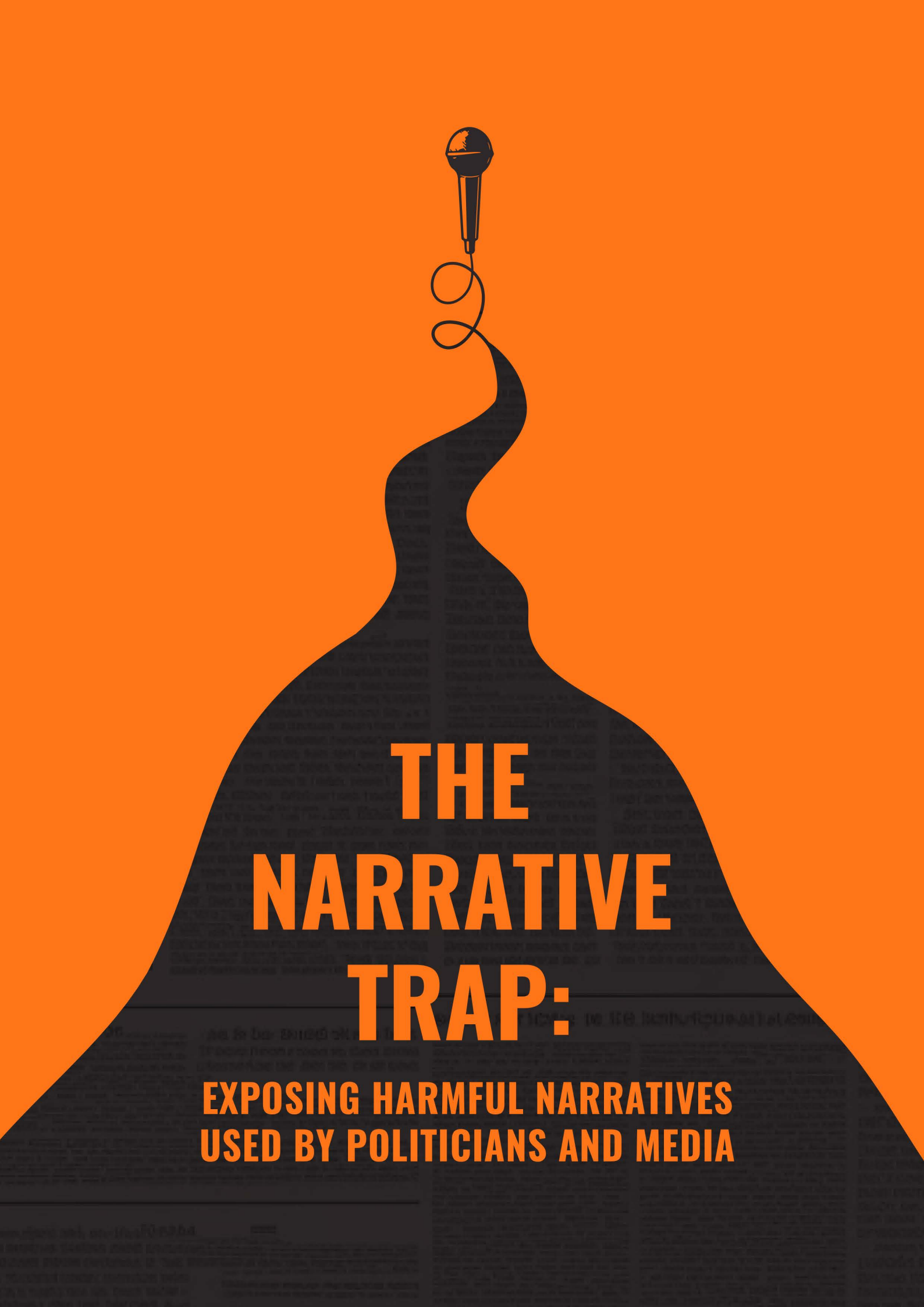

THE NARRATIVE TRAP:

EXPOSING HARMFUL NARRATIVES USED BY POLITICIANS AND MEDIA

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List of abbreviations

AAVMU - *Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services*

DM - *Democratic Movement*

AJM - *Association of Journalists of Macedonia*

NG – *Noun Group*

ICS - *Institute of Communication Studies*

NPH – *Noun Phrase*

LI – *Lexical Innovations*

CMEM - *Council of Media Ethics of Macedonia*

HN - *Harmful Narrative*

HARM-TIVE – *'Determining Political Harmful Narratives'* **(HARM-TIVE)**

FOREWORD

This publication is the result of the research **Determining Political Harmful Narratives (HARMTIVE)** conducted by the Institute of Communication Studies (ICS) in collaboration with researchers and experts in the area of communications and media, journalists, and media professionals. Through an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on communication, psychological, political, and linguistic sciences, this longitudinal study (2023 and 2024) delves deeply into the story of the political harmful narratives within the Macedonian context, addressing the key research question: Do political harmful narratives emerge and disseminate in the public communication spaces, and if so, how? The monograph traces the paths of the harmful political narratives, exploring their creation, structuring, promotion, implementation, as well as the potential effects and consequences within the current socio-political context. It examines these narratives both during the periods of 'regular' political communication and 'electoral' political communication.

Structurally, the monograph consists of five sections. It begins with the theoretical and scientific postulates of the issue, offering a clear conceptual definition of the harmful political narratives, their patterns, sources, and elements, with a focus on their significance and influence in the political communication. It, then, examines the two key subjects of observation: the political actors and the media, analysing their roles in creating, moderating, broadcasting, and boosting the harmful political narratives. Following this, the research methodology is elaborated in detail, including the methods, the techniques, and the key research indicators used to analyse the harmful political narratives. A distinctive feature of this research is the development of a special list of indicators for detecting, monitoring, and determining harmful narratives—an 'added value' to the existing research experiences, adapted to the socio-political context of the Republic of North Macedonia.

Empirically, the hypothetically posed questions about the main propagators of harmful narratives are revealed and verified in the section 'Political Narratives in Numbers'. The analysis shows that the political actors (politicians, political parties, and officials) are the dominant creators of harmful political narratives. Their 'creative' potential is vast, not only in terms of creating a large volume and frequency of such narratives, but also in the diversity and content of their narratives. Utilising all available resources and media (print, electronic, and online media), as well as the official channels (press conferences, public forums, personal social media profiles, press releases of the institutions, parliamentary speeches), they supplement or even replace public information and reasoned debate with attacks, slander, belittlement, and denigration, primarily directed at the political opponents, public figures, and even journalists. Notably, they are cautious not to 'offend' the citizens, because they are their future voters. Their narratives aim to undermine trust in institutions, encourage biased selection, foment divisions, engage in character attacks, and promote populism—ultimately eroding trust in the democratic processes and principles. Meanwhile, the media (and the journalists) often broadcast these harmful narratives uncritically, sometimes even verbatim, without scrutiny or analysis. This allows such narratives to penetrate the entire informational space. Trapped in the dilemma of 'political (in)correctness' rather than serving as 'guardians' of the public interest, they inadvertently support biased agendas—consciously or not—forgetting/compromising the fundamental journalistic standards. While their role should be to inform the citizens about the current socio-political issues, they frequently become participants in disinformation and manipulation, caught in the whirlwind of the political 'games'. The issue

extends beyond impartial and truthful reporting. Journalists should not serve the politicians, spread disinformation, hate speech, or propaganda. Instead, they must actively oppose all narratives based on falsehoods, disinformation, and discrimination, highlighting the manipulative and 'toxic' media content and deconstructing it in accordance with the clearly defined ethical standards.

The following analysis, **The Role of Words in the Construction of the Harmful Narratives** explores the content of the used words, employing methods to identify the communication strategies utilised by the political actors when addressing social phenomena and issues. In this way, the analysis scrutinises who said what and how, examining the harmful narratives in the public communication space through in-depth discursive analysis to understand their context and framework. This is supported by numerous news items/information from the media (electronic and online) in which harmful narratives dominate. Special emphasis is placed on the role of emotions and their significance in creating the harmful narratives. Numerous researches confirm that emotions are a crucial factor in influencing people and their behaviour and decision-making on vital social issues in politics. Emotionally charged words used in the harmful narratives follow the binary system of functioning —a simplified black-and-white perspective not only on politics but also on other aspects of life, such as the economy, culture, healthcare, media, education.... This creates a clear division: 'us', the good, honest patriots versus 'them', the bad, dishonest traitors, among many other variations. When such vocabulary is conveyed to the public through the media, it inevitably impacts the entire society. Following this pattern, it fosters dual divisions among citizens—even within the basic social units (family, relatives, and friends), while also generating disappointment, hopelessness, apathy, and conflicting emotions of belonging and connection on the one hand, and fear and resentment on the other. Moreover, neither the political actors nor the media bear any responsibility for harming citizens' well-being; in fact, they seem unaware of this responsibility. The fifth and final but not least section, addresses 'the Neologisms as Part of the Harmful Political Narratives'. Here, the political actors also dominate by using either entirely new coined terms or familiar expressions with new meanings, placing them in harmful contexts as a strategic linguistic manipulation primarily targeting the public. Through the media that convey these harmful neologisms, they not only become more accessible but are also more likely to enter everyday use among the citizens, thereby further spreading, gaining 'legitimacy' and becoming common practice.

Overall, the conclusions in the monograph 'warn' of a serious, politically harmful rhetoric that 'pollutes' the public communication space, undermining democracy and democratic values. This is more than enough reason to mobilise all social resources to 'resist' such methods and forms of political action. In this regard, the recommendations at the end of the monograph emphasise adherence to the existing national and international binding documents (declarations, laws, recommendations, and codes) that define the standards and principles of political communication. These require political actors to demonstrate transparency, media accessibility, professionalism, impartiality, and representation of the public interest in their communication. They must not be sources of or disseminate disinformation, hate speech, or discriminatory rhetoric. Likewise, the media must maintain independence, autonomy, impartiality, accuracy, transparency, and constructive reporting. All stakeholders are affected—the political actors, the media, and above all, the citizens and the public. Changes are essential if we are to talk about democratic political communication at all.

This publication is a 'pioneering' work that systematically and comprehensively analyses the main political harmful narratives—their emergence, scale, prevalence, the actors who create and disseminate the harmful content, the vocabulary used as the primary weapon, their discursive nature, as well as their negative impact on the 'health' of the society and democracy. Of course, the political harmful narratives are not a new 'phenomenon,' either in North Macedonia or globally, but their increasing dominance, acceptance, and, in some cases, justification as a 'companion' in the domestic political landscape have sounded the alarm. Hence, the necessity of an interdisciplinary

approach emerged from the research process as a means to 'unmask' the 'damage' these narratives cause—leveraging the capacities (knowledge and experience) of numerous theorists/researchers as well as practitioners/empiricists (a team of 30 people), adding value to the results presented in this monograph.

Finally, heartfelt gratitude goes to all researchers and authors who participated in this extensive research project, with the hope that this publication will inspire further research as well as establishment of various mechanisms for regulation/self-regulation, but also education for the citizens, the media, and the political actors in combating harmful political narratives and defending democracy. Today, even after the research has concluded, with the regular publication of monthly, bi-monthly, and semi-annual reports on findings, and now with this monograph, harmful political narratives—although perhaps less intense and vivid—have not disappeared from the political discourse and continue to 'feed' the public. This is reason enough for new researches on this topic, including in-depth analysis of the discourse surrounding the construction of socio-political issues and processes in the country.

Special thanks also go to the British Embassy Skopje, which, within the framework of the **Fact-Based Journalism for Raising Awareness and Countering Disinformation in the Media Space in North Macedonia: Use Facts** project, recognised the importance of this topic/issue both locally and globally.

Prof. Vesna Shopar, PhD

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We dream in narrative, day-dream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative.

(Barbara Hardy)[1]

1 Hardy, B. (1987). The Collected Essays of Barbara Hardy. New Jersey: Harvest Press.

INTRODUCTION

Since the dawn of time to the present day, in the world of politics, the publicly uttered word has had the weight of a 'mountain'. In ancient times, political rhetoric was considered a science, and today it is apostrophised as a skill. For the politicians, it is a 'privilege' to (in)directly address the public, but also, it is a 'responsibility' for how they will act, what and how they will say to their citizens who elected them to lead and govern the state. The political actors create and use narratives to shape the public opinion, thereby influencing the political behaviour and decision-making. In doing so, they use the media to promote their narratives as well. On the other hand, the goal of the media is to inform, educate the public, and ensure pluralism of opinions, positions and reliable facts about all social processes. The misuse of the public communication space with potentially harmful content and narratives with false, inaccurate, malinformation, hate speech and disinformation not only contaminates the political 'arena', but poses a serious challenge and threat to democracy, as well. A problem that political science, sociology, and psychology are seriously addressing, with numerous theories developed and a number of laws, declarations, regulations, and codes adopted to 'defend the truth.' In the last decade, with the rise of the information and communication technologies, the challenge has become even greater. The circle is increasingly widening, including all forms and methods of public political communication, all entities, from ordinary citizens to the highest political structures in the country, and with it, the potentially harmful content and information.

In the social and political sciences, the term *political narrative* is used to describe the way in which storytelling can shape facts, thereby influencing the understanding of the reality (Shenhav, 2006). In fact, the narratives propagated by the political actors aim to persuade and mobilize the public, shape the public opinion and legitimize the political agendas. However, political narrative is not only a theoretical concept, it is also a tool employed by political figures in order to construct the perspectives of people within their environment and alter relationships between social groups and individuals. (Graef et al., 2018).

The media, in turn, play a key role in conveying political narratives, acting as a bridge between the policymakers and the public. Through news, social media platforms and digital channels, the media 'participate' in shaping the public understanding of the political events, issues and ideologies. Their influence on the political narratives is double-edged: when media reporting is balanced, it provides valuable insights and holds governments accountable; when it is distorted, selective, or sensationalist, it can misinform and divide the public. This complex influence underscores the need for responsible journalism, media literacy of the audiences, and continuous scrutiny of the media practices to ensure a healthy and informed democracy.

The Macedonian political scene is 'living' the same upheavals, especially emphasized in the 2020s. A period burdened with serious issues and problems crucial for the development of the country: the change of the name of the country, the accession of the Republic of North Macedonia to NATO, the start/stagnation of the negotiations for EU membership, the changes to the Constitution, the rise of Euroscepticism, the good neighbourly relations with Bulgaria and

Greece, the change of power (presidential and parliamentary elections), the judicial reforms, the serious corruption scandals in numerous social spheres. A socio-political context 'susceptible' to the creation of harmful stories/narratives of the political opponents, divided into 'patriots' and 'traitors', 'honest' and 'criminals'. The political environment is deeply polarized, the media and information literacy is poorly developed, and the online space is insufficiently regulated, while the public information space is increasingly polluted with disinformation, inaccurate information, malinformation, propaganda, hate speech. Attacks, belittling, labelling and insults towards the 'other' are a routine, without arguments and facts, and different opinions are not heard or perceived. All media forms and shapes of political communication are activated - from traditional media, social networks, alternative platforms, private chat groups, and even echo chambers (bubbles) are being created as 'companions' in order for the political messages to reach citizens.

In the absence of in-depth researches that will reveal the scope, the sources, the patterns and the elements of the harmful content and narratives that 'contaminate' the public communication space, it is necessary to answer several key questions: who are the entities who create political harmful narratives, who are the entities who transmit the political harmful narratives, what is the nature, the frequency and the context of the harmful political narratives, the rhetorical strategies and techniques in their communication with the public. The answers to all these questions are provided by the research 'Determining Political Harmful Narratives' (HARM-TIVE) conducted in the period from 2023 to 2024. In doing so, the harmful narratives are clearly defined and operationalized through a series of indicators, and the main research problem - harmful political narratives in political communication - is longitudinally and empirically 'observed' through the public communication channels over a period of one year.

The research included three levels of analysis: *first level, monitoring* of the communication practices of the political actors and media monitoring (TV stations and informative online media outlets), control and analysis, during which periodic reports were prepared and published; *second level*, ad hoc research/es on a topic/topics that proved to be exceptionally significant during the research period and *third level*, preparation of a monograph, i.e., a summary report from the entire research period, which includes an in-depth analysis and offers more data on the situation with the harmful political narratives and media reporting on them in Macedonia.

Data obtained from the first level of analysis, i.e., from the process of monitoring the public political communication of the political actors and its reporting and dissemination in the media, were analysed in periodic reports, as well as in two summary analyses covering several months. The detailed analyses of each individual political entity or media outlet are available in the periodic analyses (five in total), the six-month (September, 2023 – February, 2024) and the quarterly analysis (March – May, 2024). The third level analysis is based on the total data; however, the political actors or media are analysed collectively, not individually. The monograph covers the key aspects of the problem: the theoretical postulates and the research focus on the political narratives, the political harmful narratives created by the political actors and media reporting on the narratives, their dynamics, types and forms. Special emphasis is put on the role of words in the construction of the harmful narratives, as well as on neologisms and as part of the politically harmful narratives.

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The 'Determining Political Harmful Narratives' (HARM-TIVE) research was carried out by the Institute of Communication Studies (ICS) within the 'Fact-Based Journalism for Raising Awareness and Countering Disinformation in the Media Space in North Macedonia: Use Facts' project, supported by the British Embassy Skopje.

1. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1. ABOUT NARRATIVES

A narrative is a story or telling of events, experiences, or observations, true or fictional, in a variety of forms, written, verbal or visual, to convey information, to persuade, or to entertain. It is a structured account of certain events and/or experiences in a story with specific meaning. In The Media Literacy Dictionary, narrative is defined as 'A story; a statement that connects mutually related persons and events; a certain way of understanding or explaining events', a concept that 'holds a special place in the science of communication'. Narratives often establish causality, meaning, and coherence between otherwise unrelated events, thereby enabling individuals to understand and interpret reality in a simple and accessible way. Narratives are not simply the telling of facts, but they include perspectives, values, and interpretations (Patterson & Monroe, 1998; Hineline, 2018). Because of their ability to organize complex information into coherent and connected structures that are memorable, narratives are considered a natural way for people to understand each other. This process actually helps people organize their personal and collective experiences, allowing them to see their place in a broader social or historical context (Patterson & Monroe, 1998).

A characteristic of narratives is that the information they contain is presented in the form of simple everyday human experiences (e.g., a sequence of events in the form of cause and effect, motivations, conflicts and their resolution), which makes them easier to understand and remember. Psychological researches show that people are more likely to remember and connect information when presented as a story, rather than when presented as isolated facts (Bruner, 1991)). However, they have the power to persuade and influence people's positions, beliefs and behaviours. As a tool, narratives are not neutral. They can be used to persuade people towards positive goals such as justice, equality and sustainability, however, they can also be used to support terrorism, authoritarianism and violence (Braddock and Hogan, 2016).

Narratives are also fundamental tools for constructing personal and collective identities. Through shared narratives, individuals connect with others, creating a sense of belonging and mutual understanding. For example, national histories, religious stories, or cultural myths provide frameworks that connect individuals to collective values and goals, strengthening the social cohesion (Shenhav, 2006). Narratives facilitate empathy and understanding of others, which is crucial for human socialization and connection to the community (Hineline, 2018).

Narratives are very efficient in engaging emotions, which play a key role in decision-making. Stories emotionally engage people, helping them to relate to certain situations, phenomena, and characters on a personal level, which significantly influences the positions and decisions. This emotional engagement of the individual often leads to stronger connections with the narrative content and, therefore, a deeper understanding of the issues presented in the narrative context (Marcus et al., 2000).

The evolutionary psychology suggests that storytelling may have developed as a social tool for the survival of the young individual, helping in the transfer of knowledge, invaluable survival and subsistence experiences, cultural memory, and social norms. Probably every generation strives to pass on the lessons, the dangers and the cultural values to the next generation, through storytelling, so that they can be easily remembered and further conveyed. This inherent affinity for stories is thus embedded in the human psyche, making narratives a fundamental tool for understanding and learning (Boyd, 2009; Sugiyama, 2001). Through shared stories - such as myths, historical accounts, or family anecdotes - communities create collective memory and identity, strengthening the cultural values and group cohesion (Hineline, 2018).

NARRATIVES IN POLITICS

Narratives are also used in politics, where a story is created that will be understandable to the voters, influence public perceptions of the politicians and the political issues, and shape public opinion on important socio-political events. Political narrative is a story told by the politicians to present themselves and their policies in a positive light, create a sense of continuity and give meaning to their campaigns.

By definition, political narratives are structured accounts of political events that are both personal and collective, providing frameworks through which individuals and groups understand the world, interpret their roles in the political life, and assign meaning to political and societal events (Patterson and Monroe, 1998). Political narratives help individuals and groups understand the political reality. Political actors use them to present the events in a certain way, legitimize their actions, and promote the collective identity. They influence the perception of the political issues, linking them to a broader story that may include elements of history, ideology, or cultural values (Shenhav, 2006). In fact, through the repeated storytelling, groups and individuals establish a shared sense of belonging and continuity, goals, and values that help maintain the political cohesion (Patterson and Monroe, 1998; Shenhav, 2006).

Political narratives not only shape and reflect, but sometimes distort the political reality, as well. Their role in politics is to serve as essential tools for constructing meaning and organizing complex political realities (Patterson and Monroe, 1998; Shenhav, 2006). By framing events and issues through storytelling, political actors help the public interpret political events in ways aligned with their agendas/programs, and commitments.

Political narratives are dynamic and adaptable. As political contexts change, so do the narratives, allowing the political actors to effectively respond to shifting realities (Shenhav, 2006). This adaptability enables them to remain relevant and current over time, changing to accommodate new information or shifts in the political landscape (Patterson and Monroe, 1998). It is clear, therefore, that the power of the narratives lies not only in describing but also in constructing the political reality, influencing both the public perception and the behaviour.

Patterson and Monroe (1998) advocate for the use of narrative as an analytical approach in political science, suggesting that narratives can reveal aspects of the political behaviour that may not be obvious through quantitative methods alone. By examining the structure, the content and the dissemination of the political narratives, the researchers can gain deeper insights into the values, the beliefs and the motivations underlying political actions.

RESEARCH ASPECTS OF POLITICAL NARRATIVES

The most discussed, analysed and researched aspects of the political narratives are:

- **Framing:** Political narratives often involve framing events or issues in a certain way in order to highlight specific aspects while minimizing others. With the appropriate choice of words, images and metaphors, it is possible to significantly influence how the audience perceives the issue.
- **Messages:** Political narratives are usually directed and focused on specific messages or aspects of a dialogue aligned with the political agenda. These messages are constantly repeated to strengthen the narrative (Lakoff, 2004).
- **Emotion and identity:** Effective political narratives often evoke emotions and utilise people's identities and values. They are constructed in a way that can create a sense of belonging among the supporters or provoke hate or anger to motivate certain action, or alternatively, evoke fear, panic, or threat to demotivate taking certain activities or encourage unquestioning obedience.
- **Simplicity and accessibility:** Narratives are most effective when they are simple, easily 'consumable' and available to the general public. 'Complex or nuanced arguments can be overshadowed by clearer and simpler narratives, making it easier and quicker for the audience to accept the simpler ones.'
- **Consistency:** Consistency is key in maintaining the political narrative. It helps establish credibility and ensures that the message remains coherent over time (Bennett & Livingston, 2018).
- **Contrast and opposition:** Political narratives often include contrasting one's own position with that of the opponents or the rivals: we/us versus they/them. This can be done by highlighting the differences in the policies, values, or character (Shenhav, 2006).
- **Media and communication channels:** Political actors use various communication channels, such as speeches, debates, social media, advertisements and news 'coverage', to spread their narratives.
- **Narrative evolution:** Political narratives can and must evolve over time in response to the changing circumstances, the public opinion, or the events (Polletta & Callahan, 2017). Adaptability is crucial for their long-term effectiveness.
- **Effects:** The ultimate goal of the political narratives is to influence the public opinion and the public perception, to mobilise the voters and to achieve the objectives of the political agenda. They can play a significant role in shaping the public discourse and the outcomes of the elections and the policy debates (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

It is particularly important to note that political narratives can vary greatly in their content and purpose. They can be used for positive purposes, such as promoting civic engagement and impartial public information, but very often they are also used for more manipulative purposes. Political narratives with manipulative purposes often distort facts, reinforce divisive stereotypes or incite prejudices and hostility towards certain groups, creating and sustaining negative perceptions to serve political goals. They are defined as harmful political narratives and can increase polarization, divisions, and undermine the trust in the institutions, which leads to social and political conflict

(Wodak, 2015; Sokol & Sarajlić, 2023). They spread particularly quickly in the era of social media, 'echo chambers' and 'information bubbles', and can be a powerful weapon in the hands of various actors aiming to destabilise democracy and abolish humanity.

The effectiveness of a political narrative depends on factors such as the credibility of the source, the manner in which the message is broadcast to the target audience, the broader political and social context in which it is conveyed and shared, as well as the receptiveness of the audience and its level of education and literacy.

1.2. THE ROLE OF EMOTIONS IN NARRATIVES

Emotions play a key role in storytelling as they increase the involvement and the engagement of the listeners, help retain the narrative content in the memory and influence the positions and the behaviours of the audience.

Emotionally 'charged' stories capture attention and foster a connection between the storyteller and the audience. When stories evoke emotions such as joy, sadness, or fear (known in psychology as basic emotions), they create a unique experience that can lead to deeper involvement of the individual. This emotional resonance is essential for effective communication and persuasion (Bruner, J., 1991).

Emotional stories are more likely to be remembered than neutral ones because the amygdala – a brain region involved in processing emotions – enhances the encoding of memories that are emotionally significant. As a result, narratives that evoke strong emotions can leave a lasting impression, making the conveyed message more memorable (LaBar & Phelps, 1998).

Emotion in storytelling can shape the positions and behaviours of the audience by creating empathy for the characters or the situations. When the audience emotionally identifies with the story, they are more likely to change their beliefs or take action based on the presented narrative (Green & Brock, 2000).

The structure of the narrative, including its plot and character/actor development, significantly determines its emotional impact. Well-crafted narratives typically follow a structure that builds tension and resolution, evoking emotions and leading to a cathartic experience for the audience (Scully & Seger, 2003).

In summary, the role of the emotions in storytelling is multifaceted, influencing the involvement, the memory retention, the formation of positions, the cultural transmission and the emotional experience of the audience. By effectively integrating emotions into narratives, the storytellers enhance their impact and connect and understand their audience on a deeper level.

EMOTIONALLY CHARGED WORDS

Words are not just strings of letters inked together, they are not mere combinations of letters. Words are signs. Words are activators. Words are carriers of meaning, bearers of feelings and catalysts for change (Tausczik, Y. R., & Pennebaker, J. W., 2010). A single word can spark a storm of emotions, shifting the direction of a conversation, interpersonal relationships, and even life itself.

Emotionally charged words in literature can also be found as ‘emotional words’ or ‘charged words’. At their core, these words evoke feelings, activate reactions and ruffle our inner world

(Gendron, M., Lindquist, KA, Barsalou, L., & Barrett, LF, 2012). They are expressions or phrases charged with subcontextual meaning, carrying an additional package of emotions that goes beyond their semantics. Emotionally charged words add extra intensity to a conversation or written text. Not only do we hear or read them, they go further and affect our thoughts and emotions. That is the power of these words.

It is, therefore, no surprise that various leaders, marketing professionals and communication specialists pay close attention to the emotional resonance of their language, using it to evoke specific reactions from their audience, subtly manipulating feelings and thoughts. As is often said, it is not just what you say, but how you say it, and in this case, 'how' refers to the emotional charge of the words being used.

Emotionally charged words can be categorized into different types, according to the goal that one wants to achieve in communication. Thus, one type is words of *positive emotions*. These are the words that bring a smile, warm hearts and spread joy. Words like 'love,' 'happiness,' and 'excitement' fall into this category. When used sincerely, they have the power to lift spirits, strengthen trust and reinforce connections. On the opposite side are words of *negative emotions*. This group includes words like 'anger', 'sadness', 'fear' and 'disappointment'. There are also words of *neutral emotions*. These are words like 'surprise' 'curiosity' or 'amazement' and they can take on positive or negative connotations depending on the context. Finally, there are *words of emotions that depend on the context*. At first glance, these words may seem neutral; however, they can carry significant emotional weight in certain situations. For example, 'home' may be just a noun to one person, but for another, it could evoke strong feelings of comfort, nostalgia or even longing.

But how do these words work and why are they so effective? Language is more than just a means of communication. It is also a tool through which influence, persuasion and inspiration are exerted. In human interaction, they serve as threads that connect us (Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010). Like any other tool, they can be used for both constructive and destructive purposes. While they have the power to inspire, comfort and connect, they can also be used as weapons for manipulation, harm or division. When developing the skills to understand emotional language, one should not forget the sense of responsibility and ethics in the use of these powerful tools.

The way we process emotionally charged words is not universal. Cultural differences play a significant role in how we perceive the emotional language. A word that may deeply resonate in one culture can be completely neutral in another. This cultural variation in the use of the emotionally charged words highlights the importance of the emotional intelligence in communication. The ability to understand the emotional cues of the language, to appropriately adjust the words used and to correctly navigate the nuances of different cultural contexts is a valuable skill in our increasingly globalized world.

THE POWER OF THE EMOTIONALLY CHARGED WORDS IN THE POLITICAL DISCOURSE

It can be noticed that every political speech or debate is filled with emotionally charged words (Gennaro, G. & Ash, E., 2021). These words are carefully chosen to resonate with voters' emotions and shape their perceptions. Words like 'freedom', 'justice', 'tyranny' or 'oppression' vibrate with their subcontextual emotional weight. These words are far more influential than neutral ones because they provoke emotional reactions. They aim to manipulate the public opinion, trigger strong emotional responses and serve a specific agenda. Politicians often pay particular attention to these powerful words when preparing their speeches and messages, aiming to tap into the emotions of the public (D'Ambrosio, 2022). Hence, they frequently exploit fear, hope, anger or pride.

This is why political speeches often describe certain actions as 'heroic' instead of 'brave', or a new policy as 'revolutionary' instead of 'significant'.

On the other hand, the excessive use of these words in politics can sometimes blur the line between truth and perception. This creates an atmosphere of sensationalism and may damage the credibility of the politician.

Understanding the role of the emotionally charged words in politics (their influence on evoking specific emotions, framing debates and impacting public judgments) and recognizing them in speeches and messages allows for a better understanding of the political rhetoric and making more informed decisions.

RECOGNITION AND ANALYSIS OF THE EMOTIONALLY CHARGED WORDS

These words are cleverly woven into narratives to provoke specific reactions. The ability to recognize them helps in identifying biased language and promotes critical thinking. Often, these words are embedded in *provocative language* that uses words or phrases that are intentionally used to trigger strong emotions, like 'baits' that people will 'take.' Additionally, these words often *emphasize the extremes*, with statements containing words like 'the best' or 'absolutely the worst.' When sentences, speeches or statements *evoke more feelings than they convey facts*, it is likely that emotionally charged words are being used. Therefore, it is important to always consider the motive behind using emotional words, evaluate the arguments in the statement, and check if facts supporting those arguments exist. Furthermore, the context in which these words are used should always be taken into account—whether the use of a particular phrase or word is justified in the given context. Of course, not every emotionally charged word should be ignored. Emotions carry important information, but that should not cloud the judgment.

REFINING THE KNOWLEDGE AND USE OF EMOTIONALLY CHARGED WORDS

To harness the power of the emotionally charged words, it is necessary to develop emotional intelligence, i.e., the ability to recognize, understand and control one's own and others' feelings. By refining the skills for effectively using these words and using them responsibly and empathetically, one can create more meaningful and influential communication in all areas of life.

When communicating, it is important to be mindful of the emotional weight of the words, to choose them carefully, use them wisely, and in doing so, evoke emotions in others that lead to connection and understanding between people.

1.3. POLITICAL ACTORS AND HARMFUL NARRATIVES

Political actors, as creators, constructors and producers of political narratives, shape and frame the stories or the narratives that define issues, events, policies and political identities. Hence, the political narratives are indeed a powerful, yet legitimate tool for the political actors to engage, inform and mobilise the public. However, because narratives can shape beliefs, positions and behaviours, they carry significant ethical responsibilities. If used carelessly or manipulatively,

political narratives can become harmful and dangerous, as they have the power to divide the society, deepen distrust and even incite conflict.

In political communication, there is a consensus on the need for a political culture of fairness and respect for all participants in the communication process. This consensus is reflected in numerous documents (declarations, recommendations, codes) that define the standards and the principles in the political communication, which in turn form the basis for defining and understanding the harmful narratives and their recognition in the political discourse[2].

OBLIGATION FOR ETHICAL COMMUNICATION AND PROTECTION OF THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Elected and appointed officials, as well as party officials, are obliged to practice ethical communication when interacting with the public and the media. This means that the approach they are to apply is the following: 'an approach that is applied in the work and involves honest, conscientious, timely and responsible execution of the work duties. By complying with the professional standards and the human rights of individuals involved in the work, policies and principles are implemented that comply with the moral principles of ethical conduct in the working process' (Institute of Communication Studies, 2023b).

Some British and German political parties have statutes and codes of ethics that outline general principles of integrity, honesty and ethics, in line with the specific policies of the parties.

The Council of Europe also supports freedom of speech, as protected by the European Court of Human Rights, according to which freedom of speech includes the freedom to criticise and provide information that offends, shocks or disturbs the State or any sector of the population. Such are the demands that pluralism, tolerance and broadmindedness without which there is no 'democratic society' [Global Freedom of Expression (Columbia University), n.d.]. Limiting the freedom of speech is only possible if three conditions are met: a) it is foreseen by law; b) it is necessary to protect a legitimate aim, such as the rights of others; c) it is necessary in a democratic society (Article 19, 2015).

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights clearly states that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers (United Nations, n.d.).

Every individual or group has the right to express their positions, opinions and ideas through any media, including books, newspapers, magazines, radio, television, film and electronic documents on computer networks, without fear of retaliation, censorship or legal sanctions. This is also a fundamental right of any free society, without which journalists, scientists and every citizen would not be able to fulfil their vital role in spreading new knowledge (Institute of Communication Studies, 2023c).

The principle of ethical communication and the preservation/protection of freedom of speech arises from these obligations for ethical communication.

2 Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and Elections in the Digital Age; European Commission, 2022. The 2022 Code of Practice on Disinformation; Recommendation CM/RecChS (2025) 15 on the application of the European Social Charter by North Macedonia with respect to Article 6§4; Government of the Republic of Macedonia, 2011. Code of Ethics for Public Servants.

BAN ON THE USE OF HATE SPEECH AND DISCRIMINATORY SPEECH

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe defines *hate speech* as all types of expression that incite, promote, spread or justify violence, hatred or discrimination against a person or group of persons, or that denigrates them, by reason of their real or attributed personal characteristics or status such as 'race', colour, language, religion, nationality, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity and sexual orientation (Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe for combating hate speech, 2022[3]).

In the resolutions of the Council of Europe, public officials, particularly those in leadership positions, should avoid engaging in, endorsing or disseminating hate speech. Politicians should be encouraged to publicly promote a culture of human rights and to condemn hate speech firmly and promptly, while respecting freedom of speech (Council of Europe, 2022). Member states of the OSCE are obliged to prevent hate speech, as well as other manifestations of 'aggressive nationalism, racism, chauvinism, xenophobia, antisemitism, violent extremism, as well as discrimination based on religion or belief' (OSCE, 2003).

Political parties are urged to adopt codes of conduct for their candidates/officials, which will define minimum standards for respecting the principle of non-discrimination, prohibiting the spread of hate and limiting the human rights. Furthermore, they are urged to work on inter-party initiatives that will focus on improving tolerance, preventing discrimination, promoting intercultural understanding, social inclusion and respect for diversity (UNHRSP, OSCE, OAS, ACHRP, 2021). The codes of certain political parties from Germany and the United Kingdom contain provisions related to anti-discrimination, anti-bullying and harassment, tolerance of differences and respect for human dignity and human freedom. The Code of Ethics of SDSM also speaks about the principles of non-discrimination, providing examples of various grounds for discrimination, promoting mutual respect with citizens, refraining from hate speech and encouraging ethical behaviour.

The Communication Strategy of the Government clearly states that content that could be offensive to individuals or specific groups of citizens shall not be published or shared. Furthermore, the Code of Ethics for Public Officials outlines the principle of equality among political parties, stating that public officials must treat political parties equally and not subject them to discrimination on any grounds.

The principle of preventing spreading of hate speech and discriminatory speech arises from these bans on use of hate speech and discriminatory speech.

Obligation to be transparent and accessible to the media

Due to the special social responsibility that the politicians, the candidates for office, the elected and appointed officials have, they are obliged to maintain a high level of transparency before the public and the media on matters of public interest. Countries should ensure that the media have unobstructed access to official sources, as well as to the candidates for public office, and that there are no barriers to the dissemination of information and ideas, even in cases of pandemics (UNHRSP, OSCE, OAS, 2020). In addition to the legal requirements for transparency in the financing and spending in the political campaigns during elections, the politicians should also be transparent regarding spending on social media platforms, as outlined in several joint declarations.

3 Council of Europe, 2023. Combating hate speech

Political entities are required to practice 'active transparency' in their work ('active transparency' means publication of information on institutions' own initiative, without anyone having submitted a request for access to that information to them[4]) and to publish materials of public interest, such as speeches, political positions they support, statements, press conference reports, responses to political opponents, as well as providing contact persons for communication with journalists. Additionally, political parties must make significant documents and data available to the public, such as their statutes, party structure, decision-making process, financial reports and other relevant documents related to their work.

The principle of transparency arises from this obligation.

OBLIGATION TO REPRESENT THE PUBLIC INTEREST IN COMMUNICATION

Politicians and public officials, while representing an institution (a collective identity), also have an individual (personal) identity. When communicating with the public, the politicians and the public officials must ensure that their personal positions are not perceived as the positions of the organizations or institutions they represent. This is particularly important for the public officials who are expected to be impartial in their duties.

Conflicts of interest among the politicians and the public officials are unavoidable, but they must be transparent and appropriately managed. According to the Code of Conduct for the members of the European Parliament, a conflict of interest exists where a Member of the European Parliament has a personal interest that could improperly influence the performance of his or her duties as a Member, while a conflict of interest does not exist where a Member benefits only as a member of the general public or of a broad class of persons (Annex of EP Code, 2017).

The Code of Ethics for Public Officials adopted by the Government of RM mandates that the public officials perform their duties in a politically neutral manner, refrain from promoting their political beliefs while carrying out their working tasks and avoid engaging in political activities that could undermine the trust of the citizens in their ability to perform their working tasks impartially (Official Gazette of RM, No. 133, 2011).

The Code of Conduct for Government Officials on Public Relations obliges them to remain impartial, maintain objectivity, and place their service obligations above their personal interests. It also provides guidelines to ensure the distinction and limitation of using personal social media profiles by the public officials to avoid damaging the reputation of the institution and prevent their personal positions from being taken as positions of the institution.

According to the British government, public officials responsible for communication must always be available and prepared to explain the policies and reasoning of the Government or the ministries they represent. They must speak in an official capacity rather than being quoted unofficially. Their communication should be based on the scope of the work of the Government. It should be objective and explanatory rather than one-sided, so it does not appear as politically biased. Moreover, government communication should not be used solely for party-political

4 There is also a legal basis for the active transparency of institutions, which is primarily found in the Law on Free Access to Public Information, but also in a number of other laws, such as the Law on Local Self-Government, the Law on Budgets, the Law on Public Debt, the Law on Financing of the Units of Local Self-Government and others. In addition to the regulation, active transparency also stems from good practice, and institutions have obligations for proactive publication of information from the action plans within the Open Government Partnership initiative. https://aktivnatransparentnost.mk/

purposes. Public officials should not defend the policies of their parties or attack the policies or positions of the opposition parties (unless it is necessary to respond to a specific question (Civil Service, 2010; Government Communication Service Propriety Guidance, 2014, 2022).

The principle of professionalism and impartiality in the communication of the government representatives arises from this obligation to represent the public interest in their communication.

OBLIGATION NOT TO BE A SOURCE OF AND NOT TO SPREAD DISINFORMATION AND UNVERIFIED INFORMATION

Manipulative speech, which includes disinformation, can seriously affect electoral processes and democratic processes in general by creating falsehoods and unfounded attacks on individuals, thereby reducing trust in the electoral process and the responsible institutions. The creation and dissemination of disinformation is not a criminal act, but it is unethical and can be extremely harmful to the democratic processes of a country. The general principles of integrity, honesty and ethics (in the analysed documents) are contrary to any coordinated or uncoordinated efforts to use disinformation by politicians and public officials. Hence, it is important for the politicians and the public officials not to use disinformation and to share only verified information in their communication.

The basic principles for the states stated in the 2021 Joint Declaration on Politicians and Public Officials and Freedom of Expression state that the states (and parties) should never engage in or finance coordinated inauthentic behaviour or other online influence operations which aim to influence the views or attitudes of the public or a section of the public for party political purposes. This document obliges the states to introduce disciplinary measures to be imposed on the public officials who make, sponsor, encourage or further disseminate posts which they know or should reasonably know to be false (UNHRSP, OSCE, OAS, ACHRP, 2021).

It is also prohibited to create and use fake accounts, account takeovers and bot-driven amplification, hack-and-leak operations, impersonation, malicious deep fakes, purchase of fake engagements, non-transparent paid messages or promotion by influencers, creation and use of accounts that participate in coordinated inauthentic behaviour, user conduct aimed at artificially amplifying the reach or perceived public support for disinformation. (European Commission, 2022).

Some British and German political parties have statutes and codes of ethics that outline general principles of integrity, honesty and ethics, in line with the specific policies of the parties. In addition, the British government has issued a specific guide for tackling disinformation (Government Communication Service, 2021). The government of the Republic of North Macedonia, in its communication strategy, has defined that government public relations officials should tell the truth and be objective. The document states that inaccurate information or speculations that could mislead citizens should not be published.

The evidence-based communication principle arises from the obligation for the political actors not to be a source of and not to spread disinformation and unverified information.

1.4. MEDIA AND HARMFUL NARRATIVES

The media play a central role in conveying, amplifying and sometimes even creating political narratives. They serve as a bridge between the political actors and the public, offering specific frameworks for the stories they share, which undeniably influence how people understand and respond to the political events, policies and ideologies. As the media reach a broad audience and serve as primary sources of information, their approach to political narratives can significantly impact the public opinion and the political culture. Hence, compliance with the professional journalistic standards is an imperative.

The basis for identifying harmful narratives broadcast through the media and the potential non-compliance with the professional standards are the valid regulations governing the work of the media (Article 16 of the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia, the Law on Media, the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, the Law on Prevention and Protection Against Discrimination, as well as the by-laws and rulebooks of the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services), as well as in accordance with the principles and guidelines of the guild associations, media organizations and educational institutions: the Code of Ethics of the Journalists of Macedonia of the Association of Journalists of Macedonia (AJM, n.d.); the Guidelines for Ethical Reporting for Online Media (Application of the Code of Ethics of the Journalists in the Online Sphere) of the Council of Media Ethics of Macedonia (CMEM, 2021); the values, the professional standards and practices listed in the Handbook for the Public Interest in Journalism of the Institute of Communication Studies (Šopar et al., 2016); the Handbook for Journalists and Editors *Recognize and Prevent: Journalist's Tools for Tackling Disinformation* by the Institute of Communication Studies [Trajkoska (ed.), 2023].

Thus, this section presents laws, codes and standards that synthesise reference domestic and international sources and literature, specifically regarding the regulation and self-regulation of the work of the media. What is crucial in this regard is that, when reporting on harmful political narratives, the professional journalists are expected to comply with the values upheld by these standards.

Despite the ongoing debates about the **fundamental values** underpinning the journalistic profession, there is a consensus that *independence, autonomy, impartiality, accuracy, transparency and constructiveness* are the key postulates.

Independence is one of the key values in journalism and in tackling disinformation. This means that journalism must not be influenced by external interests or agendas, such as political or corporate interests. It presupposes journalists not to be misled by sources, intimidated by power, or compromised by personal interests. At a deeper level, independence encompasses a free spirit, open-mindedness and intellectual curiosity, which enable journalists to look beyond their class, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religion, gender or ego. Independent journalism is an essential component of democracy.

Autonomy is related to independence. It exists on three different analytical levels: the first one is the institutional level, which pertains to journalism as a whole, independent of the other social institutions such as the state and the market; the second one is the individual level, which pertains to the journalists themselves, who have discretionary creative power and decision-making authority in their work; and the third one is the organisational level, which pertains to the workplace, where the individual preferences are often influenced by the institutional constraints. In general, journalism researches are primarily focused on analysing the autonomy at the institutional and individual levels, and less on the organisational level.

Journalistic impartiality is most commonly defined as expressing or using facts without distortion due to personal beliefs, bias, feelings or prejudices. Recently, impartiality has mainly been considered a method of understanding. This includes respecting the facts, consulting multiple sources, asking difficult questions, presenting evidence, keeping an open mind and making the entire process as transparent as possible. Impartiality does not mean presenting a completely neutral perspective or a perspective without an opinion; rather, it explicitly refers to the method of working, which should be unbiased.

Journalists cannot represent the 'absolute truth,' but being accurate and correctly understanding the facts remains a key principle in journalism. *Accuracy* means presenting truthful information—it is the foundation on which everything else is built: news, context, interpretation and debate. In tackling disinformation, it is essential to ensure that the presented information is accurate and supported by evidence. This includes fact-checking, verifying the sources of information, as well as openly acknowledging any ambiguities or limitations in the information.

Transparency means being open and honest about the journalistic process and any potential conflict of interest, as well as disclosing any connections or biases that might influence the presented information. It includes openness about the sources of information, acknowledging potential biases or limitations in the information, openness about funding, openness about the used methodology and the key decisions made, openness about important errors or omissions. Transparency is highlighted as an effective way to tackle disinformation and respond to the on-going decline in the trust and the credibility in the media.

Constructiveness means presenting information in a way that is useful and productive rather than polarising or harmful. When it comes to disinformation, it is important to promote constructive discourse and encourage critical thinking about the possible solutions to the common problems. Constructive journalism is an approach aimed at providing the audience with a fair, accurate, and contextualised picture of the world, without overemphasising the negative or what is wrong. It can be seen as a response to polarisation, sensationalism and negativity bias.

These basic values are translated into **standards for trustworthy/credible journalism**.

The main standards of credible journalism regarding the *sources* are as follows:

- **Verification:** Verification is the essence of the trustworthy journalism; respecting the facts and the public's right to know the truth is its primary duty. Therefore, all key elements of a story—such as claims from sources, names, dates and locations, facts and figures—should always be checked (preferably double-checked) and wherever possible, multiple sources should be used and all evidence should be balanced transparently and with an open mind.
- **Comprehensiveness:** For credible journalism, correct establishment of the facts is necessary but that is not sufficient. Even accurate facts can tell an incomplete and hence, misleading story. That is why all important information should be covered in a story, ensuring that all relevant facts and viewpoints are included.
- **Confidentiality of sources:** The credible journalism primarily requires reliable sources. That is why first-hand information obtained through direct observation should be used wherever possible. If indirect sources are needed, they should be identifiable and considered reliable. Additionally, it is important to assess whether the source has directly received the information and whether the source is up to date.

- **More than one source:** For credible journalism, stories should not be based on a single source; they should always be fair, ensuring that all involved individuals are given sufficient time for a fair hearing.
- **Referencing and Protecting Sources:** Trustworthy journalism is transparent about its sources and protects them when necessary. Additionally, such journalism avoids using vulnerable sources, such as individuals with mental disabilities, children and victims of crimes, accidents or disasters.
- **Payment/Acceptance of Money:** Credible journalism does not depend on financial incentives; it always avoids paying sources for information, just as it avoids accepting money from sources.

The main standards of the trustworthy journalism regarding the *presentation of the news* are as follows:

- **Avoiding dramatization/re-enactment:** Credible journalism presents the news in an honest manner, ensuring that quotes are accurate and precise and always used in their original context. Re-enactment or dramatization in the news with actors is avoided without explicitly stating so.
- **Difference between facts and opinions:** Credible journalism differs from other media practices by clearly differentiating factual information from normative statements.
- **Context:** Trustworthy journalism places facts in perspective, providing relevant context that gives them meaning.
- **Fairness:** Credible journalism recognises that reality is not black and white; hence, it identifies the groups and interests, and therefore perspectives, that are involved in an event or development in the news.
- **Avoiding polarisation:** Trustworthy journalism strives to tell the full story, not just the extremes at either end, it avoids exaggerating opposing opinions or conflicts just to produce news, it refrains from focusing solely on extreme positions, and pays attention to the broader environment and nuances.
- **Privacy:** Credible journalism respects the integrity and the privacy of the individuals.

1.5. NEOLOGISMS IN THE POLITICAL NARRATIVES

One way in which the political actors attempt to construct the political reality is through the use of neologisms in the political discourse. Political neologisms are created to respond to specific political, social and cultural contexts, providing a new language to describe emerging ideas, phenomena, or societal changes.

Neologisms play a significant role in the political narratives, shaping the public discourse and reflecting the shifts in the social values, ideologies, or political reality. These newly coined expressions,

phrases, or redefined words can become powerful tools for presenting certain issues, creating new associations, simplifying and emotionally 'charging' political issues in ways that align with particular political agendas. They can bring clarity, identity and unity, but they can also lead to manipulation, oversimplification, and polarisation. When used responsibly, these neologisms can enrich the public discourse and help societies face new challenges. However, when uncontrolled and irresponsibly used, they can disrupt/distort reality and lead to a series of harmful consequences.

WHAT ARE NEOLOGISMS?

Neologisms are new words in a language, new meanings of existing words or words from a passive vocabulary that are revived with new meanings. The reasons for the emergence of neologisms include: new concepts and phenomena or previously unknown concepts and phenomena for which there are no existing words and the words are borrowed together with the concept or phenomenon from the donor language (e.g., *botox, monitoring, mango, software*, etc.), new words for existing concepts and phenomena, as a result of trends, failure to translate from the donor language, or lexical influence (*billboard* instead of 'advertising board,' *benchmark* instead of 'reference point, condition, criterion,' *manager* instead of 'director', etc.), words with renewed meanings, i.e., existing words given new meanings or words from a passive vocabulary that become actualised (*application* meaning 'employment form,' *folder* for organising documents on a computer, etc.).

The emergence of the neologisms is one of the primary ways of enriching the lexical vocabulary of the Macedonian language. Some of these words successfully integrate into the lexical system, while others fall out of use. Those that do adapt follow Macedonian word-formation patterns and by incorporating Macedonian prefixes, interfixes and suffixes, fully fit into the Macedonian system.

Occasionalisms are author-specific, individually used words, i.e., authorial neologisms. Unlike neologisms, which either belong to or will eventually become part of the lexicon of the Macedonian language and are more widely used, occasionalisms remain only a potential addition to the lexicon. (Grujevska-Madjoska, 2021: 99–103). The material analysed here is mainly about occasionalisms and only a small number have entered the conversational functional style, without the potential to enter the lexicon of the Macedonian language.

Neologisms are mostly spread through the media and the internet, with the majority originating from English, which is today's global lingua franca. The neologisms used by the politicians and the political parties, conveyed through their official websites, as well as their official pages or profiles on the social network Facebook, within harmful political narratives are the subject of analysis in this document.

HARMFUL POLITICAL NEOLOGISMS

Political actors often tend to obscure their true intentions which is one of the key characteristics of the political discourse which is manifested in the language through the creation and use of neologisms to influence the public awareness—primarily that of the electorate—as well the one of the political opponents. Linguist and researcher Chi Luu (Luu, 2016) highlights that in politics, neologisms are used not only to enrich the political vocabulary and with that the discourse, but they are also used as a tool for controlling and framing the narrative and to persuade the public to adopt and use these new words, often related to discrediting political opponents with negation and/or ridiculing different political ideologies. They often carry strong symbolism or emotional nuance. She argues that the political language shapes the emotional identity of the public by offering something they

should be a part of, belong to, and something they should be wary of or reject. In essence, people are encouraged to choose a side—to decide with whom they stand and whom they should fear or oppose (*us* versus *them*). Therefore, depending on which group you identify with, you will tend to use the communication styles of that group.

In this context, the political sphere is highly active in the formation of neologisms, and according to Veronika Katermina (Katermina, 2018), due to its constant development and the current nature, its productivity in this regard will continue to grow, and the mass media and the new technologies would probably support the further spread of these so-called political neologisms. She analyses three groups of neologisms: 1. *Politicians and supporters* (neologisms referring to people who belong to a particular party or adhere to certain political views); 2. *Types of governance* (neologisms referring to different forms of rule); 3. *Political events* (neologisms referring to political processes).

According to Katermina (2018), there is a common tendency to add the suffix *-ism* when constructing neologisms linked to the names of the political actors. For example: Blair-*ism* – the political ideology of the former UK Labour Party leader and Prime Minister Tony Blair, reflecting one's commitment to centrist policies; Trump-*ism* – reflecting the positions and the political statements of the former US President Donald Trump, often with a comedic undertone; Bush-*ism* – associated with the former US President George W. Bush, referring to humorous or absurd words, phrases, and linguistic errors used in his public speaking. Regarding the types of governance, examples include blending of two words, such as *narciss-o-cracy* (rule by excessively egocentric politicians) and *idio-cracy* (rule by so-called idiotic or foolish politicians) and in terms of political events, we have word formations such as Gr-*exit* and Br-*exit* (referring to possible the Greek and British exit from the Eurozone), introducing a new suffix, *-exit*, added to the first few letters of the names of the countries.

Political discourse is characterised by a tendency to either conceal the truth or reveal only half of it. According to Marine Mchedlishvili (Mchedlishvili, n.d.), the specific use of the verbal tools is one of the main instruments for confronting political opponents. In order to belittle or discredit their rivals, politicians create effective terms and phrases, which are then widely used by the media and the public. Almost all political terms were once political neologisms with their own origin. As this author notes, their acceptance in a language depends on the significance of the concept certain neologism denotes: those with greater national/international importance become an integral part of the language. What she particularly highlights is that the most successful political neologisms establish a harmonious relationship between their external/internal form and the semantics, transforming them into powerful messages and effective tools of influence. Some of them become highly popular and are widely used and disseminated by the media and the public as common expressions, stimulating the creation of new forms. While some of these words have a short lifespan, others remain in the language and become part of it. This is especially problematic when it comes to harmful narratives, because in this way, they enter everyday use and become 'normalised'.

Linguist and researcher Irina Essina focuses on neologisms as a 'lexical tool for speech manipulation that generates additional connotations, obscures understanding, misleads and creates conflict situations' (Essina, 2020: 9). In this sense, the creation of new words can alter reality and influence or control the communication process, i.e., the exchange of information. The main mechanism of manipulation through neologisms is suggestion, a phenomenon aimed at persuasion. In this way, political actors can influence individuals by introducing certain socio-political illusory ideas and redefining norms and values. It is particularly important to emphasise that the mass media and the public also play a role in the process of using and spreading certain neologisms. The stages of this process are as follows: a political neologism is created under specific circumstances; it is then used at various levels within the political lobby; and finally, it is used by the public according to the presumed orientation of the mass media (Ismail, 2013).

LINGUISTIC CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY AND DIFFUSION OF LEXICAL INNOVATIONS

Simply put, the social construction of the reality refers to the meaning and the connotation assigned by the society to a phenomenon, event, or occurrence, and as such, they are adopted by the members of that society, who perceive and experience them accordingly (Serafimovska et al., 2022).

According to Gerald Grace (Grace, 1987), the linguistic construction of the reality occurs on two levels: 1. As a whole, the language reflects certain constructed reality, and such realities are called conceptual worlds. 2. The speech act, or the linguistic expression, also reflects a certain constructed reality, and the constructed realities at the sentence level are referred to as conceptual events. The key figure in the linguistic construction of reality is the speaker, or the sender of the message, who decides and selects which event will be presented as real, i.e., will be constructed. These events are called conceptual because they depend on the speaker's conception: the speaker recognises and structures them.

The specific political language expands the political information by fundamentally expressing particular political concepts (Abdul Ameer Hadi & Muhsin Gharab AL-Majdawi, 2019). Hence, neologisms are a distinctive feature of this type of language and refer to the source of knowledge of the political world by naming emerging ideas within that political sphere in the society. They often occur in response to current events and are associated with certain changes in politics, economics, culture and other areas.

As these researchers highlight, the politicians are considered masters at creating new words, especially during election campaigns, when they use them skilfully to influence the voters, often with new words that refer to the character of a political opponent in order to disparage some of their qualities. Political actors simultaneously flatter and, in a way, command citizens, as language users, to adopt the replacements for some existing words with new ones. Over time, language users attempt to generalise these innovations in order to alter the meaning of the words to make them more suitable for further dissemination in the society (Booij, 2005; Saeed, 2009).

In this way, according to Murray Edelman (Edelman, 1985), the political actors strategically and manipulatively construct certain linguistic reality based on constructing beliefs about the significance of certain issues, events, crises, as well as changes of the policies, and the key strategy in this process is immobilising the opponents while mobilising support from the followers. Consequently, the political language becomes a political, i.e., social reality. By using harmful neologisms, political language generates beliefs about who the 'allies' and 'enemies' are, i.e., it strengthens these beliefs. The power of such political language does not always stem from its descriptions of the 'real' world but from its strategic reconstruction of certain past events, its focus on certain present occurrences that are not the most noticeable, and its projection of potential future scenarios.

Neologisms 'are a continuum from completely new word formations to fully established lexemes that are familiar to the majority of the speech community' (Würschinger, 2021: 2). The diffusion of lexical innovations is a process that transmits successful neologisms along this continuum. The diffusion of neologisms shares certain characteristics with the diffusion of cultural innovations, because the spread of new words is often closely related to the spread of the socio-cultural products and practices. According to Everett Rogers and Floyd Shoemaker (Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971), diffusion is a special type of communication, i.e., a process through which the so-called innovations spread among the members of the social system. In this regard, neologisms, as socio-cultural innovations, become increasingly used and conventional within a given speech community. For example, a certain new word is invented by a political actor, as an individual speaker, and that

word first reaches the speakers, i.e., the community of speakers closely related to the political actor or, shares certain interests related to the new word. Through further diffusion, this new word extends to a broader audience, transcending the initial speaker community and entering other communities. In this context, the media and the social networks play a crucial role. The use of the language on social networks is more informal and creative, making these networks hotspots for neologisms. In case of harmful narratives associated with neologisms, then this diffusion of lexical innovations becomes a very significant area for study, analysis, and consideration in both academic research and practical applications.

1.6. POLITICAL NARRATIVES THROUGH THE PRISM OF THEORIES

Political narratives are crucial for understanding how the political actors influence the public perception, mobilise support for one political option while ensuring the boycott of another. Several theoretical frameworks and concepts have been developed for analysing political narratives.

Framing Theory is one of the most commonly applied approaches and relates to the way information is presented to the public, shaping their perception and understanding of political issues. Political actors use 'frames'—framing—to highlight certain aspects of an issue while minimising others. This selective approach influences perceptions, thinking, decision-making, and ultimately people's behaviour. For example, politicians may portray immigration as a security issue or as a humanitarian concern, which affects how the public and the policymakers approach the topic (Goffman, 1974).

The theory was primarily developed by Erving Goffman in his 1974 book 'Frame Analysis' and it is widely used in media studies and political communication to explain how public discourse can be influenced by the way issues are presented.

The basic concepts of this theory include *frames*, which are mental structures that help people interpret and organise information by focusing on certain elements of a story, and *framing*, the process by which the communicators (such as the media or the political actors) construct a particular understanding of an issue. Furthermore, important concepts include: *Frame building*: the creation or selection of specific frames that align with certain viewpoints, which can occur at both individual and institutional level; the *Frame setting* concept: once a frame is built, it becomes embedded in the public discourse and shapes the way people talk about and understand a given issue: and finally, the *Audience interpretation* concept: the effectiveness of the frame depends on how well it is aligned with the audience's existing beliefs and values.

In political communication, framing is a powerful tool for shaping public opinion and influencing political debates. The politicians, the media and interest groups use framing to promote their agendas by emphasising certain issues or perspectives. This includes constructing narratives that align with specific values, ideologies, or emotions. The frame determines what will be included in the conversation and what will be excluded.

The Framing Theory strives to explain the political narratives and their influence through several approaches and key concepts. First, there is *problem definition*: political actors can shape a societal issue by defining the problem and who is responsible for it. For example, in the climate change debate, one frame may define it as a scientific consensus on a human-induced crisis, while another

may define it as exaggerated or unsupported science. Each frame carries different implications for policy solutions. Furthermore, political actors often use *moral evaluation*, therefore political frames frequently include moral judgments about what is right and wrong. For instance, the welfare debate can be framed as helping vulnerable populations (a moral obligation) or as encouraging dependency (a moral failure). Each frame leads to different policy responses. *Causal interpretation* (attributing causes) is a framing tool. In the political narratives, different actors may emphasise different causes for an issue. For example, poverty can be presented and shown as the result of systemic inequality or individual failure. This influences the public support for policies such as social protection or job creation. In addition to trying to define the problem, evaluating it morally, and interpreting its causally, frames also attempt to propose solutions. These frames provide solutions based on the problem definition and the causal interpretation. For example, if crime is framed as a result of poor moral values, then the solution may involve stricter law enforcement. However, if it is framed as a socioeconomic issue, the solution may be policies related to education or employment. Finally, political framing often relies on metaphors or symbolic language to create vivid and emotionally resonant narratives. For instance, the 'war on drugs' frame suggests an urgent and militarised approach to illegal substance policy, while framing 'healthcare as a human right' as a matter of social justice.

Several empirical researches demonstrate how frames function and what the effects of certain framing choices are. According to Entman (1993), frames function through selection and emphasis: choosing what to emphasise and selecting (highlighting) certain elements of the narrative before the others. Frames prepared in this way influence the perceived causes of the problems and the preferred solutions. Nelson et al. (1997) found that different framings of racial issues (such as affirmative action) can shape the public opinion. When the racial policy was framed as promoting equality, its support increased; however, when the framing suggested unfair competition for jobs, the support declined. Iyengar (1991), in his book 'Is Anyone Responsible?', demonstrates that media framing of political issues—such as poverty or crime—has tangible effects on the public opinion. He distinguished between episodic framing (reporting on specific events or individual cases) and thematic framing (highlighting broader societal trends), discovered that episodic frames often lead people to attribute problems to individual failings rather than systemic reasons.

The Theory of Strategic Narrative focuses on how actors—primarily states, political leaders, or institutions—construct and communicate stories to shape perceptions, define reality, and influence the behaviour of both domestic and international audiences. These narratives are deliberately designed to achieve political, social, or cultural objectives, such as securing public support, legitimising certain actions, or guiding policy. The theory integrates elements of communication, international relations, and political science to explain how power operates through storytelling.

The strategic narratives are intentional, organised, and focused stories that provide meaning to the complex events by offering a coherent frame for interpretation. They are constructed by political actors and disseminated through various media channels to shape the understanding of the public and align the perceptions with a particular policy or worldview. This theory includes basic concepts such as: *narrative*, a coherent story that connects the events, the actors, and the actions, shaping how people understand the situation; *strategic action*: deliberate use of narratives to achieve specific goals, such as influencing public opinion, gaining political legitimacy, or securing international support; *narrative alignment*: the process by which different actors attempt to align their narratives with the dominant or desired understandings of an issue. This can occur at the domestic, regional, or global level; *power and influence*: strategic narratives are considered tools of soft power. Rather than coercing others, they strive to shape the beliefs, the values, and the behaviour of the audiences.

Strategic narratives are employed in both domestic politics and international relations to achieve political objectives by shaping perceptions. Politicians and states use narratives to communicate their values, justify decisions, and legitimise their actions. In political context, these narratives help present complex issues in ways that resonate with the target audiences, fostering identification with certain policies or worldviews. Miskimmon et al. (2013) introduced the theory, emphasising how strategic narratives function in the global politics. They argue that states compete to shape the international system through their narratives.

Rossell et al. (2014) examined how strategic narratives influence the international relations, analysing how the United States, Russia, and China use narratives to shape/construct the global order. Van der Zee (2020) explored how strategic narratives have been used in the European foreign policy, portraying the EU as a global actor and a leader in the multilateralism. Hallams and Schreer (2016) studied NATO's strategic narrative framework, demonstrating how different narratives were deployed to justify NATO's actions and maintain legitimacy among the member states.

Discourse theory is a theory that focuses on the language. The political discourse analysis examines how language is used to build power, ideologies, and identity. Political narratives are analysed within the broader discourse, emphasising how they reinforce or challenge the existing power structures. For example, political speeches are analysed to understand how politicians construct the national identity or portray their opponents (Fairclough, 2001).

The Discourse Theory is a frame used to understand how the language, the symbols, and the communication practices shape reality, identity, and power relations in the society. It argues that the discourse—systems of meaning created through the language—is central to the construction of the social and political life. Political narratives are seen as structured ways of interpreting and making sense of the world, with power embedded within these narratives. The theory is mainly developed from the post-structuralist thought, particularly through the work of theorists such as Michel Foucault, Ernesto Laclau, and Chantal Mouffe. It explores how the meaning of concepts (such as democracy, freedom, or justice) is not permanent but it is constructed, contested, and reshaped through political struggles.

At the core of this theory is the *discourse*—a system of meaning or a particular way of speaking and understanding of the world. It is more than just language; it includes practices, ideas, and representations that shape the knowledge and the social reality. According to Michel Foucault, discourse is closely linked to *power,* meaning that those who control the discourse can shape what is considered 'truth' or 'common sense' in the society. Furthermore, *articulation* is also an important concept when it comes to the power of discourse. Political actors 'articulate' or construct links between different ideas, symbols, or social practices in order to create a coherent narrative or worldview. For example, linking 'immigration' with 'national security' in the political discourse shapes the public perception of immigration. In the concept of *hegemony*, outlined by Gramsci and further developed by Laclau and Mouffe, certain discourses become dominant and naturalized, while others are marginalized. Political struggle is often a battle for establishing hegemony by making a particular discourse appear as 'common sense.' Political narratives, within this frame, are discursive strategies that create meaning, legitimize power, and shape public policy by defining problems, assigning blame, and proposing solutions.

Michel Foucault argued that power is not only exercised through coercion but also through the production of knowledge and truth. Those who control the discourse control what is considered 'true' or 'normal' in the society. His ideas on the relationship between the discourse and the power can be found in works such as 'The Archaeology of Knowledge' (1969). Laclau and Mouffe, in their influential work 'Hegemony and Socialist Strategy' (1985), developed a discourse theory that emphasizes how political identities and struggles are shaped through the discourse. They argue

that the political movements must engage in the construction of new hegemonic discourses to challenge the dominant ideologies. A key figure in the critical discourse analysis (CDA), Norman Fairclough, studies how discourse shapes the social practices and the power relations. He focuses on how the language contributes to the reproduction of the social structures, particularly in relation to power, inequality, and ideology. Another key figure in the discourse analysis, Teun A. van Dijk, focuses on the role of the discourse in shaping the social consciousness and ideology. He studies how the political discourse is used to reproduce social dominance, for example, through the portrayal of the immigrants or minorities in the political rhetoric.

The theory of symbolic interactionism emphasizes the role of the symbols and the meanings in shaping the interpersonal interactions (Blumer, 1969). Herbert Blumer established the term 'symbolic interactionism'. The theory focuses on how individuals create, interpret, and respond to symbols in their everyday interactions. People act based on the meanings of the things, and these meanings arise from and are shaped through the social interactions. At the heart of the symbolic interactionism is the understanding that reality is socially constructed through communication and that meaning is constantly negotiated and revised in the interpersonal relationships. Developed from the works of George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer, symbolic interactionism is often used to explain how individual identity, social roles, and group dynamics are shaped by the symbolic meanings that emerge in communication.

The basic concepts of this theory include: Symbols: objects, words, gestures, or actions that carry specific meanings within a given culture or context and are created through social interaction. *Meaning*: the meaning of symbols is determined through interaction and is subject to change based on a context or a perspective. Thus, people behave toward things based on the meanings of those things. *Self-concept*: individuals develop their self-identity through interactions with others, which includes taking on the role of the other (i.e., imagining how others perceive them).

Political narratives can be explained through symbolic interactionism by focusing on how the political actors (such as the politicians, the media, and the voters) create and negotiate the meanings through symbols, language, and interactions. Political symbols—such as flags, slogans, or iconic figures—carry powerful meanings constructed and interpreted by individuals and groups within the society. These symbols become powerful because they acquire shared meanings through social interactions. For example, political campaigns often invoke symbols like the national flag to create emotional resonance with the voters.

Political narratives are created and maintained through the use of the language and the rhetoric, which are symbolic forms of communication. Politicians prepare speeches to evoke certain meanings or emotions, and these narratives constantly interact with the audience. For example, when a politician uses the phrase 'Macedonia Timeless' or 'Macedonia for the Macedonians,' they evoke a set of symbolic meanings related to the national identity, self-identification, and self-acceptance.

In 'Mind, Self, and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist' (1934), Mead explains through his concept of the 'self' as a social construct how individuals understand themselves through the social interaction, which is crucial in the development of the political identities. Herbert Blumer expanded on Mead's ideas and emphasized that meanings arise from the social interaction. Blumer's focus on the interpretative process lies in the foundation of much of the analysis of the political narratives, because the political meanings are negotiated and constructed through discourse and interaction.

These theoretical frames provide insights into how political narratives are constructed, disseminated, and used to influence the public opinion and policy outcomes. Each theory offers a unique lens for understanding the role of the stories and the narratives in politics.

1.7. RELEVANT RESEARCHES

Various scientific disciplines, including political science, communication studies, sociology, social psychology, and linguistics, have focused their research on the impact of the narratives on public opinion, political behaviour, identity formation, and policymaking. As a result, numerous researches and data have been gathered on this subject.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE POLITICAL NARRATIVES ON PUBLIC OPINION

Numerous studies explore how political narratives shape public positions and opinions on the political issues and how they influence what people consider important. Findings indicate that framing narratives, emphasizing certain aspects of an issue over other aspects, affects the public opinion and the political decision-making by shaping how people interpret and evaluate information (Chong & Druckman, 2007). The effectiveness of the framing depends on factors such as the credibility of the source, the frequency and the repetition of the narratives, the frames (through which things should be interpreted), and the susceptibility to manipulation of the audience. When competing frames exist (different politicians presenting opposing views), individuals' interpretations are influenced by their prior beliefs, political knowledge, and values, which mitigate the impact of framing effects.

Furthermore, narratives that include predictions about future outcomes (e.g., politicians claiming that if citizens do not choose their option, the country will collapse) influence the positions of the public on the political issues (Jerit, 2009). The effectiveness of such narratives increases when they provide clear forecasts of the policy consequences, making the issue more vivid and more persuasive. Additionally, narratives that offer security and favourability for/toward a specific policy increase the support for it, whereas narratives that offer uncertainty, i.e., negative predictions about an alternative political option, reduce citizens' support for that option. These findings highlight that the perceived certainty and the direction (positive or negative) of the predictions are crucial in determining the impact of the narratives containing predictions of future outcomes on the public (Jerit, 2009). Jerit's findings emphasize the power of the predictive language in shaping the opinions and suggest that politicians and advocates can strategically use such narratives to build or diminish the public support for certain policies.

THE ROLE OF THE NARRATIVES IN POLICYMAKING

Studies of this type attempt to provide a systematic approach to examining the role of the narratives in policymaking. Researches in this field investigate how the narratives about the political problems and solutions shape the political debates and outcomes.

Research findings support the idea that narratives are essential in shaping the public opinion and the policy preferences because they simplify complex issues, making them more accessible and persuasive (Shanahan & McBeth, 2018). Successful policy narratives often contain clear elements such as heroes, villains, victims, and moral lessons, which help audiences connect emotionally and cognitively with the messages of the policy. Narratives can either drive policy change or reinforce the status quo, depending on how they present and frame the issues, mobilize the supporters, and shape the perceptions of legitimacy and urgency.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE MEDIA AND THE POLITICAL NARRATIVES

Some studies examine the role of the media in the creation, dissemination, and reinforcement of the political narratives. These studies examine how different media platforms present the political issues and shape the public perception.

Research data indicate that media influence the public perception of the political issues, the structuring of the democratic discourse, and the civic engagement, often through framing, selective coverage, and agenda-setting (Bennett & Entman, 2001). The way media select and convey political narratives—whether they convey them fully or selectively—determines how the public perceives the political issues. With the expansion of media channels and digital platforms, news consumption has become more fragmented, which can lead to echo chambers and ideological polarization, which further intensifies the political narratives (Bennett & Entman, 2001).

Moreover, media coverage of the political narratives can either strengthen or undermine the political accountability (Bennett & Entman, 2001). While the media have the potential to hold the leaders accountable for their statements and actions, they (the media) often consciously prioritize sensationalism (sensationalist narratives) over substantive reporting, which affects public understanding of critical issues.

In addition to these sensationalist narratives, 'episodic' narratives also pose a problem. Television news frequently use episodic narratives, episodic 'frames' (individual cases) rather than thematic narratives/frames (contextual analysis), which leads the audiences to attribute the accountability for the social problems to individuals rather than systemic factors (Iyengar, 1991). The dominance of the episodic shaping of the narratives shifts the responsibility for the important issues, like poverty or crime, onto individuals, thus reducing the public support for the policies that address structural or institutional solutions. These episodic narratives undermine the accountability by obscuring the role of the government, the institutions, or the social factors in resolving complex issues, which leads to a less informed and more individualistic perspective on the political accountability (Iyengar, 1991).

THE IMPORTANCE OF EMOTION IN POLITICAL NARRATIVES

These studies examine how the emotions embedded in the political narratives influence the political culture, the citizen mobilization, and the identity formation. More specifically, the researches in this area explore how the narratives that evoke emotions such as fear, anger, or hope affect the voters and their behaviour.

Findings from several key researches confirm that political narratives that trigger strong emotions, particularly enthusiasm and fear, significantly influence voter engagement and decision-making (Brader, 2005). Narratives appealing to enthusiasm increase voter interest, reinforce existing preferences, and encourage political participation, while fear-inducing narratives make people more receptive to new information, prompting them to reassess or change their views.

In this context, the concept of 'dual emotional systems'—disposition and surveillance—plays a crucial role in guiding political behaviour. The disposition system is related to habitual actions and strengthens the loyalty to specific policies, while the surveillance system is activated when individuals perceive a threat, encouraging a more careful evaluation of the political information/narratives (Marcus & MacKuen, 2000). Hence, emotions such as enthusiasm, fear, and anxiety influence how individuals process the political information, whereby enthusiasm reinforces the established preferences and loyalty, while anxiety leads to critical reassessment and more critical

political judgments. Namely, it is anxiety that activates the surveillance system, encouraging the individuals to seek information.

Additionally, 'deep stories' that are emotionally charged narratives that reflect people's life experiences and values, play a significant role in the construction of the political identities and perspectives. These narratives often transcend facts and are more closely tied to the personal and collective experiences (Polletta & Callahan, 2017). Similarly, nostalgia-based narratives, which evoke a longing for an idealized past, are particularly effective in mobilizing support for the political movements. Such narratives appeal to individuals who feel marginalized or dissatisfied with the contemporary changes, offering them a sense of belonging and identity (Polletta & Callahan, 2017).

In fact, these studies suggest that political campaigns can strategically use emotional appeals to trigger specific voter responses, making emotions a powerful tool in influencing election outcomes (Brader, 2005). Furthermore, emotions are not perceived as irrational forces in politics but as central to the informed political reasoning, shaping how individuals interpret, engage with, and react to the political events (Marcus & MacKuen, 2000).

POPULIST NARRATIVES AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE PUBLIC

Populism, as an ideology, views society as being divided into two antagonistic groups: 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite' (Mudde, 2004). This dualistic frame forms the foundation of much of the populist rhetoric and strategy. The appeal of populism lies in its simplicity and directness, making it particularly attractive to citizens who feel excluded or alienated from the traditional political elites. This adaptability allows populism to thrive across various political contexts and ideologies, ranging from right-wing nationalism to left-wing movements opposing the social order.

The rise of populism reflects broader social trends, including media sensationalism, political distrust, and disillusionment with the mainstream parties, all of which create an environment conducive to populist narratives. This type of narratives can mobilise the disengaged voters and challenge the entrenched elites, yet they also risk undermining the democratic norms by fostering division, reducing tolerance for pluralism, and eroding institutional checks and balances (Mudde, 2004).

Populist narratives are frequently associated with the right-wing movements that use fear-based rhetoric to construct a sense of feeling/connection/identity within and out of the groups. They often portray immigrants, minorities, or political opponents as threats to security, culture, and national identity, reinforcing the 'us versus them' mentality (Wodak, 2015). By creating scapegoats, the right-wing populist discourse frequently marginalises the groups, blaming them for the societal problems. This strategy not only diverts the attention from other political issues but also consolidates the support by exploiting the pre-existing prejudices.

Right-wing populists in their narratives often present their views as 'common sense,' appealing to 'the ordinary people' against 'the elites.' This approach helps legitimise the exclusionary policies by presenting them as the authentic, natural will of the people (Wodak, 2015). Populist narratives pose a risk to the democratic values by promoting polarisation and undermining the tolerance and the pluralism.

POLITICAL NARRATIVES AND CONFLICTS

Narratives embedded with conflicts, whether cultural, historical, or social, influence how the public perceives itself and its own identity. The emotions these narratives provoke play a crucial role in maintaining conflicts. Fear, anger, and distrust are typically embedded into these narratives, reinforcing the negative perceptions of the opposing group and hindering the possibilities for reconciliation or dialogue (Bar-Tal, 2007). Such narratives often include cultural myths and symbols, designed to maintain the solidarity within the group while demonising everyone outside that group, further entrenching the hostilities. Both the leaders and the institutions significantly influence the dynamics of the intractable/irreconcilable conflicts. They can perpetuate narratives that justify the ongoing hostilities or, conversely, promote dialogue and efforts to build peace (Bar-Tal, 2007).

These narratives are also key in shaping the individual and collective identities. The stories young people hear about themselves and their communities during times of conflict and confrontation impact their perceptions of belonging, conflict, and the 'other' (Hammack, 2011). The cultural narratives specific to each group inform the young person and help them understand their identity in relation to the conflict. These narratives often emphasise topics of victimisation, resilience, and historical suffering.

Although narratives can deepen and perpetuate divisions, they also have the potential to foster empathy and dialogue. By understanding and engaging with the narratives 'with each other, together', there is an opportunity to build bridges and transform identities (Hammack, 2011). This highlights the significance of the narrative in constructing the identity, especially in the context of conflict, and underscores the need for dialogue and mutual understanding to facilitate the peacebuilding efforts.

HATE SPEECH IN THE POLITICAL NARRATIVES

Researches on the use of hate speech in political narratives reveal how political leaders and movements use hate speech to target specific groups, inciting violence and discrimination, and how these narratives create an 'enemy' or a scapegoat and strengthen dehumanisation.

Research findings show that the concept of a 'dangerous speech' narrative has high potential to incite mass violence. Identifying specific speech patterns and contexts that increase the risk of violence is crucial for prevention (Benesch, 2014). It has also been found that the use of counter-narratives—positive responses to hate speech—can prevent mass violence or reduce the impact of the harmful narratives. This includes raising awareness among the communities and the individuals to produce alternative messages that promote inclusion (Gagliardone, Alves & Martinez, 2015). Effective counter-speech strategies include public condemnation of inflammatory rhetoric, promoting positive messages, and amplifying peace messages (Benesch, 2014). One method to prevent violent rhetoric and potential mass violence is community monitoring and alerting, which includes media and public message tracking.

Hate narratives, strategically used to mobilise certain voter groups while alienating others, contribute to a polarised political atmosphere, complicating the efforts to encourage inclusive democratic engagement (Sokol & Sarajlić, 2023).

POLARISATION AND 'US VS THEM' NARRATIVES

Several researches identify the increased political polarisation as a common challenge for the democracies globally. This polarisation often divides the societies along ideological, ethnic, or religious lines Factors contributing to the polarisation include the economic inequality, the influence of the social media, the identity politics, and the strategic manipulation by the political elites. Leaders often exacerbate the divisions to mobilise support, framing the opponents as existential threats to the values or the survival of their group (McCoy, Rahman & Somer, 2018).

A large number of polarising narratives lead to regression of democracy, as the political opponents are delegitimised, and the democratic norms such as mutual tolerance and institutional checks are undermined. This intensifies the power struggles and weakens the trust in the democratic institutions. Polarising narratives destabilise governance by increasing the social stagnation, reducing the political compromise, and increasing the public distrust. Social cohesion is eroded because the groups become more isolated and antagonistic, reducing the willingness to cooperate on common issues.

It is also noted that the political polarisation is increasingly based on identity rather than ideology. This 'identity-based polarisation' means that the political preferences are closely linked to other social identities (e.g., ethnicity, religion), intensifying the group loyalty and hostility towards the outgroup. The political identities have become emotionally charged, which leads to 'affective polarisation'—strong negative feelings towards the opposing side. This emotional response is less about policy differences and more about solidarity within the group and hostility towards the outgroup (Mason, 2018). Mason observes that the identity-driven polarisation erodes the democratic norms, fostering an environment where compromise and cooperation are increasingly rare. It also makes the individuals more likely to justify undemocratic practices in order to 'defend' the values and the power of their group (Mason, 2018).

DISCREDITING CAMPAIGNS AS HARMFUL NARRATIVES AND THEIR IMPACT

Discrediting campaigns significantly influence the political landscape, undermining the candidates and the parties through targeted disinformation and character attacks. These campaigns create an environment of mistrust and hostility among the electorate.

Narratives that rely heavily on gender stereotypes in the political discourse that marginalise female candidates and reinforce traditional gender roles, not only affect the candidates individually, but also they perpetuate the social inequalities.

Addressing the challenges posed by the harmful narratives requires a collective effort from the political actors, the civil society, and the media organisations to promote accountability and encourage a 'healthier' political discourse (Sokol & Sarajlić, 2023).

DISINFORMATION AS HARMFUL NARRATIVES AND THEIR IMPACT

Disinformation, defined as deliberately false information created and disseminated to manipulate the public opinion or conceal the truth, serves specific political goals, such as delegitimising the opponents, influencing the public perception, and affecting the election results. It can be strategically used by the political actors to advance particular agendas or narratives (Freelon & Wells, 2020). The spread of disinformation is facilitated by the social media platforms (Bennett & Livingston, 2018; Freelon & Wells,

2020; Lazer, D. M. J., et al., 2018). The design of these platforms, which often prioritise engagement over accuracy, exacerbates the issue by amplifying sensational and misleading content. They generate more interest and shares compared to the traditional news sources (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Guess, Nagler & Tucker, 2019).

Disinformation is often interwoven with personal stories and nostalgia, reinforcing pre-existing beliefs and emotions rather than presenting facts. This interaction complicates the public's ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, because the emotionally charged narratives can exceed the rational assessments of the information (Polletta & Callahan, 2017).

Disinformation has also been shown to influence citizen behaviour, disrupting civic engagement by creating an environment where citizens are more likely to disengage from the political processes or become confused about the political issues. This disengagement further weakens the democratic institutions and processes (Bennett & Livingston, 2018). In summary, disinformation, as a type of harmful narrative, poses significant challenges to the democratic processes by undermining the trust in the institutions, polarising the public opinion, and creating confusion regarding the factual information. This erosion of trust can weaken the foundations of the democratic governance (Freelon & Wells, 2020; Bennett & Livingston, 2018).

SOCIAL MEDIA AS BOOSTERS OF HARMFUL POLITICAL NARRATIVES

Studies in this field investigate how social media platforms amplify harmful political narratives, enabling rapid spread of disinformation, hate speech, and extremist content.

Initially, social media facilitated the democratic movements by providing a platform for mobilization and expression, particularly during revolutions such as the Arab Spring. However, later, these same platforms significantly contributed to political turmoil, polarization, and spread of disinformation. While the social media allow for more direct interaction between the citizens and the political figures and can mobilize the citizens and encourage political engagement, they can also erode the role of the traditional media as gatekeepers. This raises concerns about the quality of information, the potential for manipulation, and the exacerbation of divisions, reinforcing the extremist views and fuelling conflict (Tucker et al., 2017).

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. SUBJECT AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The subject of this research is the **harmful political narratives** in the political communication. The research focuses on **how narratives are constructed by the political actors and how the media report on them.**

The objectives of the research include **analysing the narratives** of the political entities an**d identifying the dominant harmful narratives, the rhetorical strategies and techniques** used in their communication with the public, as well as **analysis of the manner in which they are broadcast** to the public by the media.

Essentially, the aim of the research is to determine **whether the political actors adhere to the standards and principles of political communication and whether the media apply professional and ethical journalistic values and standards in their reporting**. The ultimate goal is to **raise the awareness among all participants in the public communication** (political actors, media, and the public) about the importance of respecting all standards and principles of political communication, as well as the enormous destructive power of the harmful narratives on the democratic processes, the social progress in all spheres, and the health of the citizens.

2.2. RESEARCH QUESTION AND ITS SPECIFICATION

The primary research question is: **Are harmful political narratives being created and disseminated in Macedonia, and if so, how?**

The specification of this basic research question for the political entities/actors is as follows:

- How do the main political entities (the parliamentary composition from 2020–2024 and the government composition from 2023–2024) in Macedonia construct/create harmful narratives on their official websites and their official Facebook pages/profiles (language used)?
- What harmful narratives are constructed and communicated to the public by the main political entities, including the prevalence of different types of harmful narratives?
- What topics are most commonly associated with harmful narratives within the political narratives?
- What are the main violations in the political communication of the political actors?

The specification of the basic research question for the media (television and online media) focuses on:

- How do the media broadcast the political narratives created and shared by the political actors?
- Are there any violations of the professional journalistic standards for fair, just, and impartial reporting on the political actors and conveyance of their narratives? If so, what are the main violations?

2.3. VARIABLES

The main variable in both segments of the analysis is **the harmful narrative**. Harmful narratives are the narratives of the political actors that are not benevolent in purpose or content and do not serve to promote civic activism, they go beyond merely informing the public and aim to manipulate it, undermining the democratic and humanitarian values and potentially causing harm in nearly all aspects of the socio-political life.

The list of harmful narratives has been created for the specific purposes of this research and adapted in accordance with the conducted desk analysis, consultation of relevant literature, and taking into consideration Macedonia's socio-political context and its specifics.

HARMFUL NARRATIVE 1 Disinformation: dissemination of false information or claims intended to cause harm or manipulate the public opinion. To determine whether disinformation is being disseminated, a complete understanding of the situation is required, allowing verification of the accuracy of the shared information[5].

HARMFUL NARRATIVE 2 Malinformation: politicians or public figures may have private or personal information (e.g., emails or private messages) taken out of context and disseminated to damage their reputation. Dissemination of such information is not in the public interest and is often done with malicious intent to damage their reputations [Posetti & Ireton (Eds.), 2018].

HARMFUL NARRATIVE 3 Undermining trust in public institutions (without evidence): deliberate and baseless efforts to undermine citizens' trust in the public institutions.

This usually involves baseless attacks on public institutions, accusing them of corruption, biased decision-making, or unprofessional conduct (Knight Foundation, 2018).

HARMFUL NARRATIVE 4 Biased selection: Selectively presenting data about an event that appears to confirm a particular position while ignoring other data that contradicts it. These narratives often lead the public to incorrect conclusions (Arnaudo et al., 2021).

HARMFUL NARRATIVE 5 Conspiracy theories: claims about secret conspiracies by powerful individuals or groups, usually without evidence.

HARMFUL NARRATIVE 6 Character attacks and/or demonization of opponents: mentioning political opponents and/or other significant public figures in a negative context with the aim of discrediting, insulting, belittling, or demeaning them. This narrative includes speech that portrays the 'other' as the embodiment of evil or inhumanity. Demonization and character attacks can incite anxiety, hate speech, and violence among individuals or groups of citizens (Rowell, 2011; Amnesty International, 2017).

5 Media Literacy Dictionary – disinformation

HARMFUL NARRATIVE 7 Foreign influence: narratives that accuse foreign entities of interfering in the country's internal affairs and disrupting the democratic processes through various activities, such as manipulating the public opinion, influencing the decision-making, and sowing discord in the country, etc. (Bressanelli et al., 2020).

HARMFUL NARRATIVE 8 Fomenting divisions: narratives aimed at fomenting divisions by vilifying or opposing another group of people based on their ethnicity, religious beliefs, political opinions, ideologies, age, or other characteristics.

HARMFUL NARRATIVE 9 Sexism: narratives (statements, comments, jokes, visual representations) based on the idea that a person or group of people is inferior to another solely due to their gender and/or sex (Gréboval, n.d.).

HARMFUL NARRATIVE 10 Xenophobia: inciting fear, exclusion, or restrictions against individuals and/or groups who are not citizens of Macedonia based on race, colour, nationality or ethnicity. Generally, xenophobia manifests through discriminatory activities or overtly hostile and intentional expressions of hatred. Xenophobic individuals tend to think as follows: *We* (locals) set the standard, we are good and normal, everyone should be like us and think like us, while *they* (foreigners, newcomers…) are delinquents, a threat, violent, thieves, etc. In short, 'we are the good guys,' and 'they are the bad guys' (UNHCR, 2020).

HARMFUL NARRATIVE 11 Ethnocentrism: cultural or ethnic bias—the belief that one's own ethnic group and some (or all) of its cultural characteristics are superior to all others. This often leads to incorrect 'ethnocentric' assumptions about other cultures and ways of life, as well as negative prejudices, positions, and actions towards 'the others' (ECPS, n.d.).

HARMFUL NARRATIVE 12 Hate speech and/or discriminatory speech: speech (or written communication) intended to degrade, distress, or incite violence or actions based on prejudice against individuals or groups of people due to their race, gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, language, intellectual or physical ability, moral or political views, socioeconomic class, occupation, or appearance (such as height, weight, and hair colour), among other traits. Hate speech differs from offensive speech, which aims to insult individuals (e.g., 'stupid,' 'gay') without necessarily inciting violence or discrimination. However, when the same offensive speech is used to insult a group of people (e.g., 'stupid Shiptar'), it can qualify as hate speech (Council of Europe, n.d.; Mihajlova et al., 2013).

HARMFUL NARRATIVE 13 Manipulative audiovisual media content: the use of altered photos/images, videos, and audio recordings to deceive/confuse the public or promote certain narratives. This differs from satire and parody, where people are intentionally and openly/clearly mocked through photoshopped photographs/images and added elements.

HARMFUL NARRATIVE 14 Spreading panic, fear, and insecurity: sharing true, half-true, or false information to create panic, fear, and insecurity among the citizens. This does not apply to cases where informing the public about certain real unpleasant events/incidents/phenomena is necessary, even if they naturally cause fear or panic, they certainly need to be reported. However, exaggeration, excessive emphasis, frequent repetition, and use of formulations intentionally designed to provoke panic, fear, and insecurity constitute a harmful narrative (Oxford University Press, n.d.; Waldroff, 2020). Various types of insecurity can be spread, including economic, political, and health-related.

HARMFUL NARRATIVE 15 Encouraging extreme patriotism and nationalism: creating a sense among people that they share a common enemy, leading to extreme patriotism and nationalism, and an aggressive belief in national superiority and glory (Welch, 2014).

HARMFUL NARRATIVE 15 Populism: narratives in which politicians/important public figures claim that they 'represent the people,' act according to the people's will, and are 'in people's service' when making decisions. This rhetoric explicitly or implicitly asserts support for the people against the elites/various privileged groups (Müller, 2017).

OPERATIONALISATION OF VARIABLES: INDICATORS FOR HARMFUL NARRATIVES

The main variable, 'harmful narrative,' defined in 16 different types, is primarily analysed through content analysis. The operationalisation of the variable means defining the words, phrases, and/or statements present in each of the defined harmful narratives. Thus, for each harmful narrative, indicators are defined (at least one indicator per harmful narrative) that refer to the words necessary to identify the specific type of harmful narrative. A total of 14 indicators have been defined that refer to one or more types of harmful narratives. A common feature among all indicators is that the identified claims are not supported by facts or evidence. The purpose of these indicators, as operationalised harmful narratives, is to recognise and conduct a detailed analysis of the harmful narratives.

Overview of all indicators, as well as the harmful narratives they may refer to:

	Indicators	Related harmful narratives
1	Claims of corruption, non-transparency, unaccountability, unprofessionalism, abuse of official position without attempting to substantiate those allegations.	Disinformation. Undermining trust in institutions - if unsubstantiated claims are about the public office holders or institutions. Biased selection.
2	Unverified findings (or findings that are difficult to verify) are used as a basis for accusing political opponents.	Disinformation. Undermining trust in institutions. Biased selection.
3	Misuse of information of a private nature or personal tragedies, disability, social status, marital status of one's political opponents to achieve one's own goal.	Malinformation. Character attacks, demonization. Hate speech.
4	Labelling, ridicule and grossly disrespecting other persons (media workers, civil activists, political opponents, public office holders...) Use of negative words.	Character attacks, demonization.

5	Speech that insults a certain group or justifies hate speech against a certain group, based on race, skin colour, origin, national or ethnic affiliation, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, belonging to a marginalized group, language, nationality, social background, education, religion or religious belief, political conviction, other beliefs, disability, age, family or marital status, property status, healthcare status, personal capacity and social status or any other grounds.	Hate speech.
6	Deliberately not conveying the full picture of the 'event', deliberately omitting information that refutes the position of the one presenting it.	Disinformation. Undermining trust in institutions. Biased selection. Manipulative audio-visual media content.
7	It is claimed to be true that political opponents/public institutions are manipulated by behind-the-scenes (secret) powerful groups (e.g. Freemasons, etc.) without presenting any facts or evidence, or using sources that lack any credibility or authority in the field.	Disinformation. Conspiracy theories. Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty. Foreign influence.
8	Use of sentences, phrases that accuse a foreign entity (or entities) of interfering in the internal affairs of the state, contrary to the interests of the state, which, in fact, is a violation of the democratic processes.	Foreign influence. Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty.
9	Use of words and phrases that denigrate a certain group of people in order to cause division and discord between *us/we/our* and *you/your*. Usually *we/our* is good, positive and desirable and *you/your* is bad, negative and undesirable.	Fomenting divisions. Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty.
10	Use of words and phrases that insult, belittle, ridicule a person and/or group based on their gender and/or sex.	Sexism. Character attacks, demonization. Hate speech.

11	Use of words that insult, discredit, defame a group of people (foreigners) with the aim of causing fear, rejection and distancing from them, even causing certain behaviour towards that group.	Xenophobia if they are foreigners. Ethnocentrism. Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty.
12	Use of sentences, words, phrases that glorify one's own ethnicity and all others are less important, valuable, or worthy.	Ethnocentrism. Extreme patriotism and/or nationalism
13	Images, videos, and audio recordings that are created to mislead the public into believing that something is real and true, but it is not (and can be proven false).	Disinformation. Manipulative audio-visual media content. Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty. Biased selection. Character attacks, demonization. Hate speech.
14	Words/sentences that explicitly or implicitly, directly or indirectly promote one's ideologies/activities/ behaviours as something that benefits the people/ the masses/the common 'honest man', humanity, while the ideologies/activities/ behaviours, the characteristics of political opponents are promoted as something that serves a certain small elite group of people, which does not reflect the will of the people.	Populism. Foreign influence. Extreme patriotism and/or nationalism Conspiracy theories.

2.4. SAMPLE

Given that the main goal is to investigate whether and how the political actors in Macedonia create, use, and disseminate harmful narratives, as well as the role of the media in reporting on these narratives, i.e., whether they adhere to the professional and ethical journalistic values and standards, the research monitored the following:

- The official **websites** of the **analysed political parties** in the Republic of North Macedonia,
- The official **Facebook pages/profiles** of the **analysed political parties, their leaders, and ministers**, as well as
- **Media outlets** reporting on these narratives: **TV stations and informative online media outlets.**

The reasons for selecting websites and Facebook pages/profiles for monitoring and analysis are the data from the EUROMETER 2023 survey (EUROTHINK, 2023), which indicates that online news consumption is one of the two most commonly used ways of staying informed about political news (56 %), while social networks (87 %) represent the most important source of political information.

The reasons for selecting TV stations for monitoring and analysis are the researches conducted by the AAVMU in 2023 (Data on the reach of radio stations and the share in the total viewership of TV stations (January-March and Data on the reach of radio stations and the share in the total viewership of TV stations (April–June)), as well as data from the aforesaid survey, which state that television is the second most frequently used source of political news (43 %). (EUROTHINK, 2023).

The reason for selecting informative online media outlets for monitoring and analysis is that it is the most open space for harmful narrative, and all monitored informative online media outlets had registered and received compensation for paid political advertising during the last parliamentary elections in 2020. (SEC, 2020, Register of broadcasters, print media, and electronic media [internet portals])

A) POLITICAL ACTORS

Selection Criteria: political parties with more than one MP in the parliamentary composition from 2020–2024[6]: Alliance for Albanians – 8 MPs, Alternativa – 3 MPs, Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DMPNE) – 39 MPs, Democratic Movement – 3 MPs, Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) – 13 MPs, Levica – 2 MPs, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) - 2 MPs, New Social Democratic Party (NSDP) – 2 MPs, Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM) – 31 MPs, Socialist Party of Macedonia (SPM) – 2 MPs.

Sample of official websites of political parties

The research monitored the official websites of ten political parties (with more than one MP) in the 2020–2024 parliamentary composition.

Sample of official Facebook pages/profiles of the selected ten political parties

The research monitored the official Facebook pages/profiles of ten political parties (with more than one MP) in the parliamentary composition in the period from 2020–2024.

Sample of official Facebook pages/profiles of the leaders of the selected ten political parties

The research monitored the official Facebook pages/profiles of the leaders of the selected ten political parties:

1. Arben Taravari
2. Afrim Gashi
3. Hristijan Mickoski
4. Izet Medjiti
5. Ali Ahmeti

6 Parliamentary Composition 2020 – 2024, taken from the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia – Members of Parliament

6. Dimitar Apasiev
7. Monika Zajkova
8. Goran Misovski
9. Dimitar Kovachevski (also monitored in his role as the President of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia)
10. Ljubcho Dimovski

Sample of official Facebook pages/profiles of ministers in the Government in the period from 2023–2024

1. Dimitar Kovachevski – President of the Government of North Macedonia
2. Artan Grubi – First Deputy President of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia and Minister for Inter-Community Relations
3. Fatmir Bitikji – Deputy President of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, in charge of economic affairs, coordination of economic sectors and investments
4. Bojan Marichikj – Deputy President of the Government in charge of European Affairs
5. Slavica Grkovska - Deputy President of the Government in Charge of Good Governance Policies
6. Oliver Spasovski – Minister of Internal Affairs
7. Kreshnik Bekteshi – Minister of Economy
8. Risto Penov – Minister of Local Self-Government
9. Bujar Osmani – Minister of Foreign Affairs
10. Fatmir Besimi – Minister of Finance
11. Blagoj Bochvarski – Minister of Transport and Communications
12. Ljupcho Nikolovski – Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, and Water Economy
13. Slavjanka Petrovska – Minister of Defence
14. Jeton Shakjiri – Minister of Education and Science
15. Jovanka Trenchevska – Minister of Labour and Social Policy
16. Bisera Kostadinovska-Stojchevska – Minister of Culture
17. Kaja Shukova – Minister of Environment and Spatial Planning
18. Azir Aliu – Minister of Information Society and Administration
19. Fatmir Medjiti – Minister of Health
20. Krenar Loga – Minister of Justice

Б) MEDIA

Sample of <u>television stations</u> (for monitoring the central news editions)

The sample includes public and private national TV stations with the highest viewership (Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, 2023a, 2023b), a total of nine:

1. MTV 1 (public)
2. MTV 2 (public, in Albanian)
3. Alfa TV (private)
4. Kanal 5 (private)
5. Sitel TV (private)

6. TV 24 (private)
7. Telma (private)
8. Alsat M (private, in Albanian)
9. TV 21 (private, in Albanian)

Sample of informative online media outlets

The sample includes the most-read online media outlets in both Macedonian and Albanian, whose editorial policy reflects different political perspectives (a purposive sample). Additional selection criteria include compliance with the online portals membership criteria of the Council of Media Ethics of Macedonia (CMEM) and the Register of Professional Online Media promedia.mk, as well as registration in the Register of Broadcasters, Print Media, and Electronic Media for Paid Political Advertising during the 2020 parliamentary elections.

1. Vecher.mk
2. Lokalno
3. Nezavisen
4. Sloboden Pechat
5. A1on.mk
6. MKD.mk
7. Republika
8. Kurir
9. Almakos
10. Tetova Sot
11. Nova TV

2.5. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

TIMEFRAME

The research was conducted in the period from 1 September 2023 to 31 May 2024. This period was divided into two intervals: the first interval, pre-election and preparatory period for the parties of six months, from September 2023 to February 2024, and the second interval, the election period of three months, during the (pre-)election campaign and the presidential and parliamentary elections, from March to May 2024.

RESEARCH PROCESS AND DYNAMICS

First Level of Analysis: Monitoring

The research implemented two parallel monitoring processes:

- Monitoring of the communication practices of the political actors in Macedonia, through monitoring and analysis of: 1. The official websites and the official Facebook pages/profiles of the political parties from the parliamentary composition in the period from 2020-2024 with more than one MP, 2. The Official Facebook pages/profiles of the presidents of the political parties and the ministers during the monitored period. These online channels of the political actors were monitored every fourth day. Trained monitors reviewed all posts on these channels on the selected days for analysis. If they identified a harmful narrative, the relevant post was further analysed in detail using Form 1 (see Appendix).
- Media monitoring, i.e., monitoring of the TV stations (monitoring of the central news editions) and the informative online media outlets. Every third and fourth day, all published posts/news items from the online media outlets were reviewed, and the central news editions (news items) of the TV stations covering the socio-political and economic topics were monitored. The first selection criterion was: mentioning of at least one political actor from the selected sample of political actors. The second selection criterion was: presence of a harmful narrative. The news items in the central news editions/posts in the online media mentioning a political entity and containing a harmful narrative were further analysed in detail using Form 2, for the TV stations and Form 3, for the online media outlets (see the Instruments section). The unit of analysis was an individual news item.

Second level of analysis

At this level, the use of neologisms by the political actors on their official websites, i.e., official Facebook pages/profiles included in the monitoring process was analysed.

The unit of analysis in this case was an individual post on the official websites and the official Facebook pages, i.e., profiles by the political actors during the given period.

The selection criterion was that the post contained neologisms. Regarding the analysed neologisms, the selection criterion was whether they represented a harmful narrative (either inherently or contextually), particularly in terms of discrediting or belittling political opponents (both individual and collective) and whether they refer to: 1. a political actor (individual or collective) and 2. types of governance/rule and socio-political developments.

Form 4 was used for this analysis (see the Instruments section).

2.6. METHODOLOGICAL TECHNIQUES FOR DATA ANALYSIS

The research is exploratory, with qualitative analysis supported by basic quantification. In addition to the general scientific methods of interpretation and classification, the following methodological techniques for analysis were applied:

- **Content Analysis:** Conceptual and relational analysis of the content in the posts on the official websites and the official Facebook pages/profiles of the major political actors: political parties, party leaders, ministers, as well as in the news items in the central news editions of the TV stations and the posts on the informative online media outlets covering socio-political and economic topics.

- **Critical Discourse Analysis** - the Critical Discourse Analysis is used to study the language (linguistic devices), rhetoric, and framing strategies employed by the political actors in the aforementioned online channels and media (TV stations and online media outlets).
- **Component Analysis (lexical units):** used to analyse the word-formation components from the lexical-semantic, the syntactic, and the stylistic aspect.

2.7. INSTRUMENTS

4 types of monitoring and analysis forms were created, checked, and used in the research:

Form 1: For monitoring and analysing the official websites and the official Facebook pages/ profiles of the sample of political actors

Form 2: For monitoring and analysing the central news editions on the selected TV stations.

Form 3: For monitoring and analysing the informative items at the selected informative online media outlets

Form 4: For communication analysis of the neologisms

The aspects monitored in Form 1, 2, and 3 are the following:

- **Number** of news items/posts containing harmful narratives
- **When** the news items/posts containing harmful narratives were broadcast/published
- Whether they were **announced** (for TV)
- **Duration** of the news item in full (for TV)
- **Genre/Type of post**
- **Topic** of the news items/posts (area of the main topic/specifying of a secondary topic)
- **Actors** in the news items (total number of actors, how the main actors are presented, who and how evaluates the actors)
- **Sources** on which the media rely (number and type of sources, transparency in citing the sources of information, side of the sources)
- **Visualisation** of the news item
- The **reason** for the news item/post
- **Indicators of harmful narratives** [which indicator is present, who 'produces' the indicator (TV), the journalist's attitude towards the harmful narratives of the political actors (TV)]
- For which **harmful narratives** the indicator is relevant

Form 4 is partially adapted based on one of the fundamental communication models, consisting of five key questions ('Who?', 'Says What?', 'To Whom?', 'In What Channel?', and 'With What Effect?'), as proposed by the communication theorist Harold Lasswell (Lasswell, 1948), in order to take into account the key elements of the communication process and provide a clearer overview of the analysis.

3. POLITICAL HARMFUL NARRATIVES IN NUMBERS

The analysis of the political actors addresses the following questions: '*What is the dynamics of the political actors' use of harmful narratives?', 'What are the most commonly used harmful narratives?', 'In what form are these harmful narratives conveyed?'* and *'How do political actors portray themselves in the harmful narratives?'*. **The analysis of the media**, in addition to these same questions about the political actors, addresses the following questions as well: *'Who created the harmful narrative—the political actor or the journalist?', 'What is the journalist's position towards the harmful narrative created by the political actor?' and 'How many sides are represented, and how many sources were consulted in the posts containing harmful narratives?'*

To gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the communication of harmful narratives, the analysis compares the data from two extended time periods named the 'pre-election' and the 'election' periods. The 'pre-election' period covers the period from September 2023 – February 2024 and is named as such because, during this time, it became evident that both the presidential and the parliamentary elections would take place around the same time[7]. Although the political parties had already begun their pre-election unofficial election campaigns in this so called 'pre-election' period, it was still far from the official election period. The 'election' period covers March, April, and May 2024, when, following the adoption of the Decision to announce/ call the parliamentary elections, the political entities intensified their pre-election activities. The purpose of the comparison of the two 'theoretically' defined periods is to identify the potential finesses in the political communication and media reporting, which has proven to be a justified approach. The analysis is based on the total data; however, the political actors or media are analysed collectively, not individually. The detailed analyses of each individual political entity or media outletare available in the periodic analyses (five in total), the six-month (September 2023 – February 2024) and the quarterly analysis (March – May 2024).

7 The parliamentary elections were announced/called on 14.2.2024, when the President of the Assembly, in accordance with the constitutional and legal obligations, signed the Decision on Announcement of Elections for Members of Parliament in the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia.

3.1. ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICAL HARMFUL NARRATIVES CREATED BY THE POLITICAL ACTORS

The monitoring of the official websites and Facebook pages of the defined political actors has revealed that three out of ten political parties did not exhibit any harmful narratives (the Liberal Democratic Party, the New Social Democratic Party and the Socialist Party). Harmful narratives were also not identified on the Facebook profiles of the leaders of these three political parties. Furthermore, among twenty government officials, no harmful narratives were observed in 11 of them. Hence, the analysis of the harmful narratives was conducted on the following political actors:

- The official websites and Facebook profiles of **seven political parties** (three from the Macedonian bloc and four from the Albanian bloc)
- The official Facebook profiles of the **leaders of these seven** political parties and
- The official Facebook profiles of **nine government officials**.

The table provides an overview of the political actors whose communication channels were monitored and analysed.

POLITICAL PARTIES – OFFICIAL WEBSITES AND FACEBOOK PROFILES	
Macedonian bloc	**Albanian bloc**
1. VMRO-DPMNE	4. Alliance for Albanians
2. SDSM	5. Alternativa
3. Levica	6. DUI
	7. Democratic Movement
LEADERS OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES – OFFICIAL FACEBOOK PROFILES	
Macedonian bloc	**Albanian bloc**
1. Hristijan Mickoski	4. Arben Taravari
2. Dimitar Apasiev	5. Afrim Gashi
3. Dimitar Kovachevski (in this position since February 2024)	6. Ali Ahmeti
	7. Izet Medjiti
GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS – OFFICIAL FACEBOOK PROFILES	
Macedonian bloc	**Albanian bloc**
1. Bisera K. Stojchevska	6. Artan Grubi
2. Ljupcho Nikolovski	7. Kreshnik Bekteshi
3. Dimitar Kovachevski (September 2023 – January 2024)	8. Krenar Loga
4. Bojan Marichikj	9. Jeton Shaqiri
5. Jovanka Trenchevska	

Table 1. Overview of the analysed political actors

The data are analysed and presented as aggregate data for the political actors as a group, with comparisons for the subgroup of the political parties, due to its role as the largest and most active 'creator' of harmful narratives.

DYNAMICS OF USING HARMFUL NARRATIVES

In the period from September 2023 to May 2024, the monitoring of the official websites and Facebook profiles of the political actors took place for a total of **137 days**. On a monthly basis, each of the political actors was monitored every consecutive third and fourth day of the month, or a total of 14 to 16 days, depending on the number of days in the month. The dynamics of creating and disseminating the harmful narratives is analysed from two aspects: 1) **The number of posts** containing harmful narratives communicated by the political actors, and 2) **The number of harmful narratives contained in the posts**.

Number of posts containing harmful narratives by political actors

The monitoring of the official websites and Facebook profiles of the political actors recorded a **total of 1342 posts containing harmful narratives** that were conveyed in their communication with the public. On a **monthly basis**, the number of posts containing harmful narratives[8] across all political actors averages **over 100**, while on a **daily level, averagely, four to six harmful posts** were communicated via one or more of their communication channels.

The number of harmful posts created by the political actors was highest and identical in **December 2023** and **April 2024** (Figure 1). On an **average daily level, more than six posts containing harmful narratives** were recorded in these two months. In December 2023, multiple issues in the socio-political sphere concerning the country's future were prominent, such as the composition of the upcoming caretaker government and the proposals for presidential candidates, the EU-Western Balkans Summit, and the changes to the Constitution as a prerequisite for continuing the country's European integration path. These issues provided a 'fertile' ground for creating harmful narratives, which is a possible reason for the increased number of harmful narratives in this month. In April 2024, the communication of the political parties and their leaders was focused on the ongoing campaigns for the presidential and parliamentary elections, which were taking place simultaneously. During this period, the political entities engaged in frequent communication with the citizens through direct meetings, gatherings, and rallies, promoting their political platforms as superior to those of their opponents. As a result, the context in this month was again favourable for the creation and dissemination of a higher number of harmful narratives in their communication via their websites or Facebook profiles.

8 Hereinafter referred to as harmful posts

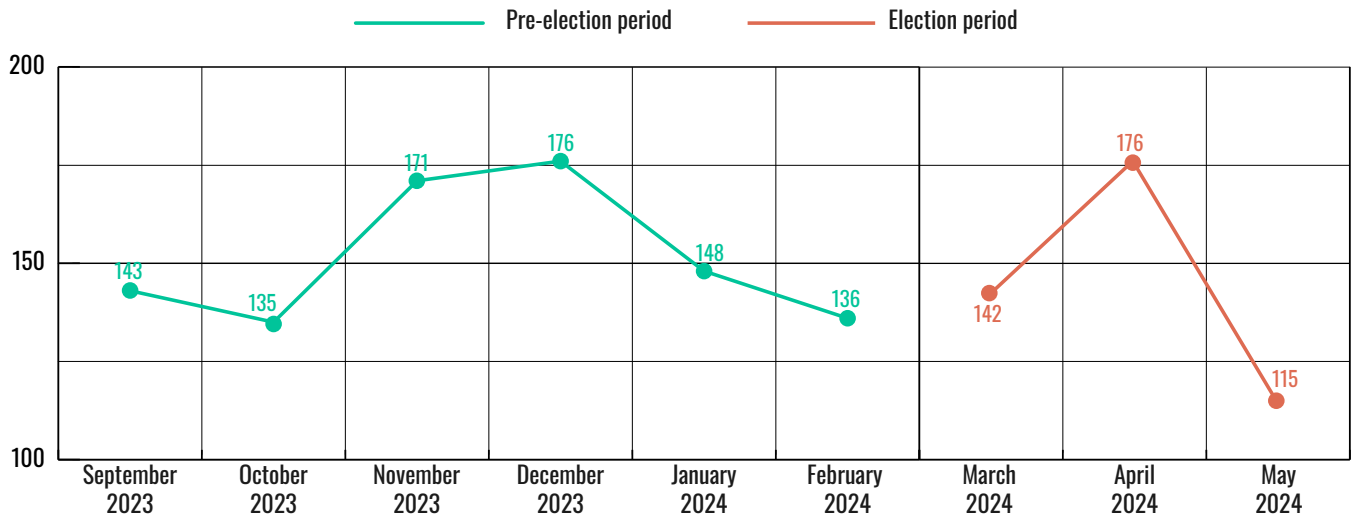


Figure 1. Number of posts containing harmful narratives by the analysed political actors, by month

By period, an average of approximately **seven more posts containing harmful narratives per month in the six-month pre-election period** (from September 2023 to February 2024) were observed among all political actors, and **a slight decline in the trend** of posts containing harmful narratives was observed during **the election period** – March to May 2024 (Figure 2).

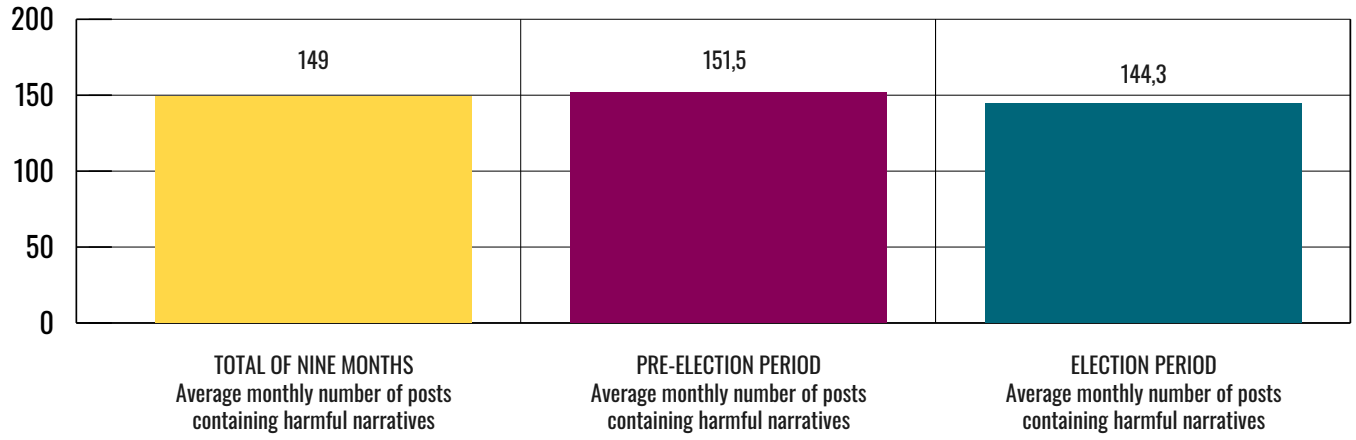


Figure 2. Average monthly number of posts containing harmful narratives by the analysed political entities (political parties, leaders, and government officials)

From the aspect of the three analysed subgroups of political actors (parties, leaders, and government officials), the **political parties** were responsible for 1103 or **82 %** of all posts containing harmful narratives. As expected, given their 'leading' role among the political actors, the same trend of **the highest number of posts** was recorded **in December 2023** and **April 2024**. However, during the three-month election period, there was a **significant decline** in the number of posts containing harmful narratives, so, **in May 2024, there were nearly three times fewer posts compared to December 2023** (Figure 3).

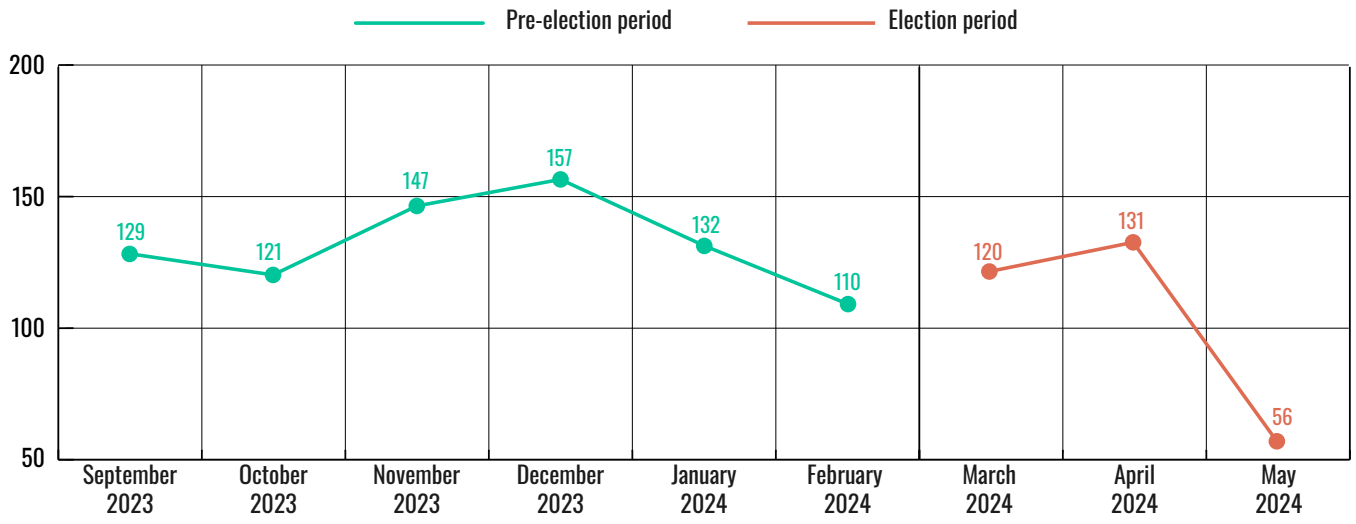


Figure 3. Number of posts containing harmful narratives on the websites and Facebook profiles of the political parties, by month

Similarly to the trend observed among all political actors, the **average monthly number of posts from the political parties was lower during the election quarter**: March – May 2024 (Figure 4).

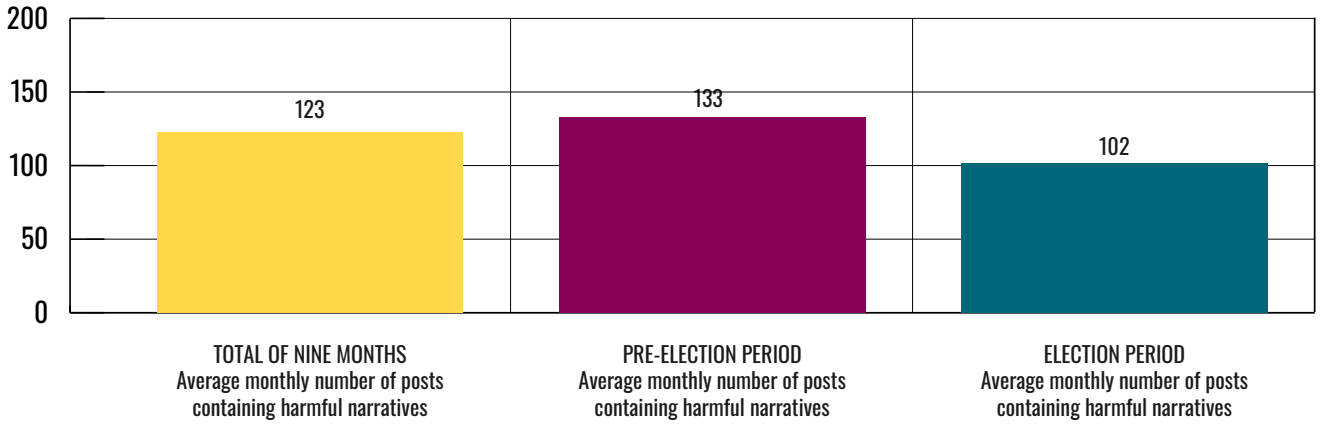


Figure 4. Average monthly number of posts containing harmful narratives from the political parties

Among the political party **leaders** and **government officials**, the trend shows that **the average monthly number of harmful posts** was **nearly twice as high in the last quarter** compared to the first six months of the monitoring. The average monthly number of posts from the leaders in the first six months of the monitoring was 14, while from the government officials, it was 4. However, in the final election quarter an average of 23 posts containing harmful narratives were recorded from leaders and 10 from government officials. It appears that **during the election period, at an individual level, the party leaders and the government officials actively communicated harmful narratives to the public**, unlike the political parties they represent.

Number of harmful narratives created and disseminated through posts

Regarding the number of created harmful narratives, the analysis shows that within the 1342 posts over the nine-month period, three times as many harmful narratives were created—**3967 harmful narratives** (Figure 5). On average, **three harmful narratives were observed per post**. As we can clearly see in Figure 5, there was a growing trend in the creation of harmful narratives during the pre-election period, peaking at the end of 2023 (601 harmful narratives were created in December). From the beginning of 2024, a significant decline was observed until April, when harmful rhetoric intensified once again. This is not surprising, considering that the official pre-election campaign for the presidential elections was in April, culminating in the first round of voting at the end of the month. This was a month of intense pre-election activities, meetings with the citizens, press conferences, and statements where each political actor pushed their rhetoric, often highly harmful. The communication channels of all analysed political actors were filled with harmful rhetoric, which, as the following section of the analysis will show, prevented the citizens from understanding the facts, the election programmes, critically assessing them, and making informed decisions about the upcoming elections.

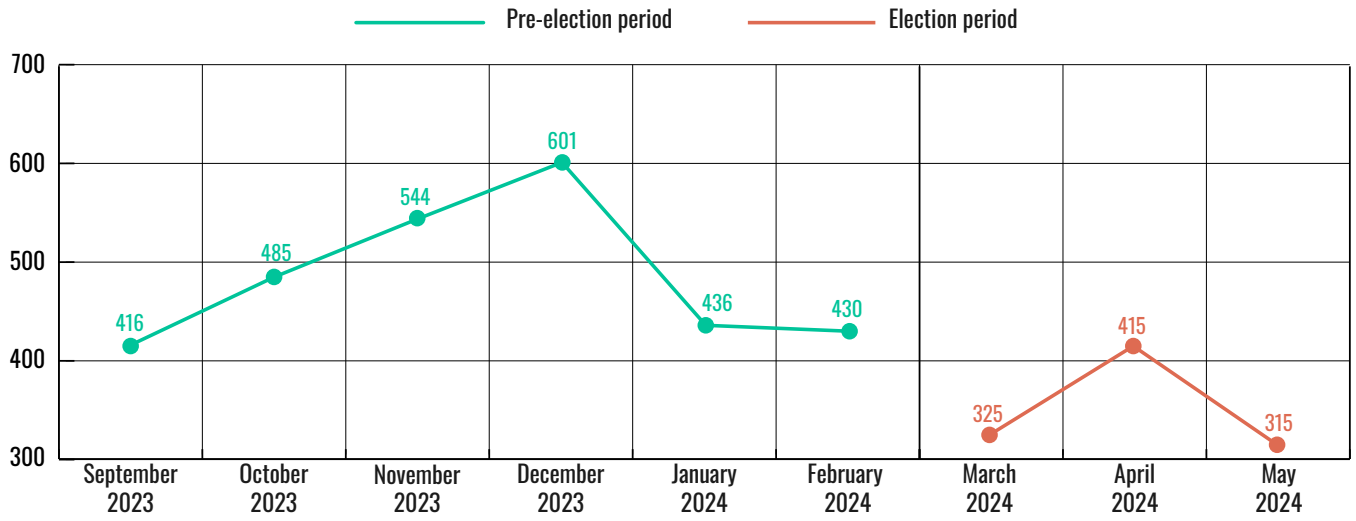


Figure 5. Number of harmful narratives created by the analysed political actors and disseminated in posts, by month

On a monthly level, the public was exposed to **harmful narratives** 441 times on an average (Figure 6), or **15** times per day. Given that narratives have the power to influence people's emotions, attitudes, and behaviours, frequent exposure to harmful narratives related to intense emotions can have far-reaching consequences for the social polarisation, the political behaviour and participation, and the democracy as a whole. The qualitative analysis of words associated with harmful narratives further examines the emotional component of the harmful narratives in detail.

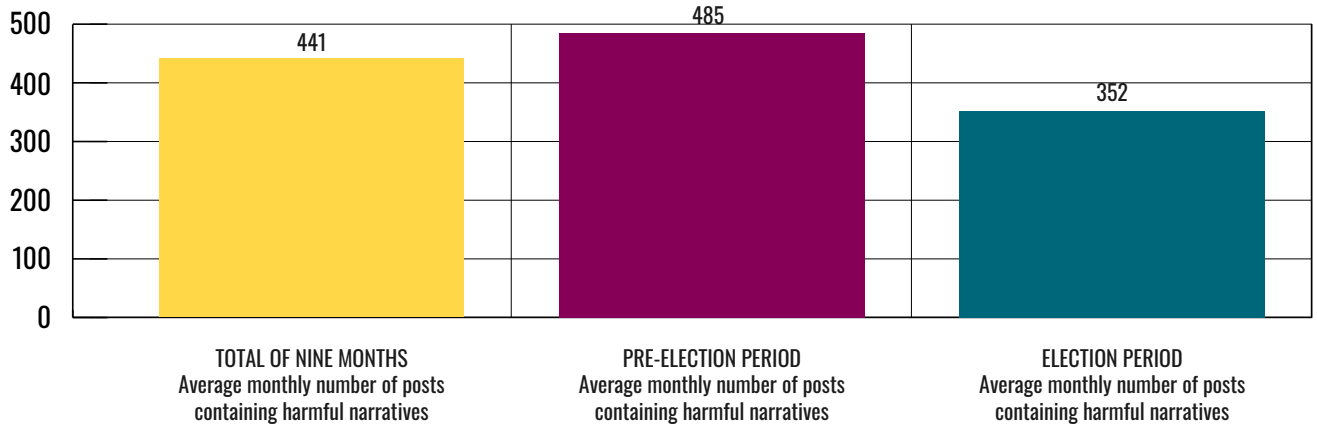


Figure 6. Average monthly number of harmful narratives created by all political actors (at nine-, six-, and three-month levels)

Among all political actors, the political parties were the primary creators of harmful narratives, + 3365 narratives. The majority were created in the first six-month period (72% – Figure 7). As illustrated in the figure, the same trend in the dynamics of harmful narrative creation was observed at the level of all political actors, as well. Therefore, it is evident that the **political parties are the key creators of harmful narratives**, setting the trend for all political actors, including the government officials. An average of 16 harmful narratives were communicated on a daily level. **Significantly fewer** harmful narratives were crated **in May** compared to all other analysed months, which coincided with the conclusion of the presidential and the parliamentary elections.

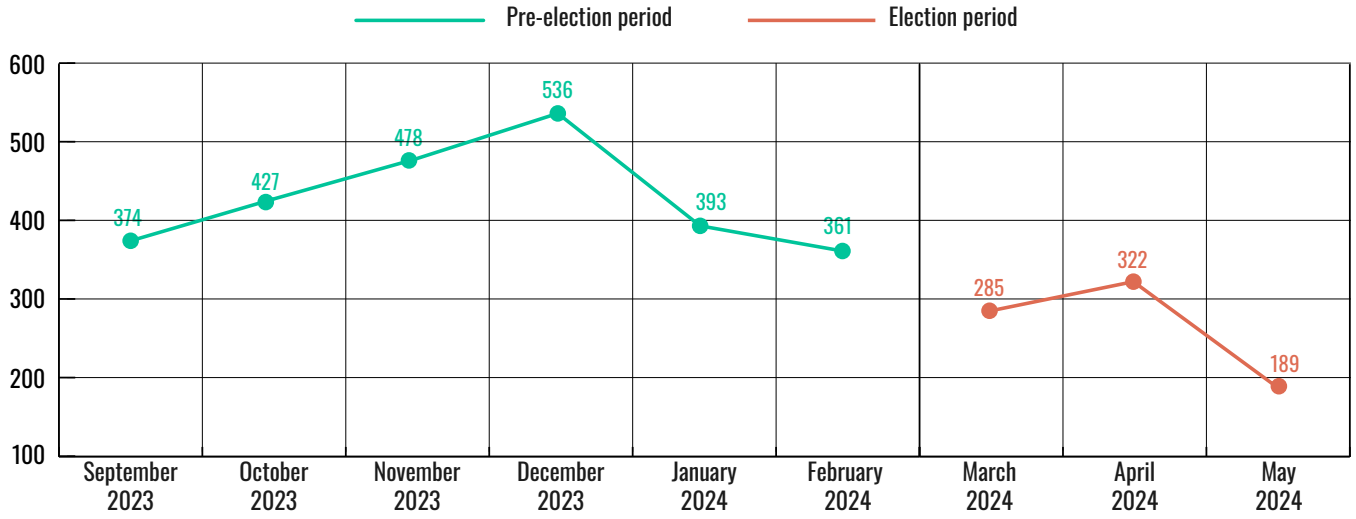


Figure 7. Number of harmful narratives created by the political actors and disseminated in posts, by month

The trend of the monthly dynamics of harmful narrative creation is also reflected in the **almost twice as high average number of harmful narratives created per month during the pre-election period**, i.e., in the period September – December 2023, the average number of harmful narratives to which the citizens following political parties' communication channels were exposed was **428 harmful narratives** (Figure 8). In the **election period, the monthly average of harmful narratives was 265**.

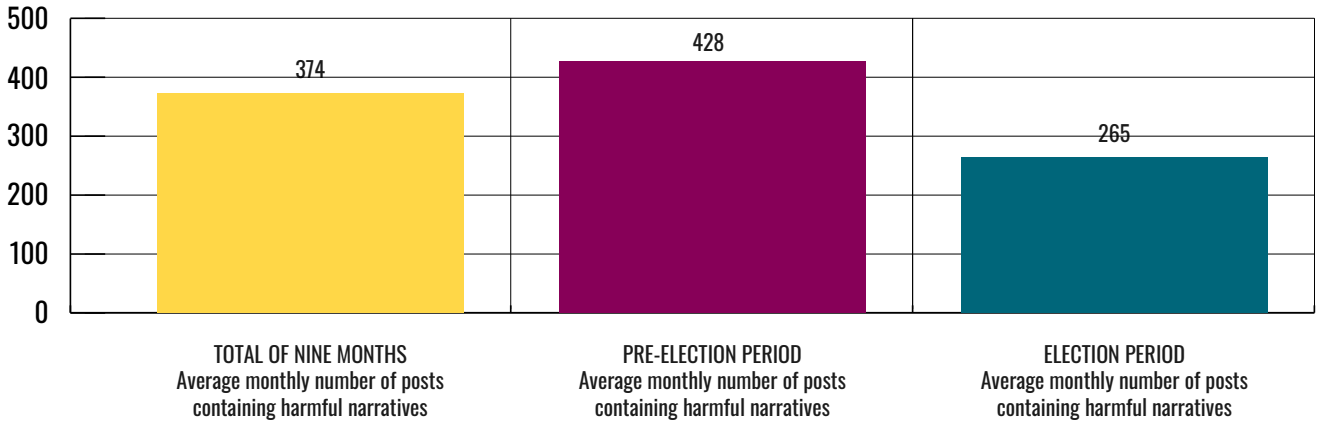


Figure 8. Average monthly number of harmful narratives created by the political actors (at nine-, six-, and three-month levels)

TYPES OF THE MOST COMMON HARMFUL NARRATIVES

The next aspect of the analysis focuses on the types of harmful narratives most frequently created by the political actors and it aims to answer the question of what the 3967 harmful narratives consisted of, what they referred to, what their purpose was, and who they targeted, etc. This aspect of the analysis includes four sub-aspects: 1) The types of harmful narratives identified from the theoretically defined narratives, 2) the topics most frequently associated with the harmful narratives, 3) the five most commonly used harmful narratives, and 4) how the political actors communicated and who they targeted with harmful narratives.

The observed types of the identified harmful narratives

Out of the 16 harmful narratives defined in the research, the political actors were found to have created 14 of them (Table 2). The harmful narratives of 'sexism' and 'xenophobia' were not observed at all, while the narratives of 'ethnocentrism,' 'conspiracy theories,' and 'malinformation' were created very rarely, 19, 12, and 4 times, respectively (Table 2, Column 1, last three rows).

Harmful Narrative*	Total number of created harmful narratives			Monthly derived average		
	Nine months	Six months	Three months	Nine months	Six months	Three months
Undermining trust	**1456**	1158	298	162	193	99,3
Biased selection	**1204**	879	326	134	147	109
Character attacks	**338**	220	118	37,6	36,7	**39,3**
Populism	**292**	215	77	32,4	35,8	25,7
Fomenting division	**264**	161	103	29,3	26,8	**34,3**
Foreign influence	**134**	93	41	14,9	15,5	13,7
Spreading panic and fear	**84**	41	43	9,33	6,83	14,3
Disinformation	**53**	53	0	5,89	8,83	0
Manipulative audio-visual content	**51**	42	9	5,67	7	3
Extreme patriotism and nationalism	**30**	19	11	3,33	3,17	3,67
Hate speech	**26**	11	15	2,89	1,83	5
Ethnocentrism	**19**	10	9	2,11	1,67	3
Conspiracy theories	**12**	8	4	1,33	1,33	1,33
Malinformation	**4**	3	1	0,44	0,5	0,33
Total	**3967**	2913	1055	441	486	352
			Daily derived average	14,7	16,2	11,7

* The titles of the harmful narratives are listed in a shortened version. The full titles can be read here

Table 2. Frequency of harmful narratives created by all political actors, monthly average number of harmful narratives, and daily average number of harmful narratives

The explanation for each of the sixteen harmful narratives is provided in the methodology section of the publication. To simplify matters, only the five most common harmful narratives are explained again in the data analysis section.

Topics that are most frequently associated with the harmful narratives

Every narrative or story is rooted in a broader or narrower topic, which the creators of the narrative aim to convey to their audience or the public. Similarly, the political actors, more precisely, the political parties, created harmful narratives for certain topics to convey specific messages. This sub-aspect of the analysis of the harmful narratives focuses on identifying the most common or the most significant topics around which the political parties created their harmful narratives.

The analysis showed that the domestic politics consistently remained the main topic for creating and disseminating harmful narratives throughout the nine-month monitoring period (Figure 9). They were 'inspired' by topics such as the EU integration process and the changes to the Constitution related to it, or the European Commission's progress report on the country (November 2023), ranging from the authority-opposition relationship to the daily events of broad public interest, such as amendments to laws (Law on Amnesty, Criminal Code), issues in the work of the local self-governments, the violent intrusion into the state-owned company for air navigation services M-NAV AD Skopje (January 2024), and, of course, the formation of

the technical (caretaker) government as well as the presidential and parliamentary elections in April-May 2024. Throughout all nine months, over 70 % of harmful narratives were created in the field of the domestic politics, rising to over 80 % in the last two months (in April and 87% in May 2024).

Of course, domestic politics is an area that directly affects the lives of the citizens, directly tied to the elections held in April and May 2024, making it highly susceptible to manipulation of citizens' emotions. Other topics were nearly ignored or deemed 'less susceptible' for creating harmful narratives. However, compared to other topics [9], those related to economy, corruption, and crime appeared more frequently as areas linked to the harmful narratives. Posts containing harmful narratives related to crime and corruption mostly referred to the corrupt behaviour of the ruling structures and their tolerance for crime (amendments to the Criminal Code, the conclusion of the contract with the consortium 'Bechtel Enka' for highway construction, corruption in the games of chance business). The harmful narratives about criminal allegations often targeted the Albanian bloc within the then government. The harmful narratives based on the economic topics were mostly related to the pricing policy implemented by the then government and the inflation, the increase of the VAT, and the higher fees for the services provided by the Agency for Real Estate Cadastre.

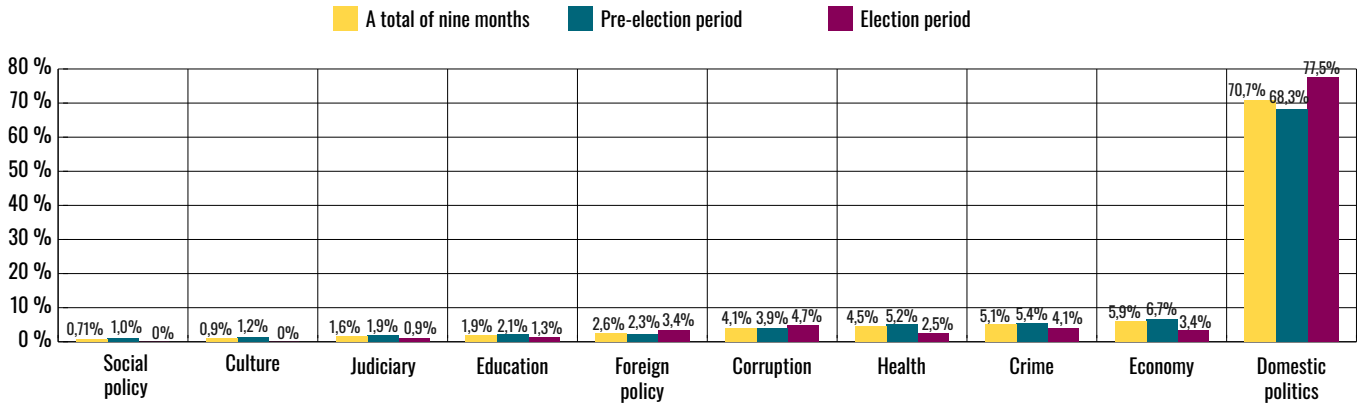


Figure 9. Topics containing harmful narratives

Five mostly used harmful narratives

Out of the identified 14 types of harmful narratives, not all were created equally or consistently. It seems that the political parties primarily created those they considered most effective for achieving their goals, and in the political 'struggle', this always means seizing power. Without exception, each political actor created the same the top five harmful narratives in terms of frequency, those proven to be instrumental in achieving success in the struggle for power.

9 11 categories of topics were defined: domestic politics, economy, foreign policy, education, healthcare, social policy, culture, judiciary, crime, corruption and sports.

The analysis showed that the most frequently created types of harmful narratives undermine the trust of the citizens in the system (*'undermining trust in institutions'*), failing to tell the whole story or all the facts (*'biased selection'*), while at the same time inappropriately belittling the opponents (*'character attacks'*), leaving no room for hope in the abilities of those entrusted by the citizens to lead, creating a divide between the 'good' and the 'bad' (*'fomenting divisions'*) and causing citizens to question whether they, too, are 'good' or 'bad' for supporting someone, fostering a sense of division not only among the political actors but also among themselves, in the society. These narratives can lead to long-term consequences in the social atmosphere, behaviour, and culture, in negative terms, often resulting in feelings of powerlessness, disappointment, and even despair, which can, in turn, affect public engagement.

Stories or narratives are well-known and powerful tools in educating the children, as they can easily connect with their feelings and thus help them understand the message being conveyed or encourage a desired behaviour beneficial for the child. The intention of the narrator, or 'the educator,' is good, aimed at supporting the child's development and shaping their character. This comparison to children is not meant to belittle the citizens, who must make crucial decisions in the democratic process, such as the elections, by implying they are 'immature' children. On the contrary, the comparison is based on the same premise of giving trust to someone to guide the way—adults for children (parents/guardians, teachers, coaches, etc.), and for the citizens in democratic elections, the politicians whom they trust to choose, pave, and lead the path for the development of the society and the well-being of all citizens. Hence, by spreading negative messages through these narratives, the political actors manipulate the trust given by the citizens and do not contribute to any social well-being. They manipulate people's feelings and fail to create a favourable environment that encourages critical thinking based on facts and arguments.

This introduction to this part of the analysis is 'inspired' by the realisation that the majority, or 90 %, of the 14 identified narratives fall under five harmful narratives: 'undermining trust in institutions and media,' 'biased selection,' 'character attacks,' 'populism,' and 'fomenting divisions'. The most prominent are 'undermining trust' and 'biased selection' (2/3 or 67 %). Far behind them are the 'character attacks,' 'fomenting divisions,' and 'populism,' while the remaining nine harmful narratives are below 3 % (Figure 10).

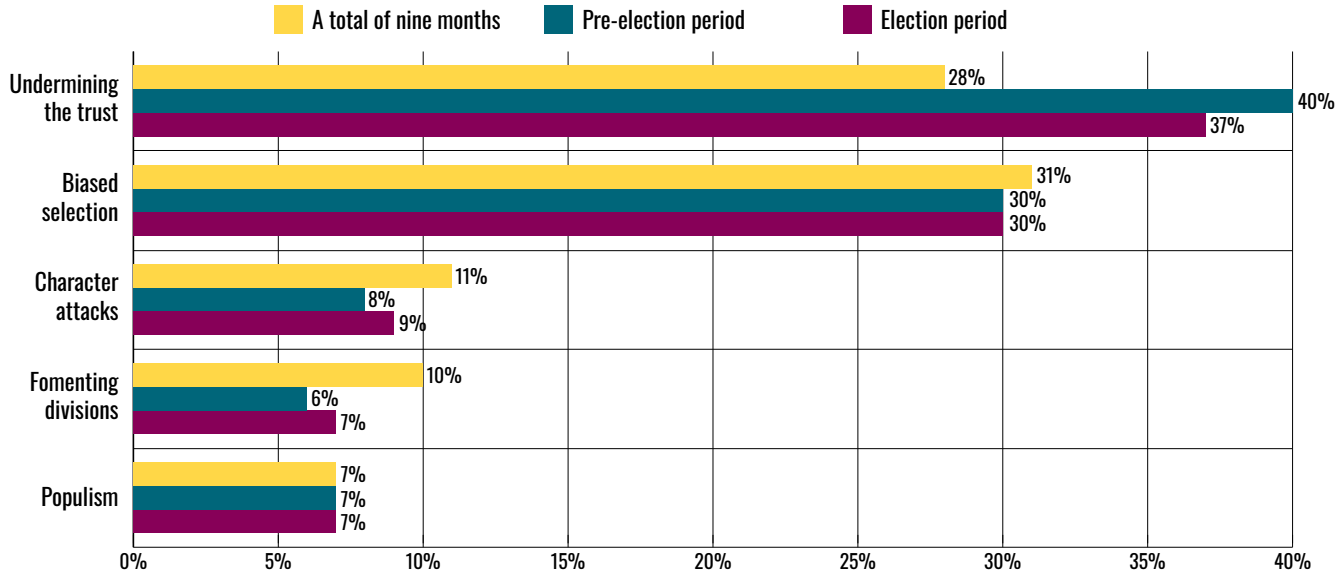


Figure 10. Five most frequent harmful narratives

Figure 10. Five most frequent harmful narratives Looking at the period of analysis, there are **differences in the frequency of three harmful narratives**. Namely, in the last quarter, 'fomenting divisions,' 'character attacks,' and 'biased selection' were created more frequently compared to the first six months (Table 3, last column). This also changes the order of the narratives during the period of March – May 2024, with 'biased selection' being the most frequent narrative, and 'fomenting divisions' becoming the fourth most frequent narrative. This shift in the narratives is not coincidental, considering that it occurred during the election campaigns and the elections, where the political actors 'modified' or 'adapted' their narratives according to their own interests in relation to their election prospects.

Harmful Narrative	Frequency of creation		
	Total during nine months (Sep 2023 – May 2024) (%, N=3967)	During the first six months (Sep 2023 – Feb 2024) (%, N=2913)	During the last three months (March – May 2024) (%, N=1055)
Undermining trust	37 %	40 %	28 %
Biased selection	30 %	30 %	31 %
Character attacks	9 %	8 %	11 %
Populism	7 %	7 %	7 %
Fomenting division	7 %	6 %	10 %

Table 3. Overview of the most frequently created harmful narratives by all political actors

The most frequent 'creators' of these five harmful narratives are **the political parties**, which account for **over 80 % of all harmful narratives crated** by the political actors. **The order of frequency** of the harmful narratives is the same with the total frequency for all political actors when it comes only to the political parties, whereas there are some **differences** in the order of the first and the second place of frequency when it comes to **party leaders and government officials**. Namely, both for the leaders and the government officials, the harmful narrative **'biased selection' ranks first**. For the government officials, 'populism' does not appear among the five most frequent; instead, 'foreign influence' appears as the fourth most frequent narrative, while 'character attacks' is the fifth most frequent narrative (Table 4).

Harmful Narrative	Frequency of creation (%[10])		
	Political parties	Leaders of political parties	Government officials
Undermining trust in institutions and media	1297 (39 %)	128 (28 %)	31 (22 %)
Biased selection	1015 (30 %)	139 (30 %)	50 (35 %)
Character attacks	273 (8 %)	55 (12 %)	10 (7 %)
Populism	245 (7 %)	41 (9 %)	/
Fomenting division	223 (7 %)	24 (5 %)	17 (12 %)
Foreign influence	/	/	11 (8 %)

Table 4. Overview of the five most frequent harmful narratives by groups of political actors: political parties, political leaders, and government officials

How political actors communicated and who they targeted with the harmful narratives

A narrative (story) consists of actors, characters about whom it speaks, and messages that the storyteller deems important to convey to their audience. In doing so, the storyteller carefully selects the words, the phrases, and the sentences to ensure their audience understands them clearly.

Who were the harmful narratives directed at?

The ruling parties in the period from September 2023 to January 2024 (until the formation of the caretaker government) primarily created the harmful narratives against their opposition rivals. The same trend was observed among the political party leaders. From February 2024, an intensification of harmful rhetoric was noticed, particularly within the then-ruling party from the Albanian bloc.

How did the political actors communicate their messages?

With the formation of the caretaker government in January 2024, a shift in political discourse was observed. Communications became more frequent, sharper, and more directed at the political opponents. Almost every topic of public interest was used both to promote one's own political ideology and to attack the opponents. Polarising narratives about pro- and anti-European orientations, which had been dominant, became even more entrenched in the electoral rhetoric during the first two months of 2024. The intensity of this communication style further increased in February 2024, as the caretaker government began working and the elections were announced in mid-month.

It is neither unusual nor unexpected for the political communication to include criticism of the opponents. However, when political criticism is based on unsubstantiated claims, uses offensive language, and labels political rivals, it turns into communication with harmful narratives. Communication with harmful narratives openly and directly violates the principles of ethical and professional communication, and the public office holders and the candidates are expected to communicate in a transparent, responsible, and accurate manner, in accordance with their commitments to serve the public good.

10 **Note:** The percentage is calculated based on the total number of harmful narratives per group, namely for political parties N=3365, for leaders N=458 and for government representatives N=144

About the government officials

In addition to monitoring harmful narratives, the Facebook profiles of the government officials (the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Ministers, and Ministers) were monitored to identify potential misuse of the official government communication channels on Facebook for party-related messaging, i.e., whether they adhered to the Code of Ethics for Public Officials, which requires them to perform their duties in a politically neutral and impartial manner, avoiding any promotion of their political beliefs while carrying out their working tasks.

Throughout the monitoring period, a consistent trend was observed in which the government officials used the official government Facebook pages for party-political activities. A common practice among some of them was to use a single Facebook profile for both official government communications and activities related to the political parties they represented. On the same profile, activities conducted as part of government duties were displayed alongside content using official government data to illustrate a party's contributions, often equating the party with the government or the state itself. This approach is not a professional method of communication with the public, given the fact that the government officials are expected to use the official communication channels to post information related to the work of the government, the decisions it makes, the policies it creates, the laws it proposes, as well as the efforts it makes in the interest of the citizens. By engaging in party promotion on the official Facebook profiles, the Prime Minister and the Ministers directly violated the principles of professionalism and impartiality in the communication of the government officials, and the Code of Ethics for Public Officials of the government was also breached.

SELF-PRESENTATION OF THE POLITICAL ACTORS

Like any other narrative, harmful narratives also have a 'narrator' who presents themselves in a certain way. In the harmful narratives, the 'narrator' is the political actor (party, leader, or government official), who, in 34 % of the harmful narratives, does not explicitly assume any particular role. In the remaining two-thirds, where they assume a certain role, the most common role is that of a 'saviour' (19 % of the harmful narratives), followed by a 'defender of the people' (15 %), or a 'defender of justice' (10 %), and a 'defender of identity' (9 %). In another 9% of the harmful narratives, they present themselves as 'EU-oriented,' with government officials being the most likely to adopt this image (26 %). Far less frequently, the political actors portrayed themselves as 'transparent' (3 %).

When the most common roles are placed in the context of the most prevalent narratives and the theme of domestic politics, a more complete picture emerges of how carefully these narratives are created. Namely, in an atmosphere of distrust ('undermining trust'), insecurity ('character attacks'), and societal division ('fomenting divisions'), a 'saviour' and a 'defender' (of the 'people,' 'justice,' or 'identity') is needed to lead domestic politics to restore the trust in the institutions, reduce the insecurity, and heal social divisions. In this setting, EU orientation becomes less relevant, and transparency as a feature of the character is even less of a priority. A narrative that offers saviours and defenders directly appeals to the emotional side of the individuals and the sub-contextual message it sends is that the citizens are powerless and incapable of acting alone, so they need a 'defender.' This message neither encourages nor leaves room for critical, independent thinking or decision-making based on data, facts, and different perspectives of the issues and problems.

FORMS THROUGH WHICH THE HARMFUL NARRATIVES ARE DELIVERED

The forms or the method by which harmful narratives are conveyed relate to the type of the post, i.e., whether it is through press releases, speeches, statements, interviews, manipulated visual or audio content, etc.

Of all available means or forms of conveying harmful narratives, more than 80 % were conveyed through three or four key formats (Table 5). **Across all political actors**, the most common form was the **press release**, followed by **press conference** and **reaction**. Similarly, the **political parties** used the same three forms - press release, press conference and reaction. Among the **leaders** of the political parties and the **government officials**, the most common format for conveying the harmful narratives was the reaction. Their second most frequent method was the **press release**, while for the government officials, it was the interview. The interview ranked as the third most common format used by the leaders to convey harmful narratives, whereas for the government officials, the **speech** was the third most prevalent form. It appears that when communicating as individuals, rather than through their political parties, the government officials particularly favour direct addresses to citizens—whether through interviews, speeches, or reactions.

Form of the harmful narrative	Total for all political actors		
	9 months	6 months	3 months
Press release	390 (44 %)	370 (48 %)	20 (19 %)
Press conference	160 (18 %)	144 (19 %)	16 (15 %)
Reaction	112 (13 %)	90 (12 %)	22 (21 %)
Interview	62 (7 %)	45 (6%)	17 (16 %)
Speech	59 (7 %)	49 (6 %)	10 (10 %)
Statement	39 (4 %)	34 (4 %)	5 (5 %)
Column	2 (0 %)	2 (0 %)	/
Other	57 (6 %)	43 (6 %)	14 (13 %)
	881	777	104

Form of the harmful narrative	Total political parties		
	9 months	6 months	3 months
Press release	372 (51 %)	356 (53 %)	16 (29 %)
Press conference	155 (21 %)	141 (21 %)	14 (25 %)
Reaction	54 (7 %)	51 (8 %)	3 (5 %)
Speech	44 (6 %)	36 (5 %)	8 (14 %)
Interview	39 (5 %)	29 (4 %)	10 (18 %)
Statement	31 (4 %)	28 (4 %)	3 (5 %)
Column	2 (0 %)	2 (0 %)	/
Other	26 (4 %)	24 (4 %)	2 (4 %)
	723	667	56

Form of the harmful narrative	Total party leaders		
	9 months	6 months	3 months
Reaction	44 (39 %)	35 (42 %)	9 (31 %)
Press release	16 (14 %)	13 (15 %)	3 (10 %)
Interview	13 (12 %)	8 (10 %)	5 (17 %)
Speech	9 (8 %)	8 (10 %)	1 (3 %)
Statement	7 (6 %)	5 (6 %)	2 (7 %)
Press conference	5 (4 %)	3 (4 %)	2 (7 %)
Column	/	/	/
Other	19 (4 %)	12 (4 %)	7 (4 %)
	113	84	29

Форма на штетниот наратив	Total government officials		
	9 months	6 months	3 months
Reaction	14 (31 %)	4 (15 %)	10 (53 %)
Interview	10 (22 %)	8 (31 %)	2 (11 %)
Speech	6 (13 %)	5 (19 %)	1 (5 %)
Press release	2 (4 %)	1 (4 %)	1 (5 %)
Statement	1 (2 %)	1 (4 %)	/
Press conference	/	/	/
Column	/	/	/
Other	12 (27 %)	7 (27 %)	5 26 %)
	45	26	19

Table 5. Overview of the forms of the harmful narratives by groups of political actors: political parties, political leaders, and government officials

3.2. ANALYSIS OF MEDIA REPORTING ON THE HARMFUL POLITICAL NARRATIVES

The role of the media in the democratic processes is well known. They provide space or a platform for exchanging opinions, discussion, and reflection – this space sometimes is referred to as the 'public sphere.' At the same time, they serve as a communication channel between the politicians and the public, enabling the politicians to convey their beliefs and proposals to the public, providing the citizens with the necessary information to participate in the political and the democratic processes, and allowing the politicians to hear the voice of the people. Additionally, the media remind the politicians of their responsibility and accountability through reporting and direct responses to various social events and issues of public interest via interviews.

The media play a crucial role in shaping the public opinion. Through the content they provide and the tone in which they deliver it, the media can influence how the public understands a particular issue, which topics they consider important, and what information they use in forming their political opinions.

The analysis of the media reporting of political narratives was conducted for two types of media, which, aside from differing in the channels through which they communicate with the public and their target audiences, also differ in how they are regulated. The two types of media included in the monitoring analysis are:

- A sample of 9 public and private national **TV stations** and
- A sample of 11 informative **online media outlets**

TV STATIONS

DYNAMICS OF USING HARMFUL NARRATIVES

Between September 2023 and May 2024, the monitoring of the TV stations was conducted over a total of **69 days**. During this nine-month period, each of the TV stations was monitored every consecutive fourth day of the month, or a total of 7 to 8 days, depending on the number of days in the month .

The dynamics of dissemination of the harmful narratives, as with the analysis of the political actors, was analysed from two aspects: 1) The number of TV news items containing harmful narratives broadcast in the central news editions of the TV stations and 2) the number of harmful narratives broadcast through these news items, i.e., how many harmful narratives were present in the news items.

Number of news items containing harmful narratives broadcast by the TV stations

During the monitoring period, the TV stations broadcast **669** TV news items containing harmful narratives in their central news editions. Similar to the political actors, more than two-thirds (72 %) of the

news items containing harmful narratives were broadcast during the pre-election period, while less than one-third (28 %) were broadcast during the election period. The highest number of news items containing harmful narratives was recorded in the period from December 2023 to February 2024, peaking in January 2024. From February 2024 until the last month of the analysis, there was a continuous decline of the number of news items containing harmful narratives, reaching the lowest level in May 2024 (Figure 11).

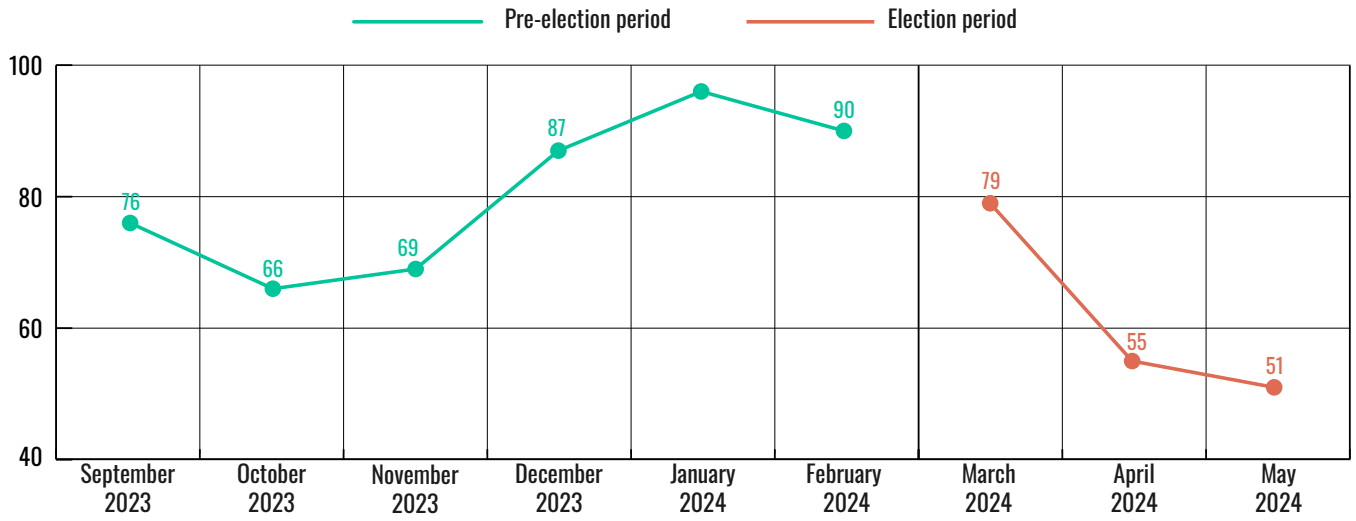


Figure 11. Number of TV news items containing harmful narratives in the central news editions, by month

On average, over the analysed nine-month period, the public 'consumed' approximately 74 TV news items containing harmful narratives per month[11]. However, when broken down by period, the picture changes slightly – in the pre-election period, the monthly average was higher, with 81 TV news items containing harmful narratives per month, whereas in the election period, this average is 62 news items containing harmful narratives per month. This means that the public was exposed to a quarter fewer TV news items containing harmful narratives during the election period compared to the pre-election period. Considering that during the election periods, broadcasters operate under specific rules on reporting during elections and are subject to special monitoring by the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, the significant decrease in harmful narratives in the TV news items during this period is unsurprising.

11 More than one third (36 %) of the total number of TV news items containing harmful narratives come from just one TV station. If the TV news items from this TV station were excluded, it would not only reduce the total number of recorded harmful news items, but the monthly and daily average of harmful TV news items that the public was exposed to, as well. In other words, the portion of the public that watches this TV station was more frequently and repeatedly exposed to harmful narratives than the part of the public that does not watch this TV station.

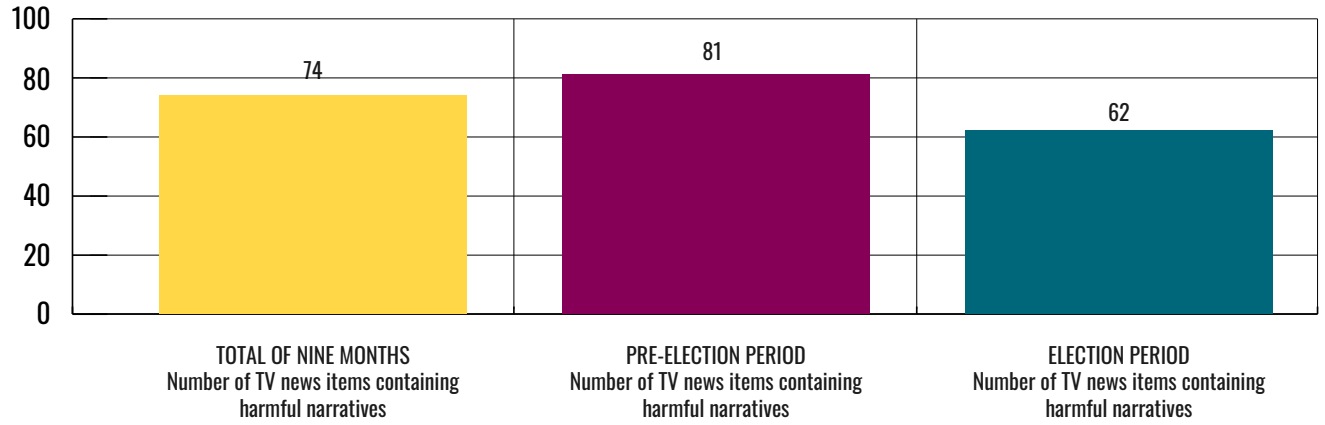


Figure 12. Average monthly number of TV news items containing harmful narratives in the central news editions, by analysed period

Number of harmful narratives present in the news items in the central news editions

Regarding the number of broadcast harmful narratives, both the total and monthly figures were significantly higher in the pre-election period than in the election period, particularly compared to the election months of April and May 2024 (Figure 13). A total of 1197 harmful narratives were broadcast in the 669 TV news items, and the same trend was observed – 73 % of harmful narratives were broadcast during the pre-election period, while only 27 % appeared in the election period. Additionally, the monthly trend of frequency of harmful narratives mirrored the monthly frequency of TV news items– the highest number of harmful narratives was in December 2023 and January 2024, while the lowest was in May 2024.

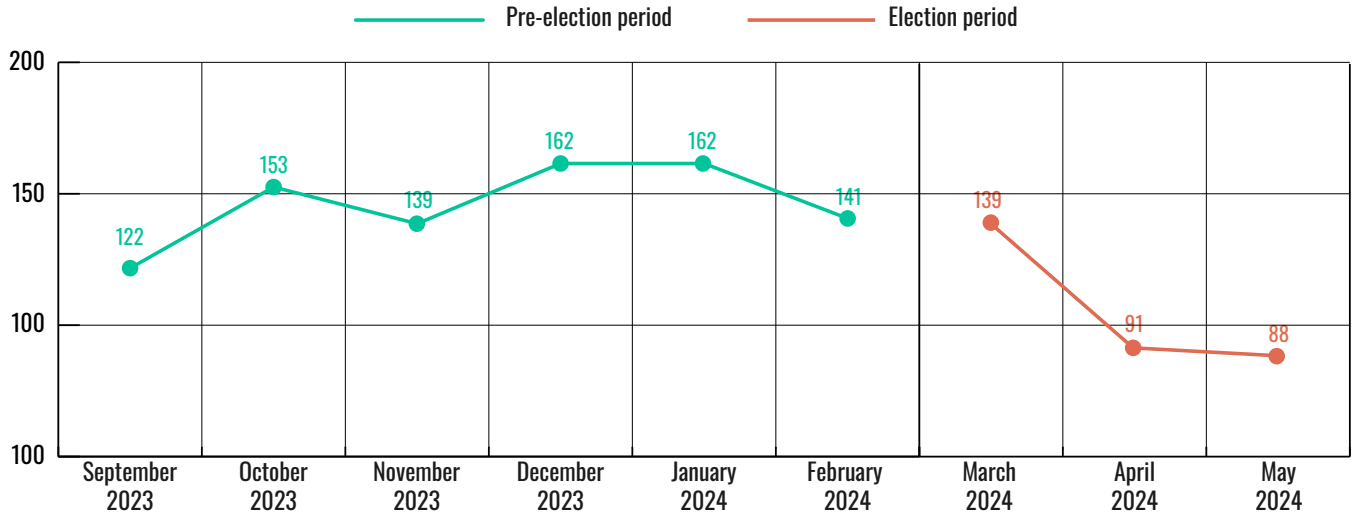


Figure 13. Number of harmful narratives in the TV news items in the central news editions, by month

Figure 14 illustrates that, over the nine-month period, an average of 133 harmful narratives were broadcast to the public per month, equating to four harmful narratives per day. When analysed by period, the public was exposed to over one-third more harmful narratives in the pre-election period than in the election period. During the election period, the average number of broadcast harmful narratives per month was 106, or three or more harmful narratives per day. The numbers indicate that the TV stations slowed down the broadcast of harmful narratives in the month

immediately preceding the elections (March) and during the election months (April and May), primarily due to legal provisions regulating reporting during elections. However, does this make a significant difference in fostering an atmosphere of impartial reporting and providing accurate and constructive information that enables citizens to engage in critical thinking and make informed decisions regarding the elections? When, during the six-month period before the elections, the public was exposed to four or more harmful narratives on a daily basis, and this number decreased by only one narrative per day during the election period, the space for critical and clear public reasoning remains quite limited.

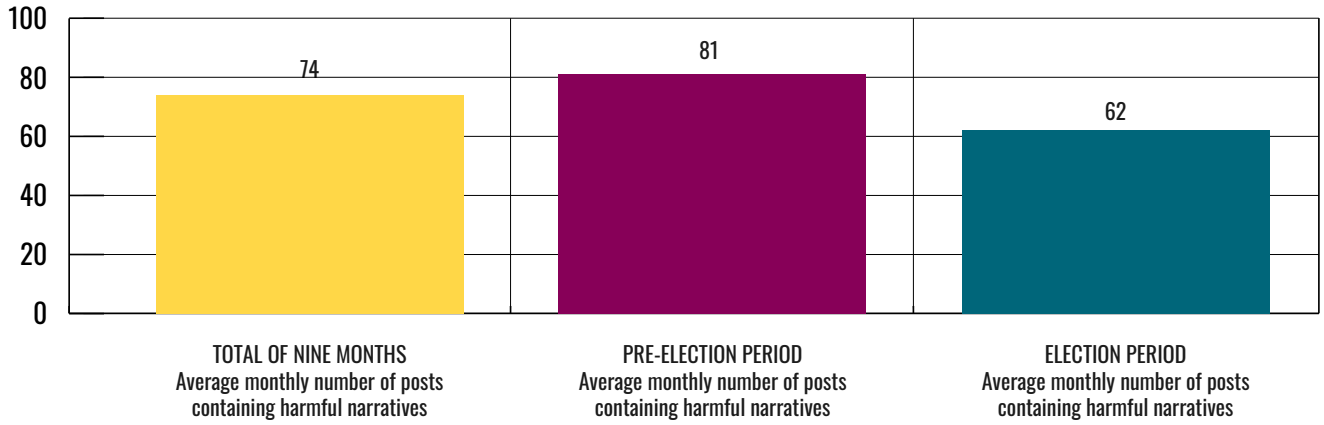


Figure 14. Average monthly number of harmful narratives in the TV news items in the central news edition (over nine, six, and three months), by analysed period

TYPES OF THE MOST COMMON HARMFUL NARRATIVES

The analysis of the broadcasting of harmful narratives in the TV informative reporting largely mirrors that of the political actors when it comes to: 1) the types of harmful narratives observed in the news items, based on the theoretically defined narratives, 2) the topics most frequently related to the harmful narratives, 3) the most commonly used harmful narratives, 4) the actors involved in the news items containing harmful narratives and the journalist's position towards them. There is an additional, fifth sub-aspect: 5) who created the harmful narrative and the journalist's position towards the harmful narrative created by the political actor.

The observed types of the identified harmful narratives

A total of 15 out of 16 harmful narratives were recorded in the TV news items (Table 6). Out of these 15, three appeared only incidentally in either of the two periods: 'conspiracy theories' and 'malinformation' (twice each) and 'xenophobia' (once), while 'sexism' was not recorded at all.

Harmful narrative*	Total number of created harmful narratives			Monthly derived average		
	Nine months	Six months	Three months	Nine months	Six months	Three months
Undermining trust	419	319	100	47	53	33
Biased selection	325	225	100	36	38	33
Character attacks	152	121	31	17	20	10
Fomenting division	80	46	34	9	8	11
Disinformation	69	61	8	8	10	3
Populism	49	41	8	5	7	3
Spreading panic and fear	30	13	17	3	2	6
Foreign influence	20	15	5	2	3	2
Hate speech	16	15	1	2	3	0
Manipulative audio-visual content	**13**	9	4	1	2	1
Extreme patriotism and nationalism	**11**	7	4	1	1	1
Ethnocentrism	**8**	4	4	1	1	1
Conspiracy theories	**2**	0	2	0	0	1
Malinformation	**2**	2	0	0	0	0
Xenophobia	**1**	1	0	0	0	0
Total	**1197**	**879**	**318**	**133**	**147**	**106**
			Daily derived average	**4,4**	**4,9**	**3,5**

* The titles of the harmful narratives are listed in a shortened version. The full names can be found in subtitle 2.3 Variables (p. 47-49).

Table 6. Frequency of harmful narratives in the TV news items, monthly average number of harmful narratives, and daily average number of harmful narratives

Topics that are most frequently associated with the harmful narratives

Domestic politics accounts for 68 % of the harmful narratives conveyed in the TV news items over the entire nine-month period. There was a significantly higher number of harmful narratives on this topic during the election period (82 %) compared to the pre-election period (63 %) (Figure 15). The next topic regarding the harmful narratives, with significantly lower frequency, was the economy, where even fewer harmful narratives were observed during the election period. Judiciary and foreign policy appeared even less frequently, while other topics (crime, healthcare, education, corruption, social policy, and culture) were almost negligible in terms of harmful narratives.

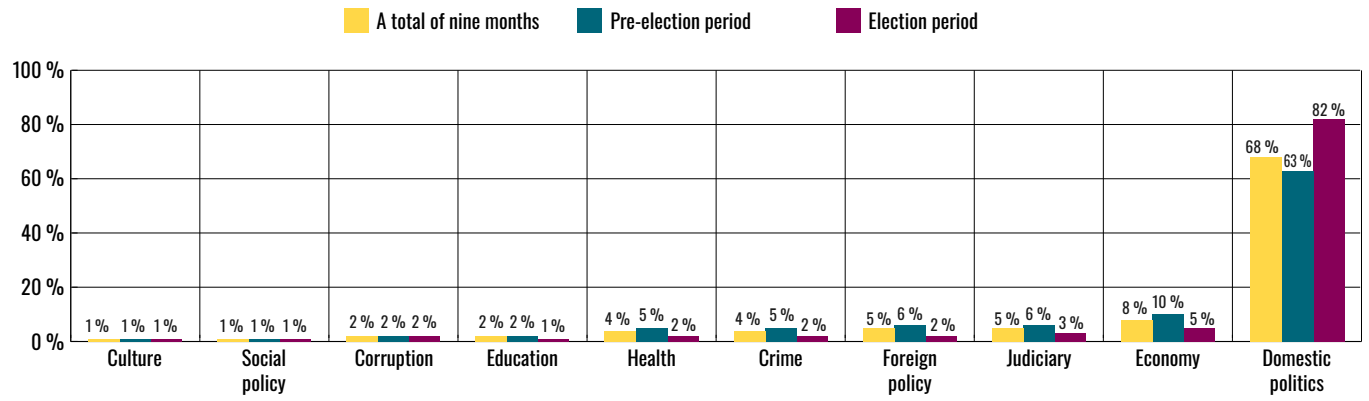


Figure 15. Topics in which harmful narratives appear in the TV news items in the central news editions, by analysed period

Although, in most cases, the main topics for which the political actors created harmful narratives were reflected in the TV news items containing harmful narratives, a closer comparison between the topic of harmful narratives in TV stations and the topic by the political actors conveyed through their own communication channels reveals several significant differences:

- A lower overall presence of domestic politics as a topic in the media reporting by the TV stations (68 % among the TV stations compared to 71 % among the political actors). However, broken down by period, during the media reporting in the election period, the harmful narratives on the topic of domestic politics were more frequent (82 %), than the political actors conveyed in the same period through their channels (77.5 %) (compare to Figure 9).

- Harmful narratives in case of judiciary and foreign policy ranked third and fourth in media reporting, whereas they were only eighth and sixth in case of the political actors (compare to Figure 9).

- Harmful narratives in case of crime and healthcare ranked fifth and sixth in media reporting, whereas they were third and fourth in case of the political actors.

Despite these differences in the selection of the topics of the harmful narratives, the TV stations generally followed and boosted the two main topics of harmful narratives created by the political actors through the media reporting.

Most common harmful narratives in the news items

Five harmful narratives dominated the TV reporting (Table 6), accounting for 88 % of all observed narratives. The ranking of the top four in terms of the frequency is identical to that of the political actors, with only one difference in the fifth harmful narrative: among the political actors it was populism, and among the TV stations it was disinformation (Figure 16). A closer look at the election period shows that the harmful narrative 'spreading panic, fear, and insecurity' was the fifth most common harmful narrative in media reporting, although it accounted for less than 3 % across the entire nine-month period.

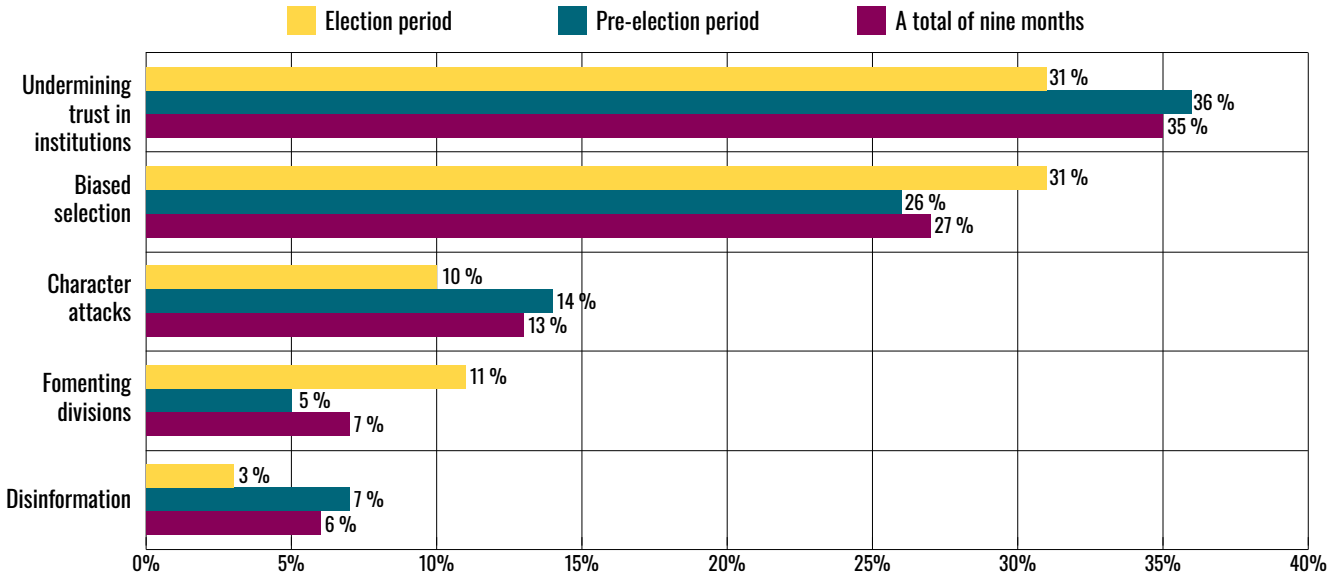


Figure 16. The most frequent five harmful narratives in the TV news items in the central news editions, by analysed period

Overall, the harmful narratives created by the political actors were almost entirely mirrored in the media reporting about the politicians and their narratives in the media information space of the TV stations.

Who are the actors in the news items containing a harmful narrative, and what is the journalist's position towards them?

The analysis of the actors appearing and disseminating the harmful narratives over these nine months leads to one of the main conclusions regarding who has access to the TV stations and who is granted the privilege to speak. Without exception, the largest share of airtime has been given to the representatives of the major political parties (VMRO-DPMNE, SDSM, DUI), and during the election period, to the Vredi coalition, their leaders, representatives, and the presidential candidates as well. Smaller political actors and parties have had little to no presence in the TV news items. The entire informative scene appears to be dominated by these political parties, creating two binary oppositions—one within the Macedonian bloc and another within the Albanian bloc.

Regarding the position of the journalist towards the actors, it was mostly neutral almost on all TV stations, however, in some cases, neutrality lacked, i.e., the journalists displayed either negative or positive position, depending on the actor in question.

A biased approach, where the journalist is overtly for or against a particular political actor, contradicts the professional journalistic standards. In accordance with the Code of Ethics of the Journalists, 'reporting on the political processes, especially the elections, should be impartial and balanced. The journalist must ensure professional distance from the political entities'[12].

What does the dominant presence of the actors from these three or four major political parties/coalitions in the TV news editions mean? Several explanations are possible. The first

12 Journalists' Association of Macedonia. Code of Ethics of the Journalists of Macedonia

relates to the clientelistic practices between the ruling political parties and major audiovisual media, that increase the risks of potential political control over these media outlets due to the regulatory shortcomings regarding paid political advertising (notably, the MPM 2023 report recorded a two-percentage-point decline in the political independence indicator compared to 2022) (Micevski, I. and Trpevska, S., RESIS 2024[13]). The second possible conclusion is that the TV stations, in their news editions, allocate the most airtime to the largest political entities, rarely featuring other voices, even on specific and specialised topics where expert opinions would be expected (such as amendments to laws or the selection of judges and prosecutors). In this way, the TV stations violated the principle of providing equal access to the media for different social groups, including the political parties (Resolution of the Council of Europe 1636, 2008[14]). The third explanation is that the political actors, aware that continuous visibility and activity is key to election success, impose themselves in the public sphere. Visibility, performance, and charisma often take precedence over well-reasoned arguments, which should be the main political tool in a democracy.

Who created and what is the journalist's position towards the harmful narrative created by politicians?

The analysis of the responsibility for creating the harmful narratives reveals a certain variation in the journalist's role in the creation of the harmful narrative. In most cases (76 %), the harmful narrative was created by the political actor, with the journalist merely conveying their statements without intervention or taking a position. However, in 1/4 of the news items, the journalist directly participated in the creation of the harmful narrative—either creating it themselves or co-creating it with the political actor (Figure 17)[15].

There is little difference between the pre-election and the election periods in terms of the cases where the political actor alone created the harmful narrative or where both the journalist and the political actor co-created it. The only notable difference is a significant reduction in the journalist's role as a creator of harmful narratives during the election period (8 %).

13 Monitoring Media Pluralism in the Digital Age, National Report for the Republic of North Macedonia for 2023 (2024).

14 Available at Res. 1636 - Resolution - Adopted text

15 The largest journalistic share in the creation of harmful narratives has one TV station. If it is excluded, journalists have created 11 % of the harmful narratives.

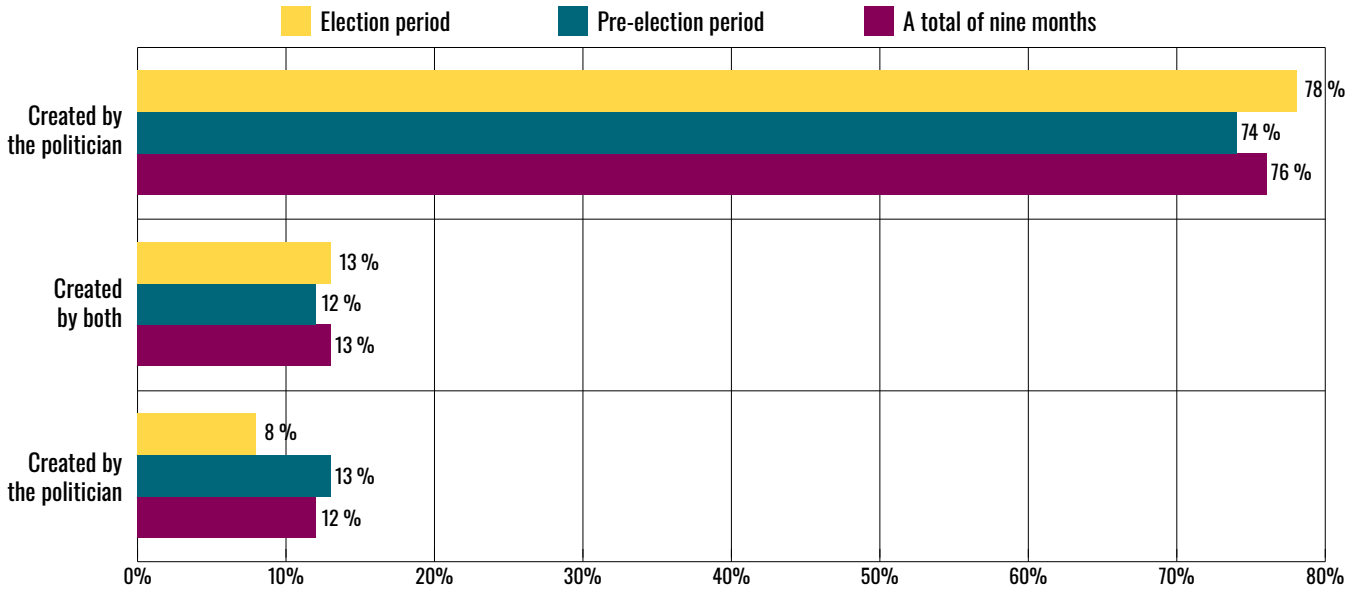


Figure 17. Creator of the harmful narrative in the TV news items in the central news editions, by analysed period

In the cases where the harmful narrative was created solely by the political actor, the journalists most often broadcast it without any intervention, and in some cases, they highlighted it but refrained from taking a position. In 7 % of cases, they condemned it, while in 13 %, they broadcast the harmful narrative with approval (Figure 18).

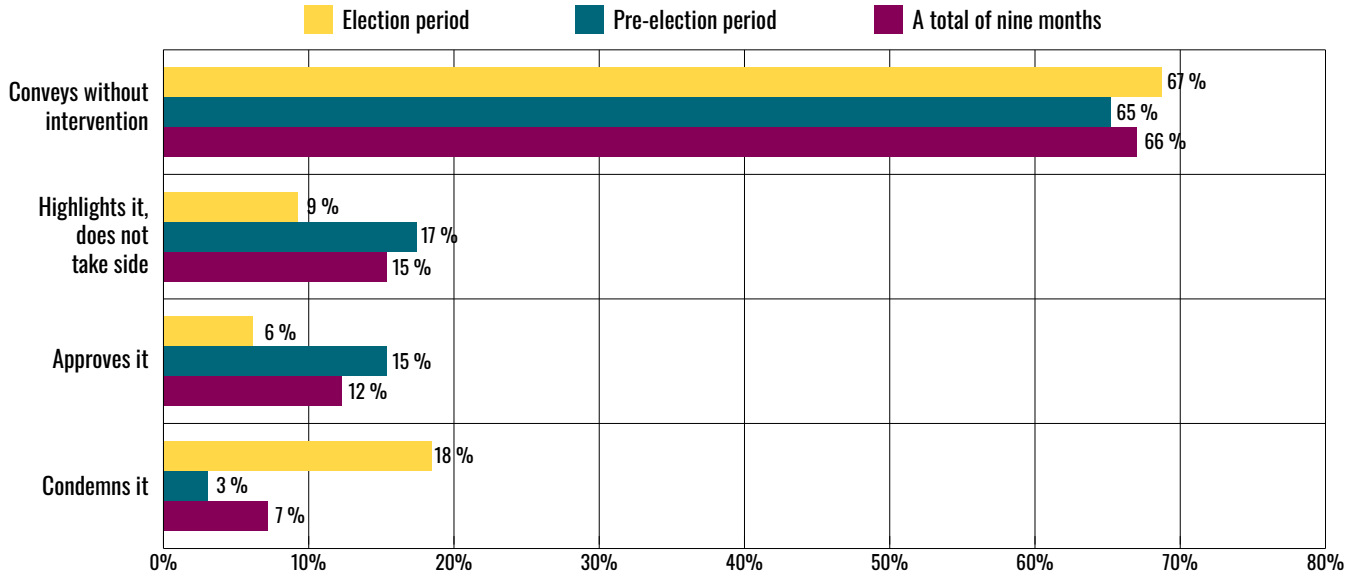


Figure 18. Journalist's position towards the harmful narrative created by the politician in TV news items, by analysed period

The role of the journalist/media has typically been to broadcast the narrative to the audience and the electorate without any intervention. However, accusations of corruption and unaccountability, offensive language towards political opponents, or selective reporting on the political actors without providing supporting evidence and arguments should be handled more seriously by the

media. Failing to filter harmful narratives and verify statements that promote baseless accusations, intolerance, or even hatred towards specific groups may embolden the politicians who see the media as an unregulated platform to disseminate their harmful narratives.

Journalists may not always be able to determine the truthfulness of the statements, but when facts and arguments are lacking, it is their duty to challenge the political actors on the basis of their serious allegations instead of merely conveying the political statements. Otherwise, the journalists and the media, even if they are not the direct creators of the speculative, misinformation, or malinformation, become its conduits and boosters, contributing to the growing social polarisation and distrust in the institutions.

HOW MANY SOURCES WERE CONSULTED, AND HOW MANY SIDES WERE REPRESENTED IN THE NEWS ITEMS CONTAINING HARMFUL NARRATIVES

An analysis of the news items containing harmful narratives, based on the number of various sides included, shows that most of them had one-sided reporting (54 %), while those featuring two or more sides accounted for roughly one-quarter of all news items (Figure 19). During the election period, media one-sidedness increased further (60 %), at the expense of the news items featuring two (18 %) or more sides (22 %). Given the social and political context, i.e., the elections held on 24 April and 8 May, this one-sidedness in some of the news items is unsurprising. The broadcasting of political rallies, gatherings, and press conferences dominated the public space during this period, where many harmful narratives were created.

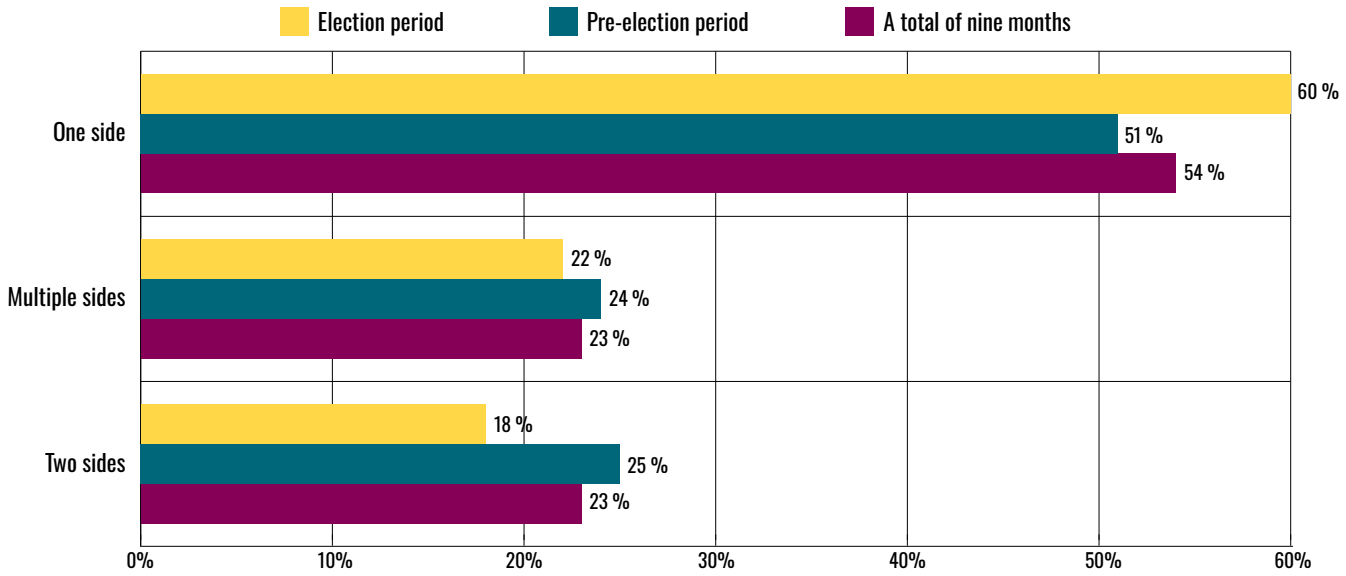


Figure 19. Number of sides represented in the TV news items containing harmful narratives, by analysed period

One-sided reporting in some media, where only one side was presented in the news items, is a serious issue indicative of unprofessional, imbalanced, and biased journalism. This kind of biased reporting, which does not allow all sides to present their version of events, can lead audiences to incomplete, incorrect, and one-sided standpoints and conclusions.

Journalists and media are responsible for consulting all relevant stakeholders and presenting all standpoints.

Balanced and impartial reporting also depends on the number and the type of the sources used by the journalists. The analysis showed that the news items with a single source dominated (44 %), followed by those with three or more sources (31 %) and those with two sources (22 %). In 3% of the news no sources were recorded, with the journalist being the sole source (Figure 20).

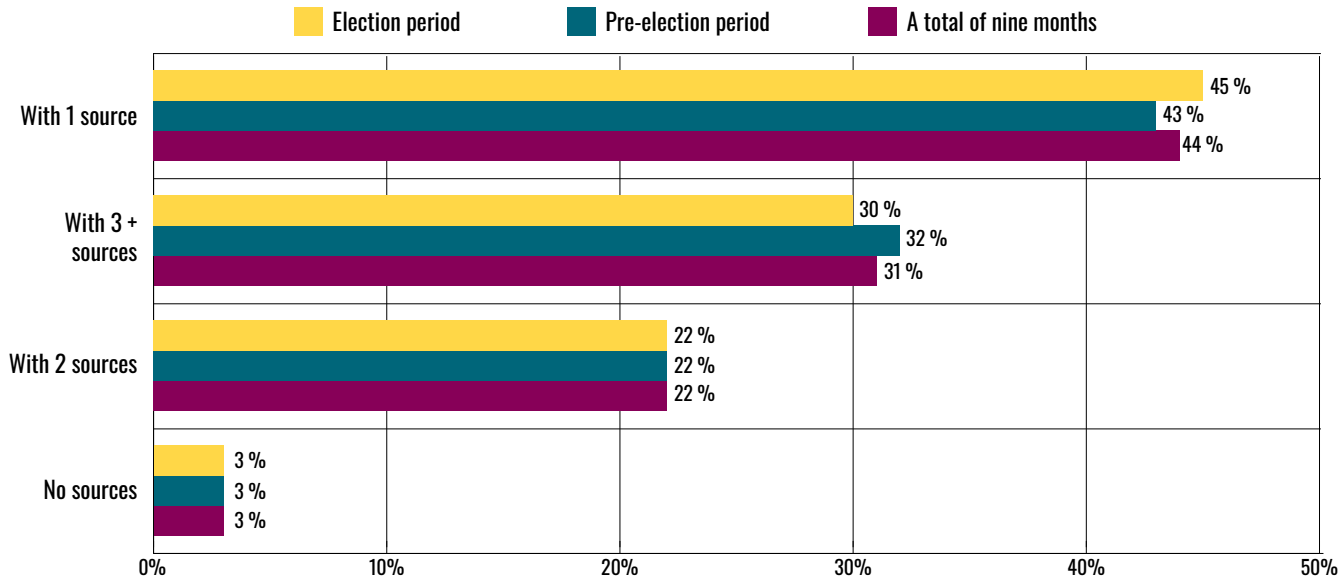


Figure 20. Number of sources in the TV news items containing harmful narratives, by analysed period

FORMS/GENRES OF MEDIA REPORTING ON HARMFUL NARRATIVES

In terms of genre, harmful narratives most frequently appeared in the reports or the analytical-reportage news items, and less so in broadcast speeches of the politicians. Then, there are the harmful narratives recorded as news or news with a statement, interviews, and, least often, news items where analysis is conducted and broadcast press releases by the political actor. (Figure 21).

Notably, the share of the news items featuring broadcast speech of a politician was significantly higher during the election period (20 %) compared to the pre-election period (11 %) and the overall analysed period (14 %). Through such reports, where only a politician's speech is broadcast, the journalists and the media provide the political actors with a platform that they can abuse for their own objectives, without their statements being critically analysed by the media.

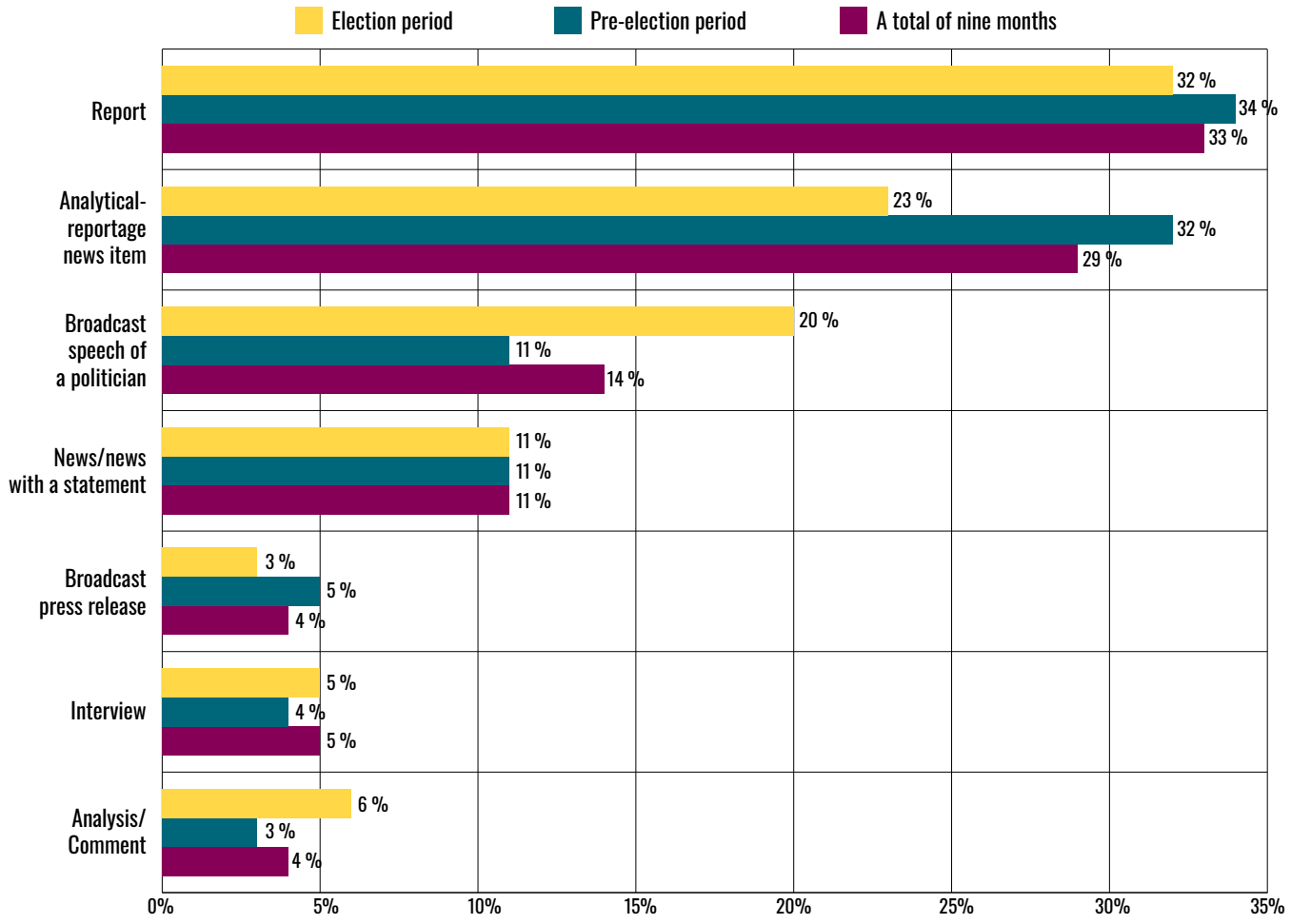


Figure 21. Genre of the TV news items containing harmful narratives, by analysed period

The large number of news items featuring broadcast speech of a politician during the three-month election period is unsurprising, especially considering that this period was dominated by pre-election rallies, speeches, and press conferences held by the political parties. Naturally, the media have an obligation to broadcast the political messages to the voters, but they must do so in a balanced and impartial manner, ensuring that voters have enough information to make choices based on objective facts. It is also important how the media handle the harmful narratives—how they 'filter' them, whether they condemn them, or further boost them.

The use of this form of reporting, which represents a kind of media 'anomaly,' is more characteristic of other types of media (primarily online media outlets) and has little in common with the professional journalistic standards. Broadcasting speeches or press releases from political actors—especially when these are filled with allegations of corruption, unprofessional conduct, and attempts to discredit political opponents—without analysing their content, verifying such claims, or presenting the other side, is indicative of biased and unprofessional journalism. Furthermore, this practice allows the political parties to dominate the media space, enabling them to promote their own agendas and spread their ideologies unchecked.

INFORMATIVE ONLINE MEDIA OUTLETS

The analysis of the data from the monitoring of the media reporting of the informative online media outlets reveals the manners in which the harmful narratives are broadcast and disseminated, as well as the role the journalists play in this process. The data have been analysed and presented as aggregate data for all informative online media outlets as a single group, with comparisons made for the analysed period (pre-election and election) and where significant differences exist, comparisons have been made based on the language of communication (Macedonian and Albanian).

DYNAMICS OF USING HARMFUL NARRATIVES

Between September 2023 and May 2024, the monitoring of the informative online media outlets was conducted over a total of **69 days**. On a monthly basis, each of the informative online media outlets was monitored every consecutive fourth day of the month, or a total of 7 to 8 days, depending on the number of days in the month. The dynamics of dissemination of the harmful narratives, like in the previous analyses, was analysed from two aspects: 1) The amount of content containing harmful narratives published by the informative online media outlets and 2) the number of harmful narratives conveyed through the published content.

Posts containing harmful narratives in the informative online media

During the nine months of monitoring, the informative online media outlets managed to disseminate harmful narratives in a total of **1908 published pieces**, around 600 more posts than the original creators of the harmful narratives— the political actors. This is primarily due to the fact that the same content was published by multiple informative online media outlets or that multiple posts were published about the same event. In any case, it is clear that the public was frequently exposed to content containing harmful narratives.

The highest number of such posts was recorded in January 2024 and particularly in April 2024 (Figure 22). In January, the then government was dissolved, and by the end of the month, a caretaker government was formed. Meanwhile, April marked the height of the election campaigns for both the presidential and parliamentary elections, as well as the first round of the presidential elections.

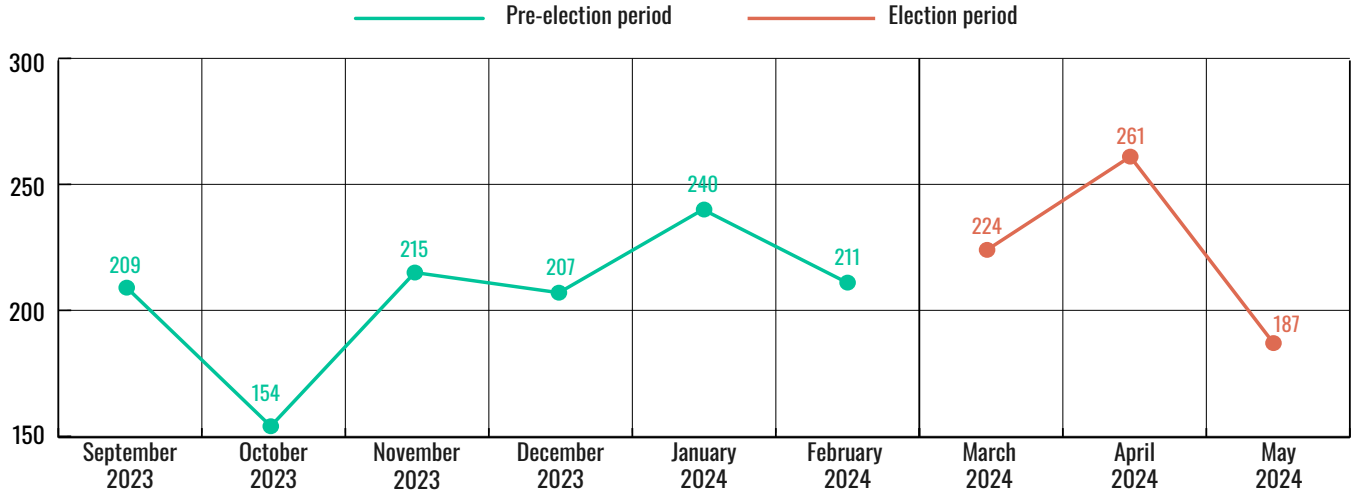


Figure 22. Number of posts containing harmful narratives in informative online media outlets, by month

Reduced to an average number of posts over the course of nine months, the online media outlets published 212 pieces of content per month. Comparing different periods, the monthly average for the election period is higher than the monthly average for the pre-election period and the overall nine-month average (Figure 23). Instead of contributing to accurate, fair, and impartial reporting for the citizens, the informative online media outlets contributed to the increase of the toxic and polarising discourse dictated by the political actors.

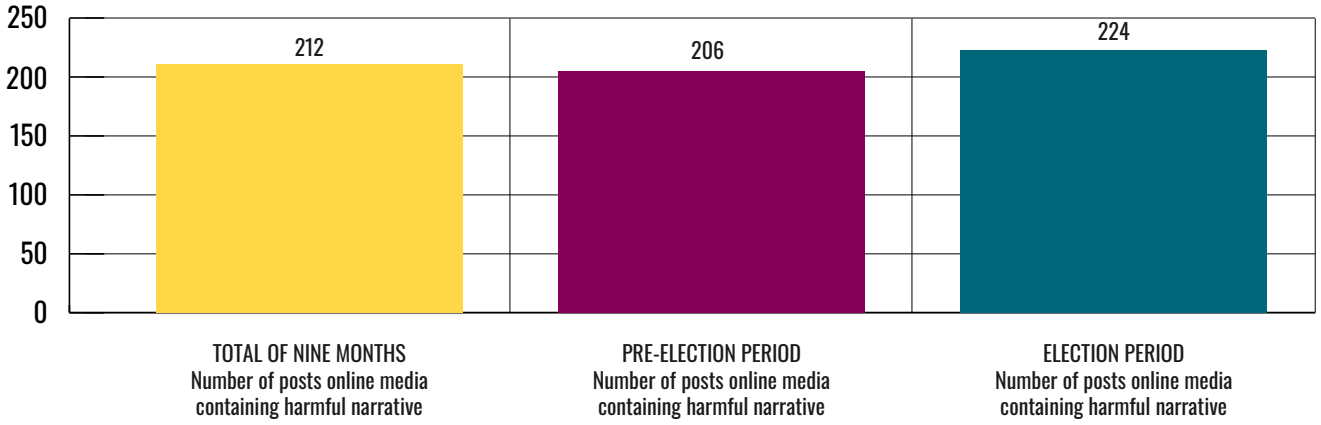


Figure 23. Average monthly number of posts containing harmful narratives in the informative online media outlets, by analysed period

Number of harmful narratives in the posts on the informative online media outlets

The next level of analysis—examining how many harmful narratives were present in the published contents—reveals that a total of **3762 harmful narratives were identified** across 1908 posts. The citizens were exposed to nearly two harmful narratives per published content. Of these, 70 % were conveyed during the pre-election period, with the highest numbers recorded in November 2023 and April 2024 (Figure 24). In November 2023, an average of nearly three harmful narratives appeared in a single published content, while in April 2024, this number was close to two. What led to this intensified toxic media reporting in these two months? In November 2023, several political events took place (the OSCE Summit was held in Skopje as part of OSCE Chairpersonship of North Macedonia during that period, the amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia were made), as well as the discussions about the 2024 elections. In this context, the political parties across the country also began campaigning (long before the official campaigns started on 18 April 2024). April 2024 was the peak month for the election campaigns and simultaneously the election month for the presidential elections. All these events provided the political actors with ample space to create harmful narratives, while the informative online media outlets failed to recognise their crucial role in ensuring balanced reporting—especially at moments when the citizens needed to make important decisions and conclusions. They also failed to acknowledge their significant responsibility in maintaining a democratic atmosphere.

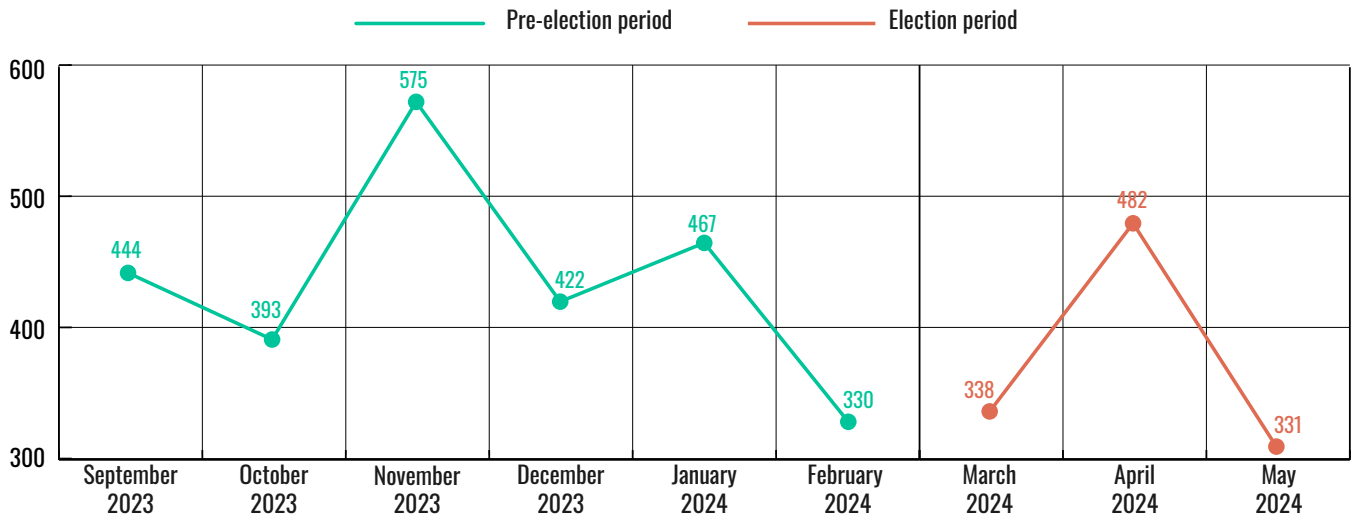


Figure 24. Number of harmful narratives in the posts in the informative online media outlets, by month

Despite the fact that the election period saw a higher monthly average of published content compared to both the pre-election period and the overall analysed period, it recorded the lowest monthly average of broadcast harmful narratives in the published content (Figure 25). Although a considerable number of harmful narratives were disseminated, it is encouraging that during this period, the 'toxicity' of the content was 14 % lower compared to the pre-election period. However, considering that April recorded the highest number of harmful narratives and that the informative online media outlets consistently contributed to the 'toxic' atmosphere over the previous six months, the earlier conclusion remains valid: these media outlets did not fulfil their crucial role in impartial and fair reporting, which is essential for strengthening the democratic culture.

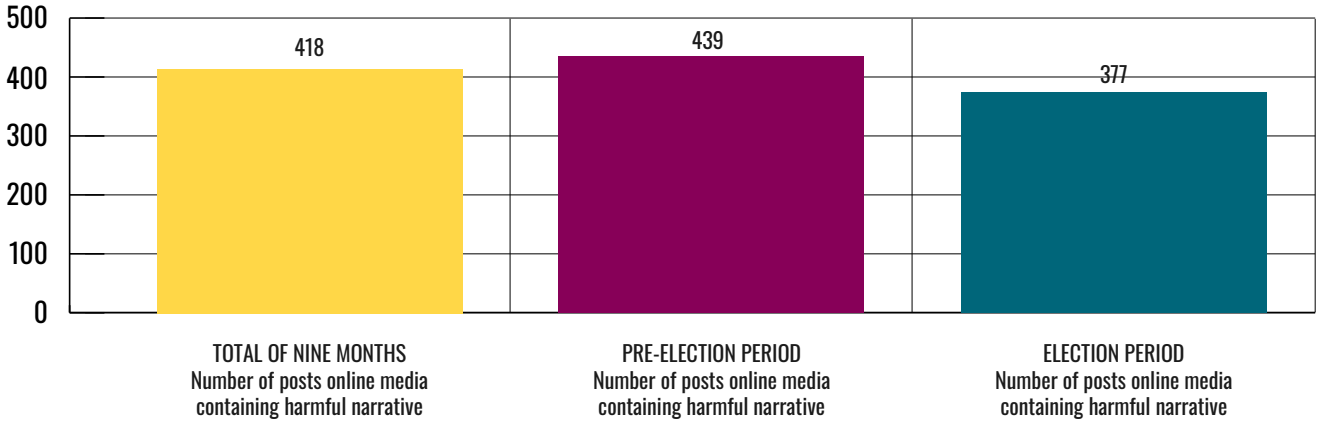


Figure 25. Average monthly number of harmful narratives in the posts on the informative online media outlets, by analysed period

TYPES OF THE MOST COMMON HARMFUL NARRATIVES

The analysis of the broadcasting of harmful narratives by the informative online media outlets, just like the analysis of the TV stations, includes the same sub-aspects: 1) The types of harmful narratives recorded in the published content in the informative online media outlets, based on the theoretically defined categories, 2) the topics that are most frequently associated with the harmful narratives, 3) the six most commonly used harmful narratives, 4) the political actors targeted by the harmful narratives in the published content and 5) the role of the journalists in creating and addressing the harmful narratives.

Types of harmful narratives

Out of sixteen harmful narratives in the media space, the informative online media outlets disseminated fifteen. The harmful narrative of 'xenophobia' was not recorded at all, as it was not created by the political actors either. 'Sexism' was recorded only once (it was not recorded among the political actors at all), while 'malinformation' was recorded four times (matching the number recorded among the political actors).

Most common topics of harmful narratives

Of the recorded fifteen harmful narratives broadcast in the media content by the informative online media outlets, the vast majority (70 %) were related to domestic politics, while significantly fewer were related to the economy, corruption, crime, or other topics (Figure 26). This is expected, given that these narratives were created by the political actors themselves, and the informative online media outlets merely disseminated them without any objection in the media space.

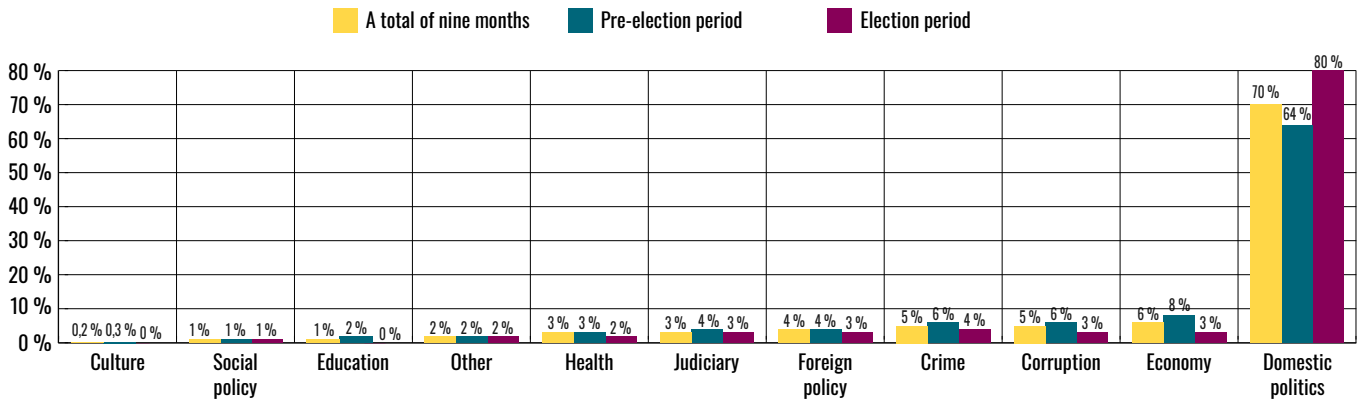


Figure 26. Topics in which the harmful narratives appear in the posts on the informative online media outlets, by analysed period

The most common harmful narratives in the posts

Unlike the political actors, who primarily engaged in five of the most common harmful narratives, the informative online media outlets recorded six harmful narratives with an equal frequency rate (7 % - the lower threshold of frequency of harmful narrative occurrence) (Figure

27). They are almost identical in terms of the order of occurrence between the political actors and the online media outlets, except for the harmful narrative of 'disinformation,' which ranks fourth in the posts of the informative online media outlets in terms of frequency, but does not appear among the top five harmful narratives used by the political actors.

'Disinformation,' 'populism,' and 'character attacks' were more frequently conveyed during the pre-election period (Figure 27). In contrast, the narratives of 'undermining trust in institutions,' 'biased selection,' and 'fomenting divisions' were significantly more prevalent in the online media outlets content between March and May 2024—during the election period. These three narratives are particularly harmful during democratic processes such as elections, when the citizens decide about their own future and it is of great importance to have access to accurate, fair, and impartial information and facts. However, by disregarding the professional media standards, the online media outlets provided content that undermined trust, failed to ensure impartiality, and contributed to deepening of the social divisions. In doing so, they effectively acted as an 'extended arm' of the political actors.

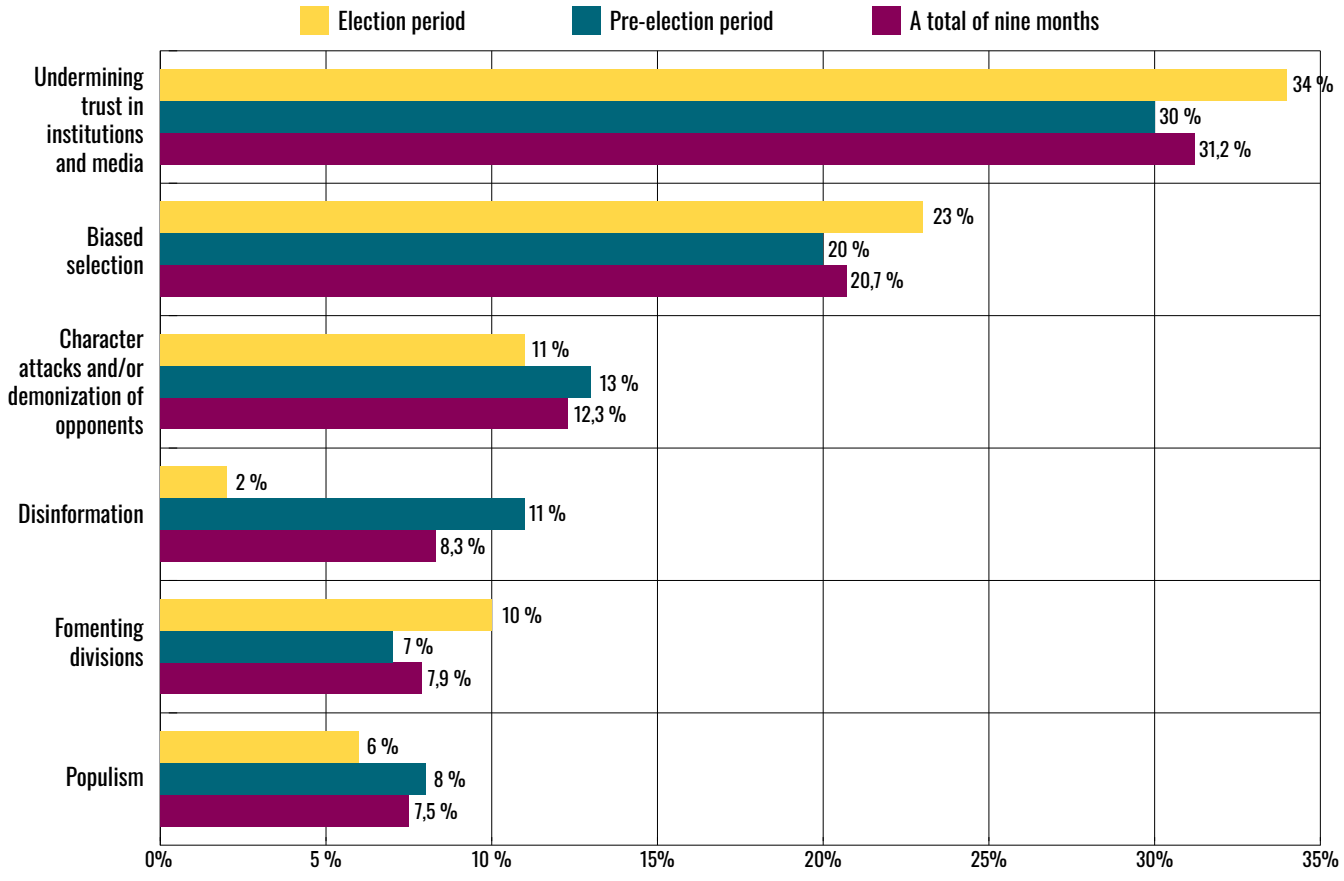


Figure 27. The most common harmful narratives in the posts on the informative online media outlets, by analysed period

Who created and what is the journalist's position towards the harmful narrative created by politician

Out of the total 3762 harmful narratives broadcast in the informative online media outlets, the journalist independently or in collaboration with the political actor participated in creating harmful narratives in only 16 % of the cases.

Most harmful narratives were created by the political actors, with a higher frequency during the election period compared to the pre-election period (Figure 28). The journalist's role as a creator of the harmful narratives, whether independently or alongside the political actor, was insignificantly lower during the election period.

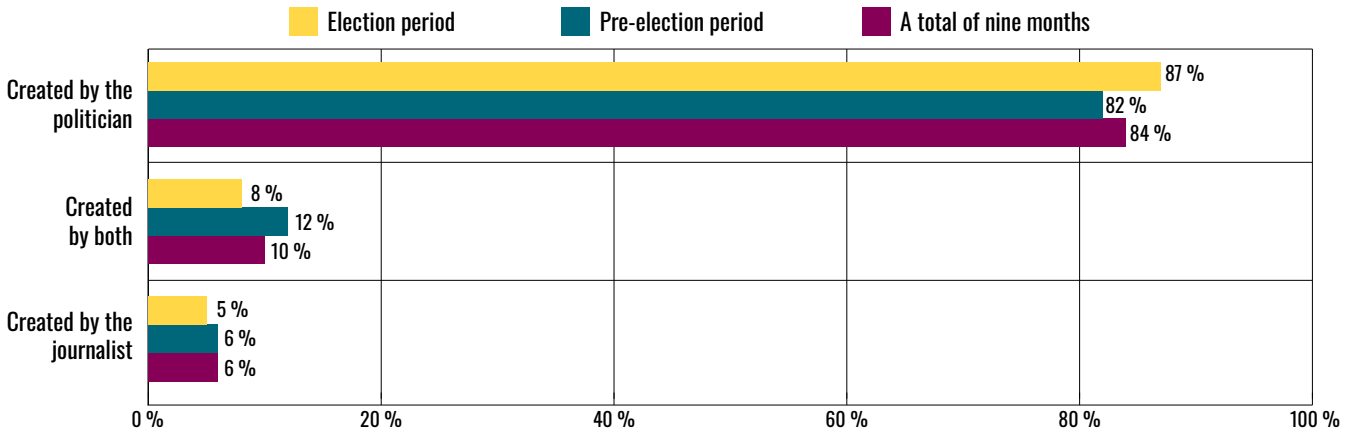


Figure 28. Producer/creator of the harmful narratives in the posts on the informative online media outlets, by analysed period

Analysing the journalist's position towards the harmful narratives created by the political actors further highlights the lack of adherence to the professional reporting standards. Namely, the journalist most often acts as mere conveyer of the harmful narratives, failing to provide additional data and explanations from multiple sides. In nearly a quarter of the broadcast harmful narratives, the journalist highlights the narrative without taking sides, however still does not provide additional explanations to debunk it. There are also instances where they endorse or condemn the harmful narrative (Figure 29). When assessing the role of the online media outlets in reporting on harmful narratives, we regrettably conclude that such media reporting not only violates the professional journalistic standards but also significantly contributes to the development and maintenance of a toxic atmosphere, especially at crucial moments when the citizens must make important decisions about the future of the society. Instead of playing their expected role, the informative online media outlets follow the agenda set by the political actors without any objection.

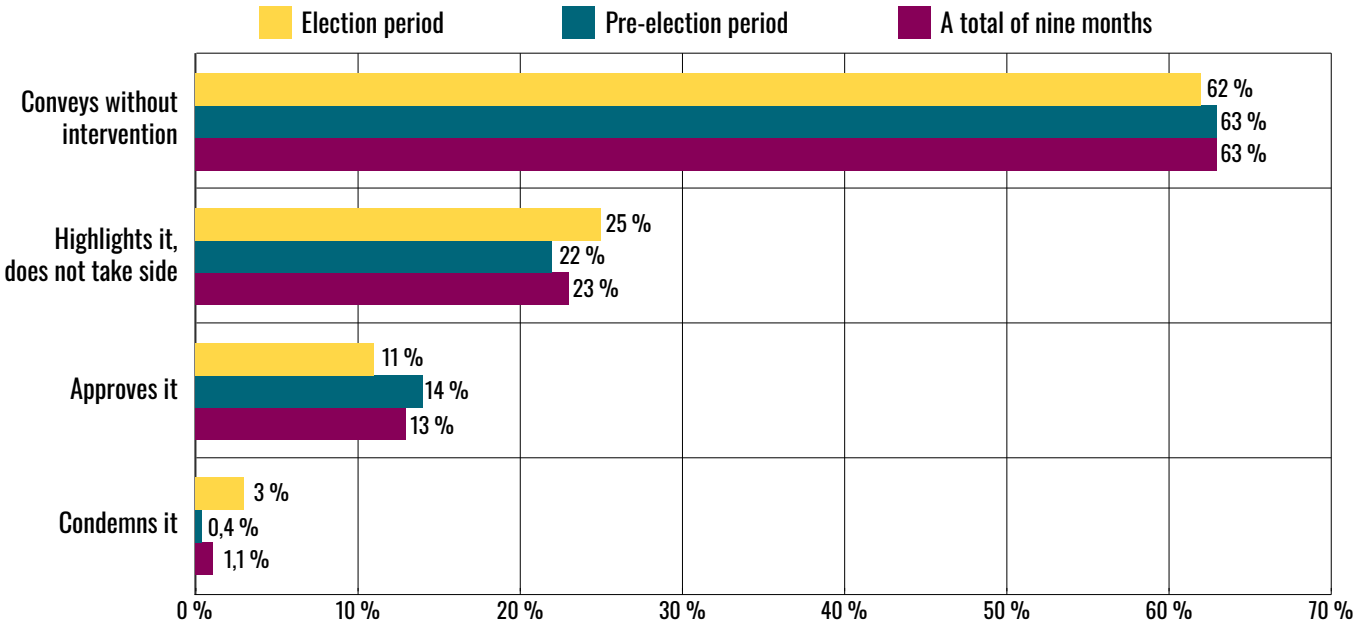


Figure 29. Journalist's position towards the harmful narratives created by the politician in the posts on the informative online media outlets, by analysed period

CONSULTED SOURCES AND PRESENTED SIDES IN THE POSTS CONTAINING HARMFUL NARRATIVES

Consulting multiple sources when reporting on a social event, a person, or an important political issue, as well as presenting different perspectives or sides, are important professional standards in journalism and indicators of impartial and professional media. What does the analysis of these two media professionalism indicators reveal?

A common characteristic of all informative online media outlets is their reliance on a single source of information. In 86 % of the posts, only one source was consulted, while two or more sources were rarely or incidentally consulted. In some cases, no source was cited at all (Figure 30). This approach is largely due to the dominance of two genre forms: 'broadcast press release' and 'broadcast speech', where the online media outlets fully or partially broadcast a press release or a position of a specific political actor (party, party leader, spokesperson, MP) on a given issue. Hence, regardless of the number of analysed news items containing harmful narratives on different portals, a constant factor across all of them is the dominance of a single information source.

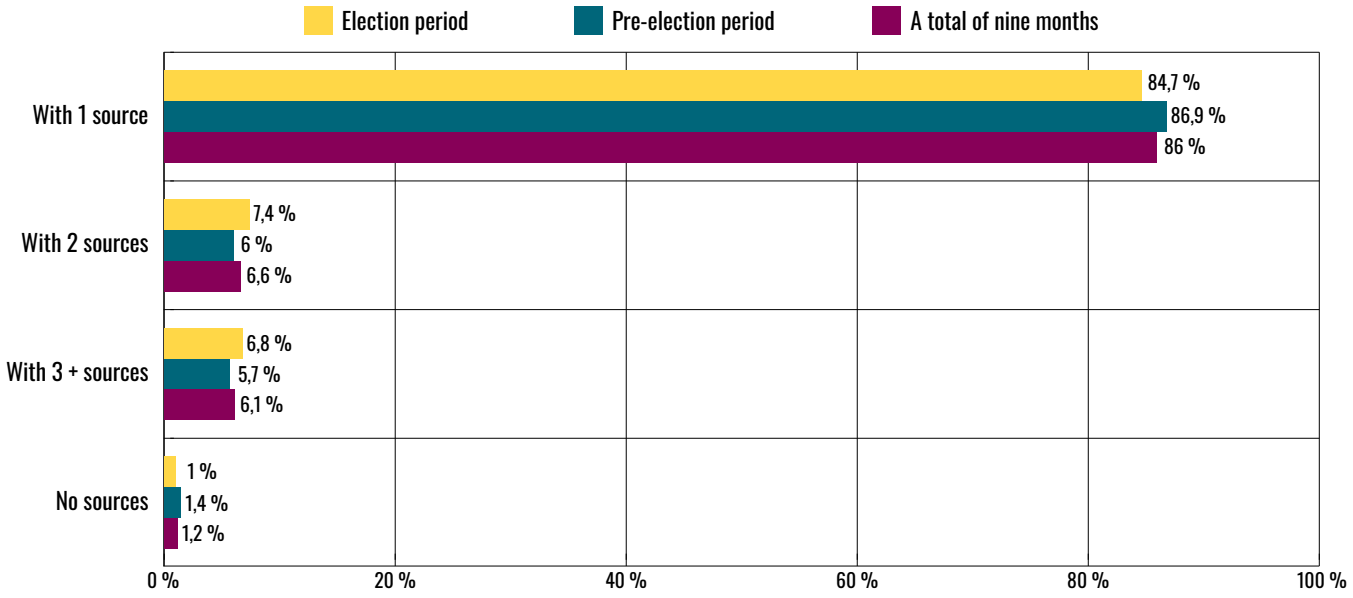


Figure 30. Number of sources presented in the posts containing harmful narratives on the informative online media outlets, by analysed period

A similar pattern emerges in the analysis of presenting different sides in the posts—one-sided reporting is a characteristic of all the analysed informative online media outlets. In 90 % of online content containing harmful narratives, only one side is represented, while two or more sides are presented in very few posts (Figure 31). In some months, certain informative online media outlets had all their analysed articles featuring only one side.

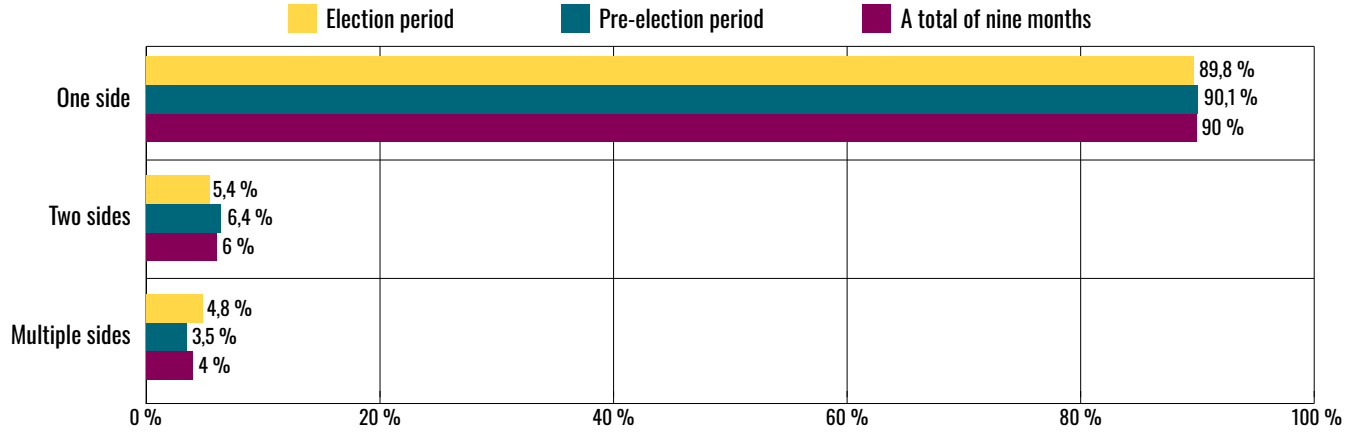


Figure 31. Number of sides presented in the posts containing harmful narratives on the informative online media outlets, by analysed period

FORMS OF MEDIA REPORTING ON HARMFUL NARRATIVES

In terms of the genre, the most common forms of reporting are the party press releases, politicians' broadcast speeches[16], their Facebook posts, interviews given to other media, and press conferences. Nearly two-thirds of the analysed online media posts fall under the categories of 'broadcast press release' and 'broadcast speech' (Figure 32).

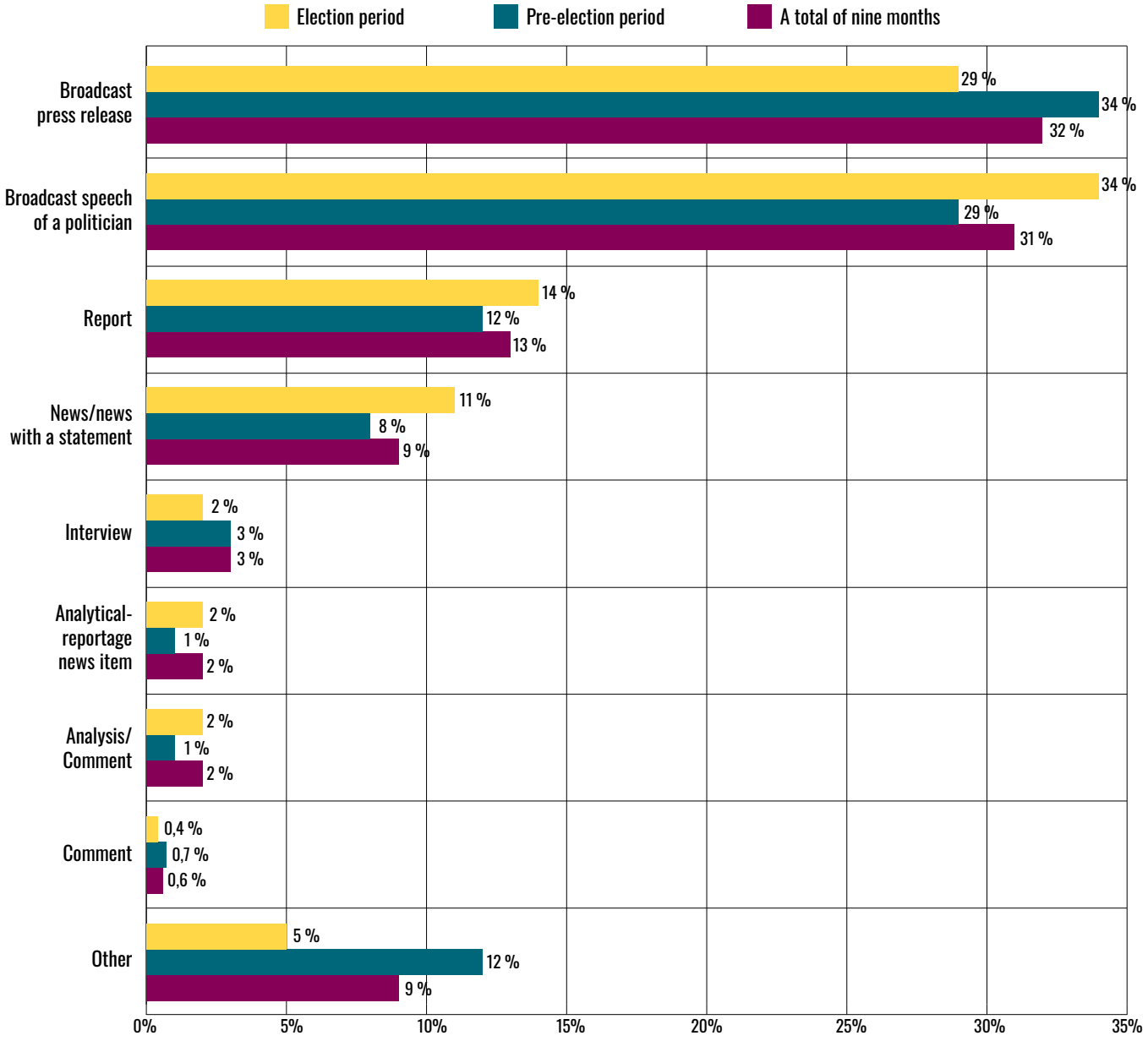


Figure 32. The genre of the posts containing harmful narratives on the informative online media outlets, by analysed period

16 The genres 'Broadcast press release' or 'Broadcast speech of a politician' do not belong to the traditional journalistic genre divisions based on various criteria, such as: length of the journalistic text, duration of the video material, topic, field, style, method of preparation, type of media, etc. Given that the monitoring covers online media, where there is a trend of hyper production of journalistic and quasi-journalistic forms, this type of posts was also recorded using the methodological approach.

A noticeable practice is the creation of multiple posts about a single event, such as a press conference, an interview (often given to another media outlet), or participation of the political entities in debates on certain TV stations. There is an increase in the number of information, posts, and news on a single event, often breaking down the statements of a politician, an MP, a spokesperson, a member of a political party, into separate posts for each topic discussed. This practice not only makes the daily reporting of an online media outlet appear richer compared to the other online media outlets, but also multiplies the number of harmful narratives, effectively making the media outlet itself a creator of the harmful narratives. This approach to reporting allows free space for the harmful narratives to 'grow,' with both the political actor and the media actively participating in their proliferation.

3.3. KEY FINDINGS FROM THE ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICAL ACTORS AND THE MEDIA

ABOUT THE POLITICAL ACTORS

Over a nine-month period, the creation and communication of harmful narratives in the political communication of all political stakeholders with the public followed two trends: **a rising trend**, peaking in December 2023 and April 2024, and a **declining trend**, starting in January 2024 and reaching its lowest point in May 2024, after the parliamentary elections. In December 2023, the outgoing government was making way for a caretaker government. April 2024 was the month of the election campaigns for the presidential and parliamentary elections and the first round of the presidential elections.

The presence of harmful narratives in the posts was not linear—one post did not necessarily contain just one harmful narrative, but in most cases, multiple harmful narratives were present in a single post. Some political actors used two, three, or even four, five and six harmful narratives in one post. This indicates that the political actors used intensified negative or harmful rhetoric in order to position themselves as the top political option for citizens. The most frequently used harmful narrative (37 %) was 'undermining trust' in institutions—ranging from the state institutions and local governments to the political parties as institution and the media. Close behind this narrative, almost with the same frequency (30 %), was 'biased selection' of data and information, used in two ways: either to vilify the political opponents or to 'polish' their own image by omitting key information, potentially leading citizens to incorrect conclusions. Far less frequent (7–9 %) were the 'character attacks,' including labelling, belittling, and other forms of vilification of the political opponents, as well as 'fomenting divisions' by deliberately distinguishing between 'us—the good, prosperous, progressive' and 'them—the bad, regressive, destructive'. The harmful narrative of 'populism' was also used to promote own ideologies or actions as being in the people's best interest.

One-fifth of the political actors presented themselves as saviours and defenders of the people against the political opponents allegedly working to destroy the country. The government officials mostly (one-quarter of them) present themselves as being EU-oriented. Among political parties in

the Macedonian bloc, the then ruling party portrayed itself as the only option for a European future, while the largest opposition party pledged to defend national interests, restore national dignity, and return the state to the hands of the citizens by decisively combating corruption. A smaller opposition party from the Macedonian bloc positioned itself as the only uncorrupted political option committed to protecting national interests. Among the political parties in the Albanian bloc, the ruling party presented itself as pro-European, against the harmful Russian influence, and as a champion of true values and the defender of the people (primarily the Albanian population). The opposition, united in a three-party coalition, portrayed itself as a better alternative to the ruling party, advocating for the Albanians, fighting against corruption, and defending the interests of the ordinary people.

Reasoned and sharp criticism of the political opponents during the pre-election period is expected and present in every democratic society. However, the creation and distribution of harmful narratives in the public space can contribute to the polarisation of the public debate, normalisation of the poor communication practices, and violation of the ethical and professional communication standards. A discourse containing unfounded accusations, attacks, insults, and offensive language on the public scene and in the public communication can lead to fomenting even greater divisions based on ethnicity and politics, ultimately reducing the trust in the electoral process and the institutions. When the offensive language is neither condemned nor restricted, over time, it may become accepted as part of the general language usage, facilitating the dissemination of harmful narratives and lowering the standards of the public discourse.

The responsibility of the political actors in fostering a culture of public communication is crucial. Hence, political communication should be based on evidence, professionalism, impartiality, ethics, and avoiding hate speech and discriminatory rhetoric.

ABOUT THE MEDIA

Media reporting on the harmful political narratives over the nine-month monitoring period has been highly prevalent, both on the national television broadcasters and across the informative online media outlets. Toxic reporting, particularly in the informative online media outlets, has been more intense than among the political actors . In this way, the (online) media have amplified the impact of the harmful narratives by providing a platform for the political actors to reach broad audiences, not only those who follow the communication channels of the parties and the Facebook profiles of the politicians.

The harmful rhetoric dictated by the biggest and the most influential political actors has been almost entirely mirrored in central news editions and online home pages. The peaks of the toxic narratives and the inter-party accusations were recorded in January, before the official election campaign had begun, and again in April, at the height of the campaign. Monitoring numbers confirm that the political elite easily dominate the media agenda, enjoying the privilege of setting topics that serve their interests, shaping the public opinion, and controlling the public discourse.

Informative online media outlets broadcast most of the news items containing harmful narratives[17] (1908 posts), nearly three times more than the TV stations (669 posts), which had

17 In online media, there are no space limitations, while TV news editions (news) have limited duration.

the lowest role in disseminating the harmful narratives compared to the political actors who are the creators of the harmful narratives— with 1342 posts on the internet and Facebook. When considering the number of broadcast harmful narratives, the (lack of) seriousness and the (lack of) responsibility of each analysed stakeholder regarding their professional obligations to the public becomes evident. Again, the informative online media outlets led in this aspect, conveying three times more harmful narratives than the TV stations—3762 compared to 1197. However, the highest share of harmful narratives was conveyed by the political actors. Through their communication channels, they conveyed 3967 harmful narratives over the entire monitored period . Despite the regulations governing the professional and ethical communication with the public, almost none of these individual stakeholders adhered to them.

Theoretically, if a citizen regularly followed the communication channels of the political actors, the TV stations and online media, **they would be exposed to an average of 435 pieces of content containing harmful narratives per month**. This hypothetical 'exaggeration' serves as an illustration of the excessive exposure of the citizens to harmful narratives.

The potential consequences of such high exposure to harmful narratives are numerous and far-reaching, impacting the democracy, the social well-being, and, most importantly, the citizens. Hence, adherence to the positive regulations and standards for proper public communication—both political and media-related—should be frequently reinforced and revisited by the political actors and media professionals alike. The trust placed in them by the citizens obliges both the politicians and the journalists to maintain transparency, impartiality, civility, and communication based on evidence and facts.

The harmful narratives most frequently broadcast by the TV stations and the online media outlets closely mirror those conveyed by the political parties . The three most common types of harmful narratives across all three groups of stakeholders are: 'undermining trust in institutions,' 'biased selection of information,' and 'character attacks.' The key distinction between the political actors and the media is that the latter frequently engage in disseminating disinformation, which ranks among the top five harmful narratives in media reporting.

Additionally, the way harmful narratives have been reported in the media and the role of the journalist as passive conveyor—without critical analysis of the harmful narratives, accusations and statements of the political actors, without providing multiple perspectives on the narrative being conveyed, by consulting only one source in most cases, it becomes even clearer how much the public was exposed to narratives that incite feelings that can inhibit or encourage unproductive behaviours, and even aggression.

When presenting harmful narratives, online media outlets almost uniformly inform the public by uncritically broadcasting speeches of the political actors or the political press release of a certain political party. These posts are typically brief, consisting of just a few paragraphs or even only a few sentences summarising a politician's position on an issue. As a result, since it is not news, the readers unfamiliar with daily political developments may struggle to fully understand the information—what was said, why, when, and where. Another notable trend among the informative online media outlets is the practice of creating multiple posts from a single event or pseudo-event (such as a press conference or a debate), each focusing on different issues and topics.

Similarly, the TV reporting is often one-sided, relying on a single source in the majority of the reports or the analytical-reportage news items through which the harmful narratives are being broadcast. The fact that more than half of the news items include only one side is alarming, considering that impartiality and objectivity must be among the most important journalistic standards. Even more so if we note that in the majority of news items featuring only one side, political actors dominate as the sole source of information, which implies that the role of the media

is to be a silent observer of the political events. Especially in cases where the harmful narrative is created by a political actor, the journalists have an obligation to seek opposing viewpoints and present all sides of an issue.

POLITICIANS CREATE, MEDIA FACILITATE THE DISSEMINATION OF THE HARMFUL NARRATIVES

Politicians demonstrate a significant 'creative' capacity in creating the harmful narratives—not only in terms of volume and frequency but also in terms of content and variety. On average, political actors created over 400 harmful narratives per month. They use multiple communication channels to spread these narratives, including their own websites and Facebook pages, informative online media outlets, TV stations, press conferences, and press releases distributed to the TV stations and the online media outlets. In media reporting, the broadcast press conferences and press releases are among the most common genre forms. In this way, the political actors effectively saturate the entire information space.

As much as the political actors have created harmful narratives, the media have supported the broadcasting of these harmful narratives to the citizens, allowing them to penetrate the media space and reach a broad audience, and in the case of the informative online media outlets, even more than the creators themselves. On average, in one month, the TV stations broadcast over 100, and the online media outlets over 400 harmful narratives.

This is a devastating finding, particularly when considering the political actors in relation to the media and the journalists. The public expects from the politicians who gain the trust of the citizens, transparent and dignified communication based on evidence, not creating narratives that undermine the sense of security and trust in the ability of the politicians to contribute to the well-being of the citizens. The media should be the 'guardians' of the truth and impartial reporting. Media reporting should provide the public with complete, accurate, and evidence-based information, explain the different standpoints, based on which they can then make proper decisions.

HARMFUL NARRATIVES AS THE MAIN COMMUNICATION TOOL IN THE ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

The discourse, primarily based on unsubstantiated claims, without evidence or facts, used to undermine trust in institutions and opponents (a total of 3049 recorded attempts to undermine trust in institutions within the discourse of the political actors and in the media reporting), in which information is selectively chosen in favour of one's political option (a total of 2039 recorded attempts of biased selection of information by the political actors and the media) or uses offensive language against the political opponents (a total of 953 recorded character attacks by the political parties and in the media reporting), was the dominant tool in the pre-election race.

Such discourse in no way contributes to providing a well-informed basis for the citizens to draw conclusions and make reasoned decisions regarding the elections. The frequent use of such discourse may lead to the acceptance of the offensive language as part of the general lexis, thereby enabling dissemination of harmful narratives and a poor culture of public discourse.

THE MEDIA VIOLATE THE BASIC PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF MEDIA REPORTING

Impartiality and balance, together with truthfulness, are the core elements of the journalistic profession. Consulting only one source (in 45 % of the TV news items and 86 % of the informative items on the online media outlets and over 1 % of the online media posts where no source is provided) and presenting only one side in the news item (in 55 % of the TV news items) or the published online content (in 90 % of posts), especially when that side is responsible for creating certain harmful narratives, is far from professional journalism.

If we take into account that many of the published pieces of content were merely broadcast speeches of the politicians or press releases from the political parties, we can conclude that journalists, instead of approaching the social events and developments in a serious and thorough manner, leave it for the political actors to speak on their behalf, naturally through the prism of the daily politics. Therefore, serious issues such as vetting in the judiciary, corruption and crime, foreign influences in domestic politics, changes to the Constitution, and the relations with the neighbours, are raised without the intention of serious analysis, but rather as part of the political attacks and accusations. Hence, the news items are one-sided, unprofessional, and do not contribute in any manner to enriching the public debate on these important issues.

The reporting of the TV stations on the political actors is regulated by the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services[18] and the Electoral Code[19], which prescribe in details the conditions and methods by which the broadcasters, particularly the Public Broadcasting Service MRT, must cover the elections. In accordance with the aforesaid, the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services (AAVMU) monitors the media reporting of the presidential and the parliamentary elections as prescribed in the Electoral Code. The clearly regulated legal obligations and the focus of both the domestic and international organisations on informing the public during the elections have caused/encouraged the TV stations to be very careful in how they report and broadcast the election campaigns. This, of course, has also resulted in a significant reduction in harmful narratives in the news items during the election period, including those created by the journalists and those created by the political actors and broadcast by the media.

There is a lack of clear legal regulation for the informative online media outlets (similar to that for the broadcasters) regarding the manner in which they should report during elections, thus allowing for more 'freedom' in their operations. The self-regulation mechanism in the online media outlets does not yield the expected results, nor does it lead to full adherence to ethical standards.

THE HARMFUL IMPACT OF THE NARRATIVES ON CITIZENS

The large number of harmful narratives created and disseminated in the public probably has a significant impact on the citizens and their decisions. The goal of the harmful narratives is to manipulate the public opinion, shape perceptions and attitudes, and provoke emotions that can lead to discrimination, hate, or violence.

18 Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services (2017).

19 Electoral Code, revised text (March 2024).

Emotions, both positive and negative, have always been a fundamental element of the political action and, consequently, the political communication. Election campaigns are the context in which the dramatization of the political narratives reaches its climax. This is further contributed to by the increasingly personalised, popularised, and populist rhetoric and communication styles of the leaders and other political actors.

The subject of this research was not the potential influence of the harmful narratives on the public, nor how they affect their decisions, opinions, and feelings. Therefore, conclusions cannot be made regarding the harmful impact within this publication.

4. THE ROLE OF WORDS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE HARMFUL NARRATIVES

One of the key questions in the analysis of the harmful narratives in the political communication is how the potentially most harmful narratives are constructed by the political entities (political parties, party leaders, government members) and by the media (TV stations and online media outlets). In order to answer these questions, we delve into the basic construction of each narrative, analysing the most frequently used words, their meaning, and their potential to provoke emotions, through which the harmfulness of the narrative is amplified. This method is closely related to the discourse analysis, which uncovers the communication strategies and messages used by the largest political actors.

The most frequently used words are visually presented, and then a deeper analysis is carried out to understand the context and the frame (framing) within which the harmful narrative is placed.

The scope of the analysis are the three most frequently used harmful narratives: (1) Undermining trust in institutions, (2) Character attacks and/or demonization and (3) Fomenting divisions. The harmful narrative of 'biased selection' is excluded, which actually accounts for one third of all narratives and is generally the second most frequently used narrative. The reasons for its exclusion are: first, the expectation that politicians increasingly select the information they want to convey in the election campaigns, and second, the intensity of the harmfulness. Unlike biased selection, which essentially means deliberately omitting the full picture of the events and the developments, the analysed three narratives — undermining trust in institutions, character attacks, and fomenting divisions — offer a vocabulary that is much more emotionally charged and 'richer' with toxicity in an attempt to 'gain' the trust of the citizens.

The procedure for analysing each individual harmful narrative takes place on two levels and includes several phases. At the first level of the analysis, all texts (sentences) from the nine-month database in which harmful narrative is found are collected, regardless of which political entity (party, leader, member of the government) created them and whether they are conveyed via internet or Facebook, and in the case of the media, regardless of which TV station broadcast it or which online media outlet conveyed it. Then, the text is 'cleaned' of the morphologically unchangeable words: *adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, particles, interjections, and modal words*. The cleaned text is then visually represented, revealing which political actors use which words. At the second level, a more detailed analysis is carried out: in addition to removing the unchangeable words, the text is also cleaned of the names of political entities. Thus, if the first step of the analysis tells us 'who' is speaking 'about whom', revealing the entities/actors, the second level of analysis aims to discover 'what' is being said in the harmful narrative, 'how' someone or something is being spoken about, what the topic of the harmful narrative is, and, in a word, to analyse the manner in which the narratives are framed. Finally, the sentences in which the most frequent words appear are analysed to understand the context, identifying the emotionally charged words – words with emotional charge – as well as the types of the emotions that are provoked/are likely

to be provoked. The main tool for textual analysis and linguistic processing is Voyant[20], a web-based programme.

At the beginning, the three most common harmful narratives constructed by the political entities/actors are analysed, followed by the analysis of the media reporting of the same harmful narratives in the central news edition of the TV stations and the informational posts on the online media outlets.

20 More information about the features of the program can be found at the following link: About - Voyant Tools Help

4.1. HOW THE POLITICAL ACTORS USE WORDS TO CONSTRUCT HARMFUL NARRATIVES

FIRST LEVEL OF ANALYSIS

First, the 25 most frequent words in the texts that show unfounded undermining of trust in institutions, character attacks on opponents, and fomenting divisions are presented.

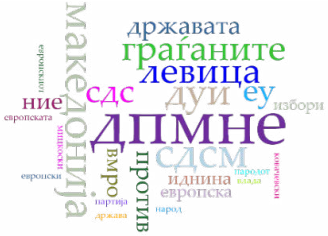
Undermining trust[21]	Character attacks[22]	Fomenting divisions[23]
		
DPMNE (686), VMRO-DPMNE (84), VMRO (26); **DUI (581);** **SDS (439), SDSM (117);** The citizens (388); Macedonia (281); Authority (242), the Authority (234); The state (171); **Mickoski (170);** Eur (148); Skopje (124); **Levica (124);** The government (122), Government (88) municipality (117); against (103); Money (103); The people (101); The Mayor (100); Crime (95); **Kovachevski (91);**	**DUI (105)** **SDS (89)** **DPMNE (69)** **Pendarovski (55), Stevo (28)** **Kovachevski (49)** Macedonia (43), Government (20), The Government (17) The citizens (34) **Ahmeti (29); Ali (19)** **Mickoski (25)** **Levica (23)** **Spasovski (20)** **Grubi (19), Artan (17)** The state (18) Government (18) President (18) **Djaferi (17)** **Bujar (16); Osmani (15)**	**DPMNE (149), VMRO DPMNE (33), VMRO (15);** **SDSM (99); SDS (74);** Macedonia (89); **DUI (85);** **Levica (81);** The citizens (79); EU (69); the state (57); against (56); we (54); future (45); European (feminine) (43), European (masculine) (26), The European (masculine) (25), The European (feminine) (25); Elections (40); **Mickoski (34);** party (31); the people (31); people (27) **Government (27);** **Kovachevski (26)**

Table 7. The 25 most frequent words in the three harmful narratives

21 Most frequent 25 words in HN 'undermining trust' Voyant Tools (voyant-tools.org)

22 Most frequent 25 words in HN „character attacks' Voyant Tools (voyant-tools.org)

23 Most frequent 25 words in HN „fomenting divisions' Voyant Tools (voyant-tools.org)

As seen in Table 7, the first 3-4 most frequent words are the three largest political parties: **VMRO-DPMNE, SDSM, and DUI**, which are used for constructing all three harmful narratives: undermining trust in institutions, character attacks (demonization), and fomenting divisions. They are followed by the political actors H. Mickoski and Levica when it comes to the narrative of unfounded undermining of trust in institutions, S. Pendarovski and D. Kovachevski for constructing character attacks (demonization), and DUI and Levica for constructing the narrative fomenting divisions.

What this visually presented analysis also shows is that there is specific naming of the two largest political parties from the Macedonian bloc: VMRO-DPMNE is most often referred to simply as *DPMNE*, while SDSM is most often referred to as *SDS*, especially in the character attacks and undermining trust in institutions. In fact, when the goal is to attack the character of the political opponent and/or demonize them, the terms *DPMNE* and *SDS* are exclusively used. The leaders of VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM are most often referred to simply by their surnames: *Mickoski* and *Kovachevski*.

In the texts where undermining trust in institutions is present, VMRO-DPMNE most often undermines **citizens'** trust in **SDSM, DUI,** and the **Government**.

In the texts involving character attacks, the presence of **DUI** (and members of DUI), **SDSM**, as well as the key public office holders: **the President of the state, S. Pendarovski** and **the Prime Minister, D. Kovachevski**, predominates. These attacks most often come from Levica and VMRO-DPMNE.

When analysing texts that foment divisions, the main actors of the division are **VMRO-DPMNE** and **SDSM**, followed by **DUI** and **Levica**. SDSM most often attacks VMRO-DPMNE, Levica attacks VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM and DUI simultaneously, and VMRO attacks SDSM and DUI.

SECOND LEVEL OF ANALYSIS

In this step of the analysis, after the names of the political entities have been removed, the most frequent words (shown in the figure) are grouped by identical or similar meanings, indicating the topics most often addressed in the analysed harmful narratives.

Undermining trust	Character attacks	Fomenting division
Authority (242), The authority (234), Government (122), The government (88); **(Σ=686)** The citizens (388), The people (101); citizens (87); the public (66) **(Σ=642)** Macedonia (220), the state (171), North Macedonia (36), Republic of Macedonia (25), North (6) **(Σ=458)** Eur (148), money (103); millions (86), denar (71); **(Σ=408)** party (84); Parties (67) **(Σ=151)** Skopje (124) Municipality (117) against (103) The Mayor (100) EU (99) crime (95), the crime (69) side (88) Political (85) elections (77) oncology (74) corruption (65)	Macedonia (36), the state (18), state (8), North Macedonia (4), Republic of Macedonia (3); **(Σ=69)** Authority (20), the authority (17), government (18), the government (14); **(Σ=69)** the citizens (34); the public (13); people (10); individual (14) **(Σ=71)** president (18) position (14) The Albanians (14) party (13) the crime (13), criminals (11) minister (12) against (11) Prime Minister (11) elections (11)	Macedonia (89), the state (57), state (29), North Macedonia (11), Republic of Macedonia (8), North (3); **(Σ=197)** EU (69), European (feminine) (43), European (masculine) (26), The European (masculine) (25), The European (feminine) (25) **(Σ 188)**; the citizens (79), the people (31); People (27), citizens (22) **(Σ 159)** against (56) we (54); our (22) **(Σ 76)** future (45) elections (40) party (31); parties (23) **(Σ=54)** government (27), authority (22) isolation (24) road (22) back (21) membership (20)

Table 8. The most frequent words in the three harmful narratives

Apart from the political actors, *Macedonia* and citizens are the most frequently mentioned words, with Macedonia often appearing without the addition of 'North' and 'Republic.' The *Authority/ Government* is frequently discussed in the context of undermining trust in institutions, as well as in character attacks that include references to *euros, money, millions, corruption, and crime*. Divisions are fomented in relation to the *EU* and *European future*.

As a summary from both levels of analysis, as well as from the specific examples of harmful narratives, it can be concluded that politicians' communication with the citizens **undermines trust in both central and local government**. VMRO-DPMNE and Levica undermine the trust of the citizens in SDSM and DUI by claiming that 'SDSM and DUI only think about their own profit and interests', they have 'brought despair, poverty, and misery', and that they engage in 'nepotism, scandals', 'crime' and 'corruption', they 'employ party loyalists', 'accept the Bulgarian dictate', 'spread sheer propaganda', they 'have destroyed the country', 'protect DUI's bandits', and are 'incompetent' and 'irresponsible', having 'ruined the healthcare system'. Trust in DUI is also being undermined by VMRO-DPMNE and Levica, claiming that they have 'privatised Customs', that they are a 'criminal gang' and 'profiteers'. Less frequently, trust in the local government run by VMRO-DPMNE is also being undermined, primarily by SDSM, but also by Levica, with accusations that they 'destroyed the public transport in Skopje', 'make false promises', 'create chaos', and 'spread panic'. Thus, for SDSM, DPMNE often does not deserve the VMRO label, while for VMRO-DPMNE, SDSM does not deserve the 'M' at the end.

Whenever trust in institutions is being undermined, the politicians clearly invoke the good of the 'citizens'/'people'/'public', they mention the name of the country (usually without the addition of 'North'), and refer to corruption and crime involving millions of euros.

Words such as 'despair', 'poverty', 'misery', 'scandals', 'destroyed', 'incompetent', 'crime(inal)', 'corruption', 'panic', 'chaos', 'profiteers', and 'false promises' carry strong emotional sub-context, emotional charge that can evoke negative feelings such as anger, rage, fear, insecurity, and a sense of being manipulated, betrayed, resigned. These emotions are manipulated to foment and/ or intensify the distrust in the state institutions, but also in the local government and the political parties.

Politicians **engaged in personal insults, calling each other**: *pawn, louse, vassal, Balkan misogynist, coward, schizo, retard, wishy-washy person, retard, deserter, tyrant, the biggest political gossipmonger, spotter, incompetent, bully, political usurper, pardoned terrorist, and manipulator. They also describe each other as: incompetents, soropii (Sorosluts), fools, crooks, bastards, mafiosi, cartels, narco-clans, corrupt, servants, schizophrenic, criminal gang, neo-fascists, neo-supremacists, vmroid nits, vmrons, wimps, kleptomaniacs, thugs, brutes, puppets, bandits, battery-powered patriots, secessionists, servants, cancer-mafia, political illiterates, cowards, incompetents, Ballists, Quislings, nationalists, irredentists, and bloodsuckers*.

Character attacks are more frequently directed at DUI and its members, as well as at SDSM, including the Prime Minister and the President of the state, and these attacks mainly come from Levica and VMRO-DPMNE. Character attacks and demonization also occur through disrespecting and denying the real names of the rival parties, by denying or omitting the Macedonian identity, so VMRO-DPMNE is always without Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, and the Social Democratic Union is not from Macedonia. The state/Macedonia, its citizens, the public, corruption, crime, and high public offices such as prime minister, president, and minister form the context within which character attacks occur. In other words, these words create the 'frame' through which narratives should be read and understood.

The vocabulary used in constructing the harmful narrative of 'character attacks' is rich in negative emotionally charged words. Words like '*schizo', 'retard', 'retard', 'schizophrenic', 'kleptomaniacs'*

imply a certain mental state in people, potentially evoking fear, insecurity, or even pity—feelings that result in distrust towards a particular individual. Meanwhile, words like *'coward', 'wishy-washy person'* and *'deserter'* attack a person's morality and determination, evoking contempt and anger, which can lead to low respect, aggression, humiliation, etc. Feelings of fear form the sub-context of the words such as *'bully', 'tyrant', 'terrorist', 'bloodsuckers'*, etc.

From both levels of analysis, it is also evident how **political actors create the narratives aimed at fomenting divisions**. There is a clear and open representation of us/we as the 'political option that offers hope and a prosperous *future*' and a *'European perspective*' (as done by SDSM and DUI), while others promise a 'thorough and independent investigation of all dirty money linked to the government' and an 'uncompromising fight against *corruption* and *crime*' (VMRO-DPMNE). Meanwhile, the others/them are portrayed as the 'political option that means going *back* to isolation', a 'dark past' and 'hopelessness' (SDSM about VMRO-DPMNE), or 'anti-Macedonian bourgeois parties', 'casino business' and the 'axis of evil' (Levica about SDSM and DUI). This explicit and open polarisation of 'us' versus 'them' is always 'framed' within the context of the *state (Macedonia), the citizens, the EU, and the European future*, with *elections* positioned as the *road* to that future.

Words such as 'Macedonia', 'state', 'people', and 'citizens' carry strong emotional charge, evoking patriotism, belonging, and collective identity. This makes it easier to manipulate citizens' emotions. In the context of the harmful narrative of 'fomenting divisions', this manipulation is directed at dividing 'us', the patriots, from 'them', the non-patriots; 'us', who stand for the people and the citizens, from 'them', who act against their interests. Words such as 'isolation', 'back' and 'hopelessness' evoke feelings of loneliness and inadequacy, in contrast to the words such as 'future', 'prosperity' and 'hope', which emotional potential inspires hope and action. One side is portrayed as 'caring for' and 'respecting' the people, while the others are accused of 'insulting' and 'belittling' them. All of these words carry a strong emotional charge. Selecting emotionally charged words that provoke opposing feelings (positive for one side, negative for another), foments divisions not only between the political parties but also between the citizens who support different political options.

Examples of posts of the political actors using emotionally charged words and phrases within the harmful narratives of 'undermining trust in institutions', 'character attacks' and 'fomenting divisions'

UNDERMINING TRUST	*The leadership of SDSM and DUI, through REK Bitola, plan to **plunder the people** and fill their **suitcases with money and escape** – Mickoski warned the employees not to succumb to pressure from the management and urged SDSM and DUI not to allow the **theft of the people and the state**.*
	*While the **people are starving**, while **Macedonia** has the lowest minimum wage, and while **there is no money for medicines**, the State Lottery, led by DUI cadre and Artan Grubi, is **spending EUR 12 million on gambling machines**.*
	The chaos caused by the surrounding the change of the personal and travel documents is a result of the irresponsibility and incompetence of the government of DUI and SDSM.
	*There is no sector that the government of SDS and DUI has not destroyed. Kovachevski spent 2 years in ignorance, **keeping silent about DUI's criminal businesses** and besides becoming a **pendant** of DUI, he has nothing else to brag about. **People are starving**, and **Macedonia** has the lowest minimum wage.*
	***Bulgarian dictate** that **Macedonia accepted** due to the weak Government is **the worst thing** that the country has ever accepted.*
	*The DUI **gang**, led by Bekim Neziri in 2010, used his position as director **to beat up and fire** an air traffic controller who, as an instructor at M-NAV, refused to sign off on his controller training completion.*
	*Mickoski has neither a plan nor a vision—**there is no future with DPMNE**. Mickoski stated on television that with DPMNE there will not be membership in the EU even in 100 years.*
	***The care for the people** in the government led by SDS and DUI is reduced solely to **caring for their own profit and personal interests**.*
	*365 days of **defeats, humiliations, misery and poverty** brought by the government of SDS and DUI for the citizens of Macedonia. 365 days of **misery for the people**. 265 days of **scandals, crime and corruption. The criminogenic** ruling duo of SDS-DUI is accused of partisation of all the pores of the state apparatus through the employment of party henchmen in institutions.*
	***Crime and corruption are everywhere**, and at the top of this pyramid are the officials of DUI and SDS. In fact, the latest report from the European Commission also highlighted the **widespread corruption**, making it the worst report Macedonia has ever received.*
	*SDS and DUI are **drowning in crime**. The government of SDS and DUI has **completely criminalized and destroyed the state**. With SDS and DUI, the **people** are left to rely on their own solidarity, while the **government does nothing to help them**.*
	***The people** have not forgotten how DPMNE **wasted EUR 1 billion** on weeping willows, styrofoam, and underwear for Prometheus instead of investing in the citizens. This is the same DPMNE that, before **pretending to be serious and concerned** at a press conference, **started with lies, laughed, and turned serious issues into a comedy**.*
	***The incompetent and irresponsible** government of SDS and DUI has not built a single kilometre of motorway in Macedonia for seven years and has **destroyed** the railway transport to the point where there are no trains to Kichevo and Kochani. This **disaster** they have left behind must be overcome.*
	*... Since they entered the caretaker government and have a minister of interior, instead of a solution, DPMNE **created chaos** with the personal documents and **spreads panic among the citizens**...*
	*The local government of DPMNE has **literally destroyed** the public transport in Skopje, despite citizens still vividly remembering the promises of free public transport, 250 new eco-friendly buses, a bus factory, and other broken promises. **The citizens** of Skopje no longer know which days JSP is operating and which days it is not. They are uncertain whether they can rely on the public transport to get to work, school, university, doctor, market, their destination at all. DPMNE, driven by **political whims**, blocked the project for a new and eco-friendly public transport system, BRT, **destroyed** JSP Skopje, and not only the public transport company but also other public enterprises that are **drowning in debt and dysfunction**.*

CHARACTER ATTACKS	
	This is the kind of PRESIDENT I want! Not that louse Pendarovski!
	*Did the **Prime Minister-TERRORIST of Severdjistan** condemn the terrorist attacks in Moscow and why not?*
	***The installed** Primer Minister Dimitar Kovachevski…*
	***The Bermuda Triangle**, the Triple Pact or the **'Axis of Evil'** (SDS-DPMNE-DUI), through their **fools** in the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services and the State Election Commission, are once again trying to directly harm the Levica Party. **The crooks** from AAVMU SEE YOU IN HELL, **BASTARDS**.*
	*The Macedonian party in power, SDSM, has been reduced to a **servant and an accomplice in all scandals**. **There is no one who is not ashamed of their performances** wherever they represent us around the world.*
	***Unpopular and corrupt** government of SDSM and DUI; **the criminals** from DUI and their **servants** from SDS;– Kovachevski is nothing more than a mere lackey of Ali Ahmeti, while Stevo Pendarovski is a **silent observer**; – Krenar Loga is just a bell boy from Alliance.*
	*These **Siamese twins**, these **bourgeois parties** of SDS and DPMNE, led by Stevo and Goga, are anti-people parties, they are **business oligarchies** of millionaires who have **no contact with reality**.*
	*Here are the **VMROID NITS** in the act!*
	*Until now, **Macedonia** has never had such an **insignificant figure in its government** as Kovachevski. – That installed leader of SDS turned a blind eye on all possible crimes of DUI. – **The citizens** and the members of SDS will remember him as the **most incompetent prime minister** of the Republic of Macedonia, the man who had no voice and handed over the state to DUI.*
	***Micika**, the 'Duke' **they sent to get the job done, but he got fooled**. Baaaaaaa 🐑🐑🐑🐑*
	***DPMNE caught red-handed** again, this time for procurement of machines at astronomical prices*
	*DPMNE joined the Government with DUI. **The wishy-washy** Mickoski is lost—he says one thing, thinks another, and does something entirely different… Mickoski does not have any stance, nor the political capacity to make any decision, he definitely does not know what to do with himself*
	*...Stevo applauded the insults shamelessly with no shame, while **Bogdanka** laughed, scumbags, what kind of a man is he? -Besides being arrogant, Pendarovski has become a prototype of a **Balkan misogynist**. Frchkoski needs to join him and they can form a club of misogynists. -That also demonstrates a state of deep psychological inner irritation in Pendarovski, along with a great deal of **hatred** and a **sense of intellectual inferiority** in relation to Professor Gordana Siljanovska Davkova.*
	*The public is already aware that Djaferi, just like Kovachevski, was a **deserter** from the Army. -The **Despot** from Forino is a figure known to the public for his violations of the laws and procedures...*
	*...**A thug and a political usurper**. The amnestied **terrorist**, with the support of his coalition partners SDS and VMRO-DPMNE, now serves as the caretaker Prime Minister, Talat Djaferi...*
	*Obviously, DPMNE and Levica have a **perverted necrophilic understanding** of politics, the question is, **is there a grain of humanity** in DPMNE and Levica?*
	***Battery powered patriots from** DPMNE, the **quislings** from SDS and **the secessionists** from DUI. Disrespected **deserter president**.*
	*Apasiev is a **spotter** whenever the government needs to adopt a law or cover up a crime, then, he **pretends to be either a battery-powered patriot or a concerned politician**. Apasiev is merely a **tool for covering** all the crimes of SDS and DUI.*

FOMENTING DIVISION	
	*In the upcoming elections, the citizens must choose between **hope and a prosperous** European future with the SDSM and hopelessness, going back 10 years in isolation with DPMNE.*
	*This **broad people support** further confirmed the determination of the **Macedonian people** to enter **#InTheFight against the political elites**, against the **lackeys of the foreign interests and servants of the big capital**, thus resulting in an authentic presidential candidate, ready to represent the interests of the **people**, the interests of **ordinary citizens**, workers, **the oppressed**, and **the disenfranchised**.*
	*We are closing an era of a **treacherous, criminal and corrupt rule** of SDS and DUI - whose results are counted in **lost years, lives and disfigurement** of Macedonia. They changed the name, capitulated in front of all their neighbours, and in the meantime **filled their pockets greedily**. Levica invites all citizens to come out en masse and deliver the final blow to the worn-out ruling clique! Levica will finally get rid of the **transition kleptomaniacs** of SDS of '**Our country**' and it will become a **strong and modern** that is founded on the ASNOM ideals and the **urge for freedom** from the clutches of **profit** and national **betrayals**, the urge to fight the oligarchy and the urge to get the **Republic** back into the hands of the common people.*
	*The **truth** is that on these elections, the citizens must decide between the **pro-European** coalition VREDI (WORTH) and the corrupt elite of DUI, who are WORTH nothing, because they have been **holding** the Albanians from North Macedonia **hostage** for 20 years.*
	*The **criminals** of DUI on one side, and the VMRO Coalition and the people on the other side.*
	*... **It is sad** that the local government **cares more about the business deals** that produce **concrete monsters** than the **children's happiness**. In contrast to them, the main interest of Levica **is the contentment of our people**.*
	*The coalition of the Albanian opposition parties, VLEN, is very interested in a real **law against gambling**... -A detailed and independent investigation for all **dirty money** from the Serbian **underworld**, which, with the permission and knowledge of DUI, entered our country through the casino business. Change comes through the VLEN coalition, the state will develop, **Albanians will be protected**, and those who are guilty will be held accountable for all the crimes committed.*
	*We are in alliance with the **people**, with this **Macedonian people** who raised their voices against the crime of SDS and DUI. We are **in alliance with farmers**, with **workers**, with **health workers**. VMRO-DPMNE is an **ally to the pensioners**, VMRO-DPMNE is an **ally to the youth**, to the educational workers, to the cultural workers. Unlike us, Dimitar Kovachevski is in alliance with Ali Ahmeti, Artan Grubi, Bujar Osmani, Kreshnik Bekteshi, and several members of DUI who **see Macedonia as a private business**. They provided for themselves and the next generations, while the **people suffer and barely make ends meet**, those from SDS and DUI have become owners of shopping centres, of million companies. They live in mansions like the ones we only see in movies. IT IS ENOUGH!!!*

4.2. HOW ONLINE MEDIA CONVEY THE VOCABULARY OF THE POLITICAL HARMFUL NARRATIVES

FIRST LEVEL OF ANALYSIS

At the first level of analysis, the 25 most frequent words in the posts on the online media outlets that show unfounded undermining trust in institutions, character attacks on opponents, and fomenting divisions are presented.

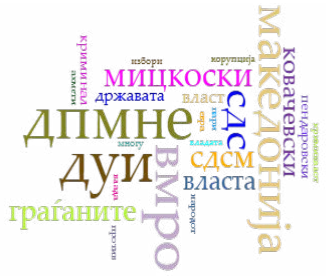
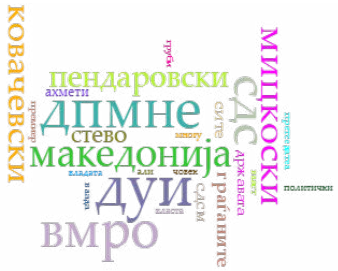
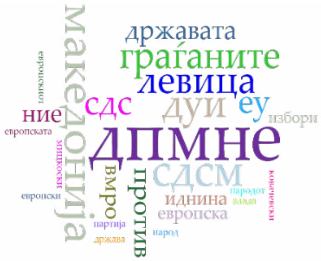
Undermining trust[24]	Character attacks[25]	Fomenting divisions[26]
		
VMRO DPMNE (479), VMRO (41), DPMNE (181); SDS (369), SDSM (273); DUI (634); Macedonia (432); the authority (225), authority (170) : Mickoski (295); The citizens (255); Kovachevski (212); The state (160); Pendarovski (143)	VMRO DPMNE (131); VMRO (40); VMRO (22), DUI (185); SDS (131), SDSM (53); Macedonia (108); Pendarovski (81 times); Stevo (64); Mickoski (98); Kovachevski (88); The citizens (57); All (53); The state (48); Ahmeti (46); president (39)	Macedonia (174); VMRO DPMNE (159), DPMNE (64), VMRO (31); SDSM (134), SDS (45); DUI (107); The citizens (101); The state (95); All (94); government (48), authority (46); Mickoski (80); EU (64); Kovachevski (62); elections (55); future (47); Our (41);

Table 9. The 25 most frequent words in the three harmful narratives

24 Most frequent 25 words in HN 'undermining trust' Voyant Tools (voyant-tools.org)

25 Most frequent 25 words in HN „character attacks' Voyant Tools (voyant-tools.org)

26 Most frequent 25 words in HN „fomenting divisions' Voyant Tools (voyant-tools.org)

As seen in the table, the political actors are always among the top 10 most frequent words, namely: the three largest political parties: VMRO-DPMNE, SDSM, and DUI, as well as the political leaders Mickoski and Kovačevski. This is a characteristic of constructing all three harmful narratives: unfounded undermining trust in institutions, character attacks (demonization), and fomenting divisions.

SDSM is often referred to as SDS without the 'M' at the end, especially in case of character attacks and fomenting divisions between people. **Unfounded undermining of trust**, in addition to the government, SDSM, and DUI, also targets the institution of the President of the state, with S. Pendarovski being one of the most frequently mentioned words. In the posts where character attacks are recorded, they typically relate to or are created by the three largest parties: VMRO-DPMNE, SDSM, DUI, their leaders: H. Mickoski, D. Kovachevski, A. Ahmeti, as well as the President S. Pendarovski. The European Union is also among the most frequent words in the texts where the harmful narrative '**fomenting divisions**' is recognized, besides the aforementioned political actors.

SECOND LEVEL OF ANALYSIS

At the second level of analysis, the entities/political actors are removed, and the words that are close or similar in meaning are grouped together, providing the sum of their individual frequencies.

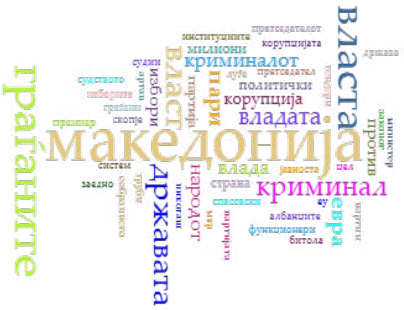
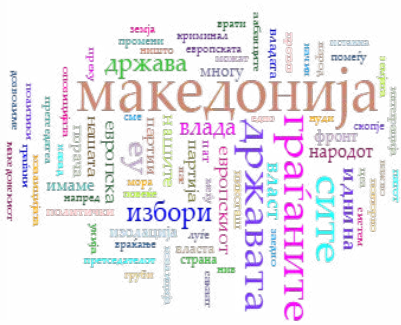
Undermining trust	Character attacks	Fomenting divisions
		
The authority (225), authority (170), the government (124), government (108); **(Σ=627)**; Macedonia (397); the state (160); Republic of Macedonia (21), North Macedonia (14), North (4), **(Σ=592)**; The citizens (255); population (71); the people (103); the public (66) **(Σ = 495)**; EUR (120); money (119); millions (84) **(Σ = 323)**; crime (147); the crime (108) **(Σ = 255)**; corruption (94)M; the corruption (63) **(Σ = 157)**; elections (94) against (92) Political (86) party (83) side (81) Tenders (73) EU (71) The Albanians (68) The institutions (62) System (61) Skopje (60)	Macedonia (97), Republic of Macedonia (8), North Macedonia (1), the state (48) state (18), **(Σ =172)**; Government (36), The government (38), Authority (37), the Authority (30) **(Σ=141)**; the citizens (57), the people (26); **(Σ = 83)**; All (53); party (25); the party (18) **(Σ=43)**; president (39) many (38) Political (35) individual (33) Prime Minister (30) their (27) against (26) Skopje (24) Politics (23) elections (21) The Albanians (19) EU (18) money (17) Nothing (17)	Macedonia (158); the state (95), state (53), North Macedonia (11), Republic of North Macedonia (3), Republic of North Macedonia (2), **(Σ 322)**; the citizens (101), the people (38); **(Σ = 139)**; government (48), the government (31), authority (46), the authority (32) **(Σ=157)**; EU (64); European (masculine) (40), European (feminine) (39) **(Σ = 143)**; party (36); parties (35); the coalition (29) **(Σ = 100)**; all (94) elections (55) future (47) Our (plural) (41), our (feminine) (36) many (36) We have (36) Front (34) isolation (34) Sent a message (33) Political (32) Never (32) side (30) road (30) back (29)

Table 10. The most frequent words in the three harmful narratives

The three most frequent words (or rather, groups of words) after the named political actors for constructing the three harmful narratives are *Macedonia* (the state), most often referred to simply as Macedonia, the *Government/authority*, and the *citizens*, whereas the goal is to undermine the citizens' trust in the Government/authority, the focus is on the crime involving *millions of euros* and *corruption*. When character attacks are made, the party affiliation is often highlighted, and the divisions are most often related to the EU, the *European path*, and future *prospects*. The harmful narratives are most frequently created to influence citizens' behaviour during *elections*.

Harmful narrative 'undermining trust'

We can conclude **from both levels of analysis** that the **fomenting distrust** in institutions in the online media most often targets the Government, i.e., DUI and SDSM, the government of D. Kovachevski, the Ministry of Interior and the Minister O. Spasovski, the Minister of Health V. Filipche, the Speaker of the Assembly T. Djaferi, the Public Prosecutor's Office, the financial police, the 'state audit office' in the era of SDSM,' 'the judiciary which is under political influence by SDSM,' the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors, the management of the Power Plants of Macedonia, and the Minister of Culture. Less frequent, but still present, are the narratives undermining trust in VMRO-DPMNE and their caretaker minister P. Toshkovski. From the analysis and the examples of texts in which the harmful narrative was identified, it is evident that the undermining of trust is most often achieved by highlighting and accusing the '*corrupt authority*' (SDSM and DUI) for millions of euros in crime and their '*partisan institutions*' (healthcare, judiciary), where '*the people*' and '*the state*' are '*lied to*,' '*manipulated*,' and '*damaged*.'

The terms used in the analysed harmful narratives, which are similar in meaning and refer to the same topic, are categorized into **six word groups**. The most frequently used group includes the words 'authority,' 'the authority,' 'government,' and 'the government,' all of which refer to those who govern the state and its policies. This group appeared 627 times in total. **The second** most frequent group of words with the same/similar meaning is 'Macedonia', 'the state' grouped into one because they refer to the state ('Macedonia' is the name of the state). **The third** most frequent group of words is the words 'the citizens', 'the people', 'the population' and 'the public' which refer to the same thing - to people and can be grouped into one larger group of words with the same meaning. Similarly, the words 'euro,' 'money,' and 'millions' are grouped together as they all relate to currency, making this group **the fourth** most frequent. **The fifth and sixth groups** pertain to crime and corruption. Words with the same meaning, such as 'crime' and 'the crime,' are grouped together in one, while 'corruption' and 'the corruption' form another. However, the application counts them separately due to membership extension. The remaining 12 words are independent, although they are related according to the meaning and the context to the six groups of words.

From the perspective of the emotional charge that these words carry in the content broadcast in online media, two types can be distinguished among the six groups of words – the first refers to the groups of words that are related to the state ('Macedonia' and 'state') and to the citizens/people (the words 'the citizens', 'the people', 'the population' and 'the public'); and the second type refers to the corruption and the crime. The first type/group of words incite/incites feelings of patriotism, belonging, pride, while the second type has a negative emotional charge, inciting feelings of anger, frustration, fear, and perhaps even powerlessness, which in turn play a major role in inciting the distrust. The patriotic feelings and the feelings of belonging amplify the effect of the negative ones in the direction of increasing distrust. Thus, it can be concluded that the

online media have 'managed' to support the political actors in their attempt to incite distrust in institutions, fully broadcasting the emotionally charged words created by the political actors, and even amplifying them, conveying them without any intervention and additional facts and explanations.

Harmful narrative 'character attacks'

When the focus of interest is on the character attacks on the politicians, it can be said that the online media users read many **character attacks** regarding the politicians during the analysed nine-month period;

- DUI and SDSM are 'incompetent', 'criminals', 'destroyers of the state', 'government disserving to the people', 'sycophants', 'spineless', 'exhibitionists'.
- SDSM are 'servants of DUI', 'lackeys of DUI', 'a pendant of DUI', 'stateless', 'quislings', „kleptomaniacs'
- VMRO-DPMNE are 'incompetent', 'involved in illegal drug businesses', drug addicts, 'trapped in a conservative mind'.
- D. Kovachevski is an 'insignificant figure in the government', 'the most incompetent Prime Minister', 'an installed leader of SDSM who keeps quiet about all possible crimes of DUI'
- H. Mickoski is a liar, 'he does not have any stand, or political capacity to make decisions', 'wishy-washy person'
- S. Pendarovski is a 'manipulator', 'shameless', 'cannot get out of the criminal matrix of SDS', 'obedient', 'representative of the artanoid regime', 'Ali Ahmeti's lackey'.

From the lists of the most frequent words, it can be seen that the online media have disseminated harmful narratives in which the creators most often attack the government/the authority; they often use the name of the country '*Macedonia', 'the citizens', 'all', 'the state'; they attack the office 'President', 'Prime Minister', skilfully using 'the people', 'the state', 'the party'*.

The online media have most often reported the vocabulary with an extremely negative emotional charge present in the harmful narrative **'character attacks/demonization'**, without any additional information, explanation, clarification or re-examination. Whether directed at a political party, leader, or other official, the term 'character attacks' in the harmful narrative conveys negative emotions. If we try to group them according to the meaning, then we can say that there are six groups of words with a negative emotional charge:

1. A group of words whose meaning refers to the incompetence, unprofessionalism, and incompetence of an individual or party: *'incompetent' 'insignificant figure in the government,' 'installed leader who keeps quiet about all possible crimes,' 'does no have any stand or political capacity to make decisions'* - these words can cause contempt and encourage belittling and disrespect for the characters they 'describe.'
2. A group of words whose meaning refers to the illegal behaviour of individuals or parties that describe them: '*criminals', 'involved in illegal drug businesses'* and which evoke feelings of anger, contempt and can incite aggressive behaviour

3. A group of words whose meaning refers to the irresponsible and unpatriotic behaviour of the individuals and the parties: *'destroyers of the state', 'government disserving to the people', 'stateless', 'quislings'*, and which arouse strong emotions of anger and contempt, and can also encourage aggressive behaviour.
4. A group of words that refer to the moral characteristics of individuals and parties: *'spineless', 'wishy-washy person, 'liar', 'manipulator', 'shameless'*, which cause feelings of repulsion, disgust, contempt and can encourage belittling and ignoring
5. A group of words related to specific mental disorders or illnesses, such as '*exhibitionists*' and '*kleptomaniacs*,' which evoke fear and astonishment, often leading to judgmental behaviour, avoidance, or aggression.
6. A group of words whose meaning refers to subservient, dependent behaviour and character traits (very close to the first group of words whose meaning refers to the ability and capacity of the individuals/the parties): '*servants', 'lackey', 'pendants', 'sycophants', 'obedient*', which arouse feelings of contempt and shame, and can lead to offensive behaviour, belittling and ridicule.

Disaggregated in this manner, the words through which the political actors construct and the online media unquestioningly report on the character attacks regarding the politicians, the office holders and/or the political parties, present a slightly different picture. The emotions that are triggered by words, and the possible behaviours that would emerge as a result of the negative feelings, can have far-reaching consequences for democratic processes, but also for the mental health and state of people. Moreover, neither the political actors who create the harmful narrative, nor the online media that amplify the harmful narrative with their 'word-for-word' reporting, not only do not bear any responsibility for the disruption of the well-being of citizens, they seem to be unaware of this responsibility.

Harmful narrative 'fomenting divisions'

Furthermore, what the creators of the harmful narrative of 'fomenting division' attempted to do by clearly highlighting differences, the online media have carried over, reinforcing the differences that foment division:

we (ours) as: 'pro-European', 'honest', 'responsible', 'hardworking', 'dedicated', 'against ethno-tribalism', 'democrats', 'those who are the last generation of Macedonian politicians who can save Macedonia; those who will punish the criminals; who advocate for peace, progress.	≠	You (yours) who 'have far-right and Nazi practices', 'criminals', 'Macedonian nationalists', 'who destroyed the state', 'who are for segregation, pro-Russian, who are redefining the state concept through apartheid policies, who are in delusion of beating students, stifled journalists, overlapping judiciary and prosecution, isolation, government detached from reality, mafia

The citizens were put in a position to support and be on one side or the other, to choose between the good, the honest, the progressive, the European on the one hand, and the bad, dishonest, going backward and status quo on the other. The choice of words used in order to foment divisions was to arouse different emotions and feelings, thereby reinforcing polarities and ultimately leading to the avoidance of the undesirable and the bad and the choosing/voting for the desirable and the good. For pro-European individuals, terms such as *'the honest,' 'the responsible,' 'the hardworking,' 'the dedicated,'* and '*the democrats*' evoke positive emotions, including enthusiasm, appreciation, admiration, respect, and a desire to support them in elections. In contrast, labels like '*criminals,' 'those who destroyed the state,' 'mafia members,' 'those with far-right and Nazi practices,' 'supporters of segregation,'* and '*detached from reality*' provoke negative emotions such as anger and contempt. Briefly, the two narrative frameworks presented have the power to elicit entirely opposing emotions, further reinforcing these narratives and intensifying divisions.

Examples of online media posts that contain emotionally charged words and phrases in the harmful narratives 'undermining trust in the institutions', 'character attacks' and 'fomenting division'

UNDERMINING TRUST	*Today DUI MPs and their servants from SDS further worsened the situation which they consciously and intentionally created with the passports, said today the MP from the ranks of VMRO-DPMNE, Dragan Kovachki. The detachment from reality and unwillingness to meet the needs of their own citizens, whom they have isolated from the rest of the civilized world is an unprecedented phenomenon, especially considering that we are a member of NATO and we want to start negotiations with the European Union.*
	*Are the DPMNE structures in VMRO-MVRO **obstructing police actions**? Are the DPMNE structures in VMRO-MVRO, now that they have a Minister, **obstructing the fight against the drug dealers**? The Ministry of Interior must answer the question regarding Mickoski's role. Because it is about preventing the anti-drug operation by his security. Especially since many **drug scandals are linked to** DPMNE and the White Palace.*
	*You saw the manner in which **the partisan and installed judiciary has acquitted** them, even today again we have a **partisan and installed judiciary** that needs to be reinstated, those who are beating them, and these are the SDSM-DUI coalition or DUI SDSM, now installed again... Partisan judges and prosecutors who come from the SDSM-DUI Coalition **may accuse and judge you**.*
	***Honestly**, I do not expect answers, because it has long been clear that this incompetent Government, apart from **manipulating the public** for years, does not have a single investment in the Republic of Macedonia and therefore will be remembered as a Government that **has not nailed a single nail! I regret** that **you have brought the country to a standstill**, economically, institutionally, regionally. You and your Government have also managed to demolish what has been given for centuries, **the civilizational and cultural heritage**! Minister, if I were in your place, the least I could do is withdraw **this shameful and the worst** annual programme!*
CHARACTER TTACKS	*However, Grubi in the **most primitive** manner is once again trampling on **the citizens of Macedonia, insulting them** and **underestimating them** with such a request to accept **Bulgarian blackmail**. Hence, he confirms that DUI, himself and the **apatrides** from the SDS are in direct contact with Sofia's **Greater Bulgarian** policy and are the most responsible for the negotiation **defeat** and the **blockade** of the Macedonian European integration. Because Grubi, DUI and the SDS **appendage** do not have basic feeling for the **Macedonians** who are overwhelmingly against the Bulgarian blackmail and do not accept the constitutional amendments.*
	*If you analyse Artan Grubi's political profile, it is a **hybrid profile between narcissism and Machiavellianism**. There are several characteristics in this political profile, which I have defined in a hybrid form. He wants a lot of attention, has a huge desire **to be powerful, to reflect power**. On the other hand, he is a person who has **minimal empathy** for the others. **A manipulative** profile that **does everything to achieve his goals**.*
	*Stevo Pendarovski's words should be taken with great caution. He is **synonymous with a man who says one thing until noon, explains it further at noon, and denies it in the evening. Shamelessly** in 2020, he said that it was 'out of the question' to talk about changing the Macedonian constitution in the context of **Bulgarian** demands and vetoes.*
	Ali Ahmeti, Artan Grubi, Bujar Osmani, Dimitar Kovachevski, Oliver Spasovski and Bojan Marichikj are exhibitionists who will convince you of anything and everything, said Mickoski.
	*Mickoski pointed out that there are two options in the presidential elections, on the one hand Stevo Pendarovski, who is a **representative of the Artanoid regime**, a lackey of Ali Ahmeti and has been gone for 5 years and enjoys all the privileges of **Vodno**, from where he likes to say that Goце Делцхv is Bulgarian and that if he were not President he would have emigrated.*
	*VMRO-DPMNE, **sees the equality as blackmail**, and is quick to reject **the progressive ideas** due to the **captivity of the conservative mind** in the imagined ethnic dominance of the **mutual state**...the poetic pro-Putinist views of their once-**defeated Russian-nostalgic** candidate Gordana Davkova.*
	*Mickoski is a **liar**. Everything Mickoski says is a lie. Mickoski **does not have any stand, no political capacity to make any decisions; he definitely does not know what to do with himself or the party**.*
	*Let the **wishy-washy person** Mickoski come out now and explain to **the citizens**, but also to his members, why he problematized the technical government when he finally entered the government with DUI.*

FOMENTING DIVISIONS	
	*The attempts for the **disintegration of the Macedonian nation and state**, through **the secessionism** of so-called Albanian parties that satisfy the SDS and DPMNE, **with far-right and Nazi practices for segregation and division of society**, by undermining the concept of one state-one nation, they are going to redefine the state concept through apartheid policies. Levica resolutely opposes these destructive processes. Herewith, Levica and the Constitutional Court **strike a blow** to the ethno-tribalism, which in the absence of ideas for **improving the lives of the citizens and with the aim of dismantling Macedonian** national unity is promoted by the criminal parties DUI, Besa and the Alliance for Albanians, who tacitly support the **anti-Macedonian SDS** and the **false patriots** from DPMNE. These unconstitutional provisions in the Civil Registry Law date back to 1996, but no one before Levica has dared to oppose this anti-European and discriminatory practice... with the appearance of Levica on the political scene, there is **finally a party that opposes attempts** to reduce **the Macedonian nation** to the level of an ethnicity.*
	*Our values define us and distinguish us from the **anti-European and undemocratic parties** like DPMNE and Levica. Four years ago, as well as also now, I emphasized that **we knew how to unite for common goals**, when it is **significant and decisive**. What we do tomorrow will define the lives of **generations succeeding** us. Should we leave our grandchildren and great-grandchildren a **European Macedonia** or a **pro-Russian Macedonia, a democratic or dictatorial country, peace or conflict, progress or status quo?** That is exactly why we need to **unite**!*
	*... **dignified, honest and with dedication**, despite all the obstructions they face for more than 2 years in Macedonia, there has not been a single scandal related to mayors and officials at the local level by VMRO-DPMNE, on the other hand, the SDSM and **DUI governments generate 2-3 scandals on a daily basis**.*
	*...The political competition now is between VMRO-DPMNE, as a representative of **Macedonian nationalism**. I call it a representative of the **anti-European** way of the state, and DUI as a representative of the **European** front. Here I see all the others **who want Macedonia in the EU***
	*These elections, especially in the Macedonian bloc, will be a battle between a past full of 'heroes', myths, and there is VMRO-DPMNE, which is interested in **electrifying** the masses with nationalist rhetoric. On the other hand, he adds, there is SDSM, which openly supports the European agenda.*

4.3. HOW TV STATIONS BROADCAST THE VOCABULARY OF THE POLITICALLY HARMFUL NARRATIVES

FIRST LEVEL OF ANALYSIS

In the first level of analysis of the TV news items in which the three harmful narratives are present, the most frequently mentioned words are shown in the following table.

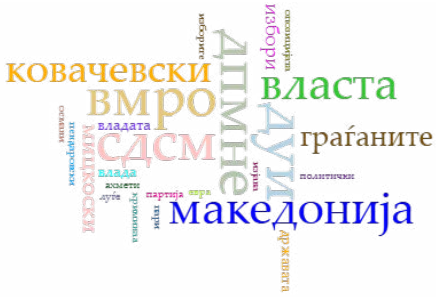
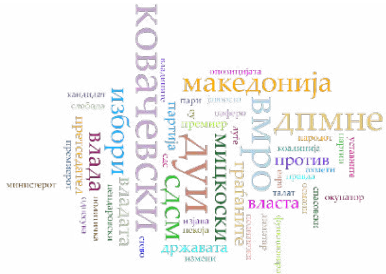
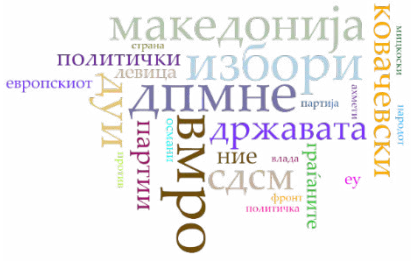
Undermining trust[27]	Character attacks[28]	Fomenting divisions[29]
		
• VMRO DPMNE (125), DPMNE (27), VMRO (23), **(Σ=175)**; • DUI (159); • SDSM (149); • The Government (116); • Macedonia (116); • Kovachevski (97); • The Government (46), Government (46); • The citizens (70); • Mickoski (59); • The state (45).	• DUI (65); • VMRO DPMNE (36); VMRO (15), DPMNE (8); **(Σ = 59)**; • Kovachevski (59); • SDSM (35); SDS (13); **(Σ = 48)** • Government (25); The Government (21); **(Σ = 46)** • Macedonia (31); • elections (28); • Prime Minister (14); The Prime Minister (13); **(Σ = 27)** • Mickoski (25); • The citizens (20); • The Government (19); • against (18); • The state (17); • President (16); • Party (16); • Pendarovski (13)	• VMRO DPMNE (30), VMRO (11), DPMNE (8) **(Σ=49)** • elections (34); • Macedonia (31); • DUI (28) • SDSM (25) • The state (22) • Kovachevski(21) • Politically/political (16) • Levica (14) • The citizens (14) • EU (13); • The European (13) • Osmani (12) • front (11) • the people (11) • against (10) • political (10) • parties (17);

Table 11. The most common 25 words in the three harmful narratives

27 The 25 most common words in the HN 'undermining trust' Voyant Tools (voyant-tools.org); Voyant Tools (voyant-tools.org)

28 The 25 most common words in the HN 'character attacks' Voyant Tools (voyant-tools.org)

29 The 25 most common words in the HN 'fomenting divisions' Voyant Tools (voyant-tools.org)

Among the most frequent words in TV news items that identify the undermining trust in the institutions, character attacks, and fomenting divisions are once again the three largest parties VMRO-DPMNE, SDSM, and DUI, as well as the Prime Minister D. Kovachevski. Among the main protagonists in the harmful narrative of **undermining trust**, besides the big three, there is also H. Mickoski; in the **character attacks**, there are also H. Mickoski and S. Pendarovski, and the main actors who are fomenting divisions, besides VMRO-DPMNE, SDSM, DUI and D. Kovachevski, are also Levica and the European Front.

SECOND LEVEL OF ANALYSIS

The second level of analysis, which excluded the major political actors, showed that the most common words in TV news items with the harmful narratives of 'undermining trust in institutions', 'character attacks' and 'fomenting division' were:

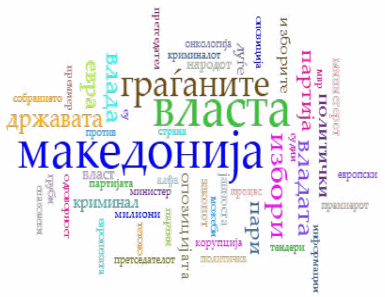
Undermining trust in the institutions	Character attacks	Fomenting divisions
		
• The authority (116); the government (46);; government (46); authority (31) **(Σ = 208)** • Macedonia(110); the state (45) state 19, Republic of Macedonia (5), North Macedonia (2), North 1 **(Σ = 181)** • The citizens (70); people (32); the population (29); the public (29) **(Σ = 160)** • euros (41); money (40); million (28) **(Σ = 109)** • party (40); the party (27); parties (25); **(Σ = 92)** • crime (32); the crime (25) **(Σ = 57)** • elections (53) • politically/political (36) • the opposition (34) • The elections (33) • The Minister (29) • The law (29) • corruption (27) • EU (27) • side (26) • Tetovo (25) • against (25) • responsibility (25)	• government (25); the government (21); the authority (19); the government (10) **(Σ = 75)** • Macedonia (28); the state (17), North Macedonia (2), Republic of Macedonia (1); **(Σ = 48)** • The citizens (20); people (13); the public (11) **(Σ = 44)** • elections (28) • Prime Minister (14); the Prime Minister (13) **(Σ = 27)** • party (16); parties (10) **(Σ = 26)** • money (12); euros (12); **(Σ = 24)** • political (12); political (11); **(Σ = 23)** • against (18) • President (16) • statement (13) • EU (13) • coalition (12) • freedom (11) • the opposition(10)	• Macedonia (26), the state (22), North Macedonia (3), Republic of Macedonia (2) **(Σ = 54)** • The citizens (14); the people (11); • people (7) **(Σ = 32)** • elections (34) • parties (17); party (10) **(Σ = 27)** • government (10); the government (9); authority (8) **(Σ = 27)** • EU(13); European (13) **(Σ = 26)** political (16) • Politically/political (16) • we (16) • front (11) • against (10) • political (10) • side (9) • President (9) • integration (9) • majority (8) • statement (8) • isolation (8) • us (7)

Table 12. The most common words in the three harmful narratives

The visualization shows the most frequent words for the three harmful narratives: *Macedonia*, the most often written without North and Republic, *the citizens/the people/the public*, then *government/authority, political party* and *the elections*. The undermining of trust is by highlighting *crime and corruption*, character attacks are clearly highlighted as being about the most important state functions: the *Prime Minister* and the *President* of the state and the axis of divisions is regularly the EU.

Harmful narrative 'undermining trust'

The data from both levels of the analysis show that the **undermining trust in the institutions** is associated with the main actors: DUI, VMRO-DPMNE (less frequently mentioned and only as DPMNE), SDSM, D. Kovachevski (most frequently mentioned only as Kovachevski), H. Mickoski (most frequently only as Mickoski). Usually VMRO-DPMNE as the opposition undermines trust in the Government (SDSM and DUI) by making claims that it is criminalized, under serious suspicions of money laundering, with scandalous tenders and must be held accountable for that. SDSM is most often associated with corruption and crime. Trust in the Ministry of Interior and its leader, O. Spasovski, is also being undermined for failing to resolve the chaos with issuing the citizens' personal documents. VMRO-DPMNE is also targeted much less frequently and is accused of spreading fake news, attempts to silence and intimidate journalists, and of being a regime party. Emotionally charged words such as *criminalized, serious suspicions, scandalous tenders, chaos, spreading fake news, silencing and intimidation, regime party* are certainly intended to cause fear, suspicion, contempt, rage, and anger.

Harmful narrative 'character attacks'

The character attacks/demonization of the political opponent refer to the Government, the government partners SDSM and DUI, and mainly come from the opposition VMRO-DPMNE and sound like this:

- The Government is '*incompetent', 'arrogant*', the government partners are '*cowards*'.
- SDSM and DUI are '*organized criminal association of parties', 'with a subservient attitude towards the EU*'.
- DUI is a '*wild gang of criminals*', '*hypocritical', 'Sicilian clan that massacres the population*.'
- Talat is a '*deserter*'.
- The Prime Minister Kovachevski is '*hypocrite', 'servile*'.
- D. Kovachevski and SDSM are '*subjects', 'servants of DUI*'.
- *'SDS is a subcontractor of DUI' 'subordinate'party', SDSM is 'corrupt', 'criminals' and 'incapable of leading the country'*.
- *'The opposition VMRO-DPMNE and Levica are anti-EU and anti-NATO, the pro-Russian coalition*.'
- '*DPMNE is unreformed collection of people, liars, thieves*.'
- '*Pendarovski is a ficus of the Government and a lying president*.'

The narrative of the character attacks of the political opponent is most often placed in context and between the words '**Macedonia**'/'**state**' and emphasizes that it is against: **'the citizens', 'the population', 'the public', 'the people'**. This is an attempt to provoke resistance, discomfort, rage, anger towards DUI, SDSM; the Government/authority because they are **'the criminals', 'the mafia', 'the hypocrites', 'the servile ones'**, in order to protect the state and the people.

Harmful narrative 'fomenting divisions'

The divisions of us/we/our and you/your in the TV news items with the harmful narrative of 'fomenting divisions' are aimed at:

- *We 'are taking care of our national cause and we will save Macedonia.' On the other hand, they are 'those with whom we will not have a state.'*
- *We are 'the one bloc that is **pro-European for EU integration**. 'hey are 'the other bloc for isolating **the country and returning us to the dark past**.'*
- *'We are a political party with **a western/pro-West orientation of the state**. They are political parties that are for **a clear eastern/pro-East orientation of the state**...'*
- *'We are the **pro-European** front. They are **the anti-European front, nationalist pro-Russian forces**.'*
- *They advocate for the destructive active blockades in the Macedonian Assembly, which are to the **detriment of the state and all citizens**. With us, the European path continues to **full membership in the EU, because citizens deserve better and more.'***
- *'Our political goal is to **bring solutions to the problems that burden Macedonia, that torment Macedonia**. Those are the major **sources of corruption problems in Macedonia**.'*
- *'We are the car **that takes you to Washington**, where the signatures for NATO membership are deposited, and the car that secured the start of negotiations with the EU, **takes you to Brussels**. That car is worth having. They represent **a car made of Styrofoam** that no one would buy.'*
- *'With us the revolutionary struggle of the Macedonian people continues today, when we are still fighting to preserve the **Macedonian national identity** that our neighbours openly dispute. In addition, they are the ones who **avoid mentioning the name of the country** on major national holidays and the names of the revolutionaries.'*
- ***'We respect and study history**, so that we can learn from the mistakes, **be united and cohesive, and listen to the voice of the people**. They are the ones who **sell out, negotiate, and blackmail**.'*
- *'Their concept is **crime and corruption** with Ahmeti and Kovachevski. The other one is **reform concept** with VMRO-DPMNE.'*
- *'We are **the people**. They are the narrow clique that suffocates and **keeps the system away from the people.'***
- *'They are for the **Tirana and Sofia platforms**. We are the only and **pro-Macedonian platform**.'*

In terms of the emotional 'weight' that the words of division carry, without exception they refer to patriotic feelings, and then to the hope for a European future, the sense of belonging and connection, on the one hand, but also fear, anger, contempt on the other. Therefore, the basic choice left to the citizens is the choice between 'the patriotism and the honest governance' and 'the hope for prosperity and a European future.'

Examples of TV news items that contain emotionally charged words and phrases in the harmful narratives ‘undermining trust in the institutions’, ‘character attacks’ and ‘fomenting divisions’

UNDERMINING TRUST	*Grubi is trying to push the law through for **lucrative purposes**. The government grants the organization of games of chance to the underground. The law will only close some casinos to pave the way for other casinos in the Serbian underground, which means ‘yes’ to Russia through Serbia.*
	*……the election census is hanging by a thread, it depends on whether DUI will boycott, whether SDSM will quietly boycott ..... yes, the officials are corrupt .... the choice between the lesser evil cannot bring you good ... the choice between SDSM and VMRO is a choice **between the donkey and the snake** ... this trio, VMRO, SDSM and DUI is the pinnacle of corruption in Macedonia ...*
	*While they accuse the opposition of Russian influence, the Government is under serious suspicion for **money laundering** through an honorary consul of Belarus. A company that is considered one of the favourites of SDSM, only in the first two months of this year, from the tenders of REK Bitola pumped more than 50 million euros. Despite producing **one scandal after another**, for the time being the institutions, **being blind and deaf**, do not notice the problem. Both the Anti-Corruption Commission, the Financial Police and the Prosecutor’s Office do not act on allegations of **crime and money laundering**, at least to clear up **public doubts**.*
	*There is no change in DPMNE, it is the same **regime party** from the past. ‘We are seeing attempts in the most **brutal** way, by arresting a journalist who reported an affair about DPMNE, to reinstate VMRO - MVRO’ (**TV 24, 8 April 2024**). The nervousness in the White palace at the beginning of the campaign is manifested by a show of force, an attempt to silence and **intimidate journalists**. With the same methods of the Gruevski regime.*
	*The government through ESM is pumping millions of euros in the pre-election period. Less than two months before the elections, **scandalous tenders are being made** by all parties that **are shaking** the Power Plants of Macedonia. Millions of dollars are being spent on luxury vehicles, and companies close to the Government are also being favoured, where they benefited from the largest tender signed in REK Bitola for coal mining in the recent period, worth a fantastic 46 million euros. The opposition is warning that crime reigns in ESM. They raise the alarm that for all crimes in Power Plants of Macedonia there should and will be responsibility. We must take back our country and thus we can announce that the next investigations will be comprehensive and will include everyone who is part of these criminal activities.*
	*... This government of SDSM and DUI is, in my opinion, **deeply criminalized to the core**, as evidenced by a large number of testimonies of people **who are victims** of this corruption, **the people** are acquitted after the first round, they come to me, they bring evidence... **the testimonies are terrible**... (for DUI) there are also testimonies of bribes, pressures... Ahmeti surrounded himself with people whose main motive is to get paid, that is, crime.....*
	A scheme to place fake polls regarding the party and politician ratings, and broadcast on MTV, to place fake news, but also other activities. In the basements of the White Palace, shows were arranged to analyse IPIS polls, the composition of the show’s guests was defined with 3 opposition analysts, and there was even a person responsible for spreading fake news through the so-called ‘dens’, say SDSM.

CHARACTER ATTACKS	
	We urgently demand that the Sicilian clan stop massacring our population... In addition to the Casino project in every alley, Artan is now implementing the Casino project in every house by granting four online casino licenses to companies.....
	... ...These are marginalized and problematic figures who have problems with the law and who were suspended from the party a year ago...
	What secrets does this bill hide, because Artan Grubi and the Green Agenda party want to smuggle it in, once under a European flag, and now under a Sicilian flag.....
	Such a rampant DUI would not have been possible without the servile Kovachevski, who was guided by DUI's mentorship....
	I think that Prime Minister Kovachevski is being duplicitous, he talks about the familiarity of MNAV, but he does not see the familial ties that he, as Prime Minister, allowed to DUI because SDSM is a subordinate party.
	Under their matrix of gentle offering with cruel blackmail lies a malicious image of duplicity, hypocrisy, and a drive for robbery and deceit. Time is working against these politically worn-out characters and fraudsters.
	Kovachevski sold out SDS, sold out his own MPs for a day more power with the criminals from DUI
	An unreformed collection of people who present themselves as protectors of a cause, but in fact are thieves who deal in tenders and commissions. Now, due to the weakness of SDSM, they have turned the Caretaker government into a bargaining chip and have boxed out a technical prime minister.
	Kovachki is a known manipulator, caught spreading fake news several times.....
	Unfortunately, the president of the state is a ficus of the government and a president-liar
	From a party, DUI has turned into a 'Cosa Nostra'

FOMENTING DIVISIONS	
	'We live in a kind of apartheid where the minority, unfortunately, rules the majority. That is the only such example in Europe. But, I can say and promise, that after 8 May and the new VMRO DPMNE government, everything will be different
	'The harmful and deliberate blockades by DPMNE in the Macedonian Assembly are damaging to both the state and its citizens. As a result, in the upcoming elections, those obstructing the European path—DPMNE and Levica—will face consequences and defeat. With the victory of the European Front, led by SDSM, in the dual elections, the country will stay on course toward full EU membership, ensuring a better and more prosperous European future for its citizens!
	'The struggle of today's generation in Macedonia is a political fight for a better European future for our homeland and all its citizens. The deceptive politics and pseudo-patriotism of DPMNE and Levica now stand as the greatest threat to a prosperous European state. False patriotism leads to isolation, uncertainty, economic stagnation, and financial hardship for citizens. Blocking the European path results in a new wave of emigration among young people and poses a risk to Macedonian identity. Therefore, an anti-European agenda is inherently anti-Macedonian.'
	... These elections will be more than just a vote—they will be a referendum on the country's future. Will we move forward toward Europe or return to obstructions and blockades? *Additionally, these elections will be a choice between a party that has been honest about its intentions, even when it made mistakes—acknowledging them and apologizing—or a political party that deceives, manipulates, and has never shown honesty toward the citizens, refusing to admit its faults.* *Will you vote for honesty and sincerity, or for lies and manipulation?*
	If someone disputes the framework agreement, and you live in a multi-ethnic city, you know very well what that means. Instead of changing, the Constitution, in order to move forward towards Europe, that lady, supported by her party leader, wants to make some kind of civil Constitution, which we have had in some periods and which led to conflicts between ethnic communities. So it is a rather serious and dangerous political concept, which if supported by the citizens en masse or in a majority on 8 May, could set us back for sure 15-20 years....
	I would like to tell the citizens not to vote for the Tirana and Sofia platforms in these elections, but to vote for the only pro-Macedonian platform, and that is the platform of the Levica
	For the leader of VMRO-DPMNE, there are two concepts, one, he says, is for continuation of the crime and the corruption with Ahmeti and Kovachevski, and the other is reform concept with VMRO-DPMNE. These are referendum elections where the decision is either us, the people, or them, the narrow clique that suffocates and keeps the system away from the people...

4.4. KEY MESSAGES FROM THE ANALYSIS OF THE EMOTIONALLY CHARGED WORDS USED

The analysis of the three most prevalent harmful narratives created by the political entities and broadcast by the TV stations and the online media revealed similar patterns and characteristics. It can be concluded that the media, particularly the online platforms, largely broadcast these harmful narratives from the political entities without restraint or criticism. Hence, the conclusions will be presented without prejudging whether it becomes a burden for the political entities or the media.

The main actors in the texts by means of which the political entities unfoundedly undermine trust in the institutions, direct personal insults to their political opponents and by means of which try to foment division and polarization in the society are: VMRO-DPMNE, SDSM and DUI. They were followed by the leaders of VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM: Hristijan Mickoski and Dimitar Kovachevski. Levica appears more often in the texts that foment division, as well as in the texts that undermine trust in the authorities. Character attacks, above all, are directed at DUI and its members, SDSM and the most important state officials: the Prime Minister and the President of the country.

Mutual naming is specific of the political opponents. According to SDSM and Levica, DPMNE does not deserve VMRO, and according to VMRO-DPMNE and Levica, SDS does not deserve M at the end!! Both sides are actually accusing each other of not deserving it and not fighting for Macedonia, but for personal goals.

The most frequent words in all texts with harmful narratives are: Macedonia (most often named without the Republic and North), *the citizens/the people* and the government. This clearly refers to the collective/group identity of the citizens, a sense of belonging, patriotic feelings.

Specifics of the different harmful narratives

The analysis showed that the **trust in both the central and local government is being undermined**. The citizens' trust in the government, in SDSM and DUI is being undermined, above all, by VMRO-DPMNE but also by Levica, and the main reasons are the crime, the corruption in the government, the nepotism, the acceptance of the Bulgarian dictate, and failure to protect Macedonian national interests. Less frequently, the trust in the local government of VMRO-DPMNE is also being undermined, above all by SDSM, as well as by Levica due to negligent work and false promises.

The political actors **direct deep/significant character attacks at each other** with words that indicate a certain mental state with the people (*'retard', 'runaway', 'schizophrenic'*), words that indicate a person's morality and their will (*'coward', 'wishy-washy person, 'deserter'*), as well as words that indicate undesirable characteristics of a person for the social environment (*'violent', 'tyrant', 'terrorist', 'bloodsucker'*).

The fomenting division is clearly expressed by the political entities. One political entity clearly and openly presents itself as a 'political option that offers hope and a *prosperous* **future**', a '***European*** perspective', and threatens with '*hopelessness*' and '*return to the past*'. Another political entity promises a '*detailed and independent investigation into all the dirty money of the government*',

an *'uncompromising fight against* **corruption** *and* **crime***'*, and expresses fears/about the sale of national interests. This clear and undisguised polarization of 'we' and 'they', 'we' and 'they' is always in the context of the state (Macedonia), t*he citizens, the EU and the European future, and the elections are the path* to that future.

The emotional charge of harmful narratives

All three harmful narratives analysed in this section abound with an emotional vocabulary that has extremely negative connotation, thereby clouding the rational assessment of the facts and quality decision-making, and may even encourage destructive behaviours.

The words used in constructing the harmful narrative of '**undermining trust in the institutions**' - *'misery', 'poverty', 'misery'/destitution, 'scandals', 'ruined', 'incompetent', 'crime(s)', 'corruption', 'panic', 'chaos', 'profiteers', 'false promises'* - can incite negative feelings such as anger, fear, insecurity and are precisely manipulated in an attempt to incite and/or strengthen distrust in the state institutions, the local government, and the political parties.

The words with an emotional charge used in the construction of the harmful narrative 'character attacks/demonization' such as *'schizo', 'retard', 'runaway', 'schizophrenic', 'kleptomaniac'* indicate a certain mental state in people and can cause feelings of fear, insecurity, perhaps even pity, feelings that result in distrust towards a certain person. The nouns with a pejorative meaning, such as 'coward', 'wishy-washy person, 'deserter' indicate the morality and the will of a person and can cause feelings of contempt and anger in people, which can lead to low respect for the person, aggression, belittling, etc. Feelings of fear are the sub-context of the words *'violence', 'tyrant', 'terrorist', 'bloodsuckers*', etc.

The emotionally charged terms used in constructing the harmful narrative of **'fomenting divisions'**—such as *'Macedonia,' 'state,' 'people,' and 'citizens'*—carry a strong emotional appeal that evokes patriotic feelings and a sense of belonging, making it easier to manipulate the emotions of the citizens. In the context of this harmful narrative, the manipulation seeks to create a divide between 'us, the patriots' and 'those who are unpatriotic,' framing the narrative as a choice between those who stand for the people and the citizens, and those who harm them. The words *'isolation', 'back', 'hopelessness'* arouse feelings of loneliness, of inadequacy, as opposed to the words *'future', 'prosperity', 'hope'* whose emotional potential encourages hope and action. On the one hand, some 'care' and 'respect' the people, while others 'insult' and 'belittle' them. By choosing words that carry intense emotional meaning, division is also fomented among the citizens themselves.

The same emotionally charged words are almost mirrored in the posts of the harmful narratives in the online media and in the news items of the central news on television, without additional information, explanation or re-examination of the statements. The media 'managed' to support the political actors in their attempt to incite distrust in the institutions, to insult their political opponents and to foment division for their own purposes, fully reporting the emotionally charged words created by the political actors, and even amplifying them, reporting them without any intervention and additional facts and explanations. If instead of these words, arguments supported by facts and evidence regarding the unprofessionalism in the work of the institutions were used, then the citizens would have the opportunity to be better informed in assessing and deciding whether to trust the institutions.

The possible impact of the words with a negative emotional charge on the citizens

A single word can incite a storm of emotions, changing the direction of the conversation, interpersonal relationships, and even life. The words like *'schizo', 'liar', 'wretchedness, poverty and misery', 'nepotism', scandals', 'crime', 'corruption', 'party minions', 'Bulgarian dictate', 'naked propaganda', 'destroyed the state', 'bandit', 'incompetent', 'irresponsible', 'destroyed the healthcare system'; 'criminal gang', 'profiteers', 'false promises', 'creating chaos', 'spreading panic', 'retard', 'fugitive', 'schizophrenic', 'kleptomaniac', 'coward', 'wishy-washy person, 'deserter', 'violent', 'tyrant', 'terrorist', 'bloodsuckers', 'isolation', 'backwards', 'hopelessness'* incite fear, anger, frustration, rage and are used as weapons for manipulation, injury/insult or division. This causes deep distrust and uncertainty among the citizens who have to make important decisions that affect their lives and the lives of the entire society. The emotions that are triggered by the words, and the possible behaviours that would emerge because of the negative feelings, can have far-reaching consequences for the democratic processes, as well as for people's mental health and condition. Moreover, neither the political actors who create the harmful narrative, nor the online media that amplify the harmful narrative with their 'word-for-word' reporting, bear any responsibility for disrupting the well-being of the citizens.

5. THE NEOLOGISMS AS PART OF THE HARMFUL POLITICAL NARRATIVES

At the second level of analysis, an ad hoc research was conducted within HARM-TIVE, focusing on an important topic that emerged from the monitoring process: the use of neologisms as politically harmful narratives. These narratives are employed in the context of manipulation, as well as in belittling and discrediting political opponents and certain political ideologies by the political actors in Macedonia.

The neologisms reflect the social reality and represent the dynamic nature of the language, which, as a living matter, is constantly changing. Neologisms therefore are candidates for critical study as they give clues to the level of development in a particular sphere of human interaction. (Rose & Ezeifeka, 2018). Although language and words are not the only tools used in politics, they are among the most accessible and effective. Therefore, studying and analysing political neologisms is of significant interest both scientifically and socially, particularly regarding their potential harm in communication. This includes the dissemination of misinformation, malinformation, and disinformation, as well as their impact on socio-political discourse and processes.

Thus, the subject of the research interest are the neologisms that the political actors in Macedonia create, use and spread within the framework of the political communication in the online space (on their official websites and on their official pages, i.e. Facebook profiles), and which are part of the harmful political narratives, especially towards belittling, i.e. discrediting the political opponents.

The analysis answers the following questions: 1. What is the meaning of the harmful political neologisms? 2. What is the broader context of these neologisms? 3. What other elements of harmful narratives do these neologisms contain? 4. Who uses them and whom are these neologisms directed to? 5. What components do these neologisms consist of?

The analysis has two aspects: communication and linguistic. The analysis covers: the political communication and the political discourse, the political actors and the broader socio-political context related to the harmful neologisms, as well as the formulations and the lexical-semantic, the word forming, morphological and the syntactic elements of the neologisms themselves that are used by the political actors in Macedonia within the harmful narratives.

5.1. COMMUNICATIVE-LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

The focus of the analysed neologisms from a communication and linguistic perspective is on the discourse and the context within the political communication and the harmful political narratives, as well as on the basic elements of the communication process, and on the lexical-semantic and the word-formation aspects. Herewith, it is important to emphasize that all neologisms that are taken into account as such are analysed both from the perspective of new meanings of existing words and as occasionalisms, i.e. authorial, individually used words, the so-called authorial neologisms.

The analysis covers a total of 42 neologisms based on the specified criteria (38 in Macedonian and 4 in the original Albanian language). Some of these neologisms appear in multiple forms, but they convey the same or similar meanings.

First, all analysed neologisms are listed according to the selection criterion.

Selection criterion	Political actor (both individual and collective)	Power/governance and socio-political trends
Neologism	1. The Autocrat of Forino	1. Business coalition
	2. The Despot of Forino	2. Business oligarchies
	3. Commander Forina	3. Business partner
	4. The Prime Minister-Terrorist	4. Bon-bon business
	5. The Tyrant Speaker	5. Casino business (originally: biznesi i kazinove)
	6. Casinoman (originally: kazinomani)	6. Casino party (originally: partia e kazinove)
	7. Artanovci/Artanians	7. Cancer mafia
	8. Artanoiden/Artanoid	8. Klepto-oligarchic government
	9. The Despot-Mayor	9. The Political-Oligarchic elite
	10. Gruevistichki/Gruevistic	10. Payton (phaeton) (insignificant) parties
	11. Zmicko	11. Pendant party
	12. Zaevism	12. Rouble-government
	13. Tache	13. Pasokificationing, Pasokification
	14. Tachevism	14. Ethnotribalism
	15. Vmrovski, Vmrovci	15. Neobalistichki, neobalisti (Neoballistic, Neoballists)
	16. Vmroidno, vmroidi	16. Severdjianistan, Severdjian
	17. VMRO-MVRO, MVRO-VMRO	17. Sorospisko, sorospii
	18. The SDS/DUI combo	18. Tender partner
	19. DUI lottery (originally: BDI-Llotarinë)	19. Tender policies
		20. Tenderi-menderi
		21. UCHKa, UCHKi
		22. Ushukjurat
		23. Shvercerat (Smuggling county)

Table 13. Neologisms for analysis[30]

30 Some of the terms in the table appear later in the text in other forms (articles, plural, with or without a hyphen, etc.), depending on the manner they were originally used by the political actors.

From the table it can be seen that according to the criterion regarding the political actor (both individual and collective) there are a total of 19 neologisms, and according to the criterion power/governance and socio-political trends there are a total of 23.

The neologisms referring to individual and collective political actors refer to the political parties and members of political parties, both in power and in opposition. Almost all neologisms clearly identify the political actor in question, either through part of their personal name, surname, or nickname, the name of their political party, or through specific details related to them. The only exception is the term 'despot-mayor,' for which additional context is needed to specify exactly which mayor is being referred to.

The neologisms referring to an individual political actor cover seven political actors: Talat Djaferi (5 neologisms); Artan Grubi (3 neologisms); Dimitar Kovachevski (2 neologisms); Stevcho Jakimovski, Nikola Gruevski, Hristijan Mickoski and Zoran Zaev (1 neologism each). Talat Djaferi is the subject of the most neologisms (5) and they cover several of Djaferi's roles: President of the Assembly, Prime Minister, Commander of the NLA.

Neologisms referring to a collective political actor include three political parties: VMRO-DPMNE (3 neologisms); DUI (2 neologisms – one of which it shares with SDSM); SDSM (1 neologism – it shares with DUI). VMRO-DPMNE is referred to by the most neologisms (3) and these include: modified name of the party; members of the party; connection with the party.

In terms of the criterion of authority/government and socio-political trends, harmful neologisms are included that refer to different types of authority/government and to different socio-political processes, activities and events. It is clear that the majority of these neologisms relate to shady businesses, criminal activities, and questionable governance, while some also reference specific organizations and groups. The most frequently used harmful neologisms include terms such as *business, tender, party/parties, and oligarchies/oligarchic*.

The communication-linguistic analysis is carried out as regards each political actor individually. The analysis begins with a tabular presentation of the basic communication elements and contextualization as regards the individual political parties where the use of harmful neologisms has been observed, in order to provide a more comprehensive overview. This is followed by a communication-linguistic analysis, comments and quotes as examples of certain harmful neologisms, in order to provide additional contextualization in terms of the socio-political conditions and developments and the harmful political narratives.

From the data from the monitoring conducted and from the additional research and analysis, it emerged that the political actors who use neologisms are: VMRO-DPMNE; Democratic Movement (and Izet Medjiti); Levica (and Dimitar Apasiev); SDSM.[31]

In this context, it should be noted that the term 'who says', i.e. the 'sender of the message' refers to the person who posted the content (message) on the official website and on the official Facebook page/official profile. Therefore, in the above list, sometimes there is only a collective political actor, and sometimes there is a combination of a collective political actor – a political party and its member, depending on who posted the content.

31 Here and below where shown, the political parties are listed in alphabetical order.

THE POLITICAL PARTY VMRO-DPMNE

The analysis shows that VMRO-DPMNE uses a total of 14 neologisms and in all cases they are n posts on their official website as the primary communication channel, and not on their official Facebook page.

WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	1. Ushukjurat
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Website
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	Fatmir Bitikji SDSM
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Undermining trust in the institutions
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	1
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	No
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	2. Cancer Mafia
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Website
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	The Government of SDSM and DUI Venko Filipche Nino Vasev and Nehat Nuhi (then medical and economic directors of the Clinic for Radiotherapy and Oncology) Irina Sotirova Buhova (then director of SSHI) Stevo Krstevski and Faton Ahmeti (then directors of the Health Insurance Fund)
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Undermining trust in the institutions Biased selection Character attacks, demonization Spread of populism

HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	10
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	Yes Titles: The 'Wild Flesh' scandal shows that even in 2023, serious abuses amounting to millions were committed at the expense of oncology patients, the cancer mafia must be held responsible The 'Wild Flesh' affair at Oncology shows the existence of a cancer mafia that is still operating today because there is no institution that responds The Minister of Health and the Director of Oncology protected the government's favourite wholesaler, even though it was late with deliveries, the Cancer Mafia eroded the system If the SDS and DUI government wants the truth to come to light regarding Oncology, it should support the extension of the Inquiry Commission's term, otherwise it will only confirm that they are part of the cancer mafia. Stoilkovski submits evidence to the Public Prosecutor's Office: We expect that the Public Prosecutor's Office, contrary to the government's support for the 'Cancer Mafia', will start taking the 'Wild Flesh' case seriously
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Healthcare
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	Yes, from multiple online media and TV stations manner: –a reported press release – report – a reported speech of a politician
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	**3. Rouble government, rouble-government**
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Website

WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	The Government of SDSM and DUI Zoran Zaev Dragji Rashkovski Dimitar Kovachevski Miodrag Davidovikj – Daka (Montenegrin businessman and former police chief) Ramiz Merko
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Undermining trust in the institutions Biased selection Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty Spreading conspiracy theories Spreading fear of foreign influence Fomenting divisions Character attacks, demonization
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	2
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	Yes Titles: Placing Daka Davidovikj on the US blacklist confirmed that the SDS government is a rouble government – so much for the pro-European forces SDS does not know how to justify Kovachevski's exotic wine excursion and the rouble-government, so it makes constructions and lies.
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Foreign policy Other
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	**4. Business paytash, business paytashi (Turkish: pâydâş)**
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Website

WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	Miodrag Davidovikj – Daka (Montenegrin businessman and former police chief) The Government of SDSM and DUI Zoran Zaev Stevcho Jakimovski 'Pucko Petrol' and its owner, Ismail Jahovski Dimitar Kovachevski
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Undermining trust in the institutions Biased selection Character attacks, demonization Spreading conspiracy theories Spreading fear of foreign influence Spread of populism
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	2
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	No
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy Foreign policy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	**5. Bon-bon business**
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Website
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	The Government of SDSM and DUI Zoran Zaev Oliver Spasovski Radmila Shekerinska
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Undermining trust in the institutions Biased selection Spread of populism

HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	1
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	No
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Crime
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	Yes, from an online media outlet manner: – a reported press release
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	**6. The Despot-Mayor**
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Website
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	Stevcho Jakimovski SDSM Municipality of Karposh
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Undermining trust in the institutions Character attacks, demonization
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	1
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	No
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Other
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	**7. Tender policies**
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Website
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	The Government of SDSM and DUI Dr. Nikola Panovski and his daughter PHI Department of Hematology
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Undermining trust in the institutions Biased selection
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	1

Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	Yes Title: The daughter Panovska from the Hematology Clinic has been making purchases from Dr. Panovski from her father for years, the tender policies of SDS and DUI have resulted in a collapsed health-care system
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Healthcare
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	**8. Artanoid(en)**
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Website
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	The Government of SDSM and DUI Artan Grubi Ali Ahmeti Dimitar Kovachevski Mile Zechevikj Stevo Pendarovski
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Undermining trust in the institutions Biased selection Character attacks, demonization Fomenting divisions
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	1
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	Yes Title: Mickoski: The current government has brought a cyclical artanoid hybrid regime, after 8 May Macedonia will be free again and led by a VMRO-DPMNE government
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	Yes, from multiple online media outlets manner: – a reported speech of a politician – other

WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	9. Artanovci
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Website
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	The Government of SDSM and DUI Artan Grubi Ali Ahmeti Dimitar Kovachevski
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Undermining trust in the institutions Biased selection Character attacks, demonization Fomenting divisions
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	1
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	No
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	Yes, from multiple online media outlets manner: – a reported speech of a politician
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	10. Tache
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Website
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	Dimitar Kovachevski
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Undermining trust in the institutions Character attacks, demonization Biased selection Spread of populism Spreading conspiracy theories
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	2

Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	No
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	Yes, from an online media outlet and a TV station manner: – a reported press release – news/news with statement – report
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	**11. The Autocrat of Forino**
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Website
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	Talat Djaferi
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Undermining trust in the institutions Biased selection Character attacks, demonization
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	1
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	No
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	**12. The Despot of Forino**
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Website
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	Talat Djaferi
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Undermining trust in the institutions Biased selection Character attacks, demonization
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	1

Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	No
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	**13. Commander Forina**
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Website
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	Talat Djaferi
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Spreading hate speech Undermining trust in the institutions Character attacks, demonization Spread of populism
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	1
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	No
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	Yes, from multiple online media manner: – a reported press release
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	**14. Pendant party**
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Website
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	SDSM Darko Kaevski Dimitar Kovachevski
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Biased selection Character attacks, demonization

HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	1
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	No
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No

Table 14. Harmful neologisms used by VMRO-DPMNE[32]

There is the presence of harmful neologisms in 9 headlines of posts, namely: *artanoiden/ Artanoid, tender policies, and /Roublerouble-government* and *cancer mafia*. The neologisms used by VMRO-DPMNE most often refer to the Government of SDSM and DUI, as well as to these two political parties and their members and partners in certain shady deals and businesses. They are used in order to criticize, belittle and discredit the political opponents, to undermine trust in the institutions, to foment division and to spread populism. The most harmful neologisms addressed to an individual political actor refer to Talat Djaferi – a total of 3 variations: *Autocrat of Forino, Despot of Forino and Commander Forina*, and then to Artan Grubi – a total of 2 variations: *artanoiden/Artanoid* and *artanovci/Artanians*. The VMRO-DPMNE's harmful neologisms are most often part of posts whose main topic area is domestic policy (9).

Out of a total of 14 neologisms, 7 refer to a political actor – the despot-mayor; *artanoid; Artanovci/Artanoans; Tache; the Autocrat of Forino; the Despot of Forino; Commander Forina;* and 7 to government/governance and socio-political trends – *ushukhurat; cancer mafia; rouble government/ta, the rouble-government/ta; (the) business paytash, (the) business pajtashi; bon-bon business; tender policies; pendant party*. The most used expression is the cancer mafia, i.e. it appears in 10 posts, and all other neologisms appear in one to two posts.

Two groups of examples appear. The first group contains one component: two nouns, one adjective, and one verb, and the second group contains eleven noun phrases or syntagms (hereinafter NPH). From the first group, the noun *artanovci/Artanians* is derived from the personal name *Artan* as the name of a group with similar characteristics 'that resemble or are like Artan' in the form of names denoting belonging to a family or place of residence with the suffixes -ov + -ci (rule which is applied in the Macedonian language n.b.); the noun Tache is the nickname of the former Prime Minister Kovachevski; The adjective *artanoiden* is derived again from the personal name Artan with the suffix -oid + -en, where -oid is of Greek origin, and -en is a Macedonian suffix for forming adjectives, again with the meaning 'which resembles or is like Artan', and the verb *ushukjuri* is irregular, so from the context it can be seen that the verb *ushukjuri* with the meaning 'take advantage of a situation to obtain material gain in an easy way' is meant, and it was probably obtained by mixing it with the modal expression shukjur which is used as an expression of gratitude. Both *ushukjuri* (*uşukhuri*) and *shukjur* (*şükür*) are Turkicisms.

32 In this and the following tabular presentations, the neologisms and titles are given in the original and have not been proofread, so for that reason certain spelling errors are present.

In reference to the second group, all NPHs are composed of two nouns, with two examples of NPH containing a preposition: *The Autocrat of Forino* and *The Despot of Forino*. These two examples, together with the example Commander Forina, refer to the former President of the Assembly, Talat Djaferi, and are related to his place of origin and his behaviour (autocrat, despot), as well as to his participation in the 2001 conflict as a commander of the NLA, i.e. his combat name.

The noun phrase (NPH) *cancer mafia* is composed of two nouns of foreign origin: *cancer* from the Latin language (*cancer*) 'Severe malignant disease of tissues: carcinoma, cancer' and *mafia* from the Italian language (*mafia*) '1. A secret criminal organization formed in Sicily in the early 19th century. 2. (*figurative*) Any organized criminal group: gang.' Although the words *cancer* and *mafia* are part of the Macedonian lexicon, their combination in one noun phrase represents a neologism with the figurative meaning 'criminal political authority with malignant effects'. The NPH *rouble government/rouble governments* is composed of the Russianism *rouble* (exoticism) with the meaning 'basic monetary unit in Russia', and in combination with the noun *government* a new meaning is created 'pro-Russian government, government that receives Russian money'. The NPH (*the*) *business-paytash* (*the*) *business-pajtashi* is composed of the noun *business* (*Anglicism*) with the meaning '1. Work, business, engagement in an activity that brings economic benefit. 2. (*colloquial*) A commercial or other activity that brings good earnings.' The noun *paytash* (Turkism) with the meaning 'comrade, friend, accomplice', which belongs to the colloquial style. When used together in an unusual phrase, they bring a new meaning 'collaborator in crime'. The NPH *bon-bon business* is composed of the noun *bon-bon* of French origin with the meaning 'sweet product made of sugar or chocolate' and *business* with the new meaning 'good business'. The NPH *tender policies* is composed of the noun *tender* (Anglicism) with the meaning '1. Public bidding for collecting bids for performing some work, for procurement, etc. 2. A special water and coal wagon, attached directly to the locomotive.' Furthermore, *politics* (ancient Greek word) with the meaning '1. Activity related to the management of the state in the field of state affairs in the country and in the field of international relations. 2. Activity of the state institutions planned and directed towards the improvement of the management and conduct of the public affairs in the state (economic, trade, financial, educational, cultural, etc. policy) and relations with other states (international policy). 3. Social activity of parties, organizations, civil associations, groups and individuals aimed at achieving programmatically determined tasks and goals. 4. Method of work (of an organization or an individual) for the purpose of achieving a certain goal. 5. (*figurative*) Skill of dealing with people and finding one's way in life.' Together they gain a new meaning 'policy of interest, for obtaining state tenders'. The NPH *pendant party* is composed of the noun *pendant* (noun derived from the verb to *bind, to tie*) with the meaning '1. Decoration with a small opening or with a ring that is attached to a chain, strap, etc. and worn around the neck. 2. A decorative object with a ring to which keys are attached.' and the noun party (Latin word) and together they take on a new meaning 'unimportant, secondary party'.

Regarding the further dissemination of neologisms as harmful narratives by the media, including TV stations and online platforms, approximately half of the total neologisms (6 out of 14) were broadcast by multiple online media outlets and TV stations, often in the form of press releases. This broadens their reach and impact, making them more accessible to the public. However, despite their exposure, all the mentioned examples remain author-specific neologisms or occasionalisms and are not widely integrated into the Macedonian language.

Contextualization of the neologism cancer mafia as the most frequently used expression

VMRO-DPMNE uses the term '*cancer mafia*' in reference to the so-called '*Wild Flesh*' scandal, also known as the 'Oncology' healthcare affair. In response to this controversy, an Inquiry Commission was established in the Assembly to determine political responsibility. The term primarily targets the SDSM and DUI Government, including former Minister of Health Venko Filipche and the leadership of the Clinic for Radiotherapy and Oncology.

The neologism *cancer mafia* VMRO-DPMNE uses in the following context:

*The **cancer mafia**, which created this Wild Flesh, will be held responsible from the first one to the last one, that is a promise to the citizens.(official website post of VMRO-DPMNE, 3.11.2023)*[33].

The 'Wild Flesh' scandal in oncology shows the full monstrosity of the cancer mafia that has enriched itself the expense of the most seriously ill patients.(official website post of VMRO-DPMNE, 3.11.2023).

*It is simple, the 'Wild Flesh' affair at Oncology shows the existence of a **cancer mafia** that is still operating today because there is no institution that reacts. On the other hand, it is evident that the **cancer mafia** operates continuously. The **cancer mafia** makes money at the expense of the citizens, and there is still only a preliminary investigation, there is no official indictment. This cancer mafia must be defeated and must be held accountable (official website post of VMRO-DPMNE, 4.11.2023).*

The Minister of Health and the Director of Oncology protected the government's favourite wholesaler, even though it was late with deliveries, the Cancer Mafia eroded the system (official website post of VMRO-DPMNE, 7.11.2023).

*Additionally, last week new findings were published about the Oncology case. From them, it can be concluded that these are well-founded suspicions about the rule of the **cancer mafia**, and there must be an investigation and accountability for them. If the government led by SDS and DUI wants to come to light about what exactly happened at Oncology, it should support the proposal to extend the term of the Inquiry Commission. Otherwise, they will only confirm that they are part of the **cancer mafia**. (official website post of VMRO-DPMNE, 11.11.2023).*

The Wild Flesh scandal at the oncology clinic shows how far the cancer mafia has metastasized, which, in collaboration with the authorities, made millions at the expense of the most seriously ill patients. If they think that in this way they will possibly protect someone from liability because they are close to the authorities or to anyone from the cancer mafia, then they are mistaken.(official website post of VMRO-DPMNE, 15.11.2023).

We call once again on the Public Prosecutor's Office not to remain silent and not to run away, but to act immediately and bring everyone involved in the cancer mafia to justice. The cancer mafia must be put to an end. Everyone who has committed a crime must be held accountable before the law. (official website post of VMRO-DPMNE, 20.11.2023).

33 This and the following quotes have not been proofread, in order to maintain authenticity.

*Today, we submitted the documents regarding the case of 'Wild Flesh', 'Cancer Mafia' at Oncology to the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office, as we announced. It is clear that behind this behaviour there is a political decision, SDS immediately stood behind the 'Cancer Mafia' after the publication of the documents submitted by a whistleblower in VMRO-DPMNE. All of this is also evident from the attitude towards and towards the work of the Commission in the Assembly dedicated to the case of 'Wild Flesh', '**Cancer Mafia**' at Oncology. Dear, we expect that humanity will still work at the Public Prosecutor's Office and, contrary to the government's support for the '**Cancer Mafia**', they will start being serious towards the case of 'Wild Flesh' at Oncology. This is about a '**Cancer Mafia**', 'Wild Flesh' which is destroying the healthcare system at the expense of the lives of the patients (official website post of VMRO-DPMNE, 23.11.2023).*

The Wild Flesh Scandal at the Oncology Clinic has exposed the entire cancer mafia that was profiting at the expense of the most seriously ill in Macedonia.(official website post of VMRO-DPMNE, 23.11.2023).

The nervousness in the SDS over the work and conclusions of the Inquiry Commission on the scandal at the Oncology Clinic shows that the cancer mafia is closely connected to the government. No one in charge has lifted a finger for years and months, and therefore the question arises of how many human lives would have been saved or extended if the clinic had not been ruled by consciously created chaos from which the cancer mafia profited. (official website post of VMRO-DPMNE, 28.11.2023).

Deriving out of cited quotes as examples, it can be noted that by using the expression cancer mafia, VMRO-DPMNE uses a linguistic device as a manipulative strategy to 'smear' the political opponent, and presents itself as a 'righteous' and 'saviour of the people'. Specifically, the use of such an expression by VMRO-DPMNE within the framework of a very important and sensitive socio-political topic further strengthens the role of the 'villain' of the political opponent – the Government of SDSM and DUI, and concomitantly the role of the 'hero' of VMRO-DPMNE.

POLITICAL PARTY THE DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT (DM)

The Democratic Movement uses a small number of harmful neologisms, i.e., only four expressions, which refer to DUI and its members and are within the framework of a socio-political event related to casinos and the Lottery of RNM.

WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	1. Casino party (originally) partia e kazinove)
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Facebook
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	DUI Ali Ahmeti Artan Grubi The Serbian mafia underground
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Dissemination of misinformation Undermining trust in the institutions Biased selection Character attacks, demonization Spreading fear of foreign influence Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	1
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	No
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Crime
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	2. The casino business/casino businesses (originally: bizeni i kazinove/ bizneseve të kazinove)
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Facebook

WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	DUI Ali Ahmeti Artan Grubi The Serbian mafia underground
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Dissemination of misinformation Undermining trust in the institutions Biased selection Character attacks, demonization Spreading fear of foreign influence Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	1
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	Yes Title: DUI ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE CASINO BUSINESS IS THE GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT OF THEIR MANDATE (originally: BDI E PRANOI SE BIZNESI I KAZINOVE ËSHTË ARRITJA MË E MADHE E MANDATIT TË TYRE)
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Crime
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	**3. The Casinoman/Casinomen (originally:kazinomani/kazinomanët)**
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Facebook
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	Artan Grubi DUI
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Undermining trust in the institutions Biased selection
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	1

Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	No
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	4. DUI-lottery (original: BDI-Llotarinë)
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Facebook
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	DUI State Lottery Artan Grubi Prparim Bajrami Artin Spahiu
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Undermining trust in the institutions Biased selection Fomenting divisions Character attacks, demonization Spreading fear of foreign influence Spread of populism Spreading extreme patriotism and/or nationalism
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	2
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	No
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Crime Corruption
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No

Table 15. Harmful neologisms used by the Democratic Movement

The DM uses only its official Facebook page as a communication channel. Thereto, it also shares the views of the Vredi coalition. Regarding the titles of the posts and the presence of harmful neologisms in them, only one expression is present in one title, and that is the expression – *casino business*. The harmful neologisms are most often related to the topic of crime, and are used in order to criticize, belittle and discredit DUI, to undermine trust in certain institutions and to spread panic, fear and uncertainty, as well as fear of foreign influence.

Two expressions refer to a political actor, one collective and one individual, and two to power/governance and socio-political trends. The most used expression is the *DUI lottery*, which appears in 2 posts.

In the Albanian language, the NPH *partia e kazinove and biznesi i kazinove* (casino-party and casino-business) are actually NGs composed of a noun in the nominative and genitive. The NPH *partia e kazinove* is composed of the noun *partia* (Latin word) and *kazino* with the meaning 'Facility, entertainment room; club' in the genitive, and together they acquire a new meaning, with a negative connotation: 'a party that engages in gambling'. The NPH *biznesi i kazinove* is composed of the noun business (Anglicism) with the meaning '1. Work, business, engagement in some activity that brings economic benefit. 2. (*colloquial*) Commercial or other activity that brings good earnings.' and *kazino* with the meaning 'Facility, entertainment room; club.' in the genitive, and together they acquire a new meaning, with a negative connotation: 'dirty business, business that earns money from gambling'.

The NPH *BDI lotaria* (DUI-lotary) is an NG formed from the abbreviation of the name of the Democratic Union for Integration (Bashkimi Demokratik për Integrim) and the noun *lotaria* meaning 'Game of chance with the drawing of numbered tickets'. Together they take on a new negative connotation: 'a party that engages in gambling'.

The noun *casinoman/casinomen* (originally: kazinomani/kazinomanët) refers to Artan Grubi and has a negative connotation: 'a person who profits from gambling'.

In respect of the further spread of the neologisms as harmful narratives by the media, i.e. the TV stations and the online media, not a single expression has been broadcast.

Contextualization of the neologism DUI lottery as the most commonly used expression[34]

Additionally, regarding the expression *DUI-lottery*, it is clear enough that the Democratic Movement uses it towards DUI and its members. The linguistic construction indicates the connection between DUI and the Lottery of RNM, i.e. the online gambling and casinos.

The neologism DUI-lottery is used by the Democratic Movement in the following context:

Dear citizens, there is no greater irony than when we hear that the DUI lottery, which brought gambling into every home via the Internet, accuses others of obstructing the implementation of the law. There is no greater irony than when the DUI lottery, which for this 4-year mandate alone has invested 46 million euros of the citizens' money in the purchase of casino machines, tries to pretend that they know nothing (post on the official Facebook page of the Democratic Movement, 15.3.2024).

34 The quotes below are translations into Macedonian, and the original in Albanian can be read at the links provided.

Let's publicly ask Artan Grubi and ***the DUI-lottery*** *whether more than 75 million euros were spent on casinos and gambling during Grubi's term as the country's First Deputy Prime Minister alone? Are most of the winners of the tender shady Serbian companies with strong underground connections? To summarize, DUI has become the patron of the dirty casino business in our country and even the birds know it. Fortunately, this disastrous rule is coming to an end, and in the new government, where the Vredi coalition will also be present, anyone who dared to use crime will be held accountable before the institutions of the system! Change is coming, change is worth it! (post on the official Facebook page of the Democratic Movement, 7.4.2024)*

The provided quotes illustrate a linguistic manipulative strategy in which the Democratic Movement merges the name of the political party DUI with the Lottery of RNM to emphasize a connection between these two institutions. Additionally, the Democratic Movement emphasises the connection of these two institutions, as well as of Artan Grubi, in his role as a former Deputy Prime Minister, to the Serbian underground, suggesting involvement in shady businesses, criminal activities, and non-transparent governance. Moreover, it places emphasis on the dirty casino business, through which it 'smears' DUI both in the sense that it is a 'laundering house for dirty money' and in the sense that it 'poisons' children and the youth who, through the online gambling, are potential victims of the greed for money of DUI and its business partners. Therefore, the Democratic Movement puts itself on the side of the children and the youth and presents itself as a 'highly moral party', and on the other hand it puts the 'immoral DUI', with personal business interests. It also casts itself as the 'saviour of the people,' emphasizing that during their future rule, they will have to be accountable to the institutions and emphasizing the need for change.

POLITICAL PARTY LEVICA

Levica is the party with the most neologisms noted – 25 in total. In most cases, they are contained in posts on their official Facebook page (17 out of 25 on Facebook only and 6 out of 25 on both Facebook and the website).

WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	1. Bon-bon business
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Facebook
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	The SDSM government Radmila Shekerinska EVN ESM
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Undermining trust in the institutions Biased selection
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	1
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	No
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Economy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	2. Business coalition
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Facebook
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	The so-called broad coalition of SDSM, VMRO-DPMNE and DUI Panche Toshkovski
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Biased selection Character attacks, demonization Spread of populism
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	1

Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	No
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	**3. Business oligarchies**
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Facebook
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	The so-called broad coalition of SDSM, VM-RO-DPMNE and DUI Stevo Pendarovski Gordana Siljanovska Davkova NLA (UCK)
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Biased selection Character attacks, demonization
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	1
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	The post does not have title.
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	Yes, from a TV station (with a modified form – business oligarchies, the business oligarchy) manner: – a report
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	**4. Tender – partner/tender partner**
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Both Facebook and website
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	Nefi Useini (businessman and former DUI official) 'Nefi Ik' company Kiril Pecakov (Mayor of the Municipality of Ohrid) The so-called broad coalition of SDSM, VM-RO-DPMNE and DUI

WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Undermining trust in the institutions Biased selection
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	2
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	No
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy Crime
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	**5. Tenderi- menderi (tenders-fixers)**
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Facebook
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	VMRO-DPMNE 'Vmrovcite (Vmrovians)'
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Undermining trust in the institutions Biased selection Character attacks, demonization Fomenting divisions
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	1
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	The post does not have title.
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	**6. Shvercerat (smuggling)**
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Both Facebook and website

WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	The Assembly Talat Djaferi The so-called broad coalition of SDSM, VM-RO-DPMNE and DUI Committee on European Affairs
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Undermining trust in the institutions Biased selection Spreading fear of foreign influence Fomenting divisions Spread of populism Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty Character attacks, demonization
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	4
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	Yes Title: (Video) Krmov: Levica is using all its strength to prevent smuggling in the Assembly!
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	Yes, from multiple online media outlets manner: – a broadcast press release – a report
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	**7. Zaevism**
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Both Facebook and website
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	Zoran Zaev SDSM Dimitar Kovachevski

WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Undermining trust in the institutions Biased selection Character attacks, demonization Fomenting divisions
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	4
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	No
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	**8. Ethnotribalism, ethno-tribalism; ethnotribalistic, ethno-tribalistic**
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Both Facebook and website
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	Ilir Sulejmani Krenar Loga Bilal Kassami Albanian political parties in Macedonia: DUI, Besa, Alliance for Albanians NLA (UCK) SDSM VMRO-DPMNE 'Bechtel and Enka'

WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Undermining trust in the institutions Biased selection Character attacks, demonization Spreading hate speech Spreading fear of foreign influence Spreading ethnocentrism Spread of populism Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty Spreading extreme patriotism and/or nationalism Fomenting divisions
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	10
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	No
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy Judiciary Foreign policy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	Yes, from multiple online media outlets manner: – a broadcast press release – a broadcast speech of a politician
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	**9. UCHka, UCHKi/UCHKite**
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Facebook
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	NLA (UCK) DUI Konstantin Dimitrovski (former director of the National University Conservation Centre) SDSM VMRO-DPMNE

WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Undermining trust in the institutions Biased selection Character attacks, demonization Spreading hate speech Fomenting divisions Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty Spreading fear of foreign influence Manipulation of audiovisual media content
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	4
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	Yes Title: APASIEV FROM TETOVO: UNDER THE RULE OF THE DUI UCHKI SUPPORTED BY THE CORRUPT MACEDONIAN ELITE, EVERY SECOND CHILD BORN FROM POLOG IS BORN IN SWITZERLAND!
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy Corruption
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	**10. Gruevskichkiot**
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Facebook
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	Ivan Mirchevski Nikola Gruevski KANAL 5
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Character attacks, demonization
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	1
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	The post does not have title.
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy

Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	**11. Vmroidna/i, vmroidi**
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Facebook
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	VMRO-DPMNE Gordana Siljanovska Davkova Hristijan Mickoski KANAL 5 Ivan Mirchevski DUI ZNAM Institute for Political Research MTV AVMU
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Undermining trust in the institutions Biased selection Fomenting divisions Character attacks, demonization Spreading hate speech Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	8
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	No
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	**12. Vmrovski, Vmrovci (Vmroistic, Vmrovians n.b.)**
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Facebook
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	VMRO-DPMNE Panche Toshkovski

WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Biased selection Undermining trust in the institutions Character attacks, demonization Fomenting divisions
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	2
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	Posts do not have titles
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	**13. (The) neoballist, (the) neoballists, neoballistic**
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Both Facebook and website
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	DUI Alliance for Albanians VREDI Besa The so-called 'Albanian bloc' Arben Taravari Artan Grubi NLA (UCK)

WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Biased selection Undermining trust in the institutions Character attacks, demonization Spreading fear of foreign influence Fomenting divisions Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty Spread of populism
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	7
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	No
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	Yes, from an online media outlet manner: – a broadcast press release
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	**14. Tache**
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Facebook
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	Dimitar Kovachevski
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Character attacks, demonization Biased selection Fomenting divisions
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	8
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	No
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy Healthcare
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No

WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	15. Tachevism
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Website
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	Dimitar Kovachevski Zoran Zaev
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Biased selection Undermining trust in the institutions Character attacks, demonization
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	1
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	No
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	16. Zmicko
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Facebook
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	Hristijan Mickoski
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Character attacks, demonization
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	1
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	The post does not have title
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No

WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	17. The Tyrant Speaker
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Website
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	Talat Djaferi
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Character attacks, demonization Undermining trust in the institutions Biased selection Manipulation of audiovisual media content
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	1
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	Yes Title: (Video) Tyrant Speaker Djaferi interrupted the session on constitutional amendments without a meeting.
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	18. Payton (phaeton) parties (labelling as insignificant parties n.b.)
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Facebook
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	DUI VREDI Besa Arben Taravari
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Fomenting divisions Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	1
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	The post does not have title
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No

WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	19. Sorospisko, sorospii/te (Sorosluts, n.b.)
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Facebook
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	SDSM Dimitar Kovachevski Zoran Zaev Fatmir Bitikji VMRO-DPMNE Djabir Derala Civil.mk Frontline.mk Trn.mk, Racin.mk Center.mk Gradska.mk Soros (Open Society Foundation Macedonia)
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Undermining trust in the institutions Biased selection Character attacks, demonization
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	2
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	Posts do not have titles
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No

WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	20. The Prime Minister-Terrorist
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Facebook
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	Talat Djaferi
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Character attacks, demonization Undermining trust in the institutions Biased selection
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	1
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	The post does not have title
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	21. Severdjianistan, Severdjan
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Facebook
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	The Government of SDSM and DUI Talat Djaferi Republic of North Macedonia Prespa Agreement Constitutional Court of the Republic of Macedonia Stevo Pendarovski U.S. Embassy and Ambassador Angela Aggeler

WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Undermining trust in the institutions Biased selection Fomenting divisions Character attacks, demonization Spreading fear of foreign influence Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	3
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	Posts do not have title
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	**22. The SDS/DUI combo**
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Facebook
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	SDSM DUI
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Undermining trust in the institutions Biased selection
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	1
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	No
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	**23. The political-oligarchic elite**
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Facebook

WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	SDSM Other oligarchic political parties
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Undermining trust in the institutions Biased selection
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	1
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	The post does not have title
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	**24. Klepto-oligarchic government**
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Facebook
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	The SDSM-DUI coalition
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Undermining trust in the institutions Biased selection
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	1
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	No
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Economy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No
WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	**25. Pasokized, we pasokize, the pasokization (Pasokificated, we pasokificate, Pasokification)**
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Both Facebook and website
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	SDSM Stevo Pendarovski Bojan Marichikj Dimitar Kovachevski

WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Undermining trust in the institutions Biased selection Character attacks, demonization Spreading fear of foreign influence Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty Fomenting divisions Spread of populism
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	7
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	Yes Titles: CALL FOR MASS TURNOUT TO COMPLETE THE PASOKIFICATION OF SDS
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No

Table 16. Harmful neologisms used by Levica

There are harmful neologisms in 4 headlines, namely: *Pasokification*, *the Speaker-tyrant*, *UCHKite* and *shvercerat*. The neologisms used by Levica most often refer to the largest political parties in power and the opposition (SDSM, VMRO-DPMNE and DUI). They are most often used in order to criticize, belittle and discredit the political opponents by character attacking them, to undermine trust in certain institutions, to foment division, to spread populism, as well as to spread fear of foreign influence and panic, fear and insecurity. The most harmful neologisms directed at an individual political actor refer to Dimitar Kovachevski – a total of two variations: *Tache* and *tachevism* and to Talat Djaferi – 2 in total: the tyrant speaker and the terrorist prime minister. The harmful neologisms of the Levica are most often part of posts whose main topic area is domestic policy (23).

Out of a total of 25 neologisms, 10 refer to a political actor – *the SDS/DUI combo; the prime minister-terrorist; the speaker-tyrant; Zhmicko; Tache; Tachevism; Gruevistichki; Zaevism; vmroidna/i, vmroidi; vmrovski, vmrovci*; and 15 to power/governance and socio-political trends – *bon-bon business; business coalition; business oligarchies; tender – partner, tender partner; tenderi-menderi (referring to fixing tenders); shvercerat (smuggling); ethnotribalism, ethno-tribalism, ethno-tribalistic, ethno-tribalistic; UCHka, UCHki, UCHkite; (the) neoballist, the neoballist(s), (the) neoballistic; payton (phaeton) parties (labelling as insignificant parties); sorospisko, sorospii/te (Sorosluts n.b.); Severdjanistan, Severdjanski; political-oligarchic elite; klepto-oligarchic power; the pasokificated, we pasokificate, (the) pasokification*. The most used expression is *ethnotribalism, ethno-tribalism, ethnotribalistic, ethno-tribalistic*, i.e. it appears in 10 posts, followed by *Tache* and *vmroidna/i,*

vmroidi in 8 posts each and the *pasokificated, we pasokificate, (the) pasokification and (the) neoballist, the neoballist(s), (the) neoballistic* in 7 posts each. All other neologisms appear in from one to four posts.

Based on the number of components in the listed neologisms, they are divided into two groups: containing one component and two or more.

The first group includes the nouns: *Zhmicko; Tache; Tachevism; Zaevism; vmrovci, vmroidi; vmrovski, vmrovci; shvercerat, ethnotribalism, the ethno-tribalism, UCHka, UCHki, UCHkite; (the) neoballist, the neoballist(s), (the) neoballistic; sorospisko, sorospii/te, Severdjistan, pasokification; then the adjectives: Gruevistichki, vmroid, vmrovski, ethnotribalistic, ethno-tribalistic, neo-ballistic, sorospisko, severdjanski, pasokificated and the verb pasokificate.* The following personal name-based terms have been derived: *Zhmicko, Tache, tachevism, zaevism, severdjanistan, severdjansk*i. The example *Zhmicko* is derived as a pejorative nickname for the president of VMRO-DPMNE H. Mickoski, alluding to his connection with the previous president of the party N. Gruevski (#Zh(#Ж)[35]). The example *Tache* is a nickname and the example tachevism is a noun derived from the nickname *Tache* + *-ism*. The example *zaevism* is derived from *Zaev* + *-ism* on the same principle. *Severdjanistan* is derived from the Romani name *Severdjan* and the Persian suffix *-stan* meaning 'place'. The name was chosen because of its phonetic similarity to the adjective *severna* as part of the new state name. It has a pejorative meaning for the supporters of the change of the state name, alluding to the prejudices as regards to the Roma people as people who would do anything for money ('they would sell their own mother'), i.e. that they sold the state name for money. Thus, a lexical innovation was obtained which, as a neologism, expanded its use and was accepted in the Macedonian language in the colloquial style, together with another neologism – *severdjgan* derived from *severdjan*, and obtained by changing the suffix *-istan* with the noun djgan (*scum*) with the meaning: 'The lowest layer in society, people with the worst qualities', but which is not found in the material considered here. Likewise, the adjective *severdjanski* was obtained by adding the suffix *-ski*. The adjective *gruevistchki* was derived from the surname of Nikola Gruevski, and the noun sorospii and the adjective *sorospisko* were derived from the surname of George Soros with the combination of Soros + *orospia* with the meaning 'prostitute' due to the sound similarity. This is also a neologism which expanded its use in the colloquial style and entered the Macedonian language. From the abbreviation through lexicalization, the following are derived: *the pasokificated, we pasokificate, (the) pasokification* from PASOK - the name of a Greek party, *UCHka, UCHki, UCHKite* from UCHK, i.e. NLA, and *vmroidna/i, vmrovski* from VMRO. The example *schvercerat* is derived from *schvercer (smuggler)* with the meaning 'one who deals with illegal activity, with illegal trade in goods, goods, people, etc.; black market' and the suffix *-at*. The example *ethnotribalism* is directly taken from the English *ethno-tribal* (but not in dictionaries), with the first part of the compound word originating from the ancient Greek *ethnos*, meaning 'people, tribe or race', but further accepted in all languages with the meaning 'people, nationality'. The second part is *tribalism*, which that is created by the English tribalism with the meaning 'state or existence as a tribe or a strong sense of loyalty to one's tribe'. However, in this form as ethnotribalism it is not found in English dictionaries, but only as *ethno, ethnic* and as *tribe, tribalism*. The more common expression is ethnonationalism or tribalism. The example neobalists is derived from the ancient Greek neo meaning 'new' and balist meaning 'member of the Albanian nationalist organization, Albanian fascist'.

35 An explanation of N. Gruevski's Twitter nickname can be found at: Macedonia: Twitter Hashtag for Prime Minister – #Ж · Global Voices и Груевски - Автократот од наше маало - Призма

The second group includes the following NPHs: *the SDS/DUI combo, the Prime Minister-terrorist, the speaker-tyrant, bon-bon business, business coalition, business oligarchies, tender – partner, tenderi-menderi, python parties, the political-oligarchic elite, klepto-oligarchic government*. The first example is derived from the English abbreviation combo (*combo* 'mixture of different things') from the *combination + SDS/DUI*. The second and third NPHs are composed of the first component function (*prime minister, speaker*) and the second component with a pejorative connotation of the official's behaviour (*terrorist, tyrant*). Three NPHs contain the component business: *bon-bon business, business coalition, business oligarchies*, whereas in the last NPH the noun *oligarsies* is misspelled instead of *oligarchies*, most likely due to the plural form of *oligarch*, which reads oligarsi. Among these NPHs, *bon-bon* business is the most commonly used in colloquial language. All three NPHs allude to the lucrative motive of certain politicians in power. Likewise, the *klepto-oligarchic government* NPH with an *oligarchiski (oligarchic)* component is similar: *the political-oligarchic elite* and *klepto-oligarchic government*. The following NPHs contain the component tender: *tender – partner* and *tenderi-menderi*, whereas the second NPH has a play on words and rhyme. The NPH *payton (phaeton) parties* has the same meaning as the *pendant parties*.

Concerning the further spread of neologisms as harmful narratives by the media, i.e. the TV stations and the online media, only 4 out of the total number of 25 neologisms have been broadcast by multiple online media and one TV station, most often as a broadcast press release and report.

Contextualization of the neologism ethnotribalism, ethno-tribalism, ethnotribalistic, ethno-tribalistic as the most commonly used expression

Levica associates the term *ethnotribalism, ethno-tribalism, ethno-tribalistic, ethno-tribalistic* with folk primitivism and tribal lifestyle, i.e. with a degenerative ideology that opposes the social progress and the necessary changes and it is in a certain way xenophobic towards other groups, i.e. ethnic communities. Precisely, it associates it with territorial claims and the lack of coexistence, i.e. with the destruction of everything Macedonian, and uses it primarily towards DUI and the Albanian bloc of parties, but also towards VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM.

The neologism ethnotribalism, ethno-tribalism, ethnotribalistic, ethno-tribalistic is used by Levica in the following context:

Responsibility for this chaos, in addition to the outgoing president - Ilir Sulejmani, also lies with Minister Krenar Loga, who instead of promoting serious reforms in the judiciary, with his ***ethno-tribalistic*** *outbursts, unconstitutionally tried to introduce nationality in birth certificates. (official website post of Levica, 8.11.2023).*

The Government, made up of the impotent quislings from the SDS and the ethno-tribal secessionists from the DUI, is allowing a corporation to complement the project of redefining the state's identity markers. (press release on Levica's official Facebook page, 20.11.2023).

This statement represents a kind of culmination of a long series of extremely nationalistic, ethno-tribalistic and extremely secessionist views and actions of the so-called Albanian political parties in Macedonia on the occasion of Albanian Flag Day. (official website post of Levica, 1.12.2023).

Hereby, Levica and the Constitutional Court are striking a blow to the ethno-tribalism, which, in the absence of ideas for improving the lives of the citizens and with the aim of dismantling the Macedonian national unity, is promoted by the criminal parties DUI, Besa and the Alliance for Albanians, who tacitly support the anti-Macedonian SDS and the false patriots from DPMNE.(official website post of Levica, 28.2.2024).

I cannot find any justification for ethno-tribalism, ethnic segregation, cartels of elites who make decisions for us behind closed doors.(official website post of Levica, 11.4.2024).

*So now we have an **ethno-tribalistic** politics, in which two ethnic groups dominate. (official website post of Levica, 15.4.2024).*

Regarding the interethnic relations in the country, she believes that 'Ethnotribalism, as I call it, is something that is a cancerous wound in this society.' (official website post of Levica, 20.4.2024).

***Ethnotribalism** is served to us as a European value. We have created a society of quotas, which has brought us every second child from Polog to be born in Italy, Switzerland or outside Macedonia. The first concept they offer us is the concept of Daytonization. Lebanonization of Macedonia, Beirutization of Skopje. That is their agenda, sponsored by Western embassies (press release on Levica's official Facebook page, 27.4.2024).*

ASNOM is what we are now reviving. Those who called us nationalists should know that more Turks and Bosniaks will enter by being on the Levica lists (in the Assembly) than by being on their ethno-tribalist lists. (press release on Levica's official Facebook page, 6.5.2024).

Larger number of young Turks and Bosniaks joined the/became MPs in the Assembly through the Levica party's parliamentary lists than through any list of ethno-tribalist parties in Macedonia. (post on Apasiev's official Facebook page, 14.5.2024).

Based on the quotes as examples, it is evident that Levica uses this harmful expression in relation to the judiciary and judicial processes, the redefinition of Macedonia's identity and that of the Macedonian people, the influence of Western embassies, the anti-Macedonian policies of SDSM, DUI, and the Albanian political bloc, as well as the false patriotism of VMRO-DPMNE. The latter places Levica in a position of 'alone against all', i.e., it puts other political actors in the 'same boat', and it sets itself apart, thus presenting itself as the 'saviour of the people'. The linguistic strategic manipulation with the use of this expression is aimed at highlighting other people's primitivism and unfavourable policies for Macedonia, while at the same time strengthening its position 'for the people and against the elites' and strengthening 'Macedonianism' among the citizens. Furthermore, by using political terms with negative connotation such as Lebanonization and Beirutization, it further reinforces the context of state fragmentation and urban fragmentation of cities, i.e. it highlights the process by which a potentially prosperous and stable country would become unsuccessful or fall into civil war.

POLITICAL PARTY SDSM

SDSM uses only two expressions as neologisms within the harmful narratives, and both refer to VMRO-DPMNE – as a political party, as well as to the former president of this party, Nikola Gruevski, and the current president, Hristijan Mickoski.

WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	1. VMRO-MVRO, MVRO-VMRO
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Both Facebook and website
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	VMRO-DPMNE Hristijan Mickoski Ivica Bisovski (Mickoski's security chief) Panche Toshkovski and Chiefs of the SVR Skopje and EBR Nikola Gruevski
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Undermining trust in the institutions Biased selection Fomenting divisions Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	5
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	Yes Title: MVRO-VMRO In action, Mickoski's security guards beat up police officers and prevented an anti-drug operation
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	Yes, from multiple online media outlets and one TV station manner: – a reported speech of a politician – a reported press release – analytical-reporting attachment – analysis/commentary – report

WHAT IT SAYS (neologism)	2. Gruevist(ichki)
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	Facebook
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	Nikola Gruevski VMRO-DPMNE Hristijan Mickoski
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	Undermining trust in the institutions Biased selection
HOW MANY POSTS are the neologisms present in?	1
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	Yes Title: A SCANDAL OF GRUEVIST PROPORTIONS IS THE NEWS THAT FAKE POLLS ARE BEING CRAFTED IN THE BASEMENTS OF THE WHITE PALACE!
What is the MAIN TOPIC area of the post(s) containing the neologism?	Domestic policy
Are the neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	No

Table 17. Harmful neologisms used by SDSM

SDSM uses both its official website and its official Facebook page as a communication channel. In 2 headlines of posts there is the presence of harmful neologisms, which include both expressions: *MVRO-VMRO* and *Gruevistichki*. They are used in order to criticize, belittle and discredit the political opponents, to undermine trust in certain institutions, to foment division and to spread panic, fear and uncertainty. The harmful neologisms of SDSM are part of posts whose main topic area is domestic policy.

Both expressions refer to a political actor, one collective, one individual. The expression *VMRO-MVRO/MVRO-VMRO* is used more often, i.e. it appears in 5 posts. The example *VMRO-MVRO* and *MVRO-VMRO* is derived from the abbreviations VMRO and MVR by adding the letter/sound O to MVR to achieve rhyme, and the adjective *Gruevstichki* is derived from the surname of Nikola Gruevski by adding the suffixes -ist + -ichki.

Regarding the further spread of the neologisms as harmful narratives by the media, i.e. the TV stations and the online media, one of two expressions *(VMRO-MVRO/MVRO-VMRO)* has been broadcast by several online media and one TV station such as: a reported speech of a politician, a reported statement, analytical-reporting news item, analysis/commentary and report.

Contextualization of the neologism VMRO-MVRO, MVRO-VMRO as the more commonly used expression of the two expressions

The very expression *VMRO-MVRO, MVRO-VMRO* clearly indicates that SDSM uses it towards VMRO-DPMNE and its members. The linguistic construction indicates the connection between VMRO-DPMNE and the Ministry of Interior in terms of the regime policies and the criminal actions and cover-ups and originates from the wiretapped conversations or so-called 'bombshells' in which the former Minister of Interior Gordana Jankulovska uses this coinage.

SDSM uses the neologism *VMRO-MVRO, MVRO-VMRO* as a harmful narrative in the following context:

*MVRO-VMRO is in action, again. A few days after entering the caretaker government, **MVRO-VMRO** was reactivated. Ivica Bisovski, Mickoski's head of security , physically attacked a police officer in front of the Mosh cafe bar in Skopje! Although he is a police officer himself, Mickoski's security guard tried to prevent a police drug operation (*official website post of SDSM, 19.2.2024*).*

*Apart from the fact that the beating showed true, criminal face of **VMRO-MVRO**, the public should know why Mickoski's security guards are sitting in front of the doors of a coffee bar at night. The Ministry of Interior and the Caretaker Minister of Interior from DPMNE should come out in front of the citizens and answer: What was the role of Mickoski's security guards? Was his task to prevent an action against drug dealers? Are those drug dealers connected to Hristijan Mickoski and DPMNE and in what manner? The citizens expect the answers. The institutions must act and everyone involved must bear responsibility. The scandal that leads directly to the White House must be completely cleared up. (*press release on the official Facebook page of SDSM, 19.2.2024*).*

*Hristijan Mickovski's bodyguard attacked a police officer in a famous Skopje bar to prevent an operation to detect drugs. This scandal must be completely cleared up by the police and the Ministry of Interior as soon as possible. The Ministry of Interior has a responsibility to answer regarding Mickovski's role in this situation. This is also about preventing an operation against drugs by his personal security. VMRO-MVRO are showing their true violent and criminal face (*press release on the official Facebook page of SDSM, 20.2.2024*).*

*DPMNE returned **VMRO-MVRO** in the most shameless, brutal way by arresting journalist Furkan Saliu. SDSM condemns this undemocratic act and demands his immediate release. It is clear to everyone that this is an attempt to silence and intimidate, after the journalist published an affair directly related to DPMNE. The heads of the SVR Skopje and EBR are newly appointed chiefs by Toshkovski. So the chiefs appointed by Toshkovski and DPMNE gave the order to arrest the journalist Saliu. This is a threat to freedom, democracy, and freedom of speech, guaranteed by the Constitution. Direct, brutal pressure on independent journalists, on those who investigate and work for the public interest (*press release on the official SDSM Facebook page, 7.4.2024*).*

*What we have been saying is being confirmed - there is no change in DPMNE, it is the same regime party from the past. We are seeing attempts in the most brutal way, by arresting a journalist who published an affair about DPMNE, to reinstate **VMRO-MVRO**. (*post on the official Facebook page of SDSM, 8.4.2024*).*

Arising out of quotes as examples, it is noticeable that SDSM uses this expression for two specific events: the attack on a police officer in a famous Skopje bar by Bisovski, Mickoski's head of security, and the arrest of journalist Furkan Saliu. Thereto, what it emphasizes is the past regime rule of VMRO-DPMNE, i.e., that in a way 'history is repeating itself', that nothing has changed and will not be different with the new coming to power of VMRO-DPMNE. By means of the linguistic manipulative strategy and the allusion to the Ministry of Interior in the name of the political party, SDSM emphasizes the 'criminal face' of VMRO-DPMNE, brutality and undemocratic rule, implicitly pointing to the opposite in itself, i.e., in its rule. Hereupon, it also calls for the responsibility of institutions and sides with the citizens, who are seeking answers, i.e., 'SDSM and the people' against 'VMRO-DPMNE and the Ministry of Interior'.

5.2. DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES AMONG THE POLITICAL ACTORS IN USE OF NEOLOGISMS

Comparatively, among the political parties, it can be noted that Levica uses the most neologisms – a total of 25, followed by VMRO-DPMNE – a total of 14, the Democratic Movement – a total of 4, and SDSM with only 2. Therefore, the opposition uses more harmful neologisms than the government.[36]

VMRO-DPMNE and Levica differ in their primary communication channels in terms of harmful neologisms. VMRO-DPMNE uses its official website more, and Levica its official Facebook page. On the other hand, the Democratic Movement uses only its official Facebook page, and SDSM, although it uses both channels of communication almost equally, is not relevant for comparison in this case given the very small number of neologisms they use to make some kind of practice of using one or the other channel of communication with the public.

The thing that is common to almost all political actors included in the analysis is that the harmful neologisms they use are most often associated with posts whose main topic area is domestic policy, except for the Democratic Movement, whose most common main topic area of posts is crime. In the context of harmful narratives, the neologisms are used to criticize, belittle and discredit the political opponents through character attacks and biased selection, undermining trust in certain institutions, fomenting divisions, spreading panic, fear and uncertainty, as well as spreading fear of foreign influence and spreading populism. It is important to point out that when criticizing, belittling and discrediting the political opponents; the political actors simultaneously present themselves as 'saviours of the people'.

Often, among all political actors, the harmful neologisms are also found in the titles of the posts, which further enhances their harmfulness, making them more visible and 'striking', easier to further share and spread, especially since very often a part of the public only reads headlines for quick information. Additionally, the media also have a practice of taking certain headlines from the posts of the political actors, thus further spreading these harmful neologisms and penetrating everyday language within socio-political life.

The one thing that is important to highlight is the use, or non-use, of common harmful neologisms. The following images illustrate this:

36 For a longer period while the HARM-TIVE research was being conducted, SDSM was in power, and VMRO-DPMNE and Levica were in opposition, which is why it is formulated in this way here and in similar cases below.

VMRO-DPMNE and LEVICA towards SDSM

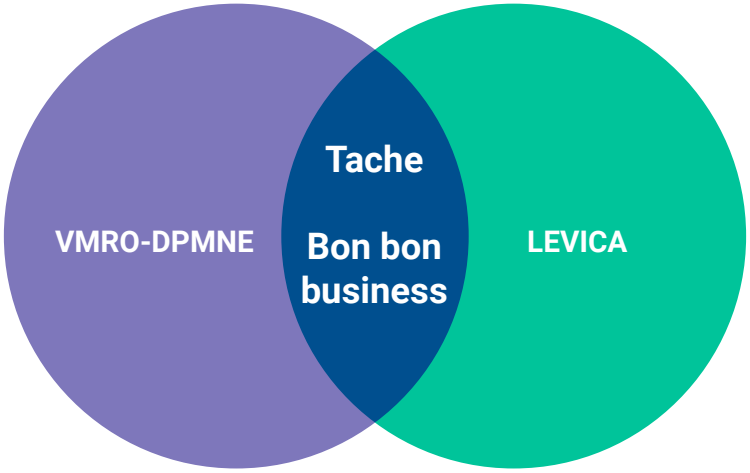


Figure 33. Common harmful neologisms of/by VMRO-DPMNE and Levica

LEVICA and SDSM towards VMRO-DPMNE

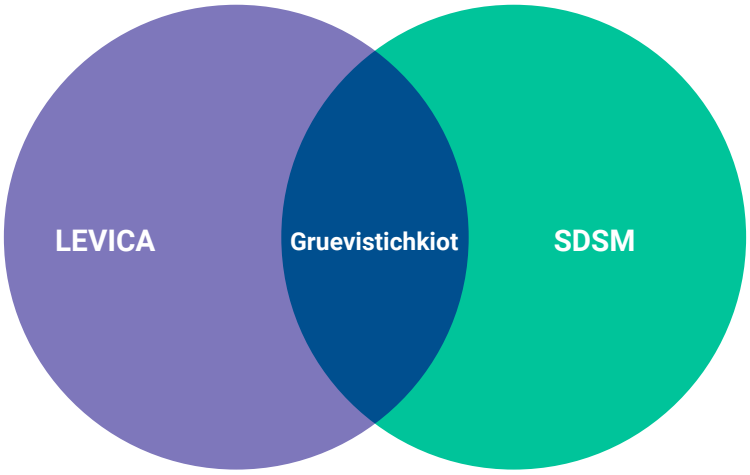


Figure 34. Common harmful neologisms of/by SDSM and Levica

The pictures clearly show that VMRO-DPMNE and Levica, and Levica and SDSM use common neologisms. However, pictures representing VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM, as well as the Democratic Movement and the other political parties, are not shown because they do not share any common harmful neologisms.

VMRO-DPMNE and Levica use the neologisms *Tache* and *bon-bon business*, while Levica and SDSM use the expression *gruevistichki* as a harmful neologism. Both expressions used by VMRO-DPMNE and Levica are from the aspect of opposition to the government, specifically towards SDSM, as the government at the time. On the other hand, the expression shared by Levica and SDSM targets VMRO-DPMNE, particularly the former president of the party. Moreover, it is noticeable that these three political parties use mutual harmful neologisms that refer only to them and their members, and not to any additional political actor, whether individual or collective.

It is interesting to note that the only Albanian party uses harmful neologisms that exclusively refer to a single political party and its members, namely the Albanian party – DUI, while the

Macedonian political parties use harmful neologisms that refer to more than one political party and its members, namely both Macedonian and Albanian political parties.

In this context, among the most commonly used harmful neologisms by the political parties, it is notable that, except for Levica, all others primarily direct these expressions at a specific party or government, its members, or particular events. In contrast, Levica employs the most frequently used harmful expression against multiple political opponents of different affiliations, across various contexts and topics. Regarding the most used harmful neologisms, VMRO-DPMNE and Levica use them towards both Macedonian and Albanian political parties, while SDSM only towards a Macedonian party and Democratic Movement only towards an Albanian party.

Additionally, the political actors analysed frequently use harmful expressions containing the suffix '—izacija (ization),' many of which have become part of everyday language and dictionaries. As a result, they were not included in this research analysis. However, it is important to note that some of these terms represent more unusual 'coinages' with added contextualized harmful meanings. Examples of such expressions include:

- ***Betonizacija*** (Betonization) (used by VMRO-DPMNE, Levica and SDSM, and linked to the so-called urban mafia, profiteering and unplanned and inhumane construction in Skopje);
- ***DUIzacija*** (DUIization) (used by VMRO-DPMNE and Levica, and linked to certain criminal actions by DUI and ONA and the appointment of Talat Djaferi as caretaker Prime Minister);
- ***Kosovarziacija*** (Kosovarization) (used by the Levica, and associated with certain Albanian policies and businesses that the Levica considers harmful).

Regarding media reporting on the harmful neologisms, the analysis reveals that the media more frequently broadcast harmful neologisms from the so-called large parties—VMRO-DPMNE (1 out of 2, or 50%) and SDSM (6 out of 14, or 46%)—compared to the smaller party, Levica (4 out of 25, or 16%). Meanwhile, there were not any instances of media reporting recorded for the harmful neologisms associated with the Democratic Movement

5.3. KEY MESSAGES FROM THE COMMUNICATIVE-LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

From the analysis conducted, it can be concluded that the political actors in Macedonia use a solid number of harmful neologisms, and they represent both completely new 'coinages' and well-known expressions that acquire a new meaning and are harmfully contextualized. The practice of creating 'coinages' is a distinct form of political expression. According to the analysis, the Macedonian political parties use more harmful neologisms, but this is certainly also due to most Macedonian political actors. However, the function and the purpose of the harmful neologisms are the same in both languages, i.e. among Macedonian and Albanian political actors. Especially, in terms of the harmful narratives, the political actors most often use the harmful neologisms to criticize, belittle and discredit the political opponents through

character attacks and biased selection, in order to undermine trust in certain institutions, foment division, spread panic, fear and insecurity, as well as spread fear of foreign influence and spread populism. The analysis reveals that, while criticizing, belittling, and discrediting their political opponents, the political actors simultaneously portray themselves as 'saviours of the people'—aligning with the people and their interests—while depicting their opponents as being 'against the people and their interests.

The harmful neologisms used by the political actors in Macedonia represent strategic linguistic manipulations aimed at the public, i.e. at future voters. The political actors who prove to be more skilled and creative in their creation and dissemination could much more successfully 'court' the public, while at the same time harming their political opponents more, thus creating a kind of 'pollution' of the socio-political space and of the communication ecology and an unfavourable climate for everyone. This is further amplified when the media broadcast harmful neologisms. The analysis showed that the media broadcast harmful neologisms from the political actors, especially from the so-called major parties, from which broadcast is more frequent, most often as a broadcast statement. Through the media, they become more accessible and more likely to enter the everyday use of the citizens, thus spreading further and becoming a practice.

The political actors in Macedonia most often use harmful neologisms that refer to a person, i.e. a political actor – both individual and collective (e.g.: *Zhmicko, tachevism, artanoid, casinoman, DUI-lottery*) and to government/governance and socio-political trends (e.g.: *bon-bon business, cancer mafia, casino party, pasokification, shvercerat (to smuggle)*). Some of these harmful neologisms have already entered wider use by the Macedonian public and are in some way 'normalized' (e.g.: *sorospii, severdjanski, MVRO-VMRO/VMRO-MVRO, gruevistichki, Tache*).

A devastating conclusion is that the majority of harmful neologisms are associated with expressions that denote shady businesses, criminal acts, and despotic rule, both from the perspective that these are socio-political developments, processes, and trends in the country; as well as from the perspective that harmful neologisms are created based on them. This, in turn, further reinforces these processes and integrates them into everyday discourse, despite their harmful nature for multiple reasons.

The political actors in Macedonia more frequently use their official pages, specifically Facebook profiles, as a channel for this type of communication, i.e., for spreading harmful neologisms. However, the use of official websites is also noteworthy in this context. It is important to highlight that there is no significant difference in the amount of content posted on Facebook, a more informal platform, compared to the content shared on official websites, which serve as channels for formal presentation and communication.

6. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

6.1. ANSWERS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research began with the basic question: Are there and how are harmful political narratives created and spread in Macedonia? Its specification emphasizes the two key entities – the political actors and the media, and the issues related to their political communication:

1. How do the main political actors – the politicians, the political parties, the government representatives (the parliamentary composition from 2020 - 2024 and the government composition from 2023 - 2024) in Macedonia construct harmful narratives on their own official websites and on their official Facebook profiles (the vocabulary used)?
2. What harmful narratives are constructed and sent to the public by the major political entities, including the prevalence of the types of harmful narratives?
3. What topics are most commonly associated with the construction of harmful narratives within the political discourse?
4. What are the main violations in the political communication of the political entities?
5. How do the media (television, online media) broadcast the political narratives created and shared by the political actors?
6. Are there any violations of the professional journalistic standards for fair, balanced, and impartial reporting on political actors and the reporting of their narratives? If so, what are they?

ANSWERS TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS ABOUT HARMFUL RHETORIC FROM THE POLITICAL ENTITIES

The communication of the political actors based on essential information, facts and evidence is of crucial importance, especially during elections, so that the citizens can be accurately informed, and based on that form appropriate opinions and judgments. The political parties, through the election campaigns, introduce the public to their programmes and plans for the development of all spheres of the society. In that intense political arena, reasoned and sharp criticism of the political opponents is expected and present in every democratic society. After all, the intersection of the arguments, the rhetoric, and the oratory skills is an inevitable part of the political processes that date back to the period before our era. However, in that arena there is a consensus on ethics in the public and the political communication, which defines the behaviour of the political actors when sharing information and messages with the public. The responsibility of the political actors in the culture of public speaking is extremely important. This implies respecting the principles of evidence-based political communication, professionalism and impartiality, ethics and non-spreading hate speech and discriminatory speech. When the political criticism relies on unsupported claims, lacks factual

evidence, and employs offensive language or labels against opponents, it shifts into communication driven by harmful narratives.

The political narratives are a legitimate, but also powerful tool of the political actors in their efforts to inform and mobilize the public, to shape its perceptions, attitudes and behaviours. Therefore, the political actors bear a tremendous responsibility. If used carelessly or with the aim of manipulating the public, then narratives become harmful with the potential to divide people, to deepen distrust in the institutions of the system, to insult, discredit or demonize.

THE RHETORIC AND THE VOCABULARY OF THE POLITICIANS IN MACEDONIA

Three out of ten political parties did not have harmful narratives on their official communication channels (website and Facebook profile), nor on their leaders' channels. Eleven out of twenty government representatives did not have harmful narratives on their official Facebook profiles. **Harmful narratives were identified** on the official websites and Facebook profiles of *seven political parties*, as well as on the Facebook profiles of their leaders and *nine government representatives*.

The words with a strong emotional charge, used exclusively in a negative connotation dominate the communication of the political entities. Such examples are: *transitional kleptomaniac, fathead, unhinged vmroids, vmroid nits, neoballists, quislings, incompetent, vassals, schizo, retard, runaway, schizophrenic, kleptomaniac, coward, wishy-washy person, deserter, rapist, tyrant, terrorist, bloodsuckers, louse*. Such political communication not only promotes a culture of discrimination on personal grounds, but also unequivocally causes intense negative emotions and states: fear, rage, anger, frustration, hatred, disgust, aggression, depression, hopelessness. Additionally, they most often create a discourse of 'saviours' and 'defenders' of the people, of justice, of identity, thereby directly addressing, again, the emotional part of the person and sending the sub contextual message that the citizens are powerless, that they cannot do it alone, and that they need someone to defend and save them.

There is a noticeable tendency among the political actors to construct neologisms, to 'coin' new words with a special meaning, which are part of certain harmful narratives. The purpose of such political newspeak is aimed at belittling, i.e. discrediting the political opponents and certain political ideologies. The communication-linguistic analysis conducted by HARM-TIVE identified a total of 42 neologisms in the analysed statements of Macedonian and Albanian political actors. Of these, 19 pertain to political actors, both individual and collective, including terms such as artanoiden, Zhmicko, VMRO-MVRO, MVRO-VMRO, Tachevizam, The Speaker - tyrant, and Casinoman (kazinomani in Albanian). The remaining 23 neologisms relate to governance practices and socio-political trends, often referencing shady dealings, criminal activities, and questionable leadership, with examples such as *Sorospisko, sorospii, Cancer mafia, Casino-business* (biznesi i kazinove in Albanian), Shvercerat *(Smuggling)*, and *Rouble-government*.

The deliberate omission of certain official names of political opponents as a means of belittling them is a common and frequent practice among the political entities. Both polarized sides use the tactic of accusing the 'others' of not deserving the Macedonian designation in their official names, implying that they are not fighting for Macedonia but rather for narrow party and personal interests.

A specific feature is that the most commonly used words in all content with harmful narratives are 'Macedonia' (often referred to without 'Republic' or 'North') and 'citizens/people.' This indicates that the primary goal of political entities' harmful rhetoric is to appeal to the collective identity of

the citizens and stir up a sense of belonging and patriotism. The intention is that, after citizens identify with the political actors, they will more easily receive and believe in what is being 'served' to them. Those who we perceive as 'ours' are always easier to adopt and more trusted.

Types, topics and frequency of broadcasting harmful narratives

The political actors created **14 different types of harmful narratives and**, on average, *three harmful narratives are present in one post.* **The topics** to which the harmful narratives are mostly related are domestic policy, most often current events (amendments to the Constitution, Criminal Code, caretaker government, the passport crisis, etc.). The largest political parties (primarily VMRO-DPMNE, SDSM and DUI) in Macedonia are most responsible for spreading harmful narratives. Concomitantly, they are also the political entities regarding which harmful narratives are most often spread.

What is common among the major political actors is their frequent use of four harmful narratives: 'undermining trust in the institutions,' 'biased selection,' 'character attacks,' and 'fomenting divisions.' Through these messages, they erode the public confidence in the system, present incomplete or one-sided views, and belittle their opponents by creating a stark distinction between 'the good ones' and 'the bad ones.' The narratives 'fomenting divisions, 'character attacks' and 'biased selection' are intensified during the election period. 'Biased selection' is especially intensified, which indicates that the political actors 'modified' or 'adjusted' the narratives according to their own interests in relation to the elections. All together, the public was 'bombarded' with harmful narratives on average 441 times per month, and on average 15 times per day. Figures that unequivocally speak of the harmful impact of political rhetoric on shaping public opinion and influencing citizens' decision-making. Their creators are most often the political parties, especially at the end of the year (December 2023), while among the political party leaders and government representatives, the most harmful rhetoric dominates during the election period.

(Non)compliance with standards of political communication

The answer to the question of communication among the political entities is the basic standards and principles for non-discriminatory and transparent political communication, such as:

- The principle of transparency
- The principle of professionalism and impartiality in the communication of the government representatives
- The principle of evidence-based communication
- The principle of ethical communication and preserving/protecting freedom of speech.
- The principle of non-spreading hate speech, discriminatory speech.

The political parties, their leaders, and government officials have violated all principles of non-discriminatory and transparent communication by using harmful rhetoric.

Through the harmful rhetoric that undermines trust in the institutions, with accusations of corruption, unprofessionalism, and without offering facts and evidence for harmful claims, the political entities have directly violated the principle of ethical communication and preserving/protecting freedom of speech. The ethical communication in politics builds the foundation for trust between the politicians and the citizens. It enables a more informed and engaged

electorate as well as healthier democratic relations and processes. By using a vocabulary of words with a negative emotional charge, such as *cancer mafia, false promises, profiteers*, instead of a vocabulary of clear and unambiguous words that will inform the public accurately, the political actors manipulate the citizens more by not offering evidence and facts for their claims. The politicians who practice ethical communication avoid emotional manipulation, fear-mongering, or inflammatory rhetoric. Ethical communication is aimed at educating and informing the public, not at exploiting emotions.

The principles of transparency and professionalism, impartiality and objectivity are blatantly violated through biased selection. The deliberate failure to convey the full picture by omitting part of the information directly contradicts the principle of transparency. A key aspect of this principle is the honesty and transparency of the politicians or the officials in sharing the truth with the public, even when it may not benefit them. The professional political communication avoids misleading statements, manipulation, and dishonesty, ensuring that the discourse remains constructive and respectful of others.

Harmful rhetoric that belittles an opponent and incites division among others also violates the principle of non-spreading hate speech and discriminatory speech. Rhetoric dominated by words such as *incompetent, vassals, kleptomaniacs* or *louse* that attack a political opponent or incite division does nothing to stop the spread of harmful and discriminatory language that can contribute to the emergence of violence, hatred or discrimination among the public. This principle is essential for creating an inclusive and fair political environment, where everyone is respected. By adhering to this principle, the political entities can help maintain social harmony, protect vulnerable groups and contribute to a more just and democratic society.

Harmful narrative	Standards/principles that have been violated
UNDERMINING TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS AND MEDIA – allegations of corruption, lack of transparency/ accountability, unprofessionalism, abuse of office without any attempt to substantiate those allegations.	Principle of ethical communication and preservation/ protection of freedom of speech Principle of professionalism, impartiality, objectivity Principle of evidence-based communication
BIASED SELECTION – Intentional failure to convey the full picture of the 'event', intentional omission of information that refutes the position of the person presenting it	Principle of transparency Principle of professionalism, impartiality, objectivity Principle of evidence-based communication
CHARACTER ATTACKS AND/OR DEMONIZATION OF OPPONENTS – Labelling, ridicule and gross disrespect of other people (the media workers, the civic activists, the political opponents, the public office holders), use of words with negative connotation.	Principle of ethical communication Principle of non-spreading hate speech, discriminatory speech
FOMENTING DIVISIONS – use of words and phrases that smear a particular group of people in order to foment divisions and discord between we/us/ours and you/yours. Usually we/ours is good, positive and desirable and you/yours is bad, negative and undesirable.	Principle of ethical communication Principle of non-spreading hate speech, discriminatory speech
POPULISM – directly or indirectly promoting one's own ideologies/ activities/behaviours as something that benefits the people, while the ideologies/activities/behaviours of the political opponents are promoted as something that serves a certain small elite group of people.	Principle of professionalism, impartiality, objectivity Principle of non-spreading hate speech and discriminatory speech

Table 18. Summary of standards violated in the most frequently used harmful narratives of the political entities

The communication of members of the Government is assessed through the Code of Ethical Conduct of Members of the Government and the public office holders appointed by the Government and the Code of Ethics for Civil Servants. They are expected to perform their work tasks in a politically neutral and impartial manner and not to represent their political beliefs in the performance of their work tasks. In contrast, the analysis showed that there is a trend among the officials to use official government Facebook pages for party-political activities. On the same profile, it was possible to observe activities that an official had as part of the Government, and at the same time to illustrate the contribution of the party, often equating the party with the Government, i.e. the state.

ANSWERS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE MEDIA REPORTING ON HARMFUL RHETORIC

In a democracy, the citizens need access to accurate and timely information so that they can make informed decisions, especially when voting or participating in public debates. The media provide important news, analysis and on-going monitoring of the government activities, policies and global events, helping people to stay educated on the issues that affect their lives. A healthy democracy relies on open public debate and dialogue, and the media provide a space, whether through articles, opinions, debates or social media platforms. By providing a platform for different groups and points of view, the media can help bridge the divisions in society. This fosters a sense of community and helps maintain social harmony in a democratic society. The media can help strengthen democratic principles such as equality, justice and human rights by promoting fair and balanced coverage. They can oppose discrimination, corruption and injustice by advocating for policies that support the democratic values.

Media reflection of the harmful political narratives

Despite these important functions of the media, the analysis showed that media reporting on the political harmful narratives is intense and present on a daily basis. This is equally true for the presence of harmful narratives on the airwaves of national television broadcasters and in the internet space of the online news media. Toxic reporting by the online news media is particularly intense, even more intense than by the creators of harmful narratives themselves – the political actors. In contrast to television, which experienced a decline in news items containing harmful narratives during the election period, the online media saw a higher monthly average of posts with such narratives during the same time.

Thus, the media multiplied the effect of harmful narratives by providing a platform for the political actors through which they reached the public, not just those who follow the politicians' communication channels.

The online news media broadcast the highest number of harmful narrative content, with 1,908 posts—three times, more than the TV stations, which aired 669 news items. At the same time, the TV stations had the lowest involvement in spreading harmful narratives, both compared to the online media and to the political actors themselves, who created 1,342 posts on the internet and Facebook. Half the number of harmful content on television compared to the online media is due to the fact that the subject of analysis were the news items in the central news of televisions, which are limited in terms of both time and space. In contrast, the online media do not have such time and space limitations and broadcast everything that the political actors posted on their official websites and/or Facebook profiles (parts of speeches by the political leaders, spokespersons, MPs, parts of appearances in debate shows, interviews, public conferences, etc.).

Both TV stations and the online news media almost mirrored the harmful narratives as the political actor created them. The most common harmful narratives are the same among the political entities and the media. In both groups, these include undermining trust, biased selection, character attacks, and fomenting divisions.

(Non)adherence to the professional journalistic matters

An analysis of media coverage reveals that journalists often acted as passive reporters, refraining from intervention or taking a stance. The lack of critical analysis of serious yet harmful claims, accusations, and statements by political actors—along with the absence of diverse perspectives and a frequent reliance on a single source—amplified public exposure to narratives that stirred emotions, potentially leading to unproductive behaviour or even aggression.

Considering that a significant portion of the posted content consists of reported speeches by a politician or a public statement from political parties, it can be concluded that journalists sometimes refrain from thoroughly analysing social events and developments. Instead, they allow the political actors to shape the narrative, often through the lens of daily politics. Thus, serious topics such as vetting in the judiciary, corruption and crime, foreign influences in the domestic policy, constitutional amendments, relations with neighbours, are opened without the intention of seriously analysing them, but only as part of political attacks and accusations. Therefore, the news items are one-sided, unprofessional and in no way contribute to enriching the public debate on these important topics.

A journalist's biased stance, whether against or in favour of a political actor, contradicts the professional journalistic standards. According to the Code of Ethics for Journalists, 'coverage of political processes, particularly elections, must be impartial and balanced. The journalist is required to maintain a professional distance from the political entities.'

The role of the media must always be for the benefit of the public and the society, and therefore this type of political statements, which create divisions, must not dominate the media space.

Impartiality and balance, along with truthfulness, are the basic elements of the journalistic profession. Consulting only one source and presenting only one side in the report or posted content, especially when that side is responsible for creating certain harmful narratives, is far from professional journalism. In cases where a journalist has already given space to unsubstantiated attacks, labelling, disinformation or insults of a political actor, the least they should do is consult the other side, confront them with the accusations and offer them the opportunity to present their side of the story.

In relation to upholding professional journalistic standards, an important conclusion about the reporting of harmful narratives during election campaigns becomes clear. Specifically, only television stations saw a significant decrease in harmful narratives during the election months (April and May 2024). The number of harmful narratives in TV news items dropped from 162 in January 2024 to 91 in April 2024 and 88 in May 2024. Televisions are subject to special regulations during the campaign period and hence the lower number of harmful narratives during this period. This is not the case with the online media, which even recorded the highest number of harmful narratives in the election month of April. This suggests a notable distinction between a regulated media environment and self-regulation in online media.

6.2. THE CONSEQUENCES OF HARMFUL NARRATIVES

In general, the production and the distribution of harmful narratives in the public communication space can contribute to polarization of the public debate, the normalization of bad communication practices, and the violation of standards and principles of ethical and professional communication. The communication with harmful narratives openly and directly violates the principles of ethical and professional communication, and public office holders and candidates for public office are expected to communicate transparently, responsibly, and accurately, in accordance with their commitment to working for the good of citizens. Although each of the analysed actors has regulations regulating professionalism and correctness in communication with the public, almost none of them complied with them.

The possible consequences of high exposure to harmful narratives are multiple and far-reaching at the expense of democracy and social well-being, but above all for the citizen himself. Therefore, adhering to the existing positive regulations that promote and uphold proper public communication (both political and media-related), such as the Code of Ethics for Public Servants (adopted in 2011), the Macedonian Journalists' Code (adopted and signed by journalists themselves in 2001), and the codes of individual political parties, is an obligation that the political actors and the media professionals should be frequently reminded of and revisit. The trust that citizens and the politicians and media workers have, obliges them to correct communication, which implies transparency, impartiality, and courtesy and based on evidence and facts, but is also their primary responsibility.

The baseless erosion of trust in the institutions, the fomenting of divisions, character attacks, demonization, and biased information selection contribute to widespread public distrust in the system. This, in turn, fosters hopelessness, isolation, disengagement from news, civic inactivity, conflict, and polarization of public discourse. As a result, the public becomes uninformed and passive, losing faith in the possibility of consensus on even the most critical socio-political issues. Lacking both the strength and motivation to hold elected officials accountable, the citizens become disconnected from those meant to serve their interests.

The use of the harmful narratives by the political actors in the public discourse encourages the normalization of the use of offensive language on the public stage and in public communication. When the offensive vocabulary is not condemned, its use is not restricted, after a long period it can be accepted as part of the general lexicon of the language, and thus enable the spread of harmful narratives and a low culture of the public speaking.

The harmful narratives in which the political entities offer themselves as 'saviours' and 'defenders' besides sending the message that the citizens are powerless, do not actually encourage or leave room for critical, independent thinking and decision-making based on data, facts and different aspects of looking at issues and problems. The emotional language used by politicians, which is often highly negative, also impacts the rational process of evaluating facts and making decisions. It evokes feelings such as fear, anger, contempt, rage, frustration, and hatred, potentially fostering destructive behaviours.

6.3. THEORETICAL AND SCIENTIFIC IMPLICATIONS

All political entities tried to offer their own frames through the information they forwarded to the public, highlighting certain aspects of an issue while minimizing others. Thus, some highlighted crimes and corruption scandals, as well as the failure to protect the national interests as the most important frames through which the public was supposed to perceive certain political entities. Others emphasized the ethno-tribalism as a characteristic of the political opponent. Others framed the elections as a choice between Macedonianism and anti-Macedonianism or between a bright future and a dark past. All these frames, intended to shape how the citizens perceive the political entities and the political reality, confirm the concept outlined in framing theory. In political communication, framing is a powerful tool for shaping public opinion and influencing political debates. As research has shown, the politicians and the media consistently use framing to advance their agendas by constructing narratives that appeal to specific values, ideologies, or emotions. Frames dictate what is highlighted in the discourse and what is omitted—whether honesty or patriotism, concern for the citizens or the European future, crime or nationalism takes centre stage.

A testament to the functionality of the strategic narrative theory is that none of the harmful narratives were randomly designed, but rather were well-thought-out strategies by which the political actors attempted to influence the public. The large number of harmful narratives has shown how political actors construct and communicate stories to shape perceptions and influence audience behaviour (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin and Roselle, 2013, 2017).

During the election period, all political entities crafted and promoted their slogans, which were frequently heard, including: 'We are restoring the dignity of the nation,' 'Macedonia is yours again,' 'Maximum for Macedonia,' 'Courage for Macedonia,' 'Dignified Macedonia,' 'People first,' 'Changes in your hands,' 'Incorruptible in the Assembly,' 'Programme for a European Future,' and 'New strategies for health and social policy – for a fairer society.' Through these slogans, the political entities sought to evoke symbolic meanings tied to national identity, self-perception, and self-acceptance, while also emphasizing honesty, loyalty, and courage as key values. This highlights the manner in which the political narratives often rely on symbols, metaphors, and cultural references, reinforcing their role in shaping interpersonal interactions, as outlined in the theory of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1986).

A large body of research suggests that the media influence public perceptions of important political issues, the shaping of democratic discourse, and civic engagement, often through framing, selective coverage, and agenda-setting (Bennett & Entman, 2001). Therefore, whether and what political narratives the media broadcast, and how selectively or completely they broadcast them, will determine the public perceptions of the political issues. If we know that one of the most common harmful narratives in the HARM-TIVE used by the political actors and broadcast through the media was biased selection, the deliberate failure to convey important facts that could undermine the position of the person expressing their views, we can only assume their harmful impact.

Several studies have identified increasing political polarization as a common challenge for democracies globally, affecting both established and emerging democracies. This polarization often divides the societies along ideological, ethnic, or religious lines. Leaders often exacerbate divisions to mobilize support from the voters, framing the opponents as existential threats to their group's values or survival (McCoy, Rahman & Somer, 2018).

The polarizing narratives intensify power struggles, lead to a decrease in compromise in politics, and weaken the citizens' trust in the democratic institutions. This type of harmful narrative (which

is very common in Macedonia, as confirmed by the research of HARM-TIVE) leads to the erosion of the democratic norms, fostering a climate where compromises and cooperation are increasingly rare.

Character attacks, discrediting campaigns significantly influence the political discourse, fostering an environment of distrust and hostility among the electorate. Hate narratives, which are strategically used to mobilize certain groups of voters while alienating others, contribute to a polarized political atmosphere, complicating efforts to foster inclusive democratic engagement. (Sokol & Sarajlić, 2023). Character attacks and/or demonization of the political opponents were one of the three most common types of harmful narrative, HARM-TIVE showed.

Previous research suggests that narratives are more effective when they clearly outline the consequences of a given policy. Narratives that emphasize certainty and highlight the benefits of a particular policy tend to increase the public support, whereas those that focus on uncertainty or make negative predictions about an opposing political option tend to decrease citizens' support. (Jerit, 2009). In many harmful narratives found in HARM-TIVE, particularly those that fuelled divisions, the rhetoric cantered on predicting future outcomes. It suggested that choosing one political option would lead to a return to a dark past, while the other would bring a bright European future. Similarly, one choice was framed as restoring the country to the right path, whereas the alternative was depicted as prolonging agony, crime, and corruption, along with the failure to protect state interests.

Many of the harmful narratives contained clear elements such as heroes, 'saviours of the people', 'defenders of national interests', but also villains in the form of 'criminals', 'usurpers', 'thugs', 'bloodsuckers', and victims in the form of 'suffering Macedonian people', 'deceived citizens', 'manipulated citizens'. All of these elements (thugs, heroes and victims) probably made the narratives more convincing (Shanahan & McBeth, 2018) and prompted a major political shift that resulted in a change of government.

Disinformation as a type of harmful narratives poses serious challenges to the democratic processes by undermining trust in the institutions, polarizing public opinion, and creating confusion regarding the factual information, which in turn can weaken the foundations of democratic governance. (Freelon, & Wells, 2020; Bennett & Livingston, 2018). If the research shows that disinformation disrupts civic engagement by creating an environment where the citizens avoid political news or create confusion as regards to the political issues (Bennett & Livingston, 2018), the fact that the HARM-TIVE survey contained some (albeit moderate) disinformation is truly worrying for the already fragile Macedonian democracy.

Numerous studies on the influence of emotions in the political narratives confirm that they are a powerful tool for influencing electoral outcomes (Brader, 2005), whereby emotions are not understood as irrational forces in the politics, but are central to informed political reasoning, shaping how individuals interpret, engage with, and react to the political events (Marcus & MacKuen, 2000). The Harm-TIVE research identified a large number of emotionally charged words (see from 93 to 119 p).

Fear and anxiety prompt critical reassessment, and more critical evaluations of the political events. In other words, they activate the 'surveillance system,' driving individuals to seek information, reconsider their political choices, and ultimately heighten their political awareness and openness to new ideas. (Marcus & MacKuen, 2000). Fear, anger, and distrust typically reinforce negative perceptions of the opposing group, hindering opportunities for reconciliation or dialogue (Bar-Tal, 2007).

Populism as an ideology sees society divided into two antagonistic groups: the 'pure people' versus the 'corrupt elite' (Mudde, 2004), and its appeal lies in its simplicity and directness, and is

particularly receptive to the citizens who feel excluded by the political elites. This in turn makes populism adaptable to a variety of political contexts and ideologies, from right-wing nationalism to left-wing anti-establishment movements.

The populist rhetoric and strategy risk undermining democratic norms by promoting division, reducing tolerance for pluralism, and eroding institutional checks and balances (Mudde, 2004). The populist narratives pose a risk to democratic values by fostering polarization and undermining tolerance and pluralism (Wodak, 2015). Populism as a harmful narrative also appears in political communication in Macedonia, ranking among the five most common harmful narratives (see p.61).

The communication-linguistic analysis of harmful neologisms constructed by the political actors has shown that a small number of examples already have the status of neologisms, such as severdjan or sorospia, and yet, given their pejorative and political background and limited use, they are still far from entering dictionaries and remain in the colloquial style and on social networks. However, language is not only in dictionaries and this spread of hate speech through neologisms certainly deserves greater interdisciplinary attention. Many authors, such as Crystal (1997), believe that authorial neologisms/occasionalisms are created in large numbers in the language, but only a few pass into neologisms and enter the lexicon. Specifically, Crystal confirms the view of Quirk et al. (1985) that 'the majority of such new formations remain uninstitutionalized/non-institutionalised attempts at lexicalization.'

The political leaders and their parties, together with the media, have the power to influence language development. The media are the channel through which linguistic innovations are spread, and the politicians can be categorized as innovators, individuals with strong ties within and outside the group (Labov, 1980: 261).

Why is it important the manner in which the language is used and its possibilities? The behaviour of people in the social environment is largely related to linguistic behaviour. Malinowski (1923) made a distinction between the 'context of culture' and the 'context of the situation,' introducing the concept of cultural and situational semantics. From a sociolinguistic perspective, this approach allows us to view language as a potential form of behaviour (Halliday, 1997: 31). In other words, language offers a range of possibilities and serves as an open system that enables individuals, as social beings, to choose their behaviour. The context of culture is the environment in which that potential is possible, and the context of the situation is the environment of each individual selection/choice. The potential of language is the potential of thought, with thought being understood as a form of behaviour. In this sense, it is of particular importance to select the possibilities (words, expressions) from the potential at the phonological, grammatical (and lexical) and semantic levels that will not have negative effects on the community – such as the words and expressions with pejorative meanings analysed here. The analysis of language as social behaviour is important not only for understanding social structure but also for understanding language in general.

The Macedonian language does not adopt a purist stance toward neologisms, with the media playing a key role in this, as they serve as the primary gateway for such words. Authorial neologisms and neologisms in general, used by writers and scientists, are characterized by a high degree of thoughtfulness and linguistic knowledge, contributing positively to enriching the Macedonian lexicon. In contrast, the media often uncritically adopt foreign words, either due to a failure to translate from other languages or out of ignorance or indifference, which negatively affects the standard Macedonian language.

6.4. RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE COMMITMENTS

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE POLITICAL ACTORS

- √ Political parties are urged to adopt codes of conduct that will establish minimum standards for respecting the principle of non-discrimination, prohibiting the spread of hatred and the restriction of human rights. Moreover, it is desirable and advisable to work on cross-party initiatives that will focus on improving tolerance, preventing discrimination, tackling disinformation, promoting intercultural understanding, social inclusion and respect for diversity. (UNHRSP, OSCE, OAS, ACHRP, 2021).
- √ The political actors while communicating with the public need to respect the principle of evidence-based communication because manipulative speech, which includes disinformation, inaccurate information, and malinformation, can seriously affect the democratic processes and elections, through the creation and spread of lies, character attacks, which can result in a decrease in trust in the electoral process and institutions.
- √ Educating the political actors, including spokespersons and the youth of the political parties, about when narratives become harmful and about their great destructive power.
- √ Conscious avoidance of manipulating the citizens' patriotic feelings, collective identity, and group affiliation.
- √ Promoting neologisms for the purpose of creative investment, constructing and encouraging a positive and optimistic reality, instead of neologisms whose purpose is to offend and discredit.
- √ Educating the youth within political parties about the principles and standards of political communication, which include the responsibilities of politicians to ensure transparency and accessibility, represent the public interest, avoid spreading disinformation and unverified information, refrain from using hate speech and discriminatory language, and uphold the freedom of speech.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SERVANTS

- √ The government representatives should follow the Government's Communication Strategy, which explicitly states that content that may be offensive to individuals or a specific group of citizens should not be posted or shared.
- √ The public servants, in accordance with the Code of Ethics for Civil Servants, must consistently respect the principle of equality of the political parties, according to which they must treat political parties equally and not subject them to discrimination on various grounds.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MEDIA

- √ Consistent adherence to the journalistic professional standards, especially the basic principles of truthfulness, accuracy and verification of claims made before they are posted, ensuring pluralism of opinions, refraining from broadcasting hate speech, and striking a balance between freedom of expression and prevention of hate speech.
- √ Promoting self-regulation while also enhancing the implementation of online media regulations in the digital space.
- √ Enforcing legal and ethical principles during election cycles for both traditional and online media, including expanding the legal framework to include obligations for online news media when reporting during elections.
- √ Respect and application of ethical election reporting. A roadmap to follow is the Guide for Ethical Media Coverage of Elections in North Macedonia by the Association of Journalists of Macedonia in 2021, which clearly states that journalists must not use hate speech in their reporting and refrain from using intolerant or inflammatory rhetoric; whereas, in cases where such rhetoric is used by the political actors, to be careful how they report in order to convey that the candidate is using such rhetoric, but not to spread it further. In this context, the Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists of the International Federation of Journalists states that 'in reporting, journalists should not contribute to hatred or prejudice and should do everything possible to avoid participating in the spread of discrimination on various grounds' (International Federation of Journalists (2019) Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists). Finally, the ODIHR, EU and Council of Europe Guidelines on Media Analysis during Election Observation Missions recommend that the media refrain from overt or covert expressions of intolerance and 'carefully consider whether the publication of such statements contributes to defamation and ridicule on the grounds of sex, race, colour, language, religion and belief, membership of a national or ethnic minority group, social differences or other opinion' (6 OSCE/ODIHR, Council of Europe & EU (2005) European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) Guidelines on Media Analysis during Election Observation Missions, Strasbourg).
- √ The journalist, as the first point of the Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists of the International Federation of Journalists points out, 'respect for the facts and for the right of the public to truth is the first duty of the journalist' (International Federation of Journalists (2019) Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists'). Moreover, the responsibility that they have towards the public is far greater than the responsibility towards the employers, the authorities or the political parties. Therefore, regardless of the values the media represents and what its editorial policy is, professional journalists must follow the principles of truthfulness, impartiality and balance.

INSTRUMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- √ The instrument has been confirmed as valid and very amenable to detailed analysis, and it is therefore recommended for use by expert, professional and academic organizations to monitor political communication and media reporting, especially during election periods.

- ✓ The instrument offers quantitative analysis, so it is always good to combine it with qualitative analysis, content analysis and discourse analysis.
- ✓ Before use, good training is required for its use and familiarization with all its aspects.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The large number of harmful narratives created and disseminated in the public domain has a significant impact on the citizens and their decisions. The purpose of the harmful narratives is to manipulate the public opinion, shaping perceptions and attitudes and inciting emotions that can lead to discrimination, hatred or violence. Hence, their constant monitoring and analysis will contribute to greater awareness of their existence, potential harmfulness, as well as pressure on the political actors and the media to adhere to professional principles and standards.

Emotions, both positive and negative, have always been a fundamental element of the political action and, consequently, of the political communication. The election campaigns are the context in which the dramatization of political narratives reaches its culmination. This is further fuelled by the increasingly personalized, popularized, and populist rhetoric and communication styles of leaders and other political figures. Hence, additional research is necessary on the relationship between the political narratives and emotions, answering questions such as how political feelings can be shaped. If so, what role do the narratives play in such shaping? Is there a connection between our ability to be moved by stories, whether true or fictional, and the way emotions are shaped in politics? Etc.

Since the subject of this research was not the potential impact of the harmful narratives from the public's perspective, in subsequent similar monitoring it is necessary to analyse the perception of the citizens and their reactions to harmful narratives, as well as how harmful narratives influence the citizens' decisions, opinions, and feelings.

The topic related to the harmful neologisms within the political communication in Macedonia is also very important for reflection, research and analysis in the field of the political science, communications, media and linguistics and pragmatics. Given that the manipulative purpose most often stands behind their creation and dissemination, as well as the way in which they are disseminated, without adequate support with relevant evidence, it is very important to highlight the responsibility of the political actors and the media in the dissemination of harmful neologisms.

In conclusion, the political communication implies certain standards and principles, and one should always take into account the standards for ethical and professional journalistic reporting in order to prevent the damage caused by the spread of harmful narratives on the citizens, society and its progress and socio-political trends. It is crucial that this topic is not overlooked in scientific research, as it can significantly contribute to understanding various aspects of political communication, including the vital role of the media. Cooperation across multiple levels and among relevant and diverse bodies, institutions, and organizations is particularly important, for both research and education. This collaboration aims to raise awareness about the (non)use of harmful narratives and to promote the development and implementation of better practices in this area.

7. ATTACHMENTS

Form 1: Monitoring and analysis of the official websites and official pages/profiles on Facebook of the sample of political actors.

Guidelines for the persons who monitor

The analysis focuses on all posts on the official website and the official Facebook profile being analysed, which mention the targeted political actors and simultaneously include a harmful narrative.

1. Enter your identification code:

2. Enter the code of the political actor whose website, i.e. whose FB profile is being analysed):* Use the **FB codes**:

3. Sequence number of the post (the sequence number of each individual post is entered; each new day, the numbering of posts starts from 1):*

4. Date of the post (select a date):

5. Where did the post appear?

- Facebook
- Website
- Both on Facebook and on the website

6. Total number of posts on the official FB page/profile during the day being analysed:

7. Total number of posts on the official website of the political party during the day being analysed:

8. Link of the Facebook post: (if it appears there)

9. Link of the online post: (if it appears there)

10. Post title (if any) or short description of the post: Enter the text from the FB post if there is an additional harmful narrative.

11. If the post appears on both a website and Facebook, is there additional text with a harmful narrative in the Facebook post?

- Yes
- No

12. Type of post:

- Press conference
- Press release
- Reaction
- Interview
- Article
- Speech
- Statement
- Other (specify)

13. Main topic area (topic that dominates the post, i.e. the author emphasizes it the most):

- Domestic policy
- Foreign policy
- Economy
- Healthcare
- Education
- Social policy
- Culture
- Sports

- Judiciary
- Crime
- Corruption
- Other (specify)

14. Specification of the main topic (define the topic, e.g.: constitutional amendments, fight against corruption, public procurement, EU integration.... etc.):

15. Is there a secondary topic - a topic that is mentioned in addition to the main topic?

- Yes
- No

Specification of the secondary topic – if any (define the topic, e.g.: constitutional amendments, fight against corruption, public procurement, EU integration.... etc.):

17. Specify the number of actors:

18. Actors (list them by name, including the main actor, the political actor whose official page/official FB profile is being analysed):*

19. How does the main actor name themselves and/or name the party (write all the words they use to describe themselves or the party; if they do not name themselves or the party, do not write anything)?

20. How does the main actor (the political actor whose official page/official FB profile is being monitored, i.e. the member of the political party who speaks on behalf of the party) present themselves and/or their party?*

- They portray their party/their leader as saviours
- They portray their party/their leader as defenders of the people
- They portray their party/their leader as defenders of their own national identity
- They portray their party/their leader as defenders of justice
- They portray their party/leader as transparent/accountable
- They portray their party/their leader as EU-oriented
- There is no particular intention to portray themselves in any 'light' - it is simply conveying information
- Other (specify)

21. Are there other actors/subjects besides the main actor?

- Yes
- No

22. First other actor/subject (identify the actor and list any terms by which they are referred to.):

23. First other actor/subject - method of presentation:

- Quoted
- Paraphrased
- They are being discussed

24. Approach towards the first other actor/subject in the entire post:

- Neutral
- Negative
- Positive
- Ambivalent

25. Second other actor/subject (identify the actor and list any terms by which they are referred to):

26. Second other actor/subject - method of presentation:

- Quoted
- Paraphrased
- They are being discussed

27. Approach towards the second other actor/subject in the entire post:

- Neutral
- Negative
- Positive
- Ambivalent

28. Third other actor/subject (identify the actor and list any terms by which they are referred to):

29. Third other actor/subject - method of presentation:

- Quoted
- Paraphrased
- They are being discussed

30. Approach towards the third other actor/subject in the entire post:

- Neutral
- Negative
- Positive
- Ambivalent

31. Number of sources:

- 1 (when the main actor is the only source)
- 2
- 3 and more

32. State the type of the other sources (the main actor is not considered as a source here):

- Stated unclear
- Stated imprecise
- Stated precise
- Media outlet as a source

33. Post elements - indicate the element present in the post:

- Text
- Audiovisual recording
- Photograph/image
- Charts, tables
- Additional elements contained in the post (e.g.: hashtag, FB status...)

34. Reason for the post:

- Announced event
- Current event
- Current scheduled event
- A pseudo-event
- Social event/social topic
- Other (specify)

35. **INDICATOR 1/2**: Allegations of corruption, non-transparency/non-accountability, unprofessionalism, abuse of office without any attempt to substantiate those claims. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

38. **INDICATOR 1/2:** Who 'creates' the indicator?

- Political Party
- Some other political entity (or entities)
- Someone else who is not a political entity

39. **INDICATOR 1/2:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Disinformation
- Undermining trust in institutions and the media
- Biased selection

40. **INDICATOR 3:** Misuse of information of a private nature (listing, disclosure of private or personal information, for example e-mails or private messages) or personal tragedies, disability, social status, marital status of one's political opponents to achieve one's own goal. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

41. **INDICATOR 3:** Write the text of the post where the indicator is identified. In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

42. **INDICATOR 3:** Describe the part of the post visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

43. **INDICATOR 3:** Who 'creates' the indicator?

- Political Party
- Some other political entity (or entities)
- Someone else who is not a political entity

44. **INDICATOR 3:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Malinformation
- Character attacks and/or demonizing opponents
- Hate speech
- Monitoring of FB and websites (from March 2024)

45. **INDICATOR 4:** Labelling, ridiculing and grossly disrespecting other persons (media workers, civil activists, political opponents, public office holders...). Use of words with negative connotation. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

46. **INDICATOR 4:** Write the text of the post where the indicator is identified. In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

47. **INDICATOR 4:** Describe the part of the post visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

48. **INDICATOR 4:** Who 'creates' the indicator?

- Political Party
- Some other political entity (or entities)
- Someone else who is not a political entity

49. **INDICATOR 4:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Character attacks and/or demonizing opponents

50. **INDICATOR 5:** Speech that insults a specific group or justifies hate speech against a specific group, based on race, skin colour, origin, national or ethnic origin, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, belonging to a marginalized group, language, nationality, social background, education, religion or belief, political conviction, other belief, disability, age, family or marital status, property status, health status, personal capacity and social status or any other grounds. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

51. **INDICATOR 5:** Write the text of the post where the indicator is identified. In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

* 55. **INDICATOR 6:** Deliberately not conveying the full picture of the 'event', deliberately omitting information that refutes the position of the one presenting it. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

56. **INDICATOR 6:** Write the text of the post where the indicator is identified. In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

57. **INDICATOR 6:** Describe the part of the post visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

58. **INDICATOR 6:** Who 'creates' the indicator?

- Political Party
- Some other political entity (or entities)
- Someone else who is not a political entity

59. **INDICATOR 6:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Disinformation
- Undermining trust in institutions and the media
- Biased selection
- Manipulative audiovisual media content

60. **INDICATOR 7:** It is claimed to be true that political opponents/public institutions are manipulated by behind-the-scenes (secret) powerful groups (e.g. Freemasons, etc.) without presenting any facts or evidence, or using sources that lack any credibility or authority. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

61. **INDICATOR 7:** Write the text of the post where the indicator is identified. In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

62. **INDICATOR 7:** Describe the part of the post visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

63. **INDICATOR 7:** Who 'creates' the indicator?

- Political Party
- Some other political entity (or entities)
- Someone else who is not a political entity

64. **INDICATOR 7:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Disinformation
- Conspiracy theories
- Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty
- Foreign influence

65. **INDICATOR 8:** Use of sentences, phrases of unfounded accusations of a foreign entity (or entities) of interfering in the internal affairs of the state, contrary to the interests of the state, which, in fact, is a violation of the democratic processes. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

66. **INDICATOR 8:** Write the text of the post where the indicator is identified. In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

67. **INDICATOR 8:** Describe the part of the post visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

68. **INDICATOR 8:** Who 'creates' the indicator?

- Political Party
- Some other political entity (or entities)
- Someone else who is not a political entity

69. **INDICATOR 8:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Foreign influence
- Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty

70. **INDICATOR 9:** Use of words and phrases that smear a certain group of people in order to foment division and discord between us/we/our and you/your. Usually we/our is good, positive and desirable and you/your is bad, negative and undesirable. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

71. **INDICATOR 9:** Write the text of the post where the indicator is identified. In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

72. **INDICATOR 9:** Describe the part of the post visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

73. **INDICATOR 9:** Who 'creates' the indicator?

- Political Party
- Some other political entity (or entities)
- Someone else who is not a political entity

74. **INDICATOR 9:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Fomenting divisions
- Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty

75. **INDICATOR 10:** Use of words and phrases that insult, belittle, ridicule a person and/or group based on their gender and/or sex affiliation. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

76. **INDICATOR 10:** Write the text of the post where the indicator is identified. In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

77. **INDICATOR 10:** Describe the part of the post visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

78. **INDICATOR 10:** Who 'creates' the indicator?

- Political Party
- Some other political entity (or entities)
- Someone else who is not a political entity

79. **INDICATOR 10:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Character attacks and/or demonizing opponents
- Sexism
- Hate speech

80. **INDICATOR 11:** Use of words that insult, discredit, smear a group of people (foreigners) in order to cause fear, rejection and distancing from them, even causing certain behaviour towards that group. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

81. **INDICATOR 11:** Write the text of the post where the indicator is identified. In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

82. **INDICATOR 11:** Describe the part of the post visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

83. **INDICATOR 11:** Who 'creates' the indicator?

- Political Party
- Some other political entity (or entities)
- Someone else who is not a political entity

84. **INDICATOR 11:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Xenophobia if they are foreigners
- Ethnocentrism
- Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty

85. **INDICATOR 12:** Use of sentences, words, phrases that glorify one's own ethnicity, and all others are less important, valuable, worthy. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

86. **INDICATOR 12:** Write the text of the post where the indicator is identified. In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

87. **INDICATOR 12:** Describe the part of the post visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

88. **INDICATOR 12:** Who 'creates' the indicator?

- Political Party
- Some other political entity (or entities)
- Someone else who is not a political entity

89. **INDICATOR 12:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Ethnocentrism
- Extreme patriotism and/or nationalism

90. **INDICATOR 13:** Images, videos and audio recordings that are created to mislead the public that something is real and true when it is not (and whose falsity can be proven). Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

91. **INDICATOR 13:** Write the text of the post where the indicator is identified. In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

92. **INDICATOR 13:** Describe the part of the post visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

93. **INDICATOR 13:** Who 'creates' the indicator?

- Political Party
- Some other political entity (or entities)
- Someone else who is not a political entity

94. **INDICATOR 13:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Disinformation
- Manipulative audiovisual media content
- Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty
- Biased selection
- Character attacks and/or demonizing opponents
- Hate speech

95. **INDICATOR 14: Words/sentences that explicitly or implicitly, directly or indirectly promote one's ideologies/activities/behaviours as something that benefits the people/the masses/the common 'honest man', humanity... while the political opponents' ideologies/activities/behaviours, the characteristics are promoted as something that serves a certain small elite group of people, which does not reflect the will of the people.**
Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

96. **INDICATOR 14:** Write the text of the post where the indicator is identified. In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

97. **INDICATOR 14:** Describe the part of the post visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

98. **INDICATOR 14:** Who 'creates' the indicator?

- Political Party
- Some other political entity (or entities)
- Someone else who is not a political entity

99. **INDICATOR 14:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Populism
- Foreign influence
- Extreme patriotism and/or nationalism
- Conspiracy theories

100. Final note on the post (if applicable, list any dilemmas, questions, or other thoughts that came up during your evaluation but could not be included earlier):

Form 2: Monitoring and analysis of the central news editions on the selected online news media

Introductory data

GUIDELINES FOR THE PERSONS WHO MONITOR

This questionnaire analyses all posts and news items posted on the selected online media that feature the targeted actors (as outlined in the online media monitoring guidelines) and contain a harmful narrative

1. Enter your identification code:

2. Enter the code of the online media you are analysing:

Date

3. Post/news item date (select a date):

4. Sequence number of the post/news items in the input (the sequence number of each separate piece of informational content is entered; each new day, the numbering of posts/news items starts from 1):

5. Preview /title of the post/news item (write down the entire preview, i.e. the entire title of the informative content):

6. Link from the post/news item:

7. Is the post/news item authored with a name and surname, or are there initials of the author of the post/news item?

- Yes
- No
- Other (specify)

8. Genre

- A politician's reported speech
- Reported press release
- News/news with statement
- Report
- Analytical-reporting news item
- Analysis/Commentary
- Comment
- Interview
- Other (specify)

9. Main topic area (topic that dominates the post, i.e. the author emphasizes it the most):

- Domestic policy
- Foreign policy
- Economy
- Healthcare
- Education
- Social policy
- Culture
- Sports
- Judiciary
- Crime
- Corruption
- Other (specify)

10. Specification of the main topic (define the topic, e.g.: constitutional amendments, fight against corruption, public procurement, EU integration.... etc.):

11. Is there a secondary topic - a topic that is mentioned in addition to the main topic?

- Yes
- No
- Online media monitoring (since March 2024)
- Secondary topic

12. Specification of the secondary topic – if any (define the topic, e.g.: constitutional amendments, fight against corruption, public procurement, EU integration.... etc.):

Actors

13. Actors (write down the total number of actors; all actors are counted, excluding the journalist):

14. **First** actor (list the actor and all the terms used to refer to them in the news item):

15. Method of presentation the **first** actor:

- Quoted
- Paraphrased
- They are being discussed

16. Who evaluates the first actor?

- Journalist
- Someone else
- Themselves

17. Approach towards the first actor in the entire news item:

	Does not evaluate them	Neutral (0)	Negative (-)	Positive (+)	Ambivalent (-/+)
Journalist					
Someone else					
Themselves					

18. **Second** actor (list the actor and all the terms used to refer to them in the news item):

19. Method of presentation the **second** actor:

- Quoted
- Paraphrased
- They are being discussed

20. Who evaluates the second actor?

- Journalist
- Someone else
- Themselves
- Does not evaluate them

21. Approach towards the **second** actor throughout the entire news item:

	Does not evaluate them	Neutral (0)	Negative (-)	Positive (+)	Ambivalent (-/+)
Journalist					
Someone else					
Themselves					

22. **Third** actor (list the actor and all the terms used to refer to them in the news item):

23. Method of presentation of the **third** actor:

- Quoted
- Paraphrased
- They are being discussed

24. Who evaluates t**he third** actor?

- Journalist
- Someone else
- Themselves

25. Approach towards the third actor throughout the entire news item:

	Does not evaluate them	Neutral (0)	Negative (-)	Positive (+)	Ambivalent (-/+)
Journalist					
Someone else					
Themselves					

26. Number of sources:

- 1
- 2
- 3 and more
- There are no sources
- TV monitoring (from March 2024)
- Additional sources
- Note regarding the sources (if any):

27. Transparency in citing the sources of information:

- Stated unclear
- Stated imprecise
- Stated precise
- The journalist as a source
- Another media outlets a source
- Note regarding the parties (if any):

28. Side of the sources

- Only one side
- Two sides
- Multiple sides

Elements and visualization

29. Visualization of the news item:

- Slide/picture
- Charts/texts/tables
- Archive footage
- Direct live reporting
- Current recording

30. Enter a description of the visualization (only if it is related to a harmful narrative):

31. Reason for the news item:

- Announced event
- Current event
- Current scheduled event
- A pseudo-event
- Social event/social topic
- Other (specify)

Harmful narratives

32. **INDICATOR 1/2:** Allegations of corruption, non-transparency/non-accountability, unprofessionalism, abuse of office without any attempt to substantiate those claims. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

33. **INDICATOR 1:** Write down the text of the post/news item where the indicator is identified. In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

34. **INDICATOR 1:** Describe the part of the news item visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

35. **INDICATOR 1:** Who 'creates' the indicator?

- The journalist
- Political actors

36. **INDICATOR 1:** When a journalist creates a harmful narrative, an evaluation should be conducted to determine why the journalistic professional and ethical standards have been breached. The evaluation should be well-reasoned and purposeful.

37. **INDICATOR 1:** In the event when the political actors 'create' the indicator, list all the political actors who do it and describe the manner in which they do it.

38. **INDICATOR 1:** The journalist's attitude towards the harmful narrative by the political actors:

- They report it without any intervention.
- They clearly highlight it, but do not take any position/try to remain neutral and distant.
- They report it with condemnation/criticism (explicitly or implicitly)
- They report it with approval (explicitly or implicitly)

39. **INDICATOR 1:** When both of them 'create' the indicator, whether:

- The journalist supports the indicator that is created by the political actors (they are oriented similarly)
- The journalist opposes this indicator from the political actors (they are oriented in the opposite direction)

40. **INDICATOR 1:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Disinformation
- Undermining trust in institutions and the media
- Biased selection

41. **INDICATOR 3:** Misuse of information of a private nature (listing, disclosure of private or personal information, for example e-mails or private messages) or personal tragedies, disability, social status, marital status of one's political opponents to achieve one's own. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

42. **INDICATOR 3:** Write down the text of the post/news item where the indicator is identified. In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

43. **INDICATOR 3:** Describe the part of the news item visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

44. **INDICATOR 3:** Who 'creates' the indicator:

- The journalist
- Political actors

45. **INDICATOR 3:** When a journalist creates a harmful narrative, an evaluation should be conducted to determine why the journalistic professional and ethical standards have been breached. The evaluation should be well-reasoned and purposeful.

46. **INDICATOR 3:** In the event when the political actors 'create' the indicator, list all the political actors who do it and describe the manner in which they do it.

47. **INDICATOR 3:** The journalist's attitude towards the harmful narrative by the political actors:

- They report it without any intervention.
- They clearly highlight it, but do not take any position/try to remain neutral and distant.
- They report it with condemnation/criticism (explicitly or implicitly)
- They report it with approval (explicitly or implicitly)

48. **INDICATOR 3:** In the case where both of them 'create' the indicator, whether:

- The journalist supports the indicator that is created by the political actors (they are oriented similarly)
- The journalist opposes this indicator from the political actors (they are oriented in the opposite direction)

49. **INDICATOR 3:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives to which the indicator refers.

- Malinformation
- Character attacks and/or demonizing opponents
- Hate speech
- TV monitoring (from March 2024)

50. **INDICATOR 4:** Labelling, ridiculing and grossly disrespecting other persons (media workers, civil activists, political opponents, public office holders...). Use of words with negative connotation. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

51. **INDICATOR 4:** Write down the text of the post/news item where the indicator is identified. In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

52. **INDICATOR 4:** Describe the part of the news item visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

53. **INDICATOR 4:** Who 'creates' the indicator:

- The journalist
- Political actors

54. **INDICATOR 4:** When a journalist creates a harmful narrative, an evaluation should be conducted to determine why the journalistic professional and ethical standards have been breached. The evaluation should be well-reasoned and purposeful.

55. **INDICATOR 4:** In the event when the political actors 'create' the indicator, list all the political actors who do it and describe the manner in which they do it.

56. **INDICATOR 4:** The journalist's attitude towards the harmful narrative by the political actors:

- They report it without any intervention.
- They clearly highlight it, but do not take any position/try to remain neutral and distant.
- They report it with condemnation/criticism (explicitly or implicitly)
- They report it with approval (explicitly or implicitly)

57. **INDICATOR 4:** In the case where both of them 'create' the indicator, whether:

- The journalist supports the indicator that is created by the political actors (they are oriented similarly)
- The journalist opposes this indicator from the political actors (they are oriented in the opposite direction)

58. **INDICATOR 4:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Character attacks and/or demonizing opponents

59. **INDICATOR 5:** Speech that insults a specific group or justifies hate speech against a specific group, based on race, skin colour, origin, national or ethnic origin, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, belonging to a marginalized group, language, nationality, social background, education, religion or belief, political conviction, other belief, disability, age, family or marital status, property status, health status, personal capacity and social status or any other grounds. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

60. **INDICATOR 5:** Write down the text from the attachment where the indicator is identified. In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

61. **INDICATOR 5:** Describe the part of the news item visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

62. **INDICATOR 5:** Who 'creates' the indicator:

- The journalist
- Political actors

63. **INDICATOR 5:** When a journalist creates a harmful narrative, an evaluation should be conducted to determine why the journalistic professional and ethical standards have been breached. The evaluation should be well-reasoned and purposeful.

64. **INDICATOR 5:** In the event when the political actors 'create' the indicator, list all the political actors who do it and describe the manner in which they do it.

65. **INDICATOR 5:** The journalist's attitude towards the harmful narrative by the political actors:

- They report it without any intervention.
- They clearly highlight it, but do not take any position/try to remain neutral and distant.
- They report it with condemnation/criticism (explicitly or implicitly)
- They report it with approval (explicitly or implicitly)

66. **INDICATOR 5:** In the case where both of them 'create' the indicator, whether:

- The journalist supports the indicator that is created by the political actors (they are oriented similarly)
- The journalist opposes this indicator from the political actors (they are oriented in the opposite direction)

67. **INDICATOR 5:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Hate speech

68. **INDICATOR 6:** Deliberately not conveying the full picture of the 'event', deliberately omitting information that refutes the position of the one presenting it. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

69. **INDICATOR 6:** Write down the text of the post/news item where the indicator is identified. In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

70. **INDICATOR 6:** Describe the part of the news item visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

71. **INDICATOR 6:** Who 'creates' the indicator:

- The journalist
- Political actors

72. **INDICATOR 6:** When a journalist creates a harmful narrative, an evaluation should be conducted to determine why the journalistic professional and ethical standards have been breached. The evaluation should be well-reasoned and purposeful.

73. **INDICATOR 6:** In the event when the political actors 'create' the indicator, list all the political actors who do it and describe the manner in which they do it.

74. **INDICATOR 6:** The journalist's attitude towards the harmful narrative by the political actors:

- They report it without any intervention.
- They clearly highlight it, but do not take any position/try to remain neutral and distant.
- They report it with condemnation/criticism (explicitly or implicitly)
- They report it with approval (explicitly or implicitly)

75. **INDICATOR 6:** In the case where both of them 'create' the indicator, whether:

- The journalist supports the indicator that is created by the political actors (they are oriented similarly)
- The journalist opposes this indicator from the political actors (they are oriented in the opposite direction)

76. **INDICATOR 6:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Disinformation
- Undermining trust in institutions and the media
- Biased selection
- Manipulative audiovisual media content

77. **INDICATOR 7:** It is claimed to be true that political opponents/public institutions are manipulated by behind-the-scenes (secret) powerful groups (e.g. Freemasons, etc.) without presenting any facts or evidence, or using sources that lack any credibility or authority. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

78. **INDICATOR 7:** Write down the text of the post/news item where the indicator is identified. In this section, the sentence(s), paragraph(s) where the indicator is identified, are recorded. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

79. **INDICATOR 7:** Describe the part of the news item visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

80. **INDICATOR 7:** Who 'creates' the indicator:

- The journalist
- Political actors

81. **INDICATOR 7:** When a journalist creates a harmful narrative, an evaluation should be conducted to determine why the journalistic professional and ethical standards have been breached. The evaluation should be well-reasoned and purposeful.

82. **INDICATOR 7:** In the event when the political actors 'create' the indicator, list all the political actors who do it and describe the manner in which they do it.

83. **INDICATOR 7:** The journalist's attitude towards the harmful narrative by the political actors:

- They report it without any intervention.
- They clearly highlight it, but do not take any position/try to remain neutral and distant.
- They report it with condemnation/criticism (explicitly or implicitly)
- They report it with approval (explicitly or implicitly)

84. **INDICATOR 7:** In the case where both of them 'create' the indicator, whether:

- The journalist supports the indicator that created by the political actors (they are oriented similarly)
- The journalist opposes this indicator from the political actors (they are oriented in the opposite direction)

85. **INDICATOR 7:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Disinformation
- Conspiracy theories
- Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty
- Foreign influence

86. **INDICATOR 8:** Use of sentences, phrases of unfounded accusations of a foreign entity (or entities) of interfering in the internal affairs of the state, contrary to the interests of the state, which, in fact, is a violation of democratic processes. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain

87. **INDICATOR 8:** Write down the text of the post/news item where the indicator is identified. In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

88. **INDICATOR 8:** Describe the part of the news item visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

89. **INDICATOR 8:** Who 'creates' the indicator:

- The journalist
- Political actors

90. **INDICATOR 8:** When a journalist creates a harmful narrative, an evaluation should be conducted to determine why the journalistic professional and ethical standards have been breached. The evaluation should be well-reasoned and purposeful.

91. **INDICATOR 8:** In the event when the political actors 'create' the indicator, list all the political actors who do it and describe the manner in which they do it.

92. **INDICATOR 8:** The journalist's attitude towards the harmful narrative by the political actors:

- They report it without any intervention.
- They clearly highlight it, but do not take any position/try to remain neutral and distant.
- They report it with condemnation/criticism (explicitly or implicitly)
- They report it with approval (explicitly or implicitly)

93. **INDICATOR 8:** In the case where both of them 'create' the indicator, whether:

- The journalist supports the indicator that is created by the political actors (they are oriented similarly)
- The journalist opposes this indicator from the political actors (they are oriented in the opposite direction)

94. **INDICATOR 8:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Foreign influence
- Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty

95. **INDICATOR 9:** Use of words and phrases that smear a certain group of people in order to foment divisions and discord between us/we/our and you/your. Usually we/our is good, positive and desirable and you/your is bad, negative and undesirable. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

96. **INDICATOR 9:** Write down the text of the post/news item where the indicator is identified. In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

97. **INDICATOR 9:** Describe the part of the news item visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

98. **INDICATOR 9:** Who 'creates' the indicator:

- The journalist
- Political actors

99. **INDICATOR 9:** When a journalist creates a harmful narrative, an evaluation should be conducted to determine why the journalistic professional and ethical standards have been breached. The evaluation should be well-reasoned and purposeful.

100. **INDICATOR 9:** INDICATOR 9: In the event when the political actors 'create' the indicator, list all the political actors who do it and describe the manner in which they do it.

101. **INDICATOR 9: The journalist's attitude towards the harmful narrative by the political actors:**

- They report it without any intervention.
- They clearly highlight it, but do not take any position/try to remain neutral and distant.
- They report it with condemnation/criticism (explicitly or implicitly)
- They report it with approval (explicitly or implicitly)

102. **INDICATOR 9:** In the case where both of them 'create' the indicator, whether:

- The journalist supports the indicator that is created by the political actors (they are oriented similarly)
- The journalist opposes this indicator from the political actors (they are oriented in the opposite direction)

103. **INDICATOR 9:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Fomenting divisions
- Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty

104. **INDICATOR 10: Use of words and phrases that insult, belittle, ridicule a person and/or group based on their gender and/or sex affiliation. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:**

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

105. **INDICATOR 10:** Write down the text of the post/news item where the indicator is identified. In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

106. **INDICATOR 10:** Describe the part of the news item visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

107. **INDICATOR 10:** Who 'creates' the indicator:

- The journalist
- Political actors

108. **INDICATOR 10:** When a journalist creates a harmful narrative, an evaluation should be conducted to determine why the journalistic professional and ethical standards have been breached. The evaluation should be well-reasoned and purposeful.

109. **INDICATOR 10:** In the event when the political actors 'create' the indicator, list all the political actors who do it and describe the manner in which they do it.

110. **INDICATOR 10:** The journalist's attitude towards the harmful narrative by the political actors:

- They report it without any intervention.
- They clearly highlight it, but do not take any position/try to remain neutral and distant.
- They report it with condemnation/criticism (explicitly or implicitly)
- They report it with approval (explicitly or implicitly)

111. **INDICATOR 10:** In the case where both of them 'create' the indicator, whether:

- The journalist supports the indicator that is created by the political actors (they are oriented similarly)
- The journalist opposes this indicator from the political actors (they are oriented in the opposite direction)

112. **INDICATOR 10:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Character attacks and/or demonizing opponents
- Sexism
- Hate speech

113. **INDICATOR 11:** Use of words that insult, discredit, smear a group of people (foreigners) in order to cause fear, rejection and distancing from them, even causing certain behaviour towards that group. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain

114. **INDICATOR 11:** Write down the text of the post/news item where the indicator is identified. In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

115. **INDICATOR 11:** Describe the part of the news item visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

116. **INDICATOR 11:** Who 'creates' the indicator

- The journalist
- Political actors

117. **INDICATOR 11:** When a journalist creates a harmful narrative, an evaluation should be conducted to determine why the journalistic professional and ethical standards have been breached. The evaluation should be well-reasoned and purposeful.

118. **INDICATOR 11:** In the event when the political actors 'create' the indicator, list all the political actors who do it and describe the manner in which they do it.

119. **INDICATOR 11:** The journalist's attitude towards the harmful narrative by the political actors:

- They report it without any intervention.
- They clearly highlight it, but do not take any position/try to remain neutral and distant.
- They report it with condemnation/criticism (explicitly or implicitly)
- They report it with approval (explicitly or implicitly)

120. **INDICATOR 11:** In the case where both of them 'create' the indicator, whether:

- The journalist supports the indicator that is created by the political actors (they are oriented similarly)
- The journalist opposes this indicator from the political actors (they are oriented in the opposite direction)

121. **INDICATOR 11:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Xenophobia if they are foreigners
- Ethnocentrism
- Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty

122. **INDICATOR 12:** Use of sentences, words, phrases that glorify one's own ethnicity and all others are less important, valuable, worthy. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

123. **INDICATOR 12:** Write down the text of the post/news item where the indicator is identified. In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

124. **INDICATOR 12:** Describe the part of the news item visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

125. **INDICATOR 12:** Who 'creates' the indicator:

- The journalist
- Political actors

126. **INDICATOR 12:** When a journalist creates a harmful narrative, an evaluation should be conducted to determine why the journalistic professional and ethical standards have been breached. The evaluation should be well-reasoned and purposeful.

127. **INDICATOR 12:** In the event when the political actors 'create' the indicator, list all the political actors who do it and describe the manner in which they do it.

128. **INDICATOR 12:** The journalist's attitude towards the harmful narrative by the political actors:

- They report it without any intervention.
- They clearly highlight it, but do not take any position/try to remain neutral and distant.
- They report it with condemnation/criticism (explicitly or implicitly)
- They report it with approval (explicitly or implicitly)

129. **INDICATOR 12:** In the case where both of them 'create' the indicator, whether:

- The journalist supports the indicator that is created by the political actors (they are oriented similarly)
- The journalist opposes this indicator from the political actors (they are oriented in the opposite direction)

130. **INDICATOR 12:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Ethnocentrism
- Extreme patriotism and/or nationalism

131. **INDICATOR 13:** Images, videos and audio recordings that are created to mislead the public that something is real and true when it is not (and whose falsity can be proven). Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

132. **INDICATOR 13:** Write down the text of the post/news item where the indicator is identified. In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

133. **INDICATOR 13:** Describe the part of the news item visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

134. **INDICATOR 13:** Who 'creates' the indicator:

- The journalist
- Political actors

135. **INDICATOR 13:** When a journalist creates a harmful narrative, an evaluation should be conducted to determine why the journalistic professional and ethical standards have been breached. The evaluation should be well-reasoned and purposeful.

136. **INDICATOR 13:** In the event when the political actors 'create' the indicator, list all the political actors who do it and describe the manner in which they do it.

137. **INDICATOR 13:** The journalist's attitude towards the harmful narrative by the political actors:

- They report it without any intervention.
- They clearly highlight it, but do not take any position/try to remain neutral and distant.
- They report it with condemnation/criticism (explicitly or implicitly)
- They report it with approval (explicitly or implicitly)

138. **INDICATOR 13:** In the case where both of them 'create' the indicator, whether:

- The journalist supports the indicator that is created by the political actors (they are oriented similarly)
- The journalist opposes this indicator from the political actors (they are oriented in the opposite direction)

139. **INDICATOR 13:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Disinformation
- Manipulative audiovisual media content
- Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty
- Biased selection
- Character attacks and/or demonizing opponents
- Hate speech

140. **INDICATOR 14:** Words/sentences that explicitly or implicitly, directly or indirectly promote one's ideologies/activities/behaviours as something that benefits the people/the masses/ the common 'honest man', humanity... while the ideologies/activities/behaviours, the political opponents' characteristics are promoted as something that serves a certain small elite group of people, which does not reflect the will of the people. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

141. **INDICATOR 14:** Write down the text of the post/news item where the indicator is identified. In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

142. **INDICATOR 14:** Describe the part of the news item visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

143. **INDICATOR 14:** Who 'creates' the indicator:

- The journalist
- Political actors

144. **INDICATOR 14:** When a journalist creates a harmful narrative, an evaluation should be conducted to determine why the journalistic professional and ethical standards have been breached. The evaluation should be well-reasoned and purposeful.

145. **INDICATOR 14:** In the event when the political actors 'create' the indicator, list all the political actors who do it and describe the manner in which they do it.

146. **INDICATOR 14:** The journalist's attitude towards the harmful narrative by the political actors:

- They report it without any intervention.
- They clearly highlight it, but do not take any position/try to remain neutral and distant.
- They report it with condemnation/criticism (explicitly or implicitly)
- They report it with approval (explicitly or implicitly)

147. **INDICATOR 14:** In the case where both of them 'create' the indicator, whether:

- The journalist supports the indicator that is created by the political actors (they are oriented similarly)
- The journalist opposes this indicator from the political actors (they are oriented in the opposite direction)

148. **INDICATOR 14:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Populism
- Foreign influence
- Extreme patriotism and/or nationalism
- Conspiracy theories
- TV monitoring (from March 2024)
- Final remarks

149. Final note on the post (if applicable, list any dilemmas, questions, or other thoughts that came up during your evaluation but could not be included earlier)

Form 3: Monitoring and analysis of the central news editions on the selected TV stations

Introductory data

GUIDELINES FOR THE PERSONS WHO MONITOR

This questionnaire analyses all news items aired in the central news editions of the selected television stations that feature the targeted actors (as outlined in the TV monitoring guidelines) and contain a harmful narrative.

1. Enter your identification code:

2. Enter the code of the television you are analysing:

Date

3. Broadcast date (select date):

4. Sequence number of the news items in the input (the sequence number of each individual news item is entered; each new day, the numbering of news items starts from 1):

5. Sequence number of the news item in the news edition (in which sequence the news item in the broadcasted news edition is):

6. Duration of the entire news item (excluding the news presenter's preview). The duration is written in the following form: 2:14 (which means that the time length of the news item is 2 minutes and 14 seconds).

7. Genre

- A politician's reported speech
- Reported press release
- News/news with statement
- Report
- Analytical-reporting attachment
- Analysis/Commentary
- Comment
- Interview
- Other (specify)

8. Is the news items announced in the main news headline?

- Yes
- No

9. Is the preview/introduction/announcement of the news item a comment?

- Yes
- No

10. Preview of the news item (write down the entire preview only if it contains a harmful narrative):

11. Main topic area (topic that dominates the news item, i.e. the author emphasizes it the most):

- Domestic policy
- Foreign policy
- Economy
- Healthcare
- Education
- Social policy
- Culture
- Sports
- Judiciary
- Crime
- Corruption
- Other (specify)

12. Specification of the main topic (define the topic, e.g.: constitutional amendments, fight against corruption, public procurement, EU integration.... etc.):

13. Is there a secondary topic in the news item?

- Yes
- No
- TV monitoring (from March 2024)
- Secondary topic

14. Specification of the secondary topic – if any (define the topic, e.g.: constitutional amendments, fight against corruption, public procurement, EU integration.... etc.):

Actors

15. Actors (write down the total number of actors; all actors are counted in, excluding the journalist):

16. **First** actor (list the actor and all the terms used to refer to them in the news item):

17. Method of presentation the **first** actor:

- Quoted
- Paraphrased
- They are being discussed

18. Who evaluates the first actor?

- Journalist
- Someone else
- Themselves

19. Approach towards the first actor in the entire clip:

	Does not evaluate them	Neutral (0)	Negative (-)	Positive (+)	Ambivalent (-/+)
Journalist					
Someone else					
Themselves					

20. **Second** actor (list the actor and all the terms used to refer to them in the news item):

21. Method of presentation the **second** actor:

- Quoted
- Paraphrased
- They are being discussed

22. Who evaluates the **second** actor?

- Journalist
- Someone else
- Themselves
- Does not evaluate them

23. Approach towards the **second** actor throughout the entire news item:

	Does not evaluate them	Neutral (0)	Negative (-)	Positive (+)	Ambivalent (-/+)
Journalist					
Someone else					
Themselves					

24. **Third** actor (list the actor and all the terms used to refer to them in the news item

25. Method of presentation the **third** actor:

- Quoted
- Paraphrased
- They are being discussed

26. Who evaluates the **third** actor?

- Journalist
- Someone else
- Themselves

27. Approach towards the **third** actor throughout the entire news item:

	Does not evaluate them	**Neutral (0)**	**Negative (-)**	**Positive (+)**	**Ambivalent (-/+)**
Journalist					
Someone else					
Themselves					

28. Number of sources:

- 1
- 2
- 3 and more
- There are no sources
- TV monitoring (from March 2024)
- Additional sources
- Note regarding sources (if any):

29. Transparency in citing sources of information:

- Stated unclear
- Stated imprecise
- Stated precise
- The journalist as a source
- Another media outlet as a source
- Note regarding the parties (if any):

30. Side of the sources

- Only one side
- Two sides
- Multiple sides

Elements and visualization

* 31. Visualization of the attachment:

- Slide/picture
- Charts/texts/tables
- Archive footage
- Direct live reporting
- Current recording

32. Enter a description of the visualization (only if it is related to a harmful narrative):

33. Reason for the news item:

- Announced event
- Current event
- Current scheduled event
- A pseudo-event
- Social event/social topic
- Other (specify)

Harmful narratives

34. **INDICATOR 1/2:** Allegations of corruption, non-transparency/non-accountability, unprofessionalism, abuse of office without any attempt to substantiate those claims. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

35. **INDICATOR 1:** Write down the text of the post/news item where the indicator is identified. In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

36. **INDICATOR 1:** Describe the part of the news item visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

37. **INDICATOR 1:** Who 'creates' the indicator?

- The journalist
- Political actors

38. **INDICATOR 1:** When a journalist creates a harmful narrative, an evaluation should be conducted to determine why the journalistic professional and ethical standards have been breached. The evaluation should be well-reasoned and purposeful.

39. **INDICATOR 1:** In the event when the political actors 'create' the indicator, list all the political actors who do it and describe the manner in which they do it.

40. **INDICATOR 1:** The journalist's attitude towards the harmful narrative by the political actors:

- They report it without any intervention.
- They clearly highlight it, but do not take any position/try to remain neutral and distant.
- They report it with condemnation/criticism (explicitly or implicitly)
- They report it with approval (explicitly or implicitly)

41. **INDICATOR 1:** When both of them 'create' the indicator, whether:

- The journalist supports the indicator that is created by the political actors (they are oriented similarly)
- The journalist opposes this indicator from the political actors (they are oriented in the opposite direction)

42. **INDICATOR 1:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Disinformation
- Undermining trust in institutions and the media
- Biased selection

43. **INDICATOR 3:** Misuse of information of a private nature (listing, disclosure of private or personal information, for example e-mails or private messages) or personal tragedies, disability, social status, marital status of one's political opponents to achieve one's own. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

44. **INDICATOR 3:** Write down the text of the post/news item where the indicator is identified. The sentence(s), paragraph(s) where the indicator is identified, is/are recorded in this section. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

45. **INDICATOR 3:** Describe the part of the news item visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

46. **INDICATOR 3: Who 'creates' the indicator:**

- The journalist
- Political actors

47. **INDICATOR 3:** When a journalist creates a harmful narrative, an evaluation should be conducted to determine why the journalistic professional and ethical standards have been breached. The evaluation should be well-reasoned and purposeful.

48. **INDICATOR 3:** In the event when the political actors 'create' the indicator, list all the political actors who do it and describe the manner in which they do it.

49. **INDICATOR 3:** The journalist's attitude towards the harmful narrative by the political actors:

- They report it without any intervention.
- They clearly highlight it, but do not take any position/try to remain neutral and distant.
- They report it with condemnation/criticism (explicitly or implicitly)
- They report it with approval (explicitly or implicitly)

50. **INDICATOR 3:** In the case where both of them 'create' the indicator, whether:

- The journalist supports the indicator that is created by the political actors (they are oriented similarly)
- The journalist opposes this indicator from the political actors (they are oriented in the opposite direction)

51. **INDICATOR 3:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Malinformation
- Character attacks and/or demonizing opponents
- Hate speech
- TV monitoring (from March 2024)

52. **INDICATOR 4:** Labelling, ridiculing and grossly disrespecting other persons (media workers, civil activists, political opponents, public office holders...). Use of words with negative connotation. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

53. **INDICATOR 4:** Write down the text of the post/news item where the indicator is identified the indicator. In this section, record the sentence(s), paragraph(s) where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

54. **INDICATOR 4:** Describe the part of the news item visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

55. **INDICATOR 4:** Who 'creates' the indicator:

- The journalist
- Political actors

56. **INDICATOR 4:** When a journalist creates a harmful narrative, an evaluation should be conducted to determine why the journalistic professional and ethical standards have been breached. The evaluation should be well-reasoned and purposeful.

57. **INDICATOR 4:** In the event when the political actors 'create' the indicator, list all the political actors who do it and describe the manner in which they do it.

58. **INDICATOR 4:** The journalist's attitude towards the harmful narrative by the political actors:

- They report it without any intervention.
- They clearly highlight it, but do not take any position/try to remain neutral and distant.
- They report it with condemnation/criticism (explicitly or implicitly)
- They report it with approval (explicitly or implicitly)

59. **INDICATOR 4:** In the case where both of them 'create' the indicator, whether:

- The journalist supports the indicator that is created by the political actors (they are oriented similarly)
- The journalist opposes this indicator from the political actors (they are oriented in the opposite direction)

60. **INDICATOR 4:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Character attacks and/or demonizing opponents

61. **INDICATOR 5:** Speech that insults a specific group or justifies hate speech against a specific group, based on race, skin colour, origin, national or ethnic origin, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, belonging to a marginalized group, language, nationality, social background, education, religion or belief, political conviction, other belief, disability, age, family or marital status, property status, health status, personal capacity and social status or any other grounds. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

62. **INDICATOR 5:** Write down the text of the post/news item where the indicator is identified. In this section, record the sentence(s), paragraph(s)h where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

63. **INDICATOR 5:** Describe the part of the news item visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

64. **INDICATOR 5:** Who 'creates' the indicator:

- The journalist
- Political actors

65. **INDICATOR 5:** When a journalist creates a harmful narrative, an evaluation should be conducted to determine why the journalistic professional and ethical standards have been breached. The evaluation should be well-reasoned and purposeful.

66. **INDICATOR 5:** In the event when the political actors 'create' the indicator, list all the political actors who do it and describe the manner in which they do it.

67. **INDICATOR 5:** The journalist's attitude towards the harmful narrative by the political actors:

- They report it without any intervention.
- They clearly highlight it, but do not take any position/try to remain neutral and distant.
- They report it with condemnation/criticism (explicitly or implicitly)
- They report it with approval (explicitly or implicitly)

68. **INDICATOR 5:** In the case where both of them 'create' the indicator, whether:

- The journalist supports the indicator that is created by the political actors (they are oriented similarly)
- The journalist opposes this indicator from the political actors (they are oriented in the opposite direction)

69. **INDICATOR 5:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Hate speech

70. **INDICATOR 6:** Deliberately not conveying the full picture of the 'event', deliberately omitting information that refutes the position of the one presenting it. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

71. **INDICATOR 6:** Write down the text of the post/news item where the indicator is identified. In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

72. **INDICATOR 6:** Describe the part of the news item visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

73. **INDICATOR 6:** Who 'creates' the indicator:

- The journalist
- Political actors

74. **INDICATOR 6:** When a journalist creates a harmful narrative, an evaluation should be conducted to determine why the journalistic professional and ethical standards have been breached. The evaluation should be well-reasoned and purposeful.

75. **INDICATOR 6:** In the event when the political actors 'create' the indicator, list all the political actors who do it and describe the manner in which they do it.

76. **INDICATOR 6:** The journalist's attitude towards the harmful narrative by the political actors:

- They report it without any intervention.
- They clearly highlight it, but do not take any position/try to remain neutral and distant.
- They report it with condemnation/criticism (explicitly or implicitly)
- They report it with approval (explicitly or implicitly)

77. **INDICATOR 6:** In the case where both of them 'create' the indicator, whether:

- The journalist supports the indicator that is created by the political actors (they are oriented similarly)
- The journalist opposes this indicator from the political actors (they are oriented in the opposite direction)

78. **INDICATOR 6:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Disinformation
- Undermining trust in institutions and the media
- Biased selection
- Manipulative audiovisual media content

79. **INDICATOR 7:** It is claimed to be true that political opponents/public institutions are manipulated by behind-the-scenes (secret) powerful groups (e.g. Freemasons, etc.) without presenting any facts or evidence, or using sources that lack any credibility or authority. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

80. **INDICATOR 7:** Write down the text of the news item where the indicator is identified. In this section, record the sentence(s), paragraph(s)h where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

81. **INDICATOR 7:** Describe the part of the news item visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

82. **INDICATOR 7:** Who 'creates' the indicator:

- The journalist
- Political actors

83. **INDICATOR 7:** When a journalist creates a harmful narrative, an evaluation should be conducted to determine why the journalistic professional and ethical standards have been breached. The evaluation should be well-reasoned and purposeful.

84. **INDICATOR 7:** In the event when the political actors 'create' the indicator, list all the political actors who do it and describe the manner in which they do it.

85. **INDICATOR 7:** The journalist's attitude towards the harmful narrative by the political actors:

- They report it without any intervention.
- They clearly highlight it, but do not take any position/try to remain neutral and distant.
- They report it with condemnation/criticism (explicitly or implicitly)
- They report it with approval (explicitly or implicitly)

86. **INDICATOR 7:** In the case where both of them 'create' the indicator, whether:

- The journalist supports the indicator that is created by the political actors (they are oriented similarly)
- The journalist opposes this indicator from the political actors (they are oriented in the opposite direction)

87. **INDICATOR 7:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Disinformation
- Conspiracy theories
- Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty
- Foreign influence

88. **INDICATOR 8:** Use of sentences, phrases of unfounded accusations of a foreign entity (or entities) of interfering in the internal affairs of the state, contrary to the interests of the state, which, in fact, is a violation of democratic processes. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

89. **INDICATOR 8:** Write down the text of the news item where the indicator is identified. In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

90. **INDICATOR 8:** Describe the part of the news item visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

91. **INDICATOR 8:** Who 'creates' the indicator:

- The journalist
- Political actors

92. **INDICATOR 8:** When a journalist creates a harmful narrative, an evaluation should be conducted to determine why the journalistic professional and ethical standards have been breached. The evaluation should be well-reasoned and purposeful.

93. **INDICATOR 8:** In the event when the political actors 'create' the indicator, list all the political actors who do it and describe the manner in which they do it.

94. **INDICATOR 8:** The journalist's attitude towards the harmful narrative by the political actors:

- They report it without any intervention.
- They clearly highlight it, but do not take any position/try to remain neutral and distant.
- They report it with condemnation/criticism (explicitly or implicitly)
- They report it with approval (explicitly or implicitly)

95. **INDICATOR 8:** In the case where both of them 'create' the indicator, whether:

- The journalist supports the indicator that is created by the political actors (they are oriented similarly)
- The journalist opposes this indicator from the political actors (they are oriented in the opposite direction)

96. **INDICATOR 8:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Foreign influence
- Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty

97. **INDICATOR 9:** Use of words and phrases that smear a certain group of people in order to foment divisions and discord between *us/we/our* and *you/your*. Usually *we/our* is good, positive and desirable and *you/your* is bad, negative and undesirable. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

98. **INDICATOR 9:** Write down the text of the post/news item where the indicator is identified. In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

99. **INDICATOR 9:** Describe the part of the news item visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

100. **INDICATOR 9:** Who 'creates' the indicator:

- The journalist
- Political actors

101. **INDICATOR 9:** When a journalist creates a harmful narrative, an evaluation should be conducted to determine why the journalistic professional and ethical standards have been breached. The evaluation should be well-reasoned and purposeful.

102. **INDICATOR 9:** In the event when the political actors 'create' the indicator, list all the political actors who do it and describe the manner in which they do it.

103. **INDICATOR 9:** The journalist's attitude towards the harmful narrative by the political actors:

- They report it without any intervention.
- They clearly highlight it, but do not take any position/try to remain neutral and distant.
- They report it with condemnation/criticism (explicitly or implicitly)
- They report it with approval (explicitly or implicitly)

104. **INDICATOR 9:** In the case where both of them 'create' the indicator, whether:

- The journalist supports the indicator that is created by the political actors (they are oriented similarly)
- The journalist opposes this indicator from the political actors (they are oriented in the opposite direction)

105. **INDICATOR 9:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Fomenting divisions
- Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty

106. **INDICATOR 10:** Use of words and phrases that insult, belittle, ridicule a person and/or group based on their gender and/or sex affiliation. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

107. **INDICATOR 10:** Write down the text of the news item where the indicator is identified. In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

108. **INDICATOR 10:** Describe the part of the news item visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

109. **INDICATOR 10:** Who 'creates' the indicator:

- The journalist
- Political actors

110. **INDICATOR 10:** When a journalist creates a harmful narrative, an evaluation should be conducted to determine why the journalistic professional and ethical standards have been breached. The evaluation should be well-reasoned and purposeful.

111. **INDICATOR 10:** In the event when the political actors 'create' the indicator, list all the political actors who do it and describe the manner in which they do it.

112. **INDICATOR 10:** The journalist's attitude towards the harmful narrative by the political actors:

- They report it without any intervention.
- They clearly highlight it, but do not take any position/try to remain neutral and distant.
- They report it with condemnation/criticism (explicitly or implicitly)
- They report it with approval (explicitly or implicitly)

113. **INDICATOR 10: In the case where both of them 'create' the indicator, whether:**

- The journalist supports the indicator that is created by the political actors (they are oriented similarly)
- The journalist opposes this indicator from the political actors (they are oriented in the opposite direction)

114. **INDICATOR 10:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Character attacks and/or demonizing opponents
- Sexism
- Hate speech

115. **INDICATOR 11:** Use of words that insult, discredit, smear a group of people (foreigners) in order to cause fear, rejection and distancing from them, even causing certain behaviour towards that group. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

116. **INDICATOR 11:** Write down the text of the news item where the indicator is identified. In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

117. **INDICATOR 11:** Describe the part of the news item visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

118. **INDICATOR 11:** Who 'creates' the indicator:

- The journalist
- Political actors

119. **INDICATOR 11:** When a journalist creates a harmful narrative, an evaluation should be conducted to determine why the journalistic professional and ethical standards have been breached. The evaluation should be well-reasoned and purposeful.

120. **INDICATOR 11:** In the event when the political actors 'create' the indicator, list all the political actors who do it and describe the manner in which they do it.

121. **INDICATOR 11:** The journalist's attitude towards the harmful narrative by the political actors:

- They report it without any intervention.
- They clearly highlight it, but do not take any position/try to remain neutral and distant.
- They report it with condemnation/criticism (explicitly or implicitly)
- They report it with approval (explicitly or implicitly)

122. **INDICATOR 11:** In the case where both of them 'create' the indicator, whether:

- The journalist supports the indicator that is created by the political actors (they are oriented similarly)
- The journalist opposes this indicator from the political actors (they are oriented in the opposite direction)

123. **INDICATOR 11:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Xenophobia if they are foreigners
- Ethnocentrism
- Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty

124. **INDICATOR 12:** Use of sentences, words, phrases that glorify one's own ethnicity, and all others are less important, valuable, worthy. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

125. **INDICATOR 12:** Write down the text of the news item where the indicator is identified In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

126. **INDICATOR 12:** Describe the part of the news item visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

127. **INDICATOR 12:** Who 'creates' the indicator:

- The journalist
- Political actors

128. **INDICATOR 12:** When a journalist creates a harmful narrative, an evaluation should be conducted to determine why the journalistic professional and ethical standards have been breached. The evaluation should be well-reasoned and purposeful.

129. **INDICATOR 12:** In the event when the political actors 'create' the indicator, list all the political actors who do it and describe the manner in which they do it.

130. **INDICATOR 12:** The journalist's attitude towards the harmful narrative by the political actors:

- They report it without any intervention.
- They clearly highlight it, but do not take any position/try to remain neutral and distant.
- They report it with condemnation/criticism (explicitly or implicitly)
- They report it with approval (explicitly or implicitly)

131. **INDICATOR 12:** In the case where both of them 'create' the indicator, whether:

- The journalist supports the indicator that is created by the political actors (they are oriented similarly)
- The journalist opposes this indicator from the political actors (they are oriented in the opposite direction)

132. **INDICATOR 12:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Ethnocentrism
- Extreme patriotism and/or nationalism

133. **INDICATOR 13:** Images, videos and audio recordings that are created to mislead the public that something is real and true when it is not (and whose falsity can be proven). Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

134. **INDICATOR 13:** Write down the text of the news item where the indicator is identified. In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

135. **INDICATOR 13:** Describe the part of the news item visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

136. **INDICATOR 13:** Who 'creates' the indicator:

- The journalist
- Political actors

137. **INDICATOR 13:** When a journalist creates a harmful narrative, an evaluation should be conducted to determine why the journalistic professional and ethical standards have been breached. The evaluation should be well-reasoned and purposeful.

138. **INDICATOR 13:** In the event when the political actors 'create' the indicator, list all the political actors who do it and describe the manner in which they do it.

139. **INDICATOR 13:** The journalist's attitude towards the harmful narrative by the political actors:

- They report it without any intervention.
- They clearly highlight it, but do not take any position/try to remain neutral and distant.
- They report it with condemnation/criticism (explicitly or implicitly)
- They report it with approval (explicitly or implicitly)

140. **INDICATOR 13:** In the case where both of them 'create' the indicator, whether:

- The journalist supports the indicator that is created by the political actors (they are oriented similarly)
- The journalist opposes this indicator from the political actors (they are oriented in the opposite direction)

141. **INDICATOR 13:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Disinformation
- Manipulative audiovisual media content
- Spreading panic, fear and uncertainty
- Biased selection
- Character attacks and/or demonizing opponents
- Hate speech

142. **INDICATOR 14:** Words/sentences that explicitly or implicitly, directly or indirectly promote one's ideologies/activities/behaviours as something that benefits the people/the masses/ the common 'honest man', humanity... while the ideologies/activities/behaviours, the political opponents' characteristics are promoted as something that serves a certain small elite group of people, which does not reflect the will of the people. Is the indicator present? Answer by choosing one of the alternatives:

- Yes
- No
- I am not certain.

143. **INDICATOR 14:** Write down the text of the post/news item where the indicator is identified. In this section, note the sentences or paragraphs where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is in that segment of the text, write it down, please!

144. **INDICATOR 14:** Describe the part of the news item visualization where the indicator is identified (if there is visualization). In this section, note a part of the recording or photograph where the indicator is identified. Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it! Even if you are not certain whether it is so, make a note of it!

145. **INDICATOR 14:** Who 'creates' the indicator:

- The journalist
- Political actors

146. **INDICATOR 14:** When a journalist creates a harmful narrative, an evaluation should be conducted to determine why the journalistic professional and ethical standards have been breached. The evaluation should be well-reasoned and purposeful.

147. **INDICATOR 14:** In the event when the political actors 'create' the indicator, list all the political actors who do it and describe the manner in which they do it.

148. **INDICATOR 14:** The journalist's attitude towards the harmful narrative by the political actors:

- They report it without any intervention.
- They clearly highlight it, but do not take any position/try to remain neutral and distant.
- They report it with condemnation/criticism (explicitly or implicitly)
- They report it with approval (explicitly or implicitly)

149. **INDICATOR 14:** In the case where both of them 'create' the indicator, whether:

- The journalist supports the indicator that is created by the political actors (they are oriented similarly)
- The journalist opposes this indicator from the political actors (they are oriented in the opposite direction)

150. **INDICATOR 14:** What harmful narratives does this indicator refer to? Select the options for all harmful narratives that the indicator refers to.

- Populism
- Foreign influence
- Extreme patriotism and/or nationalism
- Conspiracy theories
- TV monitoring (since March 2024)
- Final remarks

151. Final note on the news item (if applicable, list any dilemmas, questions, or other thoughts that came up during your evaluation but could not be included earlier)

Form 4: Communication analysis of the neologisms

WHO (political actor – both individual and collective – whose post it is)	
WHAT IT SAYS (neologisms)	
WHICH CHANNEL? (Facebook/website)	
WHOM IT APPLIES TO (both directly and indirectly)	
WHAT IS THE GOAL? (relationship to the HARMFUL NARRATIVES of the post(s))	
HOW MANY POSTS are there the neologisms present in?	
Are the neologisms present in the TITLE of any of the posts containing them?	
What is the area of the MAIN TOPIC of the post(s) containing the neologism?	
Are neologisms broadcast from a particular MEDIA OUTLET and what manner in?	

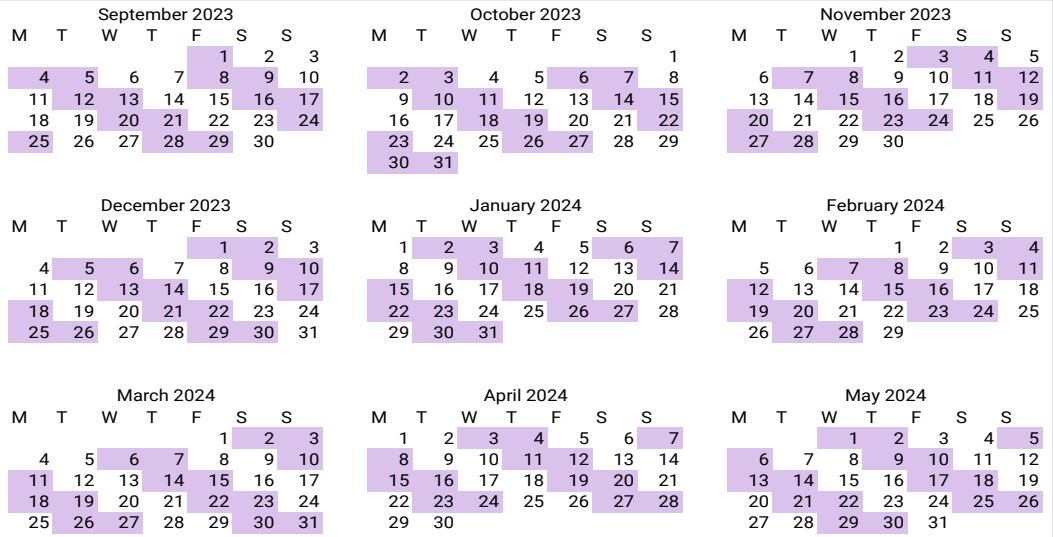


Figure 35. Overview of days of monitoring the political actors, by months

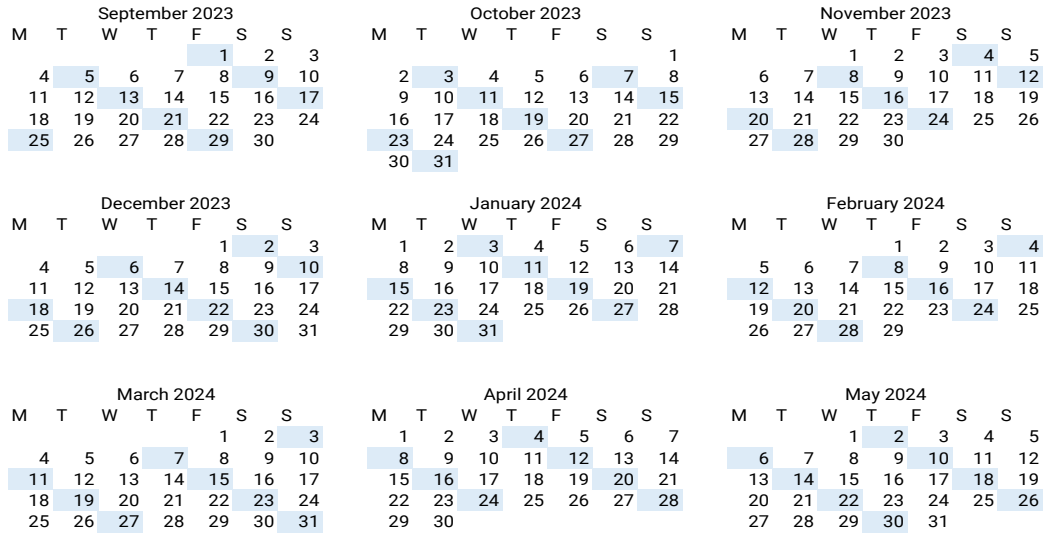


Figure 36. Overview of days of monitoring the TV stations, by months

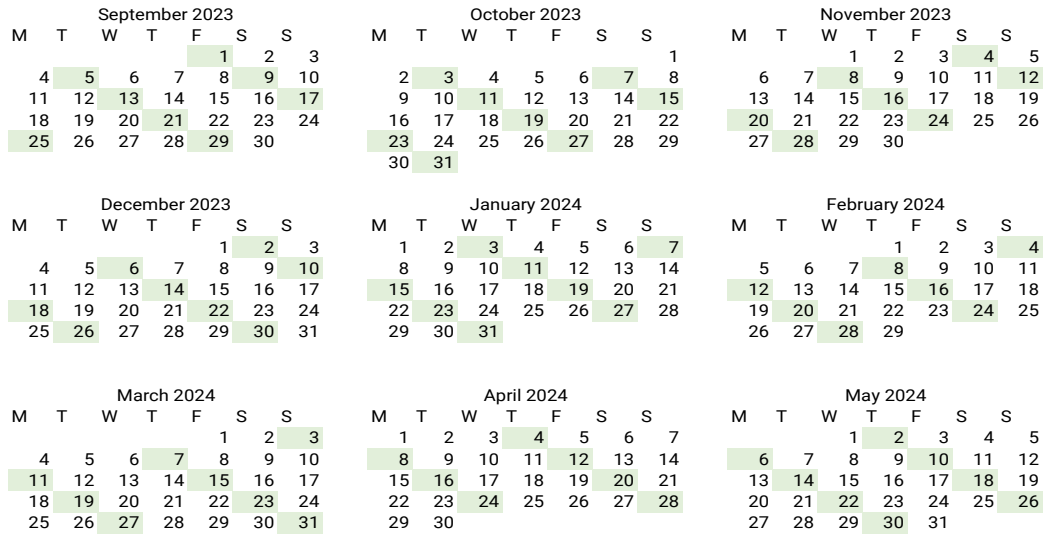
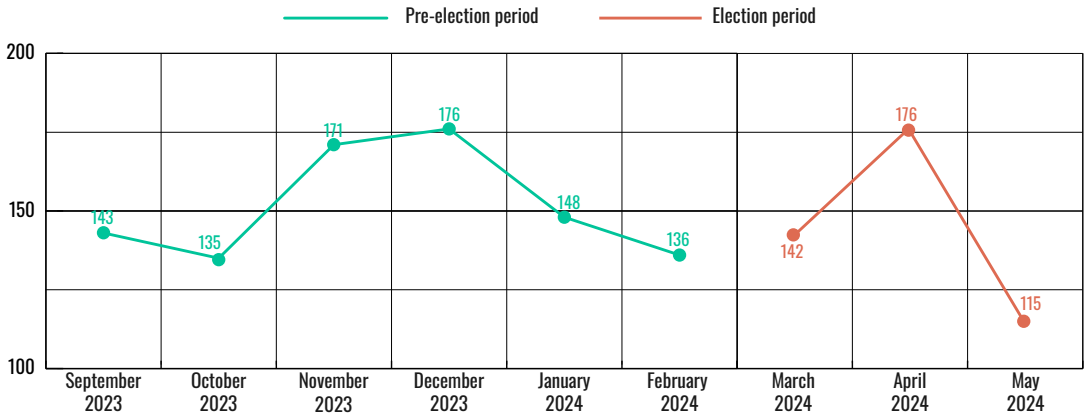


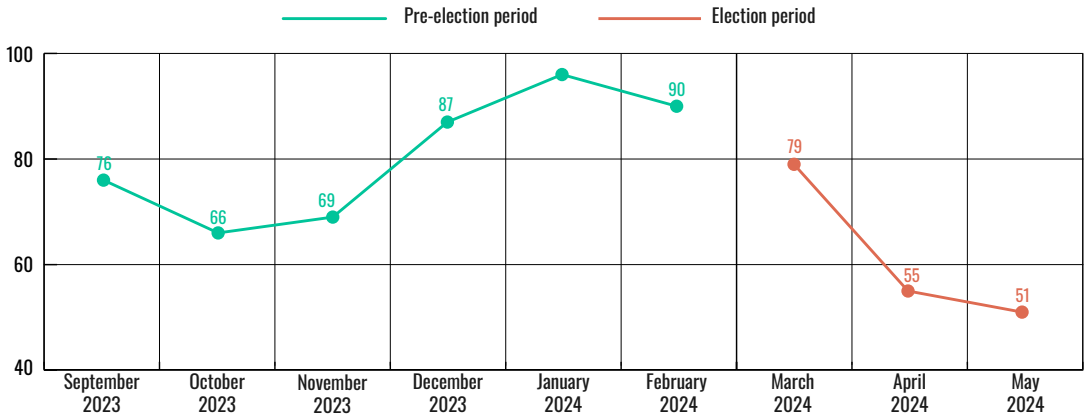
Figure 37. Overview of days of monitoring the informative online media outlets, by months

NUMBER OF PUBLISHED OR BROADCAST CONTENT CONTAINING HARMFUL NARRATIVE – COMPARISONS OF THE THREE GROUPS OF STAKEHOLDERS

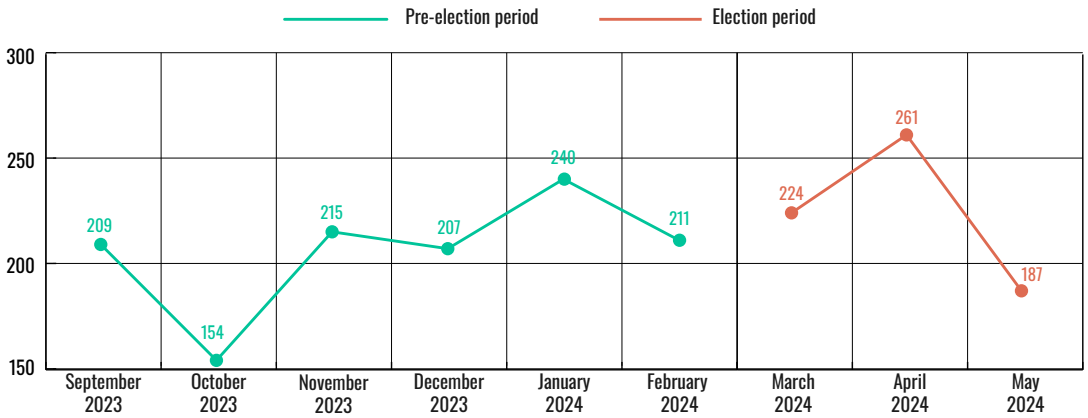
POLITICAL ACTORS: a total of 1342 posts on the internet and Facebook



TV STATIONS: 669 TV news items

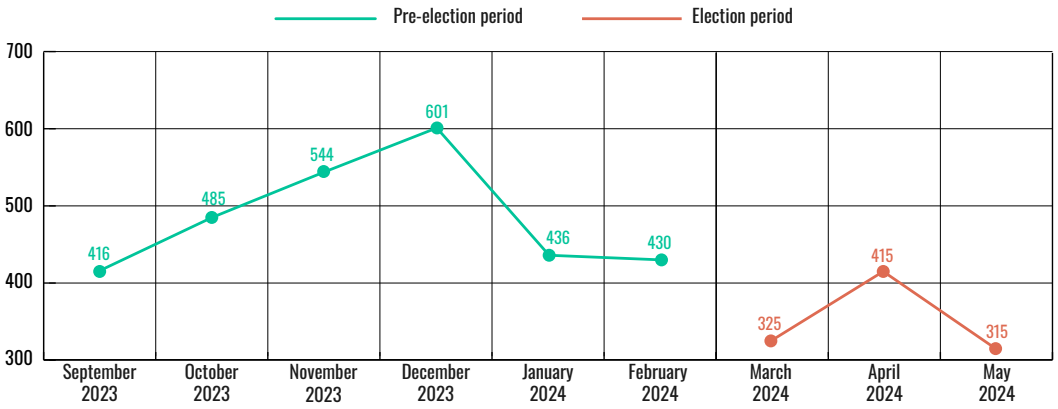


INFORMATIVE ONLINE MEDIA OUTLETS: 1908 published pieces of informative content

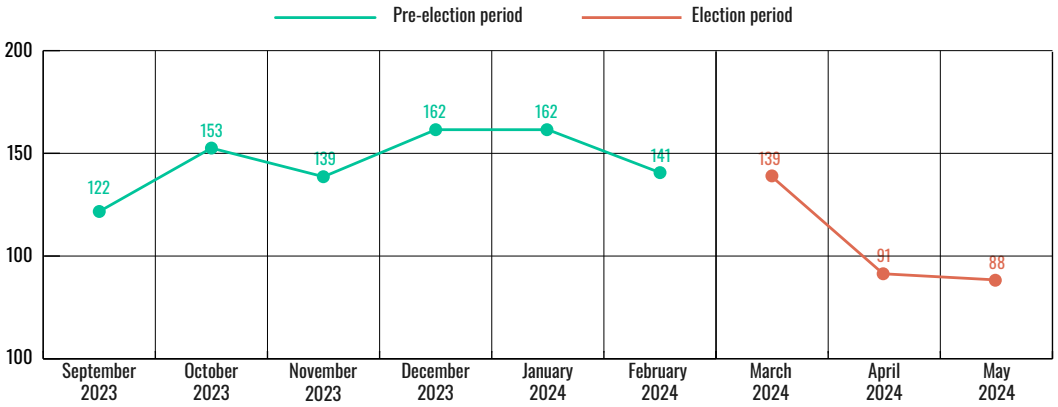


NUMBER OF BROADCAST HARMFUL NARRATIVES – COMPARISONS OF THE THREE GROUPS OF STAKEHOLDERS

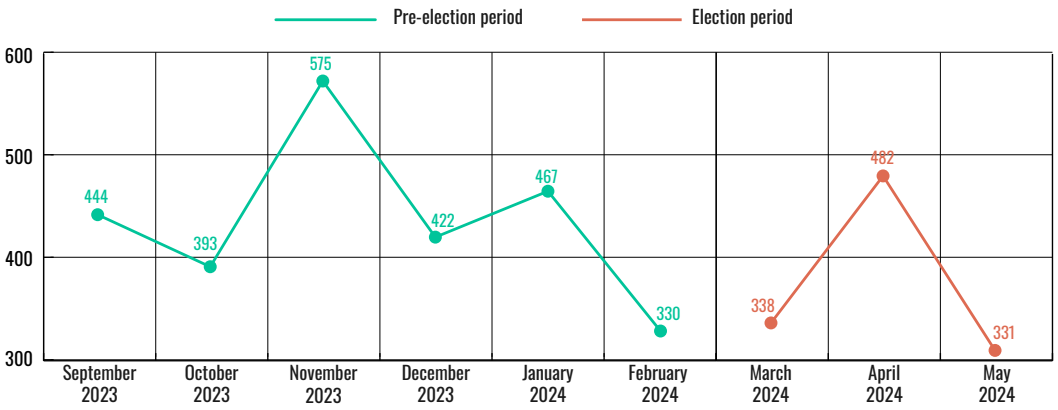
POLITICAL ACTORS: a total of 3967 broadcast harmful narratives



TV STATIONS: a total of 1197 broadcast harmful narratives

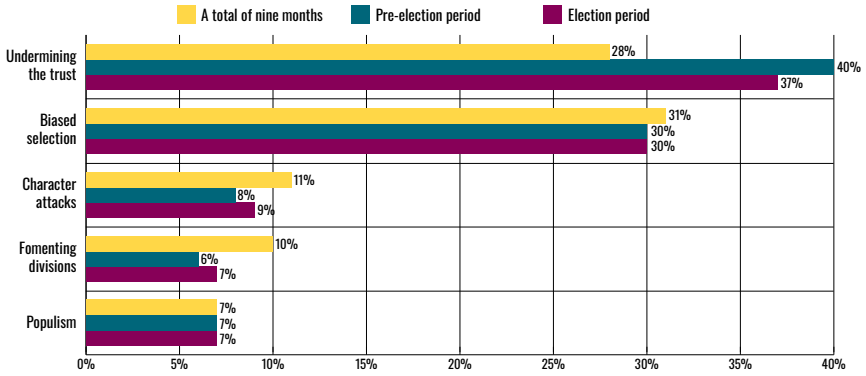


INFORMATIVE ONLINE MEDIA OUTLETS: a total of 3762 broadcast harmful narratives

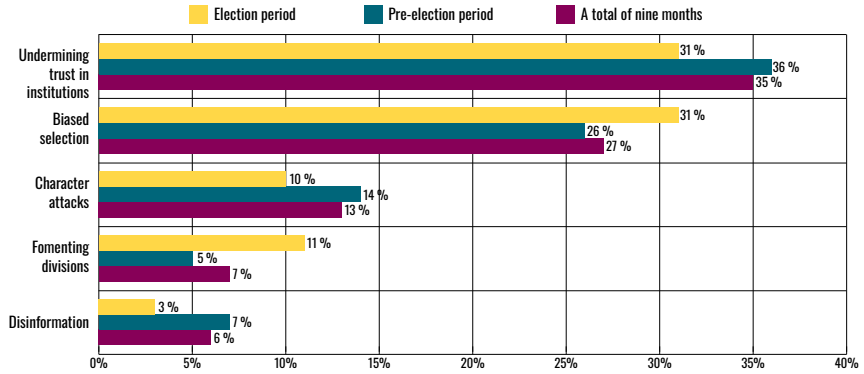


NUMBER OF BROADCAST HARMFUL NARRATIVES – COMPARISONS OF THE THREE GROUPS OF STAKEHOLDERS

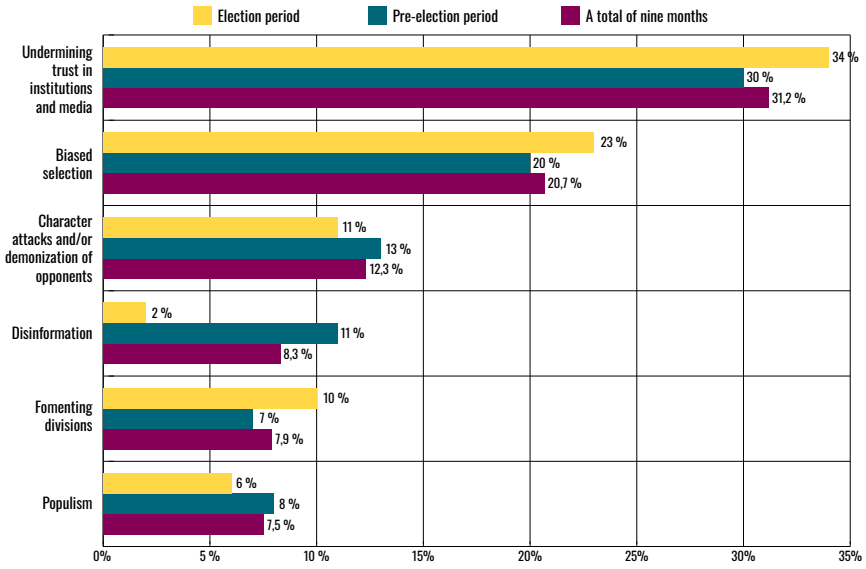
POLITICAL ACTORS



TV STATIONS



INFORMATIVE ONLINE MEDIA OUTLETS



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INTERNET SOURCES

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