East-West-Forum on Quality Journalism

The Power of Politics and Markets – Quality Journalism under Pressure

Robert Bosch Stiftung

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Preface

In April 2012, the Robert Bosch Stiftung invited journalists from Germany and Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe for the second time to reflect on quality in journalism. The participants of the East-West-Forum on Quality Journalism discussed their experiences and knowledge as well as recent key developments in journalism from interdisciplinary and international perspectives.

The forum, held in Berlin, brought together partners and former participants of the Robert Bosch Stiftung's Journalism Programs in Eastern Europe, German journalists, and representatives from the world of politics, media management, and vocational training institutions. The participants debated about the conditions journalists work under in various countries, about the media's capability to oversee and criticize the public sphere as well as about political and economic influences on reporting and public opinion-making. Also, future scenarios with respect to the journalism industry were discussed.

The contributions by the forum's participants prove impressively to what extent country-specific conditions are critical for determining whether quality journalism can be achieved or not. Besides journalistic qualifications and professional ethical standards, legal stipulations, political will, ownership structures, economic freedom, technological changes, and training opportunities – to name only a few parameters – all have a strong influence on the quality of journalistic work.

No one expects to find simple answers or even a panacea for establishing critical and independent journalism throughout Europe. However, by means of this forum we wish to encourage a dialog on innovative initiatives that improve the quality of European journalism and establish an opportunity to consider recent, worrisome developments in journalism. The point is to become familiar with media conditions across borders, to identify areas of overlap as well as differences, and to find out how journalists and others media actors can support one another.

This publication's articles look at both general contemporary aspects of quality journalism and at aspects specific to individual countries. As a result, the publication covers a wide range of topics journalists in both the East and West of Europe are currently concerned with.

We hope you find it informative and inspiring!

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Europe Needs a Free Press *and* Quality Journalism

By Prof. Wolfgang Kenntemich
University of Leipzig, Germany

A free and independent press, in combination with professional journalism, is the driving force behind democracy. For most people in Western Europe, this is a truism and is thus taken for granted. The citizens of Eastern and Southeastern Europe have had to struggle at times to ensure free media as a guarantor of freedom. Professional, critical journalism not only remains difficult to finance, but can also be life-threatening. Political and economic pressures are omnipresent. Attempts of exerting influence via the political and economic spheres have significantly increased, even in Western Europe. We needn't look further than the examples of Italy or France. In addition, the internet has become a sweet poison: an ever-increasingly supply of information, free of charge and often without traceable sources, often driven by PR, catering to the world of youth entertainment.

The Robert Bosch Stiftung has significantly contributed to quality journalism with an initiative, which is rightly appreciated: the annual East-West-Forum, which offers top journalists, scientists, and media managers a platform to exchange information regarding latent and current threats to professional journalism in Europe. With the help of best-practice models, the forum addresses the question of how to best protect quality journalism in a free and independent media landscape on a sustained basis.

As is well known, in journalism quality is not easily defined. Media theorist Stephan Ruß-Mohl is often quoted comparing the attempt to define quality journalism with the attempt to nail pudding to the wall. Students used to enjoy showing him that pudding could indeed be nailed to the wall, and there has been a great deal of progress in subsequent attempts by media studies to define quality criteria. Foremost among these definitions is the gatekeeper function of journalism, which assembles, analyzes, and processes relevant information for corresponding media and their specif-

ic communication forms according to independent and professional evaluation criteria. The digital media world, with internet, smart phones, tablets, and hybrid televisions, has generated an inundation of information. This condition has caused many people to require additional help when drawing from – as media theorist Miriam Meckel defines it – a pool of information and subjects, in which »this complexity is reduced and moments of social understanding are generated.«

Among others, Polish journalist Marek Magierowski (Uwazam Rze/Warsaw) fears that this will become increasingly difficult at a time of trivialization and tabloidization in digital media: »In the future, we will have fewer readers who demand quality journalism.« Instead, they will tend to prefer sensational journalism and banal entertainment. For this reason, quality journalism will increasingly have to adapt to the rapid technological change in the media world and the accompanying changes in reception patterns of (particularly younger) consumers.

Successful general manager of ZEIT Verlag, Dr. Rainer Esser, is one of many who counter that quality can only be defined by its relation to the particular target group which a respective medium is intended to reach. According to him, as the target group becomes smaller, new subject matters must be sought out which are produced according to particular quality standards. Media outlets would then have to diversify increasingly and should begin today to orient themselves today towards the reader and user of tomorrow. Esser also keeps the economic success of the publisher in mind in order to be able to finance quality journalism. »High-quality information is somewhat quixotic. And it will be needed in the future more than it has been so far,« says Esser. Independent media in Eastern Europe, in contrast, continue to be financially unstable, as argues Christoph Keese, president for public affairs at Axel Springer publishing. Buyers and investors are therefore no longer traditional publishers, but rather industrial firms or financial investors, whose primary interest is securing returns.

Reports from journalists in Eastern Europe are making people sit up and take notice. Despite the involvement of Western publishers and media outlets, diverse and critical press landscapes have failed to develop in several countries. After the fall of Communism, most of them were initially concerned with making money. Today they primarily use tabloid content, entertainment, and utility value titles to retain readers through difficult times. The WAZ group has drawn much criticism for not having contributed to quality journalism. In Romania, catering to regional concerns has proven to be unsuccessful. This is increasingly accompanied by further cuts to editorial staff and poor compensation for journalists. The situation outside of capital cities and urban centers has consistently been particularly difficult. An undersupply of professional journalists in rural regions hinders the democratization process in several countries. Most newspapers in Eastern Europe are also faced with the chal-

lenge of subscribers and readers demanding free Internet content. The conservative Warsaw news magazine »Uwazam Rze« has a unique way of dealing with this problem: It rejects the Internet. There is no free access to quality content on their website, such as news coverage or editorial columns. Thus, readers and users have to go to the kiosk every week. The newspaper's methods are justified by its success: a circulation of 140.000 copies and a half a million euros in profit are hard to ignore.

Some networks of journalists have been forced, practically out of necessity, to collectively market quality journalism. One of the most successful organizations is the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network BIRN. Bojana Barlovac, national editor in Serbia, knows well how difficult it is to produce quality journalism in those transitioning democracies, in which the wounds of the Balkan war are still fresh, and the road from Communism to capitalism in the 90s has been anything but successful. Privatization processes have failed, and war profiteering and the smuggling of tobacco, weapons, and drugs have made the Balkans susceptible to organized crime. This is clearly not an easy environment for free and independent reporting.

With its approximately 200 employees, BIRN relies to a great deal on the promotion and education of young journalists. Local journalists are schooled in the high standards of transparent, exact, and objective reporting in special continuing education programs, and are integrated into the BIRN team. The main clients are, however, not regional media, which show little interest in investigative reporting. The majority of customers are found in the United States and Great Britain. Martin Mikule of Prima TV in Prague relates how quality-oriented journalist education was criminally neglected after the fall of Communism. As a result, media in Eastern Europe did not demand well-educated journalists. They preferred to employ low cost interns or unskilled workers. The possibilities provided by the Internet, in which everyone can publish, reinforce this tendency. A blogger in Poland – not classic media journalists – recently exposed a lie told by the Polish prime minister. This resulted in a discussion regarding the necessity of professional journalists.

Jörg Sadrozinski, director of the Deutsche Journalistenschule (DJS) in Munich, has taken upon himself the task of continuing to guarantee quality in the changing media world, and of fostering it when necessary. His credo: Good journalism should not only be available in traditional media, but also on the Internet. Young journalists should learn to remain flexible, to try out several forms of media, and to foster a more international approach. Stronger collaboration between corresponding educational institutions and universities in Europe is in the works.

It is not only economic and technological influences that hamper quality journalism in Europe. The controversy surrounding media legislation in Hungary has reignited the discussion over political pressures and the exercise of influence upon a free and

independent press. The bone of contention is above all the establishment of a powerful media control authority, the director of which is appointed directly by the government. In addition to television and radio, he is also responsible for the Hungarian news agency. The media control authority is also responsible for the licensing of virtually all media, including print media, and can impose sanctions against foreign media. The public media sector is thereby placed under a central authority like none other in Europe. The Hungarian constitutional court has already scrapped some further-reaching provisions. The more recently established EU commission, however, demands drastic revisions to the law, which the Hungarian government claims is oriented toward laws and provisions in other European countries.

An extensive comparative study by the Central European University in Budapest regarding media legislation in Europe is of interest here. It concludes not only that the Hungarian media law is not compatible with EU law, but also that other media laws, such as in Italy or France, are inadequate and give cause for criticism. (Full study and executive summary: http://cmcs.ceu.hu). Alarmed by the situation in Hungary, the EU Commission has taken increased measures to protect freedom and pluralism in European media. Interestingly, several activities fall under the authority of Nellie Kroes, Vice-President of the European Commission and Commissioner for the Digital Agenda, whose responsibilities include the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD). As member of Cabinet of Neelie Kroes, Lucas Josten is responsible for media policy. Three current measures are of interest:

:: A »high-ranking group for freedom and pluralism in EU media« was established under the direction of former Latvian president Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga. It intends to publish a report by February 2013.
:: A discussion forum of experts presided over by Belgian publisher Christian von Thillo (Persgroep) addresses the latest trends in the digital media market.
:: A center for media pluralism and freedom was created in Florence. It provides a space for the development of new ideas concerning the guarantee of a free and diverse media landscape.

Expectations towards the EU Commission are particularly high in the other Eastern European countries. Many independent journalists fear a domino effect of restrictive media laws if Hungary gets away with its provisions.

Time is of the essence. Financial constraints, attempts at political control, and the rapid development of the digital media world – with more and more possibilities for the spread of information – all drastically limit the room in which quality journalism can maneuver. The prospects of a free and independent press as the driving force behind democracy may soon be forfeited.

The Evanescence of the Hungarian Media Market: A Sad Story

By Zsolt Bogár
Online edition of HVG weekly, Budapest, Hungary

As I write these lines, serveral months have passed since the East-West-Forum 2012. At that time, I wanted to point out that everything that had not already been terminated by the new Hungarian media law would be brought to an end by the current economic crisis, the related contraction in the advertising market, and the allocation of the majority of advertising revenue to media with close ties to the government. Very little critical reporting exists in Hungary. This is not primarily due to censorship of any kind or political pressure from the government, but rather a result of our small media market: the general tabloidization of the media and the short supply and limited range of critical political media. The single exceptions are found online: Internet market leaders are independent and their writing is impartial and critical. The limited size and variety of the media market is precisely what makes independent public service media so necessary, especially in news departments.

But the media laws have particularly weakened this field. Reorganization in the public sector has hollowed out such stations, which now have only meager financial means, expertise, and production capacities. All the production resources were relocated to a centralized production center, including the production of news broadcasts. The stations' only remaining task is to take orders: Public service media's news coverage, which is supposed to be the core of journalistic work at news stations, has been reduced to a single newsroom. The system is complex, the individual leaders' expertise is unclear. One has the impression that the reorganization was carried out in order to lay off large numbers of journalists and to dictate the definition and interpretation of news stories in a centralized way. The changes have led to disruptions and gross errors in news broadcasts and continue to damage the quality of news coverage to this day.

Political influence is not necessarily exerted directly, but rather in subtle ways, without concrete impact. A lack of journalistic self-confidence, adjustments as (survival) strategies and self-censorship have caused editors to act in ways contradictory to the principles of their profession, but rather according to putative intentions for political power. I am sure that many editors even exaggerate when they try to assess what is expected of them. They forego issues that they consider to be too politically risky without being asked to do so. The fact that contemporary public service media do not follow non-partisan lines is a result of the outrageous appointments made by the personnel policy in the last few years. This policy also determines how »trustworthy,« i.e. open to influence, those in middle management are.

As a former employee of the public service radio station MR1-Kossuth's news office, I am astounded by the people now holding positions of responsibility and who have had to leave the station. I find it truly sad that such people now occupy managerial positions; their radio reports were often too bad for me to broadcast. I couldn't understand how such people were allowed to work in broadcasting. It seems strange that so few of my previous colleagues remain. All of them have been fired. Renowned, prize-winning editors and journalists have been laid off; even those whom the current management had previously awarded with prizes. The madness of the situation is illustrated by the story of Nóra Teszári, former moderator and editor for the public television broadcaster Duna TV. She was fired just weeks after a nationwide campaign to reform public media had prominently featured her face.

In 2012, the production center for television and radio MTVA received a higher percentage of state funding than ever before. It has a budget of 77.4 billion forint (ca. 258 million euro), of which 65 billion forint (ca. 218 million euro) comes from public funding. State subsidies have virtually trippled since 2009, leading primarily to more fictional content; more television series are being produced – including a soap opera – without better ratings to show for it. It is thoroughly unclear how much money is distributed to which formats and programs. Neither the parliamentary opposition nor the board of audit has the right to access budget or economic management. The production center's board of directors is also not qualified as a regulatory body, considering that a majority of its members are close to the government.

Public service media is weak, and just at a time when foreign publishers – among them German publishers – are reassessing their activities in Hungary. The consolidation and elimination of positions, as well as the integration and fusion of international media outlet subsidiaries, are common occurrences; both Axel Springer publishing and the WAZ group have already seen staff cutbacks. Regional newspapers belonging to both publishers are notorious for their lack of critical reporting regarding government policies. These formerly government-subsidized newspapers – referred to as »county newspapers« – published no critical commentary regarding

the new media laws, even though they negatively affect journalists from these very newspapers.

The Hungarian media market is in a sad state, which is bad news for the watchdogs of Hungarian democracy.

Hungarian Media under »Orban's Rule«: A Taste of Hungarian Television

By Fanny Facsar
ZDF, Mainz, Germany

A lot has been written about the controversial Hungarian media law, which caused an uproar of international criticism – almost unprecedented in scope and scale for an EU-member state.

»Caters to the government«, »ignorant of ethical norms«, »non-transparent hiring process«, »overly critical journalists who upset the system«, »biased« ... Many of these criticisms may be true of several media organizations world-wide. But the current Hungarian media landscape and especially the state-regulated Hungarian public media (primarily Hungarian Television MTV and Radio) are exceptional in the fact that they supposedly operate within the EU norm.

Thus, members of the EU and beyond are witness to the process of alarming change in a fragile democratic country. Brussels (e.g. the European Council) has succeeded in pressuring Hungarian law makers, at least now that some of these amendments have been revised, but as an OSCE representative on freedom of the media has recently pointed out, »The new Hungarian media legislation can still curb media pluralism and put the media at the risk of political control.«

I visit Hungary regularly and have dealt with its political climate since my first assignments as a journalist in 2002. Until 2010 there was rivalry between the two main parties, the center-right wing Fidesz (current government) and the Social Democrats (MSZP). At its »best,« this rivalry culminated in bigotry on both sides, mutual defeatism, and personal attacks. At its »worst,« it led to unconstructive politics of opposition, criticism of the government without real alternatives, and unfounded electoral promises, regardless of which party was being opposed. This resulted in difficulty implementing laws, stagnation, and on a larger scale a decline in establishing a strong democratic culture, functioning political spheres, and pro-

gressive development in a post-Communist state 20 years after the end of Soviet rule.

In protest of this development, Hungarian voters have been switching back and forth between the main parties almost every term, or, as a result of resignation, they have begun to refrain from voting during national elections. In light of continuous disagreements between the major parties, it comes as no surprise that representatives of the center-right Fidesz – spearheaded by Prime Minister Orban – want to propagate their »revolution,« which they deem necessary to put an end to the »political culture of the past.« With a 2/3rd majority in parliament, Fidesz is in the midst of doing exactly that, leaving parliamentary opposition to play the role of spectators. Within this political arena, the ruling party has always exerted some control over the media. Since the end of Communism, public media in Hungary has always been influenced by the current government, which is in part due to how it is financed.

Unlike Germany or the UK, for example, where public media is financed by license fees, Hungary's public broadcasting is predominantly funded by the government. But the degree to which Hungarian media is used to support Fidesz has now reached a new level. Furthermore, many critics of this media-law process were shocked at the speed with which (only a few months into the new government's term in 2012) this new media law was passed and the lack of thorough examination by the opposition or the public.

I traveled to Budapest in the spring of 2011, in the midst of these changes, and began my Robert Bosch Stiftung fellowship at Hungarian Television MTV. Over the course of three months, coinciding with Hungary's EU presidency, I worked as a »temporary correspondent« between my host-station MTV and my employer ZDF in Germany. I have also regularly covered Hungarian news for CNN since 2006. During my time at Hungarian TV, I gained very personal insights into fellow colleagues' work, which was paired with direct experience of how reports are crafted in an already tense situation (due to upcoming lay-offs).

I was seen as a »representative of Western journalistic culture,« so it was not altogether surprising to me that some Hungarian decision-makers regarded my presence with skepticism, some even greeted me by asking whether or not I was a »spy.« Most of them were new to the news department at MTV or had recently been transferred there during »Orban rule« (and so were commonly referred to as »Orban loyalists« by my other colleagues). However, it did not take a spy to see the reporting process that had already been revealed to the public by internationally renowned journalists who had then been fired by the new system or »kindly asked« to transfer to a different department. Political reports were not part of the show.

Apart from news editors' obvious censorship in the remaining journalists' political reporting, there was one experience that offered a glimpse as to how far this political influence really went. On one occasion, a political correspondent was asked to edit her quotation of a government MP according to what the politician had »meant to say« rather than what he had actually said because it might have been »misunderstood,« as the news-editor that day suggested. It was brave of the journalist not to yield immediately, saying, »This is going way too far.« But she eventually made the requested change. Reactions like these – agreeing to »friendly requests« made by news-editors and/or their political bosses – in combination with bewilderment at the new journalistic circumstances quickly showed what options the remaining people in the newsroom had: either follow the rule or risk being fired.

During that time, some journalists voluntarily signed up to cover soft-news, hoping that once »Orban-rule« was over they would be able to return to the political department and actually cover the news using the standards they learned in communication education in Hungary or abroad: accurate reporting not catered to any interest groups, only seeking the truth and informing the public.

The word »balanced« reporting took on a new meaning, serving political propaganda rather than critical analysis of political decision making. This became evident on multiple occasions, for example during a heated conflict between the Romani population and non-Romanies in a town near Budapest. In other countries news stories reveal the failed policies of Romani-integration, but viewers of Hungarian Television learn that the government has everything »under control.« Equally stunning was the continuous reporting of the discussions between IMF, EU, and Hungary with regard to financial aid for Hungary's deteriorating economy. Public television broadcasted interviews in which Orban discussed Hungary as not in need of any financial help, but rather as being »asked to accept help« and willing to negotiate with Brussels. In other countries, however, Orban had given interviews in which he spoke of the necessity of this aid to the Hungarian economy. Two perspectives on the same political situation – and Hungarian Television, whether willingly or forced, chose to broadcast stories in a way that cast a rather positive light on events that were uncomfortable for the government to handle.

I saw many young journalists leave Hungarian Television to work at online websites and newspapers where self-censorship is felt but not as strongly implemented as it is at MTV. Some even left the country to study abroad, hoping for a change with the 2014 elections. They think anything would be better than the current system. Once reports started being openly manipulated (e.g. eradicating the politically unfavorable image of the ex-chief justice who fell to political disgrace), some reporters stopped worrying about being fired and actually began a hunger strike in protest. This resulted in the editor-in-chief of the news-department being shifted to a differ-

ent department. A small victory, but it could not change the new mentality taking root at MTV. And the public might be aware of or even opposed to this situation with Hungarian public media, it is still surprising to hear that some of those who voted for this new government may disagree with Fidesz's influence, but that they willingly chose it over the widely disrespected socialist predecessors, whom they see as even worse. So some Fidesz voters believe the truth may be »fired« in this process but at least it was fired by the party that represents values with which they agree. Needless to say, it is the same audience that has something to lose in this process. And Hungarian Television has lost much of its audience already, especially in terms of its news broadcasts. Younger, intellectual audiences are turning to other news sources, and if they do watch MTV it is ironically, to get a good laugh at bad journalism. And people who do not know how they are going pay for their next meals have more existential problems to deal with than the content of what is being broadcast on their televisions.

Regardless of how much pressure Brussels is able to continue to exert to keep (Hungarian) media independent, a dangerous development is already at work in many domestic reporters' minds: self-censorship. Until journalists learn how to write between the lines and express criticism, as they did prior to 1990, a lot of time will be wasted. That time could be used to strengthen a strong, vivid democratic culture of debate in the name of diligent public information, which was why public media was established in first place.

The Golden Future of Newspapers: How Quality Media Profit from Digitalization

By Dr. Rainer Esser
ZEIT Verlag, Hamburg, Germany

Speech on 26 April 2012, East-West-Forum on Quality Journalism, Berlin

Good Newspapers Look Forward to a Golden Future

»Newspapers are under pressure«, »There isn't a market for quality journalism anymore«, »The internet is jeopardizing our business.« We are all familiar with these kinds of forebodings. Charismatic media gurus (especially in the United States) and depressed publishers have been philosophizing about the end of newspapers for years.

Actually, the opposite is true: There have never been so many news stories that – thanks to cell phones, Twitter, and Facebook – can travel thousands of miles in a matter of seconds. People have never been as well informed as they are today. But the number of people reading newspapers and magazines continues to fall, while online news sources become increasingly prevalent. The digital revolution has made tablet computers and smartphones everyday accoutrements, creating more and more opportunities to provide people with high quality content. If those of us working with editing and management prepare accordingly, we will be well on our way towards successful futures.

People Want Higher and Higher Quality Presentation

Our readers will continue to ask for more quality journalism. The desire for information is part of human nature. People who are informed can take part in discussions and receive acknowledgement. On the other hand, it is increasingly difficult to keep up with the constant barrage of information with which we are faced. Our world is turning more and more quickly, growing increasingly complex. The electronic media

profit from this rapidity, with tickers, Twitter, and Facebook all reporting on the latest terrorist attack or the most recent storm with lightning speed. Quality media benefit from the complexity of events and the informational overflow. Especially in turbulent times, people seek orientation, stability, and reliability. It is not enough that so much information is available – audiences respond when that information has been edited by competent, responsible, trustworthy, non-sensational, and unbiased people.

Digitalization Creates New Opportunities for Publishers

Digitalization is a blessing for journalists, readers, and publishers. It allows us to give our readers a new experience of our business, journalism, while still profiting from it ourselves.

About one-third of a publishing house's costs are spent on the physical publication alone. In the digital world, the processes of production, logistics, and distribution are reduced to practically nothing and take practically no time. There are more and more tablet computers and thus more digital sales revenue. This represents an immense potential. The demand for news stories on the internet is also a blessing. Since most users of online news sources are not subscribers to that newspaper's print edition, a newspaper can easily expand its audiences with online editions. The number of readers of ZEIT nearly tripled with the introduction of ZEIT ONLINE. There is a huge potential for new advertising revenue and for the acquisition of new subscribers to the printed edition.

Additionally, we experience digital media in a completely new way. When we use mobile devices, it is possible not only to read and look at content; we can also take hold of it. We can move texts around, enlarge them, mark them, and recommend them to friends. Anyone can access digital content from anywhere in the world without the limitations of physical distribution. Furthermore, content and its representation in digital media can open new worlds. We can have discussions with other readers or editors. We can customize our own individual publications and contribute our own editorials, news, comments, pictures, or videos.

Modern Journalists and Publishing House Managers Play Slightly Different Roles in the Digital Era

However, new business is not served to us on a silver platter. Those of us working in journalism as well as in management have to take on slightly different roles.

Demands on Future Journalists

Successful journalists in the digital media world think and act on multiple platforms. They follow Gabor Steingart's triad of basic values: *information*, *mobility*, and *understanding*.
Information represents hard content. Whether through Twitter, Facebook, a Kindle, an iPad, or the good, old broadsheet – no matter how cutting edge or aesthetically pleasing, no technical form can replace quality content. A lame story remains a lame story whether it appears in the newspaper, on television, or on the internet! Quality has to be the goal of journalistic work. And the journalist is the one who should agonize over this – not the reader. If the desired target group does not like the product, then there is no quality to speak of. And there are certain basic financial conditions that quality requires. Reducing the number of editors is not the proper way for a publishing house to save money and still create quality work. Intelligent publishers will strengthen their editorial staff instead of reducing it. Our readers are intelligent, after all, and they notice when quality declines. Then the publication suffers. Circulation and advertizing revenue drop and the downward spiral begins.

In addition to content, *mobility* plays an increasingly important role. This term refers not only to mobile devices, but also the variety of platforms available. Journalistic articles appear in various forms of printed and digital media. A modern-day ZEIT editor, for example, writes for the printed weekly paper, for the very up-to-date ZEIT ONLINE, and for the iPad and Kindle editions. ZEIT ONLINE reaches over four million readers. Of those, increasing numbers of people access our news stories with their mobile devices – whether smartphones or tablet computers. For this purpose, we have specially designed optimized versions of the website. Readers can also access the printed ZEIT electronically with their iPads every week. This edition has its own new layout and is expanded with audio and videos, clearly offering more than a clumsy PDF.

Understanding between journalist and reader is a third factor in success. Every journalist has to get used to getting feedback directly from his or her readers and responding to it. One out of two citizens in the country is on Facebook; about one in ten uses Twitter. This means that news is no longer exclusively prepared and distributed by editors. We all distribute news. Readers want to have their say. The internet blurs the distinction between experts and lay people, between producers and consumers. For intelligent journalists, social media is a very useful new tool. They recognize their readers' expertise and invite them to share their photos, comments, and videos. A large proportion of ZEIT ONLINE's readers work at universities. It is not uncommon for their online comments to be longer than our articles and just as interesting. In addition to their previous tasks, modern-day editors also increasingly act as moderators and curators who compile, verify, and moderate their readers'

expertise. And it requires particular effort and curiosity to find out with which issues people in a certain place are concerned.

Demands on the Publishing Managers of the Future

In order for modern editors to meet with success, their managers also have to do their jobs. Ideally, a publishing manager is fast, flexible, and capable. He or she cooperates with his or her colleagues and is clearly focused on customers.

Our industry has been learning about the need for *mobility* for years, and sometimes we've learned the hard way. In previous years, many publishers were complacent and spoiled. Their newspapers were read in every household. Those who ran local businesses had to submit their advertisements to the leading paper's ad desk, which was open only periodically. The business model ran like clockwork without any changes being made. Circulation, sales, and profits grew. In light of this success, powers of innovation were reduced to virtually nothing. In publishing houses today, we are doing what other industries take for granted: constantly improving and constantly changing in pursuit of efficient production processes and, at the same time, continually investing in quality and innovation in the form of new journalistic and non-journalistic products.

Not only do leaders have to become more flexible, they also have to reconsider their *roles within the organization*. »The bosses of the old school are outdated,« says futurologist Erik Händeler. The important editors of the past – Henri Nannen, Rudolf Augstein, Theo Sommer – were absolute monarchs in a system of clear hierarchies and subordination in editing. Today, journalists in editorial offices are individual artists who all want to contribute to overall success. Rigid hierarchies are a thing of the past. The superiors – whether the head of the department, the editor in chief, or the business director – need much more sensitivity, communication, empathy, and cooperation skills than ever before. These social abilities bring artists' knowledge together and focus them on a common goal. This is not just a matter of course in respectful relationships, but also an economic necessity. Only those who behave cooperatively can avoid losses due to friction, stay competitive, and retain smart colleagues.

Only a few years ago, many publishing houses' employees – including ZEIT's – would have been ridiculed if they called for the implementation of *client management* or customer care centers, philosophized about customer retention and value-added services, or were interested in up- and cross-selling processes. These are all things that have been standards for successful companies in other industries for a long time. Every successful publishing house, like any other company, strives for customer loyalty. The person who subscribes to a newspaper is an individual and wants

to feel as such. Today's technology is excellently suited for this. CRM systems and goal-oriented communication across all digital channels can create an unprecedented level of understanding with subscribers. If we are engaged with adequate diligence, everyone wins: The customer feels taken seriously, the publishers sell their various products in a more targeted way and achieve higher sales.

It should be noted that our industry is currently experiencing one of, if not its most significant change ever. If we accept these new opportunities openly and creatively and follow the outlined principles, we can benefit from this change with enthusiasm and success.

Media Freedom and Pluralism in the EU

By Lucas Josten
Cabinet of Neelie Kroes, European Commission, Brussels, Belgium

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. 2. The freedom and pluralism of the media shall be respected. ***Article 11 EU Charter of Fundamental Rights***

Defending the fundamental right of expression and media freedom as well as pluralism in the EU and beyond is one of Vice President Neelie Kroes's priorities – both as Commis-sioner of the Digital Agenda and the media, and based on her own personal convictions. Although governmental challenges to media freedom and pluralism are not a recent phenomenon in Europe, and surely not confined to specific Member States, some have received a much higher profile, requiring the close attention of the European Commission: Hungary's case was perhaps the most notable one in recent history.

At the same time, the media sector faces challenges related to the digital revolution and the economic crisis to which we are all witness. Lower distribution costs and reduced barriers to market access for new media sources have an immediate impact on market developments, calling established and traditional print business models into question. In addition, they bring a host of considerations to media pluralism issues. Does a shift from analogue to digital systems automatically lead to increased pluralism? Probably not, but it does make many new opportunities available.

In light of these challenges, there is increasing expectation from civil society and parliaments for the European Commission to take a more proactive role in defending common and fundamental values. However, the fact that the Commission has a rather limited array of competences is often overlooked. As far as the Charter is concerned, under the Lisbon Treaty Member States have agreed that the EU can only legally

enforce fundamental rights in areas under EU law. Member States have constitutional courts and traditions that protect fundamental rights. The EU, therefore, can cooperate with Member States to ensure those rights are respected, but it cannot, and should not replace Member States.

Under EU law there are generally three areas in which the Commission can intervene. Competition rules are continuously applied when questions of media concentration are at stake; in the case of radio licensing, the award procedures shall be objective, transparent, non-discriminatory and proportionate. EU law gives national governments the discretion to set general conditions when granting radio licenses, which can include cultural diversity, linguistic diversity, and media pluralism. Lastly, the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMS) sets rules in order to create a level playing field for audiovisual media. Examples include protecting minors from harmful content, restricting advertising, and combating incitement to racial and religious hatred.

In the case of the Hungarian Media Constitution and Media Act (Media Law), the AVMS Directive, in combination with Article 11 of the Charter, has been successfully enforced by the European Commission. After intense negotiations with Vice President Kroes, Hungarian authorities made a commitment to change their legislation in four important areas: to exclude on-demand media services from the balanced coverage requirements for broadcasting; to respect the »country-of-origin« principle, thereby not applying fines to broadcasters legally established and authorized in other Member States; and to change their unreasonable rules on media registration and on offending individuals, minorities, or majorities. Although the Hungarian government was in compliance with EU law in the strictest sense, Vice President Kroes made clear that for her, media freedom was more than the technical application of the law and that she would follow developments closely and in close cooperation with other stakeholders. Her instinct proved right when, in December 2011, the Hungarian Constitutional Court found that the media law unconstitutionally limited the freedom of the written press and, earlier this year, the Council of Europe issued a lengthy report demonstrating that Hungarian media law was at severe risk of violating Council of Europe standards – an institution that has closely guarded human rights in Europe for over 50 years.

Following the changes to the media law based on the AVMS, the Commission was criticized for only demanding technical changes and thereby neglecting the much more pressing need for protection of fundamental rights. However, since the changes were more far-reaching for media operators and journalists than many might have realized, this criticism was largely unwarranted. It was another demonstration of the fact that when it comes to defending media freedom and pluralism, the Commission is expected to accomplish more than it is capable of doing. In other words, there is a large gap between the Commission's legal enforcement capabilities and what we are frequently expected to do.

This is why Vice President Kroes seeks a more principled debate – involving all stakeholders, journalists, media operators, civil society, Members of the National and the European Parliaments, and national authorities – about what we need and want to do in the future to ensure that the freedom of expression and the freedom of the media are respected and promoted in practice, as they represent fundamental values to which we all subscribe. In a recent speech[1] in the European Parliament, Vice President Kroes described the complexity of the issue: »*Some feel this issue needs to be more regulated by EU law. And yet, for others, more regulation – especially from Brussels – does not mean more freedom but rather more constraint, more limitations, more dependence on the legislators. So my question to you is: Is new EU legislation really the answer to threats to media freedom? (...) I don't have all the answers yet. Sometimes, the more important a task, the less straightforward it is.*«

In order to create relevant solutions, we have taken three initiatives:
First, an independent High Level Group was set up in October 2011, chaired by former Latvian President Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga – the other members are Prof. Herta Däubler-Gmelin, Prof. Luís Miguel Poiares Pessoa Maduro, and Ben Hammersley. This group examines the various types of risks to media freedom and pluralism as well as potential solutions and actions to be taken, including further action at an EU level. The group's report is expected to be released in January 2013.

Second, the EU Media Futures Group was asked to analyze the impact of technology and new business models on the media as well as relevant trends, challenges, and opportunities. It presented the executive summary of its report on June 27, 2012, proposing solutions such as: promoting new business models, rewarding creators and creation of content, adapting financial support or audiovisual creation, avoiding new barriers to entry, increasing access and use of legal content and services from anywhere in the EU on any device, and quickly improve high-speed broadband infrastructure.

And third, the newly established Centre for Media Pluralism and Freedom at the European University Institute in Florence provides the necessary academic groundwork in this area. It carries out theoretical and applied research and will soon present a policy study on the Commission's competences in regard to media pluralism and media freedom. Contributions from these initiatives as well as those received from experienced journalists from across Europe and beyond, including the Robert Bosch Stiftung's *Ost-West-Forum Qualitätsjournalismus*, feed into an EU-wide debate and ultimately help us face some tough choices about the future of this media sector.

1 Speech 12/335 »Defending media freedom« 8 May 2012

Balkan Media between Business and Politics

By Remzi Lani
Albanian Media Institute, Tirana, Albania

The relationship between the media and politics in the period of post-Communist transition has been very complex and characterized by many contradictions. More than anything else, politics has had an influence on the development of the media.

Today's Balkan press is more a political extension than a representation of public opinion. A sizeable part of the media continues to be controlled by powerful political groups. In a certain sense, the kinds of comments that a number of authors (such as Karol Jakubovicz, Mihai Coman, Colin Sparks, and Tomasz Goban-Klas) have used to describe the media situation in post-Communist societies apply to the Balkan region too: »The press became pluralistic, but not independent«, and »The press became free, but not independent.«

The shift from the »Soviet media model« to the »social responsibility model« (e.g. McQuail, 2000) seems to have been more difficult than predicted. Practices inherited from the Communist era mean that politicians and political parties are constantly trying to influence – indeed, control – the media, because the conviction remains strong that whoever controls information maintains power. The political parties, which as a rule are obsessed with holding power, »consider the media to be not a major, but the main instrument for politics.« Goban-Klas comments, »This vision of the media is one-dimensional, over-politicized and simplified, believing in a missionary role for the journalists and an ideologized press.«

If I were asked to provide two key words to describe the fundamental problem the media faces in the Balkans today, these words would undoubtedly be *repoliticization* and *clientelism*. In fact, these could be seen as two sides of the same coin.

In examining the dialectics of the relationship between the media and politics, it can be affirmed without hesitation that throughout the decades of the post-Communist transition, the media have been influenced and shaped by politics much more than politics have been influenced and shaped by the media.

It is an ineluctable fact that a conflict-ridden and highly politicized society (which still characterizes societies in the Balkans) infects its media and involves them in its conflicts and wars, using them as important means for waging those conflicts. This in turn destroys the media's independence, impartiality and professionalism. Certain media sources have been unable to resist the pressure and allure of politics (and and other influences); some find it simply impossible to imagine their role outside this partisanship.

This partisanship is primarily a reflection of the nature of politics, which is conceived as conflict rather than dialogue. It is also a reflection of the fact that Balkan societies are more political societies than information societies or civil societies.

The most common forms of political clientelism are found in the public broadcasters. In Albania, FYR Macedonia, Kosovo, and Montenegro, these continue to be under the control of central governments, which use and abuse them during electoral campaigns and beyond. Although it would be an exaggeration to compare today's public broadcasters to the propaganda bastions they were during the period of new authoritarianism, in most cases the so-called public television stations remain »red carpet« television channels: That is, they cover primarily government protocol and information. These public channels do not represent normal media as much as a type of Ministry of Propaganda.

Clientelism in the media constitutes a complex phenomenon that must be seen as closely connected to the context of social and political development in the region's countries. Politics in the Balkans is transformed into tele-politics. Generally speaking, political and public debate has relocated from rallies in public squares to the television screens broadcasting debates, which is certainly a positive development. Political discussion started on the streets, now debates take place in television studios. But it seems that the media have had to pay a price for this change.

These »tele-politics« can be seen as one aspect of the mediatization of politics, and this is an entirely normal development. But it seems that instead of mediatization of politics, tele-politics actually entails more political clientelization of the media. Since the media's focus shifts from a public to a political one, it serves politics instead of the public. What one notices in Albania, Kosovo, and FYR Macedonia are the use, misuse, and abuse of the media by politicians.

The Albanian analyst Fatos Lubonja uses the term »media regime« to describe this situation. According to Lubonja, »In the so-called police or military regimes, the police, the army or the secret services are used to ensure that the regime holds on to power. In our case the media are used.« Perhaps the most accurate term to use in this case is media-cracy. Although in theory, issues pertaining to the media are presented as issues of democracy, in reality they become a matter of power. As Sandra B. Hrvatin and Brankica Petkovic write, »Today it seems impossible to remain in power without the support of the media.«

Samuel Huntington has spoken about the dangers democracy poses to itself. In fact, media instrumentalization makes media part of this game. If they are misused, media are transformed from a mechanism of democracy into a mechanism that works »to reduce or destroy democracy.« There is yet another tendency, which at a first glance may seem counter to control and pressure, but which in fact boils down to the same thing. In some cases journalists can write what they like, can criticize as much as they like, but nobody reacts and nothing happens. This circumstance occurs in Albania, where erstwhile nervous reactions to criticism are now being replaced by total indifference to such criticism. People can write anything they want to, but nobody cares. Important investigative stories have been published in Tirana's newspapers in the last few years, but both the authorities and the judicial system have failed to react or initiate the enquiries these stories demand. In other words, journalists have the right to speak, but not the right to be listened to. Indifference to criticism leads to the devaluation of the free word.

When analyzing the situation of the media in the Balkans, we must be aware that clientelism and political instrumentalization constitute only one aspect of the media there. The picture would not be complete if the analysis were confined to these two elements. In reality, in the countries of the Western Balkans the media are sandwiched between politics and business, sometimes because of the pressures they face, but at other times because they voluntarily place themselves in this position. Thus, the media appear to be an extension of politics on the one hand, and an annex of various businesses on the other.

The overcrowded and fragmented media scene in Albania, FYR Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, and Kosovo cannot be explained in terms of market logic. Albania for instance, holds first place in Europe in terms of number of daily papers per capita (26 of them in a country with a population of roughly 3.5 million), but it ranks last in Europe when it comes to the circulation of daily newspapers per capita, because these 26 dailies produce fewer than 100,000 copies combined. Most of these dailies can be considered »construction companies' newsletters.« Companies pump funds into these newspapers, not so that they can serve public interests, but so that they can serve the interests of related businesses. If you ask these companies why they

spend money every month without seeing any returns, the answer will likely be that through these newspapers, »they protect their businesses.« This might be partially true, but only partially. Through these newspapers businesses can exert pressure and gain favors. And at times, what is *not* published (for instance, details of a bribe that has been paid to gain a contract) is more important than what is published.

»The media are not profitable, but they are seen as indirectly profitable. The media only become profitable as a tool to attain construction permits and other favors from the government. In other words, by their calculations, the balance is positive overall,« says a media activist in Tirana, quoted in the Spanish organization FRIDE's latest report on Albania (FRIDE, 2010).

A report by the Open Society Institute (OSI) emphasizes the fact that »Serbia's oversaturated media sector exceeds the commercial potential of the economy and many outlets survive thanks to biased reporting. The unfair competition makes it hard for budding independent journalism to thrive.«

What we are witnessing is an unholy alliance among politics, business, and the media, which in the most extreme cases can result in a dangerous form of state control. As Croatian journalist Drago Hedl rightly pointed out, commenting on the October 2008 murder of Ivo Pukanic, journalist and publisher of the *National* magazine, this murder offers proof of »the fine line that separates politics, business, and the media from the mafia, crime, and corruption.«

In a certain sense political pressures have been transformed into economic ones with some frequency. As Bulgarian media expert Ivan Nikolchev says, journalists »face a difficult choice between working under political or economic pressure. Sometimes they do not even have this choice, but deal with both.«

Can it be said that new economic directors have replaced former political gatekeepers? To some extent they have.

Does the European Integration Create the (False) Hope that the Media and Journalists in Serbia Will See a Better Future?

By Saša Mirković
B 92, Belgrade, Serbia

According to the Freedom House organization's research, Serbia is among the »partly free« countries in terms of media freedom. This means that we ranked 77th out of 197 countries around the world, which is a drop of several positions compared to last year.

Based on the Council of Europe's list of 27 indicators for European standards in terms of media freedom, only four standards are being fully realized in Serbia today. The other standards generally fall within the zone of general acceptance, while there are some that fall considerably short of the mark. These primarily involve the media's market operations, protection of media from political influence, labor and social rights, and journalists' safety.

These facts are alarming. Therefore, it is not surprising that there is reasonable hope that the European integration processes will improve such trends in the foreseeable future, finally helping Serbia move in the right direction, at least in terms of media.

It seems unreal that, since its democratic changes, Serbia has waited 12 years with the advancement of its Media Strategy. At one time, the development of this umbrella document was largely funded by European Union taxpayers. The EU made a considerable effort to have the Strategy adopted as a government document. I am of the opinion that this would not have happened if the adoption of the Media Strategy had not been one of the political requirements for Serbia to become a candidate for EU membership at the beginning of this year.

What does such an approach tell us? First and foremost, it reveals clearly that, without Brussels's political proviso, Serbia would have missed another opportunity to adopt the Media Strategy as it had several times before.

Unfortunately, this still does not mean that the international community has a decisive role regarding the content of the Media Strategy, whose components originated as part of the political agenda and compromises made by the then ruling coalition. Luckily, the adoption of the Media Strategy has had a direct influence on the unification of all of Serbia's relevant journalists' and media associations forming a distinctive media coalition. This coalition's disagreement with some of the proposed (and, unfortunately, adopted) solutions influenced the European Union's uncertainty in regard to some parts of the Media Strategy and its implementation.

For us media professionals, it was a sobering moment to see the limits of the European Union's influence on the content of such documents. Specifically, the European Union does not have *Acquis communautaire* in the field of media law, so rulers in countries like Serbia can copy, without any difficulty or obstruction, legal solutions from EU member states, which may not necessarily be good examples to follow and to implement. The best illustration of this is the Freedom House's current list.

In order to prevent further manipulation of this kind, it is necessary to redefine the existing operating model and prevent new members of the European Union from being able to obtain such status without carrying out fundamental reforms not only in the media sector, but also in other important areas such as the judiciary system, the fight against corruption, and so on.

Fortunately, it seems that many people in Brussels are aware of this and that, in the future, we will see a more pro-active approach to the European Union in terms of legal solutions based on the Media Strategy. It is important for it to be a comprehensive and sufficiently long process that finally results in sustainable solutions applicable in practice and agreed upon by the relevant professions.

We are aware that in politics, the choice between making compromises regarding the media's position and pressing political issues is always at the local media's expense. Local power has abused such situations for a long time. This further threatens journalists' and media's positions, which were already precarious after the economic crisis that lasted four years. We are also witness to considerably reduced support from donors, who are slowly leaving the country. Thus, brave professionals working on investigative journalism projects in professional and objective media throughout Serbia experience critically narrowed room for negotiation. Moreover, technological development and modernization are fundamentally redefining the whole concept of journalism (as we have known it for decades) and present great challenges that we have to face in order for our media to continue to exist and be competitive in the market.

Because of the economic crisis, journalists are losing jobs every day. The trend has reached epidemic proportions. As I am writing this text, one daily newspaper and a respected Serbian economic weekly have just ceased to exist. The end of a series of local television and radio stations is imminent, which will present a serious obstacle to keeping local populations informed. This is all alarming news that has strong repercussions on societies in transition like Serbia.

I am convinced that freedom and existence of the media are requisite for all other societal freedoms in a country like Serbia, which still has a lot of progess to make. It is particularly worrisome that in the last three years, journalists and editors have again been forced to take police protection due to frequent threats and attacks. Particularly striking is the example of the radio and television station B 92, where I work, and we have police officers in the building on round-the-clock duty. Two of my colleagues from B92 have been under constant police protection because of threats addressed to them for exercising investigative journalism.

Removing these barriers is requisite for improving journalism and society as a whole. It requires a pro-active approach that will dispel doubts of whether this is only important for Serbia, the region, or for all of Europe. At this point it is clear that we cannot do it alone and that we still need European assistance. I am afraid that if we miss this opportunity, it is unlikely that we will see another one in our lifetimes or in our professional careers.

Self-Censorship: The Gray Zone of Journalism in Serbia

By Bojana Barlovac
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While Serbia remains the »golden mean« on the World Press Freedom Index, its journalists serve media owners and advertisers rather than the public.

A Belgrade-Zagreb traffic sign riddled by bullets and the name of Serbia's murdered journalist Slavko Curuvija on interactive obituaries in the Newseum, the famous Washington museum of journalism, are synonymous with journalism in Serbia, for the most part based on the legacy of the nineties. However, although bullets no longer punch holes in the media-sphere and Serbia is partly depicted »in free colors« on the world media map, the situation is far worse than it seems. From the explicit censorship prevalent in the 1990s, Serbia has slipped into journalism's most dangerous gray zone: self-censorship. The rise of self-censorship is a result of the influence of a series of social and psychological factors. It is triggered by external factors, primarily political and economic.

Self-censorship in Serbia may be viewed as a state project carried out as follows: The authorities, in collaboration with media owners, design an Excel table containing basic information on the ownership structure of a media source, its advertisers, and solutions to complex equations. One such Excel table is installed for every journalist. It takes some time for a journalist to get used to the Excel document but it quickly becomes part of his or her subconscious mind and does the work on its own. Once self-censorship is up and running, institutional censorship is practically unnecessary.

Thus, the state has produced a far more sophisticated form of influencing media that eliminates the need to tell journalists what they can and cannot report on and in what fashion. The journalists themselves are programmed not to notice the stories that might not be in line with the policy and wishes of the owner of their media outlet

or advertisers. There are four factors that directly facilitate the installation of the table: media ownership structure, advertisers, weak institutional support and protection for journalists, and failure to abide by the journalists' codes of ethics.

The Boss is the Boss

Achieving the ideal of a free, democratic public sphere involves many difficulties. »In order for the regulations' insistence on serving the public interest to be effective, it has to coexist with the companies' need to make profit. Otherwise such regulations simply won't be adhered to (Lorimer, 1998: 120).« Media ownership is of vital importance in achieving this ideal. The issue of transparent capital in the media as a basis for the promotion of media pluralism is mentioned in a number of recommendations in European Union legislation. In spite of this, the people of Serbia have no insight into their media's real »identity cards.« According to a September 2011 report of the country's Anti-Corruption Council[1], there was no information on the owners of 18 of the 30 most important media sources (12 dailies, seven weeklies, six television stations, and five radio stations with national coverage) that were included in the Council's research. Nine of the eleven broadcasters with national coverage have non-transparent ownership. The question that is posed is how prepared local media are to release true and objective information when their ownership remains a secret.

In media theory and practice, it is commonly accepted that ownership of a media can affect the content of that media. Serbia lacks an adequate legal framework to regulate these issues, and positive initiatives are often obstructed by centers of power that prefer the status quo. An attempt to change this failed because the draft for the Law on Illegal Media Concentration and Transparency of Media Ownership has been awaiting approval for over four years now. The Serbian Business Registers Agency (APR) remains the only place where one can find nominal information on the media ownership structure.

The All-Important Advertisements

As the main source of media companies' income, advertisements are the second factor that facilitates the implementation of the Excel tables. Money flows into the media from political and economic centers of power, indirectly shaping editorial content. This is primarily reflected in the fact that a journalist with such an installed table knows how to act – that is, how to select and shape information – in keeping it in line with the advertisers' interests. If the advertiser is also a company with a history

1 http://www.antikorupcija-savet.gov.rs/Storage/Global/Documents/mediji/IZVESTAJ%200%20MEDIJIMA,%20PRECISCENA%20VERZIJA.pdf

of corrupt business dealings, the public will be deprived of its right to know because the advertiser enjoys an inviolable protected status. Due to the absolute power that the advertisers (both private and state) have imposed by putting the media in a subjugated position, any deviation from the table can result not only in the journalist in question being fired but also in that media source being shut down.

Weak Support

In such a narrow scope of journalists' action, adequate support from guild associations, councils, and labor unions is lacking. As a young profession, journalism has not managed to secure its own professional council that would set specific standards and ensure that they are honored. Instead, there are a number of journalists' organizations in Serbia that, without political and financial support, are not powerful enough to fight for better conditions for journalists. In addition, these organizations have even contributed to the current state of things by occasionally putting their interests before the interests of journalists in general, proof of which are conflicts between journalist organizations over property. Weak independent media have become the third factor facilitating the mass installation of Excel tables. As a result of this situation in the media, on this year's May 3rd World Press Freedom Day, Serbia ranked 77th for media freedom, as a partly free country, out of the Freedom House list of 197 countries.[2]

The Fourth Pillar of Collapse

The fact that the media are exposed to economic and political pressure has caused fundamental principles of journalism and journalists' responsibility to be forgotten, thus making journalists the fourth factor of the Excel tables' installation. Journalists allowed the table to be installed for them in spite of the fact that its subsequent self-censorship is completely contradictory to journalists' main role as defined in many international conventions. The IFJ Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists stipulates that the first and the most important duty of the journalist is respect for truth and for the public's right to truth. »In pursuance of this duty, the journalist shall at all times defend the principles of freedom in the honest collection and publication of news, and of the right to fair comment and criticism,« reads the Declaration.

However, instead of serving the public, local journalists have surrendered themselves to the mechanism of the Excel table. They automatically select and work with

2 http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Global%20and%20Regional%20Press%20Freedom%20Rankings.pdf

information shaped according to the views and needs of their centers of power, which have no need to issue any additional instructions as long as the table works. A local journalist is like a man wearing a sleeping mask and ear plugs. However, there is no excuse for such irresponsible behavior, especially not in the digital world. Offering vast possibilities for all kinds of information to be published without censorship, the internet can and should serve as a journalistic platform for online public debates. If these are strong enough they will also reach traditional media, which is still people's primary source of information in Serbia. The possibility of stirring up public debate on online platforms is the only way out of self-censorship in the current constellation of power. This is a ray of hope for gradual strengthening the entire public sphere, a world where all existing Excel tables would be deleted.

All-Purpose and High-Speed Fast Food Journalists: A Plea for Higher Quality in Journalism Education

By Jörg Sadrozinski
Deutsche Journalistenschule, Munich, Germany

Advertising revenues are falling rapidly, some papers are bankrupt, others are markedly decreasing in value, and many journalists have been fired in the past few years or are working under precarious conditions. Given this situation, what does a »future for journalists« look like? With such bleak prospects, is it worth encouraging young people to pursue journalism as a career and training them for what is apparently a dying profession?

For several years, the media – and by this I am referring to more than just newspapers – have been undergoing a process of radical transformation. This involves changes in design, form, and structure, driven by the development of the internet. The World Wide Web has put traditional journalism under pressure in a host of ways.

First, in an economic sense, in that traditional financing through advertisements and sales has been made obsolete. Many publishers and editors speak of the internet's »birth defect,« referring to the fact that journalistic content is given out for free, since websites were not (and are not) able be refinanced through the use of a payment model or through advertisements. This »free culture« has resulted in journalism being devalued, which at this point is not remediable.

The second pillar of financing, advertisement, has shifted to new providers without considerable resistance from publishers. Ads for jobs and cars, marriage announcements and classified ads were and are easier to publish through the internet and reach wider audiences than newspapers did or could.

Although more is being invested in online advertising now and money is being made, publishers and their journalistic products only receive a small portion of this: Ads are placed on Google or social networking platforms like Facebook in order to better

reach their desired target groups. And to the extent that mobile communication plays a role, providers who want to make their content available to mobile users have to follow guidelines that manufacturers like Apple or Google set for them. These new participants in the market claim a share of the income and often monitor the shared user data, which is very valuable for advertising companies.

Second, in a technological sense. Laptops, tablet PCs, and smartphones have made possible constant updating through the internet, as well as reporting that is independent of place and time. The morning newspaper lying on the breakfast table is already out of date – at least in comparison to the minute-by-minute, even second-by-second updates on news websites.

The third pressure involves content in that the internet calls into question the role and function of professional journalism. If anyone can publish and distribute content without facing any major technological or financial obstacles, are journalists left to the role of »gatekeepers« and thus basically extraneous? If companies, associations, public authorities, and private individuals can use the internet to communicate directly with media users, why would they need the press to mediate at all?

As commercial enterprises, many media establishments' ultimate goal was to maximize profits, and, in light of these developments, they had only one option: to minimize their expenses. This meant dismissing personnel, merging editorial positions, and taking other measures that ultimately worsened journalists' working conditions: less time for fact-checking, for writing that surpasses the level of cliché and status quo, or for developing new ideas – and of course less time for education in quality journalism. Here are just two examples as documentation of this situation: First, the last labor conflict between newspaper publishers and unions that was to result in a reduction of trainee salaries and lower starting salaries (which was luckily averted). Second, efforts to start publishers' own »schools for journalists« or »academies« in order to save them the cost of trainees' salaries (example: Bauer-Verlag).

But it would be too simple to make changes to journalistic working conditions simply for economic reasons. Journalistic work has undergone a fundamental change because the structure of media has changed: The internet has caused print, audio, and video to grow closer and closer together. »Cross-media« and »tri-media« are the magic words that reveal the restructuring going on in many editorial offices and media companies. In recent years and decades, online offshoots have cropped up parallel to traditional newspapers, magazines, radio, and television newsrooms. Most had little to do with their parent companies and their traditional products, which meant that (with all the consequences for publishers, fees, and recognition) they were normally outsourced and had only the (brand) name in common. The future of this trend, though, involves collaboration, integration, and working to

avoid such a dual structure. At the same time, in addition to traditional communication channels, many newspaper, radio, and television journalists will be expected to work on websites, editorial blogs, and to be active on Facebook and Twitter.

The study »Media Trend Monitor – Journalism in a New Information Age« by the dpa subsidiary news aktuell and the Faktenkontor agency illustrates this point: Around 60 percent of surveyed journalists said that »parallel work for print, web, text, mobile communications, etc.« is most likely to increase in importance in the future.[1] Striving to be the »first« to report on a news story before your competition does, makes work more intense and will, in my opinion, make journalism more superficial, more sensational, and therefore less attractive than it is now: I call it »fast food journalism.« This type of journalism that is generated more quickly, is less thorough, less discriminating, and less trustworthy – and is still consumed by an increasing number of people because its new, cheap means of production makes it available all over the world.

Given this situation, how can future-oriented journalistic education counteract this trend? My educational approach targets practical requirements. I want graduates of German journalism schools to represent quality journalism again. I want them to be able to find good, well paying jobs. In light of the described developments, does this mean that future journalists have to be »all-purpose«? That they should simultaneously do research, write, produce audio clips and videos, update websites, keep blogs, be producers, and take care of financing, advertising, and the marketing of their products?

As mentioned, journalistic quality suffers when content has to be produced for multiple forms of media at the same time. A reporter cannot concentrate on what the person he is interviewing is saying while also keeping an eye on the equipment (cameras and sound) and still compose a perfect text, a radio broadcast, or a piece for TV. The demands of each type of media are too varied. However, it is possible to create multimedia reports on a single event, as NDR correspondent Ariane Reimers did when she reported on the torch relay on Mount Everest before the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing. Miss Reimers filmed her own broadcasts, edited them, added sound, and dubbed them from base camp. She gave radio interviews and blogged for tagesschau.de. Of course not all at once, but over time.

At public service stations, volunteers have received »tri-medial« training for a long time. What does this mean? Prospective editors learn to produce material for radio, television, and online media. At German journalism schools, students are trained for work in print, radio, TV, and online media. Multimedia education takes into account the fact that, on online platforms, different forms of media are continuing to merge: Newspaper and magazine publishers produce videos and audio clips, radio and tele-

vision stations include text on their websites. In the future, journalists will have to meet these technical demands. They will have to know the needs and demands of the media for which they work – whether they implement this knowledge in their contributions to their respective media outlet depends on other factors. The core of education has to be research, communication skills, analysis, and the ability to explain backgrounds and contexts.

Moreover, it is essential that journalists learn to use new techniques. For example, dealing with and interpreting data is increasingly important. And this has to be taken into account in education. In their book »La Scimma Che Vinse Il Pulitzer«[2], translated as »The Monkey That Won a Pulitzer«, the two Italian authors Nicola Bruno and Raffaele Mastronolardo describe a future scenario that illustrates the direction in which journalism could develop. Based on software developments like »Stats Monkey«[3] – which are able to produce 150,000 news stories a week in perfect English without any assistance whatsoever from journalists (!) – Bruno and Mastronolardo predict that, in the future, knowledge acquisition will primarily involve collecting data. The flow of this data will have to be processed, analyzed, and interpreted. In developments of this nature, I see opportunities for young, prospective journalists to acquire new and necessary skills! The second trend the two Italians have identified is the revival of investigative journalism in the digital world: Technological tools like the website »Politifact«[4] that verify the truth of politicians' claims could strengthen the »cornerstones of the profession – like precision, transparency, speed, and freedom of expression.« The result: Journalists would have to adjust to a different system in the future and become a »hybrid species«, or »journo-hackers«, who are part journalist, part hacker (or data specialist).

Journalist and blogger Ulrike Langer describes another field of expertise in »Digital Big Bang – Five Theories on the Future of Journalism«[5]: »Curating is the Order of the Day« and explains: »Like museum curators who bring the best paintings and artworks together in a collection, arrange works thematically, thereby creating a way for them to be accessed by visitors, journalists should be seen as curators of the internet. Just how fruitful such collaboration between professionals and amateurs can be is revealed especially when the sheer mass of information cannot be professionally edited.« Many online editorial offices have not yet recognized the opportunities the internet presents, or, if they have, they deliberately choose not use them: Hyperlinks are still a rarity, since they take users to other websites. Generating »traffic,« or the intense use of (one's own) website, is still the explicit goal of even those online sites not financed by ads, so as few people as possible are referred to external sites – even if they contain relevant further information.

Annotated lists or collections of links arranged by specific topic or category or compilations of interesting subject matter are still seldom found in the internet. This is

not just because of the editorial management's specifications, but rather because of fear and uncertainty as to what extent a website owner can be held accountable for links to external pages. Restrictive linking practices even prevail among public service providers, although these online offerings have to be free of advertising according to law and in tele-media design, their reliable and responsible use of links and sources has to be made explicit. Precisely because of their advertising freedom and their independence, online public service providers are destined to act as »beacons.« In serving as »contact points for good journalism« and bringing high-quality products together, they provide users with useful orientation.

A further opportunity for journalists that incidentally builds more trust and creates a deeper connection with audiences lies in collaborative work with users. The British newspaper The Guardian is well known, for example, for asking for help researching the members of the House of Common's expenses scandal. They place almost half a million documents on their website and asked readers to review them. Another example of the how many users can shape and effect societal change is the Guttenplag Wiki that documents the plagiarism in Guttenberg's doctoral thesis. Without the help of hundreds of citizens working on this collaborative web project, the newspapers would not have found the countless documentations of plagiarism, public pressure on Karl Theodor zu Guttenberg would have probably subsided quickly, and most likely he would not have resigned.

Ulrike Langer writes: »Traditional media and new journalistic internet offerings are too often at odds with one another. They ignore or insult each other as rigid and incapable of innovation, or as part of the clamoring masses. But Guttenplag's example shows that both sides can complement one another wonderfully. The media benefit in their coverage of the huge amount of documentation involved in the Guttenplag Wiki. On the other hand, the project benefits from the considerable attention primarily created by the mass media. So both sides have strengthened one another.«

Today's news and information find readers, users, listeners, or watchers in abundance. But do media consumers also find reliable, well researched, and relevant news and information? Research, analysis, and commentary are hallmarks of professional journalism. Journalists have to give accounts of an increasingly complex world, illustrate contexts, and point out backgrounds. Therein – and especially in the new opportunities that the internet offers – lies the future of quality journalism.

In terms of education, which is obviously the basis for professional work, it also has to meet quality criteria so it can enable young journalists to fulfill the previously mentioned requirements. The paradox is that these qualification criteria and journalistic admissions requirements have been ignored again and again. One reason

that there are no unified standards in Germany is that the constitution guarantees freedom of information and of opinion. The journalistic profession is supposed to be »free«, meaning that anyone who publishes something can call him- or herself a journalist. But if each person who publishes something is a »journalist«, the whole profession is inevitably devalued.

One solution might be to reserve the job title »journalist« for those with a theoretical and practical education who have completed an appropriate training or examination syllabus – e.g. from professional organizations like the German Federation of Journalists (DJV). Like to programs in pedagogy, law, or medicine, the education process would have to be two-fold, entailing both study at a university and a practical component. The practical training should be carried out only in editorial offices that meet certain criteria (in terms of the supervision and the quality of reporting).

But here too, there is a clash of interests: It is generally cheaper and thus more attractive to hire only a few well qualified, educated workers – at least for employers who place no or very little value on quality. Conclusion: Quality has its price – even in terms of journalistic products and education!

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1 http://www.newsaktuell.de/pdf/medientrendmonitor062010berichtsband.pdf
2 Nicola Bruno, Raffaele Mastronolardo: La scimma che vinse il Pulitzer.
Personaggi, avventure e (buone) notizie dal futuro dell'informazione. Milano 2011
3 http://infolab.northwestern.edu/projects/stats-monkey/
4 http://www.politifact.com
5 http://medialdigital.de/2011/05/09/digitaler-urknall-5-thesen-zur-zukunft-des-journalismus/

Newspaper with Morning Coffee: A Joy of the Past?

By Sibylle Krause-Burger
Stuttgarter Zeitung, Germany

As I began my career in this wonderful profession, it meant entering a world held in considerable social esteem, a world of unique personal opportunity, and – yes, even this – romantic appeal. Being a journalist, even a female journalist, especially in the demanding field of politics: That was an accomplishment.

But to go point by point: First, the social esteem derived from the exclusivity of newspaper reporting. Television had not yet forced the printed and spoken word from the center of attention. The important newspapers, along with the weeklies *Der Spiegel* and *Die Zeit*, were the forces that formed opinion. In contrast, the newspaper *Bild* may have been influential, but was ostracized for its methods and crudeness, far more so than today. Private television had not yet been introduced, and the journalistic field consisted of, for the most part, serious journalists focused on factual information. The extensive popularization of the job and the decline in its quality in favor of ratings or circulation were yet to come.

Which brings me to the second point; the opportunities for young journalists at that time. It held such extraordinary possibilities precisely because the profession's reputation was still relatively unsullied – granted more for men than for young women. The latter were not taken seriously, and were relegated to topics which Gerhard Schröder once dismissed as »nonsense«; women's topics and the social pages. I remember a number of humiliations. A local editor refused to let me work during my civil service because of the unrest it would cause. Later the chief editor of the national political division of a large newspaper rejected me because I might have a child. Why did I want to mess around with journalism? It would be better for me to go home – back to my kitchen. Even the head editor, God bless him, once told me that as it was distracting for women to be in the man's world of political editing, it just wasn't possible.

At that time, the Federal Press Conference (BPK) was an unassuming organization located in the unassuming city of Bonn. It was the same with the foreign correspondents. But when you somehow succeeded, after a number of failed attempts, to become a part of that group, then you were recognized. People knew you, and what you wrote carried weight. The way in which you wrote also mattered; the quality of the text was important, not its ability to agitate. Whoever could think and write, whoever had something to say and could publish it in a paper that mattered – they were part of it. People made names for themselves and were stars – like Jürgen Leinemann from the *Spiegel* or Herbert Riehl-Heyse from the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

All of this was inspiring and thrilling, but it was also romantic. Not that I would ever want that type of atmosphere to return – God no! But I do fondly recall afternoons when the cafeteria smelled like printing ink, as the layout designers assembled the pages in their leather aprons and were the first to comment on the articles they had already read in reverse on the press. In the background the linotype machines rattled away. If an article was too long, then the lines cast in lead were lopped off and if necessary, a fitting ending was cast. It was all very technical and laborious, but also, somehow, wildly romantic. How easy it is today to change a text at the last minute. All the more marvelous then, that it used to work – from when the machine snapped it up only then to – wonder of wonders – spit it out as the finished product.

At that time the heads of department were minor royalty. Gone, gone those days. Many of them looked on in confusion as new technology broke into their holy domain and they again found themselves in a large, open office in front of a screen which they had to operate themselves. But such is our world today. The picture – on the PC and the TV – has marginalized the word.

Today it is no longer the so-called »giants« of newspapers who are famous but the TV moderators, and, with the exception of Ulrich Wickert, we have no idea whether they ever wrote a lead article or a full report, or can even write for that matter. Those »giants« who do remain, even great critics like Joachim Kaiser and Marcel Reich-Ranicki, still reach a large audience only because they have been successful on TV.

But even in printed media outlets, the picture occupies a much more important place than before. The word is disappearing. The exponential growth of the media landscape – not least by way of private television stations – has increased pressure to compete and lowered standards. Sensationalist journalism ranks higher than quality journalism. Even worse of course, is the fact that more and more people read the news on the Internet, and that reading a newspaper is entirely out of fashion; a development for which the publishing houses have virtually no answer. Despite all this, it is some consolation that interest amongst younger people in online versions of newspapers is increasing, and that almost half of 12 to 19-year-olds consider the

newspaper – above the radio and TV – to be the most reliable medium. However, ways of earning money on one's internet site – for instance a paywall – has not yet been perfected.

The publishing houses must take into consideration that for many people it remains a unique pleasure to have a cup of coffee and flip through the newspaper. A great number – above all the elderly – do not want to give that up. Just as they do not want to give up the joy of reading an ambitious, interesting, well researched and even better-written article. Electronic media are particularly well suited to delivering direct impressions of people and events. But only the written, verifiable word can deliver precise information. Granted, there are still pockets in TV and radio for qualitatively sophisticated journalism. To hear officials talk about it, however, even on public channels, you would think it is a type of luxury that is only performed for reasons of decor. There will always be a market for journalistic work at a high level; it is just that it has grown much smaller.

But the fascination is gone. In a world where everybody declares herself to be a journalist and can broadcast her opinions on the Internet; where you can express on Twitter, in sparser language and more quickly than any ad agency, the most banal confessions; in this world we no longer pay any attention to the most brilliant article or the most dazzling broadcast.

Czech Media Transformation and Quality Journalism

By Martin Mikule
Prima TV, Prague, Czech Republic

The current quality level and focus of Czech journalism reflects the entire country's recent history. Certain foundations of good journalism in Czech media history date back to the 1920s and 1930s. The so-called First Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1938) provided a very good platform for free journalism. As a democratic and multicultural state, it had all the necessary conditions for good journalists to be educated and trained and to be able to do good work. The daily newspaper Lidove noviny played a very important role in the First Republic's media scene. It was established in 1893 and still exists today. It published articles by notable Czech cultural figures and important intellectuals. One of its editors who contributed to the high quality of both the paper and Czech journalism in general was writer Karel Capek.

Another example of a medium with a long tradition is Czech Radio. It started broadcasting regularly in 1923 (the second regular broadcaster after BBC in Europe), and played a very important role in national unification during critical moments of Czech history, such as the Prague uprising 1945 or the Soviet invasion 1968. However, the evolution of free Czech media ceased with the Communist coup d'état in 1948. Private ownership of any mass media publication or agency was generally banned, although churches and other organizations published small periodicals and newspapers. In addition to this informational monopoly in the hands of organizations under Communist party control, every publication was reviewed by the government's Office for Press and Information.

Journalism became a profession closely intertwined with politics, and free journalism disappeared. It its stead, only Communist institutions' reports were published, mixed with ideological propagandistic comments. Independent, open-minded journalists had to leave the media, and a new generation of such journalists was not allowed to form. The only exception was a very brief interval during the Prague

Spring of 1968. In the late 1980s, a number of illegal independent papers called Samizdat also emerged, among them the daily Lidove noviny, which had been abolished by the Communist government in 1952.

However, after the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1990, there were few foundations on which to build. There was no modern tradition of independent media, nor a generation of journalists from whom the new generation could learn essential journalistic principles. Very young people with no experience took over senior positions in certain major media organizations.[1]

Some Communist papers, such as Rude pravo or Mlada fronta, became independent dailies after changing their names slightly and introducing a different focus.
A few formerly illegal papers, such as Lidove noviny or Respekt weekly, also transformed into successful democratic press. There were a great number of attempts to establish completely new papers after 1989. However, most of them failed. The ones that survived and are very successful in the current Czech media scene are mostly tabloid papers, especially Blesk – currently the daily paper with the highest sales, with a circulation of almost half a million copies. Distribution of new TV and radio licenses and later, the process of digitalization also allowed for the creation of a great deal of new TV and radio channels. Until 1989, all only radio and television was run by the state. Now there are dozens of new private broadcasters. Even though the public media (Czech Radio, Czech Television) still remain the main media in terms of news focus, they have strong new competitors. The most relevant of these are the private television stations Nova TV and Prima FTV, established in the early 1990s.

Media Independence

Censorship was abolished shortly after the Velvet Revolution in 1989, and in 1994 the Constitutional Court annulled a law enabling the criminal prosecution of journalists charged with defaming politicians. Even though the transformation of the media has been a long and chaotic process, foreign institutions' evaluation of freedom of the press in the Czech Republic has been rather positive. In its 2007 report surveying media freedom in the European Union, the Association of European Journalists found the Czech press's freedom to be relatively unrestrained:
»The Czech media enjoy a comparatively high level of media freedom and independence, reflected in the relatively mature media scene and the lack of high-profile violations of the media's ability to report on events in public life. Reporters Sans Frontieres,

1 Tomáš Klvaňa, Czech Media during the Transformation Period, Transformation: The Czech Experience, Prague 2006

in its Press Freedom Index for 2006, ranked the Czech Republic in 5th place out of 168 countries assessed.«[2]

However, this rating has not remained stable since then. In 2010, the Czech Republic plummeted to 24th place. The report raises several concerns, among them the subtle pressure sometimes exerted by business and political interests to influence reporters. Among its criticisms, the report also points out that:
»Czech journalists sometimes fail to demonstrate the independence of mind and professional rigor needed to report adequately on sensitive issues,« and that they »have shown a lack of independence and determination in questioning politicians and their decisions.«

The fact is, politicians have not yet given up trying to manipulate the media and threaten troublesome journalists. Particularly in the 1990s, several journalists faced criminal charges and civil lawsuits while others were intimidated for their activity or work. The most flagrant case of intimidation so far took place in 2002, when a senior civil servant at the Foreign Ministry was arrested for allegedly planning the murder of a reporter who published articles about his use of corrupt practices. Politicians have also used the regulatory boards appointed by parliament, which are supposed to supervise the sector, to put pressure on the media.

During the winter of 2000/2001, Czech Television reporters and other staff went on strike in protest against political manipulation. Tens of thousands of people demonstrated in the streets of Prague in support. They succeeded in part and a newly appointed TV director, who was suspected to be politically biased, stepped down. A large number of journalists from most of the media also openly protested against a criminal code amendment nicknamed the »muzzle law« in 2009. The most controversial part was banning media from publishing information from wiretapped recordings. The Czech parliament later amended the law and allowed wiretapping to be published in cases when it was in the »public interest.«

Tabloidization

With the change of regimes, the focus and style of news stories also changed. Even in serious media, hard news was replaced to a great extent by softer entertainment-based formats. The line between objective and opinion-based journalism became less clear. New focuses like lifestyle, show business, or cinema appear on front pages

2 Tereza Bottman, Freedom of the Press: How do Czech Media Fare? advocacynet.org

regularly. Journalism has become more personal and colorful, less serious, and more opinionated. Tabloid media, which basically did not exist before the Velvet Revolution, are now very successful.

The insinuation of pop culture into media applies not only to press but also to electronic media. A great number of new private radio and TV stations have emerged. The first commercial television network was Nova TV. It received its broadcasting license based on an agreement to broadcast programs focused on culture, art, or minorities. However, none of these conditions were met. Instead, it broadcasted commercial programs with tabloid-style news reporting, action films, noisy talk shows, or even soft porn. As these programs were totally novel for Czech audiences, they dramatically increased the network's viewer ratings. The second commercial television network, Prima TV, chose a slightly less aggressive commercial approach, but nevertheless, pop culture and news info-tainment also remained its central focus.

This can probably be attributed in part to the ideological shift from »anti-capitalism« to »anti-socialism.« Czech society failed to perceive the risks associated with the commercialization of the media. Other journalistic principles that were bringing in revenue at the time were rejected. The main problem in Czech media is that many media managers have found that quality journalism is not good business. It is difficult to convince them otherwise.

The Power of Politics and Markets: The State of Investigative Journalism in Romania

By Mircea Opris
Jurnalul National, Timisoara, Romania

Investigative journalism is faced with endangerment in Romania. This can be attributed to several causes: a lack of tradition in the field (a consequence of the Communist regime), lack of financial support due to economic recession, partisan articles written by journalists paid or bribed to protect various political interests, and so on.

The second-largest country in Eastern Europe (after Poland), Romania has a population of 22 million and was one of the fastest-growing economies in Europe until 2008, when it was hit hard by the global economic crisis. For many Romanian journalists and media organizations, the global economic crisis that started in the fall of 2008 hit like a ton bricks. The sharp decline in advertising revenue came at a moment when the media environment in Bucharest, if not in the entire country, seemed to be expanding on many levels. The financial and economic meltdown changed all this. Some business officials told reporters that advertising volume at the beginning of 2009 totaled just 20 or 30 percent of what media companies had received the previous year. Media groups that had been expanding quickly discontinued investments, cut wages, and decreased the work force. Some publications stopped altogether, others printed fewer pages. A few titles changed their rate of publication, going from weekly to bi-weekly, for example. At certain TV stations, entire editorial departments disappeared. Advertising agencies and production houses specializing in commercials also suffered.

However, investigative journalism remains the number one media tool and plays the role of »the fourth state power.« Documented investigations that are well written and even-handed are often the first steps in exposing corruption and maintaining human rights. Programs and organizations such as CRJI (The Romanian Centre for Investigative Journalism), CJI (Centre for Independent Journalism), or the Freedom

House Foundation aim to improve quality of journalists' work through professional training and stimulating and supporting the media industry both directly and indirectly.

Investigative journalism in Romania was hijacked, immediately after the liberalization of the press in 1990, by interest groups and influential business owners or managers of certain newspapers. After the growth of publications, radio, and TV in the early 90s, theme and content of journalistic materials started to take shape and crystallize, to a certain extent. Thus, both local and regional television and local publications created departmental investigations or even core groups of journalists to deal with such sensitive issues. Lack of training in media investigation, lack of authorities' transparency, and lack of databases transform investigations into tools for publishing text and disclosure of personal information that do not serve the purpose of journalism, but are used for blackmail, personal wars between politicians, public servants or businessmen. This kind of »journalistic investigation« served and still serves to intimidate or blackmail businesses or local governments, serves to adjust the accounts and pay policies among different groups of local political or financial interests. Finally, a practice that has been applied since early the early '90s is to write »investigations« with the sole purpose of pressuring people, companies, or institutions into entering advertising contracts with local publications and local TV stations.

Inquiries or investigations of this kind release these materials to local media and have specific targets according to the interests of publishers or third-party funders. Using these various materials to resolve trade disputes often involves conflicts that can involve businessmen, representatives of law, dignitaries, policemen, or magistrates. Topics discussed were generally the low and high consistency of documentation deficiencies. Thus, over half of local media »investigations« are based on a single source. As to the settling of accounts and strictly local interests at the village, town, or county level, the audience of those who control and produce such materials is limited by geographical proximity. Many such materials prove useful only in pressuring local authorities, magistrates, or decentralized institutions. Poor documentation is surprisingly common and, in addition, local newsrooms are not generally accessible documentary resources for national mass media newsrooms. Moreover, journalists dealing with such investigations do not have knowledge and training necessary to connect local incidents or situations with regional or national phenomena. They would play an important role in acquiring information and potential documents with local geographical proximity or in providing access to people directly involved in the situation. This poor practice leaves most local investigations incomplete and biased.

For over 10 years, but primarily in the last five years, several NGOs created mainly to support and monitor local and national media, have organized and held seminars and trainings for investigative journalists, including those poorly trained in Romania, as well as management and marketing courses for the local press. The most important contribution to investigative journalism set up by the NGOs included scholarships and grants for investigation. Grant money came with certain limitations from large multi-national tobacco, alcohol, or telecommunications companies, which prevented successful journalistic investigations from finding places for publication in Romanian media, except for on media NGOs' websites or, in rare situations, through partnerships with foreign press.

Freedom House Romania contests and grants are made annually through programs such as »Young Journalist of the Year«, »Freedom House Fellowships for Investigative Journalism – Supporting Investigative Journalism«, or »A Stronger Local Press«, whose primary purpose is supporting the development of Romanian mass media and publishing projects focused on improving the capacity of local media. The project was supported by the Employers Association of Local Publishers (APEL), established by Freedom House Romania under the Phare program, dedicated to local media.

The Romanian Centre for Investigative Journalism remains the only establishment that is specific, closed-circuit, and open only to carefully selected financial partners, the general association of investigative journalism in the U.S., UK, and Scandinavian countries. National and international investigations produced by CRJI journalists have little or no impact in Romania, as national newspapers refuse to publish them because of various advertising contracts or personal relationships between newspaper publishers and high-profile people that take part in the investigation. The texts are published on the CRJI website and in foreign newspapers. Thus, they have a reduced audience and impact on a national level, but a larger audience outside the country. Furthermore, journalists have the chance to win small grants from the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, with the financial support of the Robert Bosch Stiftung.

The Great Financial Depression involves the disappearance or reduction of investigative journalistic departments at major newspapers and television stations with national coverage. Low wages, interference of media management in the editorial content, and staff reductions have made these departments, where they remain to exist, »the last remaining dinosaurs« of an endangered species. Investigative journalists from local media have identified two solutions in publishing their materials, especially after the emergence of the New Romanian Civil Code, and since October 1, 2011, a more restrictive code. Many of these local journalists' collaborate with national media, signing their own names or writing anonymously. Investigative journalists working for newspapers, provincial, and national TV stations are under more

pressure. They face several difficulties: poor wages, lack of financial resources and logistical professional documentation, lack of experience and know-how in the field, and even their dismissal on grounds of staff reduction or lack of ethics codes – many are tempted to accept bribes or perform favors to businessmen and politicians.

Over the years there have been several attempts to forge a law dedicated to the press. Through their representative voices and organizations, journalists generally opposed such initiatives, arguing that a press law would impose restrictions rather than grant freedoms. However, a new study carried out by CIJ, ActiveWatch, and IMAS (The Institute for Marketing and Polls), published in October 2009, found that 70 percent of journalists say a press law would improve the quality of Romanian journalism. Only 35 percent say such a law would limit press freedom. Looking at the study's other findings, one could conclude that such an apparent shift of opinion is due to the awareness that the standards in the profession are low and that journalists are not protected from outer and inner pressures. According to the study, half of the Romanian journalists are not familiar with ethics codes, most journalists say professional norms are not observed in newsrooms, and 60 percent of them blame political pressure for this fact. Moreover, 31 percent say they are involved in bringing advertising to their company, 43 percent say it is hard or very hard to verify a piece of information with several independent sources, 33 percent that it is very hard to present all the various views when reporting a story, and 17 percent say that certain stories are forbidden in their newsrooms.

In Romania, like in many other countries, investigative journalism is in decline. There is some hope for the future: the rise of journalism bureaus and NGOs and a new generation of networked, web-savvy journalists are pushing the field forward. There is a real crisis in Romanian investigative journalism. The number of serious journalists active in traditional media whose work could be called investigative has fallen to fewer than 30 on a national level. This decline will probably continue. Data scraping, crowd-sourcing, and social media have really taken off as powerful tools for investigative journalism in the last few years. Few of these remaining investigative journalists work in traditional media. The only hope to keep the industry going is to identify domestic and international sources of funding for producing investigations and to keep NGOs and small active groups alive.

»United in Diversity«: On the Significance of Respect for Quality Journalism

By Susanne Biedenkopf-Kürten
ZDF Editorial Board for Europe, Mainz, Germany

Nearly twenty years ago, during one of my first visits to European institutions in Brussels, I purchased a Europe mug. Stereotypical features of the 15 EU member states at that time were represented by small caricatures that combined to form the »perfect« European: He would have a German's good sense of humor, would be as restrained as an Italian, as generous as a Dutchman, and as well organized as a Greek. The ironic attitude towards stereotypes appealed to me; it was a relief in some way. Only people who respect and acknowledge each other can laugh about themselves together. That small cup illustrated the right of the individual within the EU: each member is different but they all belong.

Since then, the European Union has grown to include 27 members, and a common currency has become a shared reality for 17 states. We also share a common internal market, and are much more closely connected to each other's joys and sorrows than was the case 20 years ago. Yet with the euro crisis and the difficult struggle to find a common solution, the European community is currently experiencing what might be the most severe crisis in its history. These days, most Germans are probably as unlikely to smile at the thought of the »organized« Greeks as the Greeks are to smile at the »hilarious« Germans. There has been no attempt to market an »upgraded« Europe mug that includes all 27 states, and it may not be the right time. The playful use of stereotypes does not sit well with conflicts of interest, which are unavoidable in an expanded Europe and during this time of upheaval. And it would require a broad base of knowledge and trust.

In the current crisis it has become clear how little we know about each other, how fragile our mutual trust is, and how quickly negative stereotypes can spread, whether in tabloids or amongst friends. So the »hard-working German« has to pay for the »bankrupt Greek,« who is supposedly continuing to have a good time on his

islands: The once-likeable southern »inefficiency« quickly turns into threatening »chaos.« All the various aspects of complex crises are reduced to seemingly simple »truths,« mostly at the expense of less powerful groups of people. But there are no simple truths and this attitude is harmful. It violates an important criterion of quality journalism: respect. Since the term »respect« can be used for different reasons and in the most varied of contexts, it is worth taking a look at its origins. »Respect,« from the Latin »respectus,« is translated as »to look back,« »to consider,« and »consideration.« These three elements are complementary. For the reporting purposes of ZDF's (Second German Television's) European editorial staff, they are indispensable.

Europe is a composite of different perspectives. Only those who seek the origins of those differences will understand them. Qualitative journalism requires respect in the sense of »considering« when it comes to classifying a number of diverse positions. Our own perspective is limited and leads to misunderstandings as soon as the situation in another country is oversimplified, and thereby made absolute. Within the context of the Greek crisis, this means that reporting journalists should not be content with simply stating that the Greeks or Portuguese are not fulfilling austerity measures as prescribed by Brussels, but must also consider the effects of austerity measures that have already been implemented on the population at large, and what it means to implement them. In order to gauge a certain effort or circumstance, it is helpful to apply it to a real life situation in one's own country. What would it mean in Germany, for example, if public officials' salaries were reduced by thirty percent overnight?

It is disastrous when a process of reform is regarded merely as a process of assimilation to one's own standards, greater accomplishments, increased efficiency, etc. This thought lies in the arrogant conviction that one's own life is better or faultless. By this logic, a successful reform process is reduced to a long overdue series of corrections that can never happen quickly enough, are never good enough.

Crises are marked by such asymmetries in perception. Our neighbors' concern and outrage are often not taken into account at all, at best only unwillingly. Continually identifying their causes helps to alleviate and relativize sensitivities, irritations, or mistakes. In this context the European editors of ZDF have developed the concept of »comparative reporting« in recent years. In situations of crisis or conflict, we systematically present different perspectives side by side in order to highlight their similarities and differences. Who in Europe supports the German savings concept, and why? What do our neighbors mean when they talk about an »economic union«? Are there certain lines that should not be crossed during negotiations, or are there any fundamental misunderstandings? And where are the intersections of different European pension systems?

This comparative reporting not only serves to relativize one's own perspective in terms of the greater European community, but can also be very inspiring when it involves European solution models for problems that concern us all, in the sense of best practice. How do our neighbors support working mothers, what models are available to combat young people's unemployment and to improve integration for migrants?

Quality journalism is also respectful when it looks back, or »respects« the past. Understanding the past requires knowledge of historical roots. Only those who have studied a country's history can reliably gauge a situation, because history often is the key to any understanding. For example, a look at Greek history can explain why Greeks place such little trust in their modern state – the last century in Greece was marked by constantly changing systems of government and a military dictatorship up through the seventies. A strong economic system was never established, and improvisation was the best survival strategy.

Anyone wondering about the eternity clause in the German constitution should call to mind the Nazi party's disempowerment of the parliament. The horrific consequences are well known. The Basic Law was drafted with the goal of never allowing this to happen again. In doing so they wanted not only to protect German law, but also Europe. Why was NATO membership so exceedingly important for Poland? And why were they so loyal to the United States during the Iraq War? Pairing journalistic discernment with reference to historical experience can create different, potentially new perspectives on such issues.

In the sense of »consideration«, quality journalism requires respect when it comes to dealing with its subjects. Their stories should not be exploited or used to confirm existing hypotheses, whether by taking individual statements out of context, putting them into different contexts, or even ridiculing them. Journalists must be open to others' points of view, even when they contradict their own. They cannot report or show anything that violates the dignity of the person represented; quality journalism must be humane.

The freedom of the press alone does not guarantee quality journalism. This was one conclusion reached by participants of the East-West-Forum for Quality Journalism, which took place in Berlin at the end of April 2012. Quality is the result of careful implementation; this also holds true for journalism. It demands that journalists think of their work as an open learning process, which is based on a set of immutable values, understanding and respect chief among them.

Authors

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Bojana Barlovac is a Serbian country editor at Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) since 2009. Barlovac is a PhD candidate at the Belgrade University's Faculty of Political Science (Culture and Media department). She spent a year as visiting scholar at the University of Tennessee, US. Previously, she has been working as news reporter for some of the biggest media outlets in Serbia – TV B92 and Fox Television. Furthermore, she is engaged as lecturer at web journalism seminars at a Serbian journalists' association. She is the author of several research projects and publications. Her work and studies have been awarded several times. Since 2007 the Robert Bosch Stiftung and the Austrian ERSTE Stiftung organize, in cooperation with BIRN, the Balkan Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence program to foster quality reporting and initiate regional networking among journalists.

Susanne Biedenkopf-Kürten

ZDF, Mainz, Germany

Susanne Biedenkopf-Kürten studied Roman languages and German in Breisgau, Montpellier and Santiago de Compostela. After completing her studies, she worked as a junior producer in the ZDF studio in Washington from 1985 to 1986 and, later, as an editor in the »heute journal« news program. After the fall of the Berlin Wall she reported from the ex-GDR and, in 1991, was ap-pointed director of the newly founded ZDF Studios in Thuringia. In 1993 she moved to the ZDF's main department for foreign affairs in Mainz, where she covered, among others, the USA and Latin America as well as a number of European countries. In 1999 Biedenkopf-Kürten became the director of the ZDF editorial board for Europe. She is responsible, amongst other things, for the daily Europe-focused magazine »heute – in Europa« (today in Europe) as well as the show »Yourope« on the German-French Culture Channel ARTE.

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Zsolt Bogár (born in 1973) is head of the business editorial team at the online edition of the Hungarian HVG weekly. He studied history and German as a foreign language in Budapest and Heidelberg. Thereafter, he completed journalism training at the Bálint György Academy of Journalism at MÚOSZ, the Association of Hungarian Journalists. From 2001 to 2008 he then worked at the political and cultural weekly magazine »Magyar Narancs« (Hungarian Orange) and was a contributing editor with the »180 perc« (180 minutes) morning show at the MR1-Kossuth public radio station in Budapest from 2009 to 2011. At the end of December 2010, Bogár was suspended, together with his colleague Attila Mong, after holding a minute's silence in protest against Hungary's new media law. Bogár was a project leader of the Media Tandem Hungary in 2006 and 2008, a fellowship program for German-

language journalists supported by the Robert Bosch Stiftung. In 2005 he also participated in the journalist exchange program »Media – Mediators Between Nations« of the Robert Bosch Stiftung and the Berlin Journalists' School. He was awarded the Media Prize for Quality Journalism three times (January 2004, March 2006, April 2008) by the independent Hungarian Foundation for Quality Journalism.

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Dr. Rainer Esser pursued a traineeship with Deutsche Bank AG in Hanover from 1975 to 1977. From 1977 to 1982 he studied Law in Munich and Geneva and earned a Master of Law degree from the University of Georgia in Athens, USA. Subsequently, he worked as an assistant at the Institute of International Procedure and Arbitration in Munich. After completing journalism training at the Deutsche Journalistenschule (German School of Journalism) in Munich, Dr. Esser worked as a lawyer in the international law offices Nörr, Stiefenhofer & Lutz in Munich and Stegemann, Sieveking & Lutteroth in Hamburg. He obtained his PhD in International Law from the University of Regensburg in 1989 and acted as editor-in-chief of Business Law Europe and Tax Letter Europe, two legal news services being published in five languages at Bertelsmann International in Munich from 1989 to 1992. From 1992 to 1995 he was general manager of Spotlight Publishing House and publisher of the magazines Spotlight, écoute, ECOS and adesso. Prior to his current position, he served as the general manager of Main Post Publishing House. In 1999 Dr. Esser became the general manager of ZEIT Verlag Gerd Bucerius GmbH & Co. KG. Since May 2011, he also serves as the general manager at DvH Medien GmbH (DIE ZEIT, Verlagsgruppe Handelsblatt, Tagesspiegel).

Fanny Facsar

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Fanny Facsar works for ZDF since 2008. Until 2010 she was employed in ZDF's foreign office in Washington D.C. In her role as a producer and online reporter she has accompanied and covered the US-election and the first two years of the Obama Administration. Since her return to Germany, Facsar is a news editor and a reporter in the news-department of the ZDF headquarters in Mainz. Apart from that she is a freelance reporter for CNN since 2006, with a focus on the political development in Hungary. She also has been assigned a »temporary correspondent« for ZDF in Hungary in 2011 in the realm of the Robert Bosch Fellowship program »Media – Mediators Between Nations«, which gave her an inside look into Hungarian Television (MTVA). Moreover, Facsar is a part-time lecturer for cross-media journalism at Bildungswerk Berlin-Kreuzberg in Berlin. She earned her B.A. and M.A. degree from the University of Dortmund and IUT Tours, France, with a major in Journalism and a minor in Political Science. She has completed a traineeship at CNN, in Atlanta (2003–2004) and subsequently at the Neue Zürcher Zeitung

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Lucas Josten is Member of Cabinet of Neelie Kroes, Vice-President of the European Commission and Commissioner for the Digital Agenda. He is responsible for media policy and relations to parliaments in the EU. Before joining the Commission, Josten has worked in the European Parliament as advisor to Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, MEP. He studied in Maastricht, Santiago de Chile and London.

Prof. Wolfgang Kenntemich

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After finishing high school and doing his service as a press officer in the army, Wolfgang Kenntemich worked as a political editor for the daily newspaper Westfälische Nachrichten. In 1973, he moved to the news agency Deutscher Depeschendienst, where he became editor-in-chief in 1979. He then worked for Axel Springer Verlag starting in 1983 in Bonn, overseeing the offices for the magazines Bild and Bild am Sonntag. Before switching to TV in 1991, Kenntemich also worked as senior correspondent for Gruner + Jahr. After a short stint at the Bayrischer Rundfunk (Bavarian Broadcasting), he moved to the newly re-opened Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk (Central German Broadcasting) in November 1991, working as editor-in-chief for television for twenty years. He is a book editor and author, amongst other of »The flood of the century« and »That was the GDR. A story of the other Germany.« At present he is an honorary professor for journalism at the University of Leipzig. Besides other roles, Kenntemich is Co-president of the European Pro Europa cultural foundation, Honorary President of the Mitteldeutscher Presseclub in Leipzig, and a member of the advisory committee of NUMOV, the German Near and Middle East Association.

Sibylle Krause-Burger

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Sibylle Krause-Burger, born in Berlin and raised in Württemberg, studied political science under Theodor Eschenburg in Tübingen. She then worked for various radio stations and large newspapers – mainly the Stuttgarter Zeitung, the Süddeutsche Zeitung, the Tagesspiegel and the Manager Magazin. Her strong suits: portraits of the powerful in politics and business, political reportages, background stories, analyses. For twelve years, beginning in 1988, she was an editor on the editorial board for politics at the Süddeutscher Rundfunk/Südwestrundfunk (South German Broadcasting/Southwest Broadcasting) broadcasting companies. Since

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Remzi Lani is currently working as the Executive Director of the Albanian Media Institute. He is a graduate of Tirana University, Faculty of Philosophy, and worked among others for the Spanish daily El Mundo. He is co-editor of the Albanian edition of Foreign Policy Magazine. He is author of various articles on Balkan affairs for different local and foreign papers and magazines. Furthermore, he is guest lecturer on journalism at several universities abroad such as Ottawa University (Canada) and Windhoek Politechnic (Namibia). Collaborator of Aspen Institute (Berlin), Istituto Affari Internationali (Rome), Center for International and Strategic Studies (Washington), Carter Center (Atlanta), Hellenic Foundation (Athens), CIDOB (Barcelona) and Bertelsmann Foundation in different projects on Balkan issues. Besides that, he is founding member of the first Human Rights Group in Albania (The Forum for Human Rights).

Martin Mikule

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Martin Mikule has been Foreign News Chief Reporter at Prima TV since 2006. His work involves mainly monitoring international events, Foreign News Desk management, preparing and editing reports for the main News Bulletin as well as Prima international weekly magazine. Mikule covered a number of international events worldwide e.g. general elections in Israel 2006, French presidential elections 2007 or the civil war in Libya in 2011. He interviewed a number of international personalities such as the former U.S. defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld or former Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak. Before joining Prima TV in 2005, he worked for different stations of the Czech Radio, mainly in the Czech Radio International Service – Radio Prague as an English Desk editor. Mikule studied political science at the Charles University in Prague.

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Saša Mirković (born in 1967) is one of the founders of Radio B 92, established in 1989. From 1989 to 2003 he was working as music editor, director of programs and general manager of Radio Television B 92. From 2003 to 2007 he was the president of the RTV B 92' s Board of directors and member of the Board. Since 2007 he is the General manager of Trust B 92 Ltd. (shareholder in RTV B 92 responsible for news program) and B 92 Director for external communications. Mirković is one of the founders of ANEM (Association of independent electronic media) in 1993 which is now having over 80 members (radio and television stations) from Serbia. Since 2006, he is the President of ANEM. Mirković studied law at the University of Belgrade.

Mircea Opris

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Mircea Opris has been an investigative journalist for the last 18 years, working for national daily Jurnalul National in Romania. He is a member of the Romanian Centre for Investigative Journalism and permanent Fellow of the World Press Institute, at Macalester College, USA. As a 1998 Alumnus, he holds a B.A. diploma in Journalism from the University of the West, in Timisoara, Romania. In 1999, he graduated from the World Press Institute, Macalester College, USA. In 2010, he received the »Balkan Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence«, a program of the Robert Bosch Stiftung and the Austrian ERSTE Stiftung in cooperation with the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN). Since 2011, he is also a counter terrorism analyst, after graduating from The Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence at Saint Andrews University, UK. He is founder of the Romanian-based COTERMOLA GRYPHON Think Tank, dealing with counterterrorism, money laundering and organized crime monitoring. Opris is also founder of the Eastern European Counterterrorism Initiative, an international network of professionals in the field of counterterrorism, focused on Eastern Europe, the Balkans and North Africa.

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After finishing high school in the town of Sonthofen (Allgäu region) in 1984, Jörg Sadrozinski studied journalism in Munich while simultaneously completing a vocational training program in journalism at the Deutsche Journalistenschule (German School of Journalism). During his studies and after earning his degree, he worked at the Süddeutsche Zeitung, the German news agency dpa, and Bayerischen Rundfunk (Bavarian broadcasting). In 1991, he was hired by Norddeutscher Rundfunk (North German Broadcasting) in Hamburg, where he initially worked as a TV news editor for ARD-aktuell. In 1998, he set up the web site tagesschau.de,

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Robert Bosch Stiftung

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