



MEDIA NEWS BULLETIN

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Media Environment

The media scene in Serbia

The World Television Day has been celebrated. Serbia has around one hundred registered TV stations, while 98.7% of its population owns TV sets, according to information collected by the Republic Statistics Agency in the last year. The research shows that citizens of Serbia watch one hour of television programme more than European citizens. (Pravda, UNS, NUNS, 21.11.2011)

Assessments of the current media situation in Serbia

The Prime Minister Mirko Cvetkovic says that the state does not influence the media and that "the dark age of the rule of political parties over the media is long gone". It seems that he has not read the recent report on the pressure and control over the media prepared by the Anti-Corruption Council. According to the report, the media is not control by a single political party anymore, but by several parties and tycoons. At the same time, a case that shook the media scene – indictments against the journalist from *Nacionalni Gradjanski* newspaper, Jelena Spasic, and its editor, Milorad Bojovic, and the forthcoming secret trial – disproves the Prime Minister's claim. (Blic, 12.11.2011)

The print media in Serbia is not dead, and latest technologies offer a chance for their development, it was estimated at the second Press Media Summit in Belgrade. The editor of the weekly magazine *Vreme*, Dragoljub Zarkovic, said that those who predicted the death of the print media were wrong and that the role of the newspaper would be to "explain events instead of reporting about them". The editor of the newspaper *Blic*, Veselin Simonovic, was of the opinion that nothing had changed in the print media scene in comparison with the last year, except that lawlessness had increased even further. He said that the market was completely destroyed and chaotic, but that all print media outlets in Serbia had survived.

(Tanjug, B92, NUNS, 16.11.2011, Beta, Politika, Blic, Pregled, 24 sata, Dnevnik, UNS, NUNS, Pravda, Alo!, Vecernje Novosti, 17.11.2011, ASMEDIA, November 2011)

Many of the media reports about the blockade of lectures on the Faculty of Philosophy between October 21 and November 10 had been based on incorrect or manipulated information, said the Professor Vesna Dimitrijevic, the dean of Faculty. "I am of the opinion that media companies and TV stations should examine all the documents and deny their previous published reports. Such a step would diminish the injustice done to the Faculty of Philosophy", added Dimitrijevic.

(Politika, NUNS, 17.11.2011)

The Media Strategy adopted by the Government represents a kind of a minimal agreement between politics, the profession, and various interests, said the editor of Radio Belgrade, Djordje Vlajic. He believes that "media laws and the whole business environment will not be improved by this government" and that "the government now has an alibi that demonstrates its willingness to do something". The journalist from the weekly magazine *Vreme*, Tamara Skroza, said that it seemed as if the report about the control over the media by the Anti-Corruption Council had never happened, since the media failed to report on it. Professor Mirosljub Rajkovic pointed out that "there was a tacit agreement among the media not to cover the Council's report".

(Danas, 10.11.2011)

The director of the International Security Institute, Orhan Dragas, says that "the laws against corruption in our country are excellent but have not been implemented. Corruption exists in the media as well: very often, informal editors of private media outlets actually work in the interest of ruling political parties. They have complete control over the published content because of their ability to blackmail the media with regard to advertisement deals paid by public companies".

(Danas, 22.11.2011)

The number of reported cases of corruption has been on the decrease since 2004, said the professor of criminal law from the University of Tilburg, Petrus van Duyne, during the round table entitled "How the Media in Serbia View and Report on Corruption". Around 40 percent of citizens report corruption, because of the lack of interest in it, especially by the media, said Van Duyne. He pointed out that Serbian journalists are often prevented from investigating corruption by their editors, who don't want to lose their advertisers. Professor Van Duyne and his team have analyzed media reports on corruption published by daily newspapers in the last 14 months, and the results will be announced not later than January 2012.

(Pravda, 23.11.2011)

Public service broadcasters

Out of 17,000 applicants, 10,000 candidates have fulfilled the general conditions of the public contest organized by Radio-Television Serbia (education, age and citizenship) under the title "We Need 100 Young Professionals for the 21st Century". Each one of the 10,000 candidates has been tested. After verification, a list of candidates with best results will be published and they will begin a three-month trial work. The best among them will be offered permanent employment.

(Politika, 12.11.2011, Politika, NUNS, 14.11.2011, RTS, Politika, NUNS, Blic - Srbija, UNS, 16.11.2011)

The RTS Digital programme has reached around 35 percent of households in Serbia, without taking into account the ones that receive the programme directly from the antennas of transmitters located on Avala or Crni Cot, says AGB Nielsen. Their data shows that RTS Digital is watched predominantly by 30-39 years-old viewers and that male population consists the majority of viewers. The Radio-Television Serbia (RTS) announced that the Guide To Digitalization would be aired on its programme on November 26 to mark the year when analog transmitters are planned to be turned off.

(Danas, NUNS, 23.11.2011)

Threats, attacks and proceedings against journalists; media-related trials

RTV EM is thankful to the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS), the Minister of Police, Ivica Dacic, and the head of the police, Milorad Veljovic, "for their understanding and interest, as well as to the police station in Knjazevac which has committed all its resources and demonstrated professionalism in an attempt to protect journalists and the media". After burglars had stolen highly valuable journalistic equipment with a precious journalistic database from RTV EM, the police identified the perpetrators and returned a part of the stolen property to its owner.

(NUNS, 11.11.2011)

Milos Vasic writes: A few days ago, journalist Petar Lukovic received two court summons: one from the investigative judge in a case related to libel and insult, and another one for the main court session related to litigation in the same case. First, Pera Lukovic has not received his own copy of private lawsuits – which is required in both cases. Namely, in litigations, each defendant has the right to file a response to the lawsuit during a period not shorter than 30 days; each defendant, it seems, except Pera Lukovic, obviously. The lawsuit was filed by priest Filaret, who demands 1.5 million dinars for emotional damage and a criminal penalty for libel and insult allegedly committed in an article originally published by magazine *Feral Tribune* from Split and later republished by *As* in Serbia. This happened in 2007. At the time, Filaret initiated a lawsuit over libel and insult against *As*, but the competent court rejected it in 2007. If the lawyers I spoke with are correct, the case has been brought to a completion (*res iudicata*). Please pay attention: the case has ended in a verdict and at the same time the claimant has not initiated any proceedings before the expiry of all legal deadlines for filing of any claims. It is not possible to file claims for libel and insult five years after the act. As we can see, the Church has a more prominent political role in Serbia than ever before, despite its declarative separation from the state. Journalist Pera Lukovic is just a collateral damage in this sinful relationship between the Church and the State: just an orphan abandoned on a doorstep of the court.

(Danas, NUNS, 14.11.2011)

The debate between an epidemiologist, Dr Zoran Radovanovic, who is a member of the Managing Board of the organization "Doctors Against Corruption", and the author of the episode of the TV series "The Insider" aired by TV

B92 under the title "The Sale and Purchase of Health", has proved once again how difficult it is to investigate the secrets of the pharmaceutical industry, writes daily newspaper *Politika*. The debate centered on whether the media had distorted the role of the World Health Organization (WHO) during the flu pandemics.
(Politika, 12.11.2011)

Journalists from RTV B92 have issued an announcement in a response to the reports published by the *Politika* daily. "Since the first episode of the series on corruption, the epidemiologist Zoran Radovanovic has been making threats against *The Insider* journalists and demanded that we not publish any facts we had discovered about him. We can prove this. After we published Dr Radovanovic's threats in B92 News, new threats have followed, now delivered via the organization he is a member of, 'Doctors Against Corruption'", claims B92.
(Politika, NUNS, 13.11.2011)

TV station *Kanal 9* from Novi Sad delivered an initiative today to the Committee for Protection of Competition aimed at ensuring that SBB finally allows broadcasters to access programme packages that are equally applied to all legal electronic media outlets in Serbia. According to information from the Journalists' Association of Serbia, numerous domestic broadcasters have had problems related to the access to the cable system of SBB in Novi Sad, Kikinda, Beograd, Uzice, Leskovac, Kruševac, Pirot...
(UNS, 16.11.2011)

The Court of Appeals in Belgrade has doubled the first-instance verdict passed by the Primary Court in Loznica against the attacker on the journalist from the same city, Vladimir Mitric because of infliction of a minor physical injury. The attacker, Ljubinko Todorovic, was sentenced to a year in prison.
(Dnevnik, Blic, NUNS, UNS, 18.11.2011)

The Journalists' Association of Serbia (UNS) welcomes the increased penalty for Todorovic, and is still convinced that the attack on Mitric was an attempt of murder. The Association reminds that the attack was committed in the same manner as the murder of journalist Milan Pantic. The president of the Executive Board of the Journalists' Association of Serbia (UNS), emphasized that Mitric would still need police protection until the attackers were identified.
(UNS, 17.11.2011, Press, 18.11.2011)

Priest Blaza Ivkovic (age 49) from the village of Saraorci from Smederevo, who was questioned by the police during the campaign entitled "Armageddon" on a basis of a suspicion that he had ordered video tapes and DVDs with pedophile content, attacked the team from the *Kurir* daily newspaper which attempted to interview him. "Do you want me to call people to lynch you? You are sect members! You are opponents of the Orthodox faith! Your newspaper is sectarian!", the priest said. He also threatened to file a lawsuit over previously published articles. "Get out of the village, get out...", yelled the priest.
(Kurir, UNS, NUNS, 20.11.2011)

Investigations of murders of journalists

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has declared November 23 as the International Day Against Impunity for Crime Targeting Journalists. The date was chosen to commemorate the massacre in Maguindanao in the Philippines in which 32 journalists lost their lives and which occurred in November 2009. The Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS) reminds that the murder of journalist Dada Vujasinovic has not been solved for 17 and a half years, while the murder of journalist Slavko Curuvija has remained unsolved for 12 and a half years. It is also a mystery who and why killed the journalist Milan Pantic in 2001.
(NUNS, 22.11.2011)

On the occasion of November 23, Nedim Sejdinovic from the Independent Journalists' Association of Vojvodina (NDNV) said that the unsolved murders of journalists had been caused by the general atmosphere in the society. "Serbia has not faced its past nor the crimes committed in its name. Murders of journalists and failure to solve them and identify those responsible should be viewed in this context", said Sejdinovic, and added that such situation sends a bad message to journalists. Dragan Janjic from the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS) said that

in at least two cases the state is justifiably suspected of being involved in murders of journalists. The participants agreed that threats and attacks on lives of journalists would be less numerous had the murderers of their colleagues been found.

(Deutsche Welle, NDNV, 23.11.2011)

Journalists' rights

Announcement issued by TV Prva says: "After her utterly unprofessional and uncooperative behavior during the previous period, and after the incident she caused yesterday after leaving her workplace and refusing to accept her daily assignments, Branka Nevistic has resigned from her job of a TV presenter-producer on TV Prva today by sending a telegram with her resignation. Her actions have caused damage to TV Prva and our company will take necessary steps to protect its interests".

(Blic, Vecernje Novosti, 10.11.2011)

A popular TV host, Branka Nevistic, has already hired a lawyer and initiated legal proceedings against TV Prva, reports daily newspaper *Blic*. She claims that she was forced to quit her job because of huge pressure and a lack of conditions for professional reporting. In her words, an open society requires open media and open discussion about all important issues, from the sale of *Telekom Srbija* to Kosovo. "As a journalist and TV presenter, my only responsibility is not to treat the viewers as fools. Journalists are pressured to act as chess pieces that can be moved at will. I am not a soldier, but a journalist", she said.

(Blic, UNS, 11.11.2011)

The Journalists' Association of Serbia (UNS) strongly supports Branka Nevistic, who has until recently worked as an editor for TV Prva, in her resistance against her former employer. The TV station tried to force the journalist to succumb to self-censorship due to pressures the station had been exposed to because of her editorial policy. The UNS said that Branka Nevistic had informed the Association in August that she was threatened with dismissal and exposed to censorship on TV Prva.

(UNS, 11. 11. 2011, Fonet, Politika, Kurir, Alo!, Večernje Novosti, 12.11.2011)

The Media Strategy

During a presentation of the third media monitoring report, media experts criticized the Media Strategy of the Government of Serbia, especially the controversial state ownership in the media. The majority opinion was that the Strategy constituted a form of a "minimal agreement between politics, the profession, and various interests" and that it would not significantly improve the position of the media in the country. Professor Mirosljub Radojkovic said that the major flaw in the Strategy is its provision which stipulates that national minority media and regional public service broadcasters should be included among the non-privatized media outlets. The second major flaw in the Strategy is the formation of six regional public service broadcasters.

(Dnevnik, UNS, NUNS, 10.11.2011)

The director of the Fonet news agency and a representative of the media sector in the Work Group for Preparation of the Media Strategy, Zoran Sekulic, expressed his doubt that the deadlines set by the action plan for implementation of the Strategy would be honored, especially with regard to the transition from budget-based to project-based financing, since the next year's election were likely to cause delays in the regulation of the media scene.

(Fonet, Danas, UNS, NUNS, 14.11.2011)

It is expected that the two main media laws – the Law on Public Information and the Law on Broadcasting – will be completed in early spring of the next year and later adopted. However, political events will decide when they will be actually adopted, says the state secretary from the Ministry of Culture, Dragana Milicevic Milutinovic. She points out that working groups are being formed which will prepare the draft laws.

(Danas, NUNS, 17.11.2011)

Dragan Janjic writes in the Media Center Newsletter: "The main requirement of the Strategy is that the state budget not be used to finance everyday business operations of the media, but to finance the public interest. This entails the government's obligation to organized public contests for media projects. Independent committees, which would not include any representatives of the government, would decide which projects are in the public interest and should receive money from the budget. This model would also allow the government to influence the allocation of money, but it is much more difficult to favor the 'obedient' media outlets in this way as compared with the system which allocates a fixed amount of money to municipal media outlets (which are public companies) each year."

(MC Newsletter, 18. 11.201).

The minority media

The Independent Journalist's Association of Serbia (NUNS) strongly condemns the political pressure exerted on the news portal www.presheva.com and expresses its full solidarity with its journalists and editors. Behaviour of Galip Beciri, the president of the National Council of Albanians, does not contribute to the freedom of expression and informing of members of the Albanian national minority and other citizens. NUNS again warns against the increasingly frequent inclination of representatives of councils of national minorities to violate the democratic norms and the rights of the independent media.

(NUNS Secretariat, 10. 11. 2011)

In response to the accusations made by the president of the Nacional Council of Albanians during his TV appearance on RTV Aldi, the editorial office of the web portal www.presheva.com demanded protection from the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS) and OSCE. "Activities of Presheva.com constitute a calculated and politically motivated attack on me and the National Council of Albanians", said the president of the Council. Mr. Beciri denied accusing the journalist, Mr. Salihu, of working for secret services and BIA during his appearance on TV Aldi.

(Danas, NUNS, 15.11.2011, Danas, UNS, NUNS, 17.11.2011)

Tamara Skroza called the attention to gross violations of the journalistic ethics that have remained without a proper response. She pointed out the example of a recent appearance of the president of a political party of Croatians on the programme of TV Prva, who was, in her words, "at the same time a guest and a target". "One of the TV hosts explained to him that the difference between Serbs and his people was in the fact that Serbs had the sense of humor, while Croatians did not". She also criticized the media reports on Kosovo and usage of the phrases like "defenseless people" and "Serbian homesteads".

(Dnevnik, 10.11.2011)

Commenting on the forthcoming adoption of the Media Strategy of Vojvodina Hungarians in 2011-2016, the president of the National Council of Hungarians, Tamas Korhec, said that he expected significant improvement of the quality and professionalism of the media in Hungarian language. Korhec added that it was of utmost importance to create necessary preconditions for the launch of a high-quality, nationally-oriented and engaged TV programme and to enable all household of Vojvodina Hungarians to receive it.

(Magyar Szo, NUNS, 20.11.2011)

The Democratic Party of Vojvodina Hungarians, the Democratic Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians, the Civic Alliance of Hungarians and the Movement of Hungarian Hope have estimated that the content of the proposed Media Strategy of Vojvodina Hungarians is unacceptable and that it would result in media censorship. The four parties have called on intellectuals and church representatives to vote against the adoption of the document. The parties say that the Strategy would give unfair advantage to the media founded by high-ranking officials of the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (SVM), including the current president of the National Council of Hungarians, Tamas Korhec. Representatives of the four parties agree that the proposed introduction of a journalistic "code of conduct" would result in a "complete censorship by political parties" and a control of SVM over the media under the cover of the National Council of Hungarians.

(Beta, NUNS, 21.11.2011, Dnevnik, UNS, 22.11.2011)

The National Council of Hungarians has adopted the Media Strategy that should "improve the quality and professionalism of the media in Hungarian language until 2016".
(Tanjug, Mađar so, NUNS, B92, 23.11.2011)

Professional standards

Branislava Dzunov, a TV critic, writes: "Decency is a skill that has to be maintained, especially on television. Is Veran Matic in control of the situation, or has he agreed to adapt the programme of TV B92 in accordance with the preference of the masses and to introduce some light entertainment? A bit of criticism of the folk music scene – this is a painless choice. A bit of a generalized mocking of ignorant Serbian politicians – no effect, since they cannot recognize themselves. The least expected outcome was for B92 to pay homage to Radio-Television Serbia (RTS) with its parodies of RTS' News and political shows. This was the station's programme on Thursday and it could only be described as a collage of nothing. It reeked of amateurism.

(Blic, NUNS, 13.11.2011)

In his open letter published by the daily *Politika*, one of the newspaper's readers, Jovan Stojanovic, writes: "The *RTS Digital* programme was launched three years ago and it is still labeled as experimental. The channel does not offer a single programme whose sound is technically correct. At the same time, the irregularity of the programme schedule is a big problem. For example, the first part of a concert (on the Channel 2) was aired on Sunday evening, while the second part was aired on Tuesday without any previous announcement. Programmes are being cut in half by live broadcasts of parliamentary sessions. Viewers are never informed when the rest of such programmes will be aired. The programme schedule information on the teletext and the web site is not updated, despite the fact that already by the afternoon the duration of programmes should be known, including the broadcasts of the trial of Vojislav Seselj (why is that being aired at all?), parliamentary sessions or sport matches... Does anyone on Radio-Television Serbia (RTS) has any respect for its viewers (who are also subscribers!) and their time?"

(Politika, NUNS, 14.11.2011)

Within the project of promotion of the media literacy program in high schools in Serbia, a book written by Velimir Curgus Kazimir has been published. The book is entitled "On Media Literacy" and will be distributed in high schools. The project is supported by the Ministry of Culture, Media and Information Society.

(Danas, UNS, NUNS, 11.11.2011)

The Sabic case

The deputy president of the Democratic Party, Jelena Trivan, says that most of parliamentary groups in the National Parliament of Serbia have proposed that Rodoljub Sabic, who is currently the commissioner for information of public importance, remain at his position. She points out that the Democratic Party recommended in 2004 and 2007 that Sabic be appointed as the commissioner, and that the party is now doing the same thing. "The term in office of Rodoljub Sabic ends on December 22 and he will be nominated as a candidate for a new commissioner in a timely and regular manner", she says.

(www.rts.rs, UNS, 10.11.2011, Pravda, 11.11.2011)

Appraisals, awards, training courses, conferences and competitions

A journalist from Radio Belgrade, Miroslav Vojvodic, received the "Branislav Mane Sakic" award for speakers in the People's Library in Smederevo. A fund with the same name gives the award for achievements in preservation of the culture of speech in the electronic media.

(Pravda, UNS, NUNS, 15.11.2011)

The thirteenth festival of the best radio and TV audio works *Taktons* ended with an appropriate official celebration and presentation of awards to the most successful contestants that was held in Studio M. The festival was organized by the Public Service Broadcaster of Vojvodina. Together with participants from Serbia, representatives of public service broadcasters from Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Srpska, Montenegro, Macedonia and Croatia, as well as from Hungary, Slovakia, Austria and Romania, took part in the festival. The representatives of Radio Romania won the largest number of this year's awards, while the sound technicians from Radio-Television Serbia were the most successful in the TV segment of the competition.

(Dnevnik, UNS, NUNS, 12.11.2011)

By a unanimous decision of the UNICEF jury, the best media reports about children's rights have received awards. Mirko Rudic was awarded for the TV report entitled "ISON – A Story About the Children's Choir in Novi Sad". The report was produced by A-Media and aired by TV B92. Marija Obrenovic was awarded for the article published in the weekly magazine *Kragujevacke* under the title "Too Poor to Buy Bread, Let Alone Dolls", while Sasa Stojkovic received the award for his radio report "Children – The Greatest Victim of Readmission". The report was aired on the programme of O.K. Radio in Vranje and was targeted primarily at the Roma population.

(MC, NUNS, 21.11.2011, Pravda, UNS, 22.11.2011)

The Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS) calls on journalists from all parts of Serbia to apply for a three-day training course entitled "Investigative Journalism and Public Finance" that will be held between November 30 and December 2, 2011 in Belgrade. The subject of the course covers the domestic and international experiences and knowledge related to corruption, its identification, proving and usage of documents in the process of journalistic research. The training course is funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as a part of its Accountability Mechanism in Public Finance project.

(MC, 21.11.2011)

The Journalists' Association of Serbia (UNS) has announced a public contest for journalistic awards in 2011 in six categories. The contest is open only to journalistic reports published or aired in the media during the period between December 10, 2010 and December 10, 2011. The deadline for applications is December 15, 2011. The awards for the most successful journalistic achievements in 2011 will be presented on the Day of the UNS, December 22.

(UNS, 21.11.2011)

The expert jury of the company *Novosti* has chosen the recipients of the awards of the 44th competition for the best journalistic caricature "Pjer". The winner of this year's competition is Muhamed Djerlek, whose work, entitled "Discord", won the first prize. The second prize went to Spiro Radulovic for his caricature "Selfishness", while the winner of the third prize is Jugoslav Vlahovic, whose caricature is entitled "The Question Mark". The best caricatures have been selected among 592 works by 155 authors.

(ASMEDIA, Novembar 2011)

Media transfers

After four years of successful performance at the helm of the city TV station Studio B, Aleksandar Timofejev will remain the director and the editor-in-chief of the station during the following term in office, confirmed the City Assembly yesterday.

(RTV Studio B, Večernje Novosti - Srbija, UNS, Kurir, Danas, Politika, 12.11.2011)

Anniversaries

The oldest daily newspaper in Serbian language in Vojvodina and the second oldest daily in Serbia, *Dnevnik* from Novi Sad, has just celebrated its 69 birthday and is convinced in its successful survival in the market. Traditional awards of *Dnevnik* have been presented, including acknowledgments to around thirty employees for their loyalty to the company.

(Pravda, UNS, NUNS, 16.11.2011)

In Memoriam

A photo reporter for daily newspaper *Vecernje Novosti*, Dusan Simic, has suddenly passed away in Belgrade. His photographs had enriched *Vecernje Novosti*, as well as other publications from the same company – *TV Novosti*, *Nada*, and *Revija 92*.

(*Večernje novosti*, 14.11.2011)

Srbislav Jankovic, a long-time journalist for *Politika Ekspres* daily and a member of the Journalists' Association of Serbia, passed away yesterday in Belgrade. He began his journalistic career in 1959 writing about tourism for *Vecernje Novosti*. He published a book "Traveling in Hellas", a monograph "Greece" and a several books about Serbian spas and its tourism potential.

(UNS, 17.11.2011, Beta, *Politika*, 18.11.2011)

A long-time journalist and a member of the Journalists' Association of Serbia (UNS), Dragojla Bajic Zoric, has passed away in Belgrade. She began her career as a journalist in 1962 and worked as a contributor to newspapers *Umetnost*, *Jugoslovenske Novosti*, *Odmor*, *Turisticke Novine and Zavicaj*.

(UNS, 18.11.2011)

Goran Stojic, the recognizable voice of TV Prva, passed away suddenly at the age of 48 in Belgrade. He cooperated with numerous production companies and marketing agencies. As a professional speaker and journalists, he left his mark in other media companies, including Radio Belgrade, RTS and *Politika*.

(www.prva.rs, UNS, 18.11.2011)

Three years after the death of the legendary journalist, editor and presenter, Djoko Vjestica, his projects and his humanitarianism are still remembered. As one of the founders of Radio Studio B, he was renowned for acting as a protector of citizens and as a radio host of the popular show "The Belgrade Postcard" he was more successful in solving citizens' problems than the official institutions. Djoko Vjestica was born in 1939. He began working as a journalist in the newspaper *Borba* and became a part of the staff of Studio B in 1971.

(Blic, UNS, 17.11.2011)

Media business operations

The media in Serbia are facing a drop in advertising revenue since the beginning of the global economic crisis in 2008, and a new wave of the crisis might make the survival in the market even more difficult. This is the conclusion reached by the participants of a three-day seminar entitled "The Transition from Traditional to New Media Channels" held on the Kopaonik mountain last week. The Seminar was organized by the non-governmental organization Integration Now! and supported by the Embassy of the USA in Belgrade. Michelle Foster, a media consultant from Washington, pointed out that the Serbian market was specific because of the fact that almost one thousand media companies operate in a small-sized market. Apart from the drop in advertising revenue caused by the crisis, the traditional media platforms – the press, radio and television – are threatened by the Internet and mobile telephony, which constitute new forms of distribution of news and entertainment content and are gaining new audience and attracting increasing profits.

(Fonet, Danas, UNS, NUNS, 14.11.2011)

The Association of Independent Electronic Media (ANEM), the Journalists' Association of Serbia (UNS), the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS) and Local Press demand that the Government of Serbia reject the proposal of Radio-Television Serbia (RTS) and the Republic Agency for Telecommunication (RATEL), which suggested that the RTS' unpaid obligations related to usage of electronic frequencies should be written off. The media and journalistic associations point out that the Government of Serbia, if it accepts the proposal, would violate not only the Law on Broadcasting and the Law on Electronic Communication, which stipulate the obligation to pay these fees, but also its own commitments from the recently adopted Media Strategy. The RTS has not only used the state's broadcasting infrastructure for years without paying any fees and without a contract, but it has also leased it and kept the money earned in this way instead of paying it back to the state budget, despite the fact that the state is its owner.

(Joint statement by ANEM-a, UNS-a, NUNS-a, NDNV-a and Local Press 11.11.2011, Fonet, Beta, Politika, Kurir, Pravda, Danas, 12.11.2011)

Snjezana Milivojevic: "The main source of media financing is the state. Through various forms of advertising, the state gives around 15 million euros to the media each year, while between 21 and 25 million is channeled via public contests and various types of state assistance. The annual advertising budget of *Telekom Srbija*, which is a publicly-owned company, amounts to 30 million euros. If we take into account other public companies and the fact that the RTS is also financed by the state budget, it becomes obvious that the revenue which is related to the state in any way is almost equal to the amount of money that is earned from the advertising agencies".

(Danas - Vikend, UNS, 12.11.2011)

Broadcasting of the programme of Radio Fokus was interrupted on Friday, November 11, because the station had failed to pay its debt to the Public Company *Emisiona Tehnika i Veze* (ETV). The station's debt towards ETV since the beginning of the year exceeds 5.5 million dinars. The announcement of the company said that the director of the station had asked its technicians to completely uninstall and remove transmitters, "which indicates their unwillingness to repay the debt and that we will be forced to ask for a protection from court".

(Danas, Pravda, UNS, NUNS, 15.11.2011)

A local television station, TV Valjevo, has stopped broadcasting its programme in the SBB cable network after the sale of the largest part of its equipment for the sum of 250,000 dinars in order to pay salaries to some of its employees. At a public auction, held on Friday in accordance with court orders awarded to three former employees of TV Valjevo, most of the equipment was purchased by the owner of the regional station TV AS from Sabac while a part of it was sold to the owner of the newly launched cable TV channel in Ub. "Out of 16 employees, only five of us have remained. We are waiting for bankruptcy proceedings", says TVA, which has not aired any news programme since January 20.

(Pregled, UNS, NUNS, 21.11.2011, Pravda, NUNS, 23.11.2011)

Privatization and state-owned media outlets

Most of the electronic and print media outlets have recently reported – citing information from the Privatization Agency – that the privatization of *A.D. Svetlost* from Kragujevac had been annulled and that the sale contract with a three-member consortium which purchased *Svetlost* at an auction held in the spring of 2007 was terminated. Despite this information, the weekly magazine *Svetlost* appeared again on newsstands in Kragujevac this week. The legal notice on the pages of the newspaper still says that it is published by *A.D. Svetlost* and lists the names of all members of the editorial office of the newspaper who have been striking since the beginning of the year and who have not entered the newspaper's offices for months.

(Danas, NUNS, UNS, 14.11.2011)

Biljana Jovanovic, the editor and presenter of the programme "The Notepad" and a student of the Machine Engineering High School, is the only member of the Roma population in RTV Raska. Her program aimed at the national minority has delayed the privatization of the TV station and allowed 35 employees to keep their jobs. The Roma population in the Raska District is not numerous. Trnavska Reka and Kucevski Lug have around 700 Roma citizens. Since 2008, when the privatization of the radio and TV station was postponed until further notice, a new programme schedule has been created with programmes in Roma language. Journalists had literally searched for and found Biljana Jovanovic in the high school and offered her cooperation. After being offered a job in TV Raska, her only condition was that her business obligations be reconciled with her schooling. 35 employees have retained their jobs. Biljana receives a salary in the amount of 5,000 dinars a month.

(rts.rs, UNS, 23.11.2011)

The Journalists' Association of Serbia (UNS)

The Business School of Public Relations "P.R.A" offers the members of the Journalists' Association of Serbia (UNS) a discount of 40% on the regular price of the school fee which amounts to 560 euros. Preference will be given to journalists who have lost their jobs due to the economic crisis that hit the media scene. Additional information is available at the web page www.pra.rs.

(UNS, 11.11.2011)

The Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS)

On the occasion of 23 November, the International Day Against Impunity for Crime Targeting Journalists, the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia has called on authorities to protect the journalists who are exposed to threats, pressure and violence.

(NUNS, Pravda, UNS, 23.11.2011)

The Republic Broadcasting Agency (RRA)

The Republic Broadcasting Agency (RRA) has sent the Government of Serbia a 10-page letter in a response to the Report on Pressure and Control Over the Media in Serbia prepared by the Anti-Corruption Council. The letter claims that the report contains "numerous untruths and insinuations aimed at the RRA". "The Anti-Corruption Council has based its opinions, at least when it comes to RRA, on insinuations and unverified information despite the fact that it had at its disposal the complete documentation".

(RRA, 14.11.2011, Danas, NUNS, 16.11.2011)

Most of the citizens' complaints filed with the Republic Broadcasting Agency (RRA) are related to the quality of service of cable distributors, but that subject does not fall within the competence of the RRA, as well as most of other complaints received by RRA from the citizens. With regard to areas that are within the competence of the RRA, complaints are largely related to airing of programmes that are not suitable for children and foul language mostly used in reality shows.

(Danas, NUNS, 14.11.2011)

As of December 1, the Republic Broadcasting Agency (RRA) is located at a new address: Ul. Trg Nikole Pasica 5 (zgrada „Doma Sindikata“), 11000 Beograd, Srbija. The phone number has remained the same: 011/20-28-700, fax: 011/20-28-745, E-mail: office@rra.org.rs

(RRA, 21.11.2011)

The Republic Agency for Electronic Communication (RATEL)

The 19th Telecommunications Forum TELFOR, the largest domestic annual event in the area of telecommunication and information technologies, took place in the Sava Center on November 22. The Register of National Internet Domain Names of Serbia (RNIDS) held a presentation on the first day of the event and participated in the promotion of the book "An Introduction to Management of the Internet", whose publication was supported in cooperation with the Digital Agenda, the DiploFoundation and RATEL. The promotion of the book took a form of a round table discussion that covered the technical and regulatory aspects, as well as the manner of using and managing the Internet:

www.rnids.rs/publikacije

(Personal magazine, 23.11.2011)

South East Europe Media Organization (SEEMO)

Kosovo journalist, publisher, politician and human rights activist Veton Surroi has won the 2011 SEEMO Human Rights Award. The SEEMO board praised Surroi's non-violent methods and consistent "commitment to human rights"

in all of his professional activities.
(SEEMO, 18.11.2011)

What is new in the media

TV viewers in the region will have a chance to watch the programme of Al Jazeera Balkans via cable and IPTV operators, the EutelSat satellite and terrestrial signals in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Al Jazeera is a global news network whose programme will be aired from its central studio in Sarajevo and regional centers in Belgrade, Zagreb and Skoplje.

(Politika, UNS, NUNS, 11.11.2011)

In the first phase, 15 million euros was invested in the launch of Al Jazeera Balkans, the only regional news TV channel. The royal family of Qatar plans to invest at least as much in the next 3-5 years. The company is headquartered in Sarajevo and it employs 130 employees; 95 percent of them are directly engaged in journalistic production, equipment, internet and IT. It is envisioned that the channel will contribute to reconciliation between the nations of the region.

(vijesti.me, BizLife, NUNS, 17.11.2011, Press, NUNS, 18.11.2011)

The weekly magazine NIN has updated its concept and design, as well as the range of issues that are covered. "We have preserved the essence of the old NIN", says the editor-in-chief, Nebojsa Spaic. "That is the highest professionalism, journalistic ethics, willingness to face the problems, uncompromising courage and the ability to reveal facts".

(blic.rs, UNS, NUNS, 16. 11.2011, ASMEDIA, November 2011)

The first integrated editorial office in Serbia and the region was launched a year ago. It has been created after a merger of the daily newspaper *Blic*, the weekly *Blic*, free newspaper *24 Sata* and web portals Blic.rs, Zena.Blic.rs, Sport.Blic.rs and 24sata.rs. The general director of the Ringier Axel Springer company, Jelena Drakulic Petrovic, announced the results of the concept of the integrated editorial office. The number of readers of the print edition has slightly increased, while for example the online issue of *Blic* has attracted many new visitors in comparison with the last year. Their number has increased from 13 million visitors in November 2010 to more than 25 million in this year.

(Blic, UNS, 17.11.2011)

Vladica Randjelovic, a coordinator of the Info center in the city administration of Vranje, has been appointed as the first commissioner for information of public importance. The web site of the city of Vranje has posted the first Information Booklet about the activities of the city administration. The 120-page document is available at the web site www.vranje.rs, and offers information about public acquisitions, revenues and expenditures, as well as employees' salaries.

(Vecernje Novosti - Srbija, 21.11.2011)

Digitalization

The state secretary for the Digital Agenda, Jasna Matic, said that the broadcasting of the digital signal would begin by the end of the year, while the whole process of digitalization would be completed before the end of the next year or soon after that. The digital test signal will cover around 40 percent of viewers in Serbia. The state secretary for the Digital Agenda said that the new strategy envisions a stage-by-stage transition to digital broadcasting of the TV signal, and pointed out that digitalization of television was "going full speed ahead". She emphasized that more than 250 people were working on the reconstruction of transmitting locations in all parts of Serbia, and added that the Digitalization Strategy stipulated state assistance in purchase of the equipment necessary for watching of TV programme for households covered by various forms of social support.

(Beta, Tanjug, RTV, NDNV, NUNS, 21.11.2011)

The 19th Telecommunication Forum TELFOR (telfor.rs) will be held in Belgrade, together with the first regional meeting between telecommunication providers. At this year's TELFOR, the Ministry of Culture, Media and Information Society of Serbia will organize a 2-day regional conference about the transition to digital broadcasting of the TV signal. The event is organized in cooperation with the Republic Agency for Telecommunication (RATEL), the company *Emisiona Tehnika i Veze* (ETV), the OSCE Mission in Serbia and the French Embassy in Serbia. (RTV, NUNS, 22.11.2011)

- Abbreviations - www.mc.rs/media-news-bulletin-abbreviations.2317.html#104230
- Sections - www.mc.rs/media-news-bulletin-abbreviations-and-sections.2317.html
- Archive - www.mc.rs/media-news-bulletin-archive.2381.html
- Media News Bulletin home - www.mc.rs/media-news-bulletin.2298.html

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