



ИЗВЕШТАЈ ОД СЛЕДЕЊЕТО НА МЕДИУМСКИТЕ СОДРЖИНИ

16 април - 7 мај 2016



Detailed Analysis
based on the monitoring of media content through the Rapid Response Media Mechanism
of the Institute of Communication Studies
(time-frame: 16th April – 7th May 2016)

9. 24 Vesti

(1) First week (16 – 22 April 2016)

In the monitored period, the *24 Vesti* television broadcaster aired 105 news segments related to political players, processes or situations. The most featured topics were the protests and citizens' rallies (15 segments), President Ivanov's blanket pardon, which provoked the protests (12 segments), the negotiations for a solution to the political crisis, which failed (11 segments), the cases of the Special Prosecutor's Office (7 segments), the preparations for the elections (6 segments), and other subject matters. In the reporting on these issues the broadcaster maintained an informative, analytical or critical approach to the political subjects.

Commentary and Opinions in the News: The broadcaster did not use commentarial elements, or took expressly favourable or hostile attitude towards the political subjects in its informative programming. The choice of subject matters and their coverage corresponded to current events in society, which were in the public interest.

(1) With a large number of news segments, there was intense coverage of topics related to the protests of the movement *Protestiram* and the association GDOM, as well as the Albanian opposition and the medical students. The reporting on all these events were comprehensive and neutral, with polling the participants and conveying differing position. There was coverage of the throwing of paint at the buildings from the Skopje 2014 project, without criticism by the broadcaster. Regarding the central rally of GDOM on 21 April, the most attention was given to the anti-EU and anti-NATO banners that appeared, which the organisers claimed had been planted.

(2) The broadcaster devoted considerable attention to other aspects of the blanket pardon, as the chief factor contributing to the worsening of the political crisis. It aired the demands to rescind the pardon, various subjects' comments on this act, as well as the solutions offered (17 April, 'Some of the legal experts contacted by *24 Vesti* claim that the solution may lie in the Constitutional Court'). The approach to this subject matter was generally critical (18 April, 'Was it in haste that President Gorge Ivanov made the decision to pardon another Fatime Fetaj, instead of the special prosecutor?'). On this subject, there was an off-colour caption noted (20 April, 'A flip-flopping president?').

(3) Although it aired a relatively small number of news segments on the subject of public debt (3 segments), the broadcaster maintained its typically critical view of the borrowing (19 April, 'By the end of this month there is no debt payment, and another borrowing has been scheduled for next Tuesday'). There was a strong critical view of the anticorruption commission expressed, of its work

in general (17 April, ‘The latest report of the Commission indicates that last year only one case of preventing corruption in politics was solved. Honest politicians or a failed mechanism to uncover corruption?’), and of the change in the head position, where Igor Tanturovski was appointed the new president (20 April, ‘Milenkov’s successor, on the other hand, is known as a donor to the VMRO-DPMNE campaign in the latest elections’).

(4) At a time when some of the other television broadcasters extensively promoted new projects for the development of agriculture announced by the president of VMRO-DPMNE Nikola Gruevski, the broadcaster, instead, conveyed the position of a union leader on the effects of the measures thus far (21 April, ‘The subsidies do not reach the real agricultural workers, accuses Riste Velkov, president of the Union of Agricultural Producers. According to him, instead of the subsidies fostering agricultural production, the situation in the field is different. Both agricultural areas and production are decreasing’).

Using Sources: In 42 news segments a single source was used, in 24 segments two or more sources with opposing views, and in 16 segments two or more sources whose positions are unanimous or neutral to one another. Ten news segments featured the opinions of analysts and experts, in 8 of which they were either the only source or the only analyst, in one segments there were two analysts with opposing views, and in another also two, but with similar positions.

Direct Addresses: The broadcaster aired a relatively small number of direct addresses, two each by the leaders of SDSM Zoran Zaev and of Dignity Stojanče Angelov, as well as one each by the presidents of the MR-DPA Ziadin Sela and of PEI Fiat Canoski, who spoke as the harmed party in the demolition of Kosmos.

Audio-visual Presentation: No manipulative audio-visual presentation was noted.

(2) Second week (23 – 28 April 2016)

During the monitored period between 23 and 28 April, the *24 Vesti* television broadcaster aired 92 news segments pertaining to political actors, processes or situations. The broadcaster gave the most attention to the protests (15 segments), President Ivanov’s blanket pardon (11 segments), the early elections (10 segments), the announcements of possible sanctions by the international community (7 segments), the possible economic consequences of the political crisis (7 segments), borrowing and public debt (4 segments), the Special Prosecutor’s Office (2 segments, with 2 additional segments on the death of Kosta Krpač), and other subject matters. In a number of segments two or more related topics overlapped (the elections, the blanket pardon, the protests, the sanctions, etc.). When reporting on these matters the broadcaster maintained a neutral or critical approach to the political subjects.

Commentary and Opinions in the News: In general, the television broadcaster did not employ commentarial elements in the news, nor did it express a favourable or belligerent position towards the political actors.

(1) President Ivanov’s blanket pardon of 56 individuals, which further complicated the political crisis, continued to be among the main topics covered by the media outlet. Moreover, it primarily aired criticisms of the decision and calls for its rescinding, by foreign and domestic factors (‘Ivanov maintains his silence on the demands to rescind the blanket pardon. Special Prosecutor Lenče Ristovska notified him that they are still awaiting his response as to where he received the information on the cases from’ (24 April)). The broadcaster consulted various experts on this issue suggesting solutions to the problem (‘While President Ivanov is asking for help from the parties on rescinding the blanket pardon, the expert community believes that he could rescind it in the same way as he issued it’ (24 April)). In the context of these events, there was also regular coverage of the prisoners’ demands to be pardoned, enforcing the critical effect of the media outlet on this

decision, suggesting inequality before the law ('Over a hundred prisoner have announced going on a hunger strike tomorrow on account of Ivanov's refusal to pardon them' (24 April)).

(2) The protests, which were directly caused by the decision to issue the blanket pardon and which continued in the monitored period, were also regularly covered and extensively reported on. The broadcaster approached this subject matter informatively and comprehensively, without featuring an express position. In the news segments, participants were not referred to as 'hooligans,' nor as 'demolishing' ('The Colourful Revolution has left a mark on the governmental institutions, the Government, as well as on most monuments from the Skopje 2014 project' (25 April)). However, strong criticism was aired after protesters had been arrested ('Students have been detained for practicing the freedom of opinion, whereas pardoned criminals walk free, the Student Plenum reacts' (28 April)). A rare indicator of taking a positive or a negative position on the protests and the counter-protests organised by the association GDOM was the reporting on interview with the former mediator in the political negotiations Peter Vanhoutte for the *Fokus* weekly ('Vanhoutte: The counter-protesters defend the ruling party' (28 April)), in which he stated that on the one side he saw a fight for the rule of law, and on the other merely nationalists and people defending the party in power.

(3) Although in the monitored period there were no specific announcement of sanctions by the international community against Macedonia because of the political crisis, and representatives of the European Union responded that for the time being the issue is in the area of speculations, the broadcaster dedicated great attention to this subject matter. It consulted various interlocutors and aired views on what may happen ('The European Union and the United States of America have instruments that would allow them to seek sanctions against individual politicians and institutions, according to experts' (23 April)), who would be affected ('The Economic Chamber fears that the sanctions from the European Union will affect business. Layoffs and losing foreign partners are possible' (26 April)), what would the consequences be ('According to the former Assembly President Stojan Andov, that would mean suspending the trade deals that Macedonia has with the countries of the Union' (23 April)), and other issues. It also reported on the other speculations regarding the consequences of the political crisis for the economy, as well as the possible devaluation of the denar, savings withdrawals, etc. It was conveyed that such fears arose among the public, but placating messages were aired as well ('The number of citizens who wish to or are interested whether to withdraw their savings is on the rise. But, according to the data from the National Bank, this number is inconsiderable' (27 April)).

Using Sources: In most news segments (43) a single source was used, followed by segments featuring two or more sources whose positions do not collide (19), and finally come the segments referring to sources with differing or opposing views (16). The broadcaster used expert or analysts' opinions in 8 segments, in 4 of which they were either the only source or the only analyst, in 3 segments they had opposing views, and in 1 they shared a single position. There was one case noted of manipulation with the sources: a 26 April segment was announced with 'analysts state,' and only one analyst was consulted.

Direct Addresses: Only three direct addresses by only two party leaders were aired: by Stojanče Angelov of *Dignity* (2 addresses) and by Fijat Canoski of PEI (1 address). There were no statements of the leaders of the major political parties.

Audiovisual Presentation: The instances of manipulative audiovisual presentation on this broadcaster are rare, but in this monitored week one was noted. In a 24 April news segment it stated 'The Macedonians from Melbourne demand Ivanov's resignation, express support for the SPO and the rule of law,' as if there were consensus among the Macedonian community there, which is not the case. The shot only shows a photograph of a dozen or so people protesting.

(3) Third week (2 – 7 May 2016)

During the reporting period between 2 and 7 May, the *24 Vesti* television broadcaster aired 87 news segments related to political actors, processes or situations. The broadcaster paid the most attention to the protests (12 segments), the issue of the early elections (7 segments), the parties' negotiation attempts (7 segments), the Special Prosecutor's Office, with a focus on the Kosta Krpač case (6 segments), the situation with the economy (6 segments), the public debt (4 segments), the blanket pardon and the demands of the prisoners at Idrizovo (4 segments), the media (3 segments), and other subject matters.

When reporting on these issues, the television broadcaster maintained a neutral or critical approach to the political subjects.

Commentary and Opinions in the News: The broadcaster generally did not use commentarial elements in the news, nor did it express a favourable or belligerent position to the political actors.

(1) In the current monitored period, frequent mentions of the SDSM party was noted, such as, for instance, placing it in context when reporting on other events, as the strike at the Greek company Aktor (4 May: 'The Aktor company was involved in an affair two years ago, when SDSM revealed that EUR 3.5 million were illegally withdrawn from the company account') and the strike at the Public Transport Enterprise (4 May: 'In May last year, on the other hand, a dozen or so drivers of the PTE parked the state buses in front of SDSM's headquarters in Bihačka Street'). The broadcaster also aired a statement by SDSM containing election promises (2 May: 'SDSM's programme envisions a system of decent, safe and humane workplaces for all workers in Macedonia'). Nevertheless, this was far from typical favouritism.

(2) The broadcaster reported neutrally, comprehensively and analytically on the development of the political crisis. At the forefront were the attempts of the representatives of the international community to stimulate finding a solution, the suggestions of what could be done, even by taking drastic measures (2 May: 'The European Commission does not specify which measures could be taken, but the warnings of possible sanctions are increasingly heard in the public, particularly after President Ivanov's decision to issue the blanket pardon'). It also reported on strong pressure, referring to secret sources (3 May: 'Deadlines grow tighter, diplomatic pressure grows... Diplomatic sources tell *24 Vesti* that the parties are very creative regarding a possible solution, but there is no shift towards a compromise for the time being'), and it aired the direct messages (5 May: 'The Netherlands, as President of the EU, sent a letter to the party leaders stating that they must fulfil the Pržino Agreement. It also indicates that the conditions for credible elections have not been met'), as well as the assessments of the international organisations (3 May: 'Experts indicate that the lack of vision on how to resolve the crisis corroborates the ICG's position that Macedonia may face more serious threats').

(3) Although they were the most featured topic, the reporting on the protests was informative and neutral, mainly by reporting live with an announcement where the next protest would be and what the key message is (5 May: 'With this the protesters sent a message that the fountain is red in the name of all the victims of the regime'). The broadcaster also reported on other aspects of this topic, such as the court proceedings against the arrested protesters, but also the guerrilla action against Mayor Talevski (5 May: 'A guerrilla action in Bitola—Congratulation on your pardon, mayor!'). The protests of *Protestiram* were more reported on than those of GDOM.

(4) The broadcaster offered neutral, comprehensive and analytical reporting on the development of the situation related to the early parliamentary elections. It informed on the deadlines for submitting applicants for electoral board members, as well as on the positions of the parties regarding their participation (6 May: 'VMRO-DPMNE does not exclude the possibility to participate in the elections alone, accompanied by the small satellite parties').

(5) The focus in the reporting on the work of the Special Prosecutor's Office was on two cases: the death of Kosta Krpač and the allegations against the Bitola Mayor Vladimir Talevski in the Transporter case. The segments were informative, without favouring or demonising any of the

parties involved.

(6) The television broadcaster, as usual, aired critical news segments on various topics that are not necessarily related to the main political events. One was on the situation with the media (3 May: 'Media outlets close, reporters arrested, wiretapped and under surveillance, receiving death threats. Macedonia is sinking according to the press freedom index'). The critical position was also formed by reporting on unfavourable situations, such as the strikes at Aktor, the PTE, the announcement of a strike at the Army of the RM, then debates such as the one of Tribunus Civilis, views of the international organisations (4 May: 'According to Transparency International, the events in Macedonia correspond to the international organisation's definition of high corruption'), and others. Authorial segments of this kind were not lacking either (4 May: 'There is no specific answer why the conservation centre has needed four years to renovate the 120 m² space housing the photographs of Goce Delčev's life'). Usually, this type of content also includes reports on the public debt.

Using Sources: Most segments (31) featured a single source, followed by the segments featuring two or more sources whose positions do not oppose each other (24), and finally those featuring differing or opposing views (15). The television broadcaster used expert and analysts' opinions in 6 segments, in 4 of which they were either the only source or the only analyst, in one segment they shared the same position, and in another they had opposing views.

Direct Addresses: With one direct address each were featured the leaders of SDSM Zoran Zaev, of DOM Liljana Popovska, of DS Pavle Trajanov, of Tito's Left Forces Slobodan Ugrinovski, and of Dignity Stojanče Angelov. The broadcaster also aired an old statement by the leader of VMRO-DPMNE Nikola Gruevski.

Audiovisual Presentation: No manipulative audiovisual presentation was noted.



Kingdom of the Netherlands