

Every second journalist bewails pressure from politics and economy

Study on Bulgarian media commissioned by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung shows mutual dependences of media actors

52 percent of Bulgarian journalists think that the people in power influence their media; only 40 percent deny this. A new study of the "Reporter" foundation and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung suggests that political pressure has increased. Moreover, every third journalist laments pressure from advertising clients. Every fourth reporter or editor states that some of his texts have been prevented from publishing. Media owners mostly find themselves under pressure from advertising clients. The authors of the study give recommendations for better framework conditions in the media sector. Especially in print media they see a call for action.

Politicians and advertising clients as well as media owners interfere into the work of Bulgarian journalists on a regular basis. This shows a new study of two Bulgarian media experts commissioned by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS). Krum Blagov from "Stiftung Reporter" and Dr. Orlin Spassov from Sofia University interviewed one hundred journalists regarding this topic. Moreover, they conducted interviews with fifteen relevant media owners and media managers. "Many Bulgarian journalists do not consider their work independent", Blagov and Spassov outlined at a press conference in Sofia. "The reporting is not enough protected from external influences".

Every third journalist feels an increasing pressure from politics, only every sixth an improvement over the last years. While journalists lament influence of politicians more strongly, media owners feel under pressure especially by advertising clients. All in all, around 30 percent of reporters and editors state, that in their media it is only possible to report with a certain tendency about specific topics, persons or companies. This more or less matches the view of the owners. "Media strongly get themselves into an unofficial censorship" said Christian Spahr, head of the Media Program South East Europe of KAS. "Reasons are the difficult economic situation in the sector, but also a missing consensus on the tasks of media in a democracy".

The authors of the study make nine recommendations for better framework conditions in the media sector. Among others, the equal access of all media to information and sales should be regulated in a better way. The state as an advertising client should be more transparent, as well as the economical situation of media, especially print media. There should be a requirement to label advertising articles in print media. Moreover, the experts ask for a political debate about the restriction of ownership concentration in individual media sectors.