



# IPI Report

4th Quarter 2005

**hybrid issue** including:

- IPI Report 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2005
- deScripto No.4 Fall 2005
- News Agencies Supplement

## deScripto

A Journal of Media in South Eastern Europe

Including:  
Media Reports  
on SEE Countries  
Special Supplement  
on News Agencies

## News Agencies

in South East Europe

# 2006: International Spotlight on Vienna

**With the EU Presidency, Mozart Year and Sigmund Freud Anniversary, international attention will focus on Vienna in 2006. And the city at the heart of Europe is in top shape.**

**H**undreds of delegations from across the world will meet in Vienna during the Austrian EU Council Presidency in the first half of 2006. At the same time, the city will be a main stage in two important anniversaries: 150 years since Sigmund Freud was born, and the 250th anniversary of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. From his early days as a child prodigy, Mozart spent most of his life in Vienna and wrote many of his major works here. He will be honoured with a variety of events for all tastes in 2006 ([www.wienmozart2006.at](http://www.wienmozart2006.at)).

## Key facts

Facts and Figures on the EU Council:

- Austria first held the Council Presidency in 1998.
- Every six months, another EU member state is in charge of setting the agenda and presiding over all Council meetings.
- Austria will take over from the UK on 1 January 2006 and will be followed by Finland on 1 July.
- 66 heads of state and 1,500 journalists are expected to come to Vienna for the EU Latin America Summit at Messezentrum WienNeu in spring 2006.



Photo: Vienna Tourism/Wilfried Gredler-Oxenbauer

*Metropolitan atmosphere and excellent quality of life: Vienna waits for you.*

The city is well prepared for the political and cultural highlights of 2006. Combining traditional hospitality with an exemplary international reputation, Vienna is in perfect shape to take on the responsible task of being an international meeting place.

## Excellent Quality of Life

Vienna holds second place in an international ranking of congress cities. As a leading business location it attracts many international corporations, and bears great responsibility as the seat of international organisations like OPEC and UNIDO.

Owing to its location at the centre of the European Union, Vienna increasingly serves as a key hub for the Central and Eastern European countries. For instance, Vienna International Airport has the second highest frequency of flights to Eastern Euro-

pe – even more than Frankfurt, and second only to London. International studies like the Mercer survey confirm the excellent quality of life Vienna offers.

The Austrian capital is also praised for its benefits as a business location, including high-quality infrastructure and good access to Eastern European markets. It is no coincidence that over 300 international businesses – including IBM, Henkel and Generali – have set up their headquarters for Eastern Europe in Vienna.

## Welcome to Vienna

Where tradition and modern times form a harmonious whole, quality of life goes hand in hand with hospitality. Guests from all parts of the world will confirm: in Vienna, you are always given a warm welcome!

## Letter from Editor

### Dear Readers,

The fourth issue of deScripto is a special issue and may surprise you. It features three different magazines in one single issue: the IPI Report, the deScripto autumn issue, and a special section on private news agencies. You might consider this a rare, and perhaps unusual combination; however, as it has arisen out of a series of coincidences, we thought there were very good reasons to publish the magazine in this format. The reasons are as follows:

The IPI report forms part of the International Press Institute's (IPI) worldwide commitment to freedom of press, while deScripto is published by the IPI-affiliated South East European Media Organisation (SEEMO), and there is a considerable overlap between the readerships of both publications. This combined issue of our magazine offers readers a unique opportunity: Members of the global IPI community will be able to see how SEEMO caters to its own press freedom community in Southeast Europe. And, of course, deScripto readers will be rewarded with a taste of the manifold global activities of IPI.

Meanwhile, deScripto will continue to be a magazine primarily focusing on issues relevant to the SEEMO member countries: Namely, media issues featuring background information on the political, cultural and social role of media in transitional countries. This focus, we believe, is becoming ever more important. Especially as the European integration of the Southeast countries – in particular the West Balkan countries – is slowing down.

It is precisely for these reasons that the arguments for this increasing mutual suspicion are becoming more and more general in relation to daily events and decisions made in the region. This has led to the conclusion that the problems of mutual understanding are to be resolved at a much deeper level, namely in the cultures and modalities of communication.

As far as public communication and public opinion are concerned, the media needs to become more actively involved. However, the exact conditions of that involvement need to be reflected upon and critically examined. deScripto will serve as an agency and a clearing house for this analytical reflection.

In trying to keep deScripto lively and topical there have been some organizational changes. Previously, the editorial work involved several institutions, which led to logistical problems. From this point onward, the magazine will form part of the research and teaching agenda of the University of Vienna. As a result, deScripto will be part of the study program



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## News Agencies Supplement

In the centre of this issue, you'll find the special supplement on News Agencies.

of the Media and Communication Department at the Vienna University. This decision was made in the hope of creating a stable environment that will reduce the ebb and flow of students working on the magazine. We will, therefore, discontinue our cooperation with Vienna Webster University.

At this point, I wish to express my sincere gratitude, particularly, to Dardis McNamee, the journalism teacher who represented Vienna Webster University, and to thank her for the competent support, the helpful advice - especially at the start of deScripto - and for her cooperation in managing the content and enrolment of students. Dardis McNamee was extremely giving of her time and I thank her for her unselfishness.

The editorial management remains in the capable hands of Axel Maireder, who shares his position with Kristina Benkotic. Axel and Kristina are passionately committed to the project and have made significant contributions to the success of this magazine. Both are now affiliated with the study programme at the Department of Communication and Media Studies, University of Vienna, which I have the honour to represent as the editor-in-chief of deScripto.

I hope you enjoy this special issue.

*Thomas A. Bauer*

## imprint

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### Mission Statement

deScripto is committed to the enhancement of a climate of critical reflection on media culture and communication, in and among the SEE countries. Published quarterly as a joint project of the University of Vienna, Webster University Vienna and the Vienna Professional School for Journalism, under the auspices of the South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), deScripto is an independent, journal of analysis and opinion dedicated to the democratization of the media and the development of civic society in the SEE Region.

The views expressed in deScripto are entirely those of the authors and do not represent the positions of SEEMO/IPI.

# IPI Death Watch

1 May to 1 October 2005

**Afghanistan**, 18 May: Shaima Rezayee, 24, a former presenter for the privately-owned television station, Tolo TV, was shot and killed in her home in Kabul. Rezayee hosted the daily music programme "Hop" until 24 March, when she was fired after Tolo TV came under pressure from a government panel of religious scholars, who condemned the channel for broadcasting anti-Islamic programmes.

**Bangladesh**, 30 May: Golam Mahfuz, 39, editor of the daily Comilla Muktakantha, was stabbed to death in his house in Comilla, 88 km east of the capital, Dhaka. The motive for the killing was not immediately known.

**Brazil**, 1 July: José Cândido Amorim Pinto, 45, an investigative journalist for Rádio Comunitária Alternativa in Carpina, Pernambuco State, was shot dead by two men on a motorcycle as he parked his car outside the radio station. Amorim produced and presented an investigative programme in which he frequently reported on corruption cases.

**Iraq**, 15 May: Najem Abd Khudair and Ahmad Adam, correspondents for the independent daily newspaper Al Mada, were killed on a roadside south of Baghdad. The journalists were among some 13 passengers in a minibus that was stopped by an armed group who picked out the journalists and slit their throats. The rest of the passengers were freed.

1 July: Khaled Sabih Al Attar, 43, a TV producer with the Iraqi public television station, Al-Iraqiya, was shot to death in the northern city of Mosul.

28 June: Ahmed Wael Bakri, a news producer for the local television station, Al-Sharqiyah, was killed by gunfire as he was driving from work in southern Baghdad. According to a station director, U.S. soldiers fired at his car after he failed to pull over for a military convoy.

2 August: Steven Vincent, a U.S. freelance journalist, was shot to death by unknown assailants hours after he was abducted at gunpoint by five men in a police car in the southern city of Basra. Vincent had been in Basra for several months carrying out research for a book on the city and reporting for The New York Times and the Christian Science Monitor. On 30 July, four days before

his death, The New York Times published an article in which Vincent voiced strong criticism of Basra's police forces, prompting suspicion that his murder may have been in retaliation for his investigative reporting.

28 August: Waleed Khaled, 35, a Reuters Television soundman, was allegedly shot and killed by U.S. forces. He was shot several times in the face and chest as he drove with Reuters cameraman Haidar Kadhem to investigate the killing of two Iraqi policemen in Baghdad's Hay al-Adil district.

17 September: Hind Ismail, 28, a reporter for the local daily, As-Saffir, was kidnapped in the northern city of Mosul on 16 Sept. Police found her body the next morning with a single bullet wound to the head.

19 September: Fakhre Haider, 38, an

engineer who worked for Al-Iraqiya television, was shot to death while driving with her husband, who was also killed. Their son was seriously wounded. In the past, Al-Iraqiya has been targeted because of its links to the U.S.-supported Iraqi government.

**Lebanon**, 2 June: Samir Kassir, a columnist for the daily Al-Nahar, was killed outside his home in Beirut's Ashrafiyeh neighbourhood when his car exploded after he started the engine. The bomb had been placed under the driver's seat of the car, police said. Kassir was known for his strong criticism of Syria's presence in Lebanon.

**Libya**, 2 June: Daif Al Ghazal, 32, a writer and journalist, was found dead 12 days after he was abducted by unknown gunmen. Al Ghazal, who wrote articles critical of Muammar Gaddafi's regime for the

by Diana Orlova, IPI Secretariat

died after being shot at least seven times by gunmen on motorcycles in Dipolog City, Mindanao Island. Cantoneros frequently criticised local officials for alleged corruption.

10 May: Philip Agustin, publisher and editor of the weekly newspaper Starline Times Recorder, was gunned down in the village of Paltic, north of Manila. He was visiting his daughter's house when he was shot through an open window, police said. The murder occurred a day before the newspaper printed a special edition that linked the local mayor to corruption.

3 July: Rolando Morales, 43, was shot 15 times by gunmen while heading home from work in General Santos City, Mindanao Island. He had just finished hosting his radio programme, "Voice of the Barangay", on Radio Mindanao Network's dxMD station. Morales frequently exposed drug trafficking and other illegal activities on his programme.

**Russia**, 28 June: Magomedzagid Varisov, a prominent journalist and political analyst, was shot and killed in Mahachkala, capital of the Russian republic of Dagestan. Varisov, a columnist for Novoye Delo, Dagestan's largest weekly, was returning home with his wife, when unidentified assailants opened fire on his car. Police believe that the attackers targeted Varisov because of his critical reporting.

**Sierra Leone**, 27 July: Harry Yansaneh, acting editor of For Di People, died of kidney failure, two months after he was brutally attacked by six persons, allegedly on the orders of Fatmata Hassan Komeh, a Member of Parliament for the ruling Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP).

**Somalia**, 5 June: Duniya Muhiyadin Nur, 26, a journalist for HornAfrik Radio and TV, was killed by an unknown gunman while covering a protest near a militia checkpoint on the road from Mogadishu to Afgoi. Nur had reportedly gone to Afgoi to cover a demonstration by truckers against the proliferation of such checkpoints.

**Sri Lanka**, 12 August: Relangi Selvarajah, 44, a popular Tamil TV and radio host, and her husband, Senathurai, were gunned down by unknown assailants in Bambalapitiya, Colombo.



Friends and relatives, many of them colleague journalists, carried the casket of Waleed Khaled, a Reuters Television soundman, during his funeral procession in Baghdad on 29 August 2005. (AP Photo/Khalid Mohammed)

Iraqi reporter working for The New York Times, was found dead in the southern city of Basra after being kidnapped several hours earlier by four masked men. He was found with his hands bound and a single bullet wound to the head.

20 September: Firas Maadidi, 40, Mosul bureau chief for the Baghdad-based newspaper As-Saffir and editor of the local daily Al-Masar, was gunned down outside his home by unidentified gunmen in the al-Noor neighbourhood of Mosul.

21 September: Ahlam Youssef, an

London-based on-line newspaper, Libya Al-Youm, was kidnapped by two armed men on May 21. His body, which showed signs of torture, was found near the eastern city of Benghazi.

**Nicaragua**, 14 August: Rony Adolfo Olivas Olivas, 47, a correspondent for the daily newspaper La Prensa, was shot dead in the city of Estelí, 150 km north of Managua. He had recently written articles on drug trafficking and had received death threats.

**Philippines**, 4 May: Klein Cantoneros, 32, a radio broadcaster for DXAA-FM,

# Nepal: Democracy Denied

by Catherine Power, IPI Secretariat

Caught up in increasing tension between Maoist rebels and the constitutional monarchy, Nepal is fast becoming one of the most dangerous places to practice journalism. For three consecutive years more journalists have been imprisoned in Nepal than anywhere else, and in 2005 hundreds of cases of intimidation, harassment, prolonged detention and, at times, torture and killings have been reported.

Restrictions imposed when King Gyanendra declared a state of emergency on 1 February 2005 delivered a shattering blow to an independent media that had flourished since democracy was restored in Nepal in 1990. During that time the independent media, supported by constitutional guarantees for press freedom did much to promote peace, development and good governance within the country.

The state of emergency, said to be a response to the country's deteriorating security situation, overrode various civil liberties and granted the monarchy absolute administrative powers. Their imposition of direct censorship meant that most journalists were banned from reporting and security forces patrolled newspapers and FM radio offices to prevent production.

The state of emergency was officially lifted on 29 April but full press freedoms were not restored. To the contrary, throughout the early weeks of June mass arrests of journalists who were peacefully protesting for their right to report took place in cities throughout Nepal resulting in hundreds of arrests and detentions. These protests were part of an ongoing campaign by Nepalese journalists and media workers who continue to actively and vigorously challenge restrictions imposed by the state.

From 10 to 16 July, representatives from the International Press Institute (IPI) joined an international press freedom mission to Nepal to investigate journalists' treatment. Participants met with dozens of journalists and editors from the Kathmandu Valley and took part in meetings with government ministers, senior officials of the Royal Nepal Army, civil society representatives and members of the IPI Nepal National Chapter.

Local journalists spoke openly about the harsh effects of government restrictions. Over 1000 journalists, particularly those working in radio, have lost their jobs while many others are working without remuneration. Those journalists who continue to report face direct censorship from the state's interference in editorial independence. The state imposed advertising embargo on "non-cooperative" newspapers has also done much to compromise the econo-

mic viability of many print publications throughout the country.

Members of the media community have also been affected by more intimidating forms of pressure and have been subject to killings, attacks, disappearances, intimidation, harassment, detention and displacement. While Maoist rebels, as well as state security forces are known to be responsible for many of these acts, the emergence of armed "vigilante" groups in certain districts also poses a serious and menacing threat to media practitioners.

IPI representatives travelled outside the capital to the cities of Butwal, Biratnagar and Nepalgunj where conditions are even more unstable. District media are at a greater risk of interference from combatants and also face greater challenges as they try to report from isolated areas using limited infrastructure.

Despite pressure from the mission's participating organizations, as well as interventions from inter-governmental organizations including the United Nations and the European Union, Nepalese authorities have not moved to restore civil liberties. Though the independent press in Kathmandu have made some progress in creating an open space from which to report, the district media continue to be heavily censored and threatened and the ban on FM radio broadcast of political news has yet to be lifted.

Journalists continue to report alarming tactics of intimidation and harassment used against them to prevent the free flow of information. On 4 October, imprisoned journalist Maheshwor Pahari died of tuberculosis after authorities refused to treat him. IPI has joined a number of press freedom organisations in voicing outrage over Pahari's death and in calling for the immediate release of three other journalists still imprisoned in Nepal.

On 10 October, IPI issued a statement calling on the Nepalese authorities to rescind a media ordinance that included sweeping restrictions on press freedom and the rights of journalists, editors and publishers. The Ordinance, promulgated by King Gyanendra on 9 October incorporates tighter provisions for content, ownership and penalties into the press laws enshrined in the 1990 constitution. The ordinance is a clear attempt to further intimidate journalists and media workers and consolidates ongoing efforts to silence the independent media.

For more information on Nepal, please visit IPI's Website: [www.freemedia.at](http://www.freemedia.at)



Picture: Nepalese journalists protest in the capital Kathmandu in a campaign to force the royal government to lift restrictions on media. June, 2005 (AP Photo/Binod)

## IPI World Congress & 55th General Assembly

# Kenya: President Kibaki Promises Freedom of Information Act

by Michael Kudlak, IPI Secretariat

The IPI World Congress and 54th General Assembly, held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 21 to 24 May, was a resounding success, with more than 450 editors, media executives, leading journalists and their guests from 53 countries in attendance.

It was the third time, after 1968 and 1981, that IPI held its annual general meeting in Kenya, and the fifth occasion, after Cairo (1985) and Cape

and elusive,” he said. “My central question is whether we have enough good journalists who know enough about these subjects and can help African audiences understand their African implications.”

Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda, opened the first panel session, “Reporting on Africa”. He urged Western media to stop portraying Africa as a “dark continent”, ravaged by disease, war and famine, and to also report about positive developments. However, he stressed that “Africa must take responsibility for the sorry state of affairs on our continent, most of which inform and generate the kind of reporting that we have witnessed.” He and the other African panelists said it was up to African journalists to highlight positive developments, which would in turn lead to greater foreign investment needed for the continent’s development.

Panel sessions on “Africa’s Development – Attracting Investment” and “Press Freedom Issues/Africa”, which featured a keynote speech by Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka (read in abstentia), rounded off the day’s events.

The second day featured a panel session on “Pluralism and Democracy – The African Experience”, a heated discussion on “Reporting on the Islamic World”, in which several panelists accused Western media of ignorance, stereotyping and sensationalism in their coverage of Muslims and Islam, and a final session on “Terrorism and Civil Liberties.”

On day three, panelists discussed “Kenya: Hopes and Challenges, Vision and Reality” and “Good Governance and the Media”. This was followed by the presentation of the 2005 IPI Free Media Pioneer Award, which this year went to SW Radio Africa, a London, UK-based radio station. Launched in December 2001, SW Radio Africa is run by a group of exiled Zimbabwean reporters and features a successful mix of music, news and interviews. SW Radio Africa’s main aim is to give a “voice to the voiceless” by fostering a dialogue with its Zimbabwean audience, who call in – often at great risk – to air their opinions and give first-hand accounts of the deteriorating situation in their country.

The Nairobi congress proved to be a great success, thanks in large part to the efforts of the Kenyan host committee and IPI’s chairman, Wilfred D. Kiboro, CEO of the Nairobi-based Nation Media Group. As in previous years, the IPI World Congress also provided a valuable meeting place where delegates could



Town (1994) that the IPI membership convened on the African continent.

The four-day event focused on the challenges facing Africa, as well as on issues related to press freedom and the media industry in general.

Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki officially opened the Congress on 22 May at the Kenyatta International Conference Centre, announcing that his government was drafting a Freedom of Information Act, which would enable all Kenyans to obtain access to official records. This was welcomed with caution by the Kenyan press, which expressed concern over President Kibaki’s reference to “necessary safeguards to ensure that [freedom of expression and freedom of the press] are exercised responsibly for the good of the press and the general public.”

Kibaki’s speech was followed by an appeal by His Highness the Aga Khan, founder of the Nation Media Group, who spoke on the potential of African media and his concerns about the “adequacy of journalistic knowledge” in an increasingly complicated world. “The major issues in Africa today are complex

Pictured from left to right are: Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda; Wilfred Kiboro, Chairman of IPI; Mwai Kibaki, President of Kenya; HH The Aga Khan; Johann Fritz, Director of IPI; Moody Awori, Vice President of Kenya

Photo: IPI Kenya

exchange views and share their experiences. Post-Congress tours to the Masai Mara Game Reserve, Mount Kenya National Park and Mombassa, among other destinations, provided further opportunities for informal contacts.

In 2006, the IPI World Congress and 55th

General Assembly will take place in Edinburgh, Scotland, from 27 to 30 May. It is being organised in close cooperation with BBC Scotland, among others, and promises to be a truly memorable event. For more information, visit the official Website: [www.ipiedinburgh.com](http://www.ipiedinburgh.com)

## IPI Protests / Letters of Concern

1 May to 1 October 2005

by Diana Orlova, IPI Secretariat

**China**, 9 May: The ban imposed on Chinese freelance journalist and poet Liu Hongbin. Liu, who has been living in the United Kingdom since 1989 and is the London correspondent for the Chinese service of Radio France International, informed IPI that a ban on his return to China was renewed on 15 March.

**Kazakhstan**, 10 May: The closure of the independent opposition weekly *Respublika*. On 4 May, the appeals court upheld the 25 March decision of the Almaty regional court, which ordered the liquidation of *Respublika's* owner, the Bastau company. On 5 May, Kazakhstan's Ministry of Information, Culture and Sport ordered the closure of the popular opposition weekly.

**Slovenia**, 12 May: The draft Act on Radio Television Slovenia (RTV Slovenia), which, in its present form, does not do everything possible to uphold the independence and autonomy of the public service broadcaster and leaves the organisation vulnerable to political influence and pressure.

**Sri Lanka**, 12 May: The death threats received by two members of the Free Media Movement (FMM), an independent group of editors and leading journalists, from a group calling itself "Theraputtabhaya force".

**Kenya**, 20 May: The decision to discontinue criminal legal proceedings against First Lady Lucy Kibaki. Nation cameraman Clifford Derrick Otieno filed the criminal proceedings against the First Lady on 16 May, alleging assault and malicious damage to property at the Nation Media Group's newsroom.

**Cuba**, 24 May: The detention and expulsion of foreign journalists from Cuba.

**Sierra Leone**, 1 June: The seditious libel charges against two Sierra Leonean journalists, managing editor Sydney B. Pratt and reporter Dennis Jones of the independent weekly *Trumpet*.

**Botswana**, 3 June: The deportation of Prof. Kenneth Good, a political science lecturer at the University of Botswana for the past 15 years, which was a direct result of a speech that Good had been prepared to deliver at a public meeting at the University of Botswana.

**Lebanon**, 6 June: The assassination of Samir Qassir, a prominent columnist for the leading Lebanese daily newspaper, *an-Nahar*.

**Uzbekistan**, 6 June: The ongoing media crackdown in Uzbekistan, where journalists were barred from covering the unrest in Andizhan, eastern Uzbekistan, on 13 May.

**Nepal**, 8 June: The mass arrest of journalists on 8 June in the capital, Kathmandu. The arrests came after journalists marched in protest through streets close to the royal palace.

**Ethiopia**, 9 June: The continued harassment of journalists reporting on violent street clashes in Addis Ababa between police and students protesting over the 15 May parliamentary elections.

**Ethiopia**, 14 June: The arrest of newspaper distributor Fikre Gudu on 8 June, which IPI viewed as an attempt to disrupt information flow.

**Zambia**, 15 June: The assault on newspaper vendors working for *The Post* newspaper in Lusaka. The vendors were attacked by a group allegedly close to the ruling Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD).

**Nepal**, 15 June: The continued

harassment and arbitrary arrests of Nepalese journalists.

**EU/China**, 16 June: The European Union's ongoing failure to publicly and consistently criticise the People's Republic of China (PRC) for its gross violations of press freedom and freedom of expression.

**Zambia**, 29 June: Post editor Fred M'membe's police summons.

**Ethiopia**, 29 June: The arrest of four editors in Ethiopia, and the continued harassment of the media.

**Sierra Leone**, 4 July: The seditious libel law under which Paul Kamara, editor of *For Di People*, is currently imprisoned.

**Russia**, 5 July: The murder of Magomedzagid Varisov, a prominent journalist and political analyst, who was shot and killed on 28 June in Mahachkala, capital of Russia's republic of Dagestan.

**USA**, 6 July: The pursuit of *Time* magazine's Matthew Cooper and *The New York Times* journalist Judith Miller, who were held in civil contempt for refusing to reveal confidential sources.

**USA**, 7 July: The prison sentence handed down to *New York Times* journalist Judith Miller.

**Zimbabwe**, 22 July: The refusal of the Media and Information Commission to grant Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe an operating licence to resume publication of the *Daily News*, which was shut down in September 2003 for violating sections of the 2002 Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

**Sierra Leone**, 2 August: The brutal beating of *For Di People* editor Harry Yansaneh, which is said to have caused his death on 27 July.

**Iraq**, 3 August: The murder of U.S. journalist and author Steven Vincent by unidentified gunmen in Iraq.

**Belarus**, 8 August: The continued harassment of journalists, after several Polish and Belarusian journalists of Polish descent were detained in the cities of Schuchin and Grodno.

**Belarus**, 23 August: The criminal inquiry opened by the Minsk City Prosecutor's Office into the possible defamation of the President of Belarus in a series of satirical Internet cartoons.

**Yemen**, 25 August: The abduction and harassment of *Al-Wasat* editor-in-chief Jamal Amer.

**EU/China**, 5 September: The summit meeting between British Prime Minister Tony Blair and representatives of the People's Republic of China (PRC), which failed to properly address the PRC's need to respect press freedom and freedom of expression.

**Niger**, 16 September: The worsening press freedom situation in Niger.

**Poland**, 20 September: The treatment of Grzegorz Gauden, editor-in-chief of the Polish *Rzeczpospolita* daily, by the downtown Warsaw District Prosecutor's Office.

**Slovenia**, 27 September: The new broadcasting law, which leaves the Slovenian public broadcaster, RTV Slovenija, vulnerable to political influence and pressure.

**Poland**, 29 September: The recent legal actions against the media, often seeking orders prejudicial to press freedom, which are threatening the financial survival of these organisations.

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## **News Agencies** in South East Europe



# Making News - For: or: Faking News -

**News agencies' self-understanding under pressure of change due to radical transitions of systems in medias, politics and communities.**

by Thomas A. Bauer

*News are merely considered as goods – that is, economical, meritorious, and political goods.*

There are essentially two approaches to consider news agencies. The empirical approach analyzes the news agency's central position in managing the distribution of news within the societal or sociopolitical context. It emphasizes questions of media economy, media politics and media policy. News are merely considered as goods – that is, economical, meritorious, and political goods. It dismisses any thoughts on symbolic or cultural measures of societal, political or other discourses.

Conversely, the critical approach raises the question: What is the political or socio-political paradigm in making news or managing the flux of news? It highlights issues of power and domination, and, of course, the question of systemic interests.

The young democracies of East and Southeast Europe are undergoing a process of radical transformation – democratic-politically, socio-politically and medially.

The era of state-owned news agency is not over yet. And the old journalistic practice of facing state-owned news agencies with a critical and, simultaneously, a pragmatic attitude may no longer be en vogue in the age of private-economies. What is more, because of the Internet new possibilities and models of generating publics are gaining in importance.

## **The political and economical idea of the news agency**

Let us begin by considering, first, the traditional approach to news agencies. For the most part, the content featured in newspapers, on television, and online is obtained through news agencies. In a medially-constructed world, news agencies are the prime source of information and public knowledge. Agencies do not simply collect data and information. Rather, they organize, edit, select data and information, and – for a “small” fee – distribute it to other

media companies, organizations, institutions, governmental agencies or private enterprises.

In that sense, news agencies are not just economic enterprises. They are primarily publicity enterprises. They are trading places for information and opinions about events as well as for opinions about opinions.

Their central grip on distribution endows agencies with the kind of power that brings them into close proximity to hierarchical interests, although – or precisely: because – they principally symbolize the model of provision of free access to information and knowledge.

## **Implications of the agency model**

The term agency as a designation for organizations which provide the public flow of information may be misleading. Media theorists often interpret agencies as a locus of objective selection. These theorists probably consider agencies as organizations which provide information goods and serve in the financial interests of other organizations rather than their own interests.

This argument about the provision of (limited, scarce, and expensive) goods, by itself hierarchical, was established fairly early on, and has been exploited shamelessly in the political context.

In the framework of dominant hierarchical paradigms in the economical, political and social realm, the argument of public provision was interpreted as a functional and moral obligation of agencies or as an organizational and moral relief for single media enterprises and the journalistic practice.

Theoretically, agencies symbolize the public right to obtain knowledge as well as the moral obligation to distribute knowledge, and the right as well as the obligation to selective confidentiality in order to protect opinions and the people who hold these opinions.

This gate-keeping function is neatly captured by

*News Agencies are trading places for information and opinions*

# aking Views? Making Views?

the concept of agency, which was established by Reuters and the Associated Press as early as 1848. Agencies, after all, obtain, edit, and distribute news in the name of factual, technical and moral competence.

News agencies may be conceived of, as well, controlling and regulatory models operating in the name of political and, frequently, hierarchical interests. In that sense, they are objects of factual and public trust as well as a screen on which to project the moral norms of how goods ought to be dealt with.

## Changing and deepening the perspectives of reflection of what is news?

If you consider the political development in East- and Southeast countries – that is the transition of political systems, the systemic transformation of media, the structural change of technology in general and the revitalization of social structures of society – it becomes a demand to take into account the enlightenments of science and experience: everything that is connected to politics and society is much more complex than organizations of political or/and commercial interests may try to convince the public.

News agencies never have been just channels for transmitting news. News agencies have always been workshops of political and societal reality.

News agents always have misused their position or have been misused as mechanics in the symbolic construction of reality– no matter if this happens in communist systems or as “embedded journalism” in connection to the warfare reporting in Iraq.

News agencies in a globalized and medialized democracy are a concentration point of knowledge, experience and of organizational culture of societal discourse in a media-democratic environment. In media-democracy and in societies with increasing civil-social character news agencies have to find a

new role and a new self-understanding. At least the internet teaches us the lesson that the construction and the concentration of knowledge and opinion can go rather heretic and “heterarchic” ways.

Meanwhile it is not any more new, but yet, it has to be remembered with emphasis: nothing is new just out of itself, things are considered new always in comparison.

News is not an absolute feature, it is a code of evaluation, an expression and signification of learning to understand the world by comparison. Information becomes news by re-signification.

*News agencies have always been workshops of political and societal reality.*



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Events are not new and not news-worthy by themselves, they become newsworthy because of the environment of comparison and because of the comparing perspective they get considered by; they become stories because they are considered as pieces with relevance and compatibility to other pieces in the whole puzzle of construction of reality.

### News as codes with signifying power

Historically, the production of news has always been linked to hierarchical structures and systems. News-worthy stories are never ordinary stories. They are stories with political implications. That is, stories by or for prominent figures with relevance to the public or public opinion.

Such stories simply could not be left to free or arbitrary social exchange. Newsworthy stories have always served to affirm and stabilize (political, social, and economic) systems. Especially, the countries of East and South-Eastern Europe know only too well that authority systems (ab)use news agencies to construct reality as they see fit. Quite possibly, they now experience a similar, but decidedly different (ab)use of the system, even though – or precisely because – news agencies are privately-owned. The dictate of ratings is probably just as dominant as the dictate of politics.

News agencies are not just organizations which administrate the flux of news. They are – what is natural for organizations and companies – organizations of their own interest, dealing and negotiating with information goods which are not theirs but everybody's own.

Seen from this perspective, news agencies are more than just input-output organisations for the flux of information. They are socially, politically and/or economically organized networks of sharing societal discourses.

News agencies socialize information and deal with fragile constructs of reality rather than with real new events. In that sense, news agencies are making news. And news are making views.

Therefore, there seems to be hardly any doubt that societies – as long and so far as they are institutionally framed in structures of national administrations and politically organized in networks of power – also need a system which rules the “flux of news”, thus taking care for political and societal viability of information and communication.

In an open and democratic society, but effectively organized by economical structures of competition, there is no question that that the flux of news is best balanced by centres of competence – news agencies. But what is the competence of news agencies?

### The Chance of new democracies and the fragility of “mediocracy”

The Eastern and South-Eastern European states are still considered as new democracies. That term of “new democracies”, however, should not be taken as an euphemization of late-born democratization. But rather, the term should be understood as declaration of learning and of taking the chance to realize all those sustained conditions on which a novel democracy can thrive in the beginning.

In my view, this seems to be particularly important for the relationship between democracy and the media. In this relationship, news agencies have a special function due to their pole-gatekeeping-position. To put it differently, media democracy needs a creative shot in the arm – in economical, medial and political practice. Within this context, news agencies are part of particularly challenged and privileged institutions. Technologically and sociologically, news agencies have their finger on the pulse of developments.

Generally, the situational assessment of media democracies swings between two poles: deep skepticism and far-reaching hope.

Skeptics argue that democracy is becoming increasingly deintellectualized under the conditions of qualitatively and quantitatively transformed, and highly commercialized communications relations.

Pragmatics take a more optimistic stand. Referring to the Internet's new possibilities, pragmatics count on the developments of participatory models and methods, which democracies have not yet seen. These developments, pragmatics assume, would provide the civil society – the embodiment of modern democracy – with un-thought of opportunities of non-dominant and “de-hierarchized” communication and political participation.

Through new media, and, above all, through new media cultures, democracy is endowed with a civil-social legitimization, which classifies every governmental legitimization as an unnecessary and increasingly undesirable intervention.

The catchphrase of media democracy is an intellectual as well as a pragmatic construct with a confrontational impetus that is two-fold. On the one hand, it confronts the media with a social-moral democratic potential: participation, responsibility, authenticity, solidarity, etc. But it also, confronts the very understanding of democracy with the communicative potential of the media: publicity, transparency, accessibility.

There still remains enough play to re-interpret the role of news agencies in democracies that were established recently and those that were established a long time ago.

*News agencies are organizations of their own interest, dealing and negotiating with information goods which are not theirs but everybody's own.*

# Gatekeepers in Stormy Times

“Compared to the Milosevic era, we do not feel that we are working in an enemy environment any more. We do not feel that we are working in a friendly environment either, but we do not expect that. We want to be left alone,” says Zoran Sekulic, a Belgrade journalist and owner of the private Serbian news agency FoNet. Private news agencies are growing rapidly in South East Europe: DeScripto compared two of them which are working under completely different circumstances.

*by Joseph Gepp*

Times have changed in Eastern Europe. Where there was once a state-owned economy and very often synchronised media landscape, there is now a free-market economy and a dazzling pluralist media landscape. News agencies are even more concerned with this development than other media that consumers directly see. The reason: even in state controlled systems there are different kinds of newspapers for different kinds of people. Nevertheless, there is only one news agency, which is owned by the state and represents it. If you want to control public opinion, the best thing to do is start at the news agency level. The news agency is the institution from which all others get their information. Its business is to decide what is real and what is newsworthy. After that it's the business of the newspapers, magazines, TV and radio stations to interpret the real stuff. In Marxist terminology, one can compare the news agency to the base and all the other media to the superstructure. News agencies decide which information goes into that wide network of discourse that forms public opinion. In a figurative sense news agencies are the gatekeepers of society.

Therefore, it is very interesting to look at the role of news agencies in South East Europe. In a lot of these countries, private agencies have become detached from the big, state-driven agency. Suddenly there are several gatekeepers watching what information comes in. Is money their only interest? Or are there also ideological, religious or ethnic aspects?

One has to keep in mind that these elements play a much bigger role in South East European societies than those of Western and Central Europe. Who are the owners? Are they critical intellectuals who live in the country? Are they Western companies who care mainly about profit? Or even ideological groups or political parties?

DeScripto spoke with two news agencies to find out more about these questions: Serbian FoNet belongs to Zoran Sekulic, a Belgrade journalist. Romanian Mediafax, located in Bucharest, is the market leader in the country.

Mediafax is by far the biggest news agency in Romania – and it's private. The owner is a Romanian company called Media Pro International, which also owns several private TV stations. Mediafax serves 90 per cent of national newspapers and magazines, 70 per cent of Romanian TV channels and radio stations, 15 Romanian miniseries and 990 companies. According to Mioara Craciun, who works in the customer department of Mediafax, it has an overall reputation of being “very accurate and 100 per cent impartial”. Among its clients are as illustrious names such as Alcatel, Brau Union, Microsoft and Kraft Foods. Founded in 1991 after the fall of Ceausescu, it soon became market leader.

All in all, the business methods and societal function of Mediafax are comparable to that of Western agencies: “There is no political or ideological pressure which plays a role in the work of Mediafax,” says

# The South East Europe Media Organisation

The South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), an affiliate of the International Press Institute (IPI), is a regional non-governmental, non-profit network of editors-in-chief, media executives and leading journalists from newspapers, magazines, radio and TV stations, news agencies and new media in South East Europe. SEEMO was founded in October 2000 in Zagreb, Croatia.

One of SEEMO's main activities is protecting press freedom. Over 60 per cent of SEEMO's press releases and letters of protest to governmental and other officials have had positive results in the past. Every SEEMO protest is distributed to more than 12,000 addresses: to leading regional and international media, national and international governmental and non-governmental organisations, politicians, and also public persons and institutions.

During the last four years, SEEMO has assembled over 3,000 editors-in-chief, media executives, leading journalists and public persons from the region in various meetings. Helping journalists means also furthering their education. Several workshops and seminars were organised in the field of education, especially for investigative reporters and representatives of minority media.

SEEMO regularly publishes *De Scripto*, a quarterly media magazine for South Eastern Europe, which is committed to the enhancement of a climate of critical reflection on media culture and communication, in and among the South East European countries, and South East Europe Media Handbook (SMH), an annual publication covering media developments, which includes selected media contacts.

SEEMO also gives two annual awards for outstanding achievements in the field of media: "Dr Erhard Busek - SEEMO Award for Better Understanding" and the SEEMO Human Rights Award "SEEMO Award for Mutual Cooperation in South East Europe".

## SEEMO Conferences Preview:

1. SEEMO Dialogue Meeting between Editors-in-Chief and Media Executives from South East Europe, Vienna, Spring 2006
2. SEEMO Dialogue Meeting between Editors-in-Chief and Media Executives from Roma Media in South East Europe, Autumn 2006
3. South East Europe Media Handbook 2005/2006 will be published in February 2006
4. Minority Media Handbook will be published in Spring 2006

Cr?ciun. We can believe her; Mediafax works in a profit oriented way. Generally speaking, this way is the reason for its success; its only interest is in making profit. It is not interested in influencing anybody, and it does not care about civil society and its well-being. Mediafax is just a business, a company like any other company in Central and Western Europe.

The situation of FoNet is a bit more different. Founded in 1994, the private Serbian news agency is the third behind state-driven Tanjug and the private Beta news agency. Owned by Belgrade journalist Zoran V. Sekulic, FoNet is self-financed and operates on market-oriented principles, but plays a role in the development of Serbian civil society. The current governance is a mixture of revolutionaries against Milosevic and heirs to Milosevic, but it is getting better. Sekulic explains that although FoNet faced hard times, nowadays there is no longer an "enemy environment". "We want to be left alone. We want a fair and clear legal framework for our work and an equal starting position in the developing media market." As well, "There are much more sophisticated methods of influencing media and occasional attempts at manipulating them [today in comparison with Milosevic era]. They come from political and financial centres of power, but FoNet somehow manages to reject or avoid them. That is why our clients recognise FoNet as the most reliable and credible news agency source in Serbia and Montenegro." Today it seems that it is at least possible to work undisturbed. However, working as a capitalist business with capitalistic goals is not as easy as in Romania.

Being a gatekeeper in times of transformation is not very easy. Both examples show that the era of state-controlled, interpreted sovereignty in South East Europe is over. Nowadays the goal of news agencies is to make profit within a capitalistic system. Sometimes this goal is clear and unchallenged – as in the case of Mediafax in Romania. Sometimes this goal still has to be wrested from powerful factions – as in the case of FoNet in Serbia. Nevertheless, it looks like the time of the "enemy environment" in South East Europe is over. This is a step in the right direction. The more gatekeepers that exist, the more pluralistic a society can be. Even in stormy times.

# Bridges for regional co-ope

News agencies are important for the dissemination of ethnic minority issues in national languages. By educating the public and allowing the minority community to be part of society, news agencies play a role in the improvement of inter-ethnic tolerance. deScripto talked to journalists and project managers working for privately owned news agencies and organisations in the region, revealing the challenges and potential of ethnic minority coverage.

*“Mainstream media provides work to Roma purely for ethnic balance among its employees and representation towards the outside public.”*

“It is disappointing that mainstream media provide work to Roma purely for ethnic balance among employees and representation towards the outside public, without even giving them the chance to practice their job as skilled journalists,” criticises Esther Holbrook, coordinator of the Roma Press Center (RPC) in Budapest. Indeed, the role of ethnic minorities in the media is more than controversial: minority issues need professional and sensitive reporting, and at the same time, media institutions need to provide the requested space for such coverage. News agencies play a crucial role in the struggle of ethnic minorities for effective social and political integration, though programmes in minority languages remain within the sphere of local media.

“Thanks to the exposure of minority issues, we succeeded in raising the interest of the public, meaning that the recognition of rights in local communities slowly became easier and more efficient,” confirms Stojan Obradovic, editor-in-chief of private Croatian news agency STINA.

In a similar way, the Slovakian Roma Press Agency (RPA) strives for the development of a democratic civil society which integrates Roma communities. The agency’s aim is to reduce the social distance the majority population feels towards the Roma through educating Roma journalists and presenting their work in the media to the benefit of both the minority and the majority in society.

In Belgrade “BETA provides persistent reporting on ethnic minority issues,” says Djordje Zorkic, deputy director of the regional news agency. “It is our intention to provide full and objective coverage supporting the best interests of minorities.” BETA news agency continuously disseminates articles in Serbian, Albanian, Hungarian, Romani and English free of charge on the Internet.

The European Union (EU) promotes the active involvement of members of ethnic minorities in media institutions as well as the reporting of minority-related issues in both public and private media.

European policy-makers visualise ethnic minorities as social bridges between countries, built upon the ideals of anti-discrimination, mutual acceptance, inclusion and participation.

During the last three years, the involvement of news agencies proved to be essential in sensitising south-eastern European society; through increased reporting on political elections, on the work of minority councils, on problems of proportional representation of minorities in public institutions, on education and housing, on cooperation in the region, and on international protection obligations, minority communities gradually become part of daily life.

## Informative and educational projects improve minority coverage

“We recognise the role of minorities in the creation of good neighbour relations among countries in the region,” declares Obradovic, highlighting the goal behind a regional project entitled “Educational and information support to implementation and protection of national minorities and strengthening of inter-ethnic tolerance in Croatia”, implemented by STINA between May 2004 and April 2005.

The project enabled the concept of news agency to further develop and encompass work as a special media institution undertaking educational and information work concerning the improvement of minority rights.

“As a result of the project we should stress that over 50 print and electronic media progressed in their reporting on minority rights, minority politics and issues of inter-ethnic tolerance,” Obradovic explains.

A similar project is currently being put into practice by the Media Diversity Institute (MDI) of London: “Seeing the Roma without prejudice” brings together 11 news agencies from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia and Montenegro. “The project aims at helping Roma

*“We recognise the role of minorities in the creation of good neighbour relations among countries in the region.”*



# ration

## Private news agencies reporting on ethnic minorities: development of democratic values

by Hannes Goegele

communities overcome discrimination, marginalisation and violations of their rights through a process of media education and empowerment, and by increasing the fair representation of Roma voices in the media,” states Lavinia Olmazu in the project outline. Concerned about the low impact of short-term projects, BETA fosters two long-term programmes: the first is called “KosovaKosovo”, an Internet-based and interactive news resource in Albanian, Serbian and English; the second focuses on the Roma community providing news coverage in Romani, Hungarian and Albanian. “Reporting on minority issues is not a commercial business, therefore we continued the programmes we had started, even after the funding was over,” reinforces Zorkic.

### Minority coverage for majority audiences

The Hungarian Roma Press Center was established in 1995 as a non-profit, private news agency with the aim of supplying mainstream media in Hungary with unbiased coverage of Roma issues seven days a week. The Roma Press Center has a multi-ethnic staff, but all journalists and editors are Romani. As a result of an agreement with the local media, journalists get a direct reward whenever their articles are published.

“While the production of news items and feature articles remains our main activity, the RPC has expanded its programme to include several other activities which help to diversify the coverage of political, social and legal realities affecting the Roma,” explains Esther Holbrook. Sending out a weekly newsletter to various subscribers - mainly NGOs, embassies and local media institutions, the RPC produces about 80 to 100 articles in Hungarian a month. This facilitates the strengthening of the overall representation of Roma in the mainstream media, bringing issues of racial discrimination, segregation, and deprivation further into public consciousness and discussion.

“Often Roma members or local Roma NGOs contact us directly and draw our attention to the stories that we report about,” Holbrook clarifies; “We then decide whether to bring it as a story in our news. We know who to talk to, and who would potentially be

willing to buy the story; mostly local media accept our offers.”

“Professional information is our rule,” Zorkic says, emphasising BETA’s keen and successful efforts in “persistently supplying articles on ethnic minority issues using the online channel”.

In Croatia, STINA’s “focus lies more within the Roma and Serbian communities. Nevertheless, whenever there are news items concerning, for example, education or bilingual town signs, we also cover issues relating to the smaller Italian, Czech or Macedonian minorities,” says Obradovic. “We sell our articles to newspapers mainly in Croatia, but also in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as to national and regional radio stations, among them Radio Free Europe and Deutsche Welle.”

### How to best spread minority voices?

The above-mentioned STINA project showed that radio proved to be the most suitable means of promoting minority issues to the general public. “Within the framework of the project, we had the possibility of offering 26 promotional radio shows to

*“Over 50 print and electronic media improved their reporting on minority rights, minority politics and the issue of inter-ethnic tolerance.”*

Picture: Young Journalists working at Roma Press Center (by Esther Holbrook, RPC)



*Systematic education of journalists covering minority issues is essential both for mainstream and minority journalists.*

local stations, which showed strong support. Many of these stations lack staff and financial means to produce such shows on their own. It was extremely important for rounding out and improving their programmes,” Obradovic elaborates.

The RPC also seeks to spread Roma voices through a project with Hungarian Radio C, Esther Holbrook explains. “The main topics of the Decade of Roma Inclusion - education, employment, health and housing – are at the centre of four two-hour shows, during which we discuss potential improvement of the situations and their challenges with experts and government representatives.”

### **Raising professional standards when reporting on minority issues**

The systematic education of journalists covering minority issues is essential both for mainstream and minority journalists working within news agencies. Raising professional standards when reporting about ethnic minorities and training journalists to independently create programmes have proven essential to the creation of a broad acceptance of minority rights and inter-ethnic tolerance.

“We train our journalists within a Regional Education Development Programme. We had already in 1996 started a Media Internship Programme, which was then carried out in cooperation with the Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ)”, Holbrook says.

The activities of the MDI project focus on the professional training of Roma journalists on the basis of the MDI’s “Media Relations Guide for Roma”, and the production of news and features on Roma people for publication and broadcast.

In the case of Croatia, Obradovic emphasises that “via various publications and seminars, the STINA project contributed to the education of over 3,000 members of national minority councils, representatives of minority organisations, NGO activists and representatives of local authorities.”

### **Cooperation across borders: regional news agencies**

“BETA’s management pioneered the offering of cooperation in the region,” Zorkic says. Regional training seminars for both majority and minority journalists such as one called “Minorities as bridges for regional cooperation”, organised by STINA in 2004, further encourage the potential exchange of experience and contact, and build a common approach to the issue. Comprehensive reporting provided through news agencies assists the western Balkan countries in their efforts to overcome conflict and fosters stabilisation.

“...the RPC collaborates on mutual story ideas with other Roma agencies in the region, such as the

Roma Press Agency in Slovakia and Dzeno in the Czech Republic; we call each other for details, info and story sharing,” explains Holbrook.

### **Funding**

The survival of private news agencies depends on public funding. “Financial support is decreasing. However, through our publications and the development of a Strategy on Desegregation, we got some funding from the Hungarian Ministry of Information, as well as some grants from specific international donors,” Holbrook says, explaining how the RCP is able to maintain its financial position.

Likewise in Croatia, the Council for National Minorities will fund the further publication of STINA’s “Minority Forum” in form of a newspaper, a great recognition for the news agency.

### **Conclusions: Lack of social responsibility**

Talking to journalists revealed that news agencies are crucial to political and social stabilisation in the region. Promoting inter-ethnic tolerance and minority rights, news agencies contribute to the civil participation of minority communities.

Furthermore, news agencies should potentially be obliged to employ both majority and minority journalists; through continuous education, awareness-raising and sensitisation, journalists should have the opportunity to cover both majority and minority issues.

News agencies are responsible for bringing together journalists from mainstream and minority, while both public and private media foster experience-sharing and aid in building a common understanding through tolerant and objective reporting. News agencies should adapt monitoring skills to suit the mainstream media. Systematic education of journalists covering minority issues is essential both for mainstream and minority journalists.

News agencies contribute to the civil participation of minority communities as well as to political and social stabilisation in the region. Being aware of all this, we realise that news coverage does not stop at political borders; news agencies should use the opportunity to report on minority issues in cooperation with similar agencies in other countries in the region.

National governments, the European Union, international organisations and other donors should feel encouraged to further support the work of news agencies, especially those covering minority issues.

Up to now, only a few agencies have recognised their social duty and started to build bridges between minorities and majorities, from nation to nation releasing a variety of articles, newsletters, radio shows and research studies. There is still a long way to go.

*News agencies contribute to the civil participation of minority communities as well as to political and social stabilisation in the region.*

# Needed: Self-regulation in the Media Industry

**Brankica Petkovic** received in Nov. 05 the Dr. Erhard Busek-SEEMO Award for Better Understanding in South East Europe 2005. Brankica Petkovic is director at the Peace Institute in Ljubljana and is mainly involved in researching and writing on minorities, especially on Roma, in Slovenia. By opportunity of the receiving ceremony in Vienna she gave the following interview to deScripto.

by Thomas Bauer

*deScripto: During your long years working in journalism you got more and more involved in minority matters, especially those of the Roma. And you yourself became engaged very much in improvements in the status of minorities in the south-east European media landscape. What are the most important achievements concerning minorities in the field of media and media work in south-eastern Europe compared to the situation before the transformation period?*

Petkovic: I can mostly talk about the situation in Slovenia, and only partly about the media integration of minorities in other countries of South East Europe. In Slovenia, some progress was made for the Roma community; the minority media until now has operated predominantly for Italian and Hungarian minorities.

I have been engaged in the media empowerment of the Roma community in Slovenia, helping them to educate and equip themselves to run their own community media service, and during this year advocating their right to become part of the public broadcasting service in Slovenia. Minorities from other parts of former Yugoslavia (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo and Macedonia) are completely excluded from the media system in Slovenia; this is connected to a lack of normative and constitutional recognition for them in Slovenia. In other countries of South East Europe minority programming is often part of public service broadcasting and is sometimes improperly run by journalists from the majority community. However, there are some Roma broadcasting media outlets run by Roma and supported by donations. The best-running station in my opinion has been Multiradio in Novi Sad, Serbia, which broadcasts programming in different minority languages and also has some joint programmes. Its operation has been interrupted, but I hope Multiradio will continue to exist.

*In light of your impressive work as the head for media policy at the Peace Institute in Ljubljana and as*

*a trainer in courses for Roma journalists, what do you think are the most important practical challenges for the media-owning majority in the establishment of a social and economic structure of communication fairness?*

Considering predominant and rather legitimate commercial interests in the media I would opt for more self-regulation in the media industry, through which the media industry could willingly make, respect and impose its own rules to provide social values and cultural diversity which are properly reflected and respected in the media.

It could be done through codes of ethics and press councils, through readers, editors and ombudsmen at newspapers, through transparency of ownership, business and editorial policies, through employment policies and training programmes provided for journalists, through the social and environmental reporting of each media enterprise, etc.

Citizens, especially children, youth, and minority groups, have to be empowered to critically use the media, to produce their own media, and to request media responsiveness to their needs, suggestions and complaints.

*What is in general your opinion on the power of media – especially regarding the many segregations between and inside societies? Do you believe in an integrative impact by media?*

When I advocate citizen and minority engagement in the media field, and thus contributions to the establishment of community media, I always need to say that it is one job that needs to be done, but the bigger job is to introduce a respect by mainstream media for cultural diversity in editorial, employment and business policy.

We are facing fragmentation of the media market and it will be even more fragmented with the digitalisation of broadcasting. Therefore, it is important that each country have a strong and good public broadcasting service to contribute to social cohesion and also at least few quality print media to play such a role.



Brankica Petkovic  
(Photo: SEEMO)

# 75 Years of Romanian Broadcasting

The history of an institution can be fully understood only if we pinpoint and understand its context. That is exactly what we are trying to do, for defining the 75 years that have passed since the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Corporation was founded. The century started with the installment of the first public phones in Paris and New York City, the nesience of Clarke Gable, the opening of the first personal exhibition of Picasso and the awarding of the first Nobel prizes. The same century marked in the year 1928 Trotsky's expulsion from Moscow, the first telephone conversation between Paris and New York City, the sale of the first TV sets with 24, 36 and 48 lines, in a store in New Jersey for 75 dollars each, the premiere, in Berlin, of Bertolt Brecht's play "The Threepenny Opera", Alexander Fleming's discovery of penicillin, the launching of the first five year plan in USSR, the first big-screen adventure for Mickey Mouse. In Romania, the century started with young Constantin Brincusi being awarded the bronze medal at the Arts School in Bucharest for one of his sculptures and continued with premieres in every field, from the architectural redefining of the cities, to the big operas in literature. Racovita created speology, Persu invents the aerodynamic automobile and writes a complex study on planes aerodynamics.

## First signal, first day on the air

In line with all the big challenges in Europe, Romania of the first decades of the 20th century was keeping up in all the fields of contemporary civilization. Nothing of what was "en vogue" in Paris, Berlin or Vienna did not take long to arrive in Romania as well. Examples can be found in the organizing of institutional structures, in cultural and scientific affairs. That is why in Romania there was a true pro-radio movement even before 1928.

## Radio was born a poet

November 1st 1928. The first official Romanian radio signal is transmitted on air. The poem "A New Soul" was dedicated to the occasion, written and read at the microphone by writer Horia Furtuna, who

later on became editor and program director of the new company. "A New Soul" appears to be the first Romanian poem transmitted on air, a first in a long series of lyrical moments presented by the public national radio station.

## A university for everybody

About the role of radio, as it was thought of in the third decade, the authorized voices from the beginning of the century confirmed the fact that radio programs were well received by the audience and they should be accessible to everybody. On February 11th 1932, with the opening of the big studio situated in General Berthelot Street, the minister of Public Projects and Communications gave in his speech a definition of the public radio:

"... a kind of university for everybody, where the useful and informative things should complete each other and the systemic education of the masses requires a constant evolution."

## The voice of national identity

Of course, after the first program on air, on November 1st 1928, and after the starting years, Romanian radio had in the following years a spectacular and obvious evolution, in quantity and quality, editorial and technical, in equipment and audience and especially in awareness.

The main periods in this evolution could be: 1928-1937; 1938-1944; 1945-1989 and the one after 1990:

The first period is characterized by the necessity of consolidating actions, the changing of the law on installment and use of radio sets, diminishing import taxes for radio sets and acquiring the necessary equipment for enlarging air time. Now takes place the first broadcasting of an opera from a studio of Radio Romania, the first studios are built in General Berthelot Street, the legal framework is set for developing the national broadcasting network, the first broadcastings in foreign languages and the first sport broadcasting. In 1936, through a new organizing law the Radio-telephone Broadcasting Corporation

becomes the Romanian Broadcasting Corporation and a year later the corporation is subordinated at the Ministers Council.

The period 1938-1944 is one of the most frustrating. Carol the Second, “king playboy”, instructed the first censure in Radio Romania’s history. But, in spite of the royal dictatorship and the war, Romanian radio manages to maintain its initial role, that of informing and propagate culture. This can be proven by the percentage between the spoken part (22,37 %) and music (52,32 %).

What could be a paradox is the important role given to local studios and the acquiring of short waves transmitters, meant to cover the whole of the country. During Antonescu’s dictatorship Romanian radio had an obvious psychological and propagandistic mission, that was evident also in the music, which promoted mostly traditional Romanian music. During the war, although the evacuation of the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Corporation started on April 22nd 1944, program broadcasting was never interrupted, not even during the most difficult times, on August 23rd 1944. On August 23rd 1944, the Romanian radio broadcasts the King’s message to the country. A day later, the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Corporation was destroyed by a German bombardment.

The third period in the history of the Romanian national public radio is during the communist decades, when the structures and activities of the institution have to follow the new organizational rules of ROR. Above from the existence of a general program department, with a political, a cultural and a musical department, the political coordinate becomes decisive for all the programs. On June 11th 1948 the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Corporation becomes controlled by the unique communist party and the entire editorial activity is subordinated to the various points coming from the unique party, subordinated to the communist ideology and propaganda, whether we refer to the period before Ceausescu to his “golden age”.

Considered the most suitable mean of propaganda, the voice of the radio entered the houses of most Romanians, not only by family packages, but also by a big scale action that reached millions of speakers with a single station. Of course, investments are being made, new buildings acquired, new studios, concert halls and the network of regional studios is consolidated. At the beginning of the ‘80’s a new censor is instituted, without any justification. By a presidential order the regional stations are dissolved,

the written press is verified word by word, television broadcasts only two hours a day, after the North Korean model, and at the radio someone was always with one hand on the “OFF” button. The professionalism of all the departments reaches an unimaginable level of performance for any journalist around the world. People had sent, on air, even the slightest trace of hope, to make up texts from slogans and truths from a puzzle of common places.

### How we won the lost sympathy

December 1989 was for Radio Romania and the Romanian society a turning point and an exam which they passed. With a serious attitude, promptness and objectivity they tried to regain listeners’ sympathy. After 1989, the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Corporation, like all mass media institutions, went through a real freeing process, it went out of isolation and through the redefinition of quality. It is a time of development in editorial and technical structures, a time of intense international cooperation with prestigious institutions.

All of these put together define the new European and international road of an institution placed at the top of Romanian audiovisual market, by its professionalism. Radio Romania managed to make up for those journalistic matters that define public radio as the prerogative of national culture and identity, in most contemporary journalistic concepts.

### Understanding the phenomenon of National Radio

Today’s listener of the programs broadcasted by the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Corporation can ask oneself what was the connection between these periods, connection which insured continuity and professionalism, even in the most difficult times. For those who were interested in the concept of the phenomenon of National Radio, for analysts and radio affectionate, the answer is obvious – objectivity and promoting real values, the educational dimension and not least the artistic dimension.

All of these transformed the National Radio into an audible voice, according to the characterization given by a politician. But, above all, the cultural-artistic dimension presented, in front of the national microphone, a true history of Romanian culture, presenting famous writers, scientists and actors from the Pantheon of Romanian culture. There is no important writer, artist or performer that existed since 1928 until now and not be present in the journalist act of the National Radio.

## Cyprus: Can Sports Unite?

Journalists working as correspondents for Turkish or Cypriot media in the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus” were refused entry to the Greek Cypriot part to cover a match between the Turkish team Trabzonspor and the Greek Cypriot team Anorthosis Famagusta on 26 July. Permission to travel to Cypriot territory for professional reasons can only be granted two days in advance. International journalists’ organisations expressed dismay at the decision, even more so since Cyprus became a new European Union member on 1 May 2004.

## Serbia: New System of Ethics Against the Cancer of Journalism

Between February and October 2005, Media Watch Serbia Council (MWSC), independent research and analysis group, carried out scientific monitoring to find out the degree to which major Serbian newspapers and newsmagazines abide with commonly accepted ethical norms and standards of journalism. MWSC described the results of its work as follows: “Serbia’s press is rapidly degenerating towards the level it was at in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s”. The unlimited freedom of expression as a basic right for the profession carries no responsibility. As a matter of fact, print media floods the public with best-selling imagined “scandals”, “criminal affairs”, “sensations” and other sorts of “spectacles”. There are many cases of criminal accusations and denunciations for personal reasons and political empowerment of politicians and leading figures in Serbian journalism. Nobody is ever held responsible for the massive number of “sensational crime” stories. According to MWSC, the public must wonder whether Serbia has enough police officers and public prosecutors to investigate the massive number of supposed crimes being committed. The atmosphere of impunity in Serbia’s media is characterised by racism, misogyny, extreme right-wing nationalism, xenophobia, paranoia, conspiracy theories, and pornography, says MWSC.

MWSC warns that the “factory of scandals” could create an enduring bad image of Serbia and its media among citizens as well as in the international context, and declares the need for a new system of ethical journalism in Serbia.

## Greece: Working Permits To Three Journalists Refused

On 30 May, Goran Momirofski, a journalist for A1 TV station from Skopje, Republic of Macedonia – FYROM, requested a work permit for himself and two of his colleagues at the Greek Embassy in Skopje, in order to visit Northern Greece and do a feature.

They also stated that they would meet with the President of the Greek Member State Committee of the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages (EBLUL) and leading members of the EFA-Rainbow Party. On 2 June, Momirofski was told by the Embassy staff that the permit request for all three journalists had been rejected by Athens.

All three journalists already had visas for Greece, but needed to get the work permits, which are a prerequisite for any foreign journalist who wants to work in Greece. There was no official explanation for the refusal.

On 6 June SEEMO issued a press releases stating it is alarmed about this case and called upon the Greek authorities to treat all journalists equally and to allow them to move freely in order to be able to exercise their profession.

## Macedonia (FYRoM): Serbian Music Banned

On 1 June, the leadership of the Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO)/People’s Party sent an appeal to all owners of television and radio stations in Macedonia to ban the broadcasting of Serbian music for the next three months. This

appeal followed the decision of the Serbian Orthodox Church not to recognise the Macedonian Orthodox Church. South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO) issued a press release on 6 June expressing its concern about this attempt by a Macedonian political party to ban Serbian music in Macedonia (Republic of Macedonia - FYROM). SEEMO also condemned this call by the VMRO/People’s Party, because no party has the right to influence the editorial policy of any media house. All politicians must recongnise the basic principles of freedom of expression and press freedom.

## Kosovo: One Step to Media Normality

With the constitution of two important media monitoring and regulating authorities, the Kosovo process towards the regulation of self-governing media has started. The development process follows the Kosovo Standards Implementation Plan.

### Towards Professionalism

In March this year editors signed a Press Code, voluntarily agreeing to comply with a set of rules on journalistic standards. The next prioritised goal in the case of print media is the constitution of a multi-ethnic Press Council because of its importance in the Kosovo process towards a self-regulating print media system. The new Press Council agreed that media representatives will accept and adjudicate complaints in an effort to provide a normal European form of self-regulation within the print media.

In August, the OSCE renewed its offer to support the development of self-regulation and professionalism in this context. "The creation of the Press Council is a step forward in the normalisation and Europeanization of media in Kosovo. Responsibility for self-regulation will lie solely with the local media," said Cees van Zweeken, Senior Media Advisor for the OSCE mission.

### Broadcasting on Its Way to Independence

In September, after approval by the Assembly of

Kosovo, the Independent Media Commission (IMC) was established and empowered by law. The IMC plans to follow the best European practices and operate independently from political influence. With the constitution of this agency, Kosovo marked an important step towards the development of a normal system of media regulation. When the IMC comes into force, it will replace the Office of the Temporary Media Commissioner (TMC). But before the new commission can start its work, its governing seven-member council has to be appointed - a process that will go on for several months.

With a board of directors of seven (five from Kosovo and two international representatives), 24 members (including the current staff of the OTMC) and a Media Appeals Board (with two Kosovo judges and one international judge), the IMC will be more than a technical agency. It will be a crucial tool for the protection of freedom of expression and will ensure the cultural diversity of the media in Kosovo. The council therefore holds all executive authority to issue, deny or revoke broadcasting licenses, and to issue and enforce regulations that pertain to broadcasters, including cable broadcasting, but excluding the Internet. According to TMC, the transfer of responsibility for broadcasting regulation from the international community to the provisional institutions of self-government has started.

## Moldova: Who Monitors Monitoring?

The administration of TeleRadio Moldova (TRM) has initiated proceedings against the Independent Journalism Center (IJC) based on its report from the July 10 mass media monitoring of early election coverage for the post of mayor of Chisinau. The report had been carried out in cooperation with the CIVIS Centre of Analysis and Sociological, Political and Psychological Investigations and featured the major tendencies displayed by 10 newspapers, 12 television and 12 radio stations. According to the report, "TeleRadio-Moldova did not cover the activity of electoral competitors in its news, demonstrated tendencies to favour the candidate of the Communist Party of Moldova and to disfavour other competitors, so that the public broadcaster limited the access of electors to information during the electoral campaign."

According to a declaration signed by TRM in July, "CIJ harms the professional fame of the company." Sergiu Batog, General Manager of TRM, has accused

centre experts of, "gross mistakes made when preparing the monitoring findings" and is convinced TRM will win the trial. Whether it is the result of deliberation or error, "the data presented in the report - accusing the National Radio and the Moldova-1 TV channel of ignoring all other candidates and of backing the ruling Communist Party's candidate - were but an invention," Batog stated. "I guess the court will reveal the centre's true colours and establish the real state of things in the Teleradio-Moldova company."

CIJ lawyer Olivia Pirtac said that CIJ now also intends to sue TRM because it is trying to manipulate public opinion in order to discredit CIJ. "We have solicited the Centre of Analysis and Sociological Investigations to check the data from the monitoring report and it confirmed their veracity. We have solicited video records from the archives of Teleradio-Moldova in order to check the data unveiled by the company," Pirtac added.

# Your Excellencies!

## Recent SEEMO Protests

### PROTEST SERBIA, 19 Aug

On 19 August, South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO) sent a letter of protest to Vojislav Kostunica, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia and to Zoran Stojkovic, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Serbia, saying it is alarmed about the insults and threats by a high-ranking Serbian politician and his advisor directed at journalists. According to information before SEEMO, on 15 August, during a press conference in Kopaonik, Serbian Capital Investments Minister Velimir Ilic

was answering questions about the court case against Marko Milosevic, son of former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic. Taking exception to the questions asked by the RTV B92 reporter, Ana Veljkovic, he started insulting the station's journalists and said they were sick and needed psychiatric

treatment. According to Veljkovic, after Ilic left the conference, his media advisor, Petar Lazovic, approached her and started insulting her. He told her to tell Veran Matic, director and editor-in-chief of RTV B92, that he would kill him. SEEMO stated that these insults and threats are a very serious and direct violation of press freedom and journalists' rights and requested an investigation into this case.

### PRESS RELEASE SERBIA, 28 July

On 28 July, South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO) issued a press release expressing its concern about the intention of the Serbian Government to amend the three-year old Broadcasting Act and to sent the amendments to Parliament without consulting professional media organisations in Serbia. According to SEEMO sources, one of the amendments would revoke the veto power of the Broadcast Council member nominated by the autonomous province of Vojvodina, who until now has had the power of veto in all decisions concerning Vojvodina. With this amendment, the Belgrade government has displayed a singular lack of understanding of the problems that are specific to Vojvodina as a multi-ethnic province. In addition, SEEMO was informed that, instead of the ballot system that was used to randomly determine the term of appointment of individual members of the Broadcasting Council during its first working period, the new amendments propose a fixed length of term for each of the elected members that favours those members who have been elected by Parliament. Thus, those nominated by Parliament as party candidates would serve terms of six years, while those nominated by professional journalists organi-

sations and NGOs would serve only for four years.

The amendments also extend the deadline for the privatisation of media operated by local government authorities until the end of 2008. According to the original Act, the deadline for privatisation was the summer of 2006. "Instead of speeding up the process of political independence, the Serbian Government is leaving the electronic media at the mercy of local authorities until after the next local elections in Serbia in 2008," said Oliver Vujovic, SEEMO Secretary General.

Under the new amendments, the deadline for the transition of Radio Television Serbia (RTS) from a state-controlled broadcaster to a public service broadcasting organisation has also been extended until 30 April 2006. "We are alarmed over this development," said Vujovic. "Public service broadcasting is one of the most important mediums through which diversity and the public's right to know can be fulfilled. It is therefore important for Serbia to finish this transition process as soon as possible, in particular since the original deadline was set for 31 January 2003."

"SEEMO calls on the Serbian Government to withdraw the draft amendments to the Broadcast Act and to enter into a wide-ranging consultation with media and other civil society groups before any further amendments are put forward," Vujovic added.

### PRESS RELEASE ALBANIA, 8 July

On 8 July, South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO) issued a press release about the

attack by the Mayor of Korca on a journalist in Albania. According to information before SEEMO, on 26 June, Robert Damo, Mayor of Korca and a member of the Democratic Party, physically assaulted Juliana Dhimitri, a journalist for Top Channel TV, who was filming an electoral debate in Korca between Democratic Party and Socialist Party candidates. The actual incident took place after the debate in the street, where Damo and another candidate were involved in a fierce discussion when Dhimitri started filming them. When Damo saw her, he pushed her away and began to insult her.

SEEMO was also informed that Damo then took her into a room of the hotel where the debate had been held, escorted by some 20 staff members. He took away her camera and continued harassing her. He also threatened Dhimitri that she would have problems if she called the police. This is the second attack by Damo on the journalist. The first incident happened three months ago. SEEMO strongly con-



demned this attack on a journalist by a high-ranking official and called upon the Albanian authorities to do everything in their power to prevent such incidents from happening in the future.

### SEEMO PROTEST SERBIA, 16 June

On 16 June, South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO) sent a letter of protest to Vojislav Kostunica, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, and Dragan Jovic, Minister of Interior Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, expressing its deep concern about threats against the editor-in-chief of the Serbian daily newspaper, Danas. According to information before SEEMO, on 11 June an unknown person called the office of Belgrade daily Danas and issued a death threat against the editor-in-chief, Grujica Spasovic. The person identified himself as "the security" of General Ratko Mladic, who is in hiding and being hunted because of his indictment by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) for war crimes in Bosnia and Herzegovina. SEEMO asked the two officials to do everything in their power to urgently investigate this threat and to take all necessary steps to protect the life of Grujica Spasovic.

### PRESS RELEASE KOSOVO, 7 June

On 7 June, South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO) sent a press release stating it is alarmed at the assassination attempt on a Kosovo journalist. According to information before SEEMO, on 3 June Bardhyl Ajeti, former journalist and editor for Bota sot daily from Kosovo, which is also published in Western Europe and USA, was shot with one bullet in the head and one in the back while driving through the village of Bresalc/Bresalce, some kilometres away from Gjilan/Gnjilane. Unknown persons have opened gunfire on Ajeti's car, while driving by. His condition was critical, although he was immediately operated upon. SEEMO has also been informed that on several occasions Ajeti claimed he was under threat, and therefore it stressed that this attempt on Ajeti's life is just one in a series of attacks on journalists in Kosovo. Only one year ago Fatmira Terdevci, a journalist for Koha Ditore, was attacked by unknown men. The perpetrators have still not been identified. SEEMO called upon the international and local authorities in Kosovo to do everything in their power to find those persons responsible for this assassination attempt and to bring them to justice.

### PRESS RELEASE ALBANIA, 19 May

On 19 May, South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO) expressed its deep concern in a press release about an attack on journalists in Albania. According to information from the Albanian Helsinki Committee, on 8 May, two journalists and two cameramen from local TV stations in

Korca were forbidden to film the activities of municipal police officers, who were in the process of suspending activities at a private bar in the Korca district. Furthermore, the chief of the municipal police of the Korca district exerted violence against Juliana Dhimitri, correspondent for Top Channel TV and threw away one of the cameraman's equipment. Oliver Vujovic, SEEMO Secretary General, condemned these attacks on journalists. "Attacks on journalists and destruction of their equipment are unacceptable. It is particularly worrying if these attacks are coming from high officials, like from a chief of the municipal police. Journalists must be able to report without fear of harassment and intimidation."

### PRESS RELEASE SERBIA, 19 May

On 19 May, South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), issued a press release expressing its deep concern about the arrest of two journalists in Serbia. According to information before SEEMO, on 6 May, acting director of Tutin Information Center, journalist Albin Gegic and cameraman Tufik Sadovic were arrested and remanded in custody for 13 days. They were accused of obstructing a broadcast and were arrested on suspicion of having destroyed public equipment. According to the Tutin Information Centre, the order for remand in custody was handed down by the investigating magistrate of the municipal court in Tutin. Both were released on 12 May, after the district court in Novi Pazar upheld their appeal and overturned the custody order. SEEMO regards these arrests as a direct violation of press freedom and journalists' rights. SEEMO believes that cases such as this could be avoided, if there were clearer regulations for the public and private electronic media in Serbia. Therefore, SEEMO urged Serbian authorities to address problems related to electronic media in the Republic of Serbia, especially following issues:



- The Serbian government should appoint the Managing Board for the Telecommunications Agency, which should prepare the Frequency Allocation Plan.
- The Broadcasting Agency should develop the Strategy for Broadcasting Development in cooperation with the Telecommunications Agency in Serbia.
- Clearer definition of the number of national commercial coverage licences for electronic media.
- Urgent inclusion of all interested parties in consultations that must precede the adoption of the Strategy for Broadcasting Development and the preparation of the Frequency Allocation Plan.

#### **PRESS RELEASE GREECE, 13 May**

On 13 May, South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), wrote a press release saying it is alarmed about the assault on Kostas Nikolakopoulos, a journalist for the sports daily Fos ton Sport and the radio station Super Sport FM. According to information before SEEMO, on 7 May, Nikolakopoulos was attacked by four unknown men in front of his wife and two young daughters, only meters away from his home in Ilion, Athens. The perpetrators hit him repeatedly on the head and body using knuckledusters and iron bars. Once Nikolakopoulos had fallen to the ground, they disappeared. Nikolakopoulos was taken to a nearby hospital, where his injuries were treated. He left the hospital three days later. SEEMO has also been informed that the journalist had received anonymous threats in the past regarding his articles and radio reports. Nikolakopoulos is a well known sports journalist, specialising on issues concerning the most popular soccer club in Greece, Olympiakos Piraeus. SEEMO used this opportunity to remind that in October 2004 sports journalist Philippos Syrigos was attacked in the car park near Super Sport FM radio station, while walking to his car after a radio show. He was attacked by two unknown men wearing helmets, who hit him on the head with a metal bar and stabbed him several times in the back. The two perpetrators managed to escape and have not been brought to justice. SEEMO called upon the authorities in Greece to find and bring to justice those responsible for these attacks.

#### **PROTEST SLOVENIA, 2 May**

On 12 May, SEEMO and IPI wrote a joint letter of protest to Janez Drnovšek, President of the Republic of Slovenia, and Janez Janša, Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, in order to highlight a number of problems with the draft Act on Radio Television Slovenia (RTV Slovenia).

Before examining some of the provisions, IPI would ask the Slovenian government whether there is a real need to introduce an amended public service broadcasting law. In previous times, the Slovenian

law was considered to be one of the most advanced within the new EU member countries and it appears to IPI that amendments might harm this reputation. IPI believed that the draft law in its form then did not do everything possible to uphold the independence and autonomy of the public service broadcaster and, quite to the contrary, it left the organisation vulnerable to political influence and pressure. For example, concerning the composition of the Programming Council of RTV Slovenia (PCRS), in Article 17 (5), 16 members are to be appointed by the National Assembly based on suggestions "by the viewers and listeners of RTV broadcasts, universities, associations of societies or their organisations..."

Using this format, IPI expressed its worry that the relationship between civil society organisations and the National Assembly merely pays lip service to the idea of negotiation and consultation but, in truth, gives the organisations little or no say in the final decision as to who should be a member of the PCRS. To avoid this problem, IPI would prefer to see either an independent board of civil society organisations choosing their own representatives or certain nominated organisations forwarding their own choices.

IPI also noted that the Roma community is not specifically mentioned. On the question of the PCRS, IPI would like to see the Roma community represented in this body. This is important because of the government's commitment to the Slovenian Constitution and the Public Media Act. Another important point is the question of the third channel that is to be used for transmitting parliamentary and other National Assembly and National Council activities. Given the special nature of this channel, IPI believed that funding should come not from the budget of the public service broadcaster, but from a special source of funding.

In view of the above, IPI and SEEMO asked the Slovenian government to take the draft law and enter into a rolling discussion with all interested parties as a means of making certain that the draft law meets the needs of the broadest possible spectrum of Slovenian society.

#### **PRESS RELEASE MONTENEGRO, 26 April**

On 26 April, South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), issued a press release saying it is alarmed about an analysis of the situation of the media in Montenegro, which was presented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Montenegro. According to information before SEEMO, the analysis, which was forwarded to the Montenegrin state institutions by the Foreign Affairs Ministry, criticised most of the local outlets as insufficiently affirmative towards the Montenegrin independence.

Firstly, the analysis emphasised as problematic the fact that the private news agency, MINA, is financed

by foreign donors. In SEEMO's opinion, this line of thinking was contrary to democratic principles and freedom of expression. Secondly, the government saw as especially worrying the fact that there exists no "national news agency". However, SEEMO stated that the creation of a state-run agency would jeopardise the independence of the media scene in Montenegro.

SEEMO was also concerned because the analysis cited certain private electronic media, which should receive "material help". SEEMO stressed that there

should be no discrimination by the government in its treatment, economic or otherwise, of the media. Finally, the analysis claimed that certain media were not reporting favourably about politicians and political issues. SEEMO stressed that journalists and media outlets should have the right to report independently, without any state influence or pressure. Therefore, SEEMO urged the Montenegrin Government to respect the principles of media independence and to refrain from putting pressure on the media.

# Review

## Article

### Transient Society: A Multi-Perspective Analysis of Transformation in the East

In: MedienJournal, Zeitschrift für Kommunikationskultur 2 / 2005 Wien

By Thomas A. Bauer

If a general term can be used to describe what has been going on in eastern and south-eastern European countries over the last 10 to 15 years, it is "transition". The term "transition" refers to a process of transformation on many different levels, in many different sectors of public and private life, with many different implications of hope for a new society, and with lots of perplexity, uncertainty and lack of orientation. Not only the construction or the ways of doing things in the realms of politics, economy, education, etc. are changing. What is relevant in this transformational process are changing relations, and the changing meaning of structures, institutions, and order of things. This makes everything involved in the process "transient." That is, any step of development leads into the next step of alteration without really knowing what the implication of the next step is. Transition is a sort of cultural development in the daily perspective of society and its systems, structures, institutions, and developments. And what about the media? As a big player in civil society, media plays an important role in performing this cultural turn, even if it itself is a "victim" of this transient process.

For the first time, the transformation process in Eastern and south-eastern countries was studied by the Austrian Magazine "MedienJournal", in 1989. The scholarly journal, produced by the Austrian Society for Communication Science and edited at the University of Vienna and the University of Salzburg, featured an issue focusing on the role of

media in civil society. Over 15 years have passed since the publication of that issue. The subject is ripe for a re-analysis of the process and its results.

Which is why the second issue of this year is dedicated to "Transformation in the East". In it, Poland, Serbia, Slovenia and the Czech Republic serve as examples of what has changed in eastern media and which structures and mentalities have been most challenged during this process.

Hania Fedorowicz analyses how civil society has stolen the show from the old bureaucratic system and how it resisted the vision of public truth and the mendacious and hypocritical monopoly of information by the state. This was made possible by putting irreproachable people into responsible positions in public institutions as a synonym for integrity. This transformation of the Polish society was called a "from bottom".

The transformation process of media in Serbia bears similarities to that in Poland. Biljana Petrovic tells the story of non-governmental media during the Milosevic era. Her story is a collection of all the totalitarian instruments employed to silence journalists and humiliate editors, including the destruction of free radio movements and alternative newspapers, and torture or killing of media people. Last, but not least, the civil movement of democratisation help destroy the old system.

Andrea Kinz illustrates how the Czech Republic's governmental media system was turned into a private commercial system. She also highlights the process of globalisation, which has integrated the east and south-east into the global market.

Anyone with the slightest interest in the social implications of media transformation (i.e., privatisation, internationalisation) and the medial implications of political transition (i.e., democratisation, commercialisation) should pick up a copy of MedienJournal 2/2005. There is only one possible problem: it is written in German.



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On November 1st 1928 aired the first program produced by the Radio-Telephone Broadcasting Corporation, as the public radio service was named in the official setting up papers, published at the end of 1927. From the very beginning, the public radio station addressed to all Romanian citizens, contributing to their education, to forming civic conscience and strengthening communitarian cohesion necessary for the democratic development of the Romanian society. Its mission is given by components such as: informing, educating, promoting culture, entertainment, promoting Romania's image and economical-social-communitarian unity.

[www.srr.ro](http://www.srr.ro)

Romanian Radio Broadcasting Corporation



Societatea Română de Radiodifuziune