

# ENDURING THE PRESSURE:

KOSOVO MEDIA REPORTING ON  
ORGANISED CRIME AND CORRUPTION

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# Executive summary

The media scene in Kosovo is crowded, with a plethora of print, electronic and online outlets having been established in the last two decades. Among these media, there are a number of independent outlets which struggle to find a place in Kosovo's market, which is small in terms of readers/viewers and limited in terms of advertising money, a lot of which is spent

by the public sector. A large proportion of the media was established by businesses, political parties and other interest groups, pursuing agendas other than that of objective and balanced reporting. These media serve the interests of businesses and day-to-day political agendas.

## Key findings

- Media in Kosovo are subjected to pressure by politicians and businesses to prevent them from reporting on cases of organised crime and corruption
- The security and safety of journalists is not ensured, influencing their reporting on cases of organised crime and corruption
- Rule-of-law institutions are passive in communications with media, and access to official documents is not applied equally across the board, making leaks an important resource for reporting
- There is a direct correlation between independent media and the professionalism of journalists. Media in general lack resources, including staff and time to dedicate to investigative reporting on cases of organised crime and corruption

Media in Kosovo are subjected to pressure by politicians and businesses to prevent them from reporting on cases of organised crime and corruption. The way pressure is exerted includes the refusal to place advertisements in media that defy politicians and businesses, threats to journalists, physical violence, and denial of access to information. Public companies receive less attention from media because of the funds they invest in advertisements. However, this depends on the professional and financial position of the media

outlet. Those that lack money and/or professionalism succumb to political and business influences in order to survive in the market.

Another method of pressure is direct threats to and intimidation of journalists. Journalists' safety is compromised by threats from disgruntled subjects of their articles, and their economic security by the threat of losing their job if their employers surrender to political and business pres-

sure in return for financial benefits and other favours from businesses and politicians. This influences their reporting on cases of organised crime and corruption, and prompts self-censorship among many journalists when they report on such cases.

Access to information is one of the most problematic issues that creates obstacles to media seeking to do quality work. State institutions do not comply with the Law on classification of documents, thus creating confusion as to which documents can be accessed by the public (the Law on Classification of Documents categorises public documents into those that are confidential and those which can be seen by the public).

But the main reason why access to information is problematic stems from the fact that the Law on Access to Public Documents is not implemented in a uniform way by Kosovo institutions, as well as because of the mutual mistrust between the judiciary and the media. There is limited cooperation between the prosecution and police on one side and journalists and media outlets on the other, and access to both formal and informal information is determined by several factors, including the professionalism of journalists, personal understanding of the principles of freedom of information by judicial officials, and institutional culture. Journalists mostly rely on informal information leaked by individuals within the judiciary and police – the police being the primary source of informal information.

Media outlets that have invested in the training of their staff and have given them job security can rely more on the professionalism of their staff and get better access to information. However, most media outlets are not inclined to investigate and produce serious reports on cases of corruption and organised crime. One important obstacle is the lack of resources to dedicate sufficient staff and time to reporting on such cases.

## Methodology

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For the purpose of this report, BIRN conducted a total of 24 in-depth interviews with 22 rule-of-law and justice professionals, politicians, civil society activists and journalists. Of these, three were interviewed twice for the purpose of gathering additional information. All 22 interviews were

conducted by e-mail, and the three (one prosecutor and two journalists) who were interviewed for a second time were interviewed in person. Those interviewed included four prosecutors dealing with cases of corruption and organised crime, two judges, one lawyer and one member of parliament. In addition, seven civil society activists and six journalists were interviewed.

On top of this, BIRN carried out media monitoring of five media outlets, including two national TV stations and three print newspapers over a three-month period (April-June 2017). The monitoring was confined to reports involving news, analysis and comments relating directly to arrests, ongoing investigations, indictments and court proceedings in the cases of organised crime and corruption, as well as systemic problems affecting the judiciary and rule of law institutions. The TV stations monitored were the public broadcaster, Radio Television of Kosovo (RTK), and the private broadcaster TV 21, while printed media included Koha Ditore, Zëri and Kosova Sot. The selection criteria used for this study were based on balancing independent media (Koha Ditore, TV 21), with two media owned by businesses (Zëri, Kosova Sot), and a public broadcaster, which is allegedly inclined to follow the policies of the ruling parties. None of the media monitored were tabloids.

## 1. Background

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In democratic countries, the role of media is not only confined to informing the public about the work of state institutions, but goes much further, having a profound impact on the level of accountability and good governance, including issues such as the rule of law and the fight against corruption. However, in less developed democracies, where there is lack of or only partial freedom of expression, media are far from being the fourth estate. In fact, media are more frequently than not controlled by the government, powerful politicians and businesses. In places like Kosovo, the range of challenges faced by media and journalists alike is wide, from an unfavourable legal, political and economic environment to physical insecurity to job insecurity, and a lack of professionalism among jour-

nalists.<sup>1</sup>This has a direct influence on the way media report on cases of organised crime and corruption.

Transparency International's 2016 Corruption Perceptions Index ranked Kosovo 95th out of 176 countries worldwide, placing it behind all the other countries in the Western Balkans. Freedom House's Nations in Transit report for 2017 graded Kosovo at 5.75 on corruption issues, with the most negative score being 7. Independence of the judiciary was also ranked at a low 5.50, with independence of the media at 5.<sup>2</sup>Notwithstanding this, Kosovo's media was described as 'partly free' by the Freedom of the Press report, which is also published annually by Freedom House.

Kosovo Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, while the legislation related to slandering is compatible with the provisions of the European Court for Human Rights. Regardless constitutional and legal provisions guaranteeing freedom of the press, Kosovo media continue to be plagued by the lack of independence, both in professional and economic sense.

## 2. Pressure on media to prevent reporting on organised crime and corruption

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### *Political pressure*

Most judicial officials believe there are connections between politicians and parts of the media. Some even claim that some individual journalists are in the service of organised crime. Others, including judicial officials and civil society activists, believe that some journalists and politicians find a common language by granting favours to each other - in return for 'appropriate reporting', journalists can be rewarded with positions in

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<sup>1</sup> Freedom House. 2017. "Freedom of the Press." At <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2017/kosovo>

<sup>2</sup> The Freedom House Nations in Transit scoring system goes from 0 as the most positive score to 7 as the most negative score.

public enterprises and institutions, while media get more access to public funds through advertisements.

Judge Fejzullah Hasani said he does not believe media reporting on organised crime and corruption is instrumentalised for political purposes, but Kosovo special prosecutor Drita Hajdari argues that “politicians and government officials influence media reporting” on organised crime and corruption. Lawyer Tomë Gashi also believes that media reporting on organised crime and corruption is heavily influenced by “influential politicians and high government officials”, and insists that in some cases, judges also instrumentalise media for use in their internal struggles.

Civil society activists meanwhile believe that media reporting on organised crime and corruption is only sporadically influenced by politicians, but that it is nevertheless used by them for their own ends. According to Besnik Boletini from Preportr, a publication issued by the NGO CoHu: “Media reporting on corruption and organised crime is utilised by politicians for their political struggles.”

Meanwhile, reporting on organised crime and corruption is frequently downplayed by politicians who claim that “corruption is only a perception”, said Visar Sutaj from the Kosovo Democratic Institute. Petrit Kryeziu, a prosecutor in Prizren and former court monitor at BIRN Kosovo, argued that while politicians “have a tendency” to influence media reporting, the judiciary cannot, because trials are open to media and “information from courts is regulated by law”.

Journalists meanwhile insist that politicians regularly influence media reporting and that in many instances, media and individual journalists succumb to such pressure for financial and career reasons. Kreshnik Gashi, a BIRN journalist, said that Reporting on organised crime and corruption is constrained by several factors. For example, media which are sponsored politically do not report on involvement of politicians in corruptive practices. Denial of advertisements by businesses also influences media to refrain from reporting on involvement of businesses and politicians linked to them in corruption and organized crime. In addition, self-censorship is also a matter of concern, since many journalists use their profession as a trampoline [to go on to] other positions.”

Pressure is applied on media in many ways, including: denial of advertisements, direct phone calls, and financial support for media that affects their editorial policies. A journalist from TV 21 noted that “there are many [online news] portals without clear ownership and address. Their reporting is politically-influenced or weak.”

Petrit Kryeziu, a former BIRN reporter who is now a prosecutor, said that pressure is applied widely using various methods, but that financial pressure is the main method:

“The media where I worked was not influenced by politics. However, from what I hear from my colleagues in other media, they receive phone calls from politicians regarding certain stories, but the most frequent blocking [of stories] happens because of editors who block certain stories because of advertisements, especially during an election campaign. That way, they ensure financial benefits for their media outlet. Sometimes this happens as another [kind of] favour, such as for example the employment of some family member, etc.”

Besnik Boletini from the NGO Cohu’s publication Preportr agreed that there was political pressure and instrumentalisation, mainly driven by the media’s financial interests:

“Sometimes they [politicians] give tips about their colleagues from other parties; sometimes they exert direct influence on the editorial policies of the media, which is done by financing some media, and in other cases, by opening [their] own portals which publish whatever is in the interest of the politicians.”

According to civil society activists and journalists, those outlets most influenced by politicians are news websites created by politicians themselves or by businesses, national media owned by businesses, and the public broadcaster. Asked if political influence determines whether media report about organised crime and corruption or not, Jeton Mehmeti from the GAP Institute argued that “the public broadcaster [RTK] rarely reports about organised crime and corruption” because of the influence exerted on it by the government.

Rrezarta Reka, a civil society activist, agreed that there is political influence on publicly-funded media: “There is a very heavy influence from

politics and parties, especially those in power, over media, including those that get financed with public funding.”

This was echoed by Visar Sutaj from the Kosovo Democratic Institute:

“There are independent media, and there are media which are financed by businesses, which in turn influence the media on behalf of politicians. There are also unprofessional media, which are not influenced by anyone, but which simply lack professionalism.”

In contrast, in independent media, journalists are free to report without getting “suggestions” from politicians or businesses. However, government control of information affects the quality of media reporting, particularly regarding access to official documents, which is not granted consistently to all media by government agencies and is sometimes used as a political tool by the ruling parties.

## *Business pressure*

Businesses apply pressure for their own ends. They mainly try to influence media to stop reports on corrupt practices and organised criminal activities, journalists claim, using their financial muscle to exert pressure. For example, Besnik Krasniqi from the daily newspaper Koha Ditore claimed that one public enterprise revoked its advertisement contract with his newspaper to halt an ongoing journalistic investigation into abuses at the public enterprise.

Pressurising media by depriving them of advertisements is apparently the most preferred way of exerting pressure over reporting on organised crime and corruption. Artan Canhasi from the Kosovo Democratic Institute said that media outlets’ dependency on advertising revenue affects how often they cover the topic:

“It is driven by the media’s business interests. For example, there is almost no reporting about public companies which have huge marketing budgets. Media frequently fail to publish stories which might threaten the interests of some businesses.”

Dibran Istrefi, a journalist from Klan Kosova, also argued that “organised crime is connected to businesses and they apply pressure through advertisements”.

## *The safety of journalists*

Journalists working for independent media are not afraid to report on organised crime and corruption despite the risks and pressure.<sup>3</sup>

Phone calls from politicians intended to halt publication or to intimidate the journalists, threats and physical attacks are frequent. Artan Canhasi from the Kosovo Democratic Institute told BIRN: “As a consequence of the lack of security, journalists are constrained from reporting on organised crime and corruption because of the fear of physical violence.” This leads some journalists to practice self-censorship, Canhasi added.

Besnik Boletini from the NGO Cohu’s publication Preportr also claimed that fears about physical security prevent journalists from reporting on cases of organised crime and corruption: “Journalists are also attacked physically and our prosecution and court system do not deal with these attacks properly.”

“Apart from external interference, journalists are pressurised from within their media [outlets]. They have bad working and contractual conditions, so they have learned self-censorship. Many reports on cases of organised crime and corruption have been stopped by media bosses themselves,” Boletini added.

## **3. Access to Information**

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Opinions among civil society and experts regarding equality of access to information are divided between those that believe that all media do not have equal access to information, and those that believe that access to information depends on the professionalism the media outlet. The latter

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<sup>3</sup> Vehbi Kajtazi, a journalist at the Insajderi site, was attacked in October 2017, allegedly because of a story about the involvement of Kosovo member of parliament Milaim Zeka in a visa scam. The attackers were subsequently identified as Zeka’s friends.

claim that more professional journalists and media outlets have more access to information than those that are less professional. This opinion is shared by some journalists and judicial professionals. For example, prosecutor Besim Kelmendi said that media professionalism “plays a substantial role in access to information”.

## *Obstacles to access to information*

Interviews for this report suggested that media that specialise in reporting on corruption and organised crime, which have gained credibility due to their professionalism and persistence, get better access to sensitive information. This suggests that professionalism and professional persistence pays off in terms of building up a good working relationship between media and prosecutors.

“There were cases when I was contacted by a journalist who said that they have certain information and they asked whether the publication of the news would damage the investigation. I contacted the prosecutor responsible for the case and told them that the news can be published since the case had already been made public,” Kelmendi said.

In some other cases however, prosecutors complained that media reporting had damaged an ongoing investigation because it was at an early stage:

As Drita Hajdari, a special prosecutor who has dealt with many high-profile cases of organised crime and corruption, said:

“Frequently, reporting on cases in the early stages of investigations seriously damaged the process of the investigation and influenced in a negative way the outcome of the investigation. This is because with these reports, criminals are informed that they are under investigation and they have the possibility of influencing the investigatory process by destroying evidence and by influencing witnesses and co-perpetrators, or in some other way... I myself have dealt with tendentious reporting when my statements were misinterpreted or were just placed in an already prepared context.”

This suggests there is a lack of understanding between the media and prosecutors about ways of cooperation which would not jeopardise ei-

ther's work. There is also widespread belief that the prosecution is passive in its communications with the media, although it does have an official communications strategy:

“I believe that the passive role of the prosecution and judiciary in general has negative effects in combating corruption and organised crime... we should be more cooperative and more open to media, especially with investigative reporters,” said Kelmendi.

However, it seems that the regulations on providing access to information are subject to interpretation by individual prosecutors, who are guided by personal experiences and what they perceive as limitations to their communication with the media, which makes the relationship between the two sides difficult. Prosecutor Drita Hajdari believes that although media can be a valuable ally in fighting corruption and organised crime, there are practical and legal obstacles which prevent prosecutors being open with journalists:

“According to Article 10 of the Law on the State Prosecution, we are forbidden to give information which can influence investigations, therefore this is a very sensitive problem and I think that media that want to accomplish their mission in fighting crime should not bring us into a situation in which we reveal details of investigations, from which only those under investigation benefit,” Hajdari said.

## *Non-compliance with freedom of information legislation*

In interviews for this report, journalists widely complained that prosecutors lack transparency and that they do not publish indictments, which should be regarded as public documents. The main problems in information-gathering are refusals by state institutions to provide documents, and non-compliance by state institutions with the Law on Classification of Public Documents, which creates the possibility for public officials to deny access to public documents, even when they should be available to the public.

According to Kreshnik Gashi from BIRN Kosovo: “There are problems in arranging interviews and meetings, and a lack of access to official documents, while the prosecution does not provide information on indictments and courts do not publish schedules of court hearings.”

This situation can also work in some journalists’ favour, suggested Besnik Boletini: “Lack of transparency has created privileges for some journalists who have created relationships with prosecutors, and they get access to such documents [indictments] which should otherwise be public, and they present those as investigative journalism.”

## *Mistrust between prosecution and media*

BIRN’s findings suggest there is currently a deadlock of mistrust between media and prosecutors – media seek to investigate and report on cases and issues of public interest, while prosecutors are compelled to protect the confidentiality of their work.

Prosecutor Drita Hajdari believes cooperation is possible if media reports help in the fight against corruption and organised crime:

“I personally consider media as allies in combatting organised crime and corruption. Of course, professional journalists... they have to have the honest aim of fighting organised crime and corruption,” said Hajdari.

A similar opinion was offered by Hajdari’s colleague, Besim Kelmendi, who believes that “investigative journalists can play an important role in fighting corruption and organised crime. Cooperation with media, especially with investigative journalists, can be beneficial to both the prosecution and the court system.”

Artan Canhasi from the Kosovo Democratic Institute argued meanwhile that publicity for the fight against graft encourages prosecutors: “Regular media reporting on cases of corruption and organised crime raises public pressure, and [then] the prosecution becomes active in prosecuting high-profile cases.”

On the other hand however, some prosecutors interviewed for this report said that there were cases when prosecutors have been misinterpreted or when their statements were taken out of context by journalists:

“There were cases when my readiness to talk to the media was abused blatantly. My words were intentionally perverted and abused, and what is worst, there was a case when I was contacted just for the sake of formality, because the report had already been prepared to serve someone’s taste and aims,” said prosecutor Drita Hajdari.

BIRN Kosovo journalist Kreshnik Gashi said meanwhile that there are problems within state institutions over the procedures for classifying documents. People who are authorised to provide access “are frequently not sure about which documents should be accessible and which should not”, Gashi claimed.

According to the prosecutors interviewed, judicial institutions have developed communication strategies, put in place communication structures and approved communication regulations that should enable effective communication with the media. But in reality, prosecutors’ openness is dependent on their personal understanding of the rules governing communication with the media. As prosecutor Besim Kelmendi said:

“Yes, there are cases [when media were not allowed access to information]. Among many reasons, this also depends on the prosecutor in charge of the investigation and on the Prosecutorial Council, since not all of us who are prosecutors have sufficient knowledge about the media and even when we maybe do not lose anything and do not compromise the investigation procedure, we hesitate to give information because we fear that the information will be abused and can be interpreted at will, and this is the reason why we hesitate to give information to the media.”

Journalists interviewed say that the most important information that triggers reports about corruption and organised crime comes from informal sources. Following the receipt of such information, journalists interviewed said they verify this information using formal documents and sources, if there is willingness by institutions and people who are authorized to talk to the media.

However, institutions usually do not take the initiative in publicising information about cases of corruption and organised crime, said Flutura Kusari, a civil society activist and legal expert: “Their [the judiciary’s] priority is not informing citizens about their activities to fight organised crime and corruption.”

Although the Law on Courts stipulates that all final verdicts should be published online, so far only 2,000 have been published, even though about 300,000 verdicts are issued by the courts each year.

## *The judiciary's confused communications strategy*

The level of transparency varies across institutions, which means that there is no unified policy among institutions regarding communications with media; within the government, there are transparent ministries and non-transparent ministries.

State institutions are generally not willing to provide official documents. There are delays in providing access to documents and the prosecution announces arrests and indictments selectively, depending on the political influence of the people who have been arrested or indicted. Sometimes the openness of prosecutors is determined by their personal opinion about the professionalism of media. However, there are people within state institutions who volunteer to provide information, especially about abuses within their workplaces.

Several people interviewed for this study, including prosecutors, civil society activists and journalists, told BIRN that within rule-of-law institutions, the police are the most open to media, and that most informal information also leaks from the police, then from lawyers for the defendants and the defendants themselves.

Whereas prosecutors argue that revealing sensitive information during the investigation procedure may damage the investigation itself, this is viewed with high level of suspicion by civil society activists. They argue that the failure of the judiciary to inform media about their activities and

to give access to documents compromises institutional transparency and damages its reputation:

“Acting behind closed doors, to save the reputation of criminals, the authorities leave the public uninformed and do themselves damage because the impression that corruption is not being fought is created,” said Flutura Kusari.

Access to information in courts and trials is regulated by law, and should be equally available to all, but defence lawyers interviewed for this study believe that government-controlled media have more access to information in the justice system. However this claim was not supported by the journalists interviewed.

Media and journalists whose inquiries are more regular and more persistent receive more attention from justice officials. Justice officials believe/expect that media should be active in reporting on cases of organised crime and corruption:

“Reporting on organised crime and corruption is the media’s obligation; it not only serves the purpose of informing citizens, but it can also have a positive influence in preventing this negative social phenomenon,” prosecutor Drita Hajdari said.

## **4. Varying standards of journalistic professionalism**

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In Kosovo, some media outlets offer objective, fact-based and concise reporting on organised crime and corruption, while others display a lack of independence and capacity to report on these topics.

Most journalists agree that professionalism in reporting on organised crime and corruption is limited to the media that regularly report on these matters and have invested in the training of their staff. In general however, media need training for their journalists to do this type of reporting properly.

BIRN's study showed that this opinion is shared by some journalists and judicial professionals. Media that have specialised in reporting about corruption and organised crime, which have gained credibility due to their professionalism and persistence, get better access to sensitive information because of the trust they have gained with judicial and police officials, interviewees for this study said.

However, journalists frequently lack the knowledge and capacities to report on cases of corruption and organised crime, or lack independence. This has substantial influence on the openness of judicial professionals towards these media:

“As in the justice system, there are instances of unprofessionalism in the media too. Sometimes there is biased and imprecise reporting,” said a special prosecutor dealing with corruption, who wished to remain anonymous.

## 5. The scarcity of investigative journalism

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There is a scarcity of investigative journalism in Kosovo, and most civil society activists and experts interviewed for this report believe that a limited number of media are active in investigating organised crime and corruption cases. However, the influence of these reports has had little effect on the actions of the judiciary, although there were cases, such as the indictment against two former ministers of culture, which resulted directly from media reporting.

“In principle, the prosecution keeps its eyes open to media reporting, because there are many quality reports containing substantial evidence. There were cases when the prosecution has initiated formal investigations based on media reporting. Specifically, there is the case of the former ministers of culture, which was opened as a result of media reporting,” said prosecutor Hajdari.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Both former ministers were subsequently acquitted.

In-depth reporting is scarce because investigations into such issues require more time and resources.

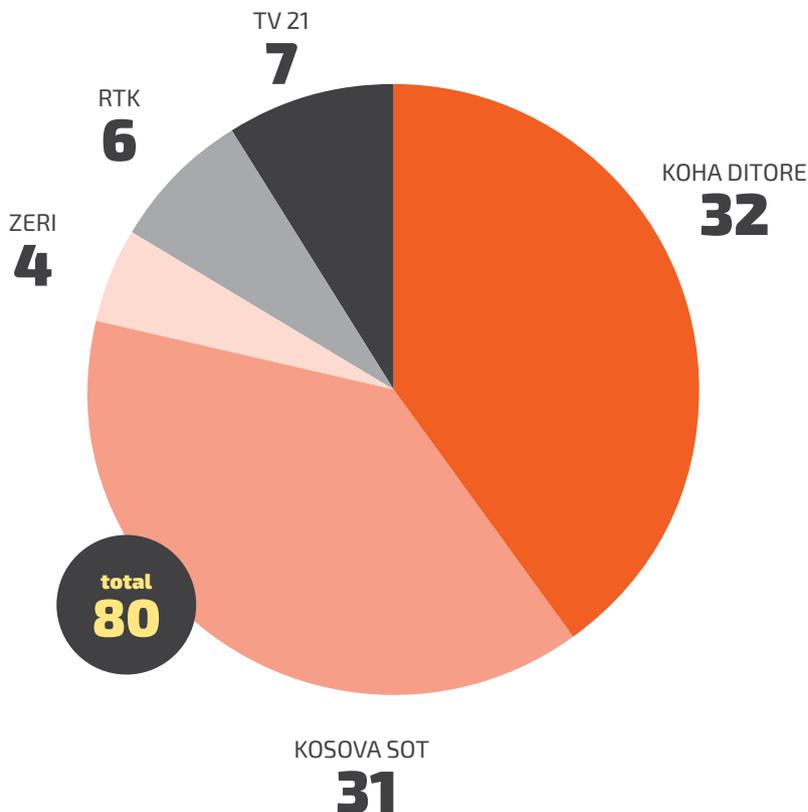
Most journalists who were interviewed complained that they did not have sufficient time to investigate reports on cases of organised crime and corruption because these stories are more demanding than reporting on day-to-day issues.

# **ANNEX**

**RESULTS OF MEDIA CONTENT  
QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS**

## How the media agenda was set

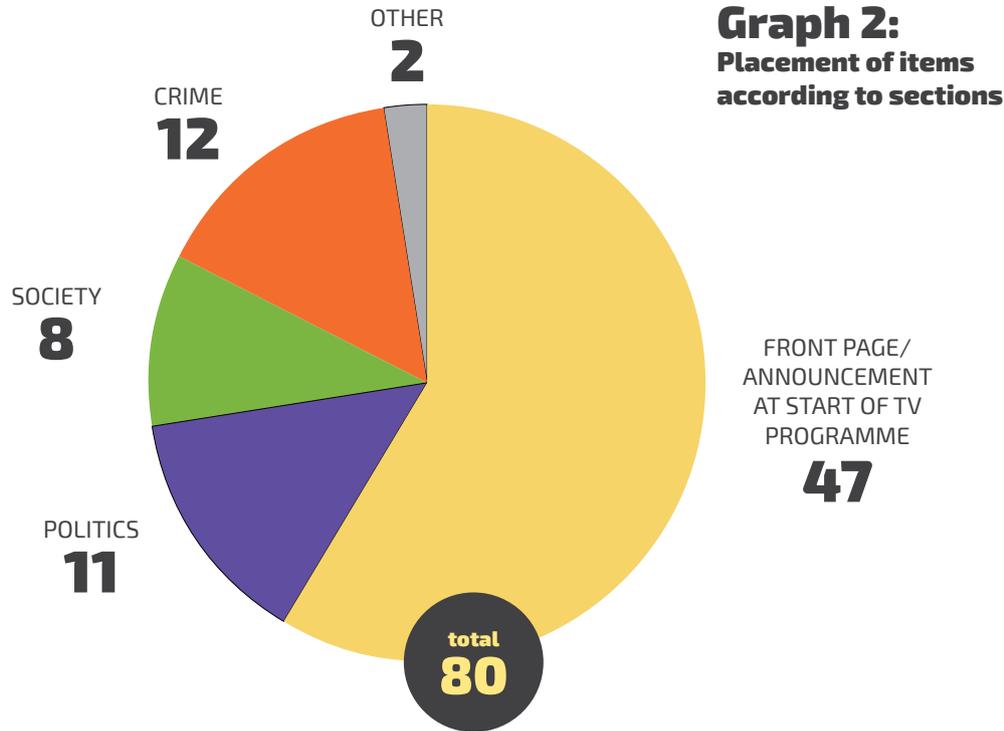
The research was conducted through quantitative and qualitative analysis of media reporting on investigative and court proceedings related to organised crime and corruption. Research by the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network in Kosovo included five media companies from the country, two TV broadcasters (public broadcaster RTK and privately-owned TV 21), as well as three daily newspapers (Koha Ditore, Kosova Sot and Zeri). The sample period was the three months starting on April 3, 2017 and ending on June 30, 2017. Over these three months, 80 items were identified and analysed ('items' refers to print or TV reports with their accompanying photos, images, infographics, etc).



**Graph 1:** Total number of reports per media outlet

# Placement of reports

More than a half of all the reports (47 out of 80) were given the most attention-grabbing spot in the newspapers or TV reports - on the front pages or in the announcements at the start of the TV programme. Judicial proceedings on corruption and organised crime were also located in newspaper sections or in reports on TV programmes dealing with crime (12 items), politics (11 items) and society (8 items).

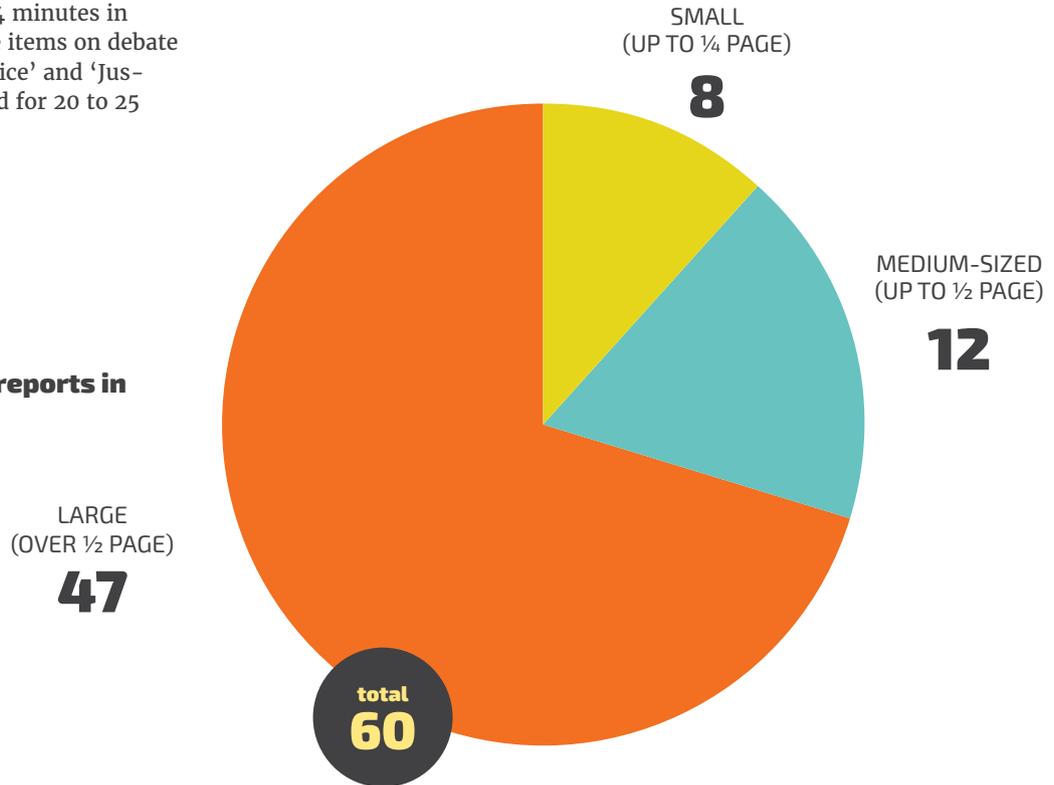


# Length of the reports

The length of printed articles also testifies about the importance of certain topics. In the period observed, 47 large reports or articles were recorded, along with 12 medium-sized and 8 shorter ones.

As for TV reports, their length varied from 34 seconds to 4 minutes in news editions, while items on debate shows 'Oath for Justice' and 'Justice in Kosovo' lasted for 20 to 25 minutes.

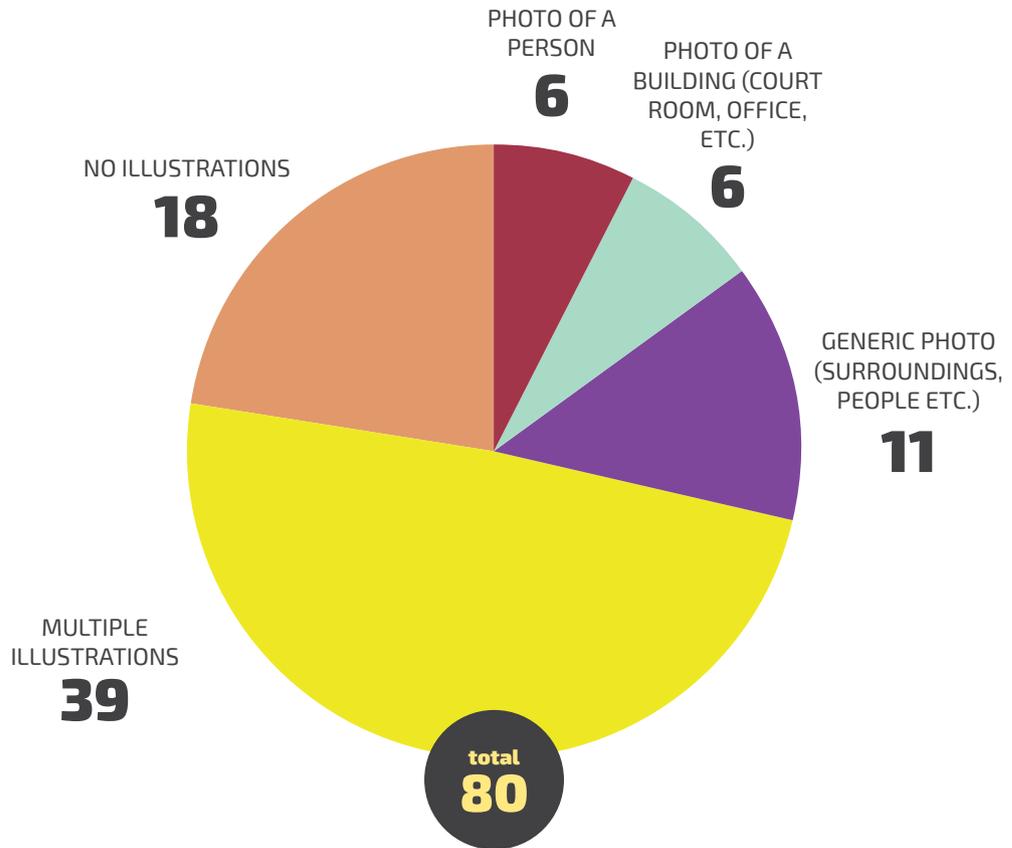
**Graph 3:**  
Size of articles/reports in print media



# Illustrations

In terms of illustrations for the reports, the media usually used multiple illustrations (39 items out of 80), which is usual practice in longer-form reports. Generic photos of buildings, crowd etc. were used in 11 reports, while a photograph of the subject of the report – the defendant, suspect or interviewee – was used in six of them. Shorter news items were published without illustrations.

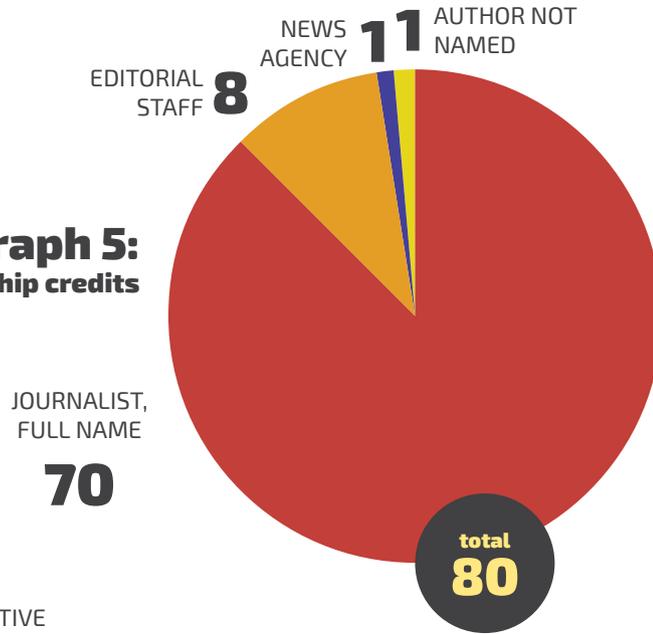
**Graph 4:**  
Illustrations for  
articles/reports



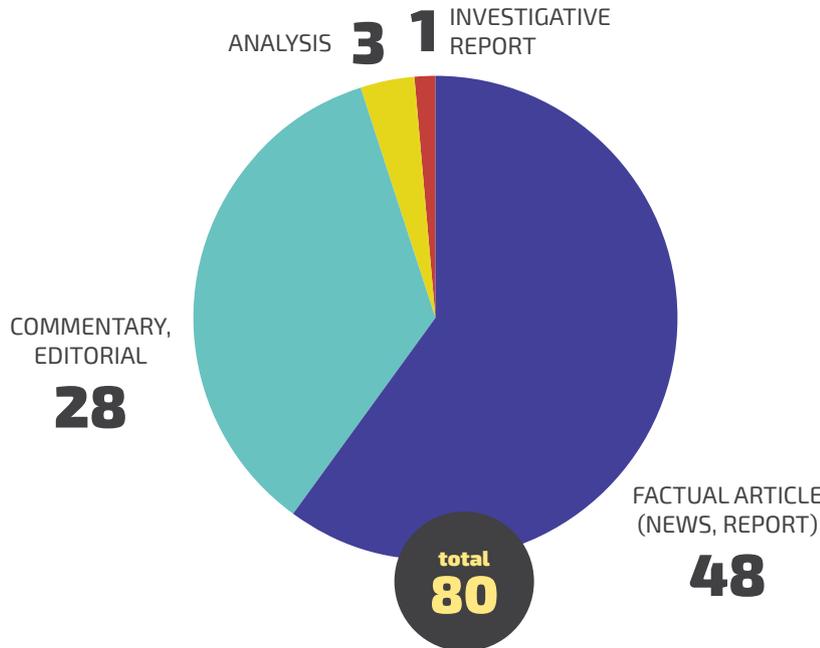
# Authorship

Media usually credited the article or report with the full name and surname of the author. Nearly 90 per cent of the articles and reports analysed were credited to the author with his or her full name and surname. In eight cases “editorial staff” were credited and in one case, “news agency”; only in one instance was no author credited.

**Graph 5:  
Authorship credits**

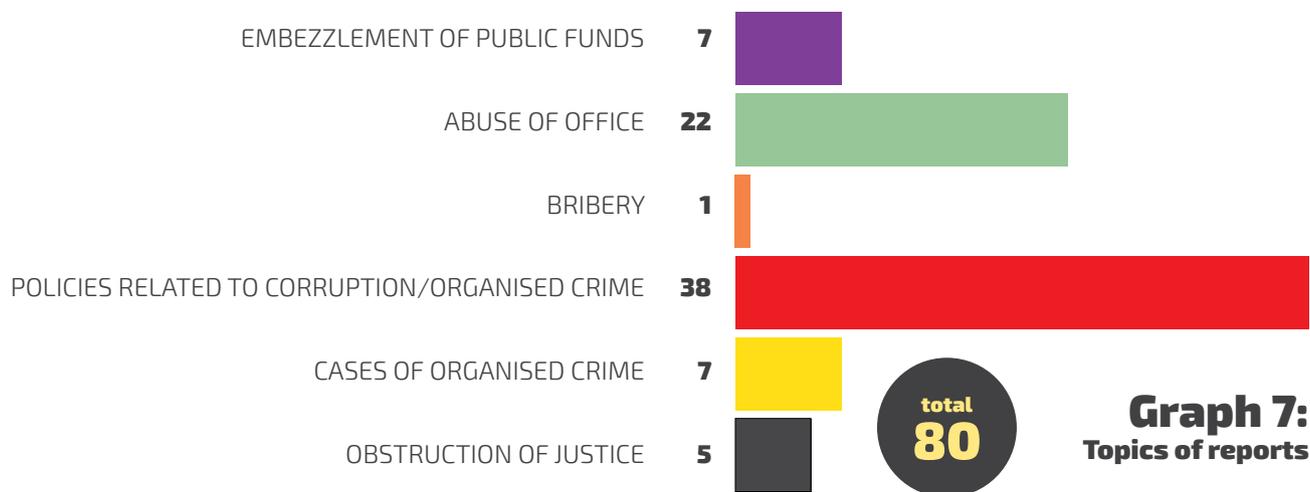


**Graph 6:  
Genre**



## Genre

Out of the total of 80 articles or reports that were analysed, 48 were news pieces. In Kosova Sot, commentaries and editorials dominated, with 28 items of this genre published by the newspaper. Only three analytical pieces and one investigative report were published in three-month period across all sampled outlets.



## Topics of reports

In the 80 articles and reports that were analysed, the topic of almost half of them (37 reports) was the implementation of policies on organised crime and corruption. These articles were mainly published by Kosova Sot.

The topic of a quarter of all the articles analysed (22 out of 80) was abuse of office, while seven reports related to the embezzlement of public funds. There were only seven reports in total on organised crime.

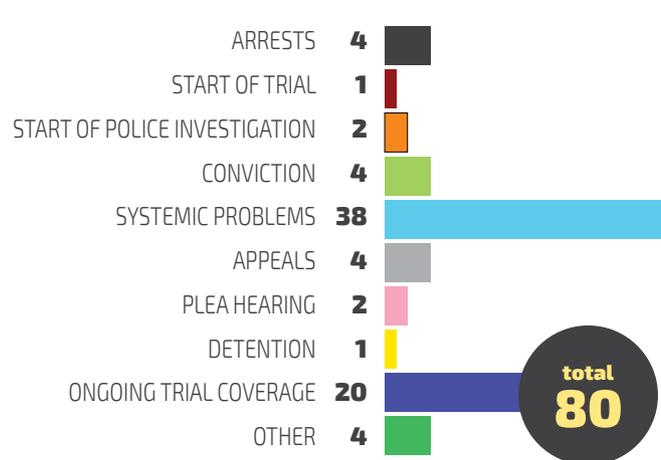
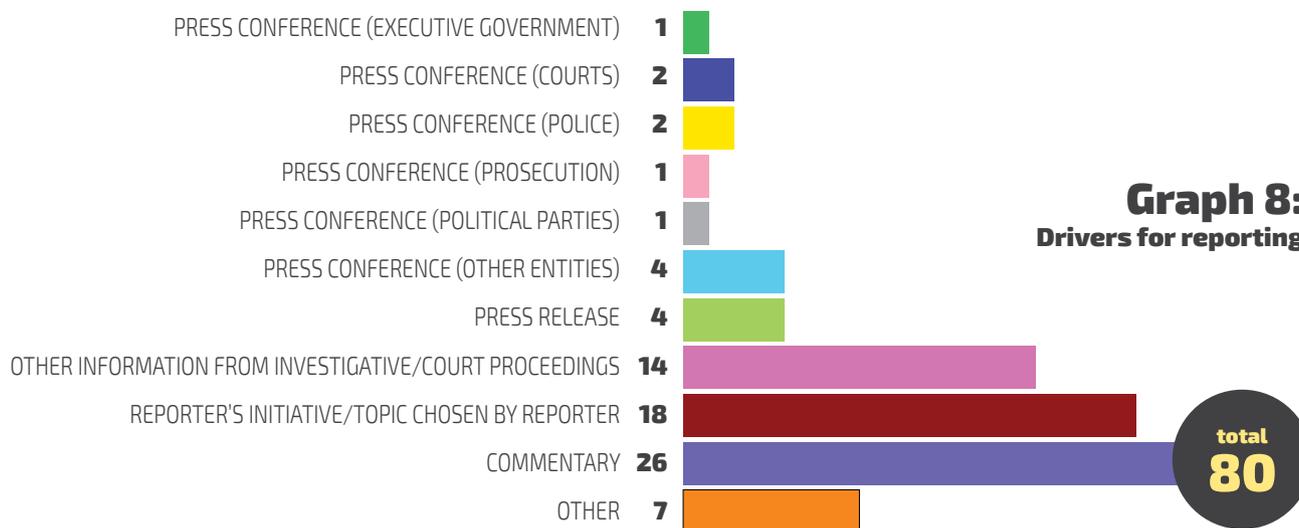
One of the most important cases during the reporting period was the trial of the former Pristina court judge Kole Puka who was accused of taking illegal decisions. Koha Ditore published four articles on this case while Zeri reported on it once.

Another court case which was prominent during the reporting period was the one against former Education Minister Rame Buja, who was accused of abuse of office. Koha Ditore reported on it four

times, including the news that the indictment against the former minister had been dropped, and TV21 once.

Out of seven reports on organised crime cases, Koha Ditore published three reports related to former Sken-deraj/Srbica mayor Sami Lushtaku, the 'Medicus' organ trafficking case and the lack of final court verdicts in higher-level corruption cases, while RTK reported about the case of former Culture Minister Astrit Haraqija, an incident related to the breaking down of the doors of the University Clinics Centre's procurement offices, and the confiscation of 312kg of marijuana, which was presented as a "successful police action".

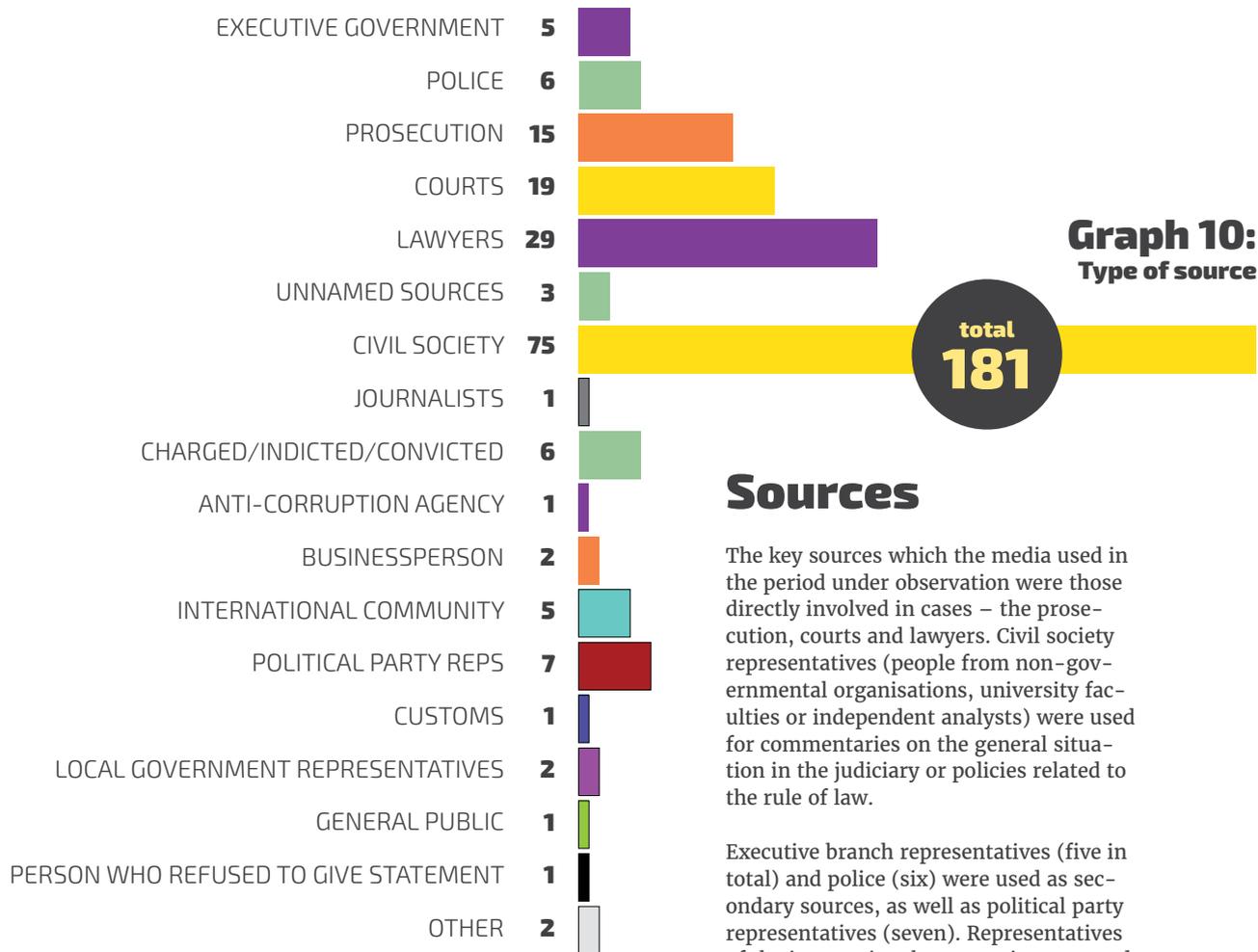
During the reporting period, the monitored media mostly reported on the quality of policies related to organised crime and corruption, with 38 articles in total. This includes commentaries as well as reports on news events.



## Triggers for reporting

A lot of reporting was based on information coming from ongoing court proceedings (14 reports out of 80) or on official press releases or press conferences (15 reports). A significant number of reports (26 out of 80) were commentaries, mostly from Kosova Sot, as a result of this newspaper's specific editorial policy.

Other things that triggered reporting were the various stages of investigative or court proceedings. The media that were analyzed mostly reported on systemic problems - policies and procedures related to processing organized crime and corruption cases (38 reports), followed by reports on court proceedings.



## Sources

The key sources which the media used in the period under observation were those directly involved in cases – the prosecution, courts and lawyers. Civil society representatives (people from non-governmental organisations, university faculties or independent analysts) were used for commentaries on the general situation in the judiciary or policies related to the rule of law.

Executive branch representatives (five in total) and police (six) were used as secondary sources, as well as political party representatives (seven). Representatives of the international community appeared as sources five times.

The sample recorded a small number of unnamed sources (three in total).

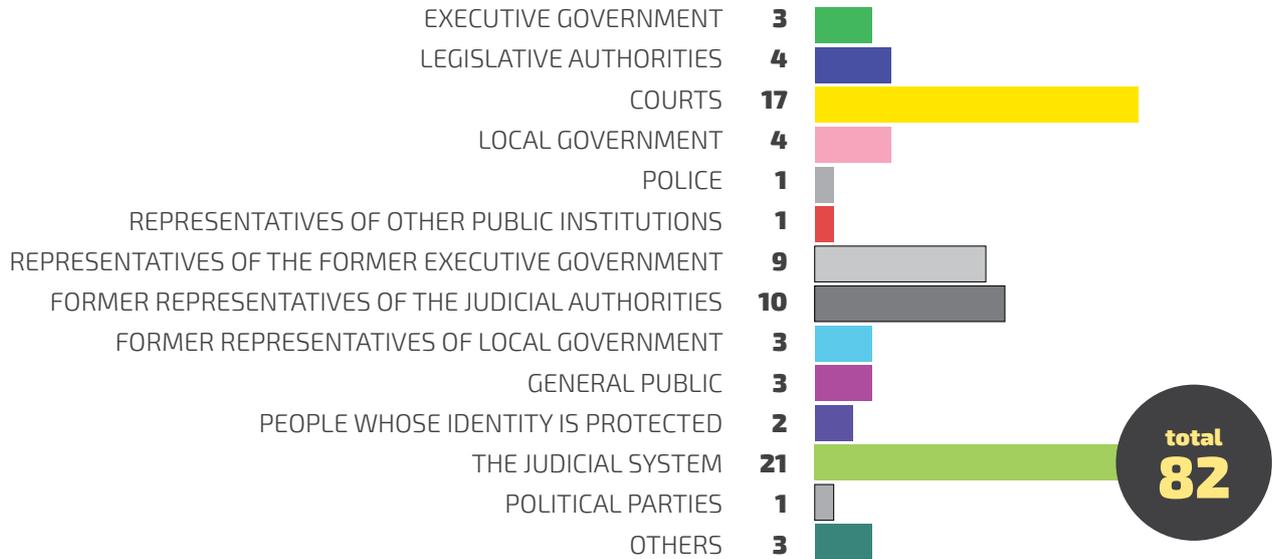
*\*total number of sources is larger than total number of articles as the majority of articles had more than one source*

# Subjects of reports

The judicial system in general, along with courts and judges (whether of current or former), are the main subject of reporting when it comes to corruption and organised crime. In the observed period, they were the subject of reports 48 times.

The executive and legislative branches featured far less often as subjects in articles about the fight against corruption and organised crime.

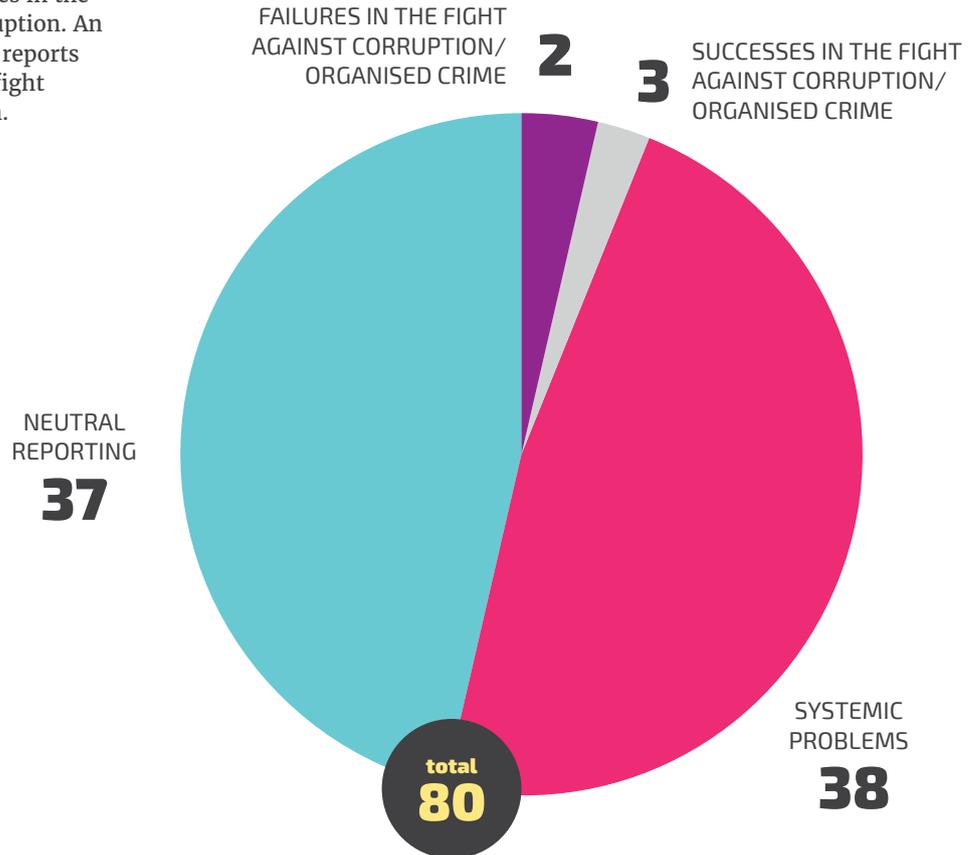
**Graph 11:**  
**Subjects of reports**



*\*total number of subjects is larger than total number of articles as two articles have two subjects*

# Overall evaluation

Almost half of the articles and reports were factual, neutral reporting. However, it is important to note that as many as 38 articles and reports dealt with systemic problems, and an additional two with failures in the fight against crime and corruption. An exceptionally low number of reports were about successes in the fight against crime and corruption.



**Graph 12:**  
Tone of Reporting

# About the project:

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The report was published as part of a project entitled 'Exercising Freedom of Expression and the Openness of State Institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Serbia'. The project was implemented by the Balkan Investigative Regional Reporting Network - BIRN Hub, in partnership with BIRN Serbia and BIRN Kosovo, from April 2017 to January 2018, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Serbia. It was supported by German Federal Foreign Office Stability Pact funds.

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