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country report

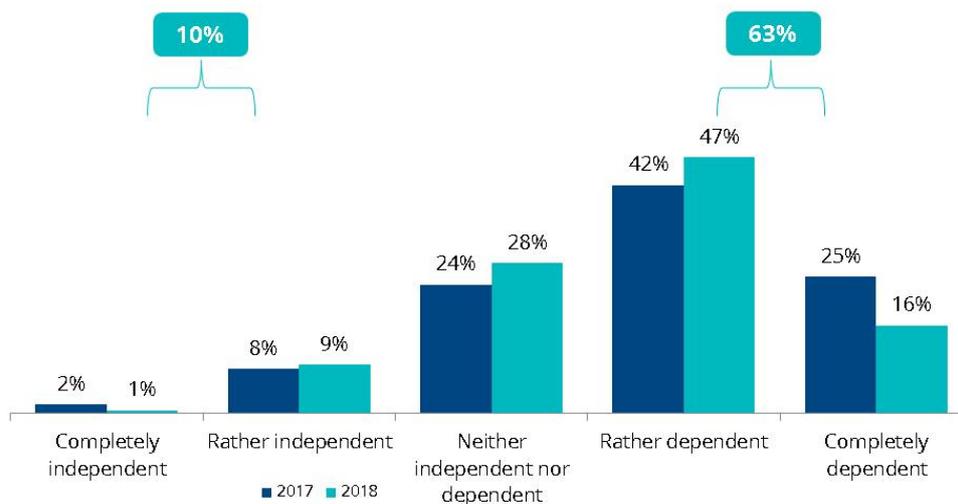
Media Programme South East Europe

Bulgaria: Trust in Media Is Still Low

Hendrik Sittig

Almost two thirds of Bulgarians are convinced that the media in their country are not reporting independently. Moreover, only every tenth describes journalists as trustworthy. The EU and Germany enjoy the highest institutional confidence. These are the main results of a national representative survey commissioned by the Media Programme South East Europe of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS).

How dependent or independent are the media in Bulgaria?



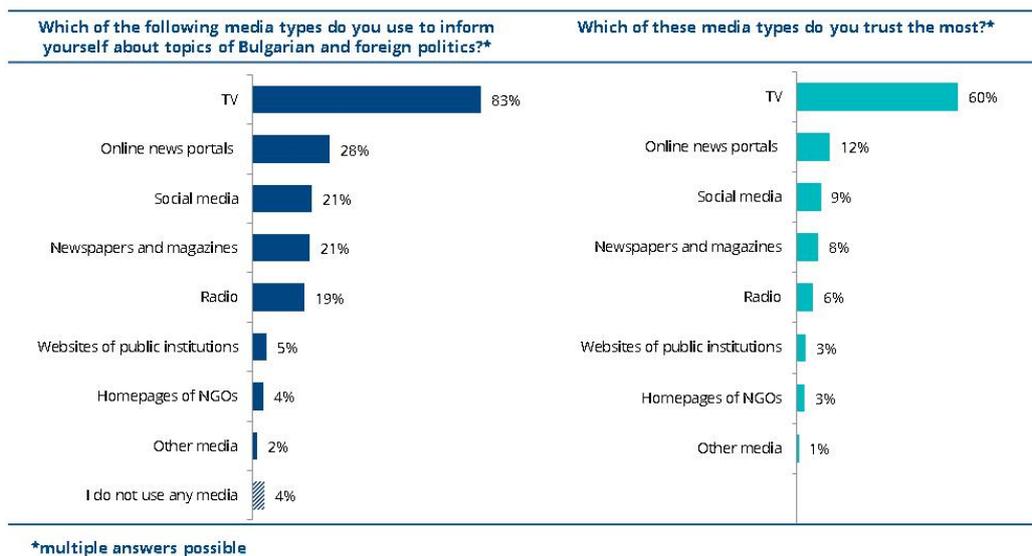
No Changes Concerning Media Freedom in Bulgaria

Still only ten percent of Bulgarians believe in independent reporting in their country – thereby, the low value from the previous year is confirmed. Besides that, the majority of respondents (63 percent) state that the press is dependent. Trust in journalistic work is also low: only nine percent of respondents think that journalists are credible. Almost every third does not trust their reporting. “For an EU Member State such low results are alarming,” says Hendrik Sittig, Head of the KAS Media Programme South East Europe. “Media can only fulfil their observer and controlling role in a democracy, if they work independently from politics and business. Only then the trust in reporting can be increased again.”

TV Is Most Used and Trusted Source of Information

Concerning the media usage, TV might have lost slightly in popularity. However, it is still by far ahead of other media with 83 percent. Online news portals have increased to 28 percent. Social networks and print media (each 21 percent) and radio (19 percent) follow. Websites of public institutions and non-governmental organisations are pretty much not used at all as a source of information. Regarding the age there is a similar picture as in other countries. The younger generation watches less TV and compared to the general public uses more online media.

In terms of confidence, TV is also ahead. 60 percent of Bulgarians trust TV news. Well behind are online news (12 percent), social media (9 percent), print media (8 percent) and radio (6 percent).



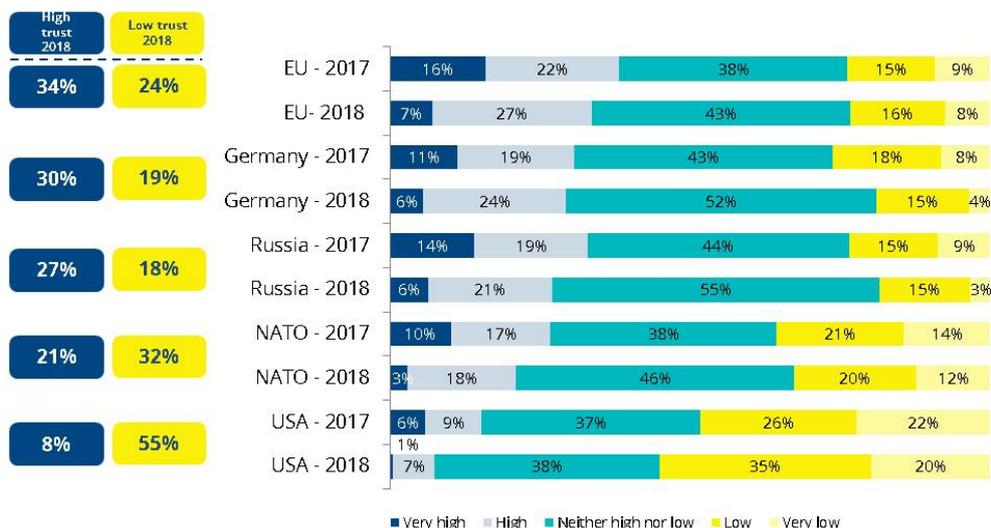
The distribution of false information still plays a huge role in the evaluation of media reporting. It harms immensely the credibility of – especially – traditional media. The majority of respondents think that they are mostly finding their way to the public through print media (37 percent) and social networks (35 percent).

Citizens seem well informed concerning the question to whom or which organisation to report hate speech or violence in the media. 23 percent mention in this context the ombudsman. 13 percent would appeal to the Commission for Protection Against Discrimination, 11 percent to the Council for Electronic Media and 9 percent the Prosecutor's office.

People Place the Most Trust in the EU

In respect of trust in institutions and states, there are hardly any changes from the previous year. The EU still enjoys the highest confidence. However, it has fallen slightly to 34 percent. NATO has also received a decline of trust (now 21 percent). Concerning the confidence in other states, Germany is with 30 percent marginally ahead of Russia (27 percent). The USA are even only trusted by eight percent.

How much do you trust the following institutions and countries?



The Bulgarian institute “Alpha Research” conducted the opinion poll. The sample (1,027 interviewees) is nationally representative. The KAS Media Programme South East Europe presented the results during a public discussion on “How can citizens’ trust in media and politics be regained?” in Sofia on 21st November 2018. Speakers at the panel discussion were Irina Nedeva, Chairperson of the Association of the European Journalists in Bulgaria, Orlin Spassov, Executive Director at the Foundation Media Democracy, and Neli Dineva, Researcher at “Alpha Research”.

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