

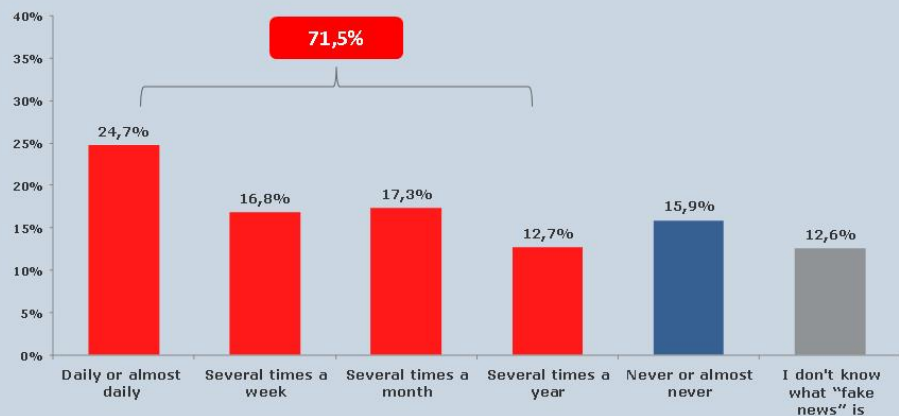
Every fourth Bulgarian sees Fake News daily

REPRESENTATIVE SURVEY COMMISSIONED BY KONRAD-ADENAUER-STIFTUNG:
DISINFORMATION IS A RELEVANT POLITICAL ISSUE IN THE BALKAN COUNTRY

Many Bulgarians know what 'fake news' is: 72 percent of the respondents have been confronted with false reporting in the media, 25 percent see 'fake news' about political topics even daily. This is the result of a representative survey commissioned by the KAS Media Program South East Europe among more than 1,000 citizens over 18 years. The respondents have also been asked about their confidence in international institutions and countries. The EU enjoys higher trust than Russia.

7 out of 10 Bulgarians see fake news about politics

How often do you see news that contains false facts connected with political topics ("fake news")?



The phenomenon of 'fake news' on political topics is already known in Bulgaria: Only 16 percent (all values rounded) of the respondents have never or almost never seen fake news in the media. Another 13 percent said they did not know what 'fake news' is. On behalf of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, the Bulgarian opinion research institute Alpha Research interviewed 1,024 Bulgarians in a representative survey (face-to-face interviews) in the end of May 2017.

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

MEDIA PROGRAM
SOUTH EAST EUROPE
 CHRISTIAN SPAHR

June 2017

www.kas.de/medien-europa/en

Fake news is identified most commonly by the middle generation with university education and from bigger cities. These citizens perceive information more critically. Inhabitants of smaller towns and villages with lower education as well as young people identify fake news more rarely. In this regard, the figures point to the continuing need for more media literacy and political education in the field of media.

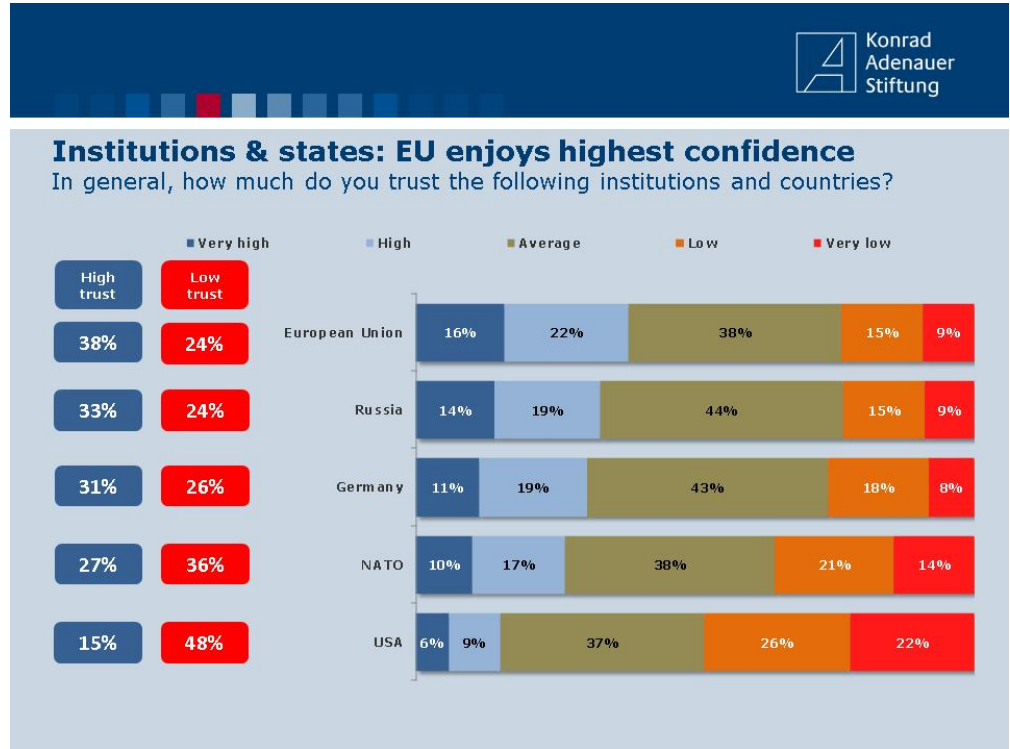
TV remains most popular source for political news – only every sixth reads print media

The media usage was also a topic of the survey: In order to inform themselves about domestic and international political news, 91 percent of respondents use television – by far the leading medium. Online news portals follow with 24 percent; social networks like Facebook and Twitter are on rank 3 with 23 percent. They are thus placed in front of print media, which only one in six Bulgarians uses as a source of political news (18 percent). Only 5 percent use the websites of the government and other public institutions to inform themselves about politics. There are characteristics of individual age groups as follows: From the respondents aged between 18 and 30, almost every second (46 percent) uses social networks to inform themselves politically. In villages, less than ten percent use online news portals as a political source of information, but the radio has much more followers than in the cities.

The majority of Bulgarians are active on the internet every day. However, for editorial news TV has still a predominant position. For more and more citizens TV is not enough and they are looking for other sources of political news. Concerning the political discourse, social media already have the same significance as professional online media. Journalists are not the only news providers anymore. All the more they have to convince the citizens with quality content. Especially print media and radio stations have to prove themselves to be a relevant political news source. Government and other political institutions have to make their online platforms more attractive and need to spread their content on social media more actively.

Higher trust in EU than in Russia – but the difference is not big

Very often the term 'fake news' is used in a similar sense as 'propaganda' – the targeted manipulation of the public by governments or political organisations. To shed a light on the geopolitical component of 'fake news', the survey also focused on the trust of the Bulgarians in international institutions and selected other countries. The results show a variety of opinions: 38 percent of the respondents have high or very high trust in the European Union; further 38 percent indicate an "average" trust in the EU. Only 24 percent show "low" or "very low" trust towards the EU. Not quite as many citizens lean towards Russia: 33 percent have "high" or "very high" trust and 44 percent "average" trust in Russia. Germany enjoys the trust of Bulgarians as well (31 percent high/very high, 43 percent "average"). The USA receives lower scores with 15 and 37 percent. NATO enjoys high or very high trust among 27 percent of the respondents, "average" trust among 38 percent.



With regard to the national security and the question whom the citizens trust most in this matter, Bulgarian stakeholders are becoming more prominent: 29 percent of the Bulgarians trust their own security forces. Equally 29 percent trust the EU, only 20 percent NATO and 18 percent Russia. Multiple answers were possible for this question.

Anti-European fake news are already being comprehensively analysed by the EU commission and other institutions. Now it is not only necessary to publically expose propaganda mechanisms. The EU has to find simple and clear messages for social networks and needs to emphasise the values and advantages of its political model in a more effective way. This was the conclusion of government communication experts who work together in the framework of the [SEECOM](#) association. The EU should not only communicate facts, but also evoke more positive emotions.

The results of the survey of KAS Media Program South East Europe were presented on 27th June 2017 in Sofia at a conference, organised in cooperation with Sofia Security Forum and the Bulgarian foundation Media Democracy (FMD). Media and communication experts from Bulgaria, Germany, Ukraine, Russia, Romania, Montenegro and NATO participated at the panel discussions on 'fake news' and security policy. Journalists, diplomats, policy advisers, academics and interested citizens were following the debate.

Collaboration: Lara Enste, Manuela Zlateva



Imprint

Konrad Adenauer Stiftung
 Media Program South East Europe

19, Konrad Adenauer St.
 1st floor, apt. 2
 1504 Sofia
 Bulgaria

Phone +359 2 94249-71
 Fax +359 2 94249-79