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**STATE INSTITUTIONS AND FREEDOM OF SPEECH IN THE
REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

Abstract: The Republic of Macedonia is one of the youngest world democracies, a multiethnic, multi-confessional and multi-lingual society facing enormous internal and external challenges and difficulties. Different opinions exist among researchers when it comes to freedom of speech as one of the most important features of a democratic society. A great discrepancy exists, regarding this issue, among researchers, practitioners and ordinary citizens in the Republic of Macedonia. The main objective of this paper is to give a description of the citizen's view regarding the freedom of speech in the Republic of Macedonia, as opposed to the generally known theoretical knowledge on this issue. The paper is based on a survey of 1079 citizens conducted during 2011 in all parts of the country. The sample is of a mixed nature and includes representatives of all ethnic and religious groups in the county, as well as representatives of different political proveniences.

Key words: democracy, freedom of speech, survey, religion and ethnicity in Macedonia

I. Introduction

The last decade of the XX century will be remembered by world history due to the changes in all European socialist societies. One party regimes fell one after another and were replaced by pluralistic systems. The dictatorships of the proletariat were replaced with democracy and the market economy replaced centralized economies. Although these changes reflected positively in all ex-Communist countries, not all of them have reached the same levels of economical and democratic development.

The Republic of Macedonia as one of the six constituent republics of the now ex-Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, gained its independence in the beginning of the 90s after a referendum for independence that was boycotted by the Albanian ethnic community.

Since the first days of its existence, and up to now, the Republic of Macedonia in continuity has been faced with tremendous external and internal challenges. Although all neighboring countries recognize and accepted Macedonia's independence, many issues regarding the name of the country, the borders of the country, the language and the Macedonian church remained unsolved and have played a major role in the overall development of the country for the last two decades. From the internal point of view, many issues, especially in the field of inter-ethnic relations, have been a continuous part of the country's development.

All internal and external problems aside, the level of democracy in the country has been one of the greatest problems facing politicians, researchers and ordinary citizens during the whole period of the country's development. In different periods, citizens' attitudes and opinions regarding the level of democratic development of Macedonia have varied, but the opinion that the democracy in the Republic of Macedonia is not well developed has continuously made itself felt.

According to the 2011 Democracy Index prepared by the Economist Intelligence Unit, in 2011 the Republic of Macedonia was ranked as the 73rd country with an overall score of 6.16. Compared to all neighboring countries Macedonia has been ranked higher only compared to Albania, which is ranked as the 87th. On the other hand, Bulgaria is ranked the 52nd, Greece 32nd, and Serbia 64th.

Freedom of speech is considered to be one of the most important indicators when it comes to determining the level of democratic development for a certain country. Analysis conducted by international independent institutions and organizations came up with very

discouraging data regarding the freedom of speech in the Republic of Macedonia.

According to the Reporters without Borders 2011 Press Freedom Report, the Republic of Macedonia is ranked 94th with an overall score of only 31.67. This is a very negative indicator, specially having in mind the fact that according to the same source, in 2010 Macedonia was ranked 68th, in 2009 it was ranked 34th, in 2008 it was ranked 42nd, in 2007 it was ranked 36th, in 2005 43rd, and so forth. In fact, in 2011 Macedonia hit the lowest point for the period covering the entire decade. Besides this, according to the Freedom House's Freedom of the Press Reform for 2011, the Republic of Macedonia has partly free press and scores 48 in the press freedom score. According to the same report, in 2010 Macedonia scored 46, in 2009 and 2008 Macedonia scored 47 and in 2007 Macedonia scored 45.

II. Data and Sample Description

In order to determine the citizens' attitudes and opinions regarding the freedom of speech in the Republic of Macedonia, a sample of 1079 citizens of different sex, age, education, social standing, ethnical and religious belonging were surveyed.

Table 1. Sample description		
Criteria	n	%
Gender		
Male	533	49
Female	546	51
Age		
18-25	39	4,8
26-30	195	23,8
31-35	169	20,6
36-40	169	20,6
41-45	91	11,1
46-50	65	7,9
51-55	39	4,8
56-60	13	1,6
Over 60	39	4,8
Education		
Primary school	39	3,6
Secondary school	377	34,9
Higher education	117	10,8
Bachelors degree	481	44,6

Masters degree	52	4,8
PhD	13	1,2
Ethnicity		
Albanian	377	34,9
Macedonian	611	56,6
Turkish	52	4,8
Roma	13	1,2
Other	26	2,4

As can be noticed from the data presented in table 1:

- Both male and female respondents were part of the survey, although the number of female respondents is slightly higher compared to male respondents;
- Respondents from all age groups have been included in the survey, starting from the youngest one, from 18 to 25 years all the way to the age group of over 60 years. A relatively balanced structure of respondents can be noticed. In fact 52% of respondents belong to the age group of up to 40 years old, while the remaining part are over 40 years old;
- Although people of different educational backgrounds were included in the survey the sample is dominated by people that have at least a bachelors degree;
- People from different ethnic affiliations were a part of the study, although the sample is dominated mainly by surveyed people from Albanian and Macedonian ethnic background. Actually, almost 92% of the surveyed people belong to the two biggest ethnic communities in the country, from which 57% are ethnic Macedonians and 35% are ethnic Albanians.

III. Results

3.1. Citizens perceptions regarding the freedom to express their opinion about the functioning of the institutions of the political system of the Republic of Macedonia

One of the most important issues when it comes to the analysis of freedom of speech as an indicator of the level of the development of democracy, is the citizens perceptions regarding their freedom to express their opinions on matters that have to do with the way how the institutions of the political system function. The distribution of respondents answers regarding this issue are presented in table 2.

Table 2. Citizens' perceptions regarding the freedom to express their opinion regarding the functioning of the institutions of the political system of the Republic of Macedonia

	Yes		No		Partially		No answer	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Population in general	225	20,9	575	53,3	234	21	45	4,2
Gender								
Male	66	12,4	289	54,2	143	26,8	35	6,6
Female	159	29,1	286	52,4	91	16,7	10	1,8
Age								
18-25	26	66,7	13	33,3	0	0	0	0
26-30	55	28,2	91	46,7	39	20	10	5,1
31-35	39	23,1	79	46,7	39	23,1	12	7,1
36-40	0	0	130	76,9	39	23,1	0	0
41-45	13	14,3	52	57,1	26	28,6	0	0
46-50	13	20	26	40	26	40	0	0
51-55	52	40	65	50	13	10	0	0
56-60	39	33,3	39	33,3	39	33,3	0	0
Over 60	14	13,2	66	62,3	26	24,5	0	0
Education								
Primary school	0	0	39	100	0	0	0	0
Secondary school	40	10,6	224	59,4	78	20,7	35	9,3
Higher education	29	24,8	78	66,7	0	0	10	8,5
Bachelors degree	143	29,7	182	37,8	156	32,4	0	0
Masters degree	13	25	39	75	0	0	0	0
PhD	0	0	13	100	0	0	0	0
Ethnicity								
Albanian	65	17,2	234	62,1	78	20,7	0	0
Macedonian	108	17,7	328	53,7	130	21,3	45	7,4
Turkish	39	75	0	0	13	25	0	0
Roma	13	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	13	50	13	50	0	0

Over half of the respondents (53,3%) consider that Macedonia's citizens cannot express freely their opinions about the functioning of the institutions of the political in the country and only 1/5 of the surveyed people believe that Macedonia's citizens can express themselves freely about important issues related to the functioning of the institutions of the political system institutions in the country. On the other side 21.69% of the surveyed people believe that Macedonia's citizens have partial freedom to express freely about important issues related to the functioning of the institutions of the political system institutions in the country.

As can be noticed in table 2, female respondents are more optimistic when it comes to their perception about their freedom to freely express their opinion about issues that have to do with the way how the institutions of the political system function. In fact only 12% of male respondents and 29% of female respondents believe that they have the freedom to express their opinion regarding issues that have to do with the way how the institutions of the political system function.

Regarding the correlation between age and the citizens opinions weather they are to free express their opinion about issues that have to do with the way how the institutions of the political system function the following can be noticed:

- In the age group 18 – 25 years 2/3 of the surveyed consider that citizens of Macedonia have no freedom of citizens to express themselves freely about important issues related to the functioning of the political system institutions in the country;
- In the age group 26 – 30 years and 31 – 35 years around 46.6% of the surveyed consider that citizens of Macedonia have no freedom of citizens to express themselves freely about important issues related to the functioning of the political system institutions in the country;
- Negative attitudes are even more emphasized at the age group 36 – 40 years. Actually, around 66% of the surveyed consider that citizens of Macedonia have no freedom of citizens to express themselves freely about important issues related to the functioning of the political system institutions in the country;
- In the age group 41 – 45 years around 57% of the surveyed consider that citizens of Macedonia have no freedom of citizens to express themselves freely about important issues related to the functioning of the political system institutions in the country;
- In the age group 46 – 50 years around 40% of the surveyed consider that citizens of Macedonia have no freedom of citizens

to express themselves freely about important issues related to the functioning of the political system institutions in the country;

- In the age group 51 – 55 years around 50% of the surveyed consider that citizens of Macedonia have no freedom of citizens to express themselves freely about important issues related to the functioning of the political system institutions in the country;
- In the age group 56 – 60 years around 43% of the surveyed consider that citizens of Macedonia have no freedom of citizens to express themselves freely about important issues related to the functioning of the political system institutions in the country;
- In the age group of persons over 60 years around 56% of the surveyed consider that citizens of Macedonia have no freedom of citizens to express themselves freely about important issues related to the functioning of the political system institutions in the country.
- Regarding the correlation between levels of education and the citizens opinions weather they are to free express their opinion about issues that have to do with the way how the institutions of the political system function the following can be noticed:
- All surveyed people that have only primary education share an opinion that the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia are not free to express freely about important issues related to the functioning of the political system institutions in the country;
- Almost 3/5 of the surveyed people that have only high school education have expressed their opinion that the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia are not free to express freely their attitude, while around 31% believe that they are free or partially free to express their attitude about important issues related to the functioning of the political system institutions in the country;
- Around 67% of the surveyed people that have only higher education have expressed their opinion that the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia are not free to express freely their attitude, while around ¼ believe that they are free or partially free to express freely their attitude about important issues related to the functioning of the political system institutions in the country;
- Around 38% of the surveyed people that have a bachelors degree have expressed their opinion that the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia are not free to express freely about

important issues related to the functioning of the political system institutions in the country;

- Around 75% of the surveyed people that have master degree and all of the surveyed people that have Ph.D. degree have expressed their opinion that the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia are not free to express their opinion about important issues related to the functioning of the institutions of the political system is in the country.

The conducted study shows clearly that the biggest ethnic communities in the Republic of Macedonia have a pessimistic attitude toward the freedom of expression regarding the way have the institutions of the political system function, compared with smaller ethnic communities. In fact, $\frac{3}{4}$ of surveyed Turkish respondents and all surveyed Roma people have expressed the opinion that citizens of the Republic of Macedonia are free to express freely about important issues related to the functioning of the political system institutions in the country, while a similar opinion is shared by only 17% of the surveyed people from Albanian and Macedonian ethnic background. On the other side, it should be noticed that pessimism is higher among the Albanian ethnic community (62.1%) compared to Macedonian population (53.7%).

3.2. Citizens perceptions regarding the importance of the freedom to express their opinion about the functioning of the institutions of the political system of the Republic of Macedonia

As can be seen from the data presented in table 3, although the majority of citizens in the Republic of Macedonia shares the opinion that they do not have the proper degree of freedom the express their opinion regarding the way how the institutions of the political system function, they do not fail to recognize the importance of the freedom to express opinions regarding this issue.

	Very important	Partially important	Somewhat unimportant	Very unimportant	N/A
Gender					
Male	75,6	17,1	2,4	2,4	2,4
Female	78,6	14,3	2,4	4,8	0,0
Age					
18-25	100	0	0	0	0
26-30	73	20	0	7	0
31-35	69	23	8	0	0

36-40	92	8	0	0	0
41-45	71	14	0	0	14
46-50	80	20	0	0	0
51-55	70	10	0	20	0
56-60	57	29	14	0	0
Over 60					
Education					
Primary school	100,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
Secondary school	79,3	13,8	3,4	0,0	3,4
Higher education	44,4	44,4	0,0	11,1	0,0
Bachelors degree	78,4	13,5	2,7	5,4	0,0
Masters degree	100,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
PhD	100,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
Nationality					
Albanian	79,3	13,8	0,0	3,4	3,4
Macedonian	74,5	17,0	4,3	4,3	0,0
Turkish	75,0	25,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
Roma	100,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
Other	100,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0

As can be noticed in table 3, although all citizens agree on the importance of the freedom of citizens to express their opinion, such a feeling is slightly more present at the male respondents group compared to the female respondents group. In fact, the opinion that the citizens freedom to express their opinions regarding the functioning of the institutions of the political system is unimportant is much more present at the female group of citizens compared to the male respondents.

According to the survey age is not a factor of great significance when it comes to the citizens opinions regarding the importance of freedom of expression regarding the issues that have to do with the way how the institutions of the political system function, although the younger respondents are slightly more optimistic compared to older respondents.

The realized study proves that all citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, regardless their educational level are aware of the importance of the freedom of speech about important issues related to the functioning of the political system institutions in the country.

When it comes to the correlation between ethnicity and the perception of the importance of freedom to freely express opinions regarding the way how the institutions of the political system function the following can be noticed:

- Around 79.3% of surveyed Albanians and only 74.5% of surveyed Macedonians consider that it is very important for the citizens to have a chance to be free to express freely their attitude about important issues related to the functioning of the political system institutions in the country. Parallel to this all surveyed Roma people as well as 75% of surveyed Turkish people share the same opinion;
- Around 14% of surveyed Albanian people and 17% of Macedonians consider that it is partially important for the citizens to have a chance to be free to express freely their attitude about important issues related to the functioning of the political system institutions in the country;
- As non-important and partially important that citizens have a chance to be free to express freely their attitude about important issues related to the functioning of the political system institutions in the country have stated 8.6% of surveyed Macedonians and only 3.4% of surveyed Albanians.

IV. Conclusions

More than half of the respondents consider that Macedonia's citizens cannot express freely their opinions about the functioning of the institutions of the political in the country and only 1/5 of the surveyed people believe that Macedonia's citizens can express themselves freely about important issues related to the functioning of the institutions of the political system institutions in the country.

Female respondents are more optimistic when it comes to their perception about their freedom to freely express their opinion about issues that have to do with the way how the institutions of the political system function.

Younger respondents are more optimistic when it comes to their perception about their freedom to freely express their opinion about issues that have to do with the way how the institutions of the political system function, compared to older respondents.

Better educated respondents are more convinced that citizens in the Republic of Macedonia are free to express their opinions about the way how the institutions of the political system function.

The biggest ethnic communities in the Republic of Macedonia have a pessimistic attitude toward the freedom of expression regarding the way have the institutions of the political system function, compared

with smaller ethnic communities. Pessimism is higher among the Albanian respondents compared to Macedonian respondents.

Although the majority of citizens in the Republic of Macedonia shares the opinion that they do not have the proper degree of freedom to express their opinion regarding the way how the institutions of the political system function, they do not fail to recognize the importance of the freedom to express opinions regarding this issue.