

# MONITORING OF EXECUTIVE BRANCH'S PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICES:

## DOES THE GOVERNMENT ENGAGE IN INFORMATION OR PROPAGANDA?

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### REPORT No. 4

### Monitoring of Government's Media Campaigns



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The NGO Info-centre implements a monitoring of Government's and Government representatives' public relations practices with the aim to determine if the executive branch truly and timely informs the public about the implementation of public policies, its activities, results and achievements, existing problems, and to determine what types of messages Government sends to Macedonian citizens.

This 4th Report presents an analysis of the media campaigns implemented by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia. The analysis was prepared by Bojan Maričić, M.A., Ljupčo Petkovski, M.A., and Biljana Bejkova.

## INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

One of the frequently used, powerful and certainly most expensive propaganda tools used by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, primarily in its one-way communication with the citizens, are the media information and promotion campaigns.

According to the Electronic System for Public Procurement (ESPP)<sup>1</sup>, the General Secretariat of the Government alone, over the past three years, opened tender competitions, signed, contracted and realized eight media campaign on the following issues: (1) promotion of values of interethnic and interreligious coexistence; (2) promotion of fundamental family values; (3) Government's active measures and policies to support the agricultural sector; (4) implementation of Government's policies in the national healthcare system; (5) Government's policies in the area of education; (6) raising the awareness of the citizens about their role, participation and behaviour in traffic; (7) promotion of reforms of public administration; (8) raising the awareness of the citizens about the importance and the need to consume healthy food and avoid food with quality detrimental to their health.

The campaigns come with an average price tag of €0.5 million per campaign. Of the total costs of a campaign, 65% go to the marketing agencies for development and implementation of campaign ideas (videos, billboards, banners, etc.), and the remaining 35% are used to purchase advertising space in the media. The media buying, too, is done by marketing agencies. The campaigns are usually aired and published by the pro-government media which makes the Government one of the leading advertisers<sup>2</sup> in the country (ranked second biggest advertiser in the broadcasting sector in 2013). Another interesting fact is that the contracts for implementation of campaigns usually go to a handful of marketing and advertising agencies - Republika, New Moment New Ideas, Aquarius Design, Market Vision and Omega Communications.

Even a superficial analysis of the media campaigns shows that the current Government, even under the guise of regular public service announcement campaigns on given policies and reforms, does, in fact, constantly, intensively and unilaterally "plant" moral and ideological patterns in the public debate on topics and issues such as abortion, marriage, family and family values, behaviour, religion, etc. In fact, the main goal of the Government is not to inform the citizens about policies of public interest, but to promote itself and impose on the citizens values, views and principles that originate exclusively in its conservative, patriarchal, demochristian ideology. Such are, above all, the campaigns promoting family values, third and fourth child policies, healthcare reforms that restrict the right to abortion, all of them very openly and directly promoting the ideological matrices of the ruling party. The same practice is repeated, to more or less visible levels, with all the other public service ad campaigns. The campaign promoting healthy food and eating habits provides an illustrative example. The videos produced for that campaign are, at a first glance, modern and styled to resemble the cooking shows aired by the famous international TV channel "Kitchen 24".

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<sup>1</sup> <https://e-nabavki.gov.mk/PublicAccess/home.aspx#/notices>

<sup>2</sup> Analysis of the Broadcasting Market for 2013, Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, p. 33, available at URL [http://www.avmu.mk/images/Analiza\\_na\\_pazarot\\_za\\_2013.pdf](http://www.avmu.mk/images/Analiza_na_pazarot_za_2013.pdf)

They do end, however, with the "subtly religious" recommendation of the presenter: "Make the dinner table the altar of your home..."<sup>3</sup>.

In addition to frequent insertion of religious imagery and metaphors, Government's campaigns offer an abundance of messages that uphold the values of patriarchal society. Their presence is evident in almost all campaigns, starting with promotion of family values, promotion of implemented reforms of the public administration and promotion of programmes of agricultural subsidies. The men are commonly portrayed as active social actors, as "heads of family", entrepreneurs, businessmen, farmers, while the women are usually presented in the stereotypical roles of mothers, housewives, receptionists, bank tellers, secretaries and teachers. Even in the situations when women are depicted as doctors, lawyers or members of other professions, that is not to promote gender equality and emancipation, but to point out that a woman can have a career, but that its primary obligation remains to marry and give birth to at least three children.

For the purposes of this analysis, out of the many Government campaigns, we chose those that treat two extremely important moral issues – family values and interethnic and interreligious tolerance. We chose the campaigns that promote family values, large families and restrictions to abortion, as well as the campaign for promotion of interethnic and interreligious tolerance because of the way in which they were designed and the problematic messages that they disseminate. Through a narrative seemingly focused on emancipation, they actually promote neoconservative values and strengthen the existing stereotypes and prejudices.

We selected several "exemplary" videos for each of the campaigns (four on family values and abortion, three on interethnic and interreligious tolerance), that we analysed individually, according to a pre-set matrix (structure) that includes the contents and premises (the value-based messages) of the videos.

The analysis was interested primarily in the following questions:

1. Which are the value-based messages carried by the videos?
2. Whether and to which extent the videos aimed to change the factors that contribute to the worsening of the two treated problems - low birth-rates and the bad interethnic relations?
3. Whether the analysed videos reproduce stereotypes, presenting them as natural and unchangeable, thus (un)intentionally missing the purported aim of the campaigns?

We conclude the analysis with a list of summary conclusions on the campaigns that are subject to this analysis.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ETv9Jlkj1IE>

## 1. CAMPAIGN FOR PROMOTION OF FAMILY VALUES AND PROMOTION OF THIRD-CHILD POLICIES

The campaign for promotion of family values, especially the part promoting large families, is one of the first public campaigns implemented by this Government. In fact, the cycle of campaigns that aim to create socially desirable living patterns, aimed primarily at the ethnic Macedonians, started with the call for renewal of (endangered) Macedonian nation which, due to existing lifestyles and upbringing, was somehow on the brink of extinction.

The campaign titled "Create a Future" was launched in 2008, and the videos carrying that title are still being broadcast. The campaign was announced as part of the programme of support for young married couples who have not yet decided to have children, and for those who had one or two children<sup>4</sup>. The campaign provided media support for the package of Government's measures that aim to solve the problem of low birth-rates in several municipalities in the country<sup>5</sup>. The measures included financial allowance for unemployed women that gave birth to more than two children, but only in the municipalities with low birth-rate levels. That selective approach was seen by many as an attempt by the Government to allocate benefits only to ethnic Macedonians, having in mind the fact that it is usually the municipalities with Macedonian majority that suffer from low birth-rates, compared to Albanian and Roma settlements where birth-rates are sustained or follow a rising trend. In March 2009, the Constitutional Court ruled that such territorial approach with discriminatory results was unconstitutional and annulled the law that regulates the matter<sup>6</sup>.

Nevertheless, the Government continued paying the third-child allowance, and it secured pensions for mothers that had a fourth child. Although the Government presented the "Have a third child" campaign (continuation of "Create a future" campaign) as a major success, leading to 5.7% increase of birth-rates, at the time when the Constitutional Court deliberated on its constitutionality<sup>7</sup>, the financial burden for the state proved to be unbearable. So, at the beginning of 2010, the Government decided to keep just two of the whole set of large family benefits: 1) one-off financial allowance of MKD 5,000 for a first-born child; and 2) monthly allowance of MKD 8,500 to be paid for 10 years after the birth of the third child in a family<sup>8</sup>. After those changes, large family became a symbol promoted with expensive videos and advertising campaigns, a sort of moral imperative supported by the Macedonian Orthodox Church.

The campaign implemented over the course of several years while being unable to sustain the level of financial and other benefits for large families, culminated in mid-2013, when the Government proposed draft-legislation on abortion that introduced much stricter procedures for parents (primarily the mother) that considered the possibility to terminate pregnancy. The draft-law faced strong opposition in a significant portion of the public, especially the civic associations that advocate for gender equality and pro-choice associations, as well as the parliamentary opposition<sup>9</sup>. In response to the strong public reactions, the Government explained that the draft-law simply changed the old terminology used by the existing law, adopted in 1977, and that all other provisions were extremely liberal and served to protect the health and the wellbeing of the woman<sup>10</sup>. That policy of restriction of the right to terminate pregnancy emerged, in fact, as an "enforcement measure" designed to facilitate growing birth-rates. The measures were accompanied by a controversial and aggressive campaign, and the videos that were part of it were included in this analysis.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://vistinomer.mk/vmro-dpmne-mediumska-kampanja-za-treto-det/>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.bbc.co.uk/macedonian/news/story/2009/03/090318\\_sud.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/macedonian/news/story/2009/03/090318_sud.shtml)

<sup>7</sup> [http://kajgana.com/statija\\_6286.html](http://kajgana.com/statija_6286.html)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.utrinski.mk/?ItemID=EBFFEE1899402444B70E45DF2A31021E>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/NewsDetal.asp?vest=53013910174&id=9&setlzdanie=22891>

<sup>10</sup> <http://kurir.mk/makedonija/vesti/117695-Pogolema-griza-za-zenite-so-noviot-Predlog-zakon-za-abortus>

Parallel to the campaign for restriction of abortion rights as a measure to increase birth-rates, the Government launched a new, positive campaign for promotion of large families. The campaign applies different approach, but carries the same messages packaged in a more refined and acceptable manner. The "Family and Children are Our Greatest Treasure" is a continuation of the "Create a future" and "Have a Third Child" campaigns.

This analysis included four videos used in the campaigns for promotion of family values and higher birth-rates in the population.

<b>Third child - family</b>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7XEMD8f6Ok">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7XEMD8f6Ok</a>	<b>65 seconds</b>
<b>Stop dropping birth-rates. Create a future!</b>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6DIKCIPEer0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6DIKCIPEer0</a>	<b>41 seconds</b>
<b>Choose Life, You have the right of choice!</b>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wm_3Mog57LY">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wm_3Mog57LY</a>	<b>52 seconds</b>
<b>Family and Children are Our Greatest Treasure.</b>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TET8xzS_7eY">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TET8xzS_7eY</a>	<b>69 seconds</b>

### 1.1 Third child – family: Contents

This is one of the most popular videos of the campaign for promotion of third-child policy. The video briefly and efficiently (it runs for 65 seconds) depicts the lives of two families that live next door from each other and have completely different views of priorities in life and the manner of creating a family.

The first, the Dimitrov family, are sworn careerists committed to personal and career advancement, while the second family, the Nikolovski, are dedicated to love, having children, expanding the family and life in a large extended family.

Chronologically, the story begins in 1980 and ends in 2010. Each stage of life of the two families over a period of 30 years is presented in parallel, to make the point of their views towards family and career.

At the very beginning, in 1980, the Dimitrov family (Filip and Ana) are discussing the possibility to have children, with Ana saying: "Children? Yes, we shall have children, but not now. I have to graduate first". Filip concludes: "Yes, we are young, there is plenty of time (ahead of us)".

The story cuts to the young married couple Nikolovski (Jana and Nikola) who are not talking at all. They are kissing passionately on the living room sofa until they fall to the floor, laughing, and they presumably continue to make love. The scene is cut at that moment, but it unambiguously hints that some love-making is to ensue.

The next scene gives us the Dimitrov couple in 1985, with Filip saying to Ana: "Just a bit more time for me to finish my masters, and we can start planning children, right?", with Ana responding: "Yes, we need to save for a new apartment first, there is no place for children in this one". The next scene shows the Nikolovski couple playing with a small child, and Jana is visibly pregnant with the second. Again, there is no conversation, and the only sound is chatter of children playing.

The story jumps 15 years into the future and we see the Dimitrov couple in their luxurious home, with Ana, toasting her husband with a glass of wine, tells him the happy news: "I

finally got a promotion. I won't be able to take maternity leave for some time, but we will have a big apartment with two nursery rooms", with Filip adding: "One room for each kid. We will have two kids."

The telops with their names also contain their titles, putting emphasis on their professional success (Filip is B.Sc. in engineering, while Ana is M.A.).

At the same time, we have a totally different picture in the home of Nikolovski family. Nikola, the father, helps the 16-year old daughter Lena writes her homework in peace and quiet. Again, there is no conversation whatsoever.

Three years later, in 2003, we find the Dimitrovi (Ana is now university professor with a Ph.D, Filip has a M.Sc. in Specialized Engineering) sitting alone in even greater luxury, with Ana telling Filip: "I chose an university. It is private, of course". Filip says "it's very good" and Ana returns "the best", adding "we have saved enough to enrol the children", with Filip responding "when the time is right, of course". At Nikolovski's, the son Petar, already 15 years of age, has brought a girlfriend home and his mother Jana is serving them refreshments. Again, there is no conversation in the home of Nikolovski family.

The final act of the story takes place in 2010. Dimitrovi are old, sitting far from each other (in all other scenes they were close to each other, sharing great intimacy). Filip reads a book while Ana watches television. At one moment they look at each other, and Filip stands up, bitterly and without a comment leaves the room. They don't talk. The Nikolovski couple, in the meantime, became grandparents and we find them at a family gathering with their children with their spouses and the grandchildren. The room is bustling with happy chatter, incoherent voices that imply a multitude of people and pleasant and warm family atmosphere.

### **1.1.1 Third Child – Family: Premises and Presented Values**

The video ad presents a black and white picture of family life. For that reason, the message is presented through a comparison between lifestyles of two families. The two families illustrate the extreme positions between private and professional life, without any nuance between the two. Therefore, we have the Dimitrovi couple presented as selfish careerists for whom academic titles and career advancement is all that matters, while the Nikolovski couple is presented exclusively as parents, without any hint of their occupation, where they work and how they earn their living.

One important message carried by this video is that career-oriented Dimitrovi just talk about having children one day, even planning how many rooms they will have and which universities their children will enrol. On the other hand, the Nikolovski family don't say a word for the whole duration of the video and are only presented in scenes that depict different situations in the life of any parent (from love-making, playing with the children, entertaining friends, doing homework and celebrating family fetes). The message is – don't talk, don't plan, just make children as soon as possible and let the life take you along. It is the last scene of the video that sends the strongest message. The career-oriented Dimitrovi are old and alone and have nothing to say to each other. They are bitter and alienated because, after so much planning and having earned loads of money, they have no offspring of their own. The Nikolovski couple, on the other hand, enjoy the happy chatter of their grandchildren with the message that it doesn't really matter what they did in life and how much they earned. The most important thing was that they had children.

The messages are completely stereotypical and opposed to the family planning trends in contemporary societies and efforts to ensure socialisation and opportunities for the family.

The positioning of two extremes – successful career vs. family life aims to shut down any opportunity for social debate about the models that combine professional and family life and ability to be successful in both. Why? The answer is rather simple. Such a debate would put the emphasis on the responsibility and the obligations of the state to create conditions

conductive to successful combination of the two key components of one's life - private and professional.

The video eliminates those questions and pushes the citizens towards a binary choice: family or career. The video, in an extremely subjective manner, places the responsibility to have a large family solely on the young married couples, without any inclusion of social aspects of family life and responsibility of the state to enable and facilitate the necessary balance. The focus on the personal fates of careerists and family people aims to suppress the questions about the role of the state and what it can do to help the citizens combine and balance the private and professional life. Of course, it also aims to face us with the morbid and unfair dilemma: Would you rather be well-off, successful and alone when you grow old, or would you rather be surrounded by the chatter of children and your loved ones? Personal emotions, fears and stereotypes are the main points that the video aims to reach and promote.

## **1.2. Stop the drop of birth-rates. Create a future: Contents**

The video consists exclusively of population statistics – the size of the population and the numbers of new-borns in Macedonia in the last 30 years. The tone of the voiceover is strong, but concerned. Chatter of children is heard in the background while pictures of empty schoolrooms and playgrounds follow one another on the screen.

Following is an excerpt of the text read by the presenter in voiceover: “Our (*Macedonian*) population shrinks constantly. In 2011, we had only 22,770 new-born babies on a population of 2 million. The figure has been halved compared to 30 years ago. Over the past 30 years, our elementary schools lost 75,000 pupils and 3,500 school-rooms are empty”. At the same time, we see graphics with the statistics read by the presenter, according to which the number of children of elementary school age has dropped from 273,000 in 1981 to 198,000 in 2011.

At the end of the ad, the voiceover issues a warning: “The family and the children are our greatest treasure. We should prevent the emptiness. The children are our future. Campaign for promotion of fundamental family values”.

### **1.2.1 Stop the dropping birth-rates. Create a future! Premises and Presented Values**

The video, stylistically totally different from the first video analyzed here, attempts to present the same problem of dropping birth-rates through concrete statistical data that aim to have sobering effect, especially on the young people. It is for that reason that the emphasis is put on the fact that number of new-borns has halved, and on the huge drop in numbers of first graders enrolled in elementary schools in a period of less than 30 years. The video is a warning that we, as a community and a society, are in danger of extinction. The nation, the state and society face an existential threat. That is the key message of the video ad, in spite of the fact that it ends with the slogan that the family is our greatest treasure.

The actual message is that the society is under threat, that the nation faces extinction, hinting again that the responsibility to prevent and revert that process lies with the citizens, not the institutions of the state. The overall tone and the dramatic statistics call to urgent action, without much debate or reasoning, because all key messages are supported by numbers. The use of numbers is, in fact, one propaganda method most frequently used by the Government. It presents that data as absolute facts that are not to be discussed and don't need to be proved.

## **1.3 Choose Life, You have the right of choice: Contents**

This story of this ad takes place in a hospital, more specifically in the waiting room of a maternity ward. In the centre of the room stands a nervous and worried man who seems to be waiting, flowers in hand, for the birth of his child. The music is dramatic and aims to symbolize the wait for something very important.



Then, a nurse (or it could be a female doctor) enters the scene and speaks to the "father": "Congratulations, the abortion was successful. You just killed a healthy baby that could have grown into a beautiful boy or girl". While talking, the doctor/nurse is smiling as if she was giving good news, for example, of a birth of a child. She leaves and the man with the bouquet of flowers leaves down the corridor in the opposite direction.

The picture blurs, and a quote by Mother Theresa appears on the screen, also read in voiceover: "Every abortion has two victims: The lost child and the lost conscience". At the very end of the video ad, the logo of the campaign appears on the screen with the title "Choose life, you have the right of choice".

It should be noted that soon after the first airing of the video, and after strong reactions in the public, the then Broadcasting Council (it was later transformed into the current Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services), decided that, in the original form, it can't be aired before midnight<sup>11</sup>. After the decision of the Broadcasting Council, the Government again aired the video, which was modified so that at the moment when the doctor/nurse tell the man: "You have just killed a healthy baby", on screen graphic sign covers the picture stating "Censored by the Broadcasting Council of the Republic of Macedonia", with an accompanying beeping sound<sup>12</sup>.

### **1.3.1 Choose Life, You have the right of choice: Premises and Presented Values**

This is one of the most controversial video ads ever aired in Macedonia. The authors create an atmosphere of a happy wait for a child to be born, which lasts until the moment when the "father that wasn't to be" gets the cynical congratulations on a successful abortion and he is told that he killed a healthy baby. The unexpected and morbid turn of events aims to cause uneasiness and terror among the audience, an association that would be inseparably connected with abortion and its meaning. In that sense, the message eliminates any debate, qualifies the abortion as murder and in this particular case, implies that it was the father's fault.

The morbid video quotes a statement by Mother Theresa, globally known figure person that commands great authority in the public, whose name is usually tied to humanitarian work, but also with faith and religion.

Finally, the story of the video moves in the opposite direction from its ultimate message. On one hand, there is the message "choose life, you have the right of choice", and on the other, by putting an equation mark between abortion and murder, the actual message it carries is that "you don't have the right of choice", that is, one has to choose what the Government suggests, since the other option is to become a murderer.

The ad provoked strong reactions in the public and demands by civic association for the ad to be revoked. The ad was the negative culmination of the whole campaign for promotion of large families and against abortion. The Government attempted to balance its negative effects with the next cycle of video ads.

### **1.4 Family and Children are Our Greatest Treasure: Contents**

The video presents the story of an elderly man who tells the story of his family and sends a "fatherly" message to the younger generations.

The old man is sitting in a chair, rifling through a family photo-album and telling his story. Every sentence is illustrated by a photograph from the album. The story goes as follows: "My great-grandmother had seven children that she raised through two wars. My grandmother had five children. Again, she raised them through the biggest global war when another mouth to feed meant everybody would go to bed hungry. There were four of us, brothers and

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.radiomof.mk/koj-si-igra-majtap-so-sovetot-za-radiodifuzija/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://24vesti.mk/za-vladata-sovetot-za-radiodifuzija-vrshi-cenzura>

sisters. We didn't have plenty, but we never lacked for anything. The youth today... – wait, first a job and apartment..., there is not enough money..., there is not enough time..."

The man closes the album, turns to the camera and says: "There is little time left for us for whom the road nears its end. We want to see many grandchildren. So we can know somebody will follow in our steps. All I can tell to the young people is that one day, when they are old, nothing will make them happier than their children and grandchildren. Everything passes and goes away, the career, the hustle, the problems... only the family matters and children and family are our greatest treasure, our greatest joy." After that, a chyron appears with the motto of the campaign "Family and Children are Our Greatest Treasure".

#### **1.4.1 Family and Children are Our Greatest Treasure: Premises and Presented Values**

It is evident that the Government attempted to incorporate in this ad all the lessons it learned from the negative public reactions to earlier campaigns. The ads condemning the family of careerists, presenting figures that indicate significant drop of birth-rates and, of course, the morbid anti-abortion ads were perceived by the public as aggressive and negative. Therefore, the approach applied to this ad, part of a new cycle of the campaign, is not aggressive, negative or morbid. Quite to the contrary, it has a form of an honest testimonial and fatherly or grand-fatherly lesson on the beauty of family life and value of family, especially as one nears the end of life.

In fact, most messages carried by the earlier ads are contained in the words of the old man, but presented in a different way. The narrator emphasizes that everything in life is fleeting and shall pass, that only the family remains, and that all problems, obligations and tasks shall pass, while the family is the source of greatest joy and the realization that we have left somebody to continue our line. The same message is carried by the ad promoting third-child policy mentioned earlier in this analysis, although in that case, the messages are far more pretentious and aggressive. In this ad, they are wrapped and packaged in kindness and candour and carry the personal touch of the narrator.

Furthermore, as an elderly man, the narrator attempts, in a simple and soft manner, to reach to the young people that are afraid to start a family because of concerns regarding financial insecurity and inability to provide quality life to their children. He does that with emphasis on the fact that our ancestors managed, in much more difficult situations of world wars, hunger and poverty, to raise four, five or even seven children who "never lacked for anything". The message intends to encourage the young people to stop worrying too much about living conditions and security and to think only of the beauty of family life. Again, the approach not only fails to solve any dilemmas, it doesn't even provoke discussion of those dilemmas. Quite the opposite, the Government, through the main narrator, an elderly and experienced figure of authority, it subtly and yet openly and directly imposes the view that one has to have a large family, no matter the cost.

## **2. CAMPAIGN FOR PROMOTION OF INTERETHNIC AND INTERRELIGIOUS COEXISTENCE**

In May 2012, the media reported that the Government announced a call seeking a marketing agency to prepare a campaign for promotion of values of interethnic and interreligious coexistence in Macedonia.<sup>13</sup> The public call was announced several weeks after the massacre of Smiljkovsko Lake, just several days after the arrests of the suspects, who were ethnic Albanians. The call also coincided with the protests of Muslims in Skopje against the arrests which they saw as being politically motivated.<sup>14</sup> In other words, the Government announced the call at a time when interethnic and interreligious relations in Macedonia faced their greatest challenges since the 2001 conflict.

<sup>13</sup> <http://daily.mk/vesti/vladata-so-nova-kampanja-za-megjuetnichki-sozhivot>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.makdenes.org/content/article/24570142.html>

At the end of 2012, the media reported that the Government ear-marked €573,000 for design and implementation of a campaign that would promote the values of interethnic and interreligious coexistence. The budget was distributed to five marketing agencies, with the lion's share going to "Republika" agency.<sup>15</sup> A series of TV ads were produced under the auspices of the campaign, most of them available on the Internet. One of the ads, "10 Meters apart – the day we pray together", produced by "New Moment" agency, received great attention in the public after it won the "Cannes Lion" award, the equivalent of the Oscar in the world of marketing.

This analysis is interested primarily in three ads of the campaign, presented on the table below.

<b>The Sun Rises for Everyone! WE ARE ALL ON THE SAME TEAM – 1 (We have to learn to cooperate, because we win and lose together)</b>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gJ2UoHozMEQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gJ2UoHozMEQ</a>	<b>46 seconds</b>
<b>The Sun Rises for Everyone! WE ARE ALL ON THE SAME TEAM – 2 (We feel the same pain)</b>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T9V1lvtoJ-A">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T9V1lvtoJ-A</a>	<b>21 seconds</b>
<b>The Sun Rises for Everyone! Defeat the prejudice, we are all on the same team.</b>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y130JuR3NH0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y130JuR3NH0</a>	<b>54 seconds</b>

## 2.1 We have to learn to cooperate: Contents

The ad depicts young football players practicing on a pitch, divided into two teams. Both teams wear red jerseys, but the members of the two teams also wear vests in different colours, so the players of the two teams are recognizable on the pitch, which is common practice in training scrimmages. The editing is quick and the shots follow each other in a quick sequence - several close ups of the action on the pitch, followed by a brief shot of the terraces, filled with Macedonian fans with flags and other props.

In the 8<sup>th</sup> second of the video, a player in a lighter vest tackles an opponent in a darker vest from behind, and the fouled player is rolling on the ground several times. The shot changes and we see the standing up from their seats. Then a young player, 17 or 18 years old (wearing a lighter vest, it was the player that committed the foul in the previous scene), who speaks in Serbian into the camera: "Moramo biti agresivni i upotrebiti silu" (We have to be aggressive and use force).

Again we have the quick changes of shots of the action on the pitch and shots of the fans in the terraces, until one of the players (in a darker vest) makes a sliding tackle on an opponent (in a lighter vest). The camera again jumps to the terraces and we see two Macedonian fans voicing their dissatisfaction. In the next shot, we have a young player, who says in Albanian: „Këtu s'ka kompromis“ (There is no compromise here). It is not clear from the shot whether he wears the lighter or the darker vest, because only a light shoulder strap is visible.

The camera then moves quickly from the pitch to the terraces and back to the pitch. Then, a player in a darker vest tackles a player in a light vest from the front. It is a tactical, smart foul, not too rough, which aims to interrupt the flow of opponents game. In the next shot we have a player who says in Macedonian: "We should play smarter than the others and take what is ours".

<sup>15</sup> <http://daily.mk/vesti/sozhivot-na-bilbordi-i-tv-ekrani>

The match ends, the players start taking off the vests and leave the pitch. The video, until then in black and white, morphs into a colour footage. Simultaneously, a female voice in voiceover continues where the Macedonian player stopped: *"...most important of all, we have to learn to cooperate, because we win and lose together. We are all on the same team. The Sun Rises for Everyone"*. The closing shots present the slogan of the campaign on a chyron.

### **2.1.1 We have to learn to cooperate: Premises and Presented Values**

The main message of the ad is sent through the fact that both sides are players of one team who were divided into two sides for purposes of scrimmage in practice (therefore the two types of vests). It is an allusion to the interethnic life in Macedonia, suggesting that it is a game in which everybody has a role, although ultimately all are members of the same team - Macedonia. The main message is clear and powerful – we are all, regardless of our national and ethnic background, on the same team, although we play the game as if we belong to different teams.

The action is shot in black and white and it is not quite clear who is the “aggressor” and who the “victim”, that is, what are the roles of the players in the scrimmage. The black and white picture was selected on purpose, in accordance with the dominant perception of the public to which the management of interethnic relations is a cause of anxiety and feeling of unease. In the end, the players take off the vests, the picture is in colour and the whole atmosphere is more optimistic. That is not by chance – the changes hints at the desired situation in which differences disappear and are irrelevant, the society is more tolerant and gets closer to the ideal situation as envisioned by the public.

The main premise of the ad is that there are ethnic differences which are natural - members of each ethnic group have certain natural characteristics and, for that reason, they are presented as stereotypes. That doesn't target the prejudices and stereotypes that ethnic communities have about each other (for example, by pointing out how absurd they are). Rather, it depicts national and ethnic differences as natural and unavoidable. The ad doesn't aim to change the stereotypes and emancipate the public, but to reproduce and reinforce the status quo.

The authenticity and the ethnic background of the protagonists is construed through overemphasis on stereotypes we have for each other. The Serb, who makes an unsportsmanlike and rough tackle from behind and justifies the foul with the need to show aggression and force, is a metaphor for the policies of the whole ethnic community. In the case of the Albanian who made an unnecessary dangerous sliding tackle, it is not clear whether he is the aggressor or the victim, or whose side he plays for, so we have another stereotypical representation of the whole Albanian ethnic community. Finally, the ad creates a presentation of the Macedonian that differs from the dominant narrative of victimisation of Macedonian people. Namely, the Macedonian player does something that is considered to be a smart, tactical foul that aims to prevent an opponents' action. Also, unlike the “dirty” and excessively rough fouls committed by other players, the Macedonian fouls face-to-face. The Macedonian attacks, but the attack is not emotional and, therefore, is fair. His statement confirms the desired self-perception, because he justifies his game as smarter than the game of the others, in order to “take what is ours”. It reflects both idealized positive self-perception and perception of being under threat.

The ad reflects the dominant conservative and nationalist ideology of the ruling parties in Macedonia. The only politically relevant affiliation in the ad is the political affiliation, not the class background or any other identity. If the producer of the ad chose to seek common ground between the members of different ethnic communities on basis of their class background, it would expose the multi-layered nature of identity and possibility to belong to other identities, not just the ethnic identity, which would undermine the domination of ethnic

identity as the most relevant. For that reason, the differences are presented as unchangeable and the roles are stereotypical.

While it may seem that the ad promotes inclusion ("we are all on the same team"), that "all" refers, in fact, to the Macedonian ethnic community. It is evident on the terraces and the exclusively ethnic Macedonian symbols among the fans. It is the ethnic Macedonians, i.e. the males of that community that are the main (and only) target group of the ad. The Macedonians are being called to tolerate and "be smarter than the others".

## **2.2 We feel the same pain: Contents**

This ad is shorter than the previous, with a total length of 21 seconds. It has the same protagonists, the young Serb, Albanian and Macedonian football player, all wearing the red jersey of the Macedonian national football team. The ad was shot on a football pitch with empty terraces.

In the first scene, we have the young Serb player who says in Serbian: "Moraš biti oprezan sa njima" (You have to be on your toes when dealing with them). He turns to the right and the camera moves to the young Albanian player who says in Albanian: "Don't turn your back on them". He turns to the right and the camera moves to the young Macedonian player who says: "They hit below the belt".

Then, one by one, they put their arms over their private parts to protect them and form a "wall" to defend a free kick. The shot changes and the camera is behind the player who is taking a free kick, while our protagonists in the wall jump up in the attempt to defend the shot. A female voice in the voiceover says: *"We feel the same pain. We are all on the same team. The Sun rises for everyone"*. The ad concludes with a chyron with the logo of the campaign.

### **2.2.1 We feel the same pain: Premises and Presented Values**

The main premise of the ad is that there are ethnic differences which are natural - members of each ethnic group have certain characteristics based on the stereotypes that are entrenched in our context. The ad doesn't question the stereotypes, but further legitimizes and reinforces them.

The young Serb player demands greater caution in the relations with Albanians, a clear allusion to the mistrust between the two nations in real life. The Albanian, on the other hand, calls for caution when dealing with Macedonians, implying that they could be dangerous and cause harm if "he turns his back to them", that is, if he relaxes and is not "at full readiness" even for a moment. His statement, too, makes a clear parallel to the real life understanding of relations between Albanians and Macedonians – relationship of mistrust, difficult agreements and constant negotiations. The Macedonian again has the last word and the most defensive position – he believes that all the others "hit below the belt", that they are unpredictable and cagy about their intentions. Unlike the previous ad, the Macedonian here is a victim. He doesn't attack because he is cautious, he defends himself and is victimized, attacked from all sides and laments the fact that the others are unpredictable and cause him harm.

This ad, too, targets the men, especially the football fans that understand the rules of football and can see the game as a metaphor for real life relations.

The common denominator for the representatives of the three ethnicities that needs to relativize the differences and point out at unity, chosen by the author of the ad, is masculinity. The slogan "We feel the same pain" clearly hints at the testicles, which are among the most fragile and vulnerable parts of the male body and, at the same time, are symbols of virility and masculinity. Therefore, the message is clear – we are the same in the wish to preserve our masculinity, our pride and in the intent to avoid injury. An additional element that, in spite of the differences, strengthens the unity is the external threat,

symbolized by the wall that defends from a free kick, made of members of all ethnicities. The wall symbolizes the united defence from threats against masculinity which, in spite of cultural differences, is presented as universal and common.

### **2.3 Defeat the prejudice, we are all the same: Contents**

In the first scene, a young man in his early 20s sits on some white marble steps and waits for somebody. There are several cylindrical white pillars visible in the background and those who have seen it can immediately recognize that the scene is shot at the Monument to the Fallen Heroes at Skopje's Park of the Women Fighters.

A joyful girl enters the shot, sits next to him and they start cuddling - caressing each other and holding hands. A chyron appears on the left side of the screen with the text: Marko and Jana (both 24). They each have five litres of blood and 206 bones in their bodies.

The story cuts to the next scene, with a close up of an elderly lady standing in place, while in the blurred background we can see a boy with a backpack over his shoulder running towards her. The lady turns towards the boy and he offers her his arm and assistance, which she accepts. The lady walks leaning on the boy and helps herself with a walking stick. They are talking and laughing, there is a gray-white mosque in the background, and a car stops giving them way to cross the street. A chyron appears on the right side of the screen with the text: Agron (18) and granny Teuta (77). They both have 600 muscles and 77 internal organs in their bodies.

The scene changes and we see a dusty ground with a close up on children's feet playing football. The well informed viewers will recognize that the setting of the scene is shot at the Skopje's Railway Station (massive cylindrical concrete pillars are visible), and there are factory chimneys and industrial facilities visible in the background. The impression is that that scene is set in a suburb with substandard living conditions.

That doesn't stop the children playing the game – one of them scores; they are all happy and jump with joy. One of the children runs to his young mother who looks unkempt and wears a shabby motley cardigan. They hug and a chyron appears on the left side of the screen with the text: Amdi (7) and Atidže (28). Their bodies are 80% water and they will both inhale 788,400,000 times in their lifetime.

The scene changes and we see the protagonists of all three previous scenes walking close to each other, part of a larger crowd of people. The scene changes and we see Skopje's Stone Bridge shot from the side and then an aerial shot in which the crowd on the bridge creates a red sign on a white background that says: "WE ARE ALL PEOPLE – WE ARE ALL THE SAME". A voiceover starts in the fourth scene with a deep male voice narrating the following: *"We may come from different cultures, different ethnic groups or religions, we may have different jobs and lifestyles, but nobody is different on the inside. We are all people – we are all the same. Defeat the prejudices. Campaign for interethnic and interreligious coexistence"*.

#### **2.3.1 Defeat the prejudice, we are all the same: Premises and Presented Values**

The overall tone of the video ad is far more optimistic than the previous two videos presented in this analysis. It presents scenes from everyday life – a cuddling couple, a grandson helping his grandmother, children playing football. This time, the target group is much wider than the narrowly set target groups of the previous videos. At first glance, the messages are politically correct and promote the main message - we are same in spite of our differences.

However, the stereotypes are again emphasized and evident in the manner in which the members of different ethnic communities are depicted.

For example, the Macedonians Marko and Jana are both 24 years old and they meet at the well maintained Park of the Women Fighters in the centre of the city populated almost

exclusively by Macedonians. For the locals, the Park of the Women Fighters is a young lovers' gathering place, a place of first loves and tenderness. They are dressed well in a modern attire, they have no children and, although they are in love, they don't live together. The whole scene emanates love, intimacy and emotions, but also freedom. Marko and Jana represent the western-oriented ethnic Macedonian youth for whom personal freedom is above everything else.

The second scene takes place in a part of the city populated by Muslims - there is a mosque in the background - indicating that Albanians, as a rule, live on the left bank of Vardar River. The 18-year old Agron runs to assist an elderly lady cross the street.

Interestingly enough, the scene implies a positive picture of Albanians, which has emerged only recently. Namely, while they are Muslims (the mosque in the background), they are also modern, keep step with the times (they wear modern, not traditional attire; the backpack indicates that Agron goes to school).

This type of presentation of reality reaffirms one of the few positive stereotypes that ethnic Macedonians have for the Albanians, something that they have lost and lament today - Albanians know and respect the traditions. Respect and tradition are, in fact, the leitmotif of the scene with the ethnic Albanians.

Also, the fact that one vehicle correctly stops at the pedestrian street crossing debunks the stereotype that Albanians are bad and undisciplined drivers. Order is another characteristic of Albanians implied by the ad.

The depiction of the Roma is far less rosy. While the other scenes take place in urbane and clean environments, the Roma children play football on a dusty, dirty ground, in an obscure neighbourhood on the margins, under the railway station. Atidže, the Romani woman, is just four years older than the Macedonian Jana, but she already has the seven-year old son Amdi. Unlike the ethnic Macedonians who are led through life by intimacy and freedom, Albanians who know and respect order and propriety, the Roma are presented as poor and led by immaterial things, emotions, joy and common, down to earth things. It reaffirms the existing stereotypes and prejudices to which the Roma are exposed in our society.

It is interesting to view the symbolism of the body parts and organs with which each of the ethnic community is described. Macedonian Marko and Jana are described as being blood and bones. The blood as a symbol is usually related to the essence of life, vital force and heritage. The bones, on the other hand, symbolize constancy (something that remains after we leave this world), the earth, durability and eternity. Also, they are often depicted as pillars or frame that holds the body up. The Albanians, on the other hand, are presented with the muscles and internal organs. The association to the muscles is clear – it refers to the physical force used for intimidation or persuasion. The phrase “push forward on sheer muscle power” (original in Macedonian “*на мускули*”) means “by force”. The Roma are connected with the water and air, two of the classical elements considered to be the purest substances. It implies that they are unspoiled by culture and society, that they live the purest of lives led by basic needs (water and air), lives much more simple than the lives of others.

The general conclusion is that some of the messages carried by the ad, especially those explicitly referring to Albanians, go against the dominant perceptions and undermine and debunk the prejudices that exist between Albanians and Macedonians. However, even in explicit messages, the presentation of the Roma fits in the stereotypes and prejudices about them in society. The implicit and subtle messages can be interpreted through an analysis of different body parts and functions associated to the presented ethnic groups and fully reinforce the existing stereotypes entrenched in society.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

- The main goal of Government's campaigns is not to inform the citizens about policies of public interest, but to promote itself and impose on the citizens values, views and principles that originate exclusively in the conservative, patriarchal, demochristian ideology. Such are, above all, the campaigns promoting family values, third and fourth child policies and healthcare reforms that restrict the right to abortion. Those campaigns, as well as the campaign for promotion of interethnic and interreligious tolerance and coexistence, seem to use emancipatory narrative but promote neoconservative values and reinforce the existing stereotypes and prejudices. In fact, they openly and directly promote the ideological matrix of the ruling party. The same practice is repeated, to more or less visible levels, in all the other campaigns.

- In addition to religious, Government's campaigns offer an abundance of patriarchal messages. Those are evident in almost all campaigns, starting with the campaigns for promotion of family values, to the reforms of the public administration and agricultural subsidies. Men and women are usually portrayed in their stereotypical social roles and that type of media presentation doesn't promote gender equality and emancipation. Rather, it works to "reinforce" the existing gender stereotypes and prejudices.

- In the campaigns promoting family values, the Government uses a black-and-white, Manichean style to present the private lives of the citizens and the state's expectations of each family. Those who don't have children can't have them or don't want to have children, are smeared as selfish careerists who don't know what a true home and true love means. On the other hand, life in large families is filled with joy and love. They don't care about securing quality life to their offspring because, according to the Government, everything "will be resolved for the best" and, if not, then there are always "grandma and grandpa".

Therefore, the Government amnesties the state from any responsibility to create proper demographic policies and transfers the responsibility fully on the citizens and their families. The Government also applies an extremely discriminatory and non-emancipatory approach to its citizens. For example, the Government interferes directly in the private lives of the citizens and presents them with a binary choice: the family or the career. Also, instead of promoting quality life for the citizens and modern nuclear family, she reinstates and promotes the extended family that includes grandparents, their sons and daughters, grandchildren, etc.

The Government goes even further on the issue of abortion. It sees those who chose and agreed to abortion or supports the right of choice is a murderer that should feel guilty about it. The Government doesn't leave room for any discussion or dilemma on the position that every family should have more than three children and that abortion should be banned, or at least the right to abortion should be restricted. Its campaigns are exclusively one-directional and propagandist. It doesn't inform, it imposes and issues subtle threats.

- The campaign for promotion of interethnic and interreligious tolerance starts from the premise that there are ethnic differences which are natural and that members of each ethnic group have certain characteristics based on the stereotypes that are entrenched in our context. The ads covered by this analysis don't question, relativize or dismiss the stereotypes. Quite to the contrary, the campaign further legitimizes and reinforces them. The ads don't target the prejudices and stereotypes that ethnic communities have about each other (for example, by pointing out how absurd they are). Rather, it depicts national and ethnic differences as natural and unavoidable. In other words, the Government doesn't aim to overcome the stereotypes and emancipate the public, but to reproduce and reinforce the status quo and create an illusion of mutual understanding and coexistence.

The analysed ads reflect the dominant conservative and nationalist ideology of the ruling parties in Macedonia. The only politically relevant affiliation is the political affiliation, not the class background or any other identity. If the producer of the ad chose to seek common



ground between the members of different ethnic communities on basis of their class background, it would expose the multi-layered nature of identity and possibility to belong to other identities, not just the ethnic identity, which would undermine the domination of ethnic identity as the most relevant. Since the Government's intentions are evidently opposite, the differences are presented as unchangeable, and the roles are stereotypical.