

*The state did not proceed with applying its media strategy. On the contrary, the state's media policy was almost entirely devoted to seeking greater control over media content. The gap between the law's provisions on media freedom and its daily practice is dramatically expanding.*



SERBIA

The year 2012 was another politically, socially, and economically turbulent year in Serbia. Especially strong negative influences on the media sector emanated primarily from the devastating economic conditions in the country and region, and a marked increase in political pressure on journalists.

The European Council granted Serbia the status of EU candidate country in March 2012, after determining that Serbia had taken steps toward a visible and sustainable improvement of relations with Kosovo. Presidential, parliamentary, and local elections were held in May. The elections were free, fair and peaceful, but media election reporting was assessed as insufficiently balanced and analytical. The leader of the conservative Serbian Progressive Party, Tomislav Nikolic, won the presidential election and his party secured the largest number of MPs. Most of the parties that entered parliament are in favor of Serbia's joining the EU.

The EC's Progress Report on Serbia noted the need to face fiscal imbalances, implement structural reforms, continue working to expand the economy and attract foreign investment. Unemployment climbed to 26.2% in October 2012, while debt approached nearly 55% of GDP by the end of July, far above the legally binding threshold of 45%.

The government adopted amendments to the strategy for switching over from analogue to digital broadcasting of radio and television programs in March 2012. The planned switchover date, originally scheduled for April 2012 was changed to June 2015. The first digital network was launched in April 2012.

Assessing media development as a whole, the MSI panel largely agreed that sustainability is at its lowest point in years and is getting worse. Firms continue to sacrifice quality and postpone investments in order to stay afloat. The state did not proceed with applying its media strategy. On the contrary, the state's media policy was almost entirely devoted to seeking greater control over media content. The gap between the law's provisions on media freedom and its daily practice is dramatically expanding. The media sector is still burdened with an astonishing number of outlets in spite of a wave of media outlet closures in 2012. As such, this year's MSI showed Serbia stagnating in nearly every objective, with the positive political influence of EU candidacy counterbalanced by the economic crisis and domestic political machinations.

# SERBIA at a glance

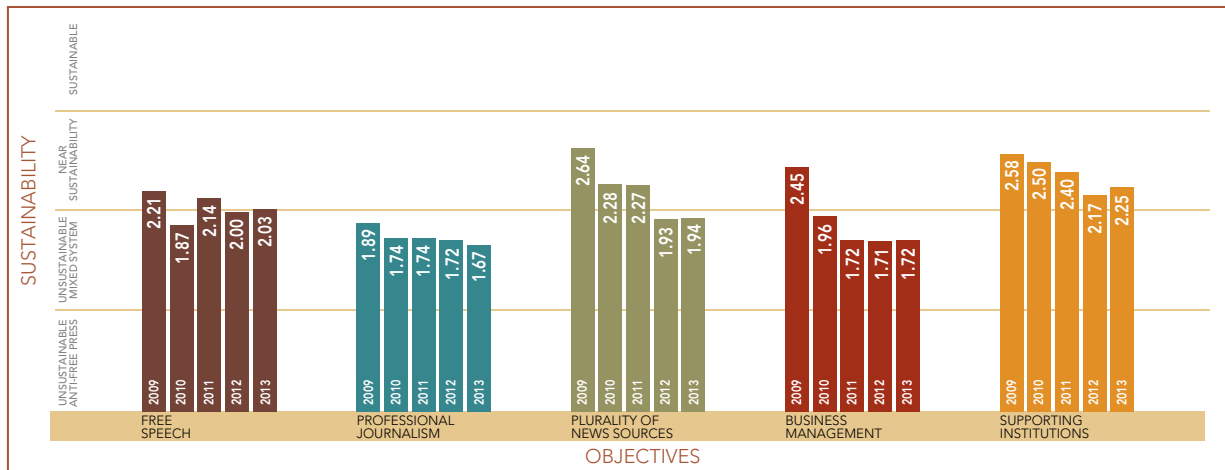
## GENERAL

- > Population: 7,243,007 (July 2013 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > Capital City: Belgrade
- > Ethnic Groups (% of population): Serb 82.9%, Hungarian 3.9%, Romany 1.4%, Yugoslavs 1.1%, Bosniaks 1.8%, Montenegrin 0.9%, other 8% (2002 census, *CIA World Factbook*)
- > Religions (% of population): Serbian Orthodox 85%, Catholic 5.5%, Protestant 1.1%, Muslim 3.2%, unspecified 2.6%, other, unknown or atheist 2.6% (2002 census, *CIA World Factbook*)
- > Languages (% of population): Serbian 88.3% (official), Hungarian 3.8%, Bosniak 1.8%, Romany 1.1%, other 4.1%, unknown 0.9% (2002 census, *CIA World Factbook*)
- > GNI (2011-Atlas): \$41.29 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2011)
- > GNI per capita (2011-PPP): \$11,540 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2011)
- > Literacy Rate: 96.4% (male 98.9%, female 94.1%) (2002 census, *CIA World Factbook*)
- > President or Top Authority: Tomislav Nikolić (since February 15, 2012)

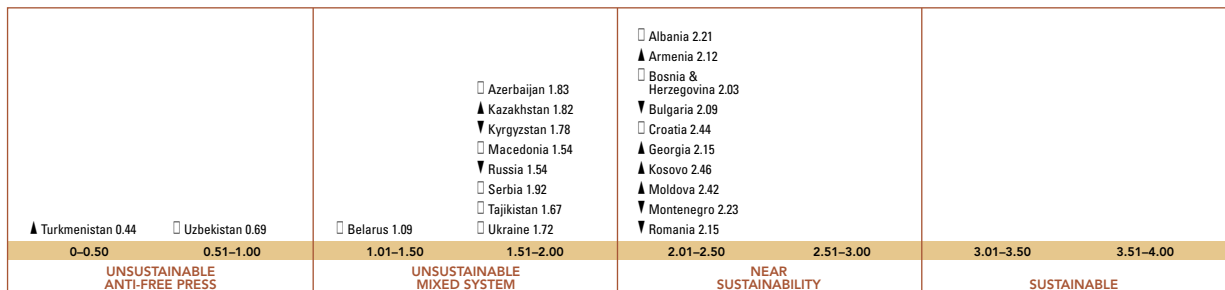
## MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations, Internet news portals: Print: 591 outlets (including 20 dailies, 94 weeklies, 43 bi-weeklies, and 224 monthlies); Radio Stations: 214 radio stations (2 public service + 4 national coverage, 48 regional, 267 local); Television Stations: 111 on air, 134 licensed ( 2 public service, 4 are national, 30 regional, and 98 local; 39 cable stations); Internet: 107 news and information sites (sources: Republic Broadcasting Agency, Business Register Agency, 2011)
- > Newspaper circulation statistics: Daily average total circulation 850,000. Largest by circulation are *Blic*—private, 121,480, *Alo!*—private, 113,842 private, *Vecernje Novosti* 109,740, state-owned, *Press 74,672*, *Politika*, 55,970. (ABC Serbia data)
- > Broadcast ratings: The top three television stations: RTS1—public, TV Pink—private, Prva Srpska Televizija—private. (ABG Nielsen, 2012) Top three radio stations: Radio S—private, B92—private, and Radio Beograd I—state-owned. (IPSOS research for Feb 1–Dec 2, 2012)
- > News agencies: BETA (private), FONET (private), TANJUG (state-owned)
- > Annual advertising revenue in media sector: €172 million. (2012 est., AGB Nielsen)
- > Internet Usage: 42.2% of total population (Serbian Statistical Office, 2011)

## MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: SERBIA



## MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX 2013: OVERALL AVERAGE SCORES



### CHANGE SINCE 2012

▲ (increase greater than .10) □ (little or no change) ▼ (decrease greater than .10)

**Unsustainable, Anti-Free Press (0-1):** Country does not meet or only minimally meets objectives. Government and laws actively hinder free media development, professionalism is low, and media-industry activity is minimal.

**Unsustainable Mixed System (1-2):** Country minimally meets objectives, with segments of the legal system and government opposed to a free media system. Evident progress in free-press advocacy, increased professionalism, and new media businesses may be too recent to judge sustainability.

**Near Sustainability (2-3):** Country has progressed in meeting multiple objectives, with legal norms, professionalism, and the business environment supportive of independent media. Advances have survived changes in government and have been codified in law and practice. However, more time may be needed to ensure that change is enduring and that increased professionalism and the media business environment are sustainable.

**Sustainable (3-4):** Country has media that are considered generally professional, free, and sustainable, or to be approaching these objectives. Systems supporting independent media have survived multiple governments, economic fluctuations, and changes in public opinion or social conventions.

Scores for all years may be found online at [http://www.irex.org/system/files/EE\\_msiscorers.xls](http://www.irex.org/system/files/EE_msiscorers.xls)

## OBJECTIVE 1: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Serbia Objective Score: 2.03

The panelists felt that free speech stagnated compared to last year, not changing its decline that was registered in the year prior. Prolonged media exposure to free speech laws that have not been implemented has produced an atmosphere of skepticism and disappointment. Nevertheless the participants not only described the media environment but also the lack of freedoms generally in the country. Nebojsa Spajic, editor in chief of the weekly publication NIN said, "In Serbia we have been faced with an essential misunderstanding of freedom of speech. The problem has been the lack of societal support for the implementation of good laws and constitutional provisions. We have had a social climate which has allowed some groups to [lobby for the closure] of certain media outlets for not being patriotic enough." The panel felt that one of more disappointing developments in 2012 was the fact that no law was passed to implement a new media strategy.

Constitutional norms and laws protecting free speech in Serbia are in line with all relevant European and modern international standards. But the persistent problem is the application of the law, especially by the court system. Legal protection in the courts is weak primarily because of the lack of knowledge and inexperience by judges and their

### LEGAL AND SOCIAL NORMS PROTECT AND PROMOTE FREE SPEECH AND ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION.

#### FREE-SPEECH INDICATORS:

- > Legal and social protections of free speech exist and are enforced.
- > Licensing or registration of media protects a public interest and is fair, competitive, and apolitical.
- > Market entry and tax structure for media are fair and comparable to other industries.
- > Crimes against media professionals, citizen reporters, and media outlets are prosecuted vigorously, but occurrences of such crimes are rare.
- > The law protects the editorial independence of state of public media.
- > Libel is a civil law issue; public officials are held to higher standards, and offended parties must prove falsity and malice.
- > Public information is easily available; right of access to information is equally enforced for all media, journalists, and citizens.
- > Media outlets' access to and use of local and international news and news sources is not restricted by law.
- > Entry into the journalism profession is free and government imposes no licensing, restrictions, or special rights for journalists.

"In Serbia we have been faced with an essential misunderstanding of freedom of speech...We have had a social climate which has allowed some groups to [lobby for the closure] of certain media outlets for not being patriotic enough," explained Sajic.

self-censorship. Several seminars were organized in Belgrade for judges on European methods of trying defamation cases against the media. After these seminars, judges in Belgrade started applying European practice in media cases; however, judges in local court systems are still unaware of these European standards. As a result, there are still many cases of some laws being misinterpreted, as was the case in the trial of the print media outlet *Svetlost* in Kragujevac. A letter to the editor from a citizen complaining about inefficiencies and malpractice by one particular judge in the Kragujevac court system was published by the editor. The judge sued *Svetlost* for publishing the letter. The letter's author confirmed in court that the published letter was identical to one he sent. Nevertheless, *Svetlost* was fined \$10,000 (600,000 RSD). The verdict was reached by a judge from the same court system who was a colleague of the identified court.

Another problem that local judges experience is that they often succumb to pressures from local politicians and special interest groups. The pressures by local authorities on judges and courts are very strong and as a result, judges are not rendering verdicts that they fear could endanger them. Lawsuits against journalists in local regions are still frequent and are brought mostly by public authorities such as chiefs of police, police inspectors, state owned enterprise directors, local municipal aldermen, judges, businessmen, and politicians. There were nine new court proceedings in 2012 against members of the Local Press independent media association. Lawsuits for moral damages are those mostly filed against local journalists. "In local areas self-censorship is stronger and freedom of speech is much more endangered," said Aneta Radivojević, producer for the local television station TV Prva.

Another important problem is the incoherence of certain laws. One obvious example is seen in the Capital City Law which has provisions that are completely at odds with the Public Information Law. The Capital City Law allows the city of Belgrade to own media outlets in spite of a strict ban on such practices found in the older, Public Information Law. At least four such laws directly contradict the Law on

**“For me, until the state is able to solve the murders of our three colleagues, crime against the media will always be one of the biggest problems in the country,” said Spajic.**

Public Information, including: Capital City Law, the Law on Local Government, the Law on Public Goods and the draft Law on Public Enterprises. The array of statutes allows prosecutors to search for several angles to press charges against journalists.

In principle there is no serious public resistance to violations of the law or public reactions when laws are applied at the expense of journalists. One notable case in 2012 was that journalist Lazslo Shash, who was sent to jail on a curious court ruling. The court convicted Shash, under aggravated circumstances, when they held that he defamed a public official. Even the higher level court confirmed this verdict. This highlights the fact that a number of judges did not have a clear understanding of the international standards with which a public person should be held to greater scrutiny by the public and media. The entire case stopped after media associations and the public reacted strongly. Such reactions force a move by the President, who pardoned Shash. The fact that the President rectified the error of a state institution like the judiciary is one of a few encouraging events this past year. What is more important is that, in this case, the public strongly supported the journalist. On the other hand, however, this case also shows that journalists and freedom of expression can easily be endangered. It should be noted that the media was not active enough in supporting the outcry against illegal private phone taps, which occurred because of this case.

Serbia has an official, independent regulatory agency called the Republic Broadcasting Agency (RBA) which, regrettably, performed poorly again this year. RBA inactivity is the main reason that the electronic media market is saturated with so many low quality media outlets. RBA continually issues broadcasting licenses without any distinct process or criteria. RBA's priority seems to be the collection of fees from as many media outlets as possible. RBA's behavior is inconsistent and suggests that it remains under strong political influence. Mileva Malešić, director of TV Forum in Prijepolje said, “The worst thing is that RBA has had premises, equipment and money to monitor and to react, but RBA has been under political influence instead of being at the service of the average citizen. RBA has reacted seriously only when [a media outlet] is not paying its obligations.”

During the year, RBA took away the licenses of several television stations, including the national TV Avala and regional television stations TV Zona and TV5 in Nis for not paying their licensing fees. The license was taken from TV Zona, but an explanation for the cancellation was received only a month later. On the other hand, RBA wrote off the debts of some media outlets in a nontransparent manner. Radivojević noted, “RBA has not been monitoring the content of media programs nor the compliance of broadcast networks within the provisions stipulated by broadcast licenses. Apart from TV Avala, several local TV stations lost licenses for the same reasons and RBA did not monitor to what extent individual media kept the program criteria ascribed to them when they got their license. That was a devastating fact. For TV5 which is now closed, a serious feasibility study was done, but RBA never controlled program content of that outlet nor any other local station in Serbia outside Belgrade.” Ljiljana Smajlovic, president of the Serbian Journalists Association added, “The case of TV Avala employees protest and [the] refusal of RBA to react clearly showed that RBA is not independent.”

RBA consistently refuses to submit data and is hiding information on how much and which media outlets have paid their debts or have arrears to RBA. The nature of RBA's unprofessional behavior can be seen on their website which posts out an outdated license database in a disorganized manner. Sinisa Isakov, director general of RTV in Novi Sad, said, “RBA has been growing and equipping itself, but it stands inefficient.”

The good thing RBA did was monitoring the media's behavior during elections, but unfortunately only for a limited number of media outlets, virtually none of which were local media outlets. Also during 2012 RBA published some objections to the advertising practices of television stations generally (such as increased volume compared to programming, longer-than-normal advertising length allowable during a one hour TV program and moral advertising content). However, the reaction from the marketplace was mild and RBA fines ineffective.

RBA also refuses to regulate cable broadcast outlets despite the fact they are the solely responsible institution to do so. An example of the anarchy that rules cable broadcasting is that the day after TV Avala lost its license, the newly formed channel TV Pink 2 immediately began broadcasting in Avala's place without any formal bidding process or organized procedure. While a cable operator can select who they want due to the lack of rules and regulations, this moves Serbia far from a fair and transparent practice of free speech and opens up the industry to speculation concerning the behavior of the industry's stakeholders. Another problem created by RBA's refusal to properly regulate is



seen with TV Arena where because of proper regulation; it is now in competition with terrestrial TV stations. Nebojsa Samardzic, a lawyer with the law offices of *Zivkovic & Samardzic*, stated, "As RBA has not shown an interest to regulate cable operations, the move of TV Pink2 in the place of TV Avala was not illegal, but it has been a common belief that political or other influences on RBA are obvious. There has been no consistent monitoring of programming [according to] feasibility studies despite the fact that RBA has excellent premises and more money than they need. RBA is not working, however, and it is obvious that [the benefit of] public interest has not been considered by those that decide on licensing."

The most serious criticism of RBA by the panelists is the function of one of its most important strategic areas. In order to get a license, every media outlet must submit a detailed feasibility study to RBA detailing their professional performance, including a description of their program content. In previous years all media outlets invested significant effort, time and scarce money in producing feasibility studies. RBA is not even monitoring the compliance of programs that are broadcast with programming authorized by the RBA license, let alone rescinding licenses of media outlets that broadcast noncompliant content. This is the main reason why there are programs broadcast that are completely different from what has been authorized by the RBA. There are even cases where some television stations on the air do not have their own production equipment or cameras, as was the case with TV Enigma from Prijepolje. These are all explanations as to why Serbia has far too many broadcast media outlets per capita.

The panelists unanimously concluded that RBA is performing poorly in spite of the fact that it has excellent premises, new equipment and projected budget surpluses every year. The practice of transferring RBA surpluses to the state budget should be changed by either lowering their licensing fees or by directing surpluses toward the development of the media sector. Print media outlets pay no specific license tax, as they are treated equally to other private firms. As mentioned, news websites are not regulated.

In Serbia all media industry organizations must register with the Serbian Business Registers Agency. No special conditions or legal restrictions exist in order to enter the media market. The application of taxes is also equal for all media outlets. The problem is that, according to some panelists, print media should have tax exemptions such as lower VAT. In the Government of Serbia's *Media Strategy* such a proposal was accepted, but the strategy is not yet operational. Two requests were put forth in the strategy: A 0% VAT or subsidizing the import of inputs for print media outlets. Both were refused.

Those trying to enter the print media market are in somewhat of a better position as they do not need licenses at startup. The only truly tax privileged media outlets are the pirate media, illegal electronic media outlets, largely thanks to ineffective state and private regulatory agencies. Their numbers have varied from between 50-100 in 2012 and do not pay taxes or other fees of any kind and have a devastating effect on local advertising markets in areas where they broadcast. "We in the print media are lucky that we have not been obliged to seek licenses from RBA," Spajic said.

The year 2012 was a year with numerous crimes committed against journalists. This year journalists were again beaten, their cars burned and many have received numerous threats. In a randomly selected, two week time period (June 26 to July 5, 2012), the following incidents against journalists occurred: A car belonging to a journalist with the daily newspaper *Kurir* was set on fire in Novi Sad; The local station from Kucevo, TV Zvizd, was destroyed in a fire; Journalists with RTV were attacked in Becej. The reaction of the police and judiciary was ambivalent at best, but was mainly one of ignorance to the events. The case of beating journalist in front of police officers was even broadcast on national television. In this case, the attacker has not yet faced prosecution, as court proceedings are extremely long and the judicial process very inefficient.

There is limited investigative reporting in Serbia despite the prevalence of corruption and the political misuse of investigative functions. Nevertheless investigating reporters are under attack from different interest groups defending their illegal interests. Right now three journalists are under permanent police protection and the public reaction has ranged from outrage to ambivalence depending on the region of the country. Criminal acts against journalists have not been vigorously prosecuted and as in previous years, are very often left unsolved as is the case of the murders of three Serbian journalists many years. "For me, until the state is able to solve the murders of our three colleagues, crime against the media will always be one of the biggest problems in the country," said Spajic.

A number of state owned media outlets receive preferential treatment mainly by the state or the party in power. A good example is the case of media financing from the government budget in Nis, where 2/3rds of the media budget is given to only one media outlet. In January 2012, a regulation ordered that media outlets financed from the state budget should be treated as public companies. The law on public subsidy control forbids the preferential treatment of one entity over another, but to avoid this provision of the law, the draft law was changed at the last moment, making the law applicable to transfers over €30 million only. So again, the media

---

---

industry is not protected since there are no transactions above this amount that ever occurs.

Another form of discrimination is the fact that several political parties have not paid arrears for advertising during the election campaign, even to state owned media. In Belgrade, media financing is carried out through intermediary or public companies. The financing of state owned media in Belgrade and local regions is not transparent and is done according to unequal standards which ultimately endanger marketplace equality. Political elites have close connections within the media industry and use them to promote their own agenda to the public. In local regions it is even worse for media outlets that are financed from the state budget. Budget financing in Serbia traditionally lacks transparency. Electronic media are under heavy market pressures from two large advertisers that dominate the market. The new government has the perception that the Democratic Party controls the media through advertising monopolies, since the owners of the two biggest advertising agencies are close associates of former President Tadić, and one of them is the mayor of Belgrade.

Libel is still not decriminalized in Serbia and the Constitutional Court has not expressed an opinion on the controversial provisions of the Law on Electronic Communication (specifically the provision that enables warrantless phone tapping). This law also endangers the practice of protecting informants. Prison sentences for libel are extremely rare and court practices are slowly improving, especially in places like Belgrade which is doing better in accepting the practices of the European court system. Journalists are having more difficulties with cases of civil lawsuits, especially in the regions. How prevalent corruption is in the judiciary is difficult to assess. However, it is obvious that a great number of judges are not familiar with how to try cases of libel in a just society. The most drastic are cases where editors are sentenced for broadcasting or publishing quotes or reports from institutions or politicians. Internet service providers or web hosting companies in Serbia today are operating in an unregulated environment, but Internet media outlets believe that the same rules of editorial standards in the media industry apply equally to them.

There are no legal regulations that preclude the media from access to public information. Officially, all media outlets have equal access to public information but this is not the reality in practice. A great number of politicians, political institutions, companies and even courts still refuse to disclose information of public importance. Some would rather intentionally pay fines instead of disseminating

information that they consider to be unfavorable toward them. Some state institutions in local regions have been ordered not to make public media announcements before clearing the information through Belgrade first. In 2012 near the border crossing town of Prijepolje, a huge drug shipment was captured by the local police, where were then told to first contact headquarters in Belgrade to seek approval for the announcement to media. The Belgrade headquarters then promptly informed media, so that the information first came from Belgrade rather than the regions. The Prijepolje media then published the news story later.

Some politicians choose to whom they will disseminate their information. There are some media outlets that are permanently supplied with exclusives from the same politician or party. The opposite also occurs, however. In Bečej, the municipality president forbade a correspondent of RTV to enter his press conference. Another serious problem is the refusal (or self-censorship) of the media to quote sources from which official information has been obtained. The professional public sector is excluded from discussions on new proposed legislation. Predrag Blagojević, owner of *Južne Vesti* noted, "Recently the Municipality of Niš asked all regional and local media to submit the names of two journalists that will be allowed to enter into the municipality building when press conferences occur. They do not have [any written standards] on accreditation of journalists. Only after strong protests from journalists did the media receive an apology."

A journalist's job is further aggravated by the Law on Data Confidentiality, which is formally in effect but the bylaws have never appeared so journalists are left to interpret confidentiality in a subjective manner on their own.

Through a concerted effort by the Commissioner for Public Information, however, the situation is improving every year. A number of panelists highly praised the efforts of the Commissioner and his extensive help to journalists and editors.

Another positive area that Serbia enjoys is the media's access to and use of local and international news sources. Access to sources of information has been unrestricted in Serbia for a long time, and the panel felt this was very positive. Another positive area the panelists felt was important to note, was the ability to enter into the field of journalism. The panelists felt that entry into the profession has been free and non-discriminatory.

## OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Serbia Objective Score: 1.67

Several panelists thought that professionalism improved in 2012, others disagreed. The objective score showed only a slight decline from the previous MSI report. There are different approaches to societal problems that can be addressed without dictates from the central government. The panelists observed that while there is more pluralism in journalism, unprofessional journalism is also spreading. The improvement seen after the elections is that there are now numerous power centers that are influencing the media sector rather than a single one. Vukasin Obradović, president of the Independent Journalists Association of Serbia, noted that, "Only centers of power that control the media have changed. Censorship and a high degree of media control have been replaced with the worst of tabloidization which is dominated by articles on arrests, charges and adjudication. We were faced with two negative phases of media development in 2012: pre-election and post-election. During the pre-election period we saw low levels of media freedom and during the post-election period we saw an explosion of tabloids. The popularity of tabloids has been growing and 'serious' media outlets, who are often interpreting public service news, have become sterile rather than professional."

Media competition is evident. Sensationalism coupled with unprofessional journalism is spreading the public's interest in the sector. It appears that with more pluralism in Serbian society, one is seeing more divisions in it as well. Nevertheless, the majority of panelists agreed that today there is more information available concerning different

### JOURNALISM MEETS PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF QUALITY.

#### PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM INDICATORS:

- > Reporting is fair, objective, and well-sourced.
- > Journalists follow recognized and accepted ethical standards.
- > Journalists and editors do not practice self-censorship.
- > Journalists cover key events and issues.
- > Pay levels for journalists and other media professionals are sufficiently high to discourage corruption and retain qualified personnel within the media profession.
- > Entertainment programming does not eclipse news and information programming.
- > Technical facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news are modern and efficient.
- > Quality niche reporting and programming exist (investigative, economics/business, local, political).

"One journalist actually told me," recalled Spajic, "I refuse to publish anything that does not come from someone's PR department because I am a professional journalist."

aspects of politics, but at the same time there is clear evidence that professionalism in the media is decaying. Because of this trend, the panelists felt that this area of the media sector decreased compared to the previous year.

There are many illiterate, unprofessional journalists but professional standards have also deteriorated. In a race for exclusivity many journalists are not checking facts. This year PR departments have been pressuring journalists and editors to publish their own content. The PR impact on management, editors and journalists is not harmless. There are some media campaigns that exist that are not critical of the media at all, such as the government's current struggle against corruption which has turned into a witch hunt, as one panelist said. Tabloids and sensationalism are widespread and are intruding on privacy. Despite the obvious need for media diversity, the expansion of tabloids is having a strong and negative impact on society, as tabloids are published with unchecked information and don't adhere to any ethical code. All told, professional standards are very low but are still there as journalists are not giving up their struggle for professionalism.

Reporting is under permanent economic and political pressure. Pressures on media after the election have not stopped. General standards are also lower due to weaker financing, the general collapse of social values and the expansion of tabloids. Professionalism is also affected by levels of poverty that hits the media and journalists. Poor conditions such as these generally dictate the level of professionalism that is seen. "The case of RTV is interesting. We introduced a new group of affirmed journalists in an effort to improve journalism on public service in the province of Vojvodina. But we were not able to restart programs for minorities [that have waned over the years]. Our experience showed that if editors are not active the quality of programs deteriorates. Serious falls in revenues limits payments to only salaries, with no money left for development and new equipment." Isakov said.

Journalists also contributed to poor reporting. Before the elections they were not publishing information on the misbehavior of politicians and tycoons, and now after the elections, they are literally "swooping on the carcasses." for stories. Journalists are also guilty of not



According to Obradovic, "In the local media there has been a trend: 'a broken pipe is not news, but one that is repaired is,'" meaning, local news find the good side in articles that could reflect poorly on local government.

quoting and checking their sources and for "spinning" a number of their stories. "One journalist actually told me," recalled Spajic, "I refuse to publish anything that does not come from someone's PR department because I am a professional journalist." The public's confidence in the media is becoming undermined and journalists are not seen as members of a respected profession. That is one of the reasons why their support is weak. Spajic added, "[Professional journalism] would be even worse if there were not a few, good quality professional media outlets. [As a whole], the media has been dominated by very low levels of professionalism, low ethics standards, low quality, low knowledge and low common sense...It seems to me that never before have things been so bad."

Journalist's code of ethics and that of most media outlets exist and were created on the basis of international ethical standards from professional media associations. A number of media outlets adhere to this code, but there are some that intentionally violate ethics standards to increase their public attention. In journalism, there is no consensus on either the substance or knowledge of ethical standards. The problem is partly in the fact that the Serbian public does not know that it is their right to demand that the media industry abides by ethical standards. According to Snezana Milosevic, secretary general of *Lokal Press*, "The media's relationship with advertising has been especially interesting. Faced with the financial crisis, more and more local media have agreed to publish an advertisement for up to 1,000 characters when advertisers are willing to pay. In as much as 80% of the cases, editors have not indicated that such text is not editorial. It is my opinion that journalists and editors recognize the advertisements very well, but the financial crisis has been preventing them from not identifying the source."

The experience with the Print Council, the body in charge of ethical standards in print media, shows that neither journalists nor their editors pay any attention to the Serbian Journalists Codex. During 2012, the Print Council received 23 appeals out of which 12 were rejected and 9 were taken into consideration. In no case was a consensus reached among members of the appeals commission. Out of the 9 cases

considered, as many as 5 were appeals against *Press Daily*. There were not any appeals against local media due to the financial crisis that increased the level of self-censorship. Nor were there any appeals against local media, largely because most editors are cautious and know that local interest groups would close down such disobedient media outlets with the help of local prosecutors, judges and other institutions with the authority to close them down. According to Obradovic, "In the local media there has been a trend: 'a broken pipe is not news, but one that is repaired is,'" meaning, local news find the good side in articles that could reflect poorly on local government. He continued, "The journalism we see today in dailies such as *Informer* and *Kurir*, which publish, in advance, announcements of arrests that will happen the next day, are professional and social disasters. Such newspapers have been ruining the name of professional journalism." In late 2012, word of the planned arrest of two oligarchs broke in these newspapers, believed to be linked to the deputy prime minister who initiated an anti-corruption drive. Far from reporting a scoop, such acts are more indicative of political tools, rather than investigative champions.

Self-censorship has spread in recent years, especially in the local media. A good example of self-censorship was seen lately in Nis. The Internet daily *Južne Vesti* published an article with the headline: "More expensive public transport." All state owned media in Nis, however, used the following headline: "New prices for public transportation." Self-censorship is still very much present in all media outlets as are cases of direct collaboration between individual journalists and editors with politicians. For a local journalist, any information that is not favored by authorities is dangerous even if seemingly trivial. The panel noted that local journalists will be wary of criticizing local officials, for fear of eliciting a public attack, threats, lawsuits, job loss, or even violence. In Kragujevac, for the first time in 20 years, one editor of a local publication recently refused to publish a journalist's column in which a fellow citizen referred to a town official as a "neighbor." After this, the journalist published the column on her Facebook profile and many more fellow citizens in town read the column than when it was published in the newspaper. Panelists agreed that widespread self-censorship is obviously returning the media sector to conditions similar to the 1990s.

In Serbia journalists cover all key events and issues in the country. Due to the attitudes of some politicians, a number of serious societal problems are not on the agenda. New citizen journalists are becoming established in Serbia without obstacles and this opens another avenue in which to cover events and issues.

The bad economy and extremely low salary levels available to media workers present huge obstacles to professional standards. This year journalist's salaries are especially low and have even decreased between 2010 and 2011. The average monthly salary in a local media outlet is around EURO 250, with wages often being paid as late as four to seven months. A number of journalists do not have social security as their employers are not able to pay into health insurance funds. Journalist's social status and living standards are near the bottom of pay scales, but journalists have few other options because employment opportunities in other industries are also few.

Panelists share the view that the proportion news and entertainment programming is balanced. The problem of content on most programs is that of quality and not quantity. Some observers think that Serbia has even more news programs than are necessary.

The technical capabilities of local media outlets are at relatively low levels and in principle lag behind media outlets in Belgrade. Technical equipment and capacities are obsolete, equipment is old or in poor condition and a number of media outlets don't have enough money to buy legal versions of software. New business models or development plans for local media are often an unattainable luxury, as they deal only with the daily problems of survival.

Niche reporting and investigative journalism share the same general quality of professionalism with the mainstream Serbian media. Due to lack of specialized journalists, some important topics are left out of the media industry. Economic news is rarely presented in a way that is understandable to the general public. Investigative journalism is underdeveloped due to the bad economy, self-censorship, the small number of specialized journalists and pressure from politicians, media owners or tycoons. It is widely believed that RTS, the public sector station, must improve its investigative reporting since they have not yet had any serious investigative stories in their programming content to date. RTS programs are, as in other media outlets, biased and burdened with self-censorship by its journalists and editors. "[The status of] professionalism can be seen in how investigative texts from the IJAS Center for investigative reporting (CINS) have been treated. A number of investigative texts on corruption were uploaded to the web site [during our reporting] but nobody ever downloaded them. Now when politicians from previous governments described in those texts are under investigation, tabloids are downloading our reports." said Obradovic.

### OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

Serbia Objective Score: 1.94

All year, journalists and institutions pledged to be more transparent in their ownership despite the fact that in only a few cases were the identities of media owners actually known. Concerning the plurality of news sources, the opinions of the panelists differed slightly but plurality has still been ranked the same as last year which illustrates that stagnation in this area of the media industry persists.

The plurality of news sources is spreading in Serbia through social networks and Internet portals. The plurality of sources is not a problem but an increase in the number of sources does not guaranty the quality of sources. It is certain that citizens in bigger towns have better access to media than citizens in small towns and villages. First, low incomes prevent people from using Internet services or buying newspapers, which would improve their awareness. In those areas, traditional local media has been a priority because they broadcast or publish local news. Poor media literacy is another reason why people over 50 years old use online media or social network less than other age groups. Blagojevic noted, "Progress has been obvious in Internet media and social networks as an increasing number of comments and [posts] from citizen are registered. Citizens have become a new and abundant source of information through Twitter and Facebook, and information has been spreading. All data collected from those sources have been

#### MULTIPLE NEWS SOURCES PROVIDE CITIZENS WITH RELIABLE, OBJECTIVE NEWS.

##### PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES INDICATORS:

- > Plurality of public and private news sources (e.g., print, broadcast, Internet, mobile) exist and offer multiple viewpoints.
- > Citizens' access to domestic or international media is not restricted by law, economics, or other means.
- > State or public media reflect the views of the political spectrum, are nonpartisan, and serve the public interest.
- > Independent news agencies gather and distribute news for media outlets.
- > Private media produce their own news.
- > Transparency of media ownership allows consumers to judge the objectivity of news; media ownership is not concentrated in a few conglomerates.
- > A broad spectrum of social interests are reflected and represented in the media, including minority-language information sources
- > The media provide news coverage and information about local, national, and international issues.

The lack of transparent ownership distorts the market, as the owners of such media outlets have hidden agendas and are not necessarily motivated by earning profits. Daily Press, for example, somehow publishes a weekly political magazine at a price 50% below the competition.

thoroughly checked by editors, as those sources often have false information.”

In principle, access to domestic or international media is not limited, but the economic crisis that has diminished people’s overall purchasing power prevents better access to a wide variety of media sources. Pirate media and overlapping signals still persist with the same effect of preventing access to electronic media. In bigger towns, the access to media is better due to the abundance of different media sources, better distribution networks and more efficient Internet access compared to local regions.

Most media under direct or indirect political and state control are not representing the complete media spectrum. Public media does not fulfill its role in covering cultural or educational issues nor airing specialized programs or covering investigative journalism. Media are not independent because they depend financially on different interest groups and because a large number of editors in chief are appointed by politicians and political parties. This is especially the case in local media and minority markets.

There are three news agencies with unequal market positions due to their different ownership structures. In principle, agencies are free, but one agency owned by the state is often favored and violates the media market. The state owned agency Tanjug has abundant financing from the Serbian state budget. On the other hand very often media entities in Serbia do not have money to pay for news agency services, especially foreign services.

News production is extensive in Serbia in both the state owned and private sector. A number of media outlets produce news, but since the process is expensive, much of their reporting comes from one single or a few sources of information. Very often news in local media and national minority language programs are not produced by themselves. In producing news, many media outlets rely on the Internet or other free or inexpensive sources. The new trend of illegally downloading programs from the Internet is spreading.

Media was scheduled to be privatized according to national legislation but it still lags six years behind schedule. Though politics have been somewhat competitive in Serbia since 2000, successive coalition governments have each, in turn, attempted to control the media and bend it to its own ends. Their refusal to implement the country’s privatization law is indicative of this trend. In the past decade, several Serbian governments invested significant efforts to stop media privatization and retain direct control of the media, especially those most influential outlets. Instead of concentrating efforts to finalize the privatization, in 2012 the top theme in media has been devoted to hidden ownership of a few media outlets. Transparency of media ownership is still unclear and many of the panelists are convinced that media transparency is the critical issue for media sector development. They contend that without transparent ownership, a comprehensive view of the media industry is not possible. According to the panelists, the lack of transparent ownership distorts the market, as the owners of such media outlets have hidden agendas and are not necessarily motivated by earning profits. Daily Press, for example, somehow publishes a weekly political magazine at a price 50% below the competition, the panel noted.

Other panelists agreed that transparency of media ownership is not unimportant but that transparent financing is far more important. “Ownership transparency has particularly been in the public eye during 2012 because of the affairs with *Politika Daily*, TV B92, TV Avala and TV Pink2. The public has not been interested in who the owner is but in who has been exerting the strongest pressure. No matter how [much the media has tried] to discover who the owners of certain outlets are, there has always been the possibility to hide real ownership. A very important topic is the prevention of monopolies. During 2012, tendencies toward monopolization of media distribution channels were recorded,” said Samardzic.

Financing of media is not transparent at all, especially in local regions that see media financing through local municipality budgets. Financing channels and practices are hidden. According to one research article, the state advertising agency controls 40% of all financial resources that come into the media sector. Therefore it is necessary to strictly control the spending of state money for media. Serbia should use the British model of transparently publishing all state financial transactions that go to the media, argued panelists.

Due to the extremely high number of media outlets in Serbia (around 1,100 registered entities), including as many as five national TV stations, the citizens of Serbia are not endangered by monopolies or oligarchies in the media industry yet. Foreign investments in the media have

diminished in 2012 as Germany-based WAZ-Mediengruppe left the market and newcomers are not yet on the horizon.

In principle the media does not resist reporting on different social issues such as those concerning gender, ethnicity, social convention, religion, and sexual orientation. Unfortunately, however, the media deals with such themes mainly when extreme events or accidents happened. Cultural and educational programs are stagnating (only 0.8% of programming on public station RTS is devoted to educational programs). The newest development on RTV Vojvodina (RTV) public television is a new program, broadcast one hour weekly, that will address the issues facing the regions 25+ minorities and discuss them in Serbian, which will help these communities address their problems and priorities to larger audiences and form bonds with neighbors around issues of common concern.

The minority language media are handicapped due to the Law on Minority Councils which is in serious contradiction with the Law on Information. Minority media are under control of the National Councils of National Minorities with devastating consequences. The Law gives to the National Minority Council the right to establish minority media and with this, they completely control minority media including the right to appoint an editor in chief. They have changed editors for unprofessional reasons and under exaggerated pressures of the most basic kind. Several minority groups did not form their Councils yet, but the fear is that their Councils will be as aggressive as some of the existing ones in controlling their minority-language media. Vojvodina's RTV station, which has 60 years of history, broadcasts programs on 10 minority languages.

Financing of minority language programs should be separated from the National Minority Councils, which are staffed by political appointees and loyal to the minority parties that are in the national ruling party coalitions in Belgrade. In this sense, as in other areas, Serbia's minority media is politicized, but competitively so. The National Minority Councils are only one side of the national minority media. RTS, a public station in Serbia does not have any programs for minorities. Several local media have topics and texts on minority languages. However, print media such as Hlas ludu, Caladi kor etc. are addressing only their native language population.

Thanks to the record number of registered and illegal media outlets, citizens have the opportunity to access information on virtually any topic that the media deals with without any problem. National coverage media sporadically cover local and regional news, with incidents and political developments dominating such reports. National media reporting on important events and news from local regions

When the mayor of Kragujevac became the subject of corruption allegations, the town's media took vehement positions on the subject, making a balanced investigation of the facts by the public all but impossible.

are not of the same caliber of other news in the national media. Some local media have more balanced news content, especially after the start of the citizen's media offensive.

In principle, international news outlets are also very well covered. Where print media are concerned, the latest research showed that local media content changed significantly since the year 2000. Before that, local newspapers carried only 60% local content and 40% covering the Serbian national political scene. Today over 90% of the content is based on local news. Unfortunately, local media that are still state owned are extended the hand of local governments and serve to forward information that glorifies certain existing political structures. Very often media outlets are also used to confront political opponents. When the mayor of Kragujevac became the subject of corruption allegations, the town's media took vehement positions on the subject, making a balanced investigation of the facts by the public all but impossible.

#### OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Serbia Objective Score: 1.72

Traditionally, the media sector's economic performance has paralleled the country's overall economic performance, which has been trending downward toward negative growth or stagnation. Throughout 2012, advertising agencies and state media financing were the focus of journalists and journalist associations. The two advertising agencies that were most strongly criticized are fortunately not the only players. There is a larger number of agencies in the market than the public perceives. Another almost unknown fact to the public is that between one fourth and one third of workforce turnover occurs within the media sector. Long term research practices proved useful for both media and advertising agencies. During the year there were disagreements between ABC Serbia and two tabloids on data accuracy, but the conflict was not resolved before the end of the year. The advertising market is stagnating and there is only room to expand in outdoor and radio advertising. Due to the serious declines in all sources of

**“Advertising market stagnation has been occurring despite the fact that 2012 was an election year,” said Samardzic.**

revenue, the panelists felt that business management practices in Serbia declined compared to the year before.

The unique conclusion of all panelists is that most media are not self-sustaining and is a reality that negatively affects editorial independence. The economic crisis has additionally made things worse. Only the largest media outlets can work on the edge of sustainability, therefore almost all media are trying to earn money from alternative sources, which in turn, further endangers the independence of the media. RTS public station does not present its balance sheet, and public station RTV Vojvodina does not even know how much subscription revenue will arrive to its account from the RTS account. RTV is exposed to decreases in revenue and cannot even obtain information on how many subscribers have paid their arrears to the public station.

Local media are not efficient and sustainable enough to save their independence. Only several big media outlets use business plans and all other are not in the position to do so and do not have the capacity to use such plans in everyday business due to the small number of employees. In the last three years, editors in local print media have reduced the number of employees by an average of 30% (source *Lokal Press*). Those journalists are now unemployed and have gone on social assistance. Layoffs have been one method

#### **MEDIA ARE WELL-MANAGED ENTERPRISES, ALLOWING EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE.**

##### **BUSINESS MANAGEMENT INDICATORS:**

- > Media outlets operate as efficient and self-sustaining enterprises.
- > Media receive revenue from a multitude of sources.
- > Advertising agencies and related industries support an advertising market.
- > Advertising revenue as a percentage of total revenue is in line with accepted standards.
- > Government subsidies and advertising are distributed fairly, governed by law, and neither subvert editorial independence nor distort the market.
- > Market research is used to formulate strategic plans, enhance advertising revenue, and tailor the product to the needs and interests of the audience.
- > Broadcast ratings, circulation figures, and Internet statistics are reliably and independently produced.

to diminish costs and have been used by practically all private media outlets. On the other hand, state owned media have surpluses of employees and have social programs for workers that are laid off. In a majority of local media outlets, the director and editor is always the same person due to the low number of employees. Blagojevic noted that, “Business and other planning do not exist as the conditions have been completely unpredictable. Very few media outlets invest money in improving the management function of the media unit.”

Most ad space is sold in Belgrade and this fact opens the question of media sustainability for media outlets that do not have national coverage. “Low prices in a saturated market disables sustainability so much that even good management has not been enough to earn a profit. [The primary] goal has been to survive. The poor market influences media activities in dramatic ways. Advertising market stagnation has been occurring despite the fact that 2012 was an election year,” said Samardzic.

In principle, revenues come from multiple sources. Parallel to that is the importance of growing state or municipality budgets, irrespective of the manner in which those funds are disseminated (through projects, state subsidies or advertising). The importance of state budgeting is now rising and the media industry now sees that state as a kind of “financier of last resort.” In the other words, media managers see state funds as the most important potential market/source of revenue. Unfortunately such an attitude is in contraction to with normal market mechanisms and profit consideration. Also, this also creates more space for stronger state influence in media and their continued independence.

The practice of advertising in Serbia has developed with most agencies being established as affiliates of well-known international agencies. Media financed from state budgets are free to advertise under essentially the same conditions as private media. Advertising turnover has stagnated despite the fact that 2012 was an election year and media revenues benefited from political campaigns. In the advertising market, an oligopoly situation has been created in the last several years. Only a few advertising agencies control the bulk of the market and most ad buys are diverted to a few select media outlets.

Until now, the largest advertisers have been banks, insurance companies, retail chains, and a few local manufacturers. All have been cutting advertising budgets. Compared to the region, the Serbian market is weak, with advertising budgets much smaller than former cohorts Croatia and Slovenia. In Serbia there are 20 agencies that are engaged in the media advertising market. Most of them do their ad buys through pools, three of which are prominent.



Approximately ten producer pools with their own advertising agencies actively sell advertisements according to their client's wishes and needs. Currently, the largest advertisers are consumer goods sellers, but with smaller budgets, so they primarily seek better results through engagement in national coverage media.

Most panelists complained that big advertising agencies are not recognizing local media outlets. Local advertising died out due to the simple fact that there are few products to advertise, as most manufacturing companies in Serbia have closed. The normal world standard is that local media averages 70% of the revenues from the local economy. But in Serbia today, the local economy is effectively nonexistent. Agencies still working with local media are paying their bills with delays of between 60 to 90 days. The biggest advertiser, Telekom, did not have a single advertisement in any local media markets. In local markets, private media have been forced to reduce ad prices, while state owned media, having direct funds from state budgets, can keep their prices stable. Nevertheless, the panelists also agreed that local media should be more active in informing advertisers about their market position.

Small and shrinking local markets and local advertisers with low financial strength brought the percentage of advertising revenues to an average level of as low as 30% of total media entity revenues. Revenues from advertising are obviously not in line with world standards. Some local media outlets have dropped their prices and bigger media outlets have lost 25% to 30% of advertising revenues in the last two years. Small media have lost even more.

The position and role of the state in media sector was and still is critical in developing the Serbian media industry. A key question concerns the way the state is spending money on media financing. State involvement in the media market is controversial because state subsidies for media are forbidden but such practices are the norm even in 2012. All year long, media institutions insisted in vain for the principle of project financing through public bidding, instead of the subsidy approach. Ministries and state agencies and public enterprises have questionable contracts with the media. State owned media do not spend taxpayer's money in a transparent manner. A good example of this is that the largest television station in the country, the state owned RTS television, does not have separate accounts for receivables from subscriptions and from their commercial activities. According to Milosevic, "Dissemination of state funds in most cases are conditional directly or indirectly on different editorial compromises. In local regions different methods have been used—from prolonging the signing of a contract,

Agencies still working with local media are paying their bills with delays of between 60 to 90 days. The biggest advertiser, Telekom, did not have a single advertisement in any local media markets.

to accumulating arrears or threats of nonpayment—if a media outlet refuses to make editorial concessions." Dragana Zarkovic Obradovic, country director for BIRN, also added, "Local authorities have granted money to local media. Research in 33 municipalities showed that 25 of them had financed media outlets directly from the municipality budget. Only one third of recipients submitted reports on spending. Results like these have been a clear illustration of [the lack of transparent] spending of state money. Those municipalities that had given money to the media divided the money as follows: 80% to municipal owned media and 20% to private media. This 20% was not given on a projected basis or through [competitive] bidding but directly for maintaining their operations."

For more than a decade, media research has been done professionally with extensive and diversified methodologies and has become an industrial standard years ago. The results have been used by media outlets for programming content or editorial policies as well as by advertising agencies for media planning. Researchers and analysts have also use market research results. The real problem once again is research on local media performance. Local media can afford market research in their respective areas only if and when donors finance such activities. The lack of data on the market performance of individual media outlets is often a strong reason for advertising agencies not to advertise in local media markets.

Broadcast ratings and circulation figures in Serbia are products of well-known worldwide research organizations: AGB Nielsen, ABC and Ipsos. AGB Nielsen and Ipsos regularly supply clients with data on television viewership and radio listenership. ABC Serbia is doing the same with print media circulation figures. ABC has been in the market for only a few years yet each year is increasing the number of print media circulation figures. Internet statistics are covered in Serbia by Wave 6 Research.

## OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

### Serbia Objective Score: 2.25

In Serbia publishers' associations are rare and only represent a small number of media owners. On the other hand there is no strong syndicate of journalists and media employees. Therefore, so called collective agreements that would define the rights of journalists on one hand and the rights and obligations of publishers on the other, is still missing in Serbia. This has forced media associations to deal more and more with social protection and labor rights of journalists, compensating for the inefficiency of weak journalist unions.

Traditionally several media associations at a country, provincial, and regional levels are active in Serbia. In 2012 one new association was formed, the Nis Journalists Association. However, the biggest leap forward was in the consolidation of numerous media associations into a single coalition. The new coalition consists of: the Independent Journalist Association of Serbia, the Independent Journalist Association of Vojvodina, the Journalist Association of Serbia, the Association of Independent Electronic Media, and the *Lokal Press*. During 2012 this coalition succeeded in convincing the government to change its dealing with media outlets by amending some of the articles of the Law on Companies in 2013. One panelist pointed out that there is no association formed to promote the capabilities of technical staff in the electronic media sector. Such an association is needed to help such professionals develop their knowledge and innovative expertise to keep up with the fast pace of

change in technology. In Serbia another new association was established called the International Advertising Association (IAA) that until now has had three strong members. The association started their work by drafting a proposed Advertiser's Codex.

Some panelists believe that cooperation between the media sector and NGOs is excellent, but the president of the Independent Journalist's Association of Serbia pointed out that media coalitions did not cooperate enough with the NGO community during the country's *Media Strategy* campaign. However, they intend to improve this in the future.

During the year no significant new development was registered in the education sector. Panelists assessed that the Nis faculty media study was weak and that no real progress occurred during 2012. The criticisms of short-term trainings that were expressed by last year's panel still stand. Diversification of training is needed with an emphasis on modern journalism and specialized journalism. No progress was registered.

In terms of acquiring media equipment, neither print media outlets nor printing services in Serbia seem to have any problems or restrictions. The low purchasing power of the media is still the main obstacle that effectively prevents the acquisition and use of better technical devices, services and innovations.

The newest development in media distribution was the take of the big distributor Futura Plus by the company Centroproizvod. Now, Centroproizvod is close to gaining a monopoly in the print media distribution marketplace. According to *Lokal Press*, in Serbia there are now six active print media distributors, while two years ago there were 12. This is a potential danger, since the margin for selling newspapers through Centroproizvod is already 30% of the retail price. Panelists repeated that in terms of allocating cable television stations the situation is inefficient because RBA insists on not regulating the cable broadcast market in the country.

A major development has been the continued postponement of digitalization in Serbia. Only one initial network was activated and then all else stopped and much more should be done. Before digitalization is finished it will not be possible to use broadband services. Currently there are many serious problems for media which are in the regions outside of Belgrade or in smaller towns. Throughout the year, the majority of media owners were for the first time informed of the daunting costs of switching over to digital broadcasting. Digitalization is a process to which much more time, money and effort should be given than it has to date.

### SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS FUNCTION IN THE PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA.

#### SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS INDICATORS:

- > Trade associations represent the interests of media owners and managers and provide member services.
- > Professional associations work to protect journalists' rights and promote quality journalism.
- > NGOs support free speech and independent media.
- > Quality journalism degree programs exist providing substantial practical experience.
- > Short-term training and in-service training institutions and programs allow journalists to upgrade skills or acquire new skills.
- > Sources of media equipment, newsprint, and printing facilities are apolitical, not monopolized, and not restricted.
- > Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, cable, Internet, mobile) are apolitical, not monopolized, and not restricted.
- > Information and communication technology infrastructure sufficiently meets the needs of media and citizens.

---

---

## List of Panel Participants

**Ljiljana Smajlović**, president, Journalists Association of Serbia, Belgrade

**Vanda Kučera**, CEO, McCann Erickson Group, marketing agency, Belgrade

**Aneta Radivojević**, producer, TV Prva, Belgrade

**Mileva Malešić**, director, TV Forum, NGO media, Prijepolje

**Dragana Žarković Obradović**, country director, Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) Serbia, Belgrade

**Snežana Milošević**, secretary general, Lokal Press, local print media association, Nis

**Vukasin Obradović**, president, Independent Journalists Association of Serbia, Belgrade

**Darko Bročić**, CEO, AGB Nielsen, marketing agency, Belgrade

**Nebojša Samardžić**, lawyer, Zivkovic & Samardzic Law Office, Belgrade

**Nebojsa Spajić**, Editor in chief, *NIN*, Weekly political magazine, Belgrade

**Siniša Isakov**, Director, RTV Vojvodina, Vojvodina province public service, Novi Sad

**Predrag Blagojević**, CEO and Owner, *Južne vesti*, private Internet daily, Nis

## Moderator

**Dragan Kremer**, Media Projects Coordinator/Open Society Foundation–Serbia

## Author

**Goran Cetinić**, Independent Media Consultant

*The panel discussion was convened on December 6, 2012.*