

# **SERVING MINORITY NEEDS IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING IN MACEDONIA**

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## Abstract

The following thesis discusses minority broadcasting in the public service broadcaster in Macedonia. The method that is used for the research represents semi-structured interviews, which were conducted only on an institutional level of the public service broadcaster due to the limited scope of this thesis. Future research would need to address the Freedom of Information Act in Macedonia in order to access financial reports and other documents needed for better understating of the financial state of the public service broadcaster.

The first part of this thesis describes the literature surrounding the concept of public service broadcasting and minorities in this same context. The following chapters address the public service broadcasting in Macedonia, the history and context of minorities in the Macedonian society, and the organization of the minority broadcasting in the public service broadcaster.

The findings of the research point to several serious problems in the minority channel of the public service broadcasting in Macedonia. These problems refer to the profound inability of the Executive Editors to articulate the importance of the field in which they operate and work, namely, the importance of the minority broadcasting; the profound disconnect between the policy and the implementation; the misperceptions of the public service broadcaster as a “state television”, and the profound gap of segregation that the minority channel is creating, instead of promoting multicultural dialog, which is at its core of minority broadcasting.

The thesis concludes with recommendations drawn from the interview findings reflecting subtitling of the programs of the minority groups, and joint news production as a base for future ethnic cross-over programming.

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# Introduction

The following thesis discusses the issue of minority broadcasting in the public service broadcasting in the Republic of Macedonia (hereinafter Macedonia). The thesis is divided into several chapters that discuss the methodology of the research; the literature behind public service broadcasting, and minorities in the public service broadcasting; continues with history and structure of the Macedonian Radio Television as the public service broadcaster in Macedonia; describes the current situation and legislative framework surrounding minorities in Macedonia, and introduces the second television programming service, MRT2, as the minority channel in the public service broadcaster. In the later chapters of this thesis the interview findings are discussed based on which future recommendations are given for the minority channel.

The methodology, as a first chapter of this thesis uses the method of semi-structured interviews conducted on institutional level in the Macedonian Radio Television due to the limited scope of this study; discusses the case selection, and justifies for the chosen interviewees for this thesis.

The second chapter introduces different definitions surrounding the public broadcasting service and provides a definition in the context of this paper. Furthermore, is discusses the theory surrounding minorities in public service broadcasting briefly introducing the concept of segregated and plural segregated societies under the consociational model, and its contrast defined under the integrative model. Here the Macedonian society is put in context to reflect later discussion on divided societies.

The third chapter discusses the history and structure of the Macedonian Radio Television. It reflects its current structure and describes the transformation of the Macedonian Radio Television from its start to today's definition. This chapter discusses the main responsibilities of the public service broadcaster in Macedonia and introduces the minority aspect represented by MRT2.

The next chapter discusses the history of the minorities in the Macedonian society. It reflects on the armed conflict in 2001, and describes the Ohrid Framework Agreement in its role as a peace deal. The changes described here, as defined by the Ohrid Framework Agreement such as the amendments on the Constitution of Macedonia and the different legislation provide the very base of today's minority broadcasting in the public service broadcaster. Continuing the discussion on minorities, this chapter later on describes the organization of the minority broadcasting in the Macedonian Radio Television and its main responsibilities under the Law on Broadcasting Activity.

The sixth chapter discusses the regulation of the Macedonian Radio Television and puts the same into context of the minority broadcasting in Macedonia.

The seventh chapter discusses the interview findings from the primary research. Several problems are brought to the surface in this chapter which reflect profound disconnect of the policy and the implementation in MRT2. Furthermore, issues such as inability to articulate the very importance of the minority broadcasting, or the lack of familiarity with the core legislation that puts in place the minority broadcasting in Macedonia by the Executive Editors is reflected in this part. Misperceptions of the public service broadcaster and referring to the

same as the “state television”, as well as dismissal of subtitling in the national language are some of the other issues that are discussed further in the interview findings.

Finally, the paper concludes with recommendations based on the interview findings in order to address the urgent need for drastic changes in the public service broadcaster.

## **Chapter 1: Case Selection, Interview Strategy and Secondary Literature**

The main objective of this paper is to address the question “How can the PSB in Macedonia be structured in such a way as to better serve minority needs?”

This section explains how the research was organized in order to reach an answer to the thesis question. It justifies for choosing Macedonia as a case selection; it explains the interview strategy and justifies for the chosen interviewees, and reflects the type of secondary literature used for paper in overall.

### **1.1. Case Selection**

The case selection of this paper focuses on Macedonia. Macedonia represents a unique case due to the different minorities living in the society as well as the different minority groups that are reflected in the Public Service Broadcaster. Contrary to other divided societies, such the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina where the different ethnic groups have their own independent broadcasting (Jukić and Džihana 2008: 81), the Public Service Broadcasting in

Macedonia is organized with the different ethnic groups under one unified system. This type of organization of the Public Service Broadcaster is unique and therefore represents a unique case for the topic developed in the paper.

## **1.2. Interview Strategy**

Four semi-structured interviews were conducted for the purposes of this paper. The interview questions were divided into several topics in order to gain better understanding and deeper knowledge on those topics. The topics that were included reflected the (1) Importance of minority broadcasting in the public service broadcaster, the (2) Regulation; the (3) Finances; (4) the Programming and (5) Steps for the future of the public service broadcaster.

The interviews are organized in such a way in order to allow for different ways of interviewing of the different experts from the Public Service Broadcaster (Lindlof and Taylor 2002: 89). Due to the limitation in the scope of the study, the focus of the research is aimed on institutional level only. Wider research focusing on broadcasting for minority groups in Macedonia is beyond the scope of this specific study.

Furthermore, due to the nature of the broadcasting organization of the minority groups and the organization of the Public Service Broadcaster in Macedonia the following practitioners were interviewed:

1. Migena Gorenca – Chief Editor of the Second television programming service MRT2
2. Sedat Azizoglu – Executive Editor of the Program in Turkish Language on the Second television programming service MRT2

3. Jana Mihailova – Executive Editor of the Program in Vlach Language on the Second television programming service MRT2
4. Miso Netkov – Journalist at the First television programming service MRT1

The interview process concentrated on interviews conducted with interviewees from the second television programming service MRT2, as MRT2 serves exclusively the minority groups in Macedonia. Starting from that point interviewing the Chief Editor of the second television programming service comes only naturally, since this person runs and manages the overall operations of MRT2. At the same time the Chief Editor of the second television programming service is also responsible for the Program in Albanian language, which is the program the is being aired longest on MRT2. The Executive Editor of the Program in Turkish languages is interviewed due to the fact that this program is the second longest program that is broadcasted after the Albanian Program. From the other four Programs that are broadcasted on the second television programming service, the Executive Editor from the Program in Vlach language is the most experience person and therefore it is assumed that this person would be able to provide more comprehensive answers on the interview questions.

One interview focused on an interviewee from the first television programming service MRT1, since this Journalist has over twenty years of experience with multicultural and diversity issues focusing on minority groups in the public service broadcaster in general.

### ***1.3. Secondary Literature***

The secondary literature used in the research of this paper mainly focuses on the Legal Framework of Macedonia, research articles and books surrounding the topic of public service

broadcasting and minorities in the media. Since there is limitation on literature that focuses exclusively on minority broadcasting in public service broadcaster, the paper occasionally takes wider approaches and uses literature that discusses minority broadcasting in wider terms in the mainstream media.

In addition, it needs to be pointed out that this thesis is facing access limitations in terms of literature that would describe the current financial situation in the public broadcaster, as well as reports supporting the number of audience that the public service broadcaster is serving. Future research would require the Freedom of Information Act in order to reflect these issues.

## **Chapter 2: Public Service Broadcasting and Minorities**

“The importance of public broadcasting is far from self-evident. It took several decades to find its place alongside entirely commercial media and media controlled by the state” (Ondobo in Banerjee and Seneviratne 2006: 9).

The following chapter looks at the literature surrounding the concept of public service broadcasting and makes an effort to define the same for the next chapters of this thesis, whereas the second section focuses on minority broadcasting in public service broadcasting which is used as a base for the later discussion.

## 2.1. Public Service Broadcasting

Several definitions are provided in this section that aim to define the concept of public service broadcasting as a system that is based on public good, public interest and means to democracy, and at the same time justify the independence of the public service broadcaster from the state in order to frame the basic understating of public service broadcasting.

McQuail defines public service broadcasting as:

[a] system that is set up by law and generally financed by public funds (often a compulsory license paid by households) and given a large degree of editorial and operating independence. The general rationale for such systems is that it should serve the public interest by meeting important communication needs of society and its citizens, as decided and reviewed by way of democratic political system (2010, 178).

The World Radio and Television Council in 2002 defines public service broadcasting from an angle of citizen's participation in the public life. The Council describes that:

neither commercial nor state-controlled, public broadcasting's only *raison d'être* is public service. It is the public's broadcasting organization; it speaks to every citizen. Public broadcasters encourage access to and participation in public life. They develop knowledge, broader horizons and enable people to better understand themselves by better understanding the world and others. (World Radio and Television Council 2002 in Banerjee and Seneviratne 2006: 11).

Price and Raboy define public service broadcasting as:

[a] system that rests on certain basic principles, defined in an era of general-interest media, long before the multiplication of channels and the era of specialization. These principles remain essential today and public broadcasting authorities must give them meaning, reinterpret them in some way, in a world characterized by media fragmentation (2003, 12).

The European Commission gives the following statement when defining public service broadcasting “Public Service Broadcasters are broadcasters with a public service mandate” (European Commission), where by this definition allows the Member States to decide for the level at which the public service broadcasting would be organized. Furthermore, the European Commission set that this mandate needs to be “consistent with the objective of fulfilling the democratic, social and cultural needs of a particular society and guaranteeing pluralism, including cultural and linguistic diversity” (European Commission).

It is evident from the definitions, that in a democratic society, public service broadcasting should reflect a certain type of institution that should serve the public interest and should be based on certain principles, even though very often, especially in the post Communist countries; this institution has unclear ties to the state. In this way the public service broadcaster exists from the democratic context in which it exists, and at the same time contributes to keeping and sustaining the democratic order in the state.

In addition to the different views of what is public service broadcasting, Price and Raboy point to the principles of universality, diversity and independence (2003: 12), while at the same time similarly to their understating McQuail defines “universality, diversity, editorial independence, social responsibility and justification, cultural quality and identity, and unprofitability” (McQuail in Sopar 2002: 58) as the base principle on which public service broadcasting should be build upon in this book Mass Communication Theory.

Public service broadcasting at its core is based on these principles which enable serving the public interest. As Hrvatin and Thompson point, in almost every case the public service broadcaster is “required to promote social and cultural pluralism” (2008: 12). Furthermore,

the European Council and the European Parliament add to the functions of social and cultural pluralism, also democratic functions (Harrison and Woods 2001: 479) to stress to the role that the public service broadcasting has and its role to ensure “democracy, pluralism, social cohesion and linguistic diversity” (Harrison and Woods 2001: 480). Looking from this perspective, Tracey underlines that the “nature of public broadcasting would be that any programme offered, whatever the genre, should be the best of its kind, the best it can be” (1998: 271).

Price and Raboy refer to the difficult situation in which the public service broadcasting is. They point that the public service broadcasting “in spite of its recognized importance, it is under attack and, in many states, in danger of serious decline” (2003: 1). Furthermore, Price and Raboy point to the very core in the existence of the public broadcasting, such as “financing and purpose” to be major problems in transitions societies (2003: 1).

In many transition countries, were these problems occur, the public service broadcasting is faced with a challenge of their own survival or their own transformation. At the same time, different authors point that in order to deal with these problems major changes need to be implemented. Marius points to the need to “sanitize the station’s politics” (2009: 1), and warns that the public service broadcasting service in Feaster Europe is “abandoning its true mission by trying to compete against the commercial product” (Marius 2005, 1), which calls for drastic changes in the purpose of the public service broadcasting. On the other hand, Preoteasa points to the problem of “low-brow entertainment and “non-event” news dominate public-service broadcasting” (2005: 1) in transitional countries and to the need of new legislations in order to transform the public broadcasting in general (2005: 3).

Even though public service broadcasting should serve the public interest, should represent the democratic order in the state and should be independent from the state itself, the reality in transitional countries, such as in Macedonia, is somewhat different. Some of the problems are pointed by Höberth and Liener and point to the lack of “on the programme plurality and the educational mission sufficiently” (2007: 9) which according to the authors is a result of ‘financial means or deficiency of the public service media’ (2007: 9). Skopljanac gives rough numbers of the financial situation in Macedonia by saying that “only about 50% of Macedonians pay license fees, the rest is financed generously through donors and government coffers” (Skopljanac in Brinnich and Heuber 2007: 26).

The legislation in Macedonia, in Article 120 from the Law on Broadcasting Activity defines the role of the public service broadcasting through producing and broadcasting programs of public interest that reflect the social and cultural pluralism in the state, and which are composed of informational, cultural, educational, scientific, sports and entertainment contents (Law on Broadcasting Activity 2005). Even though this law defines the role of the Public Service Broadcaster in Macedonia, it does not explicitly define the public interest, but as we will see later in the discussion, it does describe that the produced and broadcasted programs of the public interest should reflect the social and cultural pluralism in the country.

## ***2.2. Public service broadcasting and minorities***

In the previous section we have reflected some of the theory that surrounds the field of public service broadcasting. This section aims to further elaborate on the literature behind public service broadcasting in divided societies similar to our case study, and reflects on the importance of minority inclusion on the public service broadcaster.

The nature of public service broadcasting in divided societies takes a shape that is slightly more different, due to the characteristics of the plural societies in which it operates. Parekh states that every society “has a historically inherited cultural structure which informs its conduct of public life, and resists modifications beyond a certain point without losing its coherence and causing widespread disorientation, anxiety and even resistance” (2000: 263). However, this very inherited cultural structure is what shapes today’s policy regarding the cultural and ethnic identities of the different societies.

Hrvatin and Thompson, when looking at public service broadcasting and divided societies refer to very different systems which they define as systems with either consociational or integrative model (2008: 25). From these two systems, as they would later point, depends the organization of the public service broadcaster and the interaction of the different segments in the society, segments that they define as “each ethnic, religious, linguistic group” (2008: 25). On the other hand, further describing the nature of public service broadcasting, Hrvatin and Thompson also define two different societies, within the consociational model, namely, segregated and plural segregated societies (2008: 25). The difference that occurs in these two models, segregated and plural segregated society, can be seen the way the different segments interact within the public service broadcasting. An example for a segregated society would be Bosnia and Herzegovina, in which each of the segments “would have its own public broadcasting system” (2008:26), as reflected by the organization of the public service broadcasting into one broadcaster on state level and two broadcasters on entity level (Jusić and Džihana 2008: 82). In an organization such as this, where the different segments have their own public broadcasting system no cooperation between the segments is existent, which pushes the gaps in the society between the different segments even further away. Contrary to

this example, in the plural segregated society, the different segments in the society are organized under the umbrella of one single public broadcasting system, in which the “individual segments would have programming, management and financial autonomy”. (Hrvatín and Thompson 2008: 26). An example for this kind of model is our case study, the Macedonian Radio Television.

Hrvatín and Thomposon describe also the contrast of the consociational model, namely the integrative model which is described as a model in which more efforts are put in order to rise above the different ethnic, linguistic, religious differences in the society (2008: 26). They point that the basis of this model is “an inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue in which coexistence would be the result of an active integration policy and the search for sameness in differences” (2008:26).

These two models, point to the interaction as well as to the important on minority inclusion in divided societies. This importance, as well as the right of freedom of expression for the different minority groups, as well as the right to be informed in its own language is further stresses by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (United Nations) and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Council of Europe). Furthermore, the importance of including ethnic, linguistic and religious is also stressed in the Independent Study from K.U.Leuven, Jönköping International Business School – MMTC, Central European University – CMCS, and Ernst & Young Consultancy Belgium “Indicators for Media Pluralism in the Member States – Towards a Risk Based Approach” In this study, the importance of minority inclusion is included in the “Cultural Pluralism in the Media” (2009: 12) risk domain, but as well as in

the “Geographical Pluralism in the Media” (2009: 38) and the “Political Pluralism in the Media” (2009: 77) risk domains.

The next chapter of this thesis discusses the history and context of the Macedonian Radio Television.

## **Chapter 3: History and structure of the Macedonian Radio Television**

Public service broadcasting in Macedonia is defined as an activity by which the Macedonian Radio Television creates and broadcasts programs of public interest by which it the social and cultural pluralism in the country is reflected, and which are composed of informational, cultural, educational, scientific, sports and entertainment contents.

Macedonian Radio Television is composed of four television programming services in total, with total broadcasting time of 73 hours (Macedonian Radio Television). The first television programming service (hereinafter MRT1) broadcasts programs in Macedonian language 24 hours per day; the second television programming service (hereinafter MRT2) broadcasts in the languages of six minorities 18.5 hour per day; third television programming service (hereinafter Assembly channel) aimed for broadcasting Assembly session from the Parliament of Macedonia and fourth television programming service broadcasted via satellite which are broadcasted together in total of 30.5 hours per day (Macedonian Radio Television).

The work of the Macedonian Radio Television started on December 28, 1944, under the name Radio Skopje, with the first broadcast of the session of the Second Assembly of the Anti-

Fascist Assembly for the People's Liberation of Macedonia (Macedonian Radio Television). Later, in 1993 the Macedonian Radio Television detached from the Union of Yugoslav Radio Television (Macedonian Radio Television).

In 1993, under the Law on Establishing a Public Enterprise Macedonian Radio Television set the base for public service broadcaster in Macedonia and transforms the television from a state television into a public broadcaster (Law on Establishing a Public Enterprise Macedonian Radio Television 1993). Article 2 from this law sets the activity of the public enterprise as an activity of public interest and regulates the same according several different laws.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Article 5 states that the Macedonian Radio Television officiate based on programs that contain informational, scientifically-educational, cultural, sports, commercial and other contents which are from the internet of the life and the work of the citizens (Law on Establishing a Public Enterprise Macedonian Radio Television 1993). With the adoption of the new Law on Broadcasting Activity in 2005, the definition of the Macedonian Radio Television as a public enterprise is eliminated and the broadcaster is defined as public service broadcaster. According to Article 120, the Macedonian Radio Television as mentioned earlier in this paper broadcasts programs from public interest which need to reflect the social and cultural pluralism in the country and at the same time should consist of informational, cultural, educational, scientific, sports and entertainment contents (Law on Broadcasting Activity 2005).

In order to serve the public interest the Macedonian Radio Television, under Article 121 should ensure that the programs that are broadcasted are protected from any kind of political influence; it should plan and develop program framework that in the interest of the entire

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<sup>1</sup> Law on Broadcasting Activity, Law on Telecommunication and Law on Public Enterprises, as described by the principles defined in the Law on Establishing a Public Enterprise Macedonian Radio Television.

public and ensure the programs that are broadcasted do not discriminate; it should reflect different idea through its programs that nourishes the cultural identity of the communities, and which respect the cultural and religious differences and to encourage cultural public dialog in order to strengthen the mutual understanding and tolerance towards improving the multicultural and multiethnic environment (Law on Broadcasting Activity 2005).

In addition, according to Article 122, the Macedonian Radio Television is obligated while producing and broadcasting the programs to respect the professional principles and to insure that the different interests in the society have an equal approach, and at the same time to promote freedom and pluralism in expressing the public opinion, and to prevent any kind of racial, religious, national, ethnic or other intolerance and hatred (Law on Broadcasting Activity 2005).

The public service broadcaster in Macedonia, according to Article 117, should broadcast at least one television programming service in Macedonian language, and at least one television programming service in language that is spoken by at least 20 percent of the citizens in Macedonia different from the Macedonia language<sup>2</sup> (Law on Broadcasting Activity 2005).

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<sup>2</sup> In order to end an armed conflict in 2001 between the ethnic Albanians lead by the National Liberation Army and the Macedonian security forces, peace deal was signed in Ohrid on August 13, 2001, knows as the Ohrid Framework Agreement. The agreement, in provision 6.5 included that “any other language spoken by at least 20 percent of the population is also an official language” (Ohrid Framework Agreement 2001). Following this provision, the public service broadcaster was also altered to have at least one television programming service in a language that is spoken by at least 20 percent of the citizens in Macedonia, which is different from the Macedonian language.

## Chapter 4: History and context of minorities in Macedonia

Macedonia, with its independence in 2001, inherited the same cultural and ethnic diversity as it had while being part of Yugoslavia. However, after the independence in 1991 and especially in the period of 2001, Macedonia underwent an armed conflict which resulted with the Ohrid Framework Agreement that at the same time changed the environment in the society regarding the minority inclusion. Atanasov points to the armed conflict in 2001, and defines it from a sociological point of view as “ethnic conflict” (2003: 304).

The Ohrid Framework Agreement focused on three main parts, namely, (1) changing of the constitution of Macedonia, (2) changing the existing legislation and (3) putting an end to the armed conflict and setting a timetable for the implementation of the agreement. This meant that the Preamble of the current constitution need to be changed in order to reflect all of Macedonia’s citizens.

The existing Preamble prior the Ohrid Framework Agreement was defined as:

The citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, taking over responsibility for the present and future of their fatherland, aware and grateful to their predecessors for their sacrifice and dedication in their endeavors and struggle to create an independent and sovereign state of Macedonia, and responsible to future generations to preserve and develop everything that is valuable from the rich cultural inheritance and coexistence within Macedonia, equal in rights and obligations towards the common good – the Republic of Macedonia (President of the Republic of Macedonia).

This with the Ohrid Framework Agreement was changed into:

Macedonia is established as a national state of the Macedonian people, in which full equality as citizens and permanent co-existence with the Macedonian people is provided for Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Romanics and other nationalities living in the Republic of Macedonia (Public Prosecution Office of Republic of Macedonia).

It needs to be noted however, that the changes of the Constitution did not use “the terms ‘Macedonian people’, ‘nationalities’, and ‘minorities’, but rather speaks of ‘majority population’, ‘communities’ and ‘communities not in the majority’” (Brunnbauer 2002: 5). Furthermore, the Ohrid Framework agreement met the demands of the Albanian minority in Macedonia for establishing official status of their language (Brunnbauer 2002: 6). In this way, every language in Macedonia that is spoken in the community for more than 20 percent would become a second official language in that community.

At the same time, the Ohrid Framework Agreement included the minorities more actively in the policy process. With changes in existing legislation, all future law that were concerning the culture, the language, the personal documentations and other issues, need to be voted by a new procedure. In order to reach a decision, the Parliament need to have more than two thirds of the votes, but at the same time the decision needs to be supported two thirds of the votes of the representatives of the minorities in Macedonia.

Even though authors define Macedonia as a country where “national identity is defined in ethnic terms” (Loomis, Davis and Broughton 2001 :3) they point that the Ohrid Framework Agreement does a “precondition for the development of stronger civic identities...where people must feel with their cultural identity” (Loomis, Davis and Broughton 2001 :3).

In conclusion, Macedonia even though it can be seen as a highly divided society (Atanasov 2003: 306; Loomis, Davis and Broughton 2001: 3) the fact is that with the Ohrid Framework

Agreement from 2001 positive changes have been implemented that work towards minority inclusion in the society, which later on are included in different layers of the institutions, one of which the public service broadcaster that is the focus of this paper.

## **Chapter 5: Minorities in the Macedonian Radio Television and MRT2**

The Macedonian Radio Television, under Article 117 from the Law on Broadcasting Activity is obliged to broadcast at least one television programming service in Macedonian language, which is represented by MRT1, and at least one television programming service on the language spoken by at least 20 percent of the citizens in Macedonia, which is different from the Macedonian language and the languages from the other minority groups, represented by MRT2 (Law on Broadcasting Activity 2005).

A mentioned before, in formal terms, the Macedonian Radio Television is obliged to produce and create programs that reflect the social and cultural pluralism (Law on Broadcasting Activity 2005). At the same time, Article 121 from the Law on Broadcasting Activity points to the importance of inclusion of the minority groups in the broadcasting. This article defines that programs that are broadcasted by the Macedonian Radio Television should reflect different ideas and which nourish the cultural identity of the communities; should respect the cultural and religious differences and promote public dialogue in order to strengthen the mutual understanding and tolerance while it works towards improving of the understanding between the multicultural and multiethnic communities (Law on Broadcasting Activity 2005).

MRT2 represent the television programming service that broadcasts in Albanian language, and other different smaller minority groups. The most recent analyses conducted by the Broadcasting Council show that MRT2 currently broadcasts nearly 128 hours per week (Broadcasting Council 2010: 15).

MRT2 currently broadcasts programs in six different minority languages: Albanian, Turkish, Serbian, Romany, Vlach and Bosnian. Vesna Sopar points to 65 hours per week of programs that are broadcasted in Albanian language, 17.5 hours of programs in Turkish language, and 1.5 hours for programs in Serbian, Romany, Vlach and Bosnian language (Sopar 2008, 151). As Gorenca, Chief Editor of MRT2, points in an interview, it is the Constitution of Macedonia that defines which languages are broadcasted on MRT2, meaning that only the languages mentioned in the Constitution are the languages that the public broadcaster reflects in its programs on MRT2 (Gorenca 2010).

Furthermore, even though different authors point that the “length of every program for minorities matches their proportionate representation in the total size of the population” (Sopar 2008, 150) and that there is “with proportionate output in their languages” (Hrvatina and Thompson 2008, 31), regulation such as is not existent and the same is not supported by any internal or external documents.

An unwritten rule is that the Albanian minority which is the largest by population gets the most airing time, and the Turkish program comes in second, since this minority represent the second biggest minority in Macedonia. However, if we look at the latest census of the population published by the State Bureau of Statistics, the numbers reflect the following table:

	Percentage of the total population of ethnic minorities according to the latest census in 2002						
	Albanians	Turks	Roma	Vlachs	Serbs	Bosnians	Other
<b>Population</b>	25.17	3.85	2.66	0.48	1.78	0.84	1.04

\* Adopted from the Statistic Year Book of the Republic of Macedonia for 2002

(State Bureau of Statistics 2002: 171-174).

If we follow these figures and compare the same to the program length of each minority group, we can notice that proportional representation is not the case in defining the total airing time for each ethnic group. Had a proportional representation been the case, if we take the total time of the program in Turkish language, the only way the proportionality would be true if the program in Romany has at least 6 hours of broadcasting time contrary to the 1.5 hours at the moment.

This type of structure of the Macedonian Radio Television provides solid base for serving minority needs in the society. From this perspective, MRT2 with its broadcasting in six different languages should *de facto* lead to intercultural dialogue and tolerance especially in a society such as the Macedonian and after the conflict in 2001. However, the political influence in the Macedonian Radio Television makes the work of the public broadcaster even more difficult. The Director of the European Broadcasting Union's TV Department, Bjorn Ericsson refers to the need of “freedom in acting for the public broadcaster in Macedonia and not influence from the Government” (Netpress 2009), whereas the and EU Special Representative, Erwan Fouéré point to the urgent of “strengthening the efforts for achieving independent broadcaster free of political influence” (Radio Free Europe 2008). Different authors mentioned earlier in this chapter also point to the political influence in the public

service broadcaster in Macedonia (Sopar 2008; Brinnich and Heuber 2007). However, the Executive Director of the NGO Media Development Centre in Macedonia points that the problem in the public broadcaster is not “a division by ethnic lines, but by political lines,” (Belicanec in Brinnich and Heuber 2007, 24) which as he points leads to reporting that is “often divided, because each side took its assumed national sight” influencing specific political opinions (Belicanec in Brinnich and Heuber 2007, 24).

The different issues brought up in this section, influence MRT2 in such a way that instead of promoting multicultural dialogue, it does exactly the opposite and lead to even more divided society.

In addition, it needs to be pointed the inclusion of the minorities apart in the broadcasting is also regulated in the governance of the Macedonian Radio Television. From the three different governance structures of the Macedonian Radio Television, the Council, Management Board and Executive Director of the Macedonian Radio Television, fair representation of the minority is underlined by law in each one of them. This inclusion is explicitly written for the Council and for the Management Boards, whereas as Hrvatin and Thompson point that there is an “unwritten rule that the senior Macedonian party in power selects the director while his or her deputy is chosen by the senior Albanian party in power” (2008: 30).

The next section discusses the interview findings and puts them in context of the public service broadcasting literature, the Macedonian Radio Television and the minority aspect.

## Chapter 6: Regulation

The regulation of the broadcasting in Macedonia is executed by several institutions, namely the Broadcasting Council, the Agency for electronic communication, the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Culture.

The Broadcasting Council was established in November 2005, with the Law on Broadcasting Activity from 2005. The Broadcasting Council also follows the fair representation of the minority groups in Macedonia. Article 163 from the Law on Broadcasting Activity defines the main responsibilities of the Broadcasting Council in terms of executing the provisions of the Law on Broadcasting activity in terms of respecting the programming principles, programming requests and limitations, as well as the conditions for issuing licenses (Law on Broadcasting Activity). Brinnich and Heuber point to the continuing interference of the political parties in the Broadcasting Council, and their attempts to control the same, mentioning that the intentions of the political parties are “to install their own people to control the granting of licenses. For that purpose they are planning to change the existing law” (Brinnich and Heuber 2007, 26). However, since 2007 when this observation was made, no amendments or changes have been made to the Law on Broadcasting Activity that influence the Broadcasting Council.

Supervision over following the terms of reference included in the licenses for using the radiofrequencies, as well as the construction, maintenance and usage of the networks and the resources for broadcasting are the main responsibilities that are underlined with Article 164 from the Law on Broadcasting Activity to the Agency for electronic communication and the Ministry of transport.

The main responsibilities of the last institution related to the regulation of the broadcasting in Macedonia are defined in Article 165 of the Law on Broadcasting Activity and are directed to the Ministry of culture in terms of supervisor of the provisions of this law that refer to copywriting and the use of the different languages in the county.

After having an overview of the history and regulation of the Macedonian Radio Television, as well as the regulations that surround the broadcasting in Macedonia, the next section discusses the interview findings of the primary research and address the problems that rise with the research in the context of the minority broadcasting in Macedonia, but as well in the context of the overall meaning and importance of having minority broadcasting in the public service broadcaster in divided society such as the Macedonian.

## **Chapter 7: Interview Findings**

The next chapter of this thesis discusses the finding of the conducted interviews. Due to the semi-structured character of these interview and the different sections that the interview were addressing, this section will be divided into five categories, namely, (1) Importance of minority broadcasting in the public service broadcaster, the (2) Regulation; the (2) Finances; (3) the Programming and (4) Steps for the future of the public service broadcaster.

The first section that was discussed with the interviewees is the importance of minority broadcasting in the Macedonian Radio Television. What needs to be noted in this section is the even though the different practitioners were interviewed on question that were discussing

the general structured of MRT2, most of the practitioners were answering the questions from the perspective of program in their own minority language. This is the first profound issue that rises from the interviews that reflects a problem of segregation, contrary to the main objective of minority broadcasting to lead to multicultural dialog.

The importance of having minority broadcasting in the Macedonian Radio Television is described in different ways by the practitioners of the Macedonian Radio Television. Gorenca, Chief Editor of MRT2, describes this as “the right of every citizen in the Macedonia to be informed in his mother tongue” (2001). She further notes that

when it comes to the Albanian ethnicity, the same is not just a minority in the Republic of Macedonia, but a constitutional ethnicity, and because of the same an appropriate television service, in this case MRT2, must exist which will pay attention to the second biggest ethnicity in Macedonia (2001).

Another profound finding comes from the answers of the two of the Executive Editors from the programs in Vlach and Turkish language is the inability of articulating the very importance of the minority broadcasting that they represent in the country. From this perspective, the Executive Editor of the program in Vlach language reflects the “minority broadcasting is from significant importance because a nation without its own history, heritage and culture is like a tree without roots” (Mihailova 2010). Similar shallow description of the importance for minority broadcasting is reflected by the Executive Editor of the Turkish Program who states that

the importance of minority broadcasting is closely related to the democracy in Macedonia. A tradition that was start in 1969 with this program should not be ended, and by doing this program we contribute in the society and reflect the mosaic of language that are spoken in Macedonia” (Azizoglu 2010).

It needs to be stressed that only the last practitioner, Journalist from MRT1, reflected the importance of minority broadcasting is such a way as to portray the significance of the same.

Netkov, Journalist from MRT1 describes would point:

It is unserious and desperate to speak of a single-national state, culture or similar. The emergence of multiculturalism as a new phenomenon, looking from the aspect of the current relations in the society but as well as at the historical tendencies, minority broadcasting comes as mean of dialog, instrument of mutual respect of the traditions, the religions, the language and similar issues if we want to avoid future conflicting relations in the society (2010).

The offered answers from the interviewees, especially the ones from Editors in MRT2 bring on surface one very important question – if the Editors of MRT2 are not able to articulate the importance of minority broadcasting, how can we expect that the same would know how to serve the very minorities that they stand to represent. Even though this is a very important question, this thesis would not go in answering the same, but brings it out only as mean of stressing the importance of profound disconnect in MRT2.

In terms of the section that refers to the structure of MRT2, independence of the ethnic segments in terms of programming, management and finance, the internal and external regulations, including the Law on Broadcasting Activity from 2005, again conflicting answers are presented from the interviewees.

Mihailova, Azigoglu and Gorenca state that there is no autonomy in overall of the programs in minority languages, but contrary to this that autonomy can be seen in terms of the programming (2010). However, contrary to this, Gorenca points “if we are divided from MRT1 with the finances, we would give total independence of MRT2, because independence in terms of finances means at the same time independence on terms of information” (2010).

From this statement from the Chief Editor of MRT2, one might assume that until MRT2 is completely separated from the joint finances with MRT1, influences can be expected in information that is broadcasted by MRT2. This in turn put the independence of MRT2 at stake and raises, yet another question, of how truly independent and objective is the minority channel in its broadcasted information.

In terms of the very legislation on which the public service broadcasting is set in Macedonia, and with that the minority channel, what comes as a shock is the statement of the Chief Editor of MRT2 that she has not really read the Law on Broadcasting Activity which is the very foundation of public service broadcasting in Macedonia (Gorenca 2010). At the same time, she points out the apart from this legislation, the Macedonian Radio Television structured its minority broadcasting upon other European regulations regarding use of minorities languages, but not being familiar with the legislation of the state in which the public service broadcaster exists reflects yet another profound disconnect between the policy and implementation.

The third section of the interview, regarding the programming of the minority channel does not portray any different picture from the previous sections in terms of the answers of the interviewees.

Even though this section aimed to reflect different example that would reflect the way in which the programs successfully work towards multicultural dialog in the society, what is surprising is that only one of the interviewees gives an example that reflect only one program since the existence of MRT2. On the other hand, the answers of the interviewees do not reflect the main reason for existing of the minority channel, namely, creating of multicultural

dialog and understanding in the society, which again puts in question the very need for existence of this channel.

From the perspective of reflecting a program that would justify the existence of the minority channel and serve as an example for future programs, Gorenca points to a program that in its nature reminds of ethnic crossover program. The example that she points out in the interview reflect a documentary program done shortly after the armed conflict in 2001. This program as Gorenca points had a main theme to show one of the villages in which a lot of the Macedonian population left their homes due to the majority Albanian population in the area, as a place that is safe, in order to bring the Macedonian population back in their homes (2010). Other interviewees when asked to point to a specific program mainly responded that they can not think of anything specific at the time (Mihailova 2010; Netkov 2010; Azigoglu 2010).

In terms of the mentioned program from Gorenca, on several question that were aiming to the issues such as how was decided for the show to air and how it was measured if it was successful, no concrete answers were given, that put in question the very first statement of Gorenca and her claim of this program as successful (2010). At the same time, another problem that rose with this set of question is the issue on audience when it comes to these specific examples. On this Gorenca points that the number of the audience is something that is not available for the public, putting in question the transparency in working of the minority channel. What comes as a surprise, and relating to the audience of the minority broadcasting, is the statement of Gorenca that “the minority channel does not need to care for the number of the audience, because our objective and reason for existing is completely different from the one in the commercial televisions” (2010). One might ask, if the public service broadcaster, or

specifically, the minority channel, does not care for the number of the audience that follows its programming, then how can we expect this channel to ever mature, and more importantly, how can we expect to serve the very foundation, the public interest in the society.

Two very important question that were addressed in this section reflected the length of the minority broadcasting for each minority group as well the procedure under which the six languages of the minority channel are chosen.

The answer of the first question, similarly to the description in the section of minority broadcasting contradicts the rationale of proportional representation according the total population of each minority group. Even though Gorenca, agrees that the length of broadcasting for each minority group represent the proportional representation of the total population in Macedonia (2010), the Executive Editor of the program in Vlach language states

If this was true that we would have been talk about a different situation in the minority channel. The statistics show that the Turkish population is nearly 80.000, whereas the Serbian is nearly 40.000. If we were going to go about rationale of proportional representation than the programs in Serbian language should last half of the length of the Turkish programs, namely one an a half hour, opposite the current half hour per day (Mihailova 2010)

Even though this thesis can not state for fact whether the statistics given by Mihailova are true, even though the same greatly differ from the official statistical numbers from the State Bureau of Statistics (2002, 171-174) because the last census in Macedonia was done in 2001.

On the other hand, in terms of the procedure that defines which minority languages are broadcasted on MRT2, again only one of the interviewees had an answer to the question. As

defined by the Chief Editor of MRT2, the languages that are broadcasted by MRT2 are the languages of the minorities that are recognized in the Constitution (2010). She further mentions that even though Macedonia has more minorities in the society and is missing at least two more languages in MRT2, namely the Greek and the Bulgarian, there are no legal foundations at this point for the same to be included in the channel (2010).

The last question of this section reflected recent criticism from the Broadcasting Council that the minority channel reflects nearly two thirds of its total broadcasting to programs that have entertainment character, whereas only one third is reserved for programs with educational and informative character (2010: 16).

Even though the Chief Editor of MRT2 dismissed this criticism blaming the Broadcasting Council for outdated procedures for overseeing the type of the programming (Gorenca, 2010), the answers of the other interviewees show different opinions. Namely, Netkov states that the public service broadcasting in Macedonia follows inappropriate programming policy in the last several years (2010). To this he adds:

the Management of the public broadcaster buys banal and boring programs, without any educational character. In the past years there has not been a single program that would reflect our historic tradition or a program that would include educational aspect... and all of these is supported with unserious arguments of lack of funding and justifications that buying foreign programs is more efficient for the public service broadcaster (2010).

The fourth section of the interview concentrated on the funding of the public service broadcaster. Even though all of the interviewees agree that the collection of the broadcasting fee has been going with a very slow pace, what comes as a surprise is the statement from the Chief Editor of MRT2 blaming the Government for the low rate of the collection of the

broadcasting fee (Gorenca 2010). What needs to be noted here is that with the reorganization of the Macedonian Radio Television and with the introduction of the Law on Broadcasting Activity, the responsibility for collecting the broadcasting fee was solely transferred to the public service broadcaster (Law on Broadcasting Activity 2005). Furthermore, Gorenca points that the current system for collecting the broadcasting fee as described by the Law on Broadcasting Activity does not function because the Government has its “own private commercial televisions which they finance and do not have the need from the state television or the public broadcaster” (2010).

From here two very important issues rise, (1) if the system for collecting the broadcasting fee has not been functioning for the past five year, why the public broadcaster has not made any efforts to amend the law in order to implement changes that they see fit; and (2) if we blame the Government for lack of interest because it owns commercial television than does it mean that if they do not own the same, the public service broadcasting would not really be a public broadcaster but would in really look like the previous model of state television and be under the control of the Government.

The last section on which the interview was concentrating to refers to the future steps that the minority channel should undertake in order to better serve minorities in Macedonia. The questions in this section referred to the need of subtitling the programs and the need of additional channel for the minorities in order to better serve the minorities in Macedonia.

However, it has to be noted that some of the interviewees when asked whether subtitling the programs would help strengthening the cultural dialogue in Macedonia, either had an understating that this should be done via voice-over on the programs in another language, or

they were confused in which language the programs should be translated. Azizoglu, Executive Editor of the Program in Turkish language, points that

in order to translate a program, we first of all we need translators who would do this, and then later on enough people on our disposal who would edit and synchronize the program. This whole process with the translation and getting the ready the whole program to air may take even more than two months, by which time the contents of the program are outdated (2010).

Furthermore, Gorenca, Chief Editor of MRT2 states that even the most recent analyses from the Broadcasting Council recommend for subtitling the programs; she believes this to be redundant and notes that:

If I have to subtitle all the programs we run, than I have to subtitle them in five minority languages, which is not even technically possible. On the other hand if I have to translate the programs in Macedonian language than I offend the other minority groups in the country, and lets not forget, the Albanian program is an Albanian program, and not Albanian program will Macedonian translation.

These two statements raise the need for clarifying “subtitles” in the MRT2. One might say, similarity to the recommendation of the weekly analyses of the Broadcasting Council that subtitling of the programs might give an opportunity for remove any language barriers (Broadcasting Council 2010: 17), which in turn might result with better understanding among different ethnicities in one country. As Netkov, Journalist in MRT1, points “it is only by subtitling that we can contribute to sustainable and stable society, respected by the International Community” (2010). Similarly, Mihailova, Executive Editor of the Program in Vlach language, points that “subtitling is essential if we want to achieve what these programs stand for, meaning informing, education and above all contributing to mutual multiethnic understanding” (2010).

However, what is most worrying in this section is the statement of the Gorenca, which implies that even in its current structure, the Chief Editor of willingly created segregation in the society, firstly by willingly refusing the subtitle programs in Macedonian language, and secondly, by indirectly implying that the program for the Albanian minority is aimed only for the Albanian population in the country.

In relation to the need of an additional channel for the minorities in Macedonia, the interviewees again differ in the responses. The Executive Editor of the Program in Vlach language points that “the current organization and the current structure of the television programming services in the public broadcaster are enough to serve the needs of the communities in their mother language” (Mihailova 2010), but contrary to this Netkov, Journalist at MRT1, points that:

lately there have been announcements for adding three new editorial offices for the minority languages that are not currently included. This would in turn give a more serious treatment of the current and the future editorial offices due to the rich cultural treasury they have to offer and by this the social space in Macedonia would be classified on same level as other more advanced multiethnic societies (Netkov 2010).

How supported are the arguments from Netkov, we can only assume. If the current legislation does not change, or some internal document is introduced that would allow for additional languages on the minority channel in Macedonian, it is not likely that the current political environment would change the Constitution in order to enable this change.

The Chief Editor of MRT2 also supports the need for a new additional channel for the minorities, even though the proposition that she gives might be seen as two-folded. What Gorenca proposes is MRT2 to be transformed in order to air “constant program in Albanian

language on MRT2, but allow more space for the other minority groups on a new channel” (2010).

She further notes that by this she is not implying that the Albanian language is most important and therefore should be broadcaster constantly on MRT2, but refers to the fact of the interruptions in the broadcasting while programs in other minority languages are broadcasted and to the inconvenience of the smaller ethnic groups with the little time they have in air, which forces people if they miss important news to wait until the next day in the same time to listen to the news in their mother language (Gorenca 2010).

But if we look at this proposition and go back to the current view of the Chief Editor of MRT2 for subtitling and her statement that “the Albanian program is Albanian, and not Albanian program with Macedonian subtitles” (Gorenca 2010) aren’t we running on the risk to furthermore divide the Macedonian society.

One last issue that asks for attention, and at the same time concluding remark of this section, is the current view of the public broadcaster by the Editors that are running the minority broadcasting in Macedonia. In most of the question, when the interviewees were addressing the public service broadcasting the term “state television” was very often used. What this implies is that even though the public service broadcaster has been transformed for more than ten years from a state television to public service broadcasting, research on the ground shows that this perception has not changed in the mind of the very people that run this public service broadcaster.

As mentioned on several occasions a profound disconnect is seen between the policy and the implementation in the public service broadcaster in Macedonia. There is a lack of understanding of the very existence of the minority channel among the Editors of the minority programs and a very evident disconnect in cooperation of the minorities within the minority channel. This in turn created even further segregation in the already divided society and urges for immediate changes in the public service broadcaster.

## **Chapter 7: Closing the gap of segregation- recommendations**

Coming from the discussion in the previous chapter and the different issues raised while assessing the interview findings, several policy options are given in this section.

The first recommendation that this thesis reflects is subtitling of the programs of the minority channel. Given that the current analyses of the interview findings, it is obvious that the minority groups in MRT2 do not cooperate nor do they create an environment in the public broadcasting that would reflect the basic foundation of this kind of broadcasting, namely, promoting multicultural dialog and understating in the society. By introducing subtitling of the programs the gap that is currently created by the minority channel would be narrowed, and bases for multicultural dialog would be provided. Furthermore, with the implementation of the digitalization in the public broadcaster in Macedonia new possibilities would be made available that would allow the minority groups to subtitle in different languages and at the same time, the audience to choose from the same.

The second recommendation given by this thesis refers to joint programming of the editorial staff of the minority groups in MRT2. Similarly, to the example of ethnic cross-over programming that was described in the research findings, this recommendation proposed joint programming concentrating on news production. By joining in production of the news the different editorial staff, no additional burden is put on the finances of the public service broadcasting, but similarly to the previous recommendation, joint new production would enable opening of multicultural dialog among the minority groups in MRT2, that later can be portrayed in the society.

## **Conclusions**

In conclusion, the current environment in Macedonia has a good structure of the public service broadcasting and solid legislative framework to promote multicultural dialog in the society. After the armed conflict in 2001, under the Ohrid Framework Agreement, series of changes were undertaken amending the Constitution and the legislation that adopted the legislative framework in way as to provide minority inclusion in the society. These same changes are later implemented in the Macedonian Radio Television enabling a separate television programming service for the minority groups, and at the same are reflected through far representation of the minority groups in the governance structure of the public service broadcaster.

However, despite the solid legal framework, the research shows that there is a profound disconnect between the policy and the implementation. The Executive Editorial staff of the

minority channel MRT2 does not seem to be familiar with the very foundation of minority broadcasting in Macedonia.

Furthermore, the segments of the minority channel despite fact that they operate under one unified system, they reflect segregated opposite plural-segregated model, which replicate system that would be similar to the broadcasting system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where these segments have their own public broadcaster.

In addition, the Executive Editors of MRT2 often referred to the public service broadcaster in Macedonia as “state television” forgetting that the state television was transformed more than ten year ago.

And last, by not least, the research findings show profound inability of the people working in the minority broadcasting to articulate the importance of existing of the minority channel which questions the core existence of MRT2.

In overall, the minority broadcasting in the public service broadcasting is in a need of drastic and urgent changes. If a society that is based with its legislative framework on multicultural dialog and understanding created further gaps between the ethnic groups in Macedonia, than maybe we should put in question the very existence of this type of broadcasting.

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