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Media in BiH: Between the fight for survival and orders by their funders

Future perspectives, as far as many possibilities of media financing in Bosnia and Herzegovina are concerned, do not seem optimistic at all. According to estimates and evaluations, conducted by competent experts, the market value of commercial advertising in our country is decreasing from year to year. Big advertisers of private ownership, have, for the period of last couple of years, been exceptionally cautious, in terms of where to invest their money planned for commercial advertising and marketing campaigns, taking into serious consideration the doubtfulness of the credibility of information data provided, regarding the public audience viewership.

There is limited number of media houses in BiH that manage to ensure and provide their own financial means for regular operations, required for their functioning and normal work. Their survival and sustainability often depend on the will by local official authorities and decision makers, regarding direct financing or allocations of grants to media houses. The position of financial dependability that always contains political dependability, as well as serving particular political, ethnic, economic or other lobbies, instead of serving the public, questions media public reputation and its competence and public trust in media contents and programs they broadcast.

Estimates and evaluations conducted by non – government sector showed that tens of millions of convertible marks (BAM) have been allocated on annual basis to media houses and their programs and that general public has had absolutely no access to details regarding these allocations and the procedures required for financial grants. If these transactions are not fully transparent, that is, if there are no clear and defined criteria for allocations of these public financial means and grants to media houses, media professionals, including objective reporting and the entire community in general, shall suffer the most from the consequences that derive as a result. The survey and investigation implemented and conducted, as part of the “Media and Public Credibility”¹ project, confirmed that in BiH there were no available information regarding the criteria for public financing and allocation of funds from public budget sources and that it was impossible to determine the amounts of money allocated to certain media houses.

Regular, standard and central role in BiH media market is public broadcasting service, whose public communication is left to and handed over to requirements and desires by outer factors (mostly those of political background), while the public interest, as key financiers, has not been identified as the crucial factor required for obtaining and sustaining complete independence of public broadcasting system. Constant privatization of public services and the entire system of public communication through political managing leaves public interest on the margins of the operations by the public broadcasters.

56th E – Journalist edition shall include the texts that at the same time played great contribution during public discussion with the purpose of creating the recommendation regarding the law on ownership transparency and media financing, including the settling of commercial advertising market. The text authors include the following: journalists from Banjaluka **Žarko Marković** and **Brankica Spasenić**, freelancer from Mostar **Sanja Tirić**, journalist from Foča **Slobodan Kovač**, journalist from Foca, mr.sc **Enita Čustović** from Faculty of Political Sciences with the University of Sarajevo, and doc.dr. **Mirza Mehmedović**, from Faculty of Philosophy with the University of Tuzla.

Arman Fazlić, E-journalist editor

¹ The project „Media and Public Credibility“ is implemented by the Consortium consist of BH Journalists Association, Media Center Foundation, Press Council of BiH and NGO “JaBiHEU”.



Media in BiH between personal freedom and public finances

Buying peace and stability

Great media systems are exceptionally hard to finance and press and printed media houses are even in worst possible position. Newspapers manufacturing has become significantly expensive business and there are no guarantees that invested means would return through future incomes, because of the following: significantly decreased number of printed editions and due to a decline, deriving from commercial marketing incomes. Having considered this and during few previous years, great private companies have been extra cautious as far as spending of money planned for marketing purposes was concerned' the forecast for the forthcoming period does not seem optimistic at all and this does not concern printed media houses only. Pursuant to this, media public media financing unfortunately remains as the only option.

By: Žarko Marković

A month and a half ago, the text / article titled "How political parties finance their campaigns from public budget money from local communities", was posted and appeared on a local web site. The text contained parallel overview of public procurement plans for five towns in the Republic of Srpska, for the period from last year until present, with particular focus on the community - based and utility - drafted projects, including media financing as well. The results only proved that certain cities and towns throughout the Republic of Srpska (Banjaluka, Doboj, Prijedor, Bijeljina and Trebinje) increased their local budgets, aimed for roads reconstructions (layering asphalt) and public lighting. These cities and towns shall, under special logo (titled "Asphalt, light and invite media for follow up"), transfer some BAM 400.000, 00 to the accounts of media houses in Republic of Srpska. This amount does not include the cities of Banja Luka and Trebinje, since they have not yet released and announced the information regarding this project.

Many potential voters are still attracted by his kind of approach, although the newly built roads are used mostly by people that decide to leave and abandon this country for good in their quest for better life abroad. This matter does indeed concern something that is, in the first place, visible and can be felt and touched, that is, it "proves and confirms" that the governing official authorities are actually doing something affirmative and acceptable for their own citizens and the venue accordingly appears as even more significant, especially if the same citizens have plenty of food and drink under booths and tents.

Consequently, the votes are guaranteed, as result of public "gratitude and obedience".

In this way, local communities' budgets become dependent subjects under the control of political parties during the election year period, because there is no better chance ad opportunity for promotions, than cutting of the celebration tape, booth setting, sticking roasted pigs or lambs (meat) on the fire (in some places they even roast bulls), which altogether represents the folklore and "tradition" for the opening ceremony of 1.2 km of recently asphalted road, which shall (apparently) "dramatically" make lives of local communities and citizens significantly easier.

This particular text covered five cities and towns only and their plans in 2018. Things at higher levels are much more serious, since amounts at these levels are significantly higher and money aimed for media houses is not directed from public budget sources only; instead it is directed from the vast number of public enterprises (and they are under complete control of governing and ruling official authorities).

According to recent report by Sarajevo Media Center, public sector allocates tens of millions of BAM to certain media houses and media contents. It seems at least unacceptable, that no appropriate and public access to information details, regarding these allocations, is feasible and can be done, including the crucial information about the amounts allocated to certain media houses and more importantly, procedures and criteria upon which these amounts have been allocated.

The report outlined that the money has been allocated from all administrative

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29 Jun 2018

Journalists in Zenica: Bankruptcy procedure as a model for legal political control of public local media

23 Jun 2018

Training for journalists and activists from Syria and Iraq on reporting and transitional justice ends

21 Jun 2018

EU provides support in regulating commercial advertising market in BiH

12 Jun 2018

Bihać: Legal appointing of managing bodies in public media houses questioned

Press releases

29 Jun 2018

Regional Platform strongly condemns threats and pressures on the journalists and management of RTV Una – Sana Canton

29 Jun 2018

BHJA Journalists Club of Banja Luka: Republika Srpska President statements labeled the journalists and jeopardized their safety

12 Jun 2018

Civil society organizations: Upcoming new Law on foreign donations represents threats against freedom of joining and freedom of expression

According to recent report by Sarajevo Media Center, public sector allocates tens of millions of BAM to certain media houses and media contents. It seems at least unacceptable, that no appropriate and public access to information details, regarding these allocations, is feasible and can be done, including the crucial information about the amounts allocated to certain media houses and more importantly, procedures and criteria upon which these amounts have been allocated.

Media on media

28 Jun 2018

Western Balkans: PBSs of the region signed memorandum of understanding

20 Jun 2018

Public Service of BiH hides information regarding the collected amount through RTV Taxes while this payment system proved illegal

14 Jun 2018

EU increases budget for West Balkan region for 20%

Vacancies

Online magazine NEWSBLIC seeks for a journalist. Deadline for application: July 4, 2018.

Apply for BIRN's Summer School of Investigative Reporting 2018. Deadline for application: July 15, 2018.

UNESCO call for proposals: Photographs illustrating journalists doing their job. eadline for application: July 15, 2018.

This kind of specific relationship practically impels traditional media houses to and with their own money, seeks salvation in public enterprises and public budgets, entities and local communities.

Consequently, this creates a bedazzled circle of dependability, because it is hard to expect that media houses that practically rely on means deriving from public enterprises professionally outline about the irregularities or even criminal occurrence in their own houses.

levels in BiH, through different procedures and aimed for different purposes, including regular co – financing of public media houses, short – term allocation of financial means for specific media programs and contents covering particular issues and affairs, and other associated individual help, such as allocation deriving from additional and extra incomes from public institutions and enterprises, also directed and aimed to media houses. According to some unofficial and unconfirmed information, media houses receive (on an annual level and from public budget and public enterprises), enormous amounts of some BAM 30, 00 million in BiH.

During the period, where (on an annual level), several so called traditional media channels have been shut down, with printed media houses leading this list and definitely being in the worst possible position of all, these information revealed that without public budget money, the situation in media market would turn disastrous. It is getting hard and difficult to finance great media systems and printed media is once again in a worst possible position here. Newspaper manufacturing has become significantly expensive and costly business with no guarantees that the money invested shall return through future incomes because of both, decline in edition and because of decreased marketing incomes as well. Having in mind that large private companies have lately been extra cautious, as far as investing money in marketing is concerned, the forecast for the forthcoming period does not seem optimistic at all.

On the other hand, leading shopping centers and trade centers, including car dealers, are still investing their money in marketing, having their commercial advertisements posted and published with leading and most popular newspapers. This includes big companies from other business fields, since they dispose of significant money amounts in our market, but there is a question of what benefits they may have as far as this particular type of commercial advertising is concerned, taking into consideration that the scope towards eventual, potential and future buyers and clients, is visibly diminished, due to very low number of published and printed editions. Therefore, it doesn't take extraordinary wisdom to conclude that that the most significant piece of marketing cake ends in printed papers, due to some other and completely different schemes and combinations, rather than having commercial advertisement in printed sources, pursuant to market adequacy.

This kind of specific relationship practically impels traditional media houses to and with their own money, seeks salvation in public enterprises and public budgets, entities and local communities.

Consequently, this creates a bedazzled circle of dependability, because it is hard to expect that media houses that practically rely on means deriving from public enterprises professionally outline about the irregularities or even criminal occurrence in their own houses. In this way, company managers, all of them being active political party members, provide media with stability, and also provide them-selves with stability. To make things worse, there are no indicators that this might change in the forthcoming period, regardless to the question about who shall govern, rule or run and manage the media.

Although previous lines may sound as excuses to someone, this issue has not been about justifying; instead it has been about depressing everyday life and about the situation in which BiH media are in at present time. No media house can rely, be liquid and finally sustain from RTV Tax Fee incomes; otherwise, public broadcasters would not be desperately mourning and seeking help constantly. Commercial TV Channels cannot survive through "healthy" marketing service they acquire through audience viewership. Additionally, printed media cannot financially prevail by relaying on printed edition, including web sites that cannot rely on number of clicks and they are all consequently compelled and to some extent forced, to find alternative solutions and paths in order to sustain and survive in the market.

In this context and at present, "most liberate media houses" in BiH are on one hand, those being financed from abroad, but this could, on the other hand result in with undesirable effects, because the thorough analysis regarding the incomes these media house attain could raise the question of what is the difference between media houses being financed by local governing levels and media houses being financed by foreign governments.

Frankly, there is no difference between the two; both of them, if one should be willing to be mean, could be considered as mercenary orientated categories.

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Non-transparency in media sector disserves the public audience and professionals

By: Brankica Spasenić

Non – transparency ownership level in media field in Bosnia and Herzegovina and most recent massive appearance (“invasion or flood”) of emerging web sites without impressums posted on them, web sites with no basic information or contact details regarding the owners or persons backing up and supporting these web sites; directly and indirectly guiding and dictating the contents, has altogether become, I should say, rather disturbing and even alarming in general.

Politically biased media houses, eager for sensationalism, without clear and defined professional and ethic discourse, have become leading mechanisms for taking over the governing power; they have become mechanisms used to remain sustainable in power and often including financial malversations as part of these affairs. Consequently, many are on the good path to remain locked or chained in their own, undefined frameworks, degrading and diminishing professional standards, reputation and dignity of professional journalism. What is equally tragic is the fact that this occurrence is disorientating and even driving the public crazy.

Regardless to how humiliating this may appear for entire society and media audience, it is equally tragic for media staff, media representatives and media employees as well.

My personal experience and experience of my recent, but former workmates, proved and confirmed that non – transparent privatization process and transformation of ownership structure may practically shut down media houses and consequently media employees (and other media staff) could additionally be sacked, dismissed and left unemployed overnight, without having clue where to address this problem or whom contact, in regard with the problem of remaining and unpaid debts, including unpaid wages, salaries and other associated legal contributions that employers are legally obliged to pay for their employees.

The fact that media houses in BiH, often making judgments regarding other fields and areas in our country, where non – transparency of media ownership and managing or rather mismanaging (including financial dependability), opens unclear and vast additional room and space for misuses (mainly for political purposes) and often for criminal purposes as well. I deliberately refer to the term criminal, because the article, text or post, being released, posted or published without clearly indicated author's full name, released in media without information regarding the editor, or without information regarding the publisher or financier and along with this, the text loaded with semi and quasi information, unchecked, unverified information and unfounded qualifications, often has “racquet – based”, defamation aimed or discrediting goals.

Media ownership transparency (including editing) represents one of the most crucial conditions for media liberties and freedoms. Unfortunately, there is a great wall standing between these two items. This wall must be destroyed from both sides.

Media staff and journalists often lack strength, capacity and even time or have no possibilities to destroy this wall.

In this context, they need help from both, state – level and entity – level institutions, regulators, laws and legislatures that would eventually bring the wall down from both sides and international cooperation would be useful in this case as well.

Even if they fail to destroy the wall, they could eventually devalue it or shake it so in time, it may collapse by itself.

No one is bringing up and hoping for utopia or favoring false and unreal optimism outlining that it would be possible to establish one hundred percent transparency especially as far as money cash flow is concerned in BiH (as this is impossible in any other field in BiH, including media field as well).

Last surveys and researches regarding the issue of clientelism, that is, concerning the non – transparency in media in South East European countries, outlined that clientelism index figure was decreasing in comparison with last year's results. The quality and information transparency in media field was decreasing as well. During several meetings of media employees, staff and representatives in BiH, participants often highlighted the problem of non – transparent media ownership, particularly when media houses were concerned.

Members of the Press Council of BiH Board of Directors outlined that this kind of occurrence was typical and usual for over 60% of online media houses.

It is estimated that this particular situation represents a problem to the Press Council of BiH Complaint Commission, because it is almost impossible to make any legal contact with these specific media houses (web sites), taking into consideration that their only contact detail is marketing e-mail address.

Free Media Help Line

Actual cases:

Una – Sana Canton Radio and Television – for months, Government and Assembly official representatives of Una Sana Canton have been threatening journalists and editors of RTV USK, trying to appoint the members of new Managing Board that would suit the purposes of ruling governing authorities in this particular Canton. Association of BiH Journalists and Free Media Help Line issued a press release regarding this affair.

RTV Visoko staff – RTV Visoko, whose founder and the owner is Visoko Municipality has been liquidated and proclaimed insolvent. At the same time, Visoko Radio and Television is granted a permit by the Communication Regulatory Agency of BiH (RAK) to operate as part of “Cultural and Information Center – Visoko” Public Enterprise, but all employees were sacked. Free Media Help Line provided legal aid and counseling to former employees of RTV Visoko.

Marija Manojlovic – Mrs. Manojlovic was sacked from Herceg TV media houses and was told that this TV houses was downsizing. Her position was on the other hand taken by another female journalist. Allegedly, this new employee was not legally registered as an employee without regular and legally accepted contract. Free Media Help Line sent a notice letter to Herceg TV houses.



What is typical for almost every of the above listed countries and what is particularly emphasized in BiH, where political crisis has become a rule, rather than an exception, is the fact that the election winner becomes the greatest beneficiary from public media services. This does not necessarily mean that private media houses are free from political influence; on the contrary, even without publicly released ownership structure detailed information, the information about which political wing, party or even party leader controls which media has become a public secret.

We often wonder who should be in control, charge and who should eventually sanction and fine media houses showing, releasing or posting false or incorrect information, regarding the details about their owners, financiers or editors. First of all, impressum posting is legal duty for everybody in media field in BiH. Literally translated, impressum means “what has been imprinted (marked)”; marked and imprinted in terms of responsibility, including the influence and impact on the content posted, selection of topics and themes, text nature, positioning on web sites or in printed (published) field etc. Most frequent recommendations support the idea that this kind of legal duty should be in control of an independent body legally authorized for this kind of work; fully qualified to control and monitor media houses and also, body conformed to their work, altogether being part of legal framework. As part of its competences and duties, each and every item should provide this body with a possibility to impose sanctions and even fines against any media house failing to fulfill its legal duties or media houses releasing false and incorrect news.

Through investigating and researching this particular field, I have discovered rather discouraging experiences in Croatia where the issue of media ownership was legally regulated. Namely, the attempt of investigation and research, in order to discover to what extent is this specific law being deferred and whether sanctions of any kind have so far been imposed against the disobeying media houses, I have found out that legal provisions have remained a “dead letter on a piece of paper”.

The issue of media ownership in Croatia has been defined by the Law on Media and Law on Electronic Media.

As far as printed media houses are concerned, Article 31 of the Law on Media in the Republic of Croatia, defined that the publisher stock shares must be registered under personal and full name on one hand, and on the other hand, Article 32 also defined that publishers “were obliged to, by no later than 31 January each year, submit full information regarding the information and contact details about company’s seat and head office address, to Croatian Chamber of Commerce, that is, to submit the information regarding full names of both private and legal entities having (directly or indirectly) stock shares, partnership or co-ownership details in that particular media house, including the percentage of their stock shares”.

During the implementation of last amendments of the Law on Media from 2011, item 6 was additionally annexed to Article 32 clearly defining that “any omitting or failure to present or release the ownership structure information and details or failure to present or release information or details regarding share holding structure in such companies shall be legally forbidden and banned”.

Fairpress.eu investigators and researchers tried, through Croatian Chamber of Commerce, Ministry of Culture and State Attorney Office, to get information regarding which institutional and official body was in charge and authorized for control, supervision and monitoring over the process of the implementation of legal provisions defining media ownership, including the number of cases of violation of these provisions.

However, despite their attempts to make contacts with several institutions, they were deprived of concrete and straight answers.

“It is obvious that the authorized and official body does not exist in this case nor there have been cases of misdemeanor related to practice and occurrences of actions that were in contrast with the Law on Media regulating the media ownership”, claimed Fairpress.eu officials.

If this situation does exist in Croatia, which has been, according to last measuring of clientelism index in media of SE Europe, rated with -0.32 result and was thus placed on top of the ladder (amongst six examined countries), then it is not difficult to predict and assume the situation in BiH as far as this special issue is concerned, having considered that BiH, during the same examination, was ranked on the bottom of the ladder, rated with -0.67 result. Number zero, as the result, is the lowest ranked and rated result and number one is considered as the best result. Additionally, no country including Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Romania were ranked or rated anywhere near the zero result.

What is typical for almost every of the above listed countries and what is particularly emphasized in BiH, where political crisis has become a rule, rather than an exception, is the fact that the election winner becomes the greatest beneficiary from public media services. This does not necessarily mean that private media houses are free from political influence; on the contrary, even without publicly released ownership structure detailed information, the information about which political wing, party or even party leader controls which media has become a public secret.

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I, a journalist in Bosnia and Herzegovina – working, social and professional position of journalists within media market

By: Enita Čustović

By observing and looking from working conditions perspective and angle, journalism as professional trade and occupation has always been encountering and facing miscellaneous challenges. Despite being put aside and positioned on margins, professional journalism managed to sustain and survive in this society – particularly during the period of last few decades, particularly when working, social and professional journalists' status in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been seriously questioned and challenged. No contracts or poor and inadequate contracts, low and/or postponed (late) salaries/wages or insufficient material - based reimbursement for the work they perform, working illegally with unsettled, undefined and unclear work status; with socially and professionally endangered status, often without food allowance or transportation costs, exposed to constant and different types of pressures - journalists, along with other professional media staff, have been forced to work under the above listed and outlined conditions in BiH media market.

Let's analyze one step at the time. Even during the process of formal education for (future) journalist, certain malfunctions and irregularities can be noticed during the period of student work experience for instance. Therefore, on one hand, future journalists, (working as volunteers) often and utterly equal with experienced journalists (employees of certain media house) perform their duties and assignments together with senior journalists, and sometimes they perform even better than more experienced professional journalist, since their reports occasionally become "headlines" and "smashing news" etc; while on the other hand their work is minimized, devalued as they receive no credit for the work they perform¹. Furthermore and at the end of journalists formal education (considering that if they are lucky to gain certain level of experience during their studies and if they are lucky to prove themselves while doing their work experience in some media house and manage to stay there), they will, upon the completion of their final exam, hardly be registered and employed on full time basis, that is, they will hardly be entitled to their social and retirement funds. After volunteering period is over, they shall often put on a "probation period", (as if this new status was formally and utterly different from previously completed volunteering period), because after having completed volunteering process, for which they never receive any money, they now require the so called "probation work" (which again is very uncertain from the employment point of view). As far as the period and number of years spent, as part of the above mentioned "statuses" (volunteering and probation period) it displays yet another issue which can be discussed thoroughly.

In context of BiH media market, there have been cases in very reputable and respectable editing offices and media houses, having 15 to 20 journalists engaged, but with only few of them being employed on "full time basis". Others included volunteers, scholarship students, probation workers or simply people working on a work experience basis. And even after a journalist has completed her/his volunteering, probation work, work experience period or God knows what other types of experience and has been provided with an opportunity to finally become a professional journalist and signs certain contract (for instance Author Contract or similar type of contract), this particular contract often appears (as far as far the labor rights of journalists are concerned, including her/his status and working conditions), as quite uncertain and unsuitable for this particular journalist and above listed rights. Journalists and other media staff should seriously be cautious regarding the contracts they plan to sign. When they finally become "professionals", journalists in BiH begin with encountering and facing real working, labor and social and above any other – professional challenges.

It is well known that media reflects the situation in society, so therefore journalists provide the picture reflected by media. If this picture proves to be poor and inadequate, its reflection or part of it cannot be any better. "According to survey implemented by the BH Association Journalists", 35% to 40% journalists in BiH work on casual basis with no legal contracts and consequently

It is well known that media reflects the situation in society, so therefore journalists provide the picture reflected by media. If this picture proves to be poor and inadequate, its reflection or part of it cannot be any better.

"According to survey implemented by the Association of BiH Journalists", 35% to 40% journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina work on casual basis with no legal contracts and consequently are not entitled to pension and retirement funds. In fact, even those with full time employment contracts are not sufficiently protected"

¹ It was only during the last couple of years with the passing of the Law on Volunteering that the situation for all volunteers has slightly improved, including journalists – volunteers (Law on Volunteering of the Republic of Srpska available at: http://www.volontiram.ba/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/ZAKON_FINAL.pdf and Law on Volunteering of the Federation BiH available at: http://www.volontiram.ba/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Zakon_o_volontiranju_FBiH.pdf), although it has been difficult to determine to what extent has this law been implemented and applied in reality, that is, to what extent has this law been feasible „in the field“.



In specific environments, such as BiH, inside relatively unsettled and messy media market, the importance of preserving journalists' integrity and dignity is imposed as an imperative and it is certain that this assignment and duty should be top priority for most media professionals. It is clear that terms including "journalists' integrity and dignity" are rather complex, so the positioning of journalists and their statuses in BiH should necessarily include the three mentioned, outlined and highlighted aspects: working conditions, that is, work and legal relations, socio – economic segment and professional challenges that journalists in BiH encounter and face on daily basis.

are not entitled to pension and retirement funds. In fact, even those with full time employment contracts are not sufficiently protected"².

As far as work and legal status of journalists is concerned, we could say that the most notable disadvantage include the absence and lack of quality – based and adequate protections of journalist in most media houses through collective contracts. The protection of journalists' rights could be ensured by the interference of media syndicates (unions), even though they hardly appear on media in BiH. Powerful centers and non – transparency of media ownership information significantly contribute in complete absence of collective labor contracts and syndicate (unions). Also, as far as the aspect of harmony and guarantees of journalists' authors rights is concerned, the situation is also equally poor and inappropriate, taking into consideration that contracts signed by journalists mostly (almost on regular basis) contain no provisions concerning the protection of journalists' authors rights.

Looking from socio – economic point of view and in regard with journalists' position, it is due to unsettled and undefined labor and legal status that vast numbers of journalists have unenviable socio – economic status. Additionally, great number of journalists, which has previously been outlined, work illegally or have another (often in unfortunate) status, without healthcare, social and pension and retirement protection. Journalists often receive "minimum" wages and salaries and amounts they receive are often very low, postponed and sometimes they have to work for months or even years before they get paid for their work. Under such circumstances, additional and informal education is almost impossible to accomplish and everything is narrowed down to individual journalists' engagements and journalists cannot afford any of the above mentioned additional, informal and special education at any level. Insufficient payments and devaluing of journalist in socio – economic context, results in the situation where "decision makers" in certain media houses (especially private media houses) believe and are to some extent determined that hiring a non-graduate student is more profitable and treat such student in terms of socio – economic perspective accordingly, than hiring a professional journalist. As far as the quality produced as a result of the above highlighted employment "strategy" is concerned – we shall discuss some other time.

Finally, professional position of journalists, as well as the two previous positions, is not any better in many senses. Namely, journalists constantly face different challenges and are often openly exposed to various pressures. Great number of daily – based assignments that must be implemented, and as a result, numbers of assignments that should be completed on daily basis are often not completed properly, that is, conducted professionally with quality and implemented rationally. Along with the above mentioned facts, we cannot neglect the influence of pressures imposed by media owners (entrepreneurs) and editing offices, where journalists are forced to follow the orders as requested by their superiors, since their superiors mostly focus of commercial profit or interest, which puts journalists under additional pressure, since they must obey these orders. The internal editing diversions and distinctions based on different criteria and violated inner relationship amongst the work-mates may cause yet another problem in this particular sense. Furthermore, faced with outlined economic, but also with political pressures, many journalists accept auto censure and there are many cases of latent or even completely transparent direct censures, imposed by political elites (for example "unsuitable" interview parts or omitted statements that are literally cut out or changed from certain interviews). Violated internal relationships and lack of mutual understanding, including collegial solidarity amongst journalists, absence of public support, represent and display some of many aggravating circumstances, as far as the work satisfaction and professionalism are concerned.

In specific environments, such as BiH, inside relatively unsettled and messy media market, the importance of preserving journalists' integrity and dignity is imposed as an imperative and it is certain that this assignment and duty should be top priority for most media professionals. It is clear that terms including "journalists' integrity and dignity" are rather complex, so the positioning of journalists and their statuses in BiH should necessarily include the three mentioned, outlined and highlighted aspects: working conditions, that is, work and legal relations, socio – economic segment and professional challenges that journalists in BiH encounter and face on daily basis.

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² <https://www.fokus.ba/vijesti/bih/bh-novinari-oko-40-posto-novinara-u-bih-radi-na-crno/692377/>, accessed on June 10, 2018



Manipulation over local media houses through finances

By: Sanja Tirić

Local media houses have great influence and impact over general public audience, particularly in local communities. Media houses should be free, independent and objective and should stand and represent required pre-requisites, as one of the fundamentals, for this kind of reputation is the transparency of media ownership structure.

However, insufficient and poor marketing possibilities, including financial dependency represent key obstacles that local media houses are facing at the moment, which altogether results in the decline of media program quality.

Above mentioned quality entail the issue of fair play in this “market game”, but also, through commercial advertising, includes the approach and way of how certain subjects should be analyzed, which again would eventually enable us to have better understanding of ownership structure and relationship or at least to determine the impact by certain political structures and business groups (both public and private) that have been influenced by powerful political centers.

Media market crisis produce professional journalism crisis and discredit social role of media as well. Long – term problems in media market caused the increase in unemployment rate, as far as professional journalism is concerned, which additionally resulted in the decline of information and after all, this issue questioned the function that media houses have or should have in the democratic processes.

From financial to editing dependence

Commercial media houses mostly manage to sustain in the market, due to commercial marketing activities which include slightly different approaches, where the quality of professional journalism is diminished bearing in mind that such media houses are usually biased towards mainstream and general public opinion.

During the present time, a major discourse in media field is considered as dominant, attracting thus, a significant number of consumers of this kind of information without more powerful standard and criteria, and accordingly, marketing industry follows these kind of contents considering them as relevant (in terms of number of visitors), listening or reading audience rates, particularly the number of visits as far as portal scene is concerned.

The following question arises: How can positive business operations and activities are attained in media houses if media owners and entrepreneurs obey their legal duties, as far as social rights of media employees (journalists) are concerned?

Jurica Gudelj, editor one of the oldest web sites in BiH believes that possibilities of positive business turnovers, under the above mentioned circumstances, are minimal, but yet feasible. He admits that it is hard to run a reliable, stable and self-sustaining business. “Dnevnik.ba” is market – directed and aimed media house and significant amount of finances in this house comes from the marketing; therefore these is a list of subjects that influence and make significant impact on media houses, however, it is up to journalists and editors to resist such behavior”, claims Gudelj.

The leasing of public media space (room) by political parties is particularly interesting during the pre-election campaigns, because we could then thoroughly analyze political influence over certain media houses and in specific media space (room).

“Media financing makes absolute impact on reporting way and editing policies”, claims Dragisa Sikimic, the founder and chief-in-editor of “Moja Hercegovina”, local and popular web site. “Most significant financing sources of “Moja Hercegovina” (local web site), consists of grants/projects (almost 90% of financial sources), and marketing (around 10%). It is difficult to, at the same time, be present in the market and also sustainable in terms of finances, because small size media houses require field work activities, engaged and socially responsible journalism which is, at the same time, most expensive and costly solution”, commented Sikimic.

Free market should be independent in terms of powerful centers and political influences, and editing independence should be advanced by having professional journalists engaged and ensuring financial independence.

Pay and Create!

The quality of work is no longer an imperative, but instead, the core content that would attract more and more audience which is eventually narrowed to spectacu-

Commercial media houses mostly manage to sustain in the market, due to commercial marketing activities which include slightly different approaches, where the quality of professional journalism is diminished bearing in mind that such media houses are usually biased towards mainstream and general public opinion.

The quality of work is no longer an imperative, but instead, the core content that would attract more and more audience which is eventually narrowed to spectacular – based headlines and events that are attractive to present – day consumers. Identifying and recognizing “fake news”, has become more and more difficult; there are many sponsored articles and texts and they are not marked as such texts in comparison with responsible media work, signed personally by the authors of such texts.

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“The influence of non-registered web sites with no impresums as far as the public audience is concerned, is double – sided; on one hand such media have the possibility of acquiring and accomplishing their short – term aims and agendas. On the other hand, from the long – terms distance point of view, such projects cannot remain sustainable, because the public is after all, about clever and intelligent people who want to know about the authors of texts and articles they read”, stated Gudelj.

Today, we have the domination of the alliance between the readers and advertisers. Journalists are required to create “pleasant environment for commercial advertisers”, and this shall exclude analyzing serious issues and topics. Media houses are completely biased towards commercial advertisers, and journalists have absolutely no impact over this issue. Commercial advertisers, unfortunately, thus manage to buy significant protection from media headlines and highlighted titles.

the problem of eliminating political influence, however, it is estimated that the audience is surely capable of identifying and recognizing an independent content. “Clear, obvious and sustainable work can be recognized by editing policies, authenticity and hard and dedicated work”, claims Sanja Bejlca – Saganovic, chief-in – editor of “Dnevni list”. According to contents, structure, information and news and approach to certain topics, we may be able to determine the influence of political groups and business subjects. Bjelica Saganovic claims that “the situation in entire BIH is not good, and situation in media houses.

Interests by certain aged – groups and different ethnic groups ae being neglected and media houses thus lose their connections with media market and general public audience, becoming thus therefore subject to political influences and state and public institutions.

In most cases with local media houses getting involved the situation and case is that he who pays shall create the program content; instead of having media houses whose primary task should be the production and manufacturing the content that shall be considered important for general public and that fulfil and met public criteria.





Transparency and/or Non-Transparency in local media

By: Slobodan Kovač

Local media role is indeed significant for any community or society, but its sustainability and prevalence shall remain uncertain because local communities (municipalities) in BiH keep reducing financial budget means and funds that should be allocated to media houses from year to year. Constant income decline, deriving from commercial advertising, due to poor economical state and situation in BiH and also, due to vast commercial advertising opportunities available on the internet, also represents additional problem, as far as this particular issue is concerned.

The state of local media houses also varies from one local community (municipality) to another, since they are the financiers of these media houses. Considering that there is no law provision, clearly defining and regulating the issue of local media financing, local authorities make their own decisions regarding the amount of money they plan to allocate to public local media houses. There are very few local communities (municipalities) that are capable of financing more than one media house, mostly radio stations and periodic printed media (on one hand), while on the other hand; local TV stations almost completely vanished from the market. With the expansion of internet we noticed an increasing number of local internet and web sites and their functional work and operations does not require significant financing grants, including equipment and transparency as well.

As far as the number of media houses in Foca municipality is concerned (and the population of Foca is around 20 000), the situation is quite poor, because there is only one local radio station and the number of local web sites (and they operate on copy – paste news principle) is increasing. A two – month local community (Foca municipality) bulletin was the only printed media for years, but its last edition was published few years ago, while local TV station was shut down in 1998. During the period of last couple of years, an increasing number of local web sites has been noticed, so along with the official Foca municipality web site, there are also many local web sites, including Radio Foca, Foca24.info, Focak.org, Foca.live, Foca.Informer, Foca.Zurnal, as well as Foca News web site. The number of these media houses does not necessarily mean that there is pluralism of information present, including opinions, views and contents in general. With the review of contents and programs, that the above mentioned media plan to launch, it is clear that only Foca Radio announces and releases news, while other web site media simply take them and often do not even mentioned their original sources. Radio Foca web site broadcasts current news from local community and these mainly include service and utility information, reports on cultural events and venues, including sport activities. Foca24.info, commenced with their work as first independent information web site and as a result they have more viewers than any other local web site, including face book followers. However, the fact that contents and posts on this web site are identical to those posted on Radio Foca official municipal web site, is indeed slashing. Basic difference is that the number of commercial advertisers on this particular web site is significantly larger and accordingly, so is the number of viewers watching posted texts or articles. On the other hand, there is no impressum on this local web site, although almost everyone in Foca knows that Mr. Srebrenko Kunovac is the owner and entrepreneur of this local web site.

He is also the member of the local assembly in Foca Municipality, which clearly indicates that his web site can be used for political purposes and goals, especially during the pre – election period³.

Non – transparency also represents a great problem for local media houses and ponderousness of broadcasted and posted information. With an exception of Radio Foca, as public local media house, almost all other media houses operate quite anonymously. Illegal web sites with no impressums posted where they should be, emerge on daily basis and their financing sources and potential political influence is almost impossible to detect. In such non – transparent and in terms of legality, unsettled and messy space, a room for manipulation is

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³ Success: He took 12th position as his political party candidate and he is now the candidate at the Foca local assembly, Buka, 2016, <http://www.6yka.com/novost/114501/uspjeh-bio-je-12.-na-listi-kao-kandidat-svoje-stranke-a-sada-je-odbornik-u-skupstini>



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wide open, including the accomplishments of economic and political interests, but it is also open for sharing untrue, incorrect and unchecked information. Even if only true and correct information are posted, it does not guarantee the pluralism of views and opinions and reviewing of the truth from different perspectives. That is how we get one – sided and uniform – based reporting and self and auto censorship additionally diminishes the integrity of journalism as professional occupation.

Discussions regarding the absence of ownership transparency in media field in BiH have become frequent, however, as far as the legal legislative is concerned, there have been no concrete steps forward regarding this issue. Apart from transparency issue, regarding media ownership, it is crucial to provide general public with the information, in relation with financing and spending of public money allocated to local media houses. Radio Foca officials reckon that “taking the issue of financial reports during the local municipality sessions into serious consideration, outlines and highlights multi – purpose transparency as far as spending of public budget money is concerned”⁴.

However, this can be considered as partial transparency, because Entity based laws on public enterprises define that all public enterprises and institutions, which includes public media houses, are requested and obliged to provide information regarding their financial business and they should make the information available to general public. Although, public media receive and spend public money, the reality proved that these media houses usually provide financial reports only to governing structures that directly fund them. There is no business report available at Radio Foca web site, but the official Budget Report for 2017 is available at official Foca Municipality web site. This report includes information regarding the expenditure of allocated amounts to Culture and Information Center in Foca with Foca Radio as constituent part of this center. According to relevant information, the most significant amount of money has been allocated for monthly employees’ wages / salaries, including superannuation costs, while the least money amount has been allocated for purchasing of material and equipment. The information regarding inner organizational chart, human resources, state of equipment and implemented programs are unavailable for general public.

It would necessary to raise public awareness regarding this particular problem, but due to lack of media literacy, including the importance of professional and transparent reporting, as well as business operations by media houses, this specific problem has never been taken into serious consideration.

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4 Media Center reporting reegarding the transparency in busienss operations and editing policies in public and local mediah houses in BiH, 2017, <http://www.media.ba/bs/magazin-novinarstvo/transparentnost-poslovanja-javnih-lokalnih-medija>



Public services at the edge of democracy

By: Mirza Mehmedović

The choice of public broadcasting service editor of information, news and documentary program, has not only confirmed direct political influence on the program production of the public broadcasters, but it has, once again, jeopardized the survival and persistence of public broadcasting system in Bosnia and Herzegovina as one of the fundamentals aspects of democracy – based political principles that European Union expects from us. Wrapped model of ethnic and national key, which deviates from fundamental civil values of modern democratic societies, constant implementation of (para) political model of governing and managing of public communication system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, does not only questions free information flow, but also deprave the entire national communication system, making it subordinate and subject to (mainly) political disorientation of general public, as the only potent political category in transitional process.

In this context of considering challenges that modern public radio and television system in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been facing, it is important to define the necessity of the following syntagme, namely “(para) political model”, in terms of identifying a specific form of managing the public broadcasting system, being implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is clear that the limiting factor for the entire reform of public works and organization of political system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, represents constitutional determination of political processes subjects through the categories of constitutive (constitutionally equal) ethnic groups and other citizens, which is primarily implemented during the appointing of responsible persons to highly – ranked public functions and duties. However, if we analyze current cases of appointing certain individuals to editing functions at the state broadcasting level, we shall soon realize that the ethnic key, that is, referring to constitutional organization of public system, actually displays the cover (“smoked screen”) for positioning of political figures who cannot be considered and additionally treated as competent job performers, in order to perform particular and demanding functions. This specific politics of governing, managing and handling public functions, resulted in the situation where the public interest has been brought to a complete absence of comprehension and understanding of public interest or political influences on the quality of lives and the existence of citizens, which at the same time, shall open utter freedom for the privatization of democratic processes within political parties.

Public financing of private interests

Having in mind a common definition of public services as the pre-established system by the public, including citizens’ financing and supervising, which additionally represents primary regulators of business operation transparencies of public radio and television systems, we shall accordingly acknowledge that that the process of governing and managing the public communication in Bosnia and Herzegovina will move in opposite direction, comparing to theoretical presumptions. Regardless to how unacceptable the model of constitutional principles of ethnic groups living in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which denies and negates a citizen as universal democratic category, this model does not necessarily exclude competencies of particular ethnic group members and at the same time, it cannot serve as the polygon and field for political party interventions, as part of the process which directly reflects to democratization of the entire political situation and state during the transitional period of state and public institutions.

The reasons for accepting the privatization of public works can be seen in common and silent acceptance of present situation which can be considered as inevitable relationship of powerful positions, in which common citizen does not identify her/himself as active subject of political processes, but rather as the victim of actual cultural and historical context, again where political party represents the only legitimate subject for the accomplishment of political rights. On the other hand, if we take the example of public radio and television system and constant decline of public trust into disturbed media contents and programs, we shall clearly discover that the core of this problem is seen in producers (journalists), who deliberately abandoned public communications leaving it in mercy and disgrace of outer factors (mostly factors of political nature), while they, at the same time, failed to recognize the public interest, as key financiers, as crucial factor of the sustainability of the public broadcasting independence. Reaction to political interference during the process of managing the public broadcasters emerges at the end of the process of appointing key figures to responsible functions or during the time where personal existence of journalists as media house employees becomes jeopardized or

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endangered.

In this kind of determined relationships, in relation with public responsibility, citizens do not want to be financiers of public works which, instead of serving common public interests, become open room for the privatization of public institutions and instrument – based democratic processes, with the purpose of prevailing over powerful positions.

Abstraction of responsibility

One of the crucial problems during the process of identification of responsibility, aimed to manipulate over public works, is the abstraction of subjects referred to as the bearers of responsibilities for actions that, looking from long – term perspective, have non - affirmative and negative impact on general public interests. Hence, for instance, the “political parties”, “official and authorized institutions”, “ruling governments”, “members of parliaments / assemblies” or other similar and associated syntagm, have been used to cover and hide the identity of individuals considered as hosts of public works, which, in specific period undermined and violated public interest, are used in rare critical attitudes and opinions in relation with the misuse of public works.

This is exactly how, during the process of appointing of editors of information, news and documentary programs in original information, the relationship between voices within managing boards which always conducts these appointing, without additional elaboration of every single candidate and member, towards this particular process; or even failed to present legal set of rules as part of the procedure upon which such appointing is conducted. On the other hand, critics directed to the selection of candidates also failed to offer an explanation of required corrections during the appointing process, or complaints regarding the competences of the members of managing board, which had launched the above mentioned appointing procedure.

Even in criticizing such procedures there is a clear indication regarding how behind this process there is most probably a “political party”, and that “official and authorized institutions” being subject to instrumentalization by the “ethnic parties”, have no capacities to respond during the process of the privatization of public works.

It is because of these abstract identifications of public responsibilities that citizens lose interest for the responsibility of public functions hosts (including their legal duties), and public discussions, covering the current issues, most likely terminates within few days, which was the case with the disputable appointing process of certain people in public and state service institutions.

Having in mind this kind of political immaturity in leading and managing public works, but also in the discussion regarding the responsibility of public function hosts, we can understand that business implementation, which implies the reform of total political system, has been stagnating ever since the end of military conflict and war. For example, the laws regulating the field of public broadcasting has never even been clearly defined and despite many suggestions and recommendations by certain European institutions for reform monitoring, responsible people which at certain point did perform functions in this particular area, terminated their mandates without any progress in this specific process. Opposite to frequent suggestions for the establishment of central – based bodies in order to attain work supervision in most appropriate way, as, for instance, would best be demonstrated through the establishment of the Corporation of public services, as the system manages to remain sustainable based upon the fundamentals of divided responsibilities and unstable supervision over human resources and economic operations, which furthermore allows constant privatization of public services and the entire system of public communication. In these relationships of political managing, citizen (who shall remain a permanent marginalized category and political rights, including the opportunity for performing managing positions), can be attained mainly through the membership in political party, which again, in modern Bosnian and Herzegovinian political context is represented through corporations for common goods.

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BH Journalists Association

Kralja Tvrtka 5/5, Sarajevo, BiH

Tel: +387 33 223 818;

Fax: + 387 33 255 600

E-mail: bhnovinari@bhnovinari.ba;

Web: www.bhnovinari.ba

Bulletin Board of Editors

Faruk Kajtaz

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