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MONTENEGRO

Montenegro had a politically turbulent 2013, with presidential elections as well as local elections held in four of its 22 municipalities. The elections were conducted amidst tension between the ruling and opposition parties, and conflict within the ruling coalition intensified the problems.

The Montenegrin constitution, adopted after Montenegro won independence in 2006, limits the president to two terms in office. However, a minority coalition member, the Social-Democrat Party (SDP), contested the constitutionality of incumbent candidate President Filip Vujanović, a member of the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS), the main ruling party. Divergent interpretations of the constitutional provision grew into widespread criticism from the general public and particularly SDP, while DPS maintained that Vujanović's bid for the presidency was legal.

Most key private media outlets (the independent dailies *Vijesti* and *Dan*, and TV *Vijesti*) strongly disputed Vujanović candidacy. Ultimately, the Constitutional Court of Montenegro adjudicated in his favor. After the ruling, Vujanović ran and narrowly defeated opposition candidate Miodrag Lekić by a reported 7,000 votes. However, the opposition has not recognized the outcome of the electoral process, pointing to such potential issues as a miscounting of votes in the Municipality of Rozaje.

These elections underscore a resistance to democratic change even seven years after the country's independence. This is primarily the result of 23 years of DPS control, which has seen Prime Minister Milo Đukanović as the sole original post-Yugoslav politician to remain in power. The party has demonstrated a willingness to abuse public resources and control government institutions, thus leading many observers to question the viability of fair and free elections in Montenegro.

The MSI panelists asserted that the state of Montenegrin media has deteriorated, and the most influential media outlets have become increasingly political, undemocratic, and partisan mouthpieces for the government and the opposition. The panelists said that the 2013 elections resulted in the media sector experiencing one of the worst years in the last decades, further exacerbating tensions between leading private outlets (*Vijesti* and *Dan*) and DPS-controlled state media outlets (*Pobjeda*). Further, panelists decried a new wave of attacks on journalists, including the detonation of an explosive device by the window of the *Vijesti* editor-in-chief in Podgorica in December, the stoning of *Vijesti* staff in the newsroom by unidentified persons in November, and an explosion at the home of a *Vijesti* journalist in August.

Montenegro is currently in negotiations with the European Commission for accession to the European Union (EU), but the country's lack of substantive reforms to fight corruption and organized crime might hinder its bid. According to the panelists, the general public perceives the ongoing reforms to be insufficient, as do private and independent media outlets, as shown in their reporting. However, pro-government media are ostensibly satisfied with the reforms.

MONTENEGRO at a glance

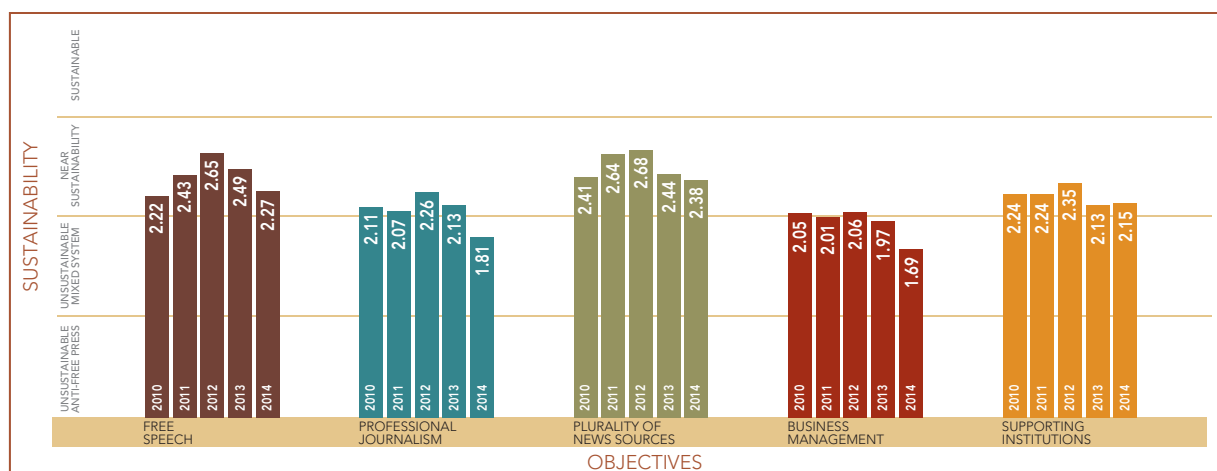
GENERAL

- > Population: 650,036 (July 2014 est. *CIA World Factbook*)
- > Capital city: Podgorica
- > Ethnic groups (% of population): Montenegrin: 45%, Serbian: 29%, Bosniak: 9%, Albanian: 5%, other (Muslims, Croats, Roma (Gypsy): 12% (MONSTAT 2011–census)
- > Religions (% of population): Orthodox 72%, Muslim 19%, Catholic 3.5%, other 0.6%, unspecified 3%, atheist 1% (MONSTAT 2011–census)
- > Languages (% of population): Serbian 43%, Montenegrin (official) 37%, Bosnian 5%, Albanian 5%, unspecified 10% (MONSTAT 2011–census)
- > GNI (2012-Atlas): \$4.486 billion (World Bank Development Indicators 2013)
- > GNI (2012-PPP): \$14,590 (World Bank Development Indicators 2013)
- > Literacy rate: 98.5% (male 99.4%, female 97.6%) (2011 est. *CIA World Factbook*)
- > President or top authority: President: Filip Vujanovic (since April 6, 2013)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations: Print: 4 dailies, 3 weeklies, 30 monthlies; Radio Stations: 54; Television Stations: 24; Cable operators: 8 (2013, Agency for Electronic Media of Montenegro)
- > Newspaper circulation statistics: *Vijesti* (circulation 8,000, private), *DAN* (circulation 9,000, private), *Dnevne Novine* (circulation 5,000, private), *Pobjeda* (circulation 3,000, state-owned) (2013 est., Direct Media Ltd.)
- > Broadcast ratings: N/A
- > News agencies: Mina News Agency (private)
- > Annual advertising revenue in media sector: €8–€10 million (2012 est., Direct Media Ltd.)
- > Internet usage: 328,000 (2012 est., Internet World Stats)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: MONTENEGRO



MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX 2014: OVERALL AVERAGE SCORES



CHANGE SINCE 2013

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

OBJECTIVE 1: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Montenegro Objective Score: 2.27

Media regulations in Montenegro are to a great degree aligned with international standards. Media owners, journalists, and editors on the panel agreed that the legal framework in place is sound, and all relevant media regulations (Law on Media, Law on Electronic Media, Law on Digital Radio Broadcasting, and Law on Public Radio Broadcasting Services) facilitate the development of free and professional media. However, as in previous years, panelists highlighted issues with media legislation enforcement. This is confirmed by the fact that journalists are very much exposed to pressures exerted by organized crime and interest groups. Marina Vuković, editor-in-chief at the state public service, RTV Crne Gore in Podgorica, commented on the legislative framework. She said that media regulations do represent a step in right direction, but “enforcement is inadequate [for] normative solutions adopted under political pressures, which, for example, put state-owned Radio and TV of Montenegro [RTV Montenegro] in a disadvantage financially with respect to commercial broadcasters during election campaigns.”

Sonja Drobac, editor in chief at Atlas TV in Podgorica, agreed that “enforcement [of media regulations] is problematic” due to the absence of “unskilled judges”

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.

According to Ašanin, “Journalists who are critical of the government have lots of reasons not to feel safe.” She added that there have been “numerous attacks in recent years both on journalists and assets of critical media companies.”

and uninformed journalists and citizens. Tanja Ašanin, a journalist with TV Vijesti in Podgorica, commented that “freedom of speech, although guaranteed by the constitution, is a losing battle in situations when this freedom is contrary to interests of ruling structures and related business and financial lobbies.”

Media outlets that investigate corruption cases are often accused of endangering alleged national interests, and often denied access to information that would reveal the truth. However, the panelists noted that the Minister of Interior, charged with investigating cases of attacks on journalists and editorial teams, has launched a special commission on law and regulation enforcement. Panelists said that the commission represents a positive step toward protecting freedom of speech in Montenegro.

The panelists said that they do not perceive media licensing procedures or issuance of appropriate permits as an impediment. Registration of media companies in Montenegro is quite liberal and has been reduced to mere record-keeping. However, the licensing procedure for electronic media is a complex legal and technical process. Montenegro has two regulatory agencies in the media sector (Media Agency and Agency for Electronic Telecommunications) and the panelists questioned the need for two, given their similar scopes of work.

Media companies enjoy free access to the market, and related business regulations are the same as regulations for other economic sectors, placing them on an even fiscal playing field. Tax statuses of media companies are almost identical to other types of companies, with the exception of print media outlets that run daily or periodical issues; they pay a lower VAT rate (7 percent).

The general political environment for journalists in Montenegro has worsened. According to Ašanin, “Journalists who are critical of the government have lots of reasons not to feel safe.” She added that there have been “numerous attacks in recent years both on journalists and assets of critical media companies.” She gave the example of the unsolved murder case of *Dan* editor-in-chief Duško

Jovanović. Some media report exhaustively on journalists who face attacks, while other outlets with a closer affiliation to the government do not mention these attacks. Drobac agreed, saying that the Jovanović murder and the attacks on *Vijesti* “haven’t resulted in adequate legal recourse. In principle, courts are unwilling to trial cases involving journalists or people from the media.”

Montenegrin law provides for editorial independence of state-owned media and national and local public services. However, these regulations do not represent serious obstacles for powerful figures in finding personnel that will abuse principles of depoliticized and professional management. The public frequently criticizes these outlets for failing to resist evident political pressures on their editorial policies. *Dan* journalist Jadranka Rabrenović said that the national public service (RTV Montenegro) is financed from the national budget and is a state media outlet, although its board includes representatives of NGOs, trade unions, and business associations. She said that editor and journalist appointments to state-owned media are politicized, and this practice precludes “balanced reporting of ruling parties and opposition party activities.”

The Montenegrin judiciary now imposes fines ranging from several thousand up to €40,000 since the decriminalization of libel. However, libel is now a matter of civil law, which comes with a host of other issues, as court practices vary and result in inconsistent verdicts and fines. However, the panelists said that they expect court practices to become harmonized in libel cases, with lower fines handed to journalists and media companies.

Slavko Mandić contended that the “decriminalization of libel was premature,” and that the “majority of European countries haven’t decriminalized libel.” He concluded that the change has “enabled the media to behave irresponsibly frequently.” Rabrenović responded by saying that journalists were never sent to prison even when libel had been a criminal offense, and she considers the decriminalization an “optimal solution.” As a result of the new laws, the daily *Dan* was acquitted in civil court for alleged libel of Ana Kolarević (sister of the Prime Minister Đukanović). But the panelists said that this acquittal is a rare case, and it raises the question of lack of accountability for parties that falsely accuse media outlets of libel.

Montenegrin society is in an ongoing debate regarding the enforcement of Freedom of Information Act, adopted in 2005. NGOs often criticize the limited enforcement of the law and the conduct of authorities when citizens apply for access to information. Most of the panelists agreed that often government bodies are ineffective in enforcing the act. Gordana Borović, member of the Podgorica Self-

Regulatory Body Board of Directors, stated that information access among the different “government bodies is not harmonized.” Some agencies are quite open in this respect while others are completely closed. Borović has noted a strategic and “frequent informal leaking of information, and this ‘mechanism’ is used especially by the police, judiciary, and different ministries.”

Montenegrins encounter no significant obstacles or limitations in accessing international and local news. Information is generally accessible, with no media censorship, and growth in Internet journalism is increasing significantly. The Internet is being used on massive scale in Montenegro, with more than 300,000 recorded users, which accounts to roughly half of the population.

The Montenegrin government has never had licensing requirements for journalists, nor do journalists need any of the kinds of permits mandated for other professions (engineers, physicians, lawyers, etc.). Some members of the journalist community are advocating for the introduction of professional journalist licenses, but there is no clear willingness among their peers to push for licensing.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Montenegro Objective Score: 1.81

The panelists agreed that the state of Montenegrin journalism has suffered additional setbacks with professional standards. Editor Samir Rastoder asserted that journalism quality in Montenegro has never been lower, with bigotry and biased, tabloid-like journalism emerging. According to

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).

Borović, Montenegrin journalism is often inaccurate, with writers not consulting relevant sources. She said that these practices underscore an absence of quality investigative reporting and she agreed that journalism in general has become completely biased. Mandić echoed that Montenegro has no objective journalism, and that reporting has become motivated by political reasons. Journalists are “forced to be biased, regardless of efforts they invest to make it look as if they are not,” he said. Borović also noted that “the media are prone to instigating scandals and spin campaigns.”

The Code of Journalistic Ethics in Montenegro, adopted by the country’s media organizations a decade ago, is not adequately enforced, according to the panelists. Experts and general public have noted the increasing politicization of media outlets—major private and independent media outlets are aligned with opposition parties, whereas public/state-owned outlets very much support the government. Dragan Markešić affirmed that there “are clear cases of unethical behavior of certain journalists,” adding that “print media are, in that respect, the worst.”

Ašanin agreed, saying that “ethical standards are often seriously violated, despite the fact that we have ethical norms.” She explained that the violations are in part due to a general lack of awareness, coupled with the practices of some media outlets that have “survived for years thanks to various benefits they receive either from the government or big capital, whose interests they are protecting.”

The panelists stated that the Montenegrin media sector has a self-regulatory body that contributes to promotion of professional ethics. However, this body represents the media community only partially, as influential outlets such as *Dan* and *Vijesti* do not participate in the group.

The practice of self-censorship in Montenegro is a legacy from the communist era. The panelists cited that the overall lack of professionalism, the poor financial situation of journalists, the corruptive tendencies, and the negative influence of politics and big business continue the culture of self-censorship.

According to the panelists, journalists in Montenegro do not face significant problems in reporting on key events. However, Mandić pointed out that “journalists are covering events in line with available resources” and at their editors’ discretion.

The media sector in Montenegro has experienced harsh economic times, with most outlets forced to lay off journalists and technical staff. The average monthly salary of a journalist is €450, which is less than in previous years. (In the 2013 MSI, €500 was cited as average media salary.) The

Dragan Markešić affirmed that there “are clear cases of unethical behavior of certain journalists,” adding that “print media are, in that respect, the worst.”

panelists stated that the entire industry employs some 3,300 people in a country of 620,000 people.

Montenegro has only four daily newspapers and five national television outlets that provide national coverage. As in previous years, there is an ongoing trend of journalists transitioning to other professions, and/or taking on additional work in order to make ends meet. The poor financial situation of journalists is exacerbated by weak trade unions, which enable media employers to financially marginalize their employees. This is another contributing factor to corruption in journalism. Journalists that come from poorer backgrounds often fail to uphold professional standards—some are easily swayed and prone to corrupt practices.

A majority of media outlets in Montenegro have modest amounts of news programming, if any at all. Only 10 percent of media outlets produce their own news programming, and panelists have identified that as a question of capacity. On the other hand, entertainment and commercial programs are pervasive and often represent easy money for media companies that are looking to survive in the market. According to the panelists, media companies disregard the social role of journalism, with news and educational programming falling victim to entertainment programming, which have contributed to the depreciation of the journalism profession in Montenegro. These trends are quite visible at the electronic media level, but even more present in public local and national broadcasting, panelists said. Most electronic media outlets prefer to present soap operas and reality shows instead of educative or informative programming.

Key private media companies (TV *Vijesti*, TV *PINK*, *PRVA* TV, TV *Atlas*) have managed to move to digital program broadcasting, and therefore require robust technical equipment. While private media outlets possess adequate facilities and equipment for gathering and producing news, local and state-owned media do not have access to modern equipment.

No progress has been recorded in the area of niche reporting when compared to previous years. The panelists reiterated the lack of investigative and/or specialized journalism in

With regard to private production of news, Rabrenović expressed the dominant opinion of the panelists: “printed private media are producing their own information, [and] part of electronic media as well—but most of them rely on agency sources.”

Montenegro, with Borović commenting that “investigative journalism is a rarity, with few editorial teams dedicated to specialized journalism, while sensationalism has suppressed objective and comprehensive reporting.” The main reason, panelists cited, is a lack of adequate financial resources, which hinders professional journalists from pursuing in-depth pieces.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

Montenegro Objective Score: 2.38

With regard to plurality, Montenegro is above European standards, with more than 70 media outlets for a population of 620,000. About 90 percent of outlets are privately owned. The country has more than 60 electronic media outlets and has four daily papers (*Vijesti*, *Dan*, *Pobjeda*, and *Dnevne Novine*). Borović affirmed that “citizens enjoy absolute access

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.

to media” and can consult a variety of sources to “compare information and reporting.”

The impact of social networks (Facebook, You Tube, and Twitter) is growing, panelists said. Suzana Ganić, a journalist with local television station Teuta in Ulcinj, concluded that Montenegro has “more than enough information sources and it is quite easy for citizens to obtain new information. There are enough newspapers, magazines, [and] radio and TV stations, as well as online news sources.” However, as in previous years, the 2014 panelists were unanimous that the increase in sources of information has not reflected an increase in the quality of journalism in Montenegro.

Montenegro has no legal limitations on access to national or international media. The only barriers are related to the financial background of citizens. The cost for ADSL access varies, from €20 to €50 per month—a significant investment for many people in Montenegro. However, the influx of telecommunication companies has resulted in Internet, cable, and satellite networks covering almost entire territory.

Public services and state-owned media outlets do not reflect the entirety of social interests and opinions, as they are predominantly promoting the interests of ruling structures and groups. For example, the state-owned daily *Pobjeda* often radically advocates for a core circle of people in power, according to the panelists. This method of reporting discounts the Law on Public Service and mitigates effective pluralism of social and political interests and opinions in public media.

Media outlets in Montenegro gather news and information from local and foreign news sources. Leading organizations continue to use mostly the national agency (MINA) or regional services from Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia.

With regard to private production of news, Rabrenović expressed the dominant opinion of the panelists: “printed private media are producing their own information, [and] part of electronic media as well—but most of them rely on agency sources.” The most influential private electronic and printed media produce their own news programs. Local media outlets, however, do not have the same resources as national media and have not been able to develop strong news programming. Panelists said that they have recently seen Internet portals make a significant penetration into the market and try to produce their own sources of information. However, Neđeljko Rudović said that “independent media outlets are under huge pressure from the government,” and if this environment continues, free journalism in Montenegro will be under threat.

In line with Company Law, all companies in Montenegro, including media outlets, are obliged to be registered in public registries. The registries are public and transparent, and provide access to information on formal owners of media companies in the country. Information is available from offices and on the Internet. As the panelists reported in past years, the public remains skeptical of official ownership; the prevailing belief is that the majority of actual owners remain hidden behind other registered names. The panelists noted no formal cases of illegal media conglomerates at present.

Panelists agreed that Montenegrin media do publish news and information of local, national, and international importance. The general public is not deprived of any important information, allowing citizens to be informed on all crucial social issues.

However, editorial policies are predominantly in the hands of political and economic centers of power, so the interests of groups with no political or financial power are marginalized. Most Montenegrin media still do not fully explore certain social issues, such as discrimination, threatened collective or individual rights, poor investigation of criminal affairs and cases of violence, the status of the LGBT population, and minority rights. RTV Montenegro, however, offers a good repertoire of cultural programming. Several stations do have broadcasts available in minority languages; for example, some outlets serve the Roma population.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Montenegro Objective Score: 1.69

As in past years, media outlets in Montenegro continued to struggle to generate profit in 2013. The panelists witnessed layoffs in the media sector in the past year. Media companies are financed by local or national authorities or by groups promoting political and business interests. For example, the Vijesti Media Group is financed partly from local business owner; and Atlas radio and TV is financed by the Atlas Group.

Media industry employees are dissatisfied with their financial status, as just a few well-paid journalists have monthly salaries that exceed €1,000. Mandić, owner of local media company, said that Montenegrin media companies do not operate “as efficient and well managed companies. All media [outlets] need donors, regardless whether they are state-owned or private.”

Panelists noted that public media services (two national and a dozen municipal outlets) enjoy permanent budgetary support. However, the economic downturn coupled with reduced advertising revenues continue to adversely impact private media outlets.

The majority of private media (more than 60 percent) are being supported by donations coming from their owners. The panelists’ general assessment was that the majority of private media are on the brink of closure, while public services are totally dependent on national or local government budgets. Markešić explained, “Media generate revenues from numerous clients, but to private media, they represent their core revenues (along with complementary funding from their owners), while state owned [outlets] receive most of the money from government budgets, with client revenues representing the next tier of revenue.” According to Borović, “Media depend on advertisers, and their editorial policies are limited because no advertiser is willing to put up with critical reporting on its own account. All media, both state owned and private, are subjected to influences, and revenues beyond advertising are very limited.”

The Montenegrin advertising market is modest, with an annual valuation of about €10 million. The market is shrinking every year, with a 10 percent decrease in advertising revenues in 2013. Overall advertising revenues in Montenegro are below regional and European standards. The Montenegrin market is among the least developed in the region, along with Albania and Kosovo. About 80 percent of advertisements are placed through specialized advertising agencies, with the remaining 20 percent contracted directly between media outlets and businesses.

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.

The market is dominated by branch offices of big regional advertising chains. However, the share of companies that advertise directly is going down every year, and at the moment, most clients are using advertising agencies for their promotion work. According to Markešić, the “number of advertising agencies is proportional to the size of the market...Advertising is not developed sufficiently because there are still no prerequisites on the market for this development.”

Advertising agencies prioritize placements in private media outlets with national coverage, then national public service outlets. As a result, local media generate very little from advertising compared to leading national media companies. The general position of the panelists was that government ads are important for some private media outlets, and it is quite clear that central and local authorities prefer to provide financial incentives, through advertising, to pro-government outlets.

Markešić differed slightly from most panelists and said that technically the telecommunication industry is the largest advertiser, and “the government does not represent a huge player on the market. However, advertising budgets of government institutions are being spent without public tenders, and the money is diverted to either state-owned media or those not critical of the government.”

Ašanin had a view more typical of the other panelists, saying that the “government is using subsidies, advertising, or other financial incentives to impose pressure on critical media or to reward the loyal [outlets].” Borović, a journalist and member of Self-regulatory Body, agreed, saying, “state-owned media survive on government subsidies, and the government is one of the key advertisers both with private and state owned media.”

In Montenegro, there is an absence of survey and market research focused on developing “good media business policies,” according to the panelists. Markešić asserted that the “Montenegrin market is in short supply” of market research and media outlets’ unprofitability can be attributed to them not utilizing “market surveys for the development of business strategies.”

When facing low profit margins, media companies in Montenegro use publicly accessible surveys developed by NGOs. These surveys are “deemed more credible and reliable” by the general public in comparison to surveys contracted by the media. Journalist Mirjana Miladinović added that the “results of surveys often depend on the organization that contracted the survey.” For example, television networks will administer market surveys promoting their platforms. According to the panelists, it is

obvious that general public does not trust these surveys, as their objectivity and reliability are questionable.

Regional agencies have commissioned professional ratings from time to time, and their results are generally not publicly known. Advertising agencies use these results on a regular basis, understanding fully the importance of using ratings.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Montenegro Objective Score: 2.15

As they noted in previous years, the panelists said that media trade associations today are poorly developed, inactive, and without significant influence, and protection of media company interests is weak. Mandić said that business associations are essentially “inactive and therefore do not represent” the interests of the media industry.

Borović said that the Association of Independent Electronic Media is potentially “better organized” than print associations, but added that “all professional associations in Montenegro have practically died out” and journalists’ rights remain “unprotected in the area of labor relations” in particular.

The panelists did mention the 2013 formation of the National Journalists’ Trade Union, which aims to protect labor rights of journalists. So far the Union is still engaged in recruiting members and therefore it is early to assess its performance, panelists said.

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.

In Montenegro, both at the local and national level, NGOs have been involved in development of civic democracy and protection of free speech. They have provided valuable support to independent media outlets, including assistance in professionalizing editorial policies. Some of the organizations (e.g., Fund for Active Citizenship, Institute Alternative, Human Rights Action, and Civic Alliance, for example) are engaged in advancing freedom of the press, investigating public impact and public confidence in media, and supporting the development of a free civil sector.

The panelists said that Montenegro has seen a decrease in recent years in educational opportunities and skills training in journalism. The economic situation and the commercialization of the media sector have impacted investments in training, acquisition of new specialized skills, and overall development of the journalism profession.

The Faculty of Political Sciences within the Department of Journalism at the State University of Montenegro continues to serve as the country's key academic institution for educating journalists. For the past decade, the Media Institute has offered training programs for journalists, but in recent years it has been facing financial difficulties in supporting programs.

The panelists contended that Montenegro now has more educated staff in the area of journalism as compared to previous years, but young journalists still have problems acquiring practical skills for everyday work. Conversely, a substantial number of educated journalists, due to the poor economic climate within the media sector, have had a hard time finding a media job and are forced to seek alternative employment.

Ašanin observed that "professional training in media companies is sporadic and insufficient," as media outlets are not interested in investing in "vocational training for their staff" and instead prioritize finding a "cheap labor force." Miladinović added that the "faculties don't provide students with on-hands training in the area of journalism, [so] direct trainings organized in media companies play crucial role" in the development of a journalist's skill set.

Media companies encounter no limitations in acquisition of equipment. There is no monopoly on the printing press market, and the panelists noted that leading print media outlets such as *Vijesti* and *Dan* have their own printing presses, as does the state-owned daily *Pobjeda*.

According to Markešić, "Distribution channels are open and accessible, although in print media, there are fewer distribution channels. But even this reduced number for

distribution" does not present limitations for the industry, he said. Distribution companies are privately owned, and aside from print media that rely on one key distributor (selling through press kiosks), media companies enjoy varied access to distribution channels.

The Montenegrin telecommunication network is modern and among the best in this region of Europe, according to the panelists. Internet and broadband Internet penetration is very high, and cable media and mobile telephony are widely accessible. Panelists called the IT and communication technology infrastructure "satisfactory," and it will improve with the completion of digitalization process for remaining households and users of modern information services.

List of Panel Participants

Nikoleta Bošković, journalist, Radio Antena M, Podgorica

Tanja Asanin, journalist, TV Vijesti, Podgorica

Marina Vuković, editor-in-chief, RTV Crne Gore, Podgorica

Predrag Zečević, journalist, Analitika Informativni Portal, Podgorica

Neđeljko Rudović, journalist, *Vijesti*, Podgorica

Suzana Ganić, journalist, TV Teuta, Ulcinj

Dragan Markešić, general manager, Direct Media Montenegro, Podgorica

Jadranka Rabrenović, journalist, *Dan*, Podgorica

Sonja Drobac, editor-in-chief, Atlas TV, Podgorica

Slavko Mandić, editor-in-chief, Radio Skala, Kotor

Gordana Borović, member, Board of Directors, Media Self-Regulatory Board, Podgorica

Samir Rastoder, editor-in-chief, *Dnevne Novine*, Podgorica

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