



MUNICIPAL COUNCILS IN SILENCE:

Media Coverage and the Engagement of Municipal Councils in Albania

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The relationship between municipal councils and the media has not been the focus of many studies carried out so far in the country. This research report aims to change this, by focusing on the media coverage of municipal councils and the engagement of council members with the media. The study relied on three methods: media monitoring, semi-structured interviews with municipal council members, and requests for information sent to all municipal councils in the country.

The findings show that the media coverage of municipal councils is very limited and concentrated in a few councils and a few topics. For the period under study, January–December 2025, media attention focused mainly on political conflicts and judicial proceedings, while topics directly related to the role of councils—such as the budget, public consultations, and access to services—received very little attention. Mayors dominated media reporting, while municipal council members rarely appeared as sources of information. Women council members proved to be markedly underrepresented in the media, despite their high numerical representation in municipal councils.

The interviews with council members reinforced the findings of the media monitoring. Council members considered the media to be interested mainly in political conflicts and not in the work of municipal councils. According to them, council members' limited engagement with the media is linked to political and economic interests, the lack of incentives for public communication, and the concern that public criticism may have consequences. A number of council members considered the local administration to be an obstacle to open communication with the media. The interviews also highlighted that council members have little knowledge of and support for communicating with the media, and that training in this area is lacking.

Council members themselves called on the media to reconceive their relationship with the municipal council and the way they approach council members. They also called on the council

itself to reconsider its relationship with the media—to see it as an ally in advancing a shared goal: improving the quality of governance and well-being in every municipality. It was suggested that council members be trained with the aim of developing practical skills: how to give interviews, how to communicate with voters through social media, and how to build a professional and transparent relationship with journalists. At the same time, council members shared the view that journalists themselves also need training, especially on how to communicate professionally with council members, how to contribute to strengthening the role of council members, and how to rely on ethical principles in their work.

1. INTRODUCTION

Municipal councils—or, in other words, local parliaments—are not often written about in the media. Studies on this topic are likewise limited. The authors who have placed municipal councils at the focus of their work have examined aspects related to the quality of governance, such as the relationship with the local administration, residents’ participation in municipal council meetings, or the implementation of gender quotas.¹ According to the results of these studies, decision-making in municipal councils is characterised by a series of problems, some of which are closely linked to the problems of governance at the central level. For example, responses to council members’ requests addressed to the local administration have been progressively weakening, a tendency that has deepened particularly after the concentration of power mainly in a single party. At the same time, municipal council members report that their efforts are often constrained by the local administration, which provides limited information or does not handle council members’ requests for information in a timely and professional manner. These problems, among others, are linked to a concern and dissatisfaction among council members that the municipal council, in practice, does not serve as a local parliament, but as the municipality’s “notary.”² In other words, municipal councils approve what is presented to them by the local administration, while their representative and oversight functions remain weak.

¹ See, for example, Dauti, M., & Metaj, G. (2024). *Përfaqësimi politik në këshillat bashkiake pas zbatimit të kuotës gjinore 50/50: Çfarë po ndodh me hendekun gjinor*. Tirana, Albania: Women’s Empowerment Network; Institute for Democracy and Mediation. (2025). *Transparenca e këshillave bashkiake: Analizë e programit të transparencës dhe i kuadrit ligjor e institucional* [Unpublished internal report]; Institute for Democracy and Mediation. (2025). *Raport vlerësimi për zbatimin e rregulloreve dhe mekanizmave të transparencës në 6 këshilla bashkiake të veriut* [Unpublished internal report]; Haxhimali, A. (2025). *Local government in Albania: Status report 2025*. Institute for Albanian Municipalities. <https://iam.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Local-Government-in-Albania-2024.pdf>

² Dauti, M., & Metaj, G. (2024). *Përfaqësimi politik në këshillat bashkiake pas zbatimit të kuotës gjinore 50/50: Çfarë po ndodh me hendekun gjinor*. Tirana, Albania: Women’s Empowerment Network.

Nevertheless, so far the focus of studies has been more on what happens inside municipal councils than on the way they are presented in the media. This study aims to fill this gap, by focusing attention on the media coverage of municipal councils and the engagement of council members with the media. This analysis is important for several reasons. First, the analysis of media coverage helps us understand the importance given to municipal councils and the weight they carry in the media narrative. Second, the focus on the content of the news, beyond the level of coverage, helps us understand what is highlighted in the media—the information through which public opinion is shaped. Third, an essential aspect of the relationship between the municipal council and the media is the perspective of council members themselves—the way they see this relationship and, equally important, what they propose for improving it.

The study relies on three methods of data collection. To learn about the media coverage of municipal councils, the news published in the media during the period 1 January–31 December 2025 was analysed. Beyond analysing the level of media coverage, the research team also focused on the content of the news, specifically on the topics related to municipal councils that are addressed in the media. To accomplish this, the working group carried out a thematic analysis of the published news. To learn about council members' perspectives, the study relied on semi-structured interviews conducted with municipal council members. The methods used and the data collected through them complement one another, focusing on quantitative and qualitative aspects of the phenomenon: the quantitative media coverage, the qualitative analysis of news content, and the personal experiences of council members. While the analysis of media coverage makes it possible to present an overall panorama of the weight that news about municipal councils occupies in the media space, the analysis of news content shifts attention to another important aspect—what is communicated about municipal councils through the media. The third method aims to shed light on council members' perspectives, paying attention to their experiences, the difficulties they encounter, and the suggestions they give for improving the situation.

The research report continues with the presentation of the study's methodology. Next, the results are presented, organised according to the methods used for collecting and analysing the data. The concluding section presents the study's main conclusions, as well as the suggestions formulated by the council members themselves.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study combines three complementary methods: media monitoring, semi-structured interviews with local councillors, and requests for information submitted to all municipalities in the country. Each method is described below.

2.1. Media Monitoring

The media monitoring component was designed to map the nature, volume, and framing of media coverage of municipal councils across Albania throughout the full calendar year 2025. A central working assumption—supported by preliminary observation—is that Albanian media tend to concentrate on national-level politics, leaving local governance institutions, and municipal councils in particular, largely in the margins of public discourse. This analysis seeks to test and substantiate that assumption with systematic evidence, while also identifying the specific topics, actors, and framings that do generate media attention when councils are covered.

Media monitoring was conducted using SentiOne, a media intelligence platform that continuously tracks online publications, including the web editions of print newspapers, digital-native online media, and television stations. A keyword-based search strategy was applied across a curated panel of 41 Albanian media outlets, targeting content that referenced municipal councils or council members published between 1 January and 31 December 2025.

Given the large volume of content identified through automated keyword matching, a semi-random sampling strategy was employed: SentiOne extracted approximately 20% of all matched articles,

ensuring proportional representation across media outlets and keyword categories. This sampling approach allows the findings to be treated as representative of the overall population of council-related coverage, and all statistics in this report are presented as percentages of the coded sample to support generalisation.

All retrieved articles from the three monitoring streams—print newspapers, online media, and television—were subsequently merged into a single consolidated dataset. During this process, three outlets with fewer than six articles in the sample (Tirana Post, Shekulli, and 55 News) were excluded as their coverage was too limited to contribute meaningfully to analysis. Additionally, two outlets initially classified as print—Koha Jone and Standard—were reclassified as online media, reflecting their predominantly digital-native character. Following these adjustments, the final monitoring panel comprises 41 outlets across three media categories.

The final merged and coded dataset comprises 1,624 articles. An additional 340 articles retrieved by SentiOne were determined by coders to contain no meaningful or substantive reference to municipal councils and were excluded from analysis. Table 1 summarises the composition of the final coded sample by media type.

Table 1: Composition of the coded media sample by media type

Media type	Outlets monitored	Articles in sample	Coded articles	% of coded sample
Print newspapers	7	348	256	15.8%
Online/digital-native media	24	1,112	965	59.4%
Television (web editions)	10	504	403	24.8%
Totals	41	1,964	1,624	100%

The seven print newspaper outlets monitored are the major national dailies: Sot, Gazeta Tema, Panorama, Fjala, Telegraf, Gazeta Dita, and Monitor. The 24 online outlets span digital-native news portals and digital editions of established media, including Shqiptarja, Balkanweb, Boldnews, CNA, Pamfleti, Politiko, Dosja, Koha Jone, Standard, and others. Television coverage was captured through the web editions of 10 national broadcasters: RTSH (the public broadcaster), Ora News, Top Channel, A2 CNN, Syri TV, Euronews Albania, Vizion Plus, ABC News Albania, Fax News, and Scan TV. A full list of monitored outlets with individual article counts is provided in Annex 1.

2.1.1. Coding Framework

Each article in the sample was reviewed and coded by a team of trained coders according to a standardised framework developed for this study, using SentiOne's tagging interface. The framework covers the following dimensions:

- **Relevance:** Each article was classified as either primary (the municipal council or its members are the main focus of the content) or secondary (the council is mentioned only incidentally or in passing). Of the 1,624 coded articles, 1,398 (86.1%) were classified as primary and 226 (13.9%) as secondary. Unless otherwise stated, the thematic and actor-level analyses presented in this report are based on primary-relevance articles only.
- **Topic/Theme:** The main subject of each article was assigned to one of 14 thematic categories: budget and draft budget; electoral engagement and political stances of council members; residents' stances on council decisions; political debate between council majority and opposition; council autonomy and relations with central government; governance concerns and accountability; justice and legal proceedings; social issues; disasters and emergencies; public access to local services; gender and gender equality; public consultations with residents; internal council procedures; and other topics. The category on electoral engagement covers articles in which council members took public positions on, or were actively involved in, two distinct electoral processes during 2025: the parliamentary elections of 11 May 2025, and the partial local by-elections of 9 November 2025 held in five municipalities (Berat, Cërrik, Mat, Tepelenë, and Vlorë), as well as the tentative by-election in Tirana that was subsequently suspended by the Constitutional Court.
- **Authorship:** Articles were classified as written by a journalist, authored by a council member, of unclear authorship, or attributed to another category (e.g. analyst, member of parliament, press release). Where the author was identified as a council member, the gender of that member was recorded.
- **Actors cited:** The primary actor quoted or featured in the article was coded as: council member, mayor, municipal official, member of parliament, resident, civil society organisation, or no identifiable source. Where the cited actor was a council member, their gender and political party affiliation were also recorded.

- **Council name:** The specific municipal council featured was identified from the full list of Albania's 61 municipalities.
- **Political party:** Where a political party was prominently featured, it was coded as: the Socialist Party (PS), the Democratic Party (PD), the ruling majority (general), the opposition (general), other parties, multiple parties simultaneously, or no party.

2.1.2. Limitations

Several limitations of the dataset should be noted when interpreting the findings.

- **Authorship attribution:** Albanian media outlets frequently publish articles without bylines or with insufficient author information, a structural feature of the sector rather than a data quality issue. As a result, authorship could be identified as a named journalist in only a minority of cases (124 of 1,624 coded articles). In the print and television sub-samples in particular, the dominant authorship categories are "other" (institutional or agency source) and "unclear." This limits conclusions about the extent of original reporting versus content aggregated from agency wires or press releases.
- **Content duplication:** A notable feature of the Albanian media landscape is the widespread republication of identical or near-identical content across multiple outlets. In the monitored sample, 46 distinct article titles appeared in two or more outlets, generating 93 duplicate instances across the dataset. This copy-paste phenomenon means that certain events or statements appear to receive broader coverage than actually reflects independent journalistic output. Where relevant, this dynamic is noted in the analysis.

- **Sampling coverage:** The 20% semi-random sample is by design representative but not exhaustive. Rare events or coverage in low-volume outlets may be underrepresented. Findings on the least-covered municipalities should be interpreted with particular caution.
- **Keyword sensitivity:** SentiOne's keyword-based retrieval may have missed articles discussing councils in substantive terms without using the designated search terms, or may have initially retrieved tangential articles that were subsequently excluded during coding. The exclusion of 340 retrieved articles during the coding phase reflects, in part, this limitation.
- **Gender data gaps:** The gender of authors and actors was systematically recorded only where the authorship or actor type was identified as a council member specifically. For other actor categories (residents, analysts, etc.) gender was not coded, including many cases when authors or actors were not identified in the articles analysed.

2.2. Semi-Structured Interviews with Local Councillors

The purpose of the interviews was to learn about council members' experiences with the media, including their engagement in the media, their assessment of the relationship between the municipal council and the media, and the difficulties they encounter, as well as their suggestions for improving the situation. To this end, the aim was to include a diverse group of council members from councils of different sizes across the country. The selection of council members was based on the information published on the official websites of the municipalities. Council members were identified by reviewing their professional profiles, with the aim of also including council members with previous experience in the media.

The process of selecting and communicating with council members was accompanied by several difficulties. In some cases, council members' contact details were missing from the municipalities' official websites or were not up to date. In other cases, the council members contacted did not respond to the request for an interview. In total, 20 council members were contacted, of whom 9 responded. Of the nine interviewees, five were women and four were men. Their ages ranged from 32 to 67 years. The interviewees were members of the municipal councils of Sarandë, Fier, Korçë, Dropull, Kukës, Kurbin, Tirana, and Shkodër, and represented the Socialist Party, the Democratic Party, and the Social Democratic Party, while one council member was independent. Seven of them were serving their second term in the municipal council, while two were in their first term. The council members came from various professions, including economics, political science, law, education, health, academia, and the energy sector. Two of them also had direct experience in the media, one as a journalist and the other as the founder and director of a media outlet. The interviewees were engaged in various committees of the municipal councils, including the committees on the economy, laws, social issues, gender equality, housing, education and sports, as well as culture.

The interviews focused on council members' experiences with the media during the exercise of their mandate. Specifically, council members were asked about the forms of their engagement in the media, the difficulties they encounter in engaging, as well as their assessments of how the media covers the activity of municipal councils. The interviews also explored whether gender differences exist with regard to engagement with the media, whether communication with the media is part of formal or informal discussions in the municipal council, and whether council members have been offered training opportunities in this area. Finally, the interviewees were invited to share concrete suggestions for improving communication between municipal council members and the media, as well as for developing training and mentoring programmes in this area. The interviews were conducted by telephone and lasted on average 30 minutes.

Given the small number of interviews and their qualitative character, the analysis identifies themes shared across the interviews rather than offering a systematic comparison by municipality size or political affiliation; where interviewees themselves drew attention to differences—including those related to gender—these are reported in the relevant sub-sections.



2.3. Requests for Information Submitted to Local Councils

BIRN sent a request for information to all councils in the country to verify whether they had adopted a regulation on relations with the public and the media. In cases where a regulation had been adopted, councils were asked to make the relevant document available, together with the number and the date of the approval decision. Of the 61 municipal councils, 54 (88.5%) responded to the request for information.

3. FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the study, organised according to the methods through which the data were collected and analysed. It is structured in two parts that move from the media's output to the councils and their members. The first part (Section 3.1) examines how Albanian media covered municipal councils during 2025, drawing on a content analysis of a large sample of news articles. The second part (Section 3.2) turns to the councils and council members themselves, combining requests for information sent to all 61 municipal councils—which document the formal rules councils have adopted on communication with the public and the media—with semi-structured interviews that capture how council members experience and explain their own engagement with the media.

The two parts are complementary in both focus and method. The media-monitoring findings are largely quantitative, describing the volume, distribution, themes, actors, and framing of coverage across the year. The findings on councils and members are documentary and qualitative, describing the institutional framework for council–media relations and the lived experience of those operating within it. Where relevant, the findings of one method are read against those of another, so that the patterns observed in media coverage can be set alongside the accounts and practices of the councils that coverage is meant to scrutinise.

3.1. Findings from Media Monitoring

This section presents the findings of the media-monitoring component, drawing on the consolidated dataset of 1,624 coded articles collected across 41 media outlets throughout 2025. Because this dataset represents a 20% semi-random sample of all council-related

content retrieved during the year, the figures are reported as percentages of the coded sample, which allows them to be generalised to the estimated full population of coverage; where useful, estimated full-year totals are given alongside the sample percentages. Unless otherwise stated, the thematic, actor, and framing analyses are based on the 1,398 articles (86.1%) classified as having primary relevance—that is, articles in which a municipal council or its members are the central focus rather than an incidental mention.

The section is organised into nine sub-sections, each addressing a distinct dimension of how Albanian media covered municipal councils in 2025: the overall volume and relevance of coverage; the extent of original reporting and content duplication; temporal trends across the year; the geographic distribution of coverage across municipalities; the themes that dominate; the actors and voices that appear; political framing and party representation; the gender dimensions of coverage; and a comparative analysis across the three media types.

3.1.1. Volume and Overall Relevance of Coverage

The coded sample comprises 1,624 articles, of which 86.1% (1,398 articles) were classified as having *primary relevance*—meaning the municipal council or its members were the central focus of the content. The remaining 13.9% (226 articles) were classified as having secondary relevance, where councils appeared only incidentally, typically as peripheral actors in a story driven by another institution or political development. Unless otherwise stated, all analyses in this chapter are based on primary-relevance articles.

Because the monitoring captured approximately 20% of all matched content, the estimated total volume of council-related coverage across all 41 monitored outlets for the full year 2025 is approximately 9,800 articles—or roughly 7,000 articles if restricted to primary-relevance content.

This figure, while seemingly substantial in absolute terms, represents a markedly thin layer of coverage when set against the breadth of Albanian media output on national political affairs, government activity, or the executive branch, where individual events routinely generate hundreds of articles in a single day. Municipal councils, which are the primary legislative and oversight bodies at local level and directly affect the daily lives of over 2.8 million citizens, receive coverage that is both episodic and predominantly reactive.

Estimated full-year council coverage across monitored outlets: ~7,000 primary-relevance articles. This volume, distributed across 41 outlets and a full calendar year, averages fewer than 200 articles per outlet annually—fewer than four per week—and is concentrated heavily in a single month (September, see Section 3.1.3).

Coverage was distributed unevenly across media types. Online and digital-native outlets accounted for the largest share of the coded sample (59.4%), followed by television (24.8%) and print newspapers (15.8%). However, the nature of relevance differed significantly: print newspapers and television carried a much higher proportion of primary-relevance articles (96.1% and 95.8% respectively), whereas online outlets showed a higher rate of secondary-relevance content (20.6%), suggesting that online media more often mentioned councils tangentially within broader political or national stories. Table 2 presents the breakdown by media type.

Table 2: Coded articles and primary relevance by media type

Media type	Coded articles	% of sample	Primary relevance	% primary within type
Print newspapers	256	15.8%	246	96.1%
Online/digital-native media	965	59.4%	766	79.4%
Television (web editions)	403	24.8%	386	95.8%
Totals	1,624	100%	1,398	86.1%

Outlet-level concentration is also pronounced. The single most prolific outlet in the sample was RTSH, the public broadcaster, which alone accounted for 8.7% of all coded primary articles—more than the entire print newspaper sub-sample combined. Sot newspaper followed with 7.0%, and the three largest online outlets (Shqiptarja, Boldnews, and Pamfleti) each contributed between 5.3% and 5.8%. Together, the top five outlets accounted for approximately one third of all coded coverage.

RTSH's disproportionate share warrants specific attention. As the national public broadcaster with a network of regional studios across Albania, RTSH is structurally better positioned than commercial outlets to report on councils beyond Tirana. Its regional journalists provide coverage of council sessions, local elections, and municipal decisions across multiple prefectures, generating a breadth of geographic coverage not matched by any other single outlet in the monitoring panel (see Section 3.1.4 for geographic analysis). This structural advantage translates into a qualitatively different coverage profile: RTSH's primary-article theme distribution includes a higher share of political stances and council process stories, compared to commercial outlets which skew more heavily toward justice and conflict narratives.

3.1.2. Original Reporting and the Copy-Paste Phenomenon

A structural feature of the Albanian media landscape that directly affects the interpretation of volume figures is the widespread practice of republishing identical or near-identical content across multiple outlets. In the monitored sample, 46 distinct article titles appeared in two or more outlets, generating 93 duplicate instances across the dataset. This means that the apparent breadth of council coverage is, in part, an artefact of content duplication, rather than independent journalistic output.

This copy-paste phenomenon typically involves a statement, press release, or story from one outlet being reproduced verbatim or near-verbatim by several others, often within hours of the original publication. The state news agency ATA (ata.gov.al) functions as a key conduit for this process: its wire dispatches, which accounted for 2.8% of the coded sample directly, are frequently republished across online outlets without attribution or editorial addition. The result is that a single council event or statement may appear to generate coverage across five or six outlets while in practice reflecting the work of one reporter or one institutional press office.

Authorship data reinforces this picture. Only 8.9% of primary-relevance articles were attributed to a named journalist or reporter. The dominant authorship categories were “other”—covering institutional sources, agency wires, and press releases—(47.4%) and “unclear” (41.3%). Fewer than 2.4% of articles were directly authored by council members, suggesting that councils themselves generate very little self-initiated media content. These patterns are consistent across all three media types, though particularly pronounced in print and television, where bylines are least frequently provided.

Less than 1 in 10 council-related articles (8.9%) carries a named journalist's byline. The dominant share of content originates from institutional or agency sources, or cannot be attributed at all—pointing to a thin layer of original editorial investment in local governance reporting.

3.1.3. Temporal Trends: When Councils Are Covered

Coverage of municipal councils was far from evenly distributed across the calendar year. A single month—September 2025—accounted for 29.4% of all coded articles, more than any quarter in the rest of the year. October and November together contributed a further 26.9%. By contrast, the first half of the year (January to June) generated only 26.7% of annual coverage, and August was the quietest month at just 2.9%.

The September spike was not driven by a scheduled electoral cycle, but by an exceptional sequence of political and legal events centred on the Tirana Municipal Council. Following Prime Minister Edi Rama's public call for the removal of Mayor Erion Veliaj at the PS Assembly in early September, the Tirana Municipal Council convened on 23 September and voted by 50 votes—with both PS and opposition council members in favour—to propose the mayor's dismissal under Article 62 of the Law on Local Self-Governance, which allows removal when a mayor has been absent from duty for more than three months. Veliaj, who had been in pre-trial detention since February 2025, had requested to attend the session but was denied. The Council of Ministers formalised the dismissal on 25 September, and President Begaj issued a decree on 1 October setting 9 November as the date for partial by-elections in six municipalities: Tirana, Vlorë, Berat, Mat, Tepelenë, and Cërrik.

This chain of events generated an extraordinary volume of council-related coverage. Of all September articles, 77.1% mentioned the dismissal proceedings, and 78.4% referenced Veliaj by name.

The two dominant themes in September were *internal council procedures* (31.9% of September articles—primarily the dismissal session itself, its legal basis, and its procedural legitimacy) and *justice and legal proceedings* (25.6%), reflecting the ongoing Special Structure against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK) prosecution and Veliaj’s constitutional challenge to his dismissal. September coverage was also heavily concentrated on Tirana (77.4% of September articles), with Vlorë a distant second at 7.1%, the latter driven by reporting on the upcoming by-election there.

The events that followed sustained elevated coverage into Q4. In October, the Constitutional Court suspended the Tirana by-election pending Veliaj’s appeal—a development referenced in 64.2% of all October articles. On 3 November, the Constitutional Court annulled both the Council of Ministers’ dismissal decision and the presidential decree for Tirana elections, formally reinstating Veliaj as mayor despite his continued detention. That same month, on 9 November, partial by-elections proceeded as scheduled in the five remaining municipalities (Vlorë, Berat, Tepelenë, Cërrik, and Mat), recording Albania’s lowest ever electoral turnout at 18.7%. December coverage was dominated by budget approval processes, with 53.0% of December articles referencing budget-related content.

The September coverage spike was driven not by a scheduled election but by the Tirana Municipal Council’s own dismissal vote on 23 September—making the council itself the protagonist of one of Albania’s most intensely covered political events of 2025. This is, paradoxically, one of the rare moments when council decision-making generated sustained media interest—precisely because it was entangled with a criminal prosecution and a constitutional crisis.

This pattern underscores a central finding: media attention to councils is driven almost entirely by exceptional political and legal triggers, not by sustained interest in council performance or governance quality. The quarterly data confirm that the first half of 2025—encompassing the period immediately after Veliaj’s February arrest but before the dismissal proceedings—accounted for less than 27% of annual coverage, despite councils operating normally across the country during those months (see Table 3).

Table 3: Quarterly distribution of coded articles and key drivers

Period	Coded articles	% of annual sample	Key driver
January–March (Q1)	250	15.4%	Veliaj arrest (Feb) and SPAK proceedings; general council activity
April–June (Q2)	186	11.5%	Continued justice narrative; May parliamentary elections context
July–September (Q3)	637	39.2%	Council dismissal vote (23 Sep), government decision, presidential decree
October–December (Q4)	551	33.9%	Constitutional Court ruling (3 Nov); partial elections (9 Nov); budget season
Full year total	1,624	100%	

The temporal pattern holds across all three media types, with some variation in intensity. Print newspapers showed the sharpest concentration, with September alone accounting for 34.0% of all print articles for the year. Television was similarly spiked, with September at 29.5% of television stations' articles. Online media, while also peaking in September (28.1%), showed a somewhat more distributed profile across Q4, consistent with the tendency of digital outlets to generate sustained follow-up content on ongoing political and legal developments. Across all three media types, Q3 and Q4 together accounted for over 70% of annual coverage—a distribution that reflects the calendar of extraordinary events rather than any regular rhythm of council accountability reporting.

3.1.4. Geographic Coverage: Which Councils Are Visible

One of the most striking findings of the monitoring is the extreme geographic concentration of council coverage. Of Albania's 61 municipalities, only 34 (55.7%) appeared in coverage at all during 2025. The remaining 27 municipalities (44.3%) received zero mentions across the entire monitored year, meaning that the councils of nearly half of Albanian municipalities are entirely absent from national media discourse.

Within the 34 municipalities that were covered, the concentration is extreme. The Tirana Municipal Council alone accounted for 69.8% of all primary-relevance articles. However, this headline figure requires careful interpretation. As established in Section 3.1.3, the overwhelming majority of Tirana's coverage was driven by the exceptional Veliaj dismissal-reinstatement saga: 79.8% of Tirana's primary articles—representing 55.7% of all primary coverage nationally—referenced Veliaj, his dismissal, the Constitutional Court proceedings, or SPAK. Tirana's *routine* council coverage—budget discussions, service delivery, misgovernance, and social issues—amounted to just 14.1% of all primary articles nationally. This means that the picture of Tirana's dominance is substantially a picture of one extraordinary case rather than of sustained editorial interest in how the capital's council functions.

A similar caveat applies to several of the municipalities that rank immediately below Tirana. Five of the remaining municipalities—Vlorë, Berat, Mat, Cërrik, and Tepelenë—held partial by-elections on 9 November 2025, following vacancies created by mayors resigning or being elected to parliament or appointed to government positions. The prospect and conduct of these elections generated campaign and results coverage that significantly inflated the apparent visibility of these municipalities. For Berat, 95% of its 22 primary articles were election-driven; for Mat, 91% of its 11 articles; and for Vlorë—the most covered municipality outside Tirana—61% of its 103 articles related to the by-election. Without this electoral boost, Vlorë's year-round routine council coverage amounts to approximately 40 articles (2.9% of primary), centred on residents opposing council decisions, public service access, and misgovernance.

When event-driven coverage is set aside—removing articles linked to the Tirana dismissal crisis and the November partial elections in five municipalities—truly routine council coverage represents an estimated 36.6% of all primary articles. The structural geographic picture is one in which a handful of large urban centres (Shkodër, Durrës, Elbasan, Pogradec, Sarandë, Fier) generate modest but year-round coverage, while the vast majority of Albanian municipalities are effectively absent from media regardless of the electoral calendar.

The councils that receive the most consistent, year-round coverage—independent of elections or legal crises—are Shkodër, Durrës, Elbasan, Pogradec, Sarandë and Fier. These are councils that generate regular coverage through budget debates, misgovernance allegations, urban development disputes, and service delivery controversies, reflecting a baseline of editorial attention to major regional centres.

The remaining 29.7% of primary articles were shared between the other 33 municipalities. This means that all other covered municipalities appeared in fewer than 2% of articles each, and 22 of the 34 covered councils appeared in 10 or fewer articles over the full year—a frequency so low as to constitute near-invisibility. The 27 municipalities with zero council coverage include a concentration of rural and small-town local governments in southern and northeastern Albania: Belsh, Delvinë, Devoll, Divjakë, Finiq, Has, Himarë, Librazhd, Maliq, Mallakastër, Malësi e Madhe, Memaliaj, Mirditë, Patos, Peqin, Prrenjas, Pustec, Selenicë, Skrapar, and others. Their absence reflects a combination of geographic distance from Tirana-based editorial teams, smaller population sizes, and the absence of the kind of political or legal events that drive Albanian national media coverage.

Geographic coverage patterns differed meaningfully by media type. Television—particularly RTSH—showed the broadest distribution, reaching a more diverse set of municipalities. RTSH covered 19 distinct councils in primary-relevance articles, including smaller municipalities such as Kukës, Cërrik, and Tepelenë that received no print coverage. This reflects RTSH's network of

regional correspondents, which provides structural access to council activities beyond the capital. Commercial television stations and online media, concentrated in Tirana-based newsrooms, showed sharper geographic concentration on the capital and the four or five largest urban centres. Pogradec and Kamëz, for example, appeared predominantly in online media and were largely absent from print—a pattern consistent with digital-native outlets following community-level developments that fall below the threshold of national print editorial interest.

Table 4: Top 10 covered councils—primary articles, event-driven share, and year-round presence

Council	Primary articles	% of primary-relevance articles
Tirana	976	69.8%
Vlorë	103	7.4%
Shkodër	43	3.1%
Durrës	39	2.8%
Elbasan	34	2.4%
Pogradec	31	2.2%
Berat	22	1.6%
Sarandë	14	1.0%
Fier	14	1.0%
Kamëz	12	0.9%
27 municipalities	0	0.0%

3.1.5. What Gets Covered: Thematic Analysis

The thematic analysis reveals a coverage landscape dominated by two frames that together crowd out substantive local governance content: legal and judicial proceedings, and procedural or electoral politics. A deeper reading of article content—beyond the assigned coding categories—further reveals several cross-cutting narratives that recur across multiple themes throughout the year, suggesting that certain governance failures generated fragmented but persistent media interest. Table 5 presents the full thematic breakdown of primary-relevance articles.

Table 5: Thematic breakdown of primary-relevance articles (with estimated full-year totals)

Theme	% of primary-relevance articles	Estimated full-year total
Justice and legal proceedings	34.8%	~2,430
Internal council procedures	18.0%	~1,255
Electoral engagement and political stances of council members	12.0%	~840
Other topics	9.5%	~665
Governance concerns and accountability	6.8%	~475
Social issues	4.1%	~285
Political debate between council majority and opposition	4.1%	~285
Budget and draft budget	4.0%	~280

Residents' stances on council decisions	2.9%	~205
Public access to local services	1.6%	~115
Disasters and emergencies	1.1%	~75
Public consultations with residents	0.6%	~40
Gender and gender equality	0.4%	~25
Council autonomy and relations with central government	0.1%	~5
Totals	100%	~6,980

Judicial and legal proceedings was by far the dominant theme, accounting for 34.8% of all primary coverage. A content-level analysis confirms that 79.6% of these articles specifically referenced Erion Veliaj—covering his arrest in February 2025, his pre-trial detention throughout the year, the SPAK prosecution, the constitutional dispute over his dismissal, and the subsequent Constitutional Court proceedings. A further 4.7% referenced the prosecution of Deputy Prime Minister Belinda Balluku, which intersected with council coverage through the constitutional implications of her suspension. The remaining 13.8% of justice articles concerned other municipalities, most notably the SPAK prosecution of the Mayor of Tropojë, Rexhë Byberi, for abuse of office and procurement irregularities, and several cases involving local officials in Kamëz and Durrës. This secondary cluster demonstrates that SPAK's reach into local government extends beyond the capital, even if the Tirana case generated far greater coverage. When Tirana is excluded entirely, the justice theme drops to 15.7% of remaining coverage.

Internal council procedures accounted for 18.0% of primary articles. Contrary to what the September spike might suggest, this category was not primarily driven by inaugural sessions of

newly formed councils. A content analysis of the 251 articles in this category shows that 53.0% directly referenced the dismissal proceedings—the council session of 23 September, the legal basis invoked (Article 62 of the Law on Local Self-Governance), and the procedural legitimacy of that vote. Only 17.9% of procedure-related articles concerned swearing-in or inaugural sessions, the majority of which arose in October and November following the partial by-elections in five municipalities. This distinction matters: the procedures theme is not primarily a record of regular council activity, but rather an artefact of a single extraordinary session that itself became the centrepiece of a constitutional crisis.

Electoral engagement and political stances of council members was the third largest category at 12.0%. Content analysis confirms that 89.3% of these articles were election-related—covering candidacies, campaign positions, and results from both the May 2025 parliamentary elections (where several council members ran for parliament) and the November 2025 partial by-elections in five municipalities. The remaining 10.7% covered non-electoral political statements by council members, predominantly in the context of the Veliaj case. The category therefore functions almost entirely as an electoral reporting vehicle rather than as a record of council members' positions on local governance matters.

The three largest thematic categories—justice (34.8%), internal procedures (18.0%), and political stances (12.0%)—together account for 64.8% of all primary coverage. Content analysis shows that the overwhelming majority of articles within each of these categories were driven by a single extraordinary sequence of events: the SPAK prosecution of Tirana's mayor, the council's dismissal vote, and the ensuing constitutional crisis. Stripped of this singular narrative, the volume of council-related media coverage would be substantially lower and its thematic profile significantly different.

The themes most directly relevant to the quality of local democracy—budget and public finances (4.0%), access to local services (1.6%) public consultations with residents (0.6%), gender equality (0.4%), and council autonomy and relations with central government (0.1%)—accounted for a

combined total of just 6.7% of primary coverage. Including residents' stances on council decisions (2.9%), the share of substantive local governance themes rises to 9.6%—less than one tenth of total coverage, and less than one third of the justice theme alone.

The public consultation finding is particularly stark. The eight articles coded under this theme represent, in practice, only six distinct events: three are duplicates of the same Kukës housing story, and one concerns a national government meeting held in Kuçovë that was tangentially linked to council approval. Only one article—an opposition council member's demand for transparency during the 2026 budget process in Tirana—represents a genuine instance of a council member publicly invoking the right of citizens to participate in a council decision. Across Albania's 61 municipalities and a full calendar year, this amounts to a near-total media silence on participatory local governance.

Beyond the coded thematic categories, a reading of article content reveals several recurring sub-narratives that cut across multiple themes and warrant separate note.

The incinerator controversy—centred on the waste management concession contracts awarded to private operators across several municipalities—appeared in 6.6% of all primary articles (92 articles), distributed across the justice (37), misgovernance (29), disasters (7), and budget (5) categories. No single coding category captures this story fully, yet it represents one of the most persistent governance accountability narratives of the year, connecting SPAK investigations, opposition accusations, and council budget decisions in a thread that ran from January through December.

Urban development, demolitions, and unlicensed construction emerged as a second cross-cutting thread, appearing in 3.9% of primary articles (55 articles) across the justice, misgovernance, budget, and residents-opposing-decisions categories. This thread covered Tirana International Development (TID)-related demolitions in Durrës and Kamëz, permit irregularities in Tirana and Elbasan, and the earthquake reconstruction programme—the latter generating 34 articles

(2.4%) that spanned social issues, misgovernance, and justice framings. Both threads illustrate a limitation of single-code thematic classification: complex, multi-dimensional governance stories are fragmented across categories in ways that understate their true weight in the coverage.

Finally, references to transparency, accountability, and the right to information appeared in 6.0% of primary articles (84 articles), almost always as a rhetorical frame within political conflict articles rather than as substantive reporting on access to documents, freedom of information (FOI) compliance, or council transparency mechanisms. This suggests that accountability language is present in Albanian council coverage, but as a political weapon rather than as a genuine scrutiny tool.

There are meaningful differences by media type. Print newspapers showed the highest share of political stance coverage (21.5%), reflecting editorial investment in electoral coverage during the campaign periods. Television was more balanced, with RTSH standing out for its higher share of political stances (19.2%) and lower justice concentration (30.6%), consistent with its broader geographic remit and regional programming. Online media showed the highest concentration on justice (39.3%) and the lowest share of political stances (5.4%), reflecting the tendency of digital-native outlets to follow breaking legal and judicial developments continuously while investing less in electoral narrative-building.

Outside Tirana, the thematic picture shifts considerably. Among the 415 non-Tirana primary articles with a named council, the distribution is more balanced: justice falls to 15.7% (from 34.8% nationally), while residents' stances on council decisions rises to 9.9%, access to local services to 4.8%, and political conflict to 4.6%. Governance concerns and accountability (8.7%) and social issues (5.3%) are proportionally more prominent outside the capital than within it. This more diverse thematic profile suggests that, where smaller municipalities do receive coverage, it tends to be driven by concrete community concerns and local governance failures rather than by the political and judicial drama that dominates Tirana-focused reporting. The challenge is

that such coverage remains thin in absolute volume and highly concentrated in the handful of municipalities that generate year-round media presence.

3.1.6. Actors and Voices in Coverage

Analysis of the primary actor cited or featured in each article reveals a significant imbalance in whose voice defines council coverage. Mayors were the primary cited actor in 51.1% of all primary-relevance articles—more than half of total coverage. Council members appeared as the primary actor in 27.5% of articles. All other actor categories combined—municipal officials, members of parliament, residents, and civil society organisations—accounted for the remaining 21.4%.

This aggregate figure requires important qualification. A content-level analysis of the 715 articles citing a mayor as primary actor shows that 65.2% (466 articles) specifically referenced Erion Veliaj—meaning that a single individual in pre-trial detention generated more mayor-attributed coverage than all other Albanian mayors combined throughout 2025. The remaining 34.8% (249 articles) covered other mayors, with acting Tirana mayor Anuela Ristani appearing in 8 articles and Prime Minister Rama—frequently cited in his capacity as a visiting government figure at municipal events—appearing in 32. Without the Veliaj case, the mayoral actor share would fall from 51.1% to approximately 18% of primary coverage, dramatically altering the apparent balance between executive and council voices.

This distribution is structurally significant regardless of the Veliaj effect. Mayors are members of the executive branch of local government; municipal councils are the legislative and oversight branch. A coverage profile in which the executive voice dominates reflects a broader pattern in which the council's representative and accountability functions receive far less media recognition than mayoral authority and decision-making—a pattern that predates and extends beyond any single individual or case.

Table 6: Primary actor cited in primary-relevance articles, overall and by media type

Primary actor cited	% of primary-relevance articles	Print	Online	TV
Mayor	51.1%	73.6%	35.0%	68.9%
Council member	27.5%	23.2%	30.9%	23.3%
Other (analyst, institution)	12.4%	1.2%	20.9%	2.3%
Member of Parliament	4.0%	—	6.7%	1.3%
Municipal official	2.6%	2.0%	2.2%	3.9%
Resident	2.1%	—	3.8%	0.3%
Civil society organisation	0.3%	—	0.5%	—
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%

The actor profile differs markedly across media types, as Table 6 shows. Print newspapers and television are the most executive-dominated, with mayors cited as the primary actor in 73.6% and 68.9% of articles respectively—leaving very limited space for council member, resident, or civil society voices. Online media presents a substantially more balanced actor profile: mayors appear in 35.0% of online articles and council members in 30.9%, approaching parity. Online is also the only medium in which residents (3.8%), members of parliament (6.7%), and civil society organisations (0.5%) appear with any meaningful frequency. This difference likely reflects the higher volume and faster news cycle of digital outlets, which generate more articles on political debate, opposition statements, and community-level stories that bring a wider range of voices into coverage.

When council members do appear as primary actors, the context is revealing. The dominant themes in council-member-actor articles are justice and legal proceedings (24.5%—almost entirely articles about the Tirana dismissal session or opposition council members challenging the process), internal council procedures (23.4%), and electoral engagement and political stances (12.8%). Only 11.7% of council-member-actor articles concerned governance concerns and accountability, and fewer than 5% each concerned budget or service delivery—the substantive governance functions councils are designed to perform.

Residents—the primary constituents of council members—appeared as the main cited actor in only 2.1% of articles (30 articles across the full year). Geographically, resident voices were almost entirely absent from Tirana coverage: 28 of the 30 resident-actor articles concerned municipalities outside the capital, concentrated in Vlorë, Durrës, Pogradec, and Sarandë. When residents appeared, it was overwhelmingly in the context of service access failures (53.3% of resident-actor articles) and opposition to specific council decisions (30.0%)—not in any form of proactive civic engagement, consultation, or participatory governance reporting. Civil society organisations appeared as the primary actor in just few articles across the entire year, all in online media, confirming that organised civil society is effectively invisible as a voice in council-related coverage.

The 715 articles citing a mayor as primary actor include 466 articles about a single individual in pre-trial detention. The 30 articles citing a resident as primary actor are spread across 8 municipalities and 12 months. Civil society appears in just few articles across the full year. These three figures together illustrate the extreme narrowness of the voice landscape in Albanian municipal council coverage.

3.1.7. Political Framing and Party Representation

Council coverage in Albania is heavily politicised, with a substantial share of articles framed around party affiliation. In 37.8% of primary articles no specific party was identified, typically because the article covered a non-partisan procedural or community issue. Among articles where a party was identifiable, the Socialist Party (PS) appeared most frequently, in 26.9% of all primary articles, followed by the Democratic Party (PD) at 17.8%. Articles referencing the ruling majority (without specifying PS) added 2.9%, and the opposition (without specifying PD) added 1.4%. Other parties combined accounted for 4.7%, and 7.2% of articles were explicitly coded as non-partisan.

The PS dominance in raw volume is largely explained by the Tirana concentration and the nature of the Veliaj case: with the capital's council—where PS holds the majority—accounting for nearly 70% of all articles, and the SPAK prosecution of a PS-affiliated mayor generating sustained coverage, PS appears in coverage by virtue of institutional and legal prominence rather than necessarily as a result of editorial bias. This is confirmed by the party distribution within justice articles: of the 486 justice articles with a party identified, PS appeared in 176 and PD in only 64, a ratio reflecting the fact that the accused in the dominant legal narrative is PS-affiliated.

A more revealing finding emerges when examining the party affiliation of articles where *council members specifically* are the primary cited actor. Of the 384 council-member-actor articles, those featuring PD-affiliated council members outnumber PS-affiliated ones by more than 3 to 1: PD or opposition council members appear as the primary voice in 207 articles, compared to 63 for PS or majority council members. This is a structurally significant finding: despite PS holding the governing majority in most Albanian councils, it is opposition council members who generate the bulk of council-member-attributed media coverage. The pattern reflects the structural logic of news production in a partisan media environment: opposition voices generate coverage through challenges, criticism, protest, and dissent, while majority council members who vote in line with the mayor rarely have incentives to speak out independently or differentiate themselves in the media.

The result is a coverage landscape in which the governing majority is mostly visible through the mayoral voice, while the opposition is mostly visible through council member voices—reinforcing a personalised, executive-centred understanding of local government.

Outside Tirana, the party picture shifts considerably. In non-Tirana primary articles, the PS/PD dominance narrows: PS appears in 87 articles and PD in 39, while ‘no party identified’ accounts for 180 articles (43.4% of non-Tirana coverage), and other parties appear in 28. This more distributed pattern suggests that beyond the capital, council coverage is less systematically anchored to the national PS/PD binary—reflecting both the greater diversity of local political configurations and the tendency of smaller municipalities to generate coverage through community issues rather than party-driven political conflict.

There are also notable differences by media type in how party framing is applied. Online outlets showed a much higher rate of party-identified articles (72.6% of online articles specified a party or general majority/opposition category), while print and television showed far lower rates of explicit party attribution (22.4% and 21.7% respectively). This reflects different editorial conventions: print and television more often report council events in procedural or institutional terms, while online outlets tend to contextualise developments within partisan frames from the outset—a practice that may reinforce the perception of councils as arenas of party competition rather than as independent local governance institutions.

3.1.8. Gender Dimensions of Coverage

Gender coding was applied to council members specifically—both as actors cited in articles and as authors of articles—rather than to the broader actor population (which includes mayors, members of parliament, and residents whose gender was not systematically recorded). This scoping is a

limitation of the dataset, but provides a meaningful window into the gendered representation of council members in media.

Among the 384 primary articles where a council member was the primary actor cited, gender was identifiable in 342 cases. Of these, 76.0% featured a male council member as the primary voice, and 13.0% featured a female council member. Gender was not identifiable in the remaining 11.0% of cases. The men-to-women ratio among council member actors is 5.8:1—a figure that significantly underrepresents women relative to their actual presence in Albanian municipal councils, where women hold approximately 42% of council seats following the application of the gender quota in the 2025 local elections. The gap between women’s share of council seats and their share of media citations as council actors (13.0%) points to a structural visibility deficit that media coverage both reflects and reinforces.

Beyond the quantitative gap, a thematic analysis of articles featuring women versus men council members as primary actors reveals meaningful differences in the *type* of coverage each receives. Table 7 presents the thematic breakdown.

Table 7: Thematic profile of council-member-actor articles by gender

Theme	Women council members	Men council members
Internal council procedures	38.0%	20.2%
Governance concerns and accountability	18.0%	11.6%
Justice and legal proceedings	12.0%	27.4%

Electoral engagement and political stances	10.0%	12.3%
Social issues	8.0%	4.5%
Political debate between council majority and opposition	2.0%	9.6%
Budget and draft budget	0.0%	5.1%
Gender equality	2.0%	0.0%
Other themes	10.0%	9.3%
Totals	100%	100%

Several patterns stand out. Women council members appear disproportionately in internal procedures articles (38.0%) compared to men council members (20.2%), suggesting that women’s media visibility is particularly concentrated in formal, institutional moments—session openings, votes, elections of council leadership—rather than in substantive debate. Budget coverage is the starkest gap: not a single woman council member article was coded under the budget theme (0.0%), compared to 5.1% for men council members. Despite the budget being arguably the most consequential annual decision a council makes, women’s voices are entirely absent from budget coverage as council actors. Men council members also appear substantially more often in justice (27.4% vs 12.0%) and political conflict articles (9.6% vs 2.0%), confirming that the most prominent and politically charged coverage frames are predominantly male spaces.

In contrast, women council members appear proportionally more often in misgovernance (18.0% vs 11.6%) and social issues articles (8.0% vs 4.5%). A reading of article content suggests this partly reflects the substantive work of a small number of active women council members—particularly those who raised incinerator allegations and earthquake reconstruction failures—and partly reflects a tendency for media to frame women’s council contributions through community welfare and accountability lenses rather than power and politics lenses. The one article coded under the gender equality theme with a woman council member as actor addressed why women give up their council mandates—a question that in itself illustrates the structural challenges the data document.

A content analysis of articles featuring identifiable women council members reveals that media visibility is concentrated within a very narrow cluster: a small number of opposition council members in large urban centres, primarily Tirana, who generated coverage through substantive political challenges—budget amendments, misgovernance allegations, incinerator controversies, and demands for transparency. Where women council members did appear with agency and voice, it was predominantly in this oppositional, accountability-seeking role rather than in any governing or policy-initiating capacity. A smaller share of coverage featured women in majority or institutional roles, almost entirely confined to formal procedural moments such as council leadership elections or the dismissal session, where their appearance was tied to institutional position rather than independent political initiative.

Outside the capital, identifiable women council members were extremely rare. A handful of women from cities such as Shkodër and Durrës appeared in a small number of articles on budget, misgovernance, and earthquake reconstruction, but no women council members from any other municipality were identifiable as primary actors across the full year’s coverage. This geographic concentration—with Tirana accounting for 64% of all women council-member-actor articles—mirrors the broader pattern of municipal invisibility documented in Section 3.1.4, and suggests that the structural barriers to women’s media visibility as council members are compounded rather than offset as one moves away from the capital.

Women also appear in council coverage as *subjects of policy* rather than as actors. References to gender in budget articles—such as proposals to reduce local taxes by 50% for women heading households with three or more children, or bonus rent schemes for single-parent families—appeared in 29 of 56 budget articles, making women a relatively visible beneficiary category in budget reporting. However, in these articles women are passive recipients of decisions made predominantly by male-coded institutions. The gender quota itself was mentioned in only 10 articles across the full year, and in most cases as a statistical reference rather than a substantive discussion of women's participation or institutional design.

Authorship data reinforces the gendered picture, though with important caveats about data availability. The gender of the author is mainly recorded in the online sub-sample, as print and television articles very rarely carry authorship data. Among online articles where authorship gender was identifiable (77 articles, or 10.1% of the online sub-sample), 55 (71.4%) were attributed to men journalists and 22 (28.6%) to women journalists. The near-total absence of bylines in print (0.0%) and television (0.3%) means that the gendered dimension of editorial production cannot be assessed for almost 60% of the coded sample, pointing to a structural gap in Albanian media transparency practices that limits any meaningful analysis of who produces council-related journalism.

The gender data describe a consistent pattern: women hold 42% of Albanian council seats but generate one seventh of council member media citations; those citations are concentrated in a handful of individuals and one city; the thematic frames in which women appear prioritise procedures and welfare over power and budget; and the one article explicitly addressing women's participation in councils asks why women give up their mandates—a question that the coverage landscape itself helps to answer.

3.1.9. Comparative Analysis Across Media Types

The three media categories—print, online, and television—show distinct profiles in how they cover municipal councils, differing in geographic reach, thematic mix, source reliance, and political framing. Table 8 summarises the key comparative indicators.

Table 8: Comparative indicators by media type

Indicator	Print	Online	TV
Share of coded sample	15.8%	59.4%	24.8%
Primary relevance rate	96.1%	79.4%	95.8%
Top theme	Justice (27.2%)	Justice (39.3%)	Justice (30.6%)
2nd theme	Internal procedures (24.4%)	Other (14.5%)	Internal procedures (21.2%)
3rd theme	Electoral engagement and political stances (21.5%)	Internal procedures (14.2%)	Political stances (19.2%)
Mayor as primary actor	56.9%	49.7%	50.6%
Council member as primary actor	32.9%	25.1%	29.3%

Articles with named journalist	Low	Medium	Low
Tirana share of primary articles	73.6%	71.1%	64.8%
Geographic diversity (councils covered)	11	23	20

Several patterns stand out. First, despite its smaller sample share, print coverage was the most politically contextualised, with the highest share of electoral and political stance coverage and the highest proportion of primary relevance—suggesting that newspapers, when they cover councils, do so with greater editorial intentionality. Second, online media showed the highest concentration on justice narratives (39.3%) and the lowest primary-relevance rate, indicating that digital outlets most readily embed council references within broader national political stories rather than treating councils as subjects in their own right. Third, television offered the broadest geographic coverage (20 councils), driven substantially by RTSH’s regional infrastructure.

RTSH’s distinctive profile within the television sub-sample deserves separate note. Accounting for 35.0% of all television’s primary articles, RTSH showed a higher share of political stance and electoral coverage (30.6% of its primary articles) and a more geographically distributed council coverage profile than any commercial broadcaster. RTSH covered 19 distinct councils in primary articles— including several (Kukës, Cërrik, Tepelenë) that appeared in no other outlet in the monitoring panel. This reflects both the mandate and the structural capacity of the public broadcaster, and represents a meaningful—if partial—counterweight to the capital-centric tendency of commercial media.

3.2. Findings from Municipal Councils and Council Members

This section turns from media output to the municipal councils and their members themselves. It draws on two complementary sources: requests for information sent to all 61 municipal councils, which document whether councils have adopted formal rules on communication with the public and the media; and semi-structured interviews with council members, which capture how members experience, and account for, their own engagement with the media. The first offers an institutional, document-based picture of the formal framework for council–media relations; the second gives voice to the practice that unfolds—or fails to unfold—within it. Read together, they help explain why the limited, event-driven coverage documented in Section 3.1 persists.

3.2.1. Council Regulations on Communication with the Public and the Media

To establish the formal basis for council–media relations, BIRN sent a request for information to all 61 municipal councils, asking whether they had adopted a regulation governing relations with the public and the media and, where they had, to provide the document together with the number and date of the approval decision. Fifty-four councils (88.5%) responded, while seven did not reply at all. Among the 54 respondents, 47 (87.0%) reported having adopted such a regulation, and 7 (13.0%) had not—Belsh, Devoll, Fier, Kavajë, Patos, Tirana, and Librazhd, the last of which reported that it was in the process of drafting one. The presence of the capital, Tirana, and a regional centre such as Fier among the councils without a regulation is notable, given that these are among the most active and most heavily covered councils in the country.

The documentation provided shows that the adoption of these regulations was overwhelmingly concentrated in a single period. Of the 47 councils reporting a regulation, at least 36 (76.6%) adopted it during 2020, pointing to a common external trigger rather than to locally driven initiatives.

Only three councils adopted or updated their regulation after 2020—Vorë (2021), Shkodër (2022), and Selenicë (2024)—while three others had regulations predating the wave, from 2019 (Berat, Maliq, and Pustec). The clustering in 2020, followed by near-complete inactivity, suggests that for most councils the regulation has functioned as a one-off formal requirement rather than as a living instrument that is periodically revisited.

The quality and accessibility of the documentation were uneven. Only 34 of the 47 councils with a regulation (72%) supplied a complete reference—both the decision number and its date. In 11 cases the published regulation lacked the decision number: eight provided the date but not the number, while three (Himarë, Kuçovë, and Pogradec) supplied neither. In a further two cases (Fushë-Arrëz and Mat), councils reported having a regulation but their official websites were not functioning, so the document itself could not be retrieved or verified. These gaps matter, because a regulation that cannot be located, dated, or traced to a formal decision offers limited transparency to the residents it is meant to serve. Detailed data for each municipal council are presented in Annex 2.

The requests for information describe a formal framework that exists largely on paper. A clear majority of councils adopted public- and media-relations regulations in a single 2020 wave and have not returned to them since; the documentation is frequently incomplete; and several councils—including the capital—either have no such regulation or cannot make it available. This pattern of formal compliance without substantive follow-through is consistent with the media-monitoring picture, in which these rules translated into very little visible council–media engagement, and it anticipates the accounts council members give in the interviews below, where the municipal administration, outdated council websites, and the absence of an active communication function feature prominently.

3.2.2. Council Members' Engagement with the Media

The interviewed council members reported that they have engaged with the media in various forms. Specifically, council members have requested that the media be present during municipal council meetings, particularly during the discussion of the draft budget or changes to local taxes and tariffs. One of the council members had requested that the municipal council meeting not continue without the presence of the media. Another council member had invited journalists to a meeting because the requests addressed to the municipality's administration had been left unanswered. Another practice is giving interviews in the local and national media. These interviews have highlighted problems faced by farmers in rural areas and have been accompanied by calls for government intervention, and have informed residents about planned investments in the municipality's territory as well as about new initiatives in support of women heads of households. Only one of the interviewed council members had experience in publishing articles in the media, with a focus on environmental issues.

3.2.3. Council Members' Concerns Regarding the Media

The interviewed council members, with very few exceptions, described the media as indifferent to their work in the municipal council. Municipal council meetings are broadcast online and the media limit their role to preparing short reports, which usually rely on the information obtained during the first minutes of the meeting. In some cases, the local media show greater attention to the debates by devoting space, through short videos, to the discussions that take place around the draft decisions. This attention was welcomed by the council members as it highlights their work in the municipal council. However, even when a council member is brought into focus along with the criticism they make, the response received from the administration is often not provided, thus making the news one-sided. The interviewed council members shared a common concern that the media do not pay attention to council members, for example to approach them and become acquainted with their work or to put questions to them related to the expertise they bring to the council.

One of the council members' main concerns is that the media are more interested in political conflicts or news that sells quickly. One of the interviewed council members, who had himself run a media outlet in the past, described the situation as follows: "Albanian media make public or think they will get viewership if they put out the bad news." He further explained that the main problem with the news is that it does not focus on the essence of the problem. Similarly, one of the interviewed women council members said that this type of news, which is not based on analysis, does little to educate readers. One council member gave the example of a conflict in the Pogradec municipal council and explained that in this case the media were present in the council the entire time, yet continuously reported only the 10-second segment in which the conflict occurred. Similarly, another woman council member shared her experience by recounting that the draft decision she proposed in support of children received no coverage at all, even though the media were present. What received attention was a political conflict. "The media," said one of the council members, "are not interested in hearing about the investments that a council member calls for but about political conflicts. Then they come running."

The second concern, which is closely linked to the first, is that the media focus very little on analysing the issues or the essence of the problems being addressed. One of the interviewed council members described this as a feature of the media culture in the country, and this applies to both the local and the national media. By avoiding in-depth analysis, the media feed the stereotypes that exist in society. One of the council members illustrated this through the news reported about the activities that take place in the Roma community. "The media," he said, "will take the worst thing to broadcast it in order to sell the news as sensational. It can transform the whole idea."

Another concern shared by the interviewed council members is that the media have their "favourites," who are often selected not for the knowledge they have but for the controversies they cause. This group, as the council members explained, includes the leaders of the political groups or the persons who hold key positions in the party. While they may be better known to the public, due to the positions they hold and the importance the media attach to them, they do not have knowledge about every topic that is discussed. This not only leads to poor discussions, but also undervalues the council members and their knowledge.

3.2.4. Council Members' Explanations for Their Limited Engagement with the Media

Some of the interviewees linked council members' limited engagement with the media to the political party, arguing that council members of the party in power have no interest in engaging. "The council members of the largest party," said one of the council members, "are constrained; perhaps they have the desire but are not allowed to." However, if this were the sole explanation, limited engagement would be found only among members of the party in power. This does not appear to be the case. Continuing his reflection, the council member said that political interests interact closely with economic interests. Council members hold back because, regardless of the political party they belong to, criticism in the media can make their lives more difficult, for example by hindering their access to the municipality or penalising them through taxes and tariffs. "Even the opposition council members," he said, "are not interested in raising their voice strongly in the media because they have their own interests related to properties, benefits, assets, businesses, beaches."

Another reason, which some council members considered the main cause of the current situation, is the way council members are selected. Those who do not prioritise residents' interests often end up on political party lists. This directly contributes to the lack of involvement of council members in debates, including their lack of interest in communicating with the media.

For council members, another problem that hinders their engagement in the media is related to the low pay. "A council member's pay," said one of the interviewees, "is small and [the council member] has no interest in leading an extensive political life." He drew a comparison with members of parliament and argued that the gap in pay is not justified. For him, council members' reputation is directly linked to their pay.

Another difficulty is related to the administration. Council members' relationship with the media is directly affected by the municipality, since it is often the municipality that informs the media and maintains communication with it. In the view of one of the council members, the administration itself "is not interested in providing information." "The information," he said, "is meagre not only

for citizens but also for council members.” Despite his efforts and continuous requests for information, the administration had not lifted a finger. For him, the reason for the lack of response was that “they have captured all the powers and have no fear because of impunity.” The situation was described in a similar way in other councils as well, where efforts for greater transparency are not welcomed by the administration and the head of the council—despite sharing the same political interests.

One of the questions addressed the importance given to the media during municipal council meetings. What emerged during the interviews was that the media are not the focus of discussions during meetings. But the situation changes when council members meet and talk in cafés. One of the council members said that in cafés people discuss the municipality’s website—why it has little information, why it has few followers, why it is not promoted, why information about public hearings is not provided on time. Another council member said that what is discussed is related to the problems within the media. He said: “Sometimes we say that the media are captured. That this piece of news does not interest the owner because it is sponsored by so-and-so, and he does not broadcast it at all.”

3.2.5. Gender Differences in Engagement with the Media

Most of the interviewed council members said that there are no gender differences with regard to engagement with the media nor with the difficulties council members face in engaging. Some typical answers were: “There are no differences. They are all equal,” “This phenomenon does not exist in our municipality,” “I see it as a matter of the individual, I do not divide it by gender.” However, the difference was mentioned by two women council members, according to whom gender differences are visible in isolated areas, where the inclusion of women in politics is a novelty and women are economically powerless. The inequalities in the community are also reflected in the municipal council. One of the interviewed women council members explained that

women “are more reserved, more cautious in public appearances,” while “men are more direct, more present.” One of the women council members’ concerns is that public appearances will be accompanied by negative comments—“moral blows”—at a high cost for the women themselves and their families. Another aspect that directly affects women’s engagement in the media is related to their short career in the municipal council and more broadly in local politics. One of the women council members shared during the interview that the frequent changes of women in the municipal council do not help them gain experience and invest in a political career, including their relationship with the media.

None of the interviewed council members reported participation in training related to the media and their representation in the municipal council. This training topic, so far, has not even been a focus of the Women Councillors’ Alliances, at least for the councils included in the study.

3.2.6. Council Members’ Suggestions for Changing the Situation

The council members’ suggestions covered three areas, which relate to the media’s approach to the municipal council and council members, the approach of the council and council members to the media, and the development of training and mentoring programmes.

The media’s approach to the municipal council and council members should change

Council members called for the media to rethink their relationship with the municipal council and the way they approach council members. First, the media should be present at all council meetings and should develop expanded reports about what is discussed in the meetings, focusing both on the council members’ requests and on the administration’s responses. In addition to informative reports, analyses that focus on the relationship between the council and the local administration should also be produced. Broadcasting the meetings online should not replace the media’s

analyses. One of the council members suggested that the media should also be present during the committee discussions, particularly when the municipality's budget is discussed.

The second suggestion is that the media should develop a special programme for council members, in which they would periodically conduct interviews about their efforts in the municipal council and the difficulties they face. This programme could be expanded to also include questions that residents have for council members.

The third suggestion is that the media should change their approach to local government—by focusing not only on mayors, council chairs, or the leaders of political groups, but on all council members. The media should approach council members on the basis of the expertise they have. Journalists, suggested one of the council members, should carry out in-depth research and invite the council members who have a direct connection to the topic being discussed. To facilitate this, municipal councils should ensure that their websites contain complete information about the expertise that council members offer and that their contact details are up to date. This will help the direct communication of media professionals with council members.

The approach of the council and council members to the media should change

Similarly, council members called for the council itself to review its relationship with the media—to see it as an ally in advancing a common goal: improving the quality of governance and well-being in every municipality.

Council members suggested allocating a special budget for the media—a budget that could cover the systematic involvement of the media in meetings and the production of analyses about municipal councils. A budget for training council members on communication with the media was also suggested.

Almost all of the interviewees shared the concern that council members' hesitation to engage with the media is partly related to their lack of knowledge or skills. This, gradually, can be addressed through training (see below), but for this the council itself must plan in its budget for capacity-building training. Council members themselves should approach the media to bring to readers' attention what they discuss in the municipal council, such as the draft decisions related to investments, local taxes, urban planning, and infrastructure.

Training and mentoring programmes should be developed

Council members' need for the development of knowledge and skills in the area of communication with the media emerged throughout all the interviews. For one of the council members, the most important topic for training is how council members can articulate themselves in the media and convey messages about poverty, injustice, corruption, or other topics of local and national importance. The suggested training topics should have a strong activism component and help council members develop knowledge and skills that they can easily put into practice. Some topics related to the development of practical skills included: how to give interviews, how to communicate with voters through social media, or how to build a professional and transparent relationship with journalists.

At the same time, council members shared that journalists themselves also need training, especially on how to communicate professionally with council members, how to contribute to enhancing the role of council members, and how to rely on ethical principles during their work. Likewise, the provision of mentoring programmes was also suggested. These programmes could be made available periodically for council members. Media professionals could offer support to council members during the preparation of articles or other forms of engagement in the media—depending on the council members' needs.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the media coverage of municipal councils, as well as council members' engagement with the media. The study relied on three methods, which complemented one another: media monitoring, semi-structured interviews with municipal council members, and requests for information sent to all municipalities in the country. The study's findings are presented in summary form below, beginning with the findings of the media monitoring.

- **Coverage volume is low, episodic, and dominated by a single extraordinary case.** Estimated full-year council coverage of approximately 7,000 primary-relevance articles across 41 outlets is thin relative to the breadth of council activities and their relevance to citizens' daily lives. Coverage is heavily event-driven, with September 2025 alone accounting for around 30% of annual coverage—a spike driven not by scheduled elections but by the Tirana Municipal Council's extraordinary session of 23 September to vote on the dismissal of Mayor Veliaj, the Council of Ministers' formalisation of that dismissal, and the ensuing constitutional crisis. The SPAK prosecution of Veliaj permeated coverage throughout the year, with his name appearing in 51.6% of all coded articles. Without this singular case, estimated full-year coverage would be substantially lower and its character fundamentally different.
- **Geographic concentration is extreme, and largely event-driven.** In 2025, 44.3% of Albanian municipalities (27 of 61) received no council coverage whatsoever. Tirana alone generated 69.8% of all primary coverage, but 79.8% of Tirana's coverage was directly tied to the Veliaj crisis, meaning that truly routine council reporting nationally accounts for an estimated 36.6% of primary articles. Several non-Tirana municipalities that appear in the rankings—Berat, Mat, Vlorë—owe most of their coverage to the November partial by-elections in five municipalities rather than to sustained editorial interest. RTSH, the public broadcaster, was the only outlet

with structural capacity to partially address this imbalance, covering 19 distinct councils through its network of regional correspondents.

- **The justice narrative dominated the year at multiple levels.** Justice and legal proceedings was the largest single theme at 34.8% of primary coverage, with 79.6% of those articles specifically referencing Veliaj. A secondary but significant justice cluster concerned the SPAK prosecution of the Mayor of Tropojë and several cases involving local officials in Kamëz and Durrës, demonstrating that SPAK's reach into local government extends beyond the capital. A related cross-cutting narrative—the incinerator controversy—appeared in 6.6% of all primary articles, spanning justice, misgovernance, disasters, and budget categories, and represented one of the most persistent governance accountability threads of the year.
- **Substantive governance topics are nearly invisible.** The themes most directly relevant to the democratic quality of council work—budget (4.0%), access to local services (1.6%), public consultations (0.6%), council autonomy (0.1%), and gender equality (0.4%)—collectively accounted for just 6.7% of primary coverage, rising to 9.6% when residents opposing decisions is included. Public consultation coverage is the starkest indicator: eight articles across the full year, of which three are duplicates of the same story and only one records a genuine council-initiated consultation. Despite a full year of council activity across 61 municipalities, Albania's media produced an estimated 40 articles on public consultation nationally—fewer than one per municipality.
- **The internal procedures category masks the extraordinary as ordinary.** At 18.0%, internal council procedures was the second largest theme, but around 53% of these articles concerned the dismissal proceedings rather than regular council sessions, votes, or agenda items. Only 17.9% of procedures articles concerned swearing-in or inaugural sessions, the majority arising in October and November following the partial by-elections in five municipalities. Regular procedural coverage of council governance—the kind of reporting

that would document how councils debate, vote, and hold the executive to account in normal times—is a minor fraction of this category.

- **Mayors dominate; opposition council members are secondary; and majority council members and residents are largely absent.** Mayors appeared as the primary cited actor in 51.1% of articles, but 65.2% of those were Veliqj-specific. More structurally revealing: when council members did appear (27.5% of articles), PD and opposition council members outnumbered PS and majority council members by 3.3:1 (207 vs 63 articles). This reflects the structural logic of partisan media: opposition generates news through challenge and dissent, while majority council members who vote in line with the mayor have little incentive to speak out independently in the media. The result is a coverage landscape in which governing councils are mostly visible through mayoral voices, and civic voice—residents at 2.1%, civil society at 0.3%—is nearly absent.
- **Original reporting on councils is rare and content duplication is more pervasive than headline figures suggest.** Only 8.9% of primary articles carried a named journalist's byline. Content analysis reveals that 16.7% of articles (233) share identical opening text blocks across multiple outlets—significantly higher than the 29 duplicate titles (59 instances) identified through title matching alone. This means that apparent coverage breadth is substantially inflated by content reproduction. Transparency and accountability language appeared in 6.0% of articles, but almost invariably as a rhetorical framing within political conflict stories rather than as substantive reporting on FOI compliance, document access, or council meeting transparency.
- **Women council members are systematically underrepresented in coverage and concentrated in a narrow range of topics when they do appear.** Women appeared as the primary council member voice in 14.6% of gendered council-member-actor, against a men-to-women ratio of 5.8:1, despite holding approximately 42% of council seats at the

national level. More significantly, women were entirely absent from budget coverage as council actors (0 of 56 budget articles), while featuring disproportionately in procedures and welfare-adjacent themes. Women council members' media visibility is overwhelmingly concentrated in few individuals, a single city (Tirana, 64%), and opposition roles (40% PD). Outside this narrow cluster, women council members across Albania's 60 other municipalities are effectively invisible.

- **Media type shapes but does not transform the coverage picture.** Online media (59.4% of the sample) showed the most balanced actor profile—the only medium where council members approach mayors in citation frequency—but also the highest concentration on justice narratives (39.3%) and the lowest primary-relevance rate (79.4%). Print and television showed the most executive-dominated actor profiles (mayors at 73.6% and 68.9% respectively). RTSH stands apart within the television sub-sample as the only outlet combining geographic breadth (19 councils), thematic diversity, and structural regional capacity. No private commercial outlet—print, television, or online—demonstrated comparable systemic investment in council-level local governance coverage.

These main findings support the hypothesis that Albanian media do not treat municipal councils as significant and autonomous democratic institutions worthy of sustained coverage. The picture is more nuanced than simple neglect: councils do receive media attention, but almost entirely when they intersect with national-level political drama, criminal proceedings, or electoral triggers. The extraordinary Veliaj case—the dismissal of a mayor by his own council while in pre-trial detention, followed by a Constitutional Court reversal—paradoxically made the Tirana Municipal Council the most covered council in the country's history while simultaneously crowding out every other form of local governance reporting.

The structural findings—geographic invisibility of 44.3% of municipalities, near-absence of budget and consultation coverage, 5.8:1 gender imbalance, 8.9% journalist byline rate, and a single outlet

(RTSH) providing the only systematic regional coverage—suggest that the problem is not primarily one of editorial choice but of systemic capacity, incentive structures, and the persistent national-centrism of Albanian media. Councils appear in media primarily as arenas for national political contestation, judicial proceedings, or electoral processes: frames driven by actors and dynamics largely beyond the councils’ own authority. The implications for how citizens understand and engage with their local democratic institutions are significant, and are explored further through the interview and FOI components of this research.

The interviews with the council members reinforced the findings of the media monitoring, but also shed light on other aspects, which the council members considered critical.

- The interviews highlighted another way in which council members engage with the media. **To increase the pressure on the administration, which does not respond to their requests, council members issue direct invitations to the media.** This is done in the hope that the presence of the media will increase the administration’s accountability and, consequently, council members’ requests will not remain unanswered.
- **The interviewed council members described the media as indifferent to their work and shared three concerns.** First, the media are more interested in political conflicts or news that sells quickly. Second, the media pay very little attention to analysing the issues or the underlying nature of the problems addressed, instead reinforcing societal stereotypes and failing to educate readers. Third, the media have their “favourites,” who are often selected not for the knowledge they have, but for the controversies they cause, which not only leads to poor discussions, but also undervalues the council members and their knowledge. These concerns are closely linked to the findings of the media monitoring.
- **In the council members’ perspective, limited engagement with the media is linked to efforts to protect political interests, which are closely tied to economic interests.** Open criticism in the media can have consequences, such as the interruption of access to resources and

opportunities. Another reason relates to the selection of council members—those who put personal interests ahead of the interests of the public are favoured. This directly leads to council members' reluctance to participate in debates, including their willingness to communicate with the media. The low pay of council members was reported as another factor that directly affects council members' interest in engaging with the media.

- **The interviewed council members had a number of criticisms of the local administration, describing it as an obstacle to open communication with the media.** Despite their efforts to increase the presence of the media during municipal council meetings, council members raised the concern that these efforts are not welcomed by the administration, which limits the role of the media.
- **According to the council members, the media are not the focus of discussions within the council.** Discussions about the media take place informally and the topics addressed highlight that the municipality's administration is part of the problem.
- **With regard to gender differences, the interviews highlighted two different viewpoints.** While for some of the interviewees there are no gender differences, for others they are visible, especially in isolated areas. These answers differ from the results of the media monitoring, but they confirm findings of previous studies on gender differences: during the interviews, gender differences are mainly identified by women.³ Whereas men generally perceive no gender differences, women often highlight them, based on their own experiences.

³ See, for example, Dauti, M., & Metaj, G. (2024). *Përfaqësimi politik në këshillat bashkiake pas zbatimit të kuotës gjinore 50/50: Çfarë po ndodh me hendekun gjinor?* Tirana, Albania: Women's Empowerment Network; Dauti, M., & Metaj, G. (2017). *Gender quotas and women's substantive representation in the local councils of Albania*. Tirana, Albania: United Nations Development Programme.

- **None of the interviewed council members reported participation in training related to the media and their representation in the municipal council.** This training topic, so far, has not even been a focus of the Women Councillors' Alliances, at least for the councils included in the study.
- **The councils' own rules on public and media relations are frequently incomplete or unverifiable.** Of the 61 municipal councils, 54 (88.5%) responded to the request for information, and 47 of those (87.0%) reported having adopted a regulation on relations with the public and the media. The documentation, however, was not always complete: in 11 cases the number of the approval decision, or even its date, was missing.

Across the different methods, the same picture emerges from different angles. The media give councils little sustained attention; council members, for their part, struggle to make themselves heard—constrained by the local administration, by political and economic pressures, and by a lack of training and support; and the formal rules meant to govern councils' communication with the public remain, for the most part, unused.

5. ANNEXES

Annex 1: Media Outlets Included in the Monitoring Sample

The table below lists all 41 media outlets included in the SentiOne media monitoring sample, organised by media type. Outlets are classified into three categories: print newspapers (online editions), online/digital-native media, and television stations (web editions). Article counts reflect all articles retrieved and retained in the final dataset (n = 1,964). Percentages are presented in the analysis sections of this report.

#	Outlet	Articles in sample	Domain
Print newspapers – 7 outlets			
1	Sot	139	sot.com.al
2	Gazeta Tema	79	gazetatema.net
3	Panorama	72	panorama.com.al
4	Fjala	24	fjala.al
5	Telegraf	15	telegraf.al

6	Gazeta Dita	14	gazetadita.al
7	Monitor	5	monitor.al
	Print total	348	
Online/digital-native media – 24 outlets			
1	Shqiptarja	112	shqiptarja.com
2	Boldnews	97	boldnews.al
3	Pamfleti	97	pamfleti.net
4	Balkanweb	91	balkanweb.com
5	CNA	85	cna.al
6	Politiko	80	politiko.al
7	Dosja	74	dosja.al
8	TPZ	50	tpz.al
9	ATA (state news agency)	45	ata.gov.al
10	Java News	43	javanews.al
11	Koha Jone	42	kohajone.com
12	Albeu	37	albeu.com
13	Lexo	37	lexo.al

14	Lapsi	33	lapsi.al
15	Liberale	32	liberale.al
16	Prapaskena	24	prapaskena.com
17	Hashtag Albania	24	hashtag.al
18	Standard	24	standard.al
19	NOA	16	noa.al
20	Ekskluzive	15	ekskluzive.al
21	Dritare	14	dritare.net
22	JOQ Albania	14	joq-albania.com
23	Gazeta Shqip	13	gazeta-shqip.com
24	Opinion	13	opinion.al
	Online total	1,112	
Television stations (web editions) – 10 outlets			
1	RTSH (public broadcaster)	164	rtsh.al
2	Ora News	89	oranews.tv
3	Top Channel	62	top-channel.tv
4	Syri TV	54	syri.net

5	A2 CNN	51	a2news.com
6	Euronews Albania	33	euronews.al
7	Vizion Plus	29	vizionplus.tv
8	ABC News Albania	9	abcnews.al
9	Fax News	8	faxweb.al
10	Scan TV	5	scantv.al
	TV total	504	
	Grand total – 41 outlets	1,964	

Note: Three outlets with fewer than six articles in the sample (Tirana Post, Shekulli, 55 News) were excluded from the final dataset as their coverage was too limited to contribute meaningfully to analysis.

Annex 2: Municipal Councils' Reporting on Regulations and Decisions

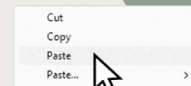
The table below presents the municipal councils' responses to the request for information on whether they had adopted a regulation governing relations with the public and the media. It covers the 54 of 61 councils (88.5%) that responded. For each council, it records whether a regulation was reported as adopted and, where the council made it available, the number and date of the approval decision.

Municipal council	Regulation adopted	Decision number
Belsh	No	–
Berat	Yes	No decision number, dated 12.2019
Bulqizë	Yes	Decision no. 151, dated 25.09.2020
Cërrik	Yes	Decision no. 67, dated 28.05.2020
Delvinë	Yes	Decision no. 15, dated 24.03.2020
Devoll	No	–
Dibër	Yes	Decision no. 56, dated 10.04.2020
Divjakë	Yes	Decision no. 28, dated 13.04.2020
Dropull	Yes	Decision no. 14, dated 28.02.2020
Durrës	Yes	Decision no. 90, dated 30.09.2020
Elbasan	Yes	Decision no. 94, dated 28.07.2020

Fier	No	–
Fushë-Arrëz	Yes	The municipal council's website does not work
Gramsh	Yes	Decision no. 46, dated 01.06.2020
Has	Yes	No decision number, dated 04.2020
Himarë	Yes	No decision number and date
Kamëz	Yes	Decision no. 96, dated 18.08.2020
Kavajë	No	–
Klos	Yes	Decision no. 50, dated 30.06.2020
Kolonjë	Yes	Decision no. 29, dated 27.02.2020
Konispol	Yes	Decision no. 18, dated 15.04.2020
Korçë	Yes	Decision no. 115, dated 1.10.2020
Kuçovë	Yes	No decision number and date
Kukës	Yes	Decision no. 51, dated 22.04.2020
Kurbin	Yes	No decision number, dated 02.2020
Lezhë	Yes	Decision no. 56, dated 28.04.2020
Libohovë	Yes	Decision no. 24, dated 29.04.2020
Librazhd	No	The council is in the process of drafting the regulation

Lushnje	Yes	Decision no. 36, dated 24.04.2020
Maliq	Yes	No decision number, dated 12.2019
Mallakastër	Yes	Decision no. 22, dated 21.05.2020
Mat	Yes	The municipal council's website does not work
Memaliaj	Yes	Decision no. 18, dated 24.04.2020
Mirditë	Yes	No decision number, dated 03.2020
Patos	No	–
Peqin	Yes	Decision no. 22, dated 21.04.2020
Përmet	Yes	Decision no. 16, dated 30.03.2020
Pogradec	Yes	No decision number
Poliçan	Yes	Decision no. 24, dated 20.05.2020
Prrenjas	Yes	Decision no. 47, dated 30.03.2020
Pukë	Yes	Decision no. 15, dated 30.06.2020
Pustec	Yes	No decision number, dated 12.2019
Roskovec	Yes	Decision no. 20, dated 27.03.2020
Rrogozhinë	Yes	Decision no. 40, dated 11.05.2020
Sarandë	Yes	Decision no. 50, dated 30.06.2020

Selenicë	Yes	Decision no. 17, dated 28.04.2024
Shkodër	Yes	Decision no. 42, dated 27.09.2022
Skrapar	Yes	Decision no. 22, dated 18.05.2020
Tepelenë	Yes	Decision no. 23, dated 03.04.2020
Tiranë	No	–
Tropojë	Yes	Decision no. 92, dated 27.03.2020
Vau i Dejës	Yes	Decision no. 24, dated 24.04.2020
Vlorë	Yes	No decision number, dated 02.04.2020
Vorë	Yes	No decision number, dated 06.2021



MUNICIPAL COUNCILS IN SILENCE:

Media Coverage and the Engagement
of Municipal Councils in Albania

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