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Media News

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• Journalism and Democracy • Media in Transition

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Stability Pact and Media

Inertia or Neglect of Pact Spirit?!

There has been a lot of controversial assessment of whether the Stability Pact will be a serious step towards real stabilization of southeast Europe or yet another big parade held in the middle of last year in Sarajevo. A donor conference held in Brussels on March 28-29 brought a little more optimism. Donor countries pledged 2.4 billion EURO for projects carrying the flashy name – *quick start!* The next conference is due in late May in Florence in an attempt to provide funds for medium- and long-term projects.

Media attracted quite a lot of donor interest. The participants of the Donors conference particularly encouraged the adoption of the Media Charter by the countries of South East Europe. Media are expected to be a generator of democratic changes, building of civil society, tolerance and spreading of trust. Dozens of different media projects arrived in the Pact's administration in Brussels. With regards to Bosnia-Herzegovina, neither the Bosnian state, nor any international organization representing the Stability Pact's interests, ensured transparency of criteria and procedures for nominating projects. That is why some initiatives did not even reach Brussels, while some were lost on their way or in its administration. It seems that best informed were some large western organizations, which through their powerful lobbies have traditionally been receiving large donor funds for their engagement in crisis areas and underdeveloped parts of the world.

There is no doubt that our colleagues from highly developed western countries with their production experience and know-how transfer have made a big contribution to media professionalism in Bosnia-Herzegovina and other countries in transition. Still, experience shows that this know-how transfer has not always been fruitful or equal to the money invested. Many education projects were implemented hastily, a lot of money was invested in a lot of media without previously researching their quality and who views, listens or reads them. Along with prominent world experts, under the cover of know-how, very average, and even incompetent teachers have marched, from whom local people here could learn nothing. Trust in local experts and newly-formed local organizations dealing

with media has been little. Local journalists believe that some of these carriers of media professionalism spend half of a received donation before even arriving in the country that the donation is intended for. When we add to all this the speculative behavior of some local donation beneficiaries, there is enough reason at the end of a big donor round for media in this part of Europe, which has lasted, depending on the country, for a full ten years, to ask the question – *what next?*

The Stability Pact had a chance to establish a new strategy. Certain preliminary guidelines in this strategy indicated changes. First, the very spirit of the Pact – *cooperation and communication on a regional level* – pointed to a more functional and economical approach to the development of the media environment. Instead of procurement of expensive equipment, which accumulated over the past years, more emphasis will be put on existing resources and rent. Doubling of campaigns will be avoided. A dynamic method of achieving quick results in a short time was chosen – *quick start!* As much as this method may seem efficient from a tactical point of view, one must take into account some negative experiences resulting from a similar method applied in the Bosnian case. Hasty, insufficiently prepared and sometimes improvised media campaigns on the eve of the first, and even the second Bosnian elections, did not yield the desired effects.

Media transition is a long-term process, which is why the Stability Pact must answer the key question: how to provide long-term stable transfer of know-how and support to the development of free and professional media in southeast Europe.

Although we still do not have complete information on how media fared at the Brussels donor conference (especially because the conference was closed to journalists), what catches the eye are the criteria used by the Stability Pact's media coordinator in proposing *quick start* priorities. Four lines of quick engagement were correctly noted: production, training, monitoring, and cooperation. Unfortunately, those who made the proposals did not consult enough (or at all) with local media professionals, institutes and experts. Perhaps governments were consulted in some countries, but without the non-governmental sector, which is now carrying the democratic and professional development of media, this task cannot be done well. Another criterion, which in our opinion is not in the spirit of the Pact, is preference to projects proposed by large western organizations from London, Brussels, Paris, Strasbourg, Cologne, Duesseldorf, etc., which usually appear as implementers in all companies from highly developed countries in the underdeveloped world. Most of these projects do not contain a sufficiently developed dimension of cooperation with local partners.

According to information available on the Internet site: <http://www.stabilitypact.org/>, 13 urgent projects worth 12,404,000 EURO were proposed to donors. The BBC is offering to open a European Center for Broadcast Journalism in Podgorica and Albanian Language Schools. European Center for Common Ground has applied with a project of media cooperation among Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro, Kosovo and Serbia. The Council of Europe will implement a project on media regulation, and the OSCE will organize a conference on the contribution of media in conflict

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prevention. London-based IWPR requested financial support for a media development and strategy program in southeast Europe. World Association of Newspapers wants to form a network of management training and support to professional organizations. OBN Sarajevo is planning to establish a regional TV network, and the OSCE will coordinate development of Radio Kosovo. AMARC – European Organization of Local Radio Stations wants to establish cooperation among local stations in the region. Among existing news networks, urgent financial support has been requested for the SENSE and AIM agencies. CIRCUM has asked for support for a project to develop the television public sector.

With all due respect for the capabilities of these organizations, it is unclear how the Pact's administration failed to recognize the values and advantages of a number of projects nominated for the Pact by local associated media organizations from the region, which have deeply entered the *quick start* stage! It seems to us that those who made the proposals followed inertia or a logic that existed five or ten years ago – that in countries in transition or war-torn countries, everything should start from scratch. No matter how critically we view what has been achieved in the media environment in the past years, our western friends must be aware that now in the region they have a lot of good media and capable institutions which, with quality know-how from abroad, have themselves been carrying out capital projects. The meaning of the Stability Pact, after all, is to encourage local initiative and local responsibility. (Z. Udovicic)

Media Cooperation in Southeast Europe

Media Pool – Communication for Professional Journalism Established

Eleven representatives of media institutes and news agencies from southeast Europe signed in Sarajevo on March 23 an agreement to create a Media Pool for Free and Independent Journalism in Southeast Europe. The goal of the pool is to stimulate free circulation of information, exchange of initiatives, ideas and experiences, and to enable mutual familiarization and understanding among media organizations in the region.

The cooperation agreement was signed by representatives of Sarajevo-based Media Plan, Institute for Media Law from Ljubljana, Institute for Sociological, Political and Legal Research from Skopje, International Center for Education of Journalists from Opatija, Center for Development of Media from Podgorica, Media Center from Belgrade, and Albanian Media Institute from Tirana, as well as the news agencies BETA (Belgrade), SAFAX (Sarajevo), MONTENA FAX (Podgorica), and STINA (Split). The pool is open to other media organizations which have the same goals.

The Media Pool remains open to all professional organizations, institutes and news agencies from the region of southeast Europe. In addition to professional and economic interest shared by members in this kind of association, the pool also has a strong significance for the development of values of the Stability Pact, established in Sarajevo last year. Another significance of the Media Pool is that it includes independent organizations from FR Yugoslavia, that is to say Serbia, which as a state is officially not in the Pact, but for which a place is reserved after its regime is changed.

From a Democratic Slovenia to an Anarchist Serbia

A presentation of the current media situation showed extreme differences in media processes and general characteristics of the media pictures of countries which the Pool members come from. The most developed media system, which is closest to the values of western democracies, exists in Slovenia. With the goal of becoming a full-fledged European Union member, the Slovenian parliament is due to pass a law which will force radio and television stations to broadcast at least 55 percent of European program, of which 20 percent should be Slovenian program of its own production. Slovenia is also characterized by a very large number of registered media. Among them there are 67 radio stations, 100 weeklies or bi-monthlies, and the rest are monthlies and other

publications, which do not have a significant intensity of appearance on the market. Of 25 former municipal radio stations, only three have not been privatized, the reason being lack of interest on the part of their employees. The state subsidizes only the public RTV, which is also financed from mandatory subscription and commercials. Foreign capital, which is restricted to 33 percent of media ownership, is present in only three cases: Kanal A, POP TV and *Gospodarski vestnik*. Protection of press freedom is strong. There is an institution called Honorable Court, whose decisions are meritorious in ethical disputes and whose disrespect on the part of a media organization leads to its professional and social banishment.

The situation in Serbia is diametrically different, and media which do not oblige the authorities are facing the strongest pressure ever. In addition to strict application of the rigorous Law on Information, which enables private plaintiffs and state bodies to receive immediate damage compensation from media, opposition radio and TV stations are now being attacked by various paramilitary groups close to the authorities who physically destroy those “politically incorrect.” Under the Law on Information, anyone can sue a media organization, and a magistrate judge has the authority to conduct an investigation and pass the verdict all in 24 hours. In such a short period it is impossible for any media organization to find evidence for its case. Fines range from 5,000 to 10,000 German marks for editors, and 10,000 to 20,000 for the medium. The biggest fine pronounced by the state – 500,000 DEM – had to be paid by Belgrade’s Studio B, owned by the political party Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO), which is in power in the city. The reason was failure to pay tax for using frequencies, which was only a pretext to try to suffocate this opposition media organization. However, the SPO paid the fine and enabled the station to continue broadcasting. According to participants in the meeting who came from Belgrade, serious independent papers which are strictly opposed to the authorities are the dailies *Blic*, *Glas javnosti* and *Danas*, and the weeklies *Vreme* and *Nin*.

In Montenegro, participants in the meeting said, there are no independent media in the real sense of the word; only media which support the authorities led by President Milo Djukanovic, and opposition, pro-Serbian media. The former are in majority, but media close to the Belgrade regime are more aggressive, which creates even more tension in Montenegro. A TV network which fully supports the Belgrade-based federal government started broadcasting recently via transmitters placed on Yugoslav Army-held hills. Although the Montenegrin government considers its broadcasting to be illegal, it has not taken any steps to prevent it in an attempt to avoid conflict with the army.

Biggest Circulations in Croatia, Cheapest Papers in Macedonia, and Most Plentiful in Albania

With regards to Croatia, the figure of 600 publications registered during the war in Croatia has now been reduced to 200. Of that, seven are dailies and sports papers. According to guests from Croatia, there are three serious political weeklies: *Nacional*, *Globus* and *Feral*. Data on circulations is unofficial and media themselves are the sources. According to them, *Vecernji list* and *Jutarnji list* have circulations of 120,000 copies each, *Glas Istre* and *Glas Slavonije* 10,000 each, *Nacional* 150,000 copies...

According to a survey conducted by the agency Puls two years ago, 84 percent of respondents in Croatia informed themselves solely through HRT’s first and second channels, while only eight percent read press. All other television stations are local with poor scope, but they are trying to create competition through the National Television Association (NUT). The strongest radio station is Croatian Radio which broadcasts on three channels. There are 130 radio stations, but a lot of them broadcast primarily music and entertainment without treating political and social issues. In these stations owners decide what journalists will do, so journalists are often forced to deal with propaganda, which is in contradiction with the journalist profession. The Internet is also an influential medium in Croatia. For example, during the recent Croatian elections, the site www.izbori.net. (election site) had around 100,000 visitors, although the price of using the net per hour is very high – 12 kunas (3 DEM).

There are three news agencies in Croatia: the state-run HINA, the private and independent STINA, and the Catholic agency KIA. In the Sarajevo meeting, guests from Croatia assessed that

recent political changes indicate a bolder process of democratization of the media scene, but they pointed out that these changes should be systematic and encompass all aspects of the media situation, without being reduced only to announcement of imminent changes at Croatian Television. They also expressed satisfaction that there was no revanchism in media or “purge” of editors who are close to the HDZ, which had been characteristic of this party when it had come into power in 1991.

In Macedonia there are four dailies and six weeklies. It is interesting that in this country newspapers are cheaper than anywhere else in the region. The price of dailies is 0.3 German marks, while weeklies cost from 1 to 1.5 marks. That is why, proportionate to the size of the population, newspapers have high circulations and sell well. The highest circulation paper is *Dnevnik*, which claims to print 70,000 copies. Broadcasters operate under the principle of the so-called “dual system, that is to say they are divided into a public radio-diffusion system and private radio-television stations. Macedonian RTV and 29 local RTV stations have a public character, while 140 RTV stations are privately owned. There are two journalist associations (a state and an independent one), but neither functions in practice.

Albania, although its population is a little over 3.3 million, has the largest number of dailies, as many as nine. They are: *Koha Ditore*, *Albanija*, *Sekulli*, *Gazeta Shqiptare*, *Rilindja Demokratike*, *Zeri i Popullit*, *Republika*, *Ekonomia* and *Gazeta 55*. However, the circulation of these papers is approximately 50,000 copies altogether, which indicates the necessity of enlarging daily publications. Private radio stations started to be founded only in 1997 following a parliament decision on free radio-diffusion. A total of 45 private television stations broadcast at the moment, but only eight of them have a respectable all-day program. There exists approximately the same number of private radio stations. State television still has a strong influence and is practically the mouthpiece of the Albanian government.

The media situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina is characterized by a strong influence of the international community which affects the creation of media legislation, as well as transformation of the public broadcasting system in the country. The Independent Media Commission (IMC), created by the international community, is in charge of allocation of broadcasting licenses and professional conduct of broadcasters. As far as print media are concerned, a Press Council is presently in the creation, again initiated by the international community, which will have the role of some kind of a court of honor. One of its functions will be to receive complaints from damaged parties about incorrect reporting of print media. The Council will not have the power to pronounce fines, but its decisions, which will be completely meritorious, will have to be published by media in a prominent place.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina there are currently 433 media operating (in the Republika Srpska 152, and in the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina 281). Of that, 206 are radio stations and 75 TV stations. The majority of broadcasters are state owned (131); 146 are privately owned, and three are so-called international media broadcasting in Bosnia-Herzegovina (the OBN television network, Radio Fern, and UN radio MIR).

Joint Activities in Region

The newly-established Media Pool has started the implementation of its first two projects – publishing a regional media journal on the Internet, and creating a media picture of southeast Europe. Considerable funds for these projects were provided by the Government of France and UNESCO. The Media Journal will be a continuation of the present service issued by Media Plan, that is to say by the SAFAX agency, *Media News*, but its topics will be expanded to cover the entire region of southeast Europe. The Media Journal will place particular emphasis on analytical reporting on media processes in individual countries, as well as media legislation which, as this meeting has shown, differs significantly from country to country.

Media institutes, members of the pool, will direct a considerable part of their joint activities towards education of journalists which, as they concluded, is essential in all countries in the region and insufficiently present in universities in the practical sense. Communication science and general sociological and political education prevails in these university departments, and there are little pure

journalism courses and little journalistic work. Participants in the pool maintained that along with the university system, it is essential to support a system of permanent practical education and training of journalists, but that *ad hoc* courses should be avoided as they eat up a lot of money and achieve little effect.

In Macedonia the journalism department is located within the Faculty of Law, but the position of so-called law courses is overemphasized. Of practical schools, there is only a school for TV anchors. On the other hand, in Albania journalist education has been in expansion in the past years. The Faculty of Journalism in Tirana has been an independent university-level institution since 1992 with a majority of journalism courses, while the local Soros Media Center and Albanian Media Institute have been organizing courses in practical journalism. In Croatia departments of journalism operate within the Faculty of Political Sciences and Croatian Studies. The Croatian Journalism Society through its Center for Education of Journalists has been organizing a large number of seminars and journalism workshops. The Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia with the Belgrade Media Center has a similar role. Bosnia-Herzegovina has the largest number of faculties for journalism education – four, and there are also two schools for permanent practical education – Media Plan School of Journalism and BBC School.

Media institutes agreed to exchange lecturers and school students, as well as the training they organize.

Media Plan and the High School of Journalism from Lille, France, are due to organize a course for journalist trainers early next year in which those who train journalists will be able to exchange experiences and to listen to achievements of educators from the Lille school, which has a 75-year experience.

The Ljubljana-based Institute for Media Law announced the holding of a roundtable on the dual system in radio-diffusion.

The news agencies attending the meeting reached agreement on joint involvement in future projects. The SAFAX and STINA agencies once again reconfirmed cooperation on developing a Phono Service project, and that they will focus on refugee and minority rights issues. BETA and MONTENA FAX expressed a desire for cooperation on projects treating refugee and economic issues in the region. Also, STINA, Podgorica's CERAM and Media Plan agreed to organize meetings of journalists from the Adriatic region. (Safax)

S e r b i a

The Media - Unpleasant Witnesses

(Written for Media News by Vladan Radosavljevic, Editor-in-Chief of Media Center Belgrade)

Despite an almost 10-year-old agonizing experience that free media in Serbia have acquired with different forms of oppression applied by the regime in an attempt to suffocate them, ban them, close and silence them, there is no doubt that the current anti-media campaign, by its dynamics and intensity, by far surpasses all other periods. In only several days, the Serbian authorities seized the transmitters of two local TV stations – Pirot and Kraljevo televisions, banned the work of a number of small TV stations, collected huge amounts of money as frequency usage compensation, and prevented an increase in the prices of highest-circulation independent papers along with increasing the prices of newsprint and printing services. Intensive interference with Belgrade Studio B TV signal has continued, and only a few days ago, in a high-handed night attack, five people in police uniform, which the Ministry of the Interior later claimed were not its men, entered by a trick the premises holding this TV station's transmitter, beat up two watchmen and made huge damage to emission equipment. During all this time the infamous Serbian Law on Information, conceived in such a way that a huge amount of money can be taken from any media organization at any moment, is hanging over the fate of independent journalism. Meanwhile, almost everyday threats made by the

most important people of the state, primarily the ministers of information and telecommunications, herald even fiercer showdowns yet to come, whose outcome may easily be a Serbia without independent press, radio and television, occupied in terms of media by political party newsletters such as the paper *Politika* or RTS.

What are the reasons for such a heavy showdown with free and professional press?

The answer is almost impossible to discern without going into the sphere of politics and events that await Serbia in the coming days.

No matter how much it tries to preserve its power and portray unimpaired monolithism, determination and strictness, the regime understands that it is in one of its biggest crises, probably bigger than when it was shaken after the expulsion of Serbs from Croatia or after Dayton. It is clear to Milosevic and to those around him that something must urgently be done because, the more or less united opposition, increasingly strong student associations, and in particular the dissatisfied population, are all starting to pose an apparent danger. And when reality cannot be changed, what else is to be done but to hide it?

Application of this proven method, but also the last remaining resort, will not be too complicated. There is almost no television station in Serbia which has a broadcasting license or which at least has all the necessary licenses from the large license set, and this situation provides the authorities with a solid legal ground to use as an argument that what is happening is not terror, but upholding of the rule of law.

The regime will choose complete darkness and silence if it estimates that something will really have to change and that the present state of things is unsustainable in the long run. These changes may take place in at least two ways that are not visible – through elections (in the year when elections are due to be held at federal and local level) or in the streets. In both cases it is precisely the media whose journalists practice journalism by applying professional rules which may become unpleasant witnesses. For, there will neither be elections without theft, nor will there be showdowns in the streets without big tragedies. In other words, it is almost certain that seizures, bans and persecution of journalists which are underway are only a probable beginning of a spring purge that awaits local media.

On the other hand, another interesting and very indicative process is unfolding. Massive rallies of citizens whom opposition parties are unsuccessfully trying to organize are spontaneously taking place in places where media are being closed down. Night after night, approximately 10,000 residents of Kraljevo and thousands of residents of Pirot protested in the central squares of their towns with a single demand – that local television stations be allowed to operate. These protests, which had seen in much earlier stages, have brought about unexpected, almost astonishing results. Serbia's telecommunications minister, member of the Yugoslav Left, and one of the most important executors of media repression, Ivan Markovic, invited the mayor of Kraljevo to a meeting and promised to return the seized emission equipment. The surprise was complete when the equipment really was returned a few days later, and TV Kraljevo continued to operate! The condition for that to happen was that protests had to end. Instructed by this example, residents of Pirot provided one part of the missing equipment in their town, and their station also continued to broadcast, for now without consequences.

The question remains whether popular rallies have really, so quickly and so efficiently, brought about the desired result. Judging by experience with local authorities so far, it is hard to believe this. True, the regime has always given in when it encountered determined resistance, but short-lasting local protests were events that could be kept under control, with the hope that rebellion would calm down and in the end completely stop. Therefore, it seems something else is in question here.

At this moment speculations are uncountable. According to many, some sort of a "foot fault" has been made within the very structures of government, which was a little early with starting a fierce and final showdown. There is also talk of personal ties between the mayor of Kraljevo and certain prominent representatives of the authorities, but most frequent speculation is that the opposition, primarily the Serbian Renewal Movement, has made another clandestine deal with the regime whose result is maintenance of status quo. This episode, a rare one with a happy ending, has

however not offered an answer to the question of whether media and repression against them may be an introduction to expected and positive changes. According to reactions in these two towns where television stations were closed for a while, the answer may be affirmative. Moreover, it is frequently claimed that repression against media could be a much more significant reason than all of the opposition's cries, which over time has lost the much needed trust. On the other hand, the dilemma remains whether Serbia, exhausted over many years, tired of rallies, rebellions and protests, is ready for a large-scale campaign which could truly shake the regime.

The answer to this question can only be given by the times ahead.

L a w o n F r e e d o m o f I n f o r m a t i o n

Opening the Windows of Government Bodies

One of the fundamental principles of the authorities in western democratic societies is responsibility of the government to the citizens that elect it. A democratic society's ideal is that citizens must be informed about the decisions their government makes, about the manner in which these decisions are made, and who creates them. However, those who have information have power, and therefore it often remains hidden from the public because this enables authoritarian rule. The logic of those in power in the entire world until recently was that a lot of state affairs must remain hidden under the pretext of state security, although the reason was a desire to have as much power as possible. However, as democracy matured in the world, governments had less and less opportunity to hide information, while journalists and the general public had more and more access to information. Today in 20 or so western nations in the world there are laws which define the citizens' general right to access to information possessed by the ruling structures. As a rule this type of law is called a "law on freedom of information" or "law on access to information."

The End of Non-transparency

Most states passed these laws only in the last 30 or so years, which shows that even governments in societies which presented themselves as truly democratic had not been in the mood to give up their exclusive right to keep information. An exception is Sweden, where an act on freedom of information was passed as far back as 1766. Exactly 200 years later, the United States in 1966 passed the first contemporary law on freedom of information. Parliaments in some 20 other countries passed these laws between 1970 and 1998.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina there is a declarative right contained in the entity constitutions that media shall be free, and that access to information shall be free. However, these general provisions are far from being able to improve the situation in practice. Journalists in Bosnia-Herzegovina know best how difficult it is, without personal acquaintances among people in power, to get relevant information. In addition to arrogant ministers and their deputies, access to information has also often been denied by their secretaries, and even doormen in state service. The international community, aware that there can be no democratic transformation of Bosnia-Herzegovina without full transparency of the work of government bodies, decided to impose a law on freedom of information. After a decree passed by the High Representative on July 31, 1999 ordering decriminalization of libel and free access to information, the OHR and OSCE started to work on creating a Law on Freedom of Information which would resemble similar laws in western countries. Presently an advisory group composed of foreign and local experts is examining solutions proposed by the OHR and OSCE, and after their remarks the law will be offered for public discussion. Its final draft, which will be sent to parliament, is expected in June.

According to the proposed law, it is stipulated that journalists, but also ordinary citizens, shall have the right to access documents or records kept by the ruling structures. This includes

ministries and parliaments on all levels of government, courts, and also large state enterprises, such as the electricity company, PTT, and water company, which are now criticized by the public for insufficiently transparent work. The law also includes the right of individuals to access documents referring to them, and the right to correct factually incorrect information.

The law, like other similar solutions in the world, will also stipulate exceptions from these general rules. Protected from publication in certain stages shall be documents of exceptional significance for national security, courts and investigative proceedings in criminal cases, certain government testing, actions and inspections. However, since the government may claim that a whole lot of documents belong to these categories, the reason for not giving any information will have to be precisely elaborated. For example, early announcement of devaluation could hurt a country's monetary policy, or giving information on evidence collected in a court case could jeopardize the safety of witnesses...

Swedish Law as a Model

As an illustration, we will give examples from Sweden on access to information, presented in a recently held roundtable in Sarajevo, "The Right to Seek Information," by the president of the Independent Media Commission (IMC), Krister Thelin. He stressed that in Sweden journalists have almost absolute access to state information. Swedish journalists even have the right to be present when official mail coming to government bodies, ministries and parliaments is opened. In that way they have a direct insight into "freshly opened envelopes" and full freedom to publicize everything they see. It would be difficult to achieve this kind of liberal situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, at least in this stage, and Thelin is aware of that. However, he announced that he will propose three postulates to the Advisory Group for drafting the Bosnian law, which should become part of the future law. They are: 1) A request for information should be informal. This is particularly important because many government structures and police bodies ask for official requests from media in order to give out any information. 2) Speedy delivery of information. Namely, journalists in Bosnia-Herzegovina wait for several days to get information which is often available the same day. That is why Thelin proposes a solution like the one in Sweden, according to which information should be made available the same day. 3) Information is completely free of charge, including costs of photocopying and mailing which needs to be done by the government. 4) Possibility to get information through court, in case it is denied, as well as responsibility before the court of those who refuse to give information.

The passing of the Law on Freedom of Information, expected this summer, will certainly not change traditional understanding in Bosnia-Herzegovina rooted among those in power that their rule will be more successful if the population is less informed, but also among the population that the government has the right to do anything. However, the existence of this law will be a tool which will stimulate the Balkan democratization process. Perhaps the law will go ahead of its time, but even its poor implementation will open opportunities for freedom of information undreamed of so far in the region. (Radenko Udovicic)

N e w s

Radio "M" Receives First Long-Term License

The Independent Media Commission (IMC) completed on March 21 the first long-term license for Sarajevo's Radio "M". On this occasion, IMC reminded that there are two types of licenses: for two years and for five years. All broadcasters that are designated as private by the IMC will receive a five-year license, and all those that have previously breached the IMC Broadcasting Code of Practice or the terms and conditions of their provisional licenses will be granted a two-year license. Public broadcasters that apply and qualify for a license, as well as new broadcasters that have only recently

applied, will also be granted a two-year license. This is because many public broadcasters are about to embark upon a privatization process and will be required to amend their status with the IMC.

Broadcasters that have applied for a frequency or frequencies that require pre-coordination with other countries, due to the risk of cross-border interference, will be required to wait a little longer.

The IMC expects to have completed this phase of the license process after summer.

Radio “Korona” on Air

Private radio “Korona” started experimental broadcasting in Trebinje on March 15 covering the city area, ONASA reported.

“We intend to intensify our signal and our program will soon be heard in all eastern Herzegovinian municipalities, parts of Montenegro and Croatia,” said the radio’s director and editor-in-chief, Radoslav Ivankovic.

There are two more radio stations operating in Trebinje: private radio Pegaz and municipal Radio Trebinje.

Free Media Essential

A roundtable on the topic “Media and Democracy and Media Abuse of Democracy,” organized by the Youth Communication Center in cooperation with Berlin’s Aspen Institute, was held in Banja Luka on March 20.

Participants, most of them from various media organizations, particularly emphasized the negative role of media in the former Yugoslavia. The majority maintained that media are still dependent on political parties in power and the international community. An OSCE representative, Pierce McCorly, said it is very important for the two entities of Bosnia-Herzegovina to pass a law on freedom of information in order to establish bigger government responsibility towards those who elect it. Alun Roberts, a UN representative, described the situation in media in Bosnia-Herzegovina as “sad,” and added that the international community has made a mistake by investing in media without coordination.

Competition for Enrolment in Journalism School Third Generation of Students

A competition has been announced for enrolment of the third generation of Media Plan’s School of Journalism. A total of 22 students – young journalists from Bosnia-Herzegovina and other countries of southeast Europe – will be admitted. Classes start on September 18, 2000 and end on May 31, 2001. To get more information and to apply, go to Internet site: <http://www.mp-institut.com/>

T h e I n t e r n e t

European Journalism Market Expanding

The European Journalist Internet Network based in Paris recently promoted a new web site (<http://www.netsatsource.com/>), which gives news editors access to articles written by correspondent journalists.

Membership in *netsatsource.com*. is free of charge, and editors pay the price of using each article. Journalists themselves define the terms of sale of their articles, from price per word to copyrights and exclusive articles. There are more than 100 journalists presently working for the network.

UN Supports Internet Expansion

The United Nations plans to support projects of introduction and bigger usage of computer technologies and the Internet in developing countries.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan told the BBC recently that he will propose to the organization's president to expand the UN mission in the 21st century to training people to use the Internet, which would be carried out by technological experts – UN volunteers. He will also propose the presentation of 10,000 Internet sites which will give hospitals and clinics access to latest achievements in medicine.

**If somebody interfere with your professional, journalistic work call
SOS – open line for journalists - 078 213 442 Media Plan Banja Luka**

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