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REGIONAL NEWSLETTER FOR THE CULTURE OF MINORITY RIGHTS AND INTER-ETHNIC TOLERANCE

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No 1

Top story in this issue:

MINORITIES AND MEDIA

In this first issue of REGIONAL NEWSLETTER FOR THE CULTURE OF MINORITY RIGHTS AND INTER-ETHNIC TOLERANCE top story is relations between national minorities and media. The story was covered from various angles, ranging from adoption of ethical and professional standards when writing about minorities to current situation regarding minorities in specific countries and possible all-encompassing transformation of media markets as well as establishment of new forms of media cooperation among former Yugoslav countries that can greatly contribute to promotion of minority rights and strengthening of inter-ethnic tolerance.

We decided this issue was in a certain way adequate introduction and condition for further elaboration on issues of minorities and inter-ethnic relations.

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Summary:

Introduction:

REGIONAL NEWSLETTER FOR PROMOTION OF CULTURE OF MINORITY RIGHTS AND INTER-ETHNIC TOLERANCE

Systematic and responsible role of media on promotion of the culture of minority rights and strengthening inter-ethnic tolerance in former Yugoslav countries has been mostly missing due to generally negative political and social context as well as lack of education and sensitivity on the part of media, editors and journalists.

Therefore STINA news agency (Split, Croatia), Media Plan Institute (Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina) and School of Journalism from Novi Sad (Serbia and Montenegro) are starting a new educational and information project "NATIONAL MINORITIES - BRIDGES OF COOPERATION AND STABILITY FACTOR BETWEEN FORMER YUGOSLAV COUNTRIES" the goal of which is to found and develop media network for promotion of the role of national minorities and inter-ethnic tolerance as elements of cooperation and stability for countries in the region and region as whole.

Regional dimension of this project is important in order to facilitate exchange of information, experience and solutions regarding position of minorities, as well as pointing out different possibilities of how minorities can become bridges of cooperation instead of being parts of conflict.

I BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

1. Majorities' State: MEDIA AND MINORITIES, OR – THE MINORITIES IN BIH MEDIA

by Dusan Babic

Generally speaking, media coverage of national minorities in BiH remains to a large degree declarative by its character, or at the trace of long employed practice of propagating the stereotype on Roma as a paradigm. According to data and information obtained, national minorities in BiH have no media of their own. Projected by modern standards, BiH as a member of the Council of Europe is due to ensure media for the minorities, education in their own languages, realization of cultural needs and similar. The attitude towards national minorities and minority ethnic groups is viewed as reliable barometer of the situations with democracy and human rights in the country concerned. Unfortunately, BiH has nothing to boast of in that respect.

2. People with two homelands, or with none: IT TAKES INTEREST, BUT ALSO COMPETENT PERSONNEL FOR BREAKTHROUGH INTO MEDIA

by Stanko Smoljnovic

Apart from verbal communication and direct contacts, minorities in Republika Srpska have nothing else left. They are poorly represented in media. Private media are not interested due to commercial effect, while the public ones, which had to promise giving minorities a part of their programme space in order to obtain their licences, refrain from doing so. They only feature in media – which is in particular so with public service, but also with private media alike – after exceptional events happen, which all shows that no strategy exists on producing models for the coverage of national minorities in media.

3. Roma and Media: BREAKING THE ICE

by Sadina Djananovic

At times when in Bosnia and Herzegovina, against any obvious logic, private media engage in the production of programmes for the deaf-and-mute, while public service wastes time and money on low-budget reality shows, instead of dealing with more useful public-interest matters, the largest national minority – Roma people, almost have no access to media whatsoever.

II CROATIA

1. MINORITIES IN PROCESS OF POST-CONFLICT COMMUNICATION

by Stojan Obradovic

Although media coverage of minorities has been lately significantly improved compared to war- and immediate post-war time, majority of analyses and research still warns that minorities are overheard, ignored, swept on the margin and discriminated, and mostly put into a negative context.

Media have huge potential to sensitize the public for this important issue by respecting their professional standards and criteria. For countries in transition, and for countries which underwent ethnic conflicts such Croatia and other former Yugoslav republics, value of diversity (including value of national minorities) can be one of key elements of post-conflict maturation, democratization and stabilization of their respective societies.

2. ROLE OF MEDIA, MINORITY RIGHTS AND CROATIAN ACCESSION TO EUROPE

by Julije Katancevic

Starting from premise that position and protection of national minorities is one of the key issues in political development of individual country, as well as its place in international community, the author is pointing out at the important role of media in forming positive public opinion regarding national minorities. Although media situation is better today, media are still not sensitive enough for reporting on minorities. Acknowledging this problem is one of the key tasks in further approach to European standards.

3. DEVELOPING MEDIA MINORITY STANDARDS

Interview with Ilija Krneta, president of Assembly of journalists writing about national minorities or part of national minority media, a branch of Croatian Journalistic Association

Interviewed by Milan Cimesa

Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities also regulates their right to own information and free approach to media. Analyzing current situation of minority coverage in media, Ilija Krneta emphasizes that media are extremely important for implementation of minority rights and warns that minority-related media standards and infrastructure need to be developed.

4. MINORITIES ARE TEST OF MATURITY OF MAJORITY

Interview with Stjepan Malovic, professor at journalism studies at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Zagreb

Interviewed by Milan Cimesa

It is not key to have special editorials and shows for minorities to have more adequate media coverage. For the most part, those special features put minorities in a certain ghetto and on a margin. What is needed is development of professional standards and their implementation in majority media, says prof. Malovic. He claims that minorities will find their place in media more easily by implementation of professional standards instead of special criteria. Emphasizing that minority media have an important role in preservation and promotion of minority tradition and culture, he warns that those media cannot fill the shoes reserved for majority media, especially state-owned.

III SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO

1. MEDIA IN AFFIRMATION OF NEW MODELS OF COOPERATION IN EX-YUGOSLAVIA REGION

by Dr Dubravka Valic Nedeljkovic

At the end of 80's ruling elites in former Yugoslavia established almost complete control over main media and put them to promotion of their political goals. Thus the media became a deadly device for nationalist and war-mongering politics.

During post-war media transition situation has been improving but it is still far from desirable professional media standards. Especially important is that "information gate" towards other countries of former Yugoslavia is still greatly reduced and closed. Political, social, economic and cultural needs and processes, on the other hand, demand media, especially public, to become more open towards the region and neighboring countries and contribute to general normalization process and stabilization of relations.

2. MEDIA AND MINORITIES IN PRIVATIZATION FOCUS

by Dr. Dubravka Valic Nedeljkovic

Statistically observing, the right of national minorities to inform in their own language in Vojvodina is entirely fulfilled but true problems of minority media are huge.

A very serious question is asked whether the privatization of the media in the languages of national minorities is an adequate solution - which will offer the possibility for existing problems to be solved, or will this legal obligation make the position of the national minorities media more difficult.

The continuity and stable financing is the only guarantee for the survival of these media. For now, national councils can neither achieve this, nor can those media survive independently on the market.

3. PRIVATIZATION - THREAT TO MULTI-LINGUAL MEDIA

by Tatjana Novcic- Matijevic

Current Serbian law on radio, passed over a year ago is now invalid, and the new is still being prepared. Media with programs for national minorities are especially sceptical towards the current law and its concept of privatization.

'If privatization would be carried out according to the current, rather vulgar practice here, a very good, half-century heritage of informing in languages of the national minorities in Vojvodina would be destroyed', says the director of Radio Subotica Antal Bjači.

Radio Kovačica, also sees the newly proposed models of privatization of local radio-stations as a danger for programs of national minorities to vanish.

'Different models from those proposed are needed. Models which would contribute to the promotion, and not the regression of rights to informing of the national minorities', according to the editor in chief of Radio Zrenjanin Đurđa Jovanović-Padejski.

4. SUBJUGATION OF MINORITY MEDIA

by Radoslav Seguljev

The decision of Executive Council to transfer the founder rights of public media of national minorities from the Executive Council to the National Councils caused a discontent for the majority of media of national minorities.

The representatives of Libertatea, Ruske Slovo and Hlas Ludu have announced a complaint to the constitutional court and demand for evaluation of constitutionality of such a decision.

The members of National Councils are being elected in the electoral way and not directly, which is one of the reasons why they are under the huge influence of the political parties so often - according to the editor in chief of Magyar Szo- Peter Kokai.