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MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION SOUTH EAST EUROPE TRENDS AS A EUROPE-WIDE CONCERN

CHRISTIAN SPAHR, KAS MEDIA PROGRAM

CLUB OF VENICE, 11 NOVEMBER 2016

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CONTEXT: CHANGE OF INFORMATION CULTURE

- Due to internet, no borders between consumers and producers of information
- Every second Serbian, Romanian, Bulgarian uses the internet (Germany 84%)
- Most internet users read news portals, some discuss politics online
- Every fifth internet user creates content (Romania, Bulgaria; Eurostat 2015)
- Citizens' protests via internet (Bulgaria 2013, BiH 2014, Macedonia 2015)
- Independent news portals and investigative media platforms gain popularity

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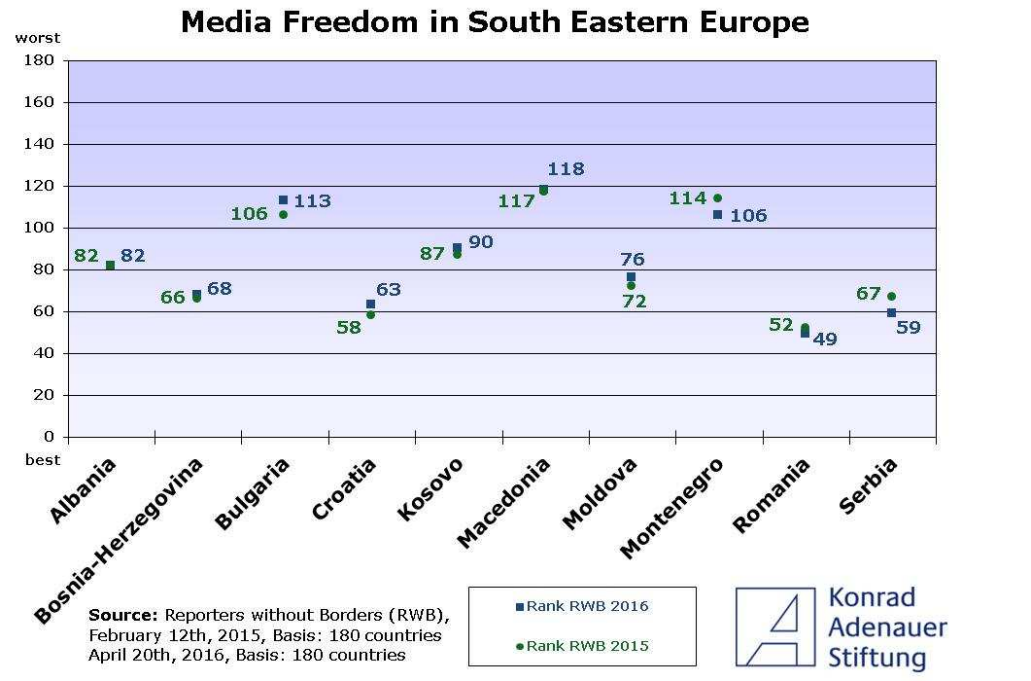
MEDIA FREEDOM – NEGATIVE TREND IN S.E.E.



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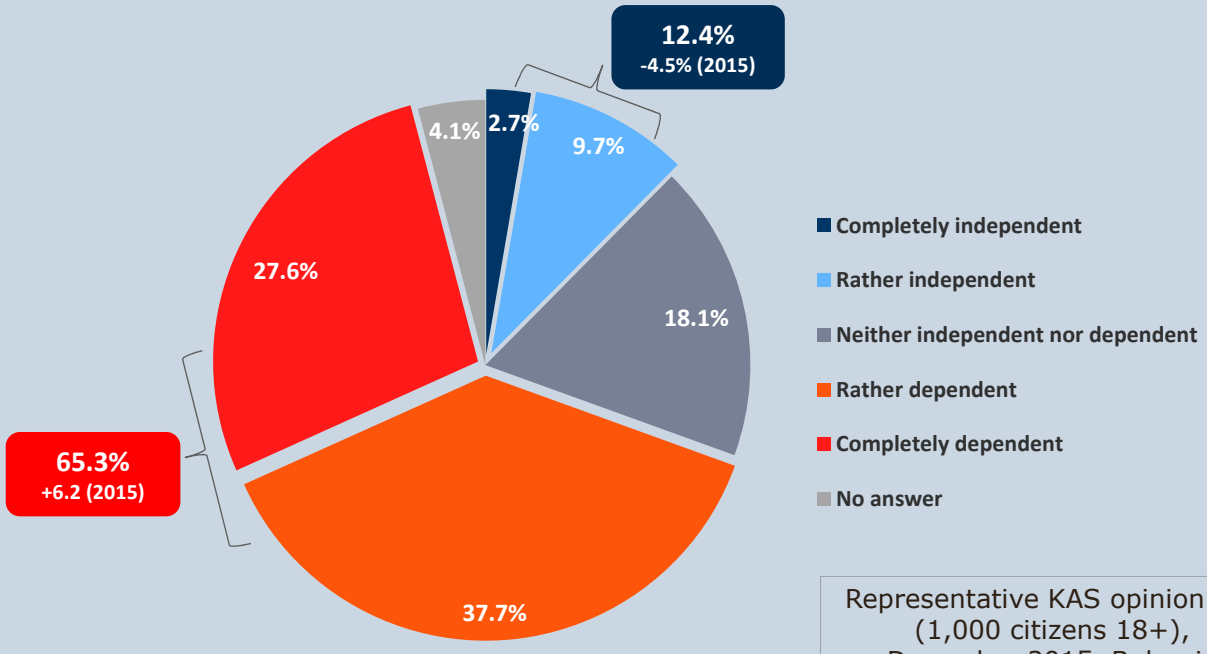
Only one in eight Bulgarians thinks the media are free

How dependent or independent are the media in the country?



Representative KAS opinion poll (1,000 citizens 18+), December 2015, Bulgaria

market LINKS

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OBSTACLES FOR MEDIA FREEDOM & DIVERSITY

- Media owners pursue **political interests** (internal censorship)
- → participation of media in political **campaigns**
- **Monopoly** tendencies in print media
- Non-transparent **ownership** and financial sources of media
- State authorities are the biggest **advertisement clients** of print media
- Partly unequal **access to distribution networks**
- Insufficient **legal guarantees** for freedom of reporting
- Unattractive **working conditions** of journalists (due to economic crisis)
- Weak **self-regulation** and lobbying of media outlets and journalists
- Lack of consensus about **ethical standards** of reporting

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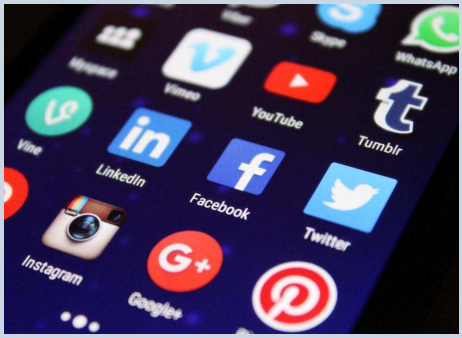
ALTERNATIVES TO OLD STRUCTURES

- **Online news portals** often report more independently and need less seed money – but also have quality issues
- Foundation of **independent editorial offices**, research associations and media NGOs
- **Investigative journalism** (facilitation through further education, grants, contests/awards …)
- **Social media** (limited): taboo topics and protests are spread via Facebook, blogs and Twitter – but cannot replace quality journalism
- **International broadcasters** of Western countries (Deutsche Welle, Radio Free Europe, Radio France Internationale, etc.)



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FURTHER APPROACHES

- **Dialogue with politicians** in candidate countries during accession process (by EU institutions, governments, NGOs)
- **Schengen and EU subsidies** as leverage
- **Further education**: media ethics, EU facts
- Advancement of **public debate**: relations of media and politics; journalism education; media legislation and self-regulation
- Promotion of **professional and ethical communication** in politics (→ SEECOM)
- New **info platforms** for experts and citizens

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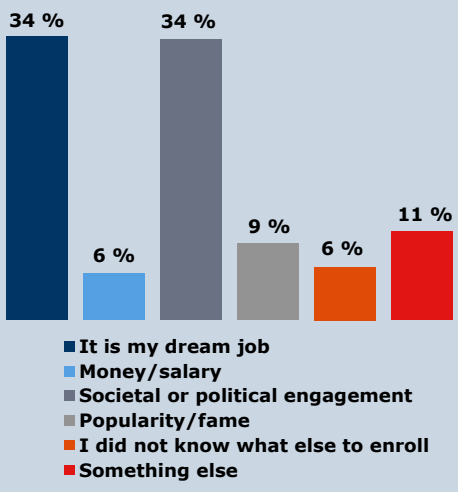
JOURNALISM EDUCATION: VIEWS OF STUDENTS

- **Survey at universities in five countries**: Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Serbia
- More than 100 participants per country
- **Key messages**:
  - Every third student not satisfied with learning conditions
  - Every second criticises technical equipment of universities
  - Majority bewails lack of practical exercises
  - Only half of the students wants to stay in media after graduation
  - TV is most popular job perspective
- Presentation at South East Europe Media Forum 2016: Book with recommendations

What is your motivation to study journalism?



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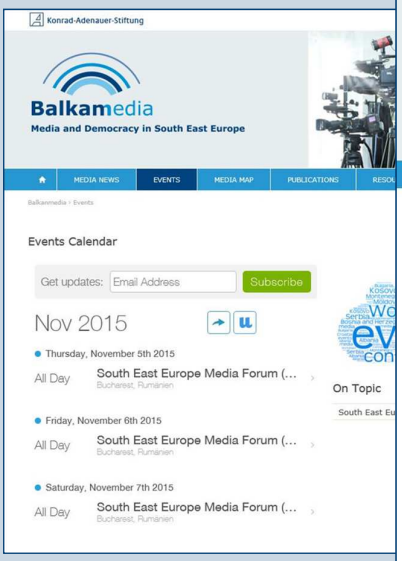
BALKANMEDIA



http://balkanmedia.org

http://www.kas.de/wf/en/71.12814

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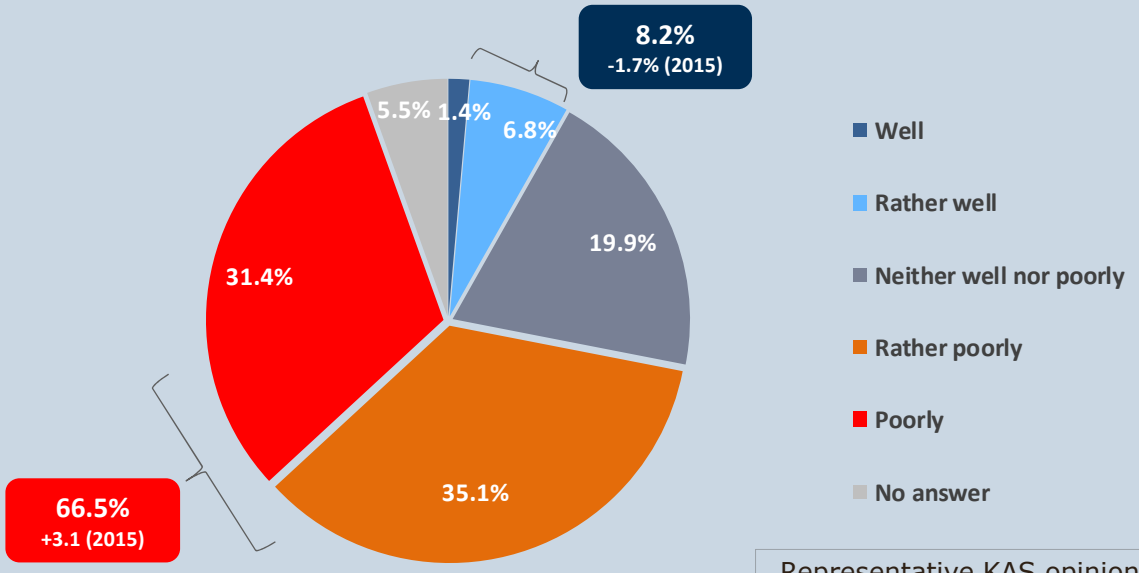
Low trust in political communication (Bulgaria)

How well or poorly are Bulgarian politicians informing the citizens about the decisions they make? (1 answer)



Representative KAS opinion poll (1,000 citizens 18+), December 2015, Bulgaria

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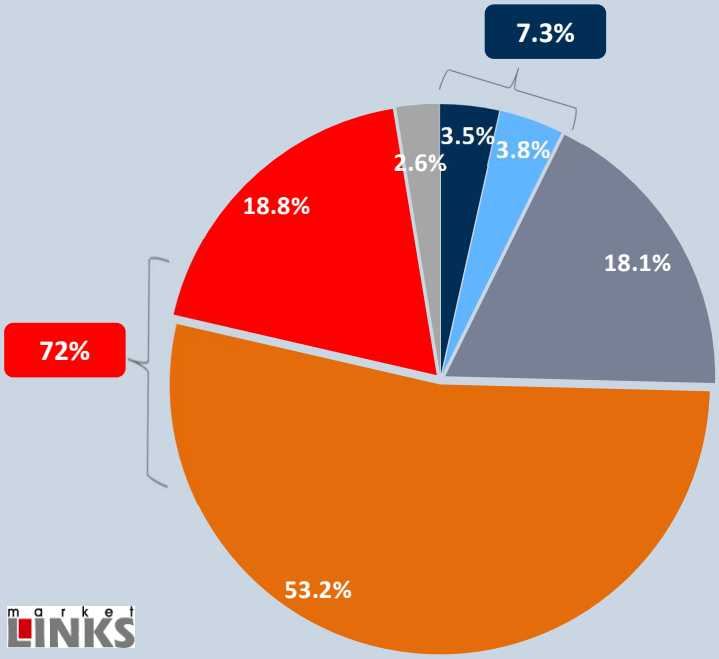
Low trust in political communication (Romania)

How well or poorly are Romanian politicians informing the citizens about the decisions they make? (1 answer)



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Representative KAS opinion poll (1,000 citizens 18+), December 2014, Romania

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PR: REALISTIC AIMS OR WISHFUL THINKING?

- **Leaders: Give room to spokespersons** and PRs, let them do their jobs
- **Be as transparent/open as possible**
- **Have a true dialogue with citizens** and listen to them
- **Treat journalists well**, to respect their professional and societal roles
- **Don`t oppress or blackmail media** (many citizens and the EU will see it)
- **Domestic and international messages** must not be contradictory

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REINVENTING ROLE OF PUBLIC COMMUNICATORS: CORE PRINCIPLES AND ACTION POINTS

- **Transparency and Openness**
  Treating public policy as service, not product
- **Inclusiveness and Participation**
  Treating people as assets, not target audiences
- **Integrity, impartiality and public interest**
  Sustaining public's trust in government comms
- **Internal communication**
  Communication as integral part of policy making
- **Professional exchange and cooperation**
  Promoting peer support and sharing
- **Innovative approach**
  Using technology to facilitate communication

SEECOM
South East Europe Public Sector Communication Association

http://seecom.info

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COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES FOR THE EU

- EU needs to find new forms of dialogue with civil society, simpler and clearer messages, addressing not only facts but also sensibilities
- EU has to deal with effects of globalisation and must find a language to confront fears
- Competing with other political models, EU has to be more successful in explaining principles
- Clear and unambiguous messages from the EU are of great importance for enlargement
- Strengthening ties between spokespersons in candidate countries and their peers in the EU

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Media Program

SEECOM

European Economic and Social Committee

EUROPEAN UNION
Committee of the Regions

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COMMUNICATION, MEDIA AND POLITICS: KEY INSTRUMENTS

- **Public fora**: South East Europe Media Forum (SEEMF), Belgrade, 21-23 November 2016
- **Informal dialogues**: Round table SEECOM Steering Committee, Chișinău, December 2016
- **Panel discussions**: "Terrorism and responsibility of media", Sofia, March 2017
- **Summer schools**: Political Communication, Bosnia and Herzegovina, July 2017
- **Conferences**: SEECOM Conference, Oct. 2017
- **Partnerships**: PRO.PR conference (Croatia), IPI World Congress (Hamburg), and others
- **Training exchanges, Monitoring/evaluation**

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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