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KONRAD ADENAUER FOUNDATION  
REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

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# Analysis of the religious communities' representation in the daily press in the Republic of Macedonia

## INTRODUCTION

In order to attain better communication between the five religious communities in the Republic of Macedonia and the public media, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation is carrying out the project "Improving the religious communities' representatives' capacity and skills for public relations in the public media". This project consists of three stages that comprise: analysis of the national daily press in relation to the representation of the religious communities' activities, workshops for the religious communities' representatives in order to provide expert training for improving their communication skills, as well as a handbook for public relations for the requirements of the religious communities in their communication with the wider public.

The project's goal is to strengthen the communication capacities of the representatives of the Macedonian Orthodox Church (MOC), the Islamic Religious Community (IRC), the Catholic Church (CC), the Evangelical-Methodist Church (EMC), and the Jewish Community (JC), setting its foundations on the research for the representation of the religious communities' activities in the media, the transparent reporting on their work, and the mutual confidence-building that leads towards improvement of the public relations.

This project is carried out as a result of the positive experiences from the previous workshops that were implemented within the project "Tolerance, dialogue, cooperation", which was carried out in the period between January and December 2011, organized by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Institute for Democracy "Societas Civilis"-Skopje, supported by the European Union. This project gave its main contribution in raising awareness for the necessity to accept the differences of the religious belonging, the mutual understanding and tolerance, and the need for correct media representation, as essential to the communication with the public.

In this relation, the information and the assessments gained during the workshops related to the media functioning and their communication with the religious communities demonstrated the need for further activities in order to provide a continuous advancement of the communication skills among the religious communities' representatives. The target groups are the five religious communities in Macedonia, i.e. the people appointed for direct informing and public relations, as well as those responsible for preparing and carrying out the drafted media agendas and strategies.



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With the execution of this project, the expected outcome is to improve and strengthen the communication skills by gaining knowledge about the functioning of the media driven by the need of the public to be delivered timely, fast, transparent and valid information.

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**A REPORT ON THE EXECUTED RESEARCH**

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The first stage related to the analysis of the national daily press and the religious communities' representation of their activities is completed.

The research was carried out between 30th April and 31st May 2014, in the period when there are no major religious holidays of any of the religious communities in the Republic of Macedonia, i.e. there are no dominant activities to be represented in the media. The commemoration of the major religious holidays is almost always represented in all media in the country, therefore the period without any major religious holidays contributes towards creating a more realistic image of the religious communities' representation in the Macedonian media.

This report shows the monitoring carried out for the representation of the religious communities' activities in the national daily press distributed to the public in Macedonian and Albanian languages, as well as information collected on ways of building public relations gained from direct contacts with the representatives of the religious communities in Macedonia.

**METHODS AND AIMS OF THE RESEARCH**

The aim of this research was to determine the way in which the representatives of the religious communities in the Republic of Macedonia communicate with the public, i.e. which tools they use to communicate with the media for delivering correct, timely and valid information for publishing. At the same time, the research demonstrated to what extent the journalists, in this case, the printed media take interest in publishing news reports, stories and other types of journalistic genres related to the activities of the religious communities. We managed to confirm the so-called "media balance" in the approach towards this sensitive issue, having in mind the fact that the final aim of this process is to collect data and results for the benefit of the public.

The team of researchers, applied the method "documentation review", in this case "direct review of the daily press", and secured relevant information for the target religious groups.

The research is based on intentionally selected samples, i.e. all the printed and electronic editions of the national daily newspapers in Macedonian language: "Vest", "Večer", "Dnevnik", "Nova Makedonija", "Sloboden pecat" and "Utrinski Vesnik", as well as the "Koha" newspaper in Albanian language. The intentionally selected sample enabled targeted and directed selection of information.



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## ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS FROM THE RESEARCH

The research titled as: **“Analysis of the religious communities’ representation in the daily press in the Republic of Macedonia”** showed the following results:

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- ❖ In a period of 30 days, in the process of the daily analysis and monitoring of each of the daily newspapers (26 printed issues per newspaper, including the double issues), reviewing 104 newspaper reports in different forms of journalistic expression.
- ❖ According to the collected indices, which are integrated in the supplement to this report and the table below (Image 1), the topic of research is most represented in the national daily newspaper “Dnevnik” in 40 texts out of 26 issues, followed by: “Utrinski Vesnik” with 20, “Vest” with 14, “Nova Makedonija” with 13, while in the “Vecer” daily newspaper only 8, in “Sloboden pecat” 5, and in “Koha” only 4 news reports were registered.

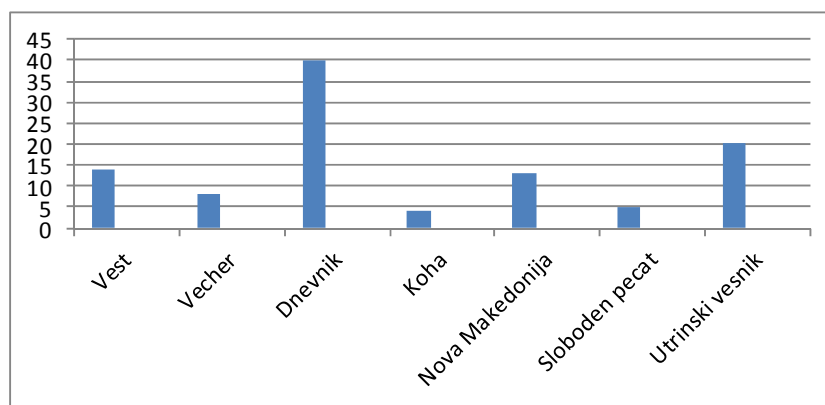


Image 1

The table from Image 1 clearly shows that the most dedicated of the printed media to the topics related with the religious communities in the Republic of Macedonia (the target group of the research) is the “Dnevnik” newspaper, i.e. the particular editorial office that practiced all forms of journalistic informing/reporting.

- ❖ Out of the total number of newspaper texts according to the quantitative analysis, 66 are dedicated to events and information related to the activities of the religious communities in the Republic of Macedonia, 13 events are activities of the church communities abroad, interviews, columns, comments, photo reviews, and short news.
- ❖ The newspaper reports, columns and interviews cover different topics, (which is a positive thing and it seems it is a new trend in reporting on religious issues), however, the most dominant are reviews related to the problem between the MOC-OA and the Serbian Orthodox Church (on a national level), as well as reviews of the so-called, historic meeting between the Pope Francis and the Patriarch Bartholomew.



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- ❖ The newspaper articles dedicated to the religious communities, their activities, public addresses, and statements in 14 cases are headlines on the front page of the national newspapers, which points at a specific editorial interest – this shows that the topic is of high interest for the general public. 11 articles of the headline news are related to activities of the religious communities from Macedonia, while 3 are related to church events abroad. There are 4 columns, 1 commentary, and 12 other types of newspaper articles published.
- ❖ The team of researchers registered only 17 newspaper articles supported by and prepared in direct communication with a representative of a certain religious community, i.e. that only in these cases the journalist asked or received a statement or an interview with a representative of the religious community.
- ❖ This research shows that the journalists often use the phrasing “we learned from sources in the church”, or “unofficial church source”, “neither confirmed nor denied by the church”, “not available for a statement” etc. At the same time, there is information related to the religious community in which another source of informing is used, for instance the Ministry of Interior, a citizen, the local population, etc.
- ❖ Most of the published newspaper articles are dedicated to topics related to the activities of the MOC–OA, then 6 articles covering the activities of the Catholic Church (one interview), 5 articles for the Islamic Religious Community (1 in the issues in Macedonian languages), no articles for the Evangelic-Methodist Church and 1 newspaper article for the Jewish Community.
- ❖ In the “Koha” newspaper in Albanian language four texts were published, three for the construction of new mosques and one for the position of the chief of the IRC Reis Ul Ulema Sulejman efendi Rexhepi, i.e. no articles related to the other religious communities in the issue in Albanian language.
- ❖ There is an increasing interest in other topics from the life/activities of the religious communities in the published newspaper articles, i.e. 11 topics related to the developments in the church or monastic tourism, we registered the closedown of a church due to a dispute, topics related to the EU funds for promotion and development of tourism with lessons from abroad, promotion of activities of the local government for an increased frequency of tourists at church sites.
- ❖ We registered 13 newspaper articles in the research material covering events related to the activities of the religious communities abroad, particularly in Australia, USA, Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, Italy, the Vatican, Jerusalem, as well as in Albania. This allowed comparative analysis, or an insight into the cooperation between the religious communities and the media in these countries, which showed that this cooperation is on a much higher level than the conditions in the Republic of Macedonia.
- ❖ We registered in the published newspaper articles one text that directly points at the lobbying processes and the need for lobbying. This coincides with one of the aims of this project, which is transfer of knowledge on lobbying skills. More specifically, in the text published in “Dnevnik” titled as “MOC hopes on Bulgarian Patriarch Neophit’s lobbying”, there are many elements of efficient lobbying activities such as making friends (“the Bulgarian patriarch is in good relations with the Mos-



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cow and Universal Archbishopries...”), then applying authority in decision making processes (“the Bulgarian patriarch is seen as a lobbyist in providing solution to the open Macedonian church issue”), motivating unions and joint appearances (“in the orthodox circles holding joint masses means in a way recognition for the church autonomy”), and there are other lobbying methods and techniques applied such as convincing, arguing, etc.

- ❖ In the communication with the public, the team of researchers realized that the representatives of the religious communities have provided 6 written announcements, 23 statements, 2 interviews, 1 Facebook add, we found out from 16, 1 public letter, 5 direct contributions in preparing reviews. (Image 2)

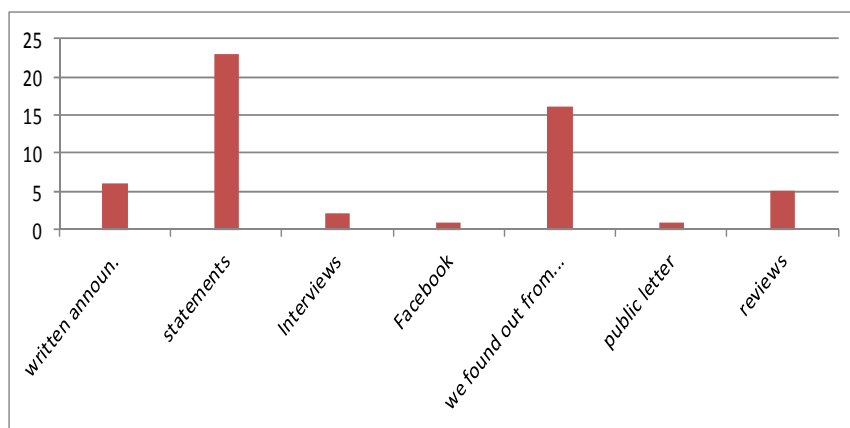


Image 2

The table above clearly shows that only direct communication provides quality information for the public. However, it is clear from the table that the other methods and techniques for public relations, distribution of announcements, carrying out interviews, and so on, are not applied sufficiently. Unfortunately, the way of informing following the principle “we found out from...” is still on a high level.

- ❖ Only the national newspaper “Dnevnik” publishes a daily Religious calendar of church holidays registered in the orthodox and catholic calendar, which is not the case with the other religious communities.



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CONCLUDING NOTES

The analysis conducted on the national daily press in relation to the representation of the activities of the religious communities produced the following concluding notes:

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- The research on the topic "**Analysis of the religious communities' representation in the daily press in the Republic of Macedonia**" conducted in the national daily press during May this year showed that the journalists often refer to various sources without naming them in most cases. At the same time, there is a notable amount of quoting statements from the representatives of the religious communities, but in the articles from the period of the research, unfortunately, the dominant style of informing is "we found out from..."
- In the newspapers in Macedonian language the most frequent topics are those related to the activities of the MOC, while in the Koha newspaper printed in Albanian language the dominant topics are those related to the activities of the IRC.
- The newspapers vary in relation to which media reports most frequently on events organized by the religious communities depending on their readership, with the exception of major events which are of concern to all the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, regardless of their religious belonging.

The following concluding notes derive from the direct contacts with the representatives of the religious communities in relation to the ways of building public relations:

- The experiences of the representatives of the religious communities show that the journalists/media are not well informed about their work at all times, for the specific, according to them, role that the religious communities have, and in this regard their functioning in total. On the other hand, the journalistic work often requires urgency in providing a statement from the relevant institutions, transparency and consistency in the communication, which points at the need to further build and cherish the permanent, transparent and coherent cooperation between the media and the religious communities.
- The representatives of the Macedonian Orthodox Church (MOC-OA) have their spokesperson of the Holy Archiereus Synod (HAS), as the only appointed person for public relations and communication with the journalists. The communication with the public is occasional or upon emergency. MOC-OA has its own web-site ([www.mpc.org.mk](http://www.mpc.org.mk)) which is well managed and which offers a lot of information related to the orthodox holidays, the history of the church, but most importantly a lot of information related to the current affairs in its area of interest. However, besides the good website, there is still a shortage of feedback communication with the believers and the general public. The church uses contemporary communication tools like Facebook only in certain parishes and by certain clerics.
- In the Islamic Religious Community (IRC) there is no a spokesperson, however there are people in charge for public relations. The cooperation with the public media is timely or upon urgency. IRC has its own website ([www.bfi.mk](http://www.bfi.mk)) which is well designed, full with information covering the activities of this religious community, but all information are given only in Albanian language. Having in mind that there are great many Muslims in the Republic of Macedonia who do not speak the Albanian language (Macedonian Muslims, Turks, Roma) there is a need for a multilingual managing of the site, at least in Macedonian language as well. We registered the use of other media, such as the Kicevo Muftiate that uses Facebook, although the frequency of the page is very low.
- The representatives of the Catholic Church practice occasional public relations, with occasional reactions and statements for the public. The Catholic Church has its own website for its cathedral in Skopje ([www.skopska-katerdrala.weebly.com](http://www.skopska-katerdrala.weebly.com)). The website of the Catholic Church is well organized and regularly maintained, which



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shows the good communication with the public, i.e. it confirms the good use of the communication tools for timely informing of the public for its functioning. However, the Croatian language prevails, and only a small part of the information is in Macedonian language. Unlike the Skopje church, the website of the Strumica Cathedral is not accessible, which disables the communication with the public in this region, where a great deal of Catholics are concentrated. The Catholic Church in Skopje has its own Facebook page with 433 visitors, and uses this media tool to call the believers to a mass.

- The Evangelical-Methodist Church does not have an appointed spokesperson. In the period of the research no newspaper article has been registered dedicated to the activities of this religious community. This church has its own website ([www.emc-umc.org.mk](http://www.emc-umc.org.mk)) which is updated upon new events. The last information is related to the activities of the church from 24th June 2014.
- Jewish community in the Republic of Macedonia communicates and cooperates with the journalists only in relation to important events, exhibitions, promotions or celebrations. The website ([www.ezrm.org.mk](http://www.ezrm.org.mk)) is updated occasionally and serves to inform the public for the conditions and the activities of this community. At this moment the website displays a 'poster' promoting the European Day of the Jewish culture from 5th September 2012.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The executed research, as well as the experiences from the previous workshops have demonstrated that strengthening the capacities and the skills of the representatives of the religious communities running the public relations desk will contribute towards improving the bilateral relations between the public and the religious communities, and vice versa, and will reduce or minimize the imprecise information released in the public, but also speculations which could have a negative effect on the reputation of the religious community.

The research has shown that the major part of the religious communities do not have an appointed spokesperson or a PR, which is necessary for successful implementation of the media strategy of each entity in order to provide a better and more successful informing of the public and to maintain a transparent functioning.

Considering the fact that there is a positive trend in the newspaper articles of the daily press in the Republic of Macedonia to promote other topics from the life/activities of the religious communities, not only reporting on religious holidays, which was a regular practice for years, there is an increasing need for further advancement of the skills for releasing stories of various type by the religious communities.

During the research we registered topics related to the development of the church or monastic tourism, promotion and development of the tourism with examples from abroad, promotion of the local government's activities for an increased frequency on church sites. This type of informing has a dual character – informational and educational, which imposed the need for further development of the communication channel between journalists/media and religious communities.

The team of researches confirmed that the journalists often use the style "we find out from church sources", "unofficial church sources", "there is neither confirmation nor a denial from the church", "they are not available for a statement" etc., and other sources of informing are used, for instance the Ministry of Interior, a citizen, the local population etc. This shows the need for further development of the religious communities' representatives' skills to fa-



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miliarize themselves with the various activities that they have, and which are not in the range of informing for the religious holidays and the ways of their veneration.

For a full execution of this project three stages were envisioned, and with the completion of the first – analysis of the national daily press in relation to the representation of the activities of the religious communities, and the knowledge gained for the ways of communicating with the public, there are workshops envisioned for the representatives of the religious communities to advance their communication skills and prepare a handout intended for the requirements of the religious communities in their communication with the media and the general public.

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The contents of this analysis are the sole responsibility of the researchers and can in  
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**SUPPLEMENT: RESEARCHED MATERIAL**

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Research conducted on the daily newspapers "Dnevnik"- "Vest"- "Utrinski Vesnik"- "Nova Makedonija"- "Vecer"- "Sloboden Pecat"- "Koha".

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**Starting date of the research: 30.04.2014**

**Dnevnik**, 30 April/1 May

1. p.11 „Од Акропол не се гледаат македонски џамии“
2. p.18 „Поп и на погребите облечен како рокер“

**Dnevnik**, 2 May

3. p.4 „Светската јавност не е доволно запознаена со трагедијата на македонските Евреи“

**Dnevnik**, 5 May

4. p.2-3 „Владиката Тимотеј: Јас би го помилувал Вранишкоски“

**Dnevnik**, 6 May

5. p.5 „Повеќе владици подготвени за помилување на Вранишковски“
6. p.12 „веб-коментари“

**Dnevnik**, 7 May

7. p.5 „Албанските имами регрутирале со странски пари“
8. p.11 „Проблем е што по помилувањето на Вранишкоски“

**Dnevnik**, 8 May

9. p.5 „Синдот на МПЦ во вторник на специјална расправа за Вранишкоски“

**Dnevnik**, 10 May

10. p.3 „Средба на г.г. Стефан со бугарскиот патријарх Неофит“
11. Supplement Публика – „Свештеникот Стојко Ристевски за последната причест“

**Dnevnik**, 12 May

12. p.5 „Православните цркви молат за восок за свеќи“
13. p.5 „Првпат заедничко празнување на македонската и на бугарската академија“



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**Dnevnik**, 13 May

14. p.5 „МПЦ се надева на лобирањето на бугарскиот патријарх Неофит“

**Dnevnik**, 14 May

15. p.4 „Помош за една од најбогатите православни цркви“

**Dnevnik**, 15 May

16. p.4 „СПЦ попушта за Вранишковски за да почне дијалогот со МПЦ? “

17. p.18 „Галеријата на икони влече туристи во Музејот на Македонија“

**Dnevnik**, 16 May

18. p.11 „Украдени четири икони од црква“

19. p.13 Страшна трансвеститска и попска брада“

**Dnevnik**, 17/18 May

20. p.6 „Како СПЦ досега ги примала сите наши службени писма? “

21. Supplement Публика „Црквите во село Судик меѓу баењето и благословите“

**Dnevnik**, 20 May

22. p.3 „МПЦ донира 50.000 евра“

**Dnevnik**, 21 May

23. p.3 „Патријархот Иринеј не може да се повикува на господ за поплавите“

24. p.11 „Автокефален скрининг за МПЦ “

**Dnevnik**, 22 May

25. p.2 „Иванов се сретна со папата Франциско“

26. p.5 „СПЦ не знае кои услови МПЦ не ги исполнува за автокефалност“

**Dnevnik**, 23 May

27. p.2 „Вредна реликвија дојде во Македонија“

28. p.19 „Обновен манастирот Еленец кај село Цера“

29. p.19 „Чествување за првиот архиепископ на МПЦ-ОА г.г. Доситеј“

30. p.20 „Македонија во чест на свети Кирил“

**Dnevnik**, 24/25 May

31. p.5 „Патријархот Вартоломеј и папата Франциско чекорат кон обединувањето“

32. p. 18 „Вистината на древната македонска култура во срцето на Рим“



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**Dnevnik**, 26 May

- 33. p.11 „Нова надеж во Ерусалим“
- 34. p.17 „Во Прилеп целосно реконструирани германските воени гробишта“

**Dnevnik**, 28 May

- 35. p.2-3 „Признавање на папата како претставник на Исус“
- 36. p.10 „Иконите заплени кај Тимио да и припаднат на Албанија“
- 37. p.11 „Дали Вартоломеј ќе стане унијат? “

**Dnevnik**, 30 May

- 38. p.2 „Да се сретнат моштите на учителот св.Кирил и на ученикот св. Климент“
- 39. p.10 „Ограбена црква во Аеродром“

**Dnevnik**, 31 May/1 June

- 40. p.2-3 „Исламот е најголемиот проблем во Европа“

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**Vest**, 30 April/1 May

- 1. p.3 „МПЦ-ОА ќе ги обновува преговорите со СПЦ“

**Vest**, 2 May

- 2. p.5 „Докторите ќе учат да бидат добри христијани“
- 3. p.43 „Горан Пандев денеска кај Папата“

**Vest**, 3/4 May

- 4. Exclusive supplement „Вест во обновениот манастирски комплекс по пожарот во 2009“

**Vest**, 7 May

- 5. p.16 „Најзагрозено културното наследство на југоисточна Европа“

**Vest**, 14 May

- 6. p.6 „Пејковски: Немавме комбе за Вранишковски“

**Vest**, 16 May

- 7. p.4 „Ќе се регистрира епархија на МПЦ-ОА во Австралија“

**Vest**, 17/18 May

- 8. p.2 „СПЦ вели нема писмо, МПЦ тврди пратила две“



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**Vest**, 22 May

9. p.7 „Голе и Маја пет дена во Рим“

**Vest**, 23 May

10. p.3 „Моштите на свети Кирил првпат во Македонија“

**Vest**, 24/25 May

11. p.2 „МПЦ не знае дали моштите се оригинал“

**Vest**, 26 May

12. p.6 „Дел од моштите на Св. Кирил се вратија во близината на родниот Солун“

13. p.6 „Сесловенско чествување на гробот на св. Методиј во Германија“

**Vest**, 28 May

14. p.15 „Се отвори римската средновековна Систинска капела“

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**Utrinski Vesnik**, 2 May

1. p.15 „Откриено старо манастирско писмо во Бигорски“

2. p.28 „Како уметник се пронајдов во зографството“

**Utrinski Vesnik**, 6 May

3. p.4 „По Тимотеј, и Пимен е за помилување на Вранишковски“

4. p.11 „Проблем е што по помилувањето на Вранишкоски“

**Utrinski Vesnik**, 7 May

5. p.2 „Вранишковски не бара ослободување“

**Utrinski Vesnik**, 15 May

6. p.7 „МПЦ чека абер од СПЦ за продолжување на дијалогот“

**Utrinski Vesnik**, 16 May

7. p.6 „Се откажуваат ли СПЦ и МПЦ од големите условиња? “

**Utrinski Vesnik**, 17/18 May

8. p.2 „Дијалогот со СПЦ ќе почека“

9. p.3 „Не сме добиле никакво писмо“

10. p.5 „Крадците ги опустошија македонските цркви“

11. p.6 „Се проширува патот до манастирот „Св.Јован Бигорски“



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**Utrinski Vesnik**, 19 May

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