



Only one in five Romanians thinks the media are free

KAS and the Center for Independent Journalism present public opinion poll and monitoring of political reporting

Only 20 percent of Romanians believe in the independence of the media. That is the result of a opinion poll commissioned by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS). Furthermore, KAS and the Center for Independent Journalism (CIJ) presented a survey on political reporting in Romania. The most mentioned politician is Prime Minister Victor-Viorel Ponta. His political positions are, however, less often the subject of media coverage than those of President Traian Băsescu. The leading politicians and parties are being portrayed critically.

Romanians do not trust their media. No less than 52 percent hold the view that the media are not independent. Many are undecided and only 20 percent believe media coverage is free. That is the result of a public opinion poll conducted by the independent agency Market Links and commissioned by KAS. 1'000 adults were asked in an online survey. The sample is representative for all sections of the population. "It's in the common interest of all actors in the Romanian media landscape to improve the image of the media," said Christian Spahr, head of the KAS Media Program South East Europe.

For 52 percent of Romanians television is the most important source of information about politics, 29 percent mention the Internet, and only 7 percent prefer newspapers. Also content-wise television gets the best rating. No less than 67 percent state that television helps them understand politics and the economy; 50 percent say the same about the internet and 33 percent about newspapers. Spahr analyses that "especially the print media should be alarmed by this. Newspapers must focus on quality journalism to remain a relevant source of information for the public in competition with television and the online media."

A detailed monitoring of political media coverage commissioned by KAS, also conducted by Market Links, reveals the media presence and popularity of politicians, as well as political parties. For this purpose 3,375 political pieces of news from four TV channels (Antena 1, PROTV, Realitatea, TVR1) and four daily newspapers (Adevarul, Evenimentul Zilei, Jurnalul National, Romania Libera) were analysed in the period September – December 2013.

The most mentioned politician was the social democratic government leader Victor-Viorel Ponta, followed by President Traian Băsescu, who received 23 percent less coverage. Crin Antonescu, leader of the National Liberal Party (PNL), came third and received half as much coverage as PM Ponta. The eight media outlets analysed portrayed Ponta much more critically than Antonescu and Băsescu, though. Despite the fact that Băsescu received quantitatively



less coverage than Ponta, the content of his viewpoints was more often quoted by the media than those of the government leader.

The so far ruling alliance of parties – the Social Liberal Union (USL) – was the political group with the highest media coverage. Slightly less frequently covered was the Social Democratic Party (PSD), closely followed by the National Liberal Party (PNL), then by the oppositional Democratic Liberal Party (PD-L). All three parties named were presented in a rather critical way by the media. The PNL was however viewed more positively than PSD and PD-L.

“It is only too normal for the main political actors to make most of the political news. Media criticism of political actors - be them individuals or parties - is, in principle, the sign of healthy journalism. But, beyond these figures, what should also be of concern for us are the ethics of political journalism, the way journalists are basing their criticism on arguments and their opinions on facts”, so Ioana Avadani, director of the CIJ.

More information: www.kas.de/medien-europa/en