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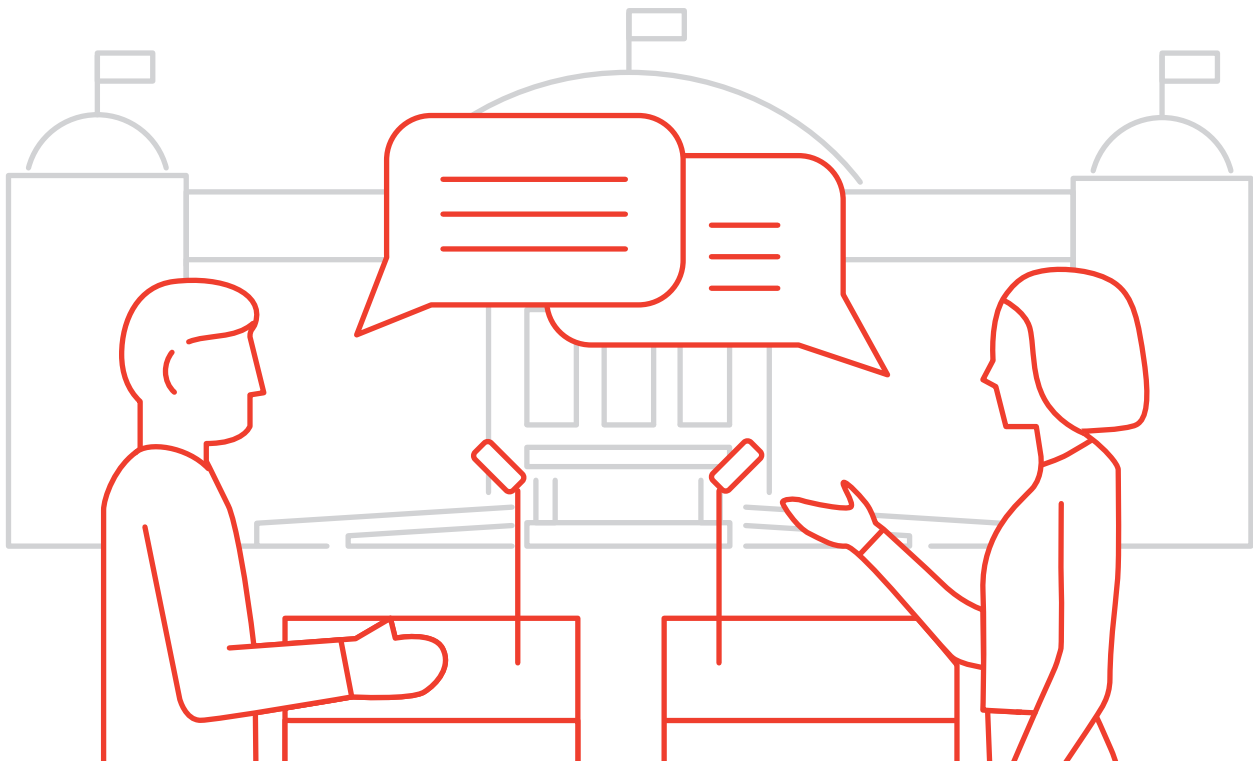
Monitoring report No. 1/2026

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PARLIAMENT WATCH: MONITORING REPORT ON THE DEBATE QUALITY IN THE PARLIAMENT (JULY – DECEMBER 2025)

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I. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The debate quality in the Parliament of the Republic of North Macedonia (or “the Parliament”) is analysed using “the Discourse Quality Index”(DQI). This Index is an instrument that allows each specific speech act during a monitored session to be coded according to several characteristics, such as the:

- Degree of speech argumentation (how many arguments there are in each discussion);
- Degree of respect the speaker has shown towards other members of parliament (MPs) and their arguments;
- Openness to acknowledge arguments of other participants and changing one’s own views because of better arguments presented in the discussion;
- Opportunity for the MPs to freely express their views.

The semi-annual reports from the monitoring of debate quality in the Parliament also include general assessment of the debate quality in terms of Discourse Quality Index. This Index gives an average assessment from one to ten of the debate quality in the Parliament.

This Index includes the following indicators: level of argumentation (20% of the score), scope of explanation (5%), accountability (20%), power of better argument (20%), attitude towards participants from other political parties (10%), attitude towards arguments presented by speakers from other political parties (10%), attitude towards external participants (2.5%), attitude towards arguments of external participants (2.5%), interruptions (5%), and limitations (5%).

One (1), being the lowest score, means that MPs fail to use arguments or invoke any principles in their speech, twist the arguments, fail to change their position and acknowledge arguments, make no reference to the arguments of others, or change their views but not as a result of arguments presented by others. Score one (1) also means that MPs show disrespect towards other participants (either MPs or external participants) and their arguments, the discussion gets interrupted and speakers are physically disrupted at certain points. On the other hand, score ten (10), that is, excellent discourse quality, means that MPs use more than two arguments in the discussion, or a minimum one argument in their address, invoke political, legal, and ethical principles, properly address the arguments, change their views as result of better arguments, treat the personality and arguments of other discussion participants with respect (either MPs or external participants), the discussion is not interrupted and the right to speech is not limited.

See Annex 1 for more details on the assessment methodology.

II. INTRODUCTION AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

In accordance with the Constitution, the Parliament of the Republic of North Macedonia holds the legislative power and is currently composed of 120 MPs. The MPs are elected in direct elections through proportional electoral lists for a four-year term. The current parliamentary composition, which is the subject of this Monitoring Report, was elected in the eleventh parliamentary elections held on May 8, 2024. The elections were conducted in a fair and democratic atmosphere, with no significant irregularities. Seventeen political entities participated in the elections, and VMRO-DPMNE¹ and the “Your Macedonia” coalition achieved a convincing victory with 58 mandates. The coalition “For a European Future,” led by SDSM², won 18 seats; the coalition “European Front,” led by DUI³, also won 18; the coalition “VLEN”⁴ – 14 seats; Levica – six seats; and the newly established political party Movement I KNOW for Our Macedonia (ZNAM) – six seats. The new parliamentary majority was formed with 78 MPs (VMRO-DPMNE, “VLEN” and ZNAM), while the opposition had 42 (SDSM, DUI and Levica).

Almost one year after the constitution of the new parliamentary composition, Arben Taravari, the leader of one of the two wings of the Alliance for Albanians (AA), announced that the party would run independently, outside the “VLEN” coalition, in upcoming local elections scheduled for autumn 2025. Shortly after the decision was made, other leaders of “VLEN” announced the unification of all members of the coalition into a single political structure, with the formation of joint bodies and a united campaign in the local elections.⁵ However, the announced unification did not take place by the autumn of 2025, and in the local elections “VLEN” once again ran as a coalition. The sudden changes within the Albanian political bloc have raised questions regarding the new composition of the parliamentary majority. On May 12, Taravari officially announced the party’s withdrawal from the government and the “VLEN” coalition, citing unfulfilled promises to their voters.⁶ The party’s decisions led to a restructuring of the parliamentary group of “VLEN”, where three MPs, members of Arben Taravari’s wing of AA, left the ruling coalition, thereby reducing the parliamentary majority to 75 MPs. The withdrawal of three Albanian MPs from the majority raised questions about the potential challenges in passing laws through the Badinter majority. The lack of MPs from non-majority ethnic communities within the government coalition has already resulted in a failure to adopt certain laws that affect ethnic communities. These laws include amendments to the Electoral Code, the election of members of the MRTV⁷ Programme Council and other similar decisions.

¹ Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity

² Social Democratic Union of Macedonia

³ Democratic Union for Integration

⁴ “Vlen” (in Alb), “Vredi” (in Mkd), “It is worth” (in Eng)

⁵ “The “Vlen” coalition is transforming into a new party,” Vecer Press, April 21, 2025

⁶ “Taravari’s Alliance for Albanians Goes into Opposition,” Radio Free Europe, May 12, 2025

⁷ Macedonian Radio and Television

The political and social situation in the country was also shocked on March 16, 2025, following a catastrophic fire in a discotheque in the town of Kochani, which tragically killed 62 young people and injured over 190.⁸ The tragedy, which occurred as a result of serious legal violations and disregard for security regulations at the local and state levels, has heightened public concern about the prevalence of corruption and the effectiveness of institutional security mechanisms. As an initial response to the tragedy, the Parliament canceled all sessions for the two weeks so as not to further fuel the already tense and mournful atmosphere.⁹ The decision by the Parliament to suspend work during a time of crisis has been met with criticism from the public, with a former parliamentary speaker describing it as an admission of the institution's dysfunctionality.¹⁰ On the other hand, local MP offices in that region were activated shortly after the tragedy, where citizens were able to address some of the MPs from Electoral District (ED) 3. After the two-week recess, the Parliament took concrete legal measures including banning pyrotechnics in public closed spaces and imposed regulation on hospitality establishments that obstruct the work of emergency services.. While these legal measures were taken, MPs otherwise failed to exercise their oversight role regarding the tragedy. On June 4 2025, the second attempt by the parliamentary group of Levica party to convene an oversight discourse failed, as that proposal did not find support from the majority. The MP and president of Levica, Dimitar Apasiev, filed a lawsuit in the Administrative Court against the Parliament and the President of the Parliament for the untimely and illegal cancellation of the duly scheduled supervisory hearing.¹¹

Considerable attention was given to the EU integration-focused Reform Agenda in the first half of 2025. Given that these reforms require strong democratic capacity, transparent communication, and constructive parliamentary discourse, they reaffirmed the need for Parliament to play a more active and responsible role in oversight, policy-making, and public involvement. At the recent EU summit, Enlargement Commissioner Marta Koss reiterated Bulgaria's precondition for North Macedonia's European integration, emphasizing that the two countries must continue their cooperation and that North Macedonia must implement the constitutional amendments to take advantage of the recently opened window for the Union's enlargement.¹²

8 "Collective grief and trauma after the tragedy in Kocani," Radio Free Europe, March 18, 2025

9 "The Parliament has canceled all activities this week as well," Sitel Television, March 25, 2025

10 "Petkovski: The Parliament should dissolve itself, it abandoned the citizens at the most difficult moment," Sloboden Pechat, March 25, 2025

11 "Apasiev will sue Gashi and the Parliament over the oversight hearing on Kochani," Sloboden Pechat, July 28, 2025

12 "Skopje Summit – Enlargement can unite Europe", July 1, 2025

The 2025 local elections (First round on October 19 and second round on November 2)) were held in an environment of heightened political sensitivity and legal uncertainty. The electoral environment was marked by late amendments to the electoral legislation that had the potential to affect the composition of candidate lists and the electoral outcome, particularly with regard to independent candidates and media representation. Legal loopholes, unequal access to the media and strict campaign regulations created a structural advantage for larger parties and limited the visibility of smaller and independent actors, despite a record number of candidates. At the same time, the elections were characterised by a clear decline in voter turnout and a record number of invalid ballots, pointing to growing political fatigue, low levels of trust in institutions and a form of silent protest. In these elections, the coalition led by VMRO-DPMNE won the largest number of municipalities, securing 33 mayoral victories in the first round and an additional 21 in the second round, as well as the mayoral post in the City of Skopje, amounting to a total of 54 municipalities plus the capital city. The VLEN coalition achieved a total of nine victories—five in the first round and four in the second round. The coalition led by SDSM won three municipalities in each electoral round, for a total of six, while the coalition led by DUI secured three municipalities in the first round and one in the second round, totalling four. The ZNAM party and the Union of Roma each won one municipality, both in the second round, thereby maintaining a limited local presence. One independent candidate was also elected in the second round.

In November 2025, judicial proceedings were initiated in connection with the catastrophic fire in Kočani, constituting a key test of the capacity of the prosecution and the judiciary to act in a case of high public interest. The manner in which the indictments were formulated, the scope of the suspects involved and the pace of the judicial process prompted public debate as to whether the investigation would lead to a full determination of both individual and institutional responsibility. Beyond the judicial proceedings, the tragedy was also addressed within the Parliament through the work of the Standing Inquiry Committee on the Protection of Human Freedoms and Rights, which held a session dedicated to the case in December 2025. The discussion was marked by intense debates among Members of Parliament and direct addresses by the families of the victims, who called for justice, institutional accountability and the identification of the systemic failures that led to the tragedy. In December 2025, the State Public Prosecutor, Ljupčo Kocevski, submitted his irrevocable resignation immediately prior to the initiation of proceedings for his dismissal in the Assembly, stating that a politically motivated process was being conducted against him and that such actions constituted a serious threat to the independence of the prosecution and to the principles of the rule of law. The resignation, which precluded the possibility of a parliamentary debate on his dismissal, further reinforced perceptions of an institutional crisis and a lack of confidence in the system's capacity to ensure accountability free from political influence.

III. SUMMARY

The report indicates a relatively low level of debate quality in the Parliament for the current mandate, and confirming that there is significant room for improvement. **The average debate quality score for the first half of 2025 is 5.7 on a scale of 1-10. This represents no change from the previous monitoring period (January-June 2025) but a slight improvement (+.2) compared to the initial monitoring period (July - December 2024) of 5.5.**

In addition to measuring the quality of the debate, MPs' activity was also assessed on how often they spoke and the duration of their speeches. Among the MPs who most frequently took the floor, seven were from the opposition and three from the majority. **Among the MPs who spoke for the longest duration, eight were from the opposition and two were from the majority.** The three MPs who both spoke most frequently and spent the longest time at the parliamentary rostrum were Sali Murati, Fatmir Bitiki and Jovanka Trenchevska. Among the ten MPs who most frequently took the floor and the ten who spent the longest time at the rostrum during the monitoring period, there were four women and seven men.

In 21% of analysed debates, participants made no arguments, and in 49% of analysed debates they made weak arguments, meaning that speakers provided explanations of their positions that were insufficient to be considered a fully developed argument. In 21% of analysed debates, speakers used at least one argument to substantiate their position. The level of argumentation in 2025 shows a slight improvement compared to the second half of 2024 and to 2023. **Argumentation was significantly lower in replies and counter-replies than in substantive speeches, which considerably diminishes the quality of debate in the Parliament.**

With regard to how MPs respond to arguments presented by other MPs, the monitoring indicates that MPs addressed those arguments adequately in only 10% of their speeches, meaning that the MP responded directly to points previously raised by another participant in the debate. In contrast to previous monitoring periods, which recorded a continuous trend of improvement, 10% represents a decline from the 14% of adequately addressed arguments in the previous reporting period.

MPs from the parliamentary majority did not refer either to the arguments of interlocutors¹³ (78%) or to their personality¹⁴ (78%) in the large majority of their speeches. This relationship is almost at the same level as in the previous monitoring period.

13 The term "political option" refers to a political group or bloc, specifically distinguished as either the majority or the opposition. The majority represents MPs whose party or coalition forms the government and holds the parliamentary majority, while the opposition represents MPs whose party or coalition is not in power.

14 The term "personality" refers to personal characteristics of the speaker, such as their character, motives, or background, rather than the content of their arguments.

Monitoring also focused on the review of four reports submitted to the Parliament¹⁵ by independent and regulatory bodies. Of the four reports, three were subject to weak discussion, while one was not discussed at all, indicating a lack of substantial parliamentary oversight in this segment.

Three regular and two additional sessions of parliamentary questions for the opposition were held. The regular parliamentary question sessions scheduled for September and October were not conducted due to a decision by MPs not to sit during the local election campaign period.

The report also confirms the low level of MPs' attention towards the rights of marginalised groups across all monitoring periods. **In 79% of their discussions, MPs do not refer to the rights of marginalised persons.** While this represents an improvement from the previous reporting period, when this figure reached 87%, **MPs consistently do not address the rights of marginalised groups unless a specific law or agenda item related to those rights is under discussion.**

Recommendations for improving the quality of parliamentary debate:

- Enhance the quality and level of argumentation of parliamentary debate through systematic improvement of MPs' preparation and presentations.
- Strengthen MPs' knowledge, debating and oratory skills through continuous training and education, while ensuring systematic support for newly elected MPs, with a particular focus on argument-based speaking and the effective use of available analytical tools.
- Make more intensive and effective use of the services, analyses and research provided by the Parliamentary Institute and the Parliamentary Budget Office.
- Actively apply Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) in the work of the Parliament, including for draft laws submitted by MPs.
- Ensure that shortened legislative procedures are used carefully and only in limited and justified contexts, so as not to restrict parliamentary debate.
- Strengthen the oversight role of the Parliament through more active monitoring and evaluation of the Government's strategic policies and reform processes.

¹⁵ Annual Report on Conducted Audits and the Work of the State Audit Office for 2024 (Observed at Plenary Session No. 68, held on 12 September 2025) – no debate; Annual Report on the Work of the State Council for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency and Juvenile Justice on the Situation in the Area of Children's Rights and Juvenile Delinquency for 2024 (Observed at Plenary Session No. 68, held on 12 September 2025) – limited debate; Annual Report for 2022 and 2023 on the Implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy 2022–2027 and the National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2022–2024 (Observed at the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, Session No. 10, held on 25 December 2025) - limited debate; Annual Report on the Work of the Agency for Supervision of Fully Funded Pension Insurance for 2024 and Financial Statements for 2024 (Observed at Plenary Session No. 68, held on 1 September 2025) - limited debate;

- Encourage greater involvement of citizens, civil society organisations and the expert community in the legislative process, including through legislative public hearings.
- Promote the use of examples drawn from citizens' experiences, interests and needs in parliamentary debates, and to actively respond to discriminatory and sexist speech.
- Apply a calendar of parliamentary and committee sessions in order to increase predictability, improve preparation and enhance the quality of parliamentary debate.

IV.

QUALITY OF DEBATE



IV. QUALITY OF DEBATE

■ DISCOURSE QUALITY SCORE

Three analyses of the quality of parliamentary debate have been produced since the current parliamentary composition was elected in May 2024. The first covered the period from June–December 2024, corresponding to the first seven months of the mandate; the second covered the period from January–June 2025; and the third, which is the present analysis, covers the period from July to December 2025. Analyses prepared prior to these three periods relate to previous parliamentary compositions.

The report indicates a relatively low level of debate quality in the Parliament for the current mandate, and confirming that there is significant room for improvement. The average debate quality score for the first half of 2025 is 5.7 on a scale of 1-10. This represents no change from the previous monitoring period (January-June 2025) but a slight improvement (+.2) compared to the initial monitoring period (July - December 2024) of 5.5.

The quality of the debate was assessed at 5.7 (on a scale from 1 to 10), representing a slight improvement compared to the first half of the mandate of the current parliamentary composition (June–December 2024), when the score stood at 5.5.

**THE SCORE FOR DISCOURSE QUALITY
FOR THE PERIOD JULY – DECEMBER 2025,
ON A SCALE FROM 1 TO 10**



With a score of 5.7, parliamentary discussion continues to fall short of the minimum threshold required to be considered a healthy debate, particularly in terms of openness to accepting opposing arguments, the willingness to adjust one's own positions in response to arguments raised during the debate, and the low level of argument-based support for expressed positions. Overall, despite the slight improvement observed, the quality of debate remains at a low level, with significant room for improvement.

■ TYPE OF DISCUSSIONS

During this period (June–December 2025), 21% of the monitored discussions were part of plenary sessions, 65% were committee hearings¹⁶, 11% were part of parliamentary questions and 2.5% were public discussions. In total, this analysis covers 1,412 individual speeches by MPs and external participants¹⁷. In the second half of 2025, a total of three regular parliamentary question sessions were held, along with two additional parliamentary question sessions reserved for the opposition. The parliamentary question sessions scheduled for September and October 2025 were not held due to the Parliament's decision not to convene during the local election campaign, as the local elections were held on 19 October 2025 (first round) and 2 November 2025 (second round).

In terms of monitored acts, 92% were reviewed under the regular procedure, 7% under a shortened procedure, and 1% were reviewed under the European flag procedure.

The most prevalent topics during this monitoring period were the draft 2026 State Budget and proposed amendments to the 2025 State Budget. MPs also devoted considerable time to the Draft Law on the Judicial Council, the Draft Law on Institutions for Secondary Education of Religious Communities, the 2025 European Commission Country Report for the Republic of North Macedonia, the public hearing on "Protecting children and young people from the harmful effects and consequences of smoking", the Draft Law on the issuance of value vouchers, and the Draft Law on Internal Affairs.

¹⁶ Monitored committees: Committee on the Political System and Inter-Community Relations; Committee on European Affairs; Committee on Financing and Budget; Committee on Rules of Procedure and Mandatory-Immunity Issues; Committee on Economic Affairs, Labour and Energy Policy; Committee on Health; Committee on Local Self-Government; Committee on Foreign Policy and Foreign Trade; Committee for Oversight of the Implementation of Measures for the Interception of Communications; Committee on Education, Science and Sport; Committee on Defence and Security; Committee on Election and Appointment Issues; Committee on Social Policy, Demography and Youth; Committee on Transport, Digital Transformation, Environment and Spatial Planning; Standing Inquiry Committee for the Protection of Civil Freedoms and Rights; National Council for European Integration.

¹⁷ External participants in parliamentary debates are understood to include all speakers in plenary and committee sessions who do not hold the status of MP but have the right to participate in parliamentary debate, such as the Prime Minister, ministers, and representatives of regulatory bodies and agencies, among others.

Regarding the political affiliation of speakers during the monitoring period, MPs from the parliamentary majority—comprising the “Your Macedonia” coalition led by VMRO-DPMNE, the “VLEN” coalition and the ZNAM movement—participated in 37% of the monitored discussions, while the opposition—comprising the “For a European Future” coalition led by SDSM, the “European Front” coalition led by DUI, and the Levica party—participated in 63% of the monitored discussions.

Figure 1. Political affiliation of MPs (%)

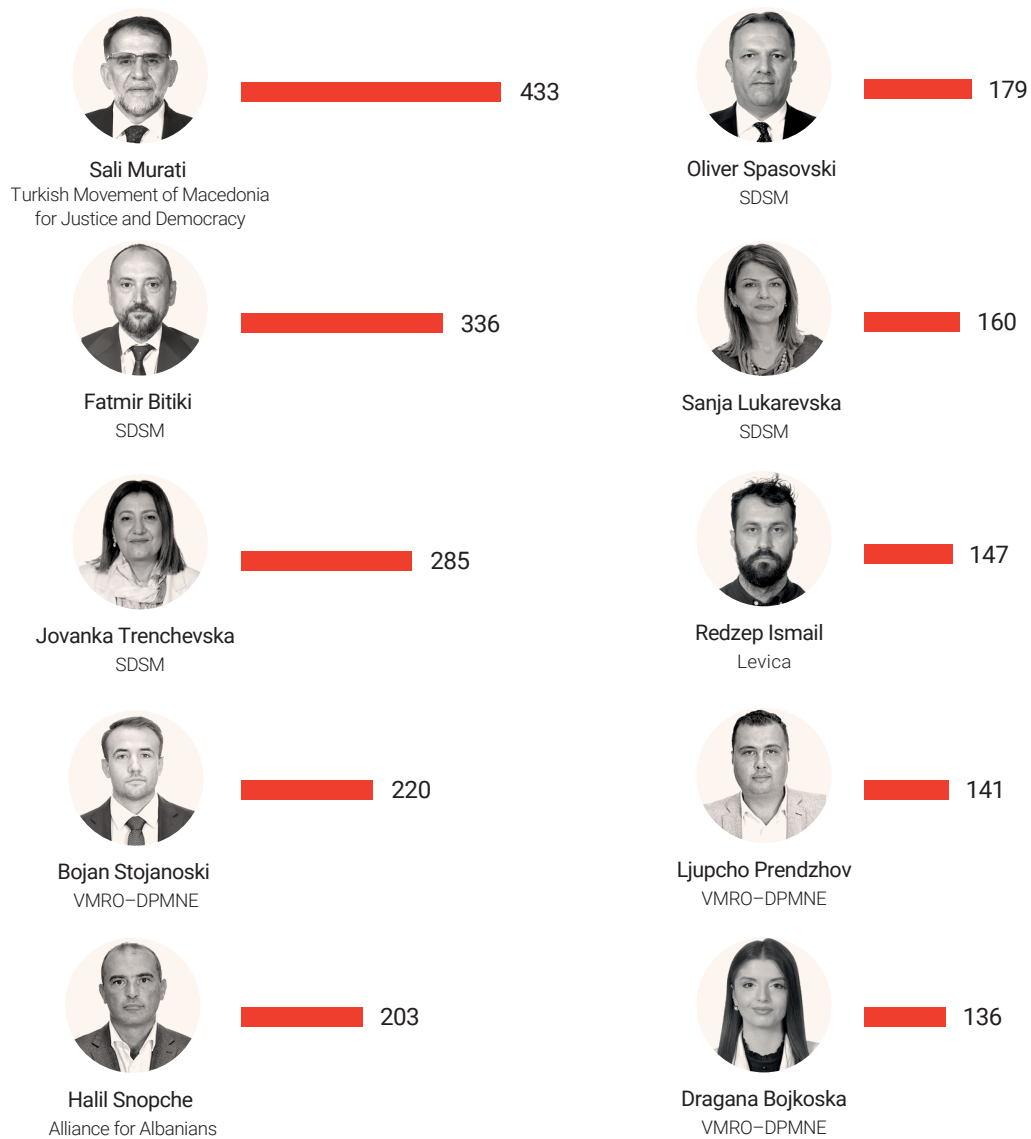


Among the MPs who most frequently took the floor, seven were from the opposition and three were from the parliamentary majority. Among the MPs who spoke for the longest duration, the top ten included eight MPs from the opposition and two from the majority.

The three MPs who spoke for the longest time and who most frequently took the floor were Sali Murati, who spoke for 433 minutes and took the floor 76 times; Fatmir Bytyqi, who spoke for 336 minutes and took the floor 74 times; and Jovanka Trenchevska, who spoke for 285 minutes and took the floor 68 times.

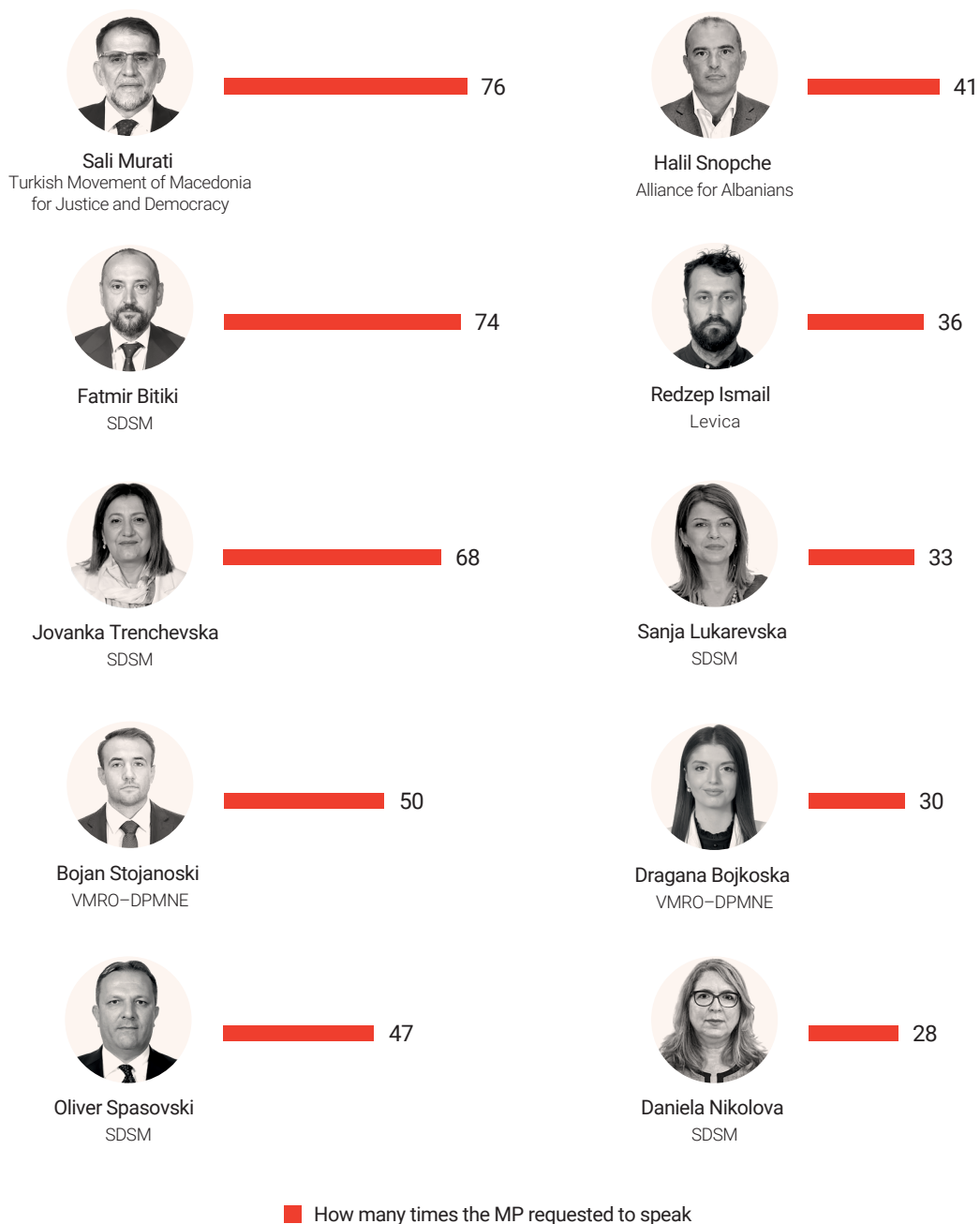
Among the ten MPs who most frequently took the floor and/or spoke for the longest time, there were four female MPs—Jovanka Trenchevska, Daniela Nikolova, Dragana Bojkoska and Sanja Lukarevska—and seven male MPs—Sali Murati, Fatmir Bitiki, Ljupcho Prendzhov, Bojan Stojanoski, Halil Snopche, Oliver Spasovski and Redzep Ismail. ►

► Figure 2. MPs who spent the longest time at the rostrum during the period July - December 2025.



■ How many minutes spoken in total

Figure 3.¹⁸ MPs who addressed most frequently during the period July – December 2025.



¹⁸ The Chart shows which MPs were the most active out of a total of 1,412 individual discussions or speeches of MPs observed in the period July – December 2025.

The types of discussions that were monitored during this period included speeches (61%), replies (22%), counter-replies (16%) and procedural remarks (1%). Although this represents a slight increase in replies (18%) and counter-replies (14%) compared to the previous monitoring period, this nevertheless points to a relatively low level of interaction among MPs. As a result, the debate largely focuses on the one-way transmission of views, in which most cases do not receive a response from the other side and remain without support or contestation from other MPs. This trend has been observed following the change in parliamentary composition after the parliamentary elections.

With speeches accounting for 61% of all discussions, parliamentary debate continues to take place predominantly as a one-way presentation of views, with limited interaction and weak exchange of positions among MPs.

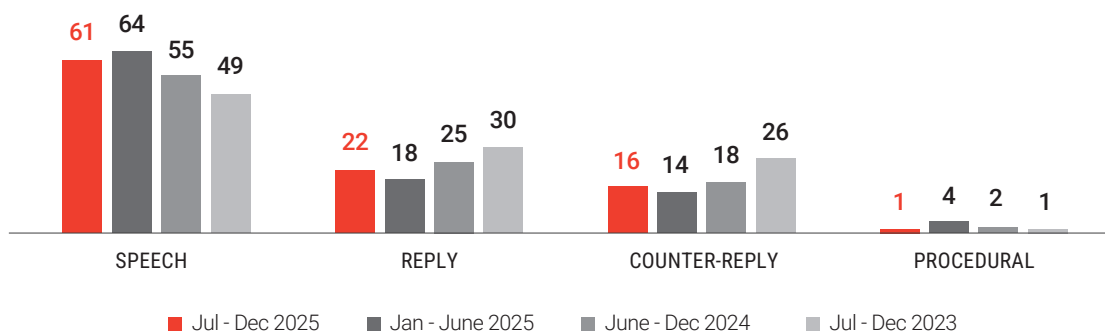
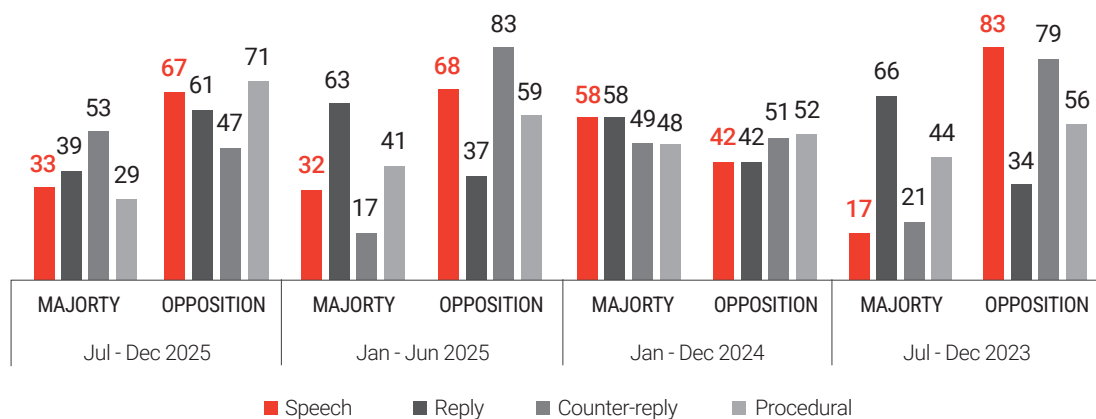


Figure 4. Type of discussion (%)?

The opposition participated more in discussion, through both speeches on agenda items (67%) and replies (61%). Unlike the first seven months of the mandate of the current parliamentary composition (July–December 2024), when the participation of the majority and the opposition in parliamentary debate was almost equal, in 2025 the opposition is visibly more present at the parliamentary rostrum.

Although the debate appeared more balanced in the second half of 2024, data from 2025 show that the distribution of speeches and replies is markedly uneven. This indicates that the trend towards greater balance observed in 2024 was not sustained and that the change in parliamentary composition did not result in a consistent positive change in the quality of parliamentary debate.

Figure 4.1 Type of discussion per political affiliation (%)

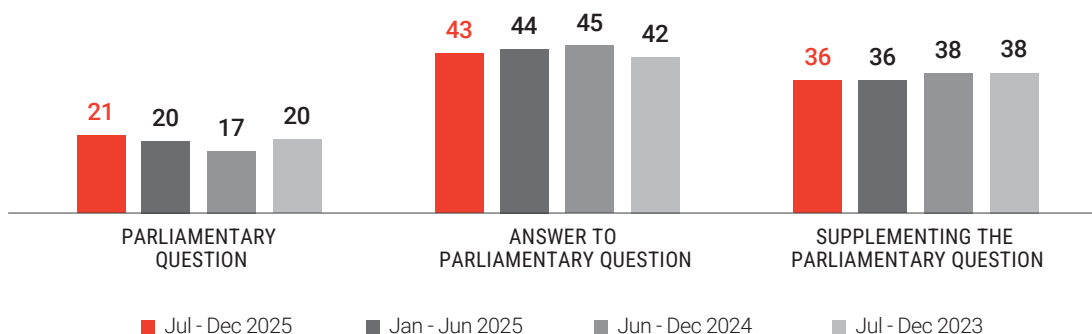


On 20 November 2023, the Parliament adopted the new Rules of Procedure, which have been applied by the new parliamentary composition formed after the May 2024 elections. In addition to the regular parliamentary question sessions held on the last Thursday of each month, the new Rules of Procedure provide for additional parliamentary question sessions solely dedicated to opposition questions. Parliamentary questions represent an important tool for overseeing the work of the Government and for holding it accountable. For this reason, it is crucial for the Parliament to organise parliamentary question sessions on a consistent basis.

During the monitoring period July–December 2025, five parliamentary question sessions were held, including three regular sessions and two additional sessions reserved for the opposition. The regular parliamentary question sessions scheduled for September and October 2025 did not take place due to the Parliament’s decision not to convene during the local election campaign.

With regard to the discussions during the parliamentary question sessions covered by the monitoring, 57% of the discussion focused on asking and supplementing questions, while the remaining part 43% of the discussion focused on answers to parliamentary questions provided by representatives of the Government. This ratio remains in line with the parliamentary question sessions observed in earlier monitoring periods.

Figure 5. Parliamentary question sessions (%)



■ LEVEL OF ARGUMENTATION

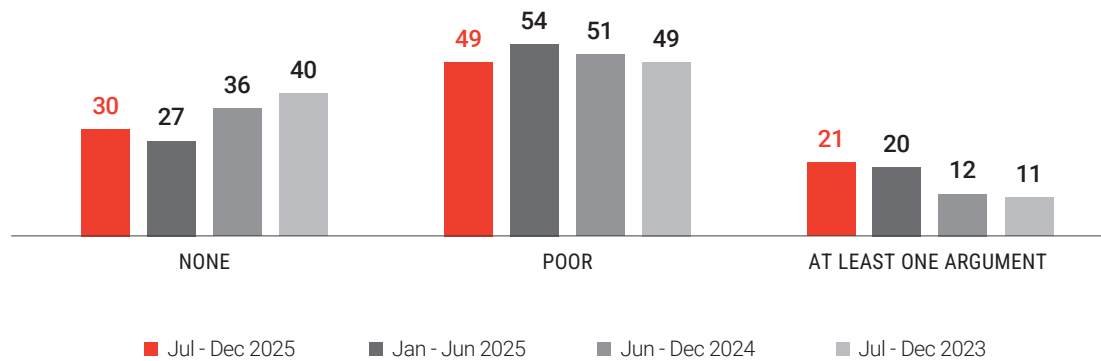
Per the methodology developed by the Institute for Democracy for monitoring the quality of debate in the Parliament, arguments are defined as a reasoned attempt to persuade the audience to accept a particular point of view on a debatable thesis. Accordingly, an argument is perceived as a reason why MPs support or contest a particular position.

An argumentative speech is understood as a statement that contains an assertion—the title of the argument, expressed through a statement that affirms or rejects the agenda item; an explanation—clarifying and linking the assertion to its substance, that is, breaking down and probing into the essence of the argument and the case and how it may have an impact; and evidence—given that an argument would amount to little more than an empty phrase in the absence of valid and strong supporting evidence.

Based on this established criteria, in 30% of the analysed discussions participants did not substantiate their statement with arguments and in 49% of the analysed discussions the level of argumentation was weak, meaning that speakers offered explanations for their positions that were insufficient to be considered a fully developed argument. In 21% of the analysed discussions, speakers used at least one argument to substantiate their position. The level of argumentation within the new parliamentary composition in 2025 shows a visible improvement compared to the first half of its mandate and the previous parliamentary composition.

In 21% of the monitored discussions, MPs use at least one argument to substantiate their positions, indicating a visible improvement in the level of argumentation compared to the previous parliamentary composition and the initial period of the mandate

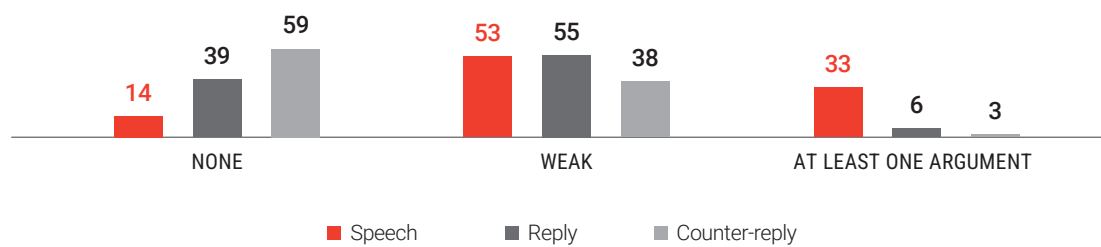
Figure 6. Level of argumentation (%)



When the degree of argumentation is analysed by type of speech within the debate, it can be observed that argumentation is significantly lower in replies and counter-replies compared to speeches. Only 14% of speeches were recorded as lacking argumentation, compared to 39% of replies and 59% of counter-replies. The low level of argumentation in these types of contributions significantly contributes to the low average score for the quality of debate in the Parliament. Conversely, one third of speeches (33%) are substantiated with at least one argument, compared to 6% of replies and 3% of counter-replies.

The low level of argumentation in replies and counter-replies significantly contributes to the low average score for the quality of debate in the Parliament.

Figure 6.1 Level of argumentation of discussions by type of speech (%)

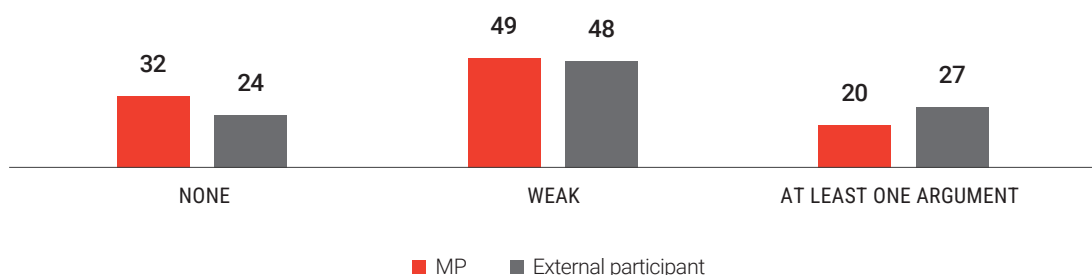


76% of the total number of monitored speeches were given by MPs, while 24% were given by external participants. External participants include all speakers in plenary and committee sessions who do not hold the status of MP but have the right to participate in parliamentary debate, such as the Prime Minister, ministers, representatives of regulatory bodies and agencies, and representatives of civil society organisations, among others.

Accordingly, when the degree of argumentation is analysed by type of speaker, it can be observed that external participants use arguments more frequently than MPs in parliamentary discussions. Thus, 27% of speeches by external participants were recorded as being supported by at least one argument, compared to 20% of speeches by MPs.

External participants use arguments more frequently in parliamentary discussions than MPs.

Figure 6.2 Level of argumentation of the discussions per political affiliation (%)

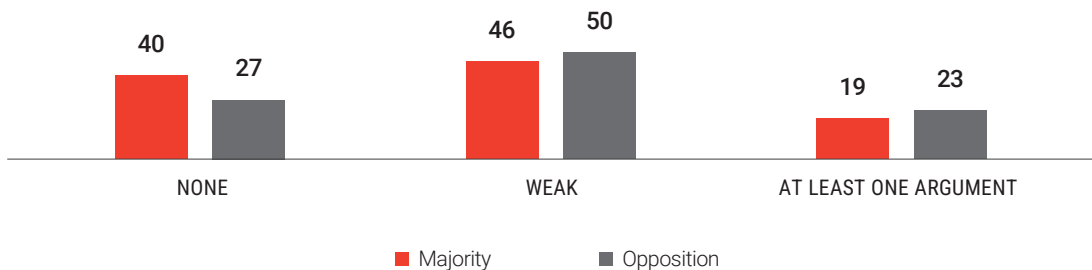


Analyzing the political affiliation of MPs, 46% of the discussions led by MPs from the parliamentary majority are characterised by weak argumentation, while in 40% of their discussion did not use any arguments. In 19% of the majority's discussions, at least one argument was identified.

With regard to opposition MPs, 50% of their speeches are characterised by weak argumentation, while in 27% of their discussions no arguments were used. In 23% of the opposition's discussions, at least one argument was identified.

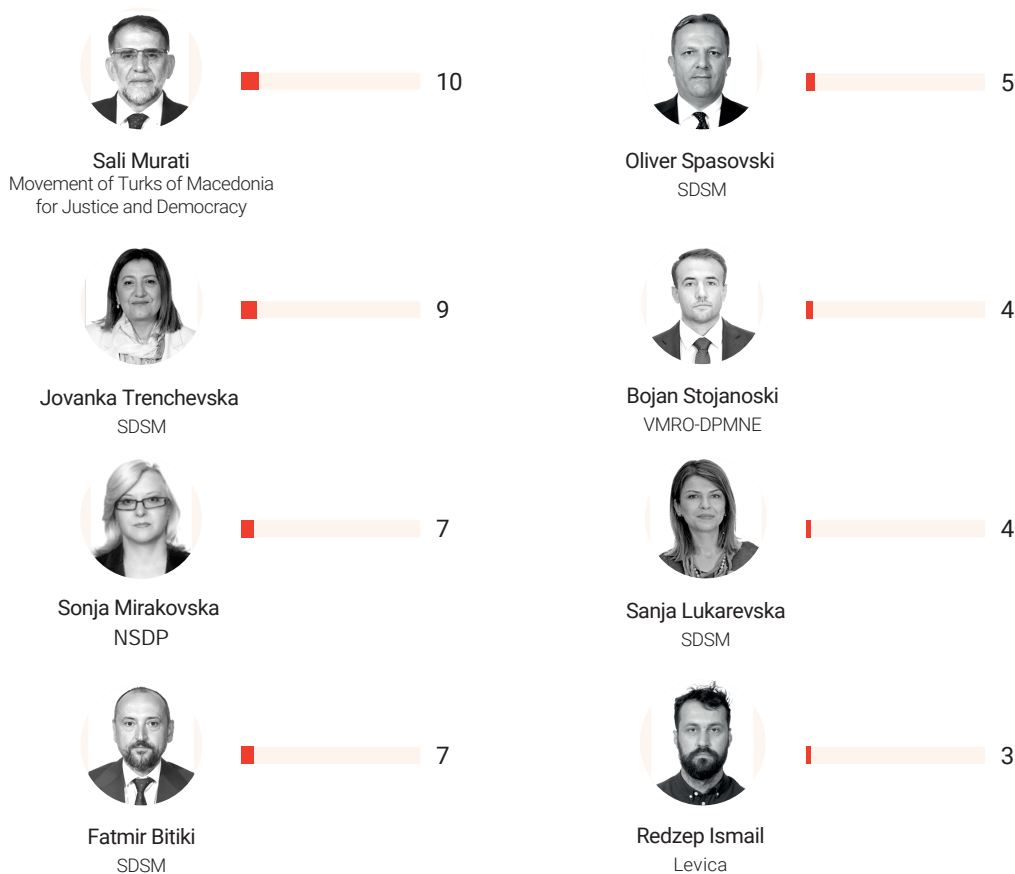
Argumentation in speeches is more pronounced among the opposition than among the parliamentary majority during this monitoring period.

Figure 7. Level of argumentation of the discussions per political affiliation (%)



A more detailed analysis indicates that, of the total number of monitored speeches delivered by MPs and supported by at least one argument, half (49%) were delivered by only eight MPs. Accordingly, 10% of the total number of monitored speeches by MPs supported by at least one argument can be attributed to Sali Murati, 9% to Jovanka Trenchevska, 7% each to Sonja Mirakovska and Fatmir Bitiki, 5% to Oliver Spasovski, 4% each to Bojan Stojanoski and Sanja Lukarevska, and 3% to Redzep Ismail.

Figure 7.1 MPs with highest share in the total number of speeches corroborated by at least one argument (%)



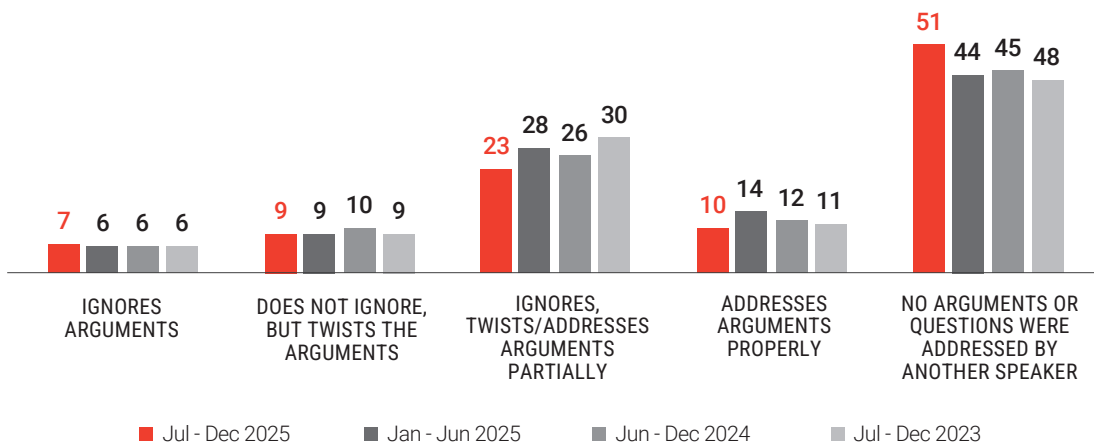
■ ACCOUNTABILITY

With regard to how MPs respond to arguments presented by other MPs, the monitoring indicates that MPs appropriately addressed the arguments in 10% of their speeches, meaning that an MP directly responded to points previously raised by another participant in the discussion. Furthermore, in 23% of the discussions MPs partially responded to the presented arguments while partially twisting or ignoring them. In 9% of the discussions, MPs did not ignore the arguments but twisted them, while in 7% the arguments raised by other MPs were completely ignored. In 51% of cases, no arguments or questions were raised by other MPs, which points to a generally low level of discussion.

In 10% of their speeches, MPs appropriately addressed the arguments, meaning that the MP directly responded to arguments previously raised by another participant in the discussion

Unlike previous monitoring periods, which recorded a continuous trend of improvement, this period shows the lowest proportion of appropriately addressed arguments, alongside an increased share of speeches that did not engage at all with arguments presented by another speaker, indicating limited direct engagement and the emergence of parallel debate..

Figure 8. MPs accountability (%)

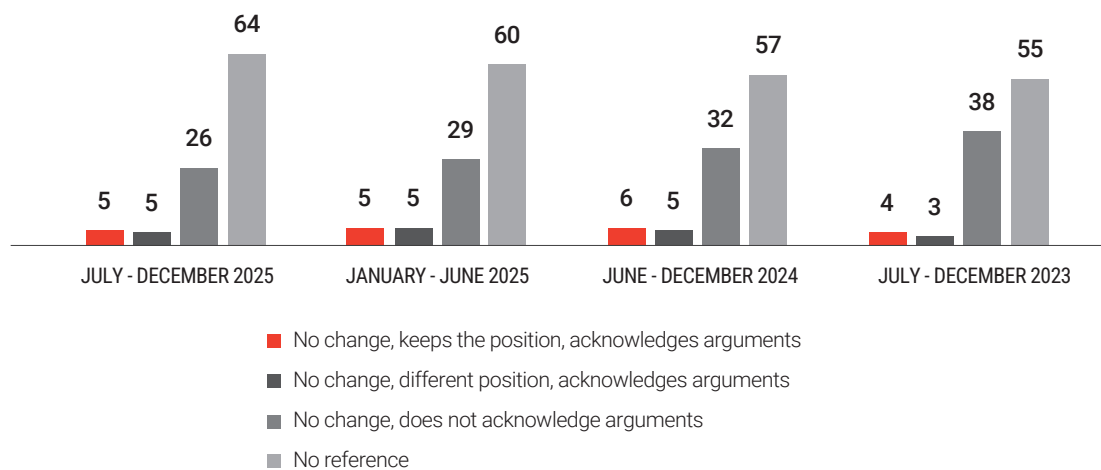


■ THE POWER OF A BETTER ARGUMENT

In this reporting period, no change of attitude was observed among MPs in the monitored discussions as a result of stronger arguments presented by interlocutors, remaining at the same level as under the previous parliamentary composition. In 64% of the discussions, no reference was made to the quality of the arguments of other MPs, which represents an increase of four percentage points compared to the previous period. In 5% of the discussions, MPs from different political parties acknowledged the quality and value of the arguments of their interlocutors, despite not changing their positions on the issue. In 26% of the discussions, MPs maintained their positions and did not acknowledge the value of the arguments presented by other speakers. Overall, a slight improvement was observed in recognition of the arguments of the interlocutor compared to the previous period..

In this reporting period, the monitored discussions did not record any change in MPs' positions as a result of stronger arguments presented by interlocutors.

Figure 9. Power of a better argument (%)



■ REPORTS FROM INDEPENDENT AND REGULATORY BODIES

This analysis monitored the deliberation of four reports submitted to the Parliament by independent and regulatory bodies. Three reports were subject to limited discussion, while one report received no discussion at all.

The review of reports submitted by independent and regulatory bodies in the Parliament is of exceptional importance, as it ensures greater transparency of the work of the executive branch and enables citizens to gain greater insight into the activities of independent and regulatory bodies.

Of the four monitored reports submitted by independent and regulatory bodies, three were subject to weak discussion, while one was not discussed at all.

Table 1. Reports from independent and regulatory bodies

1	Annual Report on Conducted Audits and the Work of the State Audit Office for 2024 (Observed at Plenary Session No. 68, held on 12 September 2025)	3	Annual Report for 2022 and 2023 on the Implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy 2022–2027 and the National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2022–2024 (Observed at the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, Session No. 10, held on 25 December 2025)
2	Annual Report on the Work of the State Council for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency and Juvenile Justice on the Situation in the Area of Children's Rights and Juvenile Delinquency for 2024 (Observed at Plenary Session No. 68, held on 12 September 2025)	4	Annual Report on the Work of the Agency for Supervision of Fully Funded Pension Insurance for 2024 and Financial Statements for 2024 (Observed at Plenary Session No. 68, held on 1 September 2025)

■ No discussion

■ Weak discussion



**RESPECT,
INTERRUPTIONS AND
LIMITATIONS**



V. RESPECT, INTERRUPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

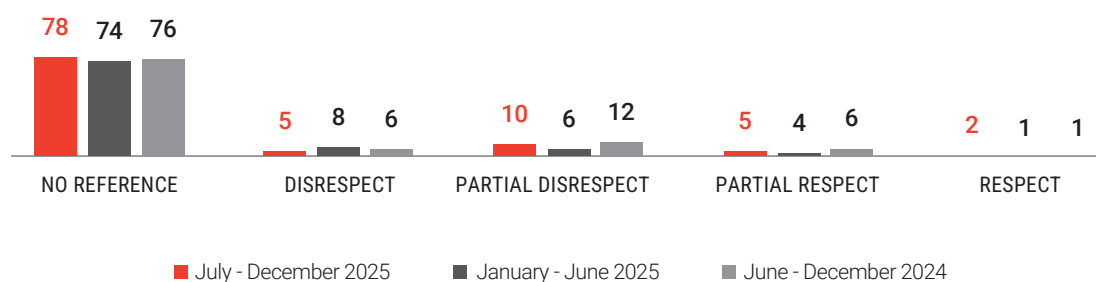
■ ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE ARGUMENTS AND PERSONALITY OF THE OTHER MPS

Speakers' attitudes towards the personality or the arguments of their interlocutors can influence the overall atmosphere of the debate. In other words, expressed forms of disrespect can alter the course of the discussion and shift MPs' focus from arguments to attacks and insults, thereby further polarising the atmosphere and preventing substantive debate. A proper atmosphere and mutual respect constitute essential prerequisites for the development of rational and reasoned debate.

In more than two thirds of speeches (78%), MPs do not take into account the claims and statements made by their colleagues.

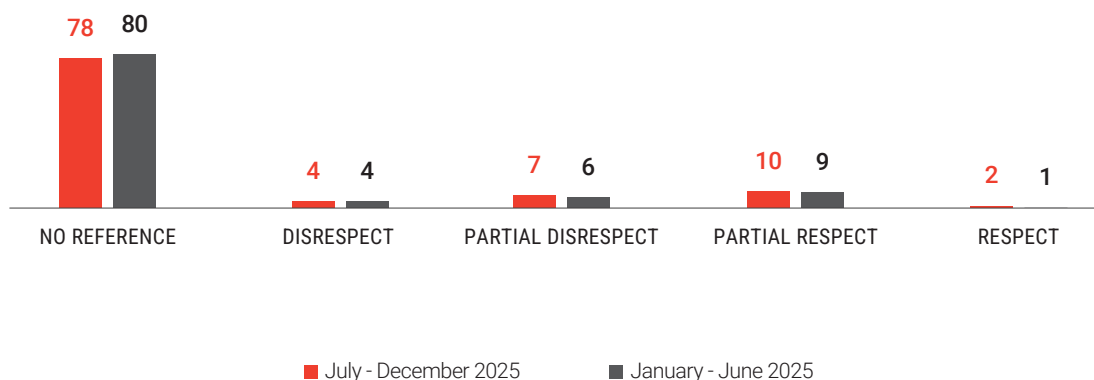
During this period, respect for arguments was expressed in less than 2% of speeches. Partial respect was expressed in 5% of cases, which represents a marginal increase compared to the previous period. During the monitoring period, partial disrespect towards the arguments of interlocutors remained high at 10% of cases, representing an increase of four percentage points compared to the previous report. Disrespect for arguments was observed in 8% of cases. However, the majority of interlocutors' arguments (78%) remained unreferenced by their colleagues.

Figure 10. Attitude towards arguments of other MPs (%)



Respect for the personalities of other MPs was expressed in only 2% of the discussions, representing a slight improvement compared to the previous monitoring period. Partial respect was expressed in 10% of the discussions, partial disrespect in 7% of discussions and full disrespect in 4% of discussions. According to these results, marginally improved interpersonal relations can be observed within the new parliamentary composition. In 78% of the discussions, MPs did not refer to the personality of their interlocutors, which represents a marginal increase of one percentage point compared to the previous period.

Figure 11. Attitude towards the personality of other MPs (%)



During the period July–December 2025, in 78% of their speeches MPs did not address either the arguments or the personality of interlocutors. The slightly higher level of respect observed towards the personality of interlocutors, compared to their arguments, indicates that MPs tend, to a marginal extent, to engage more with the content of speeches than with the personal characteristics of the interlocutor.

Figure 12. Attitude towards arguments and personality of other MPs (%)

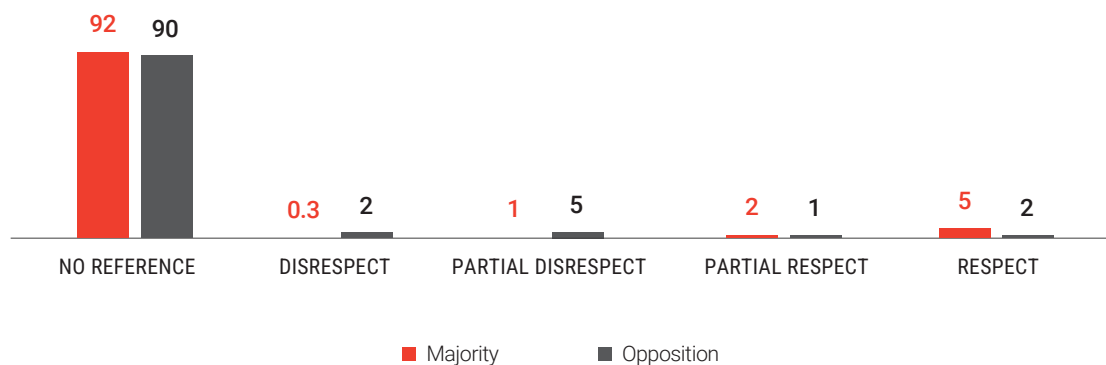


■ **ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE ARGUMENTS AND PERSONALITY ACCORDING TO THE TYPE OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE DISCUSSION**

MPs from the majority made no reference to the presentations of external participants in 92% of the discussions. Partial or full disrespect towards the arguments of external participants was observed in 1.3% of speeches by MPs from the majority, while in 7% of the discussions they expressed partial or full respect. MPs from the opposition made no reference in 90% of their discussions, while partial or full disrespect was observed in 7% of cases. In 3% of the discussions, opposition MPs expressed partial or full respect towards the external participant.

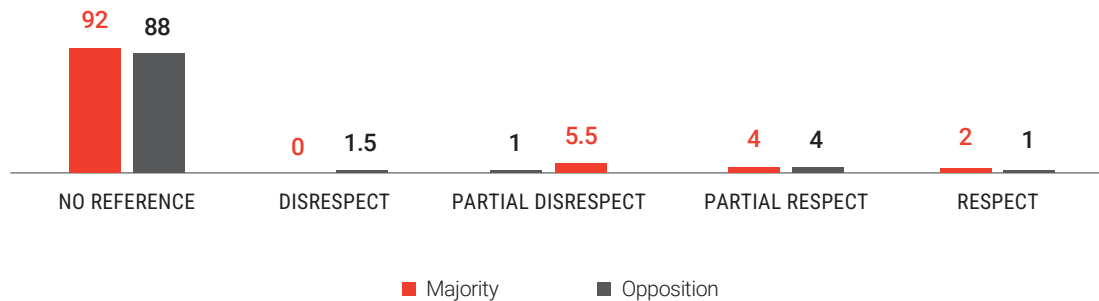
In the majority of their discussions, the MPs did not refer to the arguments of external participants.

Figure 13. Attitude towards arguments of external participants according the political affiliation (%)



MPs from the majority made no reference to the personality of external participants in 92% of the discussions; in 6% of the discussions they expressed partial or full respect, while in 1% of the speeches they expressed partial disrespect. By contrast, MPs from the opposition made no reference to the personality of external participants in 88% of the discussions. In 3% of discussions, the opposition expressed partial respect or respect towards the personality of external participants, while in 1% of the discussions they expressed partial or full disrespect towards the personality of the external participant.

Figure 14. Attitude towards personality of external participants according to political affiliation (%)



As in previous periods, MPs rarely used stories, anecdotes or testimonies in their discussions. Such elements were observed in 4% of the discussions. No interruptions of speakers by other MPs were observed during the discussions. In 3.5% of the discussions, limitations on the speaker's expression were recorded, most of which involved passive obstruction of the speaker. In the majority of speeches (61%), speakers used gestures in support of their speech, while the use of props during discussions was observed in 5% of cases. In 33% of the discussions, no explicit gestures were noted, while in 2% gestures were directed at others.

MPs are generally free and unrestricted in expressing their views at the rostrum.

VI.

**MARGINALIZED GROUPS
IN THE PARLIAMENT**



VI. MARGINALIZED GROUPS IN THE PARLIAMENT

In monitoring the quality of debate in the Parliament, the analysis also included marginalised groups and the extent to which MPs refer to their needs and rights in their speeches. During this monitoring period, MPs did not refer to the rights and needs of marginalised groups in 79% of their speeches, which represents an improvement compared to the previous period, when this share reached 87%. In the majority of their speeches, MPs do not refer to the rights of marginalised groups unless a specific law or agenda item related to those rights is under discussion.

MPs addressed the rights and needs of marginalized groups in 21% of their speeches, which is an improvement from the previous period when this percentage was 13%.

Given that most laws affect different groups of citizens in different ways, MPs should address factors that may potentially affect citizens from marginalised groups when considering agenda items. In the monitored discussions during this period, the groups most frequently included—albeit to a limited extent—were young people (12.8%), residents of rural areas (2.5%) and women (2.4%). As in the previous period, single parents and the LGBTI+ community remained the most neglected marginalised groups in MPs' speeches, with only one speech referring to the former and none to the latter.

Although MPs generally rarely refer to the rights of marginalised groups and communities, female MPs address these communities more frequently than their male counterparts. Accordingly, 55% of all speeches that included references to marginalised persons were delivered by female MPs. ►

► **Table 2.**

Marginalised groups	Speeches (%)	Speeches (absolute numbers)
Young people	12.8	181
Residents of rural areas	2.5	35
Women	2.4	34
Persons with disabilities	2.3	32
Elderly people	2.1	30
Social assistance beneficiaries	1.7	24
Roma	0.2	3
Unemployed	0.3	4
Single parents	0.1	1
LGBTI+	0	0
Other	1.5	21
No reference to marginalised groups	79.2	1118

VII.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA ON THE SPEAKERS

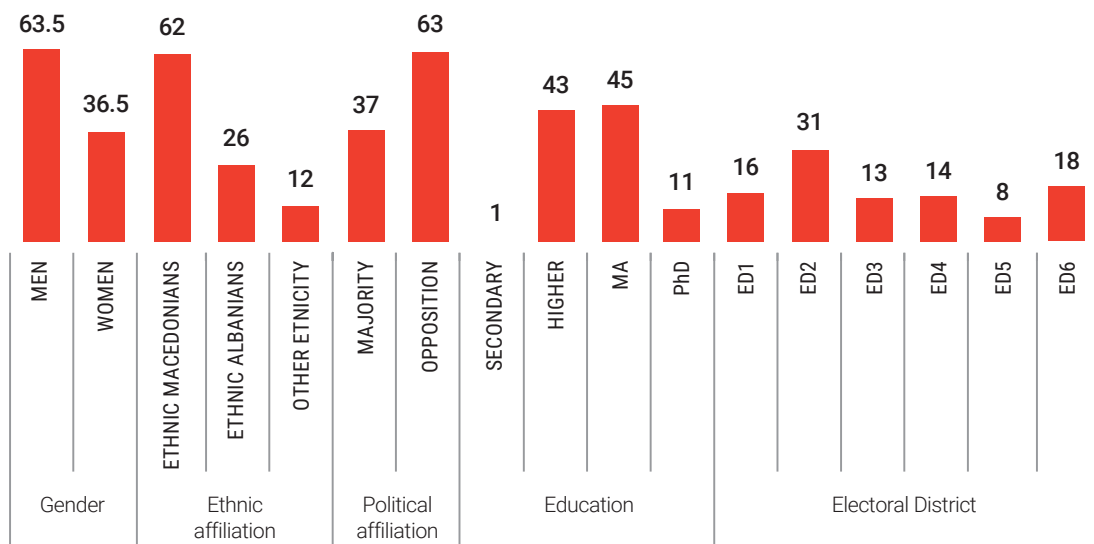


VII. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA ON THE SPEAKERS

The demographic structure of speakers, in terms of ethnicity, gender, education and constituency, has changed significantly compared to the first half of 2025. MPs from the Macedonian ethnic community account for 62% of the total debate, MPs from the Albanian ethnic community for 26%, and MPs from other ethnic communities for 12%. The most active MPs are from constituencies one (16%), two (31%) and six (18%). Compared to the previous monitoring period, MPs from constituency two have significantly increased their participation, which confirms the increased share of MPs of Albanian ethnicity in the parliamentary discourse.

The participation of women in the discussions stands at around 36%, which remains consistent with the previous period but significantly lower than in previous years, when it reached 43%. In terms of education, a higher participation of speakers holding doctoral degrees is noticeable, from whom a higher level of argumentation in their presentations can be expected.

Figure 16. Demographic structure of speakers (%)



VIII.

RECOMMENDATIONS



VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The culture of debate among MPs in our Parliament, supported by clear and well-founded arguments that directly substantiate the positions being advocated, remains at a relatively low level. Reports by the Institute for Democracy on the quality of debate within the current parliamentary composition indicate that the majority of discussions taking place in the Parliament are generally weakly argued, particularly in the segments involving replies and counter-replies. In other words, most of the positions advanced by MPs in the Parliament are not firmly grounded in evidence, nor are they accompanied by adequate explanations. For these reasons, there is a clear need to improve the quality of parliamentary debate and to raise the level of argumentation in MPs' speeches. This report on the quality of debate includes, in this section, a number of recommendations as well as available tools that MPs can use to achieve a higher standard of parliamentary debate..

Increasing awareness and knowledge of the topics under discussion, as well as improving MPs' debating and oratory skills, can significantly contribute to a higher-quality debate in the Parliament. The Parliamentary Institute (PI) and the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO), which operate within the Parliament, offer services that can help address these needs. Specifically, the PI and the PBO conduct research on topics of interest to MPs, while the PI also provides education and training in specific policy areas. For these reasons, **greater and more effective use of the services of the PI and the PBO is required.**

The Parliament should **actively apply the Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) process**, as this would significantly enhance both the quality and the level of argumentation of parliamentary discussions. RIA contributes to improving the quality of regulatory decision-making by providing information on the effects and consequences of new regulatory measures and by assessing and monitoring existing regulations. This tool is used by the Government, as the dominant proposer of legislation in the country, but not by the Parliament. As a result, the Parliament is placed primarily in the role of evaluating government proposals, yet it is generally inconsistent in performing this role, as MPs' argumentation is insufficiently focused on the substance of the proposed regulations or the debate itself remains weakly argued.¹⁹ Accordingly, the application of RIA within the Parliament, as well as its active use by MPs when proposing legislation, would enable more substantiated discussions and better-informed decision-making.²⁰ In this regard, the research conducted by the Parliamentary Institute and the Parliamentary Budget Office can contribute to a more comprehensive RIA process.

¹⁹ Dimeski, Jane, "Entrenched Debate - Analysis of the Quality of the Discussion in the Parliament June 2014 - May 2015", IDSCS, (2015), available at <https://idscs.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/rovovska-debata-mk.pdf>

²⁰ Bliznakovski, Jovan "Comparative good practices in the application of PVR and the possibility of their implementation in Macedonia", IDSCS, (2017), available at <https://idscs.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/>

MPs should **use the shortened legislative procedure and the procedure for reviewing draft laws under the so-called European flag sparingly and with caution**. Shortened and urgent procedures reduce the time available for debate, impose shorter deadlines for concluding discussions, and in some cases result in voting without debate. In previous years of monitoring, it was also noted – including in the European Commission's Progress Reports on North Macedonia – that there had been an excessive use of the European flag procedure. Although this trend has not been observed during the most recent year of monitoring, caution is warranted to ensure that such a practice does not re-emerge.²⁰ The misuse of these mechanisms restricts parliamentary debate, negatively affects its quality, limits MPs' right to speak, and deprives them of the opportunity to make informed decisions. Such misuse inevitably results in hasty and inadequate legislative solutions. At the same time, these practices contribute to a more negative perception of the Parliament among the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia.

Strengthening the oversight role of the Parliament is particularly important in the context of the strategic measures undertaken by the Government, such as the Reform Agenda within the new Growth Plan. As a representative and oversight body, the Parliament should proactively monitor and assess how the Government designs, implements and upgrades these strategic policies. This implies not only reviewing reports, but also organising thematic debates, posing precise parliamentary questions, and using mechanisms of political accountability. Equally important is the timely involvement of the Parliament in the planning and adoption phases of reforms, in order to ensure transparency, accountability and broader political and societal consensus around reform processes that directly affect the country's economic and institutional development. A development during this monitoring period has been the initiative by MPs to open an oversight debate on the tragedy in Kochani, in which more than 60 people lost their lives and over 200 were injured. The debate commenced on 9 December 2025 within the Permanent Inquiry Committee for the Protection of Citizens' Rights and Freedoms, however, its continuation, at which conclusions are expected to be adopted, has yet to be scheduled. On 3 December 2025, a separate Inquiry Committee was also established to examine the circumstances and institutional responses to a series of tragedies and accidents, including the tragedy in Kochani, though it has not yet become operational.

It is essential for **MPs to further develop their expertise and understanding of how laws affect the lives of different groups of citizens**. Partly, this can be achieved through the use of analyses prepared by the Parliamentary Institute and the Parliamentary Budget Office. In addition, MPs should request RIA reports prepared by the Government and consult experienced parliamentary staff, citizens and civil society organisations regarding the impact of legislation. During debates, additional value can be added by using examples drawn from voters' experiences, concerns or interests (citizens' communication offices, personal stories, media reports, local businesses), as well as by responding to and appropriately addressing sexist or discriminatory remarks or speech in the Parliament. In this regard, the use of the mechanism of legislative public hearings, regulated by the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament, would provide added value, as parent committees may organise public hearings on draft legislation.

²¹ Meta (2023). Gere: The concern with using the European flag is when there is no compliance with European regulation. Accessed at: <https://meta.mk/gir-zagrizenosta-za-koristenjeto-evropsko-znamence-e-koga-nemausoglasuvanje-so-evropskata-regulativa/>

In addition to the expertise of the Parliamentary Institute and the Parliamentary Budget Office, MPs have several other tools at their disposal to strengthen their capacities for reviewing and debating legislation, including training provided through the Parliamentary Support Programme (PSP), supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). This programme can support MPs training in policy analysis and alignment with EU legislation, training on legislative impact assessment (RIA), gender impact and the budgetary implications of legislation, RIA simulations for parliamentary staff and the parliamentary channel, support for integrating RIA into draft legislation, as well as strengthening knowledge and skills for conducting argument-based debate, including public speaking and media engagement skills. Each newly elected parliamentary composition, including the current one covered by this report, includes a significant proportion of MPs who are serving in this role for the first time. For these MPs, in addition to regular induction training, particular emphasis should be placed on how to present and justify their positions, as well as on familiarising them with the tools available to support the preparation of their speeches and the existing mechanisms for improving the quality of their interventions. This report can serve as a reference point for assessing whether new MPs—and MPs more generally—improve their oratory skills and the structure and substantiation of their speeches over time, when comparing the quality of their interventions at the beginning and at the end of their mandate.

Finally, the **introduction of a calendar of parliamentary sittings** is necessary. The new Rules of Procedure of the Parliament envisage this tool; what remains is the determination to introduce it and put it into operation. A sittings calendar would increase the predictability of parliamentary work and provide MPs with more time to prepare for agenda items. With greater predictability and sufficient time, MPs would be able to familiarise themselves in advance with draft laws, amendments, reports of regulatory and independent bodies and other parliamentary acts. Such predictability would contribute to more substantive and better-argued parliamentary debate.

IX. ANNEX 1 – DISCOURSE QUALITY INDEX

The Discourse Quality Index is a composite index made up of several indicators resulting from the monitoring of debates. The index is generated in several phases where the last phase is a sum of all weighted values of the individual indicators. The Index includes the following:

Table 1.

Name	Scale	Share in the total (%)
Level of argumentation	[-1:1]	20
Scope of argumentation	[-1:1]	5
Accountability	[-1:1]	20
Power of a better argument	[-1:1]	20
Attitude towards participants from another political party	[-1:1]	10
Attitude towards arguments of participants from another political party	[-1:1]	10
Attitude towards external participants	[-1:1]	2,5
Attitude towards arguments presented by external participants	[-1:1]	2,5
Interruptions	[-1:1]	5
Limitations	[-1:1]	5

For indexing purposes, each indicator is assigned a score for individual categories. The scoring is shown in the table below:

Table 2.

Level of argumentation	Grades	Scope of explanation	Grades
More than 2 arguments	4	Abstract principles	2
2 arguments	3	Common good	2
1 argument	2	Other groups	1
Weak	0	Own group	1
None	-2	Neutral	0

Accountability	Grades	Power of a better argument	Grades
Properly addresses arguments	2	Change due to arguments	5
Partially ignores, twists, addresses the arguments	1	No change, with different position, acknowledges arguments	3
No addressed arguments or questions from another speaker	0	No change, keeps the position, acknowledges arguments	1
Ignores arguments	-1	No change, no acknowledgement of arguments	0
Does not ignore, but twists the argument	-2	Change, not deriving from arguments	0
		No reference	0

Attitude towards participants from another political party	Grades	Attitude towards external participants	Grades
Full respect	2	Full respect	2
Respect	2	Respect	2
Partial respect	1	Partial respect	1
No reference	0	No reference	0
Partial disrespect	-1	Partial disrespect	-1
Disrespect	-2	Disrespect	-2

Attitude towards arguments presented by another political party	Grades	Attitude towards arguments presented by external participants	Grades
Full respect	2	Full respect	2
Respect	2	Respect	2
Partial respect	1	Partial respect	1
No reference	0	No reference	0
Partial disrespect	-1	Partial disrespect	-1
Disrespect	-2	Disrespect	-2

Limitations	Grades	Interruptions	Grades
None	0	No interruption	0
Passive obstructions	-1	With interruption	-1
Yes, the speaker indicates the obstructions	-1		
Physical interruption	-2		

Each of these indicators was linearly transformed into sub-indices on a scale of -1 to 1, taking into account the transformation so that the original score did not lose the positive or negative sign. Hence, the universal transformation formula is:

$$i = \frac{2 \times \text{indicator}}{(\text{max} - (-\text{max}))}$$

This pertains to all indicators except for interruption and limitation, because in these two indicators the absolute value of the lowest possible grade is greater than the value of the highest possible grade. Hence, the formula is:

$$i = \frac{2 \times \text{indicator}}{(|\text{min}| - (\text{min}))}$$

Once the sub-indices of the individual indicators are calculated, for calculation purposes we take into consideration the calculation of the pre-DQI with weighted values of the sub-indices according to the participation given in Table 1. For easier viewing, the final DQI is transformed linearly in a scale of 1 to 10 according to the following formula:

$$DQI = \frac{(10 - 1)}{(1 - (-1)) \times (\text{preDQI} - 1) + 10}$$

These calculations and transformations are made for each speech individually and the report transmits the arithmetic mean of all speeches from the observed period.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The [Swiss Parliamentary Support Programme \(PSP\)](#) supports the efforts of the Assembly of Republic of North Macedonia for independence through building consensus, structural reforms and capacity building for the institutional development of the Assembly; its legislative and oversight role and institutional transparency and accountability. The PSP is implemented by the National Democratic Institute, the Institute for Democracy "Societas Civilis" – Skopje and the Centre for Change Management, aimed at supporting the strategic planning of the Assembly; human resources management reforms; improved regulatory impact assessment and procurement processes; commitment to open data and measuring the public opinion and monitoring the efforts for reforms, including an enhanced citizen participation in the policy-making processes.

ABOUT NDI

Since its founding in 1983, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) has worked to strengthen democracy and support inclusive political participation worldwide. The Institute has been active in North Macedonia since 1993, partnering with citizens, civil society, political parties, media, and institutions to build more transparent, accountable, and resilient democratic practices. Today, NDI is implementing the *Swiss Parliament Support Programme* and *Integrity Driven Communities* initiatives, supported by the Governments of Switzerland and Sweden, to foster stronger democratic governance and integrity at both the national and local levels.

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ABOUT IDSCS

Institute for Democracy "Societas Civilis" Skopje (IDSCS) is a think tank organization that researches the good governance development, the rule of law and the European integration of North Macedonia. The IDSCS mission is to support citizen involvement in decision-making and to strengthen the participatory political culture. By strengthening the liberal values, IDSCS contributes to the cohabitation of diversities.

Since June 2014, IDSCS has been monitoring the debate quality in the Assembly and the media coverage of the work of the Assembly. The monitoring in the first cycle took place during a period of 10 months - from June 2014 to May 2015. The second period of monitoring and evaluation of the quality of the parliamentary debate and the media reporting started in September 2015 and it lasted until December 2017, supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. The third period of monitoring of the debate quality began in January 2018 and it lasted until December 2019. **Since January 2020, the Institute for Democracy has been monitoring the work of the Assembly and the debate quality within the framework of the Parliamentary Support Programme (PSP).**

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