

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX

2008

**The Development
of Sustainable
Independent Media
in Europe and Eurasia**



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The Development of Sustainable Independent Media in Europe and Eurasia

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IREX

2121 K Street, NW, Suite 700

Washington, DC 20037

E-mail: msi@irex.org

Phone: (202) 628-8188

Fax: (202) 628-8189

www.irex.org

Project manager: Leon Morse

IREX Project and Editorial Support: Blake Saville, Drusilla Menaker, Mark Whitehouse

Copyeditors: Carolyn Feola de Rugamas, Carolyn.Ink; Kelly Kramer, WORDtoWORD Editorial Services

Design and layout: OmniStudio

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Kosovo has enjoyed institutional and legal development to better support media sustainability. However, these institutions, laws, and regulations remain weak and unstable in practice. The overall Kosovo MSI score dropped slightly, from 2.56 last year to 2.27, with lower scores in every objective. This decrease may not be a result of a worsening media sustainability in Kosovo, but a reflection of dissatisfaction on the part of panelists with lack of further development.



KOSOVO

The past year was filled with significant developments relevant not only for development of the media sector, but also for the future of Kosovo. February saw the tragic killing by international police of two protesters from Albin Kurti's *Vetëvendosje* movement who were demonstrating against negotiations with Serbia and the Ahtisaari package and for a referendum on independence. Negotiations between Kosovo and Serbia, mediated by UN Secretary General Special Envoy Marti Ahtisaari, ended in February 2007. The resulting proposal of conditional independence for Kosovo was accepted by Kosovo Albanian leaders, western countries, and the UN, but opposed by Serbia and Russia.

Expectations were high that Kosovo's status would be resolved by the middle of 2007; however, the UN Security Council failed to approve the Ahtisaari package, due to Russian opposition. The Contact Group for Kosovo proposed another set of 120-day negotiations between Kosovo and Serbia with the mediation of the so-called "troika," representing the United States, EU, and Russia. During the negotiations, there was much debate in Kosovo whether elections, both national and local, should be held, given that the time had legally come.

Elections were held eventually and returned surprising results: for the first time, the war-wing Democratic Party of Kosovo won with 34 percent, and the moderate Democratic League of Kosovo, winner of all previous elections, came in second, with 22 percent of votes. Soon after the elections, negotiations between Kosovo and Serbia ended without any success, leading to the support of Kosovo's leadership by most western countries to declare a coordinated independence, which was made on February 17, 2008.

These developments tested the media's ability to obtain firsthand information and adhere to standards of objective, ethnical reporting. Kosovo has enjoyed institutional and legal development to better support media sustainability. However, these institutions, laws, and regulations remain weak and unstable in practice. The overall Kosovo MSI score dropped slightly, from 2.56 last year to 2.26, with lower scores in every objective. This decrease may not be a result of a worsening situation with regard to media sustainability in Kosovo, but a reflection of dissatisfaction on the part of panelists with lack of further development.

The MSI panel gave its highest rating, 2.40, to Objective 3, plurality of news sources. However, this objective dropped slightly this year after three years at above 2.60. Business management of media outlets was the worst-rated objective by the panel, the score suffering a drop to 1.96 from 2.50 last year. The drop reflects a lack of development in this objective, as panelists perceived some media as unprofessional organizations due to political influence. Although Objective 5, on supporting institutions, was one of the highest-rated objectives by this year's panel, these institutions, with a few exceptions, are still considered to be relatively weak in providing protection for journalists and fighting for a better legal working environment. This objective therefore also suffered a loss of nearly half a point compared to last year, coming in at 2.39.

KOSOVO AT A GLANCE

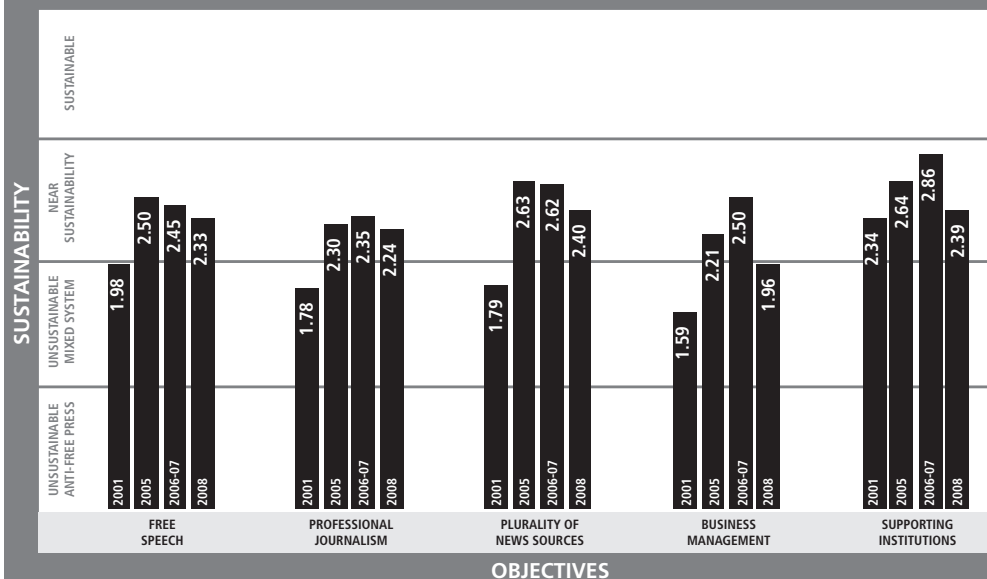
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 2.1 million (Statistical Office of Kosovo, 2007)
- > **Capital city:** Prishtina
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Kosovar Albanian 92%, Kosovar Serb 5.3%, Other 2.7% (Statistical Office of Kosovo, 2007)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Muslim, Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox
- > **Languages (% of population):** Albanian, Serbian and other (Turkish, Roma, Bosnian, Croatian)
- > **GNI (2006-Atlas):** N/A
- > **GNI per capita (2006-PPP):** N/A
- > **Literacy rate:** 94.2% (UNDP, 2004)
- > **President or top authority:** President Fatmir Sejdiu
- > **Next scheduled elections:** Local (2009), Presidential (2011)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** print: 8 daily; radio: 96; television: 25
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** N/A, *Koha ditore* is the leading newspaper (Index Kosovo, 2007)
- > **Broadcast ratings:** RTK 39%, RTV21 30%, KTV 19%; Radio Dukagjini 5%, Radio Kosovo 4%, Radio 21 1% (Index Kosovo, 2007)
- > **News agencies:** KosovaLive, Kosovo Press, Telegrafi, Kosovo Information Center
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** Approximately \$13.5 million (IREX and advertising agencies estimate, 2007)
- > **Internet usage:** Households with Internet access 28%, People claiming daily use of Internet 18% (Index Kosovo, 2007)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: KOSOVO



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.

OBJECTIVE 1: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Kosovo Objective Score: 2.33

The media had no significant developments with regard to free speech in the past year. According to panelists, this is mainly due to the lack of public interest; past public reaction to events impacting media typically produced no results or were followed by additional sanctions against the media. This lack of development resulted in a minor drop of the score from 2.45 last year to 2.33 now; both are down from a high of 2.50 in 2005. Most indicators fell close to the final average, with only Indicator 4, crimes against journalists, lagging noticeably behind. Indicators 8 and 9, covering media access to foreign news sources and entry into the journalism profession, did score nearly a full point higher each.

Indicator 4, dealing with crimes against journalists, fared the worst in the minds of panelists—not because of actual crimes, but because of the panel’s perspectives on working environment and lack of security. Almost all panelists agreed with Ibrahim Berisha, Professor of Sociology at the University of Prishtina, who said, “Journalists are not safe. One of the obstacles to them being completely free to investigate and practice free speech is the fact that they are unprotected financially and physically, and also from psychological pressure. It is hard for them to take any individual responsibility... there may be more consequences [to them for reporting on sensitive issues] than impact [on the reputations of the people they report on].”

In this respect, Besim Abazi, journalist for Voice of America, said that the procedures for journalist protection if one feels at risk are so complicated that “one may die and be forgotten by the time something is done by the authorities.” He also mentioned that journalists may have been attacked by the police in riots because of their attitude towards the *Vetëvendosje* movement.

Berat Buzhala, editor-in-chief of the daily newspaper *Express*, indicated that the safety of journalists had worsened in the past year, pointing to the fact that media professionals had begun to deal with the issue of Kosovo’s status. Furthermore, several panelists mentioned resistance by editors and pressure from politicians and international players to not undertake investigative journalism, as revealing problems might jeopardize the political equilibrium created for the sake of resolving the final status. However, this is seen as something that could hurt journalism in Kosovo in the longer term. Panelists felt that once organized crime, and the perceived fear of it, becomes institutionalized in journalism, it will be very hard to leave in the past post-independence.

Buzhala summed up the issues, saying, “Journalists feel betrayed, especially by internationals who informally support free speech and investigation of corruption, because as soon as your reporting uncovers corruption, you see that the same internationals do not take any action whatsoever related to the case.”

Legal and social protection of free speech exists formally; however, in practice, problems and restrictions remain. An indirect phenomenon that affects free speech is the government’s practice of canceling its advertisements in critical media outlets. Another problem raised by panelists is that officials in positions of power have in the past threatened journalists as part of their public denunciations of them. “Journalists have now learned the red lines and they don’t cross them,” Buzhala said. “The only times when journalists are courageous enough to talk about particular events with regard to these people is when these people show up in police reports, and their crimes become formal and official.”

Panelists could not recall any cases of assaults on journalists over the past year. However, the International Freedom of Expression Exchange reported one instance: a physical assault against Vesna Bojicic, a Prishtina-based journalist and correspondent for VOA’s Serbian-language service. Panelists asserted that the absence of attacks is not necessarily an indicator of a healthy media.

Buzhala explained that journalists and editors are recognizing that certain topics are off limits and therefore the quality

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 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 offended parties 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 past year saw no progress on accessing public information. According to Berisha, all official documents are considered protected unless the issuing ministry decides to release them. Officials are often unwilling to go on the record, especially when they feel it goes against their personal or party's interests.

and type of information presented to the public is affected. "Express has analyzed the first 1,000 editions of the newspaper, and out of the first 500 editions, 400 carried main stories on non-political issues (corruption, investigative journalism, etc.) and 100 carried main stories on straight politics. In the second 500 editions, the proportion was the other way around," he said.

The case of Albin Kurti, leader of *Vetëvendosje*, also surfaced in the panel discussion. Panelists criticized authorities for suppressing Kurti's ability to practice free speech over the past year. Berisha said that no one has reacted sufficiently, including the media, most likely fearing loss of funds from the international community or risking good relations with the government.

The system of licensing broadcast media in Kosovo still seems chaotic. All panelists agreed that after the initial licensing by KFOR, the international radio and television regulator Temporary Media Commissioner (TMC) simply renewed the same licenses without any criteria and without tendering procedures. TMC, now the local Independent Media Council (IMC), is considered to be non-transparent, discouraging market liberalization and foreign investment in the media, and above all, is responsible for the blockage of new licenses. "Licenses are simply not given to new TV or radio stations. The reasons may be political, related to the involvement of internationals, until now. It could also be due to monopolization and perhaps a lack of professionalism," Berisha said.

Nevertheless, Ardita Zejnullahu, executive director of AMPEK, the electronic media owners' association, expects downsizing in the number of electronic media in 2008, when the IMC will begin a tendering procedure for re-licensing. She said that she feels that this could also positively restructure the Kosovo media market.

Panelists indicated that the public media seem to be privileged with regard to the tax system in Kosovo. The

private media are considered ordinary businesses, whereas the public broadcaster is exempt from value added tax (VAT). The majority of panelists agreed that private media should pay less VAT, as well as enjoy other tax concessions, including a waiver for customs duties for equipment and lower interest rates on loans used for investment. Several panelists also thought that restrictions should be placed on the public media with regard to advertising space. They said that in a small and underdeveloped market such as Kosovo, public media is crowding out the only source of funding for private media.

Panelists reported that the financial and editorial independence of the public broadcaster, RTK, is threatened by political decisions. This was shown this year when the board of the Energy Corporation of Kosovo (KEK), headed by the minister of energy and mining, decided not to allow the public broadcaster RTK to collect its subscription fee (upon which RTK's budget heavily relies) through KEK bills. Although this decision was later reversed, Buzhala said that if Kosovars are committed to having a public service broadcaster, the law should not allow any minister to cut the source of financing. "We also cannot allow an adviser from the prime minister's office to threaten RTK for its reporting, as happened recently," he said.

Defamation and insult are included in the Provisional Criminal Code. Although no amendment was made to the Criminal Code in this respect, the Assembly of Kosovo passed the Civil Law on Defamation and Insult in 2007 (also promulgated by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General), making defamation and insult a civil issue as well as criminal.

The past year saw no progress with respect to accessing public information and official documents. Berisha said that the problem with the Law on Access to Official Documents is that all documents are considered protected unless a review committee in the respective ministry decides to release them. He said that he felt that it should be the other way around. Generally, officials are not willing to provide comments and interviews, especially when they perceive the matter to go against their personal interests or their party's interests. Some also have preferences for certain media outlets that may show a bias in their party's favor.

According to all panelists, media in Kosovo do not face any problems with access to international news and news sources, and the government does not impose any licensing restrictions or special rights for journalists. However, some of the panelists mentioned that entry into journalism might be too free in terms of lack of quality criteria imposed by the media itself when recruiting journalists, though they quickly agreed that this is not a matter for the government.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Kosovo Objective Score: 2.24

The panelists agreed that the practice of journalism in Kosovo is less than satisfactory in terms of professionalism. The large number of media that sprung up in the uncontrolled media market after the war in 1999 has created a high demand for journalists. Kosovo has been unable to produce quality journalists in high numbers in a short period of time. However, some panelists also noted that Kosovo has never had as many good journalists as now, and that the good ones are overshadowed by a large number of unethical or poorly trained ones. Objective 2 also saw a slight drop from 2.35 last year to 2.24. All indicators came within one-third of a point of the average, with Indicator 3 (self censorship) the lowest and Indicator 7 (modern facilities and equipment) the highest.

Self-censorship remains a problem for professional journalism in Kosovo, as evidenced by it being rated lowest by the panelists. Self-censorship has grown among majority of media, especially after the violent events of March 2004 when the media, mostly broadcasters, were blamed for sparking inter-ethnic violence. Besim Abazi from Voice of America said, "Now, not only do they censor themselves, but they are completely consumed with trying to be cautious with reporting. This is mostly visible in the case of RTK, because they were the most criticized for poor reporting during the March 17 events."

However, Berat Buzhala from *Express* indicated that recently, censorship has been much more present when writing about organized crime or suspicious individuals than when writing about politics. He confirmed that this will be present in the future as well, which will continue to affect journalism negatively.

When reporting is not fair and objective, panelists observed, it can be traced to both the low level of professionalism among journalists and editors and the outright bias towards political parties or other interests by some media outlets. The current overall environment in Kosovo was described by some panelists as "controlled anarchy." But panelists decried the state of journalism, saying that even in these circumstances and even under dictatorial regimes, journalism should keep up standards of objectivity, fairness, and ethical reporting.

Buzhala said that there exists a pool of journalists (he referred to them as "free atoms") who lack respect for standards of quality journalism. "They wander from one media outlet to another, having no problem that these media are tools of political parties," he said. "These kinds of

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journalists put a stain on the name of journalists in general, because there are definitely good, honest, professional, and uncorrupt journalists that are lost in this pool," he said.

The panelists generally agreed that professional and ethical standards of editors and managers are lower than those of journalists. Bytyqi mentioned the case of the prime minister canceling his participation on a local TV show in Prizren, causing the manager to instruct the journalist/host to publicly attack and insult the prime minister on the air in retribution. After the journalist refused to do so, the manager began suspension proceedings against him. In this respect, Abazi said, the large number of media has negatively affected professionalism in journalism, due to the negative impact of unprofessional managers in the work of journalists, as well as the incompetence of managers and their lack of information about journalism as a profession. "We hear a lot about journalist training. We would really like to hear about management and editor training, too," he said.

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).

Technical facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news in the Kosovo media are mainly modern, thanks to investments in equipment and facilities from international donors and aid organizations.

Despite the reality of the situation painted by the panel, a code of ethics does exist that was promulgated via the Press Council and formally accepted and signed by representatives of nearly all print media outlets. Also, AMPEK has developed a code of ethics for broadcast journalism.

Panelists reported having a sense that the best journalists are not encouraged to continue producing high-quality stories. Berisha mused that the exceptions among media outlets and individual journalists—those producing high-quality work—get bullied, with the intent of pushing those journalists out of business. “We tend to kill the exception: [the pervasive thought is] let’s all stay at the same level,” he said.

Kelmend Hapçiu, director of the news agency KosovaLive, said that the international administration in Kosovo had absorbed most of the young people who could have been good journalists, and this has negatively affected the professionalism of journalism in general. “Good journalists have also become targets for public relations and spokesperson positions in large public or private corporations,” he said.

Some of the panelists said that they felt that certain key events in 2007 were not sufficiently covered by the Kosovo media. For instance, the media were criticized for not giving more space to the visit by U.S. President Bush to Albania, and particularly the president’s remarks on Kosovo’s independence. Some of the panelists specifically blamed the public broadcaster RTK, saying that it does not produce up-to-date information because it has a stable annual income that is not impacted by the quality of information that it provides.

Other panelists placed wider blame, noting that other television stations did not do better in this case or in general provision of up-to-date news and information. Argjentina Grazhdani from East-West Management Institute mentioned the example of the November 2007 elections that, in her opinion, received better coverage on Albanian television stations. Buzhala added that there was not enough debate in the media about the preliminary election results; it was

Albanian television stations doing more calculations than the Kosovo media on the makeup of the future Kosovo government.

Pay levels for journalists are generally insufficient, though panelists said that this is the case for all occupations in Kosovo. Journalists are all paid more or less the same; there is no distinctive criteria differentiating high quality journalists. Some panelists disagreed with the specific situation facing journalists, saying that in most of the media, salaries are around twice as high as the average salary in the public sector.

Nevertheless, concern remains about difference in salaries, given that salaries still vary between public and private broadcasters. Zejnullahu pointed out that private broadcasters have become training centers for RTK because many journalists and other staff have been moving from private television stations to RTK. In addition to the salaries, job security at RTK is perceived to be higher as well. Albana Kusari, media program manager at USAID, said that the media do not do a sufficient job of motivating good journalists to stay in that company.

With regard to corruption in the media, panelists asserted that no salary is high enough to prevent corruption. Panelists agreed, however, that corruption in the media is somewhat low and is not organized or systematic. Buzhala said that the corruption that does exist is typically in the form of vacations, gifts, or employment of family members, rather than as cash payments. Panelists described situations where, if a journalist gets to know certain people in high positions, he or she avoids writing critically about them, but also avoids writing anything overly positive. However, Buzhala did mention cases in which journalists have blackmailed politicians with information that they possessed.

The panel agreed that entertainment programming generally eclipses news and information programming, especially on television stations. Buzhala noted that the radio market in Kosovo is mainly directed towards entertainment. Isak Vorgucic, manager of Serbian-language Radio KIM, explained how many radio stations in his region have mainly entertainment programming and they attract the majority of advertisements with ridiculously low prices. Generally, people can receive newscasts on television or radio at scheduled times. Occasionally, the media is not up to date on reporting recent events; sometimes the reports come out much later in the day or even the day after.

Technical facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news in the Kosovo media are mainly modern, thanks to investments in equipment and facilities from international donors and aid organizations. However, last year, panelists noted that some of this equipment was already

nearing the end of its service life; this year's panelists did not report a significant investment in replacement equipment.

As in years past, panelists said that investigative reporting is often of good quality, but niche reporting was generally criticized as requiring more attention. The reporting on the developments surrounding the establishment of independence showed that the media has the ability to be efficient in gathering the information and presenting it efficiently to the public. Grazhdani pointed to the talks in Vienna: Although the process was closed, when the Ahtisaari package was released, it was no surprise for the public because the media had already obtained and written about the information. "The Kosovo media were determined to get information from the Vienna talks and from the Ahtisaari proposal, even before it was fully public, from many different sources," she said.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES

Kosovo Objective Score: 2.40

Panelists felt that plurality of news is generally strong in Kosovo, and the panel gave this objective its highest score. Nevertheless, problems remain in providing citizens with objective and reliable news, as well as with reflections of broad social interests, such as coverage of minority problems and minority-language information sources. This year's MSI panel still gave a somewhat lower score than last year—a decrease of .22 points. Indicator 2 (restrictions on foreign news sources) was by far the best-ranked indicator, while Indicator 3 (public media reflecting the views of the political spectrum and interests of society at large) fared the worst, trailing the average by half a point. The rest of the indicators fell very close to the overall average.

According to panelists, citizens can rely on multiple sources of news and information. Such sources include newspapers, television, radio stations, the Internet, or international magazines. Citizens' access to domestic or international media is not legally restricted. However, problems occur in rural areas, where receiving signals from some of the broadcasters is harder.

Panelists also noted insufficient proper distribution of daily newspapers in some areas of Kosovo. "There is a difference between urban and rural areas in having access to these news sources. It is usually hard to get information in rural areas due to a lack of a wider coverage. Only a small fraction of people who live in rural villages have a chance to read the daily newspapers," Buzhala said.

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Another problem, emphasized by Vorgucic, is the lack of a Kosovo-wide broadcaster of news and information by and about Kosovar Serbs. He said that the amount of Serbian language programming on RTK is insufficient. Further, a network of Serbian-language radio stations broadcasts news and information, but only once daily. Kosovar Serbs have access to television from Serbia, but this is not specifically covering events affecting their daily lives. There are three Serbian-language print publications produced in Kosovo; one of them, *Gradjanski Glasnik*, is independent.

The panel did not report any changes in the character of RTK. Last year, panelists indicated that RTK takes sufficient steps to represent the political spectrum and obtains differing views on issues, but could do a better job acting as a public service broadcaster by presenting more programs serving youth, women, and educational needs. The panel's general feeling was that RTK's election coverage was not skewed toward any one party.

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.

Most news agencies (except KosovaLive, which is considered independent) are viewed as agents of particular political parties. Its subscribers include daily newspapers and 25 local radio stations that cannot afford to have correspondents cover the whole of Kosovo. However, some media occasionally will not properly cite KosovaLive as the source of the information.

A significant portion of news and information programming aired by commercial broadcasters is produced in house and is not simply a rebroadcast of recorded news feeds from other sources. The consensus is that private broadcasters do provide a slightly different perspective than, for example, RTK news and therefore they increase plurality. Panelists especially noted Koha Vision, which occasionally produces investigative stories.

The majority of panel participants agreed that there is a link between media and political interests that has an impact on programming and content. Panelists pointed to a pervasive feeling detrimental to the media landscape: that if one owns a media outlet, one has political power. However, according to Ibrahim Berisha, a university lecturer, the small size of the market in Kosovo means that it is not difficult to determine the ownership and financing of media outlets. "A good thing about our media is that newspaper management is composed of media personalities and not involved in criminal enterprises, money laundering, etc.," he said.

Generally speaking, the public at large is aware of what biases, if any, media ownership would impart on editorial content.

Although many social issues and interests are covered by the Kosovo media, panelists considered coverage to be overshadowed by political issues and therefore insufficient. Minority representation is even less sufficiently covered. Buzhala indicated that the hesitation of the media to deal with minority issues results in a difference regarding the selection of news. "The anger noticed in newspapers between Albanians and Serbs just after the war has been replaced with a total lack of reporting of these issues. Media should pay more attention to the case of minority issues in order to reflect the reality of how people of Kosovo live," he said.

Mifail Bytyqi from TV Prizren decried discrimination among different religions and nationalities. "All groups should be integrated and receive proper representation. However, it seems that sometimes some of the minorities [in this case Kosovar Serbs] living in Kosovo are influenced by Belgrade politics. The case when a team from a local TV station in Prizren visited an orthodox church in a village exemplifies this. The team was told by church officials that they needed to request permission from Belgrade in order to give a statement," he said.

This point was further addressed by Abazi, who said that due to lack of exchange between communities, there are discrepancies in information. He provided a recent example. "A robbery that happened in a church in Kamenica shows that the media have prejudices, as seen from speculation on who committed that act," he said. "The first mistake occurred when immediately the finger was pointed [by Serb media] at Albanians, while the second mistake showed racism in the [ethnic Albanian] media, when it turned out that the reported thief was a Roma." Initially, the ethnic-Albanian media had downplayed the possible involvement of ethnic Albanians in the crime, he said, but once it was discovered it was a Roma, it made a point of mentioning that fact prominently.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Kosovo Objective Score: 1.96

Business management of media outlets received the lowest ranking of any objective by the panel. The score suffered a drop from 2.50 last year to 1.96 this year. Panelists expressed a feeling that there was no development in this objective during the past year, and this colored their scores. All indicators fell very close to the final overall average.

Panelists questioned the level of efficiency and professional management in media organizations. Many emphasized the fact that some media, especially print media, are seen as instruments that serve political masters rather than investors interested in profitability. Panelists also brought into doubt media's independence in a climate of poor investment,

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.

though some panelists attributed the problem to Kosovo's (until very recently) unresolved political status.

Panelists also agreed that the print media market needed investment in supporting industries to be efficient and sustainable. "The problems media face, and especially the print media, are printing houses, distribution, and network coverage," Buzhala said. Kosovo still relies on kiosks for newspaper sales, compared to more developed countries, where the majority of newspapers are prepaid and distributed to homes.

Visar Hoti, manager of local radio and television station RTV Tema in Ferizaj, said that the financial sustainability of media is hurt by inadequate allocation of frequencies. He also complained about the lack of monitoring and enforcement by the IMC that allows the local media in particular to flout copyright laws, giving them a competitive edge in terms of budget and audience that translates into more advertising revenue. But other panelists pointed out the hardships faced by local media (although they indicated this is a problem for private broadcasters generally) in paying license fees. For some broadcasters, the fee amounts to upwards of 70 percent of their annual budgets.

For Kosovar Serbs, a limited audience means that, while there are a few television stations and many radio stations in the Serbian language, most have severe difficulties achieving financial sustainability. There are no local Serb print media—only national—and the vast majority of Serbian-language newspapers come from Serbia, distributed via OSCE van.

In the first years after the war, media received revenue from a multitude of sources, including donors, international aid, and advertising. Commercial media rely on many advertisers for their revenue, including, typically, a few large clients. RTK is financed through its subscription fee as well as advertising revenue. Advertising clients influencing news content is not a common practice.

In discussing the financial sustainability of local media, Bytyqi said, "The budget of local media depends on businesses or corporations that operate in our local environment. The public broadcaster RTK damages us very much with regard to marketing and advertising revenue, since it covers all of Kosovo." Zejnullahu indicated that donors favor national media stationed in Prishtina over local media.

There are several advertising agencies in Kosovo, most of them small. The advertising market is controlled by three or four main agencies—two affiliated with international companies (Zero Pozitive Publicis and Karrota-Ogilvy) and two home-grown companies (CMB productions and B2 PR).

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Most of these agencies are well respected and they fiercely compete for bigger clients. Almost all of them operate centrally from Prishtina. Despite the quantity of advertising, panelists did not feel that advertisements crowd out news and information content.

Private media in Kosovo do not receive subsidies from the government. However, the panel pointed out the existence of the Minority Media Fund, which is mandated to be financed with five percent of RTK's subscription revenues. The fund was initially subsidized by the government with €50,000 for the first wave of grants, but the fund only functioned for a short period. Vorgucic said that the fund was implemented one time but the amount was very low—less than €5,000—since about a dozen minority media were selected.

Panelists said that the government, RTK, and KEK (which collects RTK subscriptions through its bills) have no interest in implementing the fund, although minority media showed enthusiasm for it at first. Panelists agreed that RTK is not interested in revisiting the matter. The fund never actually received the five percent from RTK subscriptions, and in the meantime, the money has been used for RTK's general operations.

Several agencies in Kosovo provide market research services, including two specializing in media audience research: Index Kosovo and Strategic Puls Research. Media outlets, associations, advertising agencies, GIMEK (the Joint Industry Committee), and advertisers use audience research, though the panel indicated that it is on a fairly limited basis. GIMEK research includes audience figures for television and radio and some readership data on printed press. However, auditing of published circulation figures does not exist at this time.

Panelists disagreed on the usefulness of the research. Zejnullahu said the national media use surveys to inform their strategic planning. Hoti said that the audience and market research is unprofessional, and all results consider Kosovo as

a single market without local market details, reinforcing the centralization of advertising revenue to the detriment of local media. On the other hand, Grazhdani said that the national media finance their own audience research through GIMEK, but it is not feasible for financial reasons to transfer the practice to the local level, mainly due to the large number of local media.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Kosovo Objective Score: 2.39

Although this objective was one of the highest rated objectives by this year's panel, similar to other objectives, it fell—from 2.86 last year to 2.39. Panelists praised the work of some associations in advocating and lobbying, but they were heavily critical of some associations that were unable to provide protection for journalists. All indicators were close to the final objective average, with the exception of Indicator 6, covering access to print facilities and newsprint, which was notably higher.

AMPEK is an association of commercial and electronic media in Kosovo, with 63 members. It focuses on advocating and lobbying for favorable laws and regulations affecting commercial media. "The association [AMPEK] has consistently lent its expertise to the legislative process," Grazhdani said. Ardita Zejnullahu, AMPEK's executive director, explained that the past year was characterized as a success for the association. It played a key role in stopping the implementation of an IMC license regulation that would have charged fees to media outlets without any specific criteria and influenced the drafting of regulations to make advertisements compatible with EU broadcast regulations.

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 in private hands, apolitical, and unrestricted.
- > Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, Internet) are private, apolitical, and unrestricted.

Another achievement for AMPEK was the nomination of two of its members to the IMC.

Internationally, AMPEK is considered a regional partner and a legitimate representative of Kosovo's media, and is a member of regional media organizations. According to Zejnullahu and Vorgucic, AMPEK enjoys a good working relationship with local Serb media in Kosovo. AMPEK and RTK also work well together on promoting common interests, Zejnullahu explained.

Other associations include the Union of Regional Television Stations and the Association of Professional Journalists in Kosovo (AGPK). Buzhala asserted, and other panelists agreed, that AGPK does not sufficiently protect journalists' rights or use donor funds properly, and is not committed to accomplishing its mission. "There is no trade union for journalists in Kosovo," Buzhala said. "Most media outlets don't pay taxes and pension contributions for journalists; they work illegally; they don't have contracts. And this leads to a heavy movement of journalists from one media outlet to another. The most critical issue for the journalists' working environment is to have someone or something that protects them legally."

He further explained that the AGPK assembly is dominated by printing houses, RTK, and KTV, and that these influence the decisions of the board. A majority of media do not participate in this association, therefore issues raised by AGPK are usually related to the interests of these members. He said there should be more proportionate participation among the media. Berisha echoed the call for a trade union, adding that a union would review the status of journalists and help improve their security.

The Press Council was created as a way for citizens to provide feedback and complaints about stories and daily newspapers. But Buzhala and the rest of the panel said that they consider the council a failure because it never managed to analyze the concerns it received and it had no power to penalize the media. "It mostly served media's interests rather than those of citizens," Buzhala said.

A limited number of NGOs that deal with human rights and other issues also serve the media's interests in freedom of speech and media independence. While this work is important, and last year's panel had positive comments regarding the work of NGOs, this year's panel expressed a desire for stronger coordination and cooperation with the media to undertake media advocacy work.

Regarding journalism education programs in Kosovo, Bytyqi indicated that students from Kosovo's universities do not show an understanding of the qualities that make

up professional journalism, despite the fact that all seem to receive high grades. There are limited journalism degree programs, present only in private higher education institutions. All panelists agreed that these programs do not offer sufficient training, theoretical or practical, in order to have young people to enter the profession well prepared.

The Kosovo Institute of Journalism and Communication, founded in 2005, offers training programs for media workers, including a two-year program offered to practicing journalists. The institute was established at the request of media outlets, which serve as the ownership and help develop the curriculum. About 32 media outlets, including minority media, are members in this institute, which panelists said that they consider a success.

All panelists agreed that sources of newsprint and printing facilities in Kosovo are privately owned and unrestricted, allowing for diversity of choice and competition. However, problems remain with the services that these companies offer, primarily with regard to the quality of printing.

Channels of media distribution are generally in private hands or within the non-governmental sector, and they mostly try to remain apolitical. Internet providers are privately owned and most are efficiently managed, self-sustainable, and profitable. Other media distribution channels may not necessarily be self-sustaining. The Kosovo Terrestrial Telecommunications Network, for example, has many clients—including national television and radio stations, international broadcasters, Internet providers, and other entities—but is still funded by USAID, although it is seeking to become self-sustaining.

List of Panel Participants

Argentina Grazhdani, director, East West Management Institute, Prishtina

Berat Buzhala, editor-in-chief, *Express* Newspaper, Prishtina

Besim Abazi, journalist, Voice of America, Prishtina

Ibrahim Berisha, professor of sociology, University of Prishtina, Prishtina

Mifail Bytyqi, managing director, TV Prizreni, Prizren

Visar Hoti, manager, RTV Tema, Ferizaj (participated only in the second part of the discussion, Objectives 4 and 5)

Ardita Zejnullahu, executive director, AMPEK, Prishtina

Albana Kusari, media program manager, USAID, Prishtina

Isak Vorgucic, manager, Radio Kim, Caglavica

Hapçiu Kelmend, director, Kosova Live, Prishtina

Moderator and Author

Visar H Berisha, program director, Institute for Advanced Studies GAP, Prishtina

Observer

Driton Qeriqi, legal media adviser, IREX, Prishtina

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