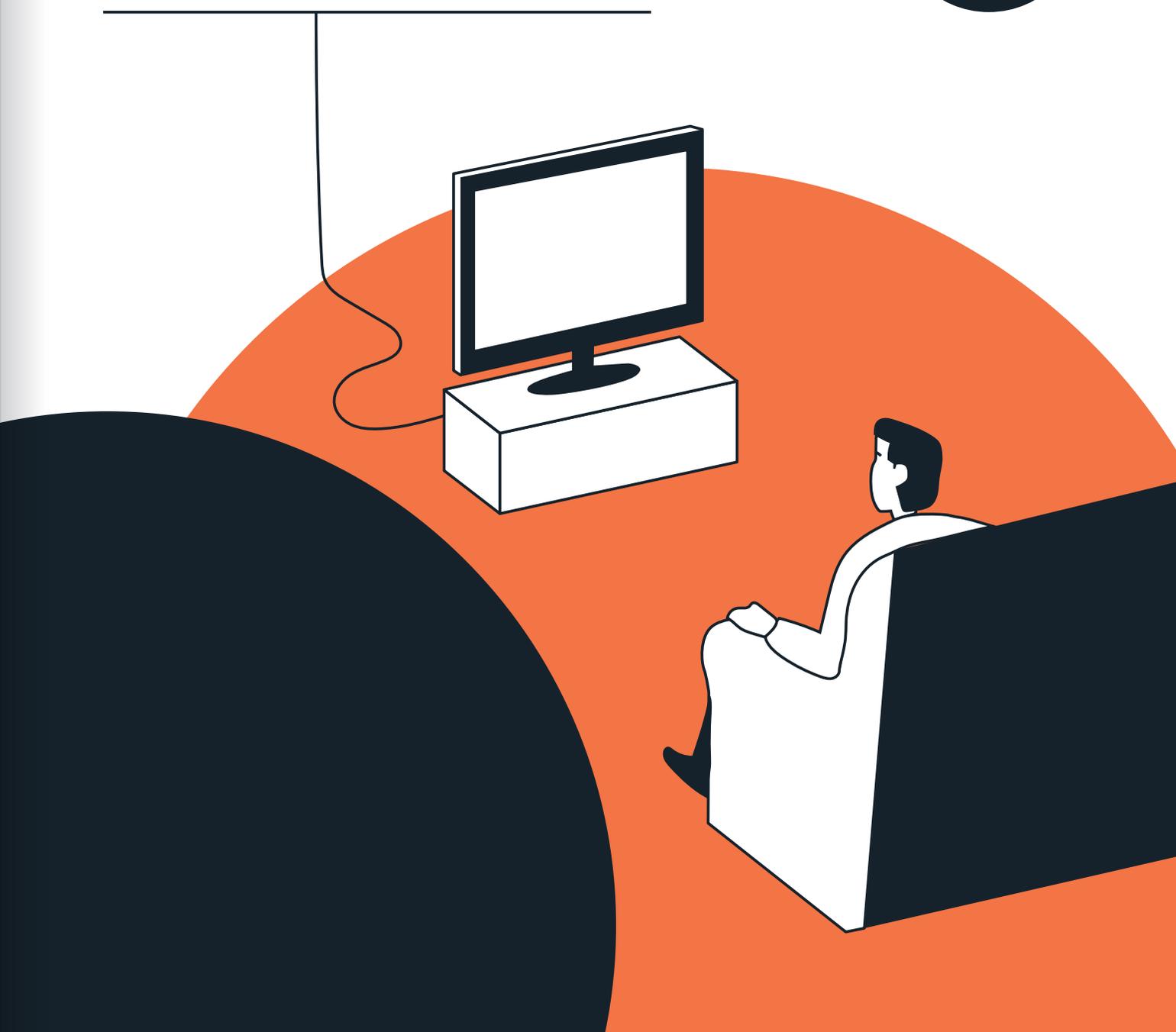


# Openness of Serbian media in Kosovo

April  
2021





Characteristics  
of the open society  
within Serb community  
in Kosovo

**Openness of  
Serbian media in  
Kosovo**

Civil society  
organizations in the  
Serbian community in  
Kosovo – Between  
perceptions and  
presentation

Political parties  
of Kosovo Serbs in  
the political system of  
Kosovo: From pluralism  
to monism

Attitudes of Kosovo  
Serbs of security  
institutions

Openness of institutions  
to the citizens of Kosovo

Community Rights in  
Kosovo

Kosovo Serbs in the  
dialogue process

Analysis of the  
economic situation in  
the  
Serb-populated areas  
in Kosovo

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# 1. Description of situation and problem detection

## a) Situation in the sphere of media

The work of media in Kosovo is regulated through numerous legislative acts. From the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of expression and freedom of media<sup>1</sup> through laws regulating in different ways the area of media reporting, such as the work of national broadcaster, protection of privacy, hate speech, libel and insult, copyrights<sup>2</sup>. Law No. 06/L-081 on Access to Public Documents and the revised Law on the Public Broadcaster Service<sup>3</sup> are positive steps as resulting from a transparent procedure and against the inclusion of the representatives of the Kosovo Journalists Association, NGOs, professionals and holding public discussions.

The media scene in Kosovo is burdened with numerous problems. A great number of international and local reports evaluating the situation in media and freedom of speech state that "the efficient

implementation of legal guarantees is still missing for a few reasons: inadequate resources and insufficient capacity of relevant institutions, absence of political will and selective implementation, sluggish administrative procedures etc.<sup>4</sup>". According to the Reporters sans frontières index evaluating the situation for journalists, Kosovo advanced from 75th position in 2019 to 70th position in 2020 on the list of 180 places in total<sup>5</sup>. In the European Commission report on Kosovo it is pointed out that there is a certain level of change and that "the rule of law institutions have increased the follow-up to threats and attacks against journalists... The public broadcaster remains vulnerable to political pressure and influence... and a sustainable solution for the funding of the public broadcaster remains to be adopted<sup>6</sup>". In the 2019 Freedom House Country Report, Kosovo is assigned 2 of 4 points in part D, stating that the government and business interests exert undue influence on editorial lines, including RTK, and journalists report frequent harassment and intimidation<sup>7</sup>. On the IREX index of sustain-

1 <http://kryeministri-ks.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Ustav1.pdf>, Article 40

2 Law No.04 / L-046 on Radio Television of Kosovo; Civil Law No. 02 / L-65 against Libel and Insult; Law No. 04 / L-44 on Commission for Media Independence; Law No. 06 / L-081 on Access to Public Documents; Law No. 04 / L-137 on Protection of Journalists' Sources; Law No.6 / L-085 on Protection of Whistleblowers

3 <http://agk-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/KOS-SRB-2019.pdf>, p.10

4 European Commission, Kosovo 2019 Report, Brussels, p. 25. accessed on 18 October 2019: <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-Kosovo-report.pdf>, quoted according to <http://agk-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/KOS-SRB-2019.pdf> p. 9

5 <https://kossev.info/reporteri-bez-granica-srbija-pala-na-93-mesto-kosovo-se-popelo-na-70/>

6 Izveštaj EK o Kosovu: Uložiti napore u dijalog sa Srbijom i sprovesti reforme (glasamerike.net)

7 <https://freedomhouse.org/country/kosovo/freedom-world/2020>, part DI

ability of media, Kosovo's overall score in 2019 is 2.53, which is a slight drop in comparison to its overall score in 2018 which was 2.56, with a "near sustainability<sup>8</sup>" classification).

Difficulties stated as common for all media are political pressure, non-transparent financing, undeveloped media advertising market, i. e. pressures on RTK as the public service, which were not resolved by the introduction of independent manner of its financing. The cases of missing and murdered journalists in the period from 1998 to 2005, have not been resolved yet despite numerous initiatives of the Association of Serbian Journalists in Kosovo, Kosovo Journalists Association (UNK) or international organizations, first of all the OSCE Mission.

There are no detailed data on the situation in Serbian media in Kosovo, let alone systematically organized. In enclosure 1 to this report a list of active media reporting in Serbian is given. There are 48 such media in total, out of them 8 televisions, 21 radio stations, 13 online portals and 6 video productions. Some media collaborate through 3 networks – Kosma mreža, Mreža Most and Neza-visna TV mreža.

In Serb-populated places in Kosovo there are several sources of informing. Citizens are offered media contents provided by Kosovo media in Serbian, Albanian media and media from Serbia. In such situation Serbian media from Kosovo are not in equal position regarding production capacities, types and quantities of contents they produce on a daily basis.

Media in Kosovo reporting in Serbian are in the majority cases registered with the Independent Media Commission<sup>9</sup> pursuant to the Law No. 04/L-44 on the Independent Media Commission and can be classified on:

- Media the founder of which is the state (public enterprises or public service)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/pdf/media-sustainability-index-europe-eurasia-2019-full.pdf>, p.55

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.kpm-ks.org/assets/cms/uploads/files/1335250532.0606.pdf>

- Commercial media (resulting from entrepreneurial initiatives of their owners)
- Media functioning as registered non-governmental organizations
- Correspondents or correspondent offices of media or agencies based in Belgrade or abroad
- Local audio-video productions broadcasting their own program through partner media or the internet.

The best covered parts of Kosovo in terms of media reporting are central Kosovo and the north of Kosovo, whereas the poorest reporting coverage is that of Methoija, Gora (populated by the Gorani and the Bosniaks speaking Serbian and Bosnian respectively) and the municipality of Zubin Potok in the north of Kosovo. The same applies to the field work of media. Most reports are from central and northern Kosovo, as well as from Kosovsko Pomoravlje, while the least covered are Sirinička župa Metohije, Gora and the Municipality of Zubin Potok.

According to the manner of financing, media are divided into following categories:

- planned remittances from the Budget of Serbia (JP Mreža Most)
- funds allocated under the Electronic Media Co-funding Bidding called for by the Ministry of Culture and Informing of the Republic of Serbia
- funds allocated under bids called for by the Office for Community Affairs within the Office of the Prime Minister of Kosovo
- planned remittances from the Budget of the Assembly of Kosovo (RTK2)
- grants by international organizations and embassies under projects (the biggest grant providers for media in Serbian have been so far: OSCE, UNDP, USAID, NED, BTM, KFOS and embassies of Norway, the USA, Germany, Great Britain etc.)
- sponsorships (minimal and insignificant)
- advertising income (minimal and insignificant)

## b) Changes that are underway, current trends

All data obtained in the research indicate a polarization trend among Serbian media in Kosovo. Citizens in focus groups, representatives of media (owners, journalists, editors) and NGO representatives point to that issue.

There is a very pronounced division into media financed from the budget and functioning with various forms of support either by local authorities or from Serbia, and independent media companies dependent on project financing through project realization grants. All participants in the research are aware of this division when discussing different aspects of their work, such as the topics they cover, data and sources their reports are based on, security at work or degree of openness and tolerance to different opinions and protagonists.

This division is, in the opinion of experts in the sphere of media, seen as a trend that deepens with time and due to which independent media are in an increasingly difficult position when sustainability of their work is concerned. Dependence on grant providers and project financing makes work more difficult due to the absence of stable and long-term financing, while media activities are planned and conceived according to grant providers' requirements and in areas supported through their programs. This kind of work also requires changes in editorial boards as there is an increasing need to separate duties on journalist and administrative-financial. Given that editorial boards are predominantly smaller in number and the existing personnel also needs to deal with project administration, that is done to the detriment of journalist and investigative work.

## c) Who are important protagonists and what are their roles

The most important role in terms of ensuring pluralism in reporting is that of the Independent Media Commission (NKM). NKM is the principal independent regulatory body in charge of "issuing licenses to public and private broadcasters, pursuing the broadcasting policy and regulating rights, duties and responsibilities of physical and legal persons providing audio and audiovisual media services"<sup>10</sup>. Objections to the work of this body relate to simplified procedures and minimum requirements for media registration, selection of steering committee members by the Assembly of Kosovo and delays in instituting procedures and imposing fines for breaches of law<sup>11</sup>. Radio and television stations are within the competences of this body.

The Press Council<sup>12</sup> is in charge of monitoring compliance with the press code and journalist standards in print media and internet portals.

The law also regulates activities of the Public Broadcasting Service or RTK as the public service. Regulations on the public service require amendments which have been waited for years, particularly with regard to the provision of necessary independence, and currently this service is entirely reliant on state financing.

RTK2 is a channel in Serbian operating since 2012 and its scope of activities is defined by the Law on Radio Television of Kosovo<sup>13</sup>. This law guarantees earmarking 10 % of the public service budget for the work of this channel. In the amendments to the Law on RTK, tentatively adopted in 2019<sup>14</sup>, but not voted on in the Assembly of Kosovo, this provision is deleted. Adoption of such legal solution

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.kpm-ks.org/sr/kpm/311/per-kpm/311>

<sup>11</sup> <http://agk-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/KOS-SRB-2019.pdf>, p.10

<sup>12</sup> <http://presscouncil-ks.org/o-nama/?lang=sr>

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.rtklive.com/rtk2-arhiva/rtk/etc/rtk\\_uredba.pdf](https://www.rtklive.com/rtk2-arhiva/rtk/etc/rtk_uredba.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.radiokontaktplus.org/vesti/danas-razmatran-nacr-zakona-o-rtk/19910>



The most important role in terms of ensuring pluralism in reporting is that of the Independent Media Commission (NKM). NKM is the principal independent regulatory body in charge of “issuing licenses to public and private broadcasters, pursuing the broadcasting policy and regulating rights, duties and responsibilities of physical and legal persons providing audio and audiovisual media services”.

would make functioning of a channel in Serbian uncertain, as well as its existence and the future of employees.

RTK2 was launched pursuant to Article 59 of the Kosovo Constitution (Rights of Communities and Their Members) under which members of communities are entitled, individually or within a community, to:

“(Par. 11): establish and use their media, including provision of information in their language, among others, in daily newspapers and cable services, and through use of a reserved number of electronic media frequencies in accordance with the law and international standards. The Republic of Kosovo shall take all measures necessary for the provision of international frequency plan to enable Kosovo Serbs access to a licensed independent television channel in Serbian visible on the entire territory of Kosovo<sup>15</sup>”.

With regard to the above stated, it needs to be said that the Journalists’ Association of Serbia in Kosovo (UNS), as well as citizens, representatives of civil-society organizations and Serbian poli-

ticians believe that by launching RTK 2 Serbs in Kosovo were not granted what they are entitled to under Article 59, par. 11 of the Constitution of Kosovo.

Despite of the opposition by the Serbian media community in Kosovo and part of local and foreign professionals, as well as others who proposed an independent public television channel outside the public media service of Radio Television of Kosovo, members of the Assembly of Kosovo including the support of MPs from the Independent Liberal Party passed in 2012 the Law on Radio Television of Kosovo providing for a channel in Serbian – RTK 2. Shortly after that, RTK 2 was launched within RTK with the editorial office and technical support in the center of Prishtina and since then it has been broadcasting program through available cable operators south of the Ibar.

After passing the Law on RTK, Serbian media community strongly protested stating that RTK 2 was not the implementation of the constitutional provision on an independent channel in Serbian and since then it has been continuously pointing out how detrimental the existing solution has been and insisting on this right granted to the Serbian community.

Journalists gathered in the Journalists’ Association of Serbia in Kosovo which initiated the idea on a TV station in Serbian are against the imposed solutions for several reasons:

- The existing solutions, as they argue, do not guarantee that the channel in Serbian would belong to the Serbian community as it is anticipated by the Constitution of Kosovo (the provision on the channel in Serbian is not in the part dealing with general principles on the right to be informed and freedom of press, but in a separate chapter “Rights of Communities and Their Members”, as a specific right granted to the Serbian community);
- The existing solution does enable what is agreed, i. e. that the TV signal will cover the entire Kosovo because the channel is broad-

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.zka-rks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/US-TAV\\_REPUBLIKE\\_KOSOVO.pdf](http://www.zka-rks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/US-TAV_REPUBLIKE_KOSOVO.pdf), p 18.

cast through cable transmitters and does not cover the north of Kosovo.

- The existing solution does not guarantee that the channel will be independent (either editorially, technically, program-wise, human resources-wise or financially).

An important actor giving support to media and journalists is the Journalists' Association of Serbia in Kosovo which has been for a long time making efforts aimed at the improvement of the position and protection of journalists. In addition to that, the association regularly makes public announcements pointing to or condemning attacks on Serbian journalists and Serbian media and reacts in other cases when human or professional media rights, as well as the right to equality in the use of languages in Kosovo are threatened.

One of its successes in Kosovo is, in their opinion, to a great extent resolved the issue of translation at public events organized by Kosovo institutions, where in the majority of cases there was no translation into Serbian although under the Constitution and laws of Kosovo, Serbian is one of the official languages in Kosovo. After several years of persistent work, protests and pointing to that problem, the issue was partly resolved although there are still cases in which the right of journalists to use Serbian is not observed.

Journalists' Association of Serbia in Kosovo insists actively both with international and local institutions on resolving the issue of missing journalists, as well as the cases of murdered journalists in the period from 1998 until 2005 during which 17 journalists were killed and abducted.

This association has an active and successful cooperation with the Association of Journalists of Kosovo. They frequently jointly organize events aimed at improvement and protection of rights of journalists in Kosovo. On the occasion of the international day of freedom of media on 3 May, the two associations organized joint protests in Gračanica and Prishtina.



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#### d) Major issues

Given the complex circumstances in which they work and numerous political and economic problems faced by Kosovan society, it can be said that Serbian media in Kosovo function with a significant number of difficulties.

Non-transparent budgetary financing is a key issue and it entirely determines the conditions and ways in which media function and, as a consequence, there is a pronounced inequality in the position of media houses. Divisions among media is an issue stated by all research participants no matter whether they are from media, NGOs or are just citizens. The division into media financed from local budgetary funds and funds from Serbia (first of all by the Office for Kosovo and Metohija), and independent media relying primarily on project finance is stated as a key determinant affecting all segments of work, from the selection of topics and manner how they are dealt with, sources of information and availability of key political protagonists important for reporting on events and processes both in Serbian community and Kosovan society as a whole.

Media relying on funding through grants are in a far less favorable position as their work and capacities are directly dependent on projects. For that reason those media have insufficient capacities, most importantly journalists in editorial offices, which limits the scope of topics they can cover and reduces their abilities to deal with topics and processes of importance for the

society and citizens in a more profound and systematic way.

Another important issue Serbian media in Kosovo are facing is a still present unavailability of representatives of institutions and local and central authorities for comments predominantly to independent media. As to availability of information from institutions, journalists claim they have difficulties to obtain information from institutions primarily at the local level, whereas in relations with central-level institutions there is still a problem in obtaining official documents in Serbian, which although guaranteed in certain cases, either do not exist or are inadequately translated. Inability to get timely responses and reliable, official data affect the work of journalists and deprive citizens of relevant information and thus undermine credibility of journalists' work.

Domination of politics in all segments of life in Kosovo is also reflected on the work of media. Political developments, first of all those at the international level relating to the negotiations with Serbia and position of the Serbian community in Kosovo are priorities in reporting and make a major part of media production. In a situation in which politics is of primary importance for the life of citizens and which is expected to resolve long-standing processes, media, in addition to their limited capacities, are given very little space to deal with other topics such as everyday life of citizens, stories putting citizens in the focus or developments and problems of the majority community. Media representatives state there is a need to present citizens positive, local success stories, life in other communities, life of the majority population or examples of mutual cooperation.



Domination of politics in all segments of life in Kosovo is also reflected on the work of media. Political developments, first of all those at the international level relating to the negotiations with Serbia and position of the Serbian community in Kosovo are priorities in reporting and make a major part of media production.

## 2. Goal of the study and research methodology (quantitative + qualitative)

### a) Goal of the research

The primary goal of the research in the sphere of media is to determine the extent to which media in the Serbian language in Kosovo have an impact on openness, availability, different opinions and topics in their community. The main research question is: Are Serbian media in Kosovo open to different topics and opinions and to what extent?

### b) Description of methodology design and its relation to the goal of the study

Given the importance of objective, truthful and timely informing as an essential condition for development of society and citizens who understand occurrences, processes and functioning of communities, an attempt is made in the analysis to present a framework within which Serbian media in Kosovo function and what challenges impact their openness and ability to give contribution to social dialogue. Findings of the analysis and the research on opinion of citizens and representatives of media will serve as a contribution to the Open initiative in developing an open and dynamic space for discussion within the Serbian community, between the Serbian and other communities, as well as institutions in Kosovo through defining the

existing situation and devising recommendations based on the results. The findings will be a valid basis for advocacy among citizens, as well as members of institutions of local and central government and international community.

### ● METHODOLOGY OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

In the research of the impact of media on openness and democratization of a community different research techniques were employed.

The legal framework defining work and independence of media in Kosovo was examined through desk research and analysis and indices of media freedoms and freedom of expression are presented.

#### SEMI-STRUCTURED IN-DEPT INTERVIEWS -

there were 13 interviews with journalists, editors and owners of Serbian media, as well as representatives of institutions and international organizations dealing with the issues of freedom of speech and work of media. During the interviews data on views on conditions in which media function were gathered (framework of activities and how they are carried out) as well as availability of sources, current possibilities of media to improve, in addition to informing, the openness of society,

as well as limitations the interviewees encounter in their work.

**FOCUS GROUPS** – there were three focus groups within the research, two in the north of Kosovo and one in the south. Focus group participants were citizens, journalists and representatives of NGOs. The average number of focus

group participants was six. Talks took approximately one and a half hours. Participants expressed their views on the work of media in terms of their openness to different opinions and topics, perceptions of citizens on what topics and which protagonists should be more present in media, and gave recommendations for a greater democratization of society.

### FOCUS GROUPS

**Time:**

The research was conducted from 15 October 2020 until 20 November 2020

**Research instrument:**

Talk guide

**No. of focus groups:**

3 focus groups

**Total No. of participants:**

16 participants (5 participants per focus group on average)

**Criteria for selection of participants:**

criteria for the selection focus group participants are: sex, age, place of residence, type of employment (we tried to include employees in public institutions, private sector, as well as civil-society organizations and media)

### INTERVIEWS

**Time:**

The research was conducted from 15 October until 25 November 2020

**Research instrument:**

Interview guide

**Total No. of interviewees:**

14 të interviewees

**Criteria for interviewee selection:**

the interviewees were journalists, correspondents, editors, media owners, representatives of grant providers and civil-society organizations.

## METHODOLOGY OF QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

<b>1</b>	<b>Time</b>	The research was conducted in the period from 1 October until 20 October 2020
<b>2</b>	<b>Manner of data gathering:</b>	face-to-face (F2F), field research (D2D)
<b>3</b>	<b>Manner of control of interviewers' work:</b>	Google maps (GPS) live location sharing
<b>4</b>	<b>Type:</b>	Google maps (GPS) live location sharing
<b>5</b>	<b>Research instrument:</b>	Google maps (GPS) live location sharing
<b>6</b>	<b>Population:</b>	18+
<b>7</b>	<b>Type of sample:</b>	Non-random, quota
<b>8</b>	<b>Quota determining criterion:</b>	Size of the municipality of residence according to predetermined quotas for municipalities and settlements south (287/300) and north of the Ibar (295/300)
<b>9</b>	<b>Sample size:</b>	582 respondents residing in the Serbian community in Kosovo
<b>10</b>	<b>Confidence interval:</b>	+/- 5 % for 50 % expected incidence
<b>11</b>	<b>Disclaimer</b>	Due to the fact that there are no statistical data on demographic structure of the targeted population, i. e. Serbian population in Kosovo, it could only conditionally be said that it is a representative sample.

## 3. Results of the research and their contextualization

With an aim of a comprehensive presentation of current conditions in the work of Serbian media their work is analyzed through various segments, such as audience (ways of informing citizens and confidence in media, interest in different topics, perception of media contents) and security of journalists as an element having effect on freedom in work.

### Audience - ways of informing and confidence in media

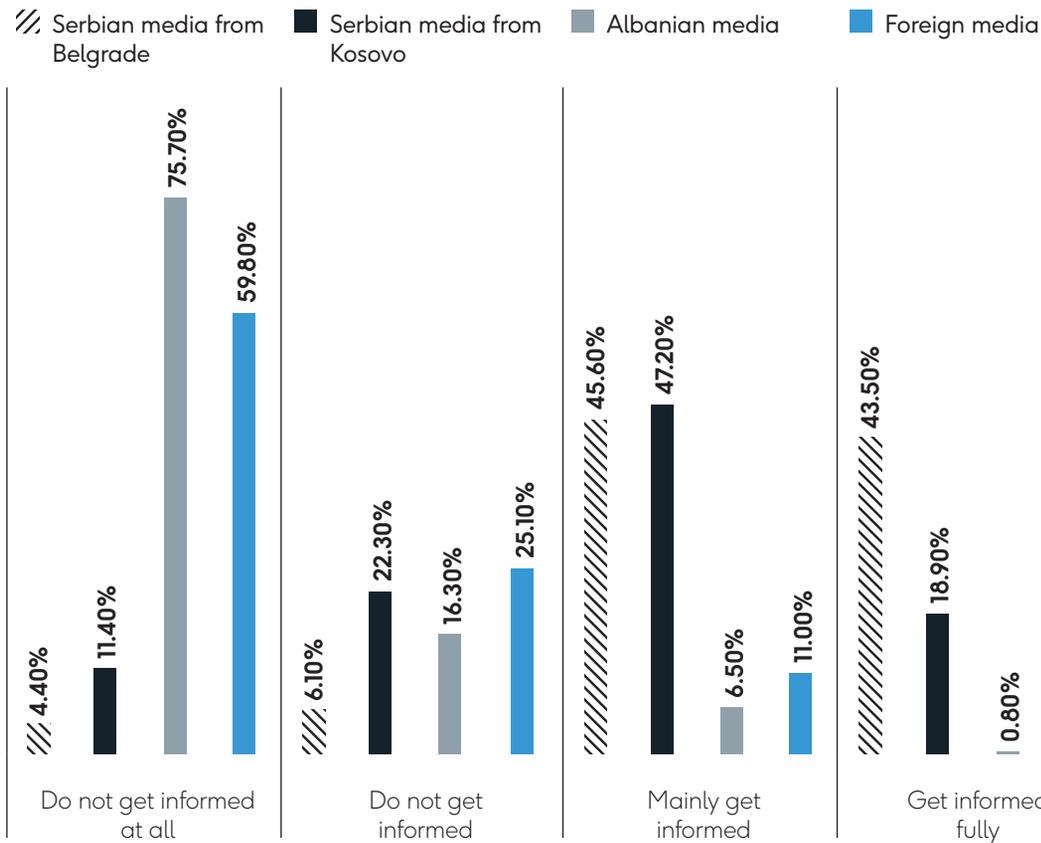
In the assessment of the impact of Serbian media in Kosovo, audience behavior is an important factor, i. e., ways in which citizens are informed. In addition to media from their communities, citizens of Serbian ethnicity may be informed from Serbian, Albanian and international media. A dominant source of informing for the majority of citizens are media from Belgrade. As many as 43.5 % of respondents are fully and 47.20 % are mainly informed from these media. Serbian media from Kosovo are an important source of information for 18.9 % of citizens who are fully informed from them, whereas 45.6 % are mainly informed from them.

These data are not surprising given the fact that media from Belgrade are a traditional source of informing, particularly of senior citizens who primarily obtain information on RTS. The other factor of relevance for such habits of the audience is a

diversity of media forms which cannot be offered by Serbian media from Kosovo as they cannot compete with big media companies and their production, particularly when movies and documentary program are concerned. Media representatives say that a distinction should be made between informing on local topics covered by media from Kosovo and the areas such as international politics, global events or entertainment program offered by media from Serbia.

A significantly smaller number of citizens rely on informing from foreign media (3 % fully and 11 % mainly), and they are predominantly younger and educated respondents. Albanian media are the rarest source of information and 6.5 % of participants in the survey rely on them mainly, and 0.8 % fully as sources of information.

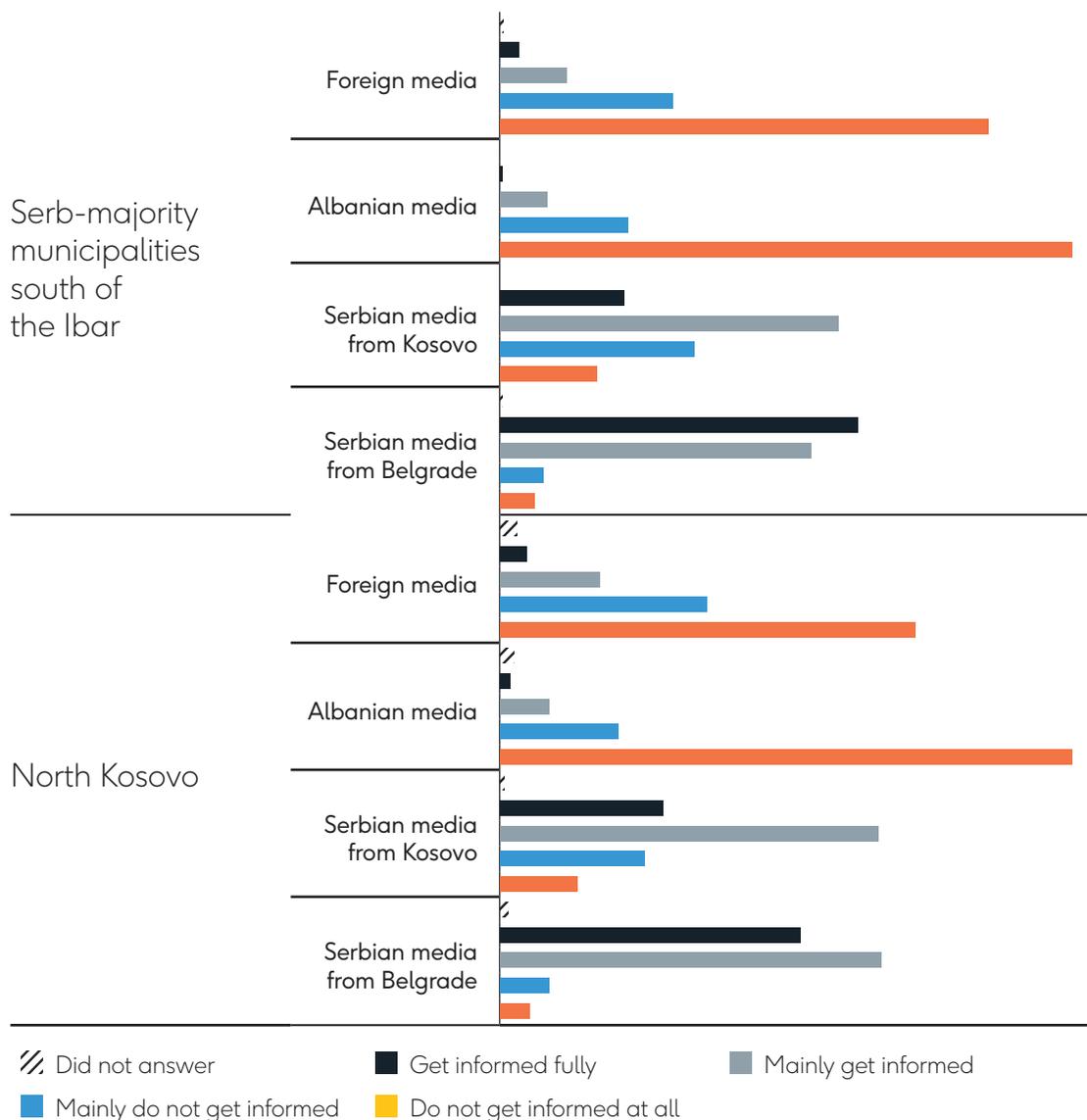
**Graph 1.** Presentation of answers to the question "From which media are you informed?"



As to the place of residence there are differences in answers about dominant source of informing, with 47.6 % of respondents south of the Ibar who are fully informed from Belgrade media, whereas that percentage is somewhat lower in case of respondents living in the north of Kosovo, i. e. 39.3%.

The answer that they are informed fully from Serbian media in Kosovo is given by 21.3 % of respondents from the north of Kosovo and by 16.6 % of respondents from the Serb-majority municipalities south of the Ibar.

**Graph 2.** Answers to the question "From which media do you most frequently obtain information?" – distribution of answers according to place of residence "



Televisions as a daily source of information on politics are dominant. 45.5 % of citizens state they obtain information on politics on television on a daily basis, whereas one third of the total number of respondents use either online newspapers (31.1 %) or online news, web pages or blogs (32.3 %). These ways of informing are also dominant in

answers on occasional obtaining information on politics expressed through the number of days of use in a week. Radio and press are the rarest ways of obtaining information on politics, and as many as 48.2 % of respondents state they never obtain information on the radio and 36.5 % never obtain information from the press.

**Table 1.** In the past three months, how many days in a week on the average did you obtain information on politics from different types of media sources such as:

	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	S	NA
<b>Printed newspapers</b>	36,5	11,5	6,1	4,4	2,6	3,3	1,5	6,7	0,5
<b>Radio</b>	48,2	14,3	12,4	8,5	5,9	3,5	1,2	5,9	0,1
<b>Television</b>	8,1	6,1	4,5	8,7	8,1	9,6	9,5	45,5	0
<b>Online newspapers</b>	23,1	6,4	7	6,9	7,1	9,8	7	31,1	1,6
<b>Online news, web pages or blogs</b>	24,4	5	6,6	7,1	8,5	7,4	8	32,2	0,9

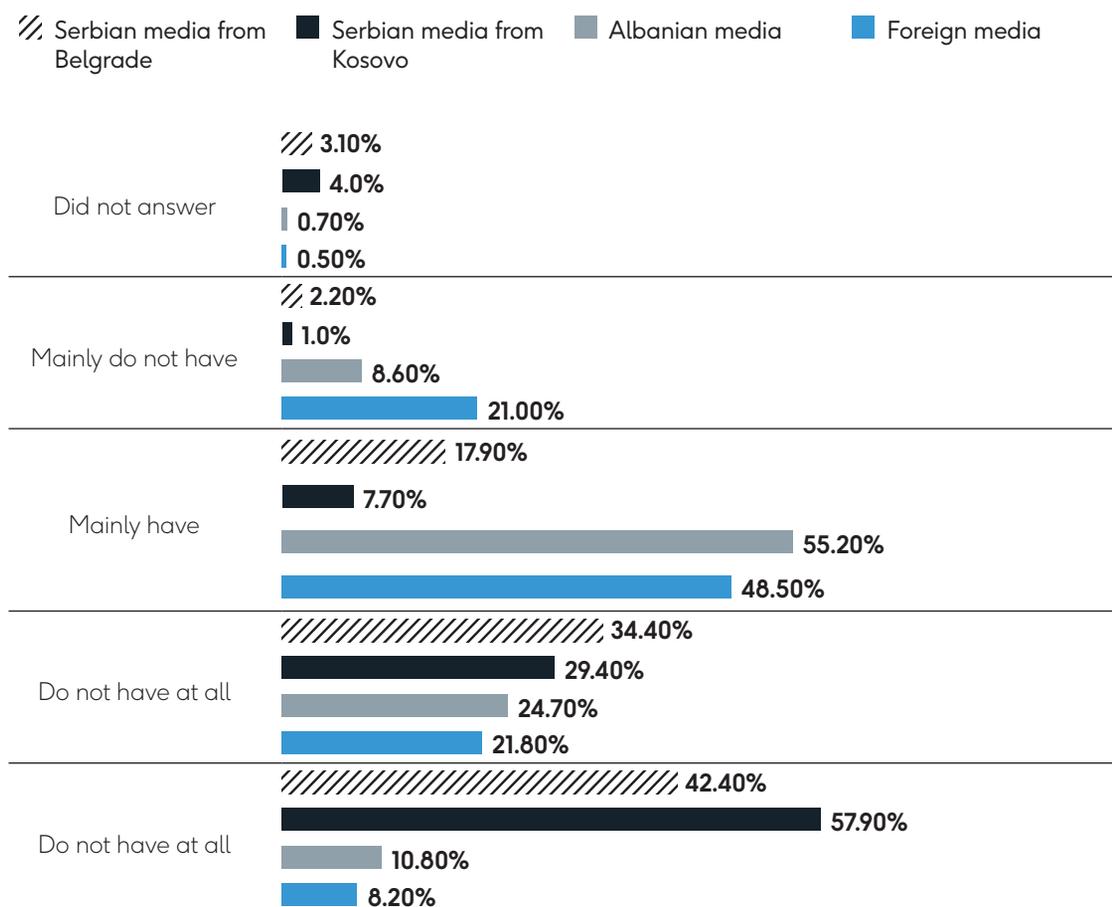
**N** - never; **1** - 1 day a week; **2** - 2 day a week; **3** - 3 day a week; **4** - 4 day a week;  
**5** - 5 day a week; **6** - 6 day a week; **S** - every day; **NA** - did not answer; values are expressed in %.

The greatest confidence in media is in correlation with the data on sources of informing, i. e. the greatest confidence is shown to media in Serbia. Almost three fourths of respondents state they have confidence in these media, out of which 50 % of citizens state they have confidence and 22.8 % state they have full confidence in information obtained from these media. Citizens express a significantly high confidence in Serbian media in Kosovo, with 8.8 % with full confidence, and 57.8 % of respondents state they have confidence in the reporting of these media.

The greatest non-confidence is expressed to information obtained from Albanian media (as many as 61.2 % have no confidence at all, whereas 22.3 % of respondents mainly do not have confidence),

and this datum should be interpreted in the context of a language barrier, i. e. inability to understand the content of information obtained from these media. Citizens have access to a small number of translated texts, i. e. they are still an inaccessible source of information for the citizens of Kosovo of Serbian ethnicity. A significant number of citizens, between one fourth and one third, do not have confidence in media which report in Serbian. Somewhat greater non-confidence is expressed to local media (10.4 % have no confidence at all and 22.3 % mainly have no confidence) than to media from Serbia (71% have no confidence at all and 19.3 % mainly have no confidence), which should be an impetus to local media, first of all those financed from the budget, to make efforts to regain audience confidence.

**Graph 3.** How much confidence do you have in the following media?



## Interests and habits of audience

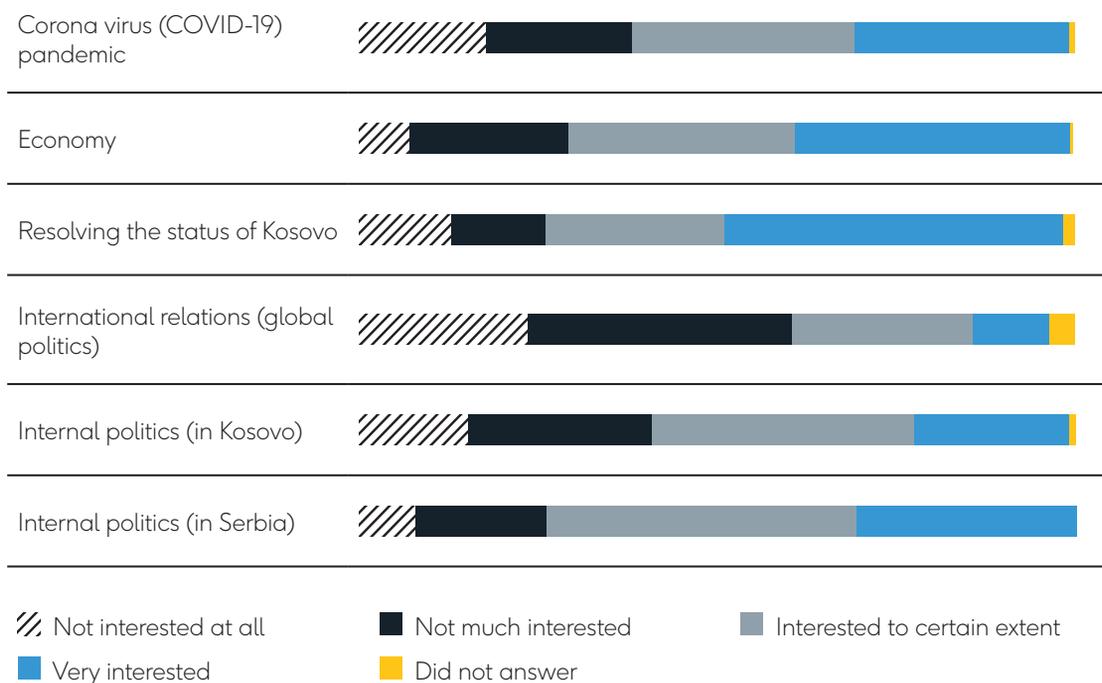
Citizens express the greatest individual interest for the issue of resolving the status of Kosovo, and 47.5 % of respondents are very interested, while 24.7 % of them are interested in information on this topic. This datum is expected given how long the process takes and a high score given to the importance of this issue for citizens. Representatives of media agree with this view, stating that the issue of status is very important for the citizens of Kosovo of Serb ethnicity as it is directly linked to the position of Serbian community and exercising their rights. Citizens do not know what the outcome will be and they have great expectations because it should provide a framework within

which the Serbs will function, i. e. it should provide mechanisms for exercising their rights in all segments of life.

Almost identical interest citizens show for internal politics in Serbia. Thus, one third of respondents, i. e. 30.1%, of them are very interested in it, and 44 % are mainly interested to be informed on this topic. Such interest, in the opinion of media representatives, can be explained with close ties with Serbia, i. e. the fact that Serbia and its representatives are active participants in the dialogue process and citizens have high expectations of them. They show interest in those negotiating on their behalf and who could have an impact on the outcome of negotiations and therefore on their position.

A significant interest is shown in economic topics (70.3 % are to some extent interested and interested), in the Corona virus pandemic (61.2 % are to some extent interested and interested), Kosovo internal politics (74.1 % are to some extent interested and interested) and Serbian internal politics (58.4 % are to some extent interested and interested). The significance of information relating to these topics is recognized both by journalists and editors of Serbian media from Kosovo.

**Graph 4.** Presentation of distribution of interest of respondents in certain information and topics available in media

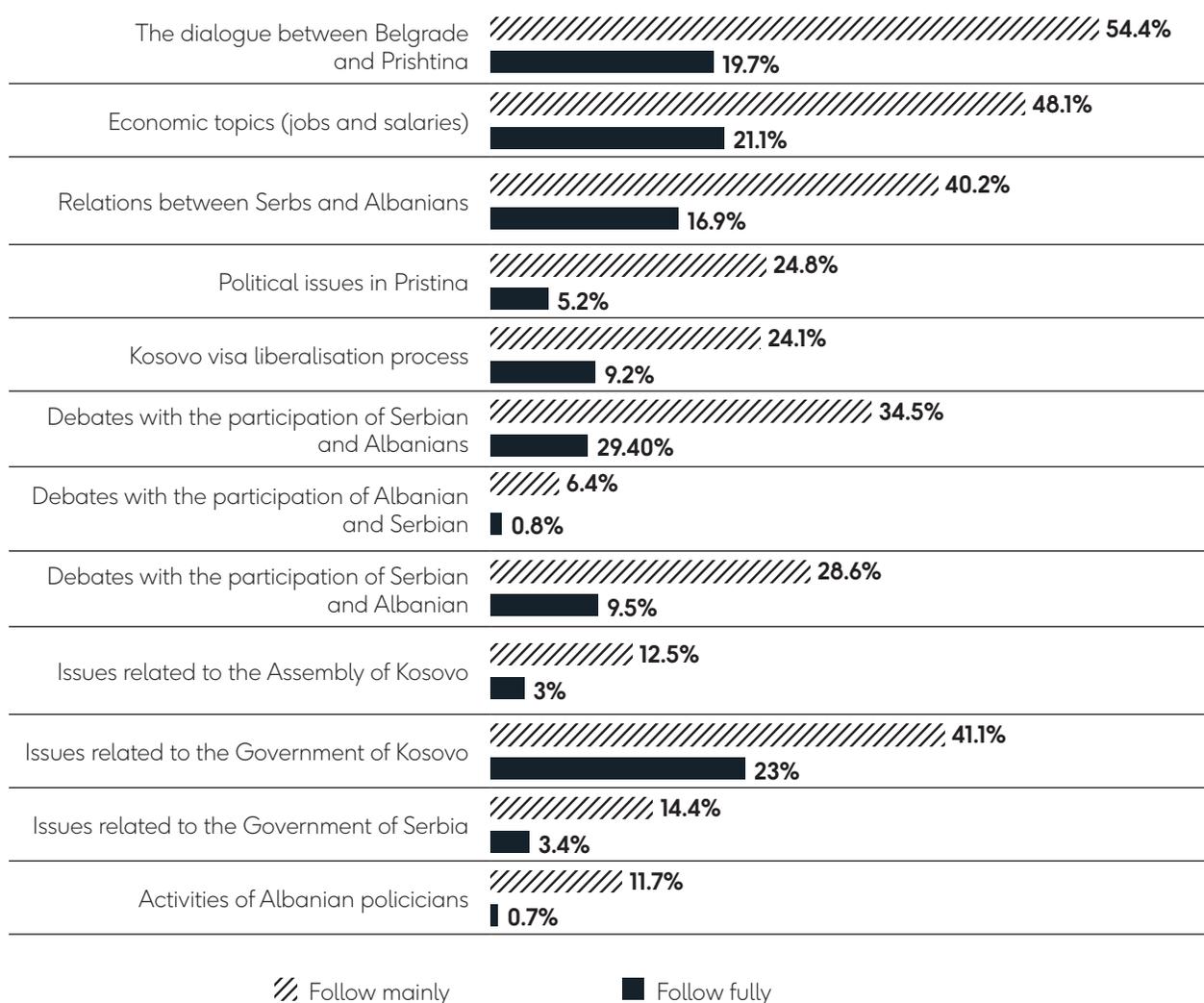


In the segment of media contents citizens answered which topics from the political domain defined as significant for their life and work they follow. Among the topics followed by the citizens fully or mainly followed by them are the dialogue between Belgrade and Prishtina, economic topics (jobs and salaries), relations between Serbs and Albanians and issues relating to the Government of Kosovo. An interesting datum is a significant interest in debates with the participation of Serbian or Serbian and Albanian politicians. This datum, in addition to that obtained from journalists and editors that there are very few debates in which politicians exchange opinions, show that viewers and listeners are interested in this form of media content and that they are keen on following them if that is possible.

The interviewed journalists and editors state that citizens are interested in economic topics, i. e. all information on (the opportunities of) employment, standard of living and economic development because they are in direct correlation with the quality of life. What is observed by the representatives of media as being read or watched are information on the pandemic as something that has significantly affected the life of citizens due to posing threat to health and having a direct influence on their everyday life, the

way they function, their movements, as well as its (adverse) impact on economic growth. In addition to that, local community and service information are most important for all categories of respondents, i. e. they comprise the biggest part of information they seek through local media. Representatives of media say they observed that citizens have a need for affirmative local stories in the form of articles or coverages on their successful fellow citizens. Success of the young in sport, good business ideas, examples of cooperation among the citizens of Serbian and other ethnicities are stories appealing to them. That way, citizens seek relief from being burdened with politics and political developments relating to long-term processes.

**Graph 5.** Topics followed in media in the Serbian language



On the other hand, topics for which citizens do not show interest are debates between Albanian politicians (85 %), coverages of the Assembly of Kosovo meetings (69.8 %) or developments in the Government of Serbia (68.2 %).

## Views on the work of media and confidence in media

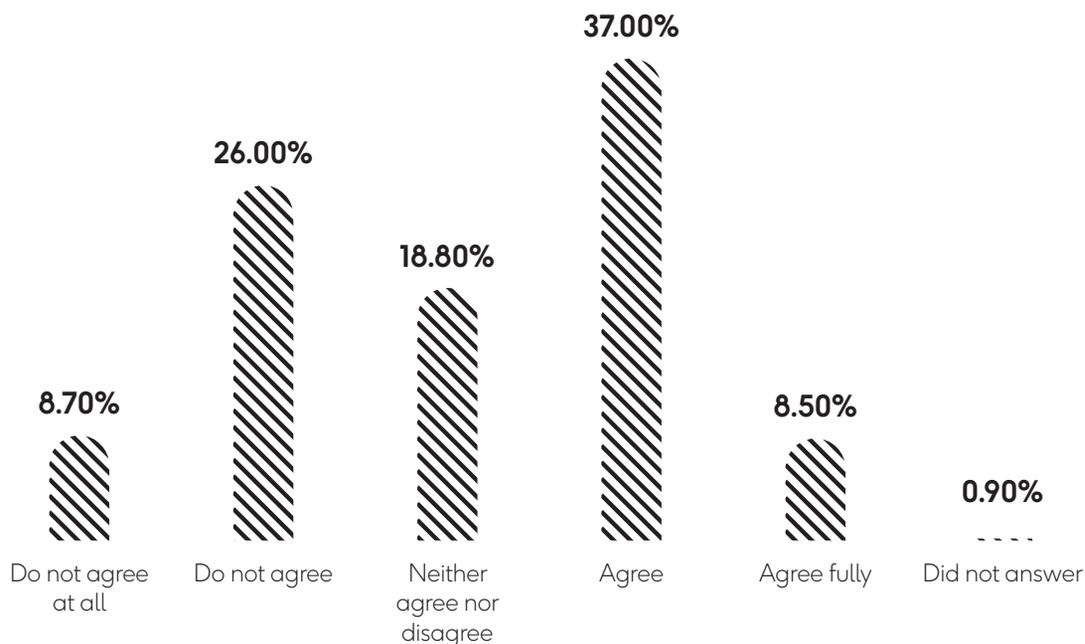
This chapter deals with the perception of citizens and media representatives of the work of media and confidence in them through a number of segments such as truthful reporting, favorizing certain parties, neglect of certain topics or actors, critical analysis of topics and manifestations from different perspectives, openness to different topics, as well as neglect and non-reporting on certain issues of importance. An attempt was made to determine prevailing views on the work of Serbian media in Kosovo. These data may be used as a basis on which media houses themselves and their representatives could be better familiarized with the preferences of their audience and identify areas and approaches the improvement of which may lead to a more

adequate and more responsive approach in processing and presentation of media contents to the public. That way media will obtain information on the aspects seen by citizens as problematic and the improvement of which requires further efforts.

Somewhat less than a half of respondents believe that media communicate true information (8.5 % fully agree and 37 % agree with the statement). Slightly more than a third of respondents, on the other hand, do not believe that reporting is truthful. A significant number of citizens do not state any view on this issue. This is an important datum for media indicating it is necessary to boost confidence of citizens in them.

Citizens and representatives of media who participated in focus groups believe that these data re-

**Graph 6.** I believe that media communicate true information



flect actual views, as their views on different media differ and consequently their views on how truthful the reporting of different media is. Experts and representatives of media point out that media reporting, particularly of those that are independent in terms of financing, is based on truthful and reliable information and that so far there have been no cases of publishing false information or information presenting certain events ambiguously.

Journalists and editors state that journalists and independent media are cautious in their work, that they have been used to present data to the public thoughtfully and carefully, particularly when it is about topics like local policy, the dialogue or relations between the Serbs and the Albanians, as these are delicate issues which might result in overheated intolerance or confusion among citizens. The complexity of political situation and the history of relations between the two communities is an important factor requiring careful and unbiased reporting, predominantly on political topics.

*We weigh every word. Words are to be carefully chosen, how to say something without hurting someone's feelings. There is less untruthfulness here than in media from Serbia or those from Prishtina. Journalists are more cautious. Probably because they are between two fires. (editor, Mitrovica)*

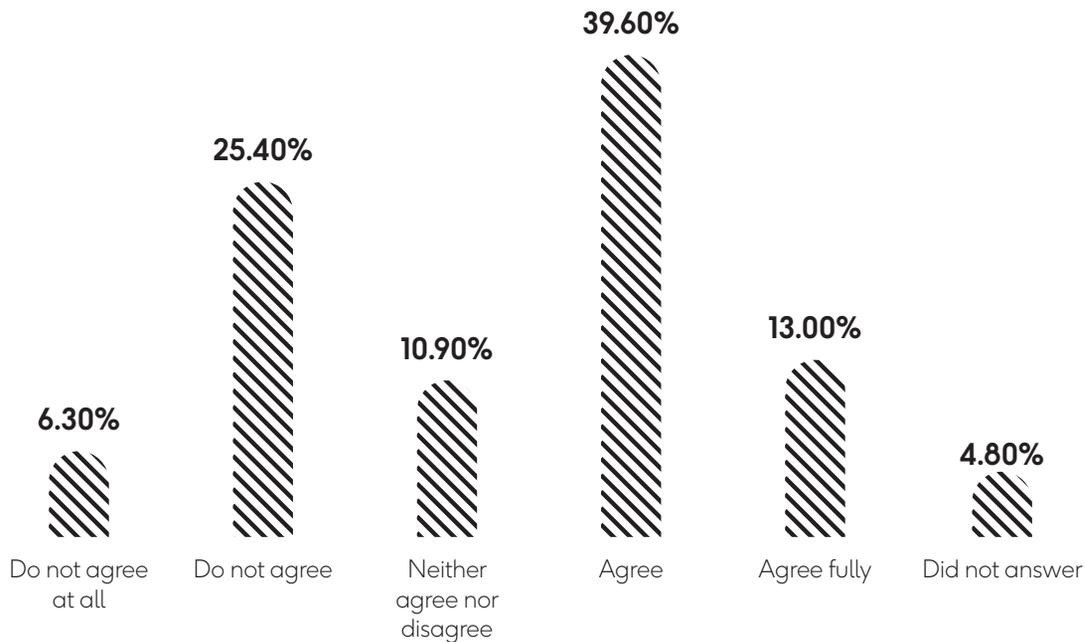
*We mainly communicate views, not news, or something that has been detected. It is difficult to talk about untruthfulness as it is only communication of statements or responses. There is no fake news or very few. (journalist, Prishtina)*

Somewhat more than a half of citizens agree with the view that information they obtain on media are biased, i. e. that they favor one party in their reporting. Due to the data on great nonconfidence in the truthfulness of what is reported, media, primarily those financed from the budget, need to make efforts to win confidence of citizens in their work. 13 % of the respondents in the survey fully agree, whereas 39.6 % of them agree with the stated view.

According to journalists and editors, a problematic segment in the work of budget-financed media is that regarding reporting on the work of local politicians and local institutions. They are of opinion that in their reporting communication of statements or announcements of politicians dominates and that they do not ask questions. A part of citizens in focus groups is of opinion that media financed from the budget predominantly communicate statements and with such approach it is not possible to talk about truthfulness or untruthfulness of information.

Citizens are predominantly of opinion that information they obtain from media are biased, favorizing one party in their reporting. Out of the total number, 52.6 % of citizens agree that reporting is biased, whereas about one third of respondents state they do not agree with the statement (25.4 %) or that they do not agree at all (6.3 %). Citizens and journalists believe that media financed from the budget favor views and opinions of local authorities and official institutions.

**Graph 7.** I believe that the information I obtain from media are biased and that they favorize one party

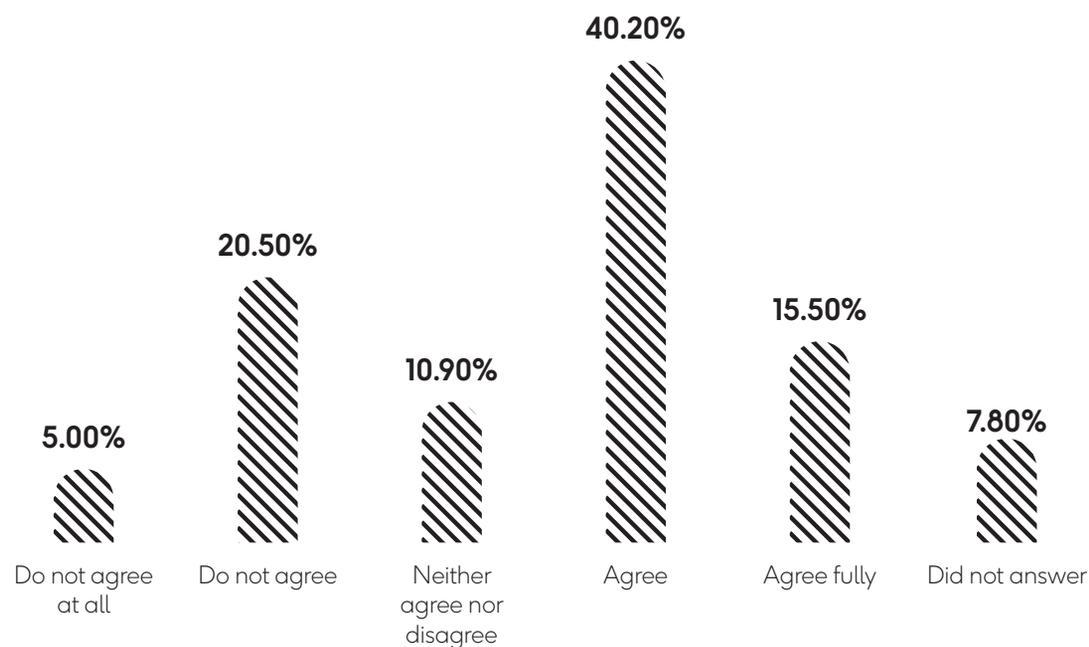


As a support to the view of division among Serbian media in Kosovo there are data on the perception of reporting on politics, and on part of media ignoring certain topics or not dealing with them from several aspects. Statements of the representatives of authorities or institutions are not questioned, there is no investigative work to check the statements, pointing to inconsistencies with the situation on the spot or confronting protagonists with data or documents which could deny statements made on television or on media financed from the budget. Participants in the research are of opinion that independent media offer a broader perspective, especially on portals, through

more in-depth analyses, by publishing comments given by analysts and experts from Serbian and Albanian communities, and through translations of analyses, articles from print media in Albanian or investigative articles or articles with thematic analyses.

A bit more than a half of citizens indicate that certain political topics are neglected (55.7 % in total, out of which 15.5 % fully agree and 40.3 % agree with the offered statement). Only one fourth of respondents believe there are no neglected topics on politics. 10.9 % of respondents do not have an opinion on that issue.

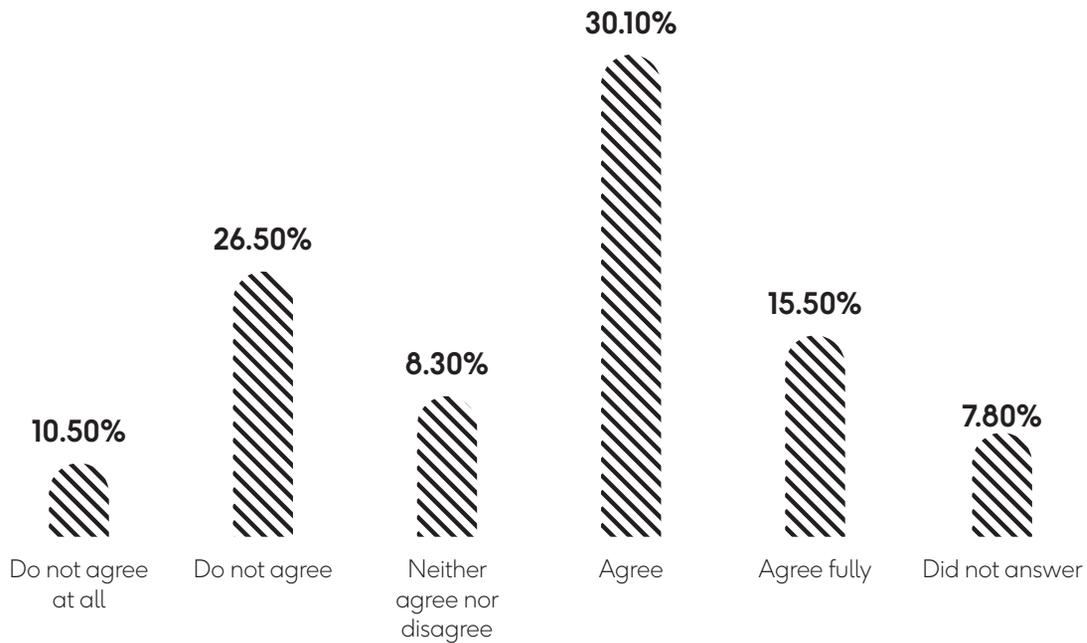
**Grafiku 8.** When it is about politics and political developments media entirely ignore certain topics



Opinions are also polarized, yet to some extent more favorable when it is about the perception of critical dealing with topics and their viewing from different aspects as opposed to the perception of reporting on political topics. 30.1 % of respondents agree and 7 % fully agree with the statement that media are making efforts to give a critical over-

view on the topic reported on. There is almost an identical percentage of those who are of different opinion (38.2 %) which may serve as an imperative for media as citizens recognize and require a more versatile perspective in the treatment and presentation of topics in media. 16 % of respondents do not have a clear view on this question.

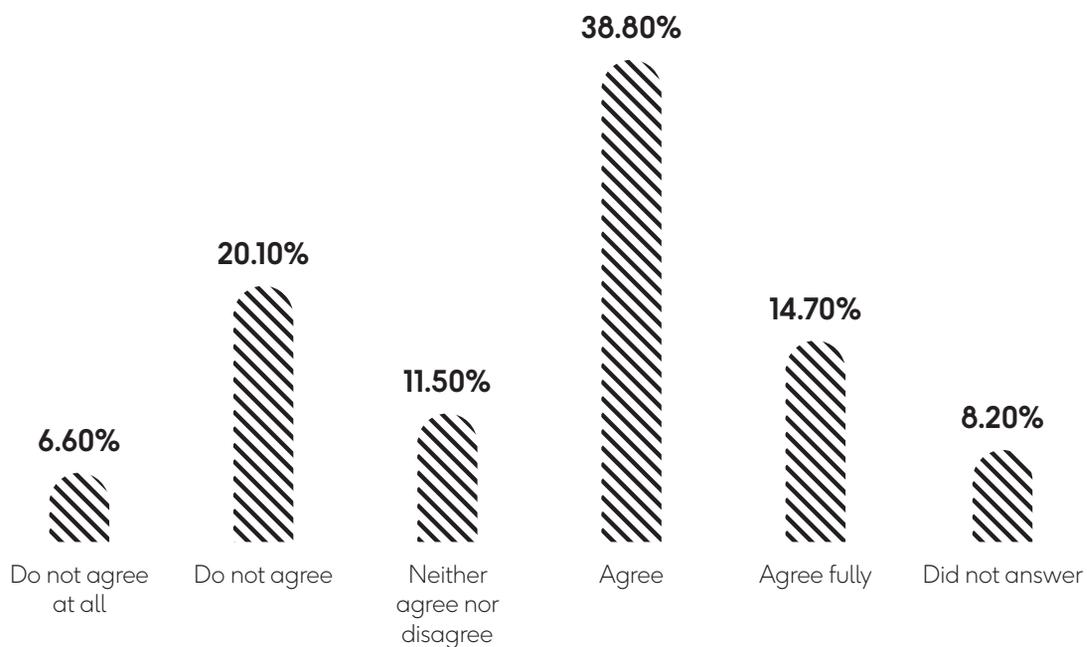
**Grafiku 9.** When media report on certain event they are trying to treat it critically and from several aspects



The most negatively evaluated aspect of work of Serbian media in Kosovo is their openness to certain persons and ideas. More than a half of participants in the survey either agree (38.8 %)

or fully agree (14.7 %) with the view on insufficient openness of media. There is a significantly lower percentage of those who either do not agree (20.1 %) or do not agree at all (6.6 %).

**Grafiku 10.** Media are not open to certain persons or certain ideas



Experts also insist on the stated division between media regarding their openness. In their opinion, media financed from the budget demonstrate a much lower degree of openness to topics, collocutors and opinions differing from the official views of the structures in power. Prevailing contents are those of activities of local authorities or the authorities from Serbia, particularly when it is about issues relating to the dialogue between Belgrade and Prishtina and various aspects of Brussels negotiations. Focus group participants state that although representatives of local authorities can be seen or heard in media favorizing them, they can rarely see them in live coverages and they do not participate in live shows. That way, even media which have access to politicians are not given an opportunity to have dialogue with them.

On the other hand, the evaluation of independent media is better regarding their openness to different opinions and topics both by citizens and representatives of media and NGOs. They present a much broader scope of collocutors including experts, analysts, citizens or public figures who are willing to state their opinion on different issues and topics, as well as on socio-political developments the impact of which is not known to a major part of Serbian community in Kosovo. The missing segment in independent media are representatives of institutions and local authorities. The majority of journalists and editors who participated in interviews state it is not possible for them to reach representatives of the authorities. There are no answers to questions they ask, i. e. journalists do not have an opportunity to ask them questions at official events. In addition to that there is a negative experience of not being invited to press conferences and public events or representatives of the authorities refusing to answer their questions.

Statements of representatives of institutions is another segment which could improve media contents presented to the public. Journalists and editors state difficulties in accessing institutions or representatives of institutions refusing to answer questions of journalists. There are numerous examples of journalists sending requests for information

of public importance the access to which is free, yet with no responses to them. Journalists also state they get official responses which do not provide information on the activities of the institution to which their questions relate. Translation of documents into Serbian has been a problem pointed out by journalists and journalist associations for years. This is gradually improving, but representatives of media share the opinion that central-level institutions need to make much more efforts to resolve this issue.

*They do not invite us to conferences. Sometimes we would wait in front of institutions and it looked as if we had been camping there. We are following what is going on and we guess when they might appear. (journalist, online portal)*

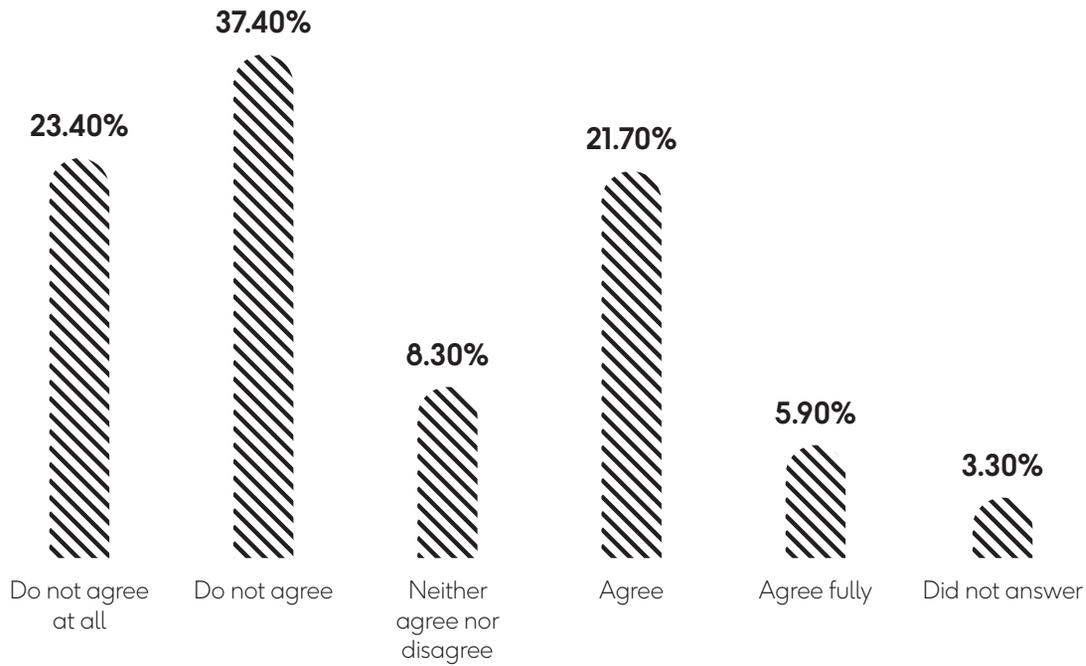
*It seems they are even not willing to give answers to their media. Instead, they sent announcements. (citizens)*

*We could not recognize their voices. They keep sending announcements. (editor, online portal)*

*They avoid all situations in which someone might ask them questions. They are asked why what was announced has not been done, what they promised, what the costs of works are, how contractors were selected (journalist, portal)*

Independence of media, i. e. a possibility to independently decide how to report, according to a significant number of citizens, does not exist. There are significantly more those citizens who believe media are not independent. Out of the total number of participants 60.8 % of respondents do not agree with the statement that media independently decide on how to report, and out of that percentage 23.4 % do not agree at all and 37.4 % do not agree. Contrary to that, approximately one fourth of the respondents agree with the statement.

**Graph 11.** I believe that media are independent and that they independently decide how to report

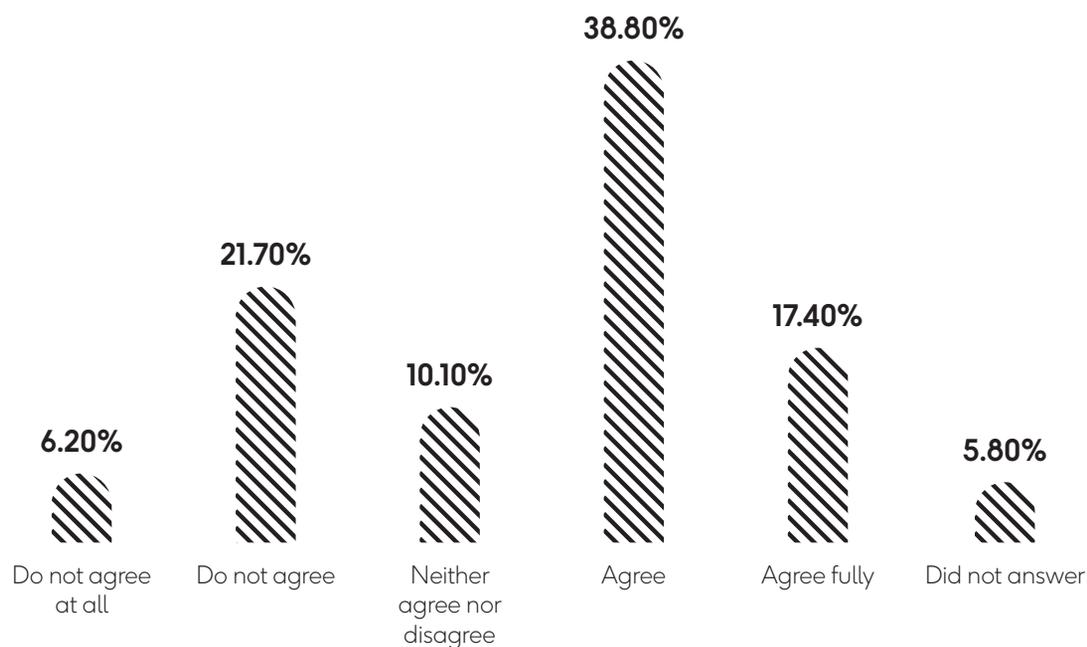


Citizens recognize local politicians and representatives of the authorities as those exerting pressure on media. They believe that dependence on budgetary funds makes media follow and report on the activities without any questioning and criticism. On the other hand, journalists and representatives of media financed through grants state there is no pressure on them or attempts to influence them how to report.

*They have to listen to those financing them.  
(general view of citizens in focus groups)*

*There are no pressures from grant providers. It has never happened that someone asks from us to change something or to withdraw something we published. (editor, online portal)*

**Graph 12.** I frequently notice that certain important news are not in media



## Hate speech

An important segment indicating objective informing and promotion of tolerance and openness to the different in the broadest sense is the absence of hate speech.

Journalists and editors from Serbian media who participated in the research point out that when analyzing such manifestations it is necessary to bear in mind the division into independent media and media financed from local budgets. A general evaluation is that in Serbian media in Kosovo hate speech is not present to a significant extent, and if there is, it comes from media financed from the budget. Representatives of media are of opinion that there is a developed awareness of professional standards among journalists and that occasional cases predominantly appear on web pages of media houses and to a lesser extent in programs broadcast on the radio or television.

A common evaluation of representatives of media and citizens is that hate speech is not directed to members of other ethnicities in Kosovo to a significant extent. If data on the perception of hate

speech toward the Albanian, the Gorani or the Roma population as the most numerous groups are observed, there is, according to respondents, a somewhat greater percentage of hate speech toward Albanians, which is 11 % of those who state that hate speech mainly exists, whereas 4.9 % of them state it exists toward the Roma and 2.7 % state it exists toward the Gorani population.

The observed hate speech predominantly relates to the members of Serbian community, i. e. it is directed toward that part of the community with which common political views are not shared or when it is about different opinion on cooperation with representatives of other communities.

Thus, journalists give examples of offensive terms directed to the members of the majority people, but the most dominant practice is that of terming politically dissenting members of own community "traitors" and "those paid from abroad". The most extreme example of this kind of reporting are attacks and reporting on Oliver Ivanović.

*There is no direct hate speech in Serbian media.*

Once, on TV Most an offensive term was used, but it was removed from the portal. It is more about the tone that the other community is viewed negatively. The opposition as well. Although the opposition is everyone saying or stating something contrary to the opinion of those in power. (journalist, online portal)

Language is offensive sometimes in pro-government media. The Albanians are called offensive names on portals. There were also complaints due to that. (correspondent, RTK)

Hate speech? There is hate speech in announcements made by Srpska lista. Media do not create such contents, but they report as something is stated. In my opinion there is much less of it due to political situation. (journalist)

Citizens also recognize that those who are not politically like-minded are objects of hate speech, thus 8.3 % of respondents say it is fully present, and 28.8 % say it is partly present. Somewhat less than a third of citizens believe there is hate speech toward the Serbs who cooperate with the Albanians (7.4 % agree fully and 17.4 % say it is mainly present). Negative reporting on the Serbs cooperating with foreigners is present according to one fourth of the surveyed citizens (5.8 % agree fully and 17.4 % say it is mainly present).

**Table 2.** Is there any and to what extent is present hate speech toward the following ethnicities and groups in Serbian media in Kosovo?

	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Toward Albanians	34,2	44	5,9	11	2,3	2,5
Toward Gorani	65,8	26,9	1,6	2,7	0,7	2,3
Toward Roma	56,6	31,5	3	4,9	1,7	2,3
Toward those of different political opinion	28,1	25,5	6,5	28,8	8,3	2,7
Toward Serbs cooperating with foreigners	34,4	30,3	9,7	17,4	5,8	2,4
Toward Serbs Cooperating with Albanians	30,8	27,6	8,7	23,2	7,4	2,3

1 Not at all; 2 - Mainly not present; 3 - Neither there is nor there is not 4 - There is mainly; 5 Fully present; NA - did not answer; values are expressed in %.

## Security of journalists

Security of journalists is a sphere analyzed as one of the aspects affecting the work of media and their freedom to deal with certain topics relating to the citizens, manifestations and activities of certain protagonists. Data obtained from different organizations and from reports dealing with security show that there are still intimidations, threats or even attacks on journalist or property of media.

Journalists' Association of Serbia in Kosovo has been warning for years that there are still unresolved cases of abductions and murders of journalists and media workers in Kosovo committed in the period from 1998 until 2005<sup>16</sup>.

The perception of security, in the opinion of media representatives, affects to a great extent the selection of topics media deal with.

Given the fact that Serbian communities in Kosovo are small and that journalists work in environments in which everyone knows everyone, they are in a difficult position as they and members of their families are easily accessible. Participants in the survey state they are more concerned for the security of persons close to them than for their own.

Threats to security are primarily manifested as subtle pressures, i. e. indirect warnings to certain journalists. Publicly given comments and insults directed to media or journalists are part of a threat to security, and this particularly refers to posts on social network accounts in which journalists are called "traitors, non-patriots, those paid by foreigners, in other words those who do not wish well to their society".

Journalists and editors point out a phenomenon of self-censorship out of fear due to previous negative experience, either personal or of their co-workers. Journalists intentionally decide not to

deal with certain topics or exert greater caution when reporting. They explain this type of caution as "weighing" whether and in what way to approach certain issues, what language and terms to use and to what extent they may put certain topics in correlation with a specific person from public or political life.

Corruption is a topic ringing to greatest caution among journalists. Journalists and editors state that corruption is a topic that might potentially put them into dangerous situation and that it is still not the area dealt with in a more profound way through big investigative stories. This does not mean that it is not written about, but that journalists are very careful when they write on scandals and possible links of certain persons with them, or in other words, they are not in a position to address this issue more profoundly. One of the explanations for such situation is the fact that institutions do not respond to inquiries, therefore it is difficult for journalists to support certain allegations with documentation or to obtain evidence in the form of decisions on public procurements, decisions of certain committees or concluded agreements, which would be of help in their work.

*Corruption? Definitely. To express, let's say a suspicion that someone is involved in something. The level of corruption also matters. The higher the level, the more dangerous it is for a journalist. (journalist and editor, Mitrovica)*

*Writing about crime and corruption poses greatest risk for journalists. About that grey zone. These are practically intact topics in Kosovo. Politicians are not benevolent to journalists as they might unearth their scandals, unprofessionalism... Journalists are a corrective factor, they should demand responsibility. (editor, Mitrovica)*

<sup>16</sup> <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/02/11/otmice-i-ubistva-novinara-na-kosovu-nisu-pravilno-istrazeni/?lang=sr>

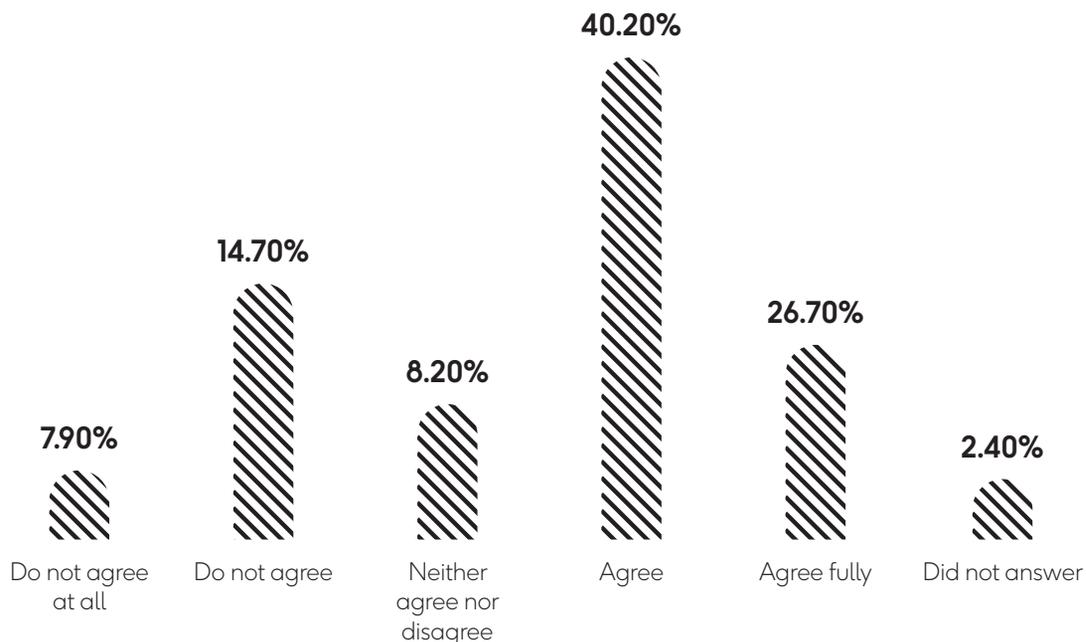
*Self-censorship. There is self-censorship in a way that journalists think preventively. They feel that someone might be provoked by an issue. Sometimes, it seems to me there is more self-censorship than censorship. Everyone sets own limits within which they feel safe. (editor, online portal)*

A great percentage of citizens believe that journalists fear writing the truth due to pressures they are exposed to. Two thirds of the surveyed share this opinion. As many as 40.2 % of respondents agree, and 26.7 % fully agree with this statement. This indicates a perception of citizens that there is a pressure on every different or opposing voice in the public, i. e. an atmosphere in which the perception of freedom of speech is not high.

Cases of attacks on journalists or their offices in previous years in the majority of cases have not been resolved. Beside that, after more than a decade, cases of abductions or murders of journalists are not closed yet. In the opinion of representatives of media and journalist associations that is a clear sign that there is no clear intention or acts of institutions aimed at protection of journalists. That way, the absence of care for journalists is manifested and they are given a signal that they cannot count on a significant degree of protection in case of a more serious violation of their security.

*A case of an attack on editorial office has not been resolved. And what is the message? The message is that if something happens to you, nobody will be able to protect you. (journalist, online portal)*

**Grafiku 13.** I am of opinion that journalists fear writing the truth due to different pressures they are exposed to



## Covid-19 pandemic and media

The Corona virus pandemic, as a dominant topic both globally and locally, took a significant portion in media reports in 2020. Serbian media in Kosovo, irrespective of the type of content they produce, predominantly dealt with this issue. Media reporting on daily information published continuously data on the number of tested and new cases of Covid-positive persons, epidemiologic and preventive measures, medical aspects of the pandemic and education. They also provided information on the work of institutions, health-care institutions and service providers.

Representatives of media who participated in the research are of opinion that reporting during the pandemic is adequate, that citizens could get the required information and that they have been presented in an interesting and easy-to-understand way various aspects, such as preventive measures, measures adopted by crisis headquarters, rules of conduct and a broader, global context (data on the situation in other countries in the region, European countries and at the global level) of the pandemic.

The cooperation with institutions, particularly those dealing with the pandemic (healthcare institutions, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Health) during the pandemic is evaluated as better in comparison to the pre-pandemic period. After a first few weeks and establishing rules and channels of communication with media, mutual communication and provision of information for media have been smooth. Journalists and editors are of opinion that the pandemic revealed possibilities of new, much better relations between media and institutions and that a good practice introduced during the pandemic should be continued.

*They (institutions) have been great, that must be said. They demonstrate they could give useful information to media and citizens. It is a kind of opportunity for them to improve themselves and our cooperation. (journalist, RTK correspondent)*

*Reporting is good. There has been a confusion because measures both from Belgrade and Prishtina have been applied. The timetable changes every third day and it has been well done, they manage to update information. (journalist, online portal)*

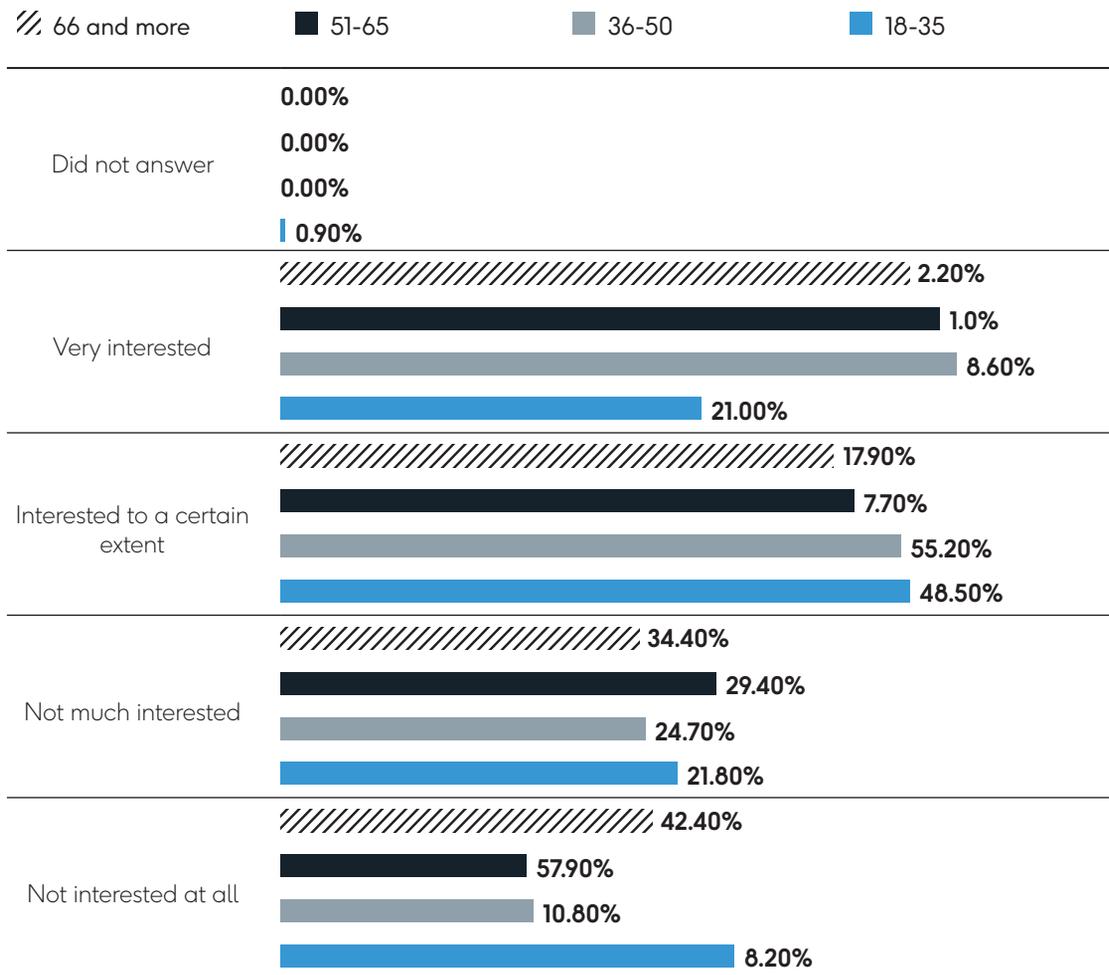
Information asked from the citizens were those relating to the guidelines for their movement, particularly abroad, because they were confused as to how to travel abroad, especially during summer season and annual vacations. Citizens of Serbia also addressed media seeking information on how to travel to Albania and which documents were required on administrative crossings Jarinje and Brnjak.

The existence of parallel measures relating to the epidemic introduced by competent institutions from Prishtina and Belgrade has been a challenge for media and citizens alike. Media have been reporting both on measures implemented by the Ministry of Health in Prishtina and by the Crisis Headquarters of the Republic of Serbia and the reporting included a great number of measures and guidelines communicated to the citizens. Thus, the burden of informing is on journalists who need to process and communicate information to their audience as clearly as possible, but also on citizens who have to absorb information and adjust their behavior accordingly.

An explanation of a qualitative improvement in mutual relations for the representatives of media is the "apolitical" nature of the issue, i. e. focusing on an goal overcoming disagreements and political divisions that exist in the society.

Citizens expressed a great interest in information on the Corona virus pandemic irrespective of their age. The results are not surprising given the effect of the pandemic on the health of people. One third of the respondents from all age categories are very interested, slightly less than a third of respondents on average are interested to some extent in this type of information. The only deviation from the trend is among younger respondents who express a high degree of interest in a significantly lower percentage (22 %).

**Graph 14.** Presentation of interest of respondents in certain information available in media – Corona virus pandemic by age



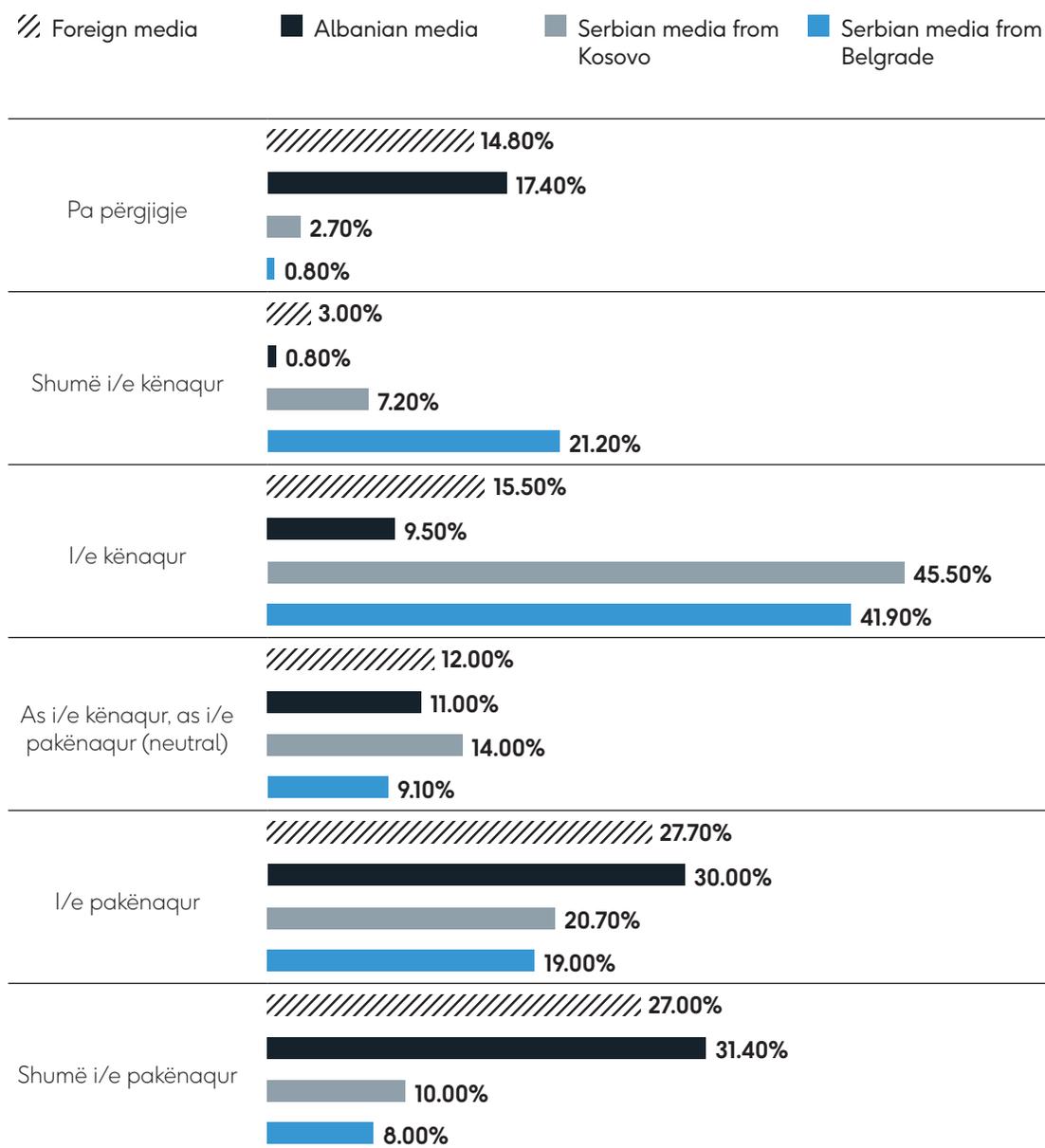
In this survey citizens confirmed a positive evaluation of media reporting on the Covid-19 pandemic. The greatest satisfaction is with media from Serbia, shared by almost two thirds (63.8 %, out of which 41.9 % are satisfied and 21.9 % very satisfied).

Beside that, a very high percentage of respondents (52.7 %) are satisfied with Serbian media from Kosovo (52.7 % of them are satisfied and 7.2 % of respondents are very satisfied).

The greatest dissatisfaction is with the reporting of Albanian media, accounting for 30 % of respon-

dents, and as many as 31.4 % of very dissatisfied respondents. We believe this issue should be dealt with in a more profound way as a significant number of citizens are informed through those media. What remains unknown is if this is an inertia position based on mutual intolerance between the communities that is present among some citizens. In addition to that it should be determined which elements of reporting provoke the dissatisfaction of citizens. Information obtained on foreign media are evaluated slightly less negatively. A bit more than one fourth of the surveyed state they are either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

**Grafiku 15.** To which extent are you satisfied with how media reported during the Corona virus pandemic?



## 4. Conclusion

A general evaluation of openness of Serbian media to different opinions and views resulting from the opinion of citizens obtained in the surveys and focus groups, as well as in-depth interviews with journalists, editors, owners of media and representatives of NGOs is very good. Media, given their personnel and material capacities, are evaluated as successful in promoting various topics, opinions, views of different social protagonists and groups, as well as of representatives of the majority community in Kosovo. This evaluation applies to independent media, i. e. those that do not rely on budgetary financing. The audience is presented the political scene of Kosovo, flows and effects of the dialogue process, economic and social life, sport, as well as cultural and artistic scene. Journalists from those media are making efforts to present the developments and occurrences through consequences they have on everyday life with comments by experts and analysts.

Media financed from the budget are objected a narrower perspective in terms of the number and diversity of protagonists, i. e. domination of political topics and reporting based on communication of statements by representatives of local authorities without critical examining their activities and effects of their work.

Given the complexity of socio-political situation in Kosovan society, divisions between the Albanian majority and the Serbian community, as well as the fact that local media in Serbian communities are not the only source of information for cit-

izens, it can be said that there is a limited impact on the public discourse or, in other words, imposition of certain topics or views to the broader public. There is no doubt that media are an important factor in agenda setting, but in assessing the impact and contribution to the openness of Serbian community to the views and actors from the majority community, it is necessary to have in mind other social and political interests the impact of which is deemed by the participants of the research to be partially limited in comparison to the impact of politics or media from Serbia.

A positive impact on the openness of the community is seen in the promotion of local topics, examples of cooperation between members of different communities, problems encountered by the members of the majority community, presentation of views of experts and analysts, but it also should be noted that closed and sluggish institutions at the local and central level, language-related problems (absence of adequate translations into Serbian) and ignoring by politicians make the work of journalists and possibilities of a more profound and comprehensive reporting more difficult.

Adverse effects that diminish the openness of media and their possibility to promote a broader scope of topics, views or individual opinions are those of politics, i. e. refusing by politicians to cooperate with a part of media and provide them necessary data, as well as still insufficiently developed (although to a certain extent improved) communication with institutions at the local and

central level. That is why media are not in position to obtain data they need to deal with certain topics, i. e. they do not have reliable and confidential sources of information. An obstruction to the openness of media is also a journalists' perception of security or self-censorship, a mechanism of journalists' self-protection reflected in their avoiding to report on certain topics they deem potentially dangerous, such as corruption or crime.

Conclusions that might lead to an improvement in the work of Serbian media in Kosovo are those relating to a low level of confidence in them, an impression that some important topics are left out, doubting the truthfulness of information or that media favorize certain parties. Such perception might be a starting point for those media to reconsider their work and work out guidelines in planning future activities aimed at better cooperation with citizens and restoring mutual trust.



A positive impact on the openness of the community is seen in the promotion of local topics, examples of cooperation between members of different communities, problems encountered by the members of the majority community, presentation of views of experts and analysts, but it also should be noted that closed and sluggish institutions at the local and central level, language-related problems (absence of adequate translations into Serbian) and ignoring by politicians make the work of journalists and possibilities of a more profound and comprehensive reporting more difficult.

## 5. Recommendations

### General recommendations

**IMPROVEMENT OF TRANSPARENCY IN THE WORK OF SERBIAN MEDIA IN KOSOVO** – A single register of media by type (radio stations, television channels and online media), transparent ownership of media houses and transparent sources of financing are perceived as preconditions for restoring trust of citizens and institutions in media and their work. The absence of a clear ownership structure and manner of financing blurs the image and leaves space for different interpretations and negative perception of media and their work among some citizens.

**SPECIALIZATION OF MEDIA** is seen as a necessary condition for the improvement of work of the existing media houses in terms of their sustainability. Journalists and editors who participated in the research point out to a currently unsustainable great number of media and a situation in which almost all of them deal with the same topics and the same type of content which is exhausting for the staff and reduces diversity of areas they cover.

Specialization is recommended both in terms of contents that are produced (current affairs, analyses and investigative journalism, stories, documentary program, articles) and thematic areas. That way media could use their capacities in a more efficient and competent way. Journalists would be able to deepen their knowledge and understanding of certain topics, and then to present the audience information on what is going on in society and effects of broader processes on their everyday

life in a better way.

**MEDIA NETWORKING AND EXCHANGE OF MEDIA CONTENTS** - media networking is seen by media representatives as a mechanism which would significantly improve the entire production of Serbian media in Kosovo. That way, media would be able to use their capacities in a more appropriate way, journalists would be able to devote more time to certain topics or processes and would be more versed in the area they cover. The effect of such organization would be a better presentation of information to citizens, and reporting would, in addition to informational, also include analytical and educational aspects.

### Recommendation for media

**EXAMINING AUDIENCE HABITS** would give a feedback to media on the contents they produce and enable developing strategies for improvement of their work.

**EXAMINING MEDIA NEEDS OF AUDIENCE** would give an insight into the type of information and topics of significance for citizens. That way a better communication would be established, needs of citizens would be known and mutual confidence would be established through adaptation of media production to those needs.

**DEALING WITH LOCAL TOPICS**, particularly stories about citizens and their experience, success

stories, successful business ideas, *stories about cooperation* with the representatives of the majority people, topics out of politics yet in the focus of entire Kosovan society, would significantly improve diversity of media contents and offer citizens a new perspective of social and political life. .

**COOPERATION OF JOURNALISTS** *through informal associations or activities of associations* is deemed an desirable way of further education through exchange of knowledge and experience, training on standards or legal possibilities of exercising rights in the domain of freedom of speech, as well as fostering advocacy capacities directed to institutions through acting in concert.

*Observance of standards of professional reporting*

*Noting and reporting cases of pressures, attacks or violation of rights of journalists*

*Cooperation of representatives of media and media associations with representatives of the Public Prosecutor's Office, police and judiciary authorities* aimed at their further education and understanding the implementation of legislature in the sphere of freedom of speech and work of journalists.

## Recommendation for institutions

**Ensuring implementation of legislation** identifying work of media, especially legal provisions defining

access of media to public documents, i. e. timely and adequate responses of institutions and local self-governments to media inquiries. Getting response within legally prescribed deadlines, getting answers to specific questions and a possibility of getting answers in Serbian are still difficulties encountered by journalists in their everyday work. Through adequate application of the principles on free access to information of public importance reporting on the work of institutions will improve, and thus they will get closer to citizens.

**TIMELY RESPONSE TO REGISTERED CASES** of pressures, attacks or threats to security of journalists aimed at creating a more secure environment for the work of journalists and a clear image among the public that such practice is unacceptable no matter who demonstrates it (authorities, politicians or individuals).

**ENSURING STEADY SOURCES OF FUNDS FOR FINANCING MEDIA OF MINORITIES** and defining clear procedures of their allocation is a reliable mechanism of providing support to the work of media.

Provision of transparent financing and independence in reporting of the national broadcaster and thus of the Serbian program service as well. In addition to that, ensuring access to program in Serbian in all Serb-populated municipalities.

# On the Initiative

"Democracy, Openness and Prospects of the Serb Community in Kosovo – Open" is a new initiative of the Kosovo Foundation for Open Society (KFOS), initiated in 2020. Open is realized in cooperation with nine civil-society organizations that are active in the Serb community in Kosovo.

A general objective of this new initiative is development of an open and dynamic space for discussion within the Serb community and between the Serb and other communities, as well as among institutions in Kosovo.

- The initiative will specifically be engaged in the analysis and estimate of the impact of civil-society and political organizations on the implementation of democratic principles and openness of the Serb community in Kosovo.
- Implementation of democratic standards and the openness of institutions, public policies, and important processes in their relations with the Serb community in Kosovo will be analyzed and estimated, as well a degree of openness of the Serbian community towards them.
- These analyses will assist in understanding the current position and prospects of the Serbian community in Kosovo, serving at the same time as a basis of their argued advocacy among citizens, institutions, local and central authorities, and the international community.

Experienced and established civil-society organizations will make eight (8) sectoral analyses with the purpose of meeting general and specific objectives.

The areas analyzed by our partners in 2020 are as follows:

**Media** To what extent media in the Serbian language in Kosovo have an impact on the degree of openness, possibility to hear and pluralism of opinions and topics? This area is researched by **Media Center** and **Crno Beli Svet**.

**Civil society** How civil-society organizations give their contribution to openness and principles of democracy of the Serbian community and generally of Kosovo society? **New Social Initiative** and **Forum for Development and Multiethnic Collaboration** are dealing with this topic.

**Political parties** Observance of democratic principles and pluralist activism of political parties of the Kosovo Serbs, as well as their openness to participate in the political system of Kosovo and give their contribution to the improvement of public policies. These issues are in the focus of **New Social Initiative and Media Center**.

**Responsibility of institutions** Better understanding of the position of the Serbian community in Kosovo by observing the openness of the institutions to address the problems of the Serbs. This analysis is made by **Crno Beli Svet** and **Forum for Development and Multiethnic Collaboration**.

**Security** How the feeling of security affects the openness of the Serbian community to Kosovo security institutions? The answer to this question is sought by **Human Center Mitrovica**.

**Economics** To what extent are business entities from the communities with Serbian majority open to be integrated in the economy of Kosovo? This area is analyzed by **Institute for Territorial Economic Development**.

**Rights of minorities** How to get to a more open society through pointing out to the gaps in the implementation of the rights of minorities? This topic is dealt with by **NVO Aktiv** and **Center for the Rights of Minority Communities**.

**Process of dialogue and normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia** To which extent and which positions of the community of the Kosovo Serbs are represented relating to the impact on and future of the process? **NVO Aktiv** and **Forum for Development and Multiethnic Collaboration** are dealing with this issue.

A consolidated report, „**Characteristics of the open society within Serb community in Kosovo**“, will be published at the end of Open 2020 cycle. It will consolidate results and conclusions from sectoral analysis made by members of Open 2020 initiative into a wider socio-political context of Kosovo.







The Open initiative is supported by KFOS

