

Trust in bulgarian media reaches all-time low

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) and "Alpha Research" present a survey on media freedom and political communication in Bulgaria.

Only every tenth Bulgarian (10 percent) believes in the independence of media in the country. The communication of politicians is also perceived in a negative way – only 11 percent feel well informed. These are the main results of a national representative survey (1.024 interviewees).

The media situation in Bulgaria is seen more and more critically – both by international organisation and its citizens. "Less and less Bulgarians believe in real media freedom," commented Christian Spahr, Head of the KAS Media Program South East Europe, the new survey results. 10 percent believe in the independence of media, 67 percent deny it, and 24 percent are not sure. "The crisis of confidence in media has grown," said Spahr. "The survey shows only minimal differences between different age groups, people from urban and rural areas or with different educational backgrounds," explains Boriana Dimitrova, Managing Partner at Alpha Research.

Bulgaria is currently listed on rank 109 out of 180 countries in the international ranking on press freedom by Reporters without Borders. "There is no systematic oppression of journalists in Bulgaria, but many factors are weakening the freedom of the media: monopolies of oligarchs, interdependency between media and politics, the dramatic economic crisis of media outlets as well as legal deficits and a weak self-regulation," says KAS expert Christian Spahr. In an earlier study of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung every third journalist said they cannot report about certain persons, companies or topics.

People not only feel insufficiently informed by the media, but also by politicians. 64 percent believe that communication of politicians is either poor or very poor, only 11 percent are satisfied. Further 25 percent can't give a definitive assessment. "In times of European crises and the need of substantial reforms, politicians should invest more than ever in professional communication," concludes Spahr. "Expert forums like the government communication association SEECOM and conferences of KAS support PR specialists on the way towards a more transparent citizen dialogue." The KAS Media Program South East Europe recently published an [expert book](#) on political communication which in particular describes the challenges for the new EU Member States and candidate countries.

The quality of debates in the media was also a topic of the survey: A majority of Bulgarians notices discrimination and defamation in the public discourse, which are reflected in the media coverage. For example, 68 percent of Bulgarian citizens notice discrimination and insults against politicians.



According to Alpha Research, the reason is not only to be found in the quality of reporting, but especially in the interaction of politicians amongst each other: "Because of insults, aggression and hate speech as well as a humiliating tone against political opponents in television appearances and media reporting of parliamentary debates, politicians become the authors and at the same time the victims of discrimination", explains Boriana Dimitrova.

55 percent of Bulgarians recognise discrimination and defamation against national and ethnic minorities in political debates covered by the media, 49 percent think that religious minorities are discriminated, and 44 percent see cases of discrimination against non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

The survey was presented at the South East Europe Media Forum (SEEMF) on 27th November 2017 in Sofia. Around 300 participants were present at the conference. SEEMF is the biggest media conference in South East Europe and takes place every year in a different country of the region. The conference is organised by the KAS Media Program South East Europe, the South East European Media Organisation (SEEMO) and the Central European Initiative (CEI).

For more information visit: www.kas.de/medien-europa/en