

LEBANESE MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE OIL AND GAS SECTOR



A Second Report by



THE SAMIR KASSIR FOUNDATION

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Introduction

Since 2013, the SKeyes Center for Media and Cultural Freedom at the Samir Kassir Foundation (SKF) has partnered with Middle East Strategic Perspectives (MESP) to conduct a thorough monitoring of the Lebanese media coverage of the oil and gas sector. SKeyes and MESP are also cooperating with journalist Matt Nash and the Lebanese Oil and Gas Initiative (LOGI) to verify the accuracy of statements by politicians and prominent economists around the oil and gas sector. All the results of the fact-checking are available on the smart phone app “LOG&Learn” downloadable on iOS and Android.

In August 2014, SKeyes and MESP published a first report entitled “Lebanese Media Coverage of the Oil and Gas Sector” available online at: [http://www.skeyesmedia.org/extensions/pdf/Lebanese Media Coverage of the Oil and Gas Sector.pdf](http://www.skeyesmedia.org/extensions/pdf/Lebanese_Media_Coverage_of_the_Oil_and_Gas_Sector.pdf). The report showed there was “room for the Lebanese media to improve their coverage of the sector. A vast majority of coverage focused on politics with very little attention paid to the environmental impact the sector will have and the role of civil society in also monitoring the sector. Many of the articles and television reports monitored included factual errors and terminology was often misused.” The report also indicated that “journalists sometimes quote sources that give inaccurate information or misquote sources, thus presenting misleading information. Finally, Lebanese journalists paid very little attention to oil and gas developments in neighboring countries, such as Cyprus and Israel, even though developments in those countries could have an impact on Lebanon.” Given these findings, SKeyes recommended that Lebanese journalists and editors:

- Fact-check all information before publication;
- Seek out high-quality, reliable sources to interview;
- Report on a wider variety of topics;
- Report on developments in neighboring countries;
- Understand and train staff on oil and gas terminology in order to use it properly;
- Use slow news periods to do more in-depth, investigative reporting; and
- Research how other countries have built their oil and gas sectors to better contextualize developments in Lebanon.

Over the past two years, a series of workshops and trainings was provided to Lebanese journalists covering the sector, based on the findings of the SKeyes-MESP report, which outlined the results of the first media monitoring conducted in 2014.

The idea behind the second edition of our monitoring of the Lebanese media coverage of the oil and gas sector is to assess the current state of affairs, evaluate where progress has been made and where challenges persist. The present report can also be seen as an indirect evaluation of efforts put to train Lebanese journalists over the past two years, by identifying where progress has been made and how to calibrate efforts – where needed – to yield more positive results.

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Methodology

As part of the project “Supporting Channels for Civic Engagement in the Management of the Lebanese Oil and Gas Sector” managed by SKF with the support of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, MESP was solicited to conduct a second monitoring of the Lebanese media coverage of the oil and gas sector. The monitoring targeted the coverage of the nascent Lebanese oil and gas sector and developments related to the sector in neighboring countries, namely Cyprus and Israel.

Mirroring our 2014 monitoring – to allow a precise comparison – the 2016 monitoring period was conducted over 75 days, also from February 1 to April 15. Five daily newspapers, two TV channels, two news websites and two magazines were subjected to an in-depth qualitative and quantitative monitoring.

The monitoring – conducted on a daily basis by MESP – focused in particular on the:

- Frequency of reporting on the topic over the monitored time period;
- Accuracy of information;
- Reliability of sources;
- Topics covered; and
- Quality of investigations.

MESP proceeded differently depending on whether the media outlet was a newspaper, a print publication or a TV channel.

Newspapers and Magazines

MESP monitored newspapers’ “Local News” and “Economy” sections. The latter usually includes both local and regional business news. When applicable, MESP also covered the “Environment” section (Assafir) and the “Youth” section (L’Orient-

Le Jour; Annahar) for articles tackling either environmental challenges posed by petroleum activity, or new oil- and gas-related degrees offered by Lebanese universities. MESP also included the sections covering Israeli news (Assafir; Al-Akhbar) for articles related to the oil and gas sector in Israel. In addition, MESP covered editorials, op-eds and commentaries.

News Websites

For news websites, MESP focused on content produced in-house. As it is primarily a content aggregator, El-Nashra’s staff does not produce most of its material. Because its articles are mostly from other sources, El-Nashra’s news updates were omitted. But El-Nashra also generates its own articles and analysis, which were included in the coverage. As for NOW English, MESP covered the “News Reports” section focusing on Lebanon, in addition to the “Blogs” and “Commentary” sections.

TV Channels

For TV channels, MESP monitored the evening news for in-house reports on the oil and gas sector in Lebanon and the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as primetime political talk shows. The monitoring was conducted by following the programs live and watching uploaded segments on the channels’ websites and YouTube accounts. Since most evening news start broadcasting at approximately the same time, which makes it challenging to follow them live, the availability of uploaded news segments online was decisive and explains why LBCI and MTV were the only TV channels included in this year’s monitoring.

Newspapers	TV Channels	Magazines	News Websites
Al-Akhbar	LBCI	Executive Magazine	El-Nashra
Annahar	MTV	Le Commerce du Levant	NOW English
Assafir			
L'Orient-Le Jour			
The Daily Star			

The development of an oil and gas industry usually has vast implications for other sectors and touches on a broad range of issues that are of concern for citizens. Monitoring the variety of topics covered by local media helps measure awareness that average citizens have about the sector.

- Economics, Finance and Markets;
- Infrastructure;
- Security and Defense;
- Border Dispute;
- Geopolitics;
- Exports and Imports.

MESP identified 12 topics thought to be the most relevant for media coverage:

- Politics (which includes news coverage of political debates related to oil and gas);
- Governance and Transparency;
- Legislation;
- Tender Process;
- Environment;
- Civil Society;

Subjects outside these 12 categories were also noted when covered.

When spotted, factual errors were pointed out and explained. The same mistake repeated in the same story was only counted once. It should be noted that only factual mistakes that could be verified objectively were identified. Subjective statements or personal convictions were left out.

Results

A total of 66 stories were identified and evaluated during the monitoring period. This is slightly more than half of the total number of stories evaluated during the same monitoring period two years ago (122 stories). In 2016, the 66 stories were divided as follows:

- 54 articles published in newspapers;
- 6 TV reports;
- 4 articles published in magazines; and
- 2 articles published in news websites.

Newspapers made 25 errors; TVs four; magazines six and news websites five.

Figure 1. Number of stories and errors by outlet



Figure 2. Timeline of stories and errors

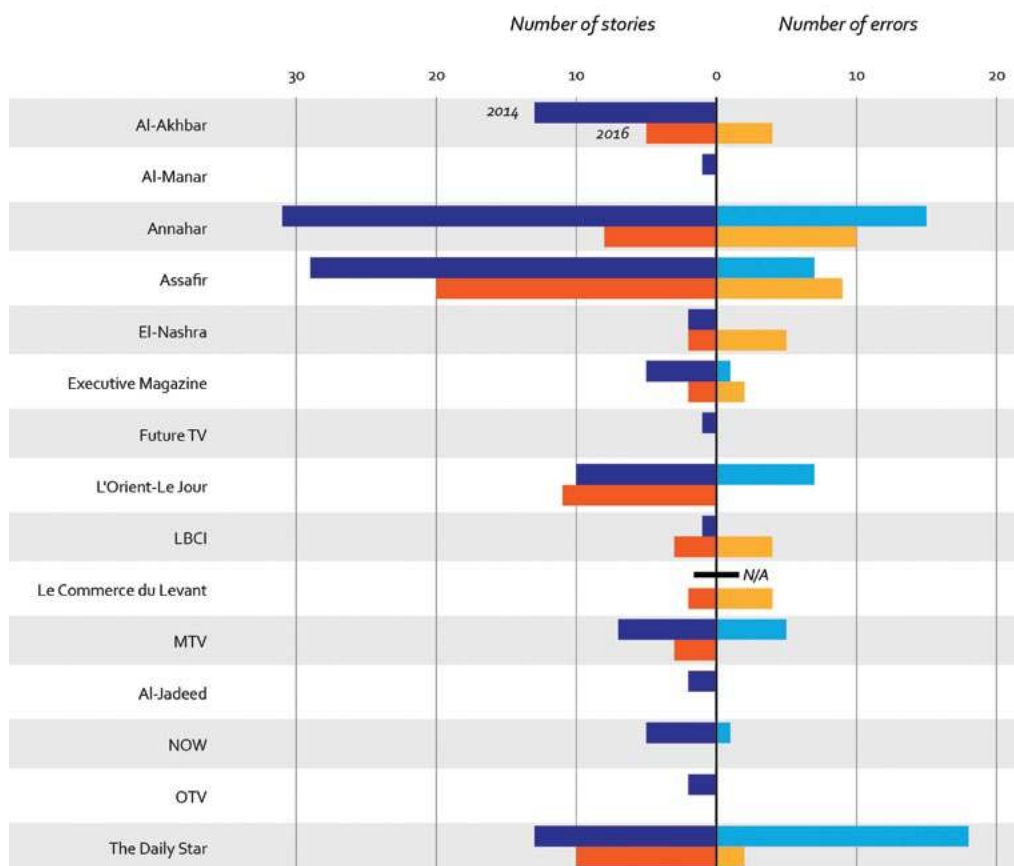
Coverage

The sharp decrease in the number of stories covering the oil and gas sector is not surprising. It is the direct result of the deadlock and repeated delays the sector has suffered from since 2013. After the success of the pre-qualification round in February-March 2013, the first licensing round was launched in May 2013 despite an incomplete framework and in the absence of basic texts: a petroleum tax law and two fundamental decrees, one defining offshore blocks and their coordinates, and another one approving the tender protocol and the model exploration and production agreement. Needless to say it was impossible for companies to place bids in the absence of fundamental documents. The closing of the tender was delayed five times in less than a year, and on August 2014, Minister of Energy and Water Arthur Nazarian decided to put an end to the ritual and postponed the tender until “a maximum of six months from the date of the adoption” of the missing decrees.

Repeated delays and absence of progress have affected interest in the sector, not only among stakeholders but also among local journalists, and that is evident in the number of stories published over the same period in 2014 and 2016. Oil and gas events organized between February 1 and April 15, 2016, contributed to narrowing the gap between the 2014 and 2016 reporting periods, with 13.6% of articles and reports in 2016 (or nine stories out of 66) covering conferences. Also, an important number of stories published, 12 out of 66, was produced by foreign press agencies or media outlets, with only one story among these featuring additional input by the Lebanese outlet publishing the story. All of these stories – produced by foreign press agencies, with or without locally added content – covered regional developments.

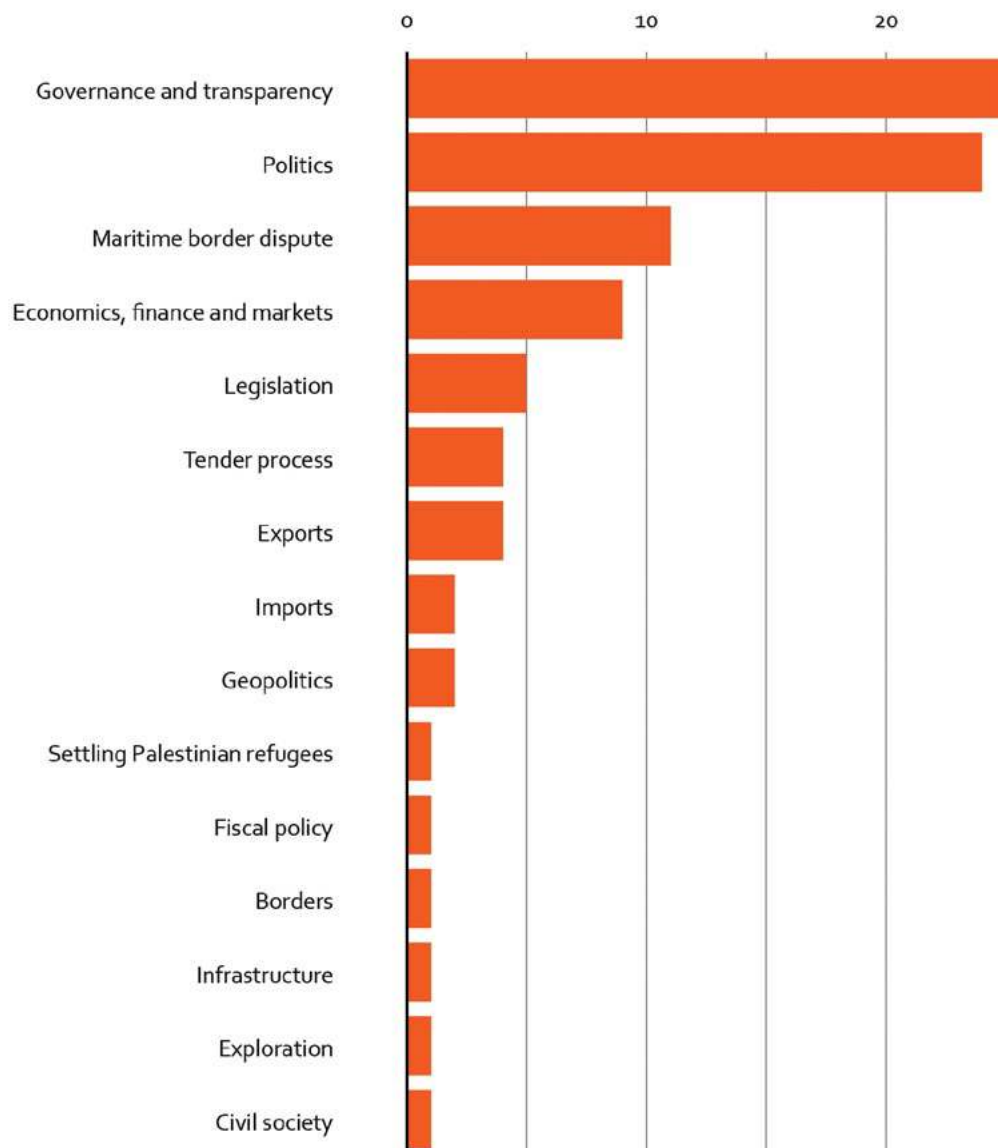
Only two media outlets produced more oil and gas stories in 2016 than in 2014: LBCI with three stories in the 2016 reporting period (one in the 2014 reporting period), and, more significant by virtue of the larger numbers, L'Orient-Le Jour with 11 stories in 2016 (10 in 2014).

Figure 3. Numbers of stories and errors by outlet, 2014 v. 2016



The type of topics covered in 2016 was also revealing. While there was a clear preference for “Politics” in 2014 (80 out of 122 stories), a tendency that was entrenched in 2016 (24 out of 66 stories) relative to the number of stories, one of the main surprises of the 2016 edition of our monitoring of media coverage of the oil and gas sector is that

“Governance and Transparency” came out on top of the topics covered, with 25 stories. Assafir led the way with eight pieces addressing “Governance and Transparency,” followed by L’Orient-Le Jour with six, and Annahar and The Daily Star with four each. Only two outlets stayed clear of “Politics:” Le Commerce du Levant and MTV.

Figure 4. Number of stories by category

Since stories can cover several topics, Figure 4's numbers exceed the total number of stories evaluated during the monitoring period.

The fourth most covered category is "Economics, Finance and Markets" (nine stories in 2016, compared to 21 in 2014). Seven out of the nine articles are not directly related to the Lebanese oil and gas sector per se, but to falling oil prices

and their impact on the local economy. It is worth noting that none of the stories under this category was published by the two economic magazines monitored, *Executive Magazine* and *Le Commerce du Levant*. So, which media outlet covered "Economics"? *Annahar*, *Assafir*, *L'Orient-Le Jour* and *MTV* each had two stories covering "Economics," and *The Daily Star* covered the topic once.

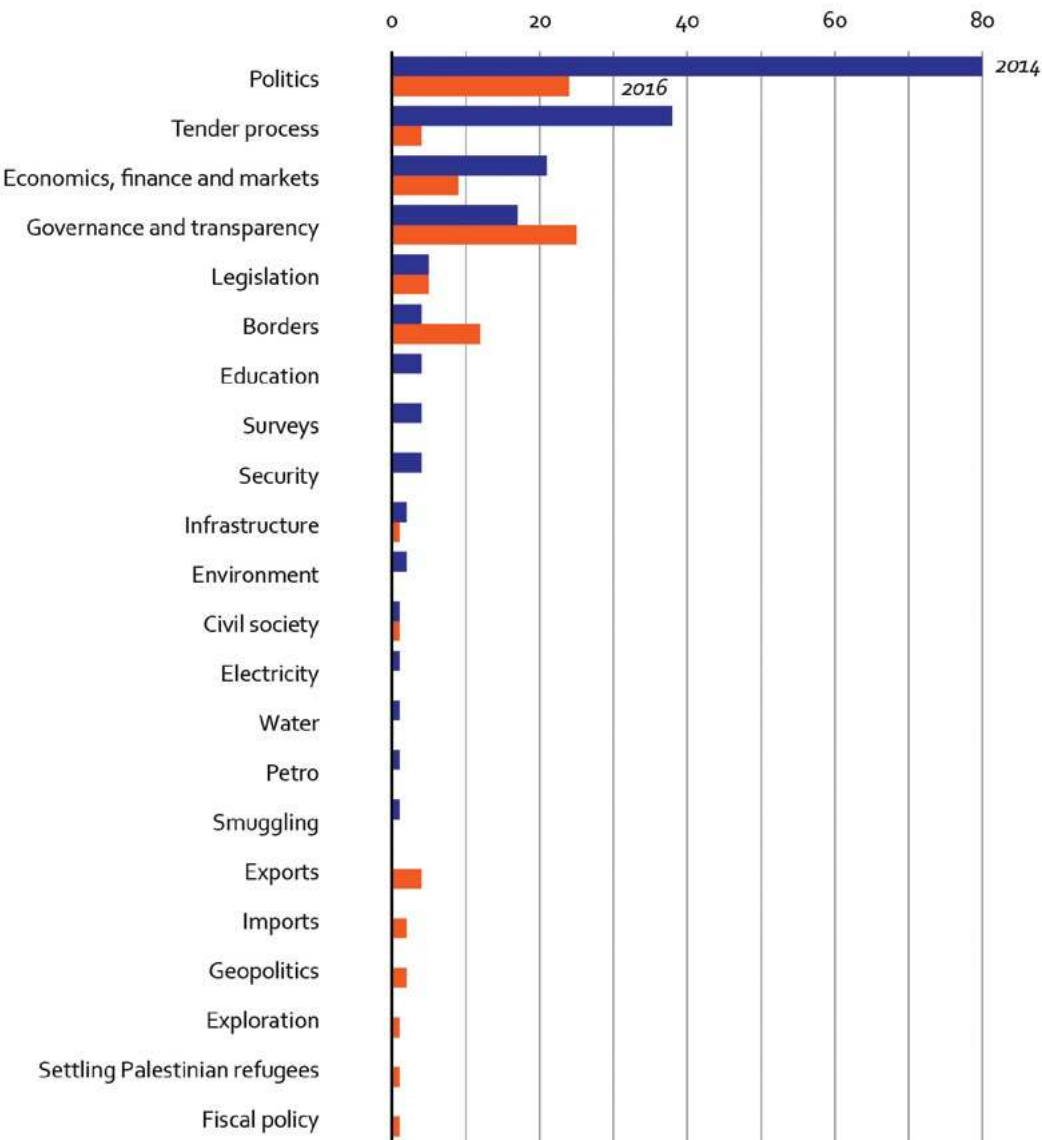
Five articles addressed the legislative framework, in Lebanon or in other Eastern Mediterranean countries. “Legislation” retains the same number of stories compared to 2014.

“Environment” (two stories in 2014), “Security and Defense” (four stories in 2014), “Surveys” (four stories in 2014) and “Education” (referring to new university majors; four stories in 2014) were entirely disregarded in 2016, while “Civil Society” and “Infrastructure” were only covered once each. The sharp drop in stories covering the “Tender process” (38 in 2014; 4 in 2016) is also a direct result of the lack of progress in the first licensing round.

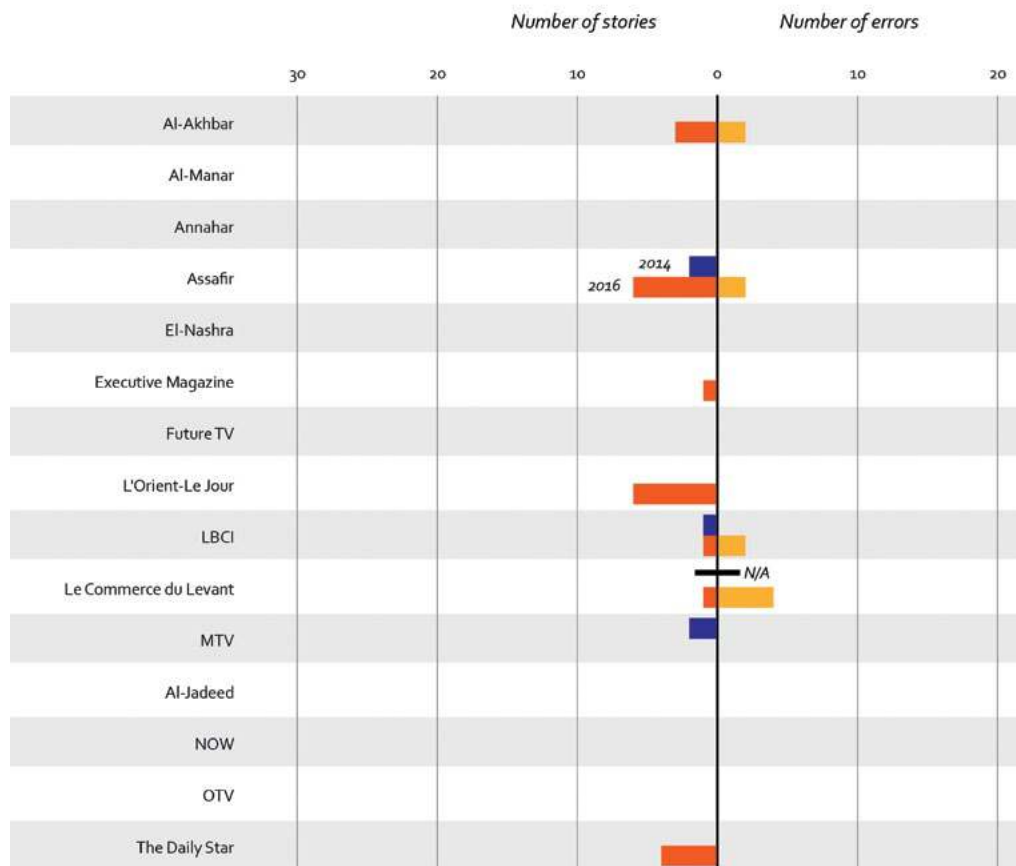
In contrast, there was a sharp rise in stories covering “Governance and Transparency” in 2016 (25 stories), compared to 2014 (17 stories), highlighting growing concerns about corruption in Lebanon, and fears that the nascent oil and gas sector would suffer from the same issues plaguing other aspects of public life in Lebanon, including patronage, political interference and possible corrupt practices. The issue of Lebanon’s borders received a significant interest in the media, with a total of 12 stories, three times the number of stories in 2014 (four). While the bulk of these stories covered the maritime border dispute between Lebanon and Israel, one article published in Assafir on March 26 also covered the demarcation of Lebanon’s land borders with its neighbors.

In addition, a number of stories published in 2016 covered new topics that were absent in the media coverage two years ago, during the same monitoring period. Gas exports and imports received a decent amount of coverage (six stories), although they were almost entirely addressing developments in Israel. Four stories covered “Exports,” three of them addressing Israeli gas exports, and a fourth joint Israeli and Cypriot efforts to export gas. And two stories covered supplying the Israeli market with gas, one from the Leviathan gas field, and another covering Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) imports. Two articles fall under the “Geopolitics” category, one covering the Israeli-Turkish rapprochement and the other the Cyprus-Greece-Israel trilateral summit held in Nicosia on January 28. *Le Commerce du Levant* wrote the only article entirely dedicated to “Exploration” addressing the renewed interest for exploration in Cyprus following the discovery of Zohr, a giant gas field in Egypt’s Exclusive Economic Zone, located a few kilometers off Cypriot waters. One story published by *Al-Akhbar* (February 12) tackled Lebanon’s “Fiscal Policy.” One other story, also published by *Al-Akhbar* (February 5) tackled the issue of “Palestinian Refugees” in Lebanon and addressed gas resources from a narrow angle claiming Lebanon would not be able to exploit its resources unless Palestinian refugees are permanently settled.

Figure 5. Number of stories by category, 2014 v. 2016



**Figure 6. Stories not about Lebanon:
Number and errors by outlet, 2014 v. 2016**



Eastern Mediterranean

Another pleasant surprise in 2016 was the impressive increase in covering oil and gas-related developments in neighboring countries, one of the recommendations of our report in 2014, given that what happens in one country could have implications on Lebanon as well. In 2014, we noted a very limited interest in covering oil and gas developments in Cyprus and Israel (only five out of 122 stories) despite the relevance they could have for Lebanese authorities and the public. If

we put aside stories covering the maritime border dispute between Lebanon and Israel, since these cannot be considered as covering the Israeli oil and gas sector, in 2016, 22 stories, or a third of all the stories monitored, covered news or analyzed developments related to the oil and gas sector in either Cyprus or Israel. Granted, more than half of these stories were produced by foreign press agencies or media outlets (with only one of them including additional input by the local media outlet publishing the story); but the mere publication of these stories highlight an increasing interest in the

subject compared to 2014, when this interest was at its lowest despite its significance for the country.

Four media outlets stood out for multiplying the number of regional stories produced: Al-Akhbar went from no story in 2014 to three in 2016 (one of which is a reproduction of an article published in a foreign media outlet). The Daily Star from no story to four (including three by a foreign press agency); Assafir from two to six (including two by a foreign press agency), and L'Orient-Le Jour from no story to six (the six are produced by foreign press agencies, with only one article including added content by L'Orient-Le Jour).

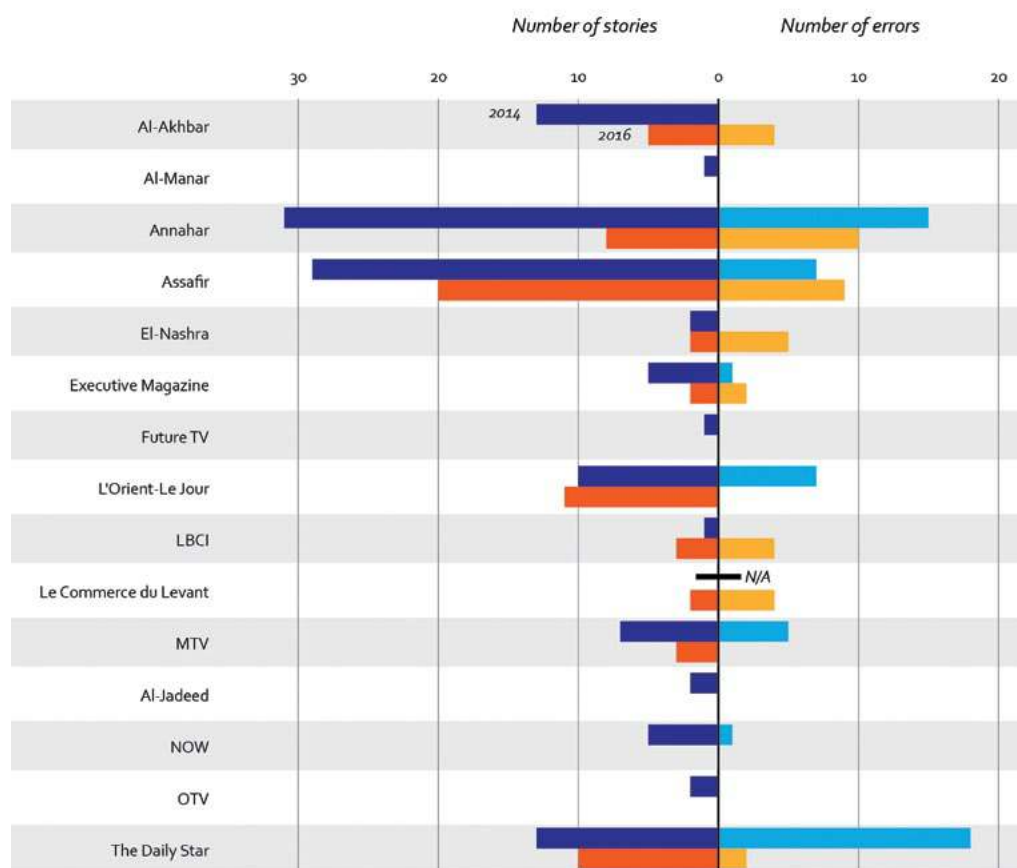
To say that Annahar and El-Nashra have limited interest in what happens elsewhere in the Eastern

Mediterranean is an understatement: they are the only media outlets that did not tackle regional issues in 2014 and 2016 alike.

Errors

In the 66 stories found and evaluated during the 2016 monitoring period, MESP identified 40 errors. The average error per story in 2016 is 0.6, compared to 0.44 in 2014. Taken on its own, the rise in the average number of errors per story may not be steep, but if coupled with the total number of stories (only about half the total number of stories two years ago), the result would be more revealing, because the more there are stories, the more likely it is to make mistakes.

Figure 7. Stories about Lebanon: number and errors by outlet, 2014 v. 2016



On the contrary, the fewer stories there is, the fewer number of errors, one would expect. The picture becomes a bit grimmer if we take the number of stories and errors by source agency. Indeed, the 40 errors were all made in stories produced by Lebanese media outlets. The 12 stories produced by foreign press agencies or media outlets did not include mistakes. The average error per Lebanese story then would be 0.74. The difference between 2014 and 2016 becomes more pronounced.

Once again, there are major differences among the media outlets monitored. Media outlets with less than five stories are not included in this analysis, since we consider a modest production not exceeding five stories would not allow us to draw robust conclusions.

The two business magazines, Executive Magazine and Le Commerce du Levant, the two TV channels, LBCI and MTV, the two news websites, El-Nashra and NOW will therefore not be included in this analysis and we will focus instead on five media outlets, all of them daily newspapers: Al-Akhbar, Annahar, Assafir, L'Orient-Le Jour and The Daily Star.

Three among them registered an average error per story below the overall average of 0.6: L'Orient-Le Jour, The Daily Star and Assafir. Despite producing more stories than in 2014, L'Orient-Le Jour had a clean record with zero mistakes in 2016. Even if roughly half of the stories were produced by foreign press agencies, this is still a welcome development considering the progress made compared to 2014, when L'Orient-Le Jour made seven mistakes in 10 stories. Equally remarkable is The Daily Star's record this year. Lebanon's English-language newspaper recorded the highest number of errors in 2014 with 18 errors in 13 stories, an average of 1.38 error per story. In 2016, only two mistakes were made in 10 stories, an average of 0.20 error per story. With 20

oil and gas articles in the 2016 monitoring period, Assafir is the most prolific of all media outlets monitored. We identified nine errors in these articles, an average of 0.45 error per story, which is higher than its 2014 average of 0.24.

Two media outlets registered an average error per story higher than the overall average: Al-Akhbar and Annahar. Al-Akhbar failed to keep its clean 2014 record. Although it produced fewer stories in 2016 than in 2014 (five and 13 respectively), it made four errors this year, with an average of 0.80 error per story. Annahar, the most prolific media outlet in 2014 with 31 stories, produced only eight oil and gas articles in 2016, in which we identified 10 mistakes. Its average error per story rose from 0.48 in 2014 to 1.25 in 2016.

As in 2014, a number of mistakes repeated by journalists throughout the monitoring period are related to terminology and attempts to estimate the hydrocarbon potential.

That said, we noticed progress on the terminology front. The use of terms such as “reserves” or “discoveries” or “Lebanon's oil” in stories about Lebanon (where no discoveries have been made, and as a result we cannot talk about reserves either) has noticeably dropped. Although this may well be attributed to the number of stories – much lower in 2016 than in 2014 – it can also be argued that the results of training that Lebanese journalists have been given over the past two years are beginning to bear fruit. In our 2014 report, we recommended building the capacity of journalists covering the oil and gas sector. Over the past two years, SKeyes and the Lebanese Petroleum Administration (LPA) have indeed organized a number of trainings, in Lebanon and abroad, to familiarize Lebanese journalists (and bloggers) with the basics of the sector. This is a long-term effort that must be sustained and supported, as results are within reach.

As for estimates, it was interesting to note that all errors concerned the amount of gas contained in gas fields discovered in neighboring countries. Whether for Aphrodite, Zohr, Leviathan or Gaza Marine, the estimates were often wrong although only a click away if information was double-checked online. During the monitoring period, no article or TV report attempted to estimate Lebanon's hydrocarbon potential. More significantly, the statement that Lebanon holds 96 (or 95.9) trillion cubic feet of gas, based on a misunderstood declaration by former Energy Minister Gebran Bassil – the most common mistake identified in our 2014 report – was not made once. Although references to this estimate are still common, it was notably absent in the 66 stories that were found and monitored over a period of 75 days in 2016. However, the belief that Lebanon holds vast oil and gas reserves is still deeply held and is often treated as a fact in many oil and gas stories about Lebanon.

Another set of mistakes concerned regulatory issues. Journalists, and even industry experts writing on the subject, often struggle with some of the provisions of the 2010 Offshore Petroleum Resources law, Exploration and Production Agreement (EPA) and other documents. Although confusion surrounding taxation, State participation in the first licensing round, the nature of the EPA etc. is being addressed, essentially by the LPA, the impact has been limited on that front. On the one hand, these are complex issues that require more time and training to be understood, on the other hand, this also represents the “arena” where various parties tend to confront each other indirectly, through a journalist or an expert's pen, to advance their views. Training should target the first category.

Finally, we identified numerous errors that could have been avoided simply by careful fact-checking. Just like in 2014, we found that media outlets often get basic information wrong: gas estimates in the various gas fields discovered in the Eastern Mediterranean, the year of discovery, identifying offshore blocks and whom they are licensed to, etc. It is probably too costly for media outlets to afford fact-checking departments at a time when they are struggling to survive, but this comes at the expense of the quality of the coverage. Fortunately, this is again an area where progress is within reach. General knowledge or basic information is easily available online, provided the journalist knows where to look for it.

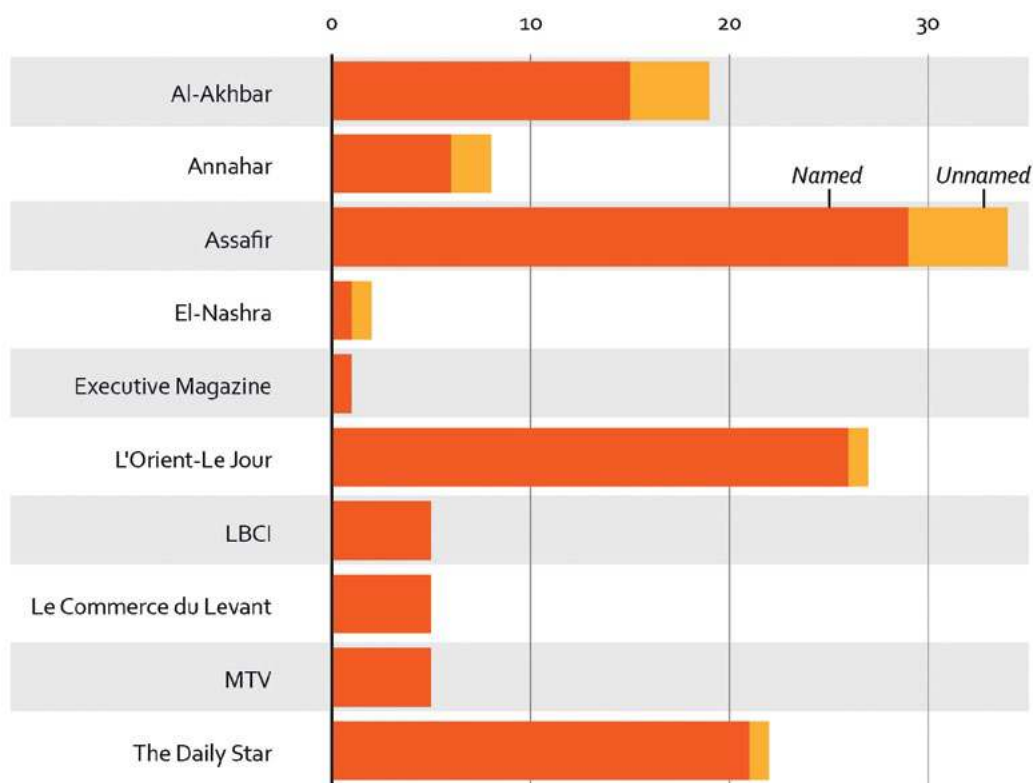
Among the five media outlets we retained for our analysis (those with five stories or more), one – Annahar – did not produce any story covering oil and gas developments in other Eastern Mediterranean countries. Among the remaining four, two had no mistakes: L'Orient-Le Jour and The Daily Star. But, for these two, external production was dominant. Three out of four regional articles in The Daily Star were produced by a foreign press agency, and all six of L'Orient-Le Jour's regional articles were produced by foreign press agencies, with only one article including content added by L'Orient-Le Jour). By contrast, two out of Al-Akhbar's three regional articles were produced in-house. They included one mistake each, both about regulatory hurdles in Israel. And four out of Assafir's six regional articles were also produced in-house, two of them had no mistakes, and two included one mistake each. They both concerned the coverage of regulatory issues in Israel.

Sources

Backing up a story with named and unnamed sources is one way for a journalist to present a

solid product. On its own, the number of sources in a piece does not necessarily ensure high-quality coverage. Another important element to take into consideration is the reliability of the source.

Figure 8. Number of sources



In 2014, we noted that although Lebanese journalists did make an effort to use sources in their stories, it did not always reflect positively on their final product. Indeed, a large number of mistakes identified in the 122 stories evaluated in 2014 were attributed to sources, not to the authors. One example was particularly significant: The Daily Star, which registered the highest average error per story two years ago, had nine errors, out of a total of 18, directly attributed to sources.

Another positive development in 2016 is that journalists were receptive to our recommendation to seek out more and better sources. We note that

there is a tendency to resort more frequently to sources. More significantly, in 2016, only five out of the 40 errors detected overall are attributed to sources. All five were made in three stories: an article by Al-Akhbar (two mistakes by the same source), an article by Assafir (one mistake) and a TV report by LBCI (two mistakes by the same source).

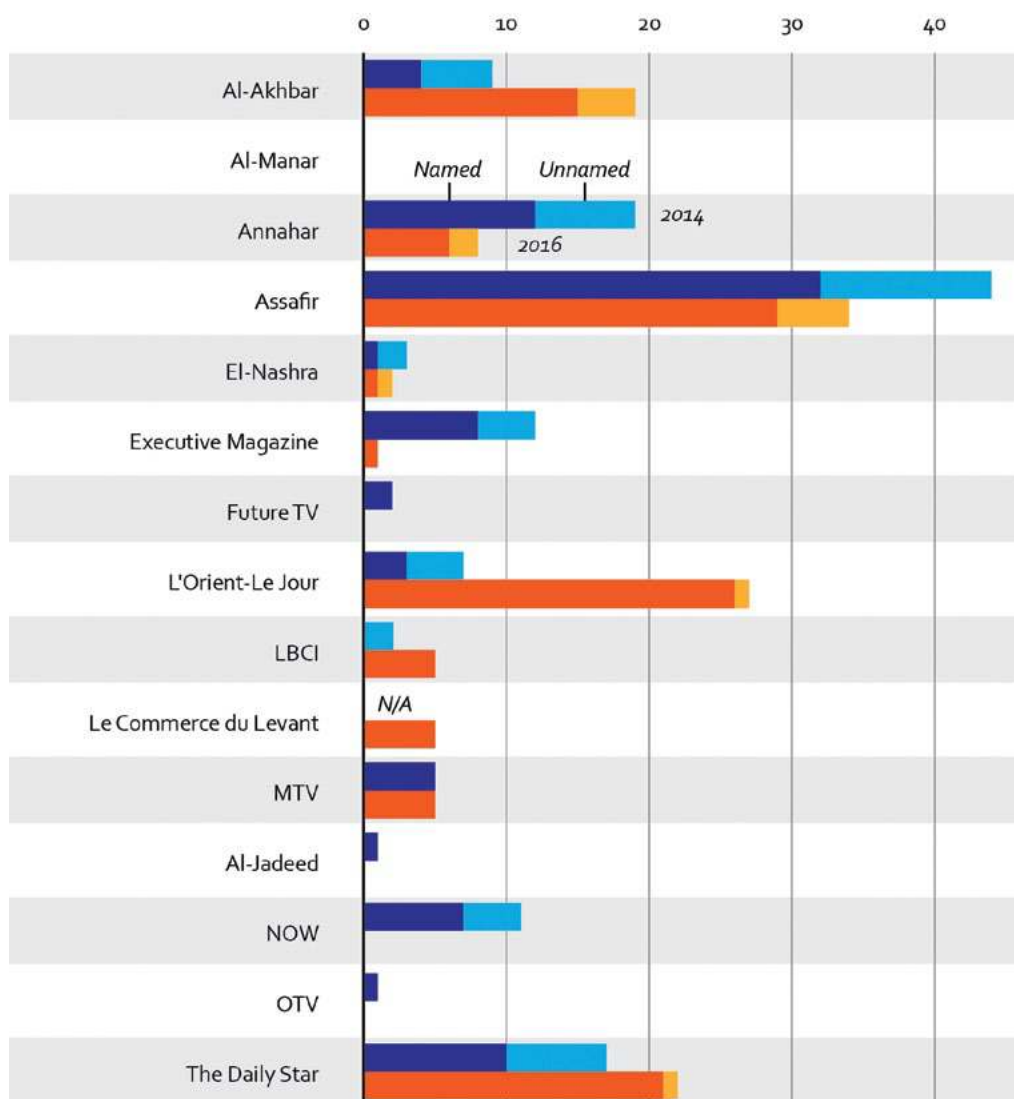
All five media outlets that produced five or more stories on oil and gas, Al-Akhbar, Annahar, Assafir, L'Orient-Le Jour and The Daily Star, used more sources, on average, than they did two years ago.

Among the five, Al-Akhbar, L'Orient-Le Jour and The Daily Star relied more heavily on sources using, on average, more than two sources per story (respectively 3.80, 2.45 and 2.20). A remarkable increase compared to 2014 when the three used, on average, 0.69, 0.70 and 1.31 source per story respectively.

Assafir came next with an average of 1.70 source per story (1.52 in 2014), followed by Annahar with an average of one source per story (0.61 in 2014).

The five media outlets also resorted to unnamed sources in certain cases, but this was the exception rather than the norm: Al-Akhbar used an average of 0.80 unnamed source per story, out of a total of 3.80. Annahar, 0.25 out of one. Assafir, 0.25 out of 1.70. L'Orient-Le Jour, 0.09 out of 2.45. And The Daily Star, 0.10 out of 2.20.

Figure 9. Number of sources, 2014 v. 2016



Major Trends

Based on the results of this year's monitoring, we identified the following trends in the Lebanese media coverage of the oil and gas sector:

1. Decline in the number of articles

In 2016, we noticed a decline in the number of articles covering the oil and gas sector, slightly more than half the number of stories produced over the same period in 2014. We can safely assume this does not reflect lack of interest in the subject but is a direct result of delays in moving the process forward in Lebanon.

2. Greater interest in the Eastern Mediterranean

The decline in the overall number of articles on the oil and gas sector is not reflected across the board. A third of all the stories produced during the 2016 reporting period (22 out of 66) covered news or analyzed developments related to the oil and gas sector in Cyprus or Israel. A massive increase compared to 2014 when only five out of 122 stories covered regional developments, and one of the main surprises of the 2016 edition of our media monitoring.

3. Publishing stories produced by foreign press agencies and media outlets

Twelve out of the 66 stories monitored in 2016 were produced by foreign press agencies or media outlets. Only one of them contained additional input by the local media outlet publishing the story. The 12 articles covered regional developments, reflecting an interest in what happens elsewhere in the Eastern Mediterranean, and possibly a certain lack of confidence in covering regional news directly, which Lebanese media outlets can gradually overcome.

4. Governance and Transparency

Another pleasant development in 2016 is the sharp rise in stories addressing "Governance and Transparency," highlighting on the one hand, growing concerns about potential corrupt practices in the sector and, on the other hand, a willingness to keep a watchful eye on the sector and monitor related developments.

5. Preference for news coverage

In 2016, there was a clear preference for news coverage. Over half the stories (36 out of 66) covered political or non-political issues. Also significant this year is the number of stories covering oil and gas events organized during the monitoring period (nine out of 66), which gave the media an opportunity to talk about the sector, during this slow oil and gas news period.

6. Fewer errors in stories categorized as "News coverage"

In 2014, we noted a relatively high number of errors in stories categorized as "news coverage," although a journalist is supposed to commit fewer mistakes when simply covering the news. In 2016, there was progress on this front, with an average of 0.19 error per news story compared to 0.37 in 2014.

7. Most common mistakes

The most common mistakes repeated by journalists involved the use of inaccurate terminology and inaccurate estimations of the hydrocarbon potential in neighboring countries. But there was progress in 2016. There were fewer references to "discoveries" and "reserves"

when talking about Lebanon, and no attempts to estimate the country's hydrocarbon potential.

8. Basic information often wrong

As in 2014, some basic information and official data are often inaccurate: gas estimates in the various gas fields discovered in the Eastern Mediterranean, the year of discovery, identifying offshore blocks and whom they are licensed to, etc. This probably indicates that not enough effort is being put into fact-checking.

9. Op-eds still include too many errors

In 2014, we noted that given the importance of opinion pieces in providing prescriptive analysis, the number of errors made in this type of

publications can be perceived as relatively high, with an average of 0.39 error per article. In 2016, this became even more obvious with an average of 1.50 error per article.

10. Resorting to sources more frequently

Another positive development: on average, there was around 1.90 source per story in 2016, almost double the 2014 average. Most media outlets monitored made an effort to resort to sources more frequently, as recommended in our previous report. More significantly, there is a clear improvement in identifying sources. In 2014, many of the mistakes made were attributed to sources and not to the author of the articles. In 2016, only five out of the 40 errors detected overall are attributed to sources.

Recommendations

We are pleased to note that Lebanese journalists took a number of our recommendations in 2014 into consideration. Two out of eight recommendations were entirely implemented: (i) Covering developments in neighboring countries and (ii) seeking out more and better informed sources. Other recommendations were taken into account: (i) understanding and correctly using the terminology and (ii) reporting on a wider variety of topics, though more progress can be done.

We encourage Lebanese journalists to pursue this trend. In addition, and to support them in carrying out their mission of covering the oil and gas sector, we suggest the following recommendations:

NEW – More input when reproducing an article by a foreign press agency or media outlet.

Twelve out of this year's 66 stories were produced by foreign press agencies or media outlets; a healthy trend signaling increased interest in the oil and gas sector beyond Lebanon. But only one of these articles contained additional input by the local media outlet publishing the story. When possible, it is preferable to add more input, to provide the readers with context and explain developments they are not familiar with.

NEW – Regional coverage: More in-house production.

A third of the regional oil and gas stories produced this year were produced by foreign press agencies or media outlets. This is normal as Lebanese journalists are only beginning to familiarize with the oil and gas sector in neighboring countries. With time, the objective must be to increase in-house production of regional oil and gas stories. The added value,

compared to simply reproducing a foreign article, would be to connect the story to the local context.

NEW – A more varied type of coverage: interviews, investigations, TV reports and programs.

This year's coverage was dominated by news reporting and feature stories. Interviews were notably absent, though interviewing experts and officials help shed light on the topic and explain sometime complex issues. There were also fewer op-eds and TV reports. We believe diversifying the types of stories can contribute to a better coverage of the oil and gas sector and is certainly more valuable for the audience.

NEW: Translate/cover the work and reports of think tanks and international organizations working on the sector.

Suggest to the readers new reading items. International think tanks and organizations working on the oil and gas sector regularly publish new material covering a wide range of topics related to the sector, including governance, combatting corruption, geopolitics, imports and exports, etc. which include a wealth of information that is useful to the reader. Since Lebanon is at an early stage of developing its sector, it would benefit from looking at other countries' experiences and best-practice benchmarks.

Fact-checking.

Because it might be too costly for Lebanese media outlets to afford fact-checking departments at a time they are struggling to survive, we urge journalists to verify all information included in their stories. As in 2014, we identified numerous

errors that could have been avoided simply by careful fact-checking. This is unfortunate because a wealth of information is available online, provided a journalist knows where to look for it.

Continue to learn about and understand the topic.

As we have said in 2014, quality reporting requires journalists who are willing to devote time to becoming specialists in this field. It also requires editors and news organizations that will put forth the necessary resources to train and retain top talents on the beat.

Mastering the terminology.

Though progress was made on this front, compared to 2014, more efforts are needed to offer a quality coverage of the oil and gas sector.

A wider variety of topics.

This year, the topics that were covered the most were “Governance and Transparency” and “Politics” followed, far behind, by “Maritime Border Dispute” and “Economics, Finance and Markets.” We recommend reporting on a wider variety of topics related to the oil and gas sector:

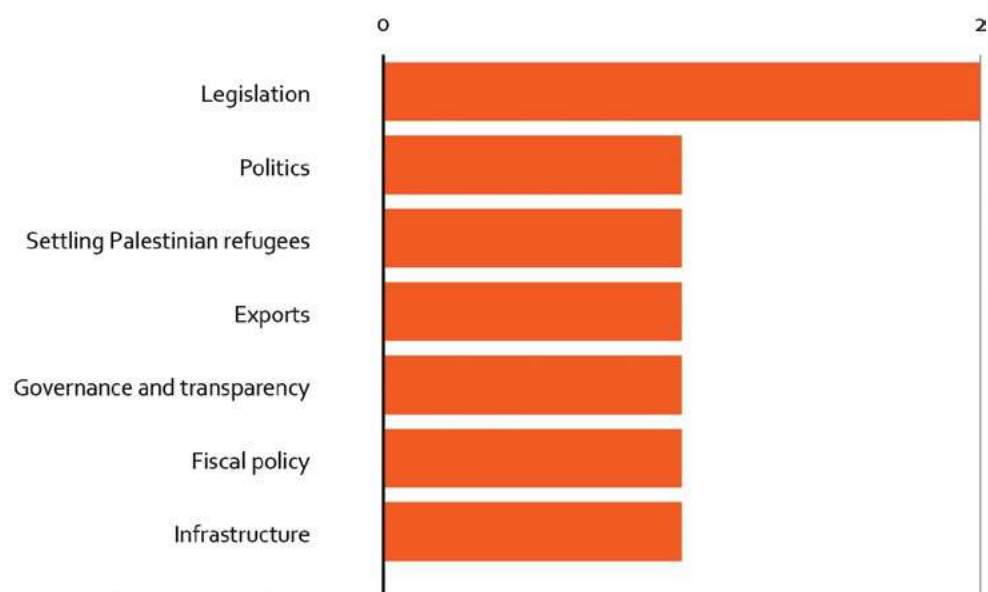
- Educate the public; don’t simply cover the news;
- Familiarize with the legal and institutional frameworks and explain them to the public;
- Do not hesitate to provide a geopolitical context;
- Address environmental issues; and
- Talk about the related infrastructure.

Appendix A:

Selected Media Outlets

A.1 Al-Akhbar

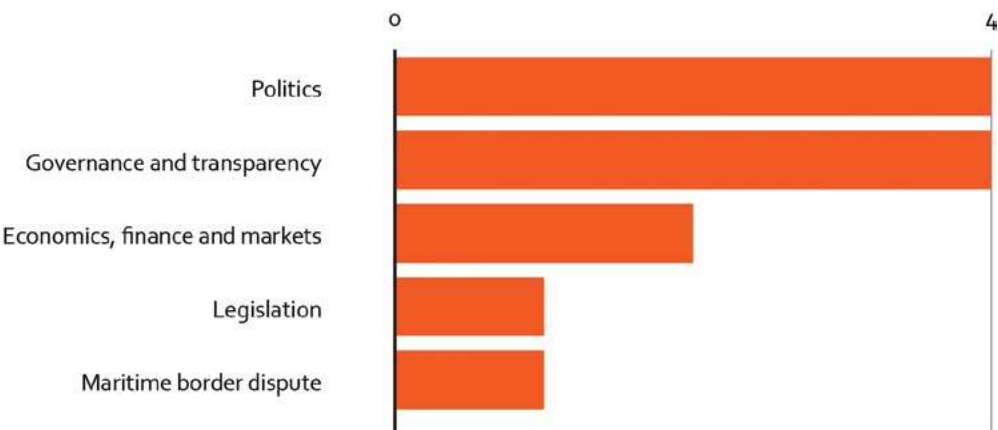
Number of stories by category



	2014		2016
Stories	13	▼	5
Errors	0	▲	4
Error rate	0	▲	0.8

A.2 Annahar

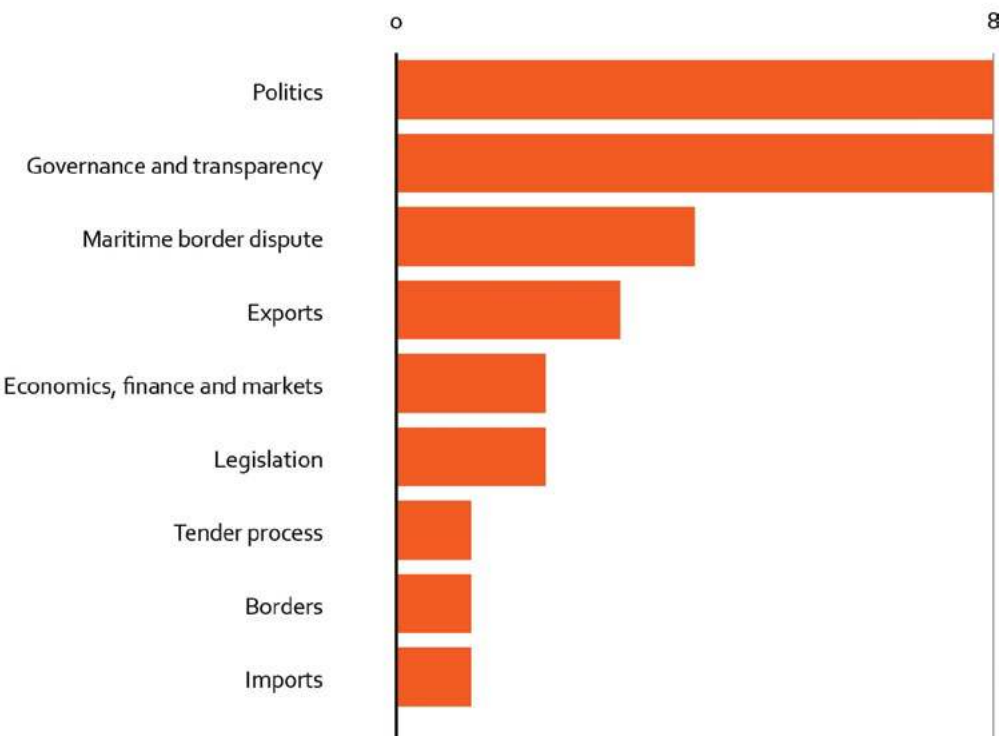
Number of stories by category



	2014		2016
Stories	31	▼	8
Errors	15	▼	10
Error rate	0.5	▲	1.3

A.3 Assafir

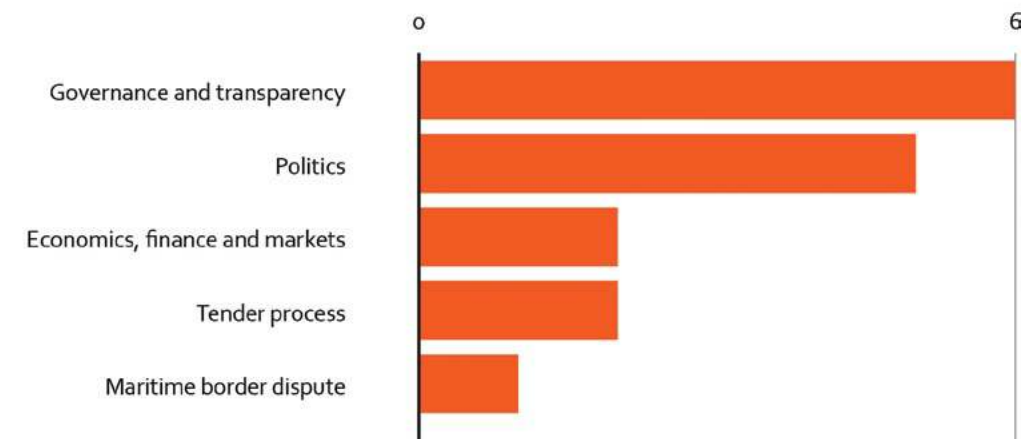
Number of stories by category



	2014		2016
Stories	29	▼	20
Errors	7	▲	9
Error rate	0.2	▲	0.5

A.4 L'Orient-Le Jour

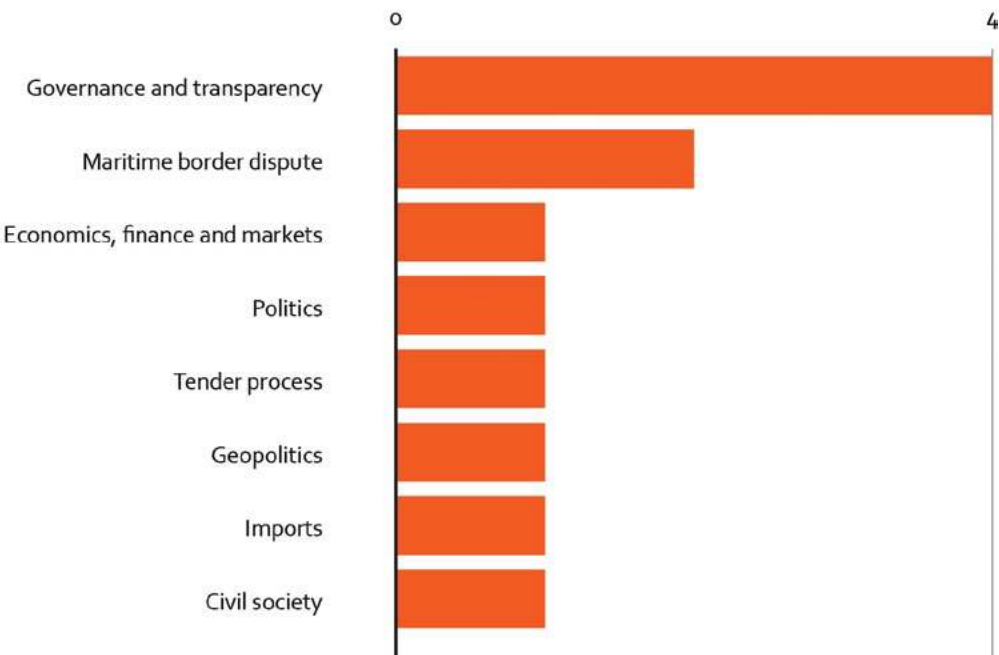
Number of stories by category



	2014		2016
Stories	10	▲	11
Errors	7	▼	0
Error rate	0.7	▼	0

A.5 The Daily Star

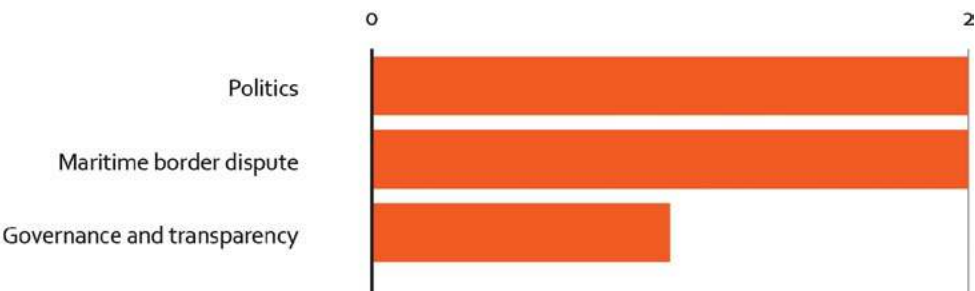
Number of stories by category



	2014		2016
Stories	13	▼	10
Errors	18	▼	2
Error rate	1.4	▼	0.2

A.6 LBCI

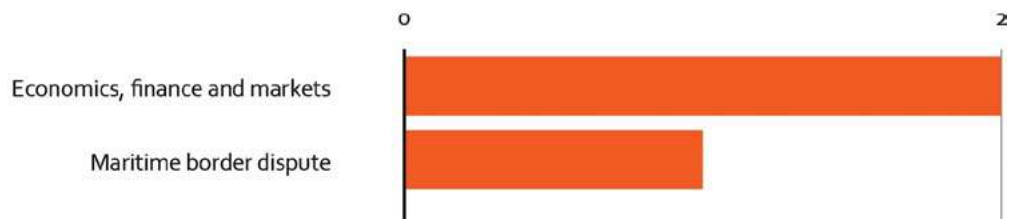
Number of stories by category



	2014		2016
Stories	1	▲	3
Errors	0	▲	4
Error rate	0	▲	1.3

A.7 MTV

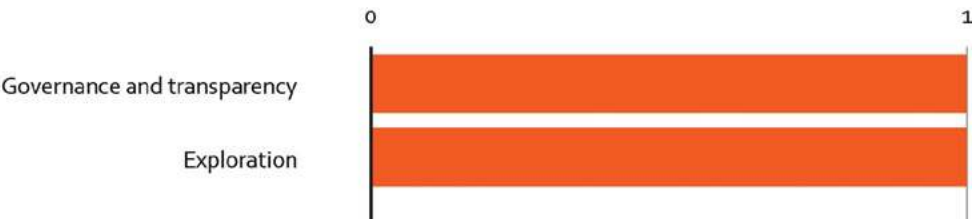
Number of stories by category



	2014		2016
Stories	7	▼	3
Errors	5	▼	0
Error rate	0.7	▼	0

A.8 Le Commerce du Levant

Number of stories by category



	2014		2016
Stories	N/A	►	2
Errors	N/A	►	4
Error rate	N/A	►	2

A.9 Executive Magazine

Number of stories by category



	2014		2016
Stories	5	▼	2
Errors	1	▲	2
Error rate	0.2	▲	1

A.10 El-Nashra

Number of stories by category



	2014		2016
Stories	2	►	2
Errors	0	▲	5
Error rate	0	▲	2.5

Appendix B

List of Articles and News Stories

Date	News Outlet	Title
2/1/2016	Assafir	سلبات وإيجابيات تراجع المؤشرات وأسعار النفط على الدولة والمستهلك
2/1/2016	The Daily Star	Leviathan partners sign \$1.3B gas deal
2/2/2016	Le Commerce du Levant	Gaz offshore : regain d'intérêt pour le potentiel de Chypre
2/2/2016	MTV	هل استفاد اللبناني من تراجع أسعار النفط؟
2/3/2016	Assafir	خلافاً قضائية حول استثمار الغاز في فلسطين المحتلة
2/3/2016	L'Orient-Le Jour	Israël: la justice examine un accord clé sur le gaz en Méditerranée
2/4/2016	L'Orient-Le Jour	L'avenir du gaz israélien toujours suspendu à une décision de justice
2/5/2016	Al-Akhbar	غاز لبنان مقابل توطين الفلسطينيين
2/5/2016	Annahar	غيوبة الدولة والشعب
2/6/2016	Assafir	إسرائيل وقبرص ومسألة الغاز
2/9/2016	The Daily Star	Import bill drops on cheap oil, strong dollar
2/9/2016	Al-Akhbar	نتنياهو يدافع عن مخطط الغاز: آخر الفرص
2/11/2016	Assafir	بري: المراسيم النفطية لا تحتمل المماثلة
2/11/2016	Assafir	ثروة الغاز.. الخيبة الإسرائيلية الثقيلة
2/12/2016	Al-Akhbar	أي نظام ضريبي يحكم القطاع النفطي اللبناني؟
2/12/2016	El-Nashra	بين الموازنة والنفط والأخوين شحاده... كل يغني على ليلاه حتى يأتي يوم القطاف
2/15/2016	Annahar	عدم إفادة لبنان من تراجع أسعار النفط يفتح مجدداً ملف حماية الدولة للوكالات الحصرية
2/15/2016	Assafir	البرلمان الأردني يتجه لإلغاء صفقة الغاز مع إسرائيل
2/16/2016	The Daily Star	Petroleum is Lebanon's mixed blessing
2/16/2016	Assafir	الموسوي: لن نقبل استباحة منطقتنا الاقتصادية
2/16/2016	L'Orient-Le Jour	Netanyahu a défendu son accord sur le gaz devant la Cour suprême
2/17/2016	L'Orient-Le Jour	Chypre attribue de nouveaux permis d'exploration de gaz offshore
2/17/2016	The Daily Star	Cyprus to go ahead with third gas exploration licensing round
2/19/2016	L'Orient-Le Jour	L'économie libanaise bénéficie-t-elle vraiment de la baisse des prix du pétrole?
2/19/2016	Assafir	«الوفاء للمقاومة» لاستعادة الحقوق النفطية
2/22/2016	MTV	إقتصاد: اتفاقات وتعاون وخطط مستقبلية في المنتدى الاقتصادي
2/23/2016	Assafir	اللبنانيون ممنوعون من نعمة تراجع النفط
2/24/2016	Annahar	شفافية الرقابة لإدارة العمليات البترولية
2/26/2016	The Daily Star	As the region changes, Turkey and Israel move closer
3/2/2016	The Daily Star	As subject of oil and gas heats up, app helps get facts straight
3/4/2016	Executive Magazine	Few outcomes in Cyprus-Greece-Israel trilateral summit
3/8/2016	El-Nashra	ماذا تريد إسرائيل من بعلبك، جبيل والبترون؟
3/11/2016	The Daily Star	Oil and gas require public oversight
3/11/2016	Assafir	«الحكمة» تستضيف ندوة حول «الحكومة السليمة» والنفط في لبنان

Date	News Outlet	Title
3/12/2016	L'Orient-Le Jour	Pétrole : des acteurs du secteur plaident pour davantage de transparence
3/12/2016	Al-Akhbar	الغاز الإسرائيلي إلى الأردن... عام 2017
3/14/2016	Assafir	نقاش حول النفط والغاز مع "هيئة قطاع البترول"
3/15/2016	Annahar	مؤتمر النفط والغاز في جامعة MEU: تأكيد دور الجامعات في تطوير القطاع
3/17/2016	L'Orient-Le Jour	L'économie a partiellement profité de la baisse des prix du pétrole
3/23/2016	Annahar	مبادرة الشفافية في مجال الصناعات الاستخراجية
3/23/2016	LBCI	اقترح اميركي يحل مؤقت للنزاع اللبناني- الاسرائيلي
3/24/2016	Assafir	خليل يلتقي لاغارد: «النقد الدولي» مرتاح لخطواتنا
3/24/2016	Annahar	خليل يطالب بالحل الدائم لترسيم الحدود البحرية وواشنطن تقترح المؤقت
3/24/2016	The Daily Star	The people of our region deserve to live in peace
3/24/2016	L'Orient-Le Jour	Khalil demande aux Américains une « solution définitive » au litige frontalier avec Israël
3/24/2016	MTV	بارودي يطالب الامم المتحدة العمل لحل النزاع النفطي
3/25/2016	L'Orient-Le Jour	Chypre lance de nouveaux appels d'offres pour l'exploration de gaz au large de l'île
3/26/2016	Assafir	لبنان بلا حدود برية في الأمم المتحدة.. أي معنى لسيادته؟
3/28/2016	The Daily Star	Ban Ki-moon open to demarcation of Lebanon maritime border: Berri
3/28/2016	LBCI	الحدود اللبنانية غير مضبوطة رسمياً
3/29/2016	Assafir	جدل غاز إسرائيل يعود إلى الكنيسة
3/29/2016	Assafir	دعم أميركي لوساطة الأمم المتحدة في ترسيم الحدود البحرية
3/29/2016	Al-Akhbar	«المحكمة العليا» الإسرائيلية تفرمل «مخطط نتيهاو للغاز»
3/29/2016	L'Orient-Le Jour	Les juges accusés de retarder le développement gazier d'Israël
3/29/2016	The Daily Star	Israel's high court strikes down government natural gas plan
3/29/2016	LBCI	نتيهاو في مواجهة محكمة العدل العليا في ملف الغاز
4/1/2016	Le Commerce du Levant	Textos
4/2/2016	Assafir	لنحفظ نفط لبنان : دعوة مسؤولة لتصحيح المسار
4/7/2016	Annahar	أين الغاز اللبناني؟
4/7/2016	Assafir	«هايكازيان» تستضيف مؤتمراً حول النفط والغاز والحوكمة الرشيدة
4/7/2016	Assafir	«إمارة النفط» الإسرائيلية تستورد الغاز.. من الكاريبي!
4/9/2016	L'Orient-Le Jour	La faillite politique, principale accusée dans le dossier du gaz offshore
4/9/2016	Assafir	مؤتمر النفط والغاز: الحوكمة الرشيدة تضمن حقوق لبنان
4/9/2016	Assafir	أسئلة ما زالت تحتاج إلى أجوبة من هيئة البترول
4/11/2016	Annahar	«لوبيات» ضاغطة
4/14/2016	Executive Magazine	What lies beneath Lebanon must act to keep its seat at the oil and gas table

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