

DETERMINING POLITICAL HARMFUL NARRATIVES

SUMMARY

**SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE PERIOD
SEPTEMBER 2023 – FEBRUARY 2024**



Title of the publication:

Determining Political Harmful Narratives (HARM-TIVE)
Summary of results for the period September 2023 – February 2024

Publisher:

Institute of Communication Studies
St. Jurij Gagarin 17-1-1, Skopje
www.iks.edu.mk

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Edition:

ResPublica 

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Original title:

Мерење на политички штетни наративи - ШТЕТ-НА

Graphic design:

Ivana Temelkoska

Technical editing:

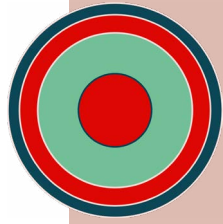
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Place and date:

Skopje, 2024

Content

5	Political entities and media that are subject of the analysis
5	KEY FINDINGS
5	Every third post is harmful
6	Champions
6	Exceptions
6	Defenders and rescuers
7	The party is the state
8	Forgotten journalistic standards
9	News from the party headquarters
9	Lessons not learned
10	POLITICAL ACTORS
11	Analysis of the harmfulness of posts
14	Types of Harmful Narratives
15	How political entities present themselves
16	Similarities and differences between political entities regarding harmful narratives
17	MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT
19	TV STATIONS
20	Types of harmful narratives
20	Who produces the harmful narratives and how journalists respond to the harmful narratives of political actors
23	ONLINE MEDIA
25	Types of Harmful Narratives
26	Main topics and sources



The research Determining Political Harmful Narratives (HARM-TIVE) was launched in September 2023 with the aim of determining whether and how political actors in Macedonia produce, use and share harmful narratives, as well as what is the role of the media in reporting on these narratives, i.e. whether they apply the professional and ethical journalistic values and standards.



The established [research methodology](#) includes monitoring and analysis of two segments:

- monitoring and analysis of the narratives produced and shared by political actors in Macedonia
- monitoring and analysing media coverage of political actors and the narratives they create and share through the media.



The main variable in both segments of the analysis is [the harmful narrative](#). Additional variables refer to political actors and political communication and to the media and media professional reporting.

The main variable in both segments of the analysis is the harmful narrative. Additional variables refer to political actors and political communication and to the media and media professional reporting.

The analysis of political parties and their leaders is focused on determining the dominant harmful narratives, the form and channels most often used to spread such narratives, and addresses the way in which [the standards and principles of political communication](#) are violated. On the other hand, media monitoring provides an answer to the question of whether the media adhere to [professional and ethical standards](#) for accurate, fair and impartial information or unquestioningly follow the agenda dictated by political actors. The six-month summary reflects how political actors and the media behave in the public discourse, that is, what and how they communicate to the public.



The research Determining Political Harmful Narratives (HARM-TIVE) was conducted by the Institute of Communication Studies (ICS) within the project Use Facts: Fact-Based Journalism for Raising Awareness and Countering Disinformation in the Media Space in North Macedonia supported by the British Embassy Skopje. The research is longitudinal and lasts during 2023 and 2024, it is carried out in several phases by a team from ICS in cooperation with researchers and experts in the field of communications and media, as well as with media professionals in the field of monitoring and control.

The methodological framework, samples and follow-up dynamics, as well as details of the entire research process are available at: [HARM-TIVE](#).



This document presents a summary of the monitoring [results in the period between September 2023 and February 2024](#).

The full report is available [HERE](#).



Political entities and media that are subject of the analysis

The political parties whose official websites and official Facebook pages/profiles were monitored and analysed are: Alliance for Albanians, Alternativa, VMRO-DPMNE, Democratic Movement, Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), Levica, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), New Social Democratic Party (NSDP), Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM), Socialist Party of Macedonia (SPM). The official Facebook pages/profiles of their leaders that were also monitored: Arben Taravari, Afrim Gashi, Ali Ahmeti, Izet Medjiti, Hristijan Mickoski, Dimitar Apasiev, Monika Zajkova, Goran Misovski, Ljupcho Dimovski as well as Dimitar Kovachevski. The sample of official Facebook pages/profiles of ministers covers the current government structure, including the Caretaker Government.

The monitoring of media reporting includes monitoring and analysis of media reporting on the narratives of political entities on: (1) press releases (central, main news) on a total of 9 TV stations: MTV 1 (public, MTV 2 (public, in Albanian), Alfa TV (private), Kanal 5 (private), Sitel TV (private), TV 24 (private), Telma (private), Alsat M (private, in Albanian), TV 21 (private, in Albanian); and (2) informative online media: Vecher.mk, Lokalno, Nezavisen, Sloboden Pечат, A1on.mk, MKD.mk, Republika, Kurir, Almakos, Tetova Sot, Nova TV.

KEY FINDINGS

The larger political parties and some of the political leaders in our country seem to be in a race of who will create and spread more harmful narratives, a race which, depending on the current social events, periodically changes the dynamics, and as the elections approach, sometimes turns into a sprint. A large part of the media help them in spreading the harmful narratives, the portals in particular, which very often completely forget the rules of professional reporting and the obligation to adhere to ethical standards.

Every third post is harmful

Monitoring in the period September 2023 - February 2024 showed that more than one third of the total number of press releases by political parties and political leaders contained harmful narratives. There was toxic rhetoric in 797 posts from political parties, in which 2,573 harmful narratives were found, and political leaders had 87 posts with a total of 294 harmful narratives. The analysis of the forms through which harmful narratives were spread shows that two types dominate: party press releases (50%) and press conferences from political parties (21%). Posts by political leaders with a harmful narrative are usually reactions to expressed views and accusations by political opponents, and press releases follow.

Champions

The two largest political parties VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM lead by far in the press releases with harmful narratives, and with Levica joining them at the third place. Namely, of the total number of posts with harmful narratives, 732 or 92% were created and published by these three parties (VMRO-DPMNE - 311 posts, SDSM - 228 posts and Levica - 193 posts). On the other hand, the pedestal in spreading harmful narratives among political leaders belongs to Dimitar Apasiev from Levica, who produced 50 such posts in six months. The second place goes to Hristijan Mickoski from VMRO-DPMNE (17 posts), and Izet Medjiti from the Democratic Movement (11 posts) holds the third place. As many as 78, or 90% of the total number of posts with harmful narratives of political leaders come from these three people.

Exceptions

It is worth pointing out that there are political parties and political leaders where no posts with a harmful narrative were observed at all during the six-month monitoring. Such are the Liberal Democratic Party, the Socialist Party, the New Social Democratic Party and their leaders Monika Zajkova (LDP), Ljupco Dimovski (SPM) and Goran Misovski (NSDP). It is worth noting that, unlike the larger political parties which flood the public almost daily and several times during the day with their views on various issues and often pollute the public space, the smaller political parties generally had a passive communication with the public through the channels which were monitored during the research. They are less present in the public and media space and less often publish their views on social media and on the Internet about topics of public interest.

Defenders and rescuers

Domestic politics is the main topic in the spreading of harmful narratives among political parties and political leaders (80% of the posts), followed by the economy, crime and health, which appear with lesser frequency in the communication of political actors with the public. Parties and leaders often use harmful narratives with which they try to undermine trust in the institutions and use biased selection to cause harm. Furthermore, with almost the same frequency, they use character attacks, i.e. demonization, fomenting divisions and populism.

The monitoring showed that in the harmful vocabulary of VMRO-DPMNE, the adjective 'criminal' is most often used when describing the Government/authorities, SDSM is labelled as an anti-people party, and former Prime Minister Dimitar Kovachevski is 'Tache the deserter'. On the other hand, SDSM calls VMRO-DPMNE an 'anti-West' and 'anti-democratic party' and 'obstacle to EU integration', when it comes to Hristijan Mickoski they use the alias 'little Gruevski' and the phrase 'a pale copy of

Gruevski', and they dub Levica the 'pro-Russian anti-democratic party'. In the harmful posts that Levica targeted the government with, the most frequently used adjectives are: 'corrupt', 'anti-people', 'treacherous' and 'anti-Macedonian'. According to Levica, VMRO-DPMNE is a 'false opposition' and 'vmroid elite', while SDSM is a 'quisling party'. This party calls VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM a 'smuggling coalition', a 'criminal axis' and a 'hybrid regime', and calls DUI 'UCK', 'secessionists', 'irredentists' and 'national-chauvinists'. There are also examples of harmful narratives among other political parties, but with a much lesser intensity.

What is typical of political parties (43% of posts) and their leaders (39% of posts) is that very frequently the reason for using harmful narratives when they communicate with the public is to criticize their political opponents. On the other hand, instead of conducting a reasoned political debate to improve the living conditions in the country and present their solutions to social problems, most of them use empty phrases, often flattering themselves to paint a picture of themselves as defenders and saviours of the people, of the national interests, identity and justice. By doing so, they create an image of uncertainty and encourage mistrust in the functioning of institutions.

Карактеристично е дека многу често поводот за користењето штетни наративи при комуникацијата со јавноста кај партиите (43 % од објавите) и нивните лидери (39 % од објавите) е критикување на политичките противници. Од друга страна, наместо да водат аргументирана политичка дебата за подобрување на условите за живеење во државата и да ги претстават нивните решенија за општествените проблеми, повеќето од нив користејќи празни фрази најчесто милуваат себеси да се претстават како бранители и спасители на народот, на националните интереси, на идентитетот и на правдата. Правејќи го тоа создаваат слика на несигурност и поттикнуваат недоверба во функционирањето на институциите.

The party is the state

Among government officials in the research period between September 2023 and February 2024, 26 posts with harmful narratives containing a total of 54 harmful narratives were noted. Jeton Shaqiri and Jovanka Trenchevska are government officials with one post each with a harmful narrative, Dimitar Kovachevski with two posts, and Krenar Loga with the highest number - six posts with harmful narratives. Government officials without a single post with a harmful narrative are: Fatmir Medjiti, Azir Aliu, Kaja Shukova, Slavjanka Petrovska, Blagoj Bocharovski, Fatmir Besimi, Bujar Osmani, Risto Penov, Oliver Spasovski, Slavica Grkovska, Bojan Marichikj and Fatmir Bitiqi.

Regarding the types of harmful narratives that appear in the posts of government officials, the analysis showed that they most often use biased selection through claims of corruption, non-transparency/unaccountability, unprofessionalism, abuse of office of political opponents, without any serious attempt to substantiate those claims. With a somewhat lower frequency, but still notable, are the undermining of trust in institutions and the media, fomenting divisions and populism.

Given that the monitoring also records the communication of members of the Government, specific cases have been noted when government ministers abuse the official channel of the institution they manage, without using harmful narratives. The practice of using one Facebook profile for communicating official government information, but also for the activities of the political parties from which they came, is often observed among some government officials. On the same profile, one can notice activities that an official had as part of the Government, as well as the use of official government data to illustrate the party's contribution, often conflating the party with the Government, i.e. the state.

Forgotten journalistic standards

During the monitoring of the television stations, a total of **484 news items** with harmful narratives were observed. **TV Alfa has the largest number of news items with harmful narratives - 182, and TV 24 Vesti has the lowest number (15 news items)**. At the same time, a total of **1,236 news items with harmful narratives were recorded in the online media**. The online media outlets with the highest number of published news items is **Republika - 265 articles**, and the online media with the lowest number of published articles containing a harmful narrative is **Nova TV - 32 articles**.

The most common harmful narratives in TV station coverage and online media posts are: undermining trust in institutions, biased selection, and character attacks/demonization. Furthermore, in terms of frequency, disinformation follows, as well as divisions and populism.

Political actors appear as the main source of harmful narratives in TV station reports (75%), and in the rest they are created either only by the journalist, or by both at the same time: both the journalist and the political entity. TV Alfa is a typical example where the journalist occurs as a creator or source of harmful narratives. When it comes to online media, over 80% of harmful narratives are produced by the political actor alone, 6% are produced by the journalist alone, and 12% are produced by both. Only at Vecher.mk, 50% of the indicators for harmful narratives are produced by both the journalist and the political actor, while Tetova sot records the highest participation of the journalist (20%) as the producer of the (indicator of) the harmful narrative.

The most common mistake of the journalists from TV stations and online media is to broadcast harmful narratives without any intervention. However, there are stations like TV Telma and especially TV Sitel which, not infrequently, clearly highlight the harmful narrative without taking sides, just as there are stations, like TV Alfa, which broadcast it with approval, or condemnation. In the online media, 63 percent of the posts were found to be bare broadcasting of harmful narratives from political entities, primarily contained in party press releases and political speeches. In 22% of the cases when a harmful narrative is broadcast, the journalist clearly highlights it, but does not take a position, and in as much as 14% of the cases, the journalist approves the present harmful narrative in the report.

One major issue is that the media is dominated by articles or press releases where only one source is presented, which is against the basic journalistic standards for checking information from multiple sources. It should be emphasized that TV Alfa (which has the highest number of news items with harmful narratives) contributes the most to this ratio among the TV stations in terms of the number, and the one-sidedness of the sources. Otherwise, most other television stations use three or more sources in their press releases, usually from two sides.

News from the party headquarters

It is noteworthy that in the articles with harmful narratives, the main actors are usually the largest political parties in the country or their official representatives, while the areas and topics that appear most often are related to mutual party accusations on current issues. The analysis showed that the harmful narratives are mainly created by the political parties, while the media only allow them space in their news broadcasts, passively broadcasting them and thus enabling them to reach as many citizens as possible.

The monitoring so far has shown that the main political parties get a disproportionately large amount of space, at the expense of all the others. What is striking is that political actors from SDSM, VMRO-DMNE and DUI speak on every social topic, framing it in a pre-election package. They do that, not infrequently, through a variety of harmful narratives.

In the articles with a harmful narrative, we usually see one-sidedness, or in almost half of them only one side is presented, who attacks, accuses without arguments, or insults, and the other side was not given a chance to respond to such a narrative at all. Such news items are further problematic and contribute to establishing a harmful narrative without giving the accused side a chance to contest it.

Lessons not learned

Political parties must be part of a process in which they will jointly contribute to increasing the citizens' trust in the institutions and in building a democratic society. Instead, they constantly undermine the trust in institutions, contribute to increased divisions, and constantly lower the level of public discourse.

Finally, the media themselves play a key role in building trust, which must not resort to simply being a platform where the politicians would freely push their harmful narratives at any time, attack without arguments, insult, disinform, but oppose such narratives, identify them and condemn them.

POLITICAL ACTORS

The monitoring of political actors' posts was carried out every third and fourth day of the month. In total, in the period September 2023 - February 2024, the monitoring of the official pages of political actors included 91 days.

In the period between September 2023 and February 2024, a total of 797 posts with harmful stories, narratives, and 535 posts on Facebook profiles were recorded as created by political parties

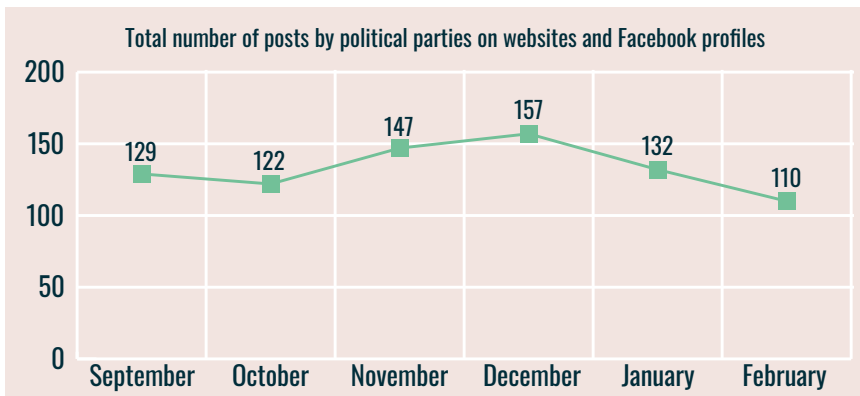


Figure No. 1 Total number of posts by political parties

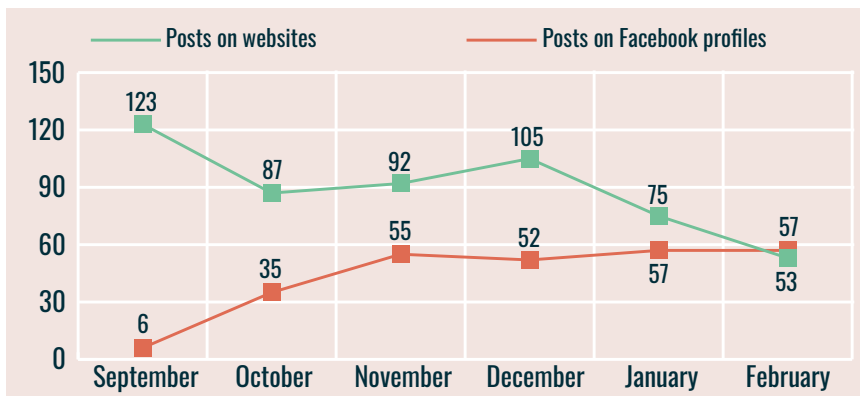


Figure no. 2 Total number of posts by political parties on their websites and Facebook profiles

In the period between September 2023 and February 2024, a total of 87 posts with harmful narratives were recorded among political leaders, mostly in February.

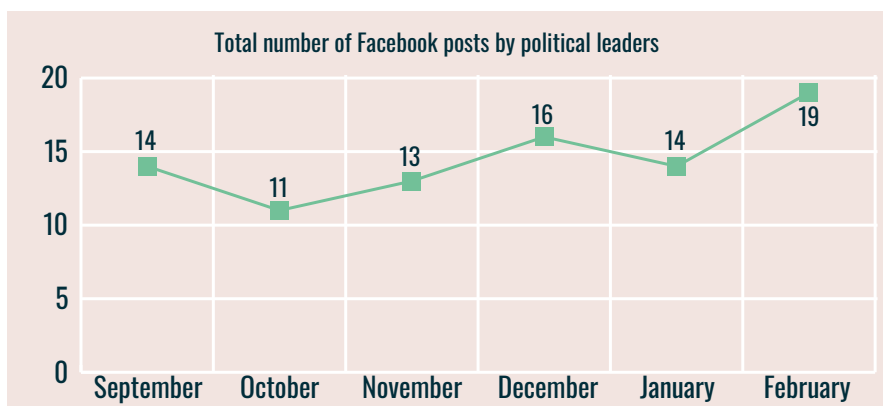


Figure 3. Total number of posts by political leaders on their FB profiles

Analysis of the harmfulness of posts

Three aspects of harmfulness analysis are presented below:

1. The first aspect is **the frequency of harmful narratives**, which is the total number of posts with harmful narratives
2. The second aspect is **the percentage of harmfulness**, which is the percentage of posts with a harmful narrative out of the total number of posts of the political subject (for example, if during the day a political entity has 10 posts, 7 of which contain a harmful narrative, the percentage of harmfulness of that political entity would be 70%)
3. The third aspect is **the score of harmfulness**, which is the number of harmful narratives in one post (for example, if during the day the political entity has one post in which three harmful narratives are broadcast, then this means that the score of harmfulness is 3).

In 797 posts by political parties, 2,573 harmful narratives were identified (1,674 harmful narratives were recorded on the parties' websites, and 899 on their FB profiles). They were most numerous in November and especially December.

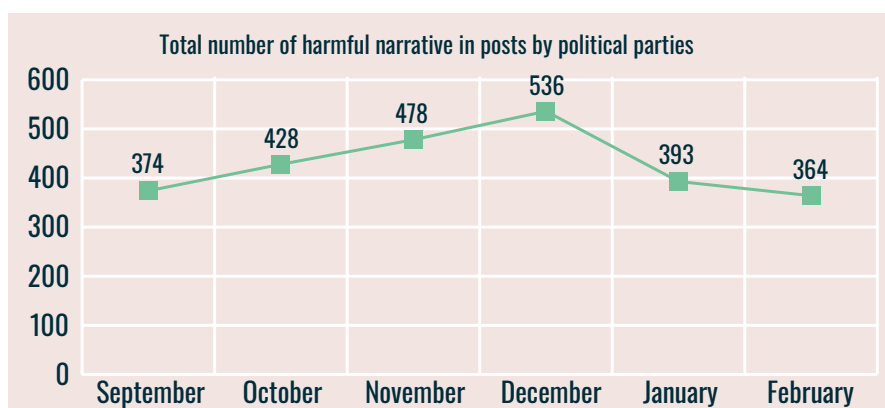


Figure no. 4. Number of times political parties have conveyed harmful narratives by month

If the percentage of damage is analysed by month, the trend of movement of that percentage is as follows:

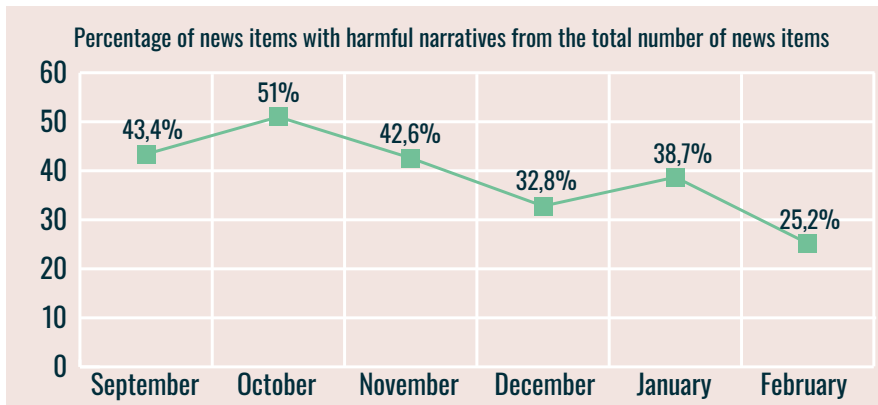


Figure No. 5. Harmfulness percentage by months

The percentage of harmfulness, seen by month, ranges from nearly 25.2% (in February) to 51% (in October). Taken together over six months, more than a third (37.1%) of all posts by all political parties on their websites and Facebook profiles have a harmful narrative/s.

In terms of the intensity of harmfulness in the posts, it can be said that it is relatively constant throughout the months and ranges within an average of three (3) harmful narratives per post.

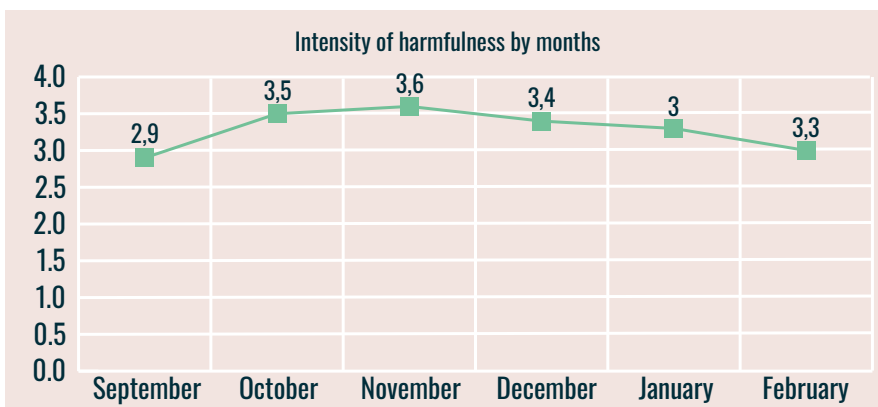


Figure no. 6 Intensity of harmfulness by months

The analysis of the 87 posts by political leaders showed the presence of a total of 294 harmful narratives. Once again, mainly in December.

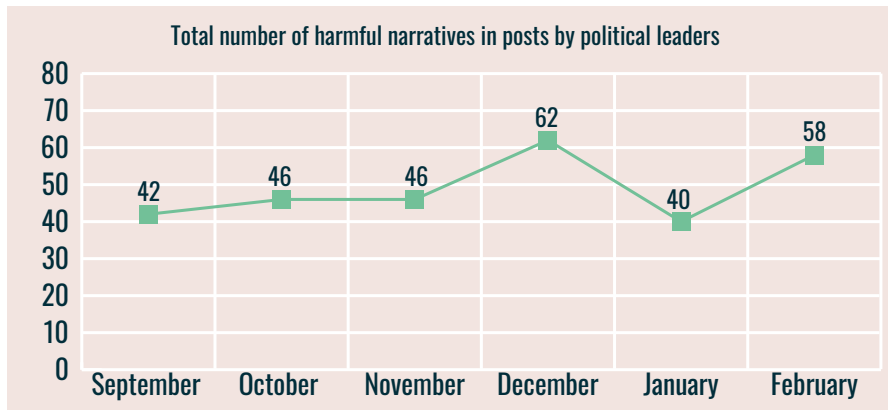


Figure no. 7 Frequency of harmful narratives of political leaders by month

If the percentage of harmfulness is analysed by month, the trend of movement of that percentage is as follows:

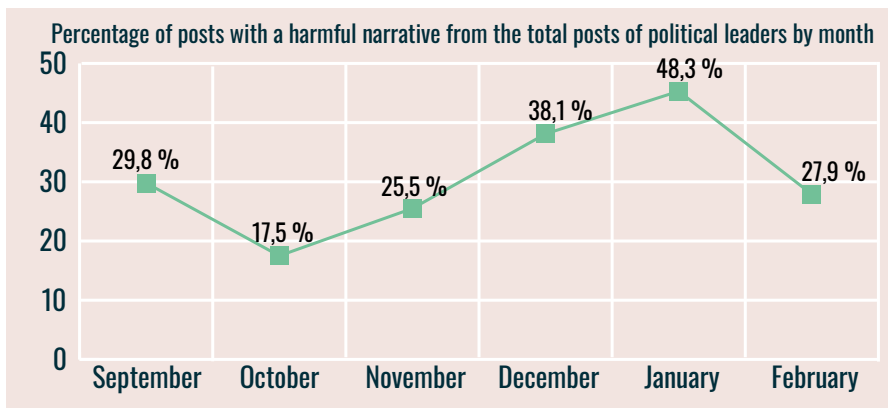


Figure no. 8 Percentage of posts with a harmful narrative from the total posts of political leaders by month

The percentage of harmfulness, seen by month, ranges from 17.5 % (in October) to 48.3 % (in January). When aggregated over six months, it is 31.2% for all political leaders, or nearly a third of political leaders' FB posts contained one or more harmful narratives.

Analysis of the intensity of harmfulness of the political leaders by month shows that the score ranges from three to almost five harmful narratives in/per post.

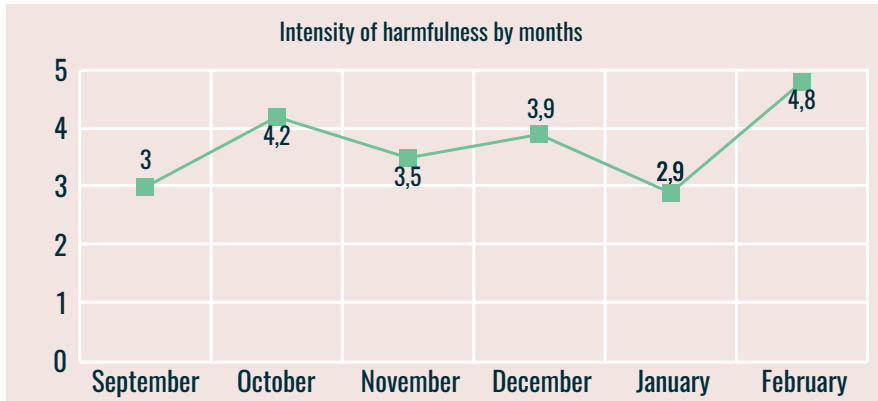


Figure no. 9 Intensity of harmfulness by months

Types of Harmful Narratives

Among political parties, two commonly used harmful narratives stand out: *Undermining trust in the institutions* and *Biased selection*. Furthermore, *Character attacks/Demonization*, *Fomenting divisions* and *Populism* occur nearly with the same frequency.

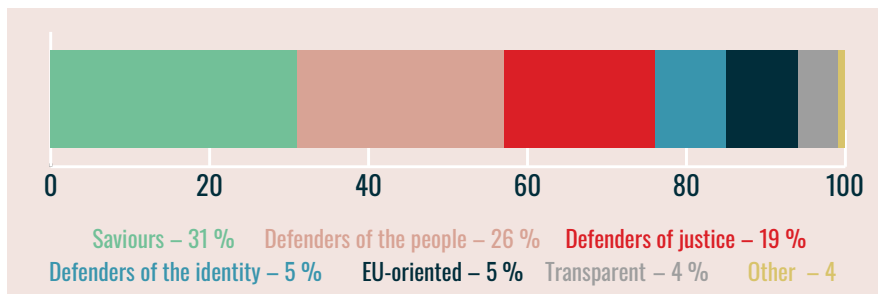


Figure No. 10 Self-representation of political parties in posts with harmful narratives

Among political leaders too, the situation is almost identical: two harmful narratives stand out according to frequency: *Undermining trust in institutions* and *Biased selection*. They are followed by *Character attacks/demonization* and *populism*.

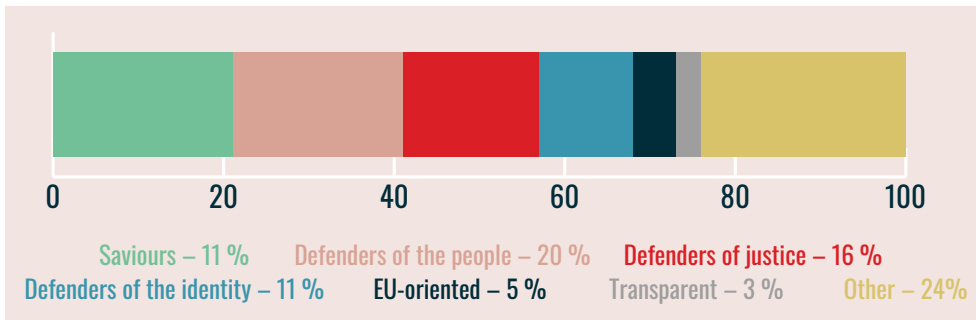


Figure No. 11 Self-representation of political leaders in posts with a harmful narrative

How political entities present themselves

In 342 out of a total of 797 (43%) posts with harmful narratives of political parties on their websites and FB profiles, the parties had no particular intention to present themselves in any light, except, presumably, only to criticize their political opponents. In the remaining 57% of the posts, they presented themselves as follows:

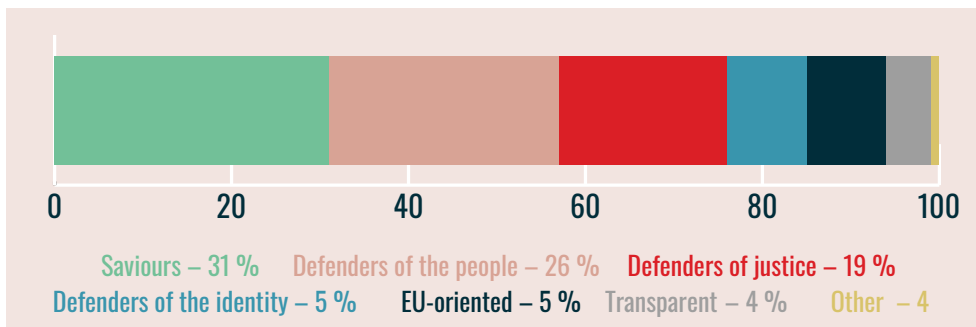


Figure No. 12 Self-representation of political parties in posts with harmful narratives

In 39% of the posts, the political leaders had no particular intention to present themselves in any way, and in the remaining 61% they presented themselves as follows:

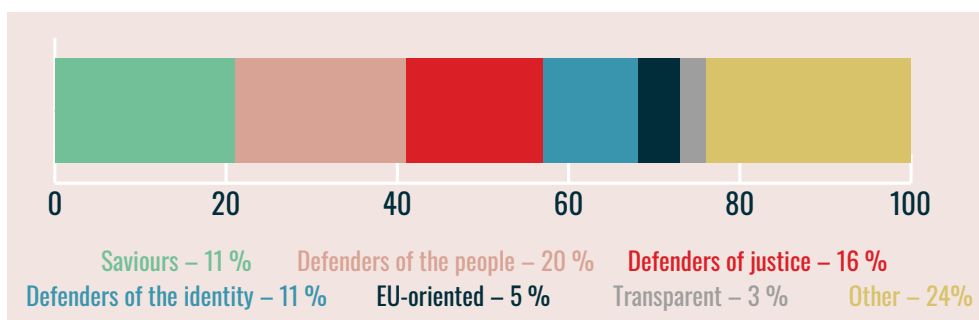


Figure No. 13 Self-representation of political leaders in posts with a harmful narrative

Similarly to the parties that they are leaders of, they portray themselves mainly as saviours and defenders of the people.

Similarities and differences between political entities regarding harmful narratives

The difference in the number of posts with harmful narratives between political parties is large. As can be seen, there are political parties that did not have any posts with a harmful narrative on their websites and Facebook profiles.

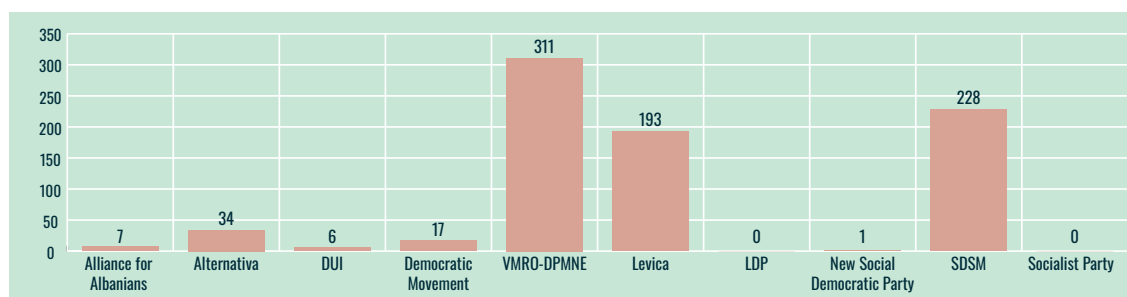


Figure No. 14 Number of posts with a harmful narrative by political party

Among the political leaders, the leader of Levica, Dimitar Apasiev, stands out, and the leaders of the smaller political parties such as Monika Zajkova (LDP), Goran Misovski (NSDP) and Ljupcho Dimovski (SPM) have not been noted for having any posts containing harmful narratives.

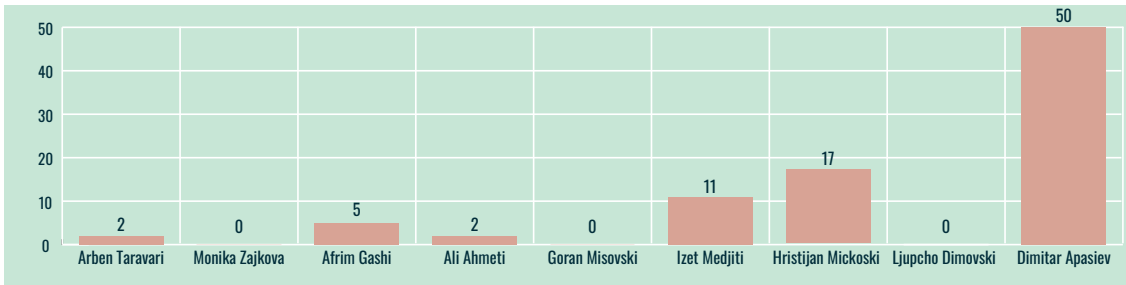


Figure No. 15 Number of posts with harmful narrative by leader

MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT

In this section, the subject of monitoring and analysis are the Facebook profiles of 20 political actors, members of the Government (Prime Minister, deputy prime ministers and ministers). The posts are analysed in detail in which these political entities misuse their office for partisan purposes and/or generate harmful narratives.

A total of 26 posts with harmful narratives and a total of 54 harmful narratives were identified. By month, the trend is as follows:

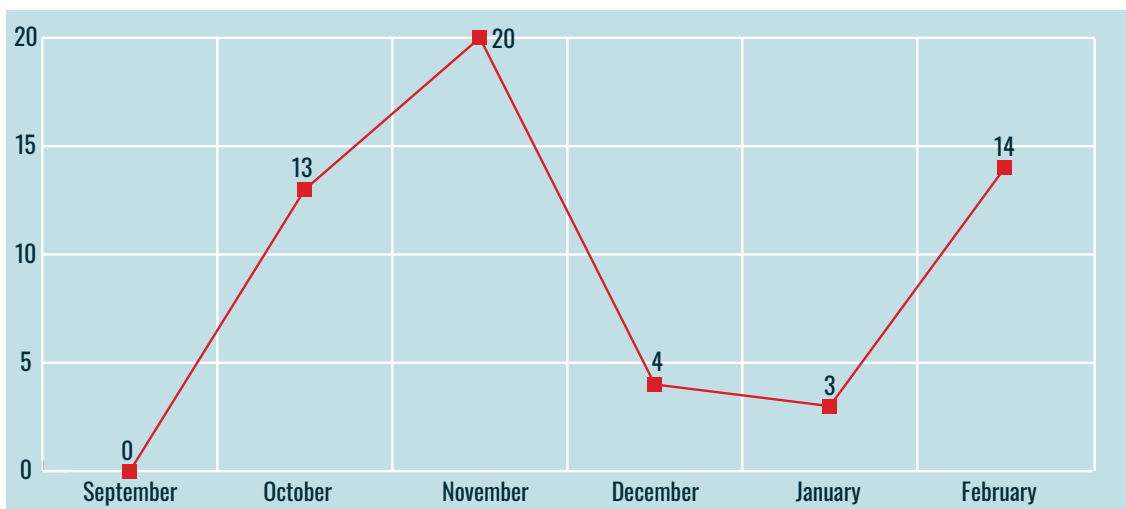


Figure No. 16 Number of posts with harmful narrative by months

Jeton Shaqiri and Jovanka Trenchevska are members of the Government with one post with a harmful narrative each, Dimitar Kovachevski has two posts, and Krenar Loga has the most, six posts with harmful narratives. Members of the Government without a single post with a harmful narrative are: Fatmir Medjiti, Azir Aliu, Kaja Shukova, Slavjanka Petrovska, Blagoj Bochvarski, Fatmir Besimi, Bujar Osmani, Risto Penov, Oliver Spasovski, Slavica Grkovska, Bojan Marichikj and Fatmir Bitiqi.

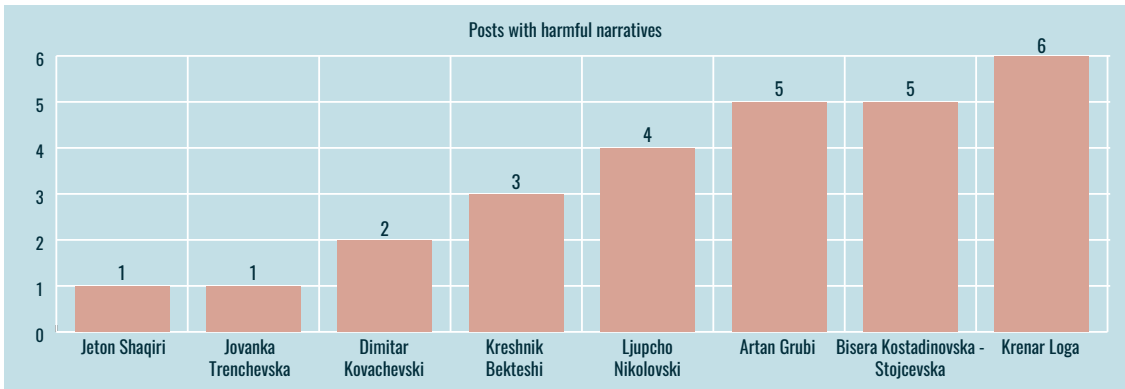


Figure No. 17 How many posts with a harmful narrative each government official has?

Regarding the types of harmful narratives that appear in the posts of government members, the analysis showed that they most frequently use biased selection through claims of corruption, non-transparency/non-accountability, unprofessionalism, abuse of office of political opponents, without any serious attempt to substantiate those claims. Both, with every member of the government in particular, and seen in general, this is the most common harmful narrative. At a somewhat lower frequency, yet still present, are: undermining of trust in institutions and the media, inciting divisions, as well as populism.

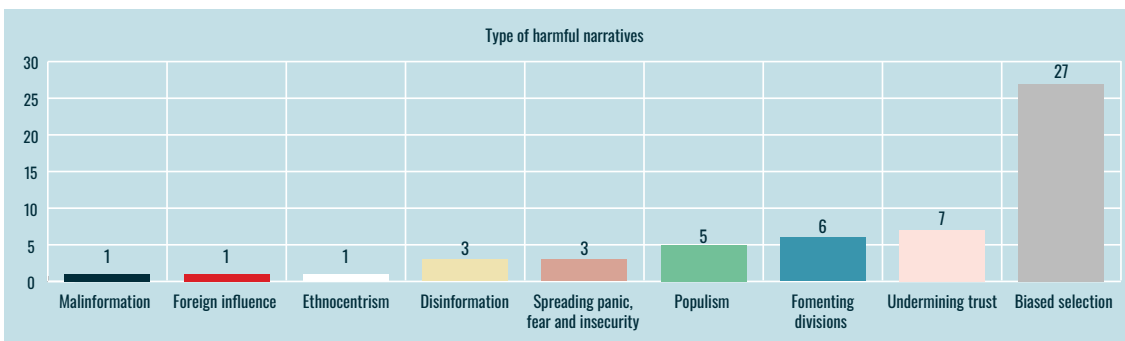


Figure No. 18 Harmful narratives and how many times have they been broadcast by members of the government

TV STATIONS

In this past six-month period, the central news editions of 9 television stations (MTV 1, MTV 2, Kanal 5, Sitel, Telma, Alsat M, Alfa, TV 21 and TV 24 Vesti) were monitored and analysed for 46 days. A total of 484 news items with harmful narratives were recorded. The lowest number was registered in October (66), and the highest in January (96).

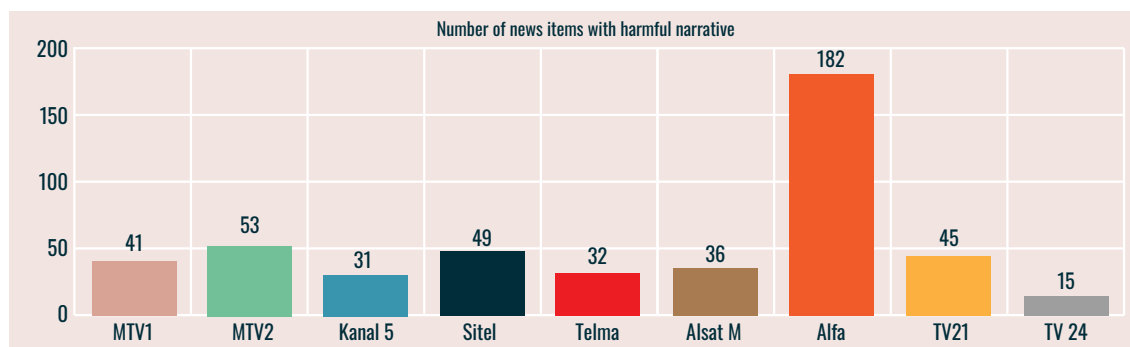


Figure No. 19 Number of news items with harmful narrative by TV station

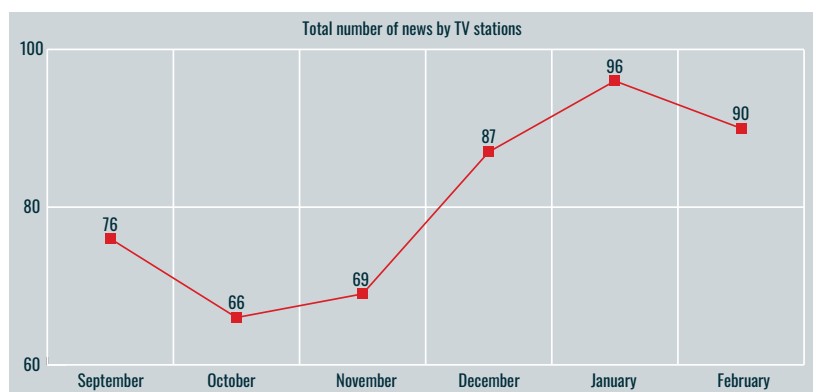


Figure No. 20 Number of news items with harmful narrative by month

The analysis of the content of 484 news items confirmed the presence of 879 harmful narratives, the highest number in January (163), and the lowest in September (122).

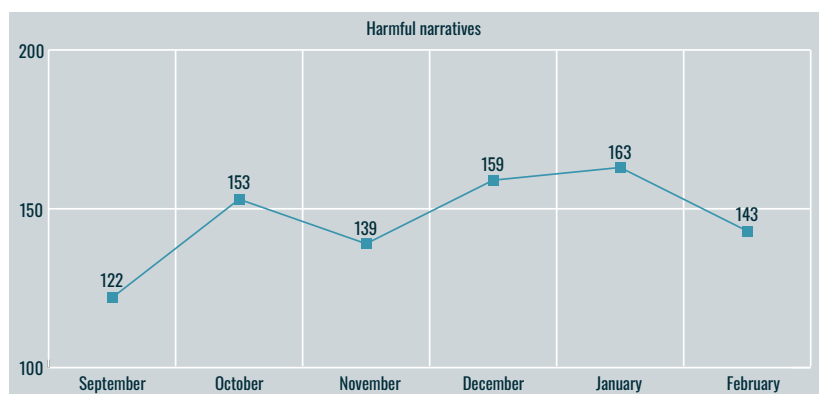


Figure No. 21 How many times per month were harmful narratives broadcast?

Types of harmful narratives

Out of total 16 harmful **narratives** that were the focus of the research, the analysis showed that 14 had been registered, some very frequently, other less so. Only the harmful narratives Conspiracy Theories and Sexism have not been used by any TV station. The top three most frequently mentioned harmful narratives in mainstream TV news coverage were:

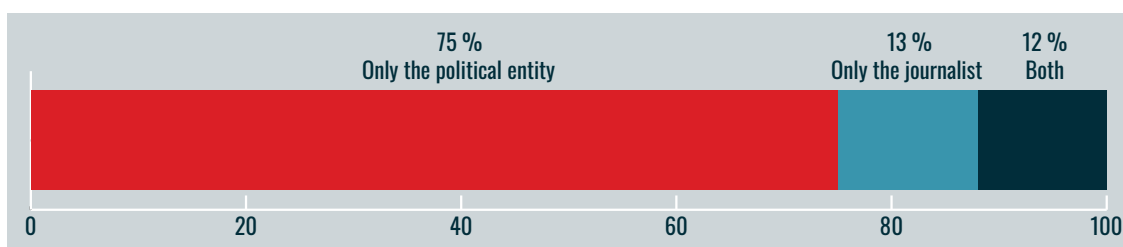
I: **Undermining trust in institutions** (319 times or 36% of the total number of narratives)

II: **Biased selection.** (225 times or 26% of the total number of narratives)

III: **Character attacks/demonization** (121 times or 14% of the total number of narratives)

These three harmful narratives identified in central news editions coincide with the same three most commonly used by political actors. Furthermore, according to frequency, *disinformation* follows, accounting for 7% of the narratives, as well as *fomenting divisions* and *populism* accounting for 5% of all observed harmful narratives on TV stations for the analysed six-month period.

Who produces the harmful narratives and how journalists respond to the harmful narratives of political actors



Generally speaking, 75% of the indicators of harmful narratives were produced only by the political actors featured in the news items, 13% of the indicators of harmful narratives were produced by the journalist alone, while 12% of the indicators in the news items were produced by both: the journalist and the political entity featured in the news item.

In the context of what is the attitude of the journalists in the TV stations towards the political actors who produce the harmful narrative, it can be said that in 65% of the cases when the political actor produces a harmful narrative, the journalist broadcasts it without any intervention, in 17% of the cases, the journalist clearly points it out, but does not take a side, in 15% of cases the journalist broadcasts the harmful narrative of the political entity with approval, and in 3% of the cases, the journalist acts with condemnation and/or criticism towards the harmful narrative of the political actor.

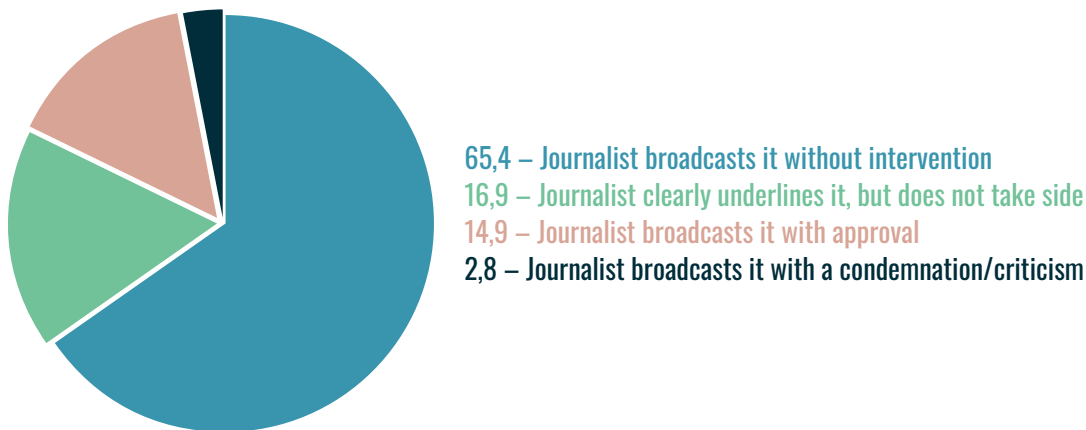


Figure No. 22 What is the attitude of the journalist when broadcasting the harmful narrative?

The most common genre of toxic news items is the report (32.4% of articles) or the analytical-report article (30%). Typically, domestic politics is the main topic of news items with a harmful narrative, but there are also a number of news items on the economy, judiciary and health. The sources in the television reports are mainly (consistently throughout the months) precise. Regarding the sides shown in the reports, the highest number of news items are those with one-sided reporting (51%), followed by those featuring two sides (such are 25.45), and finally the reports in which several sides are covered – 23.6% of news items. Alfa TV contributes the most to this ratio with the largest number of programs¹ with harmful narratives.

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 1 TV Alfa had a total of 182 news items with a harmful narrative in this six-month period, which is almost 38% of the total number of news items with harmful narratives identified in all nine monitored TV stations. If TV Alfa is excluded, the situation with the number of sides shown in the news items, as well as the number of sources, changes: without the news items from TV Alpha, news items in which one side is shown are 39.5%, news items in which two sides are shown are 29.5% and news items covering several sides is 31%.

Regarding the number of sources in the news items, the tendency is the same: those with one source dominate (almost 43% of the total number of news items), followed by those with 3 or more sources (31.6%), and the rarest are those with 2 news items (22%). Just over 3% of the news items have no source. Both here, like in the case with the parties, the television station that has the largest number of programs contributes the most to this ratio. Otherwise, most of the other television stations use 3 or more sources in their news items.

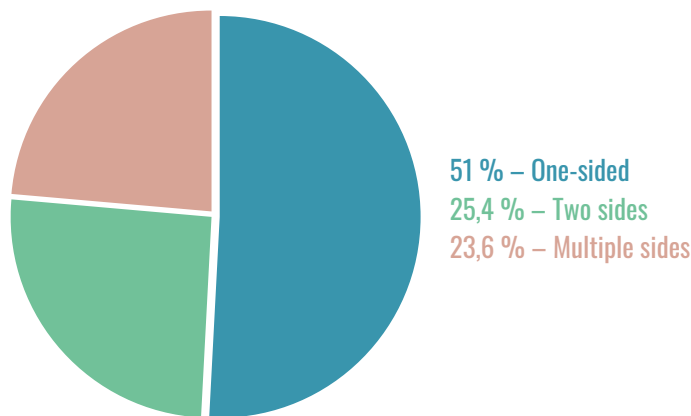


Figure No. 23 Sides in reporting

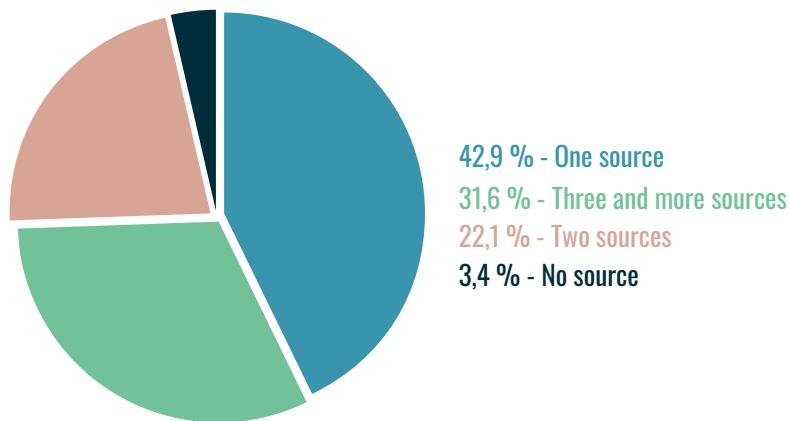


Figure No. 24 Number of sources in news items

ONLINE MEDIA

In the period between September 2023 and February 2024, 11 informative online media outlets were monitored. During the 46 days of monitoring, 1236 news items with harmful narratives were recorded. The lowest number was in October (154), and the highest in January (240).

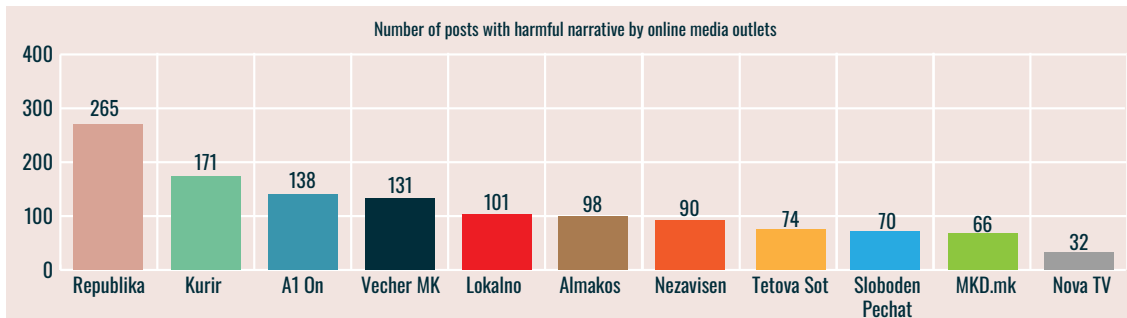


Figure No. 25 Number of posts with harmful narrative by online media outlets

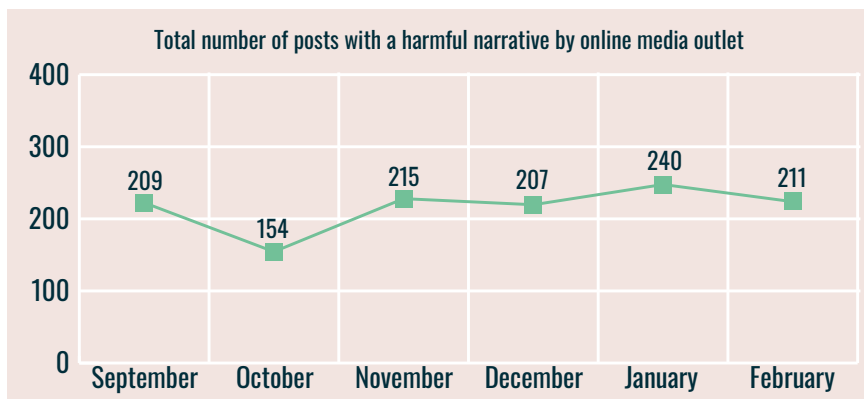


Figure No. 26 Total number of posts with a harmful narrative by online media outlet

Content analysis of 1236 articles published by 11 online media confirmed the presence of 2631 harmful narratives. Although the presence of harmful narratives in the six-month analysed period is relatively evenly distributed by month, two specific moments can be observed - in November there is the highest presence (575), and in February the lowest (330), almost halved (1.7 times) compared to November.

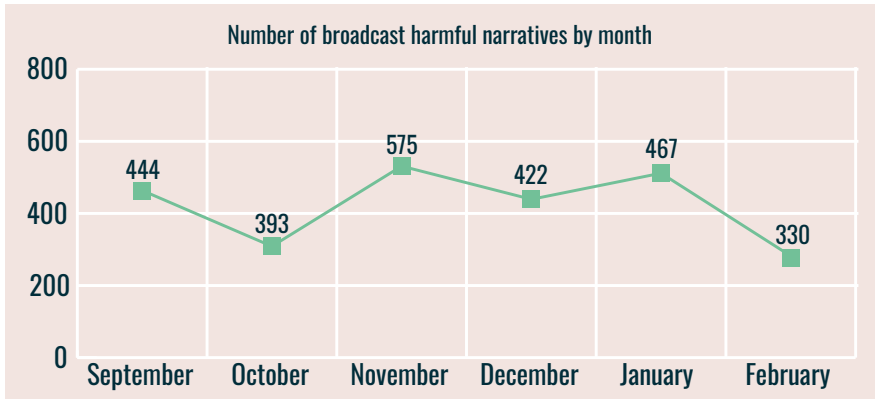


Figure No. 27 Number of broadcast harmful narratives by month

If we conduct an analysis by month again, the trend of the movement of the intensity of harm, i.e. the ratio between published articles and the presence of a harmful narrative in them, a gradual decrease in the intensity of harm can be observed from December to February, with a decrease from November 2023 to February 2024 by one narrative on average.

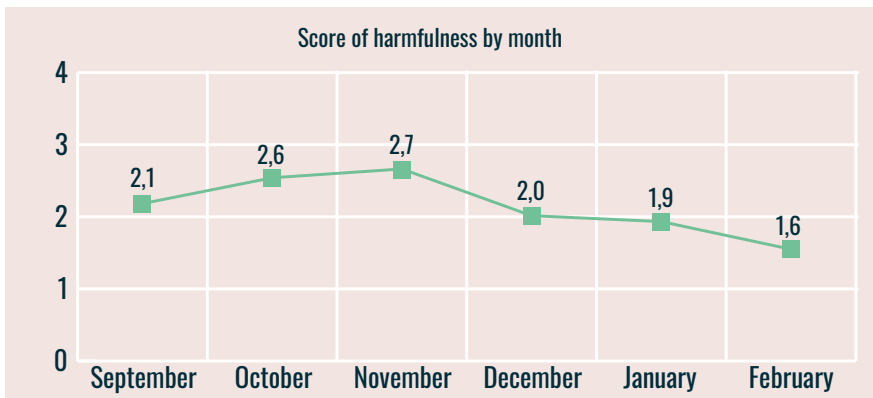


Figure No. 28 Score of harmfulness by month

The score of harmfulness was also calculated, which represents the number of harmful narratives present in one news item (post). The greater the number of narratives present, the greater the intensity of the harm. The intensity was 2.1 for all analysed online media. This means that the online media publishes an average of two harmful narratives per one post/news item.

Types of Harmful Narratives

The top three most commonly reported harmful narratives over the entire six-month period were:

4. ***Undermining trust in institutions***
5. ***Biased selection***
6. ***Character attacks***

Furthermore, Disinformation, Fomenting divisions and Populism follow in terms of frequency.

In over 80% of the news items with a harmful narrative, the narrative was produced by the political actor, in 12% it was produced by both (political actor and journalists), while journalists were the ones to produce it in only 6% of the news items.

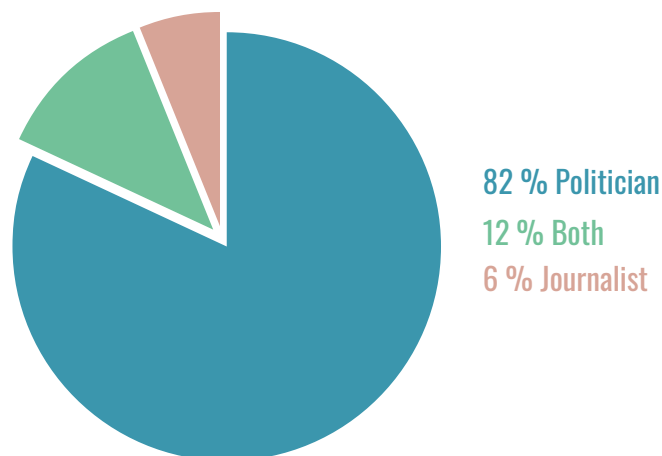


Figure No. 29 Who produces the harmful narrative?

In cases where the harmful narrative was produced either by the political actor or by both, most of the time, i.e. in 63% of the news items, the journalist simply broadcasted it without intervening during the broadcasting (behaved as if the media outlet is a 'bulletin board' that the political actor uses to communicate the harmful narrative), while in 14% of the articles the journalist even approved the harmful narrative identified in the article.

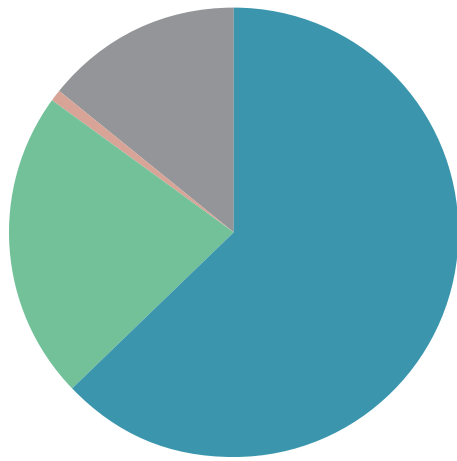


Figure No. 30 What is the attitude of the journalist when conveying the harmful narrative?

Main topics and sources

Similarly to TV stations, at the level of all 11 online media outlets, domestic politics dominates as the main topic in the news items with a harmful narrative with 64.4%, while the topics of crime, corruption and economy have a share of about 5-7%.

The sources in the news items /posts of the analysed online media are mainly (consistently throughout the months) accurate, on average in 85% of the cases. This is primarily due to the fact that press releases or politicians' speeches prevail.

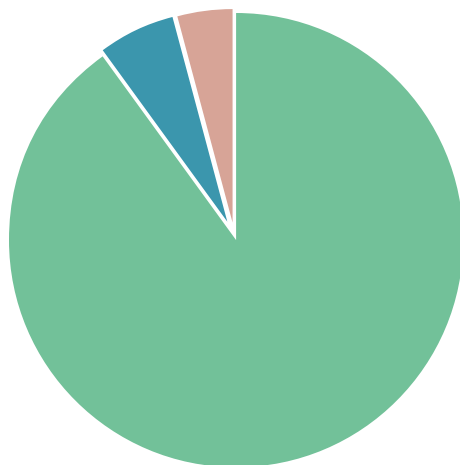


Figure No. 31 Featured sides in online media posts

What significantly deviates from professional journalistic reporting, which implies objectivity, impartiality and taking care to provide balanced information so that the public can make good decisions, is the tendency in 90% of the news items to only show one side.

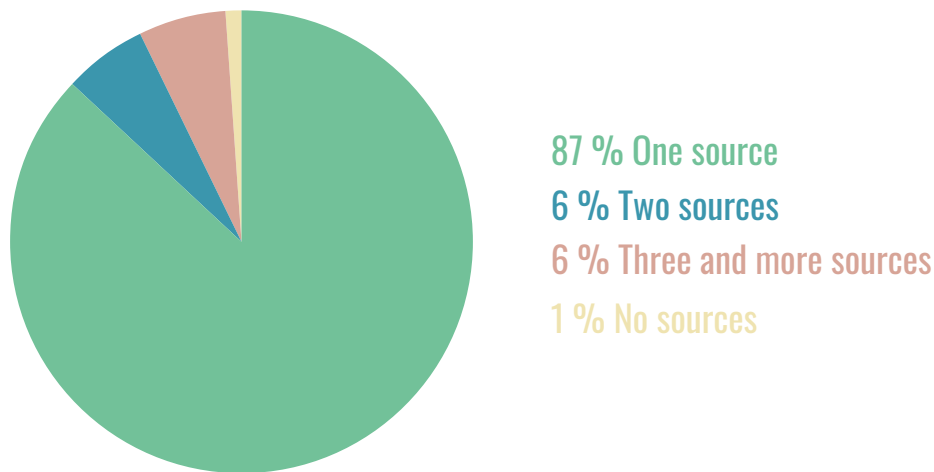


Figure No. 32 Number of sources in online media posts

In terms of how many sources were consulted (the number of sources) the news items /posts are dominated by those news items where only one source was consulted (87%), followed by those with two sources (6%) and those with three or more (6 %). In 1% of the news items/posts, no source was indicated.

