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KOSOVO

FFor Kosovars, 2010 was dominated by election fervor. It started with local elections and ended with snap elections in December 2010. Thanks to sound constitutional provisions and media laws that in principle guarantee freedom of expression in Kosovo, a lively debate flourished throughout the election period. Most print media openly take sides and are widely known for their partisanship. Electronic media tend to be more objective in covering election campaigns, but are closely watched by their regulator, the Independent Media Commission. For example, on voting day, the commission fined Klan Kosova television for breaching campaign reporting blackout restrictions. Facebook and YouTube are gaining more and more popularity, and many candidates used them to promote themselves and their political parties directly to citizens.

In its third year as an independent state, Kosovo's new political institutions met significant challenges in addressing international and domestic events. Kosovo made global headlines when the International Court of Justice declared that Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence did not violate international law. Despite this international triumph Kosovo's independence was recognized by only eight countries in 2010, increasing the total number to 72. Domestically, after the Constitutional Court found that the president was breaking the law by holding two positions, he stepped down and soon withdrew his party from the coalition government. As a consequence, the parliament was dissolved and snap elections fraught with irregularities were held on December 12.

Finally, a report by Dick Marty, member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, about alleged criminal activities of the Kosovo Liberation Army during its struggle for independence seriously tarnished country's image in the international arena.

Overall, the media sector improved in some areas and experienced setbacks in others, and Kosovo's overall MSI score declined slightly from the previous year, from 2.60 to 2.54. On the positive side, Objective 1 (freedom of speech) has increased slightly each year since 2008 with the highest freedom of speech score (2.70) since the beginning of this study in 2001. However, Kosovo media continue to receive low scores for business management. Local media in particular lack business plans and are often on the verge of bankruptcy. A number of radio stations lost their licenses during the year for inability to pay licensing fees, which in general are relatively inexpensive. As such, Objective 4 (business management) suffered a small decrease in score. Objective 5 (supporting institutions) also lost about a quarter of a point, although still scored well enough to remain in the middle of the "near sustainability" score category.

KOSOVO AT A GLANCE

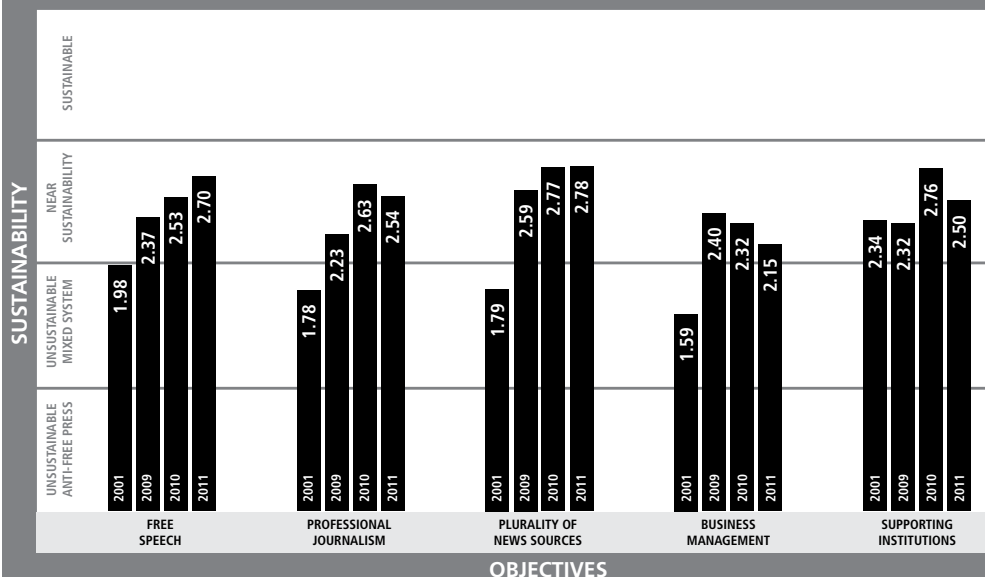
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 1,815,048 (July 2010 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Prishtina
- > **Ethnic groups (percent of population):** Albanians 88 percent, Serbs 7 percent, other 5 percent (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religion:** Muslim, Serbian Orthodox, Roman Catholic (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages:** Albanian (official), Serbian (official), Bosnian, Turkish, Roma (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2009-Atlas):** 5.855 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2010)
- > **GNI per capita (2009-Atlas):** \$3,240 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2010)
- > **Literacy rate:** 91.9 percent (male 96.6 percent, female 87.5 percent) (2007 Census, *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** Acting President Jakup Krasniqi (since September 28, 2010)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

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

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: KOSOVO



Scores for all years may be found online at http://www.irex.org/system/files/EE_msiscorers.xls

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: 2.70

Freedom of speech has earned the highest score since the Kosovo MSI study began in 2001, moving from 2.53 last year to 2.70, the only significant improvement shown by any objective. Much of the improvement was driven by better scores for indicator 3 (market entry) and indicator 5 (legal guarantees of editorial independence for public media). Slightly lower scores for indicator 4 (attacks on journalists), indicator 7 (access to information), and indicator 8 (media access to domestic and international news sources) counteracted this improvement somewhat. Indicators 4, 6 (libel laws), and 7 all still lagged behind the objective score by nearly three-quarters of a point. Indicators 8 and 9 (free entry into the journalism profession) both scored about a point higher.

There was consensus among panelists that constitutional provisions in Kosovo guarantee freedom of speech. One noteworthy advancement made last year was the modification of the Law on Access to Official Documents (renamed the Law on Access to Public Documents) that shortens the waiting period, although for now it remains to be seen how effectively this will be implemented.

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

FREE-SPEECH INDICATORS:

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

Confidentiality of sources is not properly regulated by law and needs further improvement. Ardita Zejnnullahu, the executive director of the Association of Independent Electronic Media of Kosovo said that according to current law, an outlet is obliged to provide unedited materials to the police if requested and even reveal sources when the prosecutor demands.

Panelists agreed that civil society is quite reactive in cases when freedom of speech is violated. They were quick to sign a collective reaction in defense of Sebahate Shala, a former journalist for Kosovapress news agency who was pressured to resign after publishing an article that quoted the deputy chief of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo who she asked whether people under investigation should be barred from elected office. The official merely answered yes to her question, which her supervisor declared a "stupid and unprofessional question." The article was removed from the web after Shala received phone threats. However, some panelists believe that civil society organizations sometimes overreact when a journalist is fired or resigns under pressure, without first questioning whether the journalist has violated any journalism code of ethics. Shala's outlet stated that she violated journalism ethics by asking prejudicial questions. However, panelists unanimously agreed that threats against journalists should be condemned whether or not the ethics code had been violated.

Confidentiality of sources is not properly regulated by law and needs further improvement. Ardita Zejnnullahu, the executive director of the Association of Independent Electronic Media of Kosovo said that according to current law, an outlet is obliged to provide unedited materials to the police if requested and even reveal sources when the prosecutor demands. Panelists agree that this law should be improved to give media more ability to protect sources, which is especially crucial for investigative reporting.

The Independent Media Commission is responsible for issuing licenses to electronic media. The licensing process is transparent and the criteria are determined by law. The application process is made public as are the decisions to issue or revoke any licenses. Media using SMS alerts still do not need special licenses, although this form of news distribution is still uncommon among Kosovo media. Nevertheless, panelists suggest that if such form of news distribution should

Confusion persists about whether libel is part of the civil or penal code even though the assembly passed a law defining libel as a civil crime.

become more widespread, certain regulations must be put in place to give users control over their subscription to the service. During 2010, the Independent Media Commission renewed the licenses of all existing television stations that use a frequency.

Some see a problem with the licensing for cable operators. Zejnullahu fears that the criteria for providing licenses to cable operators are "too liberal." She criticized the regulator for failure to regulate cable packages. She suggested that there should be a basic cable package that includes the three stations that broadcast on national frequencies and optional extended packages that include domestic and foreign channels. "With the current cable system we have massive breach of copyright," said Zejnullahu. Currently, if local channels choose to be included in a cable package they have to pay a fee. Panelists believe the Independent Media Commission should require cable operators to carry local terrestrial channels in their respective operation zones without any additional fee. Further, cable operators automatically drop both national and local channels from their package in the case of late payment.

Media registration and license issuance function well in Kosovo and have not changed since last year. A new outlet has to demonstrate the same start-up capital as any other business. "It is the same whether you open a shop or a media outlet, you still have to go through the same registration procedures, except for those media that need a frequency," said Luan Ibraj from the online news outlet Telegrafi. Panelists consider the taxes imposed on media outlets high and believe media outlets should not be treated just like any other business. "Electronic media have repeatedly asked for lower taxes, but this has never been approved," said Zejnullahu.

No serious crimes were committed against journalists in Kosovo in 2010 yet threats are common. Threats mostly originate from individual politicians or businessmen rather than from organized groups or through systematized campaigns by the government. For example, a *Koha Ditore* journalist, Vehbi Kajtazi, was threatened by a former Kosovo Liberation Army commander for supposedly slandering his family.

Investigative journalism once again proved to be a hard task in a transitional society. Arbana Xharra, a *Zeri* journalist, received threats after her intensive reporting on economic issues. While investigating a case in an elementary school in Ferzaj, a *Klan Kosova* reporter and her cameraman were attacked by the school director and held against their will in a classroom for 40 minutes. A program host from the same television station was assaulted by a former member of parliament, preventing the start of the show. Another media outlet received a threat from a high official in the Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

Even more worrisome are the security problems journalists face when traveling to the northern part of Kosovo, an area populated by Kosovo Serbs. Likewise, Kosovo Serb journalists are still afraid to travel in certain parts of Kosovo.

Media reaction to threats against journalists is immediate, although a number of threats are not made public. Besim Abazi, a journalist for Voice of America, considers threats to be a part of the business. "Not that this is acceptable, but a journalist must understand that this profession involves a certain degree of risk and not everything goes smoothly in this job," said Abazi. According to Faik Ispahiu from the Balkans Investigative Reporting Network, almost every week one of his journalists is threatened due to investigative reporting. "The main reason for this situation is the weak judiciary system in Kosovo," said Ispahiu.

Financing of public television is still problematic. Currently Radio Television of Kosovo, the only public television station, receives subsidies from the Kosovo Assembly and until a new law on public television is passed financing going forward is unclear. The new law must open avenues for other revenue streams from outside the Kosovo budget, as current government financing is feared to be enabling the ruling parties to compromise editorial independence. At least through 2011, Radio Television of Kosovo will continue to receive subsidies from the Kosovo budget.

Panelists would also like to see a more efficient and productive process for selecting board members. According to the Radio Television of Kosovo law, the board should be composed of public figures with professional qualifications in various areas such as culture, art, journalism, law, and academia who have demonstrated political impartiality. The current board has nine members, all appointed by the Kosovo Assembly. The current media laws favor public media over private media because the Independent Media Commission cannot revoke its license but only issue a fine. Additionally, Radio Television of Kosovo is financed by the public thus is never at risk of bankruptcy and enjoys limited advertising space.

Confusion persists about whether libel is part of the civil or penal code even though the assembly passed a law defining libel as a civil crime. In 2010, two journalists, Baton Haxhiu and Jeton Musliu, were charged with libel against the former minister Bujar Dugolli and both were found guilty and received a six month conditional prison sentence. They were accused by Dugolli after publishing two articles in *Express* newspaper in 2007 that questioned the legality of Dugolli's sudden increase in wealth. According to the Kosovo judicial system, it is the plaintiff that carries the burden of proof. Panelists agreed that this puts the journalists in a more favorable position.

As noted above, this year the Law on Access to Public Documents was modified to shorten the waiting period. Previously, according to the law, institutions were given 15 working days time to respond to information requests or state the reason for partial or total refusal. Now the new law has shortened the waiting period from 15 working days to seven calendar days. Despite this advancement, journalists often complain that their requests to access public documents are denied. Rrahman Paçarizi, the head of the board of directors of Radio Television of Kosovo, said that the problem with the law on access to public documents is the absence of a provision that classifies documents as secret or classified, or simply as secret or public. "Public officials often use this gap when deciding to avoid compliance with the request for information, stating that the document is not for public use," said Paçarizi.

Another weakness in the legislation that Paçarizi identified is set fines for public officials who do not respond to information requests. Eugen Saracini, news director at RTV 21, added that journalists also need to better understand this law; they should learn to respect the timeframe for obtaining certain information and not always press officials to provide them with the information on sight.

Minority media continue to complain that some public institutions do not provide information in their native languages. Mirjana Simic from Radio Kim, a Serbian language outlet, said her journalists are unable to obtain answers from public officials. "The use of two languages is not respected by some public institutions. Both the Energy Corporation of Kosovo and Kosovo police spokespersons should be able to speak Serbian and hence answer questions raised by Serb journalists," she said. "The government spokesman does not provide information in Serbian either."

With regard to access to local and international news sources, there is no restriction whatsoever by the government. Services from international news agencies are expensive for a number of media outlets, especially the online media, who

Over the last year a number of journalists, even the editor of a daily newspaper, moved to jobs with political parties or ran for elected office.

still need to improve in terms of citing sources properly. There are also no government restrictions to entering the journalism profession.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Kosovo Objective Score: 2.54

The score for professional journalism scores declined slightly compared with last year. Indicator 8 (niche and investigative reporting) showed the largest decline of any indicator, but it was not a steep one. Most indicators scored close to the objective score, with a few exceptions. Indicator 5 (pay levels for journalists) scored about a half-point behind the objective score, while indicator 6 (news and entertainment balance) and 7 (modern facilities and equipment) surpassed the objective score by the same magnitude.

Panelists agree that considerable improvements have been made in citing sources both in electronic and private media, which reflects a general improvement in journalism standards. Saracini praised Kosovo journalists who generally consult more than two sources. "This is a great achievement in Kosovo journalism," said Saracini. Another achievement is a

JOURNALISM MEETS PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF QUALITY.

PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM INDICATORS:

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

The favorite topics for journalists remain politics and economics. Science and technology are not considered as an attractive field for journalists. Investigative journalism, although appealing for many journalists, is still not well developed.

competitive market that does not allow any outlet to choose not to cover a particular news item because it risks being left behind by competitors. A slight improvement was also noted in verification of information, which could be as a result of increased competition as well.

Online reporting is increasing but due to the open nature of Internet publications, journalism standards with those outlets are low.

Discussions of standards within the profession are sometimes not productive. Last year a scandal drew the media community's attention after one journalist publicly criticized a fellow journalist during a press conference for asking off-topic questions. The incident was condemned by the media community and the perpetrator later on publicly apologized for using offensive language against his colleague.

In 2010, a television station was fined by the Independent Media Commission for breaching an election reporting blackout on voting day. Panelists were concerned that fines from the Independent Media Commission are so low that an outlet may accept the fine in order to get a particular political message out.

Technical experts sought for comment are often big names in television and print media. Most panelists agreed that expertise is scarce, forcing journalists to repeatedly seek comments from the same source. Kosovo still has no journalism specialists in science and technology. General assignment reporters are used to cover diverse subjects, sometimes with little knowledge in the particular field.

Self-censorship continues to present a major challenge to the advancement of journalism in Kosovo. Certain newspapers have links to political parties or businesses, which provokes journalists to employ self-censorship as a means to political and economic advantages. In most cases, however, it is not the journalists who refrain from pursuing certain topics, but the editorial board that discourages them. "Self-censorship is the main problem at Radio Television of Kosovo, and not pressure from any political parties," said Paçarizi.

Journalists at all outlets tend to cover all key events and issues. There are no key issues, national or international, that are not covered by at least some media outlets. However, some issues, such as suspected corruption by public officials, are not covered equally by all media. While some media outlets make headlines with such cases, some tend to play down the importance of such stories. This is especially true with regard to media outlets affiliated with political parties.

The desire for better salaries and benefits continues to cause journalists in Kosovo to leave the profession in exchange for positions at public or private companies. Over the last year a number of journalists, even the editor of a daily newspaper, moved to jobs with political parties or ran for elected office. Ispahiu noted that before the 1999 war, journalism was considered a patriotic profession. Today journalism serves as a springboard to a better paying job, usually as a spokesperson in public and private sector companies. Nonetheless, pay levels for journalists are reasonable and comparable to salaries at public institutions. Abazi said that while a higher salary is not a guarantee against corruption, it makes corruption easier to resist. Low salaries make journalists more susceptible to corruption and other illegal activities in order to supplement their income. For example, one journalist was found guilty of cutting down trees illegally and served three months in prison.

Panelists agreed that media outlets, especially television stations, achieve a balance of news and entertainment since they are required by law to schedule regular new slots. In some television stations the amount of entertaining programs is significantly larger, but entertainment programming does not eclipse news and information programming. News schedules are reliable and except for live broadcasting of sport events, news schedules rarely change.

Technical facilities and equipment for newsgathering and distribution are considered to be in good condition. Many media owners are worried about the expensive equipment and facilities required in the near future with the change to digital broadcasting. Media owners have repeatedly asked that their technology be exempted from the high customs tax or that a lower tax rate for media equipment to be established.

Niche reporting has not shown any significant progress since last year and is still in a nascent stage. The favorite topics for journalists remain politics and economics. Science and technology are not considered as an attractive field for journalists. Investigative journalism, although appealing for many journalists, is still not well developed.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

Kosovo Objective Score: 2.78

The score for this objective remained essentially unchanged compared with last year. Indicator 2 (citizen access to media) dropped a little, while indicator 4 (news agencies) and indicator 6 (transparency of ownership) showed improvement. Indicator 3 (public media are nonpartisan) was the only indicator to not score similarly to the objective score; it lagged behind by more than a point.

Kosovo citizens today enjoy access to a variety of news sources allowing them to select from a variety of public and private media, from electronic to print. Television remains the most prevalent media source. A few newspapers have good reputations and attract devoted readers.

New media, like social networking sites, especially YouTube and Facebook enjoy greater audiences every day. During the December 12 elections, Facebook was widely used by political candidates to campaign and this gave the electorate an opportunity to interact with political candidates to such a degree for the first time. However, the number of bloggers is relatively low in Kosovo. SMS media alerts are still uncommon as news channels in Kosovo.

In Kosovo there are no government restrictions whatsoever on access to domestic or international media and there is no registration needed within the government to access

MULTIPLE NEWS SOURCES PROVIDE CITIZENS WITH RELIABLE, OBJECTIVE NEWS.

PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES INDICATORS:

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

"I can say that RTK has failed in representing all social categories, gender, age groups, religious, and ethnic categories. From a media outlet with a few employees it turned into a mega media outlet with a great number of employees who get very good salaries," Saracini explained.

the Internet. However, general access to print media, the Internet and especially cable is largely determined by income levels. Spahiu said that this is very evident in areas with large minority populations, like Serbs in the north who do not receive Radio Television of Kosovo signals, or Gorans in the south who have access only through satellite dishes.

Publicly owned Radio Television of Kosovo offers balanced coverage in terms of air time devoted to leaders and opposition. While in terms of quantity, Radio Television of Kosovo divides time equally, in terms of quality of programming, panelists agreed that priority is given to governing political parties. This again brings the debate back to government financing and the need for better alternatives. Saracini explained that Radio Television of Kosovo, despite offering good educational and entertainment programs, still needs improvement to fulfill its role of a public media outlet. "I can say that RTK has failed in representing all social categories, gender, age groups, religious, and ethnic categories. From a media outlet with a few employees it turned into a mega media outlet with a great number of employees who get very good salaries," Saracini explained. "This is how Radio Television of Kosovo takes good journalists from other media, so there are higher expectations for them."

Other panelists agreed that board members have attempted to improve the public broadcaster's performance. Paçarizi accepts the fact that there has been a significant amount of debate about the editorial independence of Radio Television of Kosovo. "This is rather a bad perception that has been created," said Paçarizi. "Indeed the public television is a non-partisan television, which has been proven by many studies done so far."

Both local and international news agencies are used by Kosovo's media and local services tend to be affordable. Local media still tend to depend upon Kosovo news agencies. Zejnullahu is encouraged by an international organization that covers subscription fees for local media in order to get

Panelists praised national television's new steps to air programs in other minority languages and using Albanian subtitles rather than dubbing. Today there are programs in minority languages that are received without objection by a majority Albanian population.

access to content from the KosovoLive news agency. However, sometimes news agencies are not cited properly. Despite significant improvement in recent years, panelists agreed that Kosovo media should adhere more closely to copyright and citation standards.

Private media with national frequencies produce their own news, in comparison with local media that, despite producing news with local content, still depend on news agencies for national news.

Regarding awareness of media ownership, although there is no legislation in Kosovo that requires that information about ownership be made available to the public, it is very easy for people to find out the owner of the electronic media they consume. Ownership of online media outlets is often more difficult to discover.

Kosovo media have improved in presenting programs in other languages, especially on public television. There are already five local television stations that air programs in Serbian and there are efforts to create one public television station dedicated to Serbian language programming. Panelists praised national television's new steps to air programs in other minority languages and using Albanian subtitles rather than dubbing. Today there are programs in minority languages that are received without objection by a majority Albanian population.

Print media seems to be open in its coverage of social issues such as gender, ethnicity, and religion. National television stations have made good progress in including ethnic issues in their programming with balanced coverage. Print media also have designated space for opinion pieces addressing different social issues.

Local television and radio stations, since there are no local newspapers, provide better coverage of local issues. All newspapers have local correspondents who cover local issues. Citizen journalism is in an early stage and the most common method is sending photos to national television stations and newspapers on local problems. Media in Kosovo provide

sufficient coverage of the main international news stories and there are no restrictions on international coverage by the government. The widespread use of the Internet in Kosovo also provides alternative international news sources for citizens.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Kosovo Objective Score: 2.15

Objective 4 received the lowest score in this study, and it is moderately lower than last year. Lower evaluations by the panelists of indicator 5 (government distortion of the media market) and indicator 6 (market research) contributed to this decline. Most indicators score close to the objective score. However, indicator 1 (media are efficient and self-sustaining) scored about half a point higher, while indicator 5 scored about half a point lower.

The Independent Media Commission's recent decisions to withdraw licenses for a number of local radio stations that were unable to cover license fee was seen by Zejnullahu as a good sign for market robustness as unsustainable outlets are pushed out. Stronger outlets such as Telegrafi, an online outlet, are evidence that new media, especially online media, can achieve sustainability. According to Ibraj, Telegrafi receives about 200,000 hits per day.

Saracini believes that it is essential for media outlets, especially larger one like national television stations, to have effective management strategies and business plans in order to cope with technology expenses and satisfy the large

MEDIA ARE WELL-MANAGED ENTERPRISES, ALLOWING EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT INDICATORS:

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

number of employees. Business plans are not only necessary, but also can increase chances of success.

Panelists believe that all television stations, national and local, are able to sustain themselves. Zejnullahu said that, unlike some radio stations whose licenses were withdrawn by the Independent Media Commission after failing to pay their fees, no television station has been shut down over the last year for not being able to pay taxes or license fees. The new license fees recently approved by the Independent Media Commission are set according to annual financial reports submitted by the media. Since media outlets have submitted higher annual budgets, license fees have increased 40 percent, evidence that media's financial sustainability has increased.

Ispahiu said that advertising agencies are not used effectively in Kosovo. Out-of-date channels still receive advertising, often on political grounds. Advertising in Kosovo is more developed and more expensive in the capital compared to other parts of the country.

According to regulations, advertising time is restricted to 12 minutes per hour for commercial television stations. According to Zejnullahu, the Independent Media Commission is very attentive to advertising regulations, often sending warnings for exceeding the allowed advertising time. The Independent Media Commission also issues special regulations for advertisements from political parties during elections: these are not counted against the time allocated for advertising.

Public television is allowed no advertising during primetime (this is not respected, however) while during the day it may allocate six minutes per hour for advertising.

In Kosovo the government does not grant subsidies to private media. Up until last year, minority media used to receive 5 percent of their total income from Radio Television Kosovo subscriptions. In 2010 there was no fund allocated for minority media, since Radio Television Kosovo was struggling with its own financial problems.

Regarding government advertising, in general panelists agreed that electronic media in Kosovo enjoy better regulations to ensure fair treatment by the government, while print media are expected to self-regulate. According to the law, government advertising should be allocated to newspapers with the largest circulation; however the government has been repeatedly accused by MSI panelists of unfair distribution of advertising.

"From our experience at RTV21, I can say that only 0.2 to 0.4 percent of advertising revenues comes from government ads, which is very small compared to the revenue that come from

Stronger outlets such as Telegrafi, an online outlet, are evidence that new media, especially online media, can achieve sustainability. According to Ibraj, Telegrafi receives about 200,000 hits per day.

other direct ads, sponsors, etc.," said Saracini. "This is to say that ads from the government are too little in comparison to other ads, meaning editorial independence cannot be jeopardized."

The situation is different with print media, which is largely reliant on advertising from public institutions, which compromises editorial independence. "We all know the case of *Infopress* newspaper, which turned from a small circulation newspaper to a large one, thanks to the support from the government, since most of government ads go to this newspaper," said Ispahiu. Similarly, at the local level, local media depend on local governments. "Local media still look to local governments for advertisements, while most of the central government's ads go to national television stations," said Ispahiu. "This somehow forces local television to maintain good relations with local governments to safeguard financial benefits."

Audience research is often commissioned, but the objectivity of the results is often in doubt and not accepted by all media outlets. The people-meter audience measurement method is not used in Kosovo because of unreliable electric supplies. The Kosovo Electronic Media Industry Group did not conduct any media research last year.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Kosovo Objective Score: 2.50

Supporting institutions received lower scores than last year. Indicator 1 (trade associations), indicator 4 (academic journalism programs), and 5 (short-term training) suffered the largest drops in score in this objective. Indicators 4 and 5 also fell short of the objective score by a half point or more. Indicator 7 (unrestricted and apolitical channels of distribution) exceeded the objective score by about two-thirds of a point.

Panelists generally agreed that the Association of Independent Electronic Media of Kosovo (AMPEK) was very productive last year, and has actively lobbied and influenced

“We work closely with the Independent Media Commission especially in the digitalization process and we have managed to modify the first draft law on digitalization, which in its original form was considered very severe by analysts from Brussels,” said Zejnullahu.

media law amendments. AMPEK represents about 70 percent of electronic media in Kosovo, including the Serb television network. One of AMPEK’s objectives is to push for a legal framework for media according to European standards. “We work closely with the Independent Media Commission especially in the digitalization process and we have managed to modify the first draft law on digitalization, which in its original form was considered very severe by analysts from Brussels,” said Zejnullahu. AMPEK also works in cooperation with other international trade associations and closely cooperates with minority media in Kosovo. AMPEK still depends on grants from international organizations such as USAID and is still unable to sustain itself on membership fees.

Professional associations, including the Association of Professional Journalists of Kosovo (AGKP) and the Journalists’ Union of Kosovo operate more as reactive organizations that raise their voice when freedom of expression is violated. Panelists question AGKP’s professionalism. Each year it selects

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS FUNCTION IN THE PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA.

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS INDICATORS:

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

the best journalist and last year’s winner was recently found guilty of violating the journalism ethics code. Despite a conviction for libel, there was no reaction from professional associations except in statements issued by individual members. Associations do not represent any specialized sectors of the profession such as economic reporters or investigative reports.

Media generally collaborate well with NGOs, especially in promoting freedom of speech and media independence. If there are cases when freedom of expression is violated, usually a number of NGOs issue joint statements condemning the act.

Panelists strongly criticized the quality of journalism programs in both public and private universities. Ispahiu complained that his outlet has difficulty recruiting good journalists. “We usually have to take fresh graduates and train them for some time,” he said. “The Kosovo Institute for Journalism and Communication has turned into an institution of higher education that offers high officials an easy way to get a Master’s degree,” said Ispahiu. “The number of students in the program that plan to have a career in journalism is very low.”

Private university programs tend to be more up-to-date in terms of technology, but the public university attracts the highest number of journalism students. Although modern techniques such as the use of the Internet and multi-media applications are taught, the opportunities to practice them are scarce. The number of graduates from the public university specializing in technical areas such as video production, directing, photography, and sound management are limited. Abazi, a journalism lecturer himself, also complained about the study conditions at the public university. “Nevertheless, almost all of our graduates are working,” said Abazi. “A diploma doesn’t make a good journalist. Most of them understand the profession only when they start working.”

Training opportunities for professional journalists are few and media owners show little interest in investing in training for their staff. Courses on investigative journalism are in high demand but the quality of available training is low. In most cases these are informal trainings conducted by unprofessional trainers.

There are no restrictions for media on the import or purchase of equipment and materials. Printing facilities are owned by private individuals and the state has never tried to own or control them. Not all newspapers have their own printing services, but in general there seems to be a harmonious relationship between printing houses and newspapers, even if a rival newspaper is printed in another’s printing house.

No delays are evident and all newspapers are printed and distributed on time.

In terms of channels of media distribution, panelists said that so far the telecommunication service providers IPKO and KUJTESA have created an oligopoly and the entrance of Post and Telecom of Kosovo will lead to greater affordability. Technology in Kosovo meets the general needs of the media industry, but is far from digital and modern. However, the current state of Information and communication technologies does not affect the quality of the service and slow Internet connectivity or overloaded mobile phone networks are usually not an issue. This holds true in both cities and rural areas.

List of Panel Participants

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Rahman Paçarizi, chair of the board of directors, RTK, Prishtina

Eugen Saraçini, news director, RTV 21, Prishtina

Besim Abazi, journalist, Voice of America, Prishtina

Luan Ibraj, editor, Telegrafi news portal, Prishtina

Marijana Simic, deputy chief editor, Radio KIM, Caglavica

Faik Ispahiu, executive director, Jeta në Kosovë, Prishtina

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