

# DETERMINING POLITICAL HARMFUL NARRATIVES

SUMMARY

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR  
MARCH 2024 - MAY 2024



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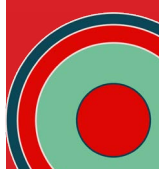
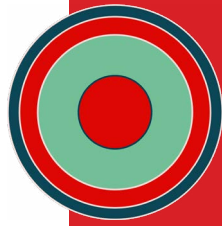
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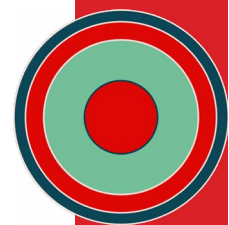
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The research **Determining Political Harmful Narratives (HARM-TIVE)** was launched in September 2023 with the aim of determining whether and how political actors in North Macedonia produce, spread and use harmful narratives, as well as what is the role of the media in reporting on these narratives, i.e. whether they apply the professional and ethical journalistic values and standards.

It is characteristic of the period March-May 2024 that the monitoring was conducted during the unofficial and official pre-election campaign for the presidential and parliamentary elections which took place on 24 April and 8 May, as well as during the post-election period when the voting results were presented, i.e. the winners in the two election cycles, and the negotiations on the composition of the new government were already underway.

The Institute of Communication Studies (ICS) underscores that the candidates for the president of the state were not subject to this monitoring.

**For the purposes of this research, the websites and Facebook pages of ten political parties that are represented by at least two MPs in the Assembly were monitored:** Alliance for Albanians, Alternativa, DUI, Democratic Movement, VMRO-DMPNE, Levica, LDP, New Social Democratic Party, SDSM, Socialist Party. The profiles of the leaders of the political parties were also monitored on Facebook, as well as the profiles of the president of the RNM Caretaker Government, the deputies of the prime minister and the ministers in the government.

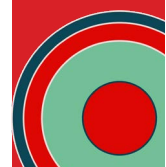
**The media sample includes the following 11 online media outlets and 9 television stations:**

**Online media outlets:** Lokalno; Nezavisen; Sloboden Pечат; A1on.mk; MKD.mk; Republika; Kurir; Almakos; Tetova Sot; Nova TV; Vecer.mk.

**Television stations:** MTV 1 (public); MTV 2 (public, in Albanian language); Alfa TV (private); Kanal 5 (private); Sitel TV (private); TV 24 (private); Telma (private); Alsat M (private, in Albanian language); TV 21 (private, in Albanian language)

The analysis of the political parties and their leaders is focused on determining the dominant harmful narratives, the form and channels most frequently used to spread such narratives, and addresses the way in which the [Standards and Principles of Political Communication](#) are violated. Whereas the media monitoring provides an answer to the question of whether the media adhere to [Standards for Ethical Professional Journalistic Reporting](#) for accurate, fair and impartial reporting or unquestioningly follow the agenda dictated by political actors.

The research **Determining Political Harmful Narratives (HARM-TIVE)** was conducted by the Institute of Communication Studies (ICS) within the project **Use Facts: Fact-Based Journalism for Raising Awareness and Countering Disinformation in the Media Space in North Macedonia** supported by the British Embassy Skopje. The research is longitudinal and lasts during 2023 and 2024, it is carried out in several phases by a team from ICS in co-operation with researchers and experts in the field of communications and media, as well as with media professionals in the field of monitoring and control.



The methodological framework, samples and monitoring dynamics, as well as details of the entire research process are available at: [HARM-TIVE](#).

This document summarises the monitoring results in the period between March - May 2024.

The full quarterly report can be read [HERE](#).

## KEY FINDINGS

The quarterly reporting period of March-May 2024 brought significant turnaround in the use of harmful narratives among political actors compared to the previous six months, that is, a reduction in their quantity both among political parties and among political leaders. This is mainly due to the decrease in the intensity of communication with the public among some political actors, that is, the post-election silence after the elections ended in May. On the other hand, this quarter saw a significant increase in harmful rhetoric among government officials. A noticeable drop in the news items with harmful narratives is noted among TV stations, but it should be taken into account that there is regulation to which these media are subject during election period. With online media, which do not have the obligation to comply with this regulation, there are changing trends in the number of harmful posts depending on the month, that is, they both broke records in this quarter and had a significant decrease in harmful posts.

All media that are subject to monitoring have signed up for paid political advertising, except [www.novatv.mk](http://www.novatv.mk).

## Changes among frontrunners

In this three-month period, there were changes in the top three political parties that spread the most harmful narratives. Namely, the two largest political parties VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM in the period September 2023-February 2024 convincingly led in the spread of harmful narratives with a total of 311 and 228 harmful posts, respectively, and Levica was in third place with a total of 193 such posts. Unlike then, in the period March-May 2024, VMRO-DPMNE kept the first place with a total of 102 posts with harmful narratives (a share of 33% in the total number of harmful posts from political parties), but Levica moved to second place with a total of 90 harmful posts (29% of the total number), and SDSM came in third place with 63 posts with harmful narratives (21% of the total number of harmful posts of political parties). It is worth emphasizing that in May - the month of holding the elections and presenting the election results, Levica had by far the most (25) harmful narratives, VMRO-DPMNE fell to second place with 16 posts with harmful narratives, and SDSM took the fourth place with five harmful posts and gave way to the third place for DUI where six posts with harmful narratives were determined.

When it comes to political leaders, the president of Levice, Dimitar Apasiev, in the period March-May 2024 had the highest number of posts with harmful narratives, a total of 32. The second place was reserved for Izet Medjiti, leader of the Democratic Movement (17), and in third place is Afrim Gashi from Alternativa (15). In the six-month analysis, Apasiev was again the leader with the largest number of posts with harmful narratives, and Medjiti was then in third place. VMRO-DPMNE leader Hristijan Mickoski, who in the period September 2023-February 2024 was in second place on the 'leaders with harmful narratives' list, in the last quarter of the monitoring, with only two posts with harmful narratives, he was in sixth place out of a total of ten ranked leaders.

## The most frequent harmful narratives

In terms of frequency, two types of harmful narratives stand out among political parties in this quarter: *Biased selection* and *Undermining trust in the institutions of the system*. Among the political parties, 253 cases of *biased selection* were established, in which they tried to mislead the public by hiding facts and presenting only selected data about certain situations with which they "drew the water to their mill". Simultaneously, the monitoring noted 239 cases of *Undermining trust in the institutions of the system* with which they consciously wanted to create insecurity and mistrust among citizens in the country. There is a change in the places of these two narratives, compared to the analysis of the previous six months, i.e. from the first place in terms of frequency, the narrative *Undermining trust* in this quarter is in the second place, while the reverse happens with *Biased selection*, in the last quarter it is the first most frequently used harmful narrative. In third place, the most frequently used harmful narrative among political parties is *Fomenting divisions* (81 cases).

Among political leaders in the period March-May 2024, the harmful narratives *Biased selection* (47 cases) and *Undermining trust* (35) are also in the first two places, but the harmful narrative *Character attacks/demonization* is in the third place (31). The setting of the types of harmful narratives in the previous six-month monitoring period is similar.

Hence, it is noticeable that, although with less dynamics, political actors this quarter also used *Populism*, *Spreading fear and panic*, *Accusations of foreign influence*, and there are also cases of use of *Hate speech* by some political leaders.

## Landing at least two harmful narratives per post

Monitoring in the period March-May 2024 revealed that political parties had 307 posts with a total of 796 harmful narratives, which means that the intensity of harmfulness is 2.6, or an average of two to three harmful narratives in one post. During this period, political leaders had 68 harmful posts with a total of 166 harmful narratives, that is, a similar intensity of harmfulness of 2.4.

The most common forms through which political parties spread harmful narratives are: press releases (29% of posts) and press conferences (25%), as well as interviews (18%). The sequence of used types of posts in press releases and press conferences is exactly the same as in the previous six-month period, and interviews are a novelty in party press releases in the (pre)election quarter. Among political leaders, posts with a harmful narrative were mostly: reactions (31% of posts) and interviews (17%). The reactions were in first place in the previous six-month period as well, but as with the parties and leaders, in this quarter they published their interviews more often, which were absent as a type of publication in the previous period of monitoring.

## Domestic politics with indecent vocabulary

The largest quantity of all posts with a harmful narrative of both political parties (76.2%) and political leaders (86.8%) in the March-May period were on the topic of domestic politics. Topics such as corruption and crime also appear in the communication of political parties and their leaders with the public, but with a much slower dynamic. There was almost no change in the themes on which harmful narratives were produced between the most recent quarter and the previous six-month period.

It is worth noting that political actors continued to use rhetoric that is insulting, belittling and low-level, and in an attempt through the vulgarization of the vocabulary to denigrate and label political opponents and win the votes of citizens, which is impermissible in the contemporary political debate and contrary to [the Standards and Principles of Political Communication](#).

SDSM's criticisms were mainly aimed at VMRO-DPMNE, calling them names such as 'VMRO-MVRO', 'darkness' and 'regime'. The messages by DUI, i.e. the European Front, were aimed at the Albanian opposition, i.e. the Vlen coalition, who were called 'vassals of Mickoski' and 'bacteria'. VMRO-DPMNE called SDSM - 'servants of DUI', and the representatives of DUI - 'Ahmeti's commanders'. The criticisms of the parties from the Vlen coalition were mainly aimed at DUI calling it a 'corrupt elite' and 'DUI Lottery', and Levica used offensive rhetoric towards almost all political entities. For them, SDSM is a 'schizophrenic party', 'transitional kleptomaniacs' and 'quislings'. VMRO-DPMNE are 'false opposition' and 'bourgeois party', and DUI are 'monster' and 'UCK-ies'.

## Intensified harmful rhetoric by government officials

The members of the Government during this period used the official channels for the promotion of their own party agenda, but also for accusations against political opponents. In the period March-May, a total of 58 posts with harmful narratives and a total of 93 harmful narratives among members of the Government were recorded. In relation to the previously analysed six-month period (September 2023 – February

2024), there is a significant increase in the number of posts with a harmful narrative by government officials and in the number of spread harmful narratives. Namely, in the last quarter, the subject of the monitoring, the number of posts with a harmful narrative grew 2.2 times compared to the previous six-month period or by 223%, while the use of harmful narratives grew by 1.7 times, i.e. by 172%. First Deputy Prime Minister Artan Grubi is the member of the Government with the most (18 posts) with harmful narratives in this period, in second place is Minister of Justice Krenar Loga (15), and in third place is Minister of Economy Kreshnik Bekteshi (12). What was observed during the monitoring is a significant increase in posts with a harmful narrative by ministers Loga and Bekteshi in May (from 2 in April to 10 posts in May by Bekteshi and from 3 to 10 in May by Loga).

Regarding the types of harmful narratives that appear in the posts of government members, the analysis showed that they mostly use two types of harmful narratives: *Biased selection* and *Undermining the trust* of citizens in institutions and the media. They seldom use harmful narratives such as *Fomenting division*, *Character attack* and *Foreign influence*. Although incidental, it is interesting to note that the harmful narratives *Ethnocentrism* and *Extreme patriotism* were used in May by Kreshnik Bekteshi and Krenar Loga, while *Spreading panic and fear* in April by Artan Grubi and the Minister of Culture Bisera Stojchevska. Another interesting note is that the *Foreign influence* harmful narrative was only used by Artan Grubi during each month of this quarter.

## Positive shifts in the media

In the period March-May 2024, there is a decrease in the total number of news items with harmful narratives on television and online media, with the latter having the highest peak during the entire monitoring period in this quarter, that is, in April. In this context, it should be taken into account that broadcasters are subject to obligations according to the regulations during election processes (Electoral Code, Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services), as well as to regular and extraordinary monitoring by domestic and foreign observers, including the media regulator, the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services.

Namely, a total of 185 news items with harmful narratives were recorded at TV stations during this period, and the least during May (compared to March, there is a drop of 35% - from 79 to 51 news items). In regard to the six-month period, there is a decrease in the number of news items with a harmful narrative in the last analysed quarter by about 20% (on average in the six-month period, 81 news items with a harmful narrative were recorded per month on televisions, while in the third quarter, on average, that number per month amounts to 62 news items). TV Alfa again has the largest number of news items with harmful narratives - 61 news items, although compared to the six-month period, there is an average decrease of about 30%. MRT 1 is the television station with the lowest number of news items with a harmful narrative (9 news items), in contrast to the previous six months when the smallest number was recorded with TV 24 with 15 news items.

On the other hand, a total of 672 news items with harmful narratives were recorded in the online media outlets. There were the fewest in May (187), and the most in April (261), which is a record for the entire monitoring period. There are big differences in the number of published news items with a harmful narrative: the online media outlet with the most harmful news items is Kurir – 124 news items, and the one with fewest published news items with a harmful narrative is Nova TV – 14 news items.

The three most frequently mentioned harmful narratives in the main news of TV stations are *Undermining trust in institutions* (100 times or 31% of the total number of narratives), *Biased selection* (100 times or 31 % of the total number of narratives) and *Fomenting divisions* (34 times or 11 % of the total number of narratives). These three harmful narratives noted in the central news editions coincide with the same three most commonly used by political actors. It is similar in the online media outlets, where the first two most frequently mentioned harmful narratives are *Undermining trust in institutions* and *Biased selection*, and in third place are *Character attacks*.

It is noteworthy that the sources in the television and online media reports are mostly precise, however a significant issue with both types of media, as in the previous six months, remains one-sided reporting. Thus, among TV stations in the period March-May, news items with one-sided reporting dominate (60%), and the situation is even worse among online media – in 85 % of the posts, one source was used.

Although it is understandable during an election campaign to convey the views and speeches of political subjects more often, however this does not mean that journalists should be silent broadcasters of their messages. One of the main tasks of journalists, i.e. the media, is to find a way to confront or compare the views of political opponents in one report and, more importantly, to ask for the opinion of independent third parties, which would give the audience/voters a chance for a more complete and a more realistic picture of the political situation based on several different sources/sides.

## POLITICAL ACTORS

Monitoring of political actors was conducted every third and fourth consecutive day. In total, in the period March - May 2024, the monitoring of the official pages of political actors covered 46 days. In the period March - May 2024, out of a total of 307 posts with harmful narratives by political parties, 90 posts appeared only on the parties' Facebook profiles, 114 only on the parties' official websites, and 103 both on their Facebook profiles and on the official websites.

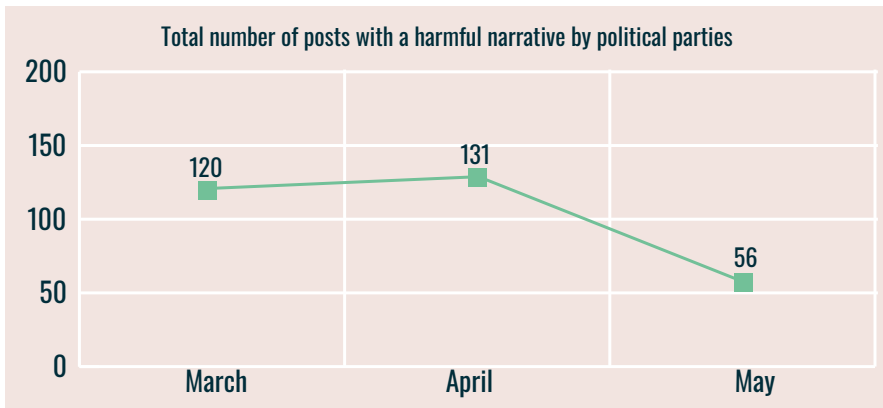


Figure 1 Total number of posts with a harmful narrative by political parties

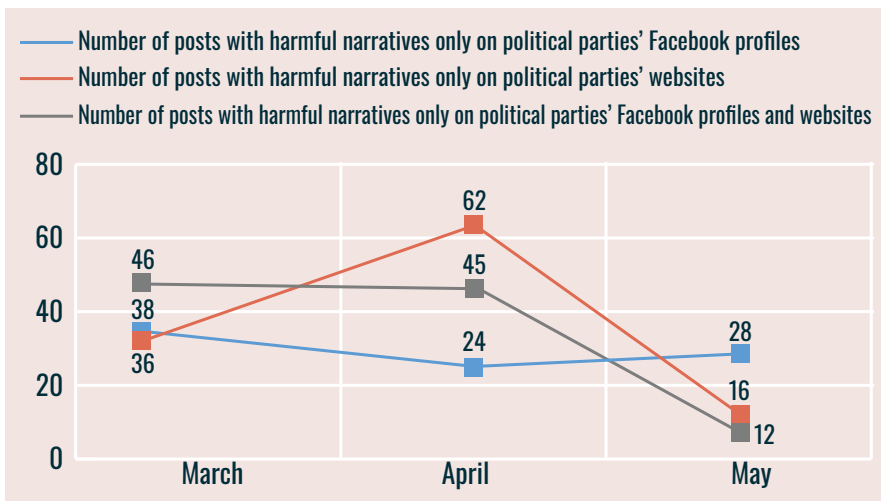


Figure 2 Total number of posts by political parties on their websites and Facebook profiles

A total of 68 posts with harmful narratives were recorded on the Facebook profiles of political leaders during the 46 day of monitoring, most of them are identified in May (29).

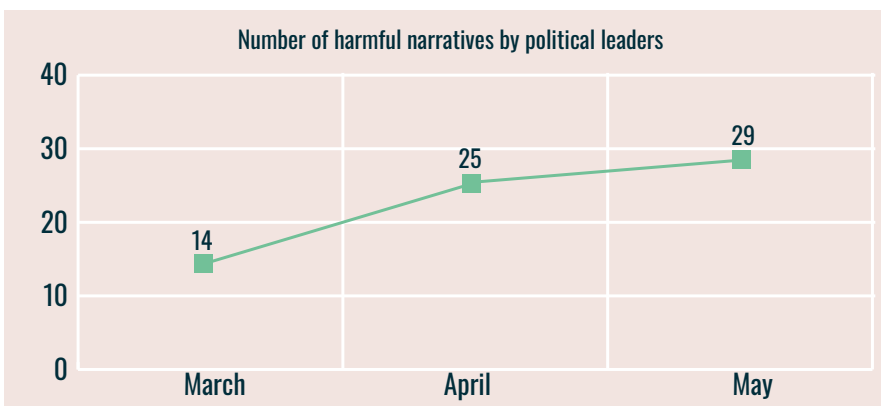


Figure 3 Total number of posts by political leaders on their Facebook profiles

# Analysis of the harmfulness of posts

Three aspects of the analysis of the harmfulness are outlined below:

1. The first aspect is the **frequency of harmful narratives**, which is the total number of posts with harmful narratives
2. The second aspect is **the percentage of harmfulness**, which is the percentage of posts with a harmful narrative from the total number of posts of the political entity (for example, if during the day the political entity has 10 posts, of which 7 are with a harmful narrative, the percentage of harmfulness of that political entity is 70 %)
3. The third aspect is the **intensity of harmfulness**, which is the number of harmful narratives in one post (for example, if during the day the political entity has one post in which three harmful narratives are broadcast, then this means that the intensity of harmfulness is 3).

In 307 posts by political parties, there are 796 harmful narratives (114 harmful narratives were recorded on the parties' websites, 90 on their Facebook profiles, while 103 were recorded on both channels of communication with the public). The largest number was recorded in April (during the pre-election campaigns) and there is a significant drop in May.

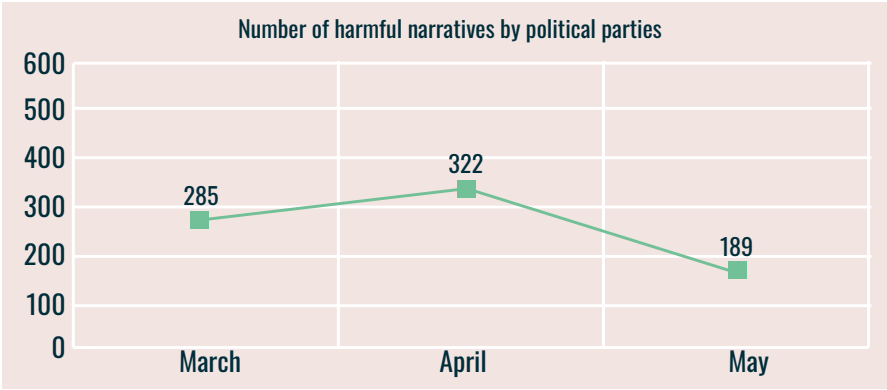


Figure 4 Number of times political parties created harmful narratives per month

If the percentage of harmfulness is analysed by months, the trend of the movement of that percentage is upward, despite the drop in posts with a harmful narrative during May:

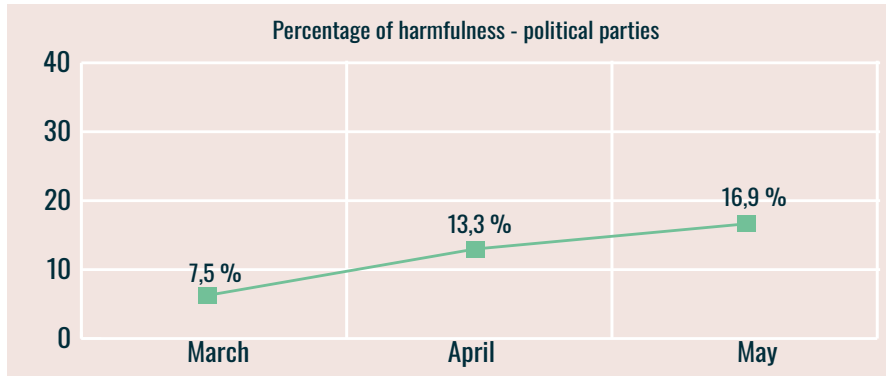


Figure 5 Percentage of harmfulness by months

The percentage of harmfulness, viewed by month, ranges from 7.5% (in March) to almost 17% (in May). Summarised for three months, **about 11% of all posts by all political parties on their websites and Facebook profiles have a harmful narrative.**

In terms of the intensity of harmfulness in the posts, it can be said that it was continuously growing from March to May, from 2.4 to 3.4, so that on average it ranged from two (2) harmful narratives in one post in March to three (3) harmful narratives in one post in May. It appears that the harmful rhetoric increased during the elections and especially after the election period. The largest share in the intensity of harmfulness belongs to Alternativa (4) and Levica (3).

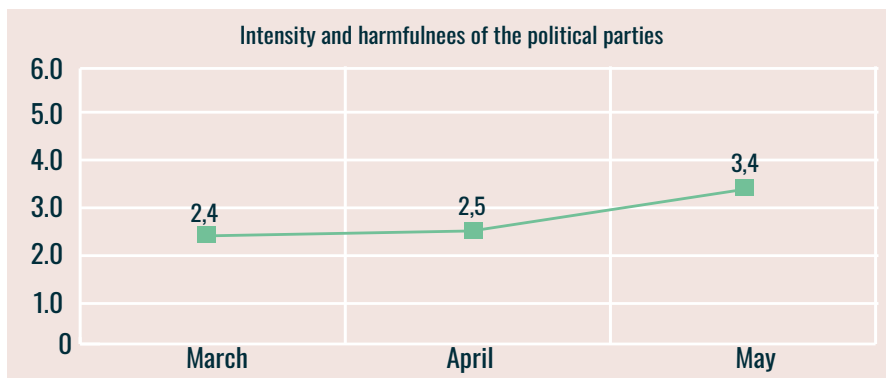
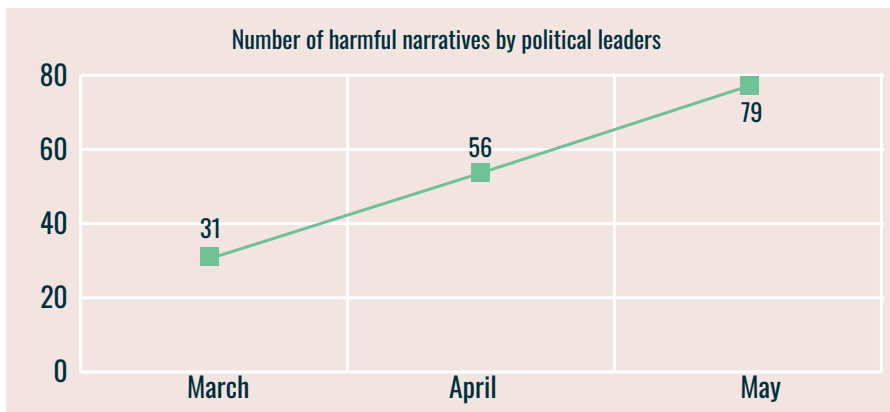


Figure 6 Intensity of harmfulness by month

The analysis of the 68 posts by political leaders showed the presence of a total of 166 harmful narratives. Among political leaders, the number of posts with a harmful narrative shows a constant growth, more significant from March to April and milder in May, when the number is the highest (79).



Слика бр. 7 Фреквенција на штетни наративи на политичките лидери по месеци

If the percentage of harmfulness is analysed by month, the trend of movement of that percentage is as follows:

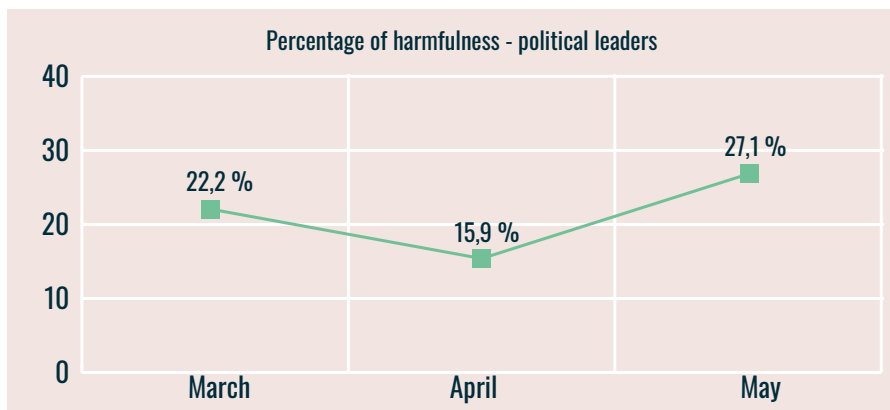


Figure 8 Percentage of posts with a harmful narrative from the total posts by political leaders per month

The percentage of harmfulness, viewed by month, recorded a drop in April (from 22% in March to 16%), before rising again to 27% in May. Summarised over three months, it is 21% for all political leaders, **or there is one-fifth of political leaders' posts on Facebook with one or more harmful narratives.**

Analysis of the intensity of harmfulness of political leaders by month shows that the intensity is relatively the same, ranging from an average of 2.2 to 2.7 harmful narratives in/per post.

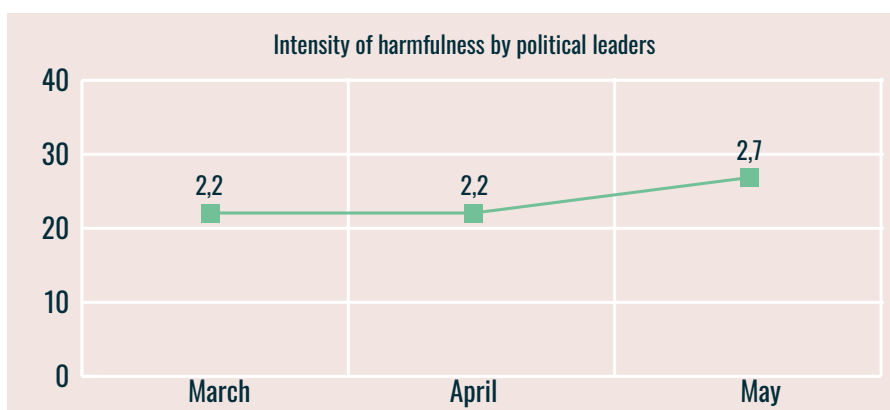


Figure 9 Intensity of harmfulness by months

## Types of Harmful Narratives

With political parties, besides the two most frequently used harmful narratives *Biased selection* and *Undermining trust in the institutions of the system*, with relatively big frequency are used *Fomenting divisions*, *Character attacks/demonization* and *Populism*. As a third group of harmful narratives that appeared among political parties more frequently during April and May, which in the previous period did not appear or appeared quite rarely are *Spreading fear, panic and insecurity* and *Foreign influence*.

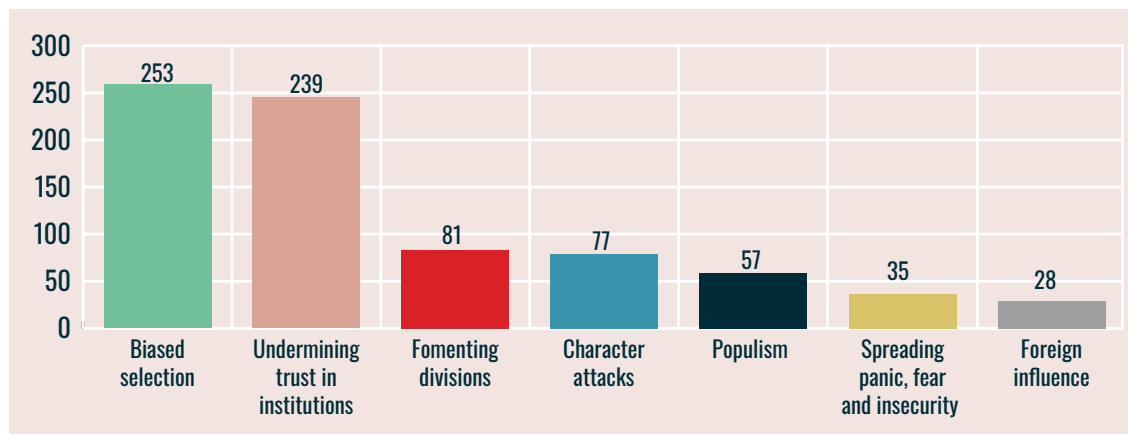


Figure 10 Frequency of different types of harmful narratives spread by political parties

Among political leaders, the situation is almost identical: three harmful narratives stand out according to frequency: *Undermining trust in institutions*, *Biased selection* and *Character attacks/demonization*. This is followed by *Populism*, *Fomenting divisions* and *Hate speech*, which are particularly strong during May.

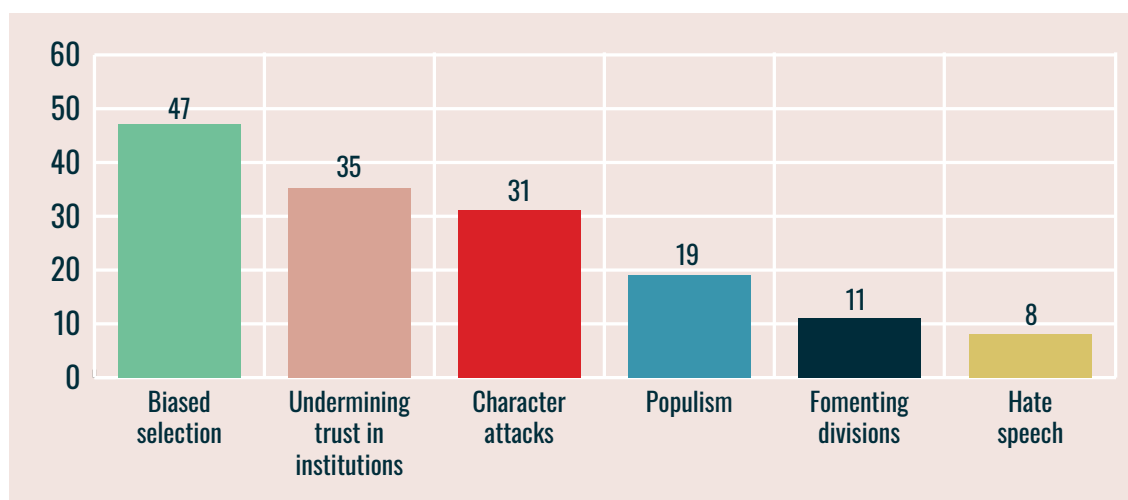


Figure 11 Frequency of different types of harmful narratives disseminated by political leaders

## Self-representation of political actors

In 121 out of a total of 307 (39 %) posts with harmful narratives by political parties on their websites and Facebook profiles, the parties had no particular intention to present themselves in any light, except, apparently, only to criticize their political opponents. In the remaining 61% of the posts, they presented themselves as follows:

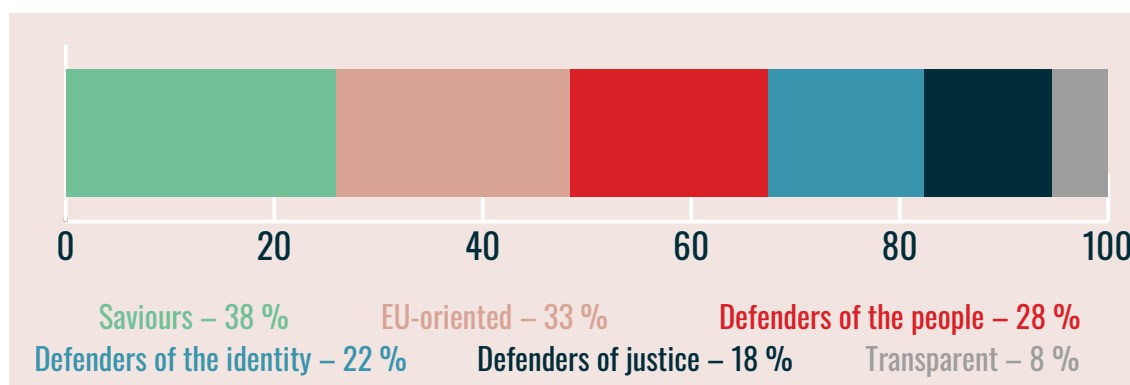


Figure 12 Image of self-representation of political parties in posts with a harmful narrative

In their communication with the citizens, the parties usually send the message that the people need someone to save them and in their posts they present themselves as the saviours, but also that they are oriented towards the “European path”. Apart from being saviours and EU-oriented, parties are frequently portrayed as the ones who defend the people, the identity, as well as being in the role of defenders of justice in the state. Very rarely do political parties portray themselves as being transparent as part of their profile.

On the other hand, in 29% of the posts, political leaders did not have any particular intention to present themselves, and in the remaining 71% they present themselves as follows:

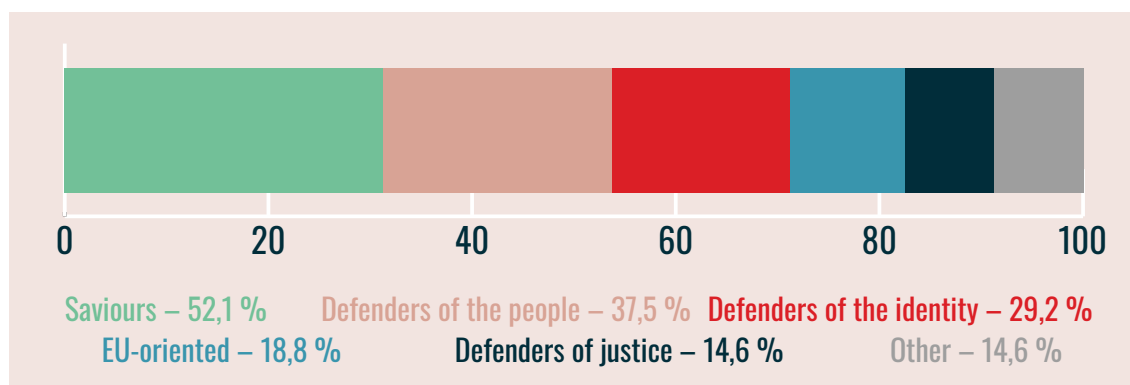


Figure 13 Image of self-representation of political leaders in posts with a harmful narrative

Unlike the parties whose leaders they are, the leaders portray themselves much more frequently (over half of self-presentation cases) as saviours, and then as defenders of the people and identity (in more than a third of the cases of self-presentation). Also, in contrast to the rhetoric of their political parties, leaders are much less likely to present themselves as EU-oriented.

## MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT

In this section, the subject of monitoring and analysis are the Facebook profiles of 20 political actors, members of the Government (Prime Minister, deputy prime ministers and ministers). Analysed in detail are posts in which these political actors misused their position for partisan purposes and/or generated harmful narratives. **For more details about the monitored members of the Government, see the Methodology** ([link](#)). From 28 January 2024, the monitoring includes the new members of the Caretaker Government for conducting the elections, i.e. the profiles of the new Prime Minister Talat Djaferi, the Minister of Interior Panche Toshkovski and the Minister of Labour and Social Policy Gjoko Velkovski.

In the research period of 46 days in the period March-May 2024, a total of 58 posts with harmful narratives and a total of 93 harmful narratives were recorded on the Facebook profiles of these officials.

By months, the trend is as follows:

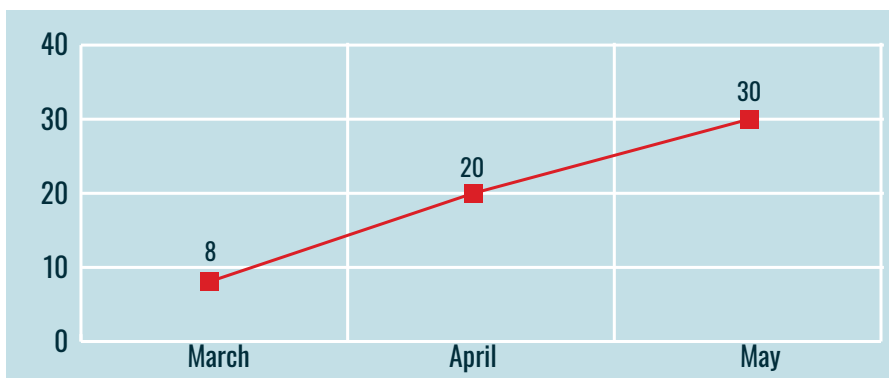


Figure 14 Number of posts with harmful narratives

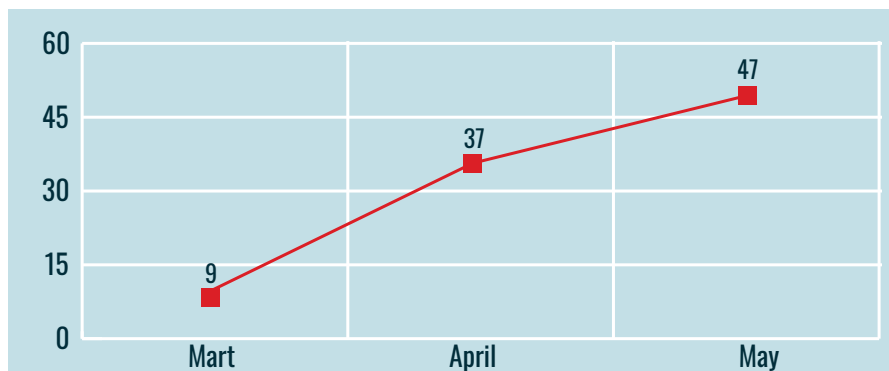


Figure 15 Frequency of posted harmful narratives by months

Regarding the intensity of harmfulness, the monthly trends can be seen in the graph below:

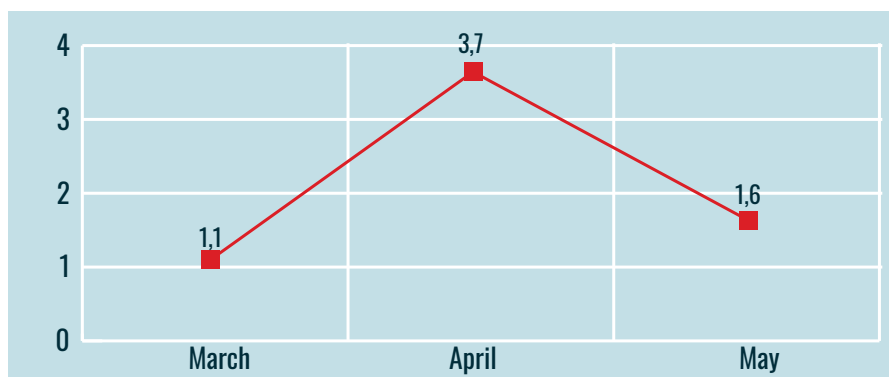


Figure 16 Harm intensity

During April, which was the month of pre-election campaigns and the first round of presidential elections, an average of four (4) harmful narratives were present in one post.

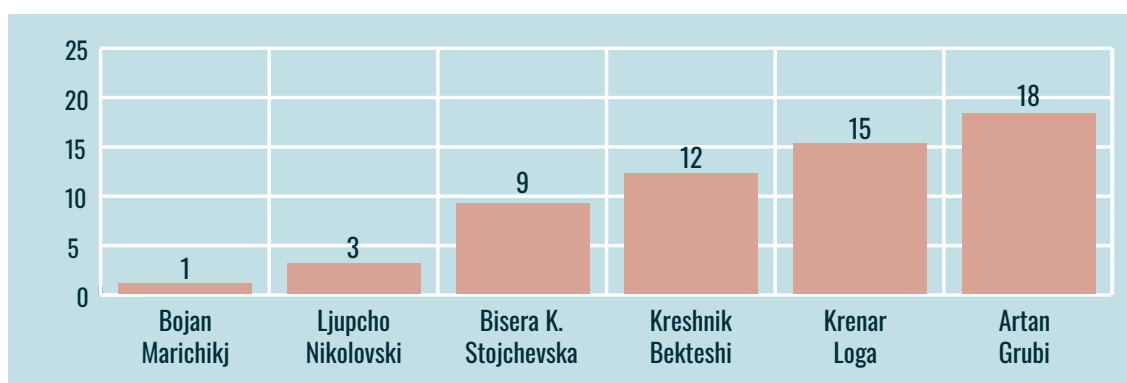


Figure 17 Number of posts with a harmful narrative by each government official

In terms of how they present themselves, members of government in their posts attacked their political opponents, frequently presented themselves and emphasized that they were European-oriented and defenders of the national identity.

Regarding the form in which the harmful narratives were disseminated, the data showed that the harmful narratives produced by government members were mostly in the disseminated reactions published on their Facebook profiles, but more frequently through other forms such as audio-visual content from campaign videos, speeches from rallies and media interviews.

## TV STATIONS

In the past three-month period, the central news editions of 9 television stations (MTV 1, MTV 2, Kanal 5, Sitel, Telma, Alsat M, Alfa, TV 21 and TV 24) were monitored and analysed for 26 days. A total of 185 news items with harmful narratives were recorded. The smallest number of news items was during May (a 35% drop compared to March). A significant drop was noted in April, in the period of the pre-election campaigns for the presidential and parliamentary elections.

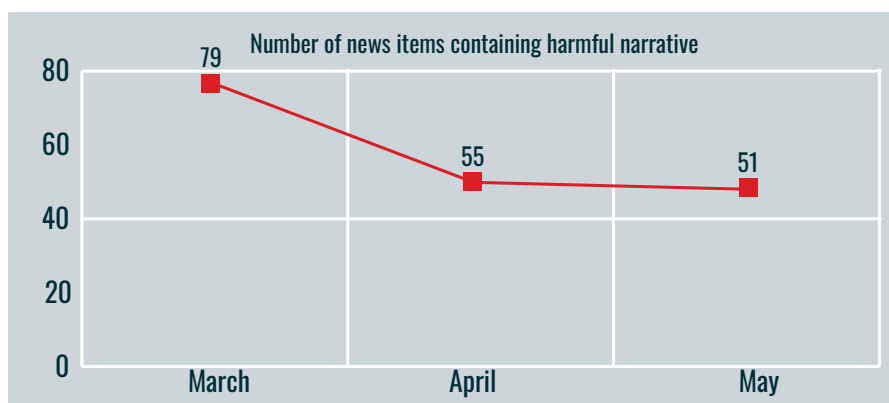


Figure 18 Number of news items with harmful narrative by month

The content analysis of 185 news items confirmed the presence of 318 harmful narratives, again the least in May (88).

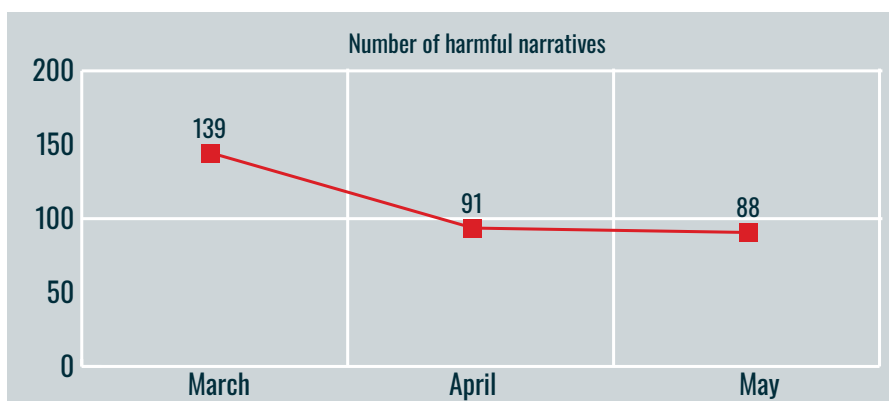


Figure 19 Frequency of disseminated harmful narratives on monthly basis

The general intensity of harmfulness (which represents the average number of harmful narratives present in one news item) is 1.7 for all analysed TV stations. This means that, on average, television stations broadcast almost two harmful narratives in one report.

## Comparison by number of news items for three months: March – May 2024

Similar to the previous report on the six-month monitoring, in this quarter as well, TV Alfa stands out far from all TV stations in terms of the number of news items with a harmful narrative, and far behind it are TV Alsat M with a total of 26 news items and TV 21 with 25 news items.

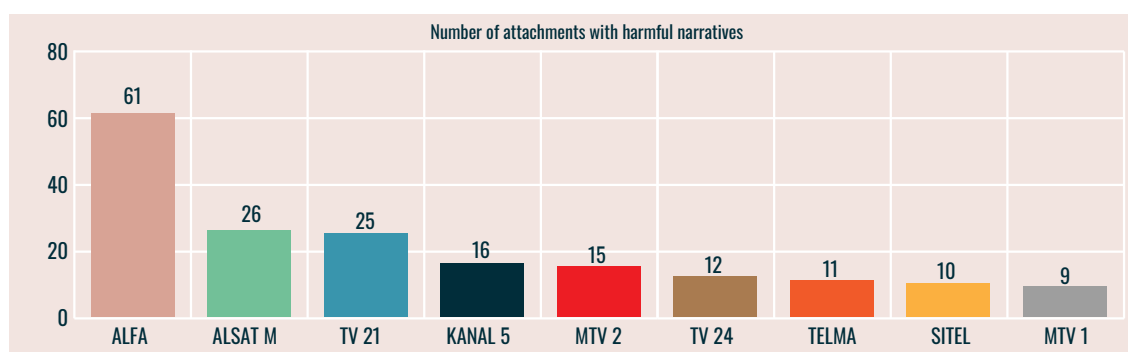


Figure 20 Number of news items with a harmful narrative according to TV stations

## Types of harmful narratives

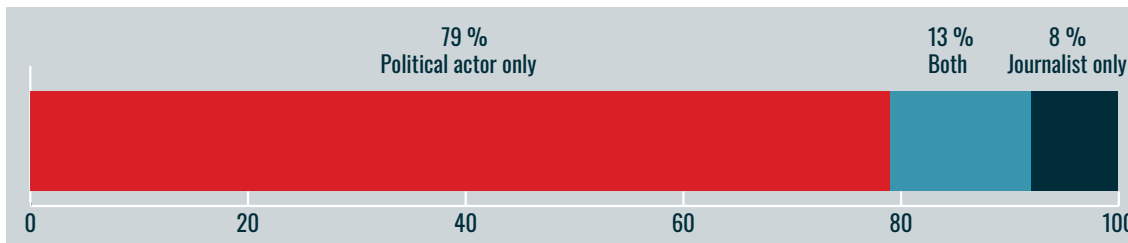
In the last quarter from the monitoring, in the news items of the nine TV stations, there are recorded 13 of the total 16 [harmful](#) narratives which are the focus of the research. Only the harmful narratives *Malinformation*, *Xenophobia* and *Sexism* were not recorded in either TV station's reporting. The top three most frequently mentioned harmful narratives in the central news editions of the TV stations are:

- I: **Undermining trust in institutions** (100 times or 31% of the total number of narratives)
- II: **Biased selection** (100 times or 31 % of the total number of narratives)
- III: **Fomenting divisions** (34 times or 11% of the total number of narratives)

These three harmful narratives noted in central news editions coincide with the same three most frequently used by political actors.

Furthermore, in terms of frequency, *Character attacks* follow with 10% (31 times) participation in harmful narratives, then *Spreading panic, fear and insecurity* with 5% participation (17 times) and *Disinformation*, which accounts for 2.5% (8 times) of the narratives noted on TV stations for the analysed three-month period.

## Who produces the harmful narratives and how journalists respond to the harmful narratives of political actors



Almost 80% (78.6%) of the harmful narratives present in the news items were created by political actors, 13% of the harmful narratives were produced by both (the political actor and the journalist), and 8% of the harmful narratives in the news items were produced by the journalist.

In 67% of the cases when the political actor produces a harmful narrative, the journalist broadcasts it without any intervention, in 18% of the cases the journalist broadcasts the harmful narrative from the political actor with approval, in 9% the journalist clearly highlights it, but does not take side and in 6% of cases, the journalist condemns and/or criticizes the harmful narrative of the political actor.

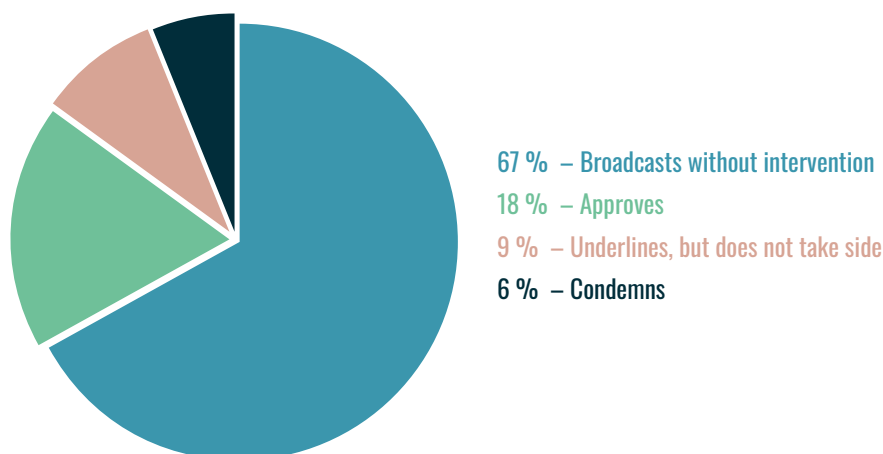


Figure 21 What is the attitude of the journalist when reporting the harmful narrative?

## What is the form in which the harmful narrative can be found?

The most common genre of the news items with a harmful narrative is the report (31% of the news items) or the analytical-reportage news item (23%), while in 19% of the news items with a harmful narrative, the speech by the political actor is broadcast.

## Main topic in news items containing harmful narratives

Out of 185 news items with a harmful narrative in this quarter, in 151 (82%) the main topic is domestic politics, but there is also a certain number of news items on topics of economy, crime, corruption and foreign policy.

## Sources

The sources in the television news items are mostly (in 175 or 95% of the news items) precise.

In terms of the sides presented in the news items, mostly present are those with one-sided reporting (107 news items or 60%), followed by those that include multiple sides - 22% (40 news items), and finally there are news items with 2 sides (such are 32 news items or 18% of news items).

When it comes to the number of sources in the news items, the tendency is the same: those with one source dominate (such are 83 news items or 45% of the total number of news items), followed by those with three or more sources (55 news items or 30%), and the rarest are those with two news items (41 news items - 22%). Only six (6) TV Alfa news items do not have sources listed, which represents about 3% of the total number of news items with a harmful narrative from all TV stations.

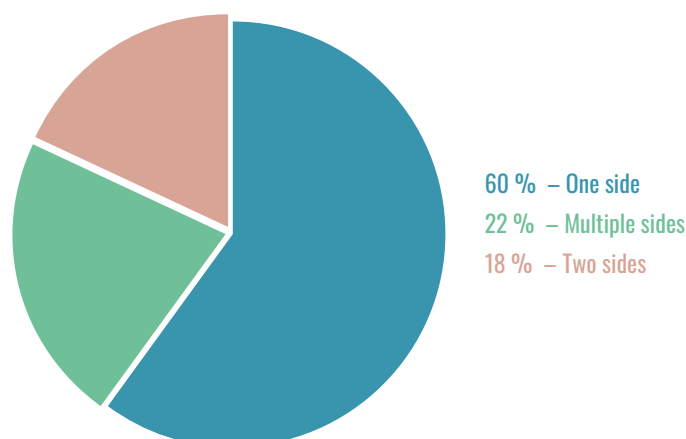


Figure 22 Sides in reporting

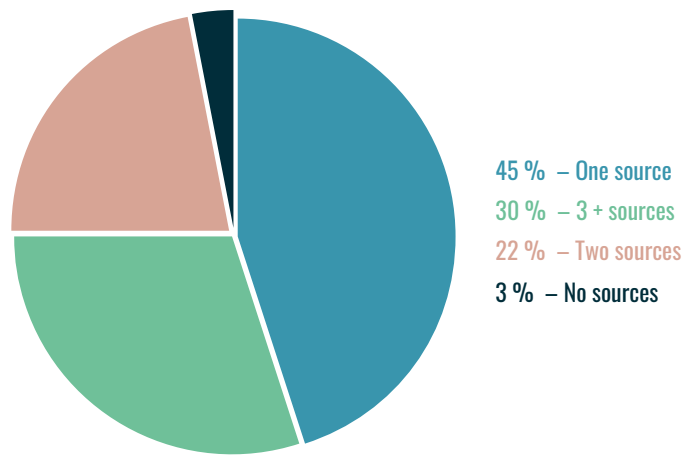


Figure 23 Number of sources in news items

## ONLINE MEDIA

In the total 46 days of monitoring of the online media for the period of March-May 2024, 672 news items with harmful narratives were recorded. There were the fewest in May (187), and the most in April (261).

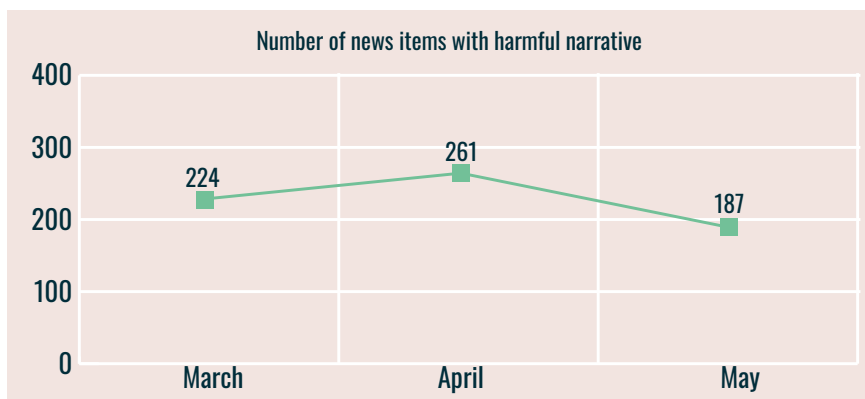


Figure 24 Total number of news items with a harmful narrative by online media outlets

The content analysis of the 672 news items published by the 11 online media outlets confirmed the presence of 1131 harmful narratives, the most in April (482).

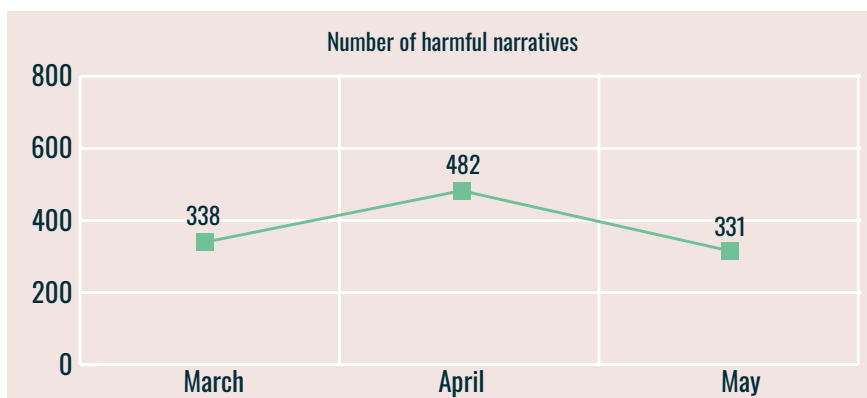


Figure 25 Number of reported harmful narratives by month

The intensity of harmfulness is 1.7 for all analysed online media outlets. This means that online media on average publish almost two harmful narratives in one post/news item.

If reviewed on monthly basis, one can see that the intensity was lowest in March and most intensive in April, although in the three months it is around two harmful narratives by post.

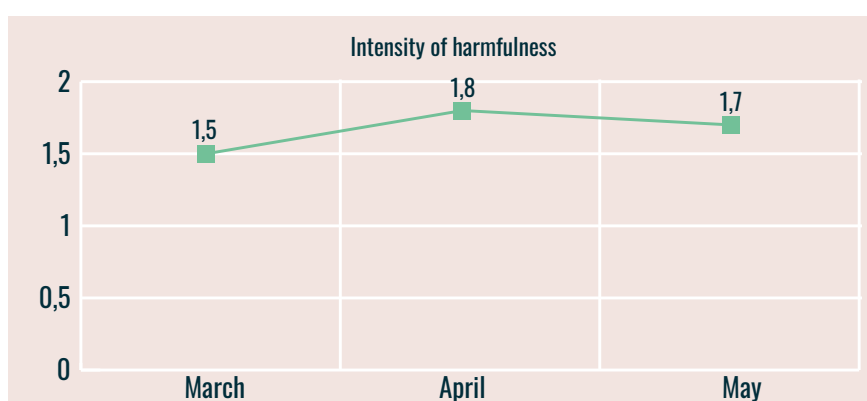


Figure 26 Intensity of harmfulness by month

## Number of news items for three months

Out of the 11 monitored online media outlets, the largest number of news items/posts with harmful narratives during the three months were found at: Kurir (124 news items), Nezavisen (84), A1on.mk (75) and Večer.mk (75). Nova TV has the least (14 news items). The difference between the online media outlet with the fewest published news items with a harmful narrative (Nova TV – 14 news items) and the online media outlet with the largest number of published news items with a harmful narrative (Kurir – 124 news items) amounts to 110 news items.

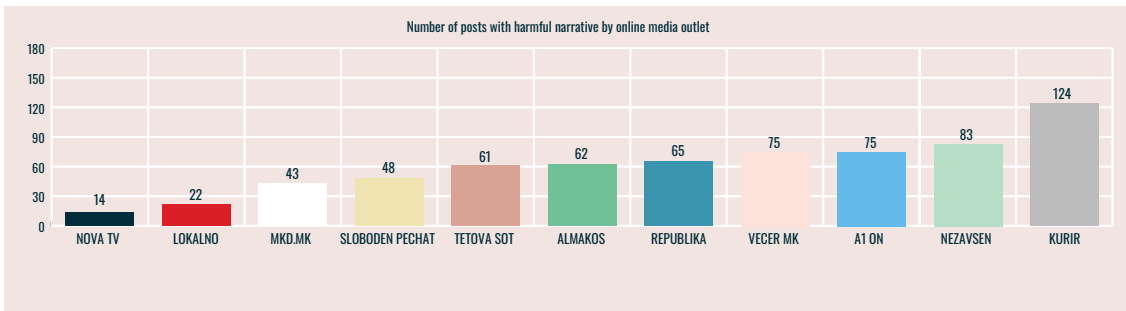


Figure 27 Number of posts with harmful narrative by online media outlet

## Types of harmful narratives

The top three most frequently broadcast harmful narratives throughout the three-month period are:

- I. Undermining trust in institutions
- II. Biased selection
- III. Character attacks

Furthermore, *Fomenting divisions, Populism and Spreading panic, fear and insecurity* follow in order of frequency.

## Who produces the harmful narratives and how journalists respond to the harmful narratives by political actors

In 87% of the news items with a harmful narrative, it is produced only by the political actor, in 8% it is produced by both, while only the journalist produces it in 5% of the news items.

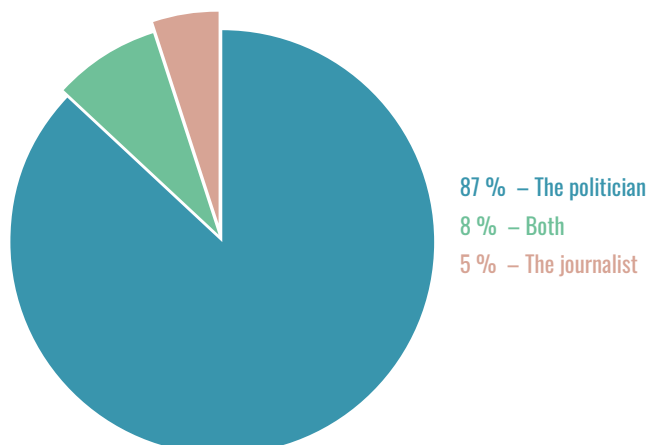


Figure 28 Who produces the harmful narrative?

In cases where the harmful narrative is produced either by the political actor or by both, most of the time, i.e. in 62% of the news items, the journalist just broadcasts it without intervening during the reporting and in 11% of the news items they even **approve** the present harmful narrative in the news item.

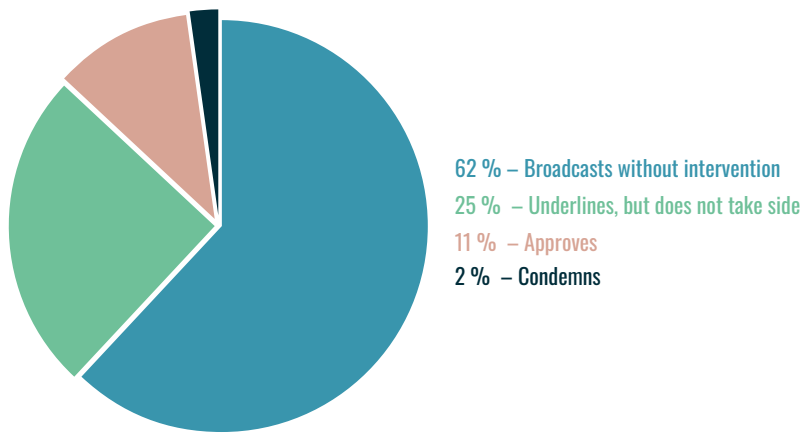


Figure 29 What is the attitude of the journalist in reporting the harmful narrative?

## Main theme in news items with harmful narratives

Similar to the political actors and TV stations, domestic politics dominates as the main topic of the news items with a harmful narrative with almost 80%, while the topics of crime, foreign policy, economy, corruption, economy, judiciary and health participate with 2-4% (each of them).

## Sources

The sources in the news items/posts of the analysed online media outlets are mostly (constantly throughout the months) precise, on average in 90% of the cases. This is primarily due to the fact that the dominating form are press releases and speeches by politicians.

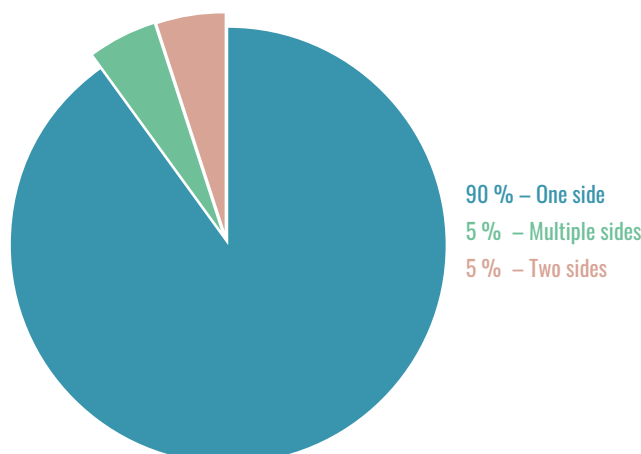


Figure 30 Presented sides in online media posts

What significantly deviates from professional journalistic reporting, which implies objectivity, impartiality and duty to provide balanced information to the public so that the public can make reliable decisions, is the tendency in 90% of the posts to show only one side.

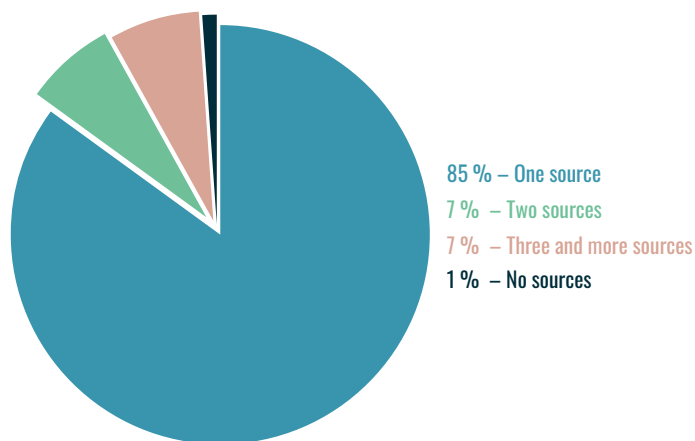


Figure 31 Number of sources in online media posts

In terms of the number of consulted sources in the news items/posts, news items in which only one source is consulted dominate (85%), followed by those with two sources and those with three or more (7% each). In 1% of the news items/posts there is no source indicated.

Ова истражување е спроведено во рамки на проектот „Употреба на новинарство засновано на факти за подигање на свеста и спротивставување на дезинформациите во медиумскиот простор во Северна Македонија“ финансиран од Владата на Обединето Кралство, со поддршка на Британската амбасада Скопје. Мислењата и ставовите наведени во оваа содржина не ги одразуваат секогаш мислењата и ставовите на Британската Влада.

