

Analysis of opportunities for CSO's engagement through case studies in media

ALBANIA

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MJAFT! Movement

The mission of the MJAFT! Movement is to increase active citizenship, to strengthen the sense of community, to promote responsible governance and to improve the image of Albania around the world.

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ACTION SEE

ACTION SEE (Accountability, Technology and Institutional Openness Network in the South East Europe region) is a network of civil society organizations that jointly work on promoting and ensuring government accountability and transparency in the region of South-East Europe, raising the potential for civic activism and civic participation, promoting and protecting human rights and freedoms on the Internet and building capacities and interest within civil society organizations and individuals in the region in using technology in democracy promotion work.

The core members of the network are Metamorphosis Foundation for Internet and Society from North Macedonia, Center for Democratic Transition from Montenegro, Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability from Serbia and CA Why Not from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

ACTION SEE works with partners from Albania MJAFT and from Kosovo Open Data Kosovo, well as partners from other countries in Europe and the world.

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www.wfd.org

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Center for Democratic Transition

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INTRODUCTION

The modern world enjoys a daily life governed by the information that media gives. Media is considered as the 4th power, after the 3 main branches being, legislative, executive and judiciary. Its claim to power lay on the fact that is the main information outlet for the people. From what media “says and tells” the other three powers can prosper or demise, so to say. Often paradigms of the political, social, economical and cultural life are built by the media.

This analysis aims to provide an overview of media reporting on good governance, transparency, and accountability and the type of undertaken civil initiatives. This analysis also seeks to find the effects media reporting has on these stressed issues.

Taking into account that such analyses have also been drafted in the ACTION SEE project partner states, the conclusions of this kind refer to the regional state of affairs with media as well.

METHODOLOGY

This analysis covers media content (online, printed and television) published in the period between May 2018 - February 2019.

Good governance is defined by principles and indicators that have been already used in the ACTION SEE project developed as Regional Openness Index as well as by keywords and definitions of the principles of transparency, openness, accountability in good governance, responsibility and good governance, effectiveness, and efficiency used for this analysis:

Transparency

Transparency rests on the free flow of information. Processes, institutions, and information are directly accessible to the stakeholders. It provides sufficient information to allow stakeholders to understand and follow institutions and processes through participation in open administration initiatives. It is assumed that the public is regularly informed about all activities of the institutions, Government, agencies, courts, and spending of public money, and that information on public procurement and annexes to public procurement contracts is published regularly.

Openness

The right to access to public information is used effectively and efficiently, and citizens can access freely and partake in the public consultations as a process of inclusion and openness of institutions.

Accountability in good governance

Institutions and processes try to serve all stakeholders. Information available to the public is published in a way so that every citizen can access it, there is openness of data of public interest and regular publication of reports on the work of institutions.

Responsibility

Integrity forms part of good governance viewed as good conduct within the working environment by implementing Codes of Ethics and professionalizing the civil servants, quality control of operations and good managing of institutions. The prevention of conflict of interest is part of each civil servant's/ functionary's integrity.

Rule of law

Legal frameworks ought to be fair and implemented unbiasedly.

Media in Albania

The relationship between politics and the media lies in essence of Democracy. Depending on the different missions, repatriation among them remains symbiotic, characterized by one high degree of interdependence. But, as Barner points out, apart from interdependence, the demarcation line should again be maintained. For the sake of a democratic society, we need a sensible balance between media and politics. This applies not only to the countries in transition, but for all free democratic civilizations.¹

Albania is facing a lot of difficulties regarding free and independent media and most of the people are losing faith and do not believe media to be free and not affected by politics or corruption.

1. <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/albanien/14000.pdf>

REFUGEE CAMP AS A CONDITION -EU ambassador discussion with civil society

2. <https://360grade.al/104582/kampet-e-refugjateve-ne-kembim-te-negociatave-flet-vlahuttin-ja-kushti-jone-per-integrimin/>

An important issue at the beginning of May 2018, with the pressure of Albania getting its recommendation for the opening of negotiations with European Union various articles displayed for the conditions that might come with this responsibility. Most of the written media in the country covered the possibility of having a refugee camp in Albania as a condition for the opening of negotiations.² These declarations were important for organizations regarding human rights in Albania, since there is a lot to work with and to prepare for such big step.

3, <http://top-channel.tv/2018/06/25/negotiat-vlahutin-kampet-e-refugjateve-jo-kusht-per-shqiperine/>

4, <http://www.gsh.al/2018/06/25/refugjatet-vlahutin-ndertimi-kampit-nuk-eshte-kusht-per-hapjen-e-negotiatave/>

Most of the articles begin with the statement that building a refugee camp is not a condition for opening negotiations.

These were declared by EU Ambassador to our country, Romana Vlahutin, who held a meeting in the municipality of Great Highland. Vlahutin inaugurates the EU office in this municipality as well as conducts a conversation with civil society.³ The ambassador also stated that the only conditions that may be related to a good governance and improvement of the situation in Albania.⁴

The Law for the National Theater-artists and activists raise; no transparency

The beginning of June 2018 caught Albania in the verge of other protests and issues regarding a new law/project that the government has proposed requiring the collapse of the National Theater building and replacing it with a new one, with the justification that the current building lacks the proper conditions and it risks people's lives. This declaration has raised many voices especially the ones of the actors who believes that the theater should be considered part of cultural heritage and should not be removed. They are also suspicious regarding the purpose of this decision, believing that it is corrupted and not in the public interest but in the interest of big companies which aspire to build there. Through this call, The National Alliance for the Protection of National Theater was formed, a new group who is composed from different artists, civil society members and volunteers who believe at the cause.

Actors and activists state that it is not only the lack of transparency about this project that concerns them, but the loss of Tirana's identity. The legacy and public places of the city are disappearing one after the other.⁵

The theater is one of the last witnesses of the capital's history, he has known fascism, communism, intellectuals have been killed in front of his doors on the doorstep of freedom. After the destruction of the stadium or the complete renovation of Skanderbeg Square, many citizens feel always and more lost in the face of transformations in the heart of their city. The artists insisted that no discussion with them would continue without the withdrawal of the draft law granting a part of the theater company Fusha Ltd for tower constructions in exchange for the construction of a new theater.⁶

"The Civic Alliance for the Protection of the National Theater calls on the country's prime minister to face and face, he needs to know who he is facing, he must know that the only dialogue that can be developed will be with the government, and in terms of withdrawing the bill," added the statement.

Another issue for this case is the lack of public consultations, which even though they are declared that there have been public consultations; the activists state that none of their request is being considered. According to a report by the government, National Theater Buildings "bear no historical value", while their book value is 95 million Lek (about 760 thousand Euros). The draft law also seeks to argue why the field's application should be dealt with outside the legal framework of the law "On Private Public Partnership", a law that, while allowing the highly-criticized form of "unsolicited claims", nevertheless forces this claim to be cast public spaces where other interested companies may participate.⁷

Activists believe that this is the main reason why the government wants to proceed with the collapse of the building. Their resistance has been in various forms, including creating specifics shows, displaying movies, near the theater building.

5.<http://www.mapo.al/projektligji-jashtezakon-shem-per-shembjen-e-teatrit-kombetar/>;

6<https://alpenews.al/reportazh-shkrimi-nemediat-franceze-prishja-e-teatrit-kombetar-artistet-bejne-rezistence/>.

STUDENT PROTEST- biggest protest in Albania. Thousands of students demand their rights in front of Ministry of Educations

On December 2018, Albanian students marched together on the streets of Tirana, to protests against the corrupted education system. All the students were disappointed from the conditions starting from the University building and going through dormitory conditions, lack of student card, corrupted professors, weak curricula and most importantly high university fees. What started out on December 4 as a self-organized protest by a group of students from the Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning soon became a massive reaction of students from all over Albania. Concern for high university fees had existed for several years, but what triggered the mass protest was a decision of the Council of Ministers of May 2018 that among others stipulated an additional fee for credits or exams carried out. On the second day, on December 5th, protesters joined the students of the Faculty of Civil Engineering and later those of the Natural Sciences boycotting the lesson to move in front of the Ministry of Education and Sports. The impact of social networks and the determination of the students who were in protest, caused and sensitized the rest of the students from the Faculty of Economics, Philology, Agricultural University of Tirana and others.⁸

From Tirana, the protest extended further to parallel protests in Elbasan, Vlora, Korca and Shkodra and Gjirokastra. But the giant size and involvement nationwide took student protests on December 6th. This also led to the reaction of Minister of Education, Lindita Nikolla, who in a press release said that the DCM had already abolished the fees for the examinations. A few hours later, Prime Minister Rama, in a video on Facebook, explained that he had launched a massive investment (18.8mln € Stage 1) in collaboration with the German government to change the dormitory situation.⁹

Among other things, Prime Minister Rama emphasized that in the second phase of the project would be intervened in 9 buildings with a value of 11.4 million euros

On December 7th, on the fourth day of the protest, the student's demands changed by adding to the number. In addition to the requests for lifting the payment for loans, postponement of the payment deadline for installment payment, the students added to the list of requests, including the reduction of tariffs, the inclusion of their representatives on the administrative board, the improvement of dormitory conditions, the fund for scientific research and the addition of funds that go to education from the state budget. The protest was formalized with 8 official request by the students:¹⁰

1. Budget growth at 5% of GDP with the aim of halving the study fee for each level of study, improvement of teaching and infrastructure (universities and dormitories).
2. Transparency with the budget from the Ministry of Education, publication of all online expenses.
3. Increase from 10% to 50% of the total student vote to elect the candidates for deans, rectors, and each faculty to have a student representative in the academic senate.
4. Review of Academic Titles and Verification of Plagiarism of PhDs and Textbooks.
5. Based on Article 99 on Student Councils, the Higher Education Law item 2 requires that the HEI Management Board has an equal number of votes from the MAS and HEIs as well as to add a representative to this board from students.
6. Equipping all students with a student card within the academic year 2018-19
7. Building European and online bookstore libraries free of charge for students in Albanian.
8. Evaluation of performance in the teaching and research of the pedagogue, his online publication and lecture recording.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Media has a key role in informing our society and also raising awareness when needed. After a monitoring of 40 local Medias, printed, online and television, we could see that the information is driven to news that are often considered more readable from the audience. Most of the news are repeated and sometimes it's hard to find critical approaches and the news give the impression of being politically affected.

- We recommend a stronger cooperation between media and civil society and institutions.
- More qualitative approach to news.
- Respecting ethics in the way the article or the news is delivered.
- Independence and free from political influence.



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TRANSPARENCY AND
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ZaštoNe? 

ODK  OPEN DATA KOSOVO

LEVIJIA 

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