



MACEDONIA DEMOCRACY WATCH



SITEL

14

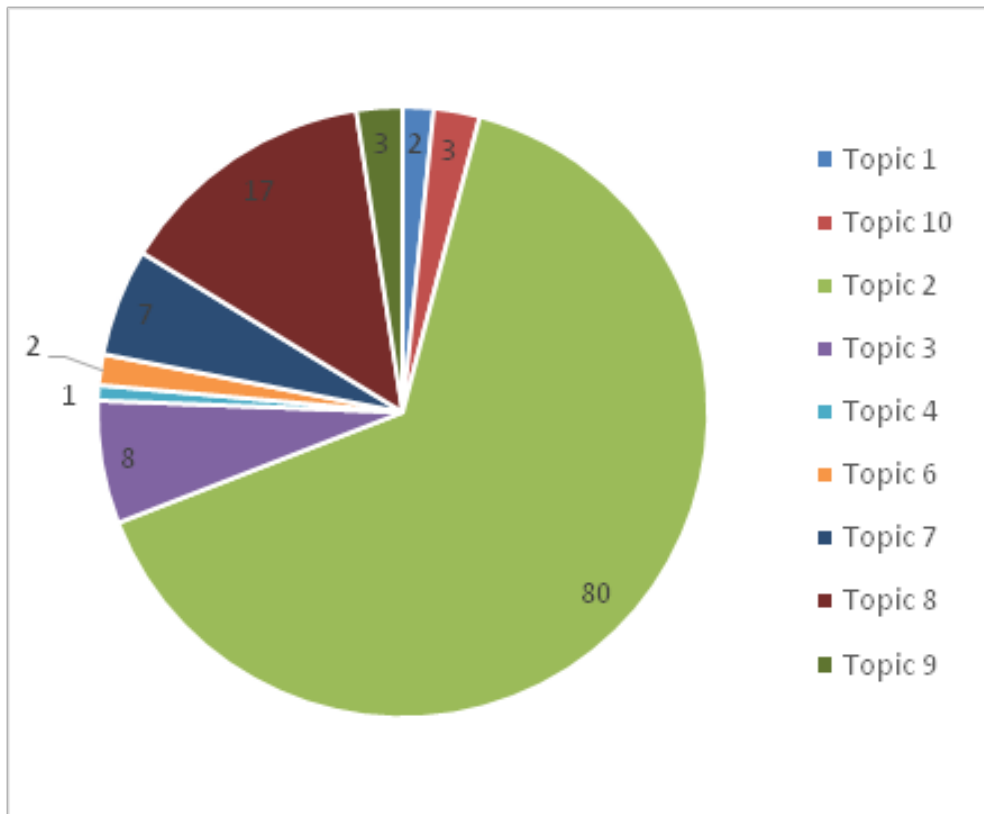
GENERAL CONCLUSION ABOUT THE REPORTING OF SITEL

- During the analysed period, Sitel published a total of 123 reports in its central journal that were related to topics of current political events. The pre-election campaign was most present in the news programme, with 80 reports, and then came state bilingualism and federalization with 17, the promotion of Government projects and investments (8), the regular work of institutions (7), etc.
- The focus of reporting was directed to the two major political parties, their officials and the coalitions they lead, smaller entities had very little space left for them in the news. In terms of quantity, Sitel published a slightly higher number of reports whose subject was the oppositional SDSM, the Coalition they lead and their officials (123), compared to VMRO DPMNE, the Coalition for a Better Macedonia and Government officials (98). However, in terms of quality, the reports about the government were favourable and supportive, while the ones for the opposition (SDSM and their officials) were demonizing. The TV station took a negative stand while reporting about the work of the SPPO and the Ad Hoc body for monitoring the elections.
- An explicitly favourable attitude was focused towards the ruling party VMRO DPMNE and a demonizing one towards SDSM and their leader Zoran Zaev, not only in the reports about pre-election activities, but also in commentary headlines and editorial comments, through the thesis imposed by the ruling party in the pre-election campaign about state bilingualism and federalization.

1. COVERED TOPICS

According to the selection of topics and according to the narratives in the reports, the news on Sitel in the first ten days of the pre-election campaign aimed at promotion and propaganda to the benefit of the ruling party VMRO DPMNE,

their officials and coalition. In the few reports that did not refer to pre-election activities, such as the court process for SPPO's case 'Fortress', the Ad Hoc body on media, the approach to reporting about these subjects is negative.



Number of reports on Sitel, in relation to the different topics (November 21 - 29)

Topic 1	Organization of early parliamentary elections (voters' registry, issues with the number of voters, following up on potential irregularities, etc).
Topic 2	Pre-election campaigns of political parties (all activities including rallies, announcements for rallies, meetings with the people, promises, press releases, reactions, etc.).
Topic 3	Promotion of Government projects and measures
Topic 4	Other activities of Government officials (protocol meetings, statements and other regular activities)
Topic 5	The work of the Special Public Prosecutor's Office
Topic 6	The work of the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services (AAMS) and the Ad Hoc body
Topic 7	Regular operations of state institutions, courts, local self-government (reports in which the media do not report about political parties, rather they report of various public interest problems and issues)
Topic 8	State bilingualism and federalization
Topic 9	Public opinion polls
Topic 10	Other topics

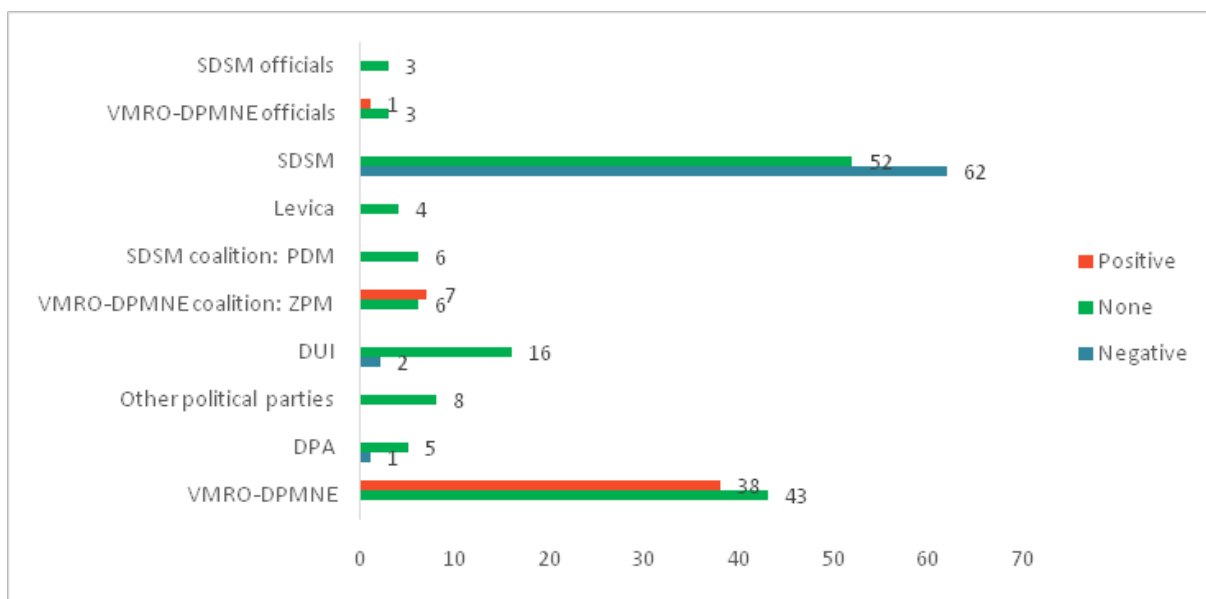


2. POLITICAL PLURALISM IN THE OVERALL REPORTING ON DOMESTIC EVENTS

The focus of reporting of this TV station was placed on the two major political parties, their officials and the coalitions they lead; the news rarely left space for smaller entities and for other topics besides pre-election activities. In terms of quantity, Sitel showed more reports where the subject was the oppositional SDSM, the coalition led by them and SDSM officials (123), while the reports about VMRO DPMNE and their coalition and officials were 98. DUI was the subject of 18 reports, which was followed by DPA with 6,

then reports for other political parties – 8 and Levica 4.

However, according to the manner of reporting, 46 reports about VMRO DPMNE, the Coalition for a Better Macedonia and VMRO DPMNE officials were favourable and supportive, while 62 reports demonized SDSM. DUI in 2 and DPA in one reports were mentioned in a negative context. The TV station also manifested a demonizing attitude in their reports about the work of SPPO (Fortress) and the Ad Hoc body for monitoring the elections.



Number of reports about political entities (shown as part of the total number of reports) and the manner in which they were framed (November 21 - 29)

3. BALANCE IN REPORTING ON THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN OF POLITICAL ENTITIES

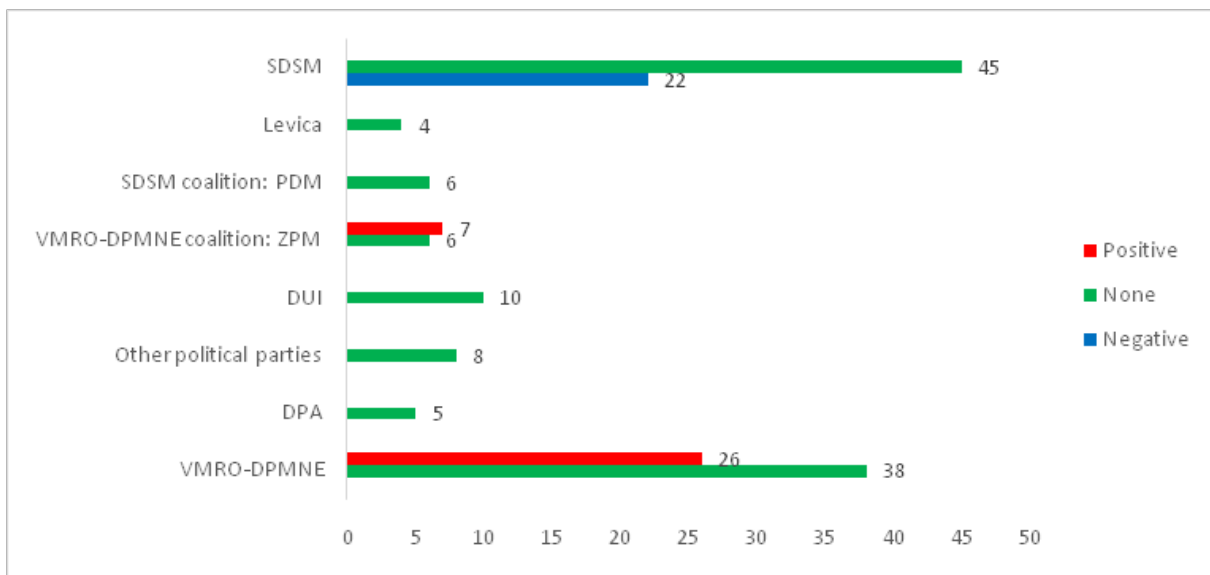
When we look only at the topic of party activities specifically for the election campaign, then out of the total number of reports, Sitel published an almost identical number of reports for the two major political parties - VMRO DPMNE with their coalition and officials in 77 reports, and 67 reports for SDSM and their coalition and officials. Having in mind that there are 11 parties and coalitions at the elections, this TV station informed very little about the pre-election programmes of the others – in ten days of monitoring there were 10 reports mentioning DUI, 5 for DPA and 4 for Levica.

An explicitly favourable journalist opinion was present only in reports about the pre-election activities of VMRO DPMNE, the officials and the coalition they lead – this subject was favoured in 33 reports total. (21.11. ‘VMRO DPMNE has the largest programme at these elections, presented on 500 pages’, 21.11 ‘A specific programme that is most elaborate so far, most detailed and realistic and coming from the citizens and is intended for them’, 29.11. ‘Before thousands of people Gruevski presented some of the projects foreseen in the largest election programme of VMRO-DPMNE, presented on 500 pages’), and some of them were commentator headlines and analyses (28.11 headline/comment ‘VMRO organized a rally, where Foreign Minister of Austria - Kurz spoke, which was one of the surprises, because I cannot remember that anyone at such a high European level has spoken at a political or election rally in the Republic of Macedonia’, ‘Although the rally in Veles comes after that grand

central rally which was organized by the ruling coalition in Skopje yesterday...’) and editorial comments (on 28.11. as many as three editorial comments were made: ‘You could see from the video footage why more than 80,000 people gathered yesterday in Skopje, since the topic is a very important one. The topic is whether Macedonia will be federalized, whether state bilingualism will be introduced and an irreversible process be commenced’, ‘Someone wanted a crisis so the Social-Democrats can offer cantonization and bilingualism for the whole state, thus the Macedonian lose what they have in the only country in which they have something’).

Is the election campaign titled ‘For Life in Macedonia’ an authentic election platform of SDSM, is the slogan theirs, or has their slogan, the entire programme and everything else been crudely stolen from Serbian ultra-nationalists Dveri’).

One of the editorial comments (28.11) with an emphasized personal negative opinion of the editor/presenter was aimed at the Ad Hoc body for monitoring the media in the pre-election period, he calls it an ‘illegitimate institution’ (‘The fifth member of the Ad Hoc body, and in this body the votes are consistently divided three to two, three are from SDSM, two from VMRO, the fifth member in this threesome was voted outside the legal deadline, which means that his mandate there is illegitimate. We will survive one SPPO, with their partisan tasks to consistently aim at one chosen, select group of people, although one more SPPO that persistently aims at the same selected group is tough to handle’).



Number of reports about political entities (shown as part of the reports on the pre-election campaign) and the manner in which they were framed (November 21 - 29)



4. APPROACH TO REPORTING ON SPECIFIC TOPICS

In the two topics specific for the analyzed period - state bilingualism and federalization and the rating polls of the parties, other than conveying the statements from Government representatives in the pre-election campaign and the editorial comments, the TV station also published opinions of associations. (22.11 'Sharp reactions from the defenders to the announcements from oppositional leader to re-define the Constitution of the state and introduce bilingualism on the entire territory. They believe that Zaev is directly insulting them and the victims made for Macedonia'), polls with citizens (25.11 'The messages are that the citizens will decide at these elections in what kind of country they wish to live - in a unitary Macedonia or in a federalized Macedonia conspired

by SDSM leader Zoran Zaev') and experts (25.11 'Zaev's statements about changing the Constitution and introducing bilingualism are dangerous and they gradually lead to federalization of the country, according to Boshko Stankovski, MBA in Cambridge International Law').

Brima Gallup's poll published in the pro-Government weekly paper *Republika*, was shown by Sitel on two consecutive days (25.11 'Poll two weeks before the elections: Huge advantage for VMRO-DPMNE and Nikola Gruevski', 26.11 'Brima Gallup Poll, part two: Gruevski is the choice of the people when it comes to the position of Prime Minister. They believe that the leader of the ruling party is a better choice, rather than having to choose between him and the president of the oppositional SDSM, Zaev').