

THE ONLINE MEDIA LANDSCAPE IN THE FOCUS OF DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGNS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS: ALBANIA, KOSOVA, AND NORTH MACEDONIA



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Abstract

In the conditions of a technological transformation of the media, professional credibility and reliability in information are fading due to the manipulative role that the media have taken. This paper, among other things, highlights exactly the editorial lines of the media, which do not build them on principles based on professional cause, but rather on the causes of political-media oligarchies. The fake news industry in the world is currently the most profitable product, and this is the most serious threat to democracies, which cannot be properly consolidated without a regulation in the dense "traffic" of online communication. In this industry Russia leads with its Sputnik, which has created a widespread establishment in the media space of Central and Eastern Europe. Preventing of this media "pandemic" is extremely complicated and costly, because this type of information is camouflaged in various forms and the public needs a proper media education to identify and differentiate fake news from true ones. Therefore, it is very necessary to create a national strategy of each state, to prevent the spread of this media "pandemic", while the most effective "virus" is the professionalization of the media and its detachment from the influence of political oligarchies. False news is creating its bedrock of influence and this is especially evident in the division of society as a result of political tensions and inter-ethnic discontent. Moreover, this paper shows that in such a divided society, the disinformation that circulates incessantly in the public space, sows fear. If a disinformation protection strategy were to be developed, then public confidence would not be in crisis, as it is currently in the Western Balkans, and the media would return to its primary role: independent and objective information.

1. Introduction

Media environment has changed a lot in the recent years. Click-bait and sensationalists content has replaced the professional journalism, chasing for more views and clicks, and is rightly defined as 'attention economy' by Marwick and Lewis (2017). Social media has increasingly been a powerful tool for political engagement and expression. Political actors have used the benefits of digital media to shape public opinion, control the flow of information online, and initiate particular political activity through political campaigns. Political actors have always used

rumors and other false information tools, but modern technologies allow them to produce and disseminate disinformation faster and with higher effects. The speed, reach, and low cost of online communication are increasing the consequences of disinformation.

The new way of receiving news, reacting or sharing it, has made the media landscape difficult fact-checking sphere. Each of the interpreters can be the agent who distributes or recreates, reshapes, or re-contextualizes the news for their network out of the gatekeeping mechanism (Derakhshan & Wardle, 2017). The

consumer habits towards seeking online information has changed also. Thus, the effect of disinformation wouldn't be possible and wouldn't reach so much attention without the consumers', namely the audience's consent and activity. In this sense, the effects of disinformation are strongly linked to the news consumption habit and confirmation bias, as prescribed by Wooley and Joseff (2020), who argue that the most relevant theories for examining the influence of disinformation are tied to the psychology of information consumption and opinion formation: cognitive bias, such as attitude polarization, confirmation bias, and illusory correlation (Woolley & Joseff, 2020).

The impact of disinformation on democracy, human rights, and the rule of law are the subjects that are constantly studied with particular attention by respective field experts and researchers. Disinformation has been used interchangeably with misinformation in some cases. Distinguishing these two terms is the bottom ground to analyze the intent of the messenger. Derakhshan and Wardle (2017) explore the phenomenon of 'fake news' within an information disorder framework while identifying three types of disorders: dis-information (Information that is false and deliberately created to harm a person, social group, organization or country), miss-information (Information that is false, but not created with the intention of causing harm), and mal-information (Information that is based on reality, used to inflict harm on a person, organization or country). These three types of information disorders differ from each other in the context of the intended harm. Woolley and Joseff (2020) define the phenomenon of disinformation as a deliberate use of irrational arguments to undermine a political ideal, ignite social division, or cause political cynicism. Having this in mind, we can't say that any of the countries are resilient to disinformation campaigns, as to some extent, the disinformation is the cause of the psychology of human nature. But some of the countries are more vulnerable than others. Why does this happen, and what are the factors leading them to a battleground for arising disinformation campaigns that affect the formation of public opinion?!

Favourable environment for rising and developing disinformation campaigns as an ultimate threat to the democratic values of that society are countries of post-war conflict, countries of most prominent polarized societies, countries with heritage of ethnic and religious divisions and differences, unregulated or fragile media systems, public low trust in media institutions so as high percentage of online and social media users. Humprecht et al. (2020) created a framework of societies who are more resilient to disinformation through measurable indicators for cross-national comparative analysis of the country factors, regrouping them in three main domains:

- Factors of the Political Environment Limiting Resilience
- Factors of the Media Environment Limiting Resilience
- Factors of the Economic Environment Limiting Resilience

Country clusters were grouped based on their systems such as Northern and Western European countries with democratic-corporatist media systems and liberal media systems; Southern European countries with polarized-pluralist media systems and United States as an exception because of its large advertising market. The cluster of Southern European countries is more vulnerable to online disinformation because of high levels of polarization, populist communication, social media use and low level of trust and shared media consumption, so as United States because of low trust, politicized, and fragmented environment (Humprecht, Esser, & Van Aelst, 2020). In this regard, South East European Countries as post-conflict and post-communist states striving to democratize and join EU, inheriting an interethnic and religious divisions as well as highly polarized and politicized societies with low media and government trust and low level of professional journalism; makes them more vulnerable to disinformation whether by domestic or foreign actors exploiting the unregulated online media system in the region. If such a case, disinformation is more a symptom of a fragile society of social and political division and disorder, rather than a cause as Greene et, al. (2021) report assumes for Western Balkan countries. Disinformation than, is an amplifier of an already divided society which initiates political tensions and interethnic resentment, decrease public trust in institutions and media, which in return creates collective quiescence. According to Balkan Barometer Statistics for 2017 until 2020, trust in government doesn't exceed 50 percent of the population in each of the Western Balkan Countries, which leads to low voter turnout numbers also in each country (Greene, Asmolov, Fagan, Fridman, & GJuzelov, 2021). Media has an existential role of being watchdog of democracy in one country by its critical attitude to the government and to the negative habits of the society, hence by being the monitor-er of checks and balances of the system, which prevents any government to exercise its power unanimously. When a journalist fails to present the facts to the public for political, economic, or other reasons, or even more presents no fact-based analysis – bias or hides information, misleads the audience and distorts public opinion. By objective, verified and impartial information, media can direct society's effort to be as democratic as possible. As Voltmer (2013) highlights, the prerequisite of the citizens to be able to make intelligent choices for their future is to receive high-quality information for the candidates and political parties.

'The failure of the media to provide the kind of information that fosters informed popular participation poses a serious risk to the viability of democracy'. Limited diversity of the media and media dependence reduce voters' ability to become fully informed and increases the possibility that bad politicians will be voted out (Voltmer, 2013).

Based on recent analysis, the situation of freedom of media in Western Balkan isn't as likely as it should be, referring to pressures on journalists, obscure media ownership, general politicization of the media and government control over media content (Jankulovska, 2020). Western Balkan Countries during their transition to democratization did unify their regulations and laws according to the European standards for media freedom, media pluralism and freedom of speech as prerequisites to accession to EU (BiEPAG, 2017), but they are yet struggling to implement and react on denunciation for violation of these rights and especially this becomes even harder with the transformation to information production and consumption in the online sphere.

Online disinformation is often the case in Western Balkan Countries, as such manipulative and destructive for shaping public opinion, especially during political activities such as election campaigns. The coronavirus pandemic caused political communication during the election campaigns to shift and take place mostly in the online sphere. When the audience is uncertain of which political decision to take and automatically demanding more information to ease their decision, an online sphere is fraught with fake news, fabricated information, a package of disinformation campaigns that serves to a political or business agenda of a group of interest. Online disinformation is a widespread phenomenon that attacks even the best democratic societies. But, societies with fragile democracies or countries in transition, are affected mostly. Countries like Kosova, Albania and North Macedonia are also the target of disinformation campaigns during elections, coming from internal and external actors.

From the analysis of the two years' last elections taking place in the Western Balkan Countries, Greene et, al. (2021), came to conclusion that not only disinformation campaigns that share untruths or inaccurate information about candidates are the most prominent factors which undermines the integrity of the democratic process of elections, but there are also internal and external factors who equally contribute to the overall compromised process:

- low levels of participation;
- a proliferation of new parties;

- aspects of electoral systems that are more likely to weaken the integrity of the process (for example 'closed list' systems in which voters have no opportunity to select candidates);
- and external support for particular parties (including financial support and overt political endorsements).

Thus, the interruption of the democratic process in all the sectors in these countries is more domestic in nature than foreign Green et, al. (2021), considering here disinformation campaigns infiltrated from abroad also.

In this regard, World Press Freedom Index in one country reflects the state in which media operates in that country in the context of media pluralism, media independence, media environment and self-censorship, legislative environment, transparency, infrastructures and abuses. This year, World Press Freedom Index 2021 has ranked North Macedonia in the 90th place among 180 other countries ranked by this organization. Albania and Kosova are not far from this place. Albania has been ranked in the 83rd place from the World Press Freedom Index and Kosova in the 78th place.

2. Kosova

Kosova has the worst performance for media freedom and transparency in the region, falling in the 78th place World Press Freedom Index ranking for eight levels comparing to the 2020 year in which Kosova was ranked in 70th place. Reporters Without Borders see the media environment in Kosova to increased instability due to the coronavirus crisis, assuming journalists and media are exposed to a hostile environment with physical and verbal attacks, cyber-attacks, pressure for self-censure, and lack of transparency for media ownership. Due to the coronavirus crisis, which led to a financial crisis, some newspapers had to stop their print production (Reporters Without Borders, 2021). During 2020 year, the number of 24 journalists who have been target of verbal and physical attacks is increased compared to 2019, according to Freedom House (2021) report for Kosova, where the system of the country has been rated as transitional or hybrid regime. In addition, cases of party officials using intimidation language and incite physical violence through social media are existent (Freedom House, 2021).

Kosova is an exception from other Western Balkan countries regarding the origin of disinformation. As a country with a contested status and commitment to international recognition carries a great risk of foreign disinformation campaigns with a geopolitical interest which does not intend to interfere in domestic politics or daily politics, but with a broader sense of the very existence of the state of Kosova. These long lasting disinformation campaigns has an intend to delegitimize the state

of Kosova, to weaken relations with Europe and to destabilise its governance. As Green et. al (2021) underline three narratives contributing to this context:

- allegations that Kosova is a mafia state, operating under the protection of Kosova Force (KFOR) and thus with the implicit support of western powers;
- invention and/or exaggeration of threats to the safety and property of ethnic Serbs and other minorities living in Kosova;
- insinuations that Kosova is incapable of sustainable self-governance without support from Serbia (Greene, Asmolov, Fagan, Fridman, & GJuzelov, 2021).

During Kosova Parliamentary Elections, 14 February, 2021, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) monitored election campaign in online news portals and social media from January 24 to February 13, 2021. NDI examined a sample of 3693 news articles, 1289 Facebook posts and 500 tweets relevant to the monitoring scope, from which 214 news articles and social media posts in Albanian language and 50 in Serbian language contained inappropriate information or inflammatory language. (National Democratic Institute, 2021). This report reveals that during election campaign, online portals and social media accounts contributed to divisive language, by creating and producing direct attacks and de-contextualizing politicians' statements. Memes and fabricated stories with photos and videos were distributed in a high scale. Moreover, sexism was present to portals and social media, using inflammatory language to attack female candidates about personal life, physical appearance, etc., which NDI report identifies it, as misogyny. Bot activities and Russia supported media in Serbia created false and fabricated narratives about main politicians in Kosova, which passed unnoticed or unidentified by the Kosovar media as manipulative information brought outside of the border. Among other intentional manipulative stories or news, the one that reached the high number of people in Facebook, was a story that has been created in Kosova Parliamentary elections of October 6th 2020 and reactivated and brought again, the false accusations to discredit a female candidate for president, Vjosa Osmani. The post has reached 57,638 people in Facebook for 2021 parliamentary election campaign, as NDI (2021) reports. A public broadcaster (RTK) published an article in their website claiming that Russian influence in elections is done through a mutual friend of Vjosa Osmani and her husband, Dana Rohrabacher – pro Russian congressmen in Serbian parliament. The article is still featuring on the RTK website.

It is important to mention that the access to internet in Kosova is the highest percent in the region with almost 95 percent of the

population of which nearly 52 percent use social media daily (DataReportal, 2021).

3. Albania

Albania has improved to +1 place comparing the ranking from the 2020 year. Again Reporters Without Borders assume that Albania has the threat from defamation law, which has pending status in the Albanian parliament and which increases the threat to censorship to journalists and media. The defamation law was criticized by media, civil organizations, journalists' associations, international press freedom groups, European Commission, and Venice Commission for its generalized nature which makes it possible to be used as a weapon against journalists and media who are critical to the government. Despite other controversies, the law allows the Audio Visual regulatory body (AMA) to impose sanctions on news websites which would in return incite self-censorship (Reporters Without Borders, 2021). The online media landscape in Albania is characterized with physical and verbal attacks also and the authorities fail to punish the actors. Some journalists were arrested during demonstrations, and some media owners- critical to the government, were accused of organized crime, and drug trafficking. During the pandemic crisis, the government warned the citizens to be "beware of the media" and used as a pretext to sue 5 journalists and media outlets who 'spread panic' to the citizens (Vurmo, 2021). According to the Union of Albanian Journalists: 'over 40 percent of reporters had salary cuts and 47 journalists lost their jobs' (Gërguri, 2020) during coronavirus pandemic crisis. The government has a hostile approach to the journalist and media who criticize the government. Thus, 'Acromax Media', a German company invoking copyrights infringements, deleted videos that reveal or criticize government actions during election period of the 2020 year. The case was judged by the independent media and journalists as the government's attempts to restrict the freedom of the press and freedom of speech. The company has allegations that is working with the government (Laufer, 2020). Nevertheless, Albanian media achieved to create a platform for ethical self-regulation, which is an act to be greeted (Reporters Without Borders, 2021). Freedom of House (2021) report for Albania has categorized the country as transitional with a hybrid regime system considering also the independent media rating which has decreased (from 3.75 to 3.50) comparing 2020 year. Disinformation campaigns in Albania are more domestic in nature and have political and financial intend rather than geostrategic intend. A strong pro-EU and pro-NATO consensus among the Albanian population limits the external actors to undermine its relations. According to Green et. al (2021) sensationalist reporting to boost – traffic without verifying the information is in the form of commercially oriented disinformation, and the other is produced for political purposes,

where the actors are often high political or institutional representatives who disseminate false information to the public through their social media profiles. The Facebook analysis of this report reveals that also high-quality media (such as Top Channel, etc.) in the country are among those who produce and distribute disinformation (Greene, Asmolov, Fagan, Fridman, & GJuzelov, 2021).

In the campaign of 25th April Parliamentary Elections in Albania, the scandal of the voter database, revealed 90000 citizens' personal information, contact details and vote preferences which were monitored by 'patronazhistët', of the Socialist Party. The 'patronage' are employers in the central and local public administration, so as employees in the institutions that doesn't allow by law the political activity of the employees, such as Republican Guard, The Armed Forces and the State Police. The portal Lapsi.al who revealed the existence of such a database in the hand of the Socialist Party, received a demand from SPAK (Special Prosecution and Special Investigation Unit for Prosecution and Investigation of Corruption, Organized Crime and Criminal Matters) to seize their offices, equipment and telephones, that was later dismissed by the Strasbourg human rights court invoking the European law which gives journalists the right not to reveal the source of information (Passarelli, Peytier, Kostelac, & Nizharadze, 2021).

In Albania, the social media landscape is unregulated in the electoral legislation which creates a battleground for a political campaign to be performed by unknown financial sources. As BIRN (2021) reveals during the 2021 election campaign in Albania, in a Facebook page of the Untold Stories of Albania that ran a deep fake for the opposition leader of the Democratic Party, Lulzim Basha, the source of finance was unknown and impossible to be revealed. The deep-fake with 203,844 views, on a page with only 1883 followers had spent approximately 300 dollars for the ad. Similar to this deep-fake, the page has run 2018 political ads from December to April 24th with millions of viewers financed by 'dark money' from an unknown origin (Likmeta, 2021). In general, Reporting Diversity Network 2.0, identified the 2021 election campaign as tough among political figures with incidents of hate speech including derogatory, inflammatory, offensive and sexist language. Even though the media was attentive to these narratives, they were amplifiers of reporting what has been said several times instead of reporting cautiously by reflecting critically on the hate speech narratives (Hysa, 2021).

It is important to mention that there are 2.00 million internet users in Albania from which 55.6 percent use social media daily (DataReportal, 2021).

4. North Macedonia

North Macedonia has improved for +2 places in comparison to the ranking of 2020 World Press Freedom Index. Nevertheless, North Macedonia has been criticized for its impunity culture continually. Threats and insults to media and journalists, such as verbal and cyber harassment continue to pass unpunished. The legal framework for realization of media freedom exists, but that often depends on political will and selectivity in case resolving. The number of attacks to journalists was raised to 12, comparing to registered 4 attacks in 2019. The country is making some attempts to improve the safety of journalists and media workers by drafting a new penal code by the Ministry of justice (Reporters Without Borders, 2021). The proposed changes to the law include: same charges for assaulting a journalist or media as assaulting a police officer; decreased charges of defamation for journalists and media outlets and editors; so as introduction of the criminal offence of stalking which includes charges or jail sentences for stalkers who physically and also virtually threaten their victims (Marusic, 2021).

The media landscape in North Macedonia has changed a lot since the 2017 years where the media were in total control and served to the party's disinformation and propaganda campaigns. The change of political structures in government after the 2017, promised a new pluralist and democratic society. But yet, media landscape is captured by political powers and corruptions. Balkan Barometer survey (2020) on public opinion has reported 50 percent of the respondents see the media as politically dependent and 70 percent see the media as affected by corruption (Balkan Barometer, 2020). During the coronavirus pandemic, the government added a financial package to help the journalists overcome the crisis, the action which was not welcomed by the independent media and journalist invoking government control over the freedom of media. In 2019 and 2020 the government enabled a state funding for covering political ads, from which only three biggest political parties benefited. Media professionals criticized the changes for possible violation to editorial independence by favoring specific media outlets (Bliznakovski, 2021). Freedom House (2021) characterizes the state as transitional or with hybrid system but the overall democratic score has improved considering its liberal-democratic principles and commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration.

North Macedonia is characterized by its conditional identity with geopolitical interests by its neighboring countries such as Greece for contesting the name and Bulgaria for contesting its history. The identity of North Macedonia has been many times contested and thus its' EU integration process and NATO membership commitment has been harder than was thought. Until 2017, the ruling party (VMRO-DPMNE) has directed a country into a

nationalistic and anti – western spirit, which led the country 11 years away from the democratic processes. After 2017, some progress was made, the name changed, North Macedonia access to NATO (2020) and the pro-European spirit returned. Nevertheless, the government attempt to approach EU integration and NATO membership was not unanimously supported by citizens, the ideology of nationalistic party is still present. But, these are marginalized ideas that emerge only in certain cases, such as elections. The political battle among the ruling party and the opposition (VMRO-DPMP) now is going through the narratives of the protection of the identity of Macedonians and the state, and processes that brings closer to EU integration (such as the Prespa Agreement and resolving contest with Bulgaria). North Macedonia is also a state with inherited interethnic divisions which led to war in 2001 and ended with the Ohrid Framework Agreement signed in the same year, the respecting and implementing of which is one of the conditions to EU integrations. In regard to these political complexities, disinformation in North Macedonia engages and develops around these narratives. Considering Greene et, al. (2020), recent years' disinformation campaigns include:

- narratives of Macedonian identity threats through the referendum for changing the name;
- disinformation campaigns mixing anti-Bulgarian, anti-Greek and anti-Albanian sentiment with fears that Macedonian youth would become 'cannon fodder' for NATO wars, and allegations that NATO would force the development of 5G technology with harmful effects for health and public safety;
- Fears of 'Greater Albania' actualized in a flow of events, such as an appointment of Talat Xhaferi, an ethnic Albanian, as parliamentary speaker in early 2017 and the adoption of legislation that enables the use of Albanian language as an official language;
- 'Weaponization' of COVID-19 for inciting ethnic tensions in North Macedonia (such as the case of the fake-news that Greece prohibits entering the country municipalities of North Macedonia that have most cases of Covid-19, alluding to Albanian- majority municipalities)

Geopolitical contests out of the border are often the cause of incitements for confusing and for deception of the local citizens in North Macedonia. Respectively, the intention to create interethnic tensions, undermine North Macedonia processes with neighboring countries, such as Greece and Bulgaria, defocused North Macedonian's EU integration perspective, and influence electoral processes such as Referendum for the name in 2018, Parliamentary Elections 2020, and possibly Population Census in 2021.

Investigative journalists and fact-checker agencies in North Macedonia have discovered a large network of disinformation campaigns coming from Hungary and Slovenia companies, which are linked and financed by the President of Hungary Victor Orbán, a friend of ex-premier of North Macedonia, Nikola Gruevski, who under unclear circumstances won asylum in Hungary by bypassing giving accountability in front of the legislative institutions and citizens. The disinformation campaigns of this kind include online media outlets who are right wing and media that supported and propagated for Gruevski's system (Meta.mk, 2019).

A recent study of NGO, Civilmedia (2020) for media reporting during the North Macedonian parliamentary election campaign held on 15th July 2020, daily followed the posts on the media and social networks that generated attention and a large number of reactions, which contained elements of disinformation, inflammatory language, insults to campaign participants and other actors. Over 80 cases of orchestrated content sharing containing defamation, disinformation, insults or hate speech, often in combination were revealed in this report. 'This means that, on each day of the 21-day campaign, there were on average at least 4 attempts to organize and orchestrate the public debate, by publishing and disseminating hate speech or aimed at discrediting certain candidates, or individuals who at all did not participate in the election contest.' Of these over 80 cases of observed orchestrated action to disseminate certain tendentious, violent or untrue content or communication, 14 are related to orchestrated sharing of misinformation. In 28 cases, an orchestrated content sharing incited hate speech, calls for murder or violence against campaigning politicians. In 21 of the cases, the victims of verbal violence are journalists, activists, intellectuals or other entities and organizations, and even citizens who are not public figures, nor participate in the election process, but were the target of attacks due to expressed views and opinions. In 12 cases, the CIVIL monitoring team noticed incited discrimination, mockery or hate speech on ethnic and religious grounds, and racism and xenophobia. In 6 cases, the orchestrated content sharing contained elements of discrimination or hate speech based on gender/ sexuality (Saraqini, 2020).

There are 1.71 million internet users in North Macedonia, from which 57.6% of the total population are social media users (DataReportal, 2021).

5. Conclusions

As countries emerging from communist systems strive for democratization and EU accession through an attempt to unify legislation under the EU conditions and at the same time improve respecting the human rights declaration, they share some similar

characteristics. Envisaging as weaknesses and strengths, these are the characteristics that we could consider towards prosperity and improvement of the current situation.

Some of the similar characteristics of the three countries that make them more vulnerable to disinformation campaigns, whether from internal or external influences, are:

- Low level of trust in the media and institutions of the country;
- Non-legal and editorial regulation of online media;
- Low level of investigative journalism;
- Low level of media and digital literacy in schools;
- Insufficient promotion in the local and national level of the fact-checking agencies and existing regulatory mechanisms in the countries;
- Polarized society, divided into two main camps, especially ideologically separated, but with the same personal interests that end in financial gain;
- Distribution of online disinformation campaigns in the three countries without having a barrier to the Albanian language (except ethnic Macedonians and other ethnicities living in North Macedonia).

Some of the advantages and opportunities that these countries can use to improve the situation are but are not limited to:

- All countries are oriented or tend towards the European Union and NATO, which makes them less influenced by the disinformation of the eastern camp. In particular, Kosovo and Albania with 100% civic convictions;
- Existence of joint online portals in the Albanian language - Regional cooperation without having language barriers for disorientation or debunking of disinformation in an organized way;
- Developing countries towards democratization, which enables current governments to include a genuine media education curriculum for new generations;
- Eradicating oligarchic culture and strengthening and investing in media people and media capacities;
- National strategy for investing in the professional profiling of the new generations to aim more employment opportunities and not to have political party or government as the only employer. Thus, partisan polarization would be more realistic and not based on personal interests but on critical thinking;
- Strengthen regulations and promote existent fact-checking agencies;
- Extend further and develop the national strategy for fighting disinformation.

The democratic environment in a society can be considered clean only when it is not contaminated by the uncontrolled amount of disinformation. Although the media are considered observers of democracy in a country, they nevertheless need self-regulatory mechanisms, because it cannot be claimed to be corrective of social and political distortions if they (the media) themselves are not immune to negative influences. This principle applies especially to the media which are highly exposed to online disinformation and as such they instead of exerting their influence on the consolidation of public opinion, on the contrary are becoming destroyers of this consolidation. This is especially noticeable in the unprofessional approach of the media to politics, which are often turning into extensions of political parties or their headquarters during elections.

A separate problem is the lack of definition of legal regulations in the work of social media. This is especially noticeable in Albania, where the social media landscape is unregulated in the electoral legislation, where as a result preconditions are created for a battlefield for a political campaign to be implemented from unknown sources of funding.

The lack of legal regulation of social media is a source of conflict and causes disruption of private relations between people. As a result, an uncontrolled verbal battle has been identified where regulators and the judiciary fail to punish the perpetrators of these disorders.

On the other hand, internet access, on a fairly large scale, is not in direct proportion to media education, because the spread of the internet is not always a reflection of the media culture on social networks.

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