

## Executive summary:

# NORTH MACEDONIA



### Key Country Facts

Population	2,022,547 (2002 census)
% of unemployed	21 %
Net income per person (average) EUR	405 EUR
Number of local communities (municipalities/ cities)	84
Number of local media	74 (radio, television and print) + 55 most active and prominent local online media
Annual advertising revenue in media sector	31.5 million EUR - 35 million EUR (estimate)

### Context

**Number:** There are 88 local or regional media in North Macedonia. Out of this number, 31 are TV stations - 12 of them are regional and 19 are local. In addition, there are 2 radio stations with national broadcasting licence based in other cities than Skopje (Kanal 77 in Štip and Radio Jonin from Ohrid), and 51 radio stations with local license. There are only 4 local newspapers operating on local level.

**Problems:** Funding is the main problem affecting local media, while all the other problems are interconnected with the lack of funds. Second problem relates to the fact that local authorities are still “subsidizing” some local media, mostly through advertisements and through small-scale local campaigns. Finally, the poor quality of the media content and limited capacity of the local media staff have been usually outlined as another set of problems.

**Sources of funding:** Advertisements are the main source of revenue for local media even though the amount regional and local media get from commercial advertisers is significantly low. Most of them secure funds necessary for survival during the election campaigns. Many media outlets have unofficial “partnership” with local authorities which affects their editorial policy.

### Supply side

**Mission:** Local media have mainly informative and entertaining mission, aim at sharing local and national actualities. They cover different social and political topics considered to be important for their local communities.

**Capacities:** Number of employees in local media has been drastically decreased as a result of financial constraints, and it varies from 2 to 30 - from media to media. Only big regional outlets (such as Kanal 77 from Štip, which has national broadcasting license) has large and skilled staff, including female in both, management and production. Owners and managing staff consider that number of professional staff is insufficient for producing media content of the great quality. The major portion of the employees in the

local media outlets are journalists that work also as presenters, editors, in advertising sector and more. Generally, the media lack sophisticated skills for using digital/social media, but also the young personnel needs extensive trainings in that area.

**Content:** Mostly focused on local affairs. Topics that media commonly would want to introduce but they are not producing due to lack of staff/funding include investigative programmes, children's programmes, documentary films, and sport programmes.

**Business models:** The average annual budget per local media outlet varies from 10.000 EUR to 140.000 EUR in television, and around 16.500 EUR to 30.000 EUR in radio, printed and online media. The main sources include advertisements (90% of overall funds) and subscription. From time to time, some local media outlets get engaged in projects aimed at producing particular programmes. The revenues generated by commercial activities are not enough to cover even the basic operational costs.

**Interaction with audience:** TV and radio outlets collect data on audience quarterly through the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services rating reports. Some of them also buy researches from private market research agencies, while online portals use audience data through Google Analytics. TV's reach out audience through messages and live phone-ins by which they had opportunity to ask questions to guests in programmes. Television, printed and online media interact with audience primarily through social media fan pages. Media owners and managers consider increased interaction with audience as basis for improvement of their media outlets' performance.

## Demand side

**Key observations:** Citizens often highlight the lack of own programmes, low level of professionalism among media staff, and polarization of the media along political lines as key problems affecting local media. They also noticed a certain level of distrust in local media. On the other hand, albeit increasingly using social media rather than traditional one, citizens rely more on traditional media. This is mainly prescribed to lack of transparent ownership in online portals.

**Main trends and habits:** People prefer to use social media the most for faster and easy accessible information and TV to gain more reliable news. Radio is mentioned as more practical since it can be used in different circumstances (at work, for example). The use and relevance of print media has been decreased drastically, and it is irrelevant to young people.

**Key problems of local media:** Not sufficient funding, political pressure and lack of capacity to cover local events, have been indicated as key problems according to local media audience.

**Key shortcomings of local media:** Lack of local media own production, unprofessional staff and politicization were the most common responses of participants. In terms of media content, participants pointed out to the lack of local media's own production, indicating that local media serve only to an extent of informing without having any educational or entertaining character. Regarding the staff, participants mentioned that firstly there is low level of staff organization.

**Preferences:** Key topics local media audience prefer to read depend on the age group. The younger participants would like to have more information on recruitment and other opportunities, as well as science related and educational programmes. The middle aged and older participants prefer to have more live programmes with expert guests in domains of health, psychology, culture etc., particularly morning programmes. Male and female participants have separate preferences on media content. Namely, male participants demand to watch more about sport and investigative stories in media, rather than females who prefer mostly educational programmes.