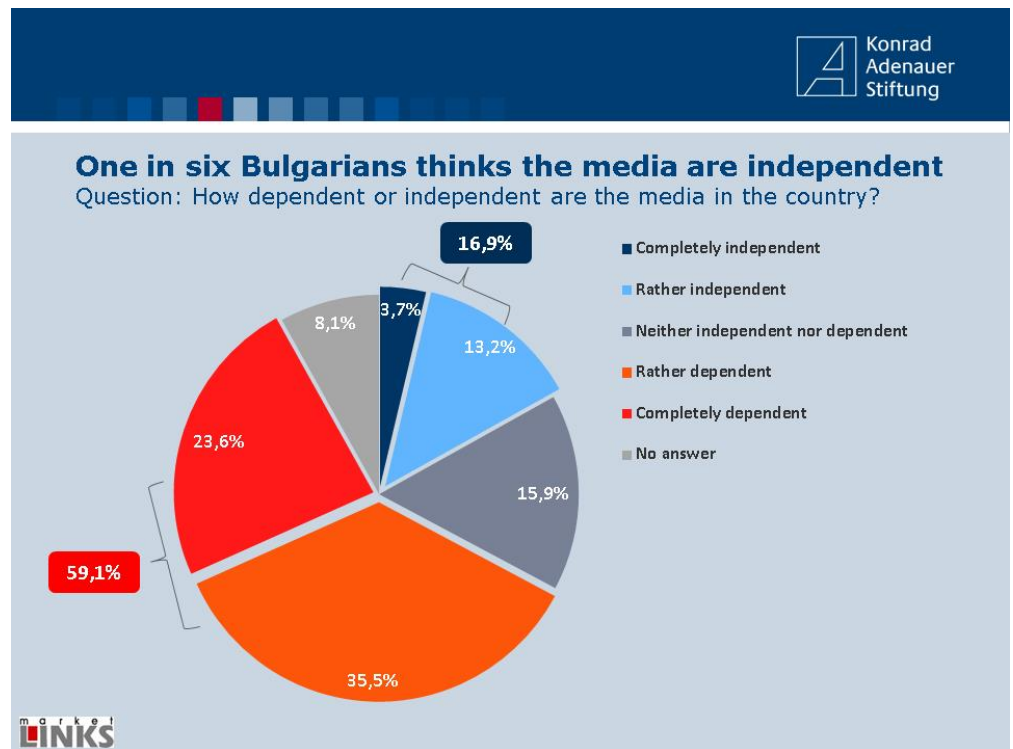


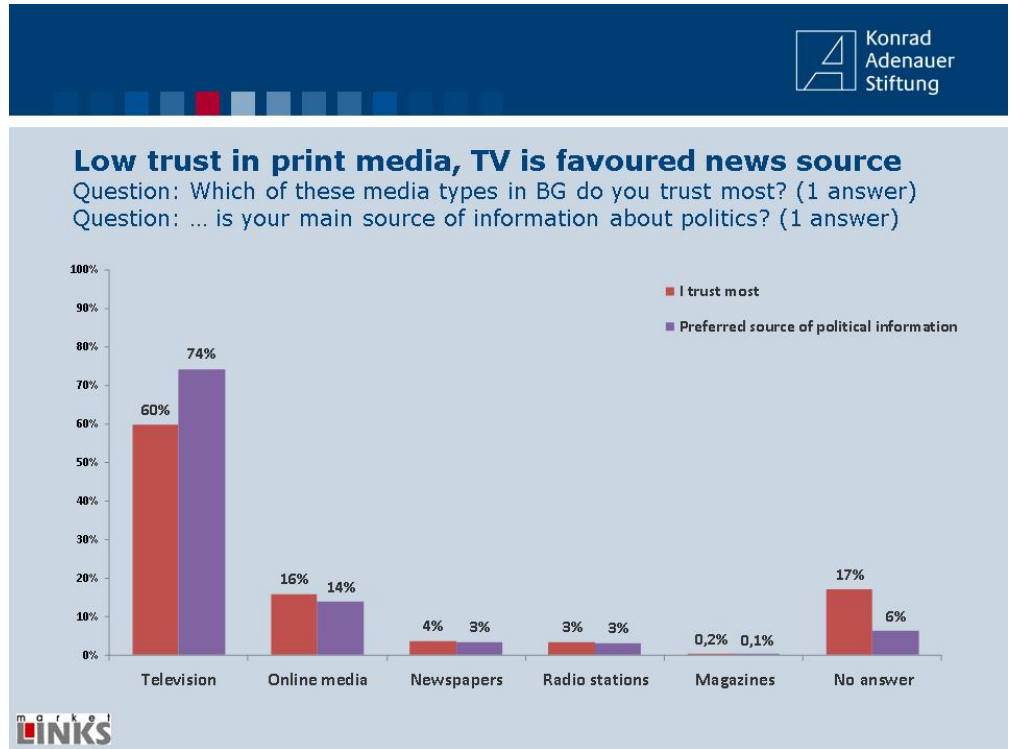
Bulgarians feel badly informed by media and politicians

REPRESENTATIVE SURVEY ON BEHALF OF THE KONRAD ADENAUER STIFTUNG SHOWS CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE IN MEDIA AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

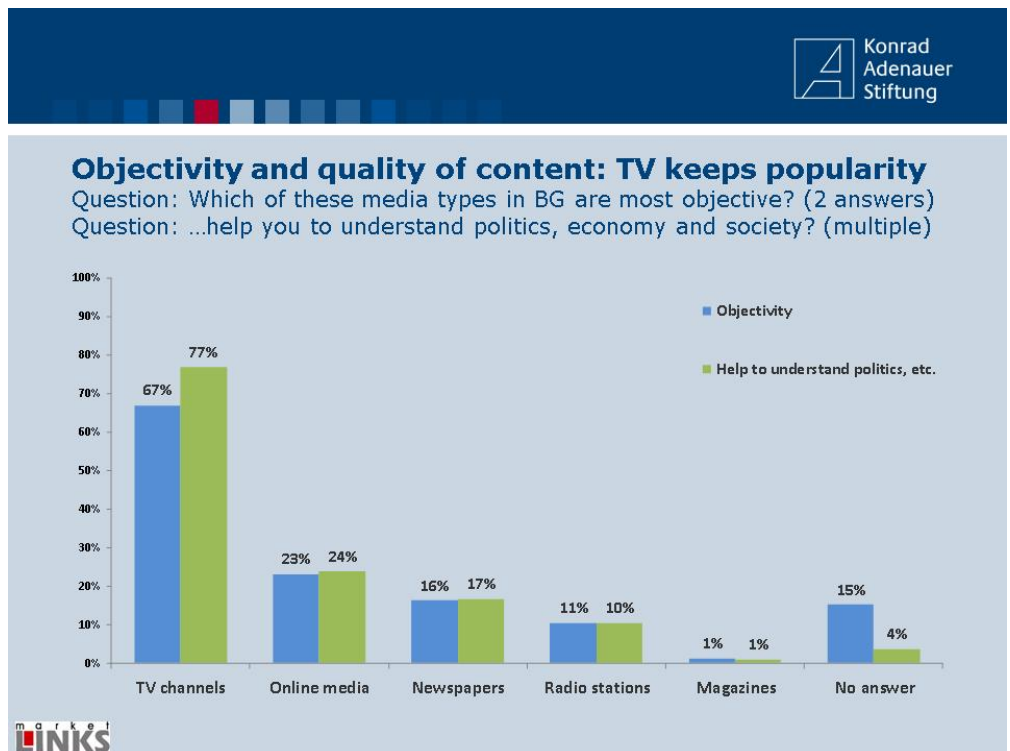
59 percent of the population of Bulgaria do not consider the media to be independent. Many are undecided and only 17 percent believe reporting is free. The crisis of confidence in the media is continuing, according to a study on behalf of the KAS Media Program South East Europe. Citizens also feel they are inadequately informed by the politicians. 63 percent take a negative view of politicians' public relations. A representative sample of 1,100 residents aged 18 and over was interviewed.



For years the Bulgarian media have had a bad reputation. Criticism is expressed of monopolisation in the newspaper sector, absent or inefficient legal operating conditions and not very effective self-regulation of the print media. For the second time in succession, the KAS Media Program South East Europe has commissioned a representative survey of opinion to measure the extent of the crisis of confidence. The result: only one in six of the citizens believes in the independence of the media (data gathered, December 2014). This hardly differs from the previous year. In December 2013, 14 percent of people interviewed thought the media were free. The differences are not statistically significant.

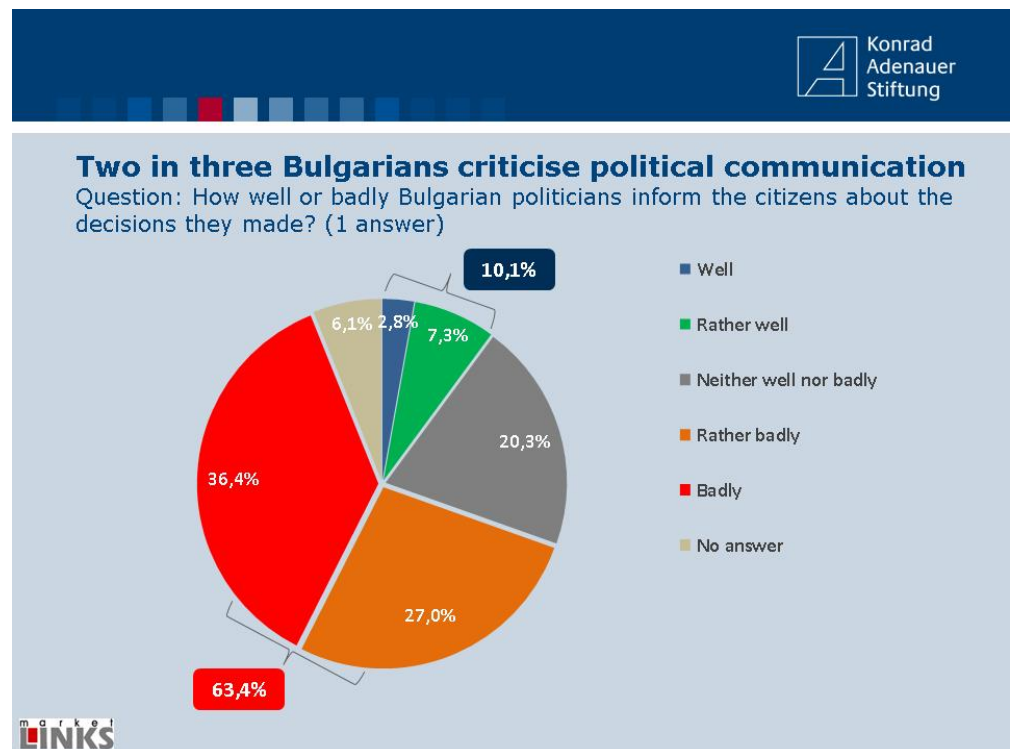


Despite the progress made in extension of the Internet, television is still the number one medium for broad sections of the population. For three quarters (74 percent) of Bulgarians it is the preferred source of informaton about politics. Here, only 14 percent mention the Web and 3 percent, the newspapers. Asked which type of media source they “trust most”, more people similarly name television (60 percent) than other media (Internet 14, newspapers and radio, 3 percent). Relatively, the younger generation of those aged up to 34 has the greatest trust in online media (at 33 percent); as expected, the elderly have the least trust in the Internet.



The journalistic quality of the television is also rated much higher than for online and print media. Thus, 77 percent say that television helps them to understand politics and the economy. Only 17 percent say this about newspapers, although as a rule print and online media based on text are better able to present complex themes. Television is also considered more objective. The newspapers have lost credibility through campaigning journalism. In addition, many people trust pictures more than words. The role of newspapers in the media mix is not as influential as in Germany, and high TV consumption leads to a more positive view of television.

Compared with the previous year, Bulgarian online media have lost popularity – in regard to trust and objectivity as well as political relevance, by about six percent in each case. This is to be interpreted by the fact that journalistic quality assurance on the Net is regarded as problematic. Admittedly, some portals are regarded as important additional sources of information and some news pages can, in fact, act more independently than conventional media. But thorough verification of information is far from standard practice: lax regard for intellectual property rights and a correspondingly free manner of quotation are widespread on the Web.



To allow citizens to form opinions and enable them to join in the political process professional journalism is not the only important requirement. Communication from politicians and state institutions is of major importance where the transparency of political processes is concerned. Politicians' engagement with the public is, however, regarded as critically by Bulgarians as the work of the media. Almost two thirds rate PR by politicians as "badly" or "rather badly" done. 20 percent say it is done neither well nor badly, and only 10 percent of citizens award positive marks.

This is consistent with a critical picture of political communication in South East Europe as a whole. The profession of political press secretary does not yet receive sufficient recognition. Not every head of government in the region has an official spokesperson to appear on their behalf. The same is true of ministries and political parties. Those responsible for public relations are frequently not sufficiently involved in the programmatic and strategic work of

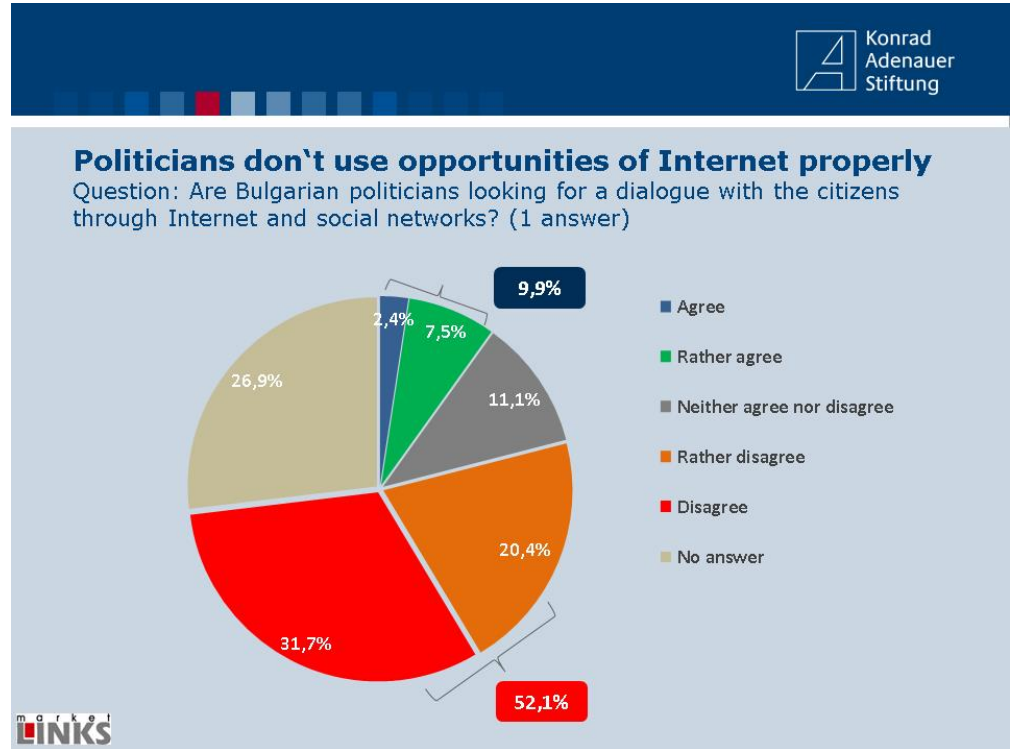
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government authorities and parties. Communication is not yet accepted as an across-the-board responsibility. A change in political culture is still in progress in government bodies. Today, active communication and transparency is more and more in demand. Propaganda and prevention of bad news are no longer sufficient. The KAS Media Programme South East Europe promotes modern political communication, in among other ways, through the regional professional association SEECOM (www.seecom.info) and with the help of workshops for communications experts of political parties.



Bulgaria's political class evidently also has room for improvement in online dialogue with its citizens. 52 percent of adult residents, at least, are of the opinion that politicians are making inadequate use of the digital interface with the population. On this question too, only ten percent of those interviewed give them good marks. The digital dialogue with citizens will be an important priority this year for the work of the KAS Media Programme South East Europe. An international conference on this topic is planned in the spring in Sofia, at which experts from a number of countries are presenting best practices.



Imprint

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