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## Indicators of Democratic Awareness in the Republic of Macedonia<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

The Republic of Macedonia, as a relatively young democratic country, gained its independence in the year 1991 following the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In this sense, the Macedonian society is regarded as a society in democratic transition. Therefore, the discussions concerning the relevance and significance of democracy, as a precondition for the global development of the society, represent an integral part of the current political and academic debates in the Republic of Macedonia. This paper examines the democratic awareness of Macedonian citizens, i.e. their habits, viewpoints and behavior as well as the extent of correspondence with the fundamental principles of democratic postulate. Additionally, the paper gives an insight into the perception of the Macedonian citizens regarding the level of the democracy within the Macedonian society, as well as the perception of their own democratization and willingness to cope with the issues in a manner which is in line with the democratic standards and principles.

**Keywords:** consolidated democracy, democratic awareness, democratization

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## 1. Introduction

Democracy in political theory is described as a political philosophy, but also as a form of governing where the governing power lies in the hands of people, and it may be exercised either in an immediate (direct democracy) or intermediate manner (indirect democracy), i.e. according to the principle of presentation and representation of interests realized by virtue of free and fair elections. Knowing that there is no an universally accepted definition of democracy, we can elaborate certain categories, namely, transparency, accountability and right to participation.

Modern or contemporary interpretation of democracy is connected with the philosophical principle of equal rights. Hence, the notion of democracy is occasionally used in the context of liberal democracy, which on the other hand implies existence of certain additional elements, such as political pluralism, equality before the law, civil freedoms and civil rights, i.e. all those agents in a civil society. Furthermore, these elements represent a parameter regarding the level of democracy within societies. Democracy, as a form of governing, is one of the most pressing issues in more recent history, particularly following the fall of the Berlin Wall and totalitarian regimes.

The Republic of Macedonia, as a relatively young democratic country, gained its independence in the so-called '*third wave of democracy*', i.e. in the year 1991 following the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In view of its constitutional system, the Republic of Macedonia is defined as a parliamentary democracy. The Macedonian society is regarded as a society in democratic transition. Therefore, any discussions pertaining to the relevance and significance of democracy represent an integral part of the current political and academic debates in the Republic of Macedonia.

This paper gives an insight into the habits, viewpoints and behavior of Macedonian citizens, and the extent of correspondence and harmonization with the fundamental principles of democratic postulates. Additionally, the paper elaborates on the perception of the Macedonian citizens regarding the level of democratization of the Macedonian society, as well as the perception whether and to what extent they experience themselves as democratically oriented.

In this paper, we will argue that in the Republic of Macedonia there is a big discrepancy between citizens' perception of their own democratizations on one hand and their willingness to cope with the issues in their day-to-day life in a manner consistent with the democratic principles on the other hand. Also, we will argue that ethnic belonging of the respondents has an impact on the final results regarding the citizens' assessment of the level of democracy within the society.

Having in mind that the paper focuses on the indicators of the democratic awareness of the citizens in the Republic of Macedonia, the notions of *democratic transition* and *consolidated democracy* are to be further defined and elaborated on.

In the book *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, the authors Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan state the following:

*" democratic transition is complete when a sufficient agreement has been reached about political procedures to produce an elected government, when a government comes to power that is the direct result of a free and popular vote, when this government de facto has the authority to generate new policies, and when the executive, legislative and judicial powers generated by the new democracy does not have to share the power with the other bodies de jure".*

*(Linz and Stepan, 1996: 3)*

Nevertheless, they raise the issue concerning the main characteristics of consolidated democracy, i.e. which habits, attitudes and behaviors must be fostered following the completion of consolidated democracy in order to treat democracy as genuinely consolidated. Moreover, Linz and Stepan produce

their interpretation of consolidated democracy and define it from the aspect of behaviors, attitudes and constitutionality.

As far as behaviors are concerned, a democratic regime is deemed consolidated when no significant national, social, economic, political or institutional actors spend significant resources attempting to achieve their objectives by creating a nondemocratic regime or turning to violence or foreign intervention to secede from the state.

From the aspect of attitudes, a democratic regime is consolidated when a strong majority of public opinion holds the belief that the democratic procedures and institutions are the most appropriate way to govern the collective life in a society such as theirs and when the support for anti-system alternatives is quite small or more or less isolated from the pro-democratic forces.

As far as constitutionality is concerned, a democratic regime is deemed consolidated when governmental and nongovernmental forces alike become subjected to, and habituated to, the resolution of conflict within the specific laws, procedures, and institutions sanctioned by the new democratic process. (Linz and Stepan, 1996: 6).

Additionally, Linz and Stepan are of the opinion that these consolidated democracies are to have established five other interactive arenas that yield mutual strengthening and reinforcing with the sole objective of provision of consolidation. There are: (a) the existence of lively civil society; (b) a relatively autonomous political society; (c) the existence of the rule of law; (d) a usable state and state machinery and (e) an economic society.

Having in mind that the paper, relying on the results from the conducted survey entitled *Political Culture and Identity in the Republic of Macedonia*<sup>2</sup> and other surveys, tackles the indicators of democratic awareness of the Macedonian citizens and their habits, viewpoints and behavior, they will be analyzed from the prism of the three existing and aforementioned arenas of consolidated democracy, i.e. civil society, political society and rule of law.

## 2. Democratic Awareness in the Republic of Macedonia

### 2.1. Civil society

According to Ernest Gellner, a civil society represents a counterpoise against the state and market. Some of the key elements of civil society are the very formal and informal social networks. In this context, and in line with this paper's requirements, a civil society refers to a given sphere (beyond the state, family and market) where self-organized groups, individuals and movements, independently from the state and its

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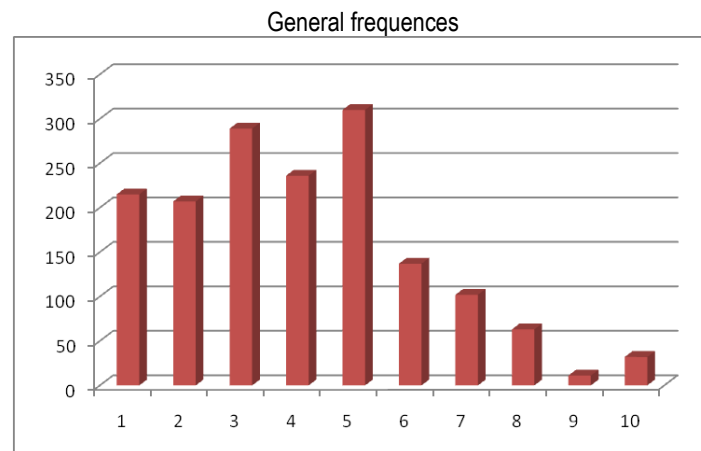
<sup>2</sup> The project "*Political Culture and Identity*" was realized by the Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research in Skopje. The project was based on the research of values and attitudes by direct surveying of respondents and organization in focus groups. This survey was conducted in the course of June 2010, whereas the focus groups took place in July 2010. The number of respondents in the survey is representative for the Republic of Macedonia in terms of ethnicity, gender, place of residence and region. It covered a group of 1600 respondents. A total of 6 focus groups were held: one with youngsters from different ethnic groups that reside in Skopje at the age of 18 to 27, another one with youngsters from different ethnic groups that reside in other towns, cities or villages also at the age of 18 to 27, other two with members of Macedonian ethnicity residing on the overall territory of the republic and additional two with members of minority ethnic groups from different towns and cities. In the course of data analysis, the results from projects conducted by the Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research were used. These projects were conducted involving the same respondents and pursuant to the same methodology thus enabling comparativeness.

institutions, by way of affiliation with nongovernmental organizations on different grounds, attempt to articulate and enhance their mutual interests. This civil society may encompass a number of diverse social movements and civil associations at all levels of society.

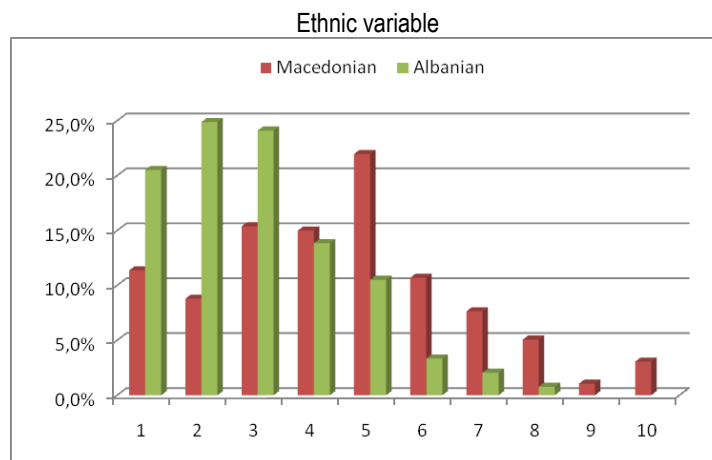
In this context and taking into account that the Republic of Macedonia is a relatively young democratic state that is still undergoing the way to complete democratization of society, to the question raised how you would rate the level of democracy in the Macedonian society on a scale of 1-10, the majority of Macedonian citizens, i.e. 19, 4% rated it with 5 as opposed to 13, 4% that rated it with 1 and only 2, 0% that rated it with 10.

In terms of the ethnic structure of the respondents, the Albanians in the Republic of Macedonia experience the Macedonian society as a nondemocratic one, and most of them, i.e. 20, 5% rated it with 1. When it comes to the perception of the level of democracy in the Macedonian society on the part of the Macedonian majority and members of other ethnic communities, there are no major deviations, i.e. 22, 0% of Macedonians, 24, 4% of Turks and 21, 7% of Roma rated it with 5.

As for the perception of one's own democratization, 40, 4% of the Macedonian citizens experience themselves as complete democrats, 37, 2% as partial democrats, whereas 22, 4% responded that they were not democrats.



(a)



(b)

Figure 1 (a) and (b). "How would you rate the level of democracy?"

From the aspect of ethnicity, most of the Albanians (48, 7%) and Turks (41, 5%) define themselves as complete democrats, as opposed to Macedonians (38, 5%) and Roma (50, 0%) who mainly see themselves as partial democrats. Such data indicate that most of the Albanians and Turks define themselves as complete democrats which is rather peculiar due to the contradictory expectations having in mind that the cultural matrix of these communities dwells on traditional and conservative values.

A genuine indicator of the level of democratic awareness and to what extent the Macedonian citizens are ready and willing to behave in a democratic manner, i.e. how they react when they encounter opinions that are opposing to theirs. Hence, 43,4% of the total number of respondents do not respect and do not find them acceptable, 18,4% stated that they attempt to impose their own opinions, whereas 38,2% responded that they respect opinions that are opposing to theirs regardless of the fact whether they find them understandable or not.

There are striking discrepancies in view of the fact that most Macedonian citizens (40, 4%) define themselves as complete democrats, as opposed to the 43, 4% that are of the opinion that what is unacceptable cannot be respected. Such data point to the great discrepancy concerning their perception of the level of democratic awareness they possess themselves on one hand, and their genuine readiness and willingness to cope with different or opposing opinions to theirs in a democratic manner on the other hand.

Similar discrepancies are evident in the answers produced by the Albanian and Turk respondents, who have mainly defined themselves as complete democrats. On the other hand, the percentage of Albanians (46, 4%) and Turks (43, 9%) who have replied that they cannot respect what is unacceptable to them remains rather high. As for the Macedonian majority, no major discrepancies were ascertained and therefore it could be acknowledged that the percentage of those who define themselves as complete democrats (37,5%) almost coincides with the percentage of those who stated that they respect opposing opinions regardless of the fact whether they are understandable or not to them (39,0%). From the aspect of respondents' ethnicity, we could deduce that the Roma are most prepared and willing to respect opposing opinions, regardless of the fact whether they find them understandable or not, and in view of the fact that 56,5% chose this answer.

**Table 1.** "How do you react when you encounter an opinion that is opposing to yours" pursuant to ethnicity

	<b>Macedonians</b>	<b>Albanians</b>	<b>Turks</b>	<b>Roma</b>
I respect it regardless of the fact whether it is understandable or not	39%	33,8%	37,8%	56,5%
I attempt to impose my opinion	18,1%	19,7%	18,3%	15,2%
I cannot respect what is unacceptable for me	43%	46,4%	43,9%	28,3%

As far as the age groups are concerned, and in line with the expectations, the highest percentage (58, 7%) of the respondents at the age of 65 and older stated that they could not respect anything that was unacceptable to them. This is primarily due to the fact that this age group has spent most of their time and professional life in a different regime, which pursuant to modern standards and interpretations is defined as a nondemocratic one. This is the core of the inflexibility and unpreparedness on the part of this population to accept opinions that differ from their respective ones.

Democracy represents a system of governing in which the expression of dissatisfaction regarding a given governmental politics, decision or state is a legitimate right to each and every citizen without being intimidated by any consequences.

The following results obtained in the course of the survey indicate whether the Macedonian citizens can and are able to take advantage of this democratic right or merely follow the principle 'a closed mouth catches no flies'<sup>3</sup>. In this context 30, 5% of the total number of respondents stated that they have never expressed their dissatisfaction with a given law, governmental decision, etc. and not because they feared the potential consequences (15, 9%), but because they believed it was a no-win situation. Such a fact points out to the existence of a given state of apathy on the part of the Macedonian citizens. Such a state is even more pronounced in the case of respondents that have not completed primary education (57, 1%) and it indicates a drastic discrepancy compared to the other categories. The largest percentage of respondents who have expressed their dissatisfaction by resorting to protests or strikes, and analyzed from the aspect of ethnicity, belong to the Albanian community (36, 4%). This form of dissatisfaction was expressed by 19, 5% of Macedonians as opposed to mere 4, and 3% of Roma. On the other hand, 39, 1% of Roma fear public expression of their dissatisfaction due to potential consequences.

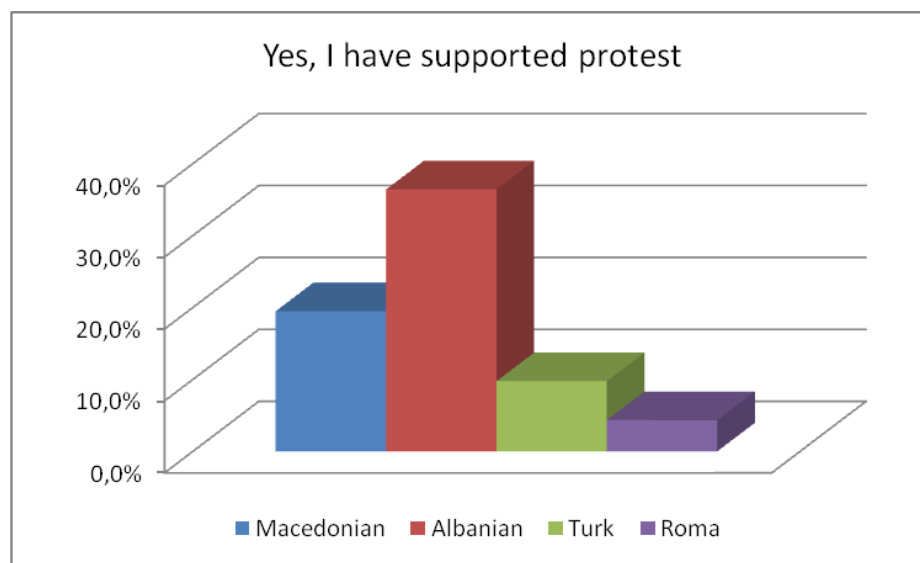


Figure 2. "Have you ever supported any protest, strike?"

In view of the age groups, there are no major deviations from the anticipated outcomes. The largest percentage of respondents who stated that they had supported a given protest or strike belong to the group of younger respondents (26,3%) aged 18 to 25, opposed to the smallest percentage (19,0%) that belong to the elderly respondents aged 65 and older.

As far as the principle 'a closed mouth catches no flies' is concerned, 68, 0% of the total number of respondents believe that they do not live by this principle, whereas 32, 0% have declared that they abide by this principle. The principle 'a closed mouth catches no flies' was true for 25% of the respondents in the survey conducted in the year 1999, which indicates a moderate increase in the course of the last ten years on the part of the citizens that do not opt for confrontation with the government or public expression of their dissatisfaction.

<sup>3</sup> A Macedonian proverb stating that those who do not object and rise against the government do not suffer.

*Freedom of speech* is one of the most significant democratic benefits and basis for the fundamental human rights. Thus, the freedom of speech is constitutionally enshrined in contemporary democratic systems, including the democratic system of the Republic of Macedonia.

In the light of the afore-stated, the question '*Do you agree with the viewpoint that the freedom of speech and thought is the most significant*' was included in this survey. A high 93,8% of the total number of respondents agree with this viewpoint as opposed to only 6,2% that claim the opposite. Compared to the survey conducted 10 years ago, there are almost no deviations in view of the percentage of respondents who stated they agreed with that viewpoint.

A rather interesting fact is that 100% of the Roma respondents stated that they agreed with the viewpoint that freedom of speech and thought is most significant.

*Media*, as an instrument used for publicizing, play a major role in the development of democratic processes but also in the preservation of democratic values. The right to publicizing, but also the right to be publicized or the so-called access to information, belongs to the fundamental principles of modern democracy. Thus, it is enshrined and regulated within the framework of national legislation, and additionally by a large number of international conventions that are legally binding.

The vast number of the total respondents (87, 7%) does not agree with the viewpoint that *journalists are to be condemned when they criticize the government or politicians*, whereas the remaining 12, 3% agree with this viewpoint. There are no major or significant deviations from the general results in any of the surveyed categories or groups. Additionally, there are no differences compared to the survey conducted in the year 1999 when almost an identical number of the respondents then (90, 44%) were of the opinion that the journalists are not to be condemned when they criticize the government.

Although the Macedonian citizens perceive themselves as true democrats, this attitude does not correspond with their willingness to deal with issues in the manner consistent with the democratic principles. In this sense, a large percentage of Macedonian citizens are not willing to accept a neither different opinion nor are willing to express publicly their dissatisfaction despite the fact that though 92% of respondents believe that freedom of speech is the most important issue for democracy. This data can be interpreted in several ways: as a lack of democratic awareness, as a fear of confrontation with the authorities or as a state of apathy.

## 2.2. Political Society

Free and active participation and involvement of citizens in the political life of any country is the principal characteristic of democracy. When it comes to contemporary democratic systems, citizens are allowed to discuss freely their problems, express and voice their dissatisfaction and complaints and request changes. The system of democratic rule represents a continuous process of harmonization and changes. If the citizens are dissatisfied with certain governmental politics or rule of a given political party, they may change the ratio of the political parties represented in the country by voting in free, fair and democratic elections.

Hence, the political parties are the stakeholders that shape democratic life, i.e. institutionalize and regulate the conflicts among the existing groups in society.

The existence of various political options with different ideological affiliation lays the foundation of a pluralistic form of democratic rule. Hereunder is presented the ideological orientation of the Macedonian citizens and the ratio of the left wing, right wing or centre members.

The majority of Macedonians are undeclared when it comes to their ideological affiliation, i.e. a high 38, 6% of the respondents stated that they did not know which political option they belonged to. The



percentage of respondents that declared themselves as centre-oriented amounts to 22,3%, as opposed to 20,5% that declared themselves as right wing-orientated and 18,5% as left wing-oriented.

More pronounced deviations from the overall results were ascertained in the case of Turks since the majority of Turks (69, 5%) cannot declare themselves ideologically. Such a trend is also evident in the case of the respondents residing in the southeastern region of Macedonia (64, 5%) and the ones with incomplete education (63, 3%).

The most peculiar fact from the aspect of ethnic structure of the respondents and their ideological affiliation is the one of the Roma population, which leads us to the conclusion that they are the most right-wing orientated ethnic community in the Republic of Macedonia expressed in percentages, (i.e.: 30,4%).

**Table 2.** "How do you declare yourselves in terms of ideological affiliation" per ethnic belonging

	<b>Macedonians</b>	<b>Albanians</b>	<b>Turks</b>	<b>Roma</b>
<b>Left wing</b>	20,8%	16,2%	4,9%	10,9%
<b>Right wing</b>	19,3%	24,1%	12,2%	30,4%
<b>Centre</b>	21%	29,5%	13,4%	8,7%
<b>Undeclared</b>	38,9%	30,3%	69,5%	50%

With reference to the three aforementioned political options, most of the Macedonian citizens have ideologically declared themselves as centre-oriented, but, nevertheless, in the course of almost all parliamentary elections held in the Republic of Macedonia these political parties had significantly fewer votes compared to the left wing and right wing political parties.

As far as the fact that indicates that the majority of Macedonian citizens are politically and ideologically undeclared, it may be interpreted in two ways. The citizens are insufficiently informed and educated regarding the basic principles and postulates of the different political ideologies or they cannot perceive and differentiate the ideological affiliation when it comes to the activities undertaken by the left-wing and right-wing parties present on the political stage in the Republic of Macedonia. Namely, even though they are very precise concerning their ideological affiliation in their respective political platforms, when it comes to their activities, they do not always adhere to their policies (in particular pertaining to welfare and economy) which are distinctive and distinguishable for the political option they belong to.

To the question whether the Macedonian citizens agree with the viewpoint that the *conservative people are better than the ones who opt for constant changes*, 33,3% of the total number of respondents are in favor of this viewpoint as opposed to the remaining 66,7% that do not agree with it. A similar distribution of responses is also evident in terms of the survey conducted in the year 1999 when 27% of the respondents were in favor of and 70% were against this viewpoint. It is intriguing that the majority of the respondents who have declared themselves as right wing oriented in the course of the survey do not agree with the viewpoint that the conservative people are better than the ones who opt for constant changes (66,5%).

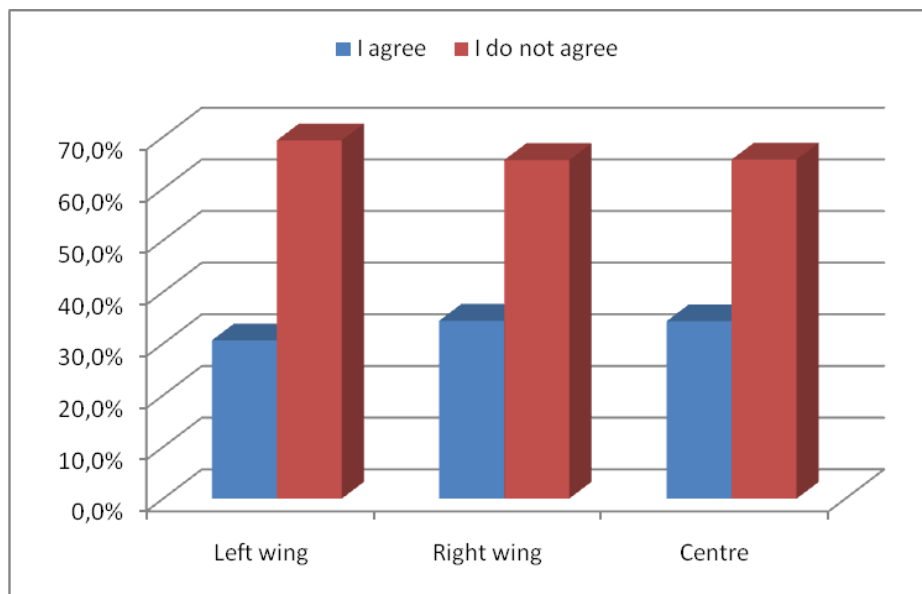


Figure 3. "Do you agree that conservative people are better than the ones who opt for constant changes?"

From the aspect of age groups, the youngest group of respondents aged between 18 and 25 and between 26 and 30 mainly disagree with this viewpoint, which leads to the conclusion that this population is most prepared for changes. As the age of the respondents increases, so does the percentage of respondents that are of the opinion that the conservative people are better than the ones who opt for constant changes. Such results are in line with the expectations, taking into account that the elderly people have difficulties in both accepting and adjusting to the changes in society.

Since its independence and the coming of the era of political pluralism, a number of young politicians have appeared and acted on the political stage in the Republic of Macedonia. The age of the Macedonian politicians, i.e. whether youth in politics may be an advantage or disadvantage is a frequent subject matter of discussions both in the public and media. In this context, the majority of respondents, i.e. 58, 2% believe in the young politicians as opposed to the remaining 41, 8% that do not believe in them. The data obtained in the course of the survey conducted in the year 1999, indicate that at that time 64% of the respondents believed in the young politicians. So, there is a slight decline in confidence in the young politicians in the last decade. And, eventually let us focus on the opinion of the Macedonian citizens concerning the *representation and participation of women* in politics and taking into account that the percentage of their representation and percentage in politics reflects the extent of the development of the democratic awareness in any society. A total of 50, 1% of the respondents are of the opinion that *half of the political office holders are to be women* as opposed to 49, 9% that are against this viewpoint.

As anticipated, there are certain deviations in the results obtained from the aggregate number of respondents in the case of women. A total of 63, 0% of the surveyed women are of the opinion that half of the political functions are to be borne by women opposed to the higher percentage of surveyed men (61, 4%) that oppose this viewpoint.

From the aspect of the ethnic structure of the respondents, it is only in the case of Turks (57, 3%) and Roma (65, 2%) that the disagreement with the viewpoint of equal representation of women in politics prevails. The negative attitude to women and their representation and participation in politics could be

interpreted in the light of the traditional and conservative values which are typical for the cultural background of these two communities.

A more pronounced disagreement with the viewpoint that half of the political office bearers are to be women is notable in the case of respondents with incomplete elementary education (65, 3%).

Nonetheless, the percentage of the respondents that holds the opinion that women are to be equally represented in politics and on the same level with men, does not really affect the political life in the Republic of Macedonia. The number of women in politics is significantly lower compared to the number of men, particularly in terms of the executive and local government. None of the governments in the Republic of Macedonia, since the very independence and continuing to present date, has had more than two female ministers in its government structure. As far as their representation and participation in the local self-government is concerned, in the course of the latest local elections held in the year 2009, fewer than five percent of the candidates running for the office of mayor were women, and none of the female candidates were elected a mayor.

The increased percentage of women represented in the legislative power is primarily due to the changes introduced to the Election Law. In compliance with these changes, when submitting their list of candidates for members of parliament the political parties are to adhere to their legal obligation stipulating that every third candidate is to be female. Such an obligation secures and guarantees a greater representation of women in the legislative power.

### 2.3. Rule of Law

The rule of law presupposes existence of legal restrictions set by the state for the purpose of safeguarding citizens' rights and freedoms as well as for the purpose of continuous functioning of the independent social system. In this respect aiming at attaining consolidated democracy, a sufficient level of autonomy and independence on the part of the civil and political society is to be continually imbedded in and endorsed by the third arena, i.e. by the rule of law. All relevant actors, in particular the democratic government and state must abide by and support the rule of law (*Linz and Stepan, 2009: 36*). Moreover, the survey tackled the perception of the Macedonian citizens regarding the rule of law in the Republic of Macedonia, i.e. whether and to what extent the state provides for overall respect of citizens' rights and freedoms. The respondents were presented with a scale ranging from 1 to 10 so as to assess the *state's concern with its citizens*. In this respect, most of the total number of respondents (20.9%) have rated the state's concern with the lowest mark on the scale – 1, whereas only 1, 4% of the respondents have rated the state's concern with 10.

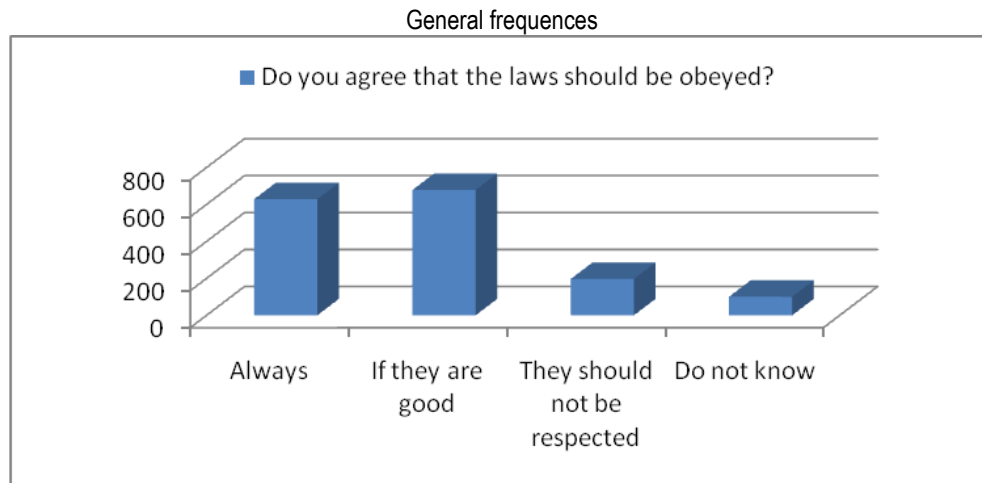
Much greater dissatisfaction was expressed by village dwellers compared to city dwellers, and 27, 2% of the village dwellers have rated the state's concern with 1.

In terms of the ethnic structure of the respondents, the greatest dissatisfaction is evident in the case of the Albanians residing in the Republic of Macedonia, and 33,3% of the Albanians have rated the state's concern with 1. A significantly lower dissatisfaction prevails among Macedonians. It is rather surprising that Roma seem to be the most satisfied with the state's concern particularly having in mind that they are deemed to be the most socially and economically vulnerable group.

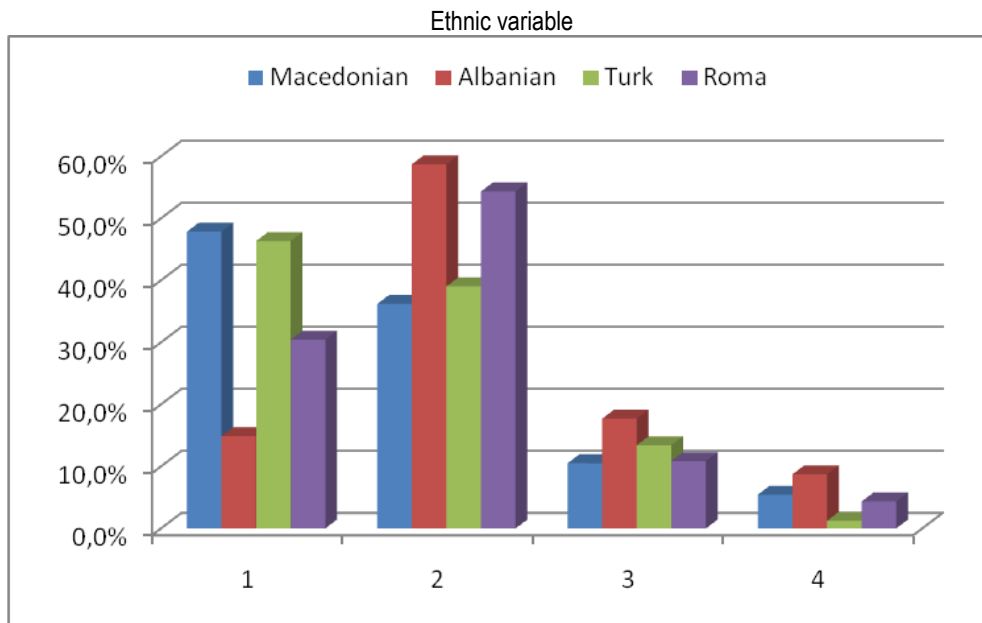
As for the age structure, the results obtained in the course of the conducted survey point out that that the respondents aged 65 or over are the most satisfied with the state's concern. In this light, 19, 0% has rated the concern with 5, whereas a high 6, 6% have rated it with 10.

Additionally, the survey analyzed the *willingness on the part of the Macedonian citizens to abide by the laws and decisions adopted by the state institutions*. A total 42,3% of the respondents stated that *'they are to be abided by only provided that they are good ones'*, 39,2 % are of the opinion that they are *'to be*

*abided at all times*, whereas 12,2% stated that *‘they are not to be abided by since the state is not concerned with its citizens’*.



(a)



(b)

**Figure 4, (a) and (b).** “Do you agree that laws should be obeyed?”

In terms of the ethnic structure, the majority of the Macedonian (47,9%) and Turk (46,3%) respondents believe that the laws and decisions adopted by the state institutions are to be abided by at all times, whereas the Albanian (58,7%) and Roma (54,3%) respondents stated that they are to be abided by only provided that they are good ones.

The conducted survey does not indicate any major deviations from the average seen from the aspect of respondents' age, gender, degree of education and place of residence.

The large percentage of expressed dissatisfaction about the manner in which the state cares about the citizens, points out to the certain institutional and systematic weaknesses regarding the issues of safety and rights of citizens. Therefore, it can be concluded that the strengthening of democratic capacity is a necessity for Macedonian society, as one of the basic preconditions for a fully consolidated democracy.

On the other hand, the reluctance of the large percentage of Macedonian citizens to obey laws, point out to the weaknesses in terms of their democratic awareness i.e. the way that they perceive and experience democracy. Considering that in a fully consolidated democracy all stakeholders in the society (including the opposition and citizens) are willing to respect the national legislation, points out to the fact that in the Republic of Macedonia there is a need for raising the democratic awareness but also for strengthening the overall democratic capacity of the state.

### 3. Conclusion

The survey tackling the segment of democracy in the Republic of Macedonia aimed at giving us an insight into the perception of democracy and democratic values on the part of the Macedonian citizens and perceiving the level of their democratic awareness. Having in mind that the Republic of Macedonia is a relatively young democratic state and its society is deemed to be in democratic transition, the indicators of democratic awareness on the part of the Macedonian citizens and their habits, viewpoints and behaviors were analyzed through the prism of the three out of the five existing arenas of consolidated democracy, namely civil society, political society and rule of law.

The analyzed data provided a clearer image as to how the citizens rate the level of democracy in the Macedonian society. Also, this data enabled us to gain an insight into the perception on the part of the Macedonian citizens regarding their own democratization, i.e. whether and to what extent they experience themselves as democrats and whether in their day-to-day life they cope and deal with the issues in a manner which is in line with the democratic standards and principles.

Provided that we defined consolidated democracy from the aspect of behaviors, viewpoints and constitutionality, by virtue of the results obtained in the course of the conducted survey, we may reach the following general conclusions about the democratic awareness of Macedonian citizens:

Existence of a major discrepancy between citizens' perception of their own democratization on one hand and the real image concerning the level of their genuine democratization on the other hand. In spite of the fact that most of the Macedonian citizens declaratively strive for fostering and promotion of democratic values, in reality they are significantly less prepared to deal with and confront things in a way that is in line with the modern democratic standards.

There is a difference among the perception of the ethnic communities living in the Republic of Macedonia (particularly between the Albanian ethnic community and Macedonian majority) regarding the level of the democracy within the society.

Hence, we may come to a general conclusion that the *Macedonian society is still paving and trudging the way to its own democratic transition*, the full realization of which presupposes deployment of all disposable capacities and potentials, such as the system institutions, the political elites and as well as the overall civil society.

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