



South East European Network  
for Professionalization of Media

**Media Coverage of the Refugee Crisis in Macedonia**

**By Marina Tuneva**

## **Introduction**

The refugee crisis in Macedonia during 2015 and its aftermath in 2016 significantly affected the country. It was a turbulent time for Macedonian society as the country simultaneously plunged into a deep political crisis. The U.S. State Department stated: “The most significant human rights problems stemmed from pervasive corruption and from the government’s failure to respect fully the rule of law, including continuing efforts to restrict media freedom, interference on the judiciary and impeding the work of the Special Prosecutor’s Office charged with investigating and prosecuting crimes relating to and arising from illegally intercepted communications, as well as the selective administration of justice.”<sup>1</sup>

Macedonia has faced serious refugee problems on several occasions in the last 25 years, first after the unrest in Albania in 1991 and again in 1992 during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The conflict in Kosovo in the spring of 1999, as well as its own armed conflict in 2001, also affected Macedonia.

Unfortunately, the country proved to have weak capacity to deal with these situations, compounded by lack of coordination among the relevant institutions. Consequently, the response of the Macedonian authorities to the crisis seemed chaotic and disorganised. Deep political polarisation was reflected in the media and media integrity remains a serious challenge.

The 2015 refugee crisis posed an additional challenge to the media, and coverage of this issue revealed significant differences in approach. This report will examine the manner in which media responded to the challenge through a media content analysis and interviews with media experts.

## **Clientelistic chains and the Macedonian media**

In recent years, journalism in the Republic of Macedonia has suffered an unprecedented credibility crisis. Pressure coming from different centres of power has made it increasingly difficult for journalists to report objectively and accurately.

Many international reports have criticised the media situation in the country, pointing out the low level of media integrity and political influences over the media.<sup>2</sup> For example, the Reporters without Borders 2016 ranking<sup>3</sup> highlights a worrying situation by placing Macedonia in 118<sup>th</sup> place on the World Press Freedom Index. The prolonged political crisis, as stated in the IREX

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1 U.S. Department of State, Macedonia Human Rights Report, 2016 : 1  
<https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/265658.pdf>

2 See for example Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2016  
[https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FH\\_FITW\\_Report\\_2016.pdf](https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FH_FITW_Report_2016.pdf)

3 Reporters without Borders, 2016 World Press Freedom Index <https://rsf.org/en/ranking>

MSI 2016 Report<sup>4</sup>, reinforced the existing divisions in Macedonia's media sector, primarily along political lines, into pro-government media on one side, and critical/independent/pro-opposition media on the other. (Note that in this report, references to the government and the opposition, as well as the political affiliations of the Macedonian media, refer to the political situation that prevailed prior to the national elections in December 2016.)

A recent regional study<sup>5</sup> revealed the application of subtle and direct pressure by political and business actors on journalists. The study points out that editors have a peculiar role in the clientelist chain, and some are said to be in constant contact with politicians or the owner of the media outlet. Governmental financing of media through advertising campaigns and other means has been seen as another instrument of influence. The government is thought to have been one of the largest spenders in the media market in recent years, arguably increasing the financial dependence of the mainstream media and, subsequently, influencing their editorial policy: "Government advertising provides the largest single source of funding and has a major influence on the media market at both national and local level."<sup>6</sup> A large number of traditional media compete on a small and limited media market: "At the beginning of 2015, besides the public broadcaster, 136 broadcasters (63 TV stations and 73 radio stations) were active on the market."<sup>7</sup> The total advertising market did not exceed 40 million euros.<sup>8</sup>

The civil society sector plays a particularly important role in debate about media reforms. Several organisations have criticised the government's limited commitment to dialogue and offered recommendations for media reforms. Prior to the 2016 general elections, a "Blueprint for Urgent Democratic Reforms"<sup>9</sup> was issued in July 2016 by a group of civil society organisations, presenting the fruits of cooperation between NGOs, academia and independent experts. The media is identified as a sector in need of systemic reforms, for instance in the work of the regulatory body, the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services. Specifically, the document recommends changes in the decision-making structure and the manner of nomination and appointment of the agency's members, to avoid its politicisation. It recommends similar

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4 IREX, Media Sustainability Index (MSI) 2016  
<https://www.irex.org/resource/media-sustainability-index-msi>

5 Snezana Trpevska and Igor Micevski, "Macedonia," in *Media Integrity Matters*, ed. Brankica Petkovic (Ljubljana: Peace Institute, 2014)

6 European Commission, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Report, 2015: 22  
[https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key\\_documents/2015/20151110\\_report\\_the\\_former\\_yugoslav\\_republic\\_of\\_macedonia.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2015/20151110_report_the_former_yugoslav_republic_of_macedonia.pdf)

7 Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services of Macedonia, Media Market Assessment, 2015: 6  
[http://www.avmu.mk/images/Analiza\\_na\\_pazarot\\_na\\_audio\\_i\\_audiovizuelni\\_mediumski\\_uslugi\\_za\\_2015\\_godina.pdf](http://www.avmu.mk/images/Analiza_na_pazarot_na_audio_i_audiovizuelni_mediumski_uslugi_za_2015_godina.pdf)

8 Ibid., 5

9 Institute for Communication Studies, Blueprint for Urgent Democratic Reforms, 2016 : 6  
[http://iks.edu.mk/attachments/article/274/BP\\_ENG\\_FINAL\\_08.07.2016.pdf](http://iks.edu.mk/attachments/article/274/BP_ENG_FINAL_08.07.2016.pdf)

changes at the public broadcaster, as well as amendments to its funding system in order to secure long-term sustainability, editorial independence and institutional autonomy.

A recent positive development in the sector was the establishment of the Council of Media Ethics of Macedonia (CMEM) in 2013. The council has put a stronger emphasis on the importance of media self-regulation. Since it began working to develop a culture of professional ethics, public reactions to cases of unprofessional reporting have risen. In its two years of existence, the council has adjudicated about 200 press complaints from the public, journalists, state institutions, the civil society sector, etc. The council has also raised the alarm about instances of obstruction of journalists' work, hate speech in the media and discrimination on different grounds, as well as one-sided and imbalanced reporting.

### **The continuing political crisis**

Macedonia has been facing a deep political crisis, dating back to 2015, when government officials were charged with election fraud, manipulation of the media and corruption. The scandal over secret recordings of telephone calls revealed widespread fraud in the electoral system, government manipulation of the media and the judiciary and improper surveillance of allegedly about 20,000 people, including journalists, judges, foreign ambassadors and activists.

The scandal eventually led to massive street protests and calls for the resignation of the government and Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski. Gruevski fought back with accusations that opposition leader Zoran Zaev was attempting to blackmail him and the government and refused to step down.

This situation prompted mediation by the European Union and United States that resulted in the signing of the so-called Przino Agreement and the resignations of Gruevski and other high government officials, followed by the installation of an interim government and early parliamentary elections in December 2016.

The elections were perceived as an opportunity for the country's leaders to finally overcome the long-standing crisis, address systemic rule of law issues and put the country firmly back onto the EU path. However, the election results have strengthened, rather than mitigated, the political divisions. A new government, headed by Zaev, was not formed until June 2017, almost six months after the elections. Throughout the period of stalemate between Gruevski's and Zaev's parties, the international community repeatedly called on Macedonia's leaders to take concrete steps in support of democracy to resolve the situation. In the spring of 2015, a group of European Commission experts issued a far-reaching set of recommendations for overcoming the political crisis.<sup>10</sup> Among their conclusions were the need for systematic changes in the public broadcaster,

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10 European Commission, Recommendations of the Senior Experts' Group on systemic Rule of Law issues relating to the communications interception revealed in Spring 2015, 2015 [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/news\\_corner/news/news-files/20150619\\_recommendations\\_of\\_the\\_senior\\_experts\\_group.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/news_corner/news/news-files/20150619_recommendations_of_the_senior_experts_group.pdf)

transparency of media ownership and media financing and improvement of the labour rights of journalists. However, due to the ongoing political crisis in the country, none of these measures has been systematically addressed.

Apart from the internal political deadlock, the country also struggled to cope with being on the refugee route, with hundreds of thousands transiting through its territory. It found itself at the centre of the European refugee crisis, being caught between Greece, the main arrival point for refugees seeking shelter in Europe, and a large number of countries unwilling to help them.

### **Macedonia on the refugee route**

This research focuses on a specific critical situation: the local aspect of the European refugee crisis, more precisely, on coverage of the crisis by the Macedonian media.

Starting in June 2015, Macedonia became a key transit link for over 700,000 refugees and migrants who used the “Balkan route” in hopes of reaching countries in Western and Northern Europe. There were unfortunate incidents including the deaths of some 30 migrants and refugees while walking along railway tracks. In the same period, hundreds of refugees were illegally detained in the refugee centre in Skopje’s Gazi Baba area. Several months later the centre started being used as emergency accommodation for refugees the authorities wanted as witnesses in criminal proceedings against smugglers and perpetrators of hate crimes. In other words,, Macedonia detained witnesses and victims of crimes. In the meantime, amendments to the asylum legislation were adopted which allowed migrants and refugees to legally reside on the state territory for a period of 72 hours, after which they must either leave the country or seek asylum.

Faced with the large backup of people at its borders, Macedonia declared a state of emergency on 19 August 2015 for both the southern and northern border areas. As soon as the border was closed, a number of clashes occurred between refugees and migrants and Macedonian security forces.

Macedonian society responded to the situation in various ways. Government officials echoed concerns that the stream of migrants and refugees was a consequence of Europe’s fragmented response to the problem. The minister for foreign affairs, Nikola Poposki, reacted by saying it was illegitimate to attack Macedonia for doing what the European Union requested: *“We are the only border where refugees and migrants are leaving the European Union in order to enter a country that is not part of the European Union. Why would we fight battles for others, unless we wanted to convince them that we are part of the European family?”*<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, the government’s response to the crisis encountered many critics. Parties from the opposition bloc accused the government of missteps, perceiving its response to the crisis as an attempt to deflect criticism from Brussels of its internal political turmoil. To give one

instance, one outlet reported the reaction of Liberal Party vice-president Kire Buzliev, saying he “does not rule out the possibility that the government will exploit the refugee misery and the ongoing political crisis in the state to transform it into a security crisis. ... ‘The belated response of the government does not give reason to believe that it can cope with this challenge.’”<sup>12</sup>

The government’s decision to close the borders also encountered criticism from UNHCR: “‘These are refugees in search of protection and must not be stopped in doing so,’ said chief spokeswoman Melissa Fleming.”<sup>13</sup>

While the Macedonian administration attempted to keep out people trying to cross its border with Greece after travelling across the sea, ordinary citizens mobilised to help the refugees by donating food, clothes and medicines. In the absence of adequate aid or coordinated government support, donations from NGOs and individual volunteers proved life-saving for refugees waiting at the borders. “Fortunately, the human dimension prevailed, and this helped mobilise a large number of citizens and humanitarian organisations to help the refugees.”<sup>14</sup>

The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Macedonia closely monitored the situation on the ground and reacted to the inadequate government actions. In its analysis<sup>15</sup> the organisation highlights the need to boost the state’s capacities to efficiently deal with this kind of emergency. Assistance from the public and civil society was assessed both as an act of solidarity and a protest against government policy. Several pro-government online media presented a different kind of narrative to explain the support from the NGO sector. These reports claimed that anarchist groups and NGOs worked together as part of orchestrated, externally funded attempts to destabilise the country by exploiting the migrant crisis.

UNHCR reported that more than 1 million refugees and migrants crossed the Mediterranean in 2015, four times the number of arrivals in 2014.<sup>16</sup> Most of these persons crossed the sea from Turkey to Greece, and almost all of that group continued their journey along the Balkan route, passing through Macedonia en route to Western and Northern Europe. This trend continued early

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12 Faktor, 22 August 2015

13 Reuters, 21 August 2015

14 Interview with Benjamin Arifi, editor of the Albanian language channel TV Shenja, 5 February 2017

15 Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of Macedonia, *Podobruvanje na zastitata na pravata na begalcite i baratelite na azil vo Republika Makedonija*, 2016: 13  
[http://www.mhc.org.mk/system/uploads/redactor\\_assets/documents/1788/PODOBROVANJE\\_NA\\_PRAVATA\\_NA\\_BEGALCITE.pdf](http://www.mhc.org.mk/system/uploads/redactor_assets/documents/1788/PODOBROVANJE_NA_PRAVATA_NA_BEGALCITE.pdf)

16 UNHCR, *Europe’s Refugee Emergency Response Update #16, 2015 : 1*  
[https://www.ecoi.net/file\\_upload/1930\\_1455616590\\_56bda0bd4.pdf](https://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1930_1455616590_56bda0bd4.pdf)

in 2016 but arrivals fell sharply as the year progressed. Around 300 people a day arrived in Serbia in May and June 2016, mainly from Macedonia (80 per cent) and Bulgaria (20 per cent).<sup>17</sup>

In 2017 the refugee situation stabilised overall. The ongoing political crisis pushed stories about refugees well down the list of priorities for Macedonian media. Local NGOs continued to closely follow the situation. The Macedonian Young Lawyers Association monitored the state-operated refugee centres in several areas in the country, in cooperation with UNHCR.<sup>18</sup>

This was not the first refugee crisis in the history of Macedonia as an independent country, but was the biggest in terms of the number of people that transited its territory. During the 1999 Kosovo crisis, 360,000 people sought refugee status in Macedonia. While 92,000 were evacuated to third countries during the height of the conflict, almost all of those who remained in Macedonia during the war repatriated in the second half of 1999.<sup>19</sup>

The governmental body responsible for managing the refugee crisis is the Crisis Management Centre,<sup>20</sup> which operates in compliance with the government strategy for the integration of refugees and foreigners, issued in 2008 for the period 2008–2015.<sup>21</sup> This document emphasises the need for continuous dialogue among the police, mass media and educational institutions. However, no updated versions of similar documents or statistics about refugees are available on the web page of this institution.

The media adopted various approaches in the coverage of the refugee crisis. Media reports often contributed to informational chaos, sometimes even perceptions of danger and fear of “others”. There were also different patterns of reporting about the government’s response to the crisis. While some media strongly emphasised the governmental and political agenda by reporting government activities and relying on official statements, others tried to report the concerns of citizens and stressed civic engagement in a wave of solidarity with the refugees. In general, two dominant frameworks were evident in coverage of the refugee crisis: a humanitarian framework and a securitisation framework.

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17 UNHCR, Refugees / Migrants Emergency Response – Mediterranean Data Base, 2016 <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/country.php?id=83>

18 These organisations presented findings from their field work in monthly reports available on their web pages. See Macedonian Young Lawyers Association, Field Report January 2017, <http://myla.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Field-Report-January-2017-1.pdf>

19 United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, U.S. Committee for Refugees World Refugee Survey 2001 – Macedonia. Accessed 1 March 2017 <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3b31e166c.html>

20 Government of Republic of Macedonia Crisis Management Centre <http://www.cuk.gov.mk>

21 Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Strategy for integration of refugees and foreigners in the Republic of Macedonia 2008–2015 [http://mtsp.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/strategija\\_begalci.pdf](http://mtsp.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/strategija_begalci.pdf)

## How the media covered the crisis

This research focuses on analysis of patterns of media reporting about the refugee crisis, including the government's responses to the crisis, particularly by analysing media reporting in crucial moments during the crisis, coupled with insights from interviews with media experts and practitioners. No research on the media coverage of the crisis has been done so far and it is hoped that this small-scale study will inform and inspire similar further research.

## Methodology

This study uses qualitative media content analysis, mainly frame analysis, to examine how the media reported on the refugee crisis. The 18 analysed news items were selected as a stratified sample covering three crucial periods of the crisis: the period of amendments to the legislation on asylum (June 2015), the period of the state of emergency (August 2015), and the closure of the border (9 March 2016).

The analysis includes five media outlets with differing profiles, including traditional (TV and press) and online news sites, with high audience reach and different political affiliations:

- **Alsat M**, a national TV station that broadcasts throughout the territory of the country in both the Macedonian and Albanian languages. This station was considered to be often critical towards the policies of the ruling parties during the crisis. Its average weekly audience reach was 16.95 per cent in 2015.<sup>22</sup>
- **Nova TV**, an Internet based news site that practices investigative journalism often perceived as critical towards the former government.
- **Prizma**, a not-for-profit investigative reporting site of the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, often considered critical towards the former government.
- **Telegraf**, an online news site whose reporting was considered to be often supportive of government policies. Its owner, Media Print Macedonia, was purchased in 2011 by a holding company owned by the businessman Jordan "Orce" Kamcev, who allegedly had close ties to the government.<sup>23</sup>
- **Utrinski Vesnik**, daily, also owned by Media Print Macedonia. It was inclined to favour the opposition prior to being taken over by MPM, when its approach changed. Its daily circulation is 10,200 copies.

Interviews with five people knowledgeable about these issues were also conducted: two editors of national TV stations, a member of the Program Council of the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, the president of the Macedonian Young Lawyers Association (an organisation which provided legal assistance during the refugee crisis) and a representative of an

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22 Agency for Media and Audio Media Visual Services of Macedonia, Media Market Assessment, 2015: 71 [http://www.avmu.mk/images/Analiza\\_na\\_pazarot\\_na\\_audio\\_i\\_audiovizuelni\\_mediumski\\_uslugi\\_za\\_2015\\_godina.pdf](http://www.avmu.mk/images/Analiza_na_pazarot_na_audio_i_audiovizuelni_mediumski_uslugi_za_2015_godina.pdf)

23 IREX Media Sustainability Index, 2012:12

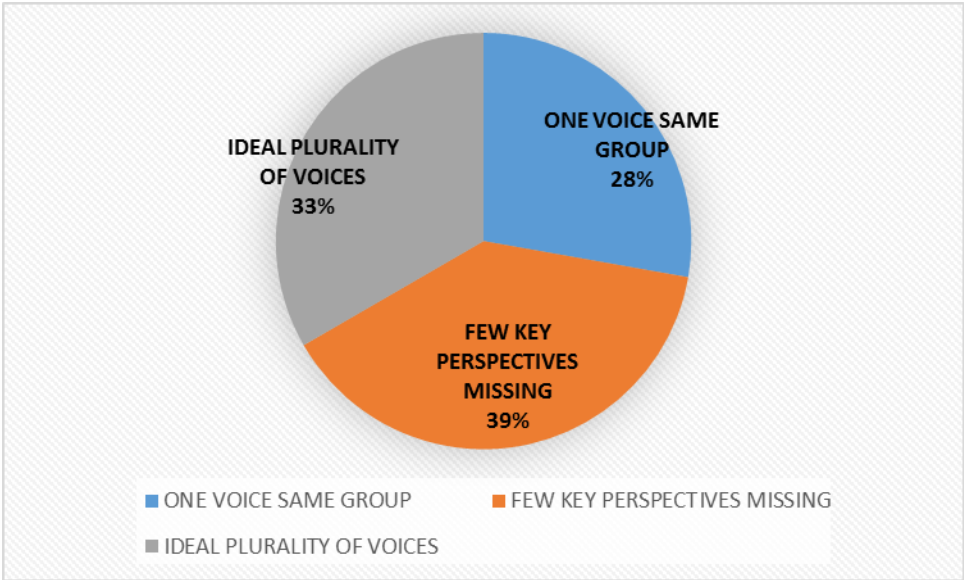


international organisation (a list of interviewees can be found at the end of this report). Secondary research into relevant documents and data was also conducted.

**Different voices, incomplete stories**

The level of pluralism and the patterns of sourcing showed variation between the different media in this study. In the selected sample of 18 articles, voices mostly came from a few relevant sectors and interest groups, but often some key perspectives were missing, mainly from the public, refugees, and international organisations, who remained largely voiceless. In the selected sample, Prizma and Nova TV proved to be the only outlets with close to ideal plurality of voices.

**Chart 1: Level of pluralism in news content**



Politicians, including ministers and members of Parliament, were consistently the most frequently cited sources in the news reports. The views of the opposition were very rarely presented in any of the media analysed.

The news providers varied significantly in their use of sources from the NGO sector and civil society groups. Such sources were the second most frequently cited in the sample, but they were highly overweighted in media that took a critical stance towards government policies and activities (Nova TV, Prizma). NGOs often scrutinised the role of the government and its institutions in the crisis. They stressed the need to aid and assist refugees and pointed out deficiencies in the measures taken to deal with refugee and migrant issues. A similar critique was

expressed by some of our interviewees: “The institutions generally did not respond to the challenge, with few exceptions, while the NGOs passed the test in this regard.”<sup>24</sup>

The outlets provided scant space for the actual words of refugees and migrants. However, the difficulties they faced were described quite often, including the conditions at border crossings and in reception centres. Refugees’ voices were most likely to be featured by Nova TV and *Utrinski Vesnik*, usually in the context of stories sympathetic to their plight.

*A 30-year-old Syrian says, “There isn’t enough food or water, you can see we are surrounded by mud, we cannot even wash. This is not a problem for us men, but for the women and children... We are stuck, Serbia will not let us go forward, Macedonia will not let us back in. We do not want to stay in Macedonia or go back to Greece or Turkey. We will wait here.”*<sup>25</sup>

Overall, since the refugees were rarely given voices in the analysed media content, the predominant frames for the perceived problems and representations of refugees were those of official sources.

The voice of the citizen was also very rarely given space in the reports analysed. “There was an obvious absence of personal stories,” one of the interviewees commented.<sup>26</sup>

Even though the UN human rights agency UNHCR was a constant presence providing assistance to refugees and migrants, it too was cited relatively infrequently in the analysed sample.

Since there was virtually no use of expert views to supply context for events related to the refugee crisis, the articles could not offer full interpretations or discussion of the situation.

### **Security threat or humanitarian crisis?**

Three frameworks dominated reporting on the refugee crisis.

The first frame emphasised the **perspective of the refugees**: their representation as disempowered victims, stories depicting refugees as asylum seekers in need of assistance. “Many news items, articles, stories and photographs depicted the difficult situation of the refugees, presenting them as victims who need assistance.”<sup>27</sup> In such framing, the main social problem is the difficult conditions the refugees faced both on the border crossing with Greece and in the Gazi Baba refugee centre. As shown in Chart 2 below, the majority of the analysed articles presented the refugee crisis in terms of humanitarian needs and presented refugees as victims, people in need

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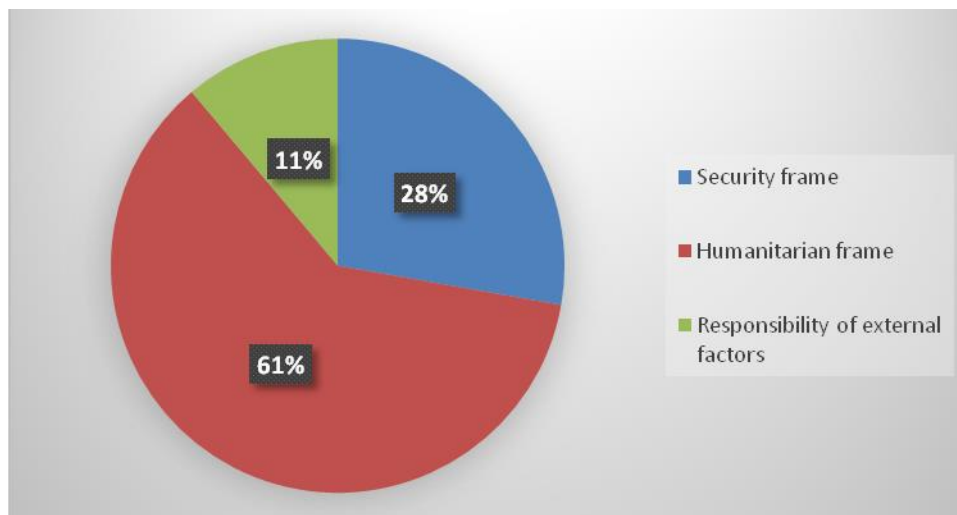
24 Interview with Zoran Fidanoski, member of the Program Council of the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, 11 February, 2017

25 *Utrinski Vesnik*, 9 March 2016

26 Interview with Mladen Cadikovski, editor in chief of TV 24, 7 February 2017

27 Interview with Benjamin Arifi

**Chart 2. Frame analysis of news reports**



The second frame presents the **arrival of refugees** in itself as a problem, owing both to potential security threats that might arise in consequence and to costs associated with refugee processing, detention and accommodation. Refugee arrival is often described using terms such as “influx”, “flow”, “waves”. This can be illustrated with the headline in *Telegraf*, “Migrants are coming: Will there be a repetition of the refugee crisis in Macedonia?”<sup>28</sup> or the story in *Utrinski Vesnik* headlined “Mosques also yielded when faced with migrant influx”.<sup>29</sup> Reporting along these lines suggested that the existing policy did not provide sufficient security at the country’s borders and that the state could not control the influx. On the other hand, coverage of the amendments to the asylum law was favourable to governmental policies. Another problem with the illegal immigration, as presented in some of the analysed articles, was connected with the existence of organised crime networks. Refugees and migrants began to appear in the media as a perceived national security problem. Such framing was problematic since, as one of the interviewees noted, “Instead of calming tensions and fears, the media used an approach which portrayed refugees as a problem for the local population.”<sup>30</sup> The approach of framing the arrival of refugees as a security and/or financial threat was less frequent (see Chart 2 above), appearing in five of the 18 analysed articles.

The third frame **placed responsibility for the situation on the “Other”**, in this case the southern neighbour Greece and the European Union. This was also linked to the narrative about the costs associated with refugee processing, detention and integration. The following table gives examples of the three approaches.

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28 *Telegraf*, 12 June 2015

29 *Utrinski Vesnik*, 17 June 2015

30 Interview with Mladen Cadikovski

**Table 1: The main frames for the refugee crisis**

	<b>Frame: Humanitarian crisis/hardships faced by refugees</b>
	Emphasis on the crisis as a humanitarian problem and the lack of services available to refugees
Examples	Detained migrants end up in shelters where conditions are unbearable and many are targeted by robbers (Nova TV, 15 June 2015)
	The government’s decision to declare a state of emergency is affecting refugees (Prizma, 20 August 2015)

	<b>Frame: Security treats with the arrival of refugees/migrants</b>
	Emphasis on possible threats to security if refugees/migrants are accepted
Examples	Migrants are coming: Will there be a repetition of the refugee crisis in Macedonia? (Telegraf, 12 June 2015)
	The changes (to the asylum law) will mitigate the problem of illegal migration (Telegraf, 17 June 2015)
	Mosques also yielded when faced with migrant influx ( <i>Utrinski Vesnik</i> , 17 June 2015)

	<b>Frame: Flawed policies of other countries and EU brought the crisis to Macedonia</b>
	Emphasis on blaming the situation mainly on Greece and the refugee policies of other EU countries
Examples	“The problem is, unfortunately, coming from our southern neighbour”, Minister Chavkov said (Alsat M, 18 June 2015)
	We won’t take the blame because someone failed to keep the crisis under control ( <i>Utrinski Vesnik</i> , 17 June 2015)

Media framing of the crisis and the media’s descriptions of refugees and migrants reflected the idea that migration is a major “problem”, mainly because of the sufferings of the migrants themselves, although a number of articles saw the situation mainly in terms of problems it brought the country, both financial problems and matters of national security. The latter frame included the tendency to put migrants and refugees in the same group and to present them as people who will become a burden on the state and ultimately threaten its security. This focus on possible threats to national security seems to have been overhyped, especially in view of the security and health threats the refugees were already exposed to. Notably, one of the most common mistakes in the media coverage was to conflate the terms “migrant” and “refugee”, with little effort paid to distinguishing between them. One interviewee put it this way: “We say ‘refugees’ when we mean people fleeing war or persecution across an international border. And

we say ‘migrants’ when we mean people moving for reasons not included in the legal definition of a refugee. We hope that others will give thought to doing the same.”<sup>31</sup>

We can also note the lack of information about various aspects of the crisis (political, geopolitical, financial and personal), although this would have helped public understanding of the background and implications of the crisis. For example, none of the articles treats the issue of the state’s capacity to efficiently deal with the refugee crisis in any depth. “The media only transmitted the statements of officials, without stimulating discussion around these topics,” another interviewee remarked.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, the media rarely brought the crisis down to the human level by telling the personal stories of the refugees. As one of the interviewees said, “Most of the media, particularly mainstream ones, did not respond to the challenge and their main task of professional reporting on the refugee crisis. No background, no distinctions made between the individual destinies of people. Often all refugees were portrayed in the same way.”<sup>33</sup> Another expert points out the importance of human stories when reporting on vulnerable groups: “When you produce a human interest story you are really calling for assistance to the refugees. You do not portray them as predators or someone who can endanger your job or something else.”<sup>34</sup>

A comparison shows some differences among the media analysed. While in the sample Nova TV and *Utrinski Vesnik* gave space to the problems of the refugees at the border and the reasons for their desperation, this “humanising” aspect was missing from the news site Telegraf.

Overall, in its main features, media coverage of the refugee crisis was similar to coverage of other important social topics, as one of the interviewees noted.<sup>35</sup> The reporting was in some aspects also one-sided, since the perceived problems were addressed according to one of the three major frames, and, as mentioned, the voices of the refugees and migrants themselves and of civil society were generally omitted.

### **The ambiguous role of the authorities**

The direct causes of the refugee crisis were not analysed in the selected sample, but the responsibility of Macedonia to deal with the crisis on its territory was sometimes mentioned or implied. Some reports credit the government with taking responsibility for addressing the problem (e.g., the amendments to the asylum law, restricting the flow of refugees into the country, suppressing smuggling networks, etc.). This was seen in the reporting of Telegraf and

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31 Adrian Edwards, UNHCR Viewpoint: ‘Refugee’ or ‘Migrant’ – Which is Right? UNHCR, 11 July 2016. Accessed 21 January 2017 <http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/7/55df0e556/unhcr-viewpoint-refugee-migrant-right.html>

32 Interview with Zoran Drangovski, president of the Macedonian Young Lawyers Association, 15 February 2017

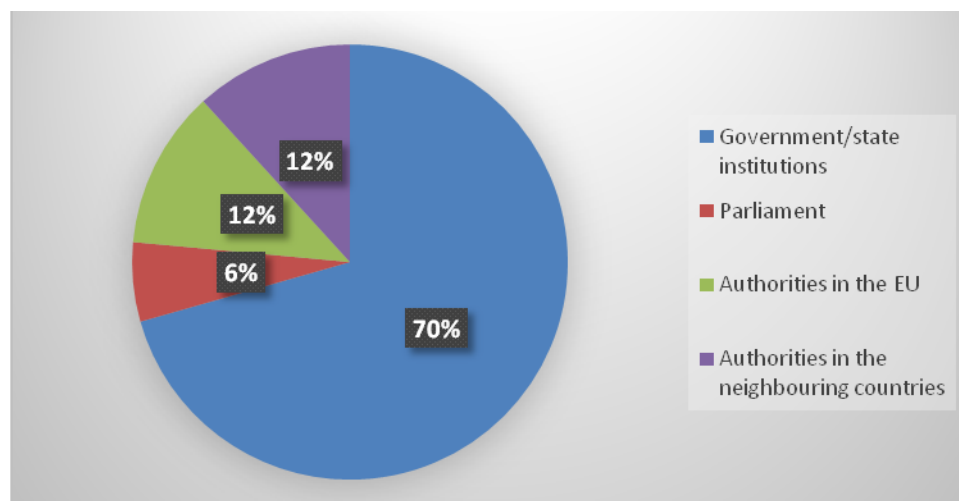
33 Interview with Zoran Fidanoski

34 Interview with a representative of an international organisation who wished to remain anonymous

35 Ibid.

Alsat M. Other media (Nova TV, Prizma) also portrayed the government as responsible for dealing with issues related to refugees and asylum seekers, but in the sense that the state was responsible for the conditions these vulnerable groups faced and that the state’s urgent intervention to ameliorate these conditions was needed (see Chart 3). For example, during the debate on amending the asylum law, there was criticism of the extremely difficult conditions in the reception centres. Some media covered this issue quite often, as well as suggesting that the government take a larger role. Nova TV regularly criticised the government. One of its headlines ran: “The world will remember what the Macedonian government did today”.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, Prizma also tried to capture the suffering at the border. It highlighted the problems as a consequence of the crisis situation and ran photographs of refugees stuck at the border, and declared, “The government’s decision to declare a state of emergency is affecting refugees.”<sup>37</sup>

**Chart 3. Who is responsible for the crisis?**



Some outlets in effect tried to defend the official response to the crisis, by denying the government’s responsibility. “The country is not part of the migrant problem; neither can it be the solution,” *Telegraf* wrote.<sup>38</sup> The pileup of migrants and refugees on the Greek border became a rationale for asking the EU to provide aid to Macedonia. Media framing of this issue mainly originated with government officials, the interviewees agreed. One said, “A special mantra was used by the government that the country was left on its own and got no assistance from anyone.”<sup>39</sup> “The messages of politicians and ministers were coordinated. They used the same

36 Nova TV, 2 August 2015

37 Prizma, 20 August 2015

38 *Telegraf*, 18 June 2015, also Alsat M, 18 June 2015

39 Interview with a representative of an international organisation

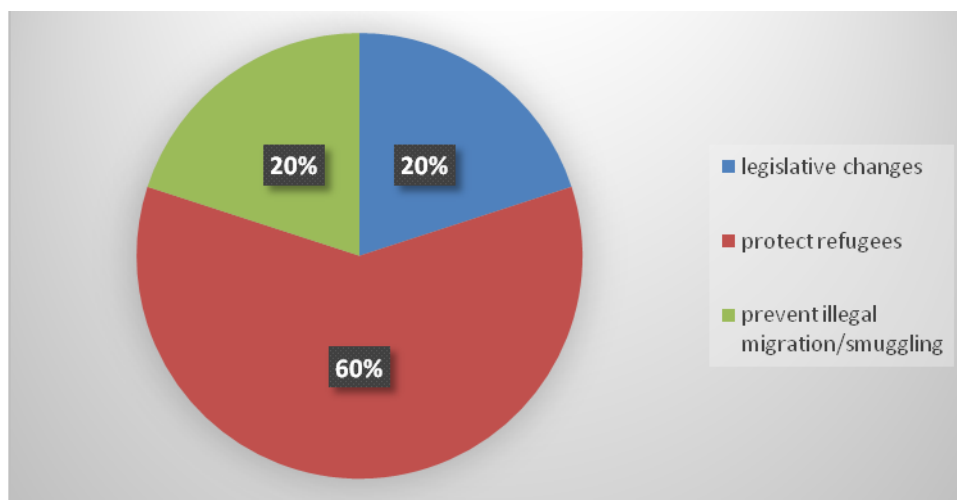
messages over and over again, that everything is coordinated regardless of the fact that the state hasn't received any assistance,"<sup>40</sup> another said. Claims that other countries bore responsibility to address the problem and demands for EU assistance were bolstered by reference to the costs of handling the influx of people.

Some media praised the government's efforts: "The country is making significant efforts to facilitate [refugees'] transit on Macedonian roads."<sup>41</sup>

In many stories, the framing of the issues implies support for certain resolutions to the crisis. Typically this took the form of general statements that the government and relevant authorities should provide support for the refugees. A critique of government actions is sometimes clearly implied: "The Macedonian authorities should protect migrants ... and not use force against them."<sup>42</sup>

Suggested steps the government and its institutions could take included imposing certain measures and undertaking activities to protect refugees, legislative changes to facilitate their transit through the country, tighter border controls and stronger measures against illegal migration and human trafficking.

**Chart 4. Framing potential solutions**



There were arguments in favour of targeting smugglers as well, but these were clearly separated from the treatment of refugees, for instance, "There is a need to combat illegal migration by identifying smugglers and illegal networks."<sup>43</sup>

40 Interview with Zoran Drangovski

41 Telegraf, 12 June 2015

42 Nova TV, 22 September 2015

43 *Utrinski Vesnik*, 20 June 2015

Some media advocated changes to the asylum legislation. “The Assembly should adopt the proposed amendments to the asylum law, which are needed to facilitate transit of refugees across the country,” Alsat M commented.<sup>44</sup>

The EU was also perceived as a key institution in any potential resolution, along with local authorities. Government officials argued that addressing the crisis demanded coordination and cooperation with the EU: “Our sources briefed us that migrants will stay on our territory until further instructions come from the European partners.”<sup>45</sup>

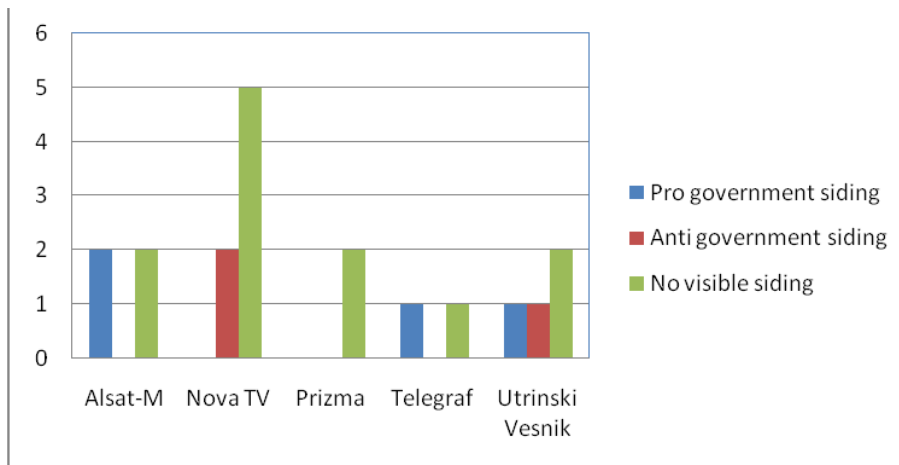
Media outlets showed notable differences in how they framed potential solutions. While Telegraf focused on addressing illegal migration, border controls and security measures, Nova TV emphasised the role and responsibilities of state actors in improving conditions for refugees, and Alsat M focused on the perceived need to amend the asylum law.

Official narratives were reflected in media coverage, more so naturally for those outlets considered to be supportive of the government, while the more critical media took a more sympathetic stance towards refugees.

### Polarised images in the media

There was no explicit siding with pro- or anti-government views of the crisis, but polarisation was implicit in the way the problems and solutions were framed and the actors identified as responsible for them.

**Chart 5. Media political affiliation**



44 Alsat M, 18 June 2015

45 Utrinski Vesnik, 9 March 2016



Our interviewees confirmed this polarisation. “This was particularly reflected after the incidents between refugees and the Macedonian police, when part of the media blamed the police for excessive use of force, while others defended the Interior Ministry and the government’s policies,” one said.<sup>46</sup> As mentioned, Nova TV and Prizma gave space to NGOs critical of the government’s handling of the crisis and the consequences. The content analysis indicated that Nova TV was particularly vocal in criticising the actions of the Macedonian police: “The authorities should urgently put a stop to police violence against migrants at the southern border with Greece.”<sup>47</sup>

The online Telegraf and the daily *Utrinski Vesnik* shared similar news agendas and arguments supportive of the government. They gave more space to measures announced by the government and their justification through the voices of sources. These media put a greater focus on threats to national security. Such favourable treatment is probably related to their close ownership ties with the government.

There was no visible siding in the analysed reports by the TV station Alsat M.

### **Perceptions of sensationalism**

There were no cases of sensational or discriminatory reporting observed in the sample. However, the experts concurred that sensationalism is widespread. One said, “In fact, the refugee crisis was not substantially treated; instead it was more sensationally covered, without sufficient empathy by journalists.”<sup>48</sup> This lack of empathy is perhaps revealed by the small number of human interest stories and scarcity of refugees themselves as sources of information.

Political and commercial influence on media also affected coverage of the refugee crisis. The profit-oriented competition for audience was also criticised by the media experts, one of whom commented, “They chose sensational headlines to generate more clicks and often these headlines did not correspond with the contents of the article.”<sup>49</sup>

Our expert interviewees evaluated the media coverage of the crisis overall as poor and lacking depth. “It was more like a rewriting of Ministry of Internal Affairs bulletins about the number of people who crossed the border, the quantity of bottles of water distributed, and this is what they did during the peak of the crisis.”<sup>50</sup>

They also point to the unclear use of terms: “They were called migrants, illegal migrants; and [media avoided using] the term ‘refugee’, which implies that they have rights. Migrants do not

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46 Interview with Benjamin Arifi

47 Nova TV, 22 August 2015

48 Ibid.

49 Interview with a representative of an international organisation

50 Ibid.

have the same rights as refugees. There was a misinterpretation of facts.”<sup>51</sup> The content analysis as well as some secondary sources<sup>52</sup> also confirm some confusion of these terms. Secondary sources also point to another problem: Media reports contributed to “inspiring xenophobia and enmity towards people crossing the Macedonian border (whether they are migrants or refugees)”.<sup>53</sup>

There were initiatives to improve media standards of accuracy during the refugee controversy, especially through the analyses of the Media Fact Checking Service, a part of the USAID Strengthening Independent Media in Macedonia program.

The experts did note that the reports avoided the worst excesses of non-objective reporting. “It is of exceptional importance that there were no cases of inducing xenophobia by the media, something that is very common in some EU countries.”<sup>54</sup>

### **The response by regulatory and self-regulatory bodies**

Media regulatory and self-regulatory bodies took some, if limited, action during the course of the crisis. There were efforts to bring instances of unprofessional reporting to the attention of CMEM, the self-regulatory media ethics council.<sup>55</sup> In particular, the leftist movement Solidarity submitted complaints against several media, including the sites Kurir<sup>56</sup>, Netpress<sup>57</sup> and Press24.mk<sup>58</sup>, as well as against the national broadcaster Sitel TV<sup>59</sup>, all considered pro-

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51 Ibid.

52 Mirjana Najchevska, Refugees, Migrants and Xenophobia in the Macedonian Media, Media Fact Checking Service, 5 September 2015. Accessed 30 January 2017 <http://factchecking.mk/refugees-migrants-and-xenophobia-in-the-macedonian-media/>

53 Ibid.

54 Interview with Zoran Drangovski

55 CMEM regularly receives complaints about breaches of the ethics code; for instance, Article 8 states, “the way the media report about accidents, natural disasters, wars, crises ... must be free from sensationalism”. Association of Journalists of Macedonia, Ethical Code of Journalists of Macedonia, 2001 <http://www.znm.org.mk/drupal-7.7/mk/node/440>

56 Nevladinite na SDSM i Soros baraat da se trgne ogradata (NGOs of SDSM and Soros demand removal of the border fence), Kurir, 17 March 2016. Accessed 2 February 2017 <http://kurir.mk/makedonija/vesti/istite-levichari-i-nvo-i-vo-grtsija-gi-sozdavaat-problemite-so-migrantite/>

57 Kurir: SDSM i Sorosovite NVO sakaat da ja preplavat Makedonija so begalci (SDSM and the Sorosite NGOs want to flood Macedonia with refugees), Netpress, 17 March 2016. Accessed 2 February 2017 <http://netpress.com.mk/kurir-sdsm-sorosovite-nvo-sakaat-da-ja-preplavat-makedonija-begalci/>

58 SDSM i Sorosovite NVO sakaat da ja preplavat Makedonija so begalci, Press 24, 17 March 2016. Accessed 2 February 2017 <http://vesti.mk/read/news/8404403/3054633/sdsm-i-sorosovite-nvo-sakaat-da-ja-preplavat-makedonija-so-begalci>

government media. The complaints cite news items in which NGOs are blamed for allegedly pressuring the authorities to remove the fence at the southern border and allow refugees to enter the country. All the articles are written in the same fashion and even share similar headlines stating that organisations linked to Zaev's opposition Social Democratic Union and the philanthropist George Soros were making these demands. These media mainly favoured stronger security measures to safeguard Macedonia's sovereignty and the context of the stories suggests the named NGOs are a security threat. CMEM found breaches of professional standards in several instances<sup>60</sup>, specifically, breaches of Article 1 of the Ethics Code of Macedonian Journalists, which provides that journalists shall publish correct, verified information and will not conceal essential information or forge documents, and Article 13, according to which journalists should distinguish between facts and opinions, news and comment. Although these media have resisted publishing the CMEM's decision, the NGOs that originally filed the complaints had a chance to air them at several public debates. In January 2016, the regulatory body with competencies in the broadcasting sector, the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, also urged the media to observe professional standards when reporting about the refugee crisis, but did not process any complaints of breaches of professional standards during the crisis.

In addition to CMEM, the Council of Honour of the Association of Journalists of Macedonia also processes press complaints by journalists and the general public. Occasionally, particularly in cases when citizens do not submit complaints, these organisations will publicly react to severe breaches of professional standards. Complaints by the public are increasing<sup>61</sup>, but these two bodies have limited capacities for monitoring the media on a daily basis, and the self-regulation system is not accepted by the entire media community.

The Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services regulates the work of the broadcasting and print media in accordance with the law. In 2016, the regulator made efforts to complement the self-regulatory bodies and demonstrated a proactive approach toward promoting professional standards. In one case, it ruled that the mainstream broadcaster Sitel TV had spread hate speech and encouraged discrimination against Albanians in Macedonia in several editions of its current affairs program in December 2016. However, some media organisations have charged that decisions by the agency's managing board were in some cases politically motivated.

## **Factors influencing media coverage of the crisis**

Journalism in Macedonia has been in deep crisis for years: “[T]his was also reflected in the way the refugee crisis was covered in the media”<sup>62</sup>, one interviewee said. Strong political influence is

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59 Slavica Arsova, *Nevladini organizacii baraat od drzavata da ja otstrani ogradata i da gi primi begalcite* (NGOs ask the state to remove the fence and accept refugees), 17 March 2016. Accessed 2 February 2017 <http://sitel.com.mk/nevladini-organizacii-baraat-od-drzhavata-da-ja-otstrani-ogradata-i-da-gi-primi-begalcite>

60 Council of Media Ethics, Decisions and Opinions database <http://semm.mk/komisija-za-zalbi-odluki-i-mislenja>

61 CMEM has received about 200 complaints since its establishment

62 Interview with Mladen Cadikovski

one of the main problems and main causes of media polarisation between outlets supportive of the government and those critical of it. In the words of another interviewee, “This influence happens every day, not just in the coverage of the refugee crisis, but in reporting on various issues.”<sup>63</sup>

Another expert mentioned that the government’s lack of openness and clarity regarding its approach to the refugee crisis created serious difficulties for the media, saying, “We could not know whether the government had a systemic approach to the crisis or a palliative one.”<sup>64</sup>

Lack of human resources in newsrooms is perceived as another major factor. “Unfortunately, most of the mainstream media could not afford to hire several correspondents or send a team of journalists from Skopje, because many newsrooms work with just a few people.”<sup>65</sup> Journalists’ lack of experience covering major, fast-developing stories is seen as an additional problem, resulting for example in the limited variety of sources cited. “While hundreds of journalists from all over Europe spent several weeks in Gevgelija (on the Macedonian-Greek border), a large number of our national media used agency news or did not deploy a team of reporters there.”<sup>66</sup> Journalists often lack training in diversity and inclusiveness and this, compounded by lack of specialised knowledge of certain topics, makes it difficult to delve deeply into complex issues. The media’s greater interest in other issues during the crisis was another factor militating against in-depth coverage. Overall the media displayed relatively little interest in the events connected to the crisis and “reduced them to a ‘situation’ at the southern border”<sup>67</sup>. The reporting was thus somewhat episodic, intensified during events like border closures, clashes between the police and the refugees and incidents at detention centres, when security concerns were higher. Thus, the longer term implications of the crisis were neglected.

The lack of internal systems at media outlets for processing complaints about their reporting, and resistance among pro-government media to take part in the self-regulation system, speak to a deficit of accountability by the media in general.

Macedonian mainstream media are increasingly accountable to different centres of power rather than their audiences. Clientelistic relationships between political parties and media owners in a small media market deeply affect the media. The intercepted communications touched on above revealed close links between the government and owners of pro-government media, which as it happened were also the biggest recipients of government advertising funds. The recordings captured high-ranking government officials giving instructions to pro-government journalists and media owners on the content of news stories, government officials granting exclusive footage to certain media, politicians choosing journalists and party members for jobs at the public broadcaster, and corrupt interactions between government officials and media owners.

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63 Interview with Benjamin Arifi

64 Interview with Mladen Cadikovski

65 Ibid.

66 Interview with Benjamin Arifi

67 Interview with Mladen Cadikovski

Capping off a dismal situation, Macedonian media and journalists are faced with a difficult working environment characterised by a lack of social and economic stability. This also results in pressure being exerted on the media and journalists by editors, media owners and other power brokers, which in turn fuels censorship and self-censorship.<sup>68</sup> Under these conditions, reporting in the public interest is discouraged.

## Conclusions

The media can fill an important role in publicizing the human-rights concerns of vulnerable groups, including refugees and migrants. During the Macedonian refugee crisis, the media had the capacity to publish and broadcast relevant, topical news while also reflecting on the actions of the government in the course of the crisis. This small study indicates that they fulfilled that role poorly. Media covered and interpreted the events in ways that revealed deep political divides within their ranks. Reports by outlets on one side of the divide could be seen as legitimising government policies and helping spread the message that refugees did not belong in the country.

This reporting was set in a frame that viewed the state as responsible for all necessary measures during the crisis, ensuring national security and preventing illegal migration, regardless of the absence of EU support. Such a pattern of reporting implicitly embraces the “us/them” divide which Van Dijk<sup>69</sup> argues is common in discourses of migration and social problems, where not only the refugees, but also the EU and Greece were portrayed as the “other” to be blamed for “our” problems. This subset of the sample typically presented the main issue as one of national security. On the other side, several media outlets voiced criticism of the government’s policies towards refugees, while presenting the main problem in the frame of humanitarian crisis and the suffering of the refugees. Human-interest stories in these outlets in effect called for vulnerable groups to be helped. These media to some extent presented the views of civil society, unlike the pro-government media which portrayed NGOs mostly as groups that opposed the government’s efforts to deal with the crisis and contributed to the endangerment of national security.

Media in both groups, however, often ran news articles that lacked information needed for a good understanding of the context. Overall, very little attention was given to the background of stories or to push factors that were driving the population flows. A paucity of information from state bodies, lack of human resources, and journalists’ lack of specialised knowledge and experience have been mentioned as some underlying causes of these defects. On a more general level, the capacity of the Macedonian media to provide quality journalism in general is hampered by heavy influence from powerful political and economic actors, including the government. These factors, together with the commercialisation of the media, combine to worsen the overall very sick state of Macedonian journalism.

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68 Centre for Independent Journalism and Macedonian Institute for Media, Employment and Working Conditions for The Journalists in the Republic of Macedonia, 2015: 13 [http://www.cji.ro/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Macedonia\\_Final.pdf](http://www.cji.ro/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Macedonia_Final.pdf)

69 Teun A. Van Dijk, *Communicating Racism: Ethnic Prejudice in Thought and Talk*, 1987: 299

## **Recommendations**

### **For policy-makers**

Systemic changes in the media sector are needed in order to assure an environment in which media can improve reporting on a variety of issues. Policy-makers such as the regulatory Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, with support from the professional media and journalism organisations, should be tasked to develop mechanisms to ensure transparency of media ownership. There is also a need for wide debate about models and criteria of state funding for the media, as well as changing the way editors are appointed to minimise political influence.

### **For the professional community, journalist associations and trade unions**

Media organisations and professional associations can do research and publicise findings relating to ethical standards and the media's public service role, specifically in the context of reporting on marginalised groups including refugees.

These groups should also contribute to developing better university and informal educational materials with the aim of improving reporting on similar issues. They can also distribute learning materials, such as guides for reporting on diversity, refugees and migrants.

On a broader level, advocacy of better working conditions will also enable positive changes in the profession.

Media and journalists' unions should strive to improve relations with the police and state authorities so as to ensure safe working conditions for journalists. They should also advocate for media policy reforms, as mentioned above.

### **For self-regulatory bodies**

Self-regulation should have an important role in the process of aiding the media to become more professional. The coverage of the refugee crisis demonstrated the urgent need for ethical journalism. Respect for diversity and avoiding language that promotes intolerance is of special importance when reporting on marginalised groups, but the general rules of fairness and balance should of course be applied consistently as well. Establishing better relations with media that still do not fully accept the self-regulatory system, as well as public discussion of instances when media refuse to act in accordance with decisions of self-regulatory bodies, will contribute to greater awareness and acceptance within the professional community and encourage more public involvement in the self-regulatory system. One of the interviewees suggests that a visibly higher level of media accountability will bring more public support in case the freedom of media is

under attack: “If they observe these duties a whole journalistic community will stand behind them and protect them.”<sup>70</sup>

### **For media managers**

The more visibility an issue such as asylum or immigration has, the more significant the effects of the media coverage are likely to be.<sup>71</sup> Informed coverage of human-rights issues should be central for media that aim to act in the public interest. In this regard, journalists need to be actively engaged and encouraged by editors and management to increase the visibility of refugees and migrants, thus contributing to a more positive narrative about these groups. Editors and media management should encourage journalists to question the stereotypical frameworks so often adopted in news reports, such as through training programs (see below).

Since Macedonian newsrooms lack capacities to cope with such unprecedented situations as the refugee crisis, managers should allocate more resources toward better and more in-depth reporting on similar issues.

News organisations can establish transparent and accessible internal systems for dealing with public complaints about their reporting.<sup>72</sup> Support for media self-regulation and observance of professional reporting standards are of particular importance in this regard.

### **For journalists**

Journalists can be encouraged to become more sensitive in covering marginalised groups. A number of diversity reporting guides are available.<sup>73</sup>

Cooperation with professional organisations that monitor asylum and immigration issues can help journalists understand the wider context of these phenomena. NGO activists are good sources of information.

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70 Interview with a representative of an international organisation

71 Ruud Koopmans, “Explaining the rise of racist and extreme right violence in Western Europe: Grievances or opportunities?”, 1996. Accessed 28 February 2017 <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1475-6765.1996.tb00674.x/abstract>

72 Aiden White, ed. *Moving Stories – International Review of How Media Cover Migration*, 2015: 8

73 For instance, Marina Tuneva, *Diversity Reporting Handbook*, 2001. Accessed 11 February 2017 [http://www.cestim.it/argomenti/08media/2011-Diversity-Reporting-Handbook\\_EN.pdf](http://www.cestim.it/argomenti/08media/2011-Diversity-Reporting-Handbook_EN.pdf)

## **For media educators**

Journalists are in need of tailor-made training to better enable them to cover complex situations such as the refugee crisis and become familiar with diversity reporting. Training can be provided by universities, professional media organisations and civil society organisations. Such training should involve analysis of previous reporting on refugees and migrants, and recognising and questioning stereotypical frames. Examples of good practice in coverage of migration issues from both the national and international media should be part of the curriculum. Such programs would sensitise and enable journalists to view the production of meaning by the media with a critical eye.

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## **Annex I – List of interviewees**

Benjamin Arifi, editor, TV Shenja

Mladen Cadikovski, editor in chief, 24 TV

Zoran Drangovski, president of the Macedonian Young Lawyers Association

Zoran Fidanoski, member of the Program Council of the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services

Representative of an international organisation who wished to remain anonymous

## **Annex II - List of analysed articles**

<b>Title of article</b>	<b>Media outlet</b>	<b>Date</b>
MPs will discuss amendments to the law on asylum	Alsat M	18 June 2015
Assembly adopts amendments to the law on asylum	Alsat M	18 June 2015
Government will discuss amendments to the law on asylum	Nova TV	15 June 2015
MPs consider asylum law amendments	Nova TV	18 June 2015
Asylum law amendments approved by government, sent to Parliament	Nova TV	16 June 2015
Assembly session begins: Asylum law on the agenda	Nova TV	18 June 2015
Assembly adopts changes to asylum law	Nova TV	18 June 2015
Law on asylum: Changes will bring acceptance of migrants on trains	Telegraf	17 June 2015

Migrants are coming: Will there be a repetition of the refugee crisis in Macedonia?	Telegraf	12 June 2015
MoI action: Smugglers detained, migrants safe	<i>Utrinski Vesnik</i>	20 June 2015
Trains open their doors to migrants	<i>Utrinski Vesnik</i>	17 June 2015
Mosques also yielded when faced with migrant influx	<i>Utrinski Vesnik</i>	17 June 2015
Ministry of Interior: Limited number of illegal migrants belonging to vulnerable groups are allowed to enter	Alsat M	21 August 2015
Human Rights Watch: Macedonian authorities should urgently stop the violence	Nova TV	22 August 2015
The world will remember what the Macedonian government did today	Nova TV	22 August 2015
Photo essay: About 1,500 migrants stuck on Greece-Macedonia border	Prizma	20 August 2015
Photo: Macedonia raises the drawbridge, no entry for illegal migrants	Alsat M	9 March 2016
Balkan route is closed, no admission of refugees in Gevgelija starting from midnight	Nova TV	9 March 2016
1,500 migrants stuck in Macedonia	<i>Utrinski Vesnik</i>	9 March 2016