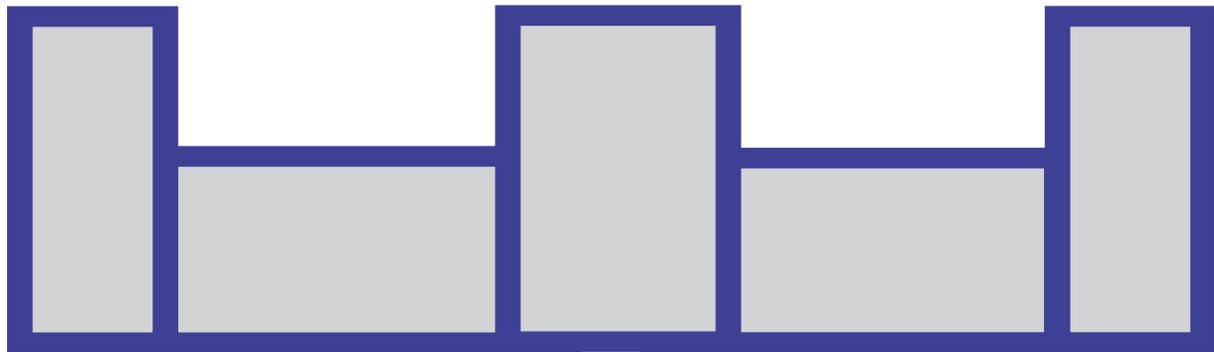




FIRST REPORT ON MONITORING OF MEDIA
REPORTING ON THE WORK OF THE
PARLIAMENT



PARLIAMENT WATCH

**Strengthening Political Debate
and Deliberative Discourse**

JUNE - SEPTEMBER 2014



First report on monitoring of media reporting on the work of the Parliament (19 JUNE – 30 SEPTEMBER)

The Institute for Democracy “Societas Civilis” – Skopje (IDSCS) and the Institute for Central-Eastern Europe and the Balkans (IECOB) are monitoring the quality of the debates in the Assembly since June 2014. The monitoring is part of the project “Parliament Watch! Strengthening the political debate and deliberative discourse”, and it is financially supported by the European Union. During the monitoring, 10 monthly reports on media monitoring will be published.

The present report is the first concerning the media coverage of the work of the Assembly in the period from 19th June until 30th September 2014.

The main goal of the monitoring is to reach empirical conclusions concerning the participation of the media in deliberation in the public policy making process and their role in informing the public about the content of the arguments brought about by MPs during parliamentary sessions.

In the following months, IDSCS will produce regular reports with the basic finding from the media monitoring.

A. Summary

In the period 19 June – 30 September, newspapers and televisions mostly mentioned the Assembly in the context of broader political events. Much less they informed specifically about the content of debates and the arguments brought about by MPs during plenary sessions and sessions of the committees in the Assembly.

Therefore, the public was deprived of information concerning the topics of discussion in the Assembly. It also remained uninformed about large part of the content and arguments which were delivered in favor or against the proposed legislations.

Newspapers published in Albanian language reported more frequently information regarding the Assembly than those published in Macedonian. However, newspapers published in Macedonian reported more frequently about the contents of parliamentary discussions.

The most frequent sources of information published in the media about the Assembly originated from the MPs. More frequently the media contained statements and standpoints that refer to only on political faction. In most of the cases, pieces of information originated from MPs who belong to the political parties that are in the majority in the Assembly. In fewer cases the sources of information originated from active or elected MPs who belong to the opposition.



B. Research methodology

The monitoring of the media includes monitoring of published information that concern the work of the Assembly and its MPs in 10 media outlets with national coverage or distribution. Six of them are daily newspapers, of which four are published in Macedonian and two are published in Albanian language. The remaining four media are televisions from which two broadcast in Macedonian language and two in Albanian language. The monitoring includes the following media:

Newspapers

- Dnevnik
- Utrinski Vesnik
- Vecer
- Sloboden Pecat
- Koha
- Lajm

Televisions

- Sitel
- Telma
- Alsat-M
- Macedonian Radio-Television 2, Program on Albanian language.

Subject of the analysis were published information in which the Assembly, MPs, the legislation or the legislative procedure were mentioned. The analysis also includes MPs of the opposition parties who won mandates on the last elections but refused to accept them and took the decision to boycott the Assembly. Each article was analyzed with the intent to point at its genre, focus and priority of the information, and the type, number, side, and publicity of sources.

C. Political context

According to the Constitution, the Assembly holds the legislative power and is consisted of 123 seats. The Members of the Parliament (MPs) are directly elected through proportional electoral system with a mandate of 4 years. At the last early parliamentary elections conducted in April 2014, VMRO – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity- won 61 mandates and formed a coalition government with DUI - Democratic Union for Integration- that won 19 seats. Citizens Option for Macedonia (GROM) and the National Democratic Rebirth (NDP) obtained 1 seat each. Social-Democratic Union for Macedonia (SDSM) won 34 mandates and leads the coalition in opposition in the government.

Since the beginning of the monitoring in June 2014 until the publication of this report, most of the MPs from the opposition boycotted the work of the Assembly.

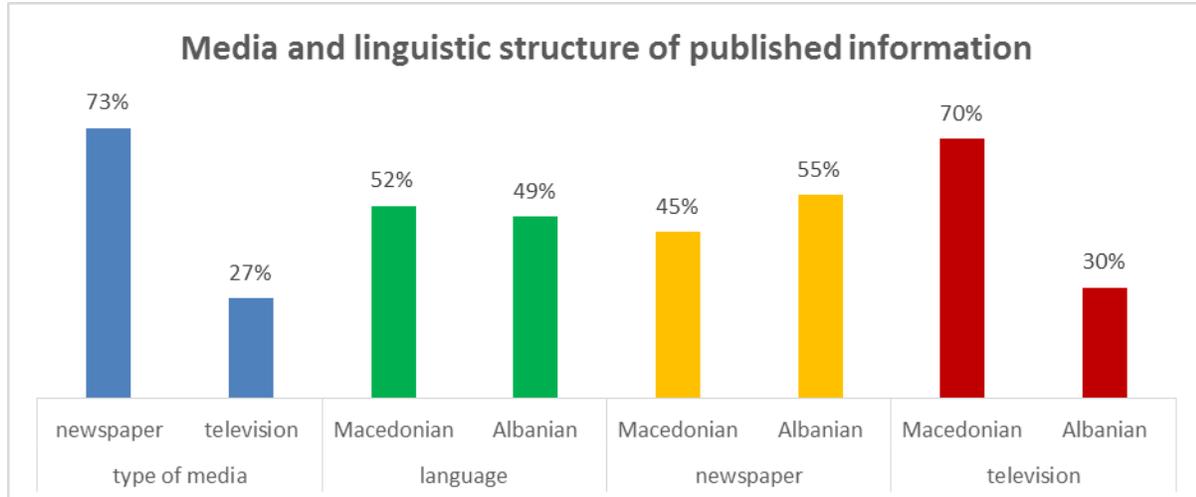


Seven MPs from DPA joined the boycott on 26 August, following an incident during the session of the Finances and budget committee. As a result of the boycott, in the period from 27 August to 30 September, the opposition was consisted of only three MPs from the opposition coalition led by SDSM who decided not to boycott the Assembly.

D. Findings from the monitoring (19 June – 30 September)

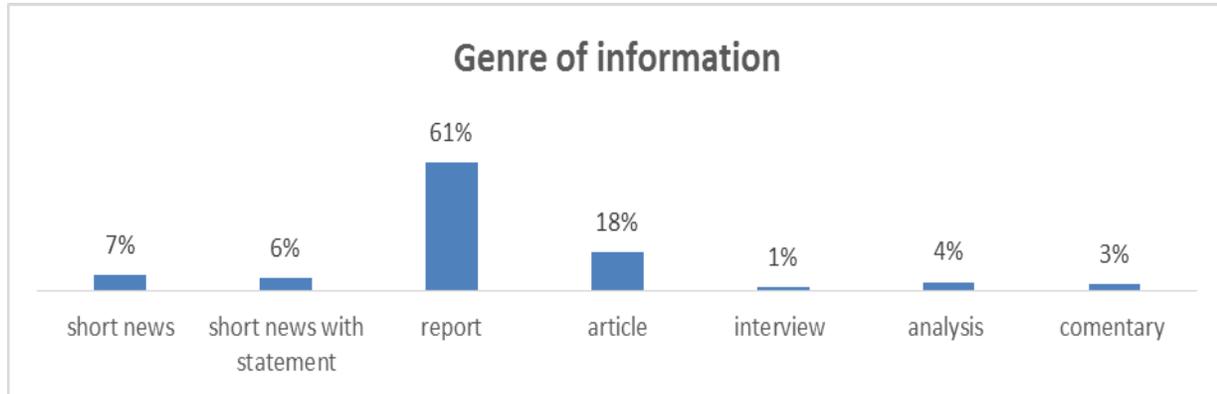
This Report covers published information in the media in the period from 19 June to 30 September. A total of 223 pieces of information including articles published in national newspapers and news broadcasted by national televisions were subject of the analysis. Monitored materials can be further specified in the following way:

- According to the type of media: 73% - newspaper articles; 27% - television programs;
- Language: 51.5% off all information concerning the Assembly was published in Macedonian language; 48.5% published in Albanian language;
- the articles published in newspapers, 45% were newspapers in Macedonian language; 55% - published in newspapers issued in Albanian language.
- News broadcasted in televisions, 70% - broadcasted in Macedonian and 30% - broadcasted in Albanian language.



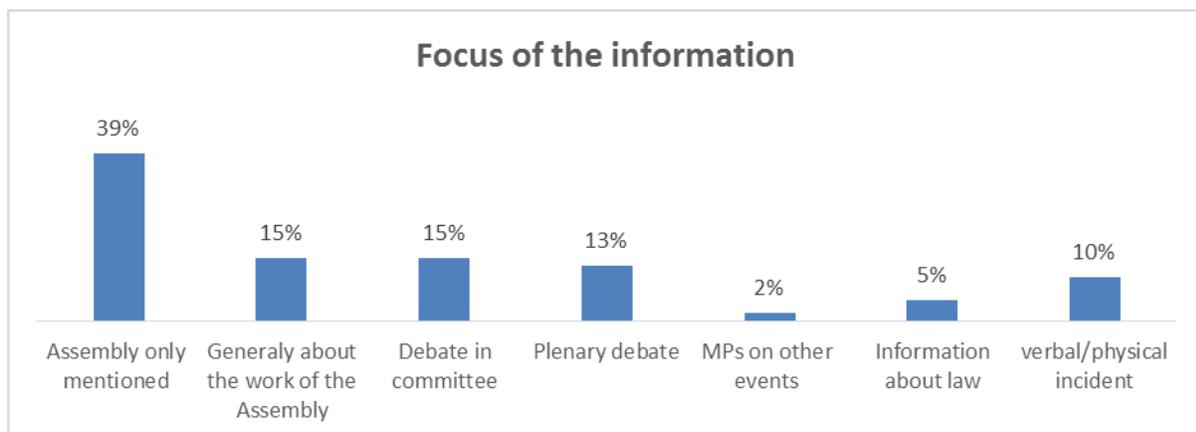
I. Genre of information

Looking at the genre of information published in the monitored media, 61% were structured as reports and they just informed about the events in the Assembly; 18% were articles with informative but also contained analytical elements 13% were short basic news, and 7% were analysis and comments about the events.



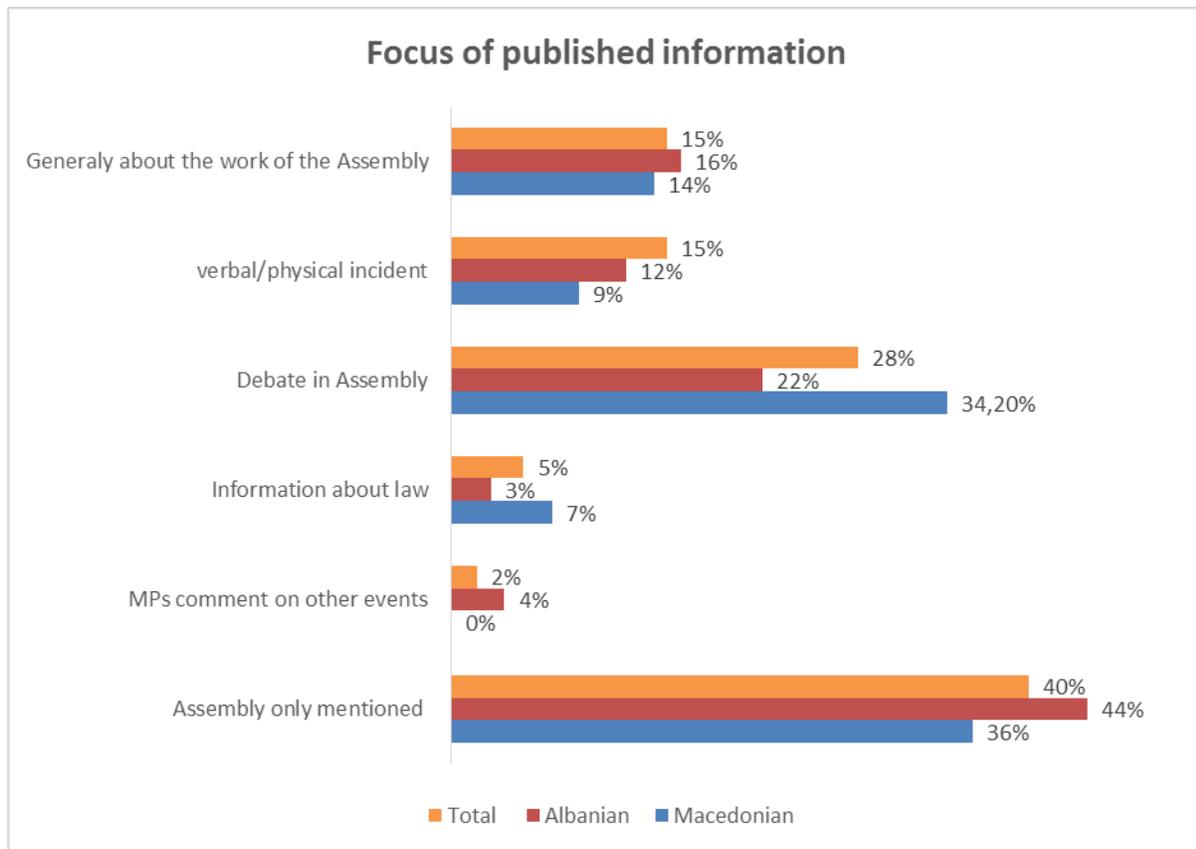
II. Focus of the information

The monitoring of the media in the period from 19 June to 30 September shows that in 39% of the monitored materials the Assembly was just mentioned and the content does not refer to any events in the Parliament, or to the work of the MPs. In these cases the Assembly is mostly mentioned against the background of political events in the country, relations between the leading political parties, and the decision from the part of the opposition to boycott the work of the Assembly. 28% of monitored materials recalled arguments and debates on plenary sessions and sessions of parliamentary committees. 15% of monitored materials recalled the work of the Assembly in general, without addressing to specific debates or arguments. 10% of monitored materials, recalled violent incidents that broke out at the session of the Financing and budget committee on 26 August. 5% of monitored materials recalled the cancellation or enactment of new law or amendments to existing ones. In these cases articles mainly concerned the terms and substance of legal changes without mentioning the Assembly.



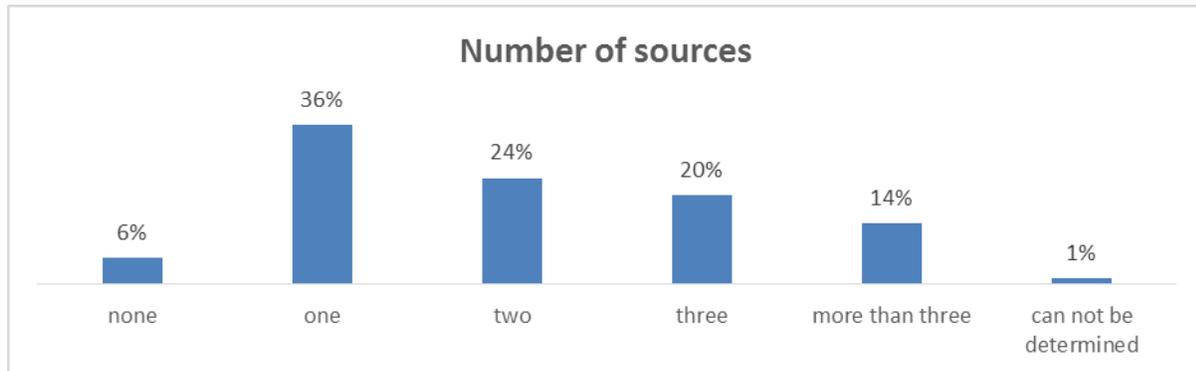


It should be noticed that the media in Macedonian language reported more often from debates in parliamentary committees and plenary sessions. Media in Albanian language put more often the Assembly in the wider context of political events, refer more often to the general work of the Parliament, and informed more often about violent incident that took place on 26 August.

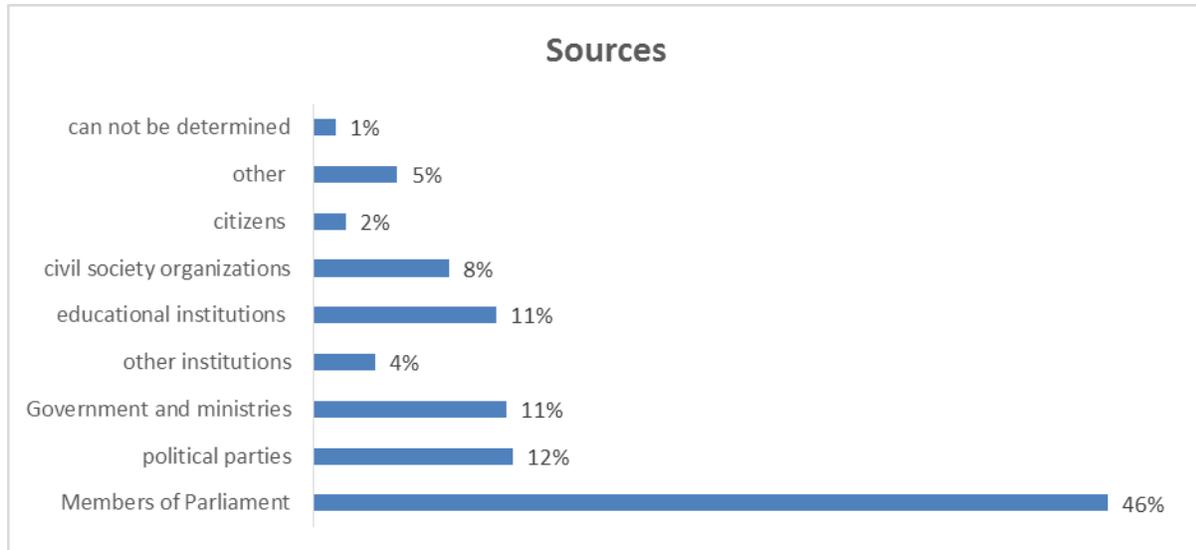


III. Number and side of sources

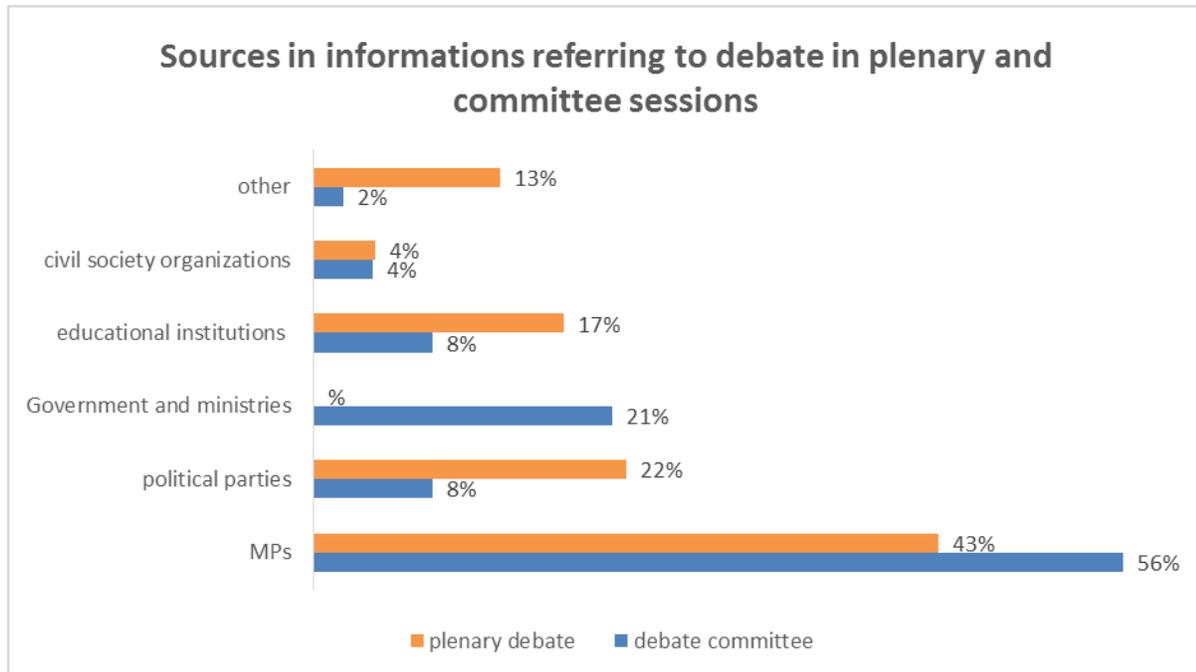
The number of quoted or consulted sources varied in the monitored materials: in 36% of the cases only one source was mentioned; in 24% two sources; in 20% three sources, and in 14% more than three sources. Six percent of published information on the Assembly did not have any quote, consulted or named sources.



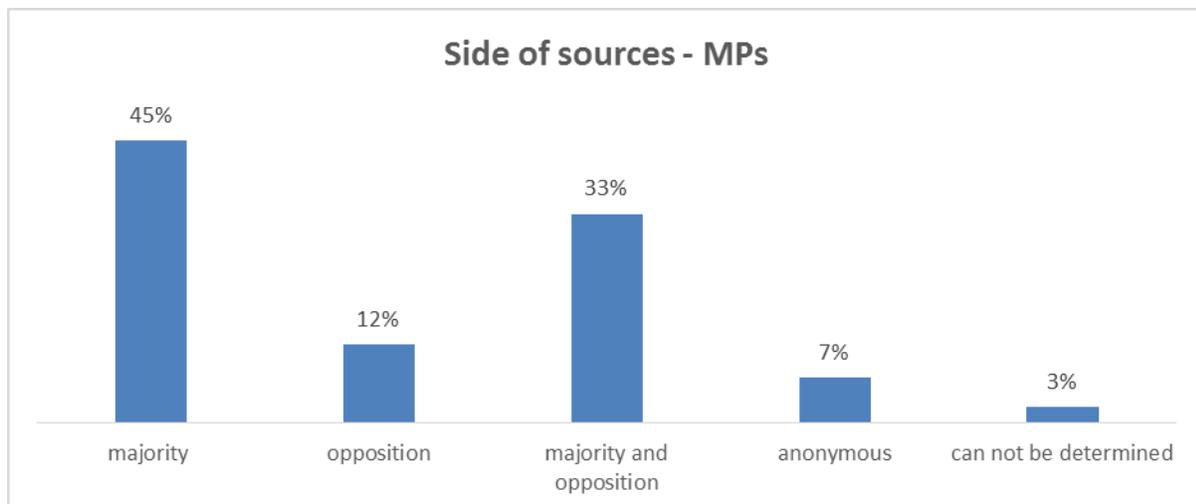
It is noticeable that the MPs are the most common used sources of information for the media concerning the Assembly (46% of the cases). It should be noticed that, the monitoring considered all MPs, including those members of the opposition parties that won mandates but refused to enter the parliament due to the decision to boycott the Assembly. 12% of sources used were political parties or their members who are not MPs or elected MPs. 11% included the Government, educational institutions and civil society organizations.



MPs were mostly quoted or consulted on issues concerning the current political situation in the country and the general work of the Assembly. Less attention was given to more specific issues concerning parliamentary sessions. The media considered citizens as source of information in rare occasions. Civil society organizations were quoted or consulted mostly in relation to political events in the wider context, and rarely in relation to specific parliamentary sessions and arguments brought by MPs.



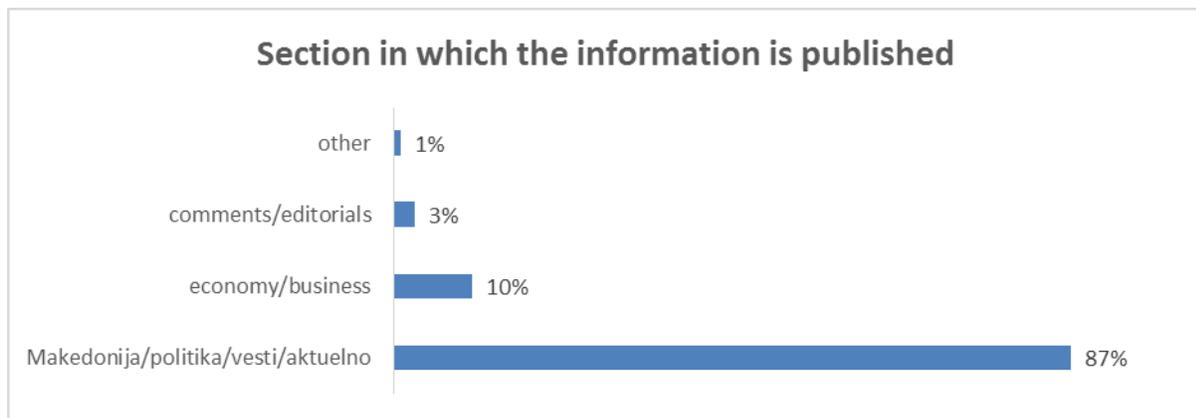
Looking at political affiliation of the MPs who were consulted as sources of information, 57% of collected information originated from just one political option. Of this percentage, 45% were MPs from the majority in the Parliament and 12% from the opposition. 33% of media information consulted or quoted MPs from both the majority and the opposition. In 7% of the cases MPs remained anonymous. In 3% of the cases the political affiliation of the MPs could not be determined.





IV. Section in which the information is published

According to the monitoring data, 41% of published information by the media referring to the Assembly were announced on the front pages of the newspapers or in the general introduction of the TV journals. In 59% that was not the case. Regarding to the sections where information was published, in 87% that was on the leading pages and the first parts of the TV journals in the sections "Makedonija", "Politika", "Aktuelno", "Vesti" etc. Information referring to the Assembly was rarely published in the business or economy sections - 10%. Three percent of the information was published in the comments and editorials sections and just 1% in other sections of the monitored newspapers or TV journals. Of the total number of published information, 82% were signed by author, while in 18% of the cases the author was anonymous.



E. Conclusions

- The media insufficiently reported about parliamentary debates and the arguments brought by MPs on parliamentary sessions. The Assembly was most frequently mentioned against the background of the wider political situation in the country and in the relations of the largest political parties, and rarely in relation to the content of the parliamentary discussions.
- Newspapers informed about the Assembly considerably more often than televisions. Newspapers in Albanian language published information about the Assembly more often, but newspapers in Macedonian language more often informed about the discussions and the topics in parliamentary sessions.
- MPs are sources of information for most of published materials concerning the Assembly. However, they are most often from only one political option. In few cases sources from both the majority and the opposition appeared in the published articles.
- In the published content that had sources from only one political party, more often the sources were MPs from political parties which are part of the parliamentary majority.



- The information concerning the Assembly was published in most of the cases in the form of informative reports, and to much lesser extent in forms that contained analytical elements.
- The media rarely consulted citizens or civil society organizations when informing on topics connected with the work of the Assembly.

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