

# SERBIA

## INTRODUCTION

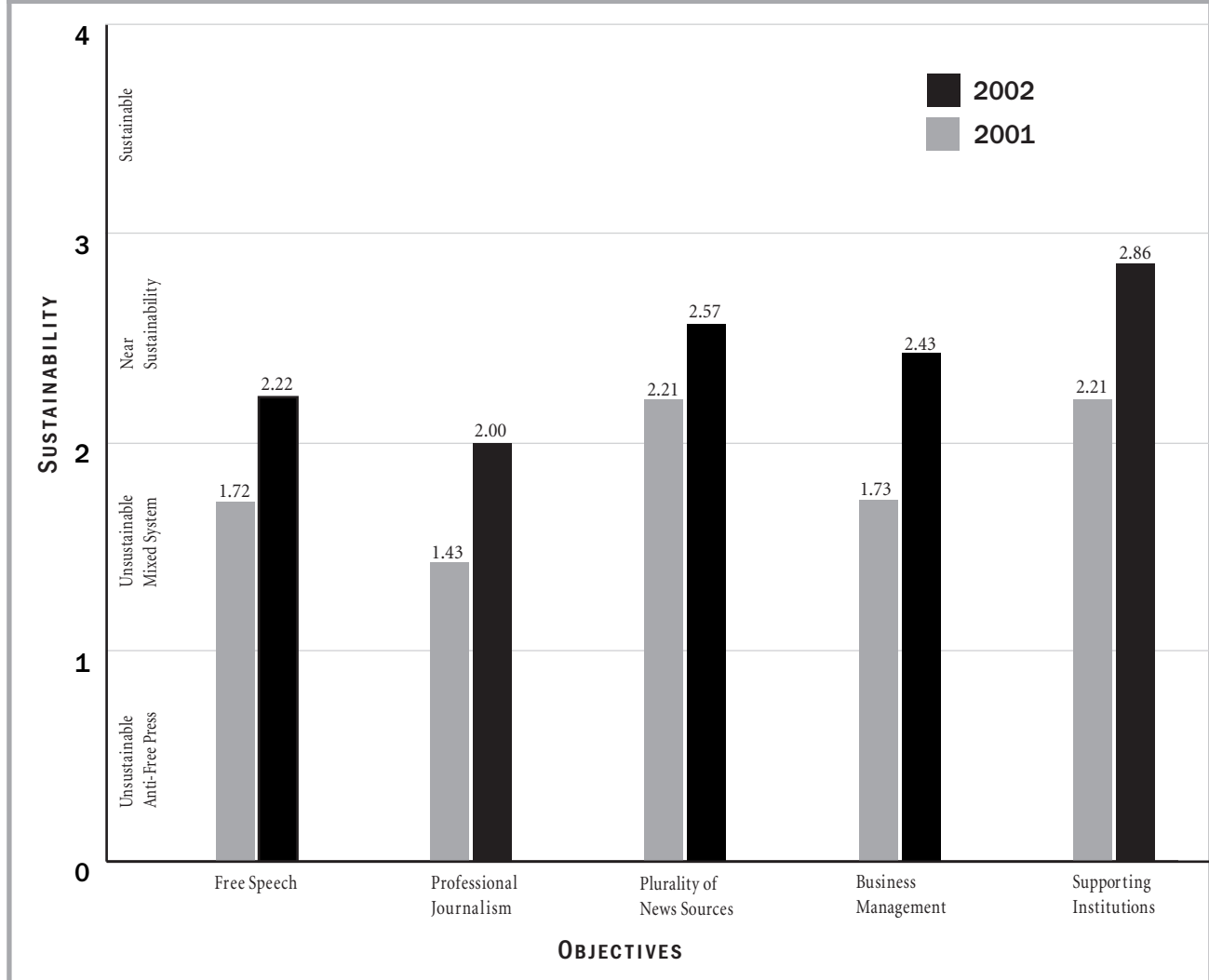
Serbia's new authorities pledged to pass new media laws in their first year of office, but by fall 2002 only one new law was passed, the Broadcast Act, and even that law had not yet been enacted. In July 2002 the Serbian parliament adopted this law, the first of three acts to replace the draconian legislation that Slobodan Milosevic's regime put in place in the 1990s, amid fights between independent media and the authorities. The task of drafting the Broadcast Act had been entrusted to journalists and media lawyers, but the Serbian government significantly amended the proposal before introducing it to parliament.

This government intervention changed the composition of the Broadcast Agency Board, the media regulator, in such a way as to reduce the presence and influence of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and independent members. It also increased the ruling parties' hold over the agency. The new Broadcast Act was nevertheless acclaimed by both local journalist associations and European organizations such as the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). It was seen as dramatically better than what Serbia had previously had. Covington & Burling, a Washington, DC-based law firm that has assisted with media legislation across the region, felt that Serbia had missed the opportunity to adopt a truly professional regulatory approach to frequencies. The firm felt that there was a very real possibility that the Broadcast Agency Board could be beholden to whatever party was in power at the time the board was constituted.

The Broadcast Agency Board was to be elected by the middle of September, but no appointments were yet made in November 2002. The Board is to set out a strategy of electronic media development, but one important tool for implementing this strategy, the federal Telecommunications Act, has yet to be put in place. The Federal Ministry of Telecommunications has been working in relative obscurity on a "Plan of Frequencies for Serbia." The need to synchronize federal and republic legislation signals trouble ahead, as Montenegro has long overtaken all federal prerogatives in this field, while Serbia fully depends on federal decisions. It is a mystery how the telecommunications issue is to be dealt with in the future joint state of Serbia and Montenegro. The Public

*Although the legal protections for free speech exist on paper, the general public does not appreciate this protection.*

## SERBIA-MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX



### OBJECTIVE SCORING

The averages of all the indicators are averaged to obtain a single, overall score for each objective. Objective scores are averaged to provide an overall score for the country. IREX interprets the overall scores as follows:

**3 and above:** Sustainable and free independent media

**2-3:** Independent media approaching sustainability

**1-2:** Significant progress remains to be made; society or government is not fully supportive

**0-1:** Country meets few indicators; government and society actively oppose change

### INDICATOR SCORING

Each indicator is scored using the following system:

**0** = Country does not meet indicator; government or social forces may actively oppose its implementation

**1** = Country minimally meets aspects of the indicator; forces may not actively oppose its implementation, but business environment may not support it and government or profession do not fully and actively support change

**2** = Country has begun to meet many aspects of the indicator, but progress may be too recent to judge or still dependent on current government or political forces

**3** = Country meets most aspects of the indicator; implementation of the indicator has occurred over several years and/or through changes in government, indicating likely sustainability

**4** = Country meets the aspects of the indicator; implementation has remained intact over multiple changes in government, economic fluctuations, changes in public opinion, and/or changing social conventions

Information Act is to follow. Its first drafts promised to remedy many of the flaws of the infamous Public Information Law, but legal analysis shows that it still allows unnecessary government involvement in the media.

## OBJECTIVE 1: FREE SPEECH

**Serbia Objective Score: 2.22/4.0**—The panel group appeared less optimistic about legal protections compared with one year ago. It is now two years after the election of a new Serbian government. The post-revolutionary pace of media reform disappoints Serbian media, as significant progress remains to be made in the areas of legal protection of free speech and protection of journalists. Broadcast media legislation continues to be a matter of public concern. The group agreed that media law is now more important because it is now seen as a requirement for admission to the European Union. Additionally, political and social attitudes need to change to ensure progress of legislation and the development of respect for free-speech rights and access to information.

A Serbian media attorney in the group expressed his feeling that the current constitutional provisions are

more or less harmonized when it comes to the protection of free speech. The group agreed that the discrepancies within the Constitution are not significant and are in line with Western standards. The media laws, however, leave much to be desired. Members of the group felt strongly that although the legal protections for free speech exist on paper, the general public does not appreciate this protection. Some felt the public simply does not believe that such freedoms can exist. It was pointed out that the same constitutional regulations existed before the October 2000 overthrow of the Milosevic regime. One participant said we have greater fears than hope in this area, and a participant from the previous year said her expectations had failed as far as legal reform was concerned. There was much discussion on the proposed Broadcasting Act that was put forward by journalists. There was also general disappointment that the government had watered down the adopted version and then been slow to implement the changes. The group agreed that the media were free but that legal reform is still needed.

The licensing of broadcast media as fair, competitive, and apolitical received a low mark, as the group was unanimous in expressing its feeling that the situation is bad. One broadcaster called the new Broadcast Law “mutilated.” With some 600 radio stations and 300 television stations, it was felt that economic survival would be a luxury for only the wealthy broadcasters. There are many wild stations, said one broadcaster, who complained that the chaos of nonregulation has resulted in some stations’ receiving licenses through political connections. There is much suspicion about how stations are given licenses, and the group felt this would not disappear until media regulators actually started to work. The new Broadcast Law establishes such a regulatory agency, but it has yet to be implemented. One person questioned how it is possible for some stations to get licenses when there is currently no active agency with the authority to issue licenses.

While the government continues to develop plans for a workable licensing system, stations that were anti-Milosevic often do not have the resources of the previously pro-Milosevic stations to compete for licenses. There was also fear that when the Broadcast Agency does begin to function, it will oversee some 30 telecommunications inspectors who are the legacy of the previous regime and do not possess the technical skills to do their jobs. They are used to an anti-independent media mentality, and as one participant said, they will obstruct implementation of the new law. An example of

Legal and social norms protect and promote free speech and access to public information.	
Free Speech Indicators	Legal/social protections of free speech exist and are enforced.
	Licensing of broadcast media is fair, competitive, and apolitical.
	Market entry and tax structure for media are fair and comparable to other industries.
	Crimes against journalists or media outlets are prosecuted vigorously, but occurrences of such crimes are rare.
	State or public media do not receive preferential legal treatment, and law guarantees editorial independence.
	Libel is a civil law issue; public officials are held to higher standards, and the offended party must prove falsity and malice.
	Public information is easily accessible; right of access to information is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
	Media outlets have unrestricted access to information; this is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
	Entry into the journalism profession is free, and government imposes no licensing, restrictions, or special rights for journalists.

the nature of the current system can be seen in the case of ANEM and B92. Two years ago, they had requested a moratorium on new licenses for six months so stations could prepare for a licensing system. Two years later the moratorium is still in place. As a result, anybody can pick a frequency and start broadcasting. This leads to serious interference problems, some of which are politically motivated.

*“We are more taxed now than under Milosevic; how much is a deliberate attempt to muzzle the press we don’t know,” said one member. “Our press tax rate is the highest in Europe, and yet our readers are the poorest.”*

“We are more taxed now than under Milosevic; how much is a deliberate attempt to muzzle the press we don’t know,” said one member. “Our press tax rate is the highest in Europe, and yet our readers are the poorest.” One newspaper publisher pointed to recent tax increases as the cause for a 30 to 40 percent drop in circulation because people cannot afford his paper. He reported that the decrease in circulation resulted in no new revenue to the state despite the tax increase. Since the question addressed fairness of the tax structure, the group reached consensus that the taxes were fair because the media taxes were the same as taxes on everything else. The group agreed that Serbia meets most aspects of tax fairness but that a message needs to be sent to the government that some taxes for the press should be lowered. As one participant put it, “the situation concerning taxes is worse than in Milosevic’s time.”

Despite great hope a year ago that the new authorities would show their support for protection of journalists from physical intimidation and violence, the group felt that there had been little progress. The moderator mentioned the unsolved Mafia-style assassination of publisher Slavko Curuvija, who was gunned down in April 1999. Apparently hopes that the new government would fulfill its promise to solve this murder have faded, yielding the lowest-possible rating and no objection from any group member.

There was some disagreement among the panelists about whether state-owned media received preferential

treatment over independent media. Although the group agreed that the new Broadcast Law did not give preferential treatment to one or the other, some felt that if the state funds a medium it can influence that medium. “Can politicians influence broadcasting? Yes, they can,” said one member. Most felt that the media in Serbia did not seem to be under the influence of the state and that there was editorial independence for all. There was agreement that in general private media were more professional and faster in their delivery. One magazine publisher said there was one positive development in the recent elections: “We were left in peace!” Research results by systematic media monitoring sponsored by IREX clearly showed that the objectivity of media in the recent pre-election period was high.

Libel remains in the criminal code and not part of the civil code. One person cited a study showing that some 200 journalists are facing libel lawsuits under criminal law. Although they agreed that the possibility of jail sentences exists under the current system, they also felt that journalists would not be imprisoned. They said that recently only one journalist had received probation and that fines seemed to be the norm. The group felt that the currently prevalent test for libel was not whether statements were false but whether were they offensive.

It was pointed out that while there was no law on access to information, there have been no reports of restriction to information by all media. However, several felt that many journalists simply did not know how to find information or how to use the Internet and that the issue has not yet received attention.

The group agreed that entry into the journalism profession is free and unrestricted.

## OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

**Serbia Objective Score: 2.00/4.0**—Significant progress remains to be made in journalistic quality and professional standards in Serbia. While there are examples of high-quality reporting in most media, there are even more examples of the opposite. The panel also pointed to differences in quality by geographic region. State-owned media were described as poor. Many of the problems of quality were seen as being directly related to the poor economy throughout the country.

Few facts are checked or verified in the Serbian press, and reporting is often unbalanced. Poor pay and commercial influence were noted as reasons for a lack

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.
	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 exists (investigative, economics/business, local, political).

of professionalism. “We had a bakery who cancelled their ads as soon as we reported bad news about them,” said one publisher from southern Serbia. Another broadcaster said his station’s sales manager blocked unfavorable news that would hurt his advertisers. Standards were seen as low, and the cancellation (or threat of cancellation) was viewed as a form of blackmail that caused self-censorship and lack of effort to report fairly and professionally.

The Union of Independent Journalists of Serbia (NUNS) adopted a code of ethics in early 2001 that is in line with world standards and largely accepted by Serbian journalists. However, many working for the state-owned media are not NUNS members. Some journalists still fear losing their jobs by reporting on sensitive issues, and self-censorship remains. It was the consensus of the group that journalists were covering key events and issues better than a year ago.

Journalists are still not well paid, and the door for corruption remains open. A recent survey showed the average wage for reporters was between \$33 and \$267 per month. Journalists believe this is a “catastrophe,” one panelist said. This low pay encourages many journalists to accept money from politicians and businessmen to broadcast or write favorable news.

News and information programming is readily available to citizens through a variety of sources. But

there is also a lot of what one panelist referred to as “political chatter” involved in news and public-affairs programming. TV Pink was cited last year as an example of entertainment overshadowing news and hiding its past as a pro-Milosevic station by offering flashy news with little substance; however, the group felt that entertainment programming generally does not overshadow news.

Many media are now reaching satisfactory technical conditions after deprivation under Milosevic. Many media that received favoritism under Milosevic are among the best equipped (Pink, BK) but are not typical of Serbian media. This advantage helps them retain a competitive edge over independent media that are now trying to catch up. B92 and ANEM member stations were mentioned as examples of operations that were catching up, but like many independent media, they are doing so largely because of donations. The state broadcaster, RTS (Radio Television Serbia), remains in poor technical condition.

*Poor pay and commercial influence were noted as reasons for a lack of professionalism. “We had a bakery who cancelled their ads as soon as we reported bad news about them,” said one publisher from southern Serbia.*

Quality niche reporting has not reached an acceptable level and has changed little since last year. There are, however, efforts to increase niche reporting through projects of several media outlets. There is at least one magazine covering economic issues (*Ekonomist*), but few broadcast programs explain economics on a regular basis. This magazine is also working to train local media in covering economics and business. Other social issues (education, health, and so on) are not covered on a regular basis or by reporters assigned to cover these subjects. Local media cover local news but not always in an in-depth or consistent manner. Investigative reporting exists and is conducted by some larger media, but there is not a significant amount of longer investigative stories or serials. Beta news agency has started an anti-corruption project that encourages investigative reporting, and Vreme has implemented a training program for investigative reporting.

### OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES

**Serbia Objective Score: 2.57/4.0**—Last year, the report indicated that in order to understand the media picture in Serbia with so-called independent media on one hand and media that operated as part of the Milosevic propaganda service on the other, the inherited situation must be considered. Some public media are operated on state budgets or partial state budgets and are considered independent with little or no government control. Some private stations have close ties to the government and are not considered independent. The degree of independence varies in each situation and sometimes cannot be determined because of a lack of transparency. Transparency is an indicator rated as zero last year and only slightly higher this year.

The discussion group was quick to note that there is a difference between rural and urban areas of Serbia concerning the plurality of public and private news sources. They said there was a reluctance to distribute papers and magazines to rural areas where only a few copies can be sold. In general, broadcast media are free for the consumer, but papers and magazines are costly in this poor economy and for the generally poorer rural citizens.

Access to the media is not restricted. The media are openly available to all but are not affordable for all.

One participant said that only one-third of the population can afford to buy a newspaper. The panel agreed that there are no restrictions on the importation of foreign papers and broadcasts, but the problem remains that sellers will not import newspapers that readers cannot afford to buy. There are several cases of private stations rebroadcasting the BBC and VOA. Indeed, the state broadcast service RTS was even rebroadcasting the BBC on a daily basis. Other foreign services are available in the language appropriate to the locale. The Internet operates unhindered, but the Telecommunications Ministry reports that less than 3 percent of the entire population has access. Some studies have shown that five people read the average newspaper before it is thrown away. This study was cited in last year's discussion. This situation results from a poor economy, which makes it difficult for people to afford newsprint, satellite, and Internet access.

*Access to the media is not restricted. The media are openly available to all but are not affordable for all. One participant said that only one-third of the population can afford to buy a newspaper.*

Multiple news sources provide citizens with reliable and objective news.	
Plurality of News Sources Indicators	A plurality of affordable public and private news sources (e.g., print, broadcast, Internet) exists.
	Citizens' access to domestic or international media is not restricted.
	State or public media reflect the views of the entire political spectrum, are nonpartisan, and serve the public interest.
	Independent news agencies gather and distribute news for print and broadcast media.
	Independent broadcast media produce their own news programs.
	Transparency of media ownership allows consumers to judge 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 panel indicated that the media largely reflect the political spectrum but that the long-term status of this situation is unclear, given the relatively short period of time since the fall of Milosevic.

News agencies' abilities to gather and distribute news brought about comments that the two leading independent agencies in Serbia—Beta and FoNet—do a good job of collecting, writing, and distributing news. There was some concern that the agencies were able to provide their services in part due to grants and that the service would suffer if this form of revenue were not available. Therefore, the long-term future of news agencies remains uncertain.

Independent broadcast media do largely produce their own news programs, but they are not always independent of owners' interests. "Ownership influences the quality of news, and often a political link is seen," said one panel member. Pink and BK television, both operations that fared well under the protection of the previous regime, were cited as examples of media that do produce their own news but with a tendency to

promote owners’ interests. Many independent papers and broadcasters do produce significant amounts of their own news—and with editorial independence.

*Independent broadcast media do largely produce their own news programs, but they are not always independent of owners’ interests. “Ownership influences the quality of news, and often a political link is seen,” said one panel member. Pink and BK television, both operations that fared well under the protection of the previous regime, were cited as examples of media that do produce their own news but with a tendency to promote owners’ interests.*

Nobody—citizens, the government, or the media community—knows who owns much of the country’s media. A municipal broadcaster pinpointed a new problem: “We have a new development in the big cities of Serbia—radio stations that are owned by big local companies. This is a relic from Milosevic’s time, when companies under his party’s control were ordered to invest and finance local radio stations and programs. In the next period, when licenses will be extended according to new law, these company radio stations will have the advantage of better financial and political position. This is in principle a danger for independent journalism.” In another area, BK and Pink were both labeled as conglomerates that leave the public with no way to determine ownership. The public register of ownership remains a device used to conceal, rather than reveal, ownership. This is done to hide political influence and foreign ownership. The register allows registration for nominee holders of media property. The group felt that mechanisms for transparency based on the rule of law should be established in order to reduce political influence.

Minority-language publications and broadcasts were seen as widely available and accessible where significant numbers of minorities live. Non-minority

audiences have little interest in minority media or news, and there is little sharing of minority news with non-minority publications.

## OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

**Serbia Objective Score: 2.43/4.0**—The group reached agreement that the supporting firms for publishers have improved over the past two years. One newspaper director noted that the situation has changed: printers do not ask for advance payments, and distributors no longer obstruct publishers. However, it was also pointed out that the big public or state-owned chains of newsstands are still stalling with their payments to publications and that distributors are not working to help the papers. Everything needs to be paid in advance to distributors, and the publisher must bear all costs. Distribution of print media is not legally regulated. There was a call for newspaper publishers to organize themselves to seek better regulation of the distribution system.

Overall, print media revenue suffers from a lack of subscription-based revenue, and this was cited as a major problem for Serbian newspapers and magazines. Subscriptions were described as rudimentary, and the state Postal Service monopoly was blamed for slowing the development of subscriptions by imposing high delivery charges for unreliable service. Small mailboxes

Independent media are well-managed businesses, allowing editorial independence.	
Business Management Indicators	Media outlets and supporting firms operate as efficient, professional, and profit-generating businesses.
	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 at commercial outlets.
	Independent media do not receive government subsidies.
	Market research is used to formulate strategic plans, enhance advertising revenue, and tailor products to the needs and interests of audiences.
	Broadcast ratings and circulation figures are reliably and independently produced.

in apartments were mentioned as another subscription problem; the papers stick out of the box, making it easy for them to be stolen. One publisher said that after a seminar with postal authorities, the publishers concluded the Postal Service had neither the attitude nor the capability to help.

A marketing specialist reported to the group that there is a great deal of advertising agency support for the media but that a great disproportion exists between the big media and the small media. Television was cited as receiving 75 percent of the entire country's advertising money, leaving the rest for print and radio. Unskilled professionals in the smaller media operations were seen as being unable to compete against the media giants for this agency support. A municipal media house operator from Pirot said that in September of this year, his

*An unstable Serbian economy was blamed for making it impossible to make a profit or do any financial planning. Most felt prospects are better now than two years ago but said many media cannot rely completely on commercial conditions. They must depend on grants for survival. "Under Milosevic, the independent media could not get advertisers from state enterprises, but now we can," said one member.*

television operation received 67 percent of the advertising revenue, 21 percent went to his newspapers, and his radio operation (which has double the audience of television) received a scant 8 percent.

Panelists felt that the percentage of operating funds earned from advertising revenue is beginning to fall in line with accepted commercial standards. BK and Pink television were both labeled as being from different models and as having a head start on most others. An unstable Serbian economy was blamed for making it impossible to make a profit or do any financial planning. Most felt prospects are better now than two years ago but said many media cannot rely completely on

commercial conditions. They must depend on grants for survival. "Under Milosevic, the independent media could not get advertisers from state enterprises, but now we can," said one member. One municipal broadcaster said that at the current revenue level there could be no guarantee of sustainability even if privatization were successful. Another participant said, "Independent media have a better outlook than in 2000, but no bigger income."

There are many gray areas concerning independent media and government subsidies. Some municipal broadcasters are considered independent. However, they continue to receive municipal assistance, and some independently owned operations are widely perceived as receiving special treatment for political favors. A television manager outlined the example of the city of Nis, where he said the city municipality is partly budgeting for the most popular private local television stations. He described the stations as basically small-scale TV Pink-type operations. He said local politicians want their messages delivered with high ratings and that they have struck some kind of agreement with station owners to cover local government activities. At the same time, the city municipality owns its own television station, but it has considerably lower ratings. According to provisions of the new law, all media should be privatized in four years. One participant said, "We have a country-specific situation here. Most ANEM members are in public ownership depending on the municipality budgets, but they are considered independent because they are members of ANEM. This is a contradiction per se. They are, according to law, public companies but live from government budgets."

Panelists agreed that market research did exist but that it was used effectively only by those with funds to afford it and then have it interpreted. One research specialist explained that the big stations have analysts to use the information and money to buy research in television. He pointed to stations such as Pink, BK, and B92. The group felt that research is too expensive for most, and there was a call for more trainers to introduce research into practice. While some radio and television operations were able to pay for and use market research, it was the feeling of the group that print media did not have easy access to such research and few skills in using it. One newspaper editor said, "The real circulation of print media is completely unexplored territory here. We can't afford a special budget for research."

There was wide agreement that reliable and independent broadcast ratings and circulation fig-



ures are being produced. The Strategic Marketing & Media Research Institute was named as an example of a research firm that was developing rapidly. “We don’t trust anybody else,” said one participant. Other researchers were described as unskilled, and reporters were blamed for not being skilled enough to describe results to their audiences. Television was cited once again as being the biggest beneficiary of market research. It was mentioned that People Meter research is now being introduced in parts of Serbia. The discussion group agreed that although good research is available, it is not affordable and widely used.

## OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

**Serbia Objective Score: 2.86/4.0**—Supporting institutions for independent media are approaching sustainability and received a higher score compared with the 2001 analysis. NGOs play a vital role in transition to a market economy. They provide support while media learn to operate by new standards and to survive in a newly evolving economy.

Trade associations are seen as a positive force in Serbia. Several of the major trade and professional organizations did exist before the regime change of two years ago but can now focus on basic issues of relevance to their membership. A survey of 800 journalists gave high marks to the Independent Journalist Association

of Serbia for defending the profession and reporters’ rights, but only average marks were given for helping reporters increase their salaries. There is inconsistency in the defense of journalists’ rights by associations. But with membership in professional groups increasing, the concerns and wishes of the profession are being heard by the associations.

*Although the biggest channels of print distribution remain in state hands, all channels are open and accessible. “Street sales are legalized, and everybody is pretty equal nowadays,” said one newspaper publisher.*

NGOs are considered an asset to the support of free speech in Serbia. However, it should be noted that Serbia has no law on NGOs, so they operate in a gray zone. At present, foreign NGOs cannot register to function in Serbia. Although they function with little or no government hindrance, they have no legal basis for existing and therefore little or no protection. A proposed new law on NGOs calls for all foreign donations to be channeled through the state government, which poses dangers to the independence of NGOs and media outlets.

There have been some minor improvements in the area of quality journalism degree programs, but the programs remain weak overall. The only major institution able to provide training in journalism is the Department of Journalism of the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade, but it remains destitute as a state-run institution. The group expressed the opinion that Serbia has restrictive laws on state-run education institutions. In the private sector, the companies dealing in education for media and otherwise have been booming for a few years, but members felt such operations have no accepted standards. However, the independent Novi Sad School of Journalism was mentioned as an example of a successful, well-run, private school. Training is now largely financed or run by donors. The group felt that state-operated media was now in the greatest need of journalism training.

Compared with the 2001 Media Sustainability Index, there was a remarkable change in how the dis-

Supporting institutions function in the professional interests of independent media.	
Supporting Institutions Indicators	Trade associations represent the interests of private media owners and provide member services.
	Professional associations work to protect journalists’ rights.
	NGOs support free speech and independent media.
	Quality journalism degree programs that provide substantial practical experience exist.
	Short-term training and in-service training programs allow journalists to upgrade skills or acquire new skills.
	Sources of newsprint and printing facilities are private, apolitical, and unrestricted.
	Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, Internet) are private, apolitical, and unrestricted.

cussion group ranked the restrictions on sources of newsprint and printing facilities. One publisher said the situation is now very liberal, newsprint is cheaper than in many other European countries, and there is a huge supply, with good payment conditions. It was said that printing houses are using commercial criteria and that there is no more political pressure. Others mentioned that many printers are completing their privatization, thus minimizing political influences.

The discussion on restrictions of media distribution channels found the group divided between good for print and not so good for broadcasting. The print representatives reported that the distribution system has improved, that there are more private distributors, and that discrimination is very rare. Although the biggest channels of print distribution remain in state hands, all channels are open and accessible. "Street sales are legalized, and everybody is pretty equal nowadays," said one newspaper publisher. The biggest chains of kiosks are owned by printing and publishing companies and are formerly state-run operations. The publishers felt these chains still prioritize their own publishers, but as far as print is concerned the group was willing to give the top rating to this indicator.

Broadcasters, on the other hand, were not pleased with the radio and television distribution system. They said that in many cases the system remains under state control. They also said that the crucial issue is to transform control over the strategic infrastructure from the state broadcaster (RTS) to the private sector. The broadcasters felt that municipal broadcasters will have to privatize according to the new Broadcast Law, which will leave little space for private operators to exist. A good Telecommunications Law could regulate this, but it is still a very chaotic, state-controlled field. Members reported that many transmitters, broadcast towers, transmission sites, and antennas are RTS-owned. They complained that it is often necessary for private broadcasters to enter into four separate contracts to use these facilities, and as one member put it, "RTS charges too much; they are ripping us off." An attorney said, "RTS, as the state broadcaster, has a monopoly over broadcast hardware and is in a position to enormously charge their own competition." Broadcasters also complained that equipment confiscated under the previous regime has not been returned and that fines have not been repaid.

## PANEL PARTICIPANTS

***Darko Brocic***

Director  
AGB

***Sanja Cosic***

Secretary General  
Independent Journalists Association of Serbia (IJAS)

***Kazimir Curguz***

Director  
Ebart Media Documentation

***Aleksandar Djordjevic***

Press and Information Advisor  
European Union Delegation of the European Commission in FRY

***Momcilo Djurdjic***

Deputy Director  
TV Pirot

***Marina Fratucan***

Owner and Editor in Chief  
*Urbans*

***Slavoljub Kacarevic***

Director and Editor in Chief  
*Glas Javnosti*, Belgrade

***Slobodan Kremenjakov***

Lawyer  
Association of Independent Electronic Media (ANEM)

***Nikola Mirkov***

Media Analyst and Cultural Program Editor  
Radio Television Serbia

***Voja Zanetic***

Director  
Mozaik

## PANEL MODERATOR

***Nebojsa Spaic***

Director  
Radio Beograd 202