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## Editorial

The question of absence of media ownership transparency still remains a top priority regarding the integration process of Bosnia and Herzegovina into European Union family. Although, there are no international bounding duties and principles for any country, in terms of regulation of media ownership transparency, this enquiry implies international documents, insisting on guaranties regarding the freedom of expression, media pluralism and right to information.

Information provided by the NGO sector in BiH has outlined a values decline of marketing and advertising market which has made the BiH governing authorities more significant as the source of financial means for media houses involved. Public funds are (for certain and particular media houses) necessary and required as far their existence is concerned, which is especially highlighted in cases of public media houses. Even though, the allocation of public budget funds (public money) means more to media houses, comparing to miscellaneous possibilities and opportunities of media financing sources; at the same time, it is an opportunity to provide hidden ("grey") cash – flow that would eventually place media into a privileged position and discriminate others, in terms of (un) equal accessibility of financing sources in fair, transparent and socially responsible way. As long as financial flows supporting media houses do not separate from the politics, we cannot expect professional and independent journalism.

Lack of legal regulation in the field of media ownership regulations opens a room for hidden (often for obvious as well) political and economic influences on media houses, which by the rule, results in the production of unprofessional media contents and programs, including clientelism – based approaches in selecting key reporting topics and finally, it creates the atmosphere where the general public have lost faith and trust in media houses.

Solving the issue of media ownership transparency, information pluralism and transparent financing of media in BiH, through passing of congruent laws, has been the focus of "Media and Public Reputation", project. This project is aimed to provide the protection of freedom of expression, reducing the pressure imposed on journalists and free access to information through media ownership transparency, transparent media financing from public budgets (funds) and implementation of European standards in this field. The project was launched by the Consortium including the following organizations Association of BH Journalists, Press Council of BiH, Media Center and "JaBIHEU", a local NGO and the project was financially supported by European Union. Currently, recommendations for legal amendments are in preparation stage for this particular field.

Texts written by media professionals and experts shall be part of this 52nd E-journalist bulletin edition has authors'. Bulletin content at the same time also represents a contribution to public discussion regarding media ownership transparency and encouraging the passing of laws in relation with media space advancement and information market in BiH. To what extent is the online media market non-transparent, what are the trends and consequences of media financing from public budget, is there space for promotion of the public interest, and to what extent do PBS broadcasters enjoy public trust?

Authors of texts include the following journalists: **Rubina Čengić**, **Senudin Safić** and **Milan Ilić**, **Mehmed Agović** expert and former BHRT general manager and **Daniela Jurčić** professor at the Faculty of Philosophy of Mostar University.

*Arman Fazlić, E-journalist editor*

## Events

12 April 2018

Assaults on journalists means endangering the freedom of expression for entire society

10 April 2018

Non – transparent media financing represents basis for public manipulation

4 April 2018

Media have duty and responsibility to express critics in regard with hate speech

## Press releases

6 April 2018

Assault on Aida Stilic an FTV female reporter and journalist from Bihac strongly condemned

## Media on media

13 April 2018

Mark Zuckerberg interrogated regarding the safety on information on Facebook

12 April 2018

Female journalists change their approaches of stories and reports due to the risk of being assaulted

## Vacancies

Public invitation for 2018 Journalist Academy applying

Deadline for application is 20 May 2018

Photo award competition for the youth population titled „Moja BiH“ (My BiH)

Deadline for application is 1 May 2018

Radio M is looking for a radio host – editor

Deadline for application is 1 May 2018

*A significant number of media houses that, despite the fact that they rely of public budget financial means in the first place, have no impressums and there are platforms amongst online media that have not even been registered as legal and official businesses, so the question is who is backing them up, who is supporting them and what is the purpose of their activities.*

## Media market in BiH: lack of transparency in online sphere

By: *Rubina Čengić*



According to their experience, Press Council of BiH and online media confirmed that over 60 per cent of media houses to whose reporting general public and citizens usually complain, are indeed media houses with no impressums - we don't know who the owners are, who the journalists and editors are, there are no addresses or contact phone numbers.

This means that people (viewers) that are offended or insulted by certain posts posted on web pages of these media houses cannot get any satisfaction, nor receive public apologies, as these media house can easily continue to spread false and fake information thus confusing the public audience.

Nermina Voloder, a female surveyor and researcher has in article (text) posted by Sarajevo Media Center proved that a significant number of media houses that, despite the fact that they rely of public budget financial means in the first place, have no impressums and there are platforms amongst online media that have not even been registered as legal and official businesses, so the question is who is backing them up, who is supporting them and what is the purpose of their activities.

“We live in times loaded with many false and fake news, manipulations, fabricated news, news that have been redesigned, rectified and tailored to favor certain individuals or groups as they all reach viewing audience and all of these false and fake news are followed with enormous amount of comments resulting in the occurrence of vast hate speech and this goes on and on in this bedazzled circle. We witness a great number of online media houses with absolutely no information regarding the contact details of responsible people and these pages often have no contact numbers in case someone decided to reply, respond or deny posted false information, lies or manipulation and this person eventually wouldn't know whom to address”, explained Ljiljana Zurovac, executive director of the Press Council of BiH.

She emphasized that freedom of information must be followed by the responsibility of information being posted in public.

“During the present, that is, during the election year we are in, the so called online media emerges and appears out of nowhere and it is certain that political parties or individuals support them (we don't know who they are), but we could only assume this, according to contents they post, mostly in order to degrade and devalue their political opponents or remove them from political scene thus directing the general public against them. These people are recognized as sleepers that suddenly “wake up” and become active every two years (elections are held every two years in BiH); they are engaged for few months and they vanish once again, while we have no information regarding the owner's details and so on. It is thus impossible to incorporate and integrate these kinds of media into the Election Law of BiH and put them into the framework of regular and acceptable behavior during the pre – election period, particularly during the pre – election silence period”, reminds Zurovac.

It was because of this specific situation that the Association of BH Journalists, along with their partners: Press Council of BiH, Media Center and JaBiHEU, a local NGO, have altogether been instigating and insisting on passing the law that would advance media space and information market in BiH, through the implementation of the following project “Media and Public Reputation”. This project's goal is to provide the protection for free expression and speech, to reduce pressures on journalists and to promote free access to information through the media ownership transparency, through transparent media financing from public budget lines and through the implementation of European standards in this particular field.

Currently, the preparation of this law, that would regulate this specific field, is in ongoing stage, including the participation and involvement of international and local experts, various institutions and their representatives, non – government organizations and other interested parties.

“Non – transparent cash flows directed to media houses, as a consequence of unsettled media market in Bosnia and Herzegovina, brings media houses into



Iznos KM	Napomena
1.127,70	Godišnja pretplata na službeni list, objava konkursa, oglasa i sl.
3.110,45	Objava konkursa i sl. javnih poziva i sl.
936,00	Objava oglasa i javnog poziva
245,70	Objava oglasa
20.000,00	Transfer, Projekat - Izdavanje časopisa „Ze-đo eko“, „Napiši priču uradi sliku“...
5.000,00	Projekat snimanja emisija i spotova na temu zaštite okoline
1.000,00	Projekat snimanja emisija i spotova edukativnog karaktera sa problematikom odlaganja otpada
1.000,00	Projekat radijske emisije o reciklaži i selektivnom odlaganju otpada
1.000,00	Projekat emisije na temu zdrav život i ekologija

financial dependency. This dependency necessarily contains requests and demands by political loyalty, including serving to particular political, ethnic, national, economic or other lobbies, interest – based groups; instead of serving the public, which consequently questions the public media reputation and integrity, its authenticity and public trust and confidence in contents and programs that media houses broadcast. Due to non – transparent spending of budget money directed to media financing at all governing levels in BiH, non – transparent and non democratic ties and bounds between politicians and media are being established as a result”, explained Arman Fazlic, web site and publications editor and administrator with the Association of BH Journalists.

According to available information provided by special marketing agencies, the financial means for marketing in media have, for the period of last 10 years, decreased by 80%, but the means deriving from the official authorities have become more significant, including grants, commercial advertising, death announcements etc.

Sanela Hadzic, a female surveyor and researcher with Sarajevo Media Center said that there are no international norms bounding any country to ensure and provide media ownership transparency, but this request is implicated in all international documents, with the insisting on guaranties related to freedom of expression, media pluralism and rights to receive and be provided with information.

She emphasized that media ownership transparency is important above all, for the prevention of corruption and money laundry, and that in the world, especially after the affair of Mossack Fonseca or Panama Papers and similar, more and more countries decide to establish public registries with relevant and accurate information, regarding the details about the company owners, including media owners as well.

“Best samples of registries shall include information, not only about nominal, but also about intermediate and final owners. In some countries the procedure of licensing of TV and Radio broadcasters include information collecting regarding the political ties by persons having shares in TV and radio broadcasting houses, as is the case in Great Britain.

In countries such as Norway, Latvia and Iceland, there are applications with required information regarding the ownership over electronic, printed and online media.

Norway even passed to Law on Transparency of Media Ownership and in Croatia, the transparency norms exist as part of the Law on Electronic Media and Law on Media”, explained Hadzic and highlighted that greater scope of information would ensure and provide better opportunity for following of different interest, including those of media ownership, so some countries require information regarding media companies and their interests in other non – media companies or they seek information on what kind of business subjects ties exist and who is having close contact with media owners what do they have in their possession (including assets and properties).

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## Free Media Help Line

### Actual cases:

**1. Milanka Kovačević**, 28.March 2018 - Mlađo Zelenović from Gacko, who (at present) is indicated for war crimes, according to international warrant issued by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Srpska, verbally assaulted Milanka Kovacevic, a female journalist of Direkt, a local web site. He used very offensive language, threatened and insulted her.

**2. Aida Štilić**, 4 April 2018 - Asim Kamber, highly – ranked member of SDA management, brutally verbally assaulted Aida Stilic in front of people outside the building of Una – Sana Canton, insulting and offending her for her professional conduct and on personal basis.

**3. BHRT** - Free Media Help Line received two complaints from female journalists from public television service for illegal and non – transparent dismissing and sacking from work.



*“Significant number of people, randomly, non – selectively and based on ad – hoc belief, accept all information they encounter on the internet, including information posted on social media, considering these information to be true and correct; regardless to the fact that this can be quite opposite, since the information posted on the internet could lead them to making wrong decisions”.*

Turcilo warned that general public, that is, citizens, unfortunately do not have sufficient developed competencies of identifying and recognizing the handle of power and mechanisms of influence in media. “I am afraid that, even if we manage to establish and define the Registry of Media, with clear list of media owners, it will take some time until citizens learn and get used to checking this kind of information and accordingly, have thorough thinking about certain media houses

But, what is also important to outline, is to insist that media should have clear, clearly recognized and easily accessed impressums with identified information regarding the owners, including also the persons writing for particular media house, editors and directors as well. This shall enable citizens to have better comprehension and understandings of the program contents in significantly wider sense, but would also allow them to acquire their legal rights should they complain regarding the contents posted by certain media.

Many web sites operate with no impressums, and if you want to file in complaint to Press Council of BiH for inappropriate contents – the rule defines that a claimer should send a request to editor to rectify, re-correct or eventually remove the disputable content, before filing in complaint to the Council. How can this be done if there is no information about the editor? Therefore, it is clear and obvious that particular media houses deliberately and intentionally avoid being transparent in order to avert responsibility.

This trend should be changed”, explained Turcilo.

Zurovac also reckons that insignificant number of citizens decide to check impressum of certain media.

“Significant number of people, randomly, non – selectively and based on ad – hoc belief, accept all information they encounter on the internet, including information posted on social media, considering these information to be true and correct; regardless to the fact that this can be quite opposite, since the information posted on the internet could lead them to making wrong decisions.

It is therefore necessary to create solid law on media ownership transparency, as soon as possible, and this law should have the guideline that would legally oblige every single media house to have impressums, including the information about the owners, editing office with precise details regarding the people being engaged there, contact phone numbers, addresses and thus additionally send a clear message to those willing to start this particular business, that they shall be legally obliged to share all of the above mentioned information”, said Zurovac.

The ownership transparency issue in media sector has been treated as one of the most crucial question in reports provided by the European Commission, regarding the progress of BiH society, as they announced that this specific issue shall be subject to detailed discussion during the releasing of opinion by the European Commission, as far as the BiH application for joining the European Union is concerned.

“Media are socially responsible organizations ensuring that citizens, as users of their services, receive fair, objective, duly and checked information from unbiased sources and through unbiased channels, and it is through media ownership, that ties between owners with political, economic and other powerful figures, can be “noted”, as all of this would allow citizens to recognize and identify mechanisms of selectivity, interpretations and contextualization of news and information in particular media houses. Therefore, ownership transparency enables citizens to note purchases of power, that may be bound to media, and thus affect and influence their contents”, explained Lejla Turcilo, professor at the Faculty of Political Studies in Sarajevo.

Communication Regulatory Agency in BiH defined relationships in electronic media, because if someone decided to broadcast the program, she/ he must be provided with the license to use frequency (which is legally treated as national property), and in order to obtain this license, she/he must submit company registry certificate issued by a local court.

License holders for using frequency must report every change in ownership structure and cannot sell their license/s to themselves or transfer them/it from one owner to another; instead this must be approved every time by the CRA officials – explained CRA officials and admitted that even they cannot be certain whether the company court registry (submitted by new applicants) always contained true and correct information, as far as the information about media owners is concerned, or whether there was a third party standing and backing



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them up.

Hodzic thus reminded that there were CRA registries for license users for audio and visual broadcasting, but the information on intermediate and tied (linked) owners were not listed within these registries.

Apart from the program content being broadcasted, ownership over media houses is also important as far as the labor rights are concerned, including all staff being employed and engaged with certain media house, since these rights are often violated, although no one ever releases these kinds of problems.

“Female and male journalists in BiH are mostly deprived of labor rights in media industry – there is very limited number of media houses that defer all legal duties defined and prescribed by the labor laws, as far as media employees are concerned. Unsettled media market in BiH, unclear ownership structure of television, newspapers, radio station and web sites, political influences and pressures on journalists, turned, to some extent, media professionals into a state of a complete dependability. How many female and male journalists are on the market, how much do they earn and what are the monthly wages (salaries) they receive, how many of them are engaged in more than a single project, how much do freelancers make, who, among these receive untaxed honorary amounts based on cash – in –hands method, who works by the author’s contract rules; altogether represent issues and questions that any democratic society (system) should reply and answer to, by the implementation of legislative, in terms of ownership over media houses, including financing system and commercial advertising in media houses”, appealed Fazlic.

Jasminka Dzumhur, Ombudsman/Ombudsmen for Human Rights in BiH, reminded that journalists have often been recognized as victims in relation with fundamental violations of human rights, but they, in most cases did not openly talk about their problems.

“They are afraid that they might lose the status they already have, although their status is not labor – legal status, in terms of legislative; it is rather considered as receiving of minimum honorary, mostly in cash, without having paid legal contribution for health, social and other types of security and the owner must be held responsible for labor – legal status of all employees and eventually show, in most appropriate and transparent way, the details of persons she/he, as the owner, employs, so the general public and citizens could be aware with the credibility these employees have, as far as the labor rights of employees, are concerned”, explained Dzumhur.

Turcilo further added that, when it comes to legal rights of employees in media field, transparent ownership allows clear setting of the principles, regarding the negotiations with employers, if required details about the owner were clear and transparent as well.

“It conduced to greater responsibility of the owner towards the employees, because it would then be possible to make clear distinction how the owners, individuals or companies increased their incomes over their employees shoulders, because they mostly made their extra profit based on the principle of the initial accumulation of their capital”, claims Turcilo.

Hodzic concluded that in BiH, at this particular moment, the regulation of media ownership and media financing in BiH has been on a minimum level, because hidden ownership has in no way been disallowed and disapproved, including the instrumentalization of public funds for personal promotion, instead of promoting journalism and advancing the public need for communications.





## Transparent media financing from public budgets and funds: trends and consequences

By: Milan Ilić

According to available data provided by the NGO sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina, media houses in BiH receive over BAM 10,0 million on an annual level from public budgets and funds and there is no access or inquiry in the criteria of these allocations. Money is allocated to media houses from different income lines and the biggest problem of transparency is present in media houses on local levels. This form of media financing contributes in the process of media sustainability in small and rather poor market in Bosnia and Herzegovina and under the circumstances where most media houses dispose of insufficient potential income financial sources.

Absence and lack of transparency of amounts and procedures of allocation of these financial means, including undefined and unclear criteria, opens room for possible and eventual misuses and also obstructs the perception of the general public, regarding the legitimacy of such allocations, including media independence, as the users of these financial means.

Sarajevo Media Center implemented a survey covering this specific issue and their report comprised the information and data provided by the CRMA (Center for Media Development and Analysis) from 2013 and 2014 suggesting that media financing from public budget, including regular and public media financing, individual financing for both, public and private media houses, and money allocated for various promoting and commercial advertising, was around BAM 30, 0 million per year.

Branka Mrkić-Radević, zurnal.info (local web site) female journalist, claims that one of the most important segments that governing bodies implement is allocation of financial means through commercial advertising of public companies. Zurnal.info also did a survey and research regarding this specific issue.

“Despite the fact that these (public) companies are partially owned by entity – level governments, which means that they also are entitled to budget financial means receiving, the information regarding the allocation of these financial means are often not transparent and unavailable. Biggest financial budget for this particular purpose is certainly in hands of telecom operators and providers such as BH Telecom and HT Eronet”, claimed Radevic – Mrkic.

She stated that significant funds are allocated by Elektroprivreda (op.a. Electrical Distribution Public Enterprise), Autoputevi RS (Motorways of the Republic of Srpska) and Autoceste Federacije (Motorways of the Federation of BiH) as well.

“Taking into consideration that leading functions and executive boards are run and managed by political party individuals or groups, financial means are often allocated and distributed to biased media houses, that would, in particular way, make and broadcast reports regarding the affirmative and positive results conducted by local governing authorities in return. By doing this, public companies represent an ideal channel for dispersing personal interests and media control. Pre – election campaigns are also financed in this specific way, because the financial means for commercial advertising are significantly increased during the pre-election period”, claimed Radevic – Mrkic

Radevic – Mrkic also confirmed the existence and presence of “alternative” media houses, having absolutely no chance in allocation of the above mentioned financial means, because they can manage and operate without being subjects to political party influences and impacts the politics often impose.

“Media means are also dispersed through various projects implemented by governments at all levels through grants, funds etc. The government of the Republic of Srpska allocated millions of BAM for all media houses supporting the present governing authorities and their political system. During the survey and research process Elektroprivreda HZHB (op.a. Electrical Distribution Public Enterprise), and HT Eronet Mostar were exceptionally non – transparent in terms of cooperation and information sharing”, said Radevic – Mrkic.

### Money for media through public budget sources non – transparent

Anida Sokol from Sarajevo Media Center explained to us, through the interview we had with her, about how the governing authorities allocate money to media houses, how transparent those allocations are in reality; what kind of criteria the governing authorities accept and do all media houses have the same treatment as

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far as financing from public budget sources is concerned.

“There are two basic ways by which the governing authorities in BiH finance media houses: through direct allocations and through commercial advertising. It is important to outline here that in BiH, biggest money amount is dispersed (almost two thirds of the total amount) to public cantonal and local broadcasters (there are 81 TV public radio and TV broadcasters in BiH), as well as to entity level news agencies (FENA and SRNA). Public broadcasting service media houses (BHRT, FTV and RTRS) should, normally be financed through the system of RTV Tax Fess payment and through commercial advertising marketing sources, which represents (to some extent) editing independence. However, because of the fact that the amount that should have been collected through the RTV Tax Fee payments has rapidly decreased,

BiH governing authorities (at all levels), have been allocating financial means to public service broadcasters as well. Additionally, Republic of Srpska government allocated BAM 2, 0 million last year to RTRS due to financial struggle this public broadcaster was in. This year, Republic of Srpska government shall allocate less than BAM 3, 0 million to public media houses. Another way which governing authorities use for allocation of public budget financial means is through commercial advertising which again is part of public procurement system. Most public money for commercial advertising is spent by public companies with telecom operators (providers) leading this list, but also governments at all levels buy this media space, including advertising services and pre – payments. Therefore for instance, local governing authorities spend around BAM 200,00 for a single greeting post message in local newspaper and this amount often reaches up to BAM 100.000,00 for television broadcasting advertising the work of local authorities, including city or municipal mayor, local assemblies etc”, claimed Sokol.

After being asked about the transparency and criteria required for media financing, Sokol said that detailed and precise long – term surveys and analysis are required in order to attain at least partial information regarding the amount of money that the governments have been allocating to media houses and this fact, as far as the non – transparency of this process is concerned. “Allocation to media houses should be issued and released by government authorities in pro – active manner and the allocated money amounts should be consolidated and available to general public.

Budget by governing authorities, is to some extent unavailable and subject to further survey and research and often it is very difficult to determine the exact amount of money allocated to certain media houses. Media financing is often classified as collective budget item such as “means aimed for informing”, and thus it is almost impossible to identify the end user of these financial means. Furthermore, governing authorities do not reply and respond to enquiries regarding these specific kinds of allocations, and the media houses also fail to release and issue proactively all relevant information in relation with the amount of money they receive from public budget funds. Public media should, pursuant to entity – level laws and legislative on public companies, release and issue information regarding their financial business operating, although no public media houses has ever done this. For example, Media Center has implemented the survey and research on local public media houses and our researches sent a questionnaire to public local and cantonal broadcasters in BiH (81 in total) and only 14 of these replied and answered to our questions, in regard with earnings and incomes deriving from public budget funds”, said Sokol.

The fact that media houses (broadcasting and posting reports where they openly criticize governing authorities) do not receive money from governing officials, does indeed speak for itself. However, we cannot claim that media houses are the only entity biased towards political parties that receive public budget money through many different ways; but also, media that do not broadcast or post critics directed to local governing officials. Bearing in mind the decline of earnings deriving from commercial advertising sources, the BiH governing authorities have become an increasing and significant source of earnings for media houses. Public money is required and necessary for media survival and this money should be directed to encourage media pluralism. However, without the existence and presence of clear and precise criteria, including transparent actions, this, as a result, could open room for eventual political and financial pressures.

Sokol also said that with local and cantonal based media houses, for which local and cantonal governing authorities (as their founders) must allocate money based on founding and establishing contracts. There were cases of financial conditioning and blackmailing or even financial budget cuts. Journalists even mentioned the

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*In BiH there is a so called “unofficial rule” claiming that parties making the governing coalition are “determined” to automatically rule and manage state – owned and public companies, public services and many other institutions, which should fundamentally serve all citizens in most appropriate way. This of course is not the case and both, the institutions and media houses, become servants of governing authorities and eventually become their spokespersons.*

presence of auto censorship and the fact that their writing was too critical towards local governing authorities, since they were their main source of financing and incomes.

“City and municipal mayors and local level assemblies could randomly make decisions regarding the amount of financial funding and thus impose local media houses with pressure. It is also problematic that certain local governments with already its local public radio, pays private radio station for following the work of this local government and there are many similar cases if you go through the site of public procurements. The survey and research conducted by non – government sector also outlined to possible samples of instrument – based and commercial relationships between the public sector and media, purely based on political interests.

Similar misuses are normally not confirmed by court verdicts and it is certain that the lack of legislatives and monitoring in this particular field allows eventual misuses”, claimed Sokol.

#### **Money for biased, not for unbiased**

Marija Arnautovic, a long – term TV Liberty female journalist and editor working at Radio Europe emphasized that money in Bosnia and Herzegovina is in many different segments, allocated, dispersed and distributed to biased groups or individuals, rather than to unbiased groups or individuals and to those who indeed deserve it. The situation is the same with money allocation to media houses. Unfortunately, there are no reliable information indicating how much, how and when any governing level authorities allocated financial means and thus funded certain media houses; however, the fact is that this money has been unequally allocated and dispersed in rather non – transparent way.

“What is known today is the fact that local governing authorities finance local media houses and that these media houses are mostly under the strong influence by the same local governing authorities. This kind of operating does jeopardize and endanger not only media freedoms and liberties, but also eliminates every single type of creativity and better broadcasting program. Also, the case of public service broadcasters confirms, particularly concerning those operating in the Republic of Srpska, about this, rather enormous influence and impact imposed by the local governing authorities. I personally believe that it is not only the money (deriving from public budget lines) that influences the work of certain media house, but also the money coming from big companies investing into media as these companies, according to certain surveys and research, mostly include public companies such as Telecom operators (providers) or Elektroprivreda (Electrical distribution company) which again are, also under the political influence.

All of this may lead to emerging of a bedazzled circle where limited number of media houses, independent from political influences or powerful lobbies or individuals, which eventually results in poor quality program, journalists’ safety and everything that journalism should comprehend and which, above any other thing, should serve the general public interest and sustain with providing of correct, true and accurate information”, claimed Arnautovic.

In BiH there is a so called “unofficial rule” claiming that parties making the governing coalition are “determined” to automatically rule and manage state – owned and public companies, public services and many other institutions, which should fundamentally serve all citizens in most appropriate way. This of course is not the case and both, the institutions and media houses, become servants of governing authorities and eventually become their spokespersons.

Ivana Maric, a female political analyst says that money allocation for media displays an impeccable mean for public service blackmailing.

“Public media services are in exceptionally independent positions because of the power they possess in terms of influencing the public opinion. Additionally, any changes of government levels produces the changes in managing or supervising boards within public media houses, in terms of employees; many people lose their jobs and are dismissed and those so called “non -obeying” journalists are degraded; inconvenient analysts are no more invited and asked to provide their expert comments and views, and those that are considered biased and obeying are on the other hand, favored and made priorities”, said Maric.





*“If media houses obey and are biased towards the local governing politics, they shall in return be provided with extra incomes and consequently make extra profit, on the other hand, if they dare to instigate, initiate or launch any story they shouldn’t or story where they criticize the governing authorities, they shall certainly pay the price for disobeying such politics through the budget money allocation, which in most cases will be significantly reduced or even terminated permanently. As long as financial flows and money allocation dispersed to media houses is not clearly distinct from an ongoing politics, we cannot expect professional and independent journalism.”*



She reckoned that this is not the only way where governing authorities impose pressure upon media houses, including both private and public media houses. Punishing and awarding media houses is done by the governing authorities through marketing controlling, where they define and determine which companies they shall advertise and for how long.

“If media houses obey and are biased towards the local governing politics, they shall in return be provided with extra incomes and consequently make extra profit, on the other hand, if they dare to instigate, initiate or launch any story they shouldn’t or story where they criticize the governing authorities, they shall certainly pay the price for disobeying such politics through the budget money allocation, which in most cases will be significantly reduced or even terminated permanently. As long as financial flows and money allocation dispersed to media houses is not clearly distinct from an ongoing politics, we cannot expect professional and independent journalism. Until this happens we shall witness media houses and journalists “playing the tune as conducted by a band leader”, because they shall find themselves in a position where they (and this does make sense in terms of financial existence) have to keep their jobs and provide financial existence for themselves and their families. Certain number of media houses is somehow managing the resist local political influences although they mostly base their work on critics directed towards illegal actions and operations done by local governing authorities. They manage to survive and sustain primarily with the help and aid provided by international financiers”, emphasized Maric.

For the time being, there has been no concrete concept of public interests which should be served through various types of financing. Public media in BiH, including three public RTV services, local and cantonal broadcasters and entity – level agencies, are now placed in the specific position of a complete dependability by the local governing authorities. One of the main reasons for such occurrences is incongruously actual forms of their financing.

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## Regional media between professionalism and commercial interests

By: Daniela Jurčić

During the period of last twenty years in former Yugoslavia media have been going through transitional process which globally contained lack of professionalism as common issue they have all been sharing, including low quality level and other values, as far as the concept of media content, is concerned. Profit has thus become crucial reason for the existence of media houses and perhaps, the biggest problem for most media houses in the region has become the emerging of pluralism and lack of competition, so the media contents, in almost every single media house, has been identical in all former Yugoslavia countries. Numerous data indicated that the biggest crisis of journalism, after World War II is still present and that it has particularly been outlined in Europe. Crisis devastated many media houses and its consequences have not been conditioned just by mere shutting off certain media houses, but instead, (which in this particular case is more significant), the crisis results produced the introduction and emerging of vast tabloid and commercial – based media houses. Globalization process caused significant changes in media sphere and as most highlighted of all, it is certainly the fact that media houses have become an industry. Media programs are no longer edited for providing general public with common good and necessary information, at least not in socially responsible way; their primary goal has become profit making by all means. The nature of media contents has certainly changed and the responsibility for media deviation could be equally shared between both media entrepreneurs and general public as well.

Media entrepreneurs impose media contents and taking into consideration present state media houses are in (including profit based policies), media entrepreneurs favor engaging insufficient staff, in terms of educational level and these are mostly young people with little or no experience that during certain period in their career, become key journalists in these media houses. Journalists often lack educational level and by educational level we consider language and expression of culture and significant level of literacy demonstrated (including both, common and journalism literacy), journalist ethics, which should bound the use of facts, rather than promoting the politics of current governing authorities so at the end, journalism would not become a confrontational process, including conflicts and affairs as well.

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For some time, reasonable consumers of media contents managed to notice changes in journalism and media. News are being transferred and posted in rather new and unique way. The number of illustrations and photos is increasing and headlines and titles are longer, bombastic and sensational. Journalism has narrowed down to mere reporting, easy going and trivial stories, quick news and plenty of photos. Information has become a source of profit making and its quality, in this sense, has rapidly decreased. Masses are provided with poor quality journalism based on tabloid sort of stories and we could even talk about rather new trend, namely, the infotainment – bound between the information and entertainment. Samples of new trends in journalism mainly include the imposing of economic pressures and profit – based motifs by the entrepreneurs so as a result, media imperative is to shock the general public, instead of providing the public with necessary information.

Media houses, which should be serving and promoting public words and truths, have become, profit making companies. Variety among media houses is decreasing on daily basis and the fact is that commercial culture introduced a completely new kind of journalism with media becoming definite public manipulators thorough its most recent kind of journalism.

Indicators of media manipulating can be noticed through the following cases: (1) Short news are demanded; (2) Significant level of futility and superficiality and (3) Bizarre contents attract vast general attention.

Media used to send messages, based on their consumption policy, as primary human requirement and necessity.

More than ever before, we have been hostages of sensationalism, stereotypes, bizarre contents and commercials. There are almost no media houses in our region that do not broadcast at least one reality show drafted and scheduled in such bizarre way, so that the completely anonymous people are being held in modern and luxurious houses, abandoned farms or deserted island, and those people, taking part in these programs, could eventually become instant TV stars and their popularity would last for as long as the reality show itself is on or, on the other hand, their popularity would depend on their ability to survive in an extraordinary conditions, but also in creating and making scandal situations. Often in these kinds of media contents, we easily notice the lack of good manners and behavior; we witness plenty of drinking, fighting, sex scenes and even encouraging promiscuity - based behavior. All good manner values are absolutely becoming relative and in these media programs and any kind of shame are rejected, confessions become subject to irony and so called striptease manner culture is being promoted as well. Unfortunately, media consumers have accepted the provided thrash and by doing this, they in fact make it obvious that measures of good taste have actually become devalued and degraded. It is also evident that media consumers are provided with absolutely every possible thing, in order to increase the audience viewership and thus eventually increase the profit.

Damages that these kinds of programs cause must become subject to serious discussions. Large percentage of shows, as mentioned above, including black chronicles, criminal and violence based programs definitely make negative impact and influence on general public. Unfortunately, many of these shows result in devastating consequences, when persons, particularly younger generation, deliberately and intentionally do something (mostly perform and perform certain negative actions and deeds), so they could get to media and be publically exposed. One of these cases recently happened in Croatia, when the little girl was apparently missing. While her desperate parents, the police and the entire public were looking for her, she was hiding at her friend's houses enjoying the media attention she was getting at the time. In this context and sense, we could talk about the negative consequences that media have on (especially) younger generations. Children and youth need our help in defending themselves from poor media houses and the contents and programs they provide, since they (children and youth) find rather difficult to make clear distinction between reality and unreal media pictures, including programs and contents they are provided with.

Tabloid biased media and continuous fight for profit making introduced significant decline of professional standards of journalism and ethics in all regional countries. Almost every regional country in former Yugoslavia displays an ideal environment for mass public manipulation. Bad and poor state in these countries, economical problems and uncertainty, corrupted politicians, particularly bad legal system, altogether produce acceptable and desirable area for unprofessional and unconscious journalists' performance, as they constantly face the danger of becoming entertainers, promoters and hidden advertisers, instead of being and acting as professional journalists. Tabloid biased media houses and commercial interests represent one of





*Journalism deontology must become an imperative on one hand and media literacy on the other. Also, it is necessary to design a model in which serious media houses would be clearly separated from other subjects in the market. Such media houses would be treated as bodies whose work is biased towards general public interests, instead of being considered as merchandise. Is there anyone capable of returning serious and professional journalism back to media scene? Journalists, civil society and the public have crucial role here. It is important to have the audience that would require and demand quality media program and serious and professional programs and contents.*



the most obvious problems in media field in this particular region.

Hunt for new information has unfortunately become merchandise and in this context, media audiences have become consumers. Media programs contain plenty of contents that encourage criminal, promote pornography, making audience passive, degrade and diminish reading, produce particular futility and superficiality, but also provide significant entertainment programs.

On the other hand, media develop intellectual skills, opinion, emotions, encourage curiosity, motivate and most importantly provide information. In this sense, media may be considered as both harmful on one hand and pragmatic on the other hand. Journalism deontology must become an imperative on one hand and media literacy on the other.

Also, it is necessary to design a model in which serious media houses would be clearly separated from other subjects in the market. Such media houses would be treated as bodies whose work is biased towards general public interests, instead of being considered as merchandise. Is there anyone capable of returning serious and professional journalism back to media scene? Journalists, civil society and the public have crucial role here. It is important to have the audience that would require and demand quality media program and serious and professional programs and contents.

Finally, we shall quote Viktor Ivancic, former Feral Tribune editor, posted in “BH Dani”,

a local weekly magazine, that, in very few sentences described present – day journalism:”Journalism has become a manufacturing entertainment trade, its purpose, goals and rules have changed; it has become more and more superficial, optimistic and everything has been deprived of criticism (...). The act of informing itself, presumes exposing of daily reading audience to the fire of sensational news, without having any of this news being marked as some kind of priorities; instead they have become mere constructions of media themselves. Entrepreneurs of media corporations advocate and encourage “content production” with negation of author’s work which is not being recognized, appreciated and eventually valued and the contents itself is treated something like popcorns or chocolate; easily digested and completely dispensable. Bearing in mind that it is the quantity that is required now days, cheap labor is consequently engaged with average literacy level and this low literacy level with many “cheap labor” engaged journalists is already frightening and on a very low level. The entire story becomes this very cheap” (11 July 2008).

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## Public interests tailored for political powerful figures

By: Senudin Safić

“Idriz Jakupovic”, foundation for scholarships of high school and university students was established in 2014 with the head office in the city of Sanski Most. The situation on the field dictated the following activities with human people gathered around Ajdin Jakupovic, a doctor of dental medicine, great Maecenas, patron and founder of the above mentioned foundation. Many humanitarian projects throughout BiH followed accordingly. Public in local community identified and recognized the efforts by the people working at “Idriz Jakupovic”, foundation, as they were speaking and spreading the words about human values throughout the cities and towns, including Sanski Most, Prijedor, Mostar, Travnik, Jajce, Gradiška, Bugojno, Kupres, Maglaj, Velika Kladuša, Banja Luka etc, making thus the bridges of friendship even beyond BiH. Recently, a contract on cooperation with two times European handball champions, namely HC Zagreb, was signed. Public and citizens are supported regardless to their religious or ethnic background for Id, Easter or Christmas (for both Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholics followers) holidays.

Estimated value of financial support regarding former and present activities of the foundation amounts around BAM 200.000.00. You probably ask yourselves, what does this introduction have to do with the given topic? Although, the foundation founder takes part and actively participates (both directly and indirectly) in financing a local RTV in Sanski Most, this media house has never released or broadcasted reports regarding the humanitarian activities implemented by Adnan Jakupovic and his associates. RTV Sana is a public media house and it is hard to believe that in four years time, they couldn’t find a term, time or space to release or broadcast reports on humanitarian activities conducted by the above mentioned foundation. “Idriz Jakupovic” foundation has never allowed political interference, influence or impact of any nature into their work. Besides, the foundation cooperates with individuals and associations that are disfavored and disgraced by local governing of-

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*We must emphasize municipalities that had lost their local public radio and TV stations long ago.*



officials and authorities, therefore, this, to some extent, determines the relationship and attitude of local media towards the foundation.

The general stance of people, gathered around “Idriz Jakupovic” foundation is that they still want to continue being at service to all citizens in Sanski Most, without any political background as this determines the future of local radio and television station. All of this takes place in the municipality whose official authorities shall allocate around BAM 389.000.00 to RTV Sana, which is an increasing amount comparing to last year implementation by BAM 10.000.00. Bad experience was also witnessed by the Civil Association for better Sanski Most (originally Udrženje građana za bolji Sanski Most) since they were not allowed to advertise on local radio station, without any reasonable explanation provided by the radio and television station officials.

Radio Sanski Most has never allowed programs regarding the democratization of local community with focus on the current situation in Sanski Most. If we are aware that the above mentioned association has openly been criticizing local official governing authorities, it becomes clear that local media in Sanski Most, although financed by the means of tax payers “listens” to the voice of powerful local politicians instead. Can we speak, in such tailored and ordered media space, about public interests, transparent financing, employment etc in accordance with affirmative and positive legislative? When we talk about financing of public and local media houses in Una – Sana municipalities, we must outline that they could hardly prevail and sustain without the municipal financial support. This situation can be considered as beneficiary for most local politicians and their interests.

We must emphasize municipalities that had lost their local public radio and TV stations long ago. Buzim radio station is locked for some time, so the real media war is battled on local web sites. Pursuant to good old custom, the internet fights between “ours” and “theirs” (AKA close to local governing official authorities) with the involvement of the opponents of local government and with occasional opposition interference, has become a common occurrence.

Local media picture in the city of Ključ is also very poor. In this particular municipality, local radio station has been “on infusion”, so its program content is often based on the music played by local and international singers and groups.

It would be unreal to expect total complying of public interests, with rather modest financial budget and number of employees, old and inadequate equipment etc. As far as financing process of the radio station is concerned, in this municipality with the number of unemployed people being greater than those who have jobs at present, the fact that publically released general dissatisfaction of the few employed persons, really speaks for itself.

The signal of local radio station in Bosanski Petrovac could hardly be broadcasted throughout the local community. Even though they are being partially financed from local budget and because of poor signal, we could talk about the discrimination of listening audience in these particular areas, because the voice of local radio speaker has never been heard in these areas.

Public media space in Bihac is also pretty complicated. RTV Bihac employees and staff have been very angry with local and official governing authorities, which had been “postponing” necessary payments, as part of the financial budget amount (“cake”) that should have been paid to all employees and staff of the above mentioned media house. And while journalists had been indicating the postponement of their monthly wages (salaries) and very difficult position they were in, the city mayor issued a warning release clearly outlining the budget tax payers money shall, in the forthcoming period, be distributed and spent transparently and that there will be no new employments (employing based on political party preferences) in media houses and public companies owned and managed by the City of Bihac. No particular dissatisfaction could have been heard since May last year, when RTV Bihac employees and staff publically expressed their dissatisfaction.

As far as the transparent money transferring is concerned, the City of Bihac official authorities made a step forward. With few clicks only, one could have full access to information and details, regarding the forthcoming financial grants planned to be allocated to RTV Bihac informative and news purposes. According to this basis, the last payment was made on 6 March 2018 and the amount transferred was BAM 28.165, 58. It is interesting to notice that the budget amount allocated by the Sanski Most municipal officials is greater than one paid by the City of Bihac.

We could discuss for days about local web sites in Bihac, ethic code obeying, financial issues etc. Only few have sincere desires and will to release and provide correct information and news to the public. According to information I attained from my female colleague from Cazin, employees at RTV Cazin media house cannot compliment and be satisfied with better monthly wages (salaries) and earnings either. However, their salaries (monthly wages) are regular, paid on time and maximum attention is directed to general public interests. When you talk with citizens of most populated municipality of Una – Sana Canton, generally there is a notable difference



in opinions and stances provided. Some citizens consider that local media house is biased towards the governing authorities as this thesis can in fact be noticed in reports related to the activities of municipal mayor and his administration.

There have been many complaints directed against the work of public media houses in Velika Kladusa as well. Non – transparency and biasing are among the most outlined complaints. Animadverts are directed against the work of municipal mayor claiming that he, along with his associates, positioned “their loyal people” in local media house. We wouldn’t go wrong if we say that this represented the resumption of the previous and past story, only with different characters and parties being involved. We are all familiar with the fact that we live in an environment where the municipal mayor and his political party make direct influence on local media houses and their work in Una – Sana canton as this has been going on for years.

The fact that this influence is rapidly growing is what worries everybody.

It is obvious that auto censorship is in close tie with the story on financing of local media houses. Transparent spending of budget money and adoration of public interests is thus put on the margins as far as this issue is concerned.

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## Public media service in BiH loses public confidence and trust

By: Mehmed Agović

Public media service in BiH, including the entire region, at this moment, is not able to participate adequately in the process of supporting democratic processes and is unable to satisfy general and wide public interests required. Key reasons for this lie in the fact that there is vast political influence and the interference by the governing authorities into their work. In ethnically, territorially and politically divided BiH society, ethno-national political and governing oligarchies endeavor and attempt, by the use of constant pressure and obstructions, to use instrumentalism – based system imposed on public RTV Service, in order to get their support for accomplishing their political interests and goals. Their long term intention and plan has always been to implement the transformation of public RTV system from the status of public media service and to change it into ethnic - biased channels and programs, so RTV system could eventually serve three major ethnic groups in BiH as a result.

Public that expects unbiased and objective information have been faced with also a new and insufficient challenges of media business operations in the present time of digital domination in this particular field. Commercial advertising, as once common mean and source of profit making, has almost completely vanished, that is, the incomes deriving out commercial advertising, have been reduced, for most media houses that usually accomplished their profit through paid commercial advertisement (and there was a belief that the price of these commercial advertisements would decrease). The impact of so called non – transparent platforms is globally getting stronger in digital and information technology based environment as Google and Face Book normally dominate in most of the global and commercial advertisement market. Under such circumstances, it would be far too optimistic to expect that, during the market race completion, a part of their incomes was to be directed to support the development and sustainability of professional journalism in general.

During the present digital era, we are facing the reduced access to same information, since this information are biased towards an individual, since appropriate and certain messages and information are also directed towards this individual and without any knowledge about where they come from, what is their main source and finally, who shape them. Accordingly, we all are more exposed to manipulation with specific aim (for instance during the election process) and we thus become subject to particular political phenomenon of manipulation.

Public media service under such circumstances and media environment may be the only “antidote or antitoxin” in protecting the public audience that requires necessary, objective and unbiased news. It is crucial that the public audience disposes of available media services provided, in order to improve their public duties and, apart from this, to become capable of estimating the effect of the governing officials whom they elect. The point is the fact that only media tailored (in accordance with the above mentioned) way is financed from public sources, that is, it has to be financed from the public and citizens so they (media houses) could be under constant supervision by the public and citizens for the work they perform.

Current governing authorities in BiH have prevented the public to have competent and adequate public service by, among other things, refusing to establish non-obstructive model of money flow (through RTV Tax Fees) aimed to finance their business operations, although this was government’s legal responsibility and duty.

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Consequently, the government officials had, months prior to October general elections, blocked necessary and critical public judging, regarding their poor performance and eventual depriving of public trust during the forthcoming elections. Long – term financial exhausting has made the public RTV service completely dependent to government's aid and help, because chief-in-editors at media houses have been appointed by the ruling politicians and their professional standards are on a significantly low level as their competence do not meet the requirements of the general public and additionally it questions the existence of such public media service and its justifiability. These is best illustrated by the RTV service of the Republic of Srpska which for instance, openly supports the political views by the present governing entity party which partially funds and finance them (RTRS) so this media eventually is therefore more state – biased, rather than public media house.

Such media service cannot serve as support, since, for instance, it should serve and display a credible media environment in BiH. Today, it cannot even be considered as neither standard nor sample to other media houses, including journalists, as current public media service should cherish and cultivate objective – based journalism. Public media service is not even credible in terms of technological development, since it is the only public media service in Europe still operating on analogue signal.

The absence of self-sustaining functions and independent media service eventually jeopardize diversity, pluralism and freedom of information and opens room for the development of stagnation of journalism, including the stagnation of trust and confidence in media in general. Public have been, among other things, deprived of required and necessary media literacy so they could comprehend and understand the meaning of media ownership issues and the nature of media, including once again, editing policies and (un) biased intentions, because they should at the end, be able to identify and recognize true from false information.

According to index of media literacy rate for 2018, implemented by the Open Society Institute (OSI) in Sofia, Bulgaria, Balkan countries proved most submissive in accepting false news comparing to other European countries. BiH is on 32nd place out of 35 European countries, because of media houses in these countries are being under the control of governing officials or associated business groups, including the lack and absence of media literacy and significantly low level of reliability in their societies. Slightly better ratings were founded in Serbia (29), Bulgaria (30) and Montenegro (31), and Albania rated 33, Turkey 34 and Macedonia 35 were less rated than BiH..

Under the conditions where public trust and confidence in social media is declining, due to vast spreading of false news and disinformation, public media houses have the opportunity to present themselves as open spaces aimed for free debates regarding social media problems and present themselves as sources of quality based and unbiased information available to general public, including the people who do not pay their RTV tax fees or people who do not necessarily require and demand information and news.

Because of targeted financing, public media services may serve as stable and solid provider of various possibilities, including better working conditions for journalists, artists, musicians and film makers and thus support cultural sector and its development and sustainability. This is the reason why, according to information provided by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), the confidence and trust in public media (radio and TV) may increase.

High level of consciousness regarding the identifying and recognizing the role of public media service has in best possible way been displayed through the recent case in Switzerland, where the citizens, in recently held referendum, decided to reject the government's proposal to stop paying for RTV tax fees for national public media service, namely SRG SSR. They thus decided to continue with financing this public media service (by paying RTV tax fees) and keep it under public control instead.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is today probably the only country in Europe where its citizens, due to internal ethnic segregation and confronted ethno – nationalistic politics, need, more than ever, independent public media service where they could influence the program policy instead of having governing officials imposing the same influence upon public media service.

Unfortunately, their consciousness for accomplishing these kinds of exigencies and necessities is not on the same level as those of the above mentioned people in Switzerland. There was no public voice and protests that should be raised against the long – term systematic obstruction of public RTV service in BiH and its independence, including its role. Public do need these particular voices in saving the public media service in BiH and first practical move and step in this process that should follow is urgent solving of the issue and problem targeted financing from public sources.