



COST OF POLITICS IN MACEDONIA

BACKGROUND PAPER

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INTRODUCTION

It is not a surprise that the cost of entering and dealing with politics has raised the ceilings for what have been traditionally called typical political, party and electoral campaigns. In a world in which the media play a crucial role in promotion and/or vilification of politicians and political parties, the so-called “incestuous” link between politics and media has nurtured many hidden and semi-disclosed expenses. On the other hand, efforts have been made to strengthen the control of spending and other types of corruptible and clientelistic behaviour of political parties. The success, in terms of reining in unlawful or semi-lawful behaviour has been modest to say the least.

Political parties invent various forms of legal (or at least not illegal) financing for their campaigns, or they do not get sanctioned for their seemingly unlawful financial activities. The legislative framework has been improved, but it does not entirely solve the problem. Political culture and political and electoral systems play a significant role in disguising the non-transparent financial activities of political parties. The level of democratic development, freedom of speech and freedom of the media are also part of the mosaic. Obviously, democracies in tatters struggle more to control political parties’ expenditures than the more developed liberal democracies.

As the political campaigns have grown more and more competitive, there is a substantial amount of evidence that, in countries with weak institutions and flawed checks and balances, state resources are being diverted to fund incumbent candidates and that potential new candidates or smaller parties are being excluded from the electoral process. On the other hand, political parties remain highly centralized institutions in which selection processes are dominated by small entrenched elites, thus ensuring that all party processes and nominations remain excessively monopolized by the parties’ patrons. Finally, relevant studies show that, across

Europe, a large majority of citizens believe that their political parties are corrupt or extremely corrupt.¹

These tendencies might lead us to the unknown and slippery field of murky politics, barriers to entry for new political parties and movements and excessiveness in spending that, in the end, deviate from the basic principles of democratic representation.

METHODOLOGY



The analysis will focus on various aspects of the cost of politics, tangible and intangible. It is often (rightly) assumed that the intangible ones (such as illegal financing, media control, lack of institutional response) are more prone to corruption or other legal wrongdoing. Therefore, we will explore: the legal framework and its changes over the years, political and party culture, business-party interests, the role of the political elites in preserving the system, ethnic cleavages, the political system, the electoral system and its variations. Interviews were performed throughout the process with former and current MPs, unsuccessful candidates, small parties' representatives, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) dealing with political campaign financing, and media representatives.

Most of the interviewees insisted to remain anonymous, which is another indication of the secretive nature of the cost of politics. Also, virtually all of the research and analyses performed by relevant domestic and international NGOs, albeit few in number, unequivocally state their major difficulties in finding those willing to speak on topics such as political party financing, electoral financing, public and official (state) scrutiny.

The methodological approach of this analysis is somewhat different than any type of analyses that could be found in the country or in the region. Basically, we are dealing with the most secretive subject of political and electoral corruption, accompanied with the difficulties of some smaller political parties and political initiatives to enter politics. These impediments stem precisely from the political corruption, elevated cost of politics and the non-ability of new or small political actors to present themselves in the controlled media.² In that sense, this could be a groundbreaking study that tackles “grey” zones in politics, *i.e.* the unequal access of political actors and

institutional and subjective barriers to that access.

There are several limitations to this study, including challenges that the author faced during the project. Political financing is considered to be the least transparent and the least controlled area of the political landscape in the Republic of Macedonia. The recently developed regulatory framework has not been effectively implemented and there are not many official reports from the controlling bodies. Apart some pioneer research by Transparency International Macedonia (cited below) based on media reports and field monitoring, there is no other research on the financing of the political campaign. In addition, there is limited public awareness about the issue, and the secondary data and expertise available in the country remain scarce.

I. Historical Context

After the breakup of Yugoslavia, and upon Macedonia gaining its independence in 1991, the political map of Macedonia over the past two decades has undergone significant changes. The newly introduced multi-party system has led to an influx of new political parties with more than 80 registered and 33 operating parties in the current system, although this number is volatile due to the difficulties of smaller political parties to re-register themselves once every four years.

Since the adoption of the constitution in 1991, eight parliamentary, six local and five presidential elections have been held. The legal framework that regulates election campaign funding is considered to be well developed, with shortcomings in the controlling mechanism. The main law regulating this issue is the Electoral Code, adopted in 2006 and last amended in December 2015. According to the law, the organizers of the election campaign are obliged to submit three financial reports on their election campaigns in order to ensure that the principles of transparency and accountability are upheld. However, the law does not require donors to submit reports on their financial contributions to political parties. This is considered to be a deficiency of the law; without reporting from donors, illicit money is not prevented from circulating in politics.

Macedonia has a unicameral parliament, the Sobranie, composed of 123 members elected for a four-year term by universal and direct vote, following a model of proportional representation. Any registered political party or coalition of parties as well as any group of citizens (independent candidates, civic initiatives, etc.) submitting at least 1,000 registered voters has the right to propose a list of candidates to parliament. For the purposes of the parliamentary elections, the territory of the country is divided into six electoral districts, in each of which 20 members of the parliament are elected.

The remaining three members represent Macedonian citizens living abroad and are elected by proportional representation, one from each of the three districts of Europe and Africa, North and South America, and Australia and Asia. Local elections are held every four years and follow a majority electoral mode.

Factors influencing the cost of politics (with examples from previous elections)

Modestly in the early stages of its independence, and more robustly after the ethnic conflict in 2001, the Republic of Macedonia became a country with significant consensual elements in the government. These consensual provisions were legally elaborated on in the Ohrid Framework Agreement³ and subsequently enshrined in the constitution. Apart from the obvious benefits provided for minorities, particularly the largest ethnic Albanian minority, in terms of education, decentralization, language use and inclusion in the public administration, these provisions, translated onto the ground of political reality, also secured a predominant position and role for political parties' elites.⁴ Thus, the political system slowly became a reflexion of the party system, namely a highly centralized organization of the political process, which in turn controls most societal processes. Since the introduction of free and multi-party elections in 1990, the Macedonian parliamentary democracy has tested three types of electoral models. In the 1990 and 1994 parliamentary elections, the main political parties agreed to adopt the majority electoral model (first past the post in a two-round system). There were 120 electoral districts for the election of 120 MPs. The members of parliament were normally elected in the second round of the elections, with a relative majority of the voters. The 1998 parliamentary elections were held in accordance to a new mixed electoral model. Out of 120 MPs, 85 were elected in accordance to the same majority model, while 35 MPs were elected in accordance with the proportional model,

by which the country represented a single electoral district. The distribution of mandates was secured through the d'Hondt formula, with a five-per-cent electoral threshold. Finally, the Electoral Code adopted in 2002 introduced a pure proportional electoral model, with six electoral districts each having 20 seats in parliament. The main electoral organs are the State Electoral Commission, six regional electoral commissions and numerous municipal electoral commissions.

The predominant role of the government

Albeit constituted as a parliamentary democracy, the political history of the Republic of Macedonia shows an overwhelmingly predominant role for the government in devising and shaping the political and legislative environment. The country, in its relatively short democratic experience, failed to make parliament a cornerstone of the democratic processes. On the contrary, one could say that over the years, parliament (*i.e.* the parliamentary majority) saw its function gradually diminished until it became almost completely subservient to the political will of the government. The apex of this parliamentary crisis came on 24 December 2014 when all opposition MPs, on the occasion of the adoption of the annual budget, were brutally removed from the parliamentary session by an intervention of secret police and special police forces. This context could presuppose a sort of illiberal democracy with weak checks and balances. The president of the republic, although elected by direct vote, lacks real powers and is perceived as a sidelined figure in Macedonian politics.

The predominant role of the government is closely related to the topic of the cost of politics. Namely, when most of the power is concentrated in the hands of the government (and the prime minister), the potential entry points for one to engage in politics could be directly related to and depend on the decisions made by the prime minister and a small group of executives (and highly ranked party officials at the same time) or invariably

around the chief of the biggest opposition party, who is nominally the contender to become the next prime minister.

As in many post-communist countries, the transition period and the process of privatisation have witnessed the emergence of business oligarchs who were able to control large portions of financial flows in the country, thus securing a privileged position in the distribution of business and political influence. These business oligarchs were crucial in giving or not giving their support to the political elites. Basically, whenever there was a change of the political elites in the government, the largest companies were almost by default linked with the new government, thus creating a sort of “incestuous” link between the ruling political parties and business.

Since 2006, when the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) took power, the country has witnessed a nearly total encroachment of the government in the business sector, thereby making the government and the pro-government businessmen the biggest employers in the country and the ones who control virtually every segment of the economy.

Another indicator for this is the financial condition of political parties in opposition. Namely, bigger opposition parties struggle with finances and donation because most of the donors/businessmen are reluctant or are afraid to donate funds for fear of government retaliation. On the other hand, smaller parties have a stark choice: either to side with the ruling coalition or to perish from the political scene.

Political parties' internal procedures

The above mentioned type of perverted political system is again tightly connected to the types and practices of political parties in the country. Macedonian political parties show strong autocratic tendencies, in which the leader and the highest ranking party clique

firmly control the circulation of party elites. The party system is extremely fragmented. As of 2008, there were 83 registered political parties.⁵ Most of these political parties have never been represented in parliament, and many of them were established as off-springs of bigger political parties. A study conducted in 2007 on the level of internal party democracy (IPD) of political parties in the region of South Eastern Europe demonstrates that the internal party procedures, the loyalty of the party members (*i.e.* clientelism) and the nexus between business and political parties are the most resilient elements that prevent parties from liberalising the barriers to entry into politics or prevent the emergence of other relevant political actors.

The index shown below calculates a sum of six individual components on the basis of which a scale from 6 to 18 can be constructed, where the higher level indicates a higher degree of internal party democracy.⁶

1. Rights of party members: The score indices given for this component have the following meaning: 1 means party members are excluded for opinions differing from the official party positions, 2 means right to free expression of opinions, which are not subject to any sanctioning whatsoever, 3 means the functioning of party factions is officially permitted.

- 2. Nominations of candidates for public offices:** This component aims at establishing the level of control which a party exercises over this process. The indices assigned along the scale from 1 to 3 depend on the party authority, which nominates and determines the candidates for members of parliament in principle: 1 means by the national party leadership, 2 means by a regional party forum, 3 means at primaries conducted by the political leadership of the party.
- 3. Way of electing the party leader:** 1 means by the political leadership, 2 means at the representative party forum, 3 means at primaries held by the political leadership.
- 4. Autonomy of the local party bodies:** 1 means the local leaderships are nominated by the national party leadership, 2 means the local party bodies have limited political and organizational autonomy, 3 means the local party bodies have a substantial degree of political and organizational autonomy.
- 5. Opportunity for the party members to take part in the formation of the party policy:** 1 means the party policy is formulated by the central leadership and the higher party elite (1 means the lowest degree of participation), 2 means the policy of the party is subject to broad discussions in all party structures, 3 means the policy of the party is shaped from the bottom up (3 means the highest degree of participation).

IPD parameters	VMRO-DPMNE	SDSM	BDI/DUI	DPA	NSDP	VMRO-NP
Party members' rights	1	2	2	2	3	2
Nomination of candidates for public offices	1	2 ⁷	1	1	2	1
Way of electing the party leader	2	2	1	1	2	1
Autonomy of the local party structures	1	3	2	2	2	1
Formation of the party policy	1	2	2	2	2	1
Role of horizontal structures	2	2	2	2	2	1
Total result	8	13	10	10	13	7

Figure 1

6. Horizontal structures, which assist the functioning of the party and its activities: 1 means lack of autonomous horizontal structures, 2 means autonomous horizontal structures exist only superficially and they have no significant impact on party activities, 3 means the horizontal structures play a large role in the activities of the party and help it shape its policy.

The results (see figure 1) show that the process of selecting party and government officials is highly centralized and lower party structures (regional, local, youth and women) have little influence over the process. The feature that is not shown in the table is the non-negligible role of big business interests in influencing political parties' policies and decisions.

Electoral models and cost of politics

The electoral model in Macedonia indirectly strengthened the tendencies of monopolization of the political process by the four biggest political parties in the country. After a couple of electoral "experiments" throughout the 1990s, the country's electoral model seems to be stabilised into a pure proportional model, with six districts and no threshold. Apart from its political imperatives (better representation of minorities, better access into politics for small ethnic-based and/or issue-based parties), the proportional electoral system brought somewhat unexpected consequences, some of them directly related to the cost of politics. On the other hand, the electoral model Macedonia employs is also deeply related to the previous description of political system.

Electoral systems are the sets of rules that specify the types of votes that citizens may cast and how those votes are translated into seats for legislative candidates. The main consequences of electoral systems can be divided into two types: inter-party and intra-party. The inter-party consequences of electoral systems include the proportionality of election results and the degree to which elections promote

bipartisanship or fragmentation in the party system. Because the stability of legislative majorities and the ability of electorates to hold legislative majorities accountable for their performance tend to be inversely related to the fragmentation in the legislature, these inter-party consequences entail a trade-off, with legislative representativeness set against stable and accountable majorities. Generally, it is assumed that the majority electoral model (first-past-the-post) produces a bipartisan political system (the UK model is the most notable example), while the proportional model induces a more fragmented system in which small parties win parliamentary seats relatively easily.

Therefore, it might be surprising that the Macedonian case deviates from the common understanding of the fragmentation of the party system. The persistence of bipartisan politics throughout the years and through different electoral models lead us to search elsewhere for the origins of this "deviation". The somewhat peculiar six-districts, pure proportional model (devised to satisfy ethnic minorities' demands) on the one hand simulates a quasi-majority model (indirectly raising the threshold for elected MPs) and, on the other hand, it still gives predominance to the party elite in making the electoral lists (as in a typical proportional system). This system actually helped the preservation of bipartisanship politics and constituted a barrier for smaller parties to act independently and present their own lists. Moreover, small parties are now forced to join big coalitions and bargain with the big parties if they want to make it to parliament. In the words of an MP and leader of a small political party:

Small issue-based parties have no chance to get any MP under this electoral model. The big four made a conscious deal to prevent any other party to claim parliamentary seats unless they join the pre-electoral coalitions. And joining such a coalition entails big sacrifices for us, either in programmatic or financial terms.⁸

It is therefore not a surprise that past "third way" initiatives, besides their initial success, turned out into failure. Finally, a telling example

is the fact that few politicians/businessmen became owners of national TV stations (SITEL, KANAL 5), thus raising their price in the political market and taking part in virtually every ruling coalition. By these political transfers, these politicians/businessmen got parliamentary seats and big parties got the influence over their TV stations. This clearly represents a source of corrupt practices. A member of Transparency International Macedonia puts this in a succinct way:

Owners of big private TV stations understood that, through their political activities, they can have the mercy of the governing officials, and even get richer through large government advertising activities. Ruling parties know perfectly well that these businessmen's political parties do not contribute with votes at all, but the gain from their TVs' political influence is enormous. It is a perfect trade-off for both sides.⁹

By contrast, the intra-party consequences of electoral systems involve the degree to which rules foster within-party electoral competition (in general elections) and/or lead candidates to devote more energy to developing ties with their electorates instead of their party leadership (or vice versa). Roughly put, these consequences originate from the importance of parties or candidates in a voter's decision of how to vote. In party-promoting systems, voters are empowered to select between (but not within) lists of candidates fielded by parties. Here, the voting decision has little to do with the individual candidates who make up the party lists and much more to do with the differences between party platforms. A telling indicator of this is the pervasiveness of the actual lists (with candidates' names): they seldom appear on voters' ballots and they are not widely advertised or circulated before the election. Contrast this with more "candidate-centred" systems, where voters are not only empowered to select among individual candidates, but they often can select among candidates of the same political party. This, of course, makes the voting decision much more about the reputations, accomplishments and personalities of individual candidates.

One of the intra-party consequences

to following this party-versus-candidate distinction is party cohesiveness: more candidate-centredness means less party cohesiveness, and so also a diminishment in the utility of party labels and the ability of voters to hold parties collectively accountable. Further afield, the distinction affects policymaking and the nature of the activities that legislators will pursue in order to seek re-election. For example, candidate-centeredness motivates policies based on favouritism because these allow legislators to claim credit for local goods. As a result, we may see more favouritism and less public good the more the electoral system promotes candidate-centred elections. Macedonian political elites across the political board chose by consensus to adopt the party-centred model, giving the parties' leaders and parties' headquarters a decisive role in shaping the electoral lists and leaving little space for intra-party democracy. As one commentator noted:

People in small towns and villages do not care who is the candidate, what are his/her accomplishments, moral or ideological virtues. They only care what the party label is behind the candidate, since people's local connections and expectations (obtaining a job, better position in the local administration or local business improvement) are directly related to which party will be the overall winner, and not which candidate will get [a] parliamentary seat.¹⁰

The intra-party implications of electoral rules extend to matters of political finance. Although there is no credible academic evidence on this correlation nor any comparative analysis¹¹, information gathered from practitioners, current and former politicians, throughout the interviews gives a glimpse on the topic. More specifically, electoral systems affect campaign finance regulations, campaign fundraising and expenditure and the effects of campaign spending on electoral results. Campaign finance regulations were amended in order to more specifically meet the challenges of the proportional model (see the next section on the legislature). As for campaign fundraising and expenditure, it is obvious that in a centrally planned electoral list and centrally organized electoral media campaign, most of the donations are directed

towards the parties' headquarters and they are eventually redirected locally. Basically, all testimonies from the interviewees show that local candidates do not operate with these finances or the percentage related to the total cost is negligible. Finally, centralized campaign spending could affect the electoral results, in terms of directing and redirecting funds and people to electoral districts in which the party estimates it could maximise the electoral results.

Deviation from the “no threshold” rule

In Macedonia, a clear pattern can be established in the sense of circumventing the benefits of the proportional system (such as large coalitions, more small parties and ideological diversification) by forging big pre-electoral coalitions in which small parties have little say and little prospect of voicing their concerns. The result is that smaller parties rarely leave the coalition and almost regularly abide to the decisions of the senior political party.

Another feature of the Macedonian electoral model is the negligible importance of the no-threshold rule. It is expected that no-threshold systems encourage small parties to go alone in the elections. In fact, assuming the six-district model, the “real” threshold in Macedonian elections is around 7,000 to 8,000 votes per district in order for a candidate to become an MP. For example, in the 2011 parliamentary elections, VMRO NP (a small right-wing party) got 30,000 votes countrywide but they did not get any MPs since the votes were spread all over the country and not concentrated in one or two districts. Had it been a single purely proportional, no-threshold electoral district, VMRO NP would have gotten at least three or four MPs. This system discourages small parties to stand alone in elections, and instead encourages them to be in a coalition having one or two guaranteed seats.

The establishment of the current proportional model was a political decision to soothe the demands of the ethnic Albanian community and it is commonly used in consensual democracies. The political rationale behind

the proportional model is that the MPs are accountable to the whole (or a large part) of the electorate and not only to their constituencies. Proportional systems should therefore maximise the political inclusiveness of the system, which may be a stabilizing factor, in that it will keep diverse sets of actors satisfied that they have a fair chance to compete. And although its deficiencies are quite obvious, it is unlikely that this model will change in the near future.

All the same, the evidence from Macedonia suggests that cohesive ethnic parties (i.e. ethnic Albanian parties) are able to mobilise support through either electoral mechanism. There is a logical reason for this: in as much as their support is geographically concentrated, they ought to be able to win approximately the proportion of single-member seats in parliament as their share of the population. For them, the majority system functions in much the same way as the proportional system, so long as they are not affected on the list vote by high threshold requirements. In Macedonia the minorities make up a large enough share of the population that this does not constitute a problem.

II. Current drivers of the cost of parliamentary politics

Electoral processes can be unduly influenced when sizeable and undisclosed amounts of money are provided to political parties and candidates by individuals and organizations with their own political agendas. Political parties and candidates may distort the electoral process by resorting to buying votes rather than focusing on the quality of their campaign messages. The quality of government is seriously compromised when decisions made by elected politicians benefit those who funded their ascent to power and not the broader public interest.

Despite the legal emphasis on transparency, the general perception of the public is that in a country where the cash economy still plays an important role transparency is generally low in practice, and that political parties and candidates for elections receive and spend much more money than the officially recorded amounts in their financial reports. Overspending is still prevalent, especially in the area of paid political advertisements, and transparency in political financing will also ensure that elected officials and parties are accountable for their finances and aid in monitoring their integrity.

In Macedonia, although much of the public discourse goes on about politics and political parties, there is hardly any public debate about the specific topic of political financing. This may be due to the fact that political influence is widespread and it controls every segment such as the economy, employment policies, legislature and media.

Barriers to entry into politics, both formal and hidden costs, and implications for the political system

Currently, the Macedonian political system faces several institutional impediments for one to enter politics. Formally, it is virtually impossible for an individual or a small issue-based political party to win representation in parliament without being attached to one of

the four biggest political parties or coalitions.

Numerous examples show the Macedonian political system has become a graveyard of failed attempts by smaller political parties to get representation in parliament. In the 2008 parliamentary elections, the Liberal Democrats, nominally the third biggest party in the ethnic Macedonian electorate, stepped out of its coalition and stood alone in the elections. They won no seats and subsequently rejoined the big left-wing coalition. A set of right-wing smaller parties (such as VMRO NP, Dostoinstvo and United for Macedonia (OM)) also stood separately during the 2011 elections. None of them won any seats, which led to their further marginalisation. Moreover, the leader of OM, Ljube Boskovski, was arrested one day after the elections on charges of money laundering for his political campaign.¹² The nature of the Macedonian proportional electoral model ensures that only large parties and coalitions are able to mobilize large number of voters and political “infrastructure” to be able to present themselves successfully at the elections.

The case of a newly established radical left party, Levica, is also revealing. They struggled for months to register the party and gave evidence of serious institutional obstacles. They complained that gathering 1,000 signatures for registering a party is an extremely costly endeavour and that bureaucratic obstacles (such as papers, documents and court registration) make it almost impossible for a group of citizens to establish a political party. Finally, after long procedures and the eventually successful registration of the party, Levica decided not to stand at the elections, stating that such a closed party-political system does not give them any chance of success.¹³

Another initiative that needs to be tested during the next parliamentary elections is the one by a few smaller political parties that recently left the ruling coalition with

VMRO-DPMNE, Demokratski Sojuz and the Democratic Renewal of Macedonia (DOM) opted for independent lists, although they seem to be aware of the obvious risks in this initiative.¹⁴

A law on party research and analytical centres was passed in 2013 allowing parties to establish such centres in their structure to enable “the building of a platform based on structured and qualified debate over political processes in the Republic of Macedonia”.¹⁵ The budget provides funds in the amount of EUR 280,000 for the centres’ support. These funds are allocated to the first four political parties having the largest number of elected MPs at the last parliamentary elections, with 60 per cent of the total funds equally distributed to the first four political parties with the largest number of elected MPs. The remaining 40 per cent is distributed to the four political parties with the highest representation – 35 per cent to the first, 30 per cent to the second, 20 per cent to the third and 15 per cent to the fourth largest political party in parliament. Although this law seems to contribute to the strengthening of party capacities and communication channels with the public, it discriminates against smaller parties. The additional funds provided by the budget put larger political parties in a more favourable position since they already have developed capacities. Transparency International Macedonia research in 2012 showed that smaller parties face serious financial challenges and their inability to reach this “pool” would additionally reduce their chances in the political battle.¹⁶ Not surprisingly, most of the smaller parliamentary parties did not vote in favour of this law.¹⁷

Another important trend in the country and in the region is the use of electoral rules to limit new political inflows. Establishing criteria in providing thousands of preliminary signatures or signatures in more than one electoral district, the obligation to collect signatures in every electoral process and the support for a high electoral threshold are some of the real obstacles to the liberalization of political

competition in this region. Innovations, such as the success of third and new political forces in Slovenia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Kosovo or Albania show that voters are seeking new political mechanisms to express their political views. In the future, this tendency is expected to intensify and countries are expected to be under pressure to review the link between citizen demands for more representative democracy and the traditional interests of political parties to maintain the *status quo*.

[Factors influencing the cost of election campaigns \(mediatisation, political culture, corruption, legal frameworks etc.\)](#)

Legal framework

Legally, political parties in Macedonia are financed from two types of sources, public and private. Public sources represent 0.06 per cent of the total annual revenues of the budget of the Republic of Macedonia. Thirty per cent of these funds are allocated equally to all political parties that won at least one per cent of the votes of the citizens who voted at the parliamentary elections, regardless whether they won seats in parliament. The remaining 70 per cent is allocated to political parties whose candidates have been elected as MPs, proportionally to the number of their MPs, and to political parties whose candidates have been elected for council members at the last local elections, proportionally to the number of elected council members. In the cases when the MP or the council member is elected as a candidate of a coalition of parties, the funds are equally allocated among the parties that are members of the coalition, unless they agree on a different distribution.

Allowed private sources of financing can be monetary or non-monetary: membership fees, donations (money, material means or services), gifts, contributions, subsidies, sponsorships, legates and sales of promotional and propaganda material. These different private sources are subject to regulation, and the size of each of them is limited by law. Hence, the annual membership fee for one member of a

party cannot be higher than the average salary for the previous year (around MKD 23,000 (Macedonian denar)(EUR 380)). The size of a donation is limited depending on whether it comes from an individual or a legal entity; thus the total amount of an individual donation must not exceed 150 average salaries for the legal entities and 75 average salaries for an individual and this amount cannot be donated more than once a year. This framework also encompasses non-monetary donations such as free services and services paid for by a third party. The provider of the service is obliged to inform the political party about the value of the service that would be calculated as part of the legal limitation on the amount of the donations on an annual basis. The same refers to selling goods and providing services to political parties for prices below the market rate. The difference between the market value and the invoiced price is considered a donation. The 2012 amendments introduced an obligation on the donor to send the invoice to the party. The political party is obliged to give back to the donor the amount that goes beyond the established donation limitation. The law explicitly forbids the political parties from accepting donations from unidentified sources, and provides an obligation for the party that receives money from an unidentified donor to immediately transfer it to the state budget.

The electoral code also stipulates compensation for election expenditures. Campaign organisers whose candidates are elected receive compensation of MKD 15 per vote (EUR 0.25). However, compensation is also provided to those campaign organisers who did not win seats, in the amount of MKD 15 per vote, if they won at least 1.5 per cent of the total number of votes cast. These funds are paid from the budget of the Republic of Macedonia, the budget of municipalities and the city of Skopje within three months after submission of the financial report on the election campaign and based on the report of the State Election Commission on the administered elections. The compensation may be stopped for the campaign organisers

in whose reports the state audit office finds irregularities and initiates proceedings against them in the competent courts.

Serious violations of the electoral process are regulated with the criminal code. Among other crimes related to elections, the criminal code includes the “abuse of funds for election campaign financing”. A campaign organiser who does not report the source of funds, prevents the supervision of spending, fails to submit a financial report, oversteps legal limitations on the amount of funds or uses unlawful means shall be sentenced to at least five years imprisonment. The same penalty is prescribed for the person in charge of the legal entity (the donor) who does not report donations, provides unlawful funds or exceeds the allowed limit, does not submit a report or provides false or incomplete information on donations or prevents supervision over campaign financing. A three-year prison sentence is stipulated for the one who secretly donates to somebody else’s election campaign, or a campaign for elections where she/he takes part, an amount surpassing the legal maximum. The law provides fines for the same abuses perpetrated by legal entities. These abuses can also lead to a ban to execute a profession, activity or duty, as well as a ban on the use of means for financing political parties.

Although all the changes in the law on financing over the past decade have resulted in a relatively coherent and comprehensive legal framework, they still have not secured greater public exposure of financing. One of the greatest obstacles in this analysis (and all other publicly available analyses) was the inability to approach political parties. Most of those questioned were unwilling to talk about party financing, stating simply that none of the political parties breached the law. Such a situation requires an urgent change of the Law on Political Parties resulting in the requirement of more detailed contact information on the political parties and more frequent updating of the relevant data. This should also involve mandatory development and updating of a website, which does not

represent a financial burden for political parties but at the same time represents a key element in the achievement of transparency in accordance with the legal requirements.

Finally, disclosure is a necessary component in any system of public control of political finance and a prerequisite for the enforcement of expenditure ceilings and contribution limits, and also for the allocation of public subsidies. Disclosure requirements are part of a broad set of regulations governing election law in general, but they have a particularly significant meaning when political finance is concerned. In order to be effective, disclosure needs enforcement agencies, administrative capabilities, sufficient budget and educated manpower. Political parties or individual candidates may be tempted to avoid transparency or report a distorted picture of their financial activity for a number of reasons. One reason for a lack of reporting or misreporting may be the receipt of larger donations in cash. In addition, experience in the so-called new democracies has shown that donors may be excessively concerned with preserving their privacy and require that non-reporting is a precondition for a contribution. In short, while disclosure is an important element of a fair electoral process, its significance is reduced in the absence of effective audit mechanisms. Disclosure of reliable reports on political party financing is the most important way to prevent irregularities. In order to have effective disclosure, it is necessary to ensure that the necessary administrative, budgetary and personnel resources are in place.

But, in the case of Macedonia, and probably in other developing democracies, the principle of disclosure could have somewhat unexpected ramifications. In a political context in which the winner takes all, including the “right” to punish and persecute the political opponent who lost the elections, very few donors would agree to be publicly exposed. In these cases, safety of donors and political freedom may seem a prudent strategy. It is possible that parties may be at a disadvantage since

potential donors may be subjected to threats or retaliation, be that from the government, other donors and businesses, or even from a powerful opposition, if such information is made public. Such exceptional situations must be clearly specified and explained in the law, provided that laws are effectively implemented at all.

Mediatization of politics and corruption

Key, if not a crucial, elements in modern election campaigns are the media and the ability of political actors to take advantage of them. Mediatization of politics is the single most important factor for raising the cost of politics in modern electoral campaigns. As this tendency prevails in virtually every corner of the world, Macedonia is probably one of the most notorious examples of buying political influence with public money. Moreover, since the ruling coalition VMRO DPMNE–DUI came into power 10 years ago, the boundaries between electoral and non-electoral campaign have become completely blurred. It has become a common saying in the country that the electoral campaign continues 365 days a year. Many media, especially commercial TV channels with national coverage, are beneficiaries of the state advertising funds that buy advertising on behalf of the government, the ministries, public enterprises and agencies, as well as local governments. Since 2014, the government introduced subsidies for the production of domestic films and documentary programmes by commercial and public service broadcasters. At the same time, the public service broadcaster Macedonian Radio Television (MRT) obtains revenues from the state budget on several grounds. The circulation of pro-government newspapers is artificially increasing, inter alia, owing to their distribution to public and state institutions.¹⁸ Several cases were disclosed in 2014 wherein media outlets received funds directly from the government.

By providing such financial benefits, the government creates a network of servile media outlets that report in its favour. The media market is so weak that the very

existence of some media outlets depends on government funds. The corruption of the media with public money became so widespread that young journalists attending a training course identified “government advertising” as “the most important component for the development and growth of a media outlet”.¹⁹

There are no clear and precise criteria for the distribution of government advertising to the media, partly because of the inadequate and confusing legislation. The share of the central and local authorities as well as of the public institutions, agencies and enterprises which are part of the advertising media market through government advertising has been one of the best kept state secrets in recent years. The journalists who investigated the subject were given the response that it was a matter of “classified information” for which they needed security clearance.²⁰ Although the regulatory body, within its regular analyses, has recently been estimating the share of the government in the advertising market, accurate figures are known only to the government.

In 2014, the government released the information on its campaign expenditures of EUR 18 million for a period of two and a half years, but failed to provide details on the amounts allocated to particular media and the criteria used for the distribution of the funds. In July 2015, after strong diplomatic pressure, the government declared a moratorium on government advertising; however, campaigns continued to be broadcasted on MRT, free of charge and in significant numbers.

The Macedonian case shows that there are three key financial mechanisms through which the government supports the media: state advertising, subsidies for production of film and documentary programmes and assistance that MRT receives from the national budget.

From 2008 to 2013, the government was among the top five advertisers in the advertising market, with the exception of 2010, when it ranked 18th. The ruling party,

VMRO-DPMNE, also appears on the list of the 50 largest media advertisers. In 2013, the government and VMRO-DPMNE had a 7.8 per cent share in the total number of advertisements. According to some estimates, the total of the budget funds spent on advertising by the government and the ruling party, and those of the public enterprises, agencies and local authorities, makes the government the largest advertiser in the television market in Macedonia. It controls 15 to 20 per cent of the total advertising revenue of the media.

The allocation of government advertising campaigns to the media cannot be explained by any economic rationale, but it rather serves as a financial injection for eligible media. Few are convinced by the government’s claims that the campaigns are conducted according to a media plan proposed by the marketing agencies, based on the criteria of viewership and ratings, while also taking into consideration the structure of the viewers, readers, target groups and forms of advertising.²¹ Marketing agencies seem to play a pivotal role in serving as a link between the government and the media. According to a well-informed interviewee, the agencies usually propose a media plan with a tested combination of media, *i.e.* media that are known as pro-governmental. Such practice signifies a form of self-censorship by the marketing agencies. Furthermore, there have been cases when the media plan was returned to the marketing agencies with names of media outlets added or crossed out. There are also claims that the government first negotiates with the media and agrees on the discounts, and then formally selects the marketing agencies through public bidding, as required by the Law on Public Procurement.

Around 40 regional and local broadcasters appeared as major contributors to the election campaign of the ruling party VMRO-DPMNE during the 2014 early parliamentary elections. Donations take the form of a service or a discount on the price for broadcasting political advertisements. According to the

available sources, three major pro-government privately owned TV stations (Alfa, Kanal 5 and Sitel) donated services from EUR 77,000 to EUR 161,000.²² At the same time the company MPM that owns three newspapers, *Dnevnik*, *Utrinski Vesnik* and *Vesti*, donated around EUR 250,000. Only six media outlets gave discounts to the opposition SDSM campaign, including several media critical of the government such as TV channels Telma (EUR 4,200) and 24 Vesti (EUR 8,500), and a daily newspaper *Sloboden Pecat* (EUR 4,400).

As a result of this malpractice, in 2014 amendments to the law were adopted to limit the media donations to political campaigns to a maximum of EUR 50,000, then in 2015 media donations to election campaigns of political parties were completely banned.

Demands on MPs once in office, both formal and informal costs (constituents, political party, external demands)

The proportional electoral model traditionally leaves a “communication” gap between the elected MP and the voters. The electoral lists, predominantly prepared in party headquarters, put the elected MPs in a position of offer their loyal to the party’s president rather than to the voters. This system, translated into reality, requires MPs to follow the party’s orders once in office. Moreover, the Macedonian case seems to be even more extensive. Strong allegations were made regarding the existence of the so-called “loyalty bonds” signed by some of the MPs from the ruling political party (VMRO-DPMNE). These allegations stated that each potential MP, before being nominated to the electoral list, must sign an official bond with the party secretary in which he/she obliges him/herself to obediently follow the party line and always vote according to the party’s decisions. If an MP does not obey, or switches political sides once he/she is in parliament, the bond could be activated and he/she will need to pay a large amount of money.²³ However, these allegations were never proven, despite some public statements from one of the MPs from the governing coalition (Pavle Trajanov, head of Demokratski

Sojuz, a minor coalition partner of VMRO-DPMNE).

In March 2016, an informal faction inside VMRO-DPMNE published a communiqué stating that they have evidence that these “loyalty bonds” actually exist, and that the legal cover-up was obtained under the reference of “covering the costs of the pre-electoral campaign”.²⁴ During the interviews, some of the interviewees mentioned that MPs did not oppose this practice since the salaries, overhead expenses and travel expenses match the amount stated in the loyalty bonds. This practice shows the low level of political culture in the country, the unprecedented and illegal forms for obtaining the loyalty of party members and the whole context of a corrupt mentality in the Macedonian political scene.

There were no such cases or allegations related to other political parties in the country. However, the proportional electoral model, unlike the majoritarian one, gives other possibilities for possible distortions of the democratic mirror. It is a “well-known” secret that big party donors could “choose” their MP on the party’s electoral list. Also, local and regional businessmen can often obtain higher positions on the party list based on their formal or informal donations and their clientelistic local approach with voters. Although this seems to be more related to the majority electoral model, the Macedonian six-district proportional model in reality makes the districts smaller and more prone to voter corruption.

As mentioned before, the bulk of finances and donations for election campaigns are transferred to the party’s headquarters, thus allowing the party elites to control the process of MP nomination. In an inverse logic, the party headquarters is in a way “buying” the loyalty of its MPs by financing the whole election campaign. Therefore, MPs rarely spend sizeable funds during the campaign, unless they are themselves donors. Even in the latter case, these donor MPs give their donations directly to the headquarters rather than spending

them on their constituents.

On rare occasions, MPs are expected to give a monthly donation to the party's headquarters. Some of the interviewees noted that this amount does not exceed EUR 100, or around eight per cent of an MP's monthly salary. Curiously, DUI's (a junior partner in the government) official report shows the practice on the Macedonian political scene for donations of political party members who are appointed or elected officials or employees in public institutions. The report lists individuals from 15 institutions, including parliament, who have donated funds to the party.²⁵

Some of the wrongdoing done by the political parties started to emerge only recently. A May 2016 report shows that more than 1,000 individuals regularly donated sums from EUR 1,000 to EUR 5,000 to the ruling VMRO-DPMNE party.²⁶ The data in the report were taken from the official database of the State Audit Office. Some of these individuals are well known to the public, such as current and former MPs, directors of cultural institutions, public clinics or other public enterprises. Others are relatively anonymous but most of them are members of the ruling VMRO-DPMNE party. Most of the individual donors are people employed in local administration, schools or public administration. The average monthly salary of these people does not exceed EUR 300 to EUR 400, but they nonetheless donated large sums of EUR 1,000 to EUR 3,000. The indicative feature of these donations is that these people donated the respective sums on the very same date, and some of them denied their own donations. A survey by the internet portal NovaTV shows that there were donors who denied that they ever donated to the party, and even some who were shocked by the sums they allegedly donated. For example, current MP Andon Chibishev stated that the last time he donated money to the party was in 2011, and the data for his donations shows he also donated in 2015. Another example is a surgeon close to the governing party who said: "This is a lot of money, I do not remember

donating such a large sum. I even checked my bank transactions and I can tell you there were not any transactions to the party from my account". Furthermore, Arna Shijac, an actor, has a surprising story to tell. She figures in the report as giving a EUR 1,000 donation. She says: "This is serious stuff, these are not negligible sums so I could forget donating. I am not a member of any political party and I have never donated a cent." There are many other similar examples. The number of people donating funds to the ruling party exceeds 3,000.

A final telling example is the case of Samoil Malcevski, a former student leader and former official in the government. His name and the names of his family members appeared in the list of donors with sums of more than EUR 10,000. He said publicly that his name and his family were abused by the party headquarters and that they have never donated, nor disposed of such large sums of money. The argument goes along the following line: these funds are "donated" by the party, these are illegal funds and they have been laundered through individual donations of party members. It could be assumed that most of these people never donated any funds but the party "donated" these funds for the party. Another implication would be that the party headquarters misused its personal data and even forged signatures.

The rumours and evidence of these alleged financial malpractices emerged a couple of years ago, but controlling state bodies remained silent.

III. Outlook

General trend in cost of politics (upward, downward, or static?)

The cost of politics in Macedonia seems to have reached its ceiling. This came with other, more disturbing, costs that entail media corruption, cronyism, entrenched political elites, barriers to entry for smaller political initiatives and subservient MPs in parliament. The final result is a deficient democracy. There are some positive prospects that the current deep political crisis will address some of the mentioned deficiencies.

The current proportional six-district no-threshold electoral model remains an obstacle for small political parties to efficiently and independently enter the political scene. It proved not to be able to engender the so-called “third option” in the country that would break the double-duopoly (two major ethnic Macedonian and two major ethnic Albanian parties) that persists in Macedonian politics. During last year’s major political crisis that occurred after the disclosure of illegally wiretapped conversations, the opposition parties led by SDSM officially proposed that the country change its electoral model into a one-district, pure proportional, no-threshold model. On that occasion, the SDSM leader stated that despite the anticipated relative loss of MPs for the opposition as well, he was prepared to support this model for the sake of the democratisation of the country.²⁷ The idea behind the proposal was to encourage smaller ethnic and issue-based political parties to refrain from the temptation to enter into big pre-electoral coalitions in order to secure parliamentary seats. The proposal was supported by most of the small parties but was rejected by the other big parties. Some of our interviewees stated that the SDSM’s proposal was not a sincere one but a mere “bargaining chip” during the inter-party negotiations, knowing that no other party from the big four would accept the proposal. The suspicious silence on this topic afterwards seems to support this hypothesis. In sum, it is obvious that the big parties are not willing to

challenge the current electoral model of which they are the biggest beneficiaries.

In the media sector, we could expect some minor improvements for the small parties and some amendments in the direction of more balanced presentation. But it is a far-fetched hope that things will improve dramatically in the near future. The ban on donations on behalf of media outlets is a good step forward and it will surely lower the cost of politics in general, and hopefully diminish the propaganda war in the media.

As for the institutional impediments for party registration, the costs remain high and often unattainable. Also the obligation for re-registering every four years is a huge burden for the parties, financially and logistically. Interviewees suggest that bigger parties often help the smaller parties to gather the necessary signatures, but then the clientelistic nexus remain strong and discourages the smaller parties from devising independent policies.

Finally, the current legal framework provides effective provisions to restrain the illegal or semi-legal flow of finances to the political parties, but weak and corrupt auditing bodies prevent its implementation in practice. If institutions such as the State Audit Office, the State Commission for Preventing Corruption and the State Election Commission are doing their job thoroughly then it should be easier to detect misconduct and unreported financial sources. Moreover, detailed disclosure of the donors who fund election campaigns is proven to be necessary to stop money from illicit sources circulating in politics.

Political parties or individual candidates may be tempted to avoid transparency or report a distorted picture of their financial activity for a number of reasons. One reason for a lack of reporting or misreporting may be the receipt of larger donations in cash. In addition, experience in the so-called new democracies

has shown that donors may be excessively concerned with preserving their privacy and require non-reporting as a precondition for a financial contribution. In short, while disclosure is an important element of a fair electoral process, its significance is reduced in the absence of effective audit mechanisms. Disclosure of reliable reports on political party financing is the most important way to prevent irregularities. In order to have effective disclosure, it is necessary to ensure that the necessary administrative, budgetary and personnel resources are in place.

The general trend in the cost of politics remains static, with strong prospects of a downward tendency. This will depend on the resolution of the political crisis and the willingness of the new government to seriously tackle the reforms. In this direction, any new democratically elected government will meet strong pressure from civil society and the international community. If the current government remains in power, it is not an exaggeration to state that Macedonia is turning itself into a Belarus-style authoritarian regime.

What options/recommendations are currently available to restrain the role of money in politics and to what extent are these likely to make an impact?

Since most of the options were elaborated on in the previous section, here we will only list the potential mechanisms, policies and legal provisions that could help in restraining the role of money in politics in the case of Macedonia:

- **Change of electoral model into a pure proportional, one district no-threshold system:** Despite the resistance from the four big political parties, it is conceivable that the country will have its electoral model changed in the near future (one to three years). The pressure for this change comes from small political parties but, even more importantly, from civil society and street protest that are taking place for nearly 50 days. The

change of the electoral model will have an immediate effect on the cost of politics, in terms of “unchaining” small parties from pre-electoral coalitions and removing the “blackmail mechanism” induced by the senior coalition partners.

- **Introducing an open proportional list** will enable a more candidate-centred approach and at the same time will break the predominance of the party elites in candidates’ nominations. However, some regional research show that open lists do not automatically restrain the role of money in politics.
- Securing **larger state donations for political parties** will help, but only in the direction of balancing the financial gap between big parties and the small ones.
- **Strengthening the capacity of the supervising state bodies:** No one expects that this could be done under the current government, since the overlap of the party and the state institutions has been one of the cornerstones of this government’s successes. However, this task will be the highest priority of the future “expert” government or any other future government elected in a free and fair election.
- Further **media reforms and stronger regulations on the media’s fair and balanced presentation:** Restraining the role of public money in private media is an immediate task, but further reforms, auto-regulation and the development of journalist standards will be a long-term objective for the country.
- **Stronger civil society** and support of the few local organisations dealing with money in politics: Macedonia’s civil society has undergone deep divides along party lines. It will take many years to restructure and reposition the role of civil society in the country. The spontaneous non-partisan protests that have been held for nearly 50 days are a good starting point.

Finally, the relatively positive, and potentially illusive, outlook in restraining the role of money in politics should be put in the specific

Macedonian context. The country is now undergoing its deepest political (and possibly security) crisis since its independence. Had this analysis been done one year ago, the prospects would have been much more pessimistic. But, the major political crisis that occurred one year ago, forced the political parties and the international community to push strongly for broader reforms which also tackled the need for free and fair elections, strengthening the legal provisions related to the financing of political parties and electoral campaigns, as well as media reforms that directly influence the cost of politics. What remains to be seen is whether these reforms will affect the next electoral process. However, the situation is tense and unclear. Early parliamentary elections were scheduled for April 2016, then postponed to June 2016 and then again cancelled with no other specific election date.

The political crisis certainly has had tremendous impact in changing the political climate in the country. However, no one expects that the current government will be a driver for any reforms whatsoever. The allegations of criminal and corrupt activities and election rigging done by the highest government officials are so strong that it is not an overstatement to say that the only realistic agenda of the current government is to stay in power as long as possible.

S U M M A R Y

Political party financing is a taboo topic in Macedonia. Moreover, it seems that there exists some kind of tacit consent between political parties (especially the big ones) to not reveal to the public the sources of party revenues. Only recently, and mostly due to the political crisis, political parties started to confront each other over the subject of illegal financing. Unfortunately, this tacit consent seems to be spreading all over the societal spectrum (legislative bodies, control bodies, media etc). In the civil sector, one can hardly find relevant NGOs that specifically deal with these issues.

The most shocking feature of the Macedonian political and societal system is the corruption of the media with public funds. The media landscape became so distorted that a stranger coming to Macedonia and watching two politically opposed TV channels will not figure out that they broadcast news about the same country. This distortion has huge ramifications for the cost of politics and gives enormous advantage to the ruling coalitions.

Another disturbing factor is the culture of loyalty and servility to political parties. The country is so deeply divided along party lines that there are virtually no prospects for other political actors to emerge. Political parties show strong autocratic tendencies and reforms in the opposite direction have been very modest.

Finally, the lack of institutional scrutiny and an independent judiciary are also key impediments to curbing corrupt practices in the country and the development of strategies to restrain the role of money in politics.

The problems with the relatively unfavourable electoral model would have been surmounted had the above mentioned negative factors been settled according to the democratic principles of liberal democracies.

Only recent developments, amid a major political crisis in the country, showed that a strong diplomatic pressure and concerted efforts from the members of the international community, along with strong pressure from the protesters in the streets, might move things forward.

In an optimistic scenario, the first signs of improvement could be expected in no less than three years time, provided that a new government will have enough capacity and willingness to tackle the serious problems the country is facing.

Endnotes

- 1 *Transparency and Integrity in Political Finance*, OECD (2012).
- 2 A large portion of media outlets in Macedonia are directly controlled or influenced by the ruling political parties, or, to a lesser extent, by big opposition parties. The analysis that follows will show that both political actors (ruling parties and large opposition parties) have an interest in controlling the media space.
- 3 http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/the_former_yugoslav_republic_of_macedonia/framework_agreement_ohrid_130801_en.pdf
- 4 The indirect consequence of the Ohrid Framework Agreement was the forthcoming predominance of four political parties, the VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM from the ethnic Macedonian political side and the DUI and DPA from the ethnic Albanian side. This peculiar “ethnic double bipartisanship” is still prevalent on the Macedonian political scene.
- 5 The exact number of political parties is not certain, since many of the parties struggle to gather the needed 1,000 signatures for re-registration and the official register of political parties does not always accurately state the number.
- 6 See Gordan Georgiev in *Reshaping the broken image of the political parties in SEE*”, ed. by Georgi Karasimeonov, GorexPress 2007.
- 7 Candidates are nominated by the local organizations and confirmed by the congress consisting of representatives of various levels of the party organization.
- 8 Interview with Pavle Trajanov, MP and leader of Demokratski Sojuz.
- 9 Interview with Saso Ordanoski, political analyst and member of Transparency International Macedonia.
- 10 Interview with a local political commentator (anonymous).
- 11 The academic research worldwide seems to be lacking as well.
- 12 Later on, the intercepted phone communication between leading government officials gives evidence that Boskovski’s arrest was purely related to political revenge by the ruling VMRO-DPMNE.
- 13 <http://www.telma.com.mk/vesti/levica-na-chekor-do-status-na-politichka-partija>.
- 14 <http://www.libertas.mk/trajanov-konfiskatsija-i-zabrana-za-politichko-dejstvuvane-od-najmalku-10-godini-za-site-koi-ja-zloupotrebile-vlasta/>.
- 15 <http://www.pravda.gov.mk/documents/zakon%20za%20partiski%20istazuvacko-analiticki%20centri.pdf>.
- 16 http://www.transparency.mk/en/images/stories/publications/bying_influence_-_money_and_politics_in_republic_of_macedonia.pdf.
- 17 <http://daily.mk/vesti/malite-se-pobunija-golemite-da-delat-pari-za-partiski-instituti-4>.
- 18 Information contained in intercepted materials disclosed by the opposition in 2015.
- 19 Blaževska, “Vladinite reklami – alfa za ureduvačkata politika, omega za nezavisnosta,” Deutsche Welle (in Macedonian), 23 September 2014.
- 20 Interview with Meri Jordanovska, journalist, BIRN Macedonia.
- 21 Alsat, M, “Sumite dobieni od vladini reklami od desetkratno pomali od oni koi gi navede ZNM”, 28 May 2015.
- 22 Informing Citizens’ Matrix, data available at the web site of the Government of RM at: <http://vlada.mk/node/9241>.
- 23 The speculation about the sums varied between EUR 30,000 and EUR 80,000, depending on the MP and his/hers perceived loyalty.
- 24 <http://plusinfo.mk/vest/64483/-frodem-menicite-potpishani-od-pratenicite-se-nezakonski-i-nevazecki->
- 25 www.transparency.mk/en/images/stories/legislation_and_practices_in_the_financing_of_political_parties.pdf.

- 26 <http://novatv.mk/donatsii-vo-vmro-dpmne-fiktivni-donatori-i-siromashni-sluzhbenitsi>.
- 27 <http://24vesti.mk/zaev-sdsm-predlaga-edna-izborna-edinica>.