

PUBLIC POLICY DOCUMENT

STATUS AND NEED OF CORRESPONDENTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

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August 2019

This publication was prepared within the framework of the project "Secure Journalists for Credible Information in Macedonia" supported by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Skopje. The content of this publication is the sole responsibility of AJM and the authors and in no way it reflects the position of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Skopje.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The media and journalism in the Republic of North Macedonia are facing numerous challenges. The current trend in the media field in the Republic of North Macedonia continues to show strong vulnerability. Over the past decade, the situation in journalism has been at a critical level in many respects and this has contributed to the deterioration of the situation of correspondents – journalists from the internal parts of the country.

With the application of information technologies, it is expected that this situation will evolve towards new trends in the media, which will *develop with intensity*. This means that the digital environment will contribute towards changing the media format and the public habits for their application.

It is important that this process does not disrupt the basic purpose of the media, to be public service informants and watchdogs of democracy in society - at central, but also at local level. The media have obligation to perform informative and educational role responsibly and conscientiously. This means that journalism is the main factor in maintaining the balance between different theses in different media, as well as maintaining security in the context of socio-economic and cultural sharing in modern society.

In order to create sustainable development in the media sphere and to detect key issues in media activity, we have prepared situational analysis of the environment for media and journalism with specific recommendations that contribute to improving the socio-economic position of correspondents and strengthening the correspondent network, all in order to meet the needs of the public with topics of local public interest.

For the purposes of this public policy document, AJM used data from the analysis of Association's members, as well as other relevant entities investigating the situation, in the Republic of North

Macedonia and other countries, in order to provide essential and comprehensive data and information on the situation. Additionally, responses from previously submitted correspondence to the public broadcaster and some private media in accordance with the Law on Free Access to Public Information were used.

II. SITUATION ANALYSIS

The correspondent network of the public broadcaster and the national televisions is constantly shrinking, and in some media it has been completely abolished. National media are heavily centralized in reporting and almost do not cover topics of local importance. Thus, the public does not have complete picture of the social conditions and processes in the country. In recent years, the situation has fallen to a very low level, which is indicative by the decision not award the "Mende Petkovski" award, due to financial reasons. This award was given to valorize the work of our correspondents and was dedicated to the famous journalist who died in Bitola in 2005.

Finance is major problem for correspondents. All current research on the socio-economic status of correspondents shows that monthly allowances or royalties per published article or text cannot cover basic living expenses. The latest survey on the position of correspondents in Eastern Macedonia showed that as many as 54.2% of journalists receive a salary ranging from 11,000 to 16,000 MKD, and 11.9% of journalists have a monthly salary of 8,000 to 10,000 MKD, which is really devastating. Only 10.2% of journalists have a monthly income of more than 22,000 MKD.

Some correspondents who cannot use local media resources and are forced to share their remuneration with the camera operator or photographer, as national media almost never cover the cost.

This situation is devastating and has depressing effect on journalists, which also is reflecting on the quality of information

MRT for the duration of 24 hours broadcasts 73 programs for its 3 channels, including the satellite channel:

The First Channel (MRT1) broadcasts a 24-hour program;

The Second Channel (MRT2) broadcasts a 24-hour program in minority languages: Albanian, Turkish, Serbian, Roma, Vlach and Bosniak;

The Parliamentary Channel;

The Satellite Channel (MRTsat) broadcasts a 24-hour program;

As well as on 3 radio stations: Macedonian Radio First, Second and Third Channel.

With the amendments to the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, MRT is obliged to open another 24-hour channel in Albanian, increasing the total number of TV channels to 5 and will have additional financial repercussions on its work.

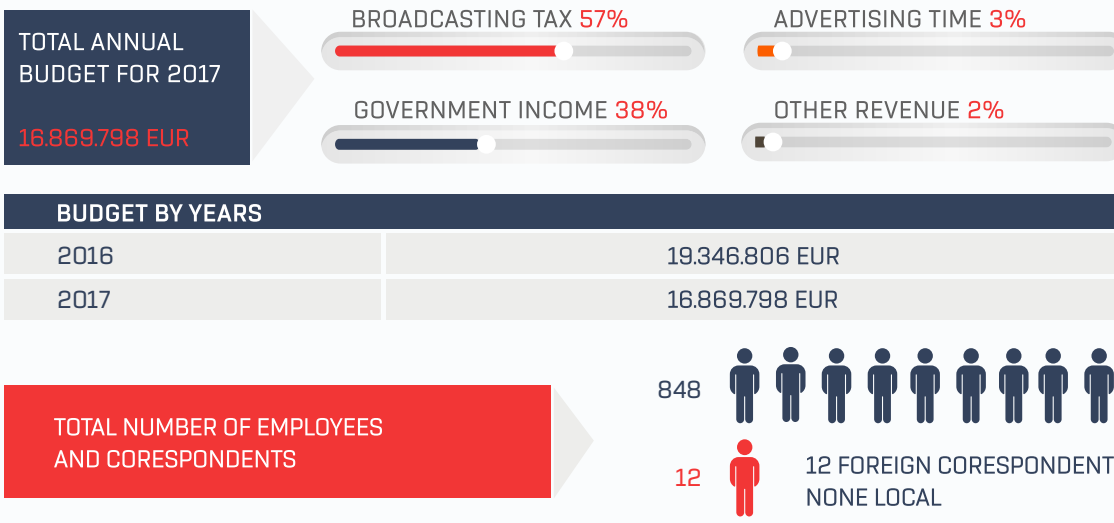
Reforms in the public service broadcaster are partly conditioned by the increase in the budget of this medium, as well as by the election of new members of the Programming Council, who should be competent and non-partisan staff. In this manner, the MRT will fulfill its mission to inform, educate and entertain the citizens. This view was often conveyed by AJM, other media organizations, as well as by some of the expert media public. MRT's work is regulated by internal documents, the Statute, the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services and the Law on Media.

According to MRT's publicly announced 2017 annual report (see Info graphic 1), its budget amounted to EUR 16,869,798, out of which 37% was earmarked for staff salaries.¹ In a conversation with a member of the MRT Program Council, it was pointed that MRT currently employs 12 correspondents

¹ MRT Annual Report for 2017, downloaded from: [www.http://mrt.com.mk/sites/default/files/Консолидиран_годишен_финансиски_извештај_ЈРП_MPT_2017r.pdf](http://mrt.com.mk/sites/default/files/Консолидиран_годишен_финансиски_извештај_ЈРП_MPT_2017r.pdf)

working for MRT1 and MRT2, and that this year MRT has published a call for new correspondents. However, this figure is low, given that another fully-fledged Albanian-language television channel will be launched.

Infographic 1: Basic information MRT



The Media Information Agency (MIA), as an official public information service, was established in 1998, upon a decision of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia. It produces between three hundred and three hundred and fifty articles on daily basis and distributes them by email and simultaneously uploads them to its website. The service operates from 07:00 - 24:00 and reports in Macedonian, Albanian and English. In addition, there are about thirty correspondents in the Republic of North Macedonia and abroad, and it employs about 80 staff, OUT of which thirty are local and foreign correspondents.

III. COMPARISON OF SITUATION WITH THE MACEDONIAN INFORMATION AGENCY SITUATION

For the purpose of this research, through the Law on Access to Public Information, we have provided data on the state of the correspondent network in the state agency.

CORRESPONDENTS IN 2005

Internal correspondents: A total of ten of them have a Temporary Employment Contract and their remuneration is between 2,000 and 13,000 MKD, and only two correspondents are employed on indefinite term contracts and their salary ranges from 18,000 to 20,000 MKD.

Foreign correspondents: Only one correspondent in London with a temporary contract and fee 10,000 MKD.

CORRESPONDENTS IN 2009

Internal correspondents: A total of 15 out of which 13 with temporary employment contracts and their remuneration is 200 MKD for published news article, and the monthly fee could reach up to 8,000 MKD. Again, only two correspondents were employed on a fixed-term basis and their salary was 24,000 MKD.

Foreign correspondents: A total of three correspondents, all with temporary employment contracts. The London correspondent had a fee of 15,000 MKD,

the Prague correspondent had a fee of 12,000 MKD and the Swedish one had a fee of 9,000 MKD.

CORRESPONDENTS IN 2019 (as of May 2019)

Internal correspondents: A total of 17 correspondents, out of which 9 with contracts for hiring advisor for correspondent services and their fee is 200 MKD per published news article. And 8 correspondents employed on fixed-term contracts, with a salary of 9,000 to 25,000 MKD.

Foreign correspondents: A total of 5 correspondents, out of which 3 with contracts for hiring advisor for correspondent services, 1 with a temporary employment contracts and 1 employed on indefinite term contract. The US correspondent has contracts for hiring advisor for correspondent services and his monthly fee is 50,050 MKD, while the Kosovo and Belgrade correspondents both being paid 24,600 MKD.

The Brussels correspondent is hired on fixed-term contract and his monthly fee is 17,000 MKD plus 2,000 EUR for field compensation. Only the Athens correspondent is employed on a full-time basis and his salary is 21,600 MKD plus a 1,000 EUR for field compensation.

According to the analysis, the quality of information provided by MRT and MIA requires the establishment of developed correspondent network covering all 30 urban areas in the country. "For the 150,000 households in the Eastern Region of the Republic of North Macedonia, MRT has employed only three correspondents and no correspondent center is active.

IV. INVESTIGATIVE SURVEY ON SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY

The results of the survey are devastating for journalism. It is rare for journalists to be satisfied with their monthly income, but it is important to emphasize that in order to get them they are forced to work in two or more places.

1. TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS OR PART TIME CONTRACTS

Correspondents who have indefinite-term contracts with national media are rare. All reporters who make up the sample agree that correspondents are not financially independent. The MIA correspondent is one of the few with a permanent employment contract.

"I work for MIA with permanent employment contract, and previously worked part time for several national media: Telma TV, Alsat TV, "Utrinski Vesnik", "Dnevnik", Radio Free Europe and others. Correspondents are not financially independent, especially those who are part-time engaged," says a correspondent for the state news agency.

It is a little encouraging that some of the web portals have interest in covering topics from the internal parts of the country and hiring correspondents, but their contracts are not indefinite, but they are part-time.

"At the moment I am engaged as correspondent for two online media outlets. I have freelance cooperation agreements within projects. I cover events in Bitola, Resen, Demir Hisar, Novaci and Mogila from all areas. In 2000, I started working for Orbis TV in Bitola. Three years without a day's work experience, and I was an editor, a journalist, a host. I was paid per written articles. One article without a statement was 50 MKD, with one statement 100 MKD, with two 150 MKD etc. Then I was in the



local weekly "Public" for ten years, out of which only three years full-time and then part-time. At the same time, from 2005 to 2017, I was correspondent for the daily newspaper "Dnevnik" engaged with freelance contract, with no salary or contributions. From 2012 to 2016 I was also a correspondent for newspaper "Vest", and from 2015 to 2017 and for newspaper "Utrinski Vesnik", also engaged in part-time contracts. Since 2001, I have been a correspondent for Radio Free Europe with a freelance contract", says a correspondent from Bitola.



2. SENSE OF INSECURITY ABOUT THE FUTURE

Apart the fact that amount correspondents receive is below the national average, a huge problem for journalists is the fact that they do not have health insurance and that they have no record for work experience. This creates sense of insecurity about the future and contributes to the increasing number of journalists who choose not to pursue their profession and work in activities other than journalism.



"I'm not going to talk about finances for me, because I am not allowed to talk about the data. But, I can say that I am among the correspondents with higher fees, but without contributions. Other correspondents in Bitola receive between 10.000 and 18.000 MKD per month. Out of the eight correspondents as we are now, only three have regulated employment, the correspondent of MTV, MIA and Nova Makedonija. With regard to financial independence, I can say that with the decline in correspondence, we used to have more correspondents and higher fees, and by that, the financial independence was greater. With decrease in freelance payments and long years of lack of employment, in-house journalists are forced to work in some local media. In such case, the local media's policies are often incompatible with national media, so the journalist with aim not to left out without money, because from all the places together collect as much as one salary with higher education, he must be silent on certain problematic topics. There were cases when due to certain articles in the national media were losing local jobs. So, what kind



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of independence can we talk about with the media that have been using our correspondent services for years without insuring them? Journalists here carry media labels, and then when they fired due to austerity measure, it is started by correspondents, or when the media are closed, journalists are left with no remuneration, and to get access to a local media they have to suit the government, whatever it is. If not, there is no slice of bread"- says Zhaneta Zdravkovska, correspondent from Bitola.

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The situation is alarming in all planning regions. In addition, Western Macedonia correspondents say the royalties or monthly income coming from the national media is insufficient to cover the necessities of a decent life.

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"I have worked for local radio and television on a permanent basis, and I have also worked as a correspondent for national television 24 News, as well as for the Meta news agency. The contracts were based on a monthly fee, with no employment contract. By no means are our correspondents financially independent. Funds vary from medium to medium, but are usually low. For example, it is either work "on piece", i.e. up to 500 MKD per article, or a fixed monthly amount, which in my experience did not exceed six thousand MKD. If the correspondent does not have another job, from the funds he receives as a correspondent, he will not be able to meet even the most basic needs," says a Tetovo correspondent.

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It is also worrying fact that those correspondents who have been working for the same national media for many years have not changed their contract, i.e. the employer does not pay their contributions and does not have social security.

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"I am engaged in Sitel TV, with a part-time contract. I cover the cities in East Region and Sveti Nikole. Sitel TV is my first media house with a royalty contract since 2008. They pay for their work, 800

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MKD per article ... Journalists are not financially independent because of their low incomes, and on the other hand, the national media have great demands from them"- says a correspondent from Shtip.

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3. LACK OF EQUIPMENT FOR JOB

National media that provide adequate equipment and resources to correspondents for their work are rare. The lack of work equipment further complicates the work of correspondents. Namely, journalists from internal parts of the country often use the local media when preparing reports, and are often forced to share their remuneration with the camera operator.

In the same survey, no correspondent answered affirmatively whether the newsrooms provided him or her with adequate reporting equipment for high-risk events. Half of the respondents responded that reporting equipment from high-risk events have been provided by AJM, but not by the media, the other half are still operating without such equipment. Almost identical is the answer to the question whether newsrooms provided reporting training on high-risk events.

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"I take photographs on a daily basis, but when I need better quality photography for a more serious subject, they sent me professional photographer from Skopje. In terms of equipment, the mobile device is provided by the newsroom and they pay my phone bill and internet. However, there are media that pay very little for camera operators' services, so the question is when journalists will be left without camera operators. Unable to find camera operators working for let's say, a fee below 10.000 MKD, the journalists will have either start filming themselves or give up their correspondence," says the correspondent from Bitola.

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Such situations, according to the respondents' testimonies, affect both the collegial relations and the quality of the work done.

The materials used to produce stories are from the 'parent' television station where the journalist works as a correspondent. The same applies for camera operator - one who works on a local television station where the reporter is reporting for and there is always a conflict unless agreement is made between the journalist and the camera operator to share funds. Also, as far as high-risk event reporting equipment is concerned, none of the media outlets for which I worked as a correspondent provided me with such equipment, or training in reporting from such events," says the correspondent from Tetovo.

"I have no camera operator and have never been hired, and I was provided with work equipment from 8 months ago. I have no reporting equipment for high-risk events. The media did not provide me with training in reporting such events," says the correspondent for Sitel TV from Shtip and Sveti Nikole.

4. PRESSURE FROM DIFFERENT CENTERS OF POWER

According to a survey report, the findings show that journalists are very disappointed when it comes to resisting pressures, as some correspondents, aware of the media situation, do not even expect such protection from the media they work for.

"So far I have protected myself and there is no need for the media to do it. I defend myself in full compliance with the AJM Code and ethical norms," said MIA correspondent.

Pressures and attempts of pressure are constantly coming from different centers of power. Journalists are fired and degraded due to the influence of political and business structures on media owners.

"At the moment I do not face pressures. But I must mention that in 2012, in the newspaper "Public" where I was employed and my internship was running, I was expressly fired in 5 minutes because the owner was not interested in the text I wrote as a correspondent in Vest that Manaki's relatives will sue the mayor. The text covered both sides, but the mayor then called the "Public" owner on the phone and he fired me. Now I have no problem, but earlier when I had problems with power centers, the newsrooms did not move with the little finger. Therefore, I do not remember exactly what year 2010 was, I think, Bitola Mayor Vladimir Taleski commemorating the Jews accused Europe of making Holocaust as the fascist did to Jews. We reported this to "Dnevnik", the colleague in "Utrinski Vesnik", and the colleague on one of the television stations. When the tension arose, the next day Taleski called "Dnevnik" and told them that I have taken his speech out of context. Colleagues from Skopje also reported it, in the same newspaper where Taleski and EU Holocaust were on headlines the day before. There were recordings of his statement, but who was interested in that? The very medium that published your news; the next day stands against you, even though you have conveyed pure truth. In addition, Taleski put pressure on another local media outlet, to make headlines to publish a text entitled "Taleski will sue journalists for false reporting". The lawsuit was not filed, but there were ways of pressure being used, and the editorial staffs succumbed", says the correspondent from Bitola.

Some correspondents say they have not faced such pressures, but they see financial dependency, or the media's overwhelming demands for remuneration, as direct pressure.

5. FREQUENT CHANGES TO EDITORIAL POLICY

The decision to change editorial policy is influenced by many social factors, but correspondents find the biggest problem in the relationship between the media and political centers of power. Namely, the media that were closed had direct and enormous impact on reducing the number of correspondents, but the situation also worsened significantly as the media changed its editorial policy.

"The number of correspondents depends directly on the media, and their downsizing means less informed public about the events and even reduced readership and viewership. The decline in the number of correspondents is due to the shutdown of the print media, but also because more national TV stations have changed their editorial policies after the change of government and expelled the correspondents" - says MIA correspondent from Strumica.

"The decrease in the number of correspondents has negative impact on the public's need for information. Information is centralized in the capital and daily politics. Reporting from other regions in the country has been significantly reduced, resulting in certain degree of isolation in these areas. The biggest reason for the decline of correspondents is the low income, lack of proper equipment and frequent manipulation by the employers" - says the correspondent from Tetovo.

"The media justify that they do not have sufficient funds for correspondent network, while at the same time are increasing the number of desk journalist and journalists in Skopje," says the correspondent from Shtip.

6. DECENTRALIZATION OF THE NEWS

The attitudes and experiences of the perpetrators and the culprits of such situations are different, but the correspondents are firm and unique in their view that there must be legislation in place that will oblige internal correspondents to be hired by all national media. According to domestic journalists, it is necessary to hire correspondents from every major city to achieve situation in which the public is adequately informed about the situation across the country.

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"First, there is need for legislation, every media outlet that has national concession - electronic media and print media with distribution across the country, must have certain number of correspondents, at least from major cities. The media should cease to perceive in-house journalists only as correspondents, but above all, as journalists and as equal members of the editorial board. In addition, it is not enough just to engage correspondents from the planning regions, but also from every major city," says MIA correspondent.

"To choose quality personnel from several towns across the country. Hire them! Regularly pay them! To inform them on editorial policy and its possible change. To train them. Invite them at least once month to the editorial board. To appoint responsible person for contact with correspondents and to give them space in news, newspapers, portals ... It is necessary to hire correspondents from all major cities: Bitola, Ohrid, Tetovo, Prilep, Veles, Shtip, Kumanovo, Strumica, and Kavadarci. It is not acceptable for media to broadcast nationally and to lack correspondent network," says a correspondent who wished to remain anonymous.

"First, to hire the right people to do the job. To provide them with equipment and solid salary. In places where there is no professional staff, to try to educate those that are interested. Lastly, provide sufficient media space for local / regional issues, the focus of which will be citizens. Of course,

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national media must have correspondents from each planning region, as they are national media. They should cover topics from all regions of the country"- says the correspondent from Tetovo.

"To invest more money to increase the interest of young graduate journalists ... Of course, the media must have correspondents from every planning region, especially the public service we all pay for, and we send them materials ... SHAME ..."- says the correspondent from the east part of the country.

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Correspondents are divided on the question - is there adequately educated staff in the internal parts of the county which can adequately address the need to increase the number of correspondents in all types of media.

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"In some cities yes, in some there is no at all," says an MIA correspondent.

"Precisely because of the extinction of correspondence and small royalties, and even local pay, interest in journalistic offspring. If space is created and conditions are better that vacuum will be filled. Otherwise, at the moment there are journalists over 30 years who can respond very well to all the tasks"- says the correspondent from Bitola.

"I honestly don't believe it. I think that generally the number of educated staff in the field of journalism is low. This is even more pronounced at the local level. But it can be changed by investing in education and serious efforts to improve the situation," says the correspondent from Tetovo.

"There is not enough educated journalism staff, much less technical staff," says the correspondent from the Shtip region.

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7. CURRENT SITUATION WITH THE MRT CORRESPONDENT NETWORK

First Programming Service, MTV 1

Currently, MTV's First Programming Service has four full-time correspondents. They are:

- Correspondent from Belgrade, Oliver Brankovich;
- Correspondent from Prilep, Elizabeta Mitreska (also covers Krushevo, Krivogashtani, Makedonski Brod and Dolneni);
- Correspondent from Bitola, Stevche Mitrevski (also covers Demir Hisar, Novaci and Mogila);
- Correspondent from Ohrid, Sasho Neloski (also covers Struga, Debarca and Vevchani, if needed).

In Ohrid and Bitola there are also camera operators with full-time employment contract with a net monthly income of about 20,500 MKD.

Brankovich from Belgrade and Neloski from Ohrid have a "Journalist 1" job position and a net monthly salary of around 27,000 MKD (without payment for wage allowance). Mitreska from Prilep and Mitrevski from Bitola are "Journalists 2" with a net monthly income of nearly 23.100 MKD. These correspondents receive no additional public funds for other expenses, except on average for two-three days when they travel frequently to the cities they cover, which on average does not exceed 2,000 MKD per year.

"The situation five years ago was different. There were seven freelance correspondents then and three full-time correspondents abroad. The seven freelance correspondents are:

- Katerina Davcheva, correspondent from Strumica and the Southeast Region;
- Olivera Zhezhova, correspondent from Shtip and the Eastern Region;
- Gabriela Dimkovich, correspondent from Kumanovo and the Northeast Region;
- Zoran Jovanovski, correspondent from Tetovo and the Northwest Region;
- Jovancho Naumovski, correspondent from Struga (Vevcani, Debar and Lower Reka region);
- Darko Stargoski, correspondent from Prilep and Southwest Region;
- Diana Ivanova, correspondent from Veles and the entire Vardar Region.

*The fees for these correspondents were paid on behalf of the journalist in the amount of 30,000 to 40,000 MKD depending on the number of articles, while the journalist paid 10,000 to 15,000 MKD for the camera operator. The camera operator, in addition to recording, additionally, with his own equipment and vehicle, also did editing of the articles."*²

Overseas correspondents up 2018 from MRTV were:

- Correspondent from Brussels Marina Toneva with cameraman Kire Tonev;
- Correspondent from Athens, Maria Kotovska with cameraman Borislav Stankovich;
- Correspondent from Washington Irina Gelevska with cameraman Risto Mishev.

MRTV paid these correspondents the costs of telephone, internet, rent, transportation to the city in which they resided and travel expenses if they traveled to another city, as well as remuneration corresponding to "Reporter 1" or about 27,000 MKD plus extra allowances specified by management (the amounts are not known).

² Interview with Donka Dolgoska, Former Editor of MTV1 Correspondence Editorial Board, 31.5.2019

*"The current situation with our correspondents is far from that of five, ten and fifteen years ago. In the period before the closure of the correspondence centers, MRT had correspondents and camera operators with full of equipment, offices, official vehicles whose gas and telephone costs were covered by MRTV and were occasionally awarded."*³

Now the situation with the equipment of the few correspondents is as follows:

Bitola - has old "PANASONIC" camera and laptop that our correspondent Mitrevski provided through sponsors in the Municipality;

Prilep - Our correspondent Mitreska shoots herself with camera;

Ohrid - Our correspondent has no equipment, but together with the camera operator last year they received second camera without batteries, so they later found own way out;

Belgrade - shoots alone, no camera operator.

*"Correspondents do not have official vehicles, they use their own without fuel and depreciation, which was not the case 15-20 years ago. Elizabeta Mitreska from Prilep, for example, does not have her own vehicle, she is walking across Prilep, and if she has to go farther, pays for taxi or goes with other colleagues from other media in their vehicles."*⁴

MRTV correspondence centers have not existed since they were abolished in 2003. Correspondent cars and other equipment were then confiscated. Since 2003 correspondents work from home. Two years later, they received reimbursement of 5,000 MKD for expenses, which was abolished in 2005.

³ Interview with Donka Dolgoska, Former Editor of MTV1 Correspondence Editorial Board, 31.05.2019.

⁴ Interview with Donka Dolgoska, Former Editor of MTV1 Correspondence Editorial Board, 31.05.2019.

The Macedonian Radio and Television does not have any correspondents from the East, South-East and North-East Regions. There are no technicians, camera operators, editors in this region. *"Formerly, correspondence centers were objects with studios, equipment for direct link at the Macedonian Radio and Television program. MTV has thirty-five motor vehicles, none of which are in the region that is part of this investigation. The Macedonian Radio and Television has no active correspondent centers in these broadcasting regions. It has its premises in Strumica, at str. Marshal Tito and in Shtip, on Freedom Square, but does not use them. In Shtip, the premises are rented and instead of journalists and technicians there are cooks and waiters working in a catering facility. MRT has the largest number of employees of all media in Macedonia, but Eastern Macedonia is 'covered' by fewer employees and one of the poorest local televisions in the region"*⁵ (Stojanov, Igor et al., 2018).

*"In terms of pressures, while I was the editor there was no serious case that would require protection. Some editors were required to film at any cost, a particular company or interlocutor. In 2015, the pressure from the news and broadcast editors themselves was more pronounced than from political structures. While I was editor, I had no case of attack except for story of two correspondents that one of the directors had either blackmailed them to work for New Regional Televisions or there will be no contract with MTV. Everyone accepted, except for Olivera Zhezhova from Shtip."*⁶

⁵ Igor Stojanov, Toni Mihailov, Ivan Bojadzki, 2018, "Socioeconomic Situation of Journalists in Eastern Macedonia - Research Stories, ZNM and Youth Club - Stip.

⁶ Interview with Donka Dolgoska, Former Editor of MTV1 Correspondence Editorial Board, 31.05.2019.

Macedonian Radio in Macedonian language

MR has 3 (THREE) correspondents:

- in Kumanovo (also covers Kratovo);
- in Kriva Palanka;
- in Strumica (also covers Gevgelija, Dojran, Bogdanci, Valandovo and Radovish).

Correspondents are at "Journalist 2" job placements with a monthly net income of 23.140 MKD and transport allowance is calculated in gross salary. Travel orders are provided for remote traveling.

This means that the Strumica correspondent should personally take care of how to reach Radovish, Dojran, Valandovo, Gevgelija or Bogdanci (whether he will use his own car or bus). The situation is better for the correspondent from Kriva Palanka, as it covers only Kriva Palanka, and the correspondent from Kumanovo must travel to Kratovo on his own.

According to all these data, it is confirmed that the Macedonian Radio and Television does not fulfill its obligation to cover almost half of the territory of the Republic of Macedonia.

With only three employed journalists - correspondents of Macedonian Radio, without single correspondent for Macedonian Television, without correspondence centers, technicians, camera operators, it can be freely said that there is no minimum requirement for elementary coverage of information throughout the region.

Situation with correspondents at MTV2, Second Programming Service

Correspondents from the Second Programming Service (MTV2) report on the radio at the same time. There are five:

- **Tetovo** - journalist and camera operator;
- **Gostivar** - journalist without camera;
- **Kicevo** - journalist without camera;
- **Debar** - journalist without camera;
- **Kumanovo** - journalist.

*"All are with full-time employment contracts at "Journalist 3" job position with a regular net wage of around 19,500 MKD without a wage allowance. They do not receive any additional funds for gas, internet or telephone expenses. The only camera operator from Tetovo has a "camera operator 3" job posting (16,500 MKD). Compared to the situation 5, 10 or 15 years ago, the situation is worse because there are no correspondents from Struga-Ohrid and Prishtina where there were previous."*⁷

As for the equipment and vehicles, none of them have official vehicle, the Tetovo camera operator has private camera. They have no offices, no telephones and internet expenses covered by MRT. Correspondents from Kumanovo and Debar use their own private cameras, they send materials from their own private computers, while those who do not have cameras, provide the materials and send them on their own by other electronic media.

None of the correspondents has office or a job secured by MRT, as was the case fifteen or twenty years ago.

⁷ Interview with Migëna Gorenca Dolgoska, Responsible Editor of MTV2 Second program service, 03.06.2019.

"Most of them did not attend any special training, nor did they receive special instructions regarding their safety, as well as resistance to impacts or pressures. Correspondents from Kumanovo, Gostivar and Kichevo had several trainings that were not organized by MRT, while those from Debar and Tetovo had no training at all".⁸

"In conversation with member of the MRT Program Council, it was stated that MRT currently employs 12 correspondents working for MRT1 and MRT2, and that this year MRT has published call for new correspondents. However, this figure is low, given that another fully Albanian language television channel will be launched".⁹

For the purpose of this research, correspondence from AJM was sent to the five largest national televisions with the following question:

What is the total number of correspondents by region, with what type of contracts they are engaged and how much their salary / fee is (as of May 2019)?

None of these media endorsed AJM's requests for information and therefore information on correspondents engaged or employed by the five major broadcasters is not part of this research.

⁸ Interview with Migena Gorenca Dolgoska, Responsible Editor of MTV2, 03.06.2019

⁹ AJM, Correspondence Network (status and analysis of public services in the Western Balkans and in the European Union, downloaded from: www.znm.org.mk/анализи-и-публикации/дописничка-мрежа-состојба-и-анализа-н/

V. MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION WITH THE CORRESPONDENTS

The analysis suggests that there is a strong need for legislation that will require all national media to engage correspondents. At a time when the media is vulnerable and at the same time attacked by misinformation, there is a need for accurate, timely and comprehensive reporting in order for the public to get a complete picture that will not be misleading due to incomplete, misleading, speculative or delayed placement of information.

It is important to emphasize that the media must be professional and responsible, and in this regard, it is necessary continuously to educate the staff, in order continuously to develop their skills and improve their working standards. The media must educate its employees with appropriate training.

Regions or the interior parts of the country are equally important for the development of the correspondent network and the situation with media. This is why there is a need to increase the funding that is allocated to the interior parts of the country in order to increase the independence of correspondents, but at the same time to motivate young people from the interior not to move out and to practice journalism.

The media must constantly work to improve the condition of its employees, i.e. their professional growth and development. This is key to gaining public confidence, especially now in the digital age when new trends are emerging that may endanger journalism and media activity. That's why the quality of the media, the offer of their content is very important. In this respect, journalists, and their correspondents, are important resource that needs lot of attention in order to improve the efficiency of their work.

The centralization of information being made available to the public is aimed at misleading the public about certain situations and events in the rest of the country. This violates the basic principles of journalism. In addition, the appropriate legislation on mandatory recruitment of domestic journalists will also reduce the influence and pressures of the various centers of power.

In addition to the obligation to engage correspondents and to set up a correspondent network, there is also a need for regulation, according to which the media will provide appropriate working conditions for correspondents as well as the procurement of basic equipment for work.

Correspondent network and correspondent treatment play an important role in promoting the cultural identity of the country as a whole, but also of its regions, in particular. They are also important for protecting and preserving the language and tradition of local communities, fostering cultural public dialogue of all citizens, with a view to promoting and strengthening relations between different communities in the country and abroad.

To improve the situation, AJM recommends set of measures to support professional media, to provide quality independent investigative journalism through the production of content involving correspondents, in order to meet the needs of various internal groups currently that are not sufficiently represented in the media. In this context, AJM's priority is focused on supporting appropriate non-formal education, training and education. In addition, AJM provides conditions for quality work in journalistic research, which is expected to enable conditions for correspondents to be properly involved in the profession.

In the part of the Macedonian Radio Television and MIA:

1. The future management of MRT should ensure the development of correspondence in each of the eight planning regions in the Republic of North Macedonia: at least two journalists and two camera operators / editors or a total of 16 journalists and 16 camera operators / editors. It is essential that all journalists and camera operators are employed with full time contracts, on a permanent basis.
2. MIA should make assessment how many correspondents are needed to effectively cover local topics and to have them all employed with full time contracts on fixed-term as in the case of MRT.
3. The future management of MRT, in cooperation with MIA, should provide in each planning region working space and means of work including at least one vehicle for the public service correspondents and the national media information agency, or at least eight correspondent centers.

In the print media section:

4. It is necessary for the daily print media at national level to have a well-developed correspondent network, since they have been financially supported by the public budget since January 2019, i.e. they should have at least three correspondents with full-time employment contract.

In the field of national terrestrial and cable television:

5. National broadcasters with terrestrial clearance (the five general format televisions) broadcasting at the national level should have widespread correspondent network as they

are the only broadcasters other than MRT to broadcast in all areas of the country. Apart from the rights these televisions receive by radiating throughout the territory, they are also obliged to report on topics of local and regional importance. Adequate facilities and working conditions are also required. Therefore, it is necessary to make amendments to the Rulebook on Minimal Technical, Spatial, Financial and Personnel Conditions for Licensing for Radio and Television Broadcasting, in Chapter VI, Article 22 concerning the Number and Structure of Employees. These changes should ensure that out of a minimum of 30 employed journalists in terrestrial; at least 4 should be full-time correspondents, or at least 10 full-time journalists for cable television.

General recommendations

6. Continuous internal education from media outlets to their correspondents is necessary, especially in the use of new technologies and in monitoring trends (self-recording and editing, use of mobile phones and reporting applications, etc.).
7. Continuous non-formal education by guild organizations is required in the direction of professional standards, recognition of misinformation, and respect for copyright and so on.
8. The international donor community should have more interest and understanding for the needs of correspondents and to have programs in place to support their development.



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