



**JOINT ACTION FOR GREATER RESPECT OF THE
RIGHTS OF JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA WORKERS**

SAFER MEDIA WORKERS FOR QUALITY JOURNALISM IN THE
REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

ANALYSIS - THE SAFETY AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC
SITUATION IN THE MEDIA

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Skopje, 2022



This publication has been produced with a financial support from the Balkan Trust for Democracy, a project of the German Marshall Fund of the United States and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent those of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Balkan Trust for Democracy, the German Marshall Fund of the United States, or its partners.

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Title

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Наслов на оригиналот:

СО ЗАЕДНИЧКО ДЕЈСТВУВАЊЕ ДО ПОГОЛЕМО ПОЧИТУВАЊЕ
НА ПРАВАТА НА НОВИНАРИТЕ И НА МЕДИУМСКИТЕ РАБОТНИЦИ

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Safer Media Workers for Quality Journalism in North Macedonia

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Print

Datapons, Skopje

Circulation

50

Skopje, January 2022

CIP - Каталогизација во публикација
Национална и универзитетска библиотека "Св. Климент Охридски", Скопје

070:331.105.441(497.7)(047.31)
331.45/.48:070(497.7)(047.31)

BEJKOVA Josheska, Biljana

Joint action for greater respect of the rights of journalists and
media workers / [authors Biljana Bejkova Joshevska, Sead Dzigal;
translation from Macedonian to English Kristina Naceva]. - Skopje:
Самостоен синдикат на новинари и медиумски работници - SSNM, 2022. - 46
стр. : илустр. ; 21 см

Превод на делото: Со Заедничко дејствување до поголемо почитување на
правата на новинарите и на медиумските работници. - Библиографија: стр.
43-46

ISBN 978-608-65669-3-7

1. Dzigal, Sead [автор]

а) Новинарство -- Синдикални организации -- Македонија -- Истражувања б)
Безбедност при работа -- Новинарство -- Македонија -- Истражувања

COBISS.MK-ID 56281861

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SUMMARY

In order to overcome the complex situation and problems faced by journalists and media workers in North Macedonia, it is necessary continuously to strengthen the relevant journalistic associations and trade unions. They take care for the protection of the interests of journalists and media workers in an organized manner and should be a key player in the exercise of their professional and labour rights. In order to help and strengthen the work of media workers in general, it is necessary to have a comprehensive assessment of the real situation and problems in the media community, as well as assessment and analysis of key factors, manners and methods to overcome them.

This research, by collecting valid data on the real situation in the media sector, directly from employees and people engaged in the media, provides a solid basis for in-depth assessment and analysis of the current situation with professional and labour rights in the media. Through the methods of questionnaires, focus groups, consultative meetings and additional desk analysis, updated data were obtained on the respect of professional rights and freedom of expression of journalists and media workers, their safety, their labour rights, as well as the degree of integration of gender equality in the work of the media.

The results of the research confirm the poor socio-economic position of journalists and media workers, the need for improvements in workers' rights, trade union organization and security, as well as the need for additional measures and activities to promote gender equality in the media.

The research also showed that a considerable number of journalists and media workers do not trust the institutions, which should guarantee and protect the exercise of their professional, labour rights, freedoms, and security. Increasing the trust in the institutional support should be in the focus of the future activities and mutual coordination and cooperation of AJM and SSNM with the responsible institutions and other key factors in the country.

INTRODUCTION

After advancing three places in Reporters without Borders' media freedom rankings in 2020, North Macedonia advanced in 2021, by two places¹. However, this progress should be interpreted carefully and in the context of the extensive list of unfulfilled reforms to improve the situation with the media in the country, as well as through the prism of other negative media influences, such as the pandemic in 2020 and 2021², and deteriorating social-economic working conditions for journalists, media workers and the media in general.

According to the latest Reporters without Borders report, problems in the work of the media and journalists are most often manifested through threats from government officials, on-line harassment, and attacks on social networks, as well as by strengthening the culture of impunity for individuals and groups make the work of the media and journalists difficult or difficult.

1 N. Macedonia ranks 90th in the world in terms of media freedom in the Reporters Without Borders index. <https://rsf.org/en/north-macedonia>

2 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, The Representative on Freedom of the Media, Harlem Désir, *Regular Report to the Permanent Council for the period from 21 November 2019 to 2 July 2020*, p. 10-59.

The situation with the media has been gradually deteriorating in the last two years, and analyses and reports indicate that the practice of threatening and insulting journalists and media workers continues, as well as that the number of threats and verbal attacks is increasing, especially through online media and social networks. These trends and processes influence the strengthening of the existing culture of impunity of the perpetrators of such acts against journalists and media workers.

In July 2021, the Ministry of Justice announced that the Government had adopted the amendments to the Criminal Code, which raise the protection of media workers to a higher level. According to the Ministry, these changes should help reduce cases of attacks and threats against journalists. These legal changes, which are still in the parliamentary procedure, further specify legal instruments and crimes that have not been covered by the law so far and aim to protect women from harassment and attacks. The crime of “stalking” has been added to the list of crimes, which includes sanctions for harassment online. It should improve the security of both journalists and media workers who are particularly

exposed to this type of threat and external pressure³. In the amendments to the Law on Civil Liability for Insult and Defamation, however, it is planned to reduce the amount of fines for damages for defamation and insult, i.e., from a maximum of 2,000 euros, with the amendments, this amount is provided to be a maximum of 400 euros.

There is still a stalemate in the systematic media reforms, which was not overcome even after the establishment of the new parliament after the early parliamentary elections in July 2020 and the establishment of new parliamentary committees in which several processes important for media reform were stuck. Numerous announcements for exit solutions for the blocked reforms were not realized during the second half of 2021, and there are no changes in the reforms of the public broadcasting service MRT.

The Association of Journalists of Macedonia (AJM) and the Independent Trade Union of Journalists and Media Workers (SSNM) of Journalists and Media Workers have continuously opposed various announcements of possible legal changes that would enable state advertising in the media. According

3 The proposed text of the law provides: “A person who unauthorizedly follows, persecutes or otherwise interferes in the personal life of another person, or establishes or tries to establish unwanted contact with him, by moving in the space where it is located a person, by abusing personal data, using the media and other means of communication, or otherwise psychologically abusing, harassing or intimidating him, shall be punished with a fine or by imprisonment of up to three years.”

to most media and journalistic organizations, the return of state advertising in the media will encourage media clientelism and significantly disrupt their professional and impartial work.

It should be added that the fragmented media market continues to have an extremely negative impact on the financial sustainability of the media, so for these reasons and socio-economic factors, the media are continuously exposed to greater influence than political and economic factors, which negatively reflects on media rights and freedoms. These continuing aggravating factors reduce the capacity of the media to assert its independence and to cope effectively with the challenges of the new digital age. One of the most serious problems they face in the new digital media environment is the growing influx of misinformation in public communication, created and placed by various centres, which are interested in polarizing society and undermining trust in institutions and the media.

The coronavirus pandemic during 2020 and 2021 caused additional complication of the situation with the media in the country. The health crisis and the consequent economic shocks have caused a decline in the social standard of journalists and media workers, which significantly increases the risks of job losses, irregular incomes, and other financial difficulties.

To overcome these complex problems of crucial importance is continuous support for the media and improvement of the conditions for their work is needed, and the strengthening of relevant and credible media associations and trade unions, which take care for protection of the interests and professional rights of media workers. One of the necessary steps in this direction is the collection of relevant and up-to-date data from the media community itself, on the conditions and working environment of journalists and media workers. The media are one of the most dynamic sectors in society, so the planned and coordinated solution of problems in this area is largely conditioned by the process of collecting and analysing valid data on the problems faced by journalists and media workers. Reliable and up-to-date information on these processes is a key element in determining the right approach, measures, and methods to address the most important issues in this area.

2

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research objectives

Strengthening credible and relevant media associations and trade unions, which care for the protection of the interests, professional and labour rights of journalists and media workers, is extremely important and that is why this research is a priority goal. In order to help and strengthen the work of media workers, as well as to be able to solve problems in the media sphere in a planned and coordinated manner, a comprehensive assessment of the real situation and problems in the media community is necessary, as well as assessment and analysis of key factors, manners and methods for overcoming them.

The assessment of the real situation in the media community is the key goal of this research. One of the necessary steps in this direction is the collection of relevant and up-to-date data from the journalists and media workers themselves. Information from journalists and media workers, who face various problems and challenges daily, is a key link in determining the right approach and methods for resolving the most important issues in the media sector.

With all this in mind, the research detects the experiences of journalists and media workers in the following areas:

- Respect for the rights of journalists and media workers, with a special focus on freedom of expression.
- The safety of journalists and media workers.

- The labour rights of journalists and media workers.
- Gender equality and the incorporation of the gender aspect in the work of the media.

Methodological approach in the research

In the research, the methods of questionnaires and focus groups were used, as well as consultative conversations with the respondents, which in this research process were composed of journalists and media workers. This research approach enabled the collection of data from respondents, who are directly confronted with the topics that are part of the research. Gathering and sorting their information and experiences provides a database that can be used to define precise and effective measures, strategies and policies to address key issues in the media community. In addition to journalists, media workers (camera operators, cameramen, photojournalists, graphic editors, technicians and other members of the media sector) were involved in the research process.

For the needs of the research, questionnaires were developed, a team of seven (7) interviewers was trained, who conducted the survey, and consultative meetings were organized with journalists and media workers in the seven regional centres of AJM (Skopje, Tetovo, Ohrid, Bitola, Strumica, Shtip and Kumanovo).

The questionnaire for collecting data from the respondents was created by preparing thematically grouped questions, which arise from the identified variables and indicators in order to obtain contextualized and updated thematic data, both in qualitative (evaluative and perceptual) and in a quantitative (statistical) sense.

The questionnaire was submitted and completed online, through the “Google Forms” platform and consisted of three parts:

- a) General information about the respondent
- b) Information on the safety of the work of journalists and media workers in North Macedonia.
- c) Information on the respect of the personal, professional, and collective-labour rights of the members of the media community in North Macedonia.

The style of the questions in the Questionnaire is of a standard survey type, in which the respondent is asked to answer a series of questions from general to specific topics, by selecting a group of offered answers. These questions for the respondents were conceptualized on two methodological techniques:

- Selection or confirmation of an established indicator in correlation with a given variable (variable), such as: “How much time are you engaged in the media sector?” With given answers: Less than a year, 1-3 years, 3-5 years, 5-10 years, and over 10 years.
- Degree of established indicators derived from correlation with a given variable (variable), such as: “Do you agree with the statement: I am thinking of leaving or changing profession”, with answer options: full agreement, partial agreement, disagreement, partial disagreement, and complete disagreement, as well as an additional possibility for the respondent not to answer.

For separate topics and examination of their indicators, two additional methodological types of questions were included: (a) Open-ended question, (b) Space for the respondent to comment. Also, in combination with the earlier methodological approaches, the method of desk analysis of relevant materials of interest and importance for the research was used, which included content and other analysis of the legal framework, available research and analysis, interviews and media reports.

The survey was conducted in the period from August 9 to September 17, 2021 and covered 335 respondents - journalists and media workers. The consultative meetings at the regional level included approximately 100 journalists and media workers.



MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY RESEARCH

The socio-economic position of journalists and media workers

According to the results from the research and the data obtained from the respondents, it was determined that a high 41.6% of the surveyed journalists and media workers are employed on a part-time basis, work on a contract basis or part-time. This position of employees and labour market trends in the media sector creates significant uncertainty for employees regarding the sustainability of their jobs. This is additionally influenced by the fact that 72.9% of the respondents have monthly incomes lower than 30,000 denars, which is approximately on the border of the average salary in the country. 80% of the respondents have regular monthly income, and almost one-third of the respondents (32.8%) think that their material position has not changed in the last three years. More than half of the respondents, 57.7%, are dissatisfied with their income and their economic security. These data confirm the **poor socio-economic situation of the majority of employees in the media sector**, continuously in the last few years.

Working environment and digital transformation

According to the respondents, 38.5 % of them work more than 40 hours a week, while 67.2 % do not receive overtime compensation. Latest trends in integrated newsrooms, which also serve online information platforms through 24/7 content publishing cycles, impose additional pressure on media employees due to which media capacities do not develop in proportion to the increase in information production and cycles. Also, 38% of the respondents confirmed accident insurance at work, which is a really low percentage, especially considering the risk of the work of workers in the media, especially the field work.

Trade union organization

45.4 % of the surveyed journalists and media workers are members of a trade union or other form of a professional organization, and more than half, or 53.7 % of respondents, think that they are sufficiently informed about the support provided by the Independent Trade Union of Journalists and Media Workers. (SSNM). These percentage are a solid base, which enables efficient work of trade unions, but at the same time, there is room for its increase and greater involvement of journalists and media workers in activities that would strengthen their influence in the decision-making process for their rights, working conditions. and security.

Gender equality

More than half of the respondents (52.2 %) gave the highest grade for the degree of promotion and respect for equal opportunities of workers in the media, regardless of their gender identity. Slightly less than half of the respondents (47.5 %) gave the highest score for the degree of protection and sanctioning of sexual and other types of gender-based violence in the media. The research showed that this perception of the respondents, however, is based on a kind of narrower understanding of gender equality, mainly in terms of employee incomes, so efforts should be increased for additional activities, such as training and other forms of education for gender equality. Slightly less than half, or 44.2 % of respondents, believe that men and women in the media are paid equally for the same jobs. Also, a high percentage of respondents - 40.3% answered that they do not know if the media in which they work has internal regulations and procedures for ensuring and respecting gender equality, and 18.5% said that there are no such regulations and procedures.

Safety and work pressures

Half of the respondents (48.4%) confirmed that they rarely face internal and external pressures in their work. Job threats received 37.3 %, which is a significant and worrying percentage, which shows that pressures and threats are not an exception, but a regular practice and experience for respondents. Journalists and media workers most often receive threats through social networks (23.3 %), while threats from media owners and editors received 8.1 % of respondents.

17.7 % of the respondents reported they received threats to the journalists' associations, and 15.9 % reported the threats to the police. When asked why they did not report if they received threats, 14.9 % of respondents said they did not trust the judiciary, 14 % said they did not trust the police, and 13.7 % said they did not trust the prosecution. If these data are contextualized and compared with other indicators of the questionnaire, it is very obvious that the respondents' trust in the institutional system is far from satisfactory.

34.9% of the respondents are satisfied with their personal safety while performing their work responsibilities. If these data are combined with the data on the percentage of employees in the media who have fieldwork engagements, it can be seen that a very small percentage of those who work in the field have confirmed that they are satisfied with their safety in performing their work tasks.

A high 59 % of respondents believe that the top risk in their work is psychological fatigue and stress, and 45.9 % point to the risk of threats and other types of psychological violence, which indicates the need for additional support for journalists and media workers in the form of preventive safeguards, training, and counselling on how to deal with these serious challenges.

The fact that half of the respondents (50.5%) are considering leaving the profession seems worrying and is a cumulative data, which includes various data, from safety to the socio-economic position in the work of the respondents. These data point to the need for a multifaceted approach in solving complex problems and challenges, which requires continuous work and cooperation of relevant instances in several sectors.

4

REVIEW OF THE SURVEY RESULTS

Demographic and professional characteristics of journalists and media worker

Out of a total of 335 respondents included in the survey, 54.6% are men, 45.1% are women, 0.3% said “other”. In terms of age, the majority of respondents (69%) are aged 26 to 50 years,

CHART 1

Respondents' gender

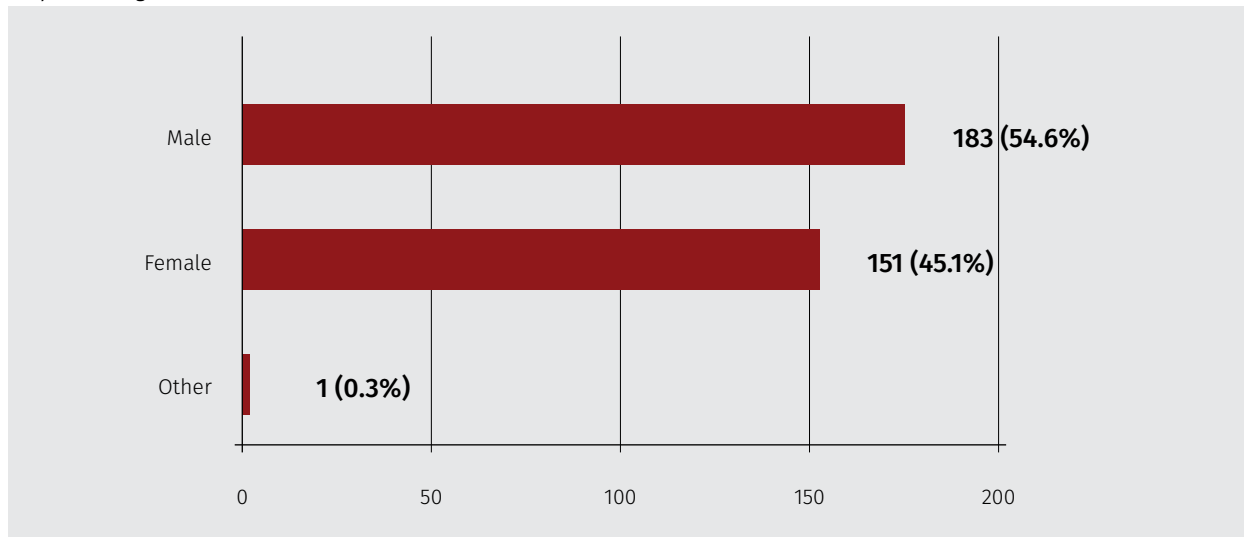
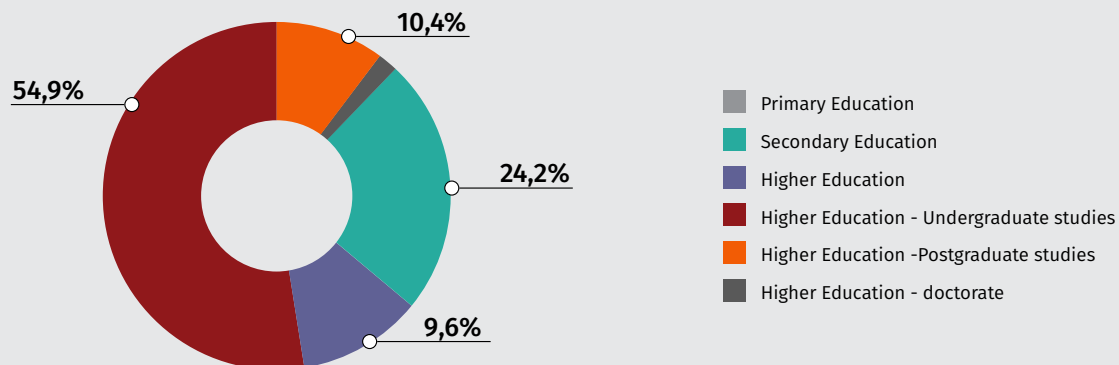


CHART 2

Respondents' education



17.6% are older than 50 years, and 12.5% are younger than 26 years.

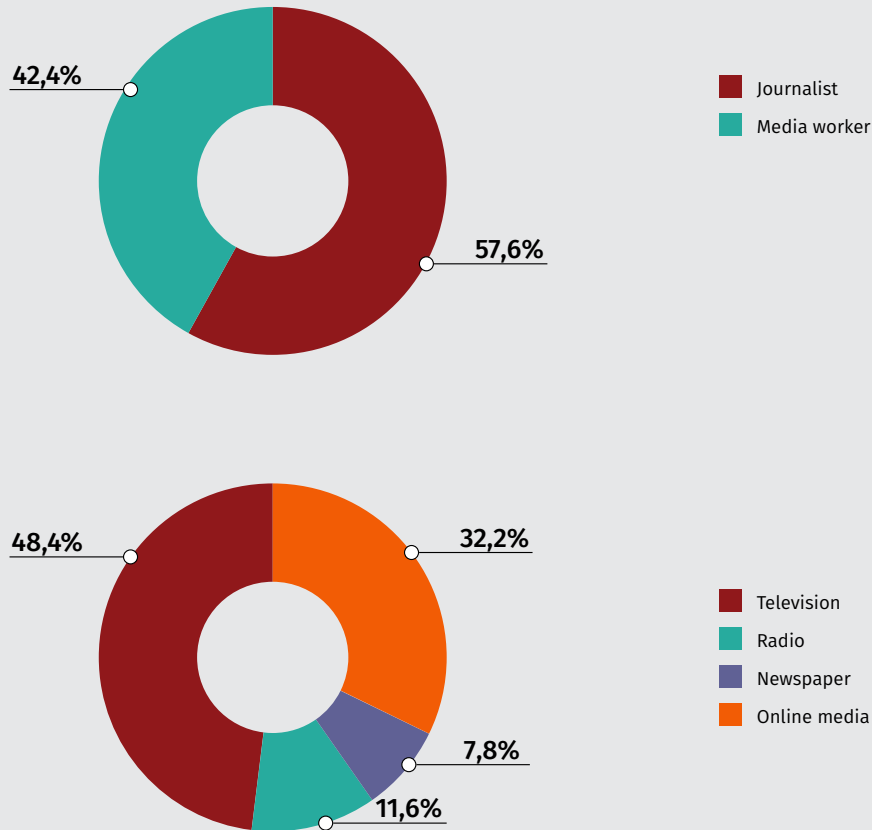
Regarding the education of journalists and media workers covered by this survey, the majority of the - 54.9% have higher education, 24.2% have secondary education, 10.4% have completed postgraduate studies, while 9, 6 % have higher education.

The majority of respondents - 57.6 % work as journalists and 42.4 % are media workers⁴. The majority (57.9%) has worked in the media sector for more than 10 years, 19.8% have 1 to 5 years of work experience, 15.8% have 5 to 10 years of work experience, while 6.6% have worked in the media sector less than a year.

⁴ In the section of journalists' respondents, a definition is used for persons engaged in media that work on "gathering, confirming, publishing and analyzing information connected to current topics and events", while in the section of "media workers", are specifically determined: cameramen, video journalists, photojournalists, technicians, technical assistants and other persons.

CHART 3-4

Type of engagement in the media and type of media in which the respondents work



When asked about the type of media in which they are employed (Chart 6), most of the respondents answered that they work in the media at the national level - 35.5 %, 14.9 % work in the public service, 13.1 % in the media of regionally,

and 12.5 % in the local media. A total of 17% of the respondents work in online media, 4.8% in print media, while 2.1% of the respondents are engaged in foreign media.

CHART 5

Duration of working engagement in the media sector in years

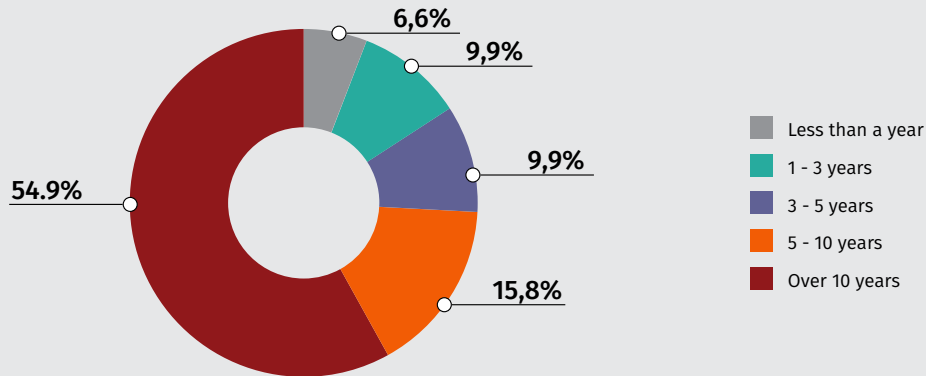
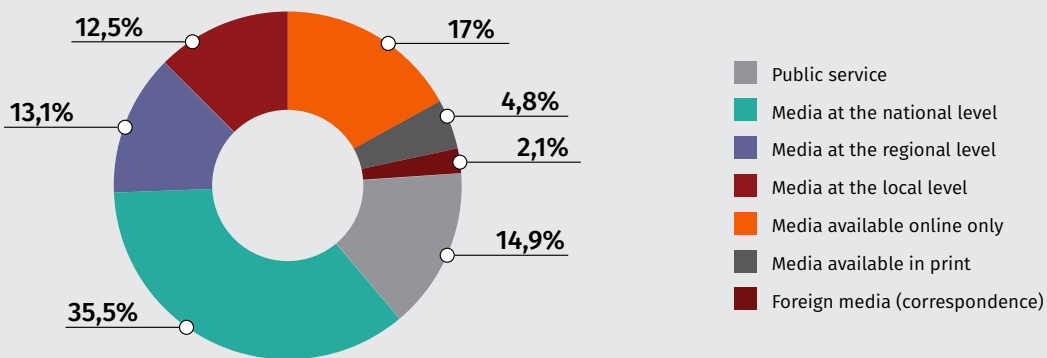


CHART 6

Type of medium in which the respondents are engaged



Economic position of journalists and media workers

When asked about the type of work engagement, 56.1 % of the respondents answered that they are full-time employees with contract for indefinite period, 19.1 % are fixed-term employees, 10.4 % work with contract for engagement, 12.2 % are part-time employees, and 0.9 % said they work voluntarily.

To the survey question “How much is your monthly income in the medium in which you are engaged” (Chart 8), a high 72.9 % of respondents answered that their monthly income does not exceed 30,000 denars. Thereby, 38.2 % have a

monthly income of 20 to 30 thousand denars, 28.4 % have a monthly income of 10 to 20 thousand denars, while 6.3 % have a monthly income of fewer than 10 thousand denars.

14.3 % of the respondents have a monthly income of 30 to 40 thousand denars, and only 4.8 % of the respondents have a monthly income of over 40 thousand denars.

A high 80 % of respondents said that their income is regular, while 11.9 % of income is 1 to 3 months late. In 1.5 %, income is more than 3 months late and in 0.9 % over 6 months.

When asked how they assess their financial situation in the last three years, almost one-third of the respondents (32.8 %) answered that it is unchanged, while 30.1 % said that their financial situation is partially better. The financial situation

CHART 7

Type of work engagement of the respondents in the media

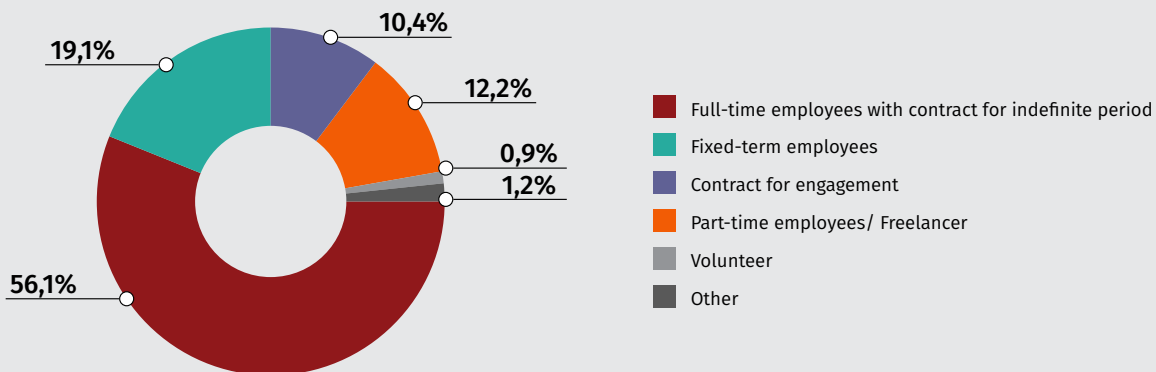
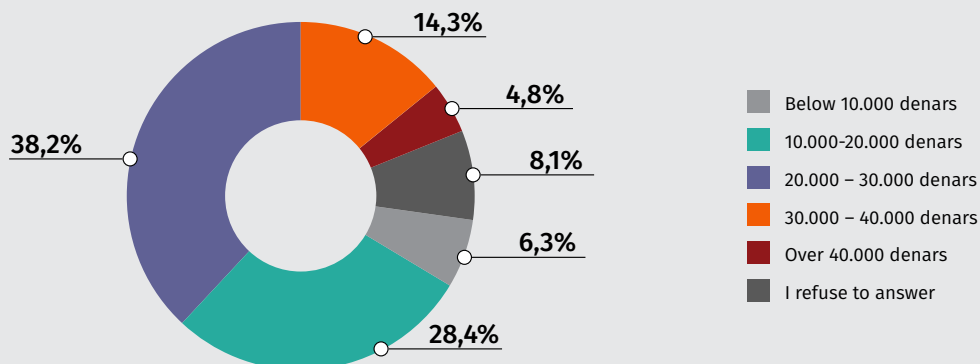


CHART 8

Monthly income of respondents in the media



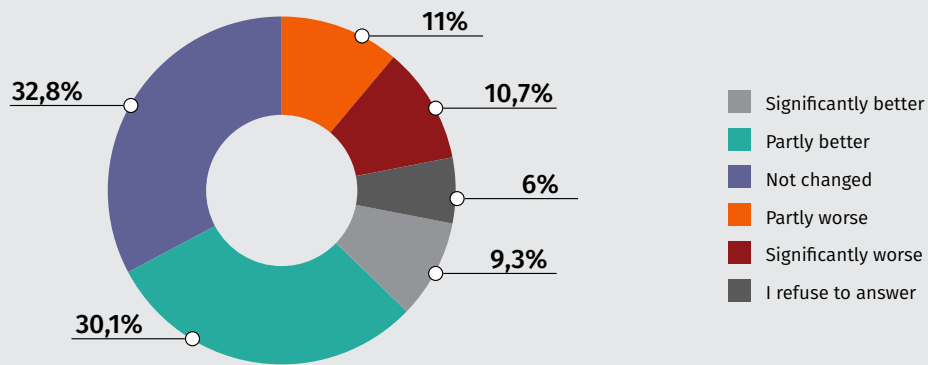
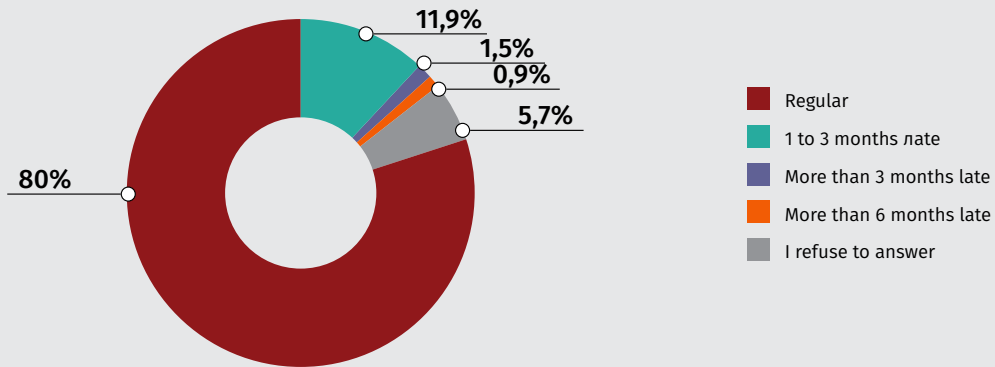
of 11% of the respondents is partially worse, it is significantly worse in 10.7%, while 9.3% of the respondents stated that they have a significantly better financial condition in the last three years.

When asked how satisfied they are with their income and their economic security, more than half (56.7%) said they were dissatisfied. Thereby, 31% are completely dissatisfied, and 25.7% are mainly dissatisfied. Only 2.7% are completely satisfied, and 22.4% are generally satisfied.

To the additional question, "Do you agree with the statement - I am considering leaving or changing profession", even half of the respondents (50.5%) answered that they partially (27.2%) or completely (23.3%) agree with the statement. 27.2% disagree with the statement, 17.9% completely disagree, and 9.3% of the respondents partially disagree.

CHART 9-10

Regularity of the salaries of the employees in the media (Chart 9) and changes in the material condition of the respondents in the last 3 years (Chart 10)



Employment rights and obligations

When asked if their overtime work is compensated, 67.2 % of respondents said they do not receive compensation, 19 % said they receive compensation, and 10.7 % said they are partially compensated.

Regarding the expenses for business trips, 45.2% of the respondents answered that the employer covers those expenses, 35% said that they do not receive compensation for these expenses, while 16.8% answered that they receive only partially compensation for business trips. The use of a private vehicle while performing work tasks was enabled by 31.3% of the respondents. 38% of the respondents have

insurance against accidents at work, while 46.7% said they do not have such insurance.

According to the number of working hours during the week, 49 % of respondents said they work from 20 to 40 hours, and 38.5 % over 40 hours per week.

Nearly one-third of respondents, 31.3 %, said they rarely get obligations out-of-working time, 29.6 % occasionally, while 20.3 % of those surveyed do so often, and 5.1 % regularly.

When asked how satisfied they are with the opportunities for professional development at work, 44.5 % answered that they are dissatisfied (27.8 % are mainly dissatisfied, and 16.7 % are completely dissatisfied), while 32.3 % are satisfied (4.5 % in full and 27.8 % in part).

CHART 11

Degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with media income and economic security

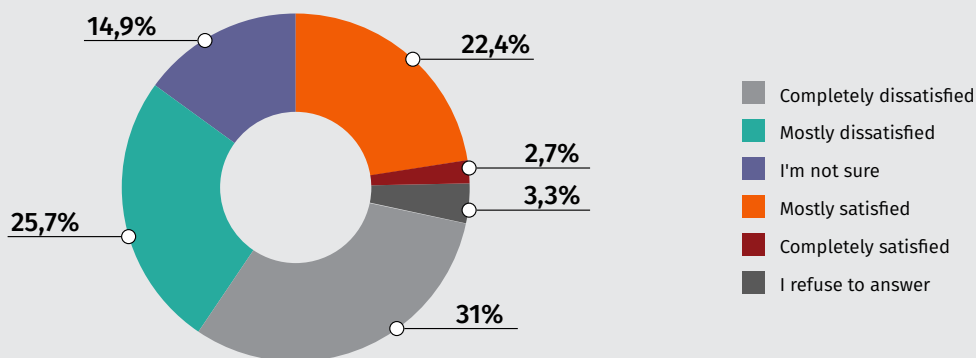


CHART 12

Coverage of certain items at work by the employer

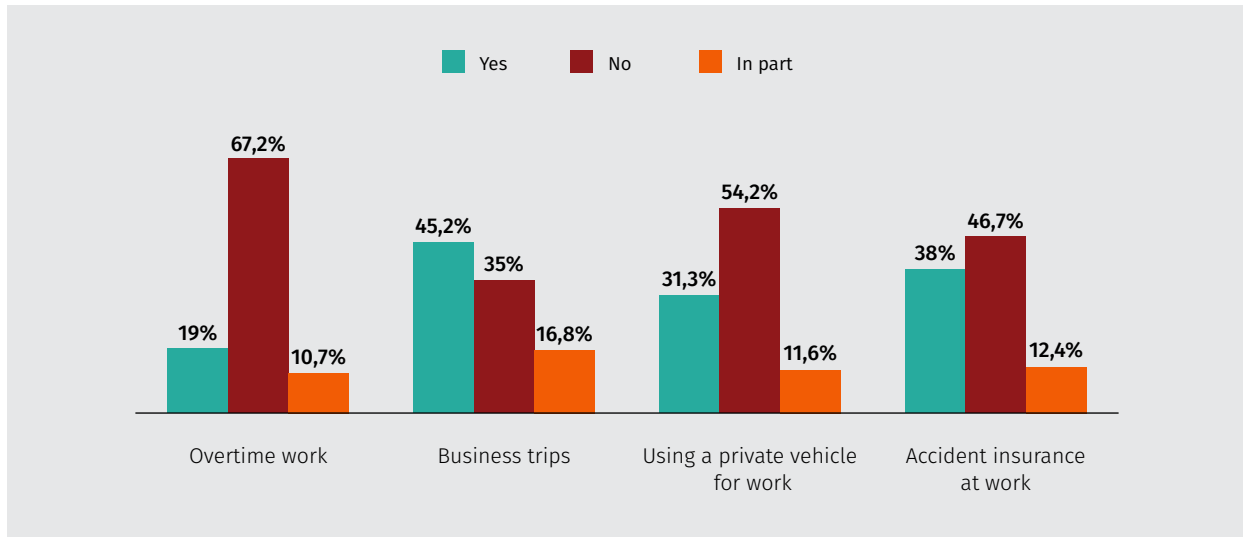


CHART 13

Number of working hours per week

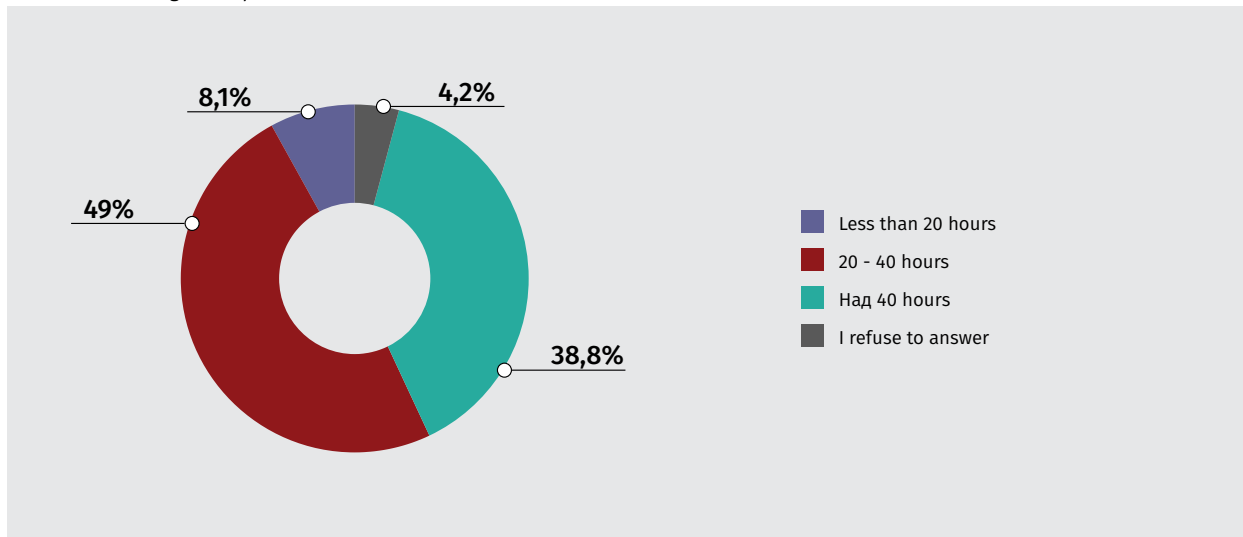
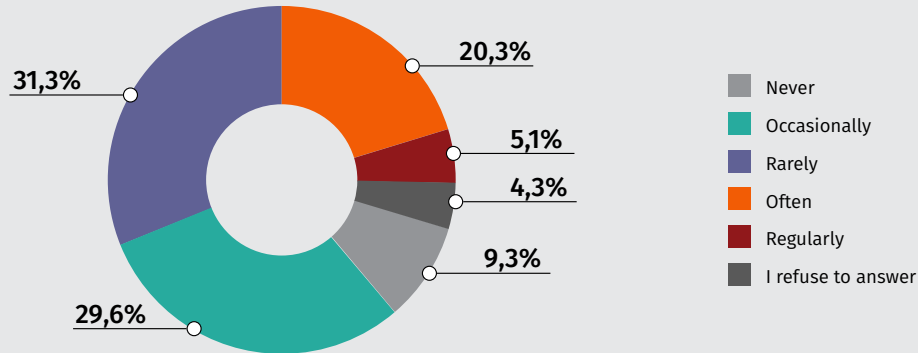


CHART 14

Receiving working obligations out-of-working time



As part of the survey questionnaire, journalists and media workers involved in the survey had the opportunity for additional comments. Most of the comments referred to their deteriorating material and financial situation, as well as the poor opportunities for advancement and training in the

media. They point out that they have low wages, unlimited working hours, overtime is unpaid, and they are not even insured against injuries:

COMMENT 1:

"I HAVE BEEN WITHOUT PENSION INSURANCE FOR SEVEN YEARS, AND I HAVE ONLY 12 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE, I AM THINKING OF LEAVING THIS PROFESSION. THERE IS NO FUTURE FOR CORRESPONDENTS".

COMMENT 2:

"I DO NOT WANT TO LEAVE JOURNALISM. THE ONLY REASON FOR DISSATISFACTION IN THE PROFESSION IS LOW WAGES. I WOULD WORK FOR ANOTHER SALARY IN ANOTHER MEDIUM, BUT I WOULD NOT LEAVE JOURNALISM AS A PROFESSION".

COMMENT 3:

"I THINK THAT MEDIA OWNERS WANT TO ACHIEVE MAXIMUM EFFECT WITH MINIMAL MEANS, IN THEIR FAVOUR. THAT IS WHY THEY DO NOT PAY FOR OVERTIME WORK, THEY DO NOT INSURE US AGAINST INJURIES, IT IS ABOUT HOLIDAYS AND MANY OTHER THINGS THAT REMAIN UNPAID BY THE OWNERS".

COMMENT 4:

"THE CAMERAMEN, WHO ARE PART OF THE CREATIVITY OF A MEDIUM AND WITHOUT WHICH NO PROJECT ON TELEVISION CAN BE IMAGINED, ARE ILLEGALLY PLACED IN THE CATEGORY OF TECHNOLOGY AND ACCORDINGLY THE PERSONAL INCOME IS VERY LOW FOR THEIR WORK, WHICH IS AS WELL AS THEIR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY. WELL, HENCE THE FRUSTRATIONS ARE GREAT AND HE IS CONSIDERING LEAVING THE PROFESSION HERE IN RSM. IN OTHER DEMOCRACIES, THE PLACE OF THE CAMERAMEN IS AT THE RIGHT LEVEL".

COMMENT 5:

"AS LONG AS WAGES ARE LOW, WORKING HOURS ARE INDEFINITE, AND OVERTIME IS UNPAID, QUALITY JOURNALISTS WILL LEAVE, AND CHILDREN "WILL TAKE THEIR PLACE TO FILL THE VACANCY".

COMMENT 6:

"THERE IS NO ROOM FOR PERSONAL PROGRESS ONCE A DEGREE OF SUCCESS HAS BEEN ACHIEVED. THE MARKET IS VERY SMALL AND IS BASED ON SENSATIONALISM AND LOW PASSIONS, AS OPPOSED TO A QUALITY PROGRAM AND ITS CONTENTS. CHEAP IS VALUED, AS OPPOSED TO QUALITY".

COMMENT 7:

"THE QUALITY OF THE MEDIA ACTIVITY HAS SIGNIFICANTLY DECREASED IN THE LAST 15 YEARS AND IS GETTING WORSE. GREAT SERVILITY AND DESTRUCTION OF THE CIVIL SECTOR, AS AN OPTION TO HAVE ITS VOICE HEARD".

Trade union organizing and attitude towards trade unions

The survey showed that 45.4 % of respondents are members of a union or other form of a professional organization, but only 17.9 % confirmed that the union in the media in which they work has signed a collective agreement on behalf of employees.

Part of the respondents - 41.2 % participated in training on ways to protect and exercise workers' and professional rights in the media, and more than half - 53.7 % think they are informed (14 % full, and 39.7 % in part) for the assistance and support for journalists and media workers by the Independent Trade Union of Journalists and Media Workers

(SSNM). Just over a third of respondents - 34% think they are uninformed (16.1% mostly uninformed and 17.9% completely uninformed):

When asked if they have sought help from any institution or organization in the last three years, over 70 % of respondents said they have not sought help from any of these institutions or organizations.

Out of the respondents, 18.5 % addressed the Association of Journalists of Macedonia (AJM), 14 % requested assistance from the SSNM, 5.2 % addressed the Agency for Audio and Audio-Visual Media Services (AVMS), 5 % addressed to an international organization or embassy, and 3.5 % sought help from the Ombudsman.

CHART 15

Respondents answered the question: "Are you a member of a trade union or other professional organization?"

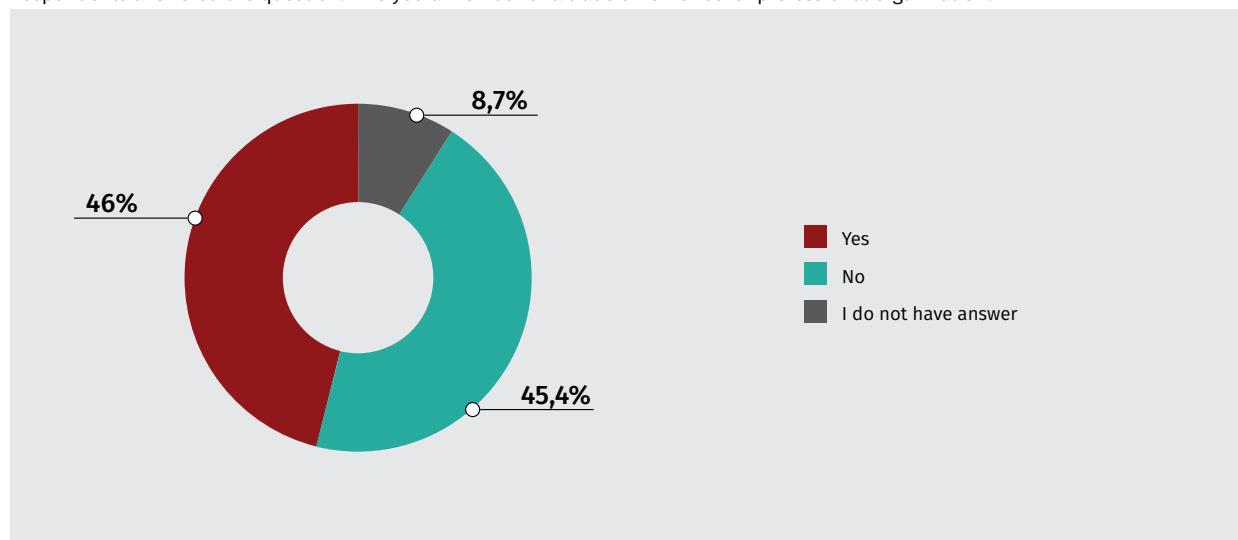


CHART 16

“Do you know what help and support for journalists and media workers SSNM offers?”

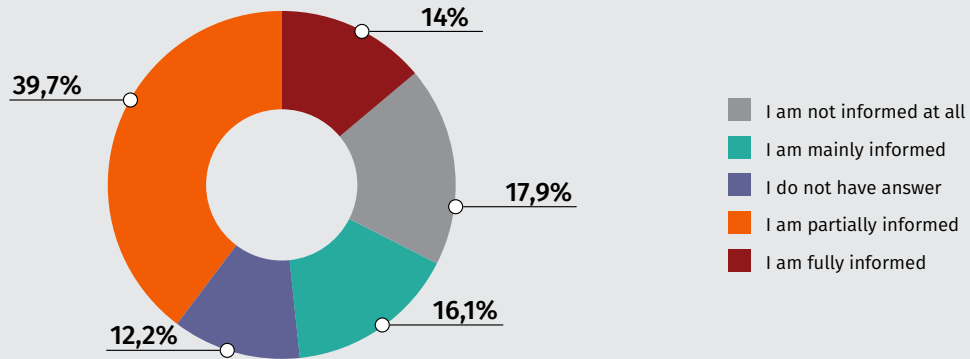
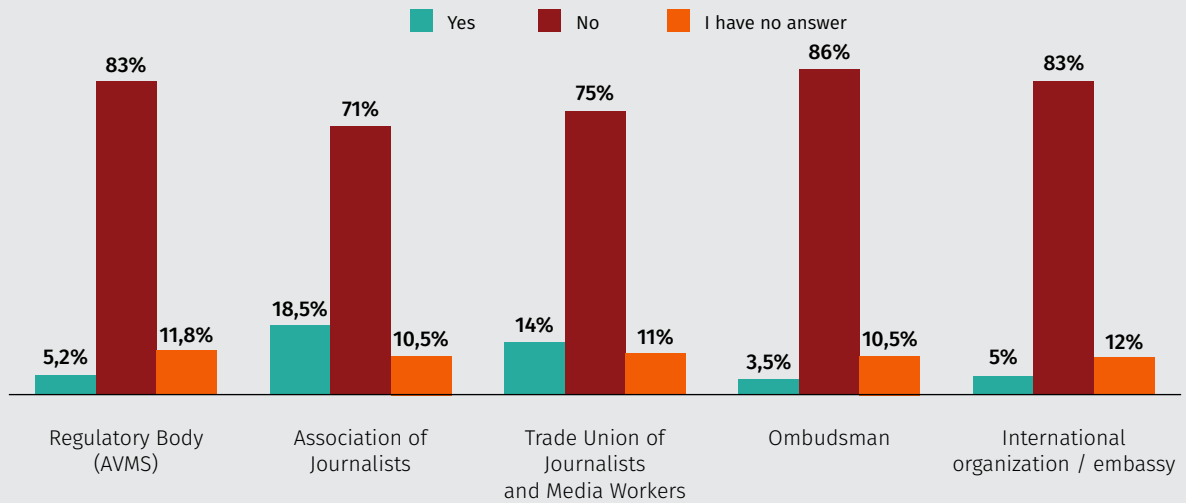


CHART 17

“Have you applied for help to any of the following institutions or organizations in the last 3 years?”



Ensuring and respecting gender equality

In the area of gender equality surveys in the media, more than half of the respondents - 52.2 % gave the highest score for the degree of promotion and respect for equal opportunities for workers in the media, regardless of their gender identity (Chart 17).

Also, a high 47.5 % of respondents gave the highest score for the degree of protection and sanctioning of sexual and other types of gender-based violence in the media (Chart 18).

Respondents rated the placement of women in editorial and managerial positions in the media as follows: 24.4% with the highest grade - (5), 16.2% with (4), 31.5% with (3), 14.7 % with (2) and 13.2 % with the lowest grade - (1). When asked about the exercise of the rights for parental and maternity leave, almost one-third of the respondents 31.5 % gave a grade (3), followed by those with a grade (5) 22.9 %, with a grade (4) 18 %, with a grade (2) 15.6 % and with a rating of (1) 15.6 %.

Regarding gender equality in the distribution of tasks and responsibilities, the grade is again the most common. 3. One-third of the respondents, 33% gave an average grade

CHART 17-18

Grading 1-5 for the promotion of equal opportunities for workers based on gender identity (Chart 17) and protection from sex-based violence (Chart 18)

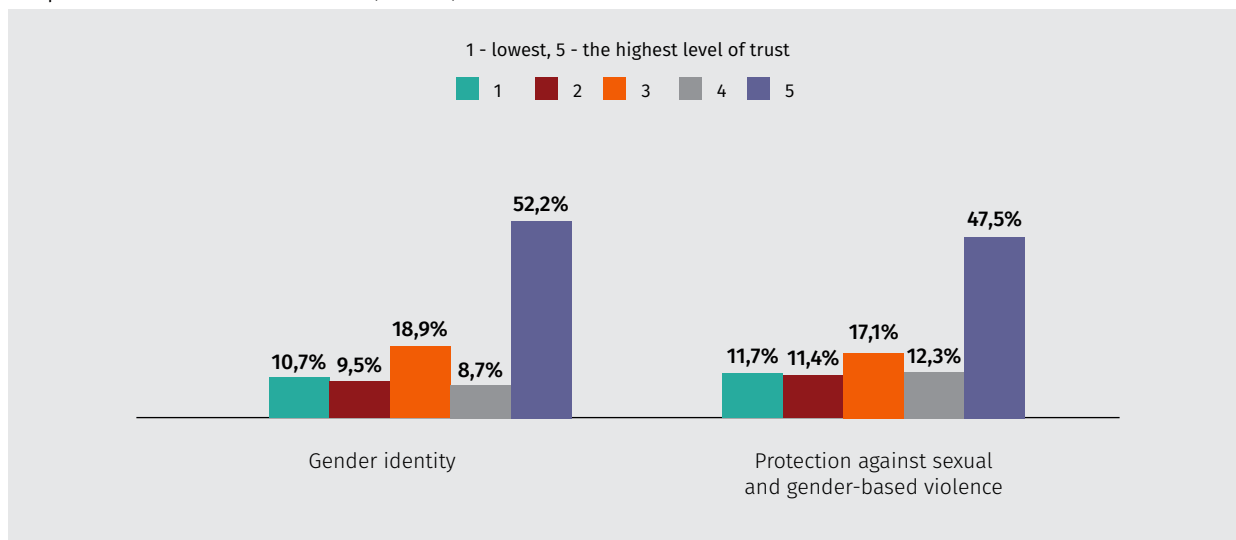
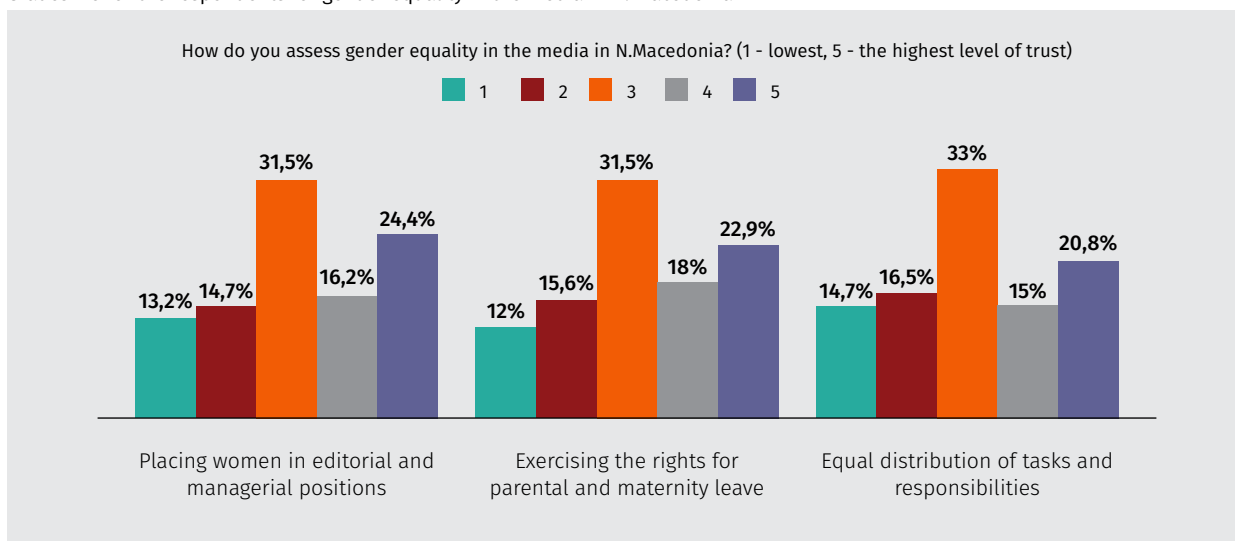


CHART 19-20

Grades 1-5 for the respondents for gender equality in the media in N. Macedonia



(3), 20.8% gave a grade (5), 15% gave a grade (4), 16.5% rated (2) and 14.7% rated (1).

To the question “Do women and men in the media where you work have the same salaries for the same job position?” (Chart 19), 44.2% answered “yes” and 9% answered “no”. A high percentage of 39.4% said they did not know, most likely because they did not have information about the salaries of their colleagues and superiors.

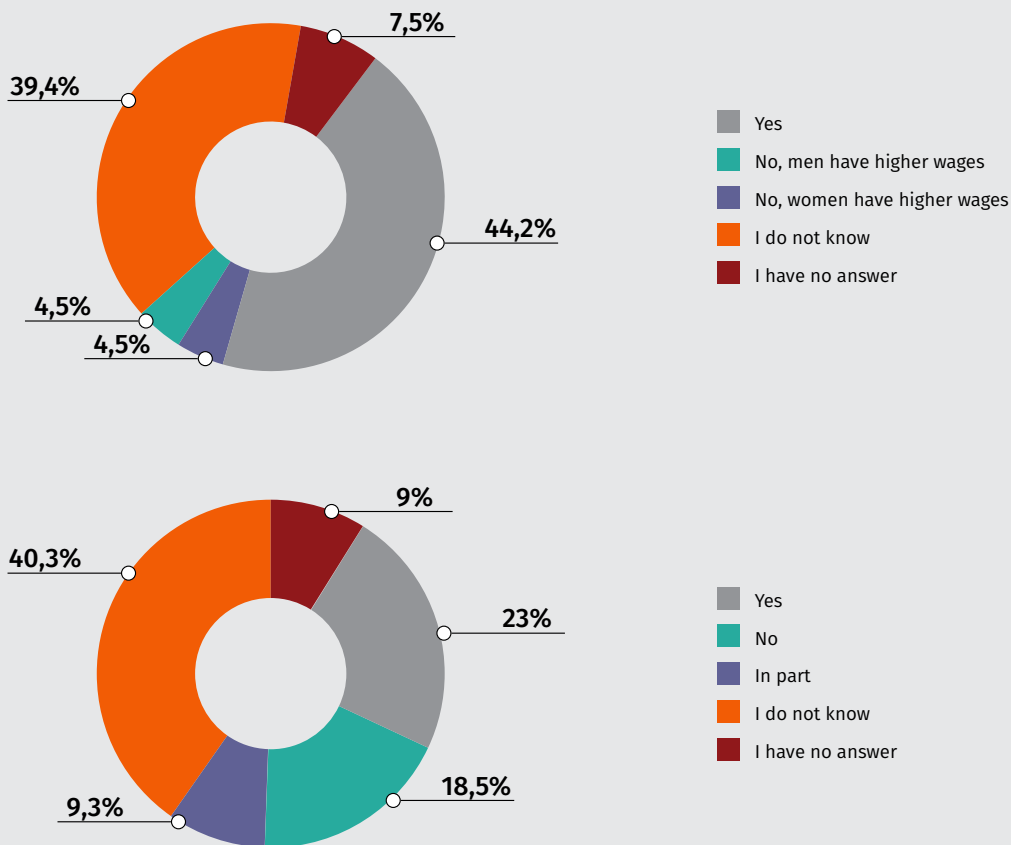
When asked if there are internal regulations and procedures for ensuring and respecting gender equality in the media in which they work, as many as 40.3% answered that they do

not know, and 18.5% said that their media do not have such regulations and procedures. 23% said yes, and 9.3% of the respondents think that only partially there are such regulations and procedures in the media in which they work.

Cross-referencing the results of the survey questions (presented in Charts 17-22), the variations in the indicators indicate that the perception of respect for gender equality tends to equalize the level of income between men and women, and much less with other indicators and factors for gender equality, such as, for example, internal regulations and procedures for ensuring gender equality.

CHART 21-22

Do women and men in the media have the same salaries (Chart 19) and do the media in which you work has internal procedures for respecting gender equality (Chart 20).



Additionally, when asked if they attended training or training on gender equality, only 25.7% of the respondents answered in the affirmative.

Safety in the work of journalist and media workers

When asked how often they face internal or external pressures at work, 12.5 % of respondents said it happens often, and 2.1 % said they face some form of pressure daily. Almost half of the respondents - 48.4 % answered that they rarely face pressure, 21.8 % never faced pressure, while 15.2 % did not answer the question.

When asked how satisfied they are with their safety in the performance of their duties, 34.9 % of the surveyed journalists and media workers answered that they are generally satisfied, and 9.6 % that they are completely satisfied. 11.6 % are completely dissatisfied with their safety at work, and 20.6 % are mainly dissatisfied.

When asked if they received threats in their work, 37.3 % of the respondents confirmed that they received threats at work, of which 36.4 % received threats indirectly (through another person or some means of communication), and 0.9 % received direct threats by the person or persons making the threats.

Journalists and media workers most often received threats through social networks - 23.3 %, then by phone - 20.3 %, and via e-mail threats received 5.1 % of respondents. 38.2 % of the respondents did not receive threats, and 10.7 % did not answer this question.

When asked what the sources of threats were, 5.4 % said they often received threats from viewers or readers, 4.2 % from media owners, 3.9 % from editors, 3.6 % from advertisers and the business sector, 3 % of government politicians and 2.4 % of police.

CHART 23

“How often do you face pressures in your work in the media?”

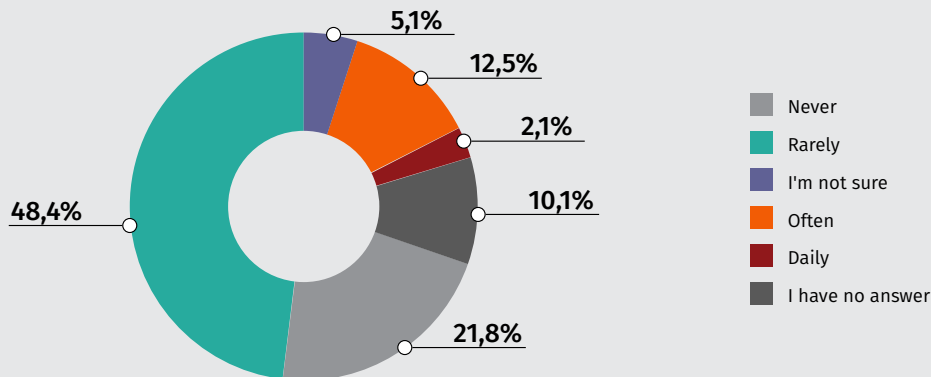


CHART 24

"How satisfied are you with your safety while performing your job responsibilities?"

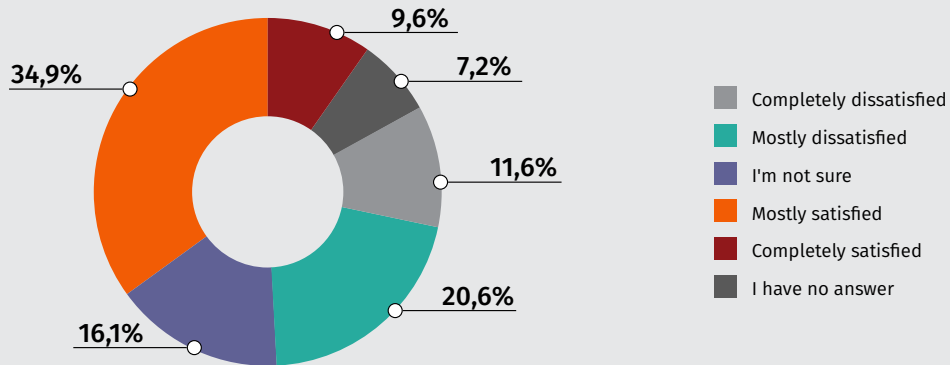


CHART 25

Answers to the respondents whether they received threats at work in the media

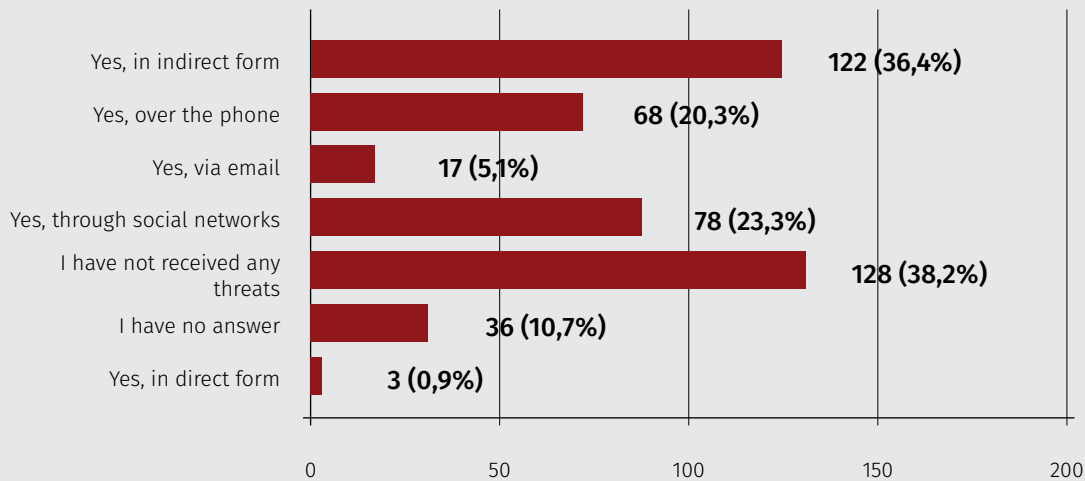
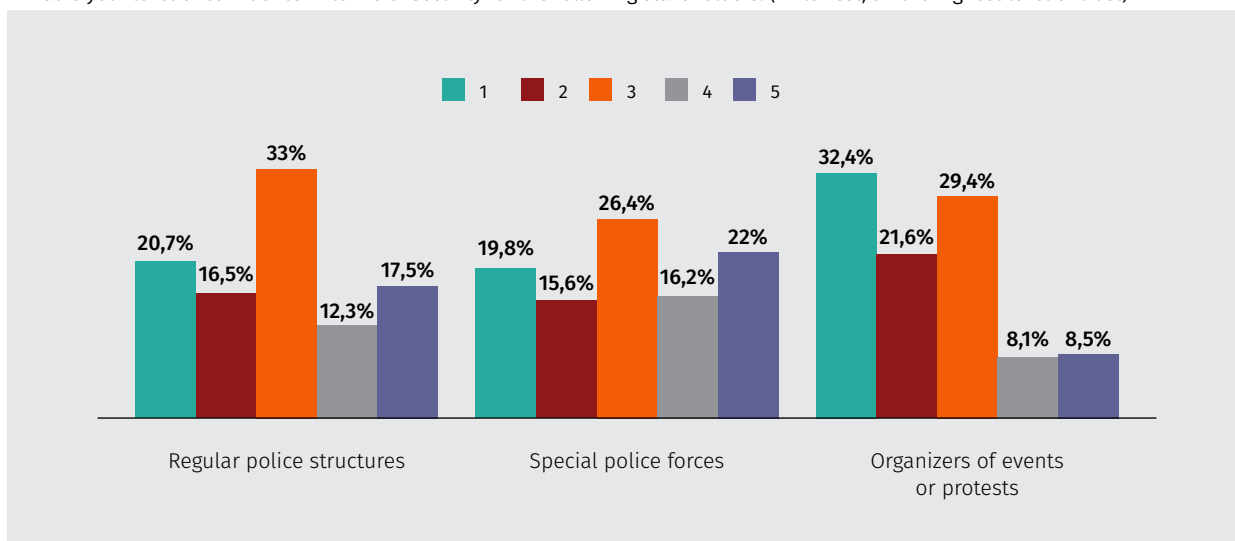


CHART 26

“What is your level of confidence in terms of security for the following stakeholders: (1 - lowest, 5 - the highest level of trust)”



When it comes to where they reported the threats, the largest percentage of respondents - 17.7 % addressed the journalists' associations, 15.9 % reported the threats to the police, 13.5 % to trade unions, 7.8 % to international organizations or embassies, 6 % in civil society organizations, and 5.1 % in the Ombudsman⁵.

When asked why they did not report if they received threats (Chart 25), 14.9 % of respondents said they did not trust the judiciary, 14 % said they did not trust the police, 13.7 % said they did not trust the prosecution, and 8.1 % did not report out of fear and insecurity.

A high 59% of the respondents think that the highest risk in their work is psychological fatigue and stress, 45.9% point out the risk of threats and other types of psychological violence, 36.9% said that there is a risk of physical attacks in

their work, while 26.1 % cited the dangers of physical injury at work as a risk.

In terms of their safety in performing their duties at public gatherings and protests, 38.2 % of the police force, 29.8 % of respondents said they trusted the police and 16.6 % said they trusted the organizers.

When asked if they face censorship and self-censorship in their work, 4.2 % of respondents said they often face censorship, while 1.2 % daily. 7.5 % of the respondents often underwent self-censorship.

5 Овие податоци се од конјункциски тип, а не дисјункциски, односно испитаниците во различни ситуации практикувале да пријават ист случај на заканување на неколку различни места.

Regarding occupational safety, threats, and risks, some of the respondents shared their views and experiences, highlighting examples of the lack of institutional resolution of cases for received threats. In addition, from the comments, the distrust in the institutional protection based on the individual experiences of the respondents is obvious:

COMMENT 1:

“SO FAR, I HAVE RECEIVED THREATS AND INSULTS FROM OFFICIALS SEVERAL TIMES. THEY WERE CONDEMNED BY THE GOVERNMENT, BUT THEIR BEHAVIOUR DID NOT HAVE AN INSTITUTIONAL SOLUTION”.

COMMENT 2:

“I WAS INJURED BY THE POLICE DURING THE PROTEST. I REPORTED THE CASE, BUT I NEVER FILED A LAWSUIT AGAINST THE POLICE OFFICER”.

COMMENT 3:

„I WAS TRIED FOR A PUBLISHED TEXT, AND I FILED A LAWSUIT AGAINST ANOTHER JOURNALIST WHO THREATENED ME PHYSICALLY WITH ARSON, BUT THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE DID NOT ACCEPT THE CASE”.

COMMENT 4:

“I WAS ATTACKED WHILE FILMING A REPORT, BUT I DID NOT REPORT THE CASE BECAUSE THOSE WHO ATTACKED ME INFLUENCE THE POLICE AND THE JUDICIARY”.

In some of the comments of the respondents and those involved in the consultative conversations, it is obvious that there is a strong awareness of the need for the better internal organization of media employees, as the main mechanism for successfully dealing with the problems they face:

COMMENT 5:

“ALL THREATS, NO MATTER HOW MINOR THEY MIGHT SEEM AT FIRST GLANCE, AND NO MATTER WHERE THEY COME FROM, SHOULD BE REPORTED TO AJM AND SSNM, AND OBLIGATORILY, IF IT IS ABOUT OUR JOURNALISTS ENDANGERED IN ANOTHER COUNTRY AND IFJ-EFJ. PERSONALLY, FOR EXAMPLE, AFTER ANNOUNCING THE THREAT OF ARREST OF JOURNALISTS IN A NEIGHBOURING COUNTRY, I HAVE REPORTED SUCH AN EVENT IN INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS OF JOURNALISTS, WHO REACTED IMMEDIATELY. ON THIS OCCASION, HAVING LEARNED FROM ALL SIMILAR EXPERIENCES, I URGE ALL JOURNALISTS TO REPORT THE THREATS”.

COMMENT 6:

“I WAS ATTACKED WITH TERRIBLE VERBAL WORDS AND INSULTS ON FACEBOOK BY THE JOURNALIST J.I., I REPORTED TO THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND AJM, BUT BOTH PLACES ANSWERED THAT THEY COULD NOT REACT AND THAT I SHOULD SOLVE THE PROBLEM VIA CIVIL LAWSUIT, BUT I DID NOT DO THAT, IN ORDER NOT TO BE EXPOSED TO ADDITIONAL INSULTS AND HUMILIATIONS FROM IT”.

5

CONCLUSIONS

Journalists and media workers, in this survey, confirmed that they are in an extremely unfavourable socioeconomic position, and half of them are even considering leaving the profession. More than half of the respondents have monthly incomes, i.e., salaries and fees lower than the average in the country (according to the State Statistical Office, the average monthly paid net salary per employee in July 2021 was 28,540 denars⁶). Despite the low income, this research showed that almost one-third of the employees in the media sector work on a part-time or part-time basis. Job insecurity and the devaluation of the work of journalists and media workers negatively affect the motivation in their work, but also increase the risk of corruption and control by various centres of economic and political power. The bad socio-economic conditions for the work of the media are part of the wider environment in the country, which is followed by additional factors specific to this sector, such as media fragmentation and poor functionality of the media market.

According to the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services (AAVMS), at the end of 2020, the program was broadcast by a total of 110 commercial broadcasters (45 televisions and 65 radio stations) and 4 non-profit radio stations⁷. A total of 11 broadcasters broadcast nationally (5 terrestrial, 4 cable and 2 satellite televisions), 18 regionally and 16 locally. Out of the radio stations, 4 broadcast on a national level and 17 on a regional level, while the others broadcast only on a local level. Additionally, 101 members⁸ are registered in the list of profes-

6 Source, SSO; <https://is.gd/ZbgoaH>

7 The total revenues in the industry in 2020 amounted to 2,382.61 million denars. More than half of them were the revenues of the commercial televisions - 1,217.88 million denars (51.12 percent). The public service generated revenues in the amount of 1,012.19 million denars (42.48%), and the revenues of the commercial radio stations amounted to 152.54 million denars (6.4%), AAVMS, 2020.

8 Source <https://promedia.mk/main>

sional online media, but the real number of online media is around 200, having in mind that in 2020, for the early parliamentary elections, as many as 235 portals registered in the State Election Commission (SEC) Register for advertising the participants in the elections. Due to these reasons and socioeconomic factors, the media are strongly influenced by external factors of power, which negatively reflects not only on their impartiality and professionalism but also on the exercise of their rights and freedoms.

Less than half of the respondents in the survey stated that they are union members, and the number of union members approximately corresponds to the percentage of those who attended training for protection and realization of workers' and professional rights in the media. The research also showed that just over half of the respondents think that they are informed about the help and support for journalists and media workers by SSNM. These findings indicate that the awareness of the importance of trade union organization among journalists and media workers is at a solid level, but also that there is much room for improvement and increase of these percentages, which requires continuous activity and cooperation with journalists and media workers. Better information and training for trade union organizations and activities can significantly improve the capacity of trade unions, and thus strengthen their influence and participation in the processes related to improving the working conditions of journalists and media workers.

The research showed that, although journalists and media workers mostly feel safe while performing their tasks (44.5 %), there is still a large number of those who feel insecure (32.2 %), as well as those who face various direct and indirect threats. Most often, it is threats through social networks, and the most common sources of threats are media owners and editors, the public (readers, viewers), the business community, the government, and politicians, as well as the police. Respondents most often contacted journalists' associations, the police and trade unions about the received threats. Those who were the target of threats, but did not report

them, stated that the reason for that was the distrust in the judiciary, the police and the prosecution, and some of them because of the feeling of fear and insecurity. These results suggest that journalism is still not a sufficiently secure profession in the country, but also that journalists and media workers still do not trust the institutions that should protect their rights and sanction those responsible for threats and attacks on them.

Journalists and media workers find their profession extremely risky and stressful. According to them, remarkably high risks in their work are psychological fatigue and stress, then the risk of threats and other types of psychological violence, the risk of physical assault, and the risk of physical injury at work.

Also, the new digital platforms for public information have brought significant changes in the part of the work cycles for journalists and media workers. In the age of the Internet and social networks, the standards for creating and updating information and media content have changed significantly, so that today media employees are faced with the reality of continuous cycles (24/7) of collecting and publishing information. This imposes additional pressure on media employees and extends working hours beyond current standards for working hours, both on a daily and weekly basis. Nearly one-third of respondents occasionally receive requests to work outside of office hours, and more than a third confirmed that they work more than 40 hours a week. Cumulatively, over one-half of the respondents confirmed that

they work under conditions in which their working hours are extended and uncertain. This puts additional pressure on journalists, especially given that almost two-thirds of those surveyed are not paid for overtime work.

More than half of the respondents gave the highest grade for the degree of promotion and respect for equal opportunities of workers in the media, regardless of their gender identity. Slightly less than half of the respondents gave the highest grade for the degree of protection and sanctioning of sexual and other types of gender-based violence in the media. In contrast, 40.3 % do not know if the media outlet in which they work has internal regulations and procedures for ensuring and respecting gender equality, and only a quarter had training on gender equality. These data indicate that the gender-sensitive approach is not fully integrated into the work of the newsrooms, that in many media there are no internal policies or procedures for embedding the gender dimension in the overall functioning of the media and media content, and that journalists and media workers are not sufficiently and thoroughly educated on the subject.

- Journalists and media workers are in an extremely **unfavourable socio-economic situation and half of them are considering leaving the profession.**
- Respondents perceive their profession as safely risky and stressful, and an **additional high risk in their work are psychological fatigue and stress.**

- Slightly more than one third, i.e., **37% of the respondents, confirmed that they received threats at work**, of which 36% received threats indirectly (through another person or different means of communication).
- Respondents **most often receive threats on social networks**, and the most common sources of threats are media owners and editors, the public (readers, viewers), the business community, the government, and politicians, as well as the police.
- The main reasons for not reporting the threats are **distrust in the judiciary, police, and prosecution**, and some of them **due to the feeling of fear and insecurity.**
- **Less than half of the respondents stated that they are members of a trade union**, and just over half of them think that they are informed about the help and support for journalists and media workers by SSNM.
- The new digital media platforms, in addition to the positive aspects, have brought additional pressures on journalists and media workers, such as **expanding working hours and exposure to online threats and attacks.**
- Almost **one-third of the respondents occasionally receive requests for work assignments outside working hours**, and **more than one third confirmed that they work more than 40 hours per week.**
- **The gender-sensitive approach is not fully integrated into the work of the newsrooms**, in many media, there are **no internal policies and procedures for incorporating the gender dimension** and the need for additional measures, training and education on this topic is confirmed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The research and the obtained results show that intensified efforts and activities of the media (especially the owners and the management) are needed to improve the socio-economic position of journalists and media workers. Creating various social measures, overtime payments, additional coverage of fieldwork costs, insurance and risk insurance, additional benefits, as well as the establishment of funds to improve the standard of media employees, are some of the possible short-term solutions for improving the socio-economic working conditions in the media. In the long-term systemic policies and measures to improve the socio-economic position of journalists and media workers, all the relevant factors should work strategically, continuously and in a coordinated manner.

It is also necessary legally to regulate the labour rights of freelancers, especially in the area of their labour protection. It is necessary to provide greater transparency in the media for payments and coverage of expenses, concluding contracts and other activities in this area, for which it is recommended to establish transparent and formalized procedures, in written and documented format, with unhindered insight and participation of trade unions.

It is necessary to reconsider the legal framework, which serves to regulate the obligations of employers and employees, as well as compensation, concerning working hours and working hours in individual and collective employment contracts in the media.

The media should be encouraged and supported in developing additional business models and revenue opportunities, especially through digital platforms and various online tools and applications, to reduce their dependence on advertisers, donations and subsidies. It is advisable to develop service models, through which the direct financial connection between the media and the users will be revitalized. Following the example of the media from other countries, which are already developing these models, and which provide their audience

with additional premium services and content, it is possible in a form adapted to local conditions and standards, to combine models of free and paid services and content, which would enable the media and retain the audience, while providing additional financial sources of revenue. This process requires time for innovation, development of tools and content, as well as audience adaptations, but the foundations for sustainable socio-economic solutions in the media sector need to be laid as soon as possible and they need to be supported by a wider range of stakeholders, including system institutions.

Additional legal analysis of relevant legislation, which reflects on the work of the media in the topics covered by this research, can also be recommended, to detect possible ways to improve the conditions for the financial operation of the media, such as opportunities for certain tax adjustments and/or reliefs, as well as other solutions in that direction, which would enable equal market competition in the media sector.

To improve the situation, greater control over the financial operations of the media and greater efficiency of the inspection services is necessary, especially in cases of violation of labour rights and employment rights of journalists, media workers and the media administration. In that regard, AJM and SSNM can provide additional assistance with information, guides, training and pointing out the best tools and practices for regular reporting of cases to the inspection services and other responsible institutions.

To increase and strengthen the influence and role of trade unions, and thus to improve the negotiating and decisive position of journalists and media workers in the media, it is necessary AJM and SSNM, but especially the trade union as the topic of labour rights is part of the mission of this organization continuously to create and undertake informative and educational activities and campaigns to encourage and motivate journalists and media workers to be union active and in solidarity. It is necessary to develop the involvement of employees in the media and professional culture that

through a massive and well-organized trade union movement, the negotiating position of journalists and media workers can be significantly improved, in all processes that affect their rights, freedoms and conditions in which they work.

To improve the safety of media employees, several measures are needed, both in legal terms and at the level of taking concrete measures in the area of their physical security. The changes in the legal framework from July 2021, which are still in the parliamentary procedure, in which attacks on media employees should be treated as attacks on officials, is a step that can improve the situation if this legal remedy is applied consistently and consistently. Clarifications on the legal definition of hate speech, in accordance with the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights, as well as additions to the powers and expertise of the public prosecutor in such cases, in the form of training and special working teams or departments, which would deal more specific and more focused on the safety of journalists and media workers. These measures can strengthen the implementation of legal instruments and restore trust in institutions, which, according to the survey results, is not at a satisfactory level.

Additionally, the media in cooperation with AJM and SSNM, as well as with the civil sector and institutions, can provide enhanced support for the safety of media employees by preparing information materials, case studies, training, providing equipment and by building and implementing appropriate internal security policies, procedures and protocols.

It is necessary to strengthen the activities and mechanisms to support journalists and media workers in reducing and overcoming daily pressure, psychological fatigue, and stress. It is extremely important that they have access to proper psychological help, counselling and education, because only in this way will they be able to overcome the pressures and problems they face every day in their work. It is necessary for this to sensitize the media, i.e., media owners and editors through the organization of public events, debates, training, educational and research materials, and other measures

suitable for strengthening awareness and education about this serious problem.

From the aspect of gender equality and its incorporation in the functioning of the media, newsrooms, as well as in the production of media content, a comprehensive systematic approach is needed, which will cover all levels, from media owners to editors, to journalists and media workers. It is necessary to raise awareness and education about the importance, but also about the ways to fully incorporate the gender dimension in the work of the media. This means that training, training and consultations are needed to create and implement appropriate policies and practices for gender equality, such as creating rules, protocols and incorporating this aspect in employment contracts, but also in collective agreements.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Intensified activities of the media (owners, management) are needed to improve the socio-economic position of journalists and media workers, in the form of various social measures, benefits, overtime payments, risk insurance, as well as funds to improve the standard of media employees.
- In addition to examining the possibilities and methods for determining specific benefits and subsidies, the media should be encouraged and supported in developing additional business models and revenue opportunities, especially through the development of services and business models that will revive the direct financial connection between the media and users.
- Better control over the financial operations of the media and greater engagement of the inspection services are necessary, especially in cases of violation of labour rights and employment rights of media employees.
- It is particularly important to strengthen support for the safety of media employees, through the preparation of information materials, case studies, training, equipment provision, and the creation and implementation of proper internal security policies, procedures, regulations, and protocols. Joint events, debates, training, and coordination activities with the institutional stakeholders from the Ministry of Interior, the prosecution, the Ministry of Justice and other responsible institutions and bodies, in cooperation with AJM and SSNM, can greatly contribute to this.
- It is necessary to strengthen the activities for support of journalists and media workers in reducing and overcoming psychological fatigue and stress through facilitated access to professional psychological help, counselling and opportunities for preventive training and education for these phenomena.
- It is necessary continuously to undertake educational and informational activities, as well as campaigns to encourage and motivate journalists and media workers to be union active and in solidarity.
- It is necessary to sensitize and educate about the importance and ways fully to incorporate the gender dimension in the work of the media, but also the production of media content.

THIS RESEARCH INCLUDED A SURVEY AND CONSULTATIVE MEETINGS WITH JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA WORKERS IN THE COUNTRY AND WAS REALIZED WITHIN THE PROJECT "SAFE MEDIA WORKERS FOR QUALITY JOURNALISM IN MACEDONIA", SUPPORTED BY THE BALKAN FUND FOR DEMOCRACY, THE GERMAN MARSHALL FUND OF THE UNITED STATES AND NORWAY MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

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A PROJECT OF THE GERMAN MARSHALL FUND



This publication has been produced with a financial support from the Balkan Trust for Democracy, a project of the German Marshall Fund of the United States and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent those of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Balkan Trust for Democracy, the German Marshall Fund of the United States, or its partners.