

MEDIA AND

**SHRINKING
SPACE**

**IN BOSNIA AND
HERZEGOVINA**

Lejla Turčilo

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SILENCED ALTERNATIVE VOICES

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METHODOLOGICAL AND CONCEPTUAL INTRODUCTION

(goal, hypothesis, and methods of research)

Goal and Justification of the Research

After the Heinrich Böll Foundation¹ both organized a conference and published a paper titled *Shrinking Spaces in the Western Balkans*, it became apparent that the issue of shrinking public space is important for further discussion and interesting, not only for the experts, but also for the general public. The media, as the key actors that should provide space for public debate, as well as a sufficient amount of objective, verified, impartial, and high-quality information, are particularly important for democratic societies, but currently the shrinking media space for diverse opinions and critical attitudes is directly threatening democracy in every society. So far, research in Bosnia and Herzegovina has shown that shrinking space is directly related to the media sphere and that, despite the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina appears to have a pluralistic media system (given the extremely large number of media), the actual space for public debate and objective reporting is shrinking.

There are several causes of shrinking space in the media sphere:

- *Inadequate or poorly implemented legal regulation* (the Media Law on Transparency of Ownership, and the Law on Advertising in Media are lacking, while regulatory bodies are not functioning)
- *Political pressures on media* (manifested through giving or denying information to certain media, unfair, and unprofessional relation to journalists in public events, direct threats, etc.)
- *Economic pressures on media* (use of advertising money as a form of media blackmail, and pressures on media to write in accordance to the interests of advertisers and political elites related to them)

1 <https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/shrinking-spaces-in-the-western-balkans.pdf>

- *Difficult working conditions and bad socio-economic position of journalists* (in a large number of cases, the first ones to endanger journalists' rights and freedoms are the media outlets in which they work, denying them fair working conditions, etc.) and the lack of journalistic solidarity (even in cases of direct threats, there is only a small number of colleagues who express some form of solidarity)
- *International donors* (the policy of investing in projects rather than in program development by international community actors has led to a number of project-oriented media outlets, who became unsustainable in the absence of international sources of funding; this approach forced the local media to deal with topics that are on the agenda of the international donors, instead of those that serve the public interest and are important for the citizens of B&H)
- *The decline of ethical standards in journalism in B&H* as a result of increasing commercialization and trivialization, as well as various forms of pressures on media
- *The low level of media literacy among the general public* (who rarely responds to any serious investigative stories, and who does not have a critical attitude towards the media or political elites).

Precisely for these reasons, it seemed justified to undertake an in-depth analysis of all the above-mentioned causes from the point of view of the media and media employees, and to provide a set of recommendations to assist media and journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina to resist the methods used by political and economic elites to shrink spaces, while strengthening the media's democratic potential and societal role.

Methodology of Research

The book *Shrinking Space and Media in B&H: Silenced Alternative Voices* is a scientific research study, based on the analysis of various documents and previous research, as well as in-depth interviews with key actors involved in the media sphere in Bosnia and Herzegovina (which not only includes journalists and editors in media, but also representatives of regulators, non-governmental organizations, political/institutional structures, analysts, etc.).

The *general hypothesis* is that the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina contribute to the shrinking of public space for alternative perspectives and exchange of ideas and opinions, which is caused by external pressures on media (political and economic) as well as internal problems in media (censorship and self-censorship, poor social status and extremely low solidarity of journalists), and the low level of media literacy of the public, which seldom or in no way supports professional media work.

The book was written on the basis of *structured interviews* with 44 participants and a set of recommendations. The interviews were conducted in Sarajevo, Mostar

and Banja Luka, based on a semi-structured questionnaire, both recorded and in a written form, and the key statements of each interview were coded according to a code sheet designed specifically for this study. The data and attitudes collected from the interviews with journalists and other media and public actors in Bosnia and Herzegovina are presented as arguments for conclusions and recommendations/guidelines but, in addition to interviews, the content analysis method (of legal regulations, key documents related to the development of the media scene-reports, analyses, projects, etc.) was also used for writing this book.

The book has no intention to provide final answers to the question of shrinking media space, but rather tries to determine the underlying causes of the process. We hope that the research findings, as well as the key guidelines and recommendations will result in discussions, in and outside the media community, primarily concerning the ways in which the media and journalists can attempt to regain the captured space and restore responsible journalism and free media as key actors of democratization in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this respect, some of the findings of the research have already been presented to the academic community in the region through the *Journal of Communication and Media* at the Faculty of Political Sciences of the University of Belgrade, after publishing the book in the *Sarajevo Social Science Review* of the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Sarajevo, and at the conference *Media Accountability*, which was held in October 2017 in Belgrade, Serbia.

We owe gratitude for contributing to this book and supporting our research to the Heinrich Böll Foundation (Sarajevo Office), and to its director Marion Kraske, who recognized the importance of media research in B&H. Also, a significant contribution towards putting the topic of shrinking space on the agenda in Bosnia and Herzegovina was made by Mirela Grunther Đečević, who inspired this research by arguing that when it comes to shrinking spaces, the media in B&H is more part of the problem than of the solution. We owe gratitude to reviewers as well, for patiently reading the book. We hope that the media community, as well as everyone interested in the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina, will be equally patient and careful to read and analyze it.

SHRINKING SPACE IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

(context and previous research)

Although widely present in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the phenomenon of shrinking space is relatively unknown and unexplored. It relates to different aspects of the increasingly narrowing public space, including the media space for diverse and alternative views, as well as the space that allows the media to operate as active actors of political processes in the public interest, while maintaining a function of watchdogs. Shrinking space in the media is characterized by political and economic dependence, political and media clientelism and parallelism and by a lack of sensitivity for anything other than a dominant or mainstream narrative².

The media have always been an important part of every democratic society. When it comes to its role in modern societies, the starting point is that media institutions are helping each individual, every member of the society to balance between their private and public lives. In private life, we depend on media information concerning the world beyond our private sphere (local news on current events) and as public actors, we are using it to expand our understanding of the world we live in and to navigate it. That is why we say that the role of the media in society is mediating between the private and public spheres.

There are several roles that the media play in this mediation, which makes them important and influential. The first role or function of the media is to inform, while the other two media roles are equally important for every individual and society in general: the educational role and mediation in political discussions or political debates. When it comes to political debate, the media play a threefold role in it:

- To provide open space for public debate and allow all relevant actors who have the will and the competence to participate in discussions on specific, important

2 More about the phenomenon of *shrinking space* in B&H and the region in: *Shrinking Spaces in the Western Balkans*, available at: <https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/shrinking-spaces-in-the-western-balkans.pdf>

issues in the community (which is why the media are usually referred to as the “virtual agora”).

- To provide the information necessary for the public debate, ensuring that people who participate in political debate and decision-making have enough reliable information to make decisions (which is why we say that media in the election should introduce citizens to programs and candidates and help them contribute to the so-called “informed election”).
- To give legitimacy to public debate actors, ensuring that the public understands the role of individual actors in political life and which political attitudes certain actors bring to the public debate (which is why we say that the media help people understand “who is who” on the political scene).

But one of the most important political roles of the media is their watchdog role, which means holding actors in the political scene accountable for their work. Precisely because of their watchdog function, we consider the media as “the fourth estate”.

In every democratic society, the triangle of politics-media-the public is a concept that lies at the centre of the public sphere and public life. Here, the “natural alliance” is between the media and the public, who should work together to hold political institutions and political elites accountable. That is why we say that the media belong to the civil society, even though they are strong political institutions. However, their main activities are aimed at providing impartial, fair, and balanced information to the public (which is an ideal case and should be demanded from the media, especially from public broadcasters), and that makes the media important players in the public scene and the public space. The key word in this context is public interest.

“Public interest can be visualized as a continuum that represents the values, aspirations and goals of a community, or policy. There are key values, such as health, but there are also controversial goals, such as water fluorescence or smoking discouragement. There are almost overarching aspirations, such as world peace, but there are also many political goals that are the subject of discussion. It is impossible to precisely state where a given item belongs to that continuum, but there is a general consensus that a series of acts and goals exist above irrational or selfish individual interests.”³

In short, the key role of the media in the public space is to inform citizens of decision-making by political actors, that decision-makers are held accountable (which means that the media and the public compare the extent to which the decision-making is in line with the public interest), and to make sure that the public has a channel for feedback and for expressing their political views and ideas. That is

3 http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Public_interest.aspx

why we emphasize that in this triangle: politics, the media, and the public, the media play such an important role.

Once the influence of the media and their power was recognized, elites began to look for ways in which they could influence them and put them in the service of politics, not of the public. All forms of influence on the media, either direct or indirect, can be considered an attempt to narrow the public space and media space for public debate, which is part of the shrinking space phenomenon. It is therefore important to recognize these influences and to resist them. They usually come from political elites, but also from economic elites, as nowadays, the political and economic spheres are closely related. The most extreme form is, of course, censorship, which prevents the media from being a useful channel for providing information to citizens, but also prevents journalists from doing their job professionally. Censorship is immanent to non-democratic and less democratic states, but it is also present in developed countries, mostly in the form of self-censorship from journalists. Self-censorship occurs when the media are exposed to pressure or when political and economic elites are in close relations with media owners and use their influence to ensure that the media will not write critical stories or investigate them. Thus, a shrinking space for many journalists unfolds within their own media outlets.

As previously stated, pressures on the media can be direct and indirect. Direct pressures, in addition to censorship, include threats to media outlets and/or journalists, as well as economic pressures (withdrawal of ads, for example, from those who report negatively on the advertisers). Indirect pressures include manipulation (for example, giving exclusive information to media outlets who report in accordance to the interests of a particular political actor or not inviting investigative journalists and journalists who write critically to press conferences and other events), bribing journalists (giving gifts to avoid critical reporting or to ensure that there will only be positive stories about certain actors in the media) etc. Generally speaking, the goal of such pressures and manipulations is to “buy silence”, that is to ensure that the media do not report in the public interest, but in the interests of political (and other) elites. The result of such non-democratic behavior from political elites is to narrow the media space, to prevent them from fulfilling their role, and to shrink the space for the public to participate in democratic processes and public life. Public debate is impossible without free media and free public, and without public debate and transparent decision-making processes, there is generally no democracy.

Shrinking space or narrowing media space, therefore, is a direct threat to the democratic potential of every society. It must be prevented by all means, primarily by improving the relationship between the media and the public, so that the former have strong support in resisting the political and economic pressures they are exposed to. Furthermore, fulfilling the democratic potential of every society (such as the adoption of laws that support media freedom, prevention of pressures on the media, and debating pressures that do take place, etc.) is an important aspect

of ensuring the freedom of the media and their watchdog role in political life. Developing a political culture which includes political literacy and media literacy, where the public is aware of the role the media should have in democracy, but also sending the message directly to political elites that their influence and pressures on the media are unacceptable, is the only way we can protect the media, and thus, ensure that as citizens we have a tool and space for participation in democracy. This is, of course, always a long-term process and a struggle that seems to never end, yet the only way forward. Namely, if society allows the situation in which the most powerful actor in the triangle: politics - the media - the public is the former, then there is in fact no democracy at all.

MEDIA SCENE IN B&H

(state and perspectives)

Bosnia and Herzegovina has a very large number of media outlets, which at first sight could give the impression that there is a wide range of sources available to citizens, and from which they can get a variety of information. However, analysts agree that media pluralism, especially in the Bosnian-Herzegovinian context, does not mean pluralism of content.

When it comes to specific indicators in Bosnia and Herzegovina, according to available data from regulators and self-regulators (Communications Regulatory Agency⁴ and Press Council⁵) there are:

- 192 broadcast media: 139 profit radio stations, 4 non-profit (plus three public broadcasters) and 43 TV stations (plus 3 public broadcasters)
- 7 daily newspapers
- 184 different editions, magazines and journals (weekly, fortnight, periodic)
- 8 news agencies
- The number of online portals is virtually impossible to determine, as there is no official portal register, and they are generated and run almost on a daily basis.
- The total number of journalists working in these media outlets is between 1574 and 2755⁶. There are six journalists' associations in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

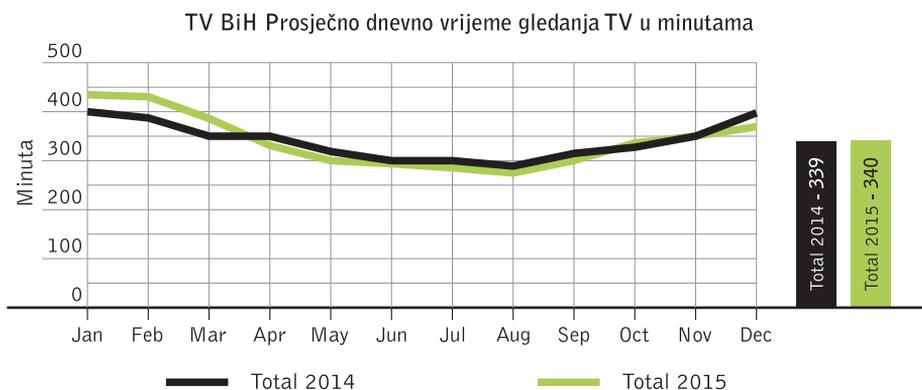
Even though the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina are increasingly turning to online media, or web sites, which are experiencing significant growth as the media of choice for citizens, the dominant and most commonly used media to meet their information needs is the television. Most of the public opinion polls on media in

4 <http://www.rak.ba>

5 <http://www.vzs.ba>

6 According to data by Journalists' Associations in B&H

B&H as well as data from media market research agencies have shown that, for years the TV has been one of the most important media sources. Such research (Graph 1) shows that the average TV viewing time is 340 minutes, which amounts to more than five and a half hours.



Graph 1: Average TV viewing time in minutes⁷

When it comes to online media in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Alexa.com shows that out of the ten most visited websites in B&H, there is only one web portal (klix.ba), while the remaining are search engines (google.ba, google.com, yahoo.com), social media (Facebook, Instagram), followed by YouTube, olx.ba (a platform for ads/listings), and Wikipedia.⁸

Only a few web sites operate as self-sustainable businesses, according to Alexa.com. These are: klix.ba, avaz.ba, nezavisne.com, radiosarajevo.ba, and bljesak.info (Table 1). It is important to mention that two of these are portals of daily newspapers, which show another dominant trend in the media, which is the fact that web portals become a significant integral part of the print media business, that is, most print media have an additional online edition. We also note cases of a complete transfer of printed media to the online space and the termination of print versions. For example, Slobodna Bosna, one of few independent research magazines, went through this transition due to the impossibility of further financing its printing costs, as a result of inter alia, and political or economic pressures (which will discuss furthermore). The magazine has moved exclusively to the portal version (now significantly different from the print version, based on typical portal short stories and without any significant serious research approach). The same happened in the case of the daily newspaper Faktor (a kind of political and business project from abroad - Turkey, which was not accepted by the public, and then switched to an online version).

7 <http://www.measurebih.com/uimages/Assessment%20of%20the%20Media%20Sector%20in%20B&H.pdf>

8 <http://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries/BA>

Site	Global Rank		Rank in Country (BA)	Global Reach %		Global Pageviews %	
klix.ba	10,318	▼ 311	6	0.00965%	▼ 2.31%	0.000675%	▼ 16.13%
avaz.ba	14,868	▼ 4,066	14	0.00715%	▼ 26.42%	0.000385%	▼ 39.61%
nezavisne.com	26,058	▼ 2,961	21	0.0037%	▼ 16.27%	0.000261%	▼ 21.30%
radiosarajevo.ba	50,003	▼ 5,208	53	0.00213%	▼ 17.26%	0.000088%	▼ 15.33%
bljesak.info	64,481	▼ 6,236	60	0.00154%	▼ 15.54%	0.0000733%	▼ 17.89%

Table 1: Economically sustainable online media in B&H⁹

It is important to mention that there is a certain number of web portals with a so-called *niche* profilation, in the field of economy (capital.ba), investigative journalism (cin.ba, zurnal.info) and human rights and democracy, significantly supported by the international donors (tavno.net, abrasmedia.info and etrafika.net) (Table 2)

Site	Pageviews/User		Bounce Rate		Time on Site (minutes)	
capital.ba	3.80	▲ 120.00%	49.20%	▼ 23.00%	4:01	▲ 78.00%
cin.ba	3.40		37.50%		4:54	
tacno.net	2.03	▲ 9.00%	59.40%	▲ 1.00%	3:56	▲ 4.00%
zurnal.info	1.60		70.80%		2:14	
etrafika.net	1.50		66.70%		2:34	
abrasmedia.info	1.10		91.30%		1:52	

Table 2: Online media with niche profilation, supported by the international donors in B&H¹⁰

Previous research on the media scene in Bosnia and Herzegovina¹¹ has shown several key characteristics of the media market in B&H:

- The media market is extremely complex and overwhelming
- The media market is characterized by a lack of transparency when it comes to media ownership.
- Although the number of media is extremely large, their impact is not equal, since there is a (smaller) number of really (politically) influential media, whose owners

9 <http://www.measurebih.com/uimages/Assessment%20of%20the%20Media%20Sector%20in%20B&H.pdf>

10 <http://www.measurebih.com/uimages/Assessment%20of%20the%20Media%20Sector%20in%20B&H.pdf>

11 Balkanski medijski barometar for example, or: http://www.fes.ba/files/fes/img/Bilder_Aktivitaeten/Analiza_Lejla_Turcilo.pdf or: https://ba.boell.org/sites/default/files/mediji_i_evropska_unija.pdf

are wealthy individuals, who are simultaneously owners of other profitable businesses.

- Web portals are on the rise and an increasing number of citizens are turning to online sources of information (not so much because of the fact that their information is of better quality and more reliable, but rather due to the fact that they are free, which is extremely important in the conditions of a severe economic crisis for Bosnian citizens).
- Not only is there a fragmented media scene, but the journalistic community is also divided.
- The working conditions for journalists and the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina are extremely difficult. The media are under pressure from political and economic elites, but at the same time numerous journalists are under pressure from media owners and advertisers.
- The Public Broadcasting Service is in a particularly difficult position, for a wide range of reasons, from political pressures to financial issues.
- Journalists are faced with a number of issues related to their legal status, including irregular and low wages, work contracts that do not guarantee safe jobs, and lack of support from professional journalists' associations and trade unions.
- The media are increasingly exposed to the pressure imposed by the need to keep up with the new technologies, which is extremely difficult for the poor media and poor society of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Overall, there are numerous problems in the media, and they directly influence its accountability.

Also, according to previous research¹², the media are faced with the following phenomena:

- Limited development and circulation of press (decrease of newspaper circulation) - though circulation in most media is hidden, and this non-transparency is usually justified as a business secret, the informal indicators say that, compared to five years ago, the circulation is 50% lower, which is mainly due to the growth of online media, or web portals. It is also interesting to note that the ethnic division of the media and public space is most evident in print media: the most read RS newspapers in the Federation sell 5% of their circulation, mostly in Sarajevo, while the most read daily newspapers from the Federation of B&H sell 8% in RS, mostly to the population of returnees¹³.

12 http://www.fes.ba/files/fes/img/Bilder_Aktivitaeten/Analiza_Lejla_Turcilo.pdf

13 <http://analiziraj.ba/2015/07/03/zaslijepljeni-mediji/>

- The tradition of advocacy reporting (instead of professional, impartial reporting), which is manifested through direct bribery of the media.
- Instrumentalization of privately owned media (owners use the media as a means of influence and negotiation with elites and for interventions in the political sphere, which, in many cases, is the main goal of media ownership) - the media scene in Bosnia and Herzegovina has already set the term “media blackmail” for the pressure of privately owned media on certain elements of the system in order to advance particular interests of the media owner, in exchange for “buying silence” or non-criticism of the government. This pressure is latent and difficult to prove, but indirectly it can be noticed in relation to affirmative writing about certain companies, for example, which are at the same time large advertisers in a given medium.
- Politicization of public broadcasters (appointments based on political loyalty, not professional criteria) and institutions responsible for the adoption and implementation of media regulation (politicization of regulators, which are becoming increasingly weak and incapable of enforcing laws) – the politicization of public broadcasters is evident in their program, not only in the amount of time devoted to certain political options, or presenting them positive light, but also in the ignorant attitude of the regulator towards apparent violations of the rule of impartiality of public broadcasters.
- The undevelopment of journalism as an autonomous profession - this undevelopment is most apparent in the election campaign period, when political subjects impose an agenda in terms of topics, issues and content that the media transmits, and also in reactivity rather than proactivity of the media during election campaigns¹⁴. Also, the widespread omission of critical and independent opinions on the work of the authorities from the media reports (as evidenced by the Media Monitoring Report during the 2014¹⁵ campaign) which show the lack of media autonomy.

In addition to the above mentioned problems, which make up the extremely complex state of the media scene in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the issue of public trust in the media is one of the important determinants of public space. Namely, research shows that citizens have lost confidence in all public institutions, including the media, and that B&H citizens recognize the influence on media, from political, economic and other centers of power, which many outlets are accepting quite easily and without resistance. Research by the B&H Journalists and Friedrich Ebert Foundation in B&H¹⁶ has shown that citizens believe that freedom of the media here is only partially present and that the main obstacles to its freedom are political

14 Udovičić et al.(2010) Izbori 2010: Kako su mediji pratili izbornu kampanju. Sarajevo: Media Plan institut, available at: <http://www.mediaplan.ba/docs/izbori2010ba.pdf>

15 <http://www.mediaplan.ba/docs/FinalReportBA.pdf>

16 http://bhnovinari.ba/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/fes_medijske_slobode_2016.pdf

and financial dependence, and the general climate of instability in the country. Furthermore research has also shown that citizens think politicians have the greatest influence on the media, and that they are the biggest or major offenders of journalistic rights and media freedom. Citizens are only partly satisfied with the topics that the media report on, considering that they should focus more on social and economic issues. .

According to the 2017 World Press Freedom Ranking by Reporters Without Borders¹⁷, B&H is ranked at the 65th position, and comparing to the previous year it has advanced three places. In the analysis of the media situation in B&H, it was found that the country has the most liberal laws related to freedom of the media, but that their implementation is bad, and one of the given examples is the fact that although defamation has been decriminalized in 2003, there is still a significant number of lawsuits revolving around it. Reporters are still under strong political pressures and threats, and the situation is further complicated by the fact that pro-government media continue to gain significant direct and indirect support, including access to state funding.

The World Press Freedom Ranking has recorded occasional ups and downs in the past ten years for Bosnia and Herzegovina. What has been noticed for years is that there are no cases of killing journalists, but that there are cases of direct and indirect pressures and threats.



Source: Reporters Without Borders, Freedom house

© Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung

Graph 2: WPF Ranking for B&H¹⁸

The IREX Media Sustainability Index for Bosnia and Herzegovina shows a fall in the overall rating of the media scene, as well as in the quality of all parameters from which the overall rating is derived (including freedom of speech, degree of professionalism in the media, diversity of information sources, media management, support of institutions to media work and freedom of journalism). The 1.97 rating is

¹⁷ <https://rsf.org/en/ranking>

¹⁸ <http://www.kas.de/wf/en/71.13562/> visited on June 18, 2016.

very low, and it is significant to note that similar ratings for the mentioned parameters were given in 2012, so we can say that in terms of media and media freedom, B&H has regressed to the same state as five years ago. In other words, despite the fact that media freedom and generally the state of the media are a significant aspect of the accession process of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the European Union, no significant progress has been made in this field, on the contrary, the state has instead regressed.

Indicator	Year						
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Free speech	2.96	2.54	2.45	2.38	2.36	2.56	2.46
Professional journalism	2.12	1.87	1.68	1.60	1.83	1.77	1.67
Diversity of news sources	2.77	2.59	2.16	2.20	2.26	2.23	2.20
Business management	2.43	1.84	1.61	1.60	1.64	1.58	1.39
Institutional support	2.71	2.27	1.95	2.35	2.12	2.02	2.15
Overall grade	2.60	2.22	1.97	2.03	2.04	2.03	1.97

Table 3: IREX Media Sustainability Index – B&H¹⁹

The Media Sector Assessment, conducted by Measures B&H for USAID in 2016²⁰, listed four key issues in the media scene:

- Political instrumentalization of media
- Non-transparent media market
- Low level of professional standards in the media
- Low level of media literacy

All of the above-mentioned problems, as well as the general assessment of the state of the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which have so far been evidenced by extensive research, indicate that the media system does not meet the needs of citizens for high-quality information and does not provide enough space for diversity of content, opinions, attitudes and views. Although since the war period the media system in B&H has been developed and improved with the assistance and efforts of various international actors (whose main motivation was that intervention in the media sphere is one of the ways to democratize society), a sound media system was unfortunately not developed. The funds invested in the media in B&H (for training programs, direct media support in the form of equipment and cash, development of the media environment through policy development, and other forms of support), which amounted to 87 million Euros (Table 4) have clearly not contributed much to the development of the media system.

19 IREX Media Sustainability Index

20 <http://www.measurebih.com/uimages/Assessment%20of%20the%20Media%20Sector%20in%20B&H.pdf>

	Training	Direct Support	Media Environment	Total Euro
Albania	6.9	1.8	1.9	10.6
Bosnia-Herzegovina	17.4	42	27.7	87.1
Croatia	2.4	19.7	14.5	36.6
Macedonia	3.4	9.2	11.2	23.8
Montenegro	1.3	2.9	3.4	7.6
Serbia	5.4	26.4	13.1	44.9
Kosovo	6.1	45.6	6.9	58.6
Balkans	42.9	147.6	78.7	269.2

Source: Aaron Rhodes, *Ten Years of Media Support to the Balkans: An Assessment* (Amsterdam: Media Task Force of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, 2007), p. 15.

Table 4: Investments of the international donors into the media sector in B&H²¹

Even this superficial view of the situation and the perspectives of the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina gives enough arguments for this claim, which we have developed as a general hypothesis of our research: the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina contribute to shrinking the public space for alternative perspectives and exchange of ideas and opinions, through external pressures on the media (political and economic), internal media problems (censorship and self-censorship, poor social status and extremely low solidarity of journalists), and the low level of media literacy that rarely supports serious media work. In order to get a deeper insight into the state of the media community and the media scene we sought to present a “perspective from the inside”. In this sense, we consulted a significant number of journalists, editors, media analysts, regulators and self-regulators, as well as other actors in the media and out-of-media scene. We will outline their remarks on the shrinking space in the B&H media in this book.

21 Rhodes A. (2007). *Ten Years of the Media Support to the Balkans, An Assessment*. Amsterdam: MTFSPSEE

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH

Legislation of the Media Sphere in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The media scene in Bosnia and Herzegovina is legally very well regulated and it can be said that Bosnia and Herzegovina does not lag behind the developed European democratic countries in this regard. The Constitution of B&H guarantees the freedom of thought and freedom of expression²², and includes a set of laws that are directly concerned with regulating media activity, or that have at least been partially adopted. Laws concerning the media or that are in some ways related to the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina are present as well: The Law on the Work of the Brčko District, the Labor Law of B&H, the Criminal Code of the Republika Srpska, the Law on Communications, the Law on Protection against Defamation of the Brčko District, Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination in B&H, Labor Law of the RS, FB&H Law on Labor, FB&H Criminal Law, Brcko District Criminal Law, B&H Criminal Code, B&H Election Law, Brcko District Election Law, Law on Freedom of Access to Information in FB&H, Law on Protection From the defamation of the FB&H, the Law on Protection against Defamation of RS, the Law on Freedom of Access to Information of the RS²³, as well as the laws related to the work of broadcasters of the Public Broadcasting Service of B&H.

The founding of JRTV B&H began in 1999, when the High Representative for B&H, Carlos Westendorp, issued the Decision on the Reconstruction of JRTV B&H. The process was continued by his successor, Wolfgang Petrich, who imposed the Law on the Foundations of the Public Radio and Television System and Services before

22 Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Article II (Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms), available at: http://www.ccbh.ba/public/down/USTAV_BOSNE_I_HERCEGOVINE_bos.pdf

23 See: <http://bhnovinari.ba/bs/zakoni-i-pravila/>

the end of the 2002 mandate, thus establishing three public broadcasters.²⁴ The Corporation itself is described as “a common management structure between public broadcasting services with the same rights and obligations towards all three public broadcasting services (BHRT, RTRS and RTVFB&H)”.

The Law on Public Broadcasting of Bosnia and Herzegovina states that the public broadcasting system consists of the Radio Television of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BHRT), Radio Television of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (RTVFB&H), Radio Television of the Republic of Srpska (RTRS) and the Public Broadcasting Corporation in B&H.²⁵ The establishment of the Public Broadcasting Corporation, as defined by the 2005 Law, is the main difference between the 2002 and 2005 Laws. The 2005 Law envisages the Corporation to be an umbrella organization or, according to Babić (2009), an integrative component of three Bosnian public broadcasters.

The role, goals, activities, headquarters and financing of the Corporation are elaborated in the articles of the Law on Public Broadcasting System of Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, the Corporation has never been established, although it should have been formed no later than 60 days after the adoption of the Law. The Radio Television of Bosnia and Herzegovina faces major problems.

In addition to the aforementioned laws, the following are also in force:

- The European Charter on Freedom of the Press,
- The Declaration of the Council of Ministers on the protection and promotion of investigative journalism, and
- The Declaration on the freedom of political debate in the media.²⁶

The European Charter on Freedom of the Press was signed in 2009 in Germany and stated, inter alia, that freedom of the press is necessary in a democratic society, that censorship must be absolutely forbidden, that states must ensure the media enjoy full protection of the independent judiciary and government in doing their job, that the economic survival of the media should not endanger neither the state nor the organization, that journalists and the media have the right to unimpeded access to all information.²⁷

Our interviewees say that the legal regulation of the media in B&H is perfectly or very satisfactorily regulated and in line with European practices, however, according to some of them, certain laws need to be improved to become more precise and what everyone agrees with is a poor application of existing laws in practice.

24 Babić, Dušan (2009), *Kroz barikade preko javne televizije*, available at: www.pulsdemokratije.com 29. 10. 2009, i Babić, Dušan (2013), *Saga o hrvatskom kanalu – nepotreban kamen smutnje*, objavljeno na: www.media.ba 13. 3. 2013., available at: <http://www.media.ba/bs/magazin-medijska-politika-regulativa/saga-o-hrvatskom-kanalu-nepotreban-kamen-smutnje>

25 https://www.parlament.ba/sadrzaj/zakonodavstvo/precisceni_tekstovi_zakona/default.aspx?id=58892&langTag=bs-BA&pril=b

26 All documents available at: <http://bhnovinari.ba/bs/zakoni-i-pravila/>

27 See more at: <http://bhnovinari.ba/bs/2009/06/09/evropska-povelja-o-slobodi-štampe/>

"The quality of media laws is quite satisfactory, there are certain shortcomings, some laws could be better defined, and they could be better aligned with some more appropriate examples from the region and European practice. The application is quite unsatisfactory. There is a huge discrepancy between the quality and the application of the law, which places us in corrupt countries with captured institutions," explains a Banja Luka interviewee who is working in one of the non-governmental organizations dealing with the work of the media in B&H.

The interviewees also say that the application of the law is obstructed by the fact that the media, as well as the entire society, are governed by ethnic, rather than ethical principles and standards, so the implementation of existing laws is often completely impossible.

"Freedom of expression is guaranteed by the Constitution and laws that are in accordance with the Constitution, but it is, unfortunately, only guaranteed on paper," one of the interviewees said.

According to the interviewees, most of the laws have been adopted under the pressure of the international community, which they do not consider to be negative, as regardless of the international community, the legislation was partly developed according to local needs, and at a time when B&H had no laws whatsoever. According to the representative of the regulator, the laws were passed precisely thanks to the international community, and the question is how this could be solved differently in the B&H context.

"Good legal frameworks reflect the degree of development in the society. The laws are either imposed by the High Representative, or brought under their pressure. The Law on Public Broadcasting Service was drafted at the OHR and delivered to the B&H authorities; the Law on Protection against Defamation and Law on Free Access to Information, as well. They are not formally imposed, but in practice they are. We were not able to adopt them on our own and without the International Community we would have had chaos."

What some of our interviewees see as a problem is the fact that, by copying laws from other European countries, there have been certain flaws in the translation itself.

"We can also see that the translations of some laws were bad and imprecise. Some laws we had to adopt under the pressure of the International Community, and what was good then, turned out to be quite bad afterwards because it was not customized, but it was only transferred from the developed country," one of the representatives of the self-regulator states. Their colleague points out that Bosnian laws are even ahead of time, and the stages in which the B&H society finds itself.

A journalist researcher from Sarajevo believes that the developed countries Bosnia and Herzegovina borrowed its laws from, have long-standing experience and quality media that have influenced the creation of these laws.

"Our problem is that we have a very bad medium on average, and then it may seem that these laws do not suit our media. I think it is more important to work on raising the standards of journalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but to also adjust the laws to our media".

One of the most important laws for journalists and B&H citizens alike - the Free Access to Information Act, should be better applicable, the interviewees agree. This law should be one of the most important to the public, as it would require transparency of information that is of public interest. However, in practice it has been shown that the application of this law encounters numerous obstacles.

"Proponents of change just wanted to protect themselves; not to improve the law itself. We were fortunate enough to react. However, we do not get information on changes of laws on due time. All laws should be advertised in public, since these are laws that should be used by citizens and journalists. Those who adopt laws break them without consequences," says the representative of the self-regulator, citing that the law in B&H is abused as a mechanism for pressure on journalists, and illustrates his claim with an example of a politician who knows that he will not win the lawsuit against the media, but still undertakes a lawsuit just to upset the media²⁸

An investigative journalist states that in their work, they are increasingly reliant on the Law on Free Access to Information, which has been characterized by changes, misuse, and lack of enforcement mechanisms.

"I have been avoiding sending inquiries to the FOIA lately, because then I have to wait for a response for at least fifteen days, because this legal deadline is used by more than 95% of the institutions I send a query to. I prefer to send an ordinary media query and get the answers I need faster. When, however, I have to use FOIA, then in most cases I know in advance that the process will last for weeks and that I will have to resort to a higher instance."

He states that the FOIA was damaged by some amendments.

"The authorities decided that they must ask for the approval of a private company in order to conclude a contract signed with them by journalists. Of course, in most cases, a private company refuses to provide the data or contract. Thus, the law

28 Changes and amendments in the Law of Free Access to Information Act FBiH available at: <http://fzs.ba/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Zakon-o-slobodi-pristupa-inf.-48-11.pdf>

is protected by a private company that works well from the state, and citizens who finance it all are completely excluded from the process. At the moment FOIA works only for the benefit of politicians, because of this law they can be praised for how transparent they are, and on the other hand the public and journalists take almost no benefit from it. The practice of other countries has shown that it is better to insist on publishing all data than on the FOIA."

The situation regarding the application of FOIA is the same in both B&H entities. Our interviewee from Banja Luka states that there are a lot of problems in practice.

"There is an unfortunate solution in the RS that the decision on a request for free access to information is given in a letter, which is being delayed. The bodies of executive, judicial, and legislative authorities are not sufficiently aware of this law? If you contact public bodies, they do not even know that this law exists"

Among the laws that limit the work of journalists, the interviewees mentioned the Law on Protection against Defamation, that is, the Entity Laws on Protection against Defamation and Brcko District. The Law on Defamation limits editors and journalists in pursuing quality work, and citizens are left deprived of quality and credible information. The interviewees state that this law is abused and used against journalists, and that court judgments are ruled against the media and employees in the media. One of the interviewees points out that the persons who file the lawsuits are most often in positions of power, and through their position, they can influence the outcome of the court proceedings. A large number of media is covered by lawsuits, which mostly come from political powers, and court proceedings are further damaging to editors and journalists. Legal regulations are used against journalists, according to the interviewees.

"If a colleague from Oslobodjenje has 105 lawsuits, you can imagine what kind of pressure he is under. It's not a question of whether you will get a fair verdict or not, but you have to deal with proving that you were right and wrote the truth, instead of doing your job" said a self-regulator from Sarajevo, citing an example of a journalist from Oslobodjenje and Slobodna Bosna who spent three months in court instead of doing work. The fines imposed on the media are high, given the financial situation of most media, and further endanger the survival of the media in the market.

"A particularly problematic practice is that of the Court in Banja Luka. We have one judgment against the Federal Television, from the period when the broadcast "60 minutes" was aired. Milorad Dodik sued them in Sarajevo and, in my opinion, the Court acted very rightly, referring to the European Court of Human Rights and stating that public figures and officials must have a higher level of tolerance to public criticism. After that, Dodik transferred the lawsuit to Banja Luka and that

judgment was the opposite. The court said that just because he is a public figure, his dignity could be more destroyed,” explained the representative of the self-regulator abuse of this law, citing a practical example.

The practice of the Basic Court in Banja Luka, which adjudicates for the benefit of political officials, or those in power, is also described by a spokesperson from Banja Luka.

“I know that the Basic Court had several controversial judgments which were awarded in favor of some politicians who sued the media for defamation, or individuals, even. This is a serious restriction of the freedom of expression and I think that it would be very important that the second instance court upholds such a judgment, the application of that law, and the freedom of expression in general. In Republika Srpska, for example, this was the case of President Dodik, who has sued several times, not only the media, but also the opposition leaders and won all these lawsuits. And that is the problem in other cases too, because there are some cases that I know are being conducted before the Basic Court in Banja Luka, where civil society organizations have been denounced here in Republika Srpska as traitors, enemies, etc., that they, in fact, instituted proceedings and sued journalists, editor-in-chiefs and media outlets for defamation. And now an interesting thing is happening. In most of these proceedings, there are several such procedures; the Court delays the proceedings in a very impartial manner. Perhaps because they do not know how to act now, because they have established a practice, lawsuits for defamation are adopted and fairly high fines are imposed.”

The interviewees also state that the problem is many claims and judgments are deliberately directed towards journalists and their media outlets, which, besides affecting their work, also bring the media forward for prosecution.

“We need to upgrade the Law on Defamation and Criminal Law, because we have cases concerning hate speech and discrimination, which are not defined under that name. And then the real judgment is over”, the Press Council stated.

The contents of Bosnian-Herzegovinian media are flooded with hate speech, which comes from political officials and other public figures. The media use statements by individual officials in the headlines to provide greater readership and a number of comments, which results in the media’s Facebook pages being full of comments containing hate speech. Hate speech is not punishable in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and there are numerous discussions and controversies surrounding this issue. The representative of the self-regulator states that it is necessary to specify hate speech is not defined in the Criminal Code. The Press Council is a member of the Coalition against Hate Speech and states that in the last three years they have been intensively asking the Ministry of Justice to make some improvements.

"The Parliament of the Federation of B&H rejected it twice, and later adopted some recommendations. In Republika Srpska this was accepted, so they made a definition that refers to hate speech", the representative of the Press Council stated.

The representative of the regulator states that the laws on the Public Service of Bosnia and Herzegovina need to be processed and harmonized, as there are certain discrepancies between the laws within the public broadcasting system, where the non-application of the laws from the set regulating the public broadcasting system is emphasized, stating that the collection of RTV charges and distribution of income from marketing is not done according to the Law. They also cite problems with the establishment of the Corporation, which would be responsible for digitization, and stress that they do not see the possibility of establishing it in due course, because the lack of Corporation has also led to the blockade of the digitization process.

Interviewees also say that the Communications Regulatory Agency should be functioning better. A journalist and founder of one of the non-governmental organizations dealing with the media says that RAK was established primarily to regulate hate speech, which at the beginning worked very well.

"It did not have a positive influence later on. Since 2004 or 2005, RAK has had its own political agenda, I do not think that there is a pressure on RAK, but it is precisely the agenda. Today RAK is a typical Bosnian agency with typical Bosnian problems, and it is no longer functioning."

Representatives of the self-regulators state that the work of the regulator can be better, and that it requires constant advocacy. One of them mentioned:

"The regulatory agency should be stricter. After the war, they were very strict and this gave good results. They put the radio-television system in order; afterwards they began to be less strict. They called on the European Court of Human Rights. Once they have a mandate to punish them, they do it more. And cooperating more with the Press Council when it comes to hate speech, would be more effective."

The Communications Regulatory Agency states that the Law on Communications should be amended, that is, it should be updated to reflect some technological changes that occurred in the meantime, in order to clarify the independence of this agency, primarily its financial independence.

"The one now applied says that we will be funded by the fees we collect from the licenses we issue. But I do not know how it happened, that we were included in the budget. Once the funds are transferred to the state budget, this immediately makes us the users of the state budget, and we do not use money from taxpayers. We are not able to freely manage our resources. Independence does not mean

lack of responsibility. They accused us of being “a state within the state” and not caring for the media, but only for ourselves, which is not true. Our work should be more strongly supported by the media. It is important to preserve the Law on Communication and adopt some changes to it. It is especially important that the principle under which the Law on Communications establishes an agency remains and gives it the authority to regulate this area by subordinate legislation.”

Participants in the research agree on the missing laws in Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding media. Those are:

- Law on Transparency of Ownership
- Law on the Advertising Industry
- Media Financing Act

Almost all of the interviewees believe that these three laws are crucial. The representative of the self-regulator states that the non-existence of these three laws leads to “huge loopholes” that lead to misinformation and hate speech. The editions have no impressum; we often do not know who the media owner is.

RAK states that the Law on Electronic Communications is indispensable, and that the Council of Ministers has been working for years to come to this law.

“It is in the form of a pre-draft, it has passed some public debate, and it is not even close to the Parliament. The parliament is monstrous, it has more than 150 members, and it is not good to make such detailed laws for this area, where things change very quickly, and changing the law is a complex job.”

Political Pressures on Media and Journalists

Although the freedom of expression in Bosnia and Herzegovina is guaranteed by the Constitution, and media activity is partly regulated by legal and sub-legal acts and declarations, a deeper insight into the functioning and operation of the media in B&H through interviews with media professionals indicate that in practice the state of the media, does not coincide with what is stated in the aforementioned acts and documents. The lack of a law on media financing and laws on transparency of media ownership allows a large extent of political pressures and manipulations.

Political pressures on the media and journalists in B&H have been obstructing media freedom for years, and at the same time, preventing high-quality work from journalists. Some media workers say that political pressures on the media have been evident since the end of the war, in various forms, and that the situation has not changed to the present day, on the contrary, it is becoming increasingly complex. Interviewees cite numerous direct and indirect pressures, and some of them emphasize that there is often a very fine line between direct and indirect pressures on media companies and their employees. All of these forms of pressure lead to censorship, self-censorship, unprofessional reporting, journalists fearing for their lives, hindering quality work and, finally, the loss of investigative journalism.

"Legally, journalists are protected. Formally, by the European Convention on Human Rights, and the Law on Protection Against Defamation, which gives greater freedom to journalists. Plus, journalists are not arrested. Still, what is problematic with us is that we are satisfied with not being the worst, and we are not doing anything we can to make things better," explained the representative of the regulator.

The pressures come from all structures, emphasizes a long-time journalist of the B&H Public Service.

"This includes: the influence of the authorities on media, both public and private, lack of control of funding, censorship and self-censorship, non-transparency of work and funding, general collapse of professional values, and lack of freedom of speech and opinions. All this leads to the extinction of investigative journalism."

Among the various political pressures on the media, interviewees mentioned:

- Discouraging financial support to the media, because they publish content that is not in the interests of the authorities;
- Negotiating cooperation with government institutions;
- Labelling the media as hostile, traitors, mercenaries, etc.;

- Recommendations to other interested parties to avoid a media outlet by stating that they are an undesirable partner for cooperation;
- Filing lawsuits for defamation aimed at the financial destruction of the media;
- Prohibiting journalists from attending conferences when certain politicians do not like their work or the work of the media outlets that employ them;
- The situation in which a politician gives an interview or certain information only if the journalist allows him to decide who will be the other guests in the program;
- When editors (in the name of a particular political party) demand a certain story (a journalist is not able to reject it, and if they do, another colleague will always accept it);
- Political pressures on the Public Service of Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Threats to journalists who have published content that does not serve the interests of public officials.

Furthermore, the interviewees emphasize that the border between political and economic pressures is often eroded, that political officials often condition financial support for the media, so that only the media that are loyal to the ruling party and who do not publish content that is critical of officials of these parties gain support.

One experienced journalist from Sarajevo explains this phenomenon in detail:

"There is a (correct) impression that political actors are actually triggers of economic pressure. The latest example illustrating this claim is the report by the Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which calls on the Federal Minister Fadil Novalić to deny money to the media for marketing activities, for writing or reporting that is not in the interest of ruling political elites, who in various ways, control the cash flows either in public, or in commercial media. It should be said that after the heated reactions of the journalist community in B&H, Prime Minister Novalić stated that the report was a falsified document. Even with the exception of credibility of the above-mentioned position of Prime Minister Novalić, previous investigations have shown that the relationship between public companies and the media in B&H was present ever since the end of the war, mainly through using advertising money from public funds to ensure affirmative writing in the media."

As examples of political pressures from practical media work, the interviewees mention a seven-hour search of the editorial board of the Klix portal (www.klix.ba), the removal of BN Television journalists from Bijeljina from a press conference organized by the SNSD, reporting of the Radio Television of Republika Srpska being under direct control of Milorad Dodik and SNSD, the writing of the Vecernji List, which is under the influence of the HDZ, the Nezavisne novine, which are heavily influenced by the SNSD, the political pressure on the Public Service of Bosnia and

Herzegovina, the case of the founder of the daily Dnevni Avaz, who is also founder of one political party that is in power, etc.

The president of Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik, has repeatedly denounced journalists working for media who do not work in his favor. In a public debate in 2014, he accused BN Television of lying, and in 2015 he denounced Banja Luka journalist Gordana Katana, who works for the Sarajevo daily *Oslobodjenje*, accusing her of trying to write a negative story about the Republika Srpska.²⁹ In the spring of 2015, the RS president was very unhappy with BNTV journalist, Ljiljana Faladžić, trying to prevent the recording of a statement.³⁰ In September 2015, Dodik was very drastic and arrogant about N1³¹ journalists' questions. In late 2016, Dodik verbally attacked N1 journalist Snežana Mitrović, who asked him if he expected 2017 to be a year of social turmoil and tension. Before that, Milorad Dodik had treated journalists very badly especially those from media that he believed were negative towards Republika Srpska and his work.³² A journalist from the media service Friends of Srebrenica (UPS Media) says that this media outlet is intended for all citizens and that is the reason why it is often labelled as a medium that does not belong to either the SNSD or the SDA. The journalist cites two examples:

"The UPS Media team was expelled from a meeting held at the Potocari Memorial Center, at the explicit request of the then mayor of the municipality, on the pretext that the gathering was closed to the media - although BHT teams and Hayat Television were present at that moment. Also, the president of the local SNSD has called our journalists "the US spies" on several occasions. When we addressed the cabinet of the President of the Republic of Srpska with a request for support to the local media, a representative of the local SNSD, Dragan Glišić, advised Danijela Dragičević that our request was not being considered because they are not ours. This information was obtained from a member of SNSD who attended that meeting."

One of the interviewed journalists says that the police search of the editorial staff of the Sarajevo portal Klix is the most obvious example of political pressure on the work of the media.

29 "When I look at you then I understand why you are constantly negative. Because you can never have anything positive." "You come from the media that is like that, and of course come from the people who are like that, because you want to do it intentionally and with all the respect that I have all yearned towards you, you show utter disregard in many issues and many reports from Republika Srpska. Thanks to you, here I am telling you, I canceled the RS institutions to take your *Oslobodjenje* newspaper.", Etc., available at: <http://www.bh-index.com/pogledajte-kako-je-dodik-izvrijedao-novinarku-oslobodenja-video/>

30 Available at: <http://www.6yka.com/novost/56537/novinari-osudili-ponasenje-dodika-spram-novinarko-bn-tv->

31 Available at: <http://ba.n1info.com/a63005/Vijesti/Vijesti/Ljutiti-odgovor-Dodika-na-pitanje-reporterke-N1.html>

32 Available at: <http://ba.n1info.com/a129832/Vijesti/Vijesti/Dodik-ponovo-napao-N1-Vi-ste-revolucionari-i-neprijatelji.html>

"It is important to mention the pressure on the media, which occurred at the end of 2014, after this portal published a video that heard the voices of two women, assuming that one of them was Republika Srpska Prime Minister Zeljka Cvijanovic. She talked with another unknown person about buying off opposition MPs in the RS National Assembly to form a parliamentary majority."

The Sarajevo journalist states that many factors influence the types of pressures on the media. In particular, he distinguishes the following factors: the ownership structure of the media, that is, the founders of the media, the manner of financing the media, the development of the media market, free access to information and potential court proceedings, regardless of whether the media employees or decision makers are in the position of the defendant.

Considering that one of the characteristics of Bosnian media is non-transparency of ownership (Turčilo, 2011.), we note the necessity of drafting the Law on Transparency of Ownership, because the public is often denied information about the ownership structures behind the media, what their main goal is, the connection with political and economic power, public information, exclusively profit or whether political power is part of the ownership structure.

Among the problems, the interviewees point out the lack of a culture of public interest and the culture of the rule of power. This allowed part of the media owners to access money in exchange for reporting which would in no way harm the governing structures, or affirmatively reporting on those who control cash flows.

The link between the politicians and the media is most evident in the case of Dnevni Avaz: the founder of this newspaper Fahrudin Radončić, is also the founder of the political party Alliance for a Better Future. A journalist from the Center for Investigative Reporting in Sarajevo cites this case as one of the most obvious political pressures.

"This influence can be seen in the articles in which certain things, stories or persons are promoted or denounced, depending on the interest of the founder of Dnevni avaz Fahrudin Radoncic. Dnevni Avaz publishes articles that speak negatively about political opponents of Fahrudin Radoncic, but not the texts that go in favor of this party or founder."

The CIN journalist stresses that the links between the media and political parties and officials can be proven, as this is evident from the download of articles published by the Center for Investigative Reporting.

"CIN offers its articles to other media. Večernji list published all our articles while we did not investigate Dragan Covic's property. They did not publish the article regarding his property or any of the articles published after that. Dnevni Avaz published our article in which we said that some politicians did not report their

property to the authorities and took only the case of Bakir Izetbegovic, Radončić's counter-candidate. Part of the article regarding their owner, Radončić, was removed from the media"

The same claims are made by the journalist of the Public Service of B&H, stating that the views of Dnevni Avaz are completely subordinate to the political ambitions and activities of Fahrudin Radončić.

"Lately, there has been an increase in internet portals that promote certain ideas also through social networks. There is hardly any party in B&H that does not 'stand' behind a portal", he says.

Political pressures are also visible when it comes to the events of the previous war and the war crimes committed, but also regarding some current events. One journalist explains this by dividing the public and the journalists according to the ethnonational principle.

"We have a situation in which one event is praised in one medium, and in another it is challenged depending on the standpoint of the media and its orientation, or the connection of the media to certain parties."

A journalist from Srebrenica also states that the media are divided along ethnic lines, while the exception, to some extent, represents BHT and several portals and freelancers.

A journalist from Sarajevo states that the overview of the contents of certain media points to which media was bound to what political party.

"It's enough to scroll through Dnevni Avaz, Stav, and Faktor or to review the Republic of Srpska Television program and everything will be crystal clear."

Some of the interviewees mentioned the existence of so-called red lines, i.e. that some editors and journalists are related to the political parties and that the party has committed to the media. One interviewee supports this claim with their personal experience. His colleague states:

"I am convinced that there are 'red phones' on the editorial board, and 'a must-publish' message in the phonebook. When it comes to journalists, there is no need for pressures, because it is well known what articles or contributions should not be published, and which questions are not asked."

A former TV journalist from Sarajevo cites an example of political takeover of the media at the time he worked there.

"The SDA and SDP coalition came to power and immediately changed staff in the informative-political program and other segments of this public television. Then control was established. What was disappointing for me was the knowledge that my colleagues immediately established contacts with the incoming parties, and made themselves available for taking political orders. A group of about ten journalists remained consistent and were immediately subjected to pressures. Overnight the internal acts of Television Sarajevo were changed and after that there was no such position any more."

All interviewees agree that political pressures strengthen both censorship and self-censorship in the media, and part of the interviewees believe that the latter is even more pronounced than the former.

"In part, this is a general attitude that can be attributed to the average member of every B&H nation. It is considered impolite to disagree with the majority of their own group. On the other hand, there is a justified fear - the survival, the position of children and the family, whether I am in danger if I oppose the position of the so-called monolithic, predominant majority", a Srebrenica journalist explains.

Although there is no official censorship, the reporters emphasize that censorship is ubiquitous in Bosnian media, and that journalists always know which topics are not desirable to write, which then leads to self-censorship.

"Censorship is when an advertiser, which is closely related to a political party, does not want to advertise in certain media that wrote critically on that politician," emphasizes a journalist of one of the web portals, explaining that such actions always lead to self-censorship, while denying financial resources to owners and editors is a form of censorship.

Political officials refuse to give statements to journalists who come from the media labelled by those officials as "hostile".

"If you write critically about a politician or a political party, it is most likely that you will not get the information next time. I consider this to be the kind of pressure that journalists feel every day. And then, being aware that they must always have information and reliable informants, they are going to have less resistance and they do not object to politicians", the interviewee emphasized.

Political pressures on the B&H Public Service have been taking place since its inception, no matter what political parties are in power. This is very easy to see from the analysis of the content that is broadcast on the TV stations of the Public Service of B&H. A Federal Television journalist states:

"The most concrete and fascinating pressure on the Public Service is that, in the most transparent and in the most unlawful manner, a member of the Presidency of B&H and the Vice-Presidents of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, invited people not to pay the RTV fee. This directly affects the economic status of the broadcasters and in this blackmailing way they want political control over the editorial policy of public broadcasters, especially BHRT, which is the victim of entity 'cash'. On the other hand, the members of the board of directors are similarly politically minded persons, as well as the managers of the the unions."

A media reporter from Mostar states that relations between politicians and media owners are huge.

"B&H is a special case. The criticism of one part of the elite necessarily brings you close to members of the other part of the elite. If you criticize SDP you have sympathy for SDA. If you criticize HDZ, you have sympathy with HSP, etc.", says a journalist who claims that uncensored media does not exist.

Economic Pressures on Media and the Advertising Industry

Economic pressures on the media are one of the key problems of the Bosnian media sphere, as precisely through economic pressures a climate of censorship and self-censorship is created, which significantly narrows the public space for views and attitudes that are beyond the mainstream. But in the B&H case, economic pressures are not only and exclusively tied to the advertising industry. Namely, there is a direct link between political elites, economic elites and media owners, which was shown by some earlier research (Turčilo, 2011.), and economic pressures are directly related to political pressures.

The advertising industry and media ownership in Bosnia and Herzegovina are extremely non-transparent, and the Law on Transparency of Ownership and the Law on the Advertising Industry are two key pieces of legislation that are missing, and whose adoption has been insisted upon by the media community for several years now, without much success. Non-parsed media ownership disables access to information related to who the real owners of the media are. Although formal organizations or companies that own a shareholding are listed in the registers of regulators and self-regulators, data on real owners do not exist in one place. It is for this reason that journalists' associations, the media, and other actors insist on creating a single media registry, containing all relevant data for each medium. This registry would help prevent the concentration of ownership and enable better visibility of the interconnection of economic, political, and media links and influence. "In Bosnia and Herzegovina there are people who are also owners of printing houses, distribution networks, newspapers, and marketing agencies and electronic media." (Tesanovic, 2014: 29). Particularly problematic is the lack of any identification of web portals, not only in terms of their ownership, but also in terms of impressum, composition of the editorial office, etc. Although they formally fall within the scope of the Press Council, as a self-regulatory body for print and online media, the web portals are not, in any way obliged to provide information about their ownership or composition of the editorial office.

In addition to the problems of non-transparency of ownership, the lack of reliable data on the media financing and market research make it much more difficult to get a detailed view of the image of the media market in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

"Since there is no transparency of media ownership, advertising is also non-transparent, because it is not possible to determine whether there is an influence on the editorial policy of the media through this. Only limited transparency of ownership through the registers of business entities exists, but it is not sufficient. Professional postulates and rules regarding covert advertising are not respected, so you can often see content that is clearly advertising in the media, but it's not marked as such and it is not separated from editorial content," one of the participants in our study said, while another participant mentioned:

"Because of the unregulated market in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it's difficult to talk about a transparent advertising industry. So I think that there is not much transparency in the advertising industry in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and I illustrate my claim with various affairs involving people from this industry (Affair Gibraltar). As long as the marketing capital (advertising and public sector investments), which is placed in the media and marketing agencies, especially from public companies, public institutions and political parties, is not subject to control mechanisms, and data are not available to the public, so we cannot talk about transparency in this sector".

The third interviewee agrees with the above, stating that: *"The advertising industry and the market are not transparent, and the exact figures for advertising are not published, especially when it comes to public institutions and companies. Transparent is perhaps the division of the marketing pie from large groups of commercial brands, but the distribution itself is not very reliable due to the questionable measurement of television ratings in Bosnia and Herzegovina."*

There are three main ways in which media is funded in Bosnia and Herzegovina:

- Assigning funds from public funds and budgets (for public services, local media and only a small part of commercial media)
- RTV fee / subscription (for public services)
- Advertising industry (for commercial media)

When it comes to allocating funds from the budget, "government institutions at all levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina spend about 30 million KM a year on the media. About 1.5 million KM is spent annually on the announcement of advertisements, public calls and tenders, while spending more than five million marks per year on the engagement of the media to monitor the work of municipal authorities or the rules of chronicle of actuality and other types of promotions"³³. These funds are described as "media help", although most analysts view them as a mechanism for buying silence and latent pressures on the media. In addition to purchasing silence by "injecting" money from public funds, another trend of media control through budget funds was noted, and it refers to the conclusion of contracts on media monitoring of the work of public authorities. "In addition to regular current and capital transfers to public companies - these others relate to the procurement of equipment - government institutions allocate funds to special-purpose media, and conclude various types of contracts with public and private broadcasters and newspapers for promotion, advertising and monitoring of the work of government bodies. According to the CRMA survey, about 1.5 million per year is spent on publishing advertisements, public calls and tenders, while more than five million is allocated to monitoring the

33 <http://media.ba/bs/magazin-teme-i-resursi/institucije-u-bih-finansiraju-medije-sa-desetinama-miliona-maraka-godisnje>

work of municipal authorities and promotion (CRMA, 2016). The amount of these funds varies from 200 marks, how much the city administration pays for publishing one greeting card in local print media, to significant contracts that state institutions make with the media for advertising and promotion services” (Sokol, Hodžić, 2017: 11).

The interviewees in our research also notice the significant influence of public companies on media advertising:

“Public companies have a large share in advertising, since they publish various advertisements, tenders etc. which are significant financial resources,” one says, while another adds: *“Public companies, depending on the party’s senior management, place their marketing campaigns in media where the top party sends them”.*

“Public companies have a large share in advertising. They do not do it to advertise their products and services, but rather to invest in media that they can control.”

This kind of investment in the media is inherent to the public media, so we can say that the budget funds are controlled mainly by the public media space in Bosnia and Herzegovina. “It is known that three-quarters of media resources get public, which includes three public services, two entity agencies, as well as public cantonal, municipal and city media. (...) In practice, there are problematic cases in which media freedom is restricted, and it should be noted that the appointments of directors and management boards in local public media are regularly politicized in order to ensure loyalty to individual political interests. In this system, the financial condition is just an additional mechanism for ensuring political servitude.”³⁴ Funding from public sources of finance constitutes an important part of the media market and the withdrawal of those funds from” disobedient media “can significantly jeopardize their existence.”³⁵

A report on the assessment of the media sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina³⁶ states that the money available on the market is politically controlled, or controlled by individuals having political affiliations. The most direct example is the telecommunication companies, whose board of directors are members appointed by political parties, which have an impact on the way in which advertising resources are allocated. This is also agreed by the interviewees in our research, who stated:

34 <http://www.media.ba/bs/magazin-novinarstvo/obrasci-finansiranja-medija-iz-javnih-budzeta-politicki-pritisci-i-finansijska>

35 The best indicator for this type of pressure is the shutting down of research magazine Slobodna Bosna, that did not manage to finance its survival without public funds, which did not get due to the critical texts about public companies.

36 Brunwasser, M., Marko D., Turčilo L. (2016), *Assessment of the Media Sector in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, available at: <https://dec.usaid.gov/dec/content/Detail.aspx?ctID=ODVhZjk4NWQzM2YyMi00YjRmLTkxNjktZTcxMjM2NDhmY2Uy&rID=Mzc5NDM3>

"Some of the biggest advertisers in Bosnia and Herzegovina are public companies, whose administrations have party-appointed people. The distribution of leading positions in public companies is not a secret, so coalition partners in government simply decide who would be in a leading position. Managed public companies, such as BH Telekom or HT Eronet, can influence the emergence of self-censorship in the media through advertising agreements."

The commercial agreements on the sale of advertising space are made by the media with the clients (advertisers) either directly or through marketing agencies. There are no reliable data on the advertising industry in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which, according to various sources, ranges from 35 to 50 million euros annually³⁷. According to our interviewees, more than 60% of these funds are invested in television advertising, about 20% in online space, and 20% in outdoor advertising (posters, billboards) and newspapers. More than two thirds of this money, according to the information our marketing agents have in the media, is invested through marketing agencies and the rest by direct negotiations between the media and public and / or private companies. It is noteworthy that the media space of Bosnia and Herzegovina is sold to clients outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina through the so-called "joint advertising packages", which regional marketing agencies offer to clients from outside of the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a part of the marketing pie. Furthermore, marketing agencies are often the owners of some media, which not only directly promote their clients, but also significantly influence the prices of advertising space (called "price dumping"). The exception is, as stated in the Media Market Assessment Report, large banks, which are also important advertisers and who invest significant funds in various types of media, focusing mainly on those with the best ratings (reading, listening, and viewing).

But there are significant problems with measuring reading, watching, and listening. One of our interviewees describes it as follows:

"Research on media ratings and circulation does not reflect the real situation. Everyone says that they are the best, so at one point it happens that everyone is the most viewed and most read. "

The second interviewee adds:

"Circulation and ratings do not reflect the real situation. That's very questionable. For example, three media were rated as the least viewed in one day, and the next day, they were again the most watched. The circulation is also used to attract the media, and they are much smaller. "

Earlier research has shown that newsprint circulation is falling, and therefore many print media are turning to web platforms as alternatives, or to complement their

37 Ibid

activities. “Although circulation in most media is hiding, and this non-transparency is just a business secret, unofficial indicators say that it is in a relationship. For a period of five years the circulation has halved, which is mainly explained by the growing role of online media, that is, the web portal. It is interesting also that the ethnic division of media and public space is most evident in print media: the most circulating daily newspapers from RS in the Federation sell 5% of their circulation, mostly in Sarajevo, while the most circulating daily newspapers from the Federation of B&H in the RS sell 8% (Mainly returnee population)” (Turčilo, 2017: 37). Our interviewees also consider print circulation “inflated”:

“As far as the circulation of printed media is concerned, I know that the circulations that are published to the public and to the clients are incorrect and exaggerated. Yearly circulation is decreasing and this trend continues.”

However, the most problematic aspect is, of course, TV metering, which one of the interviewees describes as follows:

“Surveying is a controversial issue in B&H since the only authorized auditor of Audience Measurement has proven to have more favorable conditions for certain companies, so none of the broadcasters consider them relevant. Regarding media circulation data, as far as I know, it is not collected in a systematic way and there is no relevant body that could find that information, so the information on the newsprint is reduced to those that, upon request, are provided by newspaper publishers. Since there are no relevant measuring systems, marketing agencies and advertisers decide individually in which media to advertise.”

The first problem of measuring audience ratings through Audience Measurement relates to its ownership, which is linked to some of the commercial media in Bosnia and Herzegovina³⁸, while other objections to measuring ratings through so-called ‘people meters’ relate to the possibility of manipulating them. Even before the Audience Measurement, while ratings were measured through Mareco Index Bosnia, there were objections to the way the data was collected. “Mareco Index Bosnia stopped providing these services in 2014, but filed a complaint with the Council of Competition B&H against the Audience Measurement.”³⁹ Some of the marketing agencies, as well as the media themselves, or commercial television stations, use data on the rating of cable operators and IPTV providers and consider them more reliable.

38 See in: Hodžić, S. <http://mediaobservatory.net/radar/flash-report-5-bosnia-and-herzegovina>

39 Brunwasser, M., Marko D., Turčilo L. (2016). Assessment of the Media Sector in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Available at <https://dec.usaid.gov/dec/content/Detail.aspx?ctID=ODVhZjk4NWQzM2YyMi00YjRmLTkxNjktZTcxMjM2NDNmY2Uy&rID=Mzc5NDM3>

The advertising industry and economic pressures on the media have a significant impact on the emergence of censorship and self-censorship, as our interviewees agree with:

"Large advertisers in the impoverished media environment have a position in which they can affect self-censorship (censorship is not often said because there is "no need for that") in such a way that the media in which they advertise do not write critically about them in order to preserve the contract of advertising."

"Marketing agencies have a great deal of influence in creating a media agenda and conditioning the media with great discounts, The media often have no other way to reach the big advertisers except through the agency. The advertising industry affects censorship and self-censorship all over the world, but it is only more visible in our country because the market is smaller."

Another significant problem caused by the conjunction of non-transparent media ownership, political elites, and cash flows through media advertising, is the emergence of clientelism in the media. One of the interviewees states:

"The money flow between the public sector and the media (including advertising and commercial contracts), unfortunately, is not recorded in the right way, thus opening up a vast space for "invisible "clientelistic practices" and the financial impact of the public sector on the media. At the same time, there are no real barriers to clientelism when giving grants to the media. The criteria for granting assistance to the media must be based on universal principles, and the system of legal protection for potential beneficiaries of public assistance must be accompanied by strong accountability mechanisms, and to allow the right to appeal to all interested parties."

The second interviewee adds:

"Advertisers have a significant impact on censorship and self-censorship." Clients most often ask the media not to report on certain issues. That is not always the case, but very often it is."

One example of filtering information under the influence of the advertising industry is the way in which some media report the texts of the Center for Investigative Reporting, which reveal affairs and corrupt practices. In the recent publication of such a text by CIN ("Alchemy with Biodiesel": <https://www.cin.ba/alhemija-sa-biodizelom/>), some of the media that reported on the above text omitted the names of large oil companies who are their advertisers. Whether we call this approach self-censorship or, as the media like to say, "non-aggressive cooperation with clients", it is undoubtedly to the detriment of citizens and to the public interest, because

it prevents them from obtaining complete and objective information. Some of our colleagues comment on these media approaches in the following way:

"Most media are set up so that the owner, his family and a couple of "favorites" can live well from their work, while others can only satisfy basic needs. Media work takes place in accordance to instructions of agencies and big companies. The media do not have their own standpoints they just play by the rules of other actors."

However, it is not always a matter of pressures on the media by political elites and economic powers; the trend of instrumentalization of private media for the purpose of achieving political and/or economic influence is also important. Some media owners often use the media as a means of influencing and negotiating with the elites and for interventions in the political sphere (which in many cases is the main goal of media ownership). "The media scene in Bosnia and Herzegovina has already risen to the term "media blackmail", which implies the pressures of private media on certain elements of the system in order to achieve certain particular interests of media owners in exchange for "buying silence". This pressure is latent and difficult to prove, but indirectly can be noticed in relation to affirmative writing about certain companies, for example, which are at the same time large advertisers in a particular medium. "(Turčilo, 2017: 38).

The fact is that the advertising industry is an important player in the media scene in B&H. However, it should be noted that, in relation to the size of the marketing "pie", the number of media in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains extremely large, which gives arguments for the claim that a certain number of media do not function in accordance with rational business models. In the last few years, many media have turned to political elites, receiving financial support in exchange for directly promoting their interests, as evidenced by research into how to monitor election campaigns in the media in B&H. Politics, economics and media ownership, therefore, undoubtedly form a triad of effects and impacts on the media, which develop at the

expense of citizens and the public interest, and significantly narrow down the public or media space for alternative voices.

Some of our interviewees' recommendations to change this situation are:

- Adoption of the Law on Transparency of Ownership and the Law on the Advertising Industry
- Establishment of the Media Register with all relevant indicators related to the media (ownership, impressum, etc.)
- It is necessary to have a more transparent and quality controlled measurement of media ratings, in order to ensure the reliability of these data
- Fair and transparent allocation of grants from public funds must be guaranteed through legislation and the possible establishment of a body that would supervise it at the state level
- Separation of information from advertising and promotional content and clear labelling of promotional content in the media is a key precondition for citizens to be informed on what is and isn't sponsored content
- Better cooperation and solidarity among the media and journalists could contribute to a more systematic overcoming of economic pressures and better negotiation with advertisers

Socio-economic Position of Journalists in B&H and Journalistic (un)Solidarity in B&H Society

Journalists from Bosnia and Herzegovina do their job in very harsh conditions. And today journalists in B&H are one of, as stated by participants in the interviews, the most qualified, least valued and underpaid professionals. According to data from the portal Plata.ba (<http://www.plata.ba>), the average salary of journalists in B&H is 906 convertible marks (KM), and the average monthly salary of an editor-in-chief is 1377 KM.

According to research⁴⁰ conducted by the BH Journalists' Association, which was published in the first half of 2017, between 35 and 40% of journalists are not registered as working, and the level of salary in local media is between 200 and 500 euros a month, while public services pay an average of 700 euros. The survey revealed that 74% of journalists said their economic position had deteriorated significantly over the past two to three years.

The interviewees cite numerous problems that journalists face daily:

- Journalists are demotivated because they do not have public support;
- The media outlets are quite poor, journalists do not have time or money for further education;
- Journalists are forced to work on a large number of stories on a daily basis, and have no time to craft quality stories;
- Owners have commercial interests and are exclusively interested in profit;
- A large number of journalists are either working illegally, or on minimum wage;
- Editors have significantly higher pay than journalists;
- Journalists are divided, which reflects both the position of journalists and the degradation of the profession;
- A significant number of journalists are divided along the ideological line;
- Due to political and economic influence, a large number of journalists adhere to censorship and self-censorship due to fear of losing their jobs or suffering financial sanctions;
- Journalists are not legally protected.

"In a society that is poor, we cannot expect the media to be different from the system. Therefore, if the society is poor, we cannot expect the media to be better", said a former journalist and professor at the Banja Luka Journalism Department. Another journalist from Banja Luka points out that journalism

is one of the least appreciated professions for which education is sought, and that the media do not deal with public interest, but sell goods for which they have a mass market.

In addition to the fact that the average salary of journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina is very low and most of them are reported to work on minimum wage, a journalist who works for a Bosnian-Herzegovinian portal financed with grants from international donors, also states that journalists are not protected, and that their social security contributions are not paid for months or even years.

In such a myriad of relationships, it often happens that the gap between the journalist and the editor, and especially the media owners, is enormous, and a phenomenon has been identified by the interviewees as the appearance of wealthy editors and poor reporters.

"In most media there is no collective agreement, which is crucial for the quality of legal protection of journalists. There are also big differences in income in individual media, both private and public, where editors have significantly higher salaries than journalists, especially interviewers," a Sarajevo journalist concludes, adding that "media owners in Bosnia and Herzegovina are often the owners of companies in other businesses and their wealth can be measured in millions of convertible marks, while journalistic salaries are modest and only meet basic needs. This results in, first of all, clientelism in the media - close business relations of media owners and political elites, non-transparent media financing, lack of transparency in media ownership, lack of quality worker protection of journalists, poor marketing market, dissenting journalists, lack of media unions, etc."

In most cases, journalists are not legally protected, that is, sometimes they are formally, but not in practice, says a journalist who is employed by one of the web portals.

"We can say that we have rich media owners. Editors are far better paid than journalists, but not so much to talk about luxury, or leading rich lives, although they are often the right hand of media owners and supporting centers of political power for which they are usually well rewarded. Of course, this does not apply to all media," the journalist said.

Another issue emphasized by the interviewees regards the employment of incompetent and uneducated labor in the media, because a significant part of the media does not ask for professionals, but a cheap workforce that will not work on quality investigative stories, but rather provide a large quantity of published content in the media.

"Nowadays, anyone can be a journalist. That's not bad in itself. Everyone has the right to express themselves. But the problem is that the media who want to get money as quickly as possible, literally buy such people, people without experience and knowledge, people without education in journalism, and then these people cannot make the profession better because they are ad hoc journalists. A journalist who is not a professional cannot even ask for better working conditions", says a journalism professor from Banja Luka.

A similar opinion is also given by a freelance journalist who states that the situation is identical when it comes to editors.

"Usually, when media is bought by a tycoon, he employs editors who have not graduated from journalism or other faculty and who, according to their knowledge and experience, treat journalists as commodities."

The work of journalists is often not recognized and valued by the editorial staff, and editors often choose loyalty to certain political centers of power at the expense of the quality of stories.

"I know journalists who tell me: I worked all day long, produced a story, and then someone says this should not be aired. So journalists lose faith in the profession, in the media, in everything", one of the interviewees points out. He adds that most media owners are guided by logic, if a journalist is not going to produce a story, they will find someone who wants to. *"The owners, therefore, think that they do not need journalists who are high-quality, they need those who do not cost a lot"*.

On the other hand, according to our interviewees, one should not neglect journalists who are loyal to certain political and economic centers of power or blindly follow the proprietary agenda in which they are clearly given the knowledge on which topics they should not report or which political options are suitable or not.

"We must not forget the development of state, entity, or party journalists, people who have no interest in professional work", said a freelance journalist.

A journalist from Sarajevo believes that some journalists are very close to their ownership and editorial structures, which ensures them a better position in the media.

"In the media that advocate the interests of certain policies or parties, but also in those where the owner uses the media as a tool to fight opponents or 'enemies', editors possess other 'competences' - mostly obedience and lack of professional and any other ethics".

By avoiding undesirable topics, which is considered to be part of the editorial policy, journalists use self-censorship to preserve a job and in order to not suffer from mobbing and sanctions. Journalists have been put in a disgruntled position, they must choose between ethics and professionalism on one hand, and survival on the other.

The media are also responsible for this situation, while playing the market game, and by placing themselves within a struggle for greater readership and rating in front of the press, also put tasks below every professional level, one of the interviewed journalists emphasizes. One of the interviewees also states that journalists bear some responsibility for the situation in the media.

"My first job in the media taught me, that younger journalists agree to self-censorship. Basically, I can understand a journalist who has a family, a loan, so he cannot afford to tell the editor: "I'm not doing this". But there are a lot of journalists who do not have such a difficult position, but they still do not want to oppose editors. The negligence policy causes self-censorship. Journalists often say they do not want to be indignant to editors and owners, because they do not want to end up on the street for disobedience. That, however, is not the case. It's not entirely true that if I refuse to write something which is not ethical, I would be on the street right now".

A freelance journalist says that it is up to each individual to defend the honor and reputation of the profession, and to consider that freelancing is the most difficult but the most honorable way.

"You have people in a really terrible position, who are fighting for the truth, and conformists who do not want to do anything that would put them in danger."

When it comes to solidarity among journalists in B&H, the opinions of the interviewees are divided. Some of them state that this solidarity is conditioned by various factors, that is, it is present if it does not disturb the interest of the media owners, while a part of the interviewees claim that solidarity among journalists is present and that journalists do help each other.

"Solidarity is reduced to verbal support. That's good, but that does not solve the problem", says an interviewee, while a journalist who deals with research stories thinks differently: *"Journalistic solidarity is one of the greatest advantages of the profession. Journalists help one another, there is often a recommendation for part-time jobs if one is known to be in a difficult situation, and also journalists do write stories about their colleagues whose working rights are abused."*

Given the increasing frequency of verbal attacks on journalists and the denial of the right to professionally perform their work (turned away from press conferences,

denial of information and statements, etc.), we notice small or no reactions and condemnation in public.

Most interviewees state that associations for the protection of journalists, regardless of their limited possibilities, are the only form of organized support to journalists.

"No matter how poorly they work, associations are the only ones to defend journalists", one of the journalists said. However, apart from the verdicts of verbal or physical attacks, these associations are powerless to initiate any substantial change. "Journalists' associations work to protect the rights of journalists, but they have no influence. In most cases they side with the journalists when exposed to pressures, when their rights are endangered, but this usually ends with statements and condemnations that do not reach those who have influence, not because they do not hear or read it, but because they ignore it".

Among some of the recommendations that could change the current situation, our interviewees list:

- Ensuring transparency of ownership and clearly profiling editorial policy;
- Insisting on the importance of education and self-education of journalists;
- Insisting on the development and introduction of media literacy in education, as it has now been shown that the public, although modestly media literate, still recognizes some good stories;
- Each journalist must have a 'personal editorial policy', that is, his own code of ethics or value code;
- In order to improve the unfavourable socio-economic position of journalists, it is necessary to establish media unions that will truly fight for their legal protection.

Establishing media unions would be a very important tool in the fight for the rights of journalists. However, many dilemmas remain open, as previous practice has shown that a large part of trade union leaders are in tune with political powers and that good relations with powerful individuals and groups are often more important than the interests of employees.

Despite the current situation, the interviewees say that there is room for research stories in Bosnia and Herzegovina's media, and that the so-called politics of ignorance has led to the disappearance of this kind of local journalism, and moreso if the journalists were more solidary and united, they could significantly influence the state of their profession. Also, when it comes to the development and necessity of the media trade union, it is very important that this organization is united in the entire territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and not divided by entity lines, because journalists from the whole country have identical problems.

Public Broadcasting Service in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The public broadcasting service in Bosnia and Herzegovina should be and could be one of the key channels through which opportunities for viewers and listeners are given to obtain fair, balanced, and objective information from various sources and with different variations. It is precisely the public service that should guarantee pluralism of thinking and promotion of diversity. But the Bosnian-Herzegovinian public broadcasting system is essentially the reflection of a non-functional state, a divided society, and a very complicated approach to the public good.

As already mentioned, the launch of JRTV B&H started in 1999 when the then High Representative for B&H, Carlos Westendorp, issued the Decision on the Reconstruction of JRTV B&H. The process was continued by his successor, Wolfgang Petrich, who imposed the Law on the Foundations of the Public Radio and Television System and Services before the end of the 2002 mandate, thus establishing three public broadcasters.⁴¹

Although it was established as a kind of copy of the British BBC (at the beginning of its development, BBC representatives were the educators of B&H journalists at the public service), the public system nevertheless made a compromise in the organizational sense and ended up being established as a three-part system: state-level broadcasters (BHT1 and BH Radio 1), broadcasters at the entity level (RTRS and Radio RS and FTV and Radio Federation), with the addition of the envisaged establishment of the Public Broadcasting Corporation, which never came into existence.

Since its inception, three public broadcasters have acted as competing rather than complementary houses. This was reflected directly in the quality of the program content. For example, FTV profiled almost as a commercial station, with low-cost content such as the Shopping Queen, cheap reality TV show from Croatia, soap operas, etc., which is not the role of the public service. However, in the financial sense, this TV station survives and has a significantly better financial status than BHT. Other signs of competition were the use of resources (and often the same content, sports for example, broadcast on all three channels, but with three different commentators), and mutual relations in the financial terms of emitters (the allocation of revenues from the RTV fee according to the 50% system for BHRT and 25% for entity broadcasters never came to life). The failure of the Corporation has hindered and significantly slowed the digitization process, which has not yet been completed in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

41 According to: Babić, D. (2009), "Kroz barikade preko javne televizije", 29. 10., available at: www.puls-demokratije.com; Babić, D. (2013), "Saga o hrvatskom kanalu – nepotreban kamen smutnje", 13. 3., available at: www.media.ba, available at: <http://www.media.ba/bs/magazin-medijska-politika-regulativa/saga-o-hrvatskom-kanalu-nepotreban-kamen-smutnje>

When it comes to financing the public service, the collection of RTV charges has become a significant technical, but also a political issue, which is directly related to the political dependence of public broadcasters. Namely, in the public broadcasting system, RTRS profiled itself from the very beginning as a separate medium, with a separate infrastructure in Banja Luka, which considers the funds from the collection of RTV fees as own revenues. The political bias and dependence of RTRS on power in the RS is mentioned as a problem in almost all of the research and monitoring of the media⁴². On the other hand, certain political representatives of the Croatian people that serve in institutions of government, dissatisfied with the lack of channels in the Croatian language, directly called for the boycott of payment of the RTV fee, which had a good appeal with some citizens in the western part of Herzegovina, resulting in the lowest recorded percentage of paid RTV tax. The non-collection of taxes was most significant for the BHRT, which is almost out-of-date and in a complete financial collapse. The political dependence of the entity broadcasters, the financial dubiousness of the state broadcaster, the failure of the Corporation, the unclear vision and strategy for the development of the public broadcasting system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the lack of support of the public for the public system, technologically obsolete and in terms of human resources the overburdened system - all represent characteristics of the public broadcasting system in Bosnia and Herzegovina today.

So, we can say that the public broadcasting system in Bosnia and Herzegovina is in a major crisis, for which the political representatives, or representatives of the government, are directly responsible. However, one should not ignore the role of the previous managers in generating this crisis, since the problems with the public system have lasted for years, and no government or management have shown enough interest or will to solve the problems in an adequate way. The survival of the public service is more political than a strategic and policy issue. This conclusion is that of the recent conference for rescue of public services held in Sarajevo. At the conference, certain conclusions and recommendations were made, which should contribute to solving the problems of public broadcasting in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The participants agreed that “a professional, independent and credible public service is necessary for democracy and the processes of building national identity and social cohesion. It also opposed the spread of disinformation and propaganda that created the conditions for the war in the 1990s.”⁴³ The conference concluded that the international community has consistently warned that “it is completely unacceptable to allow public service collapse. The failure to resolve the public

42 Monitoring of BH journalists in the period of election campaign, and other numerous studies, accentuate political dependency of RTRS as one of the key problems of media scene in the RS. Also, FTV is marked by the unprofessional approach towards the political representatives in the Federation BiH (famous example is the video shot where president of SDP and minister in that time Zlatko Lagumdžija ‘whisper on the ear’ to the editor of FTV on what shall be published in the information program).

43 More about the Conference: <http://www.bhrt.ba/vijesti/bih/sarajevo-zavrsava-konferencija-nacionalni-javni-rtv-servis-bih/>

service crisis will lead to the closure of the BHRT that will taint B&H's image on the international scene, portraying it as a country that fails as a democracy and seriously jeopardizes B&H's negotiations with the European Union and, no less important, which could lead to the exclusion of BHRT from EBU membership. The loss of an important player in the democratization of society will seriously jeopardize the processes of consolidation of the state and media pluralism, and will contribute to deeper divisions along ethnic lines. Furthermore, it will enable greater influence of local politicians on the public media service. It will open the door for the promotion of narrow political interests and extreme agendas, and can lead to propaganda, spreading hate speech, intolerance and even incitement to violence. Participants believe that "responsible and proactive political leadership is necessary in order to solve the structural problems for the functioning of the public service and to create financial conditions for a self-sustaining and politically independent Public Broadcasting System in B&H," and they state that "there is a full understanding of all relevant parties, including politicians, that state-level public service must be preserved and urgent measures must be taken in that direction".⁴⁴ The proposed emergency measures are the following:

Urgent measures to be taken by the Parliamentary Assembly of B&H:

- Adopt amendments to the laws on public broadcasting that will ensure stable and adequate financing of public services, create a joint service of all three public broadcasters for collecting RTV charges, to ensure the collection of RTV charges through the electricity bill.
- Ask the Council of Ministers to provide financial assistance in an urgent procedure in order to cover the debts of the BHRT.⁴⁵

Urgent measures to be taken by the Parliament of the Federation of B&H:

- Adopt amendments to the FB&H Law on Enforcement Procedure in order to secure the collection of RTV charges.

Urgent measures to be taken by the Council of Ministers of B&H:

- Separate emergency financial aid to BHRT, in order to continue broadcasting. International donors, banks and development agencies that can help overcome debt problems should also be involved. The Council of Ministers should be the guarantor of BHRT's repayment plan towards the EBU, which would therefore end the EBU's sanctions imposed on BHRT, enabling BHRT to use EBU services again.

The long-term measures proposed are:

- Open dialogue with all stakeholders should be included in this process and the public in particular.

44 Ibid

45 Ibid

- Laws must be harmonized and oblige all actors to fully respect the rule of law and to implement these laws. Laws at the state level must not be derogated to the lower level, at the level of the entity. The appropriate sanctions system should ensure enforcement of the law.
- The Council of Ministers should adopt a program of reform for the Public Broadcasting System of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- The Council of Ministers should establish a “Task Force” for the implementation of these reforms and a Working Group, to prepare amendments and harmonize public service law with representatives of the international community.
- Civil society should continue to mobilize citizens and exert pressure on BH authorities in order to ensure adequate funding and a favourable environment allowing the normal operation of the public service. If the state does not undertake the measures described above, civil society will launch a case before the European Court of Human Rights for violating Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights.
- Public broadcasting services should undertake the necessary reforms to ensure independence, optimize resources, build an efficient and professional system organized for digital production, the use of various platforms and social media, serving the interests of the public, and all nations and groups in society, thus ensuring transparency and responsiveness to citizens .
- All three public services need to continue the dialogue and create a common network operator.
- The international community is ready to intervene in the dialogue on public services of all stakeholders and provide appropriate expertise, experience and best practices.
- The European Parliament will continue to strongly urge the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina to provide funding for the public service, and the appropriate legislative and institutional framework, at the same time continuing to discuss the public service of Bosnia and Herzegovina with the European Commission.
- The international community will forward a proposal to the European Commission, to include a special chapter on the media with a special focus on public services in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which will strengthen mechanisms for applying European standards to this important area for the democratization and consolidation of social processes.
- The European Commission and the European Parliament will continue to monitor developments in the field of public broadcasting and respect for the rule of law.

- The EBU will offer “peer to peer” with the intention to help complete the reorganization and reform of broadcasting services in line with new challenges, requirements and technology development.⁴⁶

Our interviewees say that the lack of functionality of the public service is partly a consequence of the poor approach that the international community took from the very beginning of the establishment and development of the system:

“The international community was not consistent. First, it invested huge money in the so-called independent local radio and TV stations, and then turned its back on them. Then it invested millions of dollars in OBN TV and Radio Fern, and turned its back on them and let them collapse. Then they decided to create a public RTV service. With terrible pressures, they created a legal framework for the public broadcasting system, set their people (political favorites) on the Steering Committees, and turned their backs. It was then taken over by official politics both at state and entity levels who wanted to achieve their goals - both media and political. The result of this is the collapse of a primarily state-owned RTV broadcaster;” one analyst said, adding that, in addition to the international community, domestic politics play a major role in the decline of the public service: *“The grave was first dug up by domestic politicians or better, official policies, but it is also the responsibility of the international community as well as the management (including the Steering Committees) and, to a lesser extent, of the editors. These internal structures in public broadcasters were self-oriented and they did not want to hear any requirements from the public.”*

As one of the objections to the public broadcaster, several interviewees point out the lack of programs for minority communities.

“Every public service must have a program for minority communities. We do not have any, except for maybe a few minutes. A regular program is needed, as they once existed - shows on Roma, etc. This can be changed by an editorial decision since not having such programs means that the broadcaster is disrespecting the law. Sanctions need to be rigorous for the lack of minority content,” the representative of the self-regulator states.

Similarly, the representative of the regulator points out that the media formally gives space to alternative and minority views.

“The public service should be predominant, they have an obligation to adapt the segments of the program to people with disabilities, but the Public Service is falling apart. It was set up so that it fails.”

46 <http://www.bhrt.ba/vijesti/bih/preporuke-sa-konferencije-o-nacionalnom-javnom-servisu-bih/>

However, some of the interviewees have an understanding of the lack of quality content at the public service, bearing in mind how the politics, but also the citizens, treat the PBS.

"The position and status of fellow journalists, the equipment they work on, actually speaks of absolute lack of care and an utterly incorrect attitude of politicians towards the public radio and television service. The payments that they receive or do not receive, contributions that are not paid to them, and especially the story about how their firm at least pays off loans, are a serious embarrassment and a form of extreme inhuman behavior towards those who work honorably as journalists. The equipment and the building itself are at the stage of the early '80s. In all this, the political agenda and political pressures are clearly reflected, because every employee in the RTV home has his life, his family, his needs ... and it is clear that the political powers will "discipline them" by paying them miserably or not at all", says one of the interviewees, stating that one of the models for charging a RTV fee that would be applicable, is the one that already exists in Croatia. "The same politicians could simply solve the problem by looking at the neighboring Croatia. The Law on Croatian Broadcasting clearly stipulates the method of charging RTV taxes and, when those who implement the law behave like the Holy Inquisition - there is no excuse, and the tax is an obligation. Thanks to the money collected, HRT still looks like a decent media company".

And some of the employees at the Public Broadcasting Service agree with the assessment that for the situation in which the public service finds itself in, one should blame the politics and incompetent management, and that under such conditions, it is unrealistic to expect the employees to produce a quality program:

"BHT is in an extremely difficult position because of funding problems and political decisions that make it non-functional. Journalists work in impossible conditions, given that after several years of service they have not been paid, or the fact that they cannot have health care for themselves and their children. Salaries are paid in installments, and journalists are poorly paid. At the same time, all employees are asked to make a premium program, be top professionals, have the best shows, the best diction, the best style, and all of them finance themselves and invest in themselves. The negligence of politics and the incompetence and negligence of the management brought the public service into this position, so it is unfair to expect that employees should solve the problems, but it is necessary to address those who can actually solve the problem."

The interviewees agree that the role of the public service is crucial in every democratic country, and that it is precisely why the public service should be open to everyone, and more than that:

"The public service keeps the culture of the country, its archive, for example is the most valuable, and this is one of the reasons why it is important to preserve it. We are constantly talking about the news program, and other aspects are even more important: cultural, educational, documentary ones".

Although burdened with numerous problems, the public service or public broadcasting system has no alternative. It is a condition for the survival of democratic values and public interest in the media space of every democratic country and society. In this context, a meaningful, essential, non-political and strategic discussion and dialogue about what kind of public service is needed in Bosnia and Herzegovina without doubt is the first step in solving the accumulated problems. In addition to insisting on the implementation of digitization, the return of public interest to the media and especially to the public broadcasting system is essential.

The Role of the International Donors and Media Scene in B&H

International donors have played a significant role in the development of the media scene in Bosnia and Herzegovina, ever since the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement. Their financial support continues to contribute to the survival of a number of high-quality and professional media outlets, primarily those dealing with serious political issues and investigative journalism.

Those rare outlets which produce good stories on important issues continue to survive thanks to the support of international donors (Žurnal, Center for Investigative Journalism). They are very important for the Bosnian-Herzegovinian society, since investigative journalism is less and less present in the B&H media scene, precisely because of the political and economic pressures that provoke censorship and self-censorship among media outlets. These pressures result in the development of media dependence both on politically and economically powerful people, who are, usually, in close relationships.

Investigative journalism has almost vanished from the B&H public space, media houses are financially dependent, and sensationalistic news that will provide greater readership are the most desired ones. At the same time, journalists are underpaid and do not want to take risks, since they can lose jobs for writing investigative stories, and because threats to journalists who dare to discuss different topics in the society are quite present.

The contribution of donors was also significant when it comes to the adoption of laws and the establishment of media institutions, as well as regarding the support for the development of media houses, since they donated significant financial resources for equipment and additional educational programs for journalists.

Interviewees stress that international actors have played a key role in the development of the media sector in B&H, and that without their contribution and financial support, there would be no non-ethnically profiled media. Their role after the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement was immense and crucial for the development of independent media.

"The war-torn values and the ethno-political divisions that emerged as a result of the nationalization and the ethnicization of the media space during the war, and then institutionalized in the years after 1995, led to a situation where no local actors were willing to jointly work on creating a common media space", explains media analyst Davor Marko⁴⁷, who says that after the war (since 1995), only the powerful actors, that is international governments and donors, and development agencies, were able to use various mechanisms and financial means to directly influence the creation of the media space.

47 Colleague Davor Marko has contributed to the Chapter on the role of the international donors, so, as a way to praise his contribution, and with his acceptance, we quote his statements with full name.

Davor Marko says that the contribution of the international community to the development of B&H media has had the following goals:

- Support the processes of democratization of society;
- Support the processes of peacebuilding through media, after the war;
- Elimination of war propaganda and hate speech from the public space;
- Support the development of media pluralism;
- Development of private, independent media, which became the alternative voice in the public space;
- Making some order in the media sphere, by establishing regulatory and legal frameworks;
- Supporting the development of the media market;
- Supporting the transformation of previously state-controlled media into public media;
- Promoting professionalism and ethical standards through self-regulation and work of professional media associations;
- Supporting the development of civil society and citizens' organizations, that work in the field of media development and do trainings, research and media production;
- Supporting the development of media literacy, and thus promoting active citizenship in B&H.

A former journalist, now researcher and professor, says that the role of international donors has been vital for the media in B&H, who operate under the conditions of an underdeveloped market, which is further destroyed by the advertising industry, media owners' work, , and strong political control. However, she also emphasizes that donations, no matter how important these funds are, cannot compensate for the shortcomings of the domestic media space and the lack of good media policies and practices.

"They also cannot replace the lack of citizens' demands for high-quality media, which comes from a lack of media literacy and a low level of political culture, which are again resulting from the lack of civic education in schools."

While funds from international donors cannot fill all the gaps in the media market, the interviewee emphasizes that they nevertheless played a key role in keeping the media alive and independent from the domestic political centers, and that they ensured the development and survival of investigative journalism.

"If it were not for donor funds, we would not know the details of a number of corruption scandals, such as: Bosnalijek, Gavrankapetanović, administrative center of the RS, Highway."

Thanks to donors, some media have been founded to operate in the interest of all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, that is, media that are not divided by ethno-national lines and who publish stories on topics that are important for the entire B&H society and at the same time, who uncompromisingly write about all political affairs, no matter what politicians from which parties are involved in them. A media analyst and professor at one of the faculties of Bosnia and Herzegovina, states:

"Independent media have been created, multiethnic relations have been encouraged, old relationships between people have been renewed and new ones have been formed. The greatest media success was that numerous private radio stations were established throughout B&H, which had a more liberal (although not always professional) program. And they were ready to give space to people of other nationalities (at that time that was a great success) and space for different attitudes of international organizations and officials, even if they were not in line with the predominant public opinion in the territory in which that station was located."

International donors also played a very important role in supporting non-governmental organizations involved in media research and journalists' training. Thanks to these funds numerous training sessions were organized, and different types of training for journalists were held. Our interviewee highlights:

"In the post-war period, the Media Plan Institute and the Media Center from Sarajevo have had great success in educating journalists. Users of their schools nowadays are key and very professional editors in B&H media; these two organizations also achieved great successes in connecting regional media organizations and workers, which was a colossal success in the first five to six years after the war."

As the interviewees cite, thanks to the support of international donors, the Independent Media Commission was created in 1998, which preceded the Communications Regulatory Agency, and then the RAK 2001, in which the donors' financial, programming, and organizational support was crucial.

"These two agencies have had the greatest success in making some order in the media scene after the war," says a consultant who deals with media analysis and research in B&H.

While the role of international donors in the development of the media scene has been of great significance, some of our interviewees state that this support was still most significant in the post-war period and that nowadays, although their significance cannot be ignored, it is not as prevalent. A US media analyst, who has worked for a non-governmental organization based in Sarajevo for a long time, states that it has been obvious that donors have mistakenly believed that media pluralism would also improve the quality of media content.

"After more than twenty years we can say that it was wrong to support media development instead of developing journalism. Media development was supported in several ways: support in equipment, money, and media organization development. The development of journalism, however, was only supported by educating journalists, which is certainly not enough. Large amounts of money invested in the media scene in B&H did not result in a huge success"

One of the interviewees states that the second and third stages of donors' assistance (the second phase after the situation in B&H was partially stabilized, and the third is still ongoing) did not give the expected result. In the last five years, the donors' engagement has turned in the direction of support for so-called civic forces, both in the media and in other areas of society.

"The more investments were made in demolition of national options, the more they strengthened. The more investments were made in the fight against corruption the more it persisted. The more was invested in education for professional and responsible journalism, the less professional the media became. The more it was invested in journalists' associations and self-regulatory media bodies, the more they have been losing members and authority," says one interviewee, adding that most of the donors' strategic ways were counterproductive, and this was not the fault of people who led these projects, but challenging because the Bosnian-Herzegovinian society is deeply divided with diametrically opposed ethnic views on the future of all societal spheres.

What the interviewees emphasize as a failure of the donors is the fact that they often neglected the local context and local specifics by copying methods and approaches from developed countries, which has not always been the best solution for B&H. We have already mentioned this in detail in the part related to legal regulations of the B&H media, where interviewees have indicated that laws are often copied from other countries, leading to certain ambiguities and omissions.

Media analyst Davor Marko states that the neglect of local circumstances has proven to be a failure, and it is best illustrated by the non-functionality of the newly founded institutions and their sustainability, such as the Press Council, which lacks stable sources of funding, and has no expected impact.

"The same is the case with the journalist association BH Journalists, which is the most active and widely accepted throughout B&H, but still has certain obstacles in its work. Both of these institutions have problems with funding; they function partially according to the principles of project management, which should not be their activity, nor something these institutions should deal with."

Davor Marko also mentions different approaches by different donors, i.e. different principles and levels of donors' involvement. He cites substantial differences between the US and European donors. American donors, in his opinion, were very influential in B&H during the 1990s and beyond 2000, through the US Embassy and the USAID Development Agency, and favored the free market, the development of commercial media, enhancing journalistic professionalism, and the integrity of the journalist profession. European donors, unlike the US, were focused on the system as a whole, the laws that should contain and ensure the implementation of European media standards, i.e. media institutions that should be politically and economically independent and functional, namely public services, regulatory bodies, and ombudsmen. Speaking about access levels (systemic, institutional, and individual), Davor Marko points out that access to the US donors is not systematic, that is, they are not focused on the development of the media system and media laws and media institutions in general, although in certain segments they are interested in supporting certain laws or mechanisms in their implementation. The engagement of these donors is more focused on individual excellence of journalists or media, that is, very important areas for them are investigative journalism or private media such as the Alternative Television from Banja Luka, Sarajevo's OBN, and smaller commercial radio and television stations.

"On the other hand, the EU and European institutions, which are not really donors in the classical sense (with the exception of the foundations from different countries), had an essentially small influence; The Council of Europe, OSCE, are insisting on a systematic approach, that is, on the creation of functional institutions (such as the public service, regulatory bodies, ombudsman institutions), and their support was financial but less direct, due to the more complex bureaucratic and administrative procedures, which led to the situation in which a lot of money went to indirect costs for different types of EU expertise staff, etc."

The same analyst also states that European donors considered support as a longer-term process, insisting on adopting and applying the European standards and regularly controlling them at the level of the entire media system, and reporting through their Progress Reports.

One of the interviewees also argues that the key donors' problem is often focusing on journalists' training, which is essentially the easiest to organize, but this does not impact on the basic media problem in B&H, because the problem is not lack

of quality journalists but the absence of conditions for their high-quality, free, and professional work.

"The root of the problem is in the political control of the media, and the projects, no matter how good they are, cannot solve that."

One of the interviewees mentioned that recently donors have specifically given up on providing grants to owners, because in the earlier period, this resulted in the emergence of wealthy media owners who, as soon as their donors stopped giving financial support, turned to domestic political donors.

Talking about the nature of foreign donors' approach, analyst Davor Marko states that the US donors had a disruptive approach, that they mostly aided the independent, anti-national, and private media, while the European donors and institutions were pushing for reform of media systems, approaching it gradually, through the development of partnerships among the media, and initiating longer-term cooperation with local stakeholders, in order to provide functional results.

However, as the analyst suggests, the donors and international institutions have sought ad hoc and quick solutions to be able to respond to political momentum, and have not considered their strategic and long term effects, best seen in the example of OBN television and the public media system. The importance of strategic thinking is essential for the sustainability of international intervention, says Davor Marko, and this can be demonstrated with the numerous media that have radically changed their initial missions after withdrawal of donors' support (OBN TV and partly, ATV). Some media outlets completely disappeared after donors' support was reduced.

Another media analyst says that the international community was inconsistent, as it has invested huge amounts of money into the so-called independent local radio and television stations, and soon leaving them to fail. As examples, he mentions the TV station OBN and Radio Fern. This analyst also emphasizes that the international community is responsible for the difficult situation of the B&H Public Broadcasting Service.

"With terrible pressures, they created a legal framework for the Public Broadcasting System, appointed their people - political favorites in the board of directors, and then turned their backs on it. Politicians in both state and entity levels saw that, and used PBS to achieve their goals, both media and political. As a result, we have an almost inevitable defeat of the PBS. The grave was firstly dug by domestic politicians or, more generally, by official policies, but the failure of the PBS is the responsibility of both the international community and the management, and above all, I am thinking of the board of directors and to a lesser extent the editors," said the analyst.

As a lack of donors' policies, interviewees also cite the copy-pasting of models from countries with developed democracies. This approach, analyst Davor Marko, calls transplants.

"It was expected that once new institutions are installed, they would function in a new environment. This was the case with the B&H Public Broadcasting Service, initially everyone was insisting on the BBC model, which proved to be wrong, because the context is fundamentally different from the one in the UK."

In order for the reforms to be successful, it is necessary to maintain a systematic and detailed monitoring of the results of donors' interventions in media.

"This was the case in the initial stages of media reform in B&H. However, since 2002 this has not been the case, not even when a certain problem relevant to the functioning of the media institutions was identified, and when it became obvious that concrete measures to resolve it were absent. This is also the reason why pressures on very important institutions, such as RAK and Public Broadcasting Service have become more and more frequent lately," said analyst Davor Marko.

Although the media that exist due to international donations are financially independent from the political and economic centers of power, the question remains if the media agenda is imposed by the donors or how much donors initiate reporting on certain topics. It should be stressed that, thanks to international donors many topics were open, related to the area of human rights which, most likely, would not have been in the public space, due to the degree of development and conservatism of society.

"Donors have an absolute influence on the media agenda. And that is the goal of donors. Give money to make some content more popular in the media. The most common are the various types of human rights. Sometimes money was given to produce stories that connect Serbs, Croats, Bosniaks, but also for stories that promote rights of national minorities, and the LGBT population, and stories that strengthen the population's affinity towards European values, and then content that supports certain political options," one of the interviewees said.

The US media analyst states that there is always an open question on the extent to which donors actually create the media agenda.

Donations, without a doubt, helped to promote the alternative voices in the public space, for which there was no space in the mainstream media. However, B&H is a deeply divided society and divisions go along ethnic and political lines, and, as one of the interviewees said, media users seek support for their attitudes in the mainstream media.

Also, a significant part of alternative and donor-sponsored media is seen by the public as traitorous, paid-for, media working against their people, and both political officials and mainstream media criticize them for that, saying that most citizens are neither interested in alternative political views nor in alternative opinions on different societal issues.

One of the media analysts also states that many B&H media have transformed their functioning into project activities and, therefore, deal with certain topics because they are supported by international donors.

Ethical Standards and Professional Journalism

All factors mentioned in detail in the previous sections have strongly influenced the decline in ethical standards in the media, but also among journalists themselves. Incomplete and imprecise legal regulations, the political and economic influences, the relationship between the owners and the powerful people, the relationship between the owners and the loyal editors, the situation in which journalists lose their jobs if they report or write on topics that do not coincide with editorial policy, are also factors that contribute to the decline of ethics in the media.

Profit is more important than ethical standards and norms, that is, in a race for influence, readership etc., it was inevitable that the codes of ethics and standards were violated first. Most of the interviewees say that in the opinion of most private commercial media owners, media almost has no social role. Journalists should provide “raw material”, and editors who are mostly loyal to ownership structures will shape it. There is a clear distinction between private and public media, and the public is directed towards public media.

Sensationalistic titles of news stories, whose main goal is to provide readership or to attract attention also contributed to the lack of standards in journalism, making the public believe that anyone can have this profession.

The copy-paste method has also become very popular and journalists are trying to publish as much content as possible, without checking the source of information, but only copying the content, which has led to the so-called fake news production, in which online media copy-paste social media statuses without any verification.

The decline in ethical standards in journalism was also strongly influenced by the journalists who did not want to work hard, with the argument that they work for minimum wages that can hardly meet their basic needs. Also, the decline in ethics is caused by threats to those who do their job independently and professionally, etc.

The interviewees state that most of the professionals have left this profession and are increasingly moving to the PR sector, where they do not have large financial benefits, but which allows them to work in a less stressful environment.

“I think that ethical principles and standards still exist, but they disappear over time. I believe that journalism completely changed its form and purpose, although there are still media that hold on to basic ethical values and rules. I believe that new standards and the battle for the market slowly but surely destroys every aspect of quality in journalism. Profit, in the form of money or some other, over time, will become the only goal of the media,” says a journalist from Sarajevo.

Ethical standards are violated for various reasons. A journalist from the B&H Public Broadcasting Service says that some people consciously violate these standards because they want a sensation, and they do so in a variety of ways: they keep information secret, plagiarize, do unauthorized recordings etc.

"Others are unconscious, ignorant. Some people are violating standards because of their personality or personal interests. But I think that standards can be respected and are respected if journalists really want to, if they set standards straight from the beginning."

Most of the owners of the media just say that they care for ethics.

"If marketing is the main source of finance, it seems that the owners of media only take care of the relationship with the customers, the marketing service users, so it certainly creates a dilemma for them - profit or ethics in the media? Of course, I believe that objectivity and journalistic ethics are the main goals or they should be without a dilemma, but where profit is solely determined by marketing, the question is: 'Where are the ethics?'" explains the journalist from the B&H Public Broadcasting Service.

Incomplete legal regulations also have a major impact on non-compliance with ethical standards, all the loopholes in existing laws, and the lack of some key laws (media financing, transparency of ownership and advertising) allow violations of ethical principles, but also affect the work of editors and journalists (misuse of the Law on Defamation).

The fact that the activity of the Communications Regulatory Agency has been significantly weakened also affects the non-compliance with ethical standards, because owners and editors are not afraid of sanctions.

All interviewees agree that pressures on the media are enormous.

"Executive and legislative authorities are the primary non-media actors which allow media not to think about ethics," says a journalist from a local television station.

A journalist from a website that deals with investigative stories on various topics suggests that there are non-media actors that endanger the work of journalists, but the most present and least visible aspect of pressures on journalists is self-censorship, that is the decision of journalists to censor themselves in order to protect themselves, but also to prevent the editor from censoring their work.

"Is ethics secondary in such cases - probably, what is this real choice of these people - probably not significant?"

A similar opinion is also presented by a long-time journalist who says:

"There is no longer a need for censorship, because most media and journalists are already disciplined, and they know exactly what they can and cannot do."

Censorship and self-censorship are very much present in B&H media, conclude the interviewees. Journalists working as freelancers, although having much greater freedom in the choice of topics they deal with, also often turn to self-censorships fearing that no media will publish their story.

"There is a lot of censorship and self-censorship in the media. I believe that self-censorship is present. Already at the selection of the topic, the selection of interviewees, the journalist always makes a certain selection, and it is not uncommon for journalists to consciously avoid so-called forbidden topics or forbidden interviewees. So censorship would be much more present if self-censorship is less so," explains a journalist.

Censorship and self-censorship are present in both the commercial and public media. While the primary goal of commercial media is profit, the situation should be significantly different in public media, but we are also witnessing various political pressures, no matter which political option is in power, but also economic, which is also reflected through attempts to attract advertisers.

"Just take the example of the Public Broadcasting Service. Ten years ago pressures were present mostly in private media, because many of them existed only because of outside-media goals, but today pressure or at least an attempt of pressure is inevitable in all media," one of the interviewees said.

A media analyst from Banja Luka states that the most evident case of censorship and self-censorship is the RTRS, which is *"an example of an easily recognizable media regime in which the opposition is treated differently or is completely ignored."* One of the interviewees clarifies:

"Political involvement in the work of public broadcasters has an aim to impose ethnic instead of ethical standards and to strengthen national positions, because politicians are aware of the impact which the public broadcasters have on most of the population. The (non)functioning of public services is a multi-level problem. Political pressures are indisputable, but the motives for them are completely different. Politics want to set up national channels and thus destroy one institution which is a state institution. These national channels would be ethnically divided, and absolute control of national channels would be established."

The attitude towards the media is the same when it comes to the parties that are in power and the opposition political parties. A long-time journalist who built his journalistic career in both the private and public media states:

"There is no difference when it comes to the ruling or the opposition parties. Everyone wants the same. Perhaps it is because the leaders of new political projects came from larger parties. The manners are the same. Pressure on the media is present, only the degree of subtlety is different. In fact, it is proportionate to political power."

What is also problematic is the political engagement of media employees, which immediately makes it clear that they promote certain political party and not social benefit.

"It should never be allowed that media owners, journalists and members of the editorial staff have any political engagement," says a journalist from a web portal. *"However, even if individuals are not members of established political parties, often in their public engagement, we can identify their political stance and what topics they deliberately avoid."*

Given that the majority of the media finds quantity of content more important than quality, it also leads to pressure on journalists who are required to publish a large number of stories on a daily basis, leading to decline in ethical standards.

"Every journalist should start with himself, his work and ethics, and improve ethical standards. However, today, when there is no time to wait for extensive information or a story, it is difficult to think about ethical standards," one of the interviewees said.

The media analyst also states that online media and social networks have led to situations where journalists are faced with the greatest ethical doubts.

"In such circumstances, without clear orientation, left in a rather chaotic environment, my impression is that journalists solve ethical issues ad hoc, often not even aware how important it is that their approach is responsible and thoughtful. It's partly understandable, because journalists themselves are exposed to the pressures of daily tasks."

The editor of one portal that deals with various social issues, and who tries to leave room for critical thinking, states that the ethical standards of the journalists themselves are the same as in other profession.

"Same as with mathematicians, engineers, priests and nurses. So it depends on the individual, his education, and his value system. The craft or the level of education plays little or no role."

Interviewees say that, regardless of the current state of affairs, the return to ethical standards as basic postulates of the profession is possible.

The editor of a web portal states that it is necessary to develop awareness among all of those who work in journalism, that they bear the responsibility for what they write and publish.

"That awareness will be difficult to develop if things are not solved systematically, which means, if sanctions are not imposed. Sanctions for pronounced lies, for hate speech against ethnic, (non)religious, sexual, and other minorities, or majority. I fear that this pressure from the outside is an easier way of returning to ethical standards than moral lectures or the education of people inside of the profession."

A journalist from one web portal states that the wrong approach is when ethical codes are mostly discussed by journalists and editors who have the least impact on editorial policy.

"It is quite unimportant whether a journalist will respect ethical rules if that is not something that editors prefer as well, and the editor has as much power as given by the media owner. So if the media owner's intent is that the content of the media he funds brings profit, then both the editor and the journalists have to turn in the direction of creating profitable content. Such content, however, often does not respect any basic postulates. Sometimes I think that instead of the workshops, education, and journalistic codes which we have for journalists and editors, it would be more useful to focus this energy on the education of media owners."

Interviewees also state that the financial stability of the media, which implies the financial independence of the media from the centers of power, either economic or political, and often in symbiosis, could have a significant impact on the strengthening of ethical standards in the media.

"Ethical standards can be returned to the journalistic profession, if the financial stability of the media is supported. It is necessary to amend the existing laws on the public broadcasting service and to provide a stable way of financing it. It is necessary to punish all those who oppress the media, but also media workers who (knowingly or not) violate the journalistic principles," says a journalist at the B&H Public Broadcasting Service.

Although it is often said in the public that investigative journalism is unpopular and that such stories do not contribute to readership and therefore do not provide profit, a journalist from Banja Luka says that this thesis is only partly true, but that a journalist's work in its essence is to make investigative stories interesting to the public, which does not mean, of course, a violation of ethical postulates.

In order for the public to recognize the importance of ethical standards in journalism, it is necessary to insist on the development of media literacy, which should be studied during formal education (in secondary schools, not just higher

education institutions), because it is one of the ways to make the public more actively and critically demand quality of information from the media. Unfortunately, a significant part of the public consumes media content without any critical reflection, so the media literacy is really necessary in the B&H society, so that citizens could better understand the media manipulation and the accountability of information.

Media Literacy of the Public in B&H

Media literacy, in the context of the shrinking space process, is extremely important as a mechanism to ensure that the media audience understands the social role, processes, influence and mode of media functioning, and develops a critical attitude towards media content, which is a prerequisite for the audience to become an active player in this sphere. The media and information literate audience is the first step towards an informed and responsible public that is capable of resisting manipulation and seeking better media content and more responsible media outlets, which will not be accepting the shrinking space.

Unfortunately, in Bosnia and Herzegovina there is no such audience, and the level of media literacy is extremely low. Interviewees in this research believe that media literacy is completely on the margins of interest, though crucially important for developing public competences for interaction with media. One of the interviewees says that the way in which the public is interacting with the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially in the online environment, shows us the level of media literacy in B&H and how bad it is:

"Media literacy in B&H is at a very low level, both in terms of critical access to media content and the use of media's potential for informational and educational purposes. Also, the analysis of the content of comments published by citizens primarily online and partially in offline media shows that people are making strong statements almost without any factual grounding; they do not have the ability to recognize unreliable sources and are not ready to respond adequately to unprofessional media content. When it comes to the use of digital media, it is evident that they have become a part of everyday life, not only for young people but for older generations as well, but they are most likely to be used for entertainment purposes and very poorly for education. The same applies to their function of better informing citizens in order to develop a functional civic society."

When it comes to a systematic approach to the development of media literacy, we can say that it does not exist at all. Also, there is no interest from educational (and other) authorities in the development of formal and informal media education programs. Even the very term "media literacy" is defined and understood in very different ways within the media, education system and in society in general, and although it has been a focal interest over the last few years, there are still a relatively small number of relevant sources to define it.⁴⁸

48 Some authors who systematically did research in this field are Lea Tajić and Vanja Ibrahimbegović Tihak, and apart from their books, usually in scientific circles, books by Nada Zgrabljčić Rotar and James Potter are used. Other sources of information related to media literacy are not prevalent, there are few scientific articles by L. Turčilo, Z. Hrnjić Kuduzović and others.

In the widest sense, media literacy is defined as “the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and transmit messages through the media” (Zgrabljic Rotar, 2005). However, as our interviewees noticed, this definition of media literacy is difficult to apply to the public in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as a large number of people do not have any knowledge on the notion of media literacy.

“It is difficult to talk about the level of media literacy in B&H, since media literacy is a topic that has not yet been systematically addressed. I suppose the majority of people do not even know what that term implies, which is not that strange because not much is done to introduce media literacy to the education system, nor to talk about it in public” says one of the interviewees.

“The level of literacy is extremely bad, especially media literacy. Younger generations are good with digital media, but this does not mean that they are able to decrypt them critically when they receive messages from advertisers for example,” says one of the analysts.

The understanding of media literacy and approach to this issue differ significantly in the context of foreign actors (non-governmental organizations, foreign researchers, etc.) and Bosnian-Herzegovinian actors (academic community, NGO sector, regulators, etc.).

“While certain, largely overseas media organizations follow the definitions of media literacy from their communities and contexts, implementing media literacy projects with the copy-paste method, a discussion on whether media literacy is a part of information literacy is being conducted in the B&H academic community (and as such does not necessarily require separate study and development of a special approach, but can be looked at from the aspect of satisfying the information needs of each individual), whether it is complementary or even opposed to information literacy. Media literacy is often defined and considered as one-dimensional, as a skill for using information mediated by different media, with the emphasis on technical skills in the media usage (especially online technologies and platforms), making a difference between realistic and imaginary content (when it comes to younger users), and distinguishing trusted and true information from (accidentally or intentionally) false.”⁴⁹

In addition to the lack of wider understanding of the notion of media literacy, and lack of awareness of the need to develop a comprehensive approach to the development of media literacy, there is also a lack of consensus and meaningful strategy for the development of media literacy. This, of course, is not surprising in the system of formal education, given that the system itself is divided by entity and cantonal lines, making it difficult to incorporate any innovation, including media literacy.

49 http://www.fes.ba/files/fes/img/Bilder_Aktivitaeten/MEDIJSKA%20PISMENOST.pdf

"B&H education authorities do not have the knowledge, first of all, of what media literacy means, nor do they realize its importance. Taking into account the fact that education in B&H has many major problems that it fails to solve, it is no surprise that this topic gets so little attention. What is surprising is that educators working with children and young people, but also adults, do not require more knowledge of media literacy since they face many challenges of media usage, understanding of media content and violence through the media on a daily basis," says one interviewee.

All of the studies conducted so far show that media literacy in Bosnia and Herzegovina is still not a priority for the people who write (media and education) policy. The government sector has been recognized as the "weakest link" in the development of media literacy, and interviewees agree that they are extremely uninterested in media literacy.

"The government sector is certainly the slowest in this regard, and usually government sector employees are some of the most important target groups to whom it is necessary to explain the importance of the concept of media literacy," says one interviewee.

The concept of media and information literacy is developing mainly due to the individual efforts of the enthusiasts and project activities of the NGO sector, but there is also duplication and overlapping of activities stemming from a lack of strategic planning and coordination.

"Education authorities, as well as the public, have no awareness of the importance of media literacy because they do not care. With the exception of few individuals who have included these topics in their curricula, there is almost no structural approach to this type of literacy. No one is working on the development of media literacy in B&H, except for a few professors of communication science," says one of the interviewees, who thinks that *"media literacy education should be developed at the state level, and through networking with teachers in elementary schools, high schools, and universities, with the support of public broadcasters, who should, unfortunately, educate their employees first."*

Media literacy should be part of formal educational programs, but complemented with informal educational programs in this area, however our interviewees notice that including media literacy into the current education system (distinctly divided by entity and ethnic lines) could even be counterproductive, as confirmed by the statement of one of the interviewees:

"It would be best if media literacy was part of formal education, since it would include wider circles of the public in comparison to informal weekend workshops. However, given the kind of education in B&H, I'm not sure whether formal

education would be a good solution. I also think that the interesting question is whether and how the mono-ethnic education system in B&H would influence the creation of media literacy programs for schools."

Whether media literacy will become part of the curriculum from preschool to higher education is difficult to say and predict. For the time being, it is more than obvious that the media and education community, media management staff, representatives of the non-governmental sector dealing with media, representatives of educational institutions, as well as NGOs involved in education and especially lifelong learning, are not united in defining, discussing, and strategically planning media education, nor have they defined the expected outcomes, goals, approaches and methods, and hence, in the formal and informal sector of media education, there are only some attempts, without any major impact.

"Individuals work the most on the development of media literacy, as well as some parts of the non-governmental sector and international organizations," says one of the interviewees, while another believes that *"the education authorities have no clear policy of developing media literacy"* and that *"long-term, systemically designed media literacy programs do not exist at the moment. The activities being carried out are usually periodic and project-oriented, meaning that they end after a certain time, without continuous work, consolidated human and other resources, or long-term results."*

The non-governmental sector is therefore recognized by our interviewees as the one that seemingly tries to compensate for the failures observed in the formal education system, through informal education, discussions, seminars, trainings of trainers, publication of analyses on media literacy, activities focused on program development in the field of media literacy, research, promotion of the concept of citizen journalism, activities aimed at promoting the safe use of the Internet and information and communication technologies, publishing media content analysis, encouraging youth journalism etc. Research on media literacy in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Tajić 2013) has shown that there are about a dozen non-governmental organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina that are more or less active in the field of media literacy. Most often they deal with just a certain aspect of media literacy, such as the safety of children and young people on the Internet, the development of communication skills, or the development of the ability to critically evaluate content for a particular target group etc. These are certainly important, but still insufficient steps forward when it comes to the development of media literacy as the basis for social development in B&H. Our interviewees list some of these positive examples:

"A positive example is the web portal www.sigurnodijete.ba launched under the project "Comprehensive Approach to Solving the Problem of Child Pornography in B&H". Another positive example is the "Media Literacy - Understanding the

Media and My rights to Truth” seminar for teachers and high school students in B&H, organized by the Press and Online Media Council. The third example is the education of teachers on the role and potential of the media in the functioning of a democratic society within the project “I, the Citizen” conducted by CIVITAS.”

“A positive example is the web platform analiziraj.ba which was established with the aim of monitoring, analyzing and evaluating media content in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This project provides support to truthful, timely, credible and complete information to citizens, and enables citizens to critically read and watch the news and, thus, to achieve a better participation in decision-making processes. Analiziraj.ba allows citizens to develop attitudes and opinions based on high-quality and multi-level analysis of media content.”

The opinions of interviewees are divided regarding the role of the formal and informal education system in the development of media literacy. While some of them say that formal education institutions should play a key role, others advocate a multidimensional approach.

“A serious approach and long-term results can be expected only if media literacy becomes part of the formal education. Otherwise, it will remain at the level of short-term and occasional activities that depend on donors’ funds,” one of the interviewees said, while another mentioned:

“I advocate for the approach of multiple, and different actors. In the field of media literacy there is a lack of basic infrastructure- high-quality scientific papers, important policy studies, good textbooks and manuals, discussion groups etc. Also, existing institutions and organizations (e.g. RAK, VZS) should be more transparent and proactive in their work towards the public. It is necessary to explain to the public why something is hate speech, defamation, or insult, not just make a decision and justify it by referring to a certain law or code. It is also necessary to start introducing media literacy into the system of formal education; initially through some pilot projects, and later much more systematically.”

One of the interviewees shares this view and says:

“I think both forms of education, formal and informal, can give good results and that they are complementary. Formal education can offer a systematic approach to this field and I think it should be offered to college students who are not already studying journalism and communication science. Informal education has several advantages - it can reach target groups that are important, are no longer in the formal education system, and are more flexible in terms of access to the subject.”

The future development of media literacy will depend first and foremost on how ready the Bosnian and Herzegovinian educational and media community are for

constructive dialogue and consensus on the importance of media literacy for the Bosnian society and on the ways to successfully transfer this message to the decision-making institutions that should support it. Some interviewees believe that it is not possible to expect that this will happen very soon, since media literacy and the strengthening of citizens' critical views on media and its content would endanger the existing power balance in the triangle of politics-media-the public, that is, it would help citizens to better understand the media and media influence mechanisms. Consequently, by seeking higher quality, more responsible, professional content on issues and topics of public interest, citizens would expand the media and public space, open it for alternative perspectives, and/or at least oppose its narrowing. In other words, strengthening the critical skills of the public and community who think about social and political issues, in today's landscape of political and social forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina, whose primary objective is to maintain the status quo (and thus does not encourage development of critical awareness in the wider public), seems like an utopia.

But regardless of all the barriers and constraints that exist, media literacy, our interviewees agree, can be a significant step forward in overcoming the ethno-national and ethno-territorial divisions of the citizens/public. Ethno-national divisions of the public and the fact that citizens choose media and sources of information according to ethnic and territorial affiliation, is one of the causes of shrinking space in the public and/or media space in B&H, and in this context, media literacy could be part of the solution.

As some of the interviewees said:

"Media literacy is extremely important given the (national) division of the media scene. The most important thing is to develop a critical approach to media content and the media itself. Rarely the contents are read in the right context (why did this media release such information/why it did not, how the information was presented, what was the purpose of this news, which is the financial/political/ideological background of this media)"

"Media literacy is important, primarily for the protection and understanding of media and media freedom. I do not think citizens are fully aware of the importance of the media."

Some of the key recommendations for the proper development of media literacy given by our interviewees are:

- Media literacy must have an adequate place in formal education programs (for now there are only some parts of it, which have an outdated concept). In this context it is necessary to modernize curricula related to media literacy and adapt them to the demands of the digital environment.

- It is also necessary to increase the offer of media related trainings and informal education programs.
- Prior to the implementation of the media literacy programs in a formal and informal education system, it is necessary to train teachers in a high-quality and systematic manner to build capacity for program implementation. With regards to the content of media literacy programs, it is important to include positive media functions and the contribution of media to solving problems in society in their programs i.e. their participatory capacities instead of focusing on media manipulation.
- In other words, it is necessary to redirect the focus from a protectionist to a civic approach to media literacy.

A stronger development of media literacy would help “change” passive consumers of mediated information into active citizens of the public sphere, who would help reduce apathy among B&H citizens, and prevent the spread of false information and fake news, which the audience takes for granted, without serious reflection or questioning. Furthermore, due to the long-standing undemocratic tradition (where journalists were socio-political workers) and the post-war transition (in which the media became a means of realizing political and other interests and goals), citizens of B&H poorly understand the social role of the media and concept of public interest, and media literacy should help to solve this problem. The media literate audience should also be more proactive in supporting serious investigative journalism and supporting fact-checking, which would enable political representatives and other actors of the public sphere to be more responsible for their statements and actions, and contribute to situations in which their interpretations of reality would be contrasted with alternative perspectives whose relevance and importance citizens would be able to recognize. Media literacy would indirectly contribute to addressing the shrinking space problems in the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

The media should play a key role in establishing and maintaining public debates related to all issues of social importance. The aim of the research was to examine whether and how much the media contribute to the launch of public debates, whether there is any space in the media for all voices (not just dominant), how B&H media are functioning, and what are the factors that influence the evident shrinking of the media space. The general hypothesis of the research was: media in Bosnia and Herzegovina contribute to the shrinking of the public space for alternative perspectives and the exchange of ideas and opinions, which is caused by external pressures on media (political and economic), internal media problems (censorship and self-censorship, bad social status and extremely low solidarity of journalists), and the low level of media literacy of the public, which rarely supports serious media work.

In order to get adequate answers to the wide-ranging questions, and for the purpose of confirming this hypothesis, it was necessary to carry out field research and to undertake in-depth interviews with journalists, editors, analysts, professors at media and communication science departments, and employees in non-governmental organizations that are actively involved in topics related to the work of media etc.

Since the research is divided into eight chapters (media regulation, political pressures, economic pressures, socio-economic status of journalists, the role of international donors, media literacy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the B&H Public Service Broadcasting, and ethical standards and professional journalism), in this concluding chapter we will specifically present the key findings of the research for each of these areas, and we will identify the key factors that contribute to the shrinking media space.

When it comes to legal regulations of the media, there are a few key issues, or rather, shortcomings, which affect the shrinking media space and restrict journalists in their work. Although the existing laws are at a satisfactory level and are not lagging behind the laws of developed democratic countries, the main problem is the poor implementation of these laws, which considerably complicates the work of journalists and brings numerous obstacles to their daily work.

This applies primarily to the Law on Free Access to Information and the Law on Defamation, which have inherent shortcomings that make them difficult to apply. The Law on Free Access to Information should be the law of all citizens of B&H, however, most institutions use the statutory deadline of 15 days for the provision of information, and often they do not deliver them at all, or deliver incomplete information. Journalists are relying less on this law because there is no mechanism to enforce its application.

Most of the laws in Bosnia and Herzegovina were adopted with the intervention of the International Community and often these laws were only transposed from developed countries, that is, insufficient account was given to the local context, which led to the laws being better than the state of journalism in B&H, that is, they are not following the development of the society. Transposing the laws has led to some inaccuracies in the translation itself, which also leaves room for their misuse.

Hate speech is not precisely defined, which greatly affects media content, because there are no sanctions for it and it is widespread.

The Law on Defamation is used as a mechanism for pressure on journalists because journalists are quite often faced with lawsuits, which requires a lot of time spent at hearings instead of on the ground or in the newsroom, also causing stress and the need to prove that the information written is accurate. This also causes censorship and self-censorship, since court decision-makers, according to the statements of the interviewees, are often in line with political and economic elites.

Although the existing legislation protects and promotes freedom of the media and journalists, many of the interviewees say that it is only a formality, that journalists are protected on paper, but that the situation is different in practice and that they are ultimately not protected.

At the beginning of its work, the Communications Regulatory Agency worked very well on improving the media scene and eliminating hate speech from the public space. However, the political situation has affected this agency as well, so the CRA work is considerably weakened and interviewees believe that the Agency should function better and use its competencies more.

Although it is the legal obligation of the media to publish the contents of and for minority groups, which is particularly important for the B&H Public Broadcasting Service, we can see that this situation is not at a satisfactory level, that is, that

there are few cases of such content in public broadcasting programs, which can be considered an editorial mistake.

All these flaws within the laws and abuses of legal regulations contribute to the deterioration of the quality of journalism, leading to serious difficulties in the work of the media, leaving no space for many socially relevant topics. The situation is the same in both commercial and public media. Our interviewees stated that the adoption of three very important laws could have a significant impact on the improvement of the media scene. These laws are:

- Law on Transparency of the Ownership in the Media
- Law on the Advertising Industry
- Law on Financing of Media

Another problem in the legal regulation is the set of laws dedicated to the B&H Public Service, which is dysfunctional and prone to numerous political misuses, while a significant part of its legal provisions are generally not respected.

The research participants mentioned a number of direct and indirect political pressures on the media - from conditioning media funding, to labelling media as hostile and directly threatening journalists.

For most media owners, whether they are commercial or public, the priority is having good relations with the political structures, and bearing in mind that most media are funded with the help of advertisers, which are often public institutions, we can notice the close link between them and political and economic powers. For a significant portion of media owners, these good relations mean profit. However, the situation is almost identical when it comes to public media. Political pressures on the B&H Public Broadcasting Service, which are reflected in the interference with editorial policy, the presence of loyal political personnel in the boards of directors, the boycott of TV tax, are problems that were present in the B&H Public Broadcasting Service since its establishment.

Political powers obstruct the work of journalists and forbid them to attend press conferences, and the only reason for this is disagreement with the editorial policy of the media, that is, if that media outlet has published any information about the dubious actions of a certain politician or his political party. Also, another form of political pressure is the political and economic actors' recommendations to best avoid certain media that they deem as undesirable partners.

Political pressures have also been identified as the interference of political officials in the selection of guests in the program. For example, if the editor or journalist wants a politician to be present on the show, many of politicians say yes only if they can choose other guests. Also, many of them try to influence how the final version of a certain article would look like, insisting to see the article before print, and many journalists accept that term in exchange for some data or information

from a politician. Physical threats to journalists and members of their families, after publishing certain information, have been the case in B&H ever since the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement. Threats and inadequate protection of journalists have definitely influenced the gradual disappearance of investigative journalism from the media.

In addition to political pressures on media and media employees, other types of pressures, which also decrease professional journalism, come from the advertising industry.

The key problem, apart from the lack of the Law on Transparency of Media Ownership, is the lack of data on the way the media are financed, which means that we do not know who the owners of the media are, and we also cannot determine whether there are influences on the editorial policy through advertising. In Bosnia and Herzegovina there are several ways of financing the media and through each of them it is possible to exercise economic pressures. These are: allocating funds from public sources and budgets, public broadcasting fees, the advertising industry, and funds from international donors. Allocating funds from the budget, is seen by most media as buying silence, that is the media and journalists who count on the allocation of these funds know that they enter the field of censorship and self-censorship.

The advertising industry's pressure is also visible when it comes to commercial and public companies. Since most media exist due to advertising resources, editors and journalists knowingly agree to silence and do not handle topics pertaining to the advertiser as otherwise ads will be withdrawn. Particularly, it should be noted that some of the largest advertisers are public companies, run by people who are at the same time members of certain political parties. Commercial contracts are signed directly or indirectly. Directly with advertisers or through marketing agencies that also have an impact on editorial policy, so the media refuse to report on their activities in order not to lose funds.

A very problematic aspect is the measurement of television viewership: the data is not collected systematically, and there is no one that could determine the relevance of these data.

The influence of the advertising industry is not only a Bosnian-Herzegovinian phenomenon, this trend is present all over the world, but here it is significantly more pronounced because B&H is a smaller market.

The problem of charging RTV taxes has also put public broadcasters in an extremely unfavorable financial position, so money from advertising is also important in these media.

Media funded with the help of grants from international organizations do not depend on the advertising industry and the allocation of funds from public budgets. However, according to research findings, donors either create or have a major

influence on the editorial agenda of the media they are funding, which can also be considered as a sort of censorship and self-censorship. All of this shows that political and economic pressures are often highly interrelated and live in symbiosis, which greatly reduces the space for discussion about socially relevant topics.

The socio-economic status of journalists is very unfavorable. Our interviewees indicated that journalism as a profession is highly undervalued, which is also evident in the available data on salaries of journalists. Most journalists work part-time, without contracts or get paid a minimum wage. Journalists are legally unprotected, have no public support, they are forced to work on a large number of stories daily, often not having the time to check details because for most of the commercial media, the main priority is quantity instead of quality of content.

This has resulted in an environment of affluent media owners and poor journalists. The latter work under great economic and political pressures, and often do exercise self-censorship in order to survive. A significant number of journalists move to other sectors, such as public relations, where the benefits are also modest, but the work comes with less pressure.

Although some journalists agree to be loyal to certain political structures for better positions and economic revenue, most of them work in accordance to professional standards, but they are under great pressure from editorial and ownership structures, and any disobedience is sanctioned.

Some interviewees argue that the problem could be solved, at least partially, by the establishment of a media union that would provide legal protection for journalists, but there is still an open question as to what extent such an institution could become the target of political pressure. What is now evident is that journalists are subjected to numerous insults and threats from public officials, however, none of the existing bodies have the potential to seriously protect journalists and all actions end with open letters, and so on.

Journalists are demotivated, deliberately avoiding serious investigative stories, while working conditions are often very unfavorable. The fact that there is no established institution that would contribute to improving their status leads to a conscious self-censorship, thus closing the space for high-quality stories in accordance to public interest.

The Public Broadcasting Service of Bosnia and Herzegovina also reflects the situation of the entire Bosnian society. It could be said that all of the problems that limit and hinder the work of journalists in commercial media are the same for journalists in public broadcasters. The status and position of journalists in the public broadcasters is extremely unfavorable. Journalists working at the Federal Television and BHRT have to rely on old equipment, while their salaries are very low. When it comes to the Radio Television of Republika Srpska, a few interviewees have mentioned it as an example of a media that operates under extensive political

control, which is easy to observe from the content of this TV station, that is, there is a clear influence of SNSD and Milorad Dodik's politics..

The B&H Law on Public Service is extremely dysfunctional. Some politicians from the HDZ party openly invited the Croatian population from B&H to boycott paying the RTV tax until a quarter of the emitter is established in the Croatian language, which is another example of political pressure on the Public Broadcasting Service.

RTV revenue and marketing revenues are not allocated according to the Law, which states that 50% of revenues should belong to BHRT and 25% to each entity broadcasters - FTV and RTRS.

BHRT has never been able to impose itself as a public service of all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The responsibility for the bad situation of the Public Broadcasting Service of B&H lies with the political officials, the dysfunctional laws, the presence of party people in the boards of directors, and the incapacity of the management, the interviewees stated.

In order to change the current situation, it is necessary to provide stable sources of funding that will enable quality in the work of the public broadcasting service, including covering all segments of society (informative-political, cultural, documentary, minority group programs, children's programs, etc.), but also to ensure non-interference of the political elites in the editorial policy of B&H public service broadcasters.

In such an environment, where political structures (whichever parties are in power) are trying to subdue public broadcasters and influence editorial decisions, where advertisers play a significant part in their functioning, there is no space for all voices of B&H society. Instead of encouraging a public debate and opening up and giving space to subjects of social importance, public broadcasters are burdened with concern for their own survival, unfavorable working conditions for journalists, losing a significant part of their staff who go to work in other media, and numerous other issues that are a direct consequence of political and economic pressures.

International donors significantly contributed to the process of democratization in the post-war period by promoting independent media, and developing the media market. Thanks to the international community and international organizations, the regulatory and self-regulatory bodies - the Communications Regulatory Agency and the Press Council - have been established.

The interviewees stated that the financial support of international organizations has been of great importance for the development and support of investigative journalism, as well as for the development of media in which there is space for alternative and different voices from the entire society. This support is also reflected

in the establishment of media outlets whose task was to connect citizens from all over the country, that is, to establish the so-called “common media for all”.

Due to the financial support of international donors, there are still media in Bosnia and Herzegovina that pursue investigative stories related to different topics, such as the Center for Investigative Journalism (CIN) and the online magazine *Žurnal*. These two media outlets have launched a number of investigative stories, related to political abuses and misbehavior.

However, regardless of these cases, international donors are unable to fill all the gaps in the media market. Media outlets that produce investigative stories are often not recognized in the public as useful or necessary, and politicians label them as foreign mercenaries, traitors, media working against their own peoples, etc. This has a great impact on public attitudes. The existence of such media in the community provides some space for public debate, but these media outlets do not have the same importance as mainstream media, and they are never among the most read.

All of this has had a strong impact on the decline in ethical standards in media, that is, journalists are often asked to choose between survival and ethics.

Journalists accept self-censorship, they do not report on issues that are “banned” by editorial decisions, and often censor the texts they are certain the editors would censor. For most owners, journalists are inexpensive and a replaceable workforce, and in such circumstances ethical standards and codes are not a priority.

The owners’ imperative in most commercial media is the quantity of news, and journalists often even unconsciously violate ethical postulates.

The decline in ethical standards has a major impact on the lack of hate speech sanctions in the public space, and the owners feel protected when they publish inappropriate content.

The development of social networks has also affected the neglect of ethical standards, that is, the rise of fake news that is largely widespread through social networks, and most journalists, due to lack of time or will to provide readership, do not check the data at all.

The interviewees state that insisting on stable media funding and imposing sanctions for violating ethical rules is the key for the return of journalistic ethics in the media.

Political and economic pressures also directly provoke the absence of ethical standards in the media.

Insisting on the development of media literacy would significantly impact on the public’s attitudes, since the public is often unaware of the ways in which it is exposed to manipulation.

The significance of media literacy is in educating the public to critically reflect on media content and to understand the ways in which media are functioning.

Only a media literate society can play a significant role in improving the media scene and insisting on high-quality reporting.

However, in spite of the fact that media literacy is at a very low level, this issue is not systematically addressed, and there is no consensus about the strategy of effective media literacy development in B&H. Education authorities do not recognize the importance of media literacy for the population, so this area is not studied in either high school or higher education institutions.

For the time being, only non-governmental organizations, and individuals have shown interest in this issue. However, this is insufficient, because media literacy should be developed at the state level, and apart from informal education programs, serious strategic planning and coordination, which should include professors within the Departments of Media and Communication, journalists of the Public Broadcasting Service, experts in this area, and teachers from elementary and high schools, needs to happen.

Insisting on the introduction and development of media literacy would be of great significance for the return of ethics to media, which would be demanded by the media literate public.

The research has shown that the causes that lead to shrinking space in Bosnia and Herzegovina are coming from both inside and outside of the media, and that part of the responsibility for suppressing and silencing the alternative voices in the public space lies with media and journalists (who put the particular interest of owners before the public interest, accept censorship and self-censorship, earning money by maintaining good relations with political and economic elites, among which only a few have the sensitivity to alternative opinions, attitudes and views), while part of that responsibility lies with other actors (regulators, legal decision-makers, and especially political and economic elites, who consider the media as a “tool” for promoting their interests, and who exercise various forms of pressures, both political and financial, and others), but it is certainly a part of the responsibility of the public, who provide little or no support for the work of a few high-quality media outlets that cannot resist the shrinking space mechanisms.

In short, some of the key recommendations of our interviewees on how to improve the state of the media scene in Bosnia and Herzegovina, that is, how to create a media space that will be part of the solution and not the problem of shrinking space in B&H are:

- Adoption of the Law on Transparency of Ownership
- Adoption of the Law on Advertising Industry
- Adoption of the Law on Media Financing

- Precise definition of hate speech and taking a systematic approach in its suppression, but with full protection of freedom of speech
- Completing the digitalization process in B&H
- Opposing political and economic pressures and, in this context, greater solidarity and better organization of journalists
- Establishing a Media Register with all relevant media related indicators (ownership, impressum, etc.)
- More transparent and better controlled measurements of media viewership/readership, in order to ensure the reliability of this type of data
- More transparent and fair grounds for the allocation of money from public funds, which would be guaranteed by legal regulations and the possible establishment of a body to monitor it at the level of governance
- Separating information from advertising and promotional content and clearly marking promotional content in the media as a key prerequisite for citizens to be aware of which part of content is sponsored and which is not
- Insisting on the importance of education and self-education of journalists and in this context, modernizing and raising the quality of journalistic education (university programs of journalism studies)
- Establishing media unions that will truly fight for the legal protection of journalists
- Strong support for the survival of the public broadcasting system with a strategic approach to its reform and modernization
- Insisting on the reinstatement of ethical standards and respect for journalistic deontology and, in this context, increasing the role of regulators, self-regulators and other bodies (journalists' associations etc.)
- Provide an adequate place for media literacy in formal education programs and increase the educational offer for gaining knowledge about media in informal education programs.

Encouraging a wider debate and a more meaningful link between all actors in the media scene (owners, editors, journalists) and non-media actors (government and non-governmental sector, academia, civil society, etc.) could raise the level of understanding of the shrinking space phenomenon and lead to finding solutions to overcome it. We hope that this book will contribute to that effort.

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APPENDIX

FIELD RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF MEDIA

1. How do you assess the quality of existing laws in BiH?
2. How do you assess the application of existing laws in BiH?
3. In your opinion, what are the key missing laws when it comes to media regulation in BiH?
4. Which, in your opinion, are the key laws that should be changed when it comes to media regulation in B&H?
5. Is the legal regulation developed in accordance to the needs of the media scene in B&H or is it created according to the requirements and with the intervention of the international community and taken from other countries?
6. How much does existing legal regulation promote and protect the freedom of media and journalists, and how much does it constrain them?
7. Does the existing legal regulation give space for alternative voices and minority views in the media?
8. How do you assess the work of the media regulators? Are they independent and do they promote the freedom of media and professional standards of journalism?
9. How do you comment on the implementation of the FOIA in B&H?
10. How much legislation is being abused as a mechanism for pressure on journalists (e.g. the Law on Defamation)?

POLITICAL PRESSURES ON MEDIA AND JOURNALISTS

1. What are direct and indirect political pressures on the media in B&H?
2. Can you give some examples of specific political pressures on your (or some other) media in B&H over the past ten years?
3. Can you comment on the (non)functioning of the Public Broadcasting Service and whether it is, in your opinion, the result of political agendas and political pressures?
4. Is there a presence of censorship or self-censorship in B&H, and where do you specifically recognize them?
5. Does the ethno-national divide of society and the public reflect in the media sphere?
6. Does the political affiliation of media owners have an impact on editorial policy and freedom of work in media?
7. How do you comment on the relationship between politicians in government and political structures and the media (especially the Public Broadcasting Service) and change of editorial policies depending on election results?
8. Are there any specific forms of political pressure that the public discusses less?
9. Does the politics provoke censorship and self-censorship?

ECONOMIC PRESSURES AND THE ADVERTIZING INDUSTRY

1. How much, in your opinion, is the advertising industry and the marketing market in B&H transparent?
2. How many public companies participate in advertising?
3. Can you comment on research on viewership and print media circulation? Do they really reflect the situation?
4. Do, and in what ways, marketing agencies have an impact on the work of media and do they create the agenda?
5. Does the advertising industry influence censorship and self-censorship?
6. How do you comment on the link between politics-advertisers-media owners in B&H?
7. Does the size of the marketing market correspond to the number of media, that is: do the media function according to the market logic or are artificially held alive by other means?
8. Is there an advertiser's interest in alternative or investigative media?

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND SOLIDARITY AMONG JOURNALISTS

1. How would you assess the socio-economic position of journalists in B&H?
2. Are journalists in B&H media legally protected (contracts, salary, contributions, insurance etc.)?
3. Can we say that in B&H we have rich media owners and media editors and poor journalists and, if so, what are the causes of such situation?
4. In your opinion and/or experience, does the closeness of journalists with editors and media owners provide a better position in the media, regardless of professional competencies?
5. Is there correlation between the socio-economic status of journalists and self-censorship?
6. How do you comment on the lack of unity among journalists (in terms of different associations, trade union organizations, ethnic divisions, etc.)?
7. Is there a journalistic solidarity (in sharing information, solidarity with vulnerable colleagues, media that are closing down etc.)?
8. Can journalist associations be considered as legitimate representatives and defenders of journalists' rights in this context?

PUBLIC BROADCASTING SERVICE IN B&H

1. What is your view of the public broadcasting system in B&H? Is the existing system sustainable?
2. How do you see the Public Broadcasting Service in which you work? Is it the service of citizens and in what way?
3. What are the causes of non-implementation of the Law (the establishment of the Corporation) in your opinion?
4. How does the Public Broadcasting Service in which you work respond to the needs of citizens, not only in the information sense, but in the sense of other functions of the Public Service?
5. How does your Public Broadcasting Service responds to the challenges of digitization?
6. How do you generally comment on the non-implementation of the digitalization process in B&H and what does it mean for Public Broadcasting Services?
7. Are the three public broadcasters in B&H today competitive or complementary?
8. In your opinion, are all Public Broadcasting Services watched throughout B&H or are their viewers divided by ethnic and territorial lines?

9. How do you comment on non-payment of RTV taxes by some citizens?
10. What legal solutions in the future, in your opinion, should be advocated?
11. What kind of Public Broadcasting Service citizens of B&H need?

THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL DONORS

1. How would you assess the role of donors in the development of the media scene in B&H?
2. Which, in your opinion, are the key donors' contributions to media development in B&H?
3. In your opinion, what are the disadvantages of the international intervention in the media sphere in B&H?
4. In your opinion, have donors' funds been allocated and used in an adequate manner?
5. Do you notice differences in the approach of different donors?
6. In your opinion, how much have the donors' funding really supported independent and professional journalism?
7. What, in your opinion, are the lessons learned from the international intervention in the media in B&H?
8. How does donors' funding influence the agenda of media in B&H?
9. In your opinion, are the alternative/minority media the result of international intervention in the media and have they contributed to the presence of alternative voices in the public space?

ETHICAL STANDARDS IN JOURNALISM

1. How do you assess the attitude of media owners to high-quality journalism and journalists - do owners value the ethics in journalism are they interested exclusively in profit?
2. In what way, in your opinion, is possible to return ethical standards to journalism as a profession?
3. How would you assess the ethical standards of journalists themselves as their internal code?
4. Are there pressures of non-media actors on journalists that make media put ethics aside?
5. Are self-censorship and censorship present in the media?

MEDIA LITERACY

1. How do you generally assess the level of media literacy in B&H?
2. Do the B&H educational authorities and the public have awareness of the importance of media literacy?
3. Are you familiar with some initiatives, projects, and media development programs in B&H that you could serve as a positive example?
4. Who, in your opinion, is working on the development of media literacy in B&H today: the government sector, the non-government sector, international organizations, and individuals?
5. How important is the media literacy in the media scene in B&H and how should it, in your opinion, be developed?
6. Should media literacy be part of formal educational programs or should it be taught in non-formal education system?

CODE SHEET FOR INTERVIEWS

LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF MEDIA	
Key thesis by interviewee	Recommendations
POLITICAL PRESSURES ON MEDIA AND JOURNALISTS	
Key thesis by interviewee	Recommendations
ECONOMIC PRESSURES AND THE ADVERTIZING INDUSTRY	
Key thesis by interviewee	Recommendations
SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND SOLIDARITY AMONG JOURNALISTS	
Key thesis by interviewee	Recommendations

PUBLIC BROADCASTING SYSTEM IN B&H

Key thesis by interviewee

Recommendations

THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL DONORS

Key thesis by interviewee

Recommendations

ETHICAL STANDARDS IN JOURNALISM

Key thesis by interviewee

Recommendations

MEDIA LITERACY

Key thesis by interviewee

Recommendations

ABSTRACT OF REVIEWS

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...the special value of this study lies in its recommendations, in which authors use the academic framework, but also step into the field of applied media policy. Each of the eight chapters of the study offered a detailed list of things that should be done to improve the situation in the media field, and in the concluding section the most important steps are mentioned and discussed as well. Obviously, instant solutions are not possible; the situation requires short and long-term engagement in all areas. It is also clear that laws based on European models provide a good basis, but they also have to be tailored in accordance to local circumstances and then implemented - which is the biggest problem in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in other countries claiming EU membership.

What should happen to put the mentioned recommendations into action? This is a question that remains for a person who reads this book, even if that person comes from a neighborhood where media freedom is also reduced and nearly every recommendation could be applied. Adopting legislation that is missing - especially when it comes to transparency of media ownership, strategic work on strengthening the public broadcasting services, the empowerment of media regulatory and self-regulatory bodies, and media literacy, which were some of the recommendations, require changing the attitudes and the ways in which all actors in the media system operate. However, changes in the media landscape do not happen and will not happen in the vacuum, they depend on the global and local political and economic climate. The further spread of poverty or economic consolidation, further reduction

of social inequalities or their deepening, European integration or disintegration, the degrading of journalistic work or its “support in professional terms” “ (both economically and politically) – all of these factors influence the feasibility of the presented recommendations, and also the further enhancing or suppressing of hidden powers and powerful people, as well as the shrinking or spreading of the already shrunken space for open debate...

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Slovenia

The book written by Lejla Turčilo and Belma Buljubašić from the University of Sarajevo addresses pressing issues of the media sphere in Bosnia and Herzegovina in five parts, providing (1) methodological-conceptual framework with the main goal, hypothesis and research methods presentation, (2) contextual discussion and previous research with respect to the notion of shrinking space in Bosnia and Herzegovina, (3) description of the media scene in Bosnia and Herzegovina, (4) key discussions and findings of the study with respect to eight problem areas (media legislature, political pressures on media and journalists, economic pressures on media and journalists, socio-economic status of journalists, public service ideals and realities, the role of international donations in media development, ethical standards of journalism, and media literacy of the public), and (5) final discussion and recommendations. Additionally, the book provides the list of literature and sources, appendices (interview guide and coding apparatus) as well as biographical notes of the authors...

...The monograph by Lejla Turčilo and Belma Buljubašić provides valuable expert insights into the contingencies of the media sphere and journalism profession in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina. By explicating political and economic pressures, revealing the precarious working lives of journalists and difficulties they face when trying to adhere to professional standards, as well as addressing the particular crisis of public service broadcasting, the authors show how the space for public discussions is not only narrow in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also exclusive. The book can be read as a warning that without profound social changes not only in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the media will continue to be used to reproduce unjust social relations and represent the world in accordance with the interests of power holders – regardless of the emancipatory potentials of new technologies.

BIOGRAPHIES OF AUTHORS

Lejla Turčilo, PhD

Lejla Turčilo, PhD, is an associate professor at the Department of Journalism/Communication Science at the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo, where she teaches the following courses: Theory of Media, Media and Politics, Online and Digital Communication and RTV Journalism. She holds a Masters degree and a Ph.D. from the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo, for which she completed a doctoral thesis titled: *Ownership of the Media as a Form of Political Power: Reflections of Global Corporate Media in Bosnia and Herzegovina*.

She authored three published books: *Views on Media and Society: Articles, Essays, Research* (2017), *Take the Money and Run: Politics-Media-Business in Global Society and in B&H* (2011) and *Online Communication and Offline Politics* (2006), co-authored one book (*Information Literacy-Guidelines for the Development of Network Modules* with S. Dizdar, B. Rašidović and L. Hajdarpašić (2012)), four research publications (*Invisible Europe: Media Picture of the EU Integrations in B&H* with B. Buljubašić (2016), *Study on Youth in B&H* with J. Žiga, N. Džananović Miraščija, D. Kapidžić, S. Bašić, A. Osmić, J. Brkić Šmigoc, *Elections 2010: How Media Reported on the Election Campaign* with R. Udovičić and D. Marko (2010) and *Minorities and Media in Bosnia and Herzegovina* with J. Vočkić Avdagić, A. Nuhanović and V. Repovac (2010)), and was an editor of the three Proceedings (from the scientific conference *Media and Public Interest* (2016), from the scientific conference *Media Literacy - Prerequisite for Responsible Media* (2014) and *Media Accountability: the Challenges of Globalization and the Specifics of the Region* (2012)). She is an author of the report on the state of media literacy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, published in 2014 within the project "Mapping Media Literacy in Europe" at the University of Sorbonne, France. She has published more than thirty scientific and professional

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Belma Buljubašić, PhD

Belma Buljubašić, PhD, was born in 1983 in Sarajevo. She graduated from the Faculty of Political Science, Sarajevo (Department of Communication / Journalism) in 2005, receiving a M.Sc. in 2010 and a PhD in 2015 on the topic of *Instrumentalization of Mass Media in the Function of Nationalistic Destruction of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian Communication Community*. She works as an assistant professor at the Faculty of Political Science at the Department of Communication / Journalism and teaches the following courses: The Basics of Propaganda, Rhetoric and Culture of Speech, Marketing Management of Mass Media and RTV Journalism. She has published numerous scientific and professional papers in Bosnian and Herzegovinian journals and magazines in the region. She participated in numerous seminars, conferences and scientific programs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, other countries of the region (Serbia, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro) and further abroad (Germany, Denmark, Belgium, Latvia, Switzerland, Albania). She participated in the implementation of several scientific and research projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina and abroad (Regional Research Promotion Program, projects of the Peace Academy Foundation and the Open Society of the Albanian Media Institute, etc.). She is the co-editor of the Proceedings *Media Accountability: the Challenges of Globalization and the Specifics of the Region*, (2012) and the co-author of the analytical research study *Invisible Europe: Media Picture of the European Integration in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (2016). She is a member of the editorial board of the scientific magazine *Sarajevo Social Science Review*, published by the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo.

