

ASSOCIATION BH JOURNALISTS

*Project: **Free Media for Free Society***

*Research Topic: **Local Media – Quality of Media Content and Information for Citizens,  
Pluralism of Opinion and Diversity of Sources of Information***

**MONITORING OF LOCAL MEDIA CONTENT IN BOSNIA – HERZEGOVINA**

**- FIRST PRELIMINARY REPORT WITH RESULTS-**

*Based on findings of monitors, report prepared by prof.dr. Lejla Turčilo*

Sarajevo, October, 2020.

## **SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT AND RESEARCH FINDINGS**

Research project - monitoring of the content of local media in Bosnia and Herzegovina aims to gain scientific knowledge, based on empirical evidence, on whether and to what extent local media (print, broadcast and online) represent the public interest, or fulfill their societal role of local public media. It has been researched which topics are covered by local media, whether these topics are researched through journalistic work or presented to the public based on statements from local authorities and other societal actors, how many sources they use in reporting and how they treat these sources (are they all equal or are some preferred), and how much pluralism of opinion is present in the contents they publish.

617 contents from 34 local media were monitored (4 print, 10 TV stations, 11 radio stations and 9 portals). Research findings indicate the following:

- Local media mainly deal with local politics, conveying the views of local officials and other political actors in the local community.
- There are topics in the local media that are of public interest, but the way in which these topics are treated does not help citizens too much to get quality information on these topics.
- Local media mostly base their content on a small number of sources, i.e. interlocutors (usually one or possibly two).
- When the media have more interlocutors in their content, those interlocutors mostly agree on the topic or issue being addressed and do not have opposing opinions.
- The interlocutors in the stories are mostly equally treated, but there is not a small percentage of content in which the views of local officials, i.e. statements of local authorities, are transmitted directly by copy-paste method. This gives the impression that local media almost feel a responsibility to convey what local officials want to say to the public.
- There are, of course, exceptions and positive examples of local media that are responsible and have a higher level of professionalism than others, but in general we can say that in terms of pluralism of views and fulfillment of public interest, web portals have shown the worst results.

In addition to the research findings, recommendations for the media were created, which relate, above all, to more research stories on topics related to the public interest (local infrastructure, education, health, ecology, culture), and less transmission of opinion of local officials on daily political issues, and the provision of a larger number of contents originally produced by journalists in the media based on a large number of sources, in which different points of view will be presented, i.e. a pluralism of opinions will be ensured.

## **METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF RESEARCH**

### ***Introductory remarks***

Quality information is crucial for citizens, their personal lives, but (even more so) for their participation in a democratic society. In this sense, the responsibility of the media to provide reliable, verified, accurate and impartial information is crucial in any society, especially in societies with a relatively low level of political culture, democratic tradition and media literacy, where the manipulative power of the media and elites they are connected with is big.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, since the end of the war, we have witnessed all these processes: from the low level of political culture, which is manifested, among other things, in increased hate speech, especially in election campaigns (see media monitoring in election campaigns BH Journalists, available at: <http://www.bhnovinari.ba>), to a low level of media literacy (see reports on the state of media literacy and research results of the Institute for Social Research FPN, available at: <http://www.fpn.unsa.ba>). Research also shows close links between media owners and political and economic powers (see B&H Media Scene Survey Assessment of Media Sector in B&H, available at: <https://dec.usaid.gov/dec/content/Detail.aspx?ctID=ODVhZjk4NWQtM2YyMi00YjRmIDTNMx2=Mzc5NDM3>), as well as a narrowed space for alternative views and attitudes in the B&H media (see the publication Media and Shrinking Space in B&H: Silenced Alternative Voices, available at: <https://ba.boell.org/bs/2017/12/06/media-and-shrinking-space-in-I-imprinted-alternative-voices>), and manipulation of facts and increase in the number of fake news in the media, due to internal problems faced by journalists in newsrooms (poor employment status, controversial editorial policies favored by the powerful, etc.) and external pressures (threats, censorship, self-censorship, etc.) (see the publication Alternative Facts and Post-Truths in B&H: Who (Really) Creates the Media Agenda, available at: [https://safejournalists.net / wp-content / uploads / 2018/10 / who-really-creates-the-agenda-of-the-media\\_BHS.pdf](https://safejournalists.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/who-really-creates-the-agenda-of-the-media_BHS.pdf)).

All these problems of the public and media sphere in Bosnia and Herzegovina significantly negatively affect the right of the public to receive quality information. The public interest has been replaced by the particular interests of the powerful who are supported and justified in the media, and the pluralism of opinion in a large number of media has been replaced by a consensus that is in line with the media and those associated with those media.

What is the role of local media in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the processes of quality public informing and how much can they contribute to the diversity of information, opinions and available sources / views for citizens in B&H? In theory, local media should act as a link between local authorities and citizens, and be a forum through which citizens can nominate the problems and issues of their local community to local authorities to address. In practice, there are 81 local public broadcasters in B&H (12 TV stations, 62 radio stations and 7 TV stations broadcast via other electronic communications networks). For their work and attitude towards the public interest, see the publication *Public local media between public interest and financial addiction*, available at: [https://media.ba/sites/default/files/javni\\_lokalni\\_mediji\\_izmedu\\_javnog\\_interesa\\_i\\_finansijske\\_ovisnosti\\_final\\_za\\_stampu.pdf](https://media.ba/sites/default/files/javni_lokalni_mediji_izmedu_javnog_interesa_i_finansijske_ovisnosti_final_za_stampu.pdf)). These are municipal, city and cantonal broadcasters, but in addition to them there is an extremely large number of portals that deal with issues of interest to certain local communities, some of which are supported and / or partly funded by local authorities. To what extent do these and such media satisfy the information needs of citizens, in terms of quality, impartial information, and how much space do they have, i.e. give to diverse opinions, actors and topics, are some of the questions this research will try to answer.

### **Research problem**

The research problem refers to the quality of media content created and presented by local media, i.e. the level of professionalism of local media and pluralism and the diversity of views and opinions that are transmitted through them. In the broadest sense, the research problem concerns the question of how much the local media actually work in the public interest and whether the mix of non-media circumstances in local communities (connection and / or financial dependence with local authorities, pressure from local authorities, etc.) and internal problems of local media (under capacity in terms of both human and technical resources, problems of financial sustainability, level of education and motivation of employees, etc.) affect the quality of information provided by local media to the population.

## **Research subject**

The subject of research in a broader sense is the pluralism of opinions, attitudes and information in the local media in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In a narrower sense, the subject of research is media content that includes topics and issues of importance to local communities, their objectivity, diversity and quality. These media contents are contextualized in a broader communication framework in local communities, with the aim of determining how much they contribute to the quality of informing citizens.

## **Research questions**

Instead of setting classical general and elaborate hypotheses in this research, we opted to ask broad and principled research questions, which should serve as a framework for directing quantitative and qualitative analysis of media content and media context of local media in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These research questions relate to:

- Respect for the standards of the profession in the local media in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Creating content in local media in accordance with the professional principles of impartiality and pluralism of opinion;
- Quality of media coverage of local media on topics of public interest

## **Scientific and societal goals of research**

*The general objective* of the research is to ensure the implementation of the standards of the Press Council and the Communications Regulatory Agency in local media in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as to promote media pluralism and work in the public interest in local media in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

*The scientific goal* of the research is to obtain objective indicators of the level of information quality, pluralism of opinion and diversity of sources in local media in Bosnia and Herzegovina,

and to point out the specific causes and consequences of local media action on the public by quantitative and qualitative method of content analysis. in local communities.

***The societal goal*** of the research is, pointing to the degree of respect for professional standards and norms by local media, to appeal on raising the professionalism and quality of journalistic reporting in local communities, and to make recommendations for the media, but also local authorities, civil society and citizens in local communities. for the ways in which they too can influence the raising of levels of professionalism and media diversity and plurality. Recommendations for the media will be developed in the first phase of the research, while recommendations for other actors in society will be developed in the second phase of the research.

***The specific objectives*** of the research are:

- To analyze the extent to which the media content of local media throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina reflects the public interest, through topics that are reported (local politics, infrastructure, economy and employment, education, health, culture and art, etc.);
- To analyze the extent to which different sources of information are present in the media content of local media in Bosnia and Herzegovina and how they are treated (whether some of them are in a privileged position compared to others);
- To analyze the extent to which there are different opinions and views on the media content of local media in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the topics covered and how impartial journalists are in their transmission);
- To develop recommendations for the media, local authorities, civil society actors and citizens to promote pluralism and diversity in local media in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- To provide a starting point for developing a plan for training journalists and editors in local media for appropriate professional reporting on the public interest in local communities, and determine whether the training can contribute to raising the level of professionalism and pluralism in local media in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## Methods of research

The research is, in a way, *longitudinal*, since the first phase of the research was completed in October 2020 (the results of which we present in this report), while another monitoring of media content will be performed by mid-2021, as well as interviews with journalists from local media, in order to determine whether it is possible, by presenting research findings from the first phase of research, and by a set of recommendations and training for journalists in local media, to raise the level of professionalism and pluralism of media content of local media in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Also, the second phase of the research will serve as a test or control phase to correct the recommendations, as the recommendations created in this report will be delivered to key stakeholders, and in the second phase of the research their feasibility and effectiveness will be checked. All of the above will be checked in interviews with local media journalists.

*Quantitative content analysis* was used in this first phase of the research, in order to collect statistical indicators on the pluralism of media content in local media in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while in the second phase, in addition to quantitative content analysis, qualitative analysis of media context will be applied in order to get insights into the causes and consequences of media coverage in local communities.

*The inductive method* was used in the first phase, and will be in the second phase of the research, to draw general conclusions about trends in media reporting of local media in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Data collection techniques are *media monitoring* (already performed in the first phase, to obtain statistical indicators on media content, and will be repeated in the second phase of research to obtain data for longitudinal comparative analysis), and *interviews* (in the second phase of research, to obtain qualitative data on the context of the activities of local media in local communities and the causes and consequences of their media coverage).

## Variables

Variables that were used in *code sheet for media monitoring* include the following:

- Number of contents that reflects the diversity of topics in local media;



- Number of contents in which topics of public interest of local communities are represented in relation to the number of contents on other issues;
- Number of interlocutors in the contents published by local media;
- Media access to different interlocutors (equal to all or biased towards some);
- In case of perceived bias, actors who are in a privileged status in the media content (are they local politicians, economic powerful people, representatives of civil society, analysts, citizens);
- Number of contents that contain different / opposing opinions and views on a certain issue in relation to the number of contents in which views / opinions are harmonized;
- Number of contents that prefer the authors' work of journalists, as opposed to the *copy-paste* method.

### **Sample/corpus**

*The monitoring sample* includes 34 local Bosnian media (4 print, 11 radio stations, 10 TV stations and 9 online portals) that are both publicly and privately owned (list of media attached). By local media, therefore, we mean those that are thematically and in terms of audience, oriented towards local communities, i.e. media that are, essentially, established to inform citizens in local communities (municipalities and cantons) about issues and topics that are of public interest. interests, i.e. of importance for those local communities.

*The monitoring corpus* includes articles from newspapers and portals and central news programs of radio or TV stations listed in the sample (list of media attached). The corpus, therefore, includes texts from the print media and from the web portals, as well as all articles / stories in the news programs of radio and TV stations. The total number of contents that entered the corpus of research is 617.

### **Time and place of research**

The research is conducted in local media that operate throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina (Federation of B&H and Republika Srpska, and Brčko District) on 29.9. 2020 - first phase.

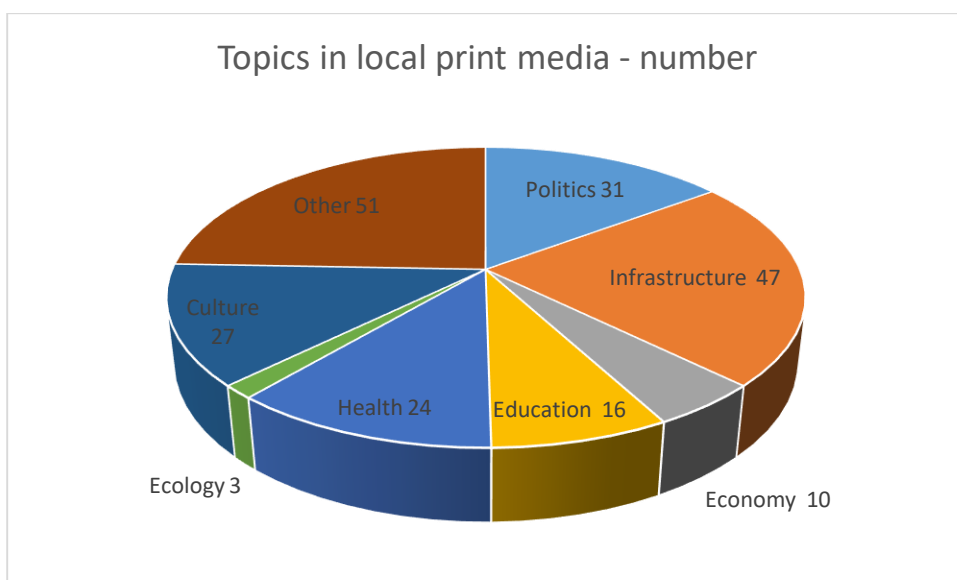
The second phase of the research will be done in the period June - July 2021. The final report on the research findings from both phases of the research, with final recommendations for the media and non - media actors, will be presented in August 2021.

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS – RESULTS OF MONITORING**

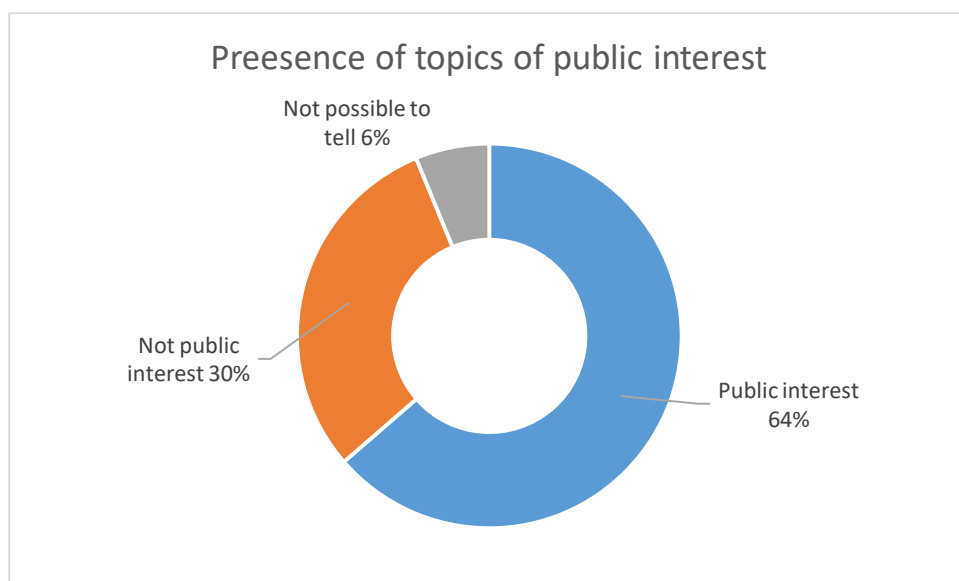
### **PRINT MEDIA**

In a sample of 4 printed local media, a total of 10 issues were analyzed, with a total of 209 texts.

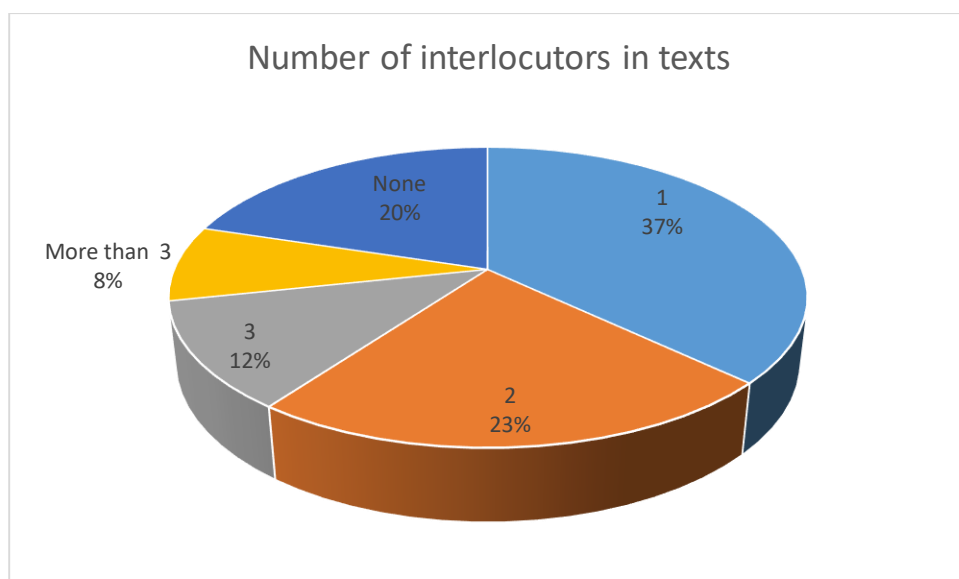
The topics that are present in the print media are diverse, but it should be emphasized that the most numerous topics are those that have no direct connection with local communities, such as some trivial topics, sports etc. However, what is encouraging is the significant presence of topics from the field of local infrastructure development, but also topics from local politics. The smallest number of texts is related to environmental protection.

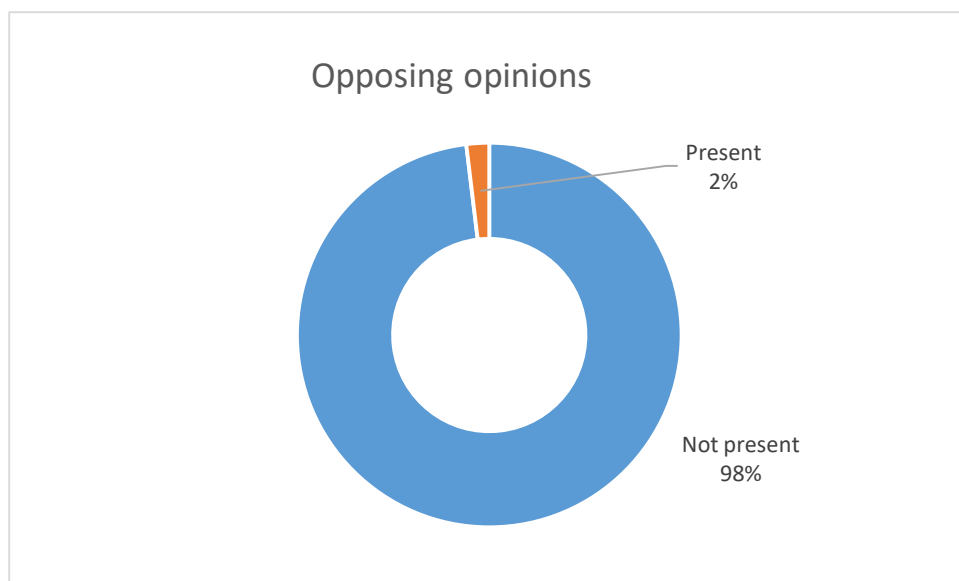
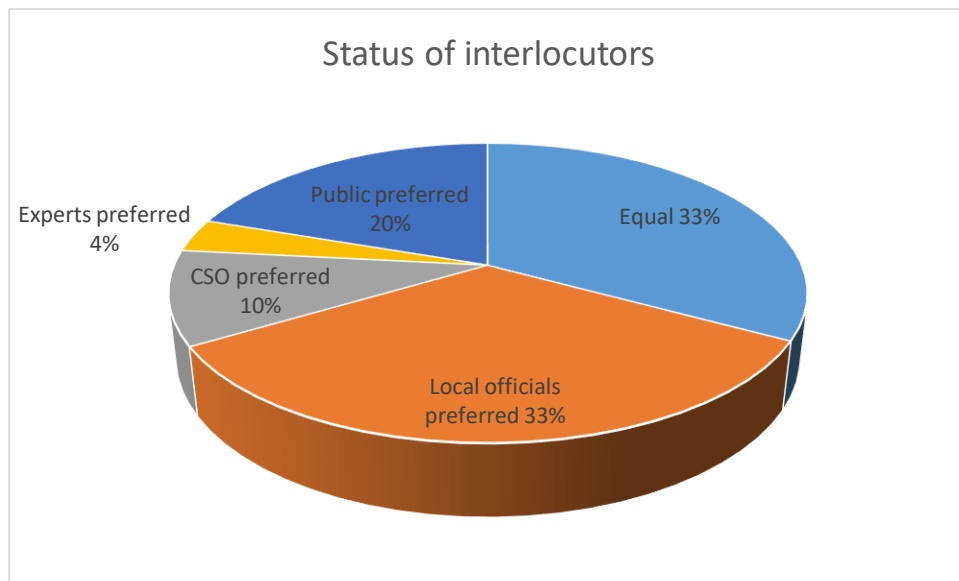


Monitors noted a greater presence of topics of public interest compared to topics that were not in public interest. 64% of topics covered in local print media are of public interest. This shows that local print media are aware of the obligation to work in the public interest, but in any case there is a lot of space to increase the percentage of content that is in the public interest. As the medium that has the most topics of public interest, monitors state Kozarski vjesnik.

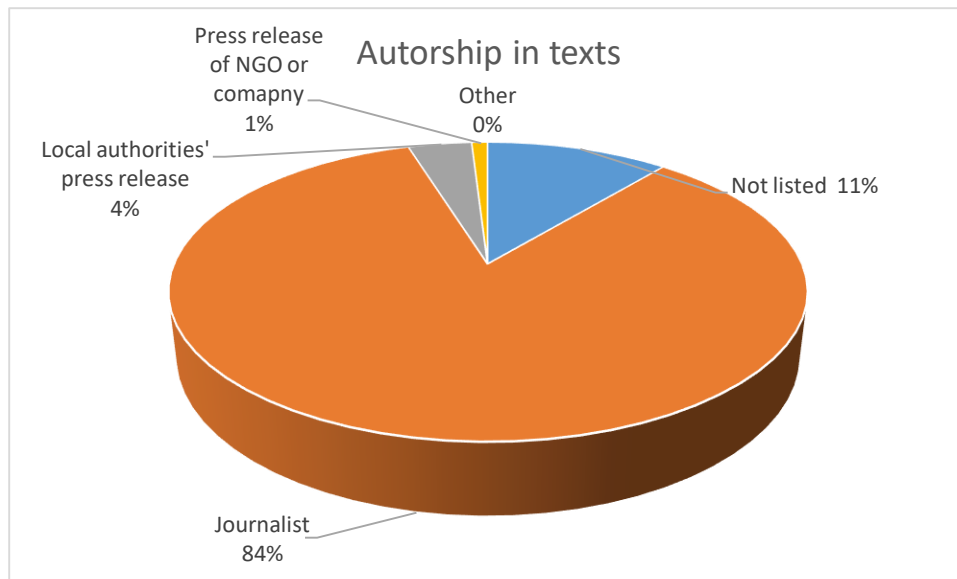


What is worrying, however, is the fact that the print media consult a small number of interlocutors (usually only one in the text), and that these interlocutors are usually in line with each other, i.e. there are very few conflicting opinions in the texts. Also, there is almost an equal number of texts where local officials are preferred and those where the interlocutors are equal, but there are certainly small percentages of texts in which the views of experts, civil society, the public and the like are preferred. Monitors, as the medium that has the highest percentage of equal interlocutors, state Semberske novine.





Journalists generally sign articles, and in this context the authorship is transparent and clearly indicated. However, in the author's signed texts, statements of local officials are often taken as a source.

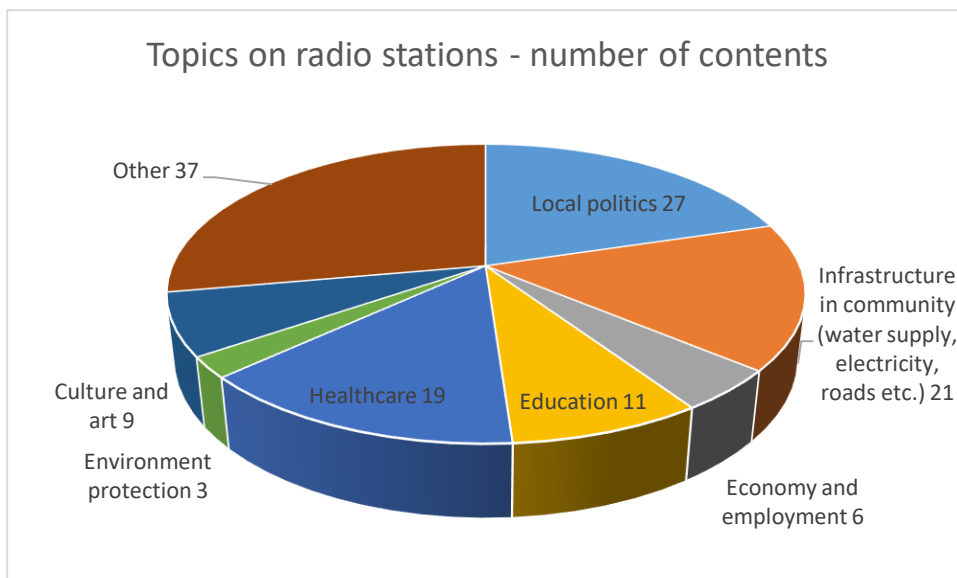


*The key advantages of local print media are, therefore, the presence of various topics and public interest, and the key disadvantages are the absence of a larger number of interlocutors in the texts, and in those texts where more interlocutors are present, reduced presence of pluralism of opinion and preference of local officials in texts.*

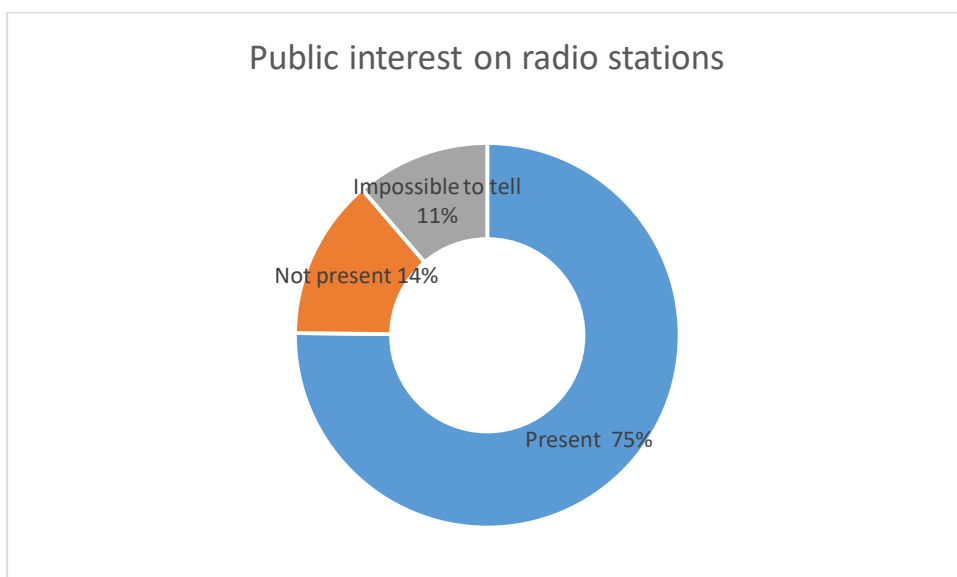
## **RADIO STATIONS**

In the sample of 11 local radio stations, in total 133 contents have been analyzed.

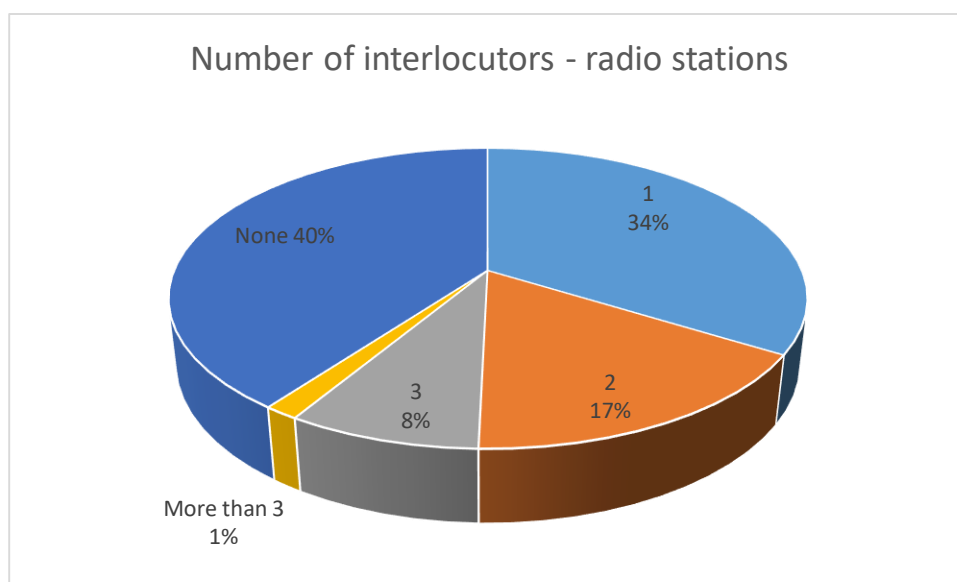
Topics that are present on radio stations are mostly related to trivial ones, and when it comes to those topics that have a direct connection with the life of local communities, the most numerous are topics related to local politics, i.e. in which the views and statements of local politicians are conveyed. There is the smallest number of topics on the radio related to the preservation of the environment, as well as topics in the field of culture.



Monitors noted a greater presence of topics of public interest compared to topics that were not related to public interest. Radio stations have a higher percentage of topics of public interest compared to local print media. Radio Konjic, Radio Gradska mreža Mostar and Radio Čapljina were evaluated by the monitors as media in which all topics in the monitored sample were of public interest.

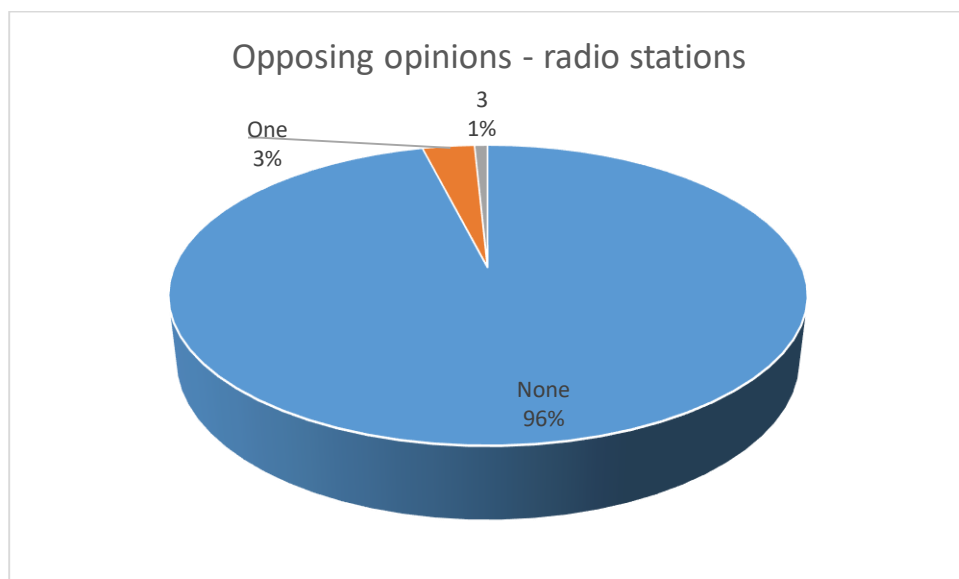
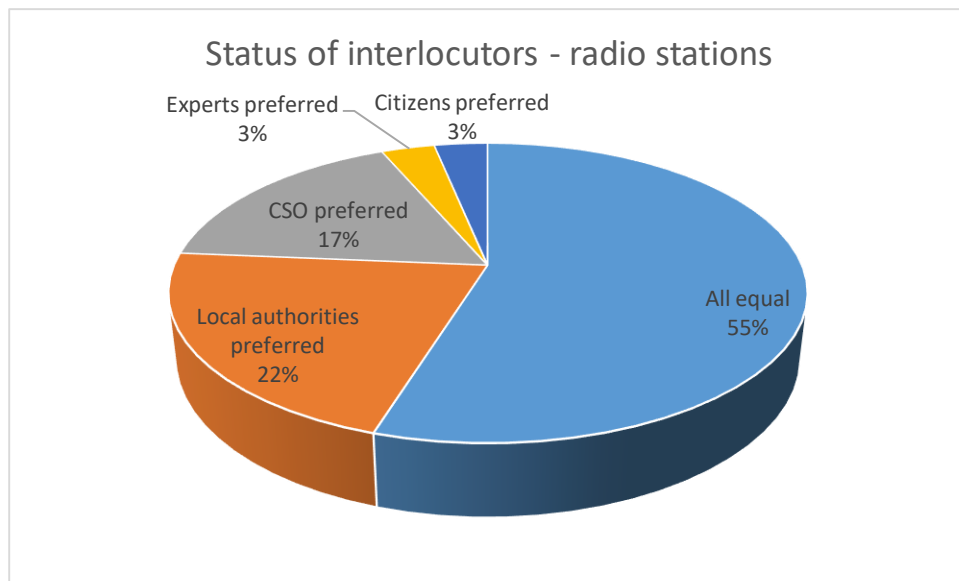


On radio stations, there is a significant number of contents in which there are no interlocutors at all, but it is about short speech information read by the leader in the studio. In those contents where the interlocutors are included, the radio stations include mostly only one interlocutor, and then when there are more of them, they have equal status, in terms of the length of statements, as well as the fact that different interlocutors are chosen. However, here, too, we are mostly talking about harmonized, not opposing views of the interlocutors, i.e. mostly the dominant tone and narrative of the content itself, determined by the journalist, then includes interlocutors who confirm this narrative, without significant pluralism in attitudes and opinions, which would allow listeners to derive their judgment from different interpretations of a particular issue. In only one case, out of 133 monitored content, it was noted that there were three opposing opinions, on Radio Brcko District.

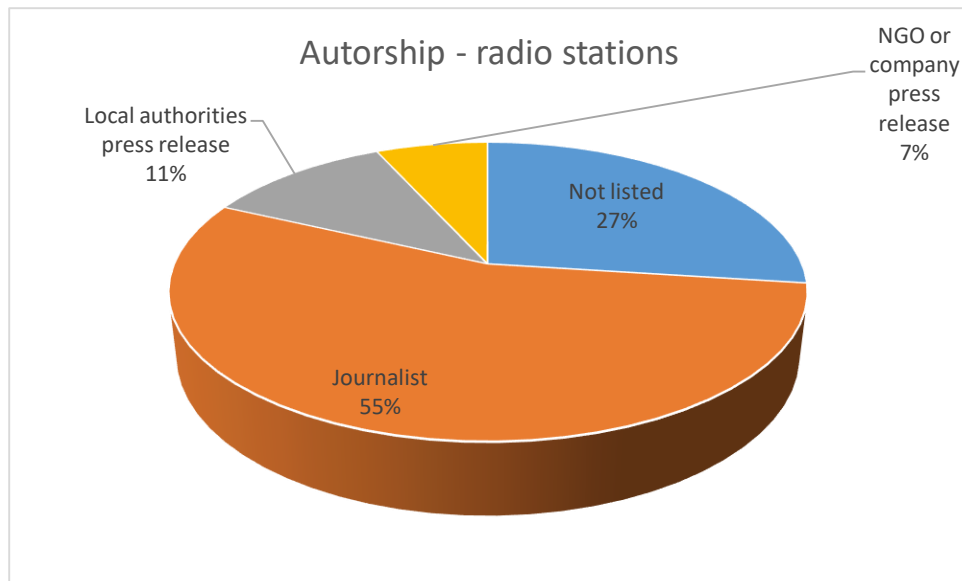


As in the case of the print media, it is important to emphasize that the fact that stories are made with only one source, as well as that unanimous or consensual sources are taken, if there are more than one, does not mean real pluralism, but actually creates the illusion of pluralism in the media, and in reality for citizens this does not open up space for a better understanding of the events, topics and issues that the media reports on. Increasing the number of sources in stories, as well as finding interlocutors who do not have pre-agreed attitudes and the same relation towards the topic being reported on is something that local radio stations need to work on.





The authors are also journalists on local radio stations in most stories from the field, but since there is a lot of short information that can be read from the studios, the author and the source are not mentioned for them. What is interesting is that this source is cited when it comes to local government press releases, but not when, say, it is agency news or news transmitted from another media. We can interpret this as the need of radio stations to emphasize their authors' work in comparison to what they transmit from local officials.

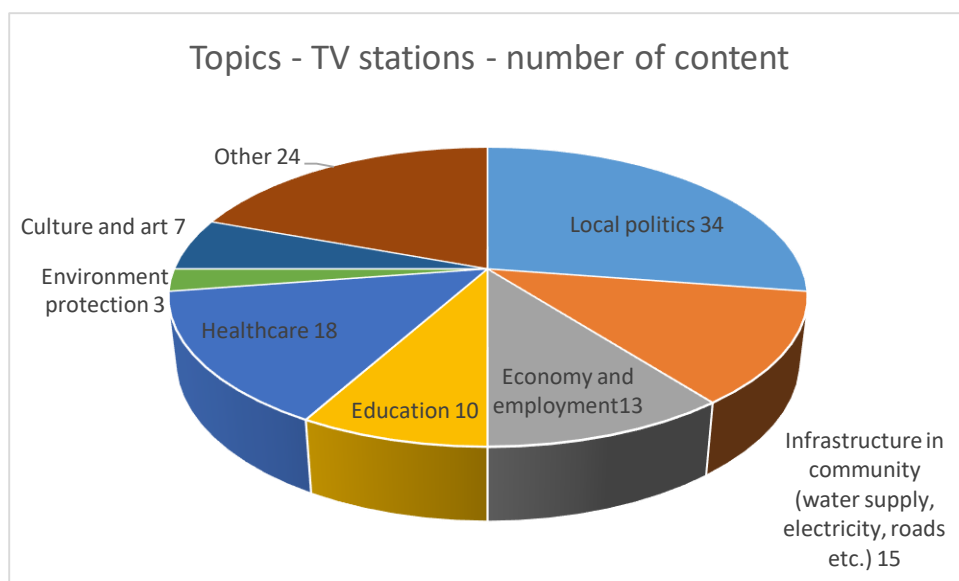


*As key advantages of local radio stations, just like with local print media, we can therefore state the presence of various topics and public interest, and as key disadvantages the absence of a larger number of interlocutors in the content, and in those contents where more interlocutors are present reduced presence of pluralism opinions.*

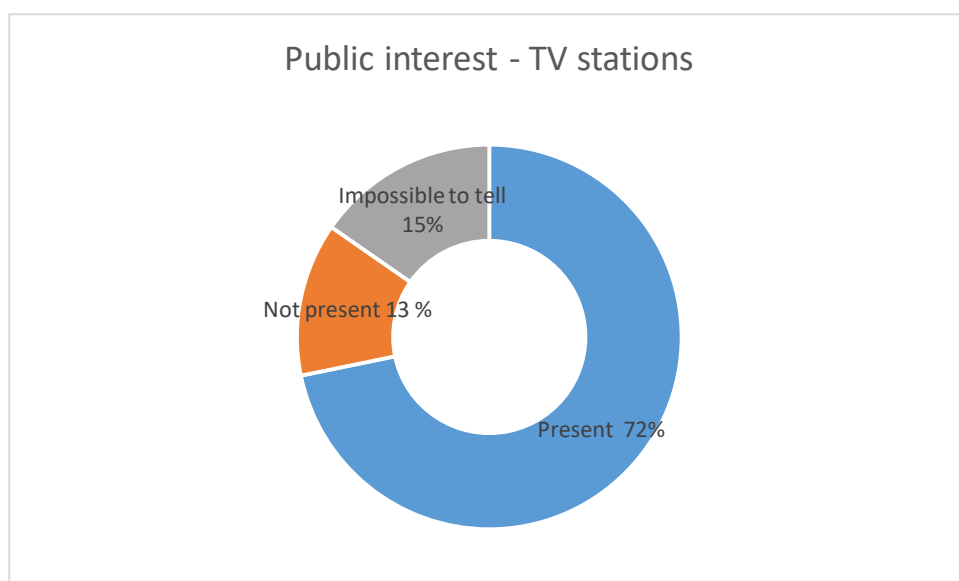
## **TV STATIONS**

In the sample of 10 local TV stations, 124 contents have been analyzed in total.

The most numerous topics on local TV stations are related to local politics, i.e. in which the views and statements of local politicians are transmitted. TV also has the fewest topics related to environmental protection, as well as topics in the field of culture. On TV, we also record a slightly smaller number of topics in the field of health compared to radio stations and print media, which can be surprising because this is the time of the pandemic, when it would be expected that topics related to health and healthcare are more present in the media.

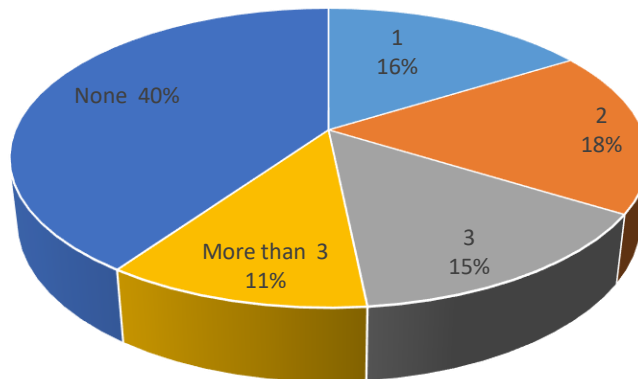


Monitors also record the presence of topics of public interest on TV stations. As the medium with the largest number of such topics, i.e. the medium in which all topics in the analyzed sample are of public interest, the monitors state TVSA, as well as RTVTK and RTV USK.



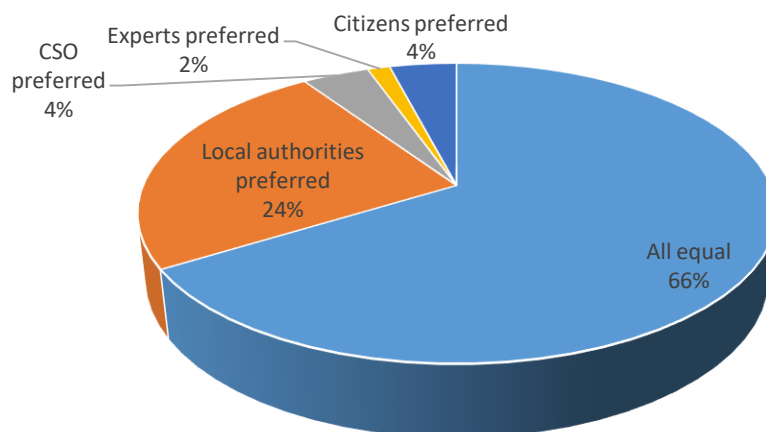
There is also a significant percentage of content on TV stations in which there are no interlocutors, but it is about the so-called "read" news. However, what is the advantage of TV stations in relation to print media and radio stations is a slightly larger number of items with a larger number of interlocutors. TVSA and ATV from Banja Luka have a slightly higher number of items with more than three interlocutors compared to other TV stations.

Number of interlocutors - TV stations

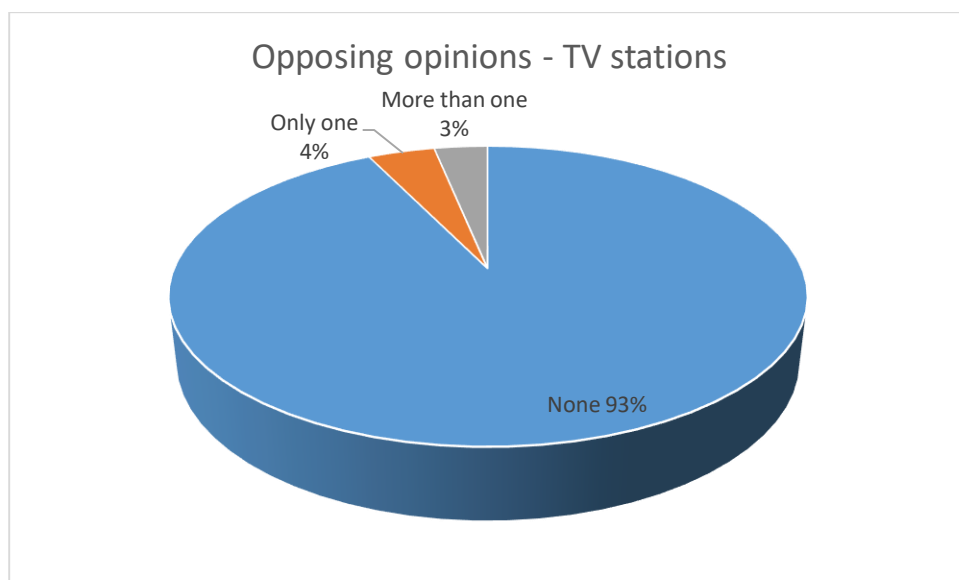


On TV stations, interlocutors in most cases have an equal status, in terms of the length of statements, as well as the fact that different interlocutors are chosen. However, in almost a quarter of the monitored content, local officials are preferred. Monitors cite RTV TK as the medium with the most equal status of interlocutors.

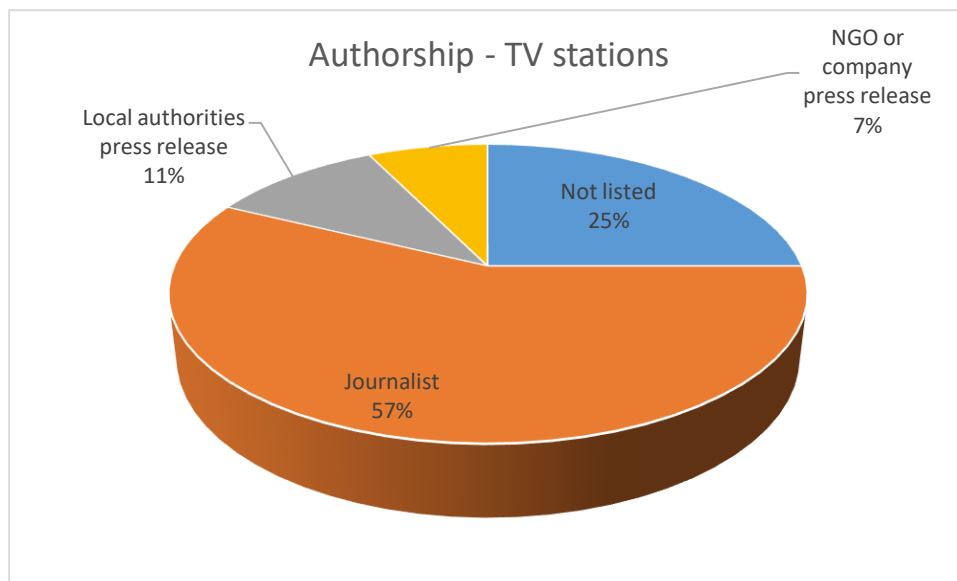
Status of interlocutors - TV stations



And in the reports with several interlocutors on TV stations, it is mostly about harmonized, not opposing positions of the interlocutors. No TV station had 3 opposing opinions, and only ATV and TVSA had reports with two opposing opinions.



On local TV stations, in most pieces, i.e. stories from the field, the authors are journalists, while when reading news from the studio, the author is not mentioned, but at the end of informative shows the editors are mentioned, so the viewer can conclude that they are the authors, but in the news sources are usually not even mentioned. In 11% of the contents, it was noted that a local government statement was cited as the source. TVSA has the largest number of such contents, so we can conclude that they have the greatest insistence is on the separation of journalistic stories from the transmission of press releases, i.e. on transparency in that regard.

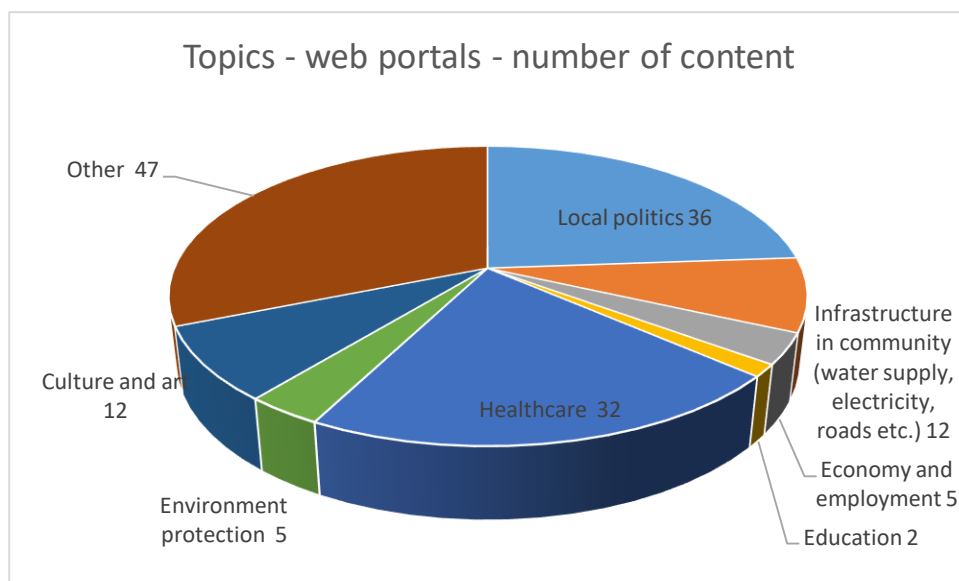


*As key advantages of local TV stations, we mention the number of interlocutors in the reports, as well as the insistence of some local TV stations that the audience clearly knows what their work is, and what they conveyed as local government press releases, and as key disadvantages relatively small number of opposing opinions in stories.*

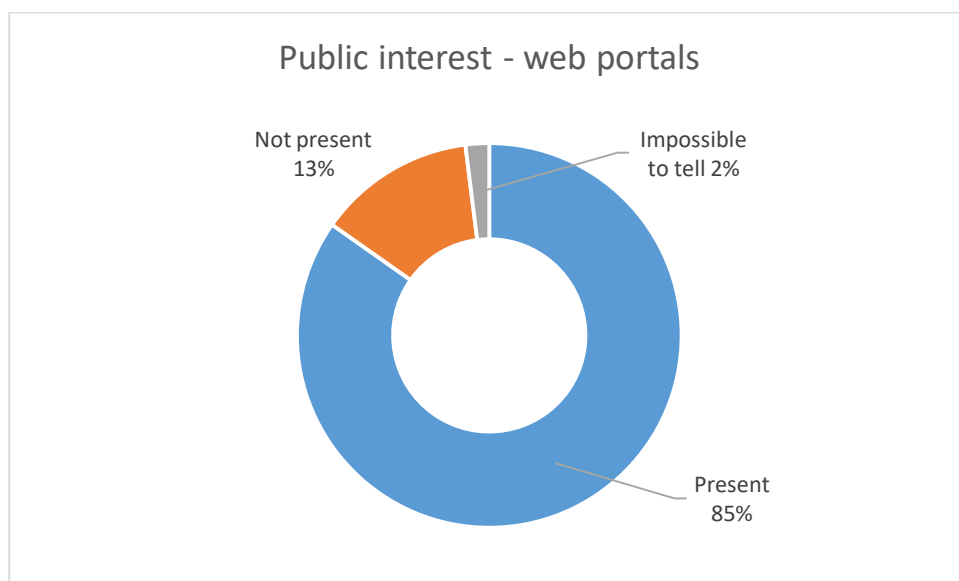
## **WEB PORTALS**

In the sample of 9 local portals, in total 151 pieces were analyzed.

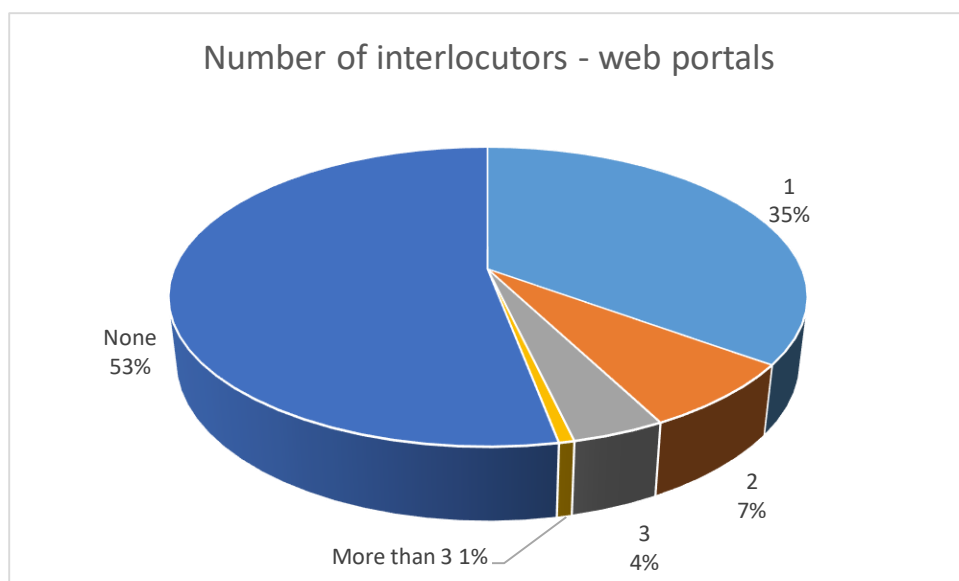
In the monitored period, monitors record the largest number of content from the domain of local politics and health on web portals. This is, in a way, expected, because portals are becoming an increasingly important medium for citizens, and even local politicians are turning their attention to these media. Also, an increasing number of health issues are certainly related to the COVID-19 pandemic.



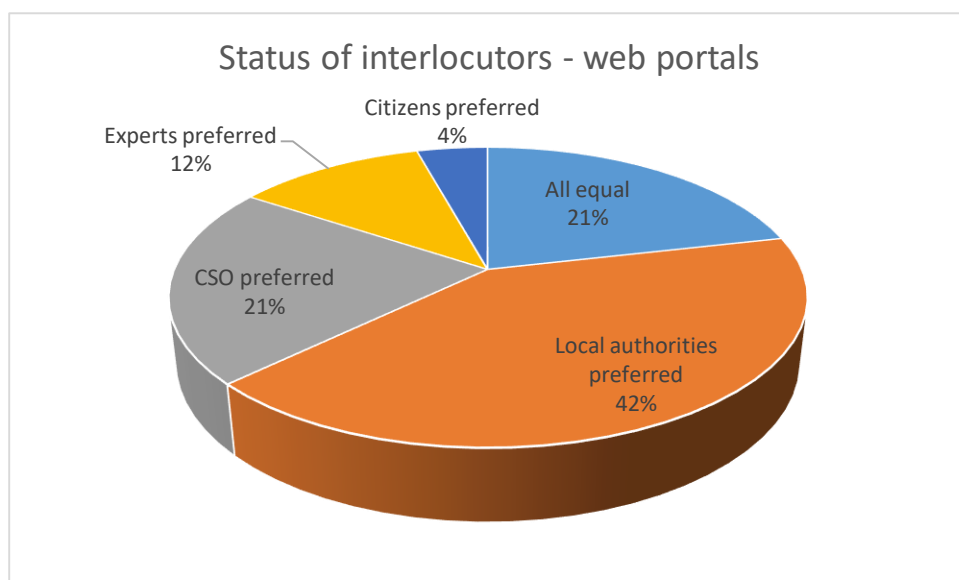
And on the portals, monitors record topics of public interest in a significant percentage.



On the portals, we find the largest number of contents in which there are no interlocutors at all. These are mostly unsigned texts (or signed only with initials) in which some remarks are given, views are expressed (author of the text or editorial office), some statistical data are analyzed etc. Also, on portals we find more than one third of the content based only on the statements of one interlocutor.



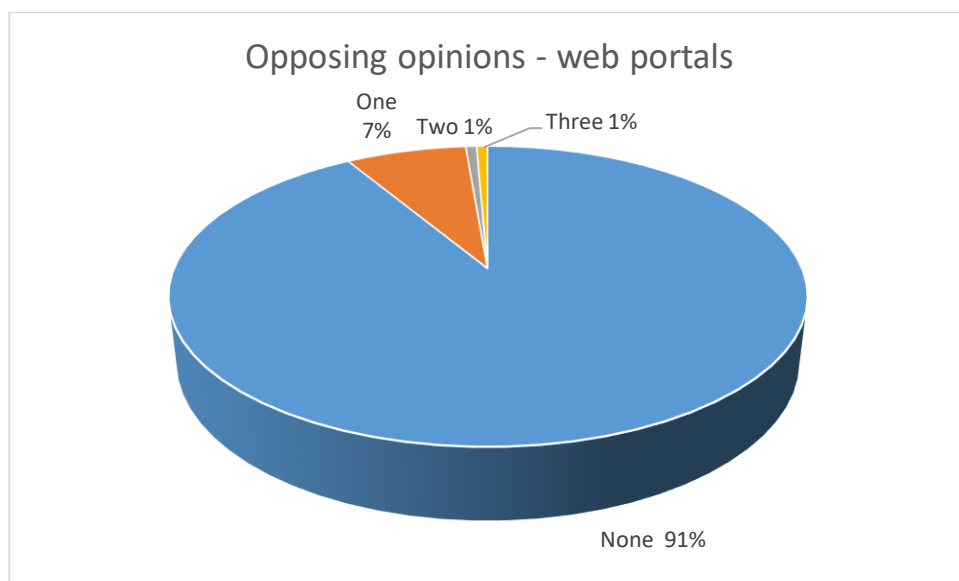
On the portals we also find the largest share of content in which local officials are preferred, compared to other types of media. This is somewhat expected, having in mind that the portals mostly deal with local politics, so in that context they mostly convey the views of local officials. Expert opinion is in the foreground mainly in topics related to health, i.e. the pandemic.



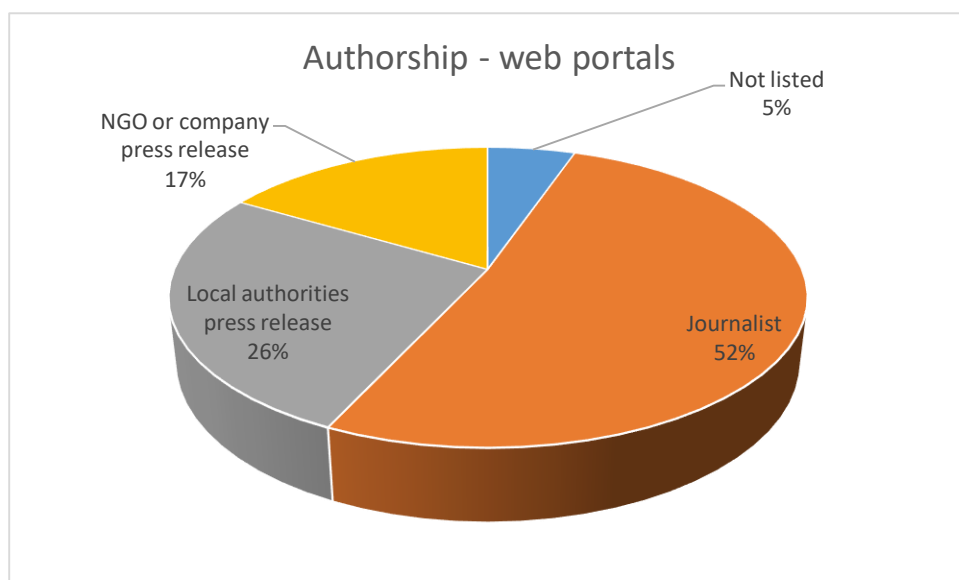
On the portals, we also record the biggest number of one-sided contents, i.e. those in which there are no conflicting opinions at all. There is a very small percentage of content with at least



two conflicting opinions, and there was no content with more than three conflicting opinions at all. This points to the fact that portals are the weakest link on the media scene, when it comes to pluralism of opinion.



In terms of authorship, about half of the texts are signed as journalistic, but just over a quarter of the content only transmits local governments' statements.

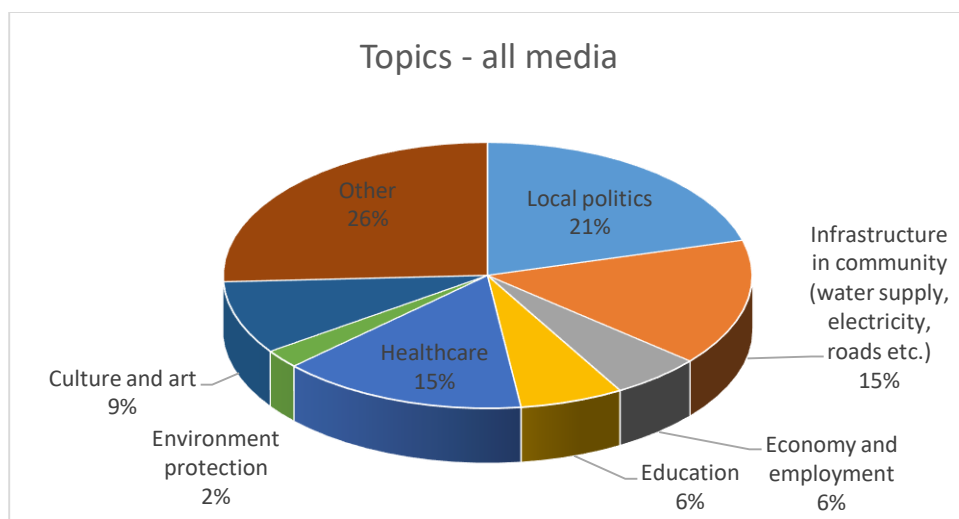


*Portals, in general, in relation to other types of media (print, radio and TV) have shown poorer quality in terms of diversity of interlocutors, pluralism of opinion and refrain from merely conveying the views of local officials, or copy-paste methods in the work.*

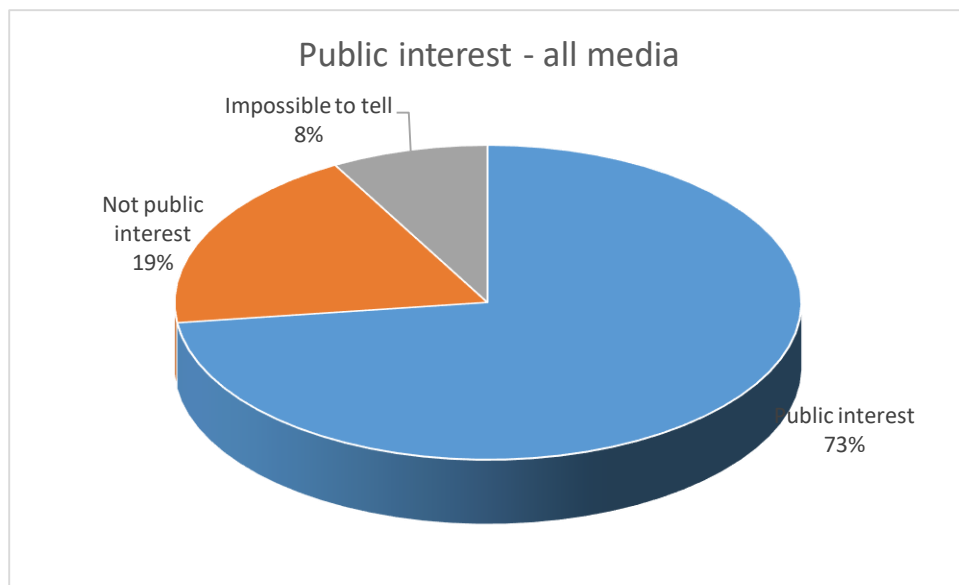
## **COMPREHENSIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS OF THE FIRST PHASE OF MONITORING**

As previously mentioned, in total 617 pieces were analyzed in 34 local media.

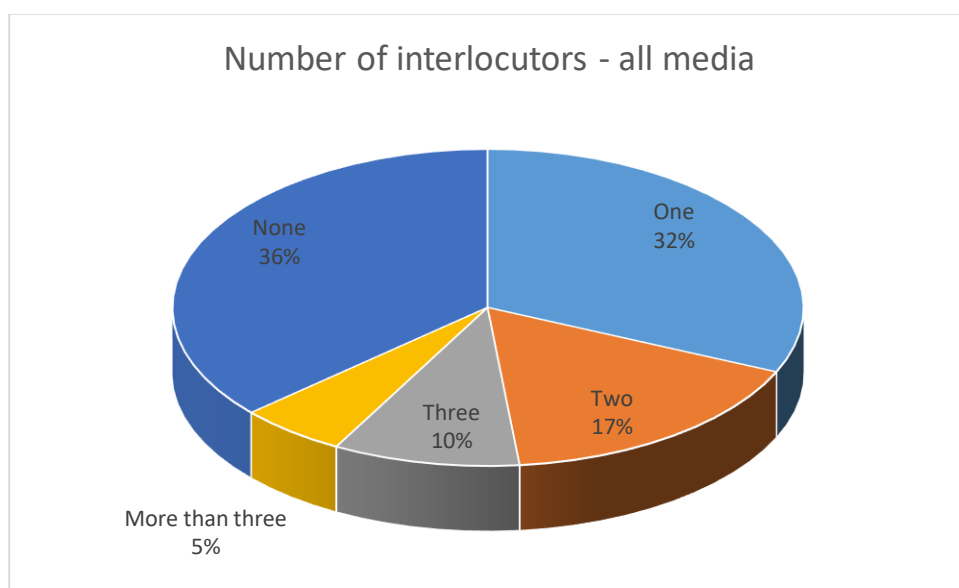
When we analyze the summary research findings we can see that local media deal with topics that are not necessarily related to local communities, so more than a quarter of the content is just such topics, which include entertainment, trivial information, information that is interesting to the audience but not relevant to local communities. One-fifth of the topics are those related to local politics, and this is mainly about conveying the views and political statements of local officials and other local policy actors. This shows us that there is still a lot of space for improving the work of local media and their true putting into function of the local community and its needs.



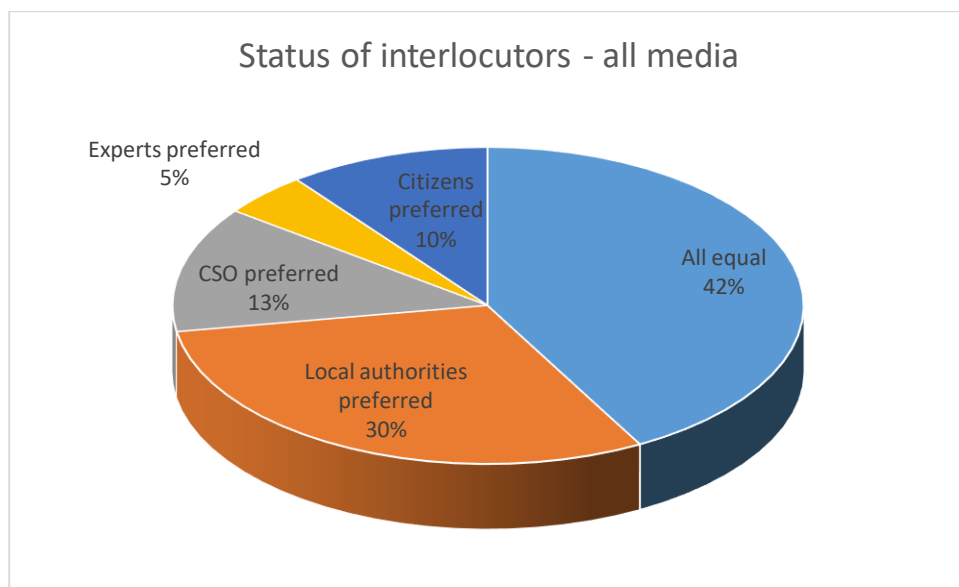
In the case of local topics, the public interest is largely present in the choice of what will be reported, but the data indicating the way in which these topics are treated show that this interest has been neglected in the work on the topic.



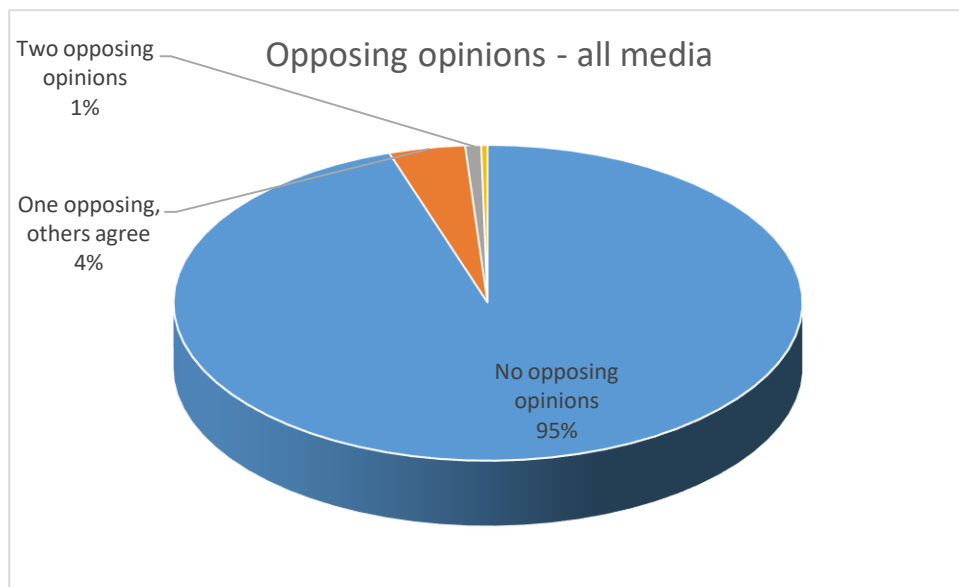
The choice of interlocutors in the media shows one-sidedness in reporting. Namely, more than one third of the content has no interlocutors at all, but it is about news that the media take over from agencies, transmission of writings of other media, journalists' reviews on some topics, transfer of statuses from social networks, etc. One third of the content has only one source. one interlocutor. This is a very worrying fact, which tells us about the inert approach to topics, i.e. reporting, in which in the stories a pluralism of views and confrontation of arguments is not achieved.



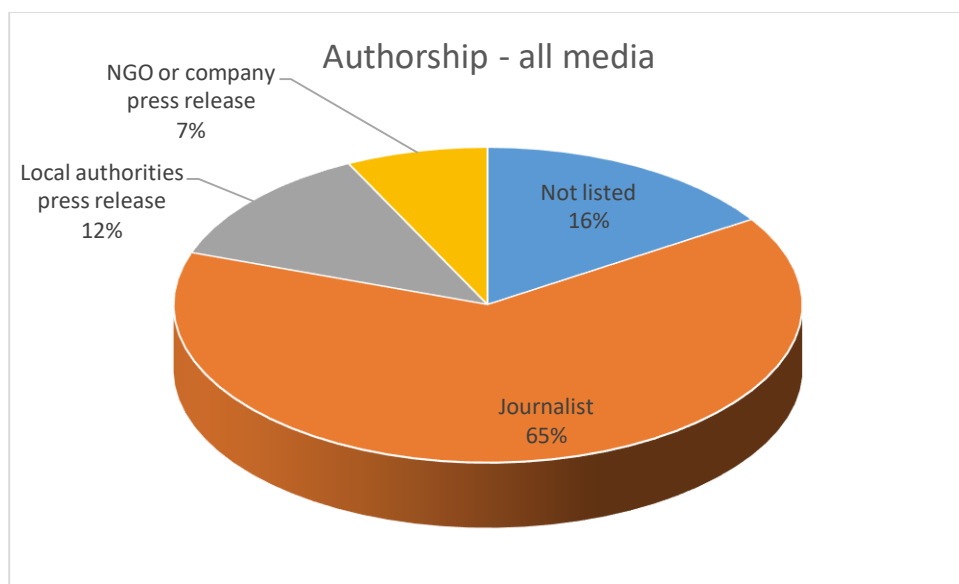
When they include two or (rarely) more than two interlocutors, the media generally give them equal space, but we also record one-third of the content in which local officials are preferred. We also see reduced media interest in civil society and experts, which should certainly change in the future, because they can help citizens better understand the processes and phenomena that the media report and view them from different angles, not just local politics.



What is, in essence, the most serious problem that the research has shown is the fact that in 95% of the content there are no conflicting opinions at all. So, even when different interlocutors are involved, they mostly agree on a topic or issue, express unanimous views and there is no confrontation of arguments. This is an absolute indicator of the absence of pluralism in the local media.



When it comes to authorship, the situation is formally satisfactory, as most of the content is signed as a journalistic work. However, it should be noted that stories in which the *copy-paste* method was applied are also signed as journalistic stories, i.e. in which the journalist only transmitted views from social networks or "rewrote" some of the statements received. Therefore, it is important to once again remind the local media of the importance of actual journalistic work, research, verification and shaping of data into an original journalistic story.



As mentioned before, main goals in this phase of research were:

- To analyze the extent to which the media content of local media throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina reflects the public interest, through the topics covered (local politics, infrastructure, economy and employment, education, health, culture and art, etc.);
- To analyze the extent to which different sources of information are present in the media content of local media in Bosnia and Herzegovina and how they are treated (whether some of them are in a privileged position compared to others);
- To analyze the extent to which there are different opinions and attitudes are present in the media content of local media in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the topics covered and how impartial journalists are in their transmission.

After the monitoring, we may conclude the following:

- Local media mainly deal with local politics, conveying the views of local officials and other political actors in the local community. Another topic they deal with is local infrastructure, but mostly in a way that they announce certain projects in that area, which often also goes in favor of local officials who use such topics and content for self-promotion.
- Topics that are of public interest are present in the local media, but the way in which these topics are treated does not help citizens to get quality information on these topics and see in an appropriate way how the public, i.e. their interest is present and defended in the local community.
- Local media mostly base their content on a small number of sources, i.e. interlocutors (usually one or possibly two).
- When the media have more interlocutors in their content, those interlocutors generally agree on the topic or issue being addressed and do not have opposing opinions. It can often be noticed from the very choice of interlocutors and the approach of journalists to the topic and interlocutors that there is almost a pre-determined judgment of journalists on the topic, the position he/she wants to express, so the selection of interlocutors is done in a way that they are mutually agreed and that they fit into the attitude that the journalist wants to express with his/her story, that is, the narrative he develops. Not only does this not contribute to the pluralism of opinion in local communities, but it is also not in line with the key journalistic principle of impartiality. It seems that journalists not

only do not give the public, i.e. their audience, the opportunity to hear different views, but they also a priori reject certain interlocutors, i.e. they do not investigate the story by consulting more interlocutors in order to see it from more angles. they take the "dams" at the start and support the agreed interlocutors.

- The interlocutors in the stories are mostly equal, but there is not a small percentage of content in which the views of local officials, i.e. statements of local authorities, are transmitted indiscriminately, by *copy-paste* method. This gives the impression that the local media almost feel a responsibility to convey what local officials want to say to the public. Even when they are financed from the budget of local communities, this is simply not their task. Accountability to the public interest must take precedence over accountability to government. The local media have, by choosing topics, shown this responsibility towards the public interest, but by choosing interlocutors and preferences towards local officials, they are still far from fulfilling their societal role of working in the public interest.
- There are, of course, exceptions and positive examples of local media that are responsible and have a higher level of professionalism than others, but in general we can say that in terms of pluralism of views and fulfillment of public interest, web portals are the worse than other media at the moment.

If we go back to research questions, we may say the following:

- Respect for the standards of the profession in the local media in Bosnia and Herzegovina is present to some extent, because there are no extreme examples of violations of standards. It is more about examples of superficially done stories, without depth and more serious research and commitment of the media to get quality information and present it to the public.
- Creating content in local media in accordance with the professional principles of impartiality and pluralism of opinion is present in some media, while in others there is dominance of the *copy-paste* journalism, but also one-sided reporting based on a small number, mostly consensual sources.
- The quality of media coverage of local media on topics of public interest is still not at a satisfactory level in most of the analyzed media.





## **RECCOMENDATIONS FOR MEDIA**

After the conducted research and presented research results, we are free to propose several key recommendations for local media, i.e. their way of reporting in and about local communities. It should be noted that these recommendations apply equally to all types of media (both print and broadcast and online), as well as to private and public media.

- Put the public interest in the forefront, not only when choosing topics, but, primarily, through approach to topics, which will put the information needs of citizens in the foreground, and not the interest of local officials or anyone else to place their information.
- Pay more attention to the topics of education, culture, health and environmental protection, and insist less on conveying the views of local politicians, i.e. simply following their activities and the agenda they impose.
- When dealing with certain topics, do thematic, research stories, and not just "cover" daily events.
- In thematic stories, take at least two interlocutors, in order to enable the audience, i.e. citizens, to look at a situation, problem, issue or event from several sources and from several angles.
- Choose interlocutors according to competencies, not according to the position of power; give more space to experts in the field being researched.
- Choose interlocutors who have diverse, i.e. mutually different opinions, in order to confront those opinions in public space and crystallize what best contributes to the solution of a problem in the community, which is the focus of the journalistic story.
- Ensure the plurality of opinions, in a way that journalists will not *a priori* create an attitude and approach to a topic they report on, and in that pre-defined position "input" the views of interlocutors, but will consult diverse interlocutors in the public interest and present their arguments objectively.
- Argumentation should be crucial in reporting, in the choice of interlocutors, as well as in giving space to interlocutors. It is crucial to choose interlocutors who have the

strength of arguments and who are able to discuss the issue or event being reported impartially and reasonably.

- Apply less *copy-paste* method, i.e. have more journalistic stories in which journalists have spent the entire process of working to obtain information, check it and format it. A signed text / article in which a journalist has just merged parts of a statement, views from social networks, etc. is not an author's work.

Although all the above recommendations seem familiar, they are essentially an appeal for greater insistence on professional standards, thorough serious and responsible work in the local media.

## **APPENDIX 1: List of media/ sample of research**

### **• PRINT MEDIJA/NEWSPAPERS**

1. Semberske novine, Bijeljina
2. Naša riječ Zenica
3. Derventski list
4. Kozarski vjesnik, Prijedor

### **• RADIO STATIONS**

1. Radio postaja Čapljina
2. Radio Konjic
3. Radio Brčko Distikt
4. Radio Livno
5. BIG Radio Banja Luka
6. Radio postaja Vitez
7. Radio Prijedor
8. Bobar Radio Bijeljina
9. Radio Gradska mreža
10. Radio Cazin
11. Radio Srebrenica

### **• TV STATIONS**

1. RTV Unsko –sanskog kantona Bihać
2. RTV Bosanskog -podrinjskog kantona ( RTV Goražde)
3. RTV Zenica - Zenica
4. RTV Tuzlanskog kantona - Tuzla
5. TV Sarajevo - Sarajevo
6. Alternativna TV ( ATV) - Banja Luka
7. RTV Herceg Bosne - Mostar
8. TV Kanal 6 Travnik
9. HIT TV Brčko Distrikt
10. RTV Doboj

- **ONLINE PORTALS**

1. Tuzlanski.ba - Tuzla
2. Hercegovina.info – Mostar
3. Trebinjelive.info - Trebinje
4. Visoko.co.ba - Visoko
5. Srpskacafe.rs – Banja Luka
6. eSrebrenica.ba – Srebrenica
7. MojPrijedor.com – Prijedor
8. Radiosarajevo.ba – Sarajevo
9. Starmo.ba – Mostar

## **APPENDIX 2: Code sheet**

Topic	Number
Local politics	
Infrastructure in community (water supply, electricity, roads etc.)	
Economy and employment	
Education	
Healthcare	
Environment protection	
Culture and art	
Other	
<b>Total:</b>	

Topic	Number
Public interest	
Not public interest	
Impossible to tell	
<b>Total:</b>	

Number of sources/interlocutors	Number
One	
Two	
Three	
More than three	
No sources listed	
<b>Total:</b>	

Status of sources/interlocutors	Number
All equal	
Local authorities preferred	
CSO preferred	
Experts preferred	
Citizens preferred	
<b>Total:</b>	

Opposing opinions	Number
No opposing opinions	
One opposing, others agree	
Two opposing opinions	
Three opposing opinions	
Opinion of journalist presented	
<b>Total:</b>	

Author	Number
Not listed	
Journalist	
Local authorities press release	
NGO or company press release	
Other	
<b>Total:</b>	

### **APPENDIX 3: Monitors**

- Eldar Karavdić
- Elvedina Obuća
- Sonja Milinić
- Nela Azinović
- Vera Kukrić