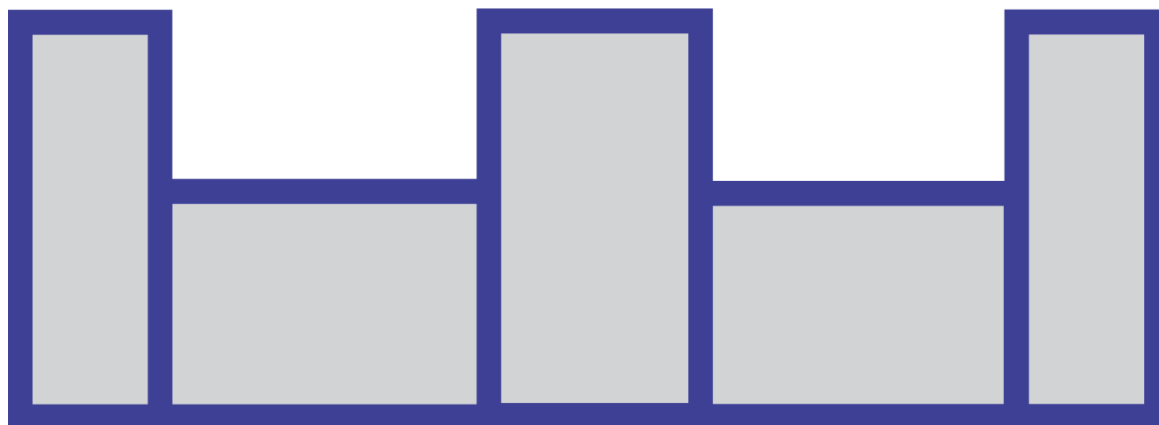




FOURTH REPORT ON MONITORING OF MEDIA REPORTING ON THE WORK OF THE PARLIAMENT



PARLIAMENT WATCH

**Strengthening Political Debate
and Deliberative Discourse**

DECEMBER 1, 2014



Fourth report on monitoring of media reporting on the work of the Parliament (DECEMBER)

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 (Parliament) since June 2014. The monitoring is part of the project “Parliament Watch! Strengthening the political debate and deliberative discourse” that is financially supported by the European Union. During the monitoring, 10 monthly reports on media are also produced.

The present report is the second concerning the media coverage of the work of the Assembly in the period from 1 until 31 December 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 and IECOB will produce regular monthly reports with the basic finding from the media monitoring.

A. Summary

The key finding from the fourth report on monitoring the media reporting is that during the monitored period, from 1 to 31 December, the media increased the reporting on the parliamentary debates, compared to November and October. Only in the period 19 June – 30 September, the media dedicated somewhat more attention to the discussions, arguments and views of the MPs. In addition, the procedure for revoking the Opposition MPs’ mandates and the amendments to the Law of High Education, caused the biggest interest for discussion.

In December, the media published somewhat more information, where MPs from only one political option are cited as sources, rather than information where MPs both from the Government and the Opposition are cited simultaneously. However, the percent of such information is at the lowest level, since the beginning of the monitoring. On the other hand, the percent of information where MPs both from the Government and the Opposition are simultaneously cited as sources, reached the highest level up till now.

Sources for most of the published information monitored in the fourth report of monitoring of media’s coverage in December were MPs from only one political side. Most of times from active and elected MPs from the opposition who did not accept the mandates, compared to MPs from the leading coalition. The percentage of information where sources were both from the majority and the opposition reduced by half compared to the previous monitoring periods.

In December, newspapers and televisions once again mentioned the Assembly primarily in the



context of the broader political situation in the country, the boycott of the Assembly by the coalition at the opposition led by SDSM and the procedure for revoking the mandates of elected MPs from the opposition. The media informed considerably less about the content of debates and the arguments brought by MPs during plenary sessions and sessions of the parliamentary committees.

Therefore, the public was rarely informed about the events in the Assembly, topics on the agenda and the arguments brought about by the MPs in discussing pending legislations.

The most frequent sources of information published in the media about the Assembly originated from the MPs. But, this percent decreased compared to the two previous monitoring period (19 June - 30 September and October). In December, the media increasingly named as sources of information on the work of the Assembly representatives of the Government and foreign experts who commented on the Parliament's work.

Newspapers presented many more pieces of information regarding the Assembly than televisions.

B. Research methodology

The monitoring of the media includes monitoring of published information that concerns 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 are published information in which the Assembly, MPs, the legislation or the legislative procedure are mentioned. The analysis also includes MPs of the opposition parties who won mandates on the last elections in April 2014 but refused to accept them and took the decision to boycott the Assembly. Each article is 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- which won 19 seats. Citizens Option for Macedonia (GROM) and the National Democratic Rebirth (NDP) obtained 1 seat each.

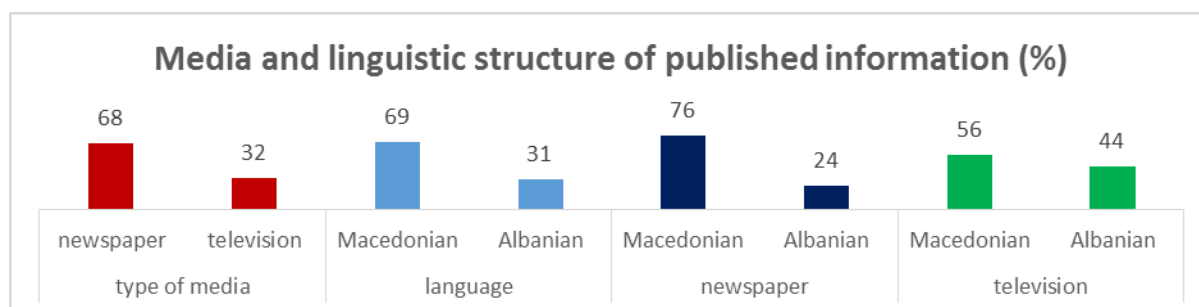
The representative of GROM is part of the ruling coalition, while the MP who received his mandate from NDP joined the parliamentary group of DUI, despite the decision of his primary party to boycott the Parliament. Thus, the parliamentary group DUI now consists of 20 members.

Since the beginning of the monitoring until the publication of this report most of the MPs from the main opposition coalition led by the party Social-Democratic Union for Macedonia (SDSM) that won 34 mandates on the elections, boycotted the work of the Assembly. In December the main opposition on parliamentary session consisted of seven MPs from the Democratic party of Albanians (DPA) and three MPs from the opposition coalition led by SDSM who decided not to boycott the Assembly. In December, the majority began the procedure for revoking the mandates of 31 opposition MPs who boycott the work of the Parliament. The procedure continued in December and has not finished until the publication of this report.

D. Findings from the monitoring (1 – 31 December)

This Report covers published information in the media in the period from 1 to 31 December. Total of 106 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:

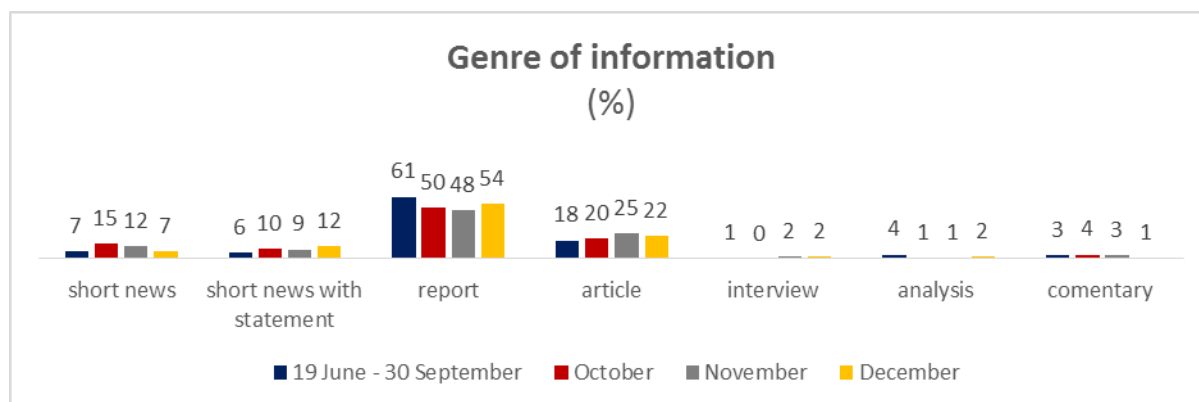
- According to the type of media: 68% - newspaper articles; 32% - television programs;
- Language: 69% off all information concerning the Assembly was published in Macedonian language; 31% published in Albanian language;
- Of the articles published in newspapers, 76% were newspapers in Macedonian language; 24% - published in newspapers issued in Albanian language.
- News broadcasted in televisions, 56% - broadcasted in Macedonian and 44% - broadcasted in Albanian language.



I. Genre of information

In December, the journalist information referring to the work of the Parliament in terms of genre, for most of the part i.e. 54%, were structured as reports and only informing about the events connected to the Parliament. That is more compared to November and October and somewhat less than the previous monitored period (19 June/ 30 September) when 61% of such information was registered.

From the monitored newspaper information and TV stories, 22% are articles i.e. have informative and analytical elements when reporting about an event, which is within the existent average since the beginning of the monitoring. From the published information, 19% are basic news with only short information about an event, only 2% of them are interviews and analyses, while there was only 1% commentaries on certain events.



II. Focus of the Information

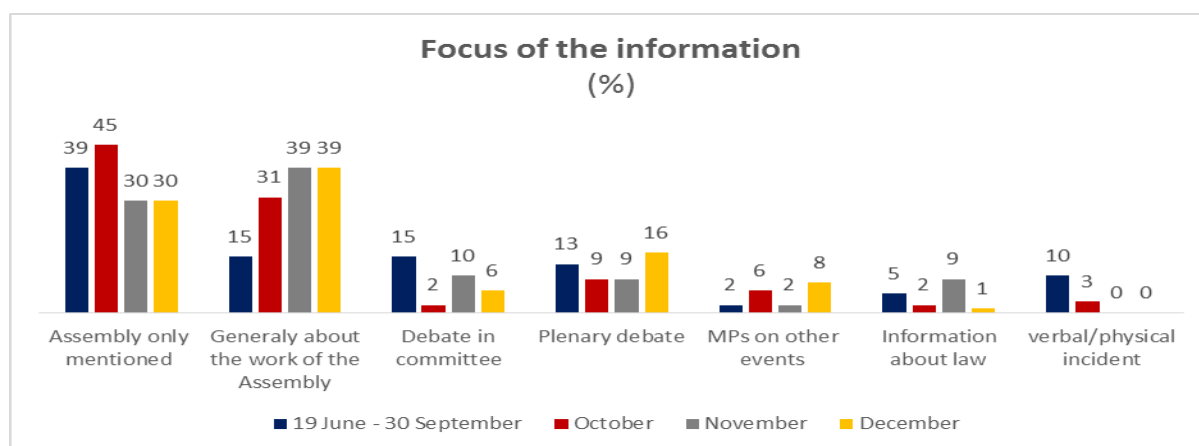
The monitoring of the published information in the media in December, shows that the percent of information in which the Assembly is only mentioned is identical as in November i.e. 30%. That is less than the two first monitored periods 19 June – 30 September and October. There is no change in the percent of information, referring generally to the work of the Parliament and not essentially to the work of the MPs. These information mainly refers to the work of the Parliament and the relations between the political parties, without giving any specific details from the sessions. Such



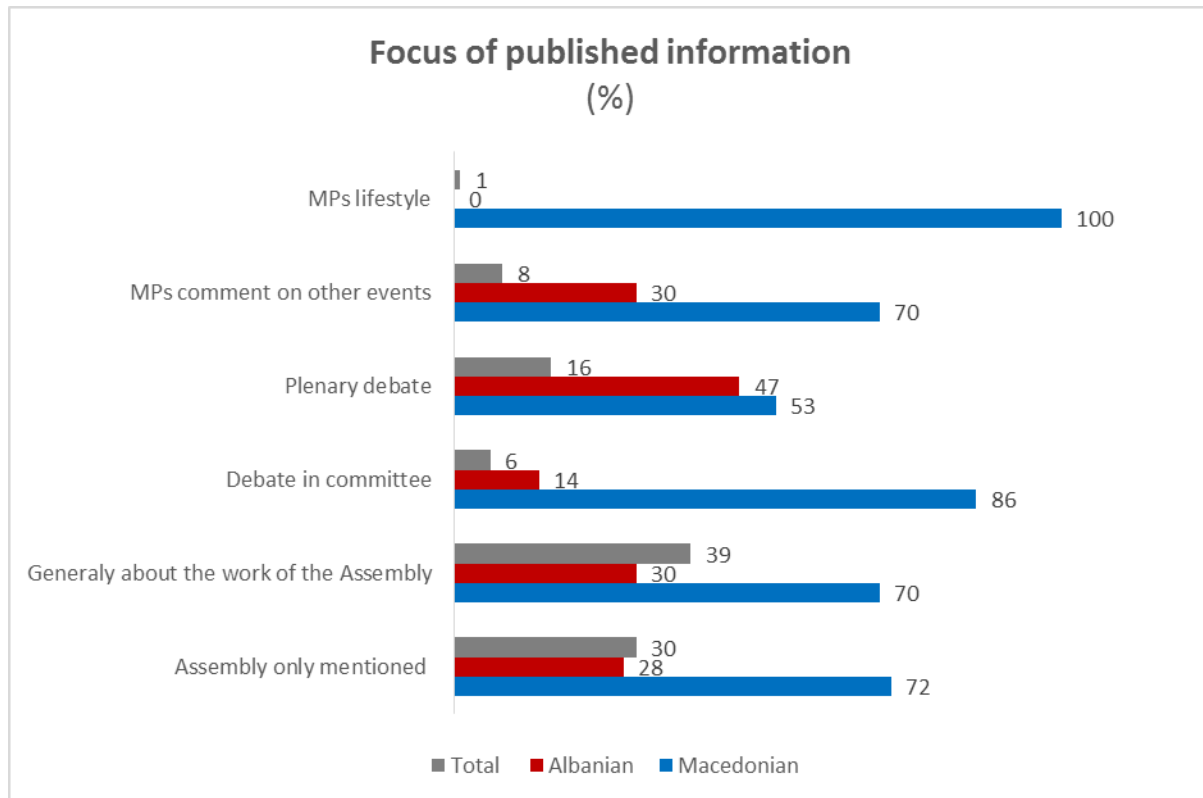
information reached 31% in October, while in the period 19 June – 30 September – 15%.

The monitored media in December in total of 22% of the published information, informed on the parliamentary debates, out of which 16% from plenary sessions, while 6% from parliamentary committee sessions. The monitored media informed more on the parliamentary discussions only in the period 19 June – 30 September, while this percent was lower in October and November.

The most interesting topics for the media in December were the procedure for revoking the Opposition MPs' mandates, who boycott the Parliament and the debate about the packet of amendments for the educational laws and especially the Law on High Education.

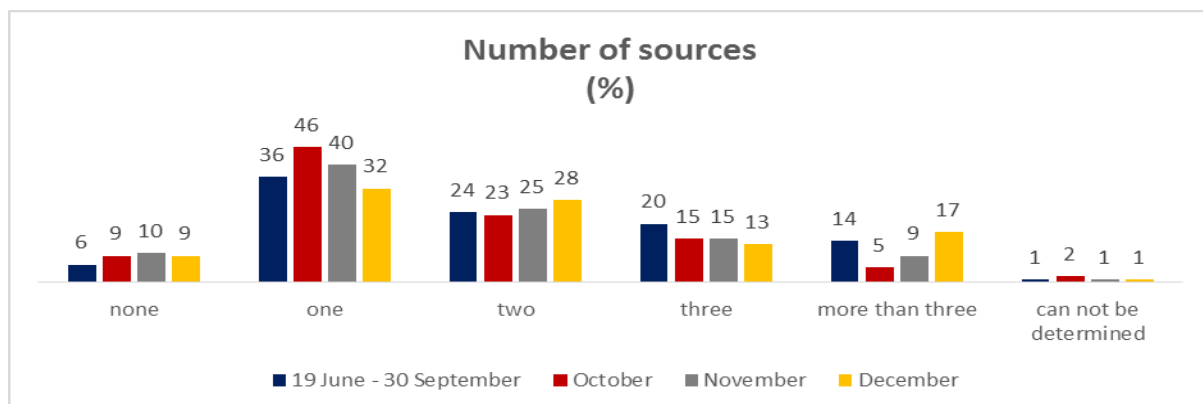


In addition, the media in Macedonian language published more information during this period in all monitored categories, compared to the media in Albanian language.



III. Number and side of sources

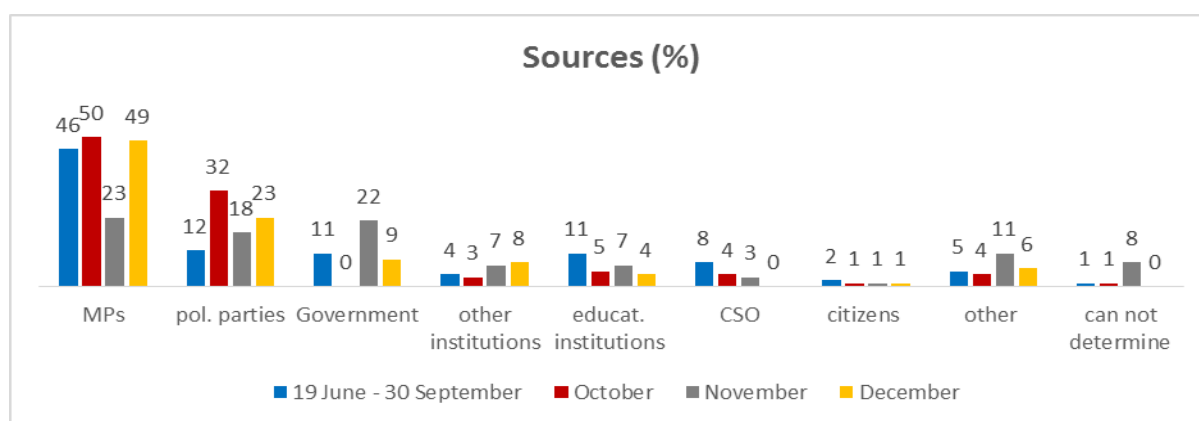
In the monitored newspaper texts and TV stories in December, the percent of information with only one cited source fell to 32%, which is the lowest level since the beginning of the monitoring. 28% of the information was with two cited sources, while 13% of the information was with three cited sources. In 17% of the monitored sessions in December, more than three sources are cited, which is the highest level since the beginning of the monitoring. In 9% of the published information, in which the Parliament is mentioned, there are no sources cited.



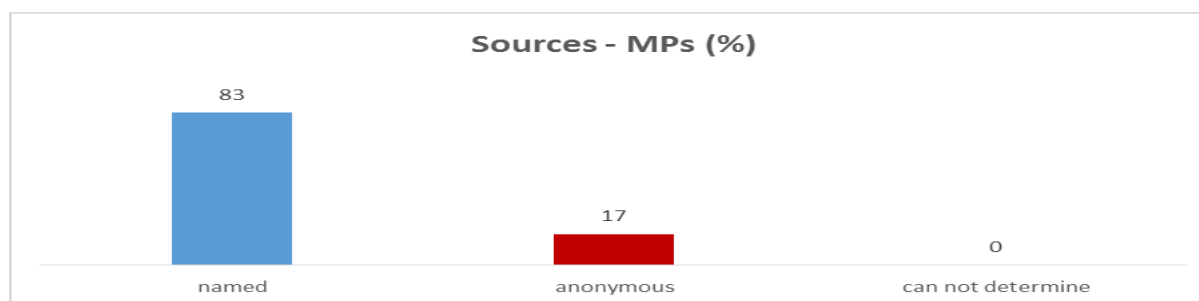


In December, the MPs were the sources for almost half of the monitored information (49%). That is 26% more compared to November, and almost identical with October and the period 19 June – 30 September. 23% of the information have political parties and their representatives as sources, which is 6% more than November, but 9% less than October, when this percent reached the highest level of 32%. In the period of 19 June – 30 September, the parties and their representatives were cited as sources in 12% of the information.

In December, 9% of the published information cites representatives from the Government and the ministries, while 8% representatives from other state institutions. 6% of the information cites “other” sources, most often foreign diplomats, representatives and parliamentarians, while in 4% of the information, analysts are consulted.



In December, in 83% of the information where the sources are MPs, the name and the surname of the MP is given. In 17% the MPs are anonymous i.e. not named.

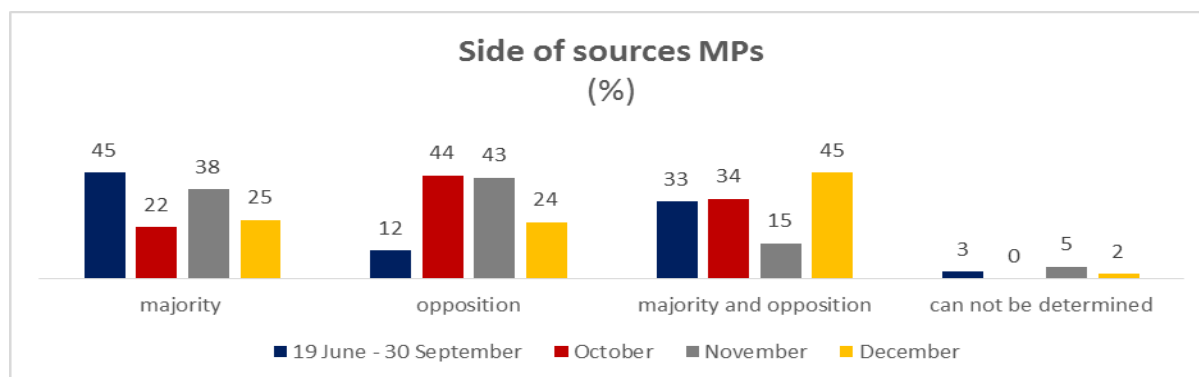


Should we analyze the political options of the MPs, consulted as sources in the journalist articles and TV stories, it seems that in December, the media published the highest level of information, with sources coming both from the Majority and the Opposition. In addition, the information with sources cited from only one side, either Majority or Opposition is at the lowest level in December.

In 45% of the information, both the Majority and the Opposition are consulted. In 25% of the information, sources from the leading majority are cited, while in 24% active MPs or elected MPs

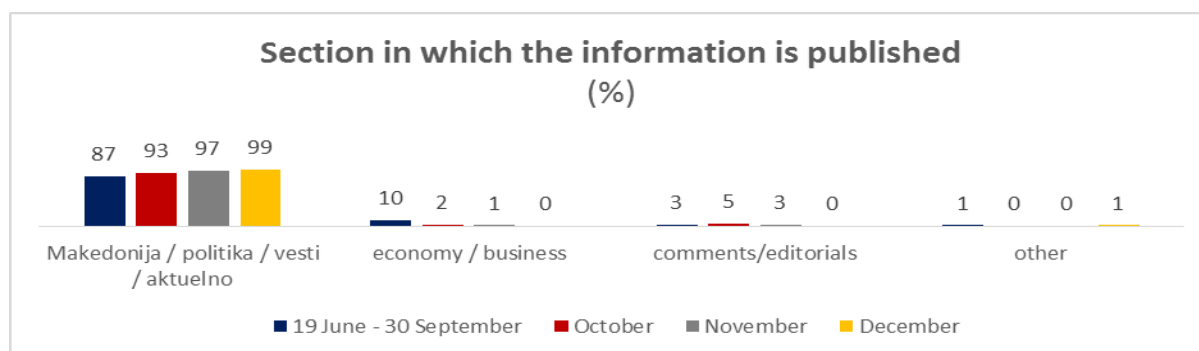


from the Opposition who do not accept mandates are cited.

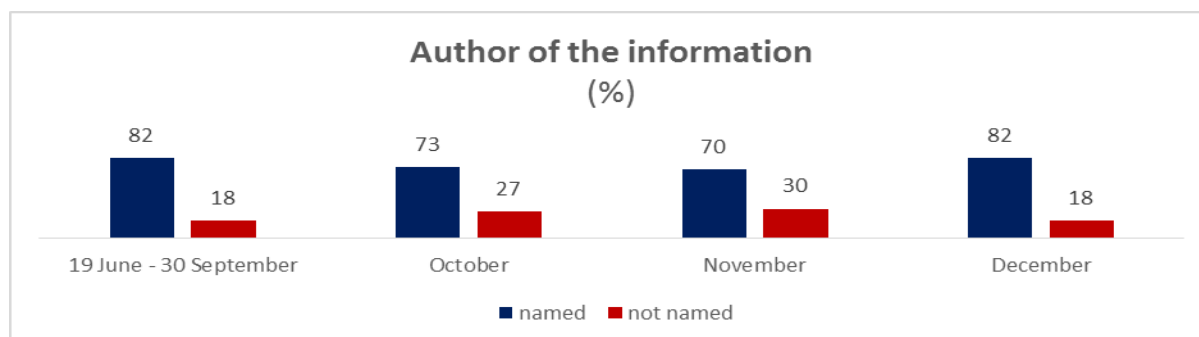


IV. Section in which the information is published

According to the monitoring data, in November, 55% of published information referring to the Assembly was announced on the front pages of the newspapers or in the general introduction of TV journals, while that was not the case with 45% of the published information. In terms of sections, this information in 99% of the cases is published on the front pages and the beginning parts of the newspapers and journals like “Makedonija”, “Politika”, “Aktuelno” and similar. The information referring to the Assembly is published in other sections, in only 1% of the cases. In December, none of the monitored information, referring to or mentioning the Parliament, was published in the economy or business section or in the section for commentaries and columns.



In the monitored media content in December, 82% of the articles and TV stories named the author, while 18% did not name the author of the published content, referring to the Parliament.



E. Conclusions

- In December, the percent of information citing sources both from the Government and the Opposition MPs, was the highest up till now. The percent of information, citing sources from one political option is the lowest since the beginning of the monitoring. There is an equal percent of information citing sources from the Government and the Opposition MPs respectively.
- In December, the main sources of media information, referring to the Parliament, are the MPs. Their presence is doubled since November, which is still the average percent from October and the period of 19 June – 30 September. The second most present source are the political parties, while the third most present source is the executive power i.e. the Government and the ministries.
- The public generally remains insufficiently informed about the work of the Parliament, the laws being discussed and the arguments being expressed by the MPs on the sessions.
- The Parliament in December 2015, is mostly mention in the context of the wider political situation in the state, the relations between the political parties, the Opposition boycott and the current procedure for revoking the mandates of the elected opposition MPs.
- The media in Macedonian language reported considerably more on the work of the Parliament than the media in Albanian language. As in the previous period, the newspapers reported considerably more on the events in the Parliament, than the televisions.

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