services of the media coverage of the election campaign in 2020, 'the four programme services of the Public Broadcasting Service, generally provided balance in the news by fulfilling the double formula for dividing the time in the news programmes.' Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, *Report from the election media representation* (June 24 – July 12, 2020). Available at: <https://avmu.mk/%d0%b8%d0%b7%d0%b2%d0%b5%d1%88%d1%82%d0%b0%d0%b8-%d0%be%d0%b4>

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[6] In its monitoring, the regulator determined that during the election campaign in 2020 ‘none of the commercial televisions managed to fully implement the proportional reporting principle based on the number of confirmed candidates’ lists and the actual intensity of the campaign. Some of the televisions made efforts to report about a larger number of campaign participants, while others concentrated on just a few of them.’ Ibid.

[7] Following the remark of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption that the criteria for distribution of subsidies are not precise enough and allow an inappropriate use of money, the print media that received support in 2020 will have to submit a report on the use of money to the Government. Prisma, *Greater Accountability for Newspaper Subsidies*, 5 February 2021. Available at: <https://prizma.mk/pogolema-otchetnost-za-vesnikarskite-subventsii/>

[8] The Government passed several decrees according to which: private televisions which transmitted via DT multiplex were exempted from paying the transmission costs for the whole of 2020; the radio stations were exempted from paying the fee for radio frequencies and for broadcasting the programmes through the network of the public enterprise Macedonian Broadcasting. The regulatory body has also decided to reimburse the expenses for the licence fee for 2019 and 2020 to all radio and television stations.

[9] At local level, municipalities and public enterprises allocate funds to the local private media for services such as: production of current-affairs, PR services etc., which certainly have influence on their editorial policy. Interview with Dragan Sekulovski, Association of Journalists of Macedonia, November 17th, 2020.

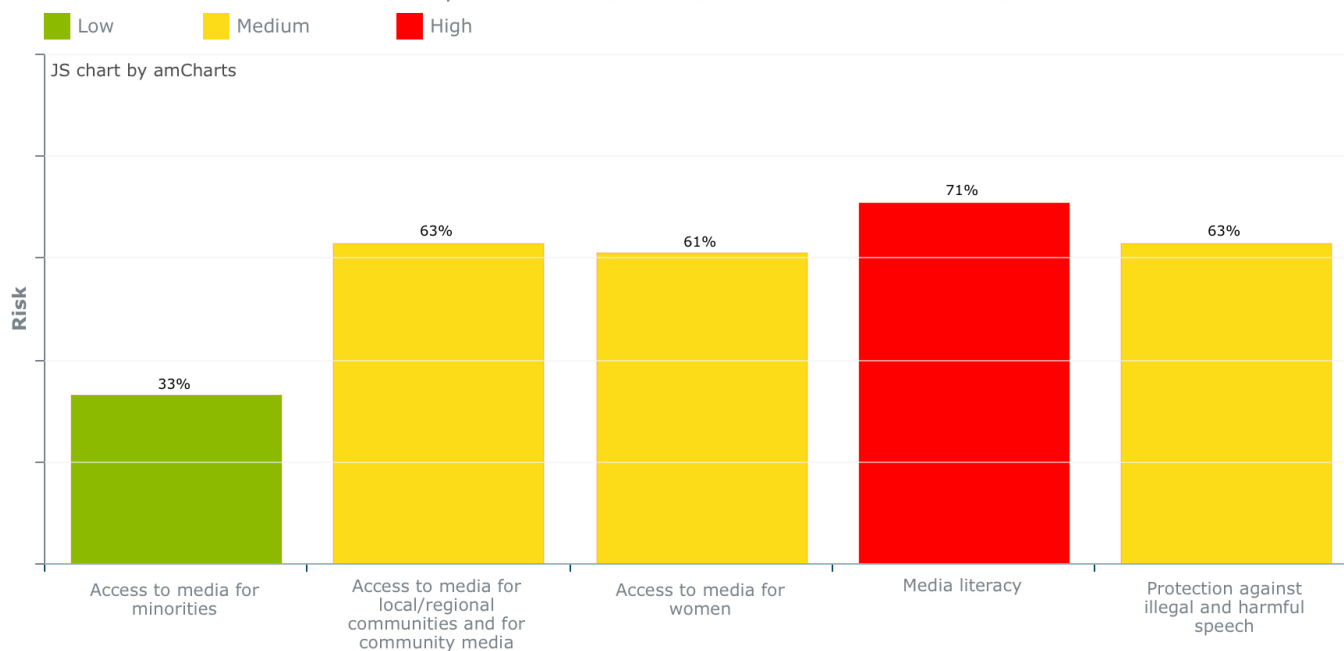
[10] For 2021, the Ministry of Information Society and Administration allocated 670.5 million denars (10.9 million euros) from the state Budget for the Macedonian Radio and Television. This is a decrease of 223.5 million denars (3.6 million euros), compared to 894 million denars (14.5 million euros) which were allocated for the public service media in 2020. This decision of the Government is contrary to Article 45 of the adopted amendment to the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, which states that, starting from 2021, 1% of the total amount of revenues will be allocated in the Budget for the public broadcaster, for the public transmitting enterprise and for the media regulator. Media Reforms Observatory, MRT with reduced 3.6 million euros in the draft budget for 2021, November 24th, 2020. Available at: <https://mediaobservatorium.mk/mrt-so-skrateni-3-6-milioni-evra-vo-predlog-budhetot-za-2021-godina/>

### **3.4. Social Inclusiveness (58% - medium risk)**

*The Social Inclusiveness area focuses on the access to media by specific groups in society: minorities, local and regional communities, women and people with disabilities. It also examines the country’s media literacy environment, including the digital skills of the overall population. In addition, for the 2021 edition of the MPM, a new indicator has been added to the Social Inclusiveness area in order to assess new challenges raising from the uses of digital technologies: Protection against illegal and harmful speech. Due to this modification of the indicators, comparison with previous editions of the MPM should be handled with extreme care.*



## The Republic of North Macedonia: Social Inclusiveness



The indicator on **Access to media for minorities** scored 33%, thus presenting the lowest risk in this group. The Law does guarantee to legally recognised minorities access to the airtime of PBS, but in practice the programme departments of the smaller ethnic communities (Romani, Serbs, Turks, Vlachs, Bosnians) lack technical and human resources as well as sufficient airtime on the public television to fulfil their informative and cultural functions. The same applies to the access of smaller ethnic communities to private TV and radio stations.<sup>[1]</sup> The media regulator has a developed policy framework for increasing the access of people with disabilities to audiovisual programmes and has so far implemented a range of activities. Some forms of access to media services such as subtitles and signing are frequently used, although there is still room for improvement. Audio descriptions do not exist at all.

There is a medium risk (63%) in the indicator **Access to media for local/regional communities and for community media**, primarily due to the economic unsustainability of regional and local media in the overly fragmented audiovisual market in which only national televisions are profitable. This negatively reflects on the programme diversity and especially on the quality of information about regional and local events. In addition, the risk is high due to the poor development of community media in the country and the lack of mechanisms for financial support for this media sector.

With a similar level of risk (61%) is the third indicator in this group - **Access to media for women**. The issue of gender equality in the media sector does not seem to be given enough attention either in the public broadcasting service or in the commercial audiovisual sector. According to the data published by the media regulator, women are less employed in editorial or managerial positions than their male colleagues.<sup>[2]</sup> There is no recent research data on the representation of women in the news and information programmes, but according to some experts, women are still less represented in the news and daily news programmes than men.<sup>[3]</sup>

The highest risk (71%) within this area is estimated for the indicator **Media Literacy** - primarily because there is still no comprehensive media literacy policy at state level; media literacy is not included in the formal education process and there are no institutional measures aiming at improving media and digital literacy skills among various segments of the population. A range of initiatives have been implemented by the CSOs which are aimed at increasing the level of media literacy, but mostly among younger age groups. The level of media and digital literacy among the population is still quite low<sup>[4]</sup>. Of particular importance are the activities of the regulatory body within the Media Literacy Network, which brings together over 60 members -

institutions, NGOs, research organisations, media and other organisations.

The total estimated risk for the indicator **Protection against illegal and harmful speech** is 63%. There are several initiatives to combat disinformation and hate speech in the country<sup>[5]</sup>, but they are only partially effective. The spread of disinformation and other harmful content on social networks was particularly intensified in connection with the pandemic. This had negative consequences on a large part of the population resulting in a mass disbelief regarding the seriousness of the infection and non-observance of the prescribed measures. The legal framework for the prevention of hate speech is comprehensive, but there are many problems in its application in the online sphere, where hate speech and other harmful content is particularly widespread.

[1] At the end of 2020, there were a total of 45 private TV and 67 private radio stations in the country. Out of them 19 TV stations and 14 radio stations broadcast programmes in some of the languages of the ethnic communities in the country. The Albanian ethnic community has the biggest access to the commercial audiovisual sector, while the smaller ethnic communities (Turks, Romani, Vlach, Serbs and Bosnians) almost do not have commercial TV and radio stations that broadcast programmes in their languages.

[2] According to the analysis of the employees' structure in the broadcasting organisations, published by the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, in all private TV companies in the country, among the 45 individuals on top management positions, 11 (32.4%) were women. In the public service, out of four individuals in top management positions, one is a woman. *Employee structure in audio and audiovisual media industry in 2019, Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services*. Available at: <https://avmu.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Struktura-na-vrabotenite-vo-2019-godina.pdf>

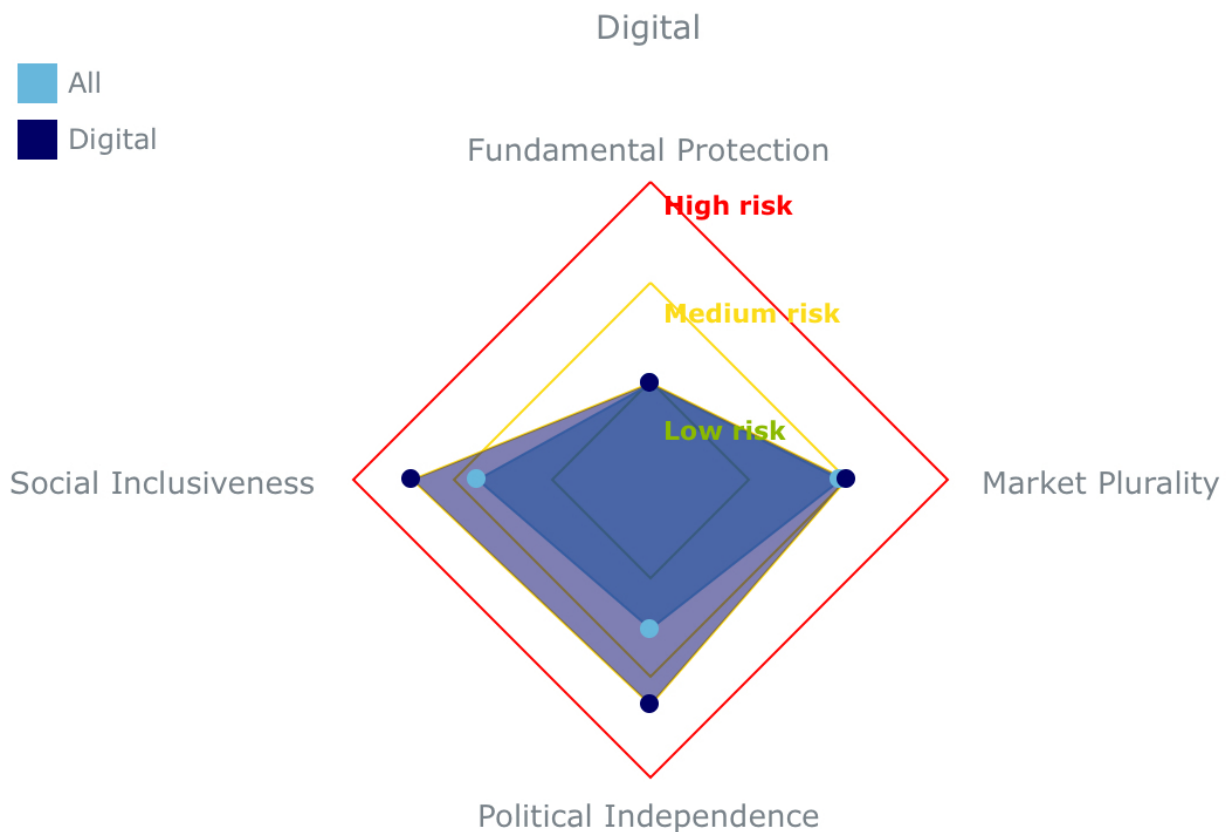
[3] According to experts, public space has long seemed to belong to men, as the media tend to invite more male experts in programmes than women. They do not pay enough attention to this issue, but generally rely often on those experts who are more easily accessible to them. Interview with Emilija Petreska Kamenjarova, Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, conducted on December 6th, 2020.

[4] According to the data published by Eurostat, the percentage of individuals who had basic or above basic digital skills in North Macedonia was 32%, in 2019, while the percentage of individuals who had low overall digital skills was 50%. Available at: [https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=isoc\\_sk\\_dskl\\_i&lang=en](https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=isoc_sk_dskl_i&lang=en)

[5] There are several online platforms and fact-checking services (<https://stopdezinformacii.mk/>, <http://proverkanafakti.mk/>, <https://vistinomer.mk/>, <https://truthmeter.mk/> <https://crithink.mk/>), numerous toolkits and guidelines aimed at improving the skills and capacity of the population to recognise disinformation etc.

## 4. Pluralism in the online environment: assessment of the risks

### The Republic of North Macedonia: Media Pluralism Risk Areas



JS chart by amCharts



The risks to media pluralism in the digital sphere greatly affect the overall picture of media pluralism in North Macedonia. For many challenges and problems in the new technological milieu, at present, regulatory policy does not have an appropriate response. Professional standards in traditional and online news media are improving, but audiences are increasingly using social media as a source of information, especially the youngest generations. Not only are they largely exposed to manipulation, disinformation, and other harmful content, but also their ability to critically assess the credibility of various sources is very low. The quality of formal education is a long-term solution, but the reforms of the educational system are being late, and while the numerous activities of the CSOs in the field of media literacy are useful, they cannot fundamentally change the picture.

**Fundamental Protection.** There is no separate law which regulates freedom of expression online. Legal guarantees in the Constitution and relevant laws are in line with international standards and also refer to freedom of expression online. There were no registered cases of arbitrary restriction of freedom of expression online, neither from the state nor from the ISPs and online platforms. The domestic fact checking services which cooperate with global social platforms are transparent about the cases of filtering/removal of disinformation or other harmful content. The new Law on Personal Data Protection, which was adopted in February 2020, is aligned with the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation, including the derogation ensuring the proper exercise of the journalistic protection. The Law on Electronic Communications 2018 contains clear obligations for Electronic Telecommunications Operators and ISPs in terms of data retention and, in practice, there were no cases of interference with the right to private and family life or the right to freedom of expression. There are regulatory safeguards regarding net neutrality,

and they are effectively implemented in practice by the ISPs. Certain risks in this area exist in terms of the following issues: firstly, the Directive (EU) 2016/680<sup>[1]</sup> which has not been transposed yet in the national legislation;<sup>[2]</sup> secondly, the ineffectiveness of the institutions in addressing the cases of online harassment and hate speech against journalists which have increased over the past year; finally, the significant percentage of households in the country that still do not have access to broadband internet at home<sup>[3]</sup> and the average Internet connection speed in the country being quite low<sup>[4]</sup>.

**Market Plurality.** Digital news media outlets are not legally obliged to disclose ownership data<sup>[5]</sup>, but there is a strong self-regulatory mechanism obliging more than 140 members of the voluntary Registry of Professional Online Media to publish such data on their web sites<sup>[6]</sup>. However, there are still digital news media which are not members of this Registry and do not publish ownership data<sup>[7]</sup>. Moreover, the legislation neither imposes restrictions on the concentration of ownership of digital media, nor is there a relevant body that monitors this issue. It is difficult to assess the real risks in this domain due to the lack of a reliable data collection system, but according to an analysis published by the media regulator certain trends can be identified. The digital news media sector is growing rapidly, but is also fragmented and economically weak, as much of the advertising revenue goes to global social networks and search engines<sup>[8]</sup>. The market shares of the Top 4 digital native news media are estimated to around 40% of the total revenues in the online sector, while the audience share of the Top 4 is estimated to around 25%<sup>[9]</sup>. There are no recorded cases of owners owning news media in all different media sectors. On the one hand, intermediaries (news aggregators and social networks) are becoming the main locations where people access news online<sup>[10]</sup>, hence they attract less revenues than news aggregators and social networks. On the other hand, the competition and regulation policy are not developed to address the problem of unfair competition between different players in the new digital ecosystem of media. There are no public support schemes for digital native news media in the country. The editorial independence of digital native news media was a serious problem, but self-regulation is constantly improving, and, in December 2020, the Council for Media Ethics adopted Guidelines for Ethical Reporting of the Online Media, which will function as a self-regulatory act of the members of the voluntary Register of Professional Online Media.

**Political Independence.** There are no legal provisions to prevent a conflict of interest between owners of digital native news media and politicians or party groups, which is a serious risk, since there have been several cases of media outlets being directly or indirectly connected to political parties which is evidently reflected on their editorial policy<sup>[11]</sup>. The Code of Journalists contains provisions according to which the distance from political actors is binding on journalists, but this standard is often violated, especially by online media. That is why the Council of Media Ethics and the Association of Journalists have joined their efforts to strengthen the implementation of ethical and professional standards in the online media, hence the Register of Professional Media was established a year ago, which today has about 140 members. Also, Guidelines for ethical reporting of online media were adopted in December 2020 which contain detailed explanations on how journalists should apply the basic ethical standards in the online environment. The Electoral Code 2020 does contain rules aimed at ensuring transparency of political advertising in digital native media outlets, but there are no explicit and clear provisions for political advertising on social platforms. Furthermore, even though political parties are obliged to keep and submit records on their campaign spending, in practice, they do not publish precise data on campaign spending on online platforms<sup>[12]</sup>. The Law does not contain any provisions related to the fulfilment of the PSM public service mission in the online sphere. Also, there is no analysis conducted by the public institutions which clearly connects the public service obligations of the PSM with the amount of funding necessary to fulfil these obligations.

**Social Inclusiveness.** The Ministry of Education and Science announced comprehensive reforms of the

primary and secondary education, in which one of the strategic goals will be to develop students' media and information literacy skills. The level of media and digital literacy among the population is assessed as quite low according to official statistics.[13] A recent research study conducted at national level determined that younger generations possess far greater digital skills and abilities than older groups in society, but the functional literacy skills are lacking in all age groups.[14] The same study also determined that the audience recognises different types of manipulative or potentially harmful content on social networks[15]. The spread of disinformation and hate speech on social networks escalated during the pandemic crisis. The negative consequences were obvious through distrust and lack of support of governmental regulations and measures. During the pandemic outbreak and during the parliamentary elections in 2020, NGOs that monitor hate speech online registered an increasing number of such cases on social networks, especially on ethnic, religious, and political grounds[16]. The legal framework for the prevention of hate speech is comprehensive, but there are many problems in its application in the online sphere.

[1] The full name of this act is: Directive (EU) 2016/680 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by competent authorities for the purposes of prevention, investigation, detection or prosecution of criminal offences or the execution of criminal penalties, and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Council Framework Decision 2008/977/JHA.

[2] The competent authorities have started a process of transposition of the Directive in the autumn of 2020. However, the experts are still not informed whether this would be a separate legal act, or the provisions of the Directive will be incorporated in an already existing law, such as the Law on the Agency for National Security. Interview with Elena Stojanovska, Personal data protection expert (Metamorphosis Foundation), conducted on December 1st, 2020.

[3] According to the data of the State Statistical Office, in the first quarter of 2020, 79.9% of the households had access to the Internet at home. In this number, 87.8% were households with broadband connection.

[4] According to the Worldwide broadband speed league 2020, the mean download speed in North Macedonia is 11.48Mbps, while the country is ranked at 109-th place.

[5] In 2013, the first draft of the Law on Media also contained obligations for disclosure of ownership for digital news media. However, the prevailing attitude among the journalists' associations was that digital news media should not be regulated by Law, but only with self-regulatory codes. Therefore, the Government withdrew that proposal and today the Law on Media only contains provisions related to broadcast and print media. This is still the dominant attitude of the Association of Journalists.

[6] The Council of Media Ethics has adopted in December 2020 the Guidelines for Ethical Reporting of Online Media which also contain obligations for the disclosure of ownership data. The Guidelines are available at:

<https://semm.mk/en/news/press-releases/879-osce-mission-to-skopje-and-council-of-media-ethics-launch-first-ever-ethical-guidelines-for-online-media-in-north-macedonia>

[7] It seems that this risk will be overcome in 2021 with the establishment of the Registry of Real Owners at the Central Registry of RNM in which all legal entities, including the digital news media, will be obliged to submit data on real owners.

[8] In the online sector, there are more than 200 media outlets. There are no exact figures about the revenues in the online sector in 2020. According to some estimations for 2019 the total revenues in the online sector are estimated at 220 million denars, while the market share of the top 4 digital news was around 92.6 million denars, or 42,1% of the total revenues in the online sector. Source: *The Impact of new media on the public opinion and on the operation of traditional media*, Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, 2020. Available at: <https://resis.mk/attach/Vlijanieto-na-novite-mediumi-vrz-formiranjeto-na-javnoto-mislenje-2020.pdf>

[9] For example, the available data from the recently launched measurement system Dotmetrics indicates that the total page view share (PVS) of the Top 4 online news media in the country was 26.54%.

[10] A telephone survey conducted in January 2020 by the RESIS Institute (for the study commissioned by the media regulator) found that television and the Internet, as sources of information, are equal in terms of frequency of use - both television and the Internet (the previous day) informed 76% of respondents. Other traditional media are significantly less used as a source of information on domestic events and current affairs - 20% were informed by radio, while only 17% by print media. Respondents who (for domestic events and current events) were informed on the Internet (76% in total) were asked to answer more specifically from which types of Internet sources. Posts on social networks are the main source of information about domestic events (89%), news aggregators are the second online location where the audience goes to be informed (55%), and the websites of domestic online portals provide direct information for 48% of the respondents. For information, the portals of the domestic televisions are visited by 37% of the respondents included in the telephone survey. Source: *The Impact of new media on the public opinion and on the operation of traditional media*, Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, 2020. Available at: <https://resis.mk/attach/Vlijanieto-na-novite-mediumi-vrz-formiranjeto-na-javnoto-mislenje-2020.pdf>

[11] There is a high risk here because several analyses and debates have shown that online media is under the strongest political influence, there are even direct links between political parties and some online media outlets. The most prominent example is the group of online media related to the opposition VMRO-DPMNE (Kurir, Republika, Infomax, Leader, Netpress, Express.MK, etc.). *The Political and Economic Basis of Media and Communication Models Spreading Disinformation and Hate Speech*, Macedonian Institute for Media, 2020. Available at: <https://mim.org.mk/attachments/article/1231/Resilience-research-publication-1-MK-ENG.pdf>

[12] The Election Code 2020 contains a separate chapter on financing the election campaign and transparency of campaign spending (articles 83-87). All political contenders are obliged to keep records and to submit reports with accompanying documentation to the State Electoral Commission, the State Audit Office, and the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption. In the financial reports of the political parties for the parliamentary elections in 2020, published on the State Audit Office web site, political parties have not reported separately about funds spent for political advertising on social networks.

[13] According to the data published by Eurostat, the percentage of individuals who had basic or above basic digital skills in North Macedonia was 32%, in 2019, while the percentage of individuals who had low overall digital skills was 50%. Available at: [https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=isoc\\_sk\\_dskl\\_i&lang=en](https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=isoc_sk_dskl_i&lang=en)

[14] *Mapping the levels of media literacy in the Republic of North Macedonia*, A research study conducted by RESIS Institute in September 2019 for the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services and OSCE Office in Skopje. Available at: <https://resis.mk/attach/mapiranje-na-nivoata-na-mediumska-pismenost-2019.pdf>

[15] What respondents have encountered (often or sometimes) on social networks in the last year are: constructed and false information that is deliberately disseminated for political and other purposes (61%); insults, humiliation, and threats on political grounds (58.8%), on ethnic or religious grounds (58.1%); and based on sexual orientation or gender identity (50.4%). Ibid, p.56.

[16] The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, *The pandemic has further increased hatred on social networks*, May 19, 2020. Available at: <https://mhc.org.mk/media/pandemi%20ata-ushte-pove%20ce-%20a-zgolemi-omrazata-na-soczi%20alnite-mrezhi/>

## 5. Conclusions

Compared to the first assessment of media pluralism in 2016, the situation in 2020 has significantly improved, because media freedoms are broader, journalists and their associations are not exposed to serious physical attacks and pressures as in the past, and the regulator is quite independent and more efficient. Nevertheless, some of the old risks are still present: the market is fragmented, most media are economically weak, and the working status of journalists is still unstable. The dominance of social networks has changed the patterns of news consumption. For most of the population, especially younger groups, social networks are the main source of information, so they are greatly exposed to disinformation and hate speech spreading there. This opens up new challenges for the regulatory policy whose development lags behind the technological advancements.

### **Fundamental Protection (32%)**

- To improve the journalists' working status and to strengthen the autonomy of newsrooms.
- The institutions should take measures to prevent online threats and harassment against journalists.
- To open a debate for developing an anti-SLAPP framework.

### **Market Plurality (64%)**

- To revise the rules on ownership concentration in order to address the detected risks.
- To develop competition and media policies to address the competition issues in the online media sector.

### **Political Independence (50%)**

- To review the provisions of the Electoral Code and other laws related to political advertising and to address the absence of transparency of party-political advertising on the online platforms.
- To develop a participatory model of the public service and to ensure stability and independence in its funding.

### **Social Inclusiveness (58%)**

- To develop policy measures to improve the access of minorities and local communities to media.
- To design a comprehensive media literacy policy at state level.
- To introduce appropriate and holistic measures for addressing hate speech and other harmful content online.

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## Annexe I. Country Team

First name	Last name	Position	Institution	MPM2021 CT Leader
<i>Snezana</i>	<i>Trpevska</i>	<i>Lead Researcher</i>	<i>Research Institute on Social Development - RESIS</i>	X
<i>Igor</i>	<i>Micevski</i>	<i>Researcher</i>	<i>Research Institute on Social Development - RESIS</i>	

## Annexe II. Group of Experts

The Group of Experts is composed of specialists with a substantial knowledge and recognized experience in the field of media. The role of the Group of Experts was to review the answers of the country team to 16 variables out of the 200 composing the MPM2021. Consulting the point of view of recognized experts aimed at maximizing the objectivity of the replies given to variables whose evaluation could be considered as subjective, and therefore to ensure the accuracy of the final results of the MPM. However, it is important to highlight that the final country report does not necessarily reflect the individual views of the experts who participated. It only represents the views of the national country team that carried out the data collection and authored the report.

First name	Last name	Position	Institution
<i>Vesna</i>	<i>Nikodinovska</i>	<i>Academic/NGO researcher</i>	<i>Macedonian Institute for Media</i>
<i>Marina</i>	<i>Tuneva</i>	<i>Representative of a publisher association</i>	<i>Council of Media Ethics</i>
<i>Dragan</i>	<i>Sekulovski</i>	<i>Representative of a journalist association</i>	<i>Association of Journalists of Macedonia</i>
<i>Magdalena</i>	<i>Davidovska Dogleva</i>	<i>Representative of media regulator</i>	<i>Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services</i>
<i>Dimitar</i>	<i>Micev</i>	<i>Representative of a broadcaster association</i>	<i>Association of regional and local media</i>
<i>Darko</i>	<i>Duridanski</i>	<i>Representative of trade union of journalists</i>	<i>Trade Union of Journalists and Media Workers</i>
<i>Blagoj</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Representative of an Internet Service Provider</i>	<i>Macedonian Telecom</i>

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