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KOSOVO

With regard to the media, 2009 can be characterized as a year of intensive debate over the freedom of speech in this country. Politics in general, and the biggest party in country that constitutes the government, has often tried to influence the media. Although most of the media did not fall under government influence, a similar statement cannot be said for the only public television in this country.

Kosovo showed higher scores for the 2010 MSI, reflecting advancement in the media sector in 2009. The overall score jumped nearly a quarter of a point, with four out of the five objectives showing improvement. Business management (Objective 4) was the only objective to receive a score lower than last year.

Kosovo's 2008 declaration of independence created new opportunities for further political and economic development. Although the scale of foreign recognition was lower than Kosovo had hoped for, and it faced a case against its independence at the International Court of Justice, it did move forward as an independent state. Kosovo became a member of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, it appointed the country's first ambassadors, and the Constitutional Court of Kosovo began functioning. Interestingly, the first case upon which the court ruled was regarding annulment of the payment of €3.5 for Radio Television of Kosovo (RTK), the public broadcaster, through electricity bills.

One of the important stories of the year revolved around RTK. Its general director resigned, saying that he found it "impossible to run RTK in a responsible manner" and questioning its ability to maintain editorial independence from the government. While threats to journalists remained relatively low, the case of Jeta Xharra, a Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) journalist, showed that critical journalists still face intimidation. Xharra received death threats after airing her show *Jeta në Kosovë*, during which she criticized the municipality of Skenderaj for lack of freedom of expression. The campaign against her started with an article published in the daily *Infopress* that called her a spy. Most of the media, however, lined up on her side, defending her right to freedom of expression, which is also guaranteed by article 40 of the Kosovo Constitution.

Local elections organized in November marked another significant event for Kosovo, and once again the impartiality of the media was challenged. While the electronic media in general were more objective in covering the election campaign, the print media were more selective in reporting the news.

# KOSOVO AT A GLANCE

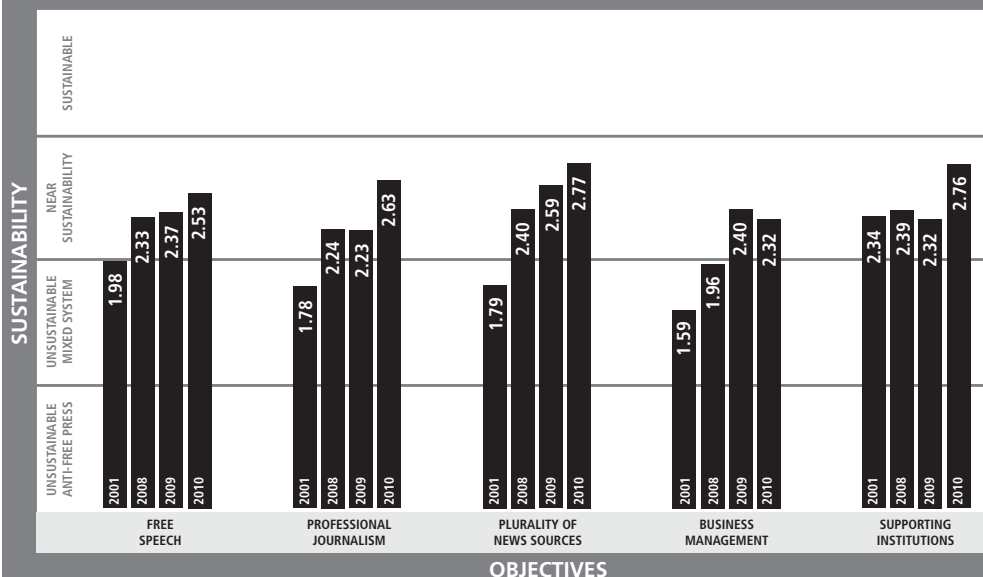
## GENERAL

- > **Population:** 1,804,838 (July 2009 est. *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Prishtina
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Albanians 88%, Serbs 7%, other 5% (Bosniak, Gorani, Roma, Turk, Ashkali, Egyptian) (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religion:** Muslim, Serbian Orthodox, Roman Catholic (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages:** Albanian (official), Serbian (official), Bosnian, Turkish, Roma (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2008-Atlas):** N/A (World Bank Development Indicators, 2009)
- > **GNI per capita (2008-PPP):** N/A (World Bank Development Indicators, 2009)
- > **Literacy rate:** 91.9% (male: 96.6%, female: 87.5%) (2007 Census)
- > **President or top authority:** President Fatmir Sejdiu (since February 10, 2006)

## MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** Print: 9 daily newspapers; Radio: 92 stations; Television: 22 stations (Source: Independent Media Commission (IMC), 2009)
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics (total circulation and largest paper):** N/A, *Koha Ditore* is the leading newspaper, followed by *Kosova Sot* (Index Kosova, July 2009)
- > **Broadcast ratings:** RTK 52%, KTV 28%, RTV21 49%; Radio Dukagjini 8%, Radio Kosova 5%, Radio 21 2% (Index Kosova, 2009)
- > **Annual advertising revenue in the media sector:** N/A
- > **News agencies:** Kosova Live, Kosova Press
- > **Internet usage:** Households with Internet access 53% (INDEX Kosova, 2009)

## MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: KOSOVO



Annual scores for 2002 through 2006/2007 are available online at [http://www.irex.org/programs/MSI\\_EUR/archive.asp](http://www.irex.org/programs/MSI_EUR/archive.asp)

### 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: 2.53

Freedom of speech increased slightly from the previous year, reaching the highest level since the Kosovo MSI study began in 2001. Indicators 1 (legal and social protections for free speech), 2 (broadcast licensing), 4 (attacks on journalists), and 8 (access to international news and news agencies) all made noteworthy gains to lead the growth in score. However, panelists downgraded their score for indicator 5 (legal guarantees of editorial independence for the public broadcaster). Indicator scores were rather spread out. Indicators 2, 8, and 9 (free entry into the journalism profession) scored particularly high, but indicators 3 (market entry), 5, and 6 (libel laws) all scored more than half a point lower than the overall objective score.

In general, the panelists agreed Kosovan law provides protection of free speech. Yet, the panelists emphasized the discord between the legal basis and actual enforcement of laws. There were some incidents of pressuring journalists during 2009, including the aforementioned threats against the BIRN journalist and a case involving two journalists from the daily *Koha Ditore*. They received a threatening phone call from a judge, who warned them not to publish an article. Later on, a Kosovo court found the judge not guilty, stating the phone threat was not considered very serious.

Eugen Saraçini, director of news at RTV 21, warned of individuals who misuse freedom of speech laws to damage someone's personal integrity, but lauded Kosovo's overall freedoms. "Regardless of the few incidents that we have witnessed, freedom of speech is protected," he claimed.

Regarding the case of *Jeta në Kosovë*, all panelists voiced their opposition to the hostility shown toward the journalists. Voice of America reporter Besim Abazi also expressed his concern at the numerous professional defects on the much-debated story by *Jeta në Kosovë*. "Violent acts against journalists are unacceptable; yet they should not leave the issue of the misuse of freedom of speech in darkness," he said. Like last year, there were no indications that the general public reacted strongly to freedom of speech violations in 2009.

The panelists agreed that the country's judiciary fails to respond promptly or without bias on matters related to freedom of speech. While they praised the legal framework, they also criticized the judiciary's lack of independence. Reaching and enforcing just verdicts on cases of infringement of journalists' rights was also decried and perceived as very slow. Bardh Hamzaj, former editor-in-chief of *Zëri*, commented on the disharmony between what the law states

and the real situation on the ground. According to him, "there is still a fragile situation in the country, regardless of the impression that everything seems in order on paper."

Panelists shared the sentiment that accessing public documents takes a considerable amount of time. According to the law on access to official documents, the institution must either grant access to the document within 15 working days or state the reasons for total or partial refusal. Panelists were concerned that access to information in general is not easy for all Kosovo communities. Goran Avramovic from Radio KIM lamented that the government still offers no Serbian translation of press conferences held by the prime minister and cabinet. "How can I obtain the necessary information when our journalists cannot understand the government's message?" asked Avramovic.

The Independent Media Commission (IMC) manages licensing of electronic media. The commission's creation and operations are guided by the constitution, and procedures for media legalization are open and competitive. The election of IMC board members is completely apolitical, as civil society members nominate candidates. The potential candidates are approved by the Kosovo Assembly in a process that is largely transparent. Ardita Zejnullahu, executive director of the Association of Kosova Independent Electronic Media (AMPEK), evaluated the licensing criteria as compatible and liberal. Moreover, she was not aware of any case in which an electronic media outlet was denied a license due to political preferences. Media that fail to receive a license can submit their complaints or claims regarding irregularities to the IMC Media Board for Appeals.

Digitalization of the electronic media (ongoing and expected to be completed by 2015) has opened up opportunities for many local television stations that lack national frequencies. The panelists noted the governmental limit on the number of national television frequencies (currently three). Despite the restriction, cable television advancement has enabled local and other television stations to broadcast at a national level.

The procedure of registering a media company in Kosovo is the same as registering a general business, except that media registration and licensing is handled by an independent and exclusive body. Zejnullahu said that she considers media "a slightly different kind of business, which should be treated differently. That's due to the fact that media, despite being privately owned, has a general responsibility and broad impact on the whole society."

The panelists raised the notion that media should be classified as a different business with regard to tax rates as well. At the beginning of the media registration process, most media were registered as NGOs. Once this approach proved unproductive,

media companies changed their labels to businesses or shareholding companies.

The tax rate does not make a distinction between the media industry and other types of businesses. The law on VAT is still being drafted and might undergo further modifications, however. Zejnullahu said that AMPEK has been lobbying for a lower media VAT that would factor in an outlet's specific business circumstances. Payments for license and frequency usage are financial burdens on top of the other customary taxes that media pay. The customs tax on media complicates the task of importing of new equipment needed for digitalization.

Apart from the aforementioned cases of threats, the panelists could not recall any crimes against journalists. There was some debate on what is considered a serious threat and crime. Abazi noted that often the pressure exerted on journalists is subtle and sophisticated.

The public broadcaster RTK is established as an independent media outlet by the Assembly of Kosovo. Most panelists agreed that the broadcaster has immense problems with editorial policy and there is widespread conviction that the currently ruling Democratic Party of Kosovo controls RTK. The panelists concurred that RTK must implement some changes to diminish interest group interference with its editorial independence.

Additionally, RTK receives considerable revenue from commercials, which makes it similar to the other private

national television stations. Panelists agreed that in general, RTK enjoys a privileged position. IMC prepared a regulation to limit advertising space in RTK; however, the regulation has not been enforced due to problems with the subscription collection fee. Zejnullahu made the case for RTK to be independent commercially as well as politically.

With regard to defamation, the assembly passed a law defining libel as a civil crime. The government is not enforcing the law, however, and there still seems to be confusion on whether libel is part of the civil or penal code. So far, however, the court has not seen a single libel case, nor has any journalist been sentenced to prison on libel charges.

The government does not restrict the issuance of licenses and does not hamper the flow of information from abroad. Regarding international media, journalists have unrestricted access to foreign news agencies, websites, newspapers, etc. The panelists said that Kosovan journalists are a diverse group, and are able to enter the profession without interference.

## OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

### Kosovo Objective Score: 2.63

The score for professional journalism showed strong growth compared to last year, and most of the indicators improved to support this increase. Indicator 5 (pay levels for journalists) did not change, however, and received the lowest score in this objective at slightly more than half a point behind the overall objective score. Indicator 6 (balance of entertainment and news) scored the highest, coming in at slightly more than half a point above the overall score.

Kosovo journalists value professionalism, panelists agreed, but they noted that further improvements need to be made. Besim Abazi of Voice of America complained about journalists who do not take care in verifying the information used in their news stories. Sometimes, for example, people are portrayed as guilty although they have not yet been tried in court. Hamzaj pointed out that reporters do not always distinguish between opinions and facts in their stories. "The two are mixed together—reporting and commentary in the same text," he said.

Panelists also discussed the need for more than two sources when gathering and compiling news. "Journalists should ask experts relevant to the matter at hand, rather than displaying their own conclusions," Hamzaj said.

Although the media sector has no overarching ethical code observed by all, panelists agreed that most journalists follow general ethical standards, and corruption is not pervasive.

## 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.

Most print media outlets subscribe to the Press Code, a code of ethics established by the Press Council of Kosovo in 2005, while electronic media follow the Broadcast Code of Conduct supervised by IMC.

Self-censorship is a troubling issue, however. Many journalists refrain from pursuing certain topics out of fear or to protect vested political and economic interests within some media outlets. Avramovic said that journalists still do not feel safe in doing their job. "Unfortunately, most of my colleagues would not dare to go to Gjakova to investigate an issue, nor would colleagues from Prishtina feel safe reporting in Leposavic," he said, referring to Serbian and Albanian areas.

Social networks and other websites have increased steadily in popularity as a means of disseminating information. Political parties utilized YouTube in particular in the last municipal elections to promote their candidates.

The panel also debated the merits of giving air time to people making self-aggrandizing claims. They brought up the case of Nazim Blaca, a former self-described member of Kosovo secret services who publicly claimed responsibility for murders and other crimes. Some television stations gave extensive air time to the issue. Although lending a platform to controversial people can fuel debate, the panelists warned of the risks of allowing such figures to use the media advance their personal goals.

Hamzaj remarked on whether journalists should be held responsible for the collateral damage resulting from their stories. "There is a fine red line between carefully broadcasting news and taking external circumstances into account," he said. Saraçini cautioned against the incorrect usage of the concepts of research and investigation. "Research

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is different from investigation; the latter is carried out by the police and not from an ordinary journalist," he said.

Generally, pay levels for journalists are reasonable, especially when compared with salaries in the public sector. Panelists noted the need for even higher salaries in order to prevent corruption and insulate journalists from external pressure. Salary level does not always represent the true professional level of a journalist, however, and inconsistent salaries create grounds for corruption. Newspapers with ties to political parties produce articles favorable to politicians. Panelists also expressed their concern that RTK news editors often give more space to stories promoting the work of the government. This is not a pay issue, they said, but one of editorial policy.

According to the panelists, entertainment programming does not eclipse news and information programming. Television stations have their own specific format and various target groups, but most have at least one or more regular slots each day reserved for news. Some media even have short news updates every hour. Overall, news schedules are reliable and not susceptible to sudden change.

Panelists evaluated the technical facilities and equipment for news gathering and distribution as in good condition. Most media owners are satisfied with their current technology, since they can manage to gather and distribute the news properly. However, they fear that in the future they will not be able to afford the newest technology due to the associated high costs and customs duties. Media owners have often required that their technology be exempted from high customs tax. Right after the war, international donors helped equip the public television and the other two national televisions with broadcasting technology, but in general, those donations ended a long time ago.

Niche reporting is still in its early stages, and mainly focuses on subjects such as economics and politics. However, Kosovo has almost no journalists specializing in science and technology. Panelists said that multi-purpose journalists cover many different areas without sufficient knowledge or background in any particular field.

## 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).



## OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

### Kosovo Objective Score: 2.77

Kosovo's score in this objective increased slightly as most indicators received increased scores from the panelists. However, one notable decrease was experienced by indicator 3 (public media are non-partisan), which also received the lowest score in this objective, trailing the overall score by about a point. Indicator 2 (citizen access to media) scored the highest, exceeding the overall score by about three-quarters of a point.

In Kosovo, the diversity and number of information sources has remained relatively high, with ready availability and little external control over sources of information. In the second half of 2009, a ninth daily newspaper was launched. Almost all existing media, both print and electronic, have improved their websites and now place their most important articles on the Internet. In addition, a number of specific information portals use the web as their sole medium.

Luan Ibraj from Telegrafi news portal believes that the diversity of information sources has increased during the past four years. "With the development of information technology and the awareness of society regarding these communication options, the level of information surfing from various sources has also increased. There is a good balance on the audience's access to this information," he said.

With the exception of a few newspapers that have been linked traditionally to certain political parties, most media

allow multiple points of view in their editorial policies. As the general public becomes more educated, most media would like to provide diverse opinions.

In Kosovo, blogs are not used commonly for news or information, although individuals and organizations use blogs to express their opinions and exchange comments on individual articles. Social networking sites such as Facebook and YouTube are used widely, especially by the younger generation. Twitter is gaining popularity in Kosovo very rapidly.

Neither the Kosovo government nor other public institutions legally or practically prohibit access to any media, whether local or international. All citizens across Kosovo have access to information disseminated through the various media forms. The Internet has continued to expand at a fast pace, even throughout villages. The Internet is affordable for most households in rural areas as well, since they have to pay only for the service. Cable networks are now replacing satellite services—especially in urban areas, where the distribution of Internet coverage has been accompanied by cable network distribution. The cable system has enabled citizens to access more information sources from a large number of local and international television channels. Even some local television stations, which previously could cover only one municipality with very limited signals, now use cable technology to cover significant parts of the territory of Kosovo.

Panelists were critical of the state of public media. In the years after the NATO intervention, the international community helped Kosovo to establish public media, including one television and two radio stations (RTK). Panelists said that on issues important to the government, the media have no editorial independence, and actually the government has tightened its control. "This is not noticed in the quantity so much as it is noticed with the priority placement of any content which deals with governmental activities," Hamzaj said. "Furthermore, there is an assumption that government officials ensure their influence by placing allegiant people in editorial positions."

The RTK board, the highest governing body of the institution, functioned with an expired mandate for nearly three years, and the Assembly of Kosovo was negligent in selecting and appointing the new board. The assembly appointed the new board in October 2009. Right before the local elections, the general director of RTK submitted his resignation after eight years in the position, citing political pressure even from the prime minister.

Based on the law that regulates its operation, RTK is financed primarily through subscriptions and advertisements, with the last option as financing from the state budget. The subscription fee for RTK has been collected through the bills

## 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.

of the Kosovo Energy Corporation (KEK), in the amount of €3.5 per month from each bill.

During 2007, the regular contract between RTK and KEK was terminated unilaterally by KEK, therefore leaving RTK without a stable and independent source of revenue. However, the collection of the subscriptions through KEK continued based on short-term contracts. The newly established Constitutional Court of Kosovo's first case was the subscription fee. The court temporarily suspended the collection of taxes for RTK through KEK and the specific subscription fee. The court asked the Assembly of Kosovo to conduct a review and to amend the law on RTK before December 1, 2009, but this has yet to take place.

The number of news agencies did not change between 2008 and 2009. Kosovo has only two existing subscription-based news agencies: Kosovoalive and Kosovapress. According to Hamzaj, "Kosovo has many news agencies; however, the one which mostly meets the professional criteria of news production and broadcasting is Kosovoalive. Others are often too close to political parties or other interest groups."

The majority of national media reserve space for international news and subscribe to international news agencies such as Reuters, AP, and AFP. Subscription news agencies have continued to decline in importance, however, given the free news available to the public through news agencies that publish their news online. Media outlets still subscribe to agencies because Kosovo needs news sources that can provide unbiased reporting.

According to Ibraj, improper citation is a common problem. "Many newspapers lift content from news agencies and often do not cite their sources; the same is true with online news portals. Journalists also tap international news agencies for content; however, they are often not cited properly."

A significant number of media outlets, including local media, produce their own news programs. However, news programs produced locally are often of lower quality than nationally produced new programs. According to Mifail Bytyçi of TV Prizreni, "As local media, we do not have the necessary capacity to develop a news story based on investigative journalism, so our own news production consists of event reports. The content of the news is 80 percent local and 20 percent national and international." During election campaigns, when national media cannot cover all territory, they draw from chronicles produced by local television stations.

Every medium registered in Kosovo is obliged to declare its owners, and information on ownership is open to the public, but Kosovo has no specific law or regulation on media ownership. According to Zejnullahu, IMC has tried

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unsuccessfully several times to launch the drafting of a media ownership regulatory framework. But she added, "Compared to other countries of the region, Kosovo is probably the most transparent country with regard to declaring media ownership and the background of the money invested in media. Electronic media declare their owners, assets, and financing sources."

Hamzaj disagreed, saying that determining ownership is much more complicated with print media than electronic, and that the individual that initially registered the outlet might not be the true owner.

There is no monopoly or oligarchy over Kosovan media. In 2009, one of the most successful businesspeople in the country, Remzi Ejuqi, bought one of Kosovo's largest and oldest newspapers, and expressed interest in buying a second newspaper as well. However, he has not displayed intentions to build a monopoly over the media.

In the years following the 1999 war in Kosovo, there were no foreign investments in the media. In 2009, the Albanian media company Klan TV began operating a television station in Kosovo. This can be considered the only foreign investment made in the Kosovan media sector. But according to Hamzaj, the lack of foreign investment in the media sector is not a cause for concern.

In general, the local and national media feature information mostly dealing with minorities. Even though the number of minority language publications is relatively small, many electronic media outlets provide information in various community languages, especially in Serbian. These stations must compete with Belgrade broadcasters, however. RTK television broadcasts various programs in four minority languages during every 24-hour broadcasting cycle. The Assembly of Kosovo, based on the Comprehensive Document on the Resolution of the Final Status, has taken up the obligation to establish one television station in the Serbian language, which would be public and financed by the state budget.



*Hamzaj said that the government is increasing its tendency to intentionally select the media for advertising. "During last year, there were cases when the government suddenly decided to withdraw its ads from some electronic and print media, while keeping the same ads at other media, in order to teach media outlets critical of the government a lesson," he said.*

This year, under the Minority and Multiethnic Media Fund, the government has allocated €180,120 to 17 media stations. Abazi claimed that Kosovo media regularly feature reports on minority issues without any pressure from the public or governmental institutions. Kosovan stations have also featured and discussed other important social issues, including religion and gender equality, without any obstacles. There have also been many debates on the gay community in Kosovo and sexual orientation in general. However, these interests still are not represented adequately in the Kosovan media.

#### OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

### Kosovo Objective Score: 2.32

The score for business management remained nearly unchanged this year, and there was little movement among the indicators. Indicator 3 (the advertising market) decreased somewhat, but this was mostly offset by an increase in indicator 7 (audience and circulation measurement). All indicators scored very close to the overall objective score; none varied by more than a quarter point.

According to Saraçini, national television stations are the most financially stable entities in the media sector. Bigger media outlets usually prepare and follow business plans, but this is not so common among the smaller media outlets, which are more unstable financially. "In all sectors, Kosovo functions according to the principle of free trade economy," Saraçini said. "Private media should function in that logic, too—if one medium sees that such a business is not a profitable business, it has the right and it should close it."

Bytyçi said that local media are forced to keep broadcasting in order to retain their frequencies, even during times when they are not self-sustaining. In such difficult periods, the

owner has to find moneymaking alternatives, often by relying on an additional side business. Because local media are prone to instability, their editorial independence is more threatened by interference from local government, political parties, and business interests.

In such a small market—two million people—with a relatively huge number of media outlets, Kosovan media outlets tend to draw funds from a variety of different sources. No outlet depends on only one financial source.

With regard to the marketing industry, the panelists observed a slight improvement in quantity but not quality. According to Kushtrim Shabani of ProMedia Marketing, the main problem in the field of marketing is the lack of reliable statistics. USAID helped to establish an industry group that measures national television viewership, but it does not cover the local media. In general, however, market competition in Kosovo has widened, and so has the advertising market. According to Ibraj, "Some media—usually the larger outlets—have forged agreements with specialized marketing companies, while those of smaller capacity tend to employ marketing experts." He added that larger businesses have already created their own marketing divisions, which approach the media directly and bypass independent marketing agencies.

Larger businesses such as banks, mobile telephone companies, and insurance companies very seldom elect to advertise in local media. Small businesses in general rarely use media to advertise. Bytyçi explained that when a small business at the local level does decide to advertise, the local medium not only airs the advertisement but produces it as well, despite the lack of staff qualified to do this task. As a result, the

#### 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.

advertisements are of low quality compared to those shown at the national level.

The print media have no advertising space limit. Electronic media are allowed by law to air 12 minutes per broadcasting hour (20 percent of broadcasting time) of advertising. IMC, the body in charge of media monitoring, occasionally allows the advertising time to be increased. "One month, during an election campaign, the media requested that IMC grant an expansion of advertising time, since political parties required their ads be aired during prime time. This request was approved by the IMC," said Zejnullahu.

Private media do not receive any state subsidies, except for some allowances to multi-ethnic and minority media in order to promote and support minority programming. To date, the state has not given any subsidies to the public media, although the Law on Radio Television of Kosovo is neutral as to whether the public media could be financed from the state budget. According to the panelists, the lack of government subsidies is an appropriate decision; otherwise, the money would likely not be allocated properly.

Hamzaj said that the government is increasing its tendency to intentionally select the media for advertising. "During last year, there were cases when the government suddenly decided to withdraw its ads from some electronic and print media, while keeping the same ads at other media, in order to teach media outlets critical of the government a lesson," he said.

Act 40.3 of Law no. 2003/17 on public procurement stipulates that government advertisements and announcements should be given to the media with the highest circulation in Albanian and Serbian languages. However, government institutions do not follow this rule. According to Saraçini, the presence of government ads in electronic media is very low compared to overall advertisements, and much lower compared to government ads placed in print media.

The media has seen no improvement in the past year on the availability of market research data, and no promising initiatives to improve the situation are in development. According to Saraçini, "Such research is very costly; it costs at least €15,000 to conduct high-quality market research. Our media is not willing to spend that much on research." He added, however, that media would benefit greatly by having monthly market research at its disposal.

The lack of statistics makes predicting media viewership, listenership, and circulation difficult. Currently, Kosovo has nine daily newspapers, and at least three pretend to be the champions of readership. Ibraj pointed out that online media have an advantage in this sense, since they have an easier and cheaper mechanism to measure their readership.

*Bytyçi explained that when a small business at the local level does decide to advertise, the local medium not only airs the advertisement but produces it as well, despite the lack of staff qualified to do this task. As a result, the advertisements are of low quality compared to those shown at the national level.*

## OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

### Kosovo Objective Score: 2.76

With increases in indicators 3 (supporting NGOs), 5 (short-term professional training), and 7 (apolitical channels of media distribution), the score for supporting institutions increased strongly. All indicators received scores close to the overall objective score.

Kosovo has media associations tasked with protecting and lobbying for the freedom of expression. The Association of Professional Journalists of Kosovo (AGPK) has been the main journalists' association for several years. One of the association's activities during the last year was lobbying to amend the Law on Access to Official Documents. But in Hamzaj's estimation, "AGPK is not very proactive, and raises its voice only when incidents occur."

The Council of Print Media of Kosovo organizes print media, and AMPEK lobbies for the interests of electronic media. According to its director Ardita Zejnullahu, "AMPEK

### 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.

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*Hamzaj spoke favorably about the printing industry and how Kosovan press outlets use print houses cooperatively. "There has never been a case that a newspaper was not published on time," he said.*

participated in all working groups and had its say when the regulations on private electronic media were set. AMPEK is also member of the regional association network, and cooperates with the European Association of Commercial Networks."

Kosovo has no local NGOs focused primarily on protecting freedom of speech and media independence. Active NGOs react from time to time when the rights of journalists are violated, which happens very rarely. According to Abazi, NGOs and media are closely allied. "NGOs need media coverage, and the media often provides it. NGOs and media are connected by the principle of protection of freedom of speech."

Formal and informal educational opportunities for journalists exist in Kosovo, according to the panelists. According to Abazi, the proportion of those who have a degree in journalism and are employed in the media sector should speak positively about Kosovan education in the field, but this is not a reliable indicator of the quality of education. The department of journalism at the University of Prishtina lacks practical and theoretical conditions for qualitative studies. Private colleges are better equipped, allowing their students to practice their profession in improvised studios. Graduating journalists are not entirely ready to work professionally; in fact, the best education they receive is generally on the job.

Several Kosovan institutions offer informal training in journalism, often free of charge but low in quality. Most of these programs are set up by local organizations; one exception is the journalism courses offered by the Kosovo Institute for Journalism and Communication (KIJAC), an

international organization funded by the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. KIJAC issues graduate degrees, but they are not accredited by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency.

Currently, investigative journalism is one of the most sought-after specializations in Kosovo. Abazi noted concerns over the many informal training programs in investigative journalism that are being conducted by unprofessional trainers.

According to Ibraj, "The opportunities to study abroad rest on individual cases, as does the desire to return back to Kosovo to work."

Printing houses are in the hand of private individuals, and the state has never tried to control them. Print houses are increasing in number and advancing their output. Ibraj observed, "There has been a significant improvement in the technology used in printing. So far, printing houses have proven to be a successful business venture."

Hamzaj spoke favorably about the printing industry and how Kosovan press outlets use print houses cooperatively. "There has never been a case that a newspaper was not published on time," he said. "Not all the newspapers have their own printing house; some of newspapers are printed in another's printing house, even if both newspapers tend to be rivals."

Internet access is not controlled, and private ISPs provide access to businesses and consumers. The channels of media distribution are in the hands of private companies as well and not under state control. National television and radio stations are distributed via KTTN, a private consortia of stations that controls the towers and equipment.

As for the newspaper distribution network, Hamzaj said that this part of the media sector remains under a monopoly. "We still have not seen a serious initiative for a new competitor to the oldest distribution network in Kosovo: Rilindja," he said. That network had its own Albanian-language newspaper years ago, when the socialist system allowed the publication of a single daily. Today, 10 years after the war, this network is focused on distribution only.

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## List of Panel Participants

**Ardita Zejnullahu**, executive director, Association of Kosova Independent Electronic Media, Prishtina

**Eugen Saraçini**, news director, RTV 21, Prishtina

**Besim Abazi**, journalist, Voice of America, Prishtina

**Mifail Bytyqi**, managing director, TV Prizreni, Prizren

**Goran Avramović**, manager, Radio Kim, Caglavica

**Luan Ibraj**, director, Telegrafi news portal, Prishtina

**Kujtim Shabani**, managing director, Marketing Agency ProMedia, Prishtina

**Bardh Hamzaj**, former editor-in-chief, *Zëri*; independent media expert, Prishtina

## Moderators and Authors

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