COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY: CITIZENS, MEDIA, AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Editor: Tarik JUSIĆ

MEDIACENTAR SARAJEVO

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A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE BOOK

Citizen participation in the political life of local communities and in the decisions taken by local public administrations is an important aspect of democracy-building. It is a mechanism for the effective external monitoring of government work, but also a means for making public policies that are close to actual citizen needs. The likelihood that public policies are based on actual citizen needs increases together with participation, and citizens are more likely to support decisions reached as a result of participatory practices. In addition, citizen participation is considered a possible solution for the problem of "democratic deficit", manifested in the growing distrust of citizens towards governments, lower voter turnout and overall political apathy and skepticism towards established democratic values, procedures and institutions. In that sense, participation is especially suitable for the local government level, as decision-making processes at that level are relatively close to citizens, and the implications of the adopted decisions are quickly felt within local communities (see Mišić-Mihajlović and Jusić; also see Isanović in this publication)

However, for participation to occur at the local level in the first place and for it to be meaningful and successful, a number of important conditions need to be met, such as a stimulating legal framework, citizen trust in local government and the existence of a strong civil society. Additional requirements include support of participatory activities by political actors, a certain level of openness and transparency of local government, as well as developed capacities of local governments to meet the needs of participatory processes (Ibid.). Finally, for participation to happen at all, it is important for citizens to have access to relevant information on the work of local government, on political options and participatory mechanisms at their disposal, as well as overall

activities within the local community. The extent to which citizens are informed becomes an important motivational factor and a prerequisite for their participation in the political life of their local community (see Gosselin in this publication).

Given the importance of well-informed citizens for the development of citizen participation, and for the overall development of democracy at the local community level, this book focuses precisely on the elements and processes required for providing sound information to citizens within local communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H). This is why we have placed a special emphasis on the key actors of these communication processes – the media and local governments.

Local media are the primary source of information on the work of local governments, as well as on the political, cultural and other relevant events within the local community. If they perform their function well, they constitute an important mechanism through which citizens can participate in the public life of their community, articulating their interests and deliberating on government performance. However, to ensure their informative function, quality, substantial and diverse media reporting on locally relevant topics is necessary, as well as a media sphere that is open towards different, often opposed, actors.

At the same time, local government is becoming an ever more prominent communicator in the local community. This is a result of a number of factors and processes, such as the gradual development of communication capacities of municipal administrations; institutionalization of public relations as an important segment of local government work; communication technologies and tools that are becoming more user-friendly, inexpensive and widespread; as well as the growing demand for greater transparency and accountability of local governments towards citizens. In addition, the local administration is becoming an increasingly important source of information for local media. All of these factors place the local government

at the very center of communication processes within the local community, transforming it into a key communication actor in this new environment (see Isanović as well as Mišić-Mihajlović and Jusić; also see Gosselin in this publication).

In line with this thematic approach, the chapters of this book can be divided into two groups: those that primarily deal with the role of local media as key actors in communication processes at the local level, and those that deal with local government and the way in which it establishes communication with citizens at the local community level. Together, the five chapters provide a systematic and multi-dimensional insight into the key institutions, mechanisms and communication practices within local communities, pointing towards the complexity of the communicative interactions that take place between media, local municipal administrations and citizens.

In the first chapter, Tania Gosselin lays out a theoretical framework for understanding the links between local media, democratic government and citizen participation in local community life, analyzing local media within wider theoretical and empirical debates on the role of media and their influence on different actors at the local level. In that sense, the paper is primarily focused on the link between local media and politics, within the specific context of post-communist societies. Proceeding from the concept of media systems and analytical dimensions developed by Hallin and Mancini, Gosselin first identifies the key characteristics of media in post-communist societies of Central and Eastern Europe, subsequently focusing on mechanisms that local media can use to influence citizens, institutions and processes, and in that manner significantly participate in the political life of a local community.

Local media are the main source of information on local events, political actors and the work of local governments, and are thus an important factor for creating the preconditions for well-informed political choices by citizens. In addition, local media

can foster citizen engagement within the local community, and can be an important element in creating a sense of belonging in a community. Finally, local media significantly influence the behavior of local governments and elected citizen representatives in local councils. However, looking at the example of B&H and other post-communist countries, it becomes evident that the media are facing a number of obstacles in fulfilling their democratic role, such as political parallelism; fragmentation of the media sector and audiences; a lack of citizen trust; shortcomings of media regulation; and inadequate mechanisms for financing media. In such conditions, as this chapter concludes, significant support by external factors is necessary to truly accomplish the democratic role of local media.

Tarik Jusić and Sanela Hodžić provide a systematic overview of the local media scene and existing public media policies and practice in B&H, observing local media in the wider context of the media sector in the country, as well as current international trends in this area. The paper starts with the assumption that the development of democratic processes at the local level depends to a significant degree on the availability of relevant local media content. However, the experiences of other countries show that a conducive legal and institutional environment is needed for the creation of a sufficient amount of quality content relevant to local communities. Unfortunately, the legal framework and regulation and public policies in B&H do not adequately stimulate the development of local media and the production of local media content of public interest. As a result, the existence of a large number of local media is not a guarantee of plurality of relevant local content or adequate representation of local communities in the media, especially in an environment where their independence from political power centers is not ensured and where their capacities for the production of content of significance for the local public are not supported. Therefore, the future of local and regional media, as well as the future of local media content of public interest will depend on a number of public policies directed at creating a healthier market, legal, regulatory and institutional environment in B&H.

Kate Coyer and Joost van Beek begin their chapter with the assumption that community media play an important role in the exercise of communication rights as a democratic cornerstone, such as the right of freedom of access to information and freedom of expression without fear and pressure. Across Europe, the role of community media is becoming more pronounced, as they are growing into a formal "third sector" of broadcasting, in addition to public broadcasters and commercial media. At the same time, the development of community media in B&H, especially non-profit radio stations directed towards local communities, is facing a number of obstacles, such as an inadequate regulatory environment that does not encourage financial sustainability or the ignorance of local officials regarding the potentials of community media, as well as overall national and political polarization where support to individual media is observed only through the lens of political conflict and interest.

In the remaining two chapters, the focus shifts from media to the local government as an important factor in communication processes within the local community.

Snežana Mišić-Mihajlović and Mirna Jusić deal with communication practices and mechanisms employed by local governments in B&H to encourage direct citizen participation in decision-making processes, and look into how this field is regulated by law. Informing citizens is considered the key prerequisite for their motivation and ability to participate in the political life of a local community. The authors assert that, to some extent, there is currently a disruption in communication between the local government and citizens in B&H, which represents an obstacle to citizen participation in decision-making processes at the local level. This disruption is most clearly manifested in the lack of continuous, systematic, institutionalized communication, which adversely affects the level of citizens' knowledge about mechanisms, reasons and goals of participation at the local level, and encourages political apathy and mistrust of citizens towards local government. Within local administrations, there is evidently a low level of understanding of the importance of communication for the

political life of the local community, as well as for the efficient operation of the local government itself. In addition, the legal framework and municipal acts do not sufficiently stimulate the development of proactive communication practices of the local government.

Finally, Adla Isanović's paper points to the potential of information and communication technologies (ICT) for the development of democracy, political participation of citizens and more transparent work of local government. This potential is increasingly important in light of the political apathy and growing distrust of citizens towards government institutions and political leaders, which represents a serious problem for democracy in B&H. Modern ICT offer an opportunity for the revitalization of democracy by offering the prospect of new communication models between citizens, public institutions and political actors, thus creating preconditions for new modes of citizen participation in decision-making on issues of public interest. The author investigates to what extent and in what manner municipal authorities in B&H use new ICT for the promotion and development of citizen participation. The research is especially focused on municipal websites, indicating that the use of these communication technologies is still at an early development stage in Bosnian-Herzegovinian municipalities: websites are primarily informative, to a lesser extent user-friendly, and slightly or not at all participatory. In other words, the potentials of the new technology are not utilized enough to significantly encourage online participation of citizens. Local governments use online technologies primarily as a channel for their own promotion, and not as a space for democratic participation and deliberation, thus missing an opportunity to bridge the gap disconnecting them from the local community.

With this structure, the publication and its individual chapters try to make a modest contribution to the understanding of communication processes at the local level in B&H, with a focus on the role of local media and local governments as primary actors

in these processes. Research on the subject has been scarce – it is almost impossible to find research papers on either local media or local government communication practices in B&H. This is more than a sufficient reason for publishing this collection of research papers, especially having in mind the scope and dynamics of reform processes that the local governments and the media system in B&H have been undergoing in the past fifteen years and that have remained largely undocumented and unknown to the wider public.

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LOCAL MEDIA, DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION: A THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

Tania GOSSELIN

1. Introduction

Much of the literature about media in Bosnia-Herzegovina focuses on the use of media to fan nationalist views and mobilize communities against one another before and during the war (e.g. Kurspahić 2003; Thompson 1994; Slapsak 1997). Other works detail the interventions of the international community in setting up and sponsoring outlets and programs with the aim of countering the effects of biased messages disseminated by Bosnian outlets (Thompson and De Luce 2002; Bratić 2008). These studies underscore specific – and dramatic – aspects of the connection between media and politics. Other elements, such as ownership or the impact of paying attention to public television news content, are less frequently focused on. Furthermore, linkages between local outlets and local democracy remain underexplored. While the importance of local media is often acknowledged in Bosnia-Herzegovina and many countries in Eastern Europe, it constitutes a neglected topic. It has become common to say that the plurality and independence of media promote a healthy democracy. The idea "that the greater the independence and pluralism of the media […], the greater will be the level of civic trust and civic involvement" (Dawisha 1996, p. 54) is generally assumed to apply to local media as well.

This book begins to fill the gap by providing analyses of different aspects of communication at the level of local communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The goal of the present chapter is to offer an analysis of local media within the larger context of theoretical and empirical debates about the roles of media, and its impact on the various actors involved in public affairs. These debates are not new. The fields of sociology, political science, communication and media studies have long been concerned with the notions of media systems and the media's role in describing and

evaluating media organization and production. More recently, scholars have started to use quantitative measures of media performance to assess the relationship between media content, ownership, and others characteristics on the one hand, and various aspects of democratic governance on the other. This rapidly expanding literature about media effects is more concerned with testing the performance of media in "real life" than defining what it should be in normative terms. Finally, since 1989, the change of regimes in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) has also prompted a renewal of interest for the role and influence of media in settings undergoing democratization.

These literatures are too rich to recount entirely in this limited space. Therefore, this brief overview is largely focused on the linkages between media and politics, with an emphasis on examples and works pertaining to local media and post-communist settings. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first relies on the notion of media systems to present key characteristics of media in Central and Eastern European countries. The second examines the mechanisms through which the media, and local outlets in particular, may influence citizens and local institutions, and thus contribute to shaping local democracy.[1]

A note on labels - local and community media

Before embarking on the review, a short note on the labels "local media" and "community media" may be useful. There is no consensus on the definition of local or community media. For example, the website of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) proposes different characteristics of community radio, among which are not-for-profit orientation, community control,

1 The second part is based significantly on the author's Ph.D. dissertation (Gosselin 2006).

community participation, cultural diversity, lack of censorship, and educational and informative content that emphasizes local issues. Similarly, different theoretical approaches to community media emphasize either the community that is served by the media, the relationship of community outlets with mainstream media, or their embeddedness in civil society (see the review by Carpentier, Lies and Servaes 2001). To avoid getting entangled in the different interpretations of community media, the term "local media" is employed in this chapter to designate subnational outlets available to territorially circumscribed groups of citizens.[2] Accordingly, a community outlet would typically belong to the larger, less specific category of local media. However, not all local outlets need possess the characteristics of community media. The choice of the more generic terminology of "local media" largely reflects this chapter's aim to present a general canvass against which we can read Bosnia's and post-communist countries' experiences 1) in the light of current characterizations of

2 The Bosnian case illustrates that even such a minimal definition is not exempt from problems. The outlets and audiences are divided between the two entities of the Republika Srpska (RS) and the Federation (there is also the self-administrated district of Brčko, which belongs to neither entity), and furthermore along ethnic lines. In this context, drawing a firm boundary between national and subnational outlets can become a moot issue. Is a paper circulating largely in RS, and reaching just shy of 40% of the country's population, considered local?

We are also aware that the labels "community media" and "local media" can be associated with different theoretical and methodological outlooks. Within the culturalist view, media stem from, and constitute channels through which groups can express specific identities and worldviews (Hall 1996). Community media thus often refers, directly or indirectly, to a sense of belonging or an identity that need not coincide with a given territory. Identity is not the main concern of scholars focusing on media economics or the impact of media exposure on citizens' level of information about public affairs. The label "local media" is more frequently used in quantitative-oriented studies of media effects, as well as those concerned with markets shares and ownership (notably in the American context, where the boundaries of local markets are well defined).

media in democratic and democratizing societies, and 2) as a fertile ground on which to test and refine hypotheses gauging media influence on politics.

2. The dimensions of media systems: media markets, political parallelism, and state intervention

The notion of a "media system" refers to the classification of different countries' media according to relevant characteristics. The concept emphasizes a core trait of the media: its embeddedness in the larger social, economic, and political environment (Blumler and Gurevitch 1975; 1994; Hallin and Mancini 2004; Siebert et al. 1956). It is therefore not surprising if attempts to define and classify the media have concentrated on links between the media and political and economic institutions. This is illustrated by nomenclatures such as Siebert et al.'s (1956) "authoritarian", "libertarian", "social responsibility", and "communist" models of the press, Altschull's (1984) "market", "Marxist", and "advancing" models, or Picard's (1985) classification of Western media organizations into "ocial democratic", "social responsibility" and "libertarian" versions.

The concept of a media system initially gained relatively limited ground. However, it has recently resurfaced following a call for a more comparative approach in political communication. Despite the impossibility of ridding the notion of media systems of all normative foundations[3], the more recent versions of the concept seek less to evaluate than to acknowledge the interconnectivity between media and culture,

3 For example, Siebert et al.'s classic *Four Theories of the Press*, mostly distinguishing media in liberal democracies from those in communist countries in the late 1950s, had a distinctly normative flavor anchored in the Cold War context.

economics, politics, as well as other facets of societies. It becomes of heuristic tool to better understand differences between media in various corners of the world, and explain the impact they potentially have on those who pay heed to them.

Hallin and Mancini (2004, p. 21) propose four main dimensions of media systems:

1) the development of media markets, especially the mass circulation press;
2) party-media parallelism, which shape the linkages between the media and political parties, but also between media and the major political divisions in a society;
3) the professionalism of journalists;
4) the nature and extent of state intervention in the media.

Based on the observation of media in (Western) Europe and North America, Hallin and Mancini (2004, pp. 73-75) combine these dimensions to define the contours of three models: the Mediterranean, or Polarized pluralist model, illustrated by the cases of France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain; the North/Central European or Democratic corporatist model, found in Scandinavian countries, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Switzerland; and the North Atlantic or Liberal model in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada and Ireland. The Mediterranean or Polarized pluralist model is defined by a press enjoying only limited circulation numbers and mostly catering to the elite, with high political parallelism, and weaker professionalism on the part of journalists. The state is influential in the media sphere, if not always effective at regulating it. The North/Central European or Democratic corporatist model exhibits high newspaper circulation, relatively high political parallelism, a professionalized community of journalists, and various segments of the societies involved in the regulation of media. Finally, the North Atlantic or Liberal model is characterized at present by circulation numbers lower than in countries belonging to the Democratic corporatist family, low political parallelism, relatively high professionalization, and moderate state intervention in the media domain.

The three models' focus on national outlets seems to leave little room for potential heterogeneity across national and local media levels to be taken into account. Also, similarities of the media in countries categorized in the same family tend to be emphasized, leading to a somewhat unequal weighting of the four dimensions across cases. For example, it is not evident that Canada's and the United Kingdom's mixed broadcasting systems have more in common with the private system found in the United States than with those in countries belonging to the North/Central European category. Furthermore, phenomena such as deregulation, the increasing reliance of public television on advertising revenues, and the global character of many media companies make it increasingly difficult to design mutually exclusive categories of media systems (Norris and Inglehart 2007, pp. 13-14).

Despite the limits of the typology[4], parallels can be drawn between the economic and political experiences of countries belonging to the Mediterranean media system family and Eastern Europe. Both regions exhibit uneven, delayed economic development, and host elites that rely on clientelism to win and maintain political support. In CEE, this state of affairs is viewed as the result of the communist heritage and the weak socio-economic bases of political parties. In the media realm, it translates into the politicization of public broadcasters, and a blurred line between journalistic and political activities (Jakubowicz 2008, pp. 110-118).

Although we take stock of the parallels, we do not seek to assign CEE media systems to one model or another. Rather, in the remainder of this first part of the chapter, we use Hallin and Mancini's dimensions as a heuristic tool to map the characteristics of media in CEE and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

4 Hallin and Mancini acknowledge the explorative character of their analysis. They also write that that their typology would require modifications to apply to other regions of the world (Hallin and Mancini 2004, p. 6).

2.1. Media markets: the press

For Hallin and Mancini, the structure of media markets is largely defined by circulation numbers, and how the mass circulation press relates to its audience and the wider society. In Southern Europe, circulation numbers are typically low, and newspapers target an educated, urban, politically involved elite. This can be contrasted with the situation in Northern Europe and North America, where circulation numbers are higher, and the audience less differentiated. There the press does not so much serve as a platform for inter-elite debates as a communication channel between political elites and citizens. It follows that private interests play a larger role in the latter regions, while print outlets are more likely to be subsidized by political interests in the south of Europe. Other important aspects of media market structure include the relative significance of television and print press in the system, an eventual distinction between sensationalist or yellow versus "quality" outlets, and the weight and nature of regional and local media.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, many new newspapers and magazines sprang up in CEE. However, after the initial effervescence, both new and old titles faced a decrease in readership[5] – a spectacular drop in the case of many former communist titles – while competing for limited advertising revenues. Most of the state-owned print media passed into private hands during a first, "spontaneous" period of privatization. After the tumultuous early years, the state usually stepped in to supervise the process of privatization, which also extended to broadcast media (Hrvatin et al. 2004, p. 20). The speed and manner of privatization varied between countries, as well as the share of foreign ownership that resulted from it. The media in the former Yugoslavia were

5 It is difficult to find comparable circulation numbers, as they are not always available – the information is often considered a business secret (Hrvatin et al. 2004, p. 24).

official socially- rather than state-owned. This specificity, together with the war dynamics that affected Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia, probably accounts for the slower privatization process. A number of the acquiring companies or individuals allied with foreign companies brought much needed capital (foreign conglomerates also entirely control some major dailies in CEE). In other cases, journalists and employees bought the outlet. There were also instances of outlets sold to people close to the government, as in Slovakia. In Albania, the largest of the former communist dailies is still owned by the Socialist Party (Hrvatin et al. 2004, pp. 22-23).

Local media ownership patterns are more likely to reveal concentration patterns than national ones, especially where larger local or regional dailies are concerned. They largely belong to a handful of foreign media groups in Hungary (Bajomi-Lazar 2003), Estonia (Paju 2004), and the Czech Republic (European Journalism Center). Concentration may also be facilitated - although not necessarily - where one or more media barons control many local outlets and significant shares of local audience, as in Romania (see Preoteasa 2003; SAR, 2003). With the exception of local dailies, the local print outlet scene is typically fragmented in most countries of the region given the sheer variety of outlets, the lower penetration of foreign companies, as well as the significant control exercised by local governments.

The readership of local media varies greatly. For example, the 73 regional editions of *Denik* in Czech Republic reach over a million readers (Compress, 2008). According to various surveys conducted between 1995 and 2002, 30% of Hungarians respondents reported reading a regional daily at least several times a week, while in Romania 36% answered that they consult them at least once a week. Roughly half this number said they listened to local radio or watch local television. Regional newspapers had the favor of 54% of respondents to a Polish survey in the late 1990s, while 15% of the respondents to a Latvian inquiry reported relying on a subnational publication as their main source of information. Only 6% said they listened to local

radio.[6] The available information about local media consumption, even if fragmentary, suggests that local dailies command the attention of a modest, yet not negligible number of citizens.

As in many other countries, television attracts the bulk of audiences and advertisement revenue. At the national level, the consolidation of markets around a few actors is often more visible than in the case of the press. Comparatively, the Bosnian market seems fragmented: it counts not only 11 daily newspapers, all privately owned, but also close to 50 television stations and almost 150 radio stations. The current distribution of audiences and advertising revenue reflects the lack of domination by any of the channels[7] (Hozic 2008). The segmentation of the market along ethnic lines contributes to this fragmentation. In some respects, the media scenes of the RS and the Federation exhibit the traits of two separate markets.

6 The Hungarian data comes from the Central European University Post-Election Survey 2002 (1,200 respondents), funded by the Central European University Foundation. The Romanian Survey data is available from the Romania Open Society Foundation at www.soros.ro. The machine readable data file 1992-1999 of the Polish General Social Surveys is produced and distributed by the Institute for Social Studies, University of Warsaw (2002). The investigators were Bogdan Cichomski (principal investigator), Tomasz Jerzynski and Marcin Zielinski. It is available at www.iss.uw.edu.pl. The Latvian data is from a survey conducted in the framework of the Baltic Institute of Social Sciences' project "Towards Civic Society" and is available at www.bszi.lv.

7 In addition, a number of popular private print and electronic outlets originate from neighboring Croatia and Serbia. In some border areas, the signals of channels and stations from the neighboring country can be received with more ease than those of Bosnian outlets. Finally, costs and accessibility problems contribute to citizens relying on television (in some remote, mountainous areas, newspaper delivery may not be as regular as in towns and cities) (UNDP RMAP, 2004 ,31).

Online media is becoming more common as access to the Internet is growing rapidly in the region. The proportion of users, who tend to be young, more than doubled between 2003 and 2008 in Central Europe and the Baltics. Average Internet penetration stood at nearly 47% in September 2009 (ITU; Internet World Stats). Bosnia-Herzegovina went from less than four users per 100 inhabitants in 2003 to nearly 35 only five years later. The number of broadband users remains much lower in the region, and urban areas are much better connected than rural ones (see Kostov 2006 about the Western Balkans). Online media frequently consists of the Internet version of traditional media outlets. In some cases, online media initiatives are anchored in the inadequacies of the information provided by existing print and broadcast outlets (Coleman and Kaposi 2006).[8]

8 Although Coleman and Kaposi's review (2006) of e-participation projects in new democracies includes a few local initiatives, wider-scale reactions to government control of media and lack of press freedom are better documented. For example, in Serbia during the 1990s, the Internet was an important alternative to outlets controlled by Milosevic and his allies. In the Ukraine, the number of online media increased significantly after the murder in 2000 of the founder of the only online newspaper of the country at the time. Online media went on to play an important role in informing the population about the protests that followed, reporting more systematically the size and spread of protests, as well as presenting the opposition's views (Krasnoboka and Semetko 2006). However, this should be taken as proof of an automatic and positive relationship between the Internet and online media use on the one hand, and democracy on the other. Not only does the relatively limited access still pose a significant obstacle in an important number of post-communist countries but, as Krasnoboka and Semestko (2006, p. 183) point out in the case of the Ukraine, it is not a "miracle of democracy" but a specific combination of conditions that turned online newspapers into credible sources of information.

2.2. Political parallelism and professionalization

Political parallelism refers to the partisanship of media content. This need not be conceived as a direct link between outlets and political parties; it can also be defined in the broader terms of a value orientation. For example, a newspaper could consistently present a socially conservative viewpoint even if no political party in a given society adopts a similar position. Parallelism can be anchored in historical linkages between media and institutions such as churches or trade unions, or a tradition of civic organizations involved in media supervision. Political parallelism can also manifest itself through journalists who serve part of their career in political offices, or a tendency for political affiliation to play a determinant role in the career of people involved in the media (Hallin and Mancini 2004, p. 28). That is why professionalization, although a distinct dimension in Hallin and Mancini's list of media systems' defining traits, is also treated briefly in this section.

While most political parties do not own a major news outlet[9], there are many examples of prominent political actors who control a newspaper or magazine with a significant audience. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, Fahrudin Radončić, owner of the largest Federation dailies, *Dnevni Avaz*, established a political party in 2009. He also owns other titles, including popular magazines, as well as a television station. The phenomenon is not exclusive to post-communist countries (see Hrvatin et al. 2004 for other examples). The best known case of a politician who doubles as a media magnate is probably that of Silvio Berlusconi, the current prime minister of Italy.

The national press has a long tradition of partisanship in many Western European countries. According to Baek's classification (2009), the press in most of Eastern Europe

9 The Czech Communist Party does and, as mentioned above, so does the Socialist Party of Albania.

in the 1990s and early 2000s was also partisan. Yet the idea that media and politics overlap to a greater extent in CEE finds a measure of support in the preliminary results of the first round of an expert survey conducted in nearly 30 European countries in early 2010 (Popescu, Gosselin and Santana Peirera 2010).[10] The survey asks: "How far is the political coverage of each of the following media outlets [up to ten in each country] influenced by a party or parties to which it is close?" The answer scale ranges from 0 for no influence at all, to 10 to denote a strong influence; the mean answer was 6.5 in CEE. In Western Europe, the mean of responses stood at 5.3. Owners' influence appears to loom even larger; when the same question is repeated, this time asking about the extent to which political coverage in each outlet is influenced by the owner, the mean answers are 7.6 in CEE, and 6.2 in Western Europe.

The survey also queried experts about journalists' political orientations, training and motivations. More CEE respondents reported that the political orientation of the most prominent journalists is well-known, that training to ensure accuracy, relevance, completeness, balance, timeliness, double-checking and source confidentiality is insufficient, and that journalists are generally not motivated by an ethic of serving the public interest.

A strong partisan orientation by newspapers need not have only deleterious effects. Van Kempen (2007) finds that a higher degree of press-party parallelism (measured by the

10 The survey invited academics active in the fields of political science, sociology, communication and media studies, leaders of journalists' associations, people involved in NGOs, as well as other individuals knowledgeable about media and politics to fill an online questionnaire. The average number of respondents per country was 10. The countries included in the results presented for CEE were Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia. In Western Europe, the averages were based on answers collected in France, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Belgium, Norway, Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Denmark, and Greece.

overlap between the party preferences of survey respondents and their daily newspaper use) contributes to mobilize citizens to go to the urns on elections days, especially those who would otherwise be less likely to show up. The situation might however be different in the local context. While citizens have access to national and local outlets (where there are local outlets), the latter may well be the only sources of information specifically about the local public scene. As a result, political parallelism at the local level has a greater potential to limit significantly the availability of information and the diversity of viewpoints. In smaller municipalities (and in some large cities' neighborhoods with elected councils, as in the Hungarian capital Budapest), local governments frequently own or control a print outlet. As a result, the content of the latter is typically favorable to the party or local coalition in power. A significant number of local papers or bulletins are issued by municipal authorities in Bosnia-Herzegovina, some of which also own a local radio station (Bajrović 2006, p. 22). According to a report by the OSCE's Representative on Freedom of the Media, the Bosnian local media scene exhibits a larger number of outlets that exist "without any apparent commercial viability and even without any apparent demand for their programming on the part of audiences." Many are subsidized by cantonal and municipal authorities, "distort[ing] both the market and potentially the editorial independence of these broadcast outlets" (Haraszti 2007, p. 7). In ethnically mixed municipalities, local authorities' ownership or financial support of local media may also reinforce the ethnic divide when the content (or the ethnic makeup of the staff, even the name) of the local outlet is addressed to the majority group, thus leaving the minority feeling estranged (UNDP RMAP, 2004, p. 31).

2.3. State intervention

Along with the legal framework regulating media competition and concentration, licensing, quotas concerning content, libel, privacy issues, access to information, hate

speech, etc., the most obvious form of state intervention is probably public broadcasting. Other than ownership, intervention can also take the form of subsidies to outlets or journalists. Hallin and Mancini (2004, pp. 43-44) distinguish between market dominated systems, where state intervention is limited, and those in which the state plays a significant role. CEE countries tend to be rather interventionist in the realm of media, notably because the legal frameworks tend to follow the continental European model rather than a more American-like, market-oriented approach. Observers of the media in the region have not so much focused on the type of legal framework as with government meddling with this framework, or the failure to implement it adequately.

Transforming the formerly party-controlled state television and radio into a public service broadcasting (PSB) system is still proving a challenge. Politicization takes place through political nominations for the helms of public television and radio, amendments to the rules governing regulatory agencies, or the adoption of laws aiming at facilitating the control of media content. For example, Slovakia had to cancel a provision planning to put media content under the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture in 2008 after strong criticisms from the OSCE as well as domestic actors (EUMAP, 2008). The following year, the chairman of the broadcasting regulatory agency in Hungary resigned to protest against the allocation of two seven-year nationwide radio licenses, raising suspicion of improper political influence on the decision. Four of the five members of the agency had been nominated by the two main political parties, and one of the winning bidders was a known supporter of one of the parties. The other successful bidder had obtained contracts from the government, led at the time by the other main party (Murphy 2009)[11]. While these cases attracted international

11 The issue was under investigation at the time of writing. Murphy (2009) reminds that court decisions deeming a license allocation illegal have not always been acted upon in Hungary.

attention, undue state meddling does not always generate the same echo. Local outlets enjoy much less visibility than their national counterparts. Furthermore, a widespread expectation that many more or less serve as mouthpieces of local authorities may well dampen reactions even when interference is exposed.

Citizens are not always convinced by media content that is heavily biased toward one political camp. Popescu and Toka's investigation (2002) shows that the overt use of public television as a political propaganda tool by the Hungarian government during the 1994 electoral campaign badly backfired, as greater exposure to public television was associated with voting for the challenger. This illustrates how mobilization can take place even when the public media is used in an outrageously self-serving manner. Mistrust of media is not uncommon in the region, including towards outlets funded by the international community in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Taylor and Kent 2000). Data collected at different time points in the 1990s and early 2000s suggest that Bosnians grant less credibility to state- and entity-level media outlets that are perceived as less politically independent (Taylor and Napoli 2003).

Finally, another outstanding issue concerning the establishment of public service broadcasting in a number of CEE countries is the securing of an independent source of adequate funding for public service programming (see for examples EUMAP reports about Bulgaria and Lithuania). In the absence of independent funding, public broadcasters remain dependent on discretionary state monies. In addition, an independent source such as a license fee may not bring in sufficient funds. This is the case in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where only 65% of the fee is actually collected (Haraszti 2007). The construction of PSB in CEE remains a work in progress. The situation not only differs across countries but also across time as political pressures exerted on public broadcasters and regulatory agencies vary with institutional developments and changes in governments. These variations remind

us that there is nothing intrinsically linear or teleological about PSB development and consolidation (see Jakubowicz and Sukosd 2008).

3. Local media and local democracy

Nowadays, the media are increasingly considered an institution, an exogenous factor capable of influence on politics and society in general (e.g. Mazzoleni, Steward and Horsfield 2003). This is reflected in the rising number of studies[12] that test the actual impact of media content on citizens' political behavior and attitudes, as well as governance indicators.

This part of the overview builds on these studies to elaborate a canvass facilitating the investigation of linkages between key aspects of media, especially local media, and a number of indicators of local democracy. To do so, it relies on the notion of media performance. McQuail (1994, pp. 78-79) proposes that the media have five tasks: informing; interpreting facts and events, mobilizing, expressing or fostering common values and cultures, as well as entertaining. Similarly, Gurevitch and Blumler (1994) suggest that the media should:

- inform about important developments in various domains likely to impact citizens' lives;
- provide analysis identifying the forces at work behind important problems and potential solutions;
- act as watchdogs against abuse of power, thus enhancing the accountability of office holders;

12 As the reader will see, the majority of these studies pertain to the American context.

- present different views and debates between them;
- contribute to citizen interest and learning about public issues and processes.

These media tasks translate into a number of potential effects on citizens and those they elect as representatives. Indeed, citizens need relevant information and analyses to identify, articulate, and voice their preferences about the key issues affecting them. The media are also one of the channels through which politicians are made aware of those preferences, and thus better able to include them in political processes and decisions.

This suggests that the media may register palpable effects on:

1) citizens' knowledge about public affairs;
2) citizens' participation in local public affairs;
3) a sense of sharing common concerns for which common solutions are required;
4) local governance.

3.1. Political knowledge

Besides word of mouth, which is most effective in very small localities, local media constitute the main if not the only source of information about local events, including candidates and issues at stake in local elections. As a result, citizens who turn to local media are likely to know more about local politics and hold an opinion about the way their locality is run. The transmission of information is probably the most commonly expected role of the media.

Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996, p. 150) found that local newspapers consumption is associated with greater knowledge about local politics, and that the more knowledgeable are more likely to turn up at the polls (Ibid., p. 226). There is also evidence that local media matter at the macro-level. Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996, p.

212-3) show that in cities where local media's coverage of local politics was meager, respondents' knowledge was adversely affected. Mondak (1995) also finds that media availability influences knowledge by linking a local newspaper strike in Pittsburgh to citizens' lower knowledge levels about state politics during an electoral campaign. In a European setting, Dreyer Lassen (2004) found that residents in Copenhagen districts who were more informed about a decentralization project were also more likely to vote in a city referendum.

Local elections typically constitute low-information contexts, notably in comparison with the large amount of information disseminated during national election campaigns.[13] Banducci et al. (2003) find that candidate appearance plays a key role in community boards elections, low-saliency and non-partisan elections conducted in 2001 in the United Kingdom. Rahn (2000) finds that affect, measured by how positive or negative people generally feel toward their country, plays a greater role in shaping the opinions of the ill-informed. Generally, the political reasoning of less aware citizens is driven to a greater extent by affect (Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock 1991). Consequently, affect may well play a prominent role in local opinion holding and, by the same token, on the decision to go to vote in local elections.

One study that we found connecting local media, political participation and having an opinion relies on a relatively small sample of 468 respondents from a single county in the United States. Scheufele, Shanahan and Kim (2002) find that both local newspaper use and factual knowledge about politics increased respondents' awareness about a proposed commercial development project in their local area. Opinion holding, measured as the strength of support either for or against the development project, was

13 Some authors have looked at campaign spending to evaluate intensity and, by the same token, the amount of information available to citizens. Unfortunately, information about local campaign spending is rarely available.

related to local newspaper use and discussions with neighbours, but not to political knowledge. A similar result emerges from Polish data: local media use made a limited contribution to political knowledge, but helped citizens to develop an opinion about the locality and the conduct of local public affairs. The impact of local media on engagement in local electoral activities was largely mediated by having an opinion, especially a positive one (Gosselin 2006).

There is debate surrounding the utility of information for citizens who want to take part in public affairs. One view contends that limited knowledge does not prevent them from taking sensible political decisions (Popkin 1991; Lupia 1994; Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock 1991). Proponents of this view find that cues rooted in partisanship, candidate traits, candidate viability, endorsements, and incumbency supply information shortcuts that voters can use while investing minimum time and effort in monitoring their political environment. However, other studies show that political knowledge remains an essential ingredient in candidate evaluations, the decision to cast a ballot, and vote choice. People who know more are more likely to participate (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995; Palfrey and Poole 1987). Knowledgeable citizens are better able to make use of partisanship and endorsement cues (Bowler and Donovan 1998). They are also more likely to arrive at correct decisions - that is, decisions more in line with their interests (Lau and Redlawsk 2001).

3.2. Political participation

3.2.1. Information and mobilization

Obviously, informed citizens are better equipped should they want to get engaged in local public life. Thus local media may well stimulate engagement – construed in a very general manner as to cover interest in local politics, having an opinion about a

local development project, the manner in which the city is managed, or the candidates in upcoming local elections, signing a petition or voting - indirectly via the information it imparts to citizens.

The media can also directly impact the decision to vote or get involved when they act as mobilizing agents. This mobilizing role can be triggered because the media are one of the means by which politicians and parties reach their constituents (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, p. 29). Lemert (1984; 1992) claims that the media provide "mobilization information", that is content that goes beyond facts about political systems, actors or events to "integrate political issues and conflicts into the context of the larger community and provides information on whom to contact, how to donate money, or where to voice one's opinion" (Eveland and Scheufele 2000, p. 220).

Voting is an aspect of political particiation that can also be observed at the macro-level, in this case the participation rate in local elections. For example, Matsusaka (1992) finds that the periods during which television and radio were massively introduced in the United States also witnessed higher turnout. Reading local newspapers also has a positive and significant impact on citizens' participation as voters and in contacting public officials (McLeod, Scheufele and Moy 1999). A number of recent studies specifically concerned with the impact of local media in the American context found a significant link between local media use and participation in local public affairs (Jeffres, Atkin, and Neuendorf 2002; McLeod et al. 1996; McLeod, Scheufele and Moy 1999; Scheufele, Shanahan and Kim 2002; Shah, McLeod and Yoon 2001). Most of the positive findings pertain to the use of hard news content in local newspapers.[14]

14 But see McLeod et al. (1996); Stamm, Emig and Hesse (1997) for a positive but weaker link between participation and local television news watching.

3.2.2. Community ties

Another linkage between local media and participation may lie with the community ties identified by the Chicago sociologists and their followers. The study of links between community ties and media use goes as far back as 1929 to Park's study of newspaper circulation in Chicago. Sociologists specializing in community and urban studies have found that individuals more deeply embedded in their communities, as witnessed by their longer residence, home ownership, and more frequent entertaining of neighbors at home, are more likely to focus on local media outlets (e.g. Janowitz 1967; Tichenor, Donohue and Olien 1970). In turn, local media consumption increases a sense of place (Neuwirth, Salmon and Neff 1989).[15] Length of residence (e.g. Franklin 2005), persuasion effort by family, friends and acquaintances (Hillygus 2005) and a sense of community have been linked to political participation (Davidson and Cotter 1989). Considering communities rather than individuals, Eagles and Erfle (1989) find that greater social cohesion is conducive to higher turnout (but see Oliver 1999 for different findings pertaining to American suburban cities).

Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1980) propose a view of local media as agents of social control (Jeffres, Cutietta, Sekerka and Lee 2000) that actively shape citizens' perceptions of local social cohesion. They posit that local media, through the elites who control them, work to minimize tensions and conflicts in smaller and more homogeneous communities. In such communities, conflict is unlikely to emerge in the open since quarrels are more likely to be settled during informal meetings between aggrieved individual citizens and local representatives. Problems solved via such informal channels prevent disruptive conflicts, and leave local outlets to report about seemingly consensus decisions. In larger and more socially diverse communities, local media act as a channel for various groups

15 The relationship appears to be reciprocal - see Stamm, Emig and Hesse 1997 for a short review.

to express differences unlikely to be solved through personal interactions. The role of local media in channeling complaints and contention reduces tensions, and even contributes to coopting protest groups, thus turning conflict into a routine, well-managed matter (Olien, Donohue and Tichenor 1995). Local outlet reporting might challenge authorities, notably incumbents, but not the rules of the game (the "power relationships" they are part of, and that the news gathering process tends to maintain - Ibid., p. 306). Therefore, citizens read, listen, and watch reports issued by outlets that directly or indirectly promote consensus, even if conflict is acknowledged as an operational mode in large and diverse cities (Ibid., p. 316). Accordingly, local media use contributes to fostering a sense of community. The "ommunity building role" of local media, like the "mobilization role", should result in direct effects of local media use on participation.

3.3. Common concerns and common solutions

In addition to studies associated with the Chicago school mentioned above, works pertaining to the public service model, as well as the literature focusing on minority media, often put forward a link between identity and media. In his book length discussion of media performance, McQuail (1992, pp. 74-75) presents media as producers and disseminators of culture and social meanings. Depending on the angle the phenomenon is viewed from, it can be related to the idea that media can be used to control (in which case the meanings are imposed or crafted from above) or form and promote an identity (in which case the meanings are chosen by the people concerned).[16]

16 The social control potential need not be conceived only in negative terms akin to propaganda; it can include instances of legislation to prevent children from being exposed to violent programs, or to promote education.

One aspect of media performance that is developed with regard to CEE, and most particularly the countries of the former Yugoslavia, is the phenomenon of media messages channeling tolerance or hatred. As mentioned in the introduction of the chapter, a number of authors have described how the media were used as propaganda tools by nationalist leaders and governments in the late 1980s and early 1990s, thus acting as a factor in the wars that unfolded in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia (Snyder and Ballentine 1999; Price and Thompson 2002). National as well as smaller outlets (regional or local) were involved. However, media more local in scope were sometimes the only independent voices (for example Radio B92 in Belgrade before it started to broadcast widely).

The sort of media content that can contribute to fostering tolerance is less easy to identify; first, whether factual information is sufficient to achieve more tolerance is not clear. Mondak (2003, p. 353) speaks of a potential for democratization through citizens better versed "in the language and values of a pluralistic system". Furthermore, such media discourse (whichever its precise contours) is bound to be less spectacular or striking than the blatantly nationalist or ethnocentric messages which are the focus of media literature, making the demonstration of a direct link between media message and tolerance even more problematic. Typically, the two types of inquiries will focus on different actors: in the first case, on political leaders' attempts to control media messages, and on the responses of citizens in the second. In this case, intent is easier to demonstrate than effect.

According to Mondak, the characteristics defining media's democratization potential reside in independence (from politics) and the professionalism of journalists. According to a ranking by university students of journalism and political science, local Romanian newspapers perform less well than national ones on both accounts. Mondak found a link between exposure of local media in the city of Cluj-Napoca and political knowledge, as well as attitudes towards national politicians and ethnic

tolerance. He also uncovered that exposure to local outlets, contrary to following national ones, was not associated with knowledge about local and national politics. Acceptance of the right to express political opposition as a general principle, and in the specific case of the significant Hungarian minority in Romania, was lower among those who read local newspapers. Finally, the latter are more likely to favor ultranationalist political parties, and approve of the city's mayor, a well-known ultranationalist hostile to the Hungarian and Roma minorities.

3.4. Local governance

The issues addressed above are inextricably linked to the influence of media on the quality of local governance. Thorough coverage of local issues will yield better informed citizens likely to be better equipped to voice their preferences and engage in their concretization, thus making representatives more responsive. It is reasonably safe to assume that citizens prefer well-run cities, where the decision making process is relatively transparent, in which they feel they can have a say as opposed to corrupt and wasteful administrations delivering services whose quality and frequency might be difficult to predict.

Recent studies have examined the association between macro-factors such as access to media, as well as media freedom on the one hand and good governance on the other (Norris 2001; Adsera, Boix and Payne 2003). Links between media ownership structure (public or private) and national indicators of education, health and freedom are another focus of interest (Djankov, McLiesh, Nenova and Shleifer 2003; Besley and Burgess 2002). Studies in this group address media effects from a wide range of perspectives, including links between various local media characteristics such as competition, ownership and content (Lacy 1989; Lacy, Coulson and St. Cyr 1999).

Another related strand of research has been concerned with the impact of media on public policy and on policy-makers. Do media have a direct impact on governmental decisions and the opinions of the decision makers, or does public opinion first mediate this influence? Media effects on local government procedures or policies can occur when citizens learn the information they need to hold their representatives accountable, to engage actively in local public life, and so on. The media can also affect local representatives directly and, consequently, their performance as those who make the decisions and establish the rules for how those decisions are arrived at. "Media attention to an issue affects legislators' attention, partly because members [of Congress] follow mass media like other people, and partly because media affect their constituents," notes Kingdon (1995, p. 58). In their study, Lomax Cook et al. (1983) found that media reports about fraud in public programs had an impact on policy-makers' opinions and on policy mostly because of the "active relationship" that developed between journalists and policy-makers, rather than as a result of pressure from public opinion. Stromberg (2004a; 2004b) argues that significant policy effects take place without altering vote intentions or public opinions; the growing reach of media forces decision makers to take into consideration the interests of smaller, dispersed and less well-politically organized groups as they become better informed.

4. Conclusion

This chapter brought together key dimensions proposed by the notion of media systems and measures of media performance drawn from the media effects approach. Examining media as systems allows researchers to better take into account the larger political and economic contexts in which the media is invariably embedded. However, it does have drawbacks. Because it can only bring into view a limited number of relevant dimensions, not all aspects of media and their environment can

be considered. The resulting typologies tend to be very broad, positing that the manner in which systems' main dimensions relate to one another is similar across many media systems and apply more or less equally to a great number of different outlets. On the other hand, thinking about and measuring media performance as media effects permits testing normative roles and the alleged impact of media as opposed to taking them for granted. Furthermore, it provides evaluations of degrees rather than all-or-nothing categorizations. On the downside, the approach tends to treat the media as a causal variable disconnected from its context.[17]

Countries in Central and Eastern Europe, including Bosnia-Herzegovina, are just beginning to be integrated in earnest in works using either of the two approaches. Where media systems are concerned, typologies and models sit rather uncomfortably with the state of flux that has characterized media in the region in the past two decades. As a result, CEE media systems are often ignored or lumped in a single, "democratizing" category. When a dimension such as professionalization of journalism or state intervention is taken up, CEE media are invariably found wanting. This is evident with respect to media in Bosnia-Herzegovina, about which Hozić argues that expectations tend to be particularly unrealistic. While the post-communist and post-war context may make flagrant the need for the media to act as "agents of democratization", they are no more likely to take up the task than in other parts of the world. Everywhere media are increasingly driven by "market demand"; as a result commercialization is to be expected, not democratization (Hozić 2008). This echoes the general conclusion

17 Only a handful of studies so far have combined the media systems and media effects approaches in empirical investigations (see Curran et al. 2009; Baek 2009; Popescu and Toka 2009). Taking into account the "heterogeneity of the audience of citizens and consumers and of political contexts [as well as] and their interactions with the media system" presents significant challenges (Popescu and Toka 2009, p. 17). However, these initial results promise a richer understanding of media.

recently drawn by James Curran that journalism is not likely to "save the world". What he calls the "professionalization project", "based on the cultivation of a public interest culture among journalists employed in market-based media" (Curran 2009, p. 312), is slowed or impaired by competition for advertising revenues, including from free dailies, specialized television channels and the Internet, and the cuts in costs that results from it. Public television as a source of quality journalism is also threatened: competition has reduced its audience and many public broadcasters have tried to regain them (and advertisement revenues) by offering something more similar to commercial media.

The media effects approach has yet to make serious inroads, as witnessed by the small number of works concerned with CEE in the second section of the chapter. Part of the problem stems from the need for survey data to explore the potential impact of local media use on behavior and attitudes at the individual level. Such survey data is not always available in post-communist countries. However, macro-indicators such as turnout in local elections and the number of local outlets (for example) have yet to be exploited.

Where local media are concerned, the most urgent task is to break their image as a homogenous and rather unimportant lot in order to raise critical questions about the effects of these outlets. Granting "analytic importance" (Jacobs 1993, xii) to local media does not amount to overemphasizing their impact. Based on the evidence reviewed in this chapter, we would argue that local media does make a difference; yet they are unlikely to support local democracy single-handedly. That said, we certainly hope that the concepts and indicators presented in this chapter will contribute to convincing media observers and researchers that the local level in CEE constitutes a fruitful terrain for investigation, and enable them to conduct further research on their impact on local democracy.

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LOCAL MEDIA AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES: TOWARDS PUBLIC POLICIES FOR THE PROMOTION OF LOCAL MEDIA CONTENT IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Tarik JUSIĆ and Sanela HODŽIĆ

1. Introduction[1]

Local media are an integral part of a local community and one of the key factors for the development of democracy, accountable government and citizen participation at the local level. The importance of local media for a local community and for the promotion of democratic processes is a reflection of the key role of media in society as a facilitative tool enabling citizens "to be informed and to be heard" (Melody 1990, cited in Peruško 2009, p. 6). The prevailing opinion, supported by some empirical studies, is that the pluralism and independence of media generally encourage citizen participation and more effective local authorities. There have been indications that the local authorities are more effective in communities with more media and a more varied media ownership structure, and especially in those with broader coverage of local issues (see Gosselin 2005).

Recognizing the importance of local media content for the functioning and development of local communities, the present paper deals with media policies focused on local media and content relevant to local communities. The aim of our research is to provide an answer to the key question of whether there exists in Bosnia and Herzegovina a stimulating environment for the development of genuinely local media content, i.e. content focused on the local communities and

1 Our special acknowledgements are due to Edin Hodžić (Analitika Center for Social Research, Bosnia and Herzegovina); Helena Mandić (the Communications Regulatory Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina); Sandra Bašić-Hrvatin (University of Primorska, Kopar, Slovenia); and Dušan Mašić (BBC's business consultant for Serbia) for having carefully read this manuscript and given their valuable and extremely useful comments and suggestions.

seeking to meet the needs of these communities for pertinent information on local political affairs, the work of the local government, and generally on the everyday life of the local community. In other words, our objective is to find out to what extent the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina have access to quality information of local relevance, and whether public policies in the field of local media - above all the media founded and funded by the local government - as well as in the domain of the public broadcasting system, encourage the production of local media content that will serve to develop a democratic, prosperous and tolerant society at the local level.

Up to now, local media and local media content have not attracted much interest from either researchers or policymakers in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The present study, therefore, seeks to offer an overview of existing public media policies and practices, as well as to analyze potential approaches to the development of local media content, be it by introducing new public broadcasting policies, changing attitudes towards local and regional media, or providing conditions for the creation of a third media sector that would primarily serve the interests of particular communities, including local communities (see Coyer and Van Beek in this publication).

As this paper will show, the current situation in the local media sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina is exceptionally difficult because the market is overcrowded and poor. On top of this, there is a lack of systematic, long-term and strategic public policies to support the production of local and regional media content of public interest. All in all, the overall media market and its regulatory and administrative environment are not conducive to the production of content of relevance for local communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Evidently, a multitude of media does not necessarily mean a multitude of quality content, as public policies in this area have largely neglected the interest of the public and the needs of local communities.

We hope that the findings of the present analysis will make a modest contribution to the otherwise scant existing insights into the functioning of this important segment of the media industry. Finally, we hope that this paper will answer the pivotal question: What should be done with the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially with the multitude of local public media, in order to create an environment that will best serve the needs of citizens at the local level?

In view of the abovementioned questions and aims, the present research offers insight into the status and role of local media in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as into the conditions for the production of relevant local media content, by placing them within a broader European context. Our study looks at existing local media and public policies pertinent to the production of local media content, examining relationships between media, local authorities, local communities and the applicable legal and regulatory framework. The conclusion offers a set of recommendations for redefining public policies in the area of local media and the production of local media content in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

2. Methodology

This paper is based on qualitative research whose core consists of over 70 interviews with editors and journalists, representatives of local authorities and civil society, as well as representatives of the Communications Regulatory Agency (CRA), the Press Council, the Federation of B&H and Republika Srpska Associations of Cities and Municipalities; and media experts. Most interviews were conducted over the phone, several of them in direct conversation with respondents, while in three cases we obtained written answers to our questionnaires. All interviews were conducted in compliance with a previously

defined questionnaire, which covered a range of thematic areas, such as programming, audience, financial issues, and political influence.

The interview findings were complemented by an analysis of the legal and regulatory framework applicable to the local media in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as compared with relevant European legislation and practice. Furthermore, additional analyses were made of the content of mainstream print media at the state, entity, regional and local levels, as well as of the news programs of a small number of local radio stations and of available program schedules of public radio and television stations at the municipality, cantonal and entity levels. We also used other relevant secondary sources in our research.

A major problem that we encountered through our research and one that seriously limited its findings was the virtual lack of reliable data on the size of the media market in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Instead, only rough estimates, mainly regarding the major state and entity media, are available. It appears that there is almost no available data on the size and dynamics of the market or the readership and ratings of local media. Also, there is a limited number of available reports dealing with the issues of local media content and local media in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This placed a significant constraint on our research aims and analyses.

3. Importance of local media content

The notions of 'local', 'local media content' and 'local media' can be defined in a number of ways. There are those who believe that 'local' refers to their own street or neighbourhood, while for others it implies their municipality or city. The question of the implications of the term 'regions' also arises here – are they territorial units as defined by the state, for example through regional development agencies, or does the term refer

to administrative units such as cantons in the Federation of B&H? (see for example, Ofcom, 2009a, pp. 15–16)

We will understand local media content relevant for local communities as referring to the content pertaining to and focusing on the actions of municipal and cantonal authorities; civil society at the municipal, cantonal and regional levels; and generally affairs in the territory of municipalities and cantons/regions (such as reports on construction works, cultural events, natural disasters, the opportunities for citizens' participation in the life of their local community through various socially useful or politically-committed initiatives, etc.) that are of limited importance for the public outside a given administrative-territorial unit. At the same time, such content is exceptionally important for the proper functioning of local communities and for an active social and political engagement of individuals in these communities.

Since the existence of local media content is closely linked to the functioning of local media, this paper will consider as local media all media outlets operating below the state and entity levels. Consequently, it will consider as local media all print and electronic media operating in particular regions, cantons, cities and municipalities and producing content focused on a specific population settled in a given narrow territory (i.e. municipality, city, canton or a region) (see Gosselin in the previous chapter in this publication; and also Ofcom, 2009a, p. 15). However, taking into account the rapid development of new communication platforms and new forms of communication between local communities, media and citizens, our research in part also deals with the local content as offered by various traditional (such as print, radio, TV) and new communication actors (such as local government, non-governmental organizations and citizens themselves) through new technologies and tools, primarily on their websites.

Essentially, our primary concern is with the availability and nature of media content relevant to a particular local community. Media content affects our understanding of the political environment; the articulation of personal interests; the content of cognitive

processes; and citizens' priorities when taking a decision, for example, at elections (on this see more in Kahn and Goldenberg 1991, p. 105; Scheufele 2002). The media represent a public sphere in which "topics of common interest are presented and defined" (Moreno 2006, p. 303) and play a key role in enabling public debate and political pluralism,[2] provided that they include various information sources and allow different social groups to receive information, express their own views and exchange ideas. In short, media that ensure access to adequate information relevant to a particular local community ultimately serve the public interest.[3]

The exceptional importance of local media content, and thus of the local media, is a result of the fact that political and social change takes concrete shape only in a local context, on the one hand, and that it is only in the local context itself that individuals can act as citizens, on the other (Aldridge 2007, pp. 5–25). According to the Ofcom report (2009a, p. 15), "the link between geography and citizen participation suggests that local and regional media play an important role in informing geographical communities...local and regional media as a whole has a role in promoting local

2 See Recommendation no. R (99) 1 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on Measures to Promote Media Pluralism; Recommendation R (94) 13 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on Measures to Promote Media Transparency; Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, adopted on December 7, 2001; the provisions on media pluralism in the European Convention on Transfrontier Television, Strasburg 1989, ETS, no. 132; UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions adopted on October 20, 2005, which define the right of states to adopt measures to protect and promote intercultural dialogue and the diversity of cultural expressions, especially measures to promote the diversity of media, including public broadcasting services.

3 Public interest represents "a complex of supposed informational, cultural and social benefits to the wider society, which go beyond the immediate, particular and individual interests of those who participate in public communication" (McQuail 1992, p.d, quoted in: Peruško 2009, p.7).

democracy and democratic participation." Consequently, local media are crucial in conveying information relevant to the local community, all the more so because the effects of decisions taken at the level of local communities are visible in the daily lives of members of those communities.[4] This is why the local public sphere is vital for democracy (Aldridge 2007, p. 2). In this light, the lack of relevant local information and debate "could help explain why so many people find so much [in] politics meaningless or difficult to engage with because they are not able to judge its effects in their own communities" (Hargreaves and Thomas, quoted in Aldridge 2007, p. 15).

A need for local information arises from practical and material reasons (for example, pertinent information on the work of a local hospital or school, on security services etc., i.e. on the most important concerns for members of a local community), but also from a feeling of belonging and from the role that the local community plays in promoting self-awareness (Aldridge 2007, pp. 8–14). In addition, media working in the service of public interest can have a positive impact on the understanding of the political environment and on citizens' political participation (Sheufele 2002, p. 55; Ofcom, 2009a, p. 15),[5] as well as directly or indirectly improve the effectiveness of local authorities, especially in cases where the quality of media coverage is improved (Gosselin 2005). This is also confirmed by the increasingly intensive processes of decentralization and transfer of powers and tasks to the local government, and the resulting growing importance of decisions reached at the level of local communities.

4 Thus, for example, Aldridge suggests that the local public sphere is of key importance for democracy since the local arena is the area where social institutions act and where important relationships and networks of social support are developed and wherein the lives 'of most people, at least most of the time" are led (Aldridge 2007, p. 7).

5 Scheufele interprets a drop in the level of political participation, in spite of the saturated information environment and the increased level of citizens' education, as an indicator of inadequate and complex media coverage, as well as of the absence of mobilizing information (Sheufele 2002, pp. 48–50).

4. Local media content in Europe and worldwide: media policy and practice

4.1. Trends in local and regional media sectors

In the absence of a stimulating environment for local media, the production of content relevant to local communities is most often unsustainable, irrespective of the type of media. There are several reasons for this situation. Above all, the production of content intended for a small audience is expensive. Therefore, local media try to survive by decreasing expenses and minimally respecting regulatory obligations with regard to certain cost-ineffective programs. Thus, for example, in the United Kingdom most local radio stations broadcast music and news about events at the national and international levels, thereby almost entirely neglecting local news (see Ofcom, 2009a; Aldridge 2007, pp. 96–97).

A further problem faced by local media is rapid and comprehensive change in the advertising market. This is clearly seen in the case of commercial local radio stations in the United Kingdom, which air minimal news programs that do not cover local affairs, while in the case of regional press, some of the most profitable categories of advertising, such as ads about job vacancies or sales of real estate or cars, are moving to the Internet (Ofcom, 2009a, pp. 3; Aldridge 2007, pp. 163–164). In general, there is less local press, and its circulation figures and readership are dwindling (Ofcom, 2009a, p. 3). At the same time, an important problem lies in the fact that the concentration of media ownership is greatest in local and regional press, whereby profitable regional monopolies are created because of centralized production in

regional centres, and as a result, journalists are cut off from their readers and local communities. The expenses are also reduced by making journalists redundant and by a growing dependence on agency content (Franklin 2006, xvii). The local press remains local only in name, while the ownership of it has stopped being local altogether in the past two decades (Franklin 2006, xxi).

Local television worldwide has not been spared problems, either. As shown by Heaton (2008, pp. 14–15), the greatest threat to local television is posed by technology companies outside a particular local or regional market that take money from advertising outside the local market. "This is the real danger to all local media companies, because local advertising money that used to go … to local companies is already moving outside the market ...the reality is that more local online ad money goes to companies outside the market than media companies within the market, and this shows no sign of letting up." (Heaton 2008, pp. 14–15).

New technologies also pose additional challenges to traditional local and regional media by providing local communities with easier access to a broad range of news sources and other content (Franklin 2006, xviii). Thanks to growing Internet penetration and other technological changes, there is more competition among information sources at the local level – local government and other local public institutions, private companies and non-governmental organizations all produce their own bulletins, magazines and websites, competing with the traditional media for the attention of the audience, and increasingly often, for advertising revenues (see Ofcom, 2009a, p. 3). The long-term prospects for the survival and development of the local and regional media sector greatly depend on further Internet penetration and the ability of these media to adapt to a new environment and new business strategies focused on the development of digital services and products, which, in turn, will enable them to offset the loss of income from their traditional services (see Ofcom, 2009a, p. 9).

4.2. European policies to promote production and availability of local content

The aforementioned trends and problems facing local media have had an extremely adverse effect on the availability of quality content of local relevance through traditional local and regional media. In these circumstances, the development of local media content serving the local community requires a legal framework and public policy that systematically promote and support the production of content targeting particular local communities. Also, it is necessary to ensure conditions for the development and operation of local and regional media which produce content important to local and regional communities, as well as to prevent the centralization of the media at the state level and the concentration of local and regional media ownership (European Commission, 2009a, pp. 38–39). However, the locality of content also refers to the presence of local content in the national media. After all, we may ask the question what media today is local at all, given the technologies of the Internet, satellite and cable television, which enable us to see, hear or read media beyond a narrow geographical area covered by their terrestrial signal or through distribution of printed copies to newsagents.

We can define the concept of media pluralism here as the "fair, diverse representation and expression" of various cultural and social groups (respectively, of various political and ideological groups), as well as of local and regional communities and interests in the media. By geographical pluralism we refer to "a plurality of themes and voices being present in the media, socialisation through multiple forms of media access and participation, choice between different forms of interaction, and representation of diverse values, viewpoints and roles, in which local and regional communities can be recognised" (European Commission, 2009a, p. 12).

According to Recommendation no. R(99)1 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, member states should promote media pluralism, but it has been left to them to define and regulate this issue in more detail.[6] Also, in Recommendation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe no.1407 (1999),[7] the Committee of Ministers is asked to devote more attention to the issue of independence of media, especially by considering ways to ensure editorial independence in member states where economic conditions do not favor the independent functioning of media, and by preventing concentration and providing practical assistance to member states, with an emphasis on transparent ownership and source of revenue.[8]

The policies of the Council of Europe on the freedom of speech and cultural pluralism include the promotion of local cultures and facilitation of the participation of all citizens in public discourse. The importance of regional and local media (as well as community media) in contributing to media pluralism and the inclusiveness of public debate is emphasized in the Council of Europe's Recomendation no. 173

6 Recommendation No. R(99)1 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on Measures to Promote Media Pluralism, available at: https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=399303&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=9999CC&BackColorIntranet=FFBB55&BackColorLogged=FFAC75 (accessed September 2, 2010); also see Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on media pluralism and diversity of media content, available at: https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1089699 (accessed June 12, 2010).

7 Recommendation 1407 (1999) on media and democratic culture of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, available at: http://assembly.coe.int/main.asp?Link=/documents/adoptedtext/ta99/erec1407.htm (accessed August 12, 2010).

8 See more in the Resolution 1636 (2008) on indicators for media in a democracy, available at: http://assembly.coe.int/main.asp?Link=/documents/adoptedtext/ta08/eres1636.htm (accessed September 24, 2010); also see Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)2 of the Committee of Ministers on media pluralism and diversity of media content, available at: https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1089699 (accessed September 24, 2010).

(2005)[9] (Articles 6, 19e i 19h). In addition, Recommendation (2007)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on media pluralism and diversity of media content[10] specifies that member states should encourage the development of media that could contribute to pluralism and social dialogue, adding that such media could be "community, local, minority or social media" (Article 4).

In addition, Public Service Broadcasters (PSB) should have special obligations towards their communities; the European Union policy in the audio-visual sector leaves it to member states to define the mandate of PSB, highlighting the importance "of fulfilling the democratic, social and cultural needs of a particular society and guaranteeing pluralism, including cultural and linguistic diversity." It also states that a public service broadcaster can also be intended for "linguistic minorities…[and] local needs."[11] Thus, a public service broadcaster is expected to

9 Recommendation 173 (2005) on regional media and transfrontier cooperation by the congress of regional and local authorities in the Council of Europe, available at: https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=866605&Site=Congress&BackColorInternet=e0cee1&BackColorIntranet=e0cee1&BackColorLogged=FFC679 (accessed June 20, 2010).

10 Recommendation CM/Rec. (2007) 2 on media pluralism and diversity of media content, available at: https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1089699 (accessed September 24, 2010); also see Recommendation of the Council of Europe no. R (99)1 (footnote 11).

11 Communication from the Commission on the Application of State Aid Rules to Public Service Broadcasting 2001/C 320/04, article 33, available at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52001XC1115%2801%29:EN:NOT (accessed September 24, 2010); Communication from the Commission on the Application of State Aid Rules to Public Service Broadcasting 2009/C 257/01, item 44, hereinafter: Communication 2009/C 257/01, available at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2009:257:0001:0014:EN:PDF) (accessed June 12, 2010). See also Protocol on the System of Public Broadcasting in the Member States, available at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/en/treaties/dat/11997D/htm/11997D.html#0109010012 (accessed September 24, 2010), which defines the prerogatives of the European Union and the member states in this field. The Commission has the prerogative to ascertain whether a member state respects the provisions of the agreement, especially the state aid rules in this field.

provide impartial, comprehensive and quality information for its citizens, including programming commitments in terms of a certain share of content promoting local culture, but also, quite often, programs which "represent all the regions and minority cultures in a given country" (European Commission, 2009a, p. 57). Many member states of the European Union impose greater obligations on PSB than on commercial stations with respect to meeting the interests of the public,[12] including various social groups, and even local and regional segments of the public. The needs of an individual and society as a whole in terms of the information-providing, educational and cultural role that a public service broadcaster is supposed to play are determined by national and regional circumstances, including the nature of the media sector, cultural diversity as well as "geographical and infrastructural facts."[13] However, potential difficulties in raising funds for content intended for linguistic minorities or local needs have also been recognized, especially in small countries, where the costs of the public service broadcaster per capita tend to be higher (Communication 2009/C 257/01, footnote 38). In the same context, the European Parliament, too, has stressed the need for a more efficient promotion of community media as an important player in promoting media pluralism and citizen participation, especially by making TV and

12 See also Recommendation 1641 (2004) on Public Service Broadcasting, available at: http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta04/EREC1641.htm (accessed September 24, 2010) and document of the Council of Europe no. 11848, "The Funding of public service broadcasting", adopted on March 19, 2009, available at: http://assembly.coe.int/main.asp?Link=/documents/workingdocs/doc09/edoc11848.htm (accessed September 22, 2010).

13 Council of Europe document no. 11848, "The funding of public service broadcasting", paragraph 6, available at: http://assembly.coe.int/main.asp?Link=/documents/workingdocs/doc09/edoc11848.htm (accessed September 18, 2010).

radio frequencies available for these media and by securing their financial sustainability.[14]

To ensure the pluralism of local media content, it is important to very actively stimulate the local media on the regulatory front, especially since these media have fewer resources compared with the media operating at the state level (European Commission, 2009a, p. 38). The policies promoting the production of content for local communities should include measures to encourage diversity of information, views and programs available to the media audience at the local level, either through obligatory programming standards or programming requirements defined in the context of licensing, whereby a certain share of self-produced programs particularly related to public interest (CM/Rec(2007)2, paragraph 3) can be required, or through measures to encourage local production and distribution of media content. The latter refer to financial incentives provided in accordance with clearly defined, objective criteria, through transparent procedures and with independent control (CM/Rec(2007)2, paragraph 4). It is also possible to encourage media pluralism through consultations of the media with representatives of the public, for example in the form advisory bodies that should preferably reflect the population structure and that would facilitate a better incorporation of the needs and wishes of the public into programming policies (CM/Rec(2007)2, paragraph 3.3).

Aware of the problems facing local and regional media, some member states of the European Union have passed a number of measures to enable the production of content important for local communities. The 2008 reports of the European Union member states indicate that different measures are applied in specific contexts to meet the needs of the

14 European Parliament resolution of 25 September 2008 on Community Media in Europe (2008/2011(INI)), available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2008-0456+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN (accessed October 6, 2010).

local population. Table 1 shows the number of states (out of 27 member states of the European Union) which apply specific measures to promote geographical pluralism.

Table 1: Incentives for geographical pluralism of media

	Number of countries using regulatory measures (N=27)	Number of countries using self-regulatory measures (N=27)
Licensing policies encouraging local/regional media (i.e.: part of frequencies explicitly reserved for regional/local media; rules protecting the local character of these media, i.e. ban on centralization of programming/advertising decisions)	22	1
Structural measures - access of different localities to media (i.e. the obligation to establish branch offices across the country)	12	1
Programming obligations: requirements to cover local events etc.	18	0
State aid to regions	7	0
Rules on national minorities	10	1
Rules on social inclusion of remote areas	5	1

Source: European Commission, 2009b, p. 783.

The case of the United Kingdom is very interesting, where the problem of geographical pluralism is being addressed on three tracks in order to create favorable conditions for making news important for local communities. First, "More for-profit and not-for-profit radio licences are being granted ...'Community television' is beginning to be established, with the potential for local output produced by local people" (Aldridge 2007, p. 24). Commercial radio and commercial television are to some extent obliged to broadcast regional programs of public interest, such as news (Aldridge 2007, pp. 93–97). However, high production costs have led to a gradual

decrease in the demand for such programs on commercial television, alongside the reduced price of the annual broadcasting license (Aldridge 2007, p. 163). Because of the problem of financial sustainability of local program production on commercial radio and TV stations, the Ofcom regulatory agency (Office of Communications) systematically transfers the burden of local content production to the BBC, which will most likely become even more dominant in producing local news. It is already visible on the BBC Local web-portal,[15] which broadcasts local news by region and has become the leading portal for local information in the United Kingdom. Apart from that, thanks to digital terrestrial television, "ultralocal" television pilot projects have been developed. The BBC, a public service broadcaster funded by the British taxpayer, is considered obliged to provide news at all levels, from the global to the local. As a result, by the end of 2005 the BBC had also established 40 local radio stations (see Aldridge 2007, pp. 24, 83–86; also see Ofcom, 2009a).

In France, the guiding principle in issuing licenses was that of pluralism and diversity, whereby "free-to-air" and local programs had priority (Kevin et al. 2004, p. 74). Attention was also paid to preserving the diversity of the radio sector in each region by having five categories of private radio stations: (a) non-commercial radio, (b) commercial local or regional radio which does not broadcast any national programs at all, (c) commercial local or regional stations which also broadcast the program of the "national thematic network", (d) thematic national stations and (e) general commercial national stations (Kevin et al. 2004, p. 74; Ofcom, 2009b, p. 2). In addition, in order to contribute to geographical pluralism, France 3 and Radio France have branches across the country. France 3 is obliged to broadcast information on local events. There also exist rules on presenting peripheral territories in the media, as well as subsidies for radio stations, a significant number of which are local stations with

15 BBC Local, available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/hi/default.stm (accessed October 6, 2010).

less than 20% of advertising revenue (the source of the report on France: European Commission, 2009b, p. 237). Thus, for example, a large number of non-commercial local radio stations and community radio stations in France belong to a group of stations that can obtain funds from a special public fund (Fund for Support of Radio Expression - FSER), with annual amounts ranging from 5,000 to 150,000 euros (Ofcom, 2009b, p. 2). Also, around 10% of the revenue of print media is obtained through public subsidies. In January 2009, President Sarkozy announced a package of measures for financial support to the print media industry in the amount of 600 million euros as a supplement to the sum of 1.5 billion euros in direct or indirect subsidies already allocated to this media sector (Ofcom, 2009b, p. 4).

Given its special territorial setup, Belgium provides another illustrative example when it comes to encouraging geographical pluralism of media. In Belgium, the Public Service Broadcaster is obliged to establish five regional centres for program production. Special licenses for local and regional radio and TV stations are required. These stations have special obligations in terms of covering local issues. Thus, regional TV stations have a mission to provide news from their respective regions, promote communication in regional communities and contribute to the cultural and social development of the region. Local TV stations, which must have the status of community media, have a mission to produce and provide information, but also to promote active citizen participation (each local TV station must conclude an agreement with the local government whereby they specify this mission) (the source of the report on Belgium: European Commission, 2009b, pp. 66–67).

Taking into account current market and technological trends, as well as the specific policies of different countries which define the development of local media and the provision of local media content, it is now time to look at the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to see the direction in which the local media market is moving, but also to assess the overall market, technological,

political and legal environment when it comes to creating conditions for the production of local media content relevant to local communities.

5. The local media market in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) is a country with a population of around 3.8 million.[16] It consists of two entities, each with a high degree of autonomy – the Federation of B&H (FB&H) and the Republika Srpska (RS) – and the special District of Brčko. In the Federation of B&H, there are ten cantons, while in the whole of B&H there are 141 municipalities. The municipality is the smallest unit of local government, and has considerable prerogatives, such as the elaboration of development strategies; urban planning; utility services; collection of local taxes; and the local government budget.[17] The municipalities in the Federation of B&H also have the responsibility "to secure conditions for the work of local radio and TV stations in compliance with the law"[18].

16 Estimate of the Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina of June 30, 2008; Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2009, p. 4); CIA's estimate, The World Factbook for July 2010, is 4.6 million inhabitants. Source: CIA, The World Factbook, available at: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bk.html (accessed August 27, 2010).

17 Law on the principles of local self-government in FB&H, Official Gazette of the Federation of B&H 49/06; Law on local government in RS, Official Gazette of RS, 101/04; 42/05; 118/05.

18 Law on the principles of local self-government in the Federation of B&H, Official Gazette of the Federation of B&H, 49/06; Article 8; we have learned from several representatives of the local government that the law does not specify what the obligation 'to provide conditions to ensure the work of local radio and TV stations' should mean, but in practice it implies financial support to the media in cases when the municipality is a founder of the media (written response by Željka Pejić, councillor for social affairs, youth and public relations, municipality of Doboj Istok, June 7, 2010).

while in the Republika Srpska it is stated that the municipality "provides information and public announcements on issues important for the life and work of citizens in a municipality."[19] Unlike the current law in the Federation of B&H, the law in the Republika Srpska does not define the obligation of the units of local self-government to provide conditions for the work of local radio and TV stations.

5.1. Regulatory framework for local media in B&H

In principle, the legal and regulatory framework guarantees freedom of expression and the freedom of media,[20] along with freedom from political control and manipulation.[21] With regard to the print media sector,[22] there are no obligations to meet the needs of

19 Law on Local Self-Government of RS, Official Gazette of RS 101/04; 42/05; 118/05; Article 26.

20 The Constitution, European Convention on Human Rights, Libel Law (Official Gazette of RS, no. 37/01, Official Gazette of FB&H, no. 31/01), which decriminalize libel and insult, as well as the Law on Communications (Official Gazette of B&H, no. 31/03 and 75/06, 32/10, Official Gazette of B&H, no. 33/02), which provides the general legal framework for the broadcasting sector and telecommunications industry and establishes the CRA (Communications Regulatory Agency).

21 Law on Communications (Article 4), Official Gazette of B&H, no. 31/03 and 75/06, 32/10; Official Gazette of B&H, no. 33/02, November 12, 2002. Also, the Law on the Public Sector Broadcasting System of B&H, Official Gazette of B&H, no. 78/05 and 35/09, Article 4, guarantees editorial independence and institutional autonomy of public service broadcasters (BHRT, FTV and RTRS). The editorial independence of public service broadcasters is also guaranteed by the manner of selecting the general director and the executive board, as well as by their financial independence since no state subsidies are available for regular program production. Funding is secured through the license fee, advertising and sponsorship. See more in Jusić 2006, pp. 261–263. In addition, there are no formal barriers to prevent the media from presenting different views and acting as a corrective to the government (Jusić 2006, p. 290). See also Hodžić 2010; Hozić 2008; IREX, 2009.

22 The sector of print media is based on a self-regulatory principle which implies that the Press Council, as a non-governmental organization established by the journalists' associations in B&H, mediates between citizens and the media in cases of violation of the Press Code. The Press Council cannot impose sanctions on print media, but it can suggest the use of journalistic tools, such as the right to obtain an answer, correction and apology.

the local population in B&H.[23] As for broadcasting, it can be said that there is no law which limits citizens' access to media or prevents the establishment of new media, except in the absence of available frequencies for broadcasting. In practice, the Communications Regulatory Agency (CRA)[24] has ensured a considerable portion of frequencies for radio and TV stations whose signals cover smaller territorial units in B&H. However, there are no special programming requirements or quotas which would place local broadcasters under obligation to produce content of specific relevance for the local population.[25] Also, there are no obligations for public service broadcasters to ensure content for specific local communities.[26]

23 General professional standards are defined by the Press Code, available at: http://www.vzs.ba/ba/?ID=2 (accessed April 5, 2010).

24 The CRA is an independent agency responsible for regulating the communications sector, including regulation of broadcasting and issuance of licenses to radio and television stations and licenses for distribution of radio and television programs, as well as licenses for audio-visual media services. The CRA codes and rules define programming principles. The agency has executive powers and may apply sanctions in case of violations of its codes and rules.

25 Programming standards for radio and TV broadcasters are defined by the Law on Communications (Official Gazette of B&H, no. 31/03 i 75/06, 32/10). In addition, the Law on Public Service Broadcasting includes provisions related to the treatment of minorities in radio and TV programs; privacy protection; treatment of violence; sexuality; announcement of and clear indication of advertising content etc. (available at: http://www.rak.ba/bih/index.php?uid= 1269867979; accessed September 7, 2010).

26 The Public Service Broadcasting system consists of three public service broadcasters, each being regulated by a separate law: the Law on Public Service Broadcasting of B&H – BHRT (Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina, no. 92/05; the Law on the Radio-Television of the Federation of B&H – RTV FB&H (Official Gazette of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, no. 01-02-401/08); the Law on the Radio-Television of the Republika Srpska – RTRS (Official Gazette of the Republika Srpska, no. 49/06). In addition, the Law on the Public Service Broadcasting System of B&H (Official Gazette of B&H, no. 78/05) regulates the overall functioning of the system and relationships among its components (AGCOM and CRA, 2008, p. 80).

5.2. Local press

In B&H there is no register of print media or newspaper circulation data. The web page of the Press Council provides basic information on print media, such as a list of publishers, addresses, and frequency of publication, but there is no data as to whether it is local, regional or state print media. According to this source, there are 11 dailies, 100 different magazines, 75 specialized and other publications and 8 religious magazines in B&H. All dailies are privately owned. Generally speaking, the print media market is very poorly developed (IREX, 2009).

Table 2. Number of print media and news agencies in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Daily newspapers in B&H	Magazines in B&H		News agencies in B&H	Other publications		Religious magazines in B&H
	FB&H	RS		FB&H	RS	
11	53	47	6	57	18	8

Source: evidence of the Press Council. Available at: http://www.vzs.ba/ba/?ID8 (accessed June 16, 2010).

Ethnicity plays an important role in the readership profile of the press. The press located in a part of the country with one dominant ethnic group is in principle not read in the parts of the country where other ethnic groups are dominant (GfK B&H, 2006a). Essentially, it can be said that in B&H we do not have a national press covering the entire country and read relatively equally throughout the country. Instead, we have a press divided along ethnic lines and read in specific parts of the country.

Major daily newspapers distributed in B&H also report on local affairs to some extent. Some of them feature regular rubrics with information from local communities (be it

different local communities or the daily's home canton/city). In general, different rubrics in all print media provide information from local communities to some extent. The *Dnevni list* daily has a special rubric devoted to its home canton (pp. 3–4) and a special rubric devoted to the city where it is headquartered (pp. 4–6). The *Dnevni avaz* and *Oslobođenje* dailies also have such a rubric (as a rule, it takes up two pages) focused on news from the canton in their Sarajevo editions, while in their national editions this rubric is substituted by one which covers news from different smaller administrative-territorial units in B&H, i.e. cantons and municipalities. Apart from that, according to representatives of the Press Council,[27] major print media have no special local editions. As for Glas Srpske, there is a rubric "Kroz Republiku Srpsku" ("Through the Republika Srpska") (pp. 2–4), with different sub-rubrics focusing on specific regions, such as Krajina, Semberija or eastern Republika Srpska, and content on different municipalities in the Republika Srpska. However, the content pertaining to local communities is not exclusively limited to such rubrics, but is also to be found on other pages. In Nezavisne novine, the content of local character is not specifically identified, although for the most part it is contained in the rubric "Događaji" ("Events"), but can be found in different other rubrics as well.[28] Our research did not include an analysis of content which could have enabled us to reach reliable conclusions about the coverage of local events in the print media. In spite of that, based on a survey of seven editions of daily newspapers, and especially based on the conducted interviews, we can conclude that, as a rule, local communities, especially smaller ones and those far from major cities, are seen as being often neglected.

27 Ljiljana Zurovac, executive director of the Press Council, in an interview in May 2010.

28 Insight into the rubrics and content focused on local communities was gained through a survey of seven editions of five major daily newspapers in B&H (*Nezavisne novine, Glas Srpske, Dnevni avaz, Oslobođenje, Dnevni list*), in the period from September 10 to September 16, 2010.

Local and regional print media tend to be weeklies or monthlies. There are some regional media, such as *Naša riječ*, *Reprezent*, and partly *Tuzlanski list*,[29] which cover events from several municipalities. It is not uncommon to find municipal or cantonal administrative services which publish their own print media or have grants for print media located in the municipality.[30] Municipal authorities publish several publications, as is the case with the municipalities of Trebinje, Visoko, Doboj, Kalinovik, Novi Grad Sarajevo, Goražde and Derventa.[31] Some of them have a regular distribution system (such as *Derventski list* or *Semberske novine*), while others are municipality bulletins, distributed on the municipality premises or through local communities and municipal web pages.[32]

29 During our research we conducted four in-depth interviews with representatives of private print media (*Tuzlanski list*, Tuzla; Naša riječ, Zenica; *Intermezzo*, Banja Luka, and *Reprezent*, Velika Kladuša). Of these, according to the interviewees' assessments, the weekly magazine *Reprezent* is primarily of a local character, i.e. focusing on Una-Sana Canton, while *Naša riječ* covers 14 municipalities, primarily in Zenica-Doboj Canton. *Tuzlanski list*, the only print media outlet in Tuzla Canton, focuses to a great extent on the local communities, i.e. municipalities in Tuzla Canton. *Intermezzo* magazine was not considered a local media outlet, but one with diverse content, including content pertaining to the local communities of different municipalities in the Republika Srpska.

30 As part of our research, we conducted short interviews with representatives of four print media outlets (the weeklies *Semberske novine*, Bijeljina, *Derventski list* and *Kozarski vjesnik*, Prijedor; and the Vareš monthly *Bobovac)*. The publisher of *Bobovac* is the Croatian cultural society Napredak; the publisher of Derventski list is the municipality of Derventa; while *Kozarski vjesnik*, along with the Prijedor radio station and TV Prijedor, is part of a publicly-owned information center. *Semberske novine* is partly funded by the municipality of Bijeljina.

31 Reported on the web page of the Press Council: http://www.vzs.ba/ba/?ID8 (accesssed June 16, 2010).

32 Interview with Ljiiljana Zurovac, executive director of the Press Council, in May 2010.

A survey of editions of several local and regional print media outlets[33] has shown that their content is primarily focused on smaller territorial units, be they cantons and their municipalities[34] or individual municipalities.[35] Some of the print media outlets that we analyzed are available online,[36] while others have purely presentational websites.[37]

Typically, municipal bulletins have a relatively low circulation of several hundred copies, and as such are often not an important source of information for most of the

33 In order to gain insight into the nature of the content of these media, we looked at several editions of the following local and regional print media available in print or on the Web: *Reprezent*, Krajina's independent weekly paper published by "Meridian" d.o.o., Velika Kladuša; *Unsko-sanske novine*, a weekly paper; *037 Plus*, a news weekly, legal successor to the pre-war newspaper *Krajina*. This paper is now a separate legal person, launched by the public service broadcaster JP RTV B&H Bihać. It is partly funded from a grant by the municipality of Bihać, and partly from advertising revenues. Apart from these, we also looked at the following sources: *Naša riječ*, a Zenica weekly; the Vareš paper *Bobovac*, published monthly by the Croatian cultural society Napredak; the weekly *Derventski list*, whose publisher is the "Public Entreprise Derventski list and Radio Derventa"; the weekly *Tuzlanski list*; *Kozarski vjesnik*, which operates as part of the same information center as the publicly-owned Radio Station Prijedor and TV Prijedor.

34 As is the case with the following print media: *Naša riječ, Reprezent, Krajina, 037 Plus.*

35 Similar to the papers *Bobovac* and *Derventski list.*

36 Bobovac, available at: http://www.vares.pp.se/bobovac/boblist/bobovac.htm, while *Derventski list* is available at: http://www.derventskilist.net/index.html (both accessed September 21, 2009).

37 *Naša riječ*, Zenica: http://www.nasarijec.ba/; also available on this page are articles about twelve municipalities in the rubric "Aktualno". *Tuzlanski list*: http://www.tuzlanskilist.ba (although this newspaper does not have a primarily local character, but includes information from Tuzla Canton), as yet no articles are available on its website, but it says that they are coming soon. *Krajina*: http://www.krajina.com.ba/index.html, several articles are available on the website (all three accessed September 21, 2010).

local population. If we cast a glance at the content of these bulletins,[38] we shall find a large amount of information on the activities of the local government, and in this sense, along with their informative role, they play a significant promotional role. As a rule, these municipal bulletins are not critical of the work of local government, nor do they cover debates among political opponents or views that question the work of the municipal administration. Consequently, they cannot play a significant role in promoting local democracy or politically active local communities.

5.3. Local radio and TV stations in an overcrowded market

After 1996, owing to the great support by the international community, a large number of commercial broadcasters were registered, marking the start of the development of an independent media sector in B&H. The Public Service Broadcasting system was also established (See Jusić 2004). Thus, in B&H we currently have a dual system of broadcasting which consists of commercial/private radio and TV stations and public broadcasters. The public broadcaster is defined as such either by its source of funding or by the nature of its founding body.[39] Beside

38 Several municipality bulletins were accessed through Google search on their websites according to their position in search results.

39 We consider a public RTV station to be an RTV station to which at least one of the following applies: "(1) founded by B&H, an entity, Brčko District, a canton, city and/or municipality (political-territorial unit), (2) founded by administrative organizations or other governing bodies of a political-territorial unit from line 1 of this item, or by any institution with the public prerogatives of a political-territorial unit from line 1 of this item; or (3) founded after the model of public-private partnership, being either owned or funded over 51% by legal persons from line 1) and/or 2) of this item," CRA, Rule 41/2009 on public RTV stations, available at: http://www.rak.ba/bih/index.php?uid=1269867979 (accessed September 2, 2010).

the six broadcasters in the Public Service Broadcasting system in B&H,[40] broadcasting licenses have been granted to another 44 TV and 144 radio stations.[41] Apart from the Public Service Broadcasting system and several TV and radio programs which cover a larger part of B&H, the majority of radio and TV broadcasters are either local or regional in terms of their signal coverage, i.e. they cover the area of several municipalities. Beside the three TV channels within the Public Service Broadcasting system of B&H (BHT1, FTV, RTRS), which cover almost the whole territory of B&H, two additional commercial channels, OBN and PINK, can be viewed in the greater part of the country. These two channels can be watched by over two million people in around 100 municipalities across the country. There are also seven medium-sized TV stations which cover around 50 municipalities, reaching 500,000 to 1,000,000 viewers.[42] The majority of other TV stations cover areas with fewer than 500,000 inhabitants and fewer than 16 municipalities. A dozen TV stations have a very limited reach, with 1,500 to 80,000 viewers (AGCOM and CRA, 2008, pp. 110–111). Evidently, this appears to be an

40 These are: BHT, BH radio 1, FTV, Radio of the Federation of B&H, TV RS, Radio Republika Srpska (RTRS has also seven local affiliates). Data available on the CRA page at: http://www.rak.ba/bs/broadcast/reg/?cid=2415, (accessed September 1, 2010).

41 Public register of the Communications Regulatory Agency, available at: http://rak.ba/bs/broadcast/reg/?cid=2415 (accessed September 1, 2010).

42 The medium-sized TV stations are: Alternativna televizija, HRT Kiseljak – Kiss TV; NTV Hayat; RTV BN; RTV TK; RTV Vikom; TV Kanal 3 (AGCOM & CRA, 2008, pp. 110–111).

exceptionally large number of radio and TV stations for a country with a population of only 3.8 million.[43]

Notwithstanding the excessive number of TV stations for a country with such a small population, the media market itself is very poor. According to the latest data available for 2006, the overall revenues from the television sector in B&H amounted to

[43] In comparison with B&H, Croatia, a country with a population of 4.5 million (source: CIA, The World Factbook, available at: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/hr.html, accessed August 27, 2010), has 25 public and commercial local, regional and national TV stations (AEM – Agency for Electronic Media, the Republic of Croatia, available at: http://www.e-mediji.hr/nakladnici/televizijski_nakladnici.php; accessed August 27, 2010). In the Czech Republic, which has a population of 10 million, in 2005 there were two channels of the national public service broadcaster (ČT1 and ČT2) and two commercial national TV channels, one of which used a network of 12 regional TV stations, while at the time, because of the unbearable market conditions, the two last local terrestrial stations had been closed. In the same period there were around 90 state, regional and local radio stations (Czech Republic, TV across Europe 2005, pp. 490–491). In the United Kingdom, with a population of about 61 million (source: CIA, The World Factbook, available at: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/uk.html, accessed August 27, 2010), around 370 commercial and BBC local, regional and national, digital and analogue radio channels (Ofcom, 2009a, p. 29, figure 9) and over 150 community radio channels (Ofcom, 2009a, p. 21) were registered in 2008. In France, which has a population of around 64 million (source: CIA, The World Factbook, available at: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/fr.html, accessed August 27, 2010), there are around 1,200 radio operators, of which 600 are community radio stations (Ofcom, 2009b, p. 2). In Germany, a country with a population of around 83 million, there are around 460 radio stations, the majority of which are local stations. Of these, 75 are public service broadcasters, while 385 are commercial stations (Ofcom, 2009b, p. 4).

approximately 60 million euros, in comparison with 40 million euros for 2003.[44] With a share of 45%, advertisements are the most important source of revenue, followed by the radio and TV license fee with 33%, the latter at the same time being exclusively the revenue of the Public Service Broadcasting system.[45] On top of this, public funding represents a significant and stable source of revenues for broadcasters, amounting to 4% (AGCOM and CRA, 2008, pp. 111–113). In 2006, more than 65% of the overall market revenues went to the Public Service Broadcasting system, while the three biggest private TV stations (NTV Hayat, Pink BH and OBN) earned 20%. This means that other, smaller local and regional TV stations had to content themselves with the remaining 15% share of revenues (AGCOM and CRA, 2008, p. 119). According to the data for 2004, only 25% of the total advertising revenue in the television market went to local TV broadcasters, namely, to some 40 TV stations.[46]

44 Senad Zaimović, director of the Sarajevo-based Fabrika advertising agency, stresses that there is no reliable data on the size of the media market in B&H for 2010; all we have are rough estimates. Also, there is no reliable data on the size of local and regional markets. It is important to point out that due to the global economic crisis in 2009 we witnessed a decrease in the market by approximately 25%; unfortunately, this negative trend continued in 2010, when an additional drop of 10 % was registered in comparison to the previous year. All things considered, there is no data on the actual size of the market; we only have rough estimates for major media outlets, while there is no available data on smaller media outlets (phone conversation on September 16, 2010).

45 We should note that local public broadcasters are not part of the public service broadcasting system. Consequently, only the three abovementioned public service broadcasters, which make up the public service broadcasting system, are funded through the license fee.

46 The public broadcasting service accounts for 67% of the total revenues of the television market, while three private broadcasters – NTV Hayat, Pink BH and OBN – account for 16%. Out of the total advertising revenues, 43% goes to the public service, while the three leading commercial broadcasters absorb 32%. In total, the increase in advertising revenues has been slower than the overall development of the market (AGCOM and CRA, 2005, pp. 78–85).

Taking into account the considerable number of regional and local electronic media outlets, it is evident that the poor market cannot ensure the successful growth and development of all, nor can significant funds be obtained for the production of quality regional and local content. Namely, in the small electronic media market in B&H, especially at the local level, distribution of advertising revenues among the many broadcasters results in scant resources for the production of content relevant to local audiences. Dušan Mašić, an independnet media consultant, thus, points out that in the overcrowded local media market, TV and radio stations cannot achieve high ratings. As a result, they find it difficult to obtain advertising contracts in a situation where there are few potential advertisers as it is, which prevents them from collecting revenues that would make it possible for them to produce quality content relevant to the local audience. On balance, the number of frequencies given to radio and TV broadcasters in B&H is excessive and unsustainable for the B&H media market, while the existence of several electronic media outlets in municipalities with a population of around 10,000 is not economically justifiable.[47] This is evident from comparisons between B&H and other countries (see earlier sections).

5.4. Local radio and TV stations and ownership relations

A significant portion of local radio and TV broadcasters are public broadcasters, founded and funded either by municipal or cantonal authorities. Today in Bosnia and Herzegovina, apart from the Public Service Broadcasting system, there are 64 public

47 Dušan Mašić, independent media consultant, in an interview given on April 9, 2010.

radio stations and 14 public TV stations, as well as 79 private radio stations and 30 private TV stations.[48] For the most part, these local and regional public radio and TV stations operate at the level of a municipality, a narrower region or a canton.

We should also note that in B&H there are six affiliates of the public service broadcaster RTRS which re-broadcast four hours of RTRS programming on a daily basis, while the remaining programs are broadcast from the local studio.[49] However, when it comes to the status of affiliates in relation to other local public broadcasters, there are no significant differences, given that in both cases the municipality is the founder and the main funder. The meager advantages enjoyed by affiliates compared with other public media outlets at the local level consist of the former being covered by the RTRS license for terrestrial broadcasting, and as such being exempt from paying a fee for license renewal.[50] Another advantage lies in all of their own production being focused on a local level, while the portion of programs taken over from the RTRS covers topics of entity/state or international relevance.[51]

According to data provided by CRA for 2005, each of the 25 cities (including all of their respective neighbourhood communities and municipalities) is covered by the

48 According to the CRA public register, available at: http://cra.ba/bs/broadcast/reg/?cid=2415 (accessed September 1, 2010)

49 Emir Povlakić, head of CRA's Sector for licenses, digitalization and broadcasting coordination believes this to be a positive practice, given that after the issuance of long-term licenses and the loss of around 30% of licenses issued to radio and TV broadcasters, the frequencies of some abolished stations were allocated to the RTRS affiliates (from an interview given in April 2010).

50 Interview with Svjetlana Vračar, director of the publicly-owned Center for culture, information and education, p.o. Ribnik, June 2010.

51 Interview with Slavko Stojanović, director of JP Srpski radio Kneževo, June 2010.

Table 3. Number of TV and radio stations by type of ownership (private/public)

	2003.*		2009.	
	Private	Public	Private	Public
TV	26	16	30	14
Radio	79	62	79	64
Total	105	78	109	78

*Source for 2003: Jusić 2004, p. 66, in: Hrvatin, Petković and Jusić 2004; source for 2009: the CRA register, available at: http://cra.ba/bs/broadcast/reg/?cid=2415 (accessed September 1, 2010).

signals of four out of 13 television stations and of two out of 24 radio stations.[52] Because of this, it is important to mention that out of 79 municipalities in the Federation of B&H,[53] 17 do not have their own radio or TV station based in the municipality,[54] which is not to say that they are not covered by the signals of radio or TV stations from neighbouring municipalities. In the Republika Srpska, out of a total of 62 municipalities, 34 do not have local electronic media based in the municipality. Table 4 gives the total number of municipalities without electronic media based in the municipality, as well as of those with one or several media outlets, also broken down by type of ownerhip.

52 Source: CRA, 2005. Presence of radio FM stations and the population's coverage by a signal by town in B&H; available at: http://cra.ba/bs/public-affairs/default.aspx?cid=3873 (accessed August 31, 2010). Presence of TV stations and the population's coverage by a signal by town in B&H; available at: http://rak.ba/B&HB&H/aktuelnost.php?uid=1270635262 (accessed September 1, 2010).

53 According to data of the Statistics Agency of B&H, available at: http://www.bhas.ba/new/BiHStats.asp?Pripadnost=4&mode=dark (accessed on September 16, 2010).

54 According to the register of electronic media, available at: http://www.rak.ba/bs/broadcast/reg/?cid=2415 (accessed on September 1, 2010).

Table 4. Municipalities by number of electronic media and type of ownership

	WITHOUT MEDIA	WITH PRIVATE ELECTRONIC MEDIA		WITH PUBLIC ELECTRONIC MEDIA		WITH BOTH PRIVATE AND PUBLIC EL. MEDIA		TOTAL
		One media outlet	Several media outlets	One media outlet	Several media outlets and one public	One private and public media outlet	Several private media outlets	
RS	34	7	3	13	0	2	3	62
FB&H	17	10	2	28	1	8	5	71*
TOTAL	51	22		42		18		133

*Eight municipalities from Sarajevo are excluded.[55]

5.5. Third sector – community media

Apart from licenses for private and public radio broadcasters, according to Rule 42/2009 pertaining to terrestrial broadcasting of radio and TV programs,[56] it is envisaged that special licenses may be issued to broadcasters targeting certain social groups (community media) which are "registered as associations or legal persons" and "established to protect and promote the rights and interests of certain social groups,

55 Register of the Communications Regulatory Agency, available at: http://www.rak.ba/bs/broadcast/reg/?cid=2415, and data on municipalities in B&H reported on the web pages of the Association of Municipalities of FB&H (available at: http://www.sogfbih.ba/Federation-Bos/Municipalities/Contacts__addresses) and RS (available at. http://www.alvrs.com/srpski/lokalnip.html) (both pages accessed April 2, 2010).

56 Regulation 42/2009 on licenses for terrestrial broadcasting of RTV program, Chapter II, Article 12; available at: http://www.cra.ba/bih/index.php?uid=1269867979 (accessed September 1, 2010).

but have an entirely non-profit character" (Article 12, paragraph 1). Apart from the standard criteria governing the issuance of licenses for terrestrial broadcasting, community media must also meet the criteria regarding program and language orientation toward a given social group (Article 12, paragraph 4b).[57]

However, there are no community radio stations in B&H, although there are media outlets with a mission focusing on a particular social community. A major reason for the absence of this type of license is the questionable financial sustainability of the media with special licenses in B&H, considering that it is not allowed for these media to be funded through advertising and sponsorship (Rule 42/2010, Article 12, paragraph 6), which is not standard practice in countries with developed media targeting specific social groups (hereinafter: community media). In addition, alternative sources of revenue are not sufficiently available given the lack of donations or funds for community media at any level of government in B&H (see more in Coyer and Van Beek, in this publication). Certainly, it is also important to take into account the fact that voluntary work and citizen journalism are not a widespread practice in B&H, which is a further obstacle to the development of community media. According to CRA, there has been no major

57 It is important to clarify that there are significant differences between the concept of local media and that of the media of interest communities (community media). Local media is defined according to geographical parameters, and we consider all media operating in a particular smaller area to be local media. On the other hand, community media refers to media that serve the specific interests of a particular community of people (not necessarily a geographical community, but primarily an interest community) and do no focus on profit-making, but rather at creating a sort of public interest for the public good of their communities. Accordingly, local media are not necessarily community media and vice versa (see Gosselin; see also Coyer and Van Beek, in this publication).

interest so far among citizens' associations or other social groups and organizations in establishing this type of media.

5.6. Public RTV stations and financial dependence on public revenue

Evidently, a large number of local and regional RTV stations (over 30% out of the total number of radio and TV broadcasters in B&H) is either owned or funded by municipal or cantonal authorities. This state of affairs has been described as a transitional phenomenon in the media sector in B&H (AGCOM and CRA, 2008, p. 124), and can be considered the legacy of the pre-war period, when most broadcasters were directly controlled by the state (AGCOM and CRA, 2008, p. 81). The total revenue of the television sector coming from public funding amounted to around 4.5 million KM in 2006, which is 4% of the total revenue of the television sector in B&H. This concerns small TV stations that are almost entirely dependent on the economic support of the government, especially at the cantonal and municipal levels (AGCOM and CRA, 2008, p. 118). When it comes to public radio stations at the local level, the situation is similar: public finance is still an exceptionally important source of revenue for these radio stations. Thus, in 2006 the majority of public radio stations obtained more than half of their revenue from public funds, with some being completely dependent on these funds. Among these station, in only eight did public funds acount for less than 30% of their total revenue (AGCOM and CRA, 2008, p. 143).

There are several potential problems linked to this direct financial dependence of a large number of local RTV stations on government funds. First, in view of their full financial dependence on the state, local media can hardly be described as editorially independent. While the funding of entity- and state-level public service broadcasters in B&H is regulated in such a way that they are not financially dependent on government bodies, but are funded by means of the RTV license fee and

advertising,[58] local and regional public media are directly financially dependent on municipal or cantonal authorities. According to experts (AGCOM and CRA, 2008, p. 118), as well as some of our respondents, this has also compromised the editorial independence of local public broadcasters.

In addition, the respondents[59] suggest that in a large number of cases local government bodies exercise direct or indirect control over the editorial policy of publicly-owned media (they appoint management boards; approve annual budgets allocated for the media; act as the main source of information; directly influence the media content; while their interests are quite often pursued through self-censorship or censorship by the editor). In these conditions, the media primarily meet the interests of the political and economic centres of power that they depend on, while the interests of citizens remain in the background.

A further problem arising from the financial dependence of public local media on the local authorities is a two-fold market distortion. Above all, this prevents a genuine market-driven positioning of public stations (AGCOM and CRA, 2008, p. 118) since their survival does not depend on the advertising market. On the other hand, these stations do attract a portion of commercial revenues and audience, thus distorting the market at the expense of private commercial broadcasters barred from access to public funds. Namely, funds for public media are secured from the budget, but they also compete with the private media for a share of the local audience and of

58 Law on the Public Broadcasting System of B&H (2005), Articles 17–24 and 30–34; Official Gazette of B&H, no. 78/05 and 35/09.

59 For example, Dušan Mašić, media expert; Samir Halilović, of the Nove nade Democratic Center (New Hopes); Radmila Žigić of Lara NGO/PAN radio, Bijeljina; Siniša Jovičić of the Forum for European Integration, Derventa (all interviews conducted in April-May 2010).

advertising contracts. According to some respondents,[60] in view of the fact that their survival does not depend exclusively on advertising revenue, these media tend to lower the prices of advertisements and bring into question the survival of the media that do not have alternative sources of funding.[61]

Finally, as reported by the AGCOM and CRA in 2008, another potential problem lies in that this form of state funding of RTV stations is in direct contravention of European Union treaties,[62] which treat public funding of economic activities as "state aid," which, in turn, may influence trade among states and create problems in the domain of market competition. As an exception, member states may ensure funding of public service broadcasting provided that this funding is intended for meeting special commitments defined by the member states and allocated to radio and television broadcasters. In other words, state funding of radio and TV stations is permitted only if it directly helps them fulfil their role as public service broadcasters and producers of programs of public interest, which is currently not the case with the local radio and TV stations in B&H. There are no programming requirements such as requirements of specific content of public interest for local

60 Danijel Marjanović, director and editor-in-chief of Kozarska Dubica-based Radio Feniks; Amna Popovac, director of Mostar's Radio Studio 88 (interviews conducted in April-May 2010).

61 Radmila Žigić, president of Women's Association Lara and editor-in-chief of Bijeljina-based Pan Radio stated that similar unfair competition was also posed by the media owned by big companies whose primary activity is not in the media sphere, but nevertheless secure regular funding for media activity as well.

62 European Union, consolidated versions of the Treaty on the European Union and of the Treaty Establishing the European Community, Section 2, Aid Grants by States, Article 87. Available at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2006:321E:0001:0331:EN:PDF, (accessed September 22, 2010).

communities or programming quotas that have to be met by these media in order to justify their public funding (AGCOM and CRA, 2008, pp. 51–53).

6. Media content for local communities in B&H

6.1. Legal obligations with regard to content production of local relevance

As for special programming obligations of radio and TV stations towards their respective local communities, above all it is important to stress that there is no explicit requirement for granting a license for terrestrial broadcasting of RTV programs[63] that gives priority to broadcasters producing content of a local character. Beside the general programming requirements, the above regulation defines special requirements for obtaining a frequency, including program specificity, and "in compliance with the regulation it is assessed to what extent the planned program scheme along with the program structure and its inclusive segments is already present in the area covered by the frequency signal in question, and upon this, priority will be given to those program segments which

63 Regulation no. 42/2009 on licenses for terrestrial broadcasting of radio and TV programs, Official Gazette of B&H, 52/09; hereinafter: Regulation 42/2009; available at: http://www.rak.ba/bih/index.php?uid=1269867979 (accessed September 2, 2010).

are insufficiently present or totally absent in a designated area..." (Regulation 42/2009, Article 10, paragraph 3).

According to Emir Povlakić of CRA's division for licensing, digitalization and coordination in broadcasting, the criterion of content locality, as one of the main features of "program specificity" for a particular area, was used in granting licenses for terrestrial broadcasting. In other words, this means that "in cases when there are several regional stations in a certain area, CRA prioritizes a local station because we believe ... that a local community is entitled to have access to local information" (interview with Emir Povlakić of CRA, April 2010).

However, although the Council of Ministers decision on the adoption of the "Policy for the Broadcasting Sector in B&H" (the Council of Ministers of B&H, 2007) noted the need to ensure local content in media programs, this commitment has not been implemented in any programming regulations that would oblige broadcasters to produce local content.

As for public service broadcasters in B&H, they are in no way obliged to produce local content, nor is any distinction made between local public media and public media at the state/entity levels in terms of programming obligations.

6.2. Editorial councils

One way for the media to adapt their programs to the interests of the public is to develop mechanisms of consultations with citizens.[64] In order to achieve this aim

64 See more in Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on media pluralism and diversity of media content, hereinafter: CM/Rec(2007)2)., available at: https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1089699 (accessed May 16, 2010).

in B&H, Rule 41/2009 on public radio and TV stations defines the obligation of public broadcasters to set up an Editorial Council made up of four to seven members "who will reflect the ethnic, cultural and religious composition of the population served by a radio or TV station, and who will be appointed by one of the founders of the public RTV station" as a precondition for obtaining/ renewing a license (Article 4). The purpose of this council is to advise the station on programming content and compliance with CRA codes and regulations (Article 5), and also "to advise the editor-in-chief on how to improve ways of meeting the needs of a community through program broadcasting..." (Article 6, paragraph 4).[65]

These programming councils have generally been established at publicly-owned local broadcasters, but so far there have been no reports on their performance or a systematic promotion of their role and significance. The experience of some representatives of public local media whom we have interviewed is that these councils are insufficiently active or entirely inactive, and as a result, they rarely provide suggestions for improving programming content and for meeting the needs of the population.[66]

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65 Rule 42/2009 on public radio and TV stations, Communications Regulatory Agency (CRA), available at: http://www.cra.ba/bih/index.php?uid=1269867979 (accessed September 19, 2010).

66 Sead Šuškić, director of Independent Television Travnik; Elvir Halilović, editor-in-chief of RTV Vogošća; Dinka Kovačević, editor-in-chief of Radio Prijedor; Obrad Nikčević, editor-in-chief of Radio Srbac; Kadir Plečan, editor-in-chief of Radio Olovo. Only one of the media representatives contacted on this occasion mentioned a concrete suggestion made by a member of the Council which had resulted in the production of a program on the needs and problems of young people (Marko Čurčić of the Public Enterprise Radio Tomislavgrad, in an interview given on June 23, 2010). On the other hand, one of the editors-in-chief said that the last meeting of the Editorial Council in his media outlet had been held two years earlier (Regulation 41/2009 contains provisions on the obligation of establishing editorial councils for public broadcasters, but the same was prescribed by the Regulation 01/1999, which had previously been in force).

6.3. Incentives for production of content for local communities

As for incentives for local production and distribution of media content, there are no special funds for this purpose, but as we have seen earlier, a considerable number of local media outlets receive financial incentives from the public budgets of municipalities and cantons.

In some municipalities and cantons, there are donations for print and electronic media, as well as commercial contracts between local government bodies and media ensuring media coverage of the work of the local government (these donations are given annually), or for covering special events deemed important for local government bodies (such as Municipality Day). Thus, for example, some municipalities allocate budgetary funds for the media to cover local events on a regular basis (for example, the municipality of Modriča allocates funds for regular time slots dedicated to specific topics related to this municipality in several media outlets, including RTRS and BNTV).

In the course of our research, we have also encountered examples of incentives for the production of content of special relevance for the local population, such as the RTV Goražde project, which promotes agicultural activities throughout the canton and has enjoyed the support of cantonal and municipal authorities.

Clearly, in such circumstances public funds are spent to make possible the production of one type of content relevant for a particular local community. According to some assessments, contracts for coverage of the work of municipal bodies provide the only guarantee that private media will provide such coverage,

and thus, ultimately serve a public good.[67] Yet, there is a serious risk of these public funds being used to influence the editorial policies of the media.[68]

It is in this light that the decision taken in June 2010 by the Government of the RS to allocate a total of around five million KM to the media in the Republika Srpska has often been interpreted. By the end of 2009, the same amount of money had been allocated to 70 local, regional and entity media outlets, both public and private. The financial support envisaged in the 2010 decision is intended for projects solicited in public calls which should comply with general social interests and seek to improve the quality of information for citizenry. However, doubts regarding the vested political interests behind such initiatives are a result of the fact that these financial resources were allocated in the pre-election period and according to somewhat unclear criteria.[69]

In addition to incentives approved and allocated by government bodies, there have been donor projects involving funding for media content of special relevance for local

67 Views presented at the OSCE conference "Component – *Media and communications: sharing good practices*," Sarajevo, June 15, 2010.

68 On occasion, cooperation between the media and municipalities in the production of some programs involves direct editorial suggestions by the representatives of municipalities themselves with regard to the coverage of the work of local authorities. For her part, Dijana Duzić, a representative of Jajce municipality, says that these cases are often exmples of positive practice, whereby topics ares suggested to journalists that might be of special relevance for citizens (OSCE conference; "Component – Media and communications: sharing good practices", 15 June 2010)

69 Source: Katana, Erduan, "Is the RS Government Buying Up the Media Prior to Elections?", Radio Slobodna Evropa (Free Europe), 2010, the text is available at: http://www.danas.org/content/vlada_rs_mediji_finansijska_pomoc/2075959.html?page=1&x=1#relatedInfoContainer (accessed September 19, 2010).

communities. However, as the overall donations available for the media, the local media included, have been dwindling rapidly, this type of assistance is playing an ever smaller role in funding media content for local communities. Consequently, it cannot serve as a basis for any long-term policies of incentives for the production of local media content.

6.4. Local content in programs of local and regional radio and TV stations

There has been little research on the coverage and quality of local content in the electronic media in B&H, while for the local print media it is non-existent. One rare instance of research of this type, completed in 2002, was CRA's analysis of TV and radio programs made during the process of granting long-term licenses. It identifed considerable flaws and a set of recommendations was issued to improve programs in various sectors, a top priority being the improvement of the local production of all types of programs, especially the production of news, education and children's programs and documentary programs. The CRA report also notes a rather low level of the production of domestic news programs for special population categories (such as refugees and displaced persons and persons with impaired hearing), as well as of religious programs and programs for minority groups.[70] Furthermore, the data obtained in the research on local radio stations conducted in 2007 indicates that radio programs primarily focus on entertainment (Mediacentar Sarajevo, 2007). In order to get better insight into the nature

70 CRA report "Programmes available to TV viewers and radio listeners in Bosnia and Herzegovina" available at: http://www.cra.ba/bs/depts/observ/default.aspx?cid=2855 (accessed on May 24, 2010).

of programs on local radio stations, we carried out a small-scale analysis for the purposes of this paper in order to assess the coverage of local topics in news programs of six local radio stations (three private and three public radio stations) in three B&H municipalities on three successive days in September 2009. In the course of those three days, a total of 501 items was broadcast on the news programs of the six stations, of which only 17 items (3%) dealt with local affairs in the given municipality.[71]

However, it is very important to stress that regular news programs do not necessarily have to be devoted to local content because other specialized programs for local issues often deal with it. Because of this, we paid special attention to program schedules of publicly-owned local, cantonal and regional radio and TV stations in an attempt to identify special programs devoted to local issues. We analyzed the available program schedules published either in the press or on the websites of the said media. Our analysis of their websites and the program schedules published in the daily press[72] allowed us to get insight into the programs of four out of a total of 14 public TV stations whose founders are either municipalities or cantons. With these four stations, we identified regular daily programs devoted to local or cantonal issues.

71 The municipalities and radio stations were selected in accordance with several criteria: size of the municipality; the existence of both public and private radio stations in the municipality; the ethnic make-up of the population; geographical distribution; online streaming of programs; etc. In the end, we selected the municipalities of Visoko, Žepče and Prnjavor. Three of the radio stations are private (Radio Q, Visoko; Radiopostaja Žepče; Radio Ljubić, Prnjavor), and three public (RTV Visoko, Radio Žepče and Radio Prnjavor). This is not a random and representative sample, and as such the data should be taken with some reservation, as a mere illustration of the news programs of some local radio stations.

72 In addition to data from the websites of the media, we also used the program schedules published in the daily newspaper *Oslobođenje*.

In addition, programs pertaining to other local communities were also broadcast.[73] When it comes to public radio stations, according to the register of the Communications Regulatory Agency, 28 out of a total of 65 public radio stations at the municipal and cantonal levels have websites. However, only 17 of those websites offer the program schedules of the radio stations, and regular programs of a local character were identified in five of those. Although this limited insight into the nature of the programs of public local and regional/cantonal TV and radio stations does not provide information about all the stations, we can assume that a considerable number of these stations offer similar content intended for their respective local communities.

73 TV Vogošća has several programs concerning the municipality of Vogošća, such as the half-hour program *Vogošćanska hronika*, broadcast every day at 18:00 and re-run at 22:30, and the program *Sedam dana u Vogošći* (Seven days in Vogošća), broadcast on Sunday 12 September 2010 at 18:00. Programs dealing with other local communities include *Tešanjska hronika*, broadcast on 10 September 2010 at 14:30 and *Hronika općine Novi Grad* (Chronicle of the municipality of Novi Grad), broadcast on 13 September at 14:30. Also, on 10 September 2010, a half-hour documentary program, *Lokalno je primarno* (Local First) was broadcast, but it was not clear from the program schedule what local communities the program focused on. The web page of RTV Vogošća (http://rtvvogosca.com.ba) did not provide a program schedule. RTV Cazin broadcasts the weekly program *Hronika Unsko-sanskog kantona* (Chronicle of Una-Sana Canton); TVSA, according to its weekly program schedule for 10–16 September 2010, broadcast a 'collage' program *Sarajevsko jutro* (Sarajevo Morning) on three week days in the morning, which included, among other features, information from Sarajevo Canton; TV Zenica broadcasts its main news program *Zenica danas* (Zenica Today), described on the website as a program devoted to topics which "make up our life and can be influenced locally," every week day at 19:00. It was also indicated that daily news programs, which are also rerun, "cover information from Zenica and the surrounding area" (http://www.rtvze.ba).

6.5. Entity and state public service broadcasters and local content

In the program schedules of the BHRT state public service broadcaster (BHT1 and BH Radio 1) available in daily newspapers and on web-pages, there is no content with a clearly-defined orientation toward local, cantonal or regional communities. In contrast, the program schedules of the entity broadcasters in the public service broadcasting system feature several programs oriented towards local communities and regions.[74] Those are one or two regular programs on FTV and RTRS each. More specifically, these are the programs *Federacija danas* (The Federation Today), broadcast every day at 17:00 with a rerun after midnight, and *Sarajevska hronika* (Sarajevo Chronicle), broadcast on Saturdays at 17:00, and the RTRS program *Srpska danas* (Republika Srpska Today), broadcast every day at 16:30, with a rerun in the early morning hours.[75]

As for the radio programming of RTRS (Radio Republika Srpska), in the program schedule available on their web-page[76] we managed to identify a regular program

74 However, we should note that the orientation of some programs towards local communities, on the basis of program schedules available on websites and/or in daily newspapers, can be recognized as such only in the names of these programs since their local character is otherwise unidentifiable.

75 Possible other content of a local character is not broadcast as a regular feature. Also, the geographical orientation or the genre of all the features is not clearly defined in the weekly program schedules. Thus, for example, it was not clear whether the documentary program *Povratak u Odžak* (Return to Odžak), broadcast on FTV on 11 September 2010, dealt with topical issues of public relevance in Odžak. Also, the program *Jutro u Srpskoj* (Morning in the Republika Srpska), broadcast on 11 September 2010, according to the title of the instalment, was focused on the city of Prijedor, but from the program schedules it is not clear what type of content this is, while the website fails to present the program in a way that would indicate that the geographical orientation towards local communities is the standard format of this program.

76 Radio program of RTRS available at: http://rtrs.tv/radio/index.php (accessed on September 23, 2010).

Zajednički talas – hronika regija (A common wave – chronicle of regions), whose title suggests an orientation towards regions, but it is not clear what type of program it actually is. If we look at the program schedule of the Radio of the Federation of B&H,[77] we will find at least two regular weekly programs dealing to some extent with local and cantonal issues, as well as a similar monthly program.[78]

However, some respondents from smaller places, especially those far away from the entity centers, point out that bigger media outlets, including the public broadcasting service, tend to focus on negative news from local communities that typically fall under the crime and accidents rubric, while the coverage of issues and processes of great social relevance for local communities is for the most part neglected.[79]

77 Program schedule of Radio of the Federation of B&H for February 1, 2010. available at: http://www.rtvfbih.ba/doc/SHEMA-OD-01-02-2010.pdf (accessed on September 19, 2010).

78 Relevant weekly programs aired on the Radio of the Federation of B&H are as follows: *Vrijeme, ljudi, običaji* (Times, People, Customs), aired on Saturday from 13:00 to 13:30; *Radioring*, aired on Monday from 18:00 to 19:00; and *Za svaku kap čiste vode* (For Every Drop of Clean Water), aired every first Thursday of the month. It is important to note that we can judge the content of these programs only from descriptions of the program content available on the web page of RTVFBiH: http://www.rtvfbih.ba/loc/template.wbsp?wbf_id=3&section=rfbih (accessed September 19, 2010).

79 Aleksandar Draganić of the Banja Luka-based Eda NGO; Despot Mojsilović, Radio Breza editor-in-chief; Đorđe Tomić, assistant professor at the Journalism Department of Banja Luka's Faculty of Philosophy; Drago Martinović, public relations officer of the Široki Brijeg municipality; Ehlimana Dučić of RTV Goražde; Emina Korač, public relations officer of the Trnovo municipality; Jasminka Drino, director of the Gornji Vakuf-based Youth Center; Ljubo Kovač of Radio Posušje; Maksuma Topalović, head of the Kakanj-based Alternativa NGO; Mirko Despić of TV OSM; Momčilo Nožinić, director and editor-in-chief of Radio Kostajnica; Omer Karić, public relations officer of the Jablanica municipality; Rezak Hukanović of Nezavisna TV 101, Sanski Most; Senada Avdagić of Radio Bosanska Krupa; Sabina Karzić, TV IC Kakanj editor-in-chief; Sajto Ćehović, director of Naša riječ, Zenica; Samir Halilović of the Nove nade Democratic Center, Bihać; Siniša Jovičić of the Forum for European Integration, Derventa; Svetlana Vuković, head of the Luna Association of Citizens, Rudo; Tatjana Ristić of the Proni NGO, Brčko; Zlata Baljak of the Center for Civic Cooperation, Livno; Zorana Petković of Osvit Radio, Zvornik (all the interviews were conducted in the period April — May 2010).

6.6. What does the audience really get?

The role of local media in informing citizens is exceptionally important, in fact far more important than other available means of information. This has also been shown by the findings of a survey on citizen participation in B&H according to which 82.2% of citizens obtain information on their respective local communities through the local media; followed by friends and neighbors (79.1%); and only then through the councils of neighborhood communities (29%); from information officers in their respective municipalities (26.9%); and finally, through municipal leaflets and brochures (24.4%) (CCI, 2009, p. 34).

Prism Research Agency carried out an OSCE-sponsored survey in 2002 on the role of local media as a mediator between citizens and local authorities. As shown by the findings, only in a few municipalities did the respondents believe that the local authorities and local media ensured sufficient information of sufficiently high quality related to local communities. Although most local media outlets devote a significant part of their programs to news from local communities and about local communities, the respondents often stress that some information is missing, namely information that could educate citizens, help resolve burning issues and encourage positive developments in the local community. The respondents also believed that the information offered by the media corresponded with the interests of the authorities. The respondents from some communities also stressed that insufficient information was provided on the work of local authorities, adding that citizens were mostly informed about plans and initiatives rather than about their implementation and the costs incurred.[80]

80 The conclusions of the Prism Research Agency survey are paraphrased based on part of the report obtained from the OSCE B&H (the written reply of the OSCE of May 4, 2010, authors' archive).

The interviews that we conducted during 2010 confirmed the 2002 findings of the Prism Research Agency. According to our interviewees, all local stations, both private and public, produce content of a local character. Nevertheless, the majority of respondents believe that important information and viewpoints are missing in the media content, which is caused primarily by a lack of information sources and by various types of political influence exerted on editorial policies, along with scarce funds in the media for the production of content important to the local public. In the opinion of some of the respondents, important topics and viewpoints are either neglected or inadequately presented, especially perspectives and programs intended for special categories of citizens.[81] At the same time, the criteria regarding pluralism of opinions, information sources, and interpretation have not been met. The shortage of programs which promote citizens' initiatives and citizen participation is also evident. One respondent also remarked that reports on relevant issues for the local community rarely went beyond identifying a problem: they just noted the existence of certain problems in the domain of infrastructure or road networks but did not raise the question of the responsibility of local government bodies or criticize them for failing to resolve the problems.[82]

81 E.g. Samir Halilović of the Nove nade Democratic Center states that in the media in Una-Sana Canton there is a shortage of programs for young people that deal with issues related to education, employment and the like (interview granted in April 2010). Zlata Baljak, from the Livno-based Center for Civic Cooperation shares Halilović's opinion that the problems of young people and social issues are neglected in the media, while respondents believe that religious topics and high-level politics are overrepresented at the expense of various local and social topics. Other respondents, such as Siniša Jovičić of the Derventa/based Forum for European Integration); Svjetlana Vuković, head of Rudo's Luna Association of Citizens; and Amna Popovac, director of Studio 88, believe that many topics of releveance for local communities are generally neglected, and as a result "when you watch TV, you do not have a realistic idea of what is actually happening in the local community" (Svjetlana Vuković, head of the Luna Association of Citizens) (all the interviews were conducted in April-May 2010).

82 Senka Trivić of Banja Luka-based Intermezzo, interview given in April 2010.

As for the local press,[83] the print media in some local communities deal to a significant degree with topics relevant to these communities, but their importance is limited due to their small distribution, absence of investigative journalism and lack of alternative information sources within local communities, along with the possible political influence exerted on media content due to the strong financial dependence of the print media on centers of power – in most cases, on local authorities.[84]

6.7. Local government and local media

Local government plays an essential role in providing relevant content for the local community,[85] with the quality of communication between the local authorities and local media being especially important. The experience of some respondents, especially of local media staff and local governance experts, is that visible progress has been made in the communication between local media and local authorities, especially owing to the appointment of a PR person in most municipalities, and also to municipal web pages.[86] These are, at the same time, the most common

83 These are weekly papers such as *Semberske novine, Kozarski vjesnik, Derventski list* and monthly magazines such as *Bobovac*, which primarily focus on one municipality; or weekly papers such as *Reprezent* and *Naša riječ*, which focus on several municipalities within one or more cantons. The respondents also mentioned several print media of a local character, such as Brčko's monthly magazine *Posavina*, whose content deals with, among others, Posavina Canton and *Čelinačke novine*, with a focus on the municipality of Čelinac.

84 Interview with Ljiljana Zurovac, executive director of the Press Council, May 2010.

85 For a comprehensive analysis of communication practices of local government see Mišić and Jusić in this publication.

86 For an analysis of municipal web pages see Isanović in this publication.

communication channels through which the media are informed about the work of local authorities. In addition, communication between the media and local government takes place through circular letters, announcements and invitations extended to the media by municipal services, while less commonly meaningful communication is initiated by the media when looking for specific information in the possession of the local government. The improved communication practices of local government bodies are largely attributable to projects aimed at communication capacity-building of local government and funded by international development agencies and donors. Nevertheless, a shortage of human, technological and financial resources is still noticeable at the municipal level, which hampers appropriate communication with the media.[87]

The findings of the OSCE-sponsored survey conducted by Prism Research Agency in 2002[88] indicate that the contribution of the media to communication between citizens and authorities is limited above all because public media serve the interests of the local government, while the content of private media is primarily guided by commercial interests. The information released by the media correspond with the interests of local authorities; in some municipalities, this has been interpreted as a result of the shortage of human and financial resources in the media, and in others as a result of the use of undemocratic methods by the authorities, such as intimidation. One of the conclusions of the aforementioned research is that in order to develop a satisfactory communication between the media, citizens and authorities it is necessary to strengthen the potential of the

87 The written response of the MDP received in May 2010.

88 Conclusions paraphrased on the basis of the part of the report obtained from the OSCE for our research (written response, May 2010).

local media (both financial and human), as well as to develop the initiatives of all three actors in the communication process – the media, authorities and citizens. An important factor in the relationship between local government and the media is certainly the financial dependence of a large number of those media outlets on the local government, which may significantly reduce editors' and journalists' freedom within these media.

6.8. Citizen participation in creating media content at the local level

As for citizen participation in the production of media content, the findings of the OSCE survey from 2002 indicate that the interviewed media representatives overwhelmingly believe that citizens are provided with sufficient opportunities to contact the media and voice their personal opinions on various topics. The same has been confirmed by the media representatives who took part in our research. The respondents in our research also stated that citizens could contribute to the quality of media content through direct telephone, SMS or e-mail contact with suggestions on coverage of certain topics, or with questions and comments during phone-in programs.

Although the media receive citizens' suggestions and questions, the cooperation between the media and citizens is still sporadic and unsystematic, and therefore we cannot talk about a culture of citizen journalism at the local level.[89] This is due to citizens' lack of awareness of the potential of such cooperation, on the one

89 Dalibor Bačić, editor-in-chief of Magic radio, Milići, interview conducted in June 2010.

hand, and to insufficient resources, both financial and human, of the media itself, on the other. These resources would allow for both more intensive cooperation with citizens and building technological capacities (such as interactive web pages). With regard to this, the media themselves do not always promote active citizen participation in creating their programs.[90]

The absence of community media further reduces the chances for the emergence of citizen journalism and citizen participation in the production of media content relevant to local communities. In addition, the development of citizen journalism will also depend on the dynamics of cultural changes, bearing in mind that the volunteer sector in B&H is still in its infancy.

Nevertheless, there are examples of good practice aimed at encouraging citizen participation in local communities in creating media content. Thus, the editor of RTV Vogošća told us that their media outlet occasionally broadcast footage received from citizens or representatives of citizens' associations, especially in the case of emergency situations. On top of this, citizens have also become involved in the very process of content production as media have provided some population groups with technical

90 Some local media outlets encourage citizen participation in program creation by indicating contact details and by calling for cooperation. Thus, Dalibor Bačić, editor-in-chief of "Magic" radio in Milići, says that in phone-in programs realized together with representatives of the local authorities citizens were actively invited to ask direct questions while the program was aired or suggest certain questions to be raised. However, other representatives of the media say that they do not actively invite citizens to make suggestions or ask questions. But even in those cases, there is the established practice of citizens pointing out relevant questions to the media, which are later covered in media content.

resources for covering stories that they consider relevant.[91] This is a good model of cooperation with citizens, but the reluctance of citizens and members of their associations to participate on a voluntary basis in the production of content and the shortage of financial resources to stimulate this form of cooperation both constitute the main obstacles to its more regular application.[92]

As we learned from the OSCE's written response, within the Local First Initiative, there are endeavors in some municipalities[93] to strengthen the capacities of the municipal government for using media as part of communication practices, as well as to strengthen citizens' capacities to contribute to better communication within the local community

91 In this way, RTV Vogošća has cooperated on several ocassions with various categories of citizens, primarily with young people and associations of minority groups. Thus, for example, they have produced 12 programs in cooperation with minority ethnic groups in B&H. RTV Vogošća, with support by the OSCE and in cooperation with local authorities, is also implementing a project that includes the production of four programs on specific population groups. One aspect of the project is the involvement of young people in the system of information on issues which are important for local communities through establishing a journalism school, initiating a magazine for young people and involving them in the production of RTV Vogošća programs. The project is based on prior research on the priority needs and problems of young people in the municipality and on reasons for their reluctance to participate in decision-making processes in the local community. As a result of the project, and in view of the fact that some participants have expressed their desire to continue their volunteer work, RTV Vogošća currently broadcasts a weekly youth program (interview with Elvir Halilović, editor-in-chief of RTV Vogošća, conducted in June 2010).

92 Elvir Halilović, editor-in-chief of RTV Vogošća; interview conducted on June 30, 2010.

93 In addition to the 13 municipalities that are already part of the initiative (Jajce, Kupres, Široki Brijeg, Zavidovići, Vlasenica, Mrkonjić-Grad, Petrovo, Šamac, Vogošća, Zvornik, Višegrad, Bihać and Gacko), the plan for 2010 was for the initiative to include 10 more municipalities (Kiseljak, Glamoč, Bratunac, Čelinac, Teočak, Ilijaš, Novo Goražde, Cazin, Ljubinje and Rudo).

through the media. In this context, incentives have been secured to encourage local broadcasters to produce stories promoting cohesion in local communities and citizen participation, including illustrative examples of citizens' engagement in bringing about positive change in their local communities.[94]

Taking into consideration all of the above, we can conclude that the true participation of citizens in the production of local media content is only in its infancy at the moment. Evidently, great potential seems to exist in this sphere, both for the media itself, which can receive interesting information and free content from citizens,[95] and citizens, who can obtain a valuable public space through local media in which to exercise their rights in the domain of public engagement and direct participation in the social and political life of their local communities.

7. Conclusion

Our research operated on the assumption that local media content is indispensable for the normal functioning of local communities and a key factor for the development of democracy. Relying on prior research (Gosselin 2005) which indicated that pluralism and independence of the local media, along with rich local content, encourage the political participation of citizens and positively affect the work and accountability of local authorities, we wanted to examine to what extent relevant

94 For this purpose, in early April 2010 a second round of tenders for the media was launched, but this time the focus will be on issues related to elections and positive examples of citizen participation in the election process.

95 According to some surveys conducted in France, as much as 70–80% of content for some local print media is provided through citizen journalism (Ofcom, 2009b, p. 3).

media content was available to local communities in B&H. We especially focused on the legislative framework, the level of development and the dynamics of the local media market, specific links between the local media and local authorities, and finally, the availability and nature of local media content in B&H. We also sought to compare the state of affairs in this sector in B&H to that of other countries, above all in member states of the European Union such as the United Kingdom, France, Belgium and the Czech Republic, and in neighboring countries such as Croatia.

A serious problem we encountered was the shortage of research on local media content in B&H, as well as the general lack of precise data on the basic aspects of the media market, such as readership and distribution channels of the press; the level and structure of local media revenues; the amount and structure of public funds allocated to the media; as well as the absence of local radio and TV station ratings. Yet although all of this seriously limited our research, regardless of these obvious deficiencies we hope to have provided a clear outline of the B&H local media sector, contributing to a better understanding of this compex, crucial yet rather neglected issue.

Insight into the practices and the legal framework of local media in other countries shows that sustainable production of a sufficient quantity of content relevant for local communities requires a stimulating environment, which must be created above all by the state, the legislator and regulatory authorities. There are several major reasons for this: first, costs of production of content for narrow local communities are high, and the media can hardly be expected to be able to produce a sufficient quantity of quality programs for local communities. The situation is all the more difficult in view of the special dynamics of the local media advertising market as some of the most profitable categories of advertising have moved to the Internet, while at the same time large national and regional networks take away revenues from smaller local radio and TV stations. The consequence of this market dynamics is a lack of quality

and relevant local content that provides information indispensable for an active and politically engaged life in the local community.

Recommendations of the Council of Europe and decisions and laws of some member states have recognized in different ways and to different degrees the importance of local media, supporting their development as well as the production and distribution of content relevant for local communities. The United Kingdom, for instance, has been trying to resolve the problem by at the same time imposing on commercial radio and TV stations certain requirements in terms of the type and quantity of local content, rapidly developing community media, and setting increasingly exacting requirements for the BBC, which is also expected to satisfy the need for local content. In other words, it is believed that the BBC, as a public broadcaster financed from public funds, is obliged to provide relevant content at all levels, from the national to the local. France has a license system for radio stations that makes a clear distinction between public and commercial stations and between national and local radio stations in order to ensure the pluralism of the radio sector and the production of local content; in addition, there are significant public funds aimed at stimulating the production of local media content. In Belgium, regional and local broadcasters enjoy a special status while their obligations with regard to providing information from regions and local communities are clearly defined in their broadcasting licenses.

In B&H, the legal framework, regulations and public policies do not stimulate the development of local media and local content. The importance of satisfying the communication needs of citizens in local communities is mentioned only in the Broadcasting Sector Policy (adopted by the Council of Ministers of B&H, 2007), but the policy has not been made operational through the codes and regulations of the CRA. The license system for radio and TV stations is not based on clear criteria in terms of stimulating local content production; nor are there specific obligations or rules applicable to local radio and TV stations to guarantee production of local

content. There are no regulations or instructions for publicly-owned local media to make sure public funds are used for the production of content of public interest at the local level where these radio stations operate. The criterion of content locality applied in the issuance of licenses is based on programming plans, but this does not guarantee that content relevant for the local population will actually be produced in practice in any significant measure.[96] Also, the relevant laws do not require public service broadcasters at the entity and state levels to meet the needs of citizens with respect to local and regional media content.

Even if the broadcasting license issued by the CRA specifies certain programming requirements, the CRA is not obliged, nor could it have the capacity, to monitor compliance with the program schedule as defined in the license. However, the agency can react *ex officio* to complaints and it has become an established practice for cases to be launched upon complaints and dealt with in a standard procedure. The answer obtained from the CRA said that complaints received by the CRA with regard to a failure to meet programming requirements were rare and insofar as they were aware there were no cases of non-compliance with programming plans.[97]

However, a fundamental problem lies in the underdeveloped and overcrowded media market in B&H and the limited space for quality production of local content as an excessive number of media outlets is fighting over meagre financial resources. It is evident that in an overcrowded media market a large number of media outlets

96 To the contrary, media expert Dušan Mašić believes that the definition of the programming concept in B&H is used as a means to obtain a license for terrestrial broadcasting, and as such is not an indication of either a genuine commitment or available resources on the part of a broadcaster to actually implement such a concept, just as the CRA does not have mechanisms to monitor their implementation (interview given in April 2010).

97 Written answer from CRA, September 7, 2010.

does not necessarily mean content pluralism and adequate representation of local communities. If we compare B&H with other countries, we shall grasp the magnitude of the problem. Thus, for example, the United Kingdom, with a population 15 times that of B&H (the UK's population is around 61 million, compared to B&H's 3.8 million) has only three to four times more radio stations (around 520 radio stations in the United Kingdom in 2008 in comparison with 140 stations in B&H), while Croatia with approximately the same population has half the number of TV stations. This means that the majority of the media, especially smaller media at the local and regional levels, is doomed to stagnation and mere survival. This also suggests that the scope for a substantial development of local media content in B&H is very limited in the given context. In such market conditions, and in a situation where public service broadcasters are facing major difficulties in collecting the RTV license fee,[98] additional programming requirements could prove counterproductive in the absence of financial resources to implement them.

Of course, this large number of media outlets is not a reflection of normal market relations; rather, certain factors have artificially maintained this situation. First of all, the large number of media outlets can exist only thanks to the special situation in B&H where the state, through municipal or cantonal governing bodies, is a direct founder or funder of over 30% of radio and TV stations. This role of the state in the radio and TV sector generates several problems: first, the development potential of the commercial sector is weakened because it is placed in an unfavorable position vis-a-vis the public media, which also takes a share of the advertising market; second, due to the great number of media outlets, advertising prices, too, are lowered,

98 For example, in 2006 only 63% of revenues was collected from the RTV license fee, which is well below the projected 85% that should ensure the financial viability of public service broadcasters (Jusić and Džihana 2008, p. 98).

especially because the public media, otherwise reliant on budget resources, tend to lower the prices to such a degree that will ensure that advertisers use their services rather than those of the commercial media; third, this prevents a genuine market-driven positioning of the state-funded public broadcasters; fourth, the editorial and financial independence of these media are compromised; finally, public resources are spent without being subject to any control mechanisms ensuring that the funds are used to produce programs of public interest for local communities. This type of state aid for the media is in direct contravention of European Union treaties[99] as the funds are not purposefully allocated to meet the commitments of the public broadcasting service to its citizens (AGCOM and CRA, 2008, pp. 51–53).

For a long time there was talk of the privatization of these radio and TV stations, which was based on the assumption that it would be the easiest way to resolve this complex issue. Although all the formal prerequisites to privatize the media owned by municipal and cantonal authorities have been in place for several years now, the privatization process in this sector has not begun, with just a few exceptions. On the one hand, the question arises of whether it is prudent to invest in an already overcrowded sector. On the other hand, the existence of public radio and TV stations is believed to be the only way to ensure the sources of information relevant for local communities, especially in the absence of alternative media sources. There are fears that privatization will bring no good to local communities, but will certainly result in a deteriroration in the quality of programs, or will make local broadcasters unviable, especially given the poor local markets. Therefore, public ownership guarantees the

99 European Union, Consolidated versions of the Treaty on the European Union and of the Treaty Establishing the European Community, Section 2, Aid Grants by States, Article 87), available at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2006:321E:0001:0331:EN:PDF (accessed on September 22, 2010).

survival of the media with a relatively clearly defined public mission in an unstable media market. Media privatization also generates concerns that the media will fall exclusively into the hands of profit-oriented owners, and consequently, that the commercialization of content will prevent the needs of the local population for information from being met. Naturally, a potential reason for stalling the privatization of these media is the desire of cantonal and municipal authorities to retain a certain degree of control over the public media in their regions.

Yet, despite all the abovementioned problems, a positive breakthrough has been made with the establishment of mandatory editorial councils in all public service broadcasters. In this way, formal preconditions have been created to ensure greater accountability of local, regional and cantonal public broadcasters towards the public. However, the editorial councils, defined in the CRA regulations as early as in 1999, have not actually taken root as yet, and considerable efforts will have to be invested for them to become a strong factor and mechanism to ensure the production of content relevant for local communities. In this sense, the appropriate and continuous promotion of the role of editorial councils and support of the media, regulatory agencies, local authorities and the non-governmental sector for their work is of key importance.

Another important step towards serious reform and further development of the B&H local media is the legal framework that ensures the allocation of special licenses to community radio stations, which entered into force about one year ago. Regrettably, no such license has been issued so far to any community radio station in B&H, while the CRA has received only a few queries related to this type of license. This indicates a lack of interest, especially among civil sector organizations and citizens' associations, which should be primarily interested in community media. All of this is closely linked to a very poor radio market, lack of potential sources of revenue for these media and the absence of special funds to stimulate the work of community media. Certainly, an important factor is also the fact that the regulatory framework

places serious restrictions on revenue sources since it bans receiving advertising revenue, and as such it does not have a stimulating role and is in contravention of the practice established in countries with developed community media, where these media too are allowed to collect advertising revenue.

Citizens rely to a great extent on local media for information about events in their local communities (CCI, 2009). However, research[100] has shown that they are not happy with the quality of the content offered – the content tends to promote the work of local authorities without critically appraising the municipal administration. One can certainly suggest a link between this nature of local media content and the financial dependence of local and regional media on local government funds. Also, it is probably linked to some extent to the growing communication capacities of local government bodies, which are increasingly proactive in placing relevant information through various channels, including, but not restricted to, the local media.

In spite of this difficult situation and problems arising from the poor media market and a lack of transparency in public funding of local and regional media, there are no public funds in B&H available to this sector with clearly defined criteria and procedures to extend systematic support for local content production of public interest. Instead, there are sporadic government grants, such as those given in the RS in 2009 and 2010, and commercial contracts signed between the local and cantonal authorities and the media. This approach to funding local production is often considered non-transparent since the criteria for the allocation of funds are not clearly defined, and the effects of such funding are also questionable because it is not clear how local communities benefit from this investment. These temporary solutions do

100 Sarajevo-based Prism Research Agency conducted an OSCE-sponsored survey in 2002 on the role of local media as a mediator between citizens and local authorities. OSCE e-mailed us a part from this report (written answer from the OSCE of May 4, 2010, authors' archive).

not enable the development and implementation of long-term, strategic policies to ensure the growth of local and regional media, on the one side, and the production of quality content relevant to local communities in B&H, on the other.

Also, there is a lack of systematic subsidies, such as differentiated VAT rates for print media, which exist in Germany.[101] These incentives would contribute to the development of the press and the production of content relevant to all citizens.

The future of local and regional media, as well as the future of production of media content of public interest relevant for local communities in B&H, will obviously depend on a set of public policies in the legislative and regulatory domains; the creation of a healthier market environment; introduction of new technologies (above all in the domain of digitalization); as well as on the establishment of systematic and transparent mechanisms for subsidizing the production of local content. Also, an important precondition for any serious growth and implementation of policies in this sector is initiating systematic research into the nature of the local media sector and the needs of local communities in order for decisions to be taken based on exact data and facts. In this context, it appears that the Communications Regulatory Agency should assume the most important role in initiating such positive processes and adopt a very proactive attitude in order to push things forward, following the example of Ofcom in the UK, for instance.

Apart from this, the survival and growth of local and regional media will largely depend on their ability to adapt to market dynamics and to benefit from the new media technologies, in particular the Internet, in order to generate new revenues and thus offset the loss of revenue from their traditional media services and products.

101 In Germany, a 7% VAT rate is applied to print media, although the standard VAT rate is 19% (Ofcom, 2009b, p. 5).

Local and regional media must also learn how to use the potential of citizen journalism and thus secure cheap and interesting content which is at the same time relevant to the local communities targeted by the media.

8. Recommendations

On the basis of the research findings, we offer a set of recommendations related to key aspects of the functioning and growth of local media in order to boost the production of relevant and quality content for local communities in B&H:

8.1. Programmming commitments of local and regional public service broadcasters: With respect to the legislative framework and regulations on radio and TV broadcasting, it is necessary to update them in order to highlight the importance of local media and incorporate the obligation to produce content relevant to local communities, above all through programming quotas for local content for all public service broadcasters operating locally and regionally.

8.2. Commitments of entity and national public service broadcasters: The laws on entity and national public service broadcasters and the public service broadcasting system must include provisions which stipulate the obligation of entity broadcasters as beneficiaries of public funds to ensure the provision of content for the public, citizens and communities at the local, cantonal, regional and entity levels. These provisions should encourage public broadcasters to produce more content pertinent to specific narrower regions, either directly through their own programs or the development of a network of regional affiliates or through utilization of new media technologies, such as web portals (for instance, following the example of the BBC).

8.3. Community media: It is necessary to make corrections in Rule 42/2009 on licenses for terrestrial broadcasting of radio and TV programs[102] in the section relating to special licenses in order to introduce the possibility for radio stations to generate income from advertising. In this case, the non-profit character of these stations would be defined through their obligation to reinvest income in the activities of the station and in the production of programs of interest for the community. This is indispensable in order to create a stimulating legal framework for the growth of community media in B&H (for details see Coyer and Van Beek in this publication).

8.4. Harmonization of domestic regulations with the standards of the European Union: As already recommended in the 2008 report by AGCOM and CRA, in order to harmonize domestic regulations with the treaties, directives and good practices of the European Union, it would be worthwhile to revise the current regulations on public service broadcasters "linking the identification and definition of these broadcasters to their mission of providing a 'public service' rather than to their source of funding or the profile of the organisation which was granted broadcasting permission." This, in turn, would imply that the basic activities of a public service broadcaster, which accomplish the broadcaster's public mission, are clearly separated from any commercial activities which do not perform a public service. As a result, this will ensure that public funds are used solely for financing activities related to the public service mission. This mechanism will guaranteee that public funds allocated to public broadcasters do not place them in a superior position in the market of commercial content and commercial broadcasters, and it would

102 Rule 42/2009 on permission for terrestrial broadcasting of radio and TV programs, Chapter II, Article 12; available at: http://www.cra.ba/bih/index.php?uid=1269867979 (accessed September 1, 2010).

at least partly resolve the problem of state ownership over public service broadcasters at local and regional levels (AGCOM and CRA, 2008, pp. 51–53).

8.5. Transparent allocation of public financial resources: It is necessary to consider passing relevant legislation stipulating that the resources for the media from public budgets are to be allocated solely on a competitive basis in public tenders according to the explicit criteria of meeting a public interest, with corresponding mechanisms to guarantee impartial allocation of funds. The establishment of a clear and transparent funding system for radio and TV programs and other media content, such as the press and web content, that are of public interest for local communities should link the mission of a 'public service' to the nature of media content rather than to the type of media or media ownership. As a result, these resources could be allocated to all types of media, be it a radio or TV station, press or web platforms, public, commercial or community media. The resources would be allocated on the basis of programming and budget proposals submitted by the media with their application for funding. The proposals would also be used after the allocation of funds to assess the level of the achievement of public-interest objectives and would serve as a reference for potential future applications for public funding of content produced by the media (see the two previous recommendations).

8.6. Guide for transparent spending of public funds: The AGCOM/CRA report suggests that the CRA should consider introducing additional regulations requiring public service broadcasters to submit a comprehensive annual report on overall financial support from public funds and the costs incurred (AGCOM and CRA, 2008, pp. 51–53).

8.7. Establishment of a public fund to support the production of local and regional media content: In order to establish a transparent system of funding from public resources and a strategic approach to encouraging production of local and regional media content relevant for local communities, it is necessary

to explore the options and advocate the establishment of dedicated public funds. These funds should support the production of media content of interest for local communities regardless of the type of media platform (radio, TV, press, the Internet) or type of ownership or license (community media; private commercial media; public media). Funds should be alloted in regular cycles in accordance with clear criteria, transparent procedures and a strategic approach. [103]

8.8. State subsidies: Examine the option and advocate the introduction of additional public subsidies for the production of local media content whenever possible, such as the introduction of a lower VAT rate for the press.

8.9. Restriction of state ownership and its influence on the editorial policies of local public media: It is necessary to resolve problems resulting from the legacy of state ownership of local and regional radio and TV stations, such as the influence of authorities on the editorial policies of these media, non-transparent spending of public funds and market distortion. This can be achieved by combining the following approaches:

a. Transforming a portion of the broadcasting licenses of these stations into radio and TV licenses for community media (see Coyer and Van Beek in this publication);
b. Merging a portion of the public local and regional radio and TV stations with the public service broadcasting system at the entity level. This can be done in a looser form on the RTRS model of affiliates, while a more progressive form would entail a complete integration of some local radio

103 In the Council of Europe document no. 11848, *The funding of public service broadcasting*, adopted on March 19, 2009, the possibility of engaging commercial media to meet a public interest is stated (for example, to provide certain programs and services financed through public funds) (paragraphs 15.5. and 35), text available at: http://assembly.coe.int/main.asp?Link=/documents/workingdocs/doc09/edoc11848.htm (accessed September 24, 2010).

and TV stations into the public broadcasting system at the entity levels. In the latter case, the stations would become part of public service broadcasters representing regional broadcasters that would cover clusters of municipalities in a given territory and ensure the production of content relevant for their respective local communities.

c. Potentially transforming a portion of the licenses into commercial radio and TV licenses as necessary, for instance in cases where there is a shortage of commercial stations in areas covered by several public service broadcasters.

d. Preserving the status quo when necessary (due to financial or other reasons such as limited human resources or the inability to establish community media) so that the local government and cantonal authorities preserve their status as founders of public local and regional media. However, this should be accompanied by the introduction of robust mechanisms to protect editorial independence (by means of a larger number of management and supervisory boards that include the non-governmental sector; regular reports on their work; public discussions on management and programs; as well as the strengthened role of editorial councils); guaranteed financial transparency of these media; and by the imposition and implementation of clear requirements related to the production of local and regional media content of public interest. This last option is closely linked to the introduction of clear mechanisms for purposeful spending of public funds solely on programs of public interest instead of the commercial activities of these media (this refers in particular to recommendations 8.4, 8.5. and 8.6).

A proper policy should carefully assess all aspects of the radio and TV market in a given region and, accordingly, choose the best combination of these approaches to strengthen both the commercial media market and public

service broadcasters and the community media sector, ensuring the optimal production of content relevant for the local community in the area. Understandably, each of these approaches is closely linked to the funding models for media content of interest for local communities (recommendations 8.4, 8.5, 8.6. and 8.7).

8.10. Strengthened editorial councils: The CRA is to amend the regulations related to the obligation of establishing editorial councils in radio and TV stations and introduce mechanisms for the regular monitoring of these councils. It is also necessary to undertake measures to strengthen the capacities of editorial councils and promote their role among the local population, e.g. through regular reports on their work and public debates initiated by editorial councils.

8.11. Support for research: In order to develop public policies based on facts, relevant data and good analyses of the state of affairs and existing needs, it is necessary to support research in the domain of local media, the production of local media content and the needs of local communities. In view of this, it is urgent to find a way of funding research on readership figures of local and regional press and ratings of local and regional radio and TV stations, as well as analyses of programs of local and regional radio and TV stations and the content of local and regional press, and analyses of the size and structure of revenues of local and regional media. The Communications Regulatory Agency should certainly play a significant role in these research activities.

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COMMUNITY RADIO IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Kate COYER and Joost van BEEK

1. Introduction

Across Europe, recognition is emerging that community media should constitute a formal 'third sector' of broadcasting, alongside public service and commercial media. It is a recognition that challenges traditional conceptions of a dual media system, and it increases the pressure on states and international bodies to expand, support and develop opportunities for 'citizen' access to broadcasting. Discussions have begun within the Council of Europe and the European Parliament on how to improve opportunities for participatory, not-for-profit media that address local community and minority interests. However, no formal requirements are yet in place for member states and the regulatory status of community media varies widely.

In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the development of community broadcasting faces many hurdles, foremost among them the lack of an overall enabling environment. Adding to the challenge is a licensing system for civil society media which, while forward-thinking in its intention, does not encourage self-sustainability or provide for adequate funding mechanisms, nor does it adequately reflect the social potential and participatory model of community media.

In this chapter, we will present the status of community radio in Bosnia and Herzegovina and place it in the context of similar initiatives across Europe. We look at examples of existing local commercial radio stations that embody some of the functions of community-oriented radio but not the form, and consider prospects for the development of the community media sector. In particular, we review the relationship between local broadcasters and local government authorities, and the challenges that community-oriented broadcasters face in this interaction. We also seek to raise challenging questions about the complexities involved in pursuing community broadcasting in environments where there is little incentive for civic engagement, where local governance is highly politicized, and where broadcasting, politics and community life are often highly segmented by ethnicity.

The chapter concludes with recommendations as to what might be necessary in establishing a stronger enabling environment for community radio in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Community radio as it is commonly conceived does not really exist in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We say "not really", because while a possibility to license civil society media has recently been established in the form of a new license for Stations Aimed at Specific Groups, there are no stations licensed yet at this time under this new licensing framework. However, there are three different models of local commercial radio stations that exhibit various characteristics of community radio: NGO-owned radio stations (Vesta Radio, Tuzla and Radio Balkan, Banja Luka); commercial stations with a civic mission (Studio 88, Mostar); and student radio stations (eFM, Sarajevo). While stations like these present evidence of the potential for strong, non-profit, community-oriented local radio, a conclusion of this research is that without a policy for community radio that includes sustainable funding models and other means of support, the development of such media will remain limited and somewhat haphazard.

The prospects of community broadcasting must also be seen in the context of the problems facing the overall media landscape in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Public service broadcasting remains in turmoil and in need of serious structural reorganization.[1] The

1 "The broadcasting sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina is oversaturated, dauntingly complex and financially poor," the Open Society Institute report *Television across Europe: regulation, policy and independence* argued in 2005 (Open Society Institute, 2005, pp. 259, 314). Following up in a 2008 report to the European Commission, the Open Society Institute remarked that "Audiovisual policy and production in Bosnia and Herzegovina [..] are still a hostage to ethnic politics" and "the ethnic leaders continue to pick and choose among the provisions of media laws, implementing those that suit their sectional interests and ignoring or denouncing the others. The contribution that public service broadcasting could potentially make in terms of social cohesion and cultural communication [..] is not being – and cannot be – realised by the incomplete, unsustainable and politicised structure that has been erected, piecemeal, over the past decade". (Open Society Institute, 2008, pp.1-2).

commercial radio sector is burdened by over-capacity, as many more radio stations were licensed in the early post-war years than the market can sustain,[2] and measures to reduce the number of radio stations in the past few years have fallen short of restoring a sustainable balance.[3] Internet penetration is increasing but remains relatively low.[4] The newspaper industry, itself in a precarious financial state due to a poor advertising market and a relatively low readership, is fraught with ethnic and political polarization.[5] Further social, political and economic problems, from limited civic engagement, ethnic segregation and income disparity to issues of political control, corruption and the lack of good governance, all hamper efforts to pursue independent journalism and broadcasting, complicating the prospects for community media.

2 While "a total of 272 active media saw the end of the war in BiH", notes the Communications Regulatory Agency (RAK)/Communications Regulatory Authority (AGCOM) report of 2006; their number had risen to 490 by March, 1997. This expansion, the report remarks, was partly "stimulated by the liberal conditions for founding media and anarchy in the frequency spectrum".

3 Interview with owner of Studio 88, Mostar.

4 Of a population of 4.6 million, Bosnia and Herzegovina had 1.3 million Internet users in 2008. (BBC News, 2010).

5 "Print media in BiH remained subject to the influence of powerful political and business interests", noted Freedom House's *Nations in Transit 2009* report. (Freedom House, 2009, p.139). "Newspapers predominantly write for specific ethnic groups in the respective regions" observes an overview of Bosnia and Herzegovina's media landscape on the Wien international website (Wien international, 2009). Almost one third of the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina does not read papers at all, and the leading quality paper, 'Oslobođenje', sells only 15,000-25,000 copies. (Jusić in: Wien international, 2009). The print media market is also "underdeveloped as a consequence of [..] limited advertising revenues," wrote Tarik Jusić in a profile of the media landscape of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the European Journalism Center website: "According to some assessments, only six per cent of advertising investment [..] goes to print media." (Ibid.)

2. Methodology

This is a qualitative research study which relies both on first-person interviews with key organizers at selected stations and on an analysis of a range of policy documents and papers related to 1) the media landscape in Bosnia and Herzegovina in general and the broadcasting sector in particular; and 2) European-level regulations and policy frameworks for community media. Further secondary sources include NGO publications and resources on media pluralism, diversity and community media.

The research interviews were primarily conducted during a week-long study tour in Bosnia and Herzegovina arranged by Mediacentar Sarajevo (with the exception of eFM, which had been visited on a previous occasion). Interviews were conducted with organizers at the stations themselves, affording us the opportunity to visit their production facilities and on-air studios.

The selection of stations that were visited was based on a decision to choose one station from each model of community-oriented radio stations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, except in the case of NGO-run stations, where we met with the two most significant community-oriented radio stations – *Vesta Radio* and *Radio Balka*n, as we felt it was important to include both stations in order to capture a representative range of stations.

Since there exist only a limited number of community-oriented stations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it was not difficult to arrive at this selection. Student radio has played a significant role in the region as elsewhere and needs to be included in a review of not-for-profit media. *While Studio 88* in Mostar is perhaps the least structurally similar to what is generally considered 'community radio', it serves as a valuable example of how local radio can function as a potent force pursuing civic goals to redress a complex local environment on a non-profit basis, driven by the determination of a small group of people.

The biggest limitation of the methodology is that we relied on 'expert' input from station organizers themselves, rather than on a cross-section of perspectives, but the selection of interviews served to effectively highlight the most urgent structural and policy questions involved. Further studies of impact and audience perception and listenership would be a contribution to the field.

3. Why community media? Why now?

Communication rights, including access to information and freedom of expression independent of government or commercial pressures are at the heart of democratic societies. Community media fulfill an important role in creating this opportunity, and the development of community media itself is linked with measures to decentralize media systems in broad terms.

There is no one definition of community media, but key characteristics of community media include that they are operated on a not-for-profit basis, are participatory and open to the community (with largely volunteer programmers), with accountable, open and transparent decision-making that is independent of commercial and government interests. In most countries, community media are allowed to take limited forms of advertising and commercial sponsorship, but what is distinctive about them is that any revenue generated is re-invested back into the stations rather than benefiting an individual owner, company or stockholders. The station's stakeholders are, instead, members of the community, who benefit from the station in non-monetary ways. Community media are driven by a mission to serve their communities rather than generate profit, and by their aims to encourage a participatory environment in which members of the community play an active role in the success of the station and its programming, and to support a

socially relevant niche or minority programming that may not be viable for a commercial broadcaster.

A recent study commissioned by the European Parliament defines community media as "media that are non profit and owned by or accountable to the community that they seek to serve. [They] are open to participation in programme making and management by members of the community" (European Parliament report 2007: 1). The African Charter on Broadcasting, adopted by media practitioners at a 2001 UNESCO Conference in Namibia, more plainly defines community media as media "for, by and about the community". The importance of this role is only amplified as the increasing commercialization of airspace increases the dominance of market-driven programming, and decreases space for public-interest content and accountability to public-interest needs. Community media are viewed internationally as playing an important role in providing local news, information, and music and cultural programming; as a response to globalized media environments; as providing an alternative form of media ownership that lies within local neighborhoods; and as a contribution to minority and multi-lingual media needs.

The European Parliament affirmed in 2007 that community media constitute a "significant component of participatory democracy" and that they fulfill local informational needs, enable citizens to play an active role in community life, and act as a catalyst of cultural and artistic initiatives, local public-interest activities and civil society advocacy. They especially encourage the direct involvement of typically underrepresented groups such as ethnic minorities and young people (Ibid., p. 5).

However, as citizen initiatives without large institutional support, community media face serious challenges with regard to financial sustainability; access to communication infrastructure such as spectrum allocation; the transition to digital broadcasting; and their place in national legal frameworks. In an era in which digital media play an increasingly prominent place in the shaping of public discourse - one in which citizens

turn to the Web not just for their informational needs but also to express themselves and to volunteer their work - some would argue that there is no longer a need to fight for legislation, policies and infrastructures to promote community media on the air. Community media advocates, however, argue that if local, community-oriented, participatory media are not given adequate space in the analogue present, we can hardly expect that the space for such media will automatically be safeguarded in our digital future. Fighting for this space on analogue platforms such as FM radio helps to ensure that community media are adequately served in the regulations and policies determining the digital transition and the future as well.

4. Community radio across Europe[6]

The existence of supportive legislation is crucial for the success of the community media sector. Under-developed, unsustainable or non-existent legal frameworks present a constant challenge to community media. Where there are no frameworks for the licensing of community radio, stations with community-oriented sensibilities tend to emerge either as pirates, community-minded commercial stations, or online media projects. History has shown, however, that community stations operating on commercial licenses tend towards eventual co-optation due to the economic value of the license. Without protection or spectrum set-asides for non-profit community radio, the sector is simply not sustainable.

Community broadcasting has developed asymmetrically across Europe at different times and under different conditions. Community radio is typically identified with Western European countries such as Ireland, France and the Netherlands, where

6 This section culled from research and reports including: European Parliament Report, 2007; Lewis 2007; AMARC, 2009; Gosztonyi 2007; Buckley et al 2008. See also Coyer 2009.

strong policies are in place to facilitate community media. The United Kingdom has a strong community broadcasting sector, but one that was only implemented as recently as 2004, counter-intuitive as that may seem considering the rich tradition of public service broadcasting there. In Germany, community radio remains underdeveloped because responsibility over the organization of broadcasting lies with the federal states. In Central and Eastern Europe, Hungary remains an exception, boasting the most widespread and developed community radio sector in the region. More typical for the region, however, is Slovenia, where two licensed university radio stations share some but not all of the core characteristics of community radio, but there is no enabling environment for a wider community broadcasting sector.

Table 1. Enabling policy environments for community media across Europe

Sector development & state support	Examples
Well-established, financially sustainable sectors in countries with supportive government policies that include strong state financial support	France The Netherlands Denmark
Well-established sectors in countries with supportive policies, but minimal state financial support	United Kingdom Ireland Hungary
Medium-developed sectors in countries with some supportive policies but no state financing	Italy Spain Sweden
Under-developed or non-existent sectors in countries with limited or no supportive policies and funding	Czech Republic Greece Bosnia and Herzegovina

Although media policy within the European Union (EU) remains the responsibility of national authorities, a number of EU policy initiatives acknowledge the importance

of community media directly and indirectly. Within EU telecommunications regulation, for example, there are directives to ensure non-discriminatory spectrum allocation, and to strengthen universal service and 'must-carry' rules. EU audiovisual regulations emphasize the importance of media pluralism and diversity and the European Parliament has called for access to the media for all societal groups (EP resolution, 2003/2237(INI)). EU policies on freedom of speech and culture highlight local creativity, local culture and the opportunity for everyone to participate in public discourse. EC Communications also stress cross-cultural dialogue and the protection of minorities (Communication COM (95) 653).[7]

Interest in advancing policies in support of community media is emerging amongst European policy-makers. In 2007, the European Parliament published a study on "The State of Community Media in the European Union", in which the authors highlight community media's contribution to core European objectives such as social cohesion, media pluralism and cross-cultural dialogue. They emphasize how community media's democratic role enhances civic engagement, and note that: "if society's future relies on the active involvement of informed, media literate citizens, community media can play a definitive role in facilitating such a future" (European Parliament, 2007, iv).

The report further recognizes that EU institutions increasingly wish to enter into a dialogue with local and regional communities regarding European affairs and stresses that the local nature of community media provides an excellent opportunity to generate this conversation. Overall, community media are presented as a "dynamic and highly diverse part of the European Union's media landscape" (Ibid., iii). The report thus calls for legal recognition of community

7 More detailed references to relevant EU policies can be found in European Parliament 2007.

media in media law, access to licenses in both analogue and digital environments, and financial support for the sector.

In its recommendations from 2005 and 2007, the Council of Europe stated that "Member States should encourage the development of other media capable of making a contribution to pluralism and diversity and providing a space for dialogue. These media could, for example, take the form of community, local, minority or social media"[8]. The Group of Specialists on Media Diversity within the Council of Europe recently commissioned a study on "The Role of the media in promoting social cohesion with particular reference to community, local, minority and social media," which noted that public service and commercial media were increasingly unable to meet the needs of marginalized and disadvantaged social groups in Europe. The report concluded that community media were an "important factor in social cohesion and citizenship, particularly for minority ethnic communities and refugee and migrant communities" (Lewis 2007, p. 3). It also emphasized the important role community media play for the broader public by linking up diverse parts of the population, and the long-term impact that they have on media literacy and training efforts.

To harness the emerging interest in further policies and regulations to protect and encourage community media, the engagement of civil society in lobbying institutions and participating in policy-making processes is essential. To this end, the Community Media Forum Europe (CMFE) and the European chapter of the World Association of Community Broadcasters (AMARC) work closely with European bodies to advocate for community media policies and support.

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8 See Recommendation 173 (2005) on regional media and transfrontier cooperation by the congress of regional and local authorities in the Council of Europe; and Recommendation Rec(2007)2 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on media pluralism and diversity of media content.

5. The status of community radio in Bosnia and Herzegovina: the road so far

The Communications Regulatory Agency (RAK) has initiated a Special License for Terrestrial Broadcasting Stations Aimed at Specific Social Groups with the intention of licensing non-profit organizations and civil groups, which went into effect January 1, 2010. These Special Licenses can be issued to "non-profit organizations or registered civil groups with the aim of protecting rights and interests of certain social groups and promotion thereof" (RAK, 2010). Licensing criteria include programming that aims to address social or linguistic needs, adherence to existing general broadcast rules and regulations on 'hate speech', and a need for stations to be "fair and impartial" (Mijatović 2009). The Agency also reserves the right to award the same frequency to more than one licensee to be used at different time intervals. There is a reduction in licensing fees that also went into effect in January, 2010, but this applied to all licensees, not just civil groups.

However, as of July 2010, there has been only one single applicant for this new Special License – a commercial rafting company – and no licenses have yet been awarded. Existing community-oriented stations operating with commercial licenses have shown no interest in changing their licenses, primarily because they would lose access to the advertising revenue that they currently sustain themselves with.

While the RAK was aware of the potential role of community media upon the Agency's establishment in 2001, there was little interest at the time in licensing community radio, and raising the concept encountered opposition from commercial media (Mijatović 2010). In 2003, however, during the process of granting long-term

licenses to radio and television stations, the RAK (2003) published the "Future of Broadcasting," a document which outlined the requirements for "possible future broadcasting developments, such as Community Radio". In 2004, moreover, the RAK published the draft document "Introduction of Community Radio in Bosnia and Herzegovina". In that document, the RAK presented a definition of community radio that does not appear in the current legislation and is stronger and broader than the one used for the current Special License. According to the 2004 draft definition, the purpose of community radio is "to serve and develop civil society," as well as to "broaden democracy; question the influencing public opinion [sic]; deny conformity; create consensus; and build community life." Moreover, the sector is defined in the 2004 draft as "community, educational, grassroots or civic" stations that pursued "positive social change," and promoted a fair system that respects human rights".[9]

In 2006, the RAK conducted a joint survey of the country's communications sector with the Italian media regulator AGCOM, in a "twinning" project funded by the European Union's CARDS program, which again brought up the prospect of community broadcasting. Describing community broadcasting as a concept seen widely across Europe and beyond, and facilitated in many European countries by a specific category of licenses, the report defined community media quite differently, as media that are "owned and controlled by local communities (a

9 Community radio, the Introduction elaborated further, "has the aim of: fostering active participation of citizens and defends their interests; to stimulate cultural diversity, to advocate tolerance, to respect and value ethnic and religions richness, to provide for enjoyment of right to expression by all without any discrimination, to reflect the tastes and desires of the community it serves, to inform in an objective manner, and to try to resolve problems of daily life. It is not associated with money and advertisement, but this does not mean that advertisement revenue to a certain extent should not occur" (RAK, 2004).

municipality, a religious group, a political party or any other group of person that share common interests)", have "a specific mission to give access to voices in the community, encourage diversity, creativity and participation", and "operate on public service principles for community benefit and are usually non-profit distributing." A point of concern in this definition is the inclusion of municipalities and political parties as possible owners, as the latter, especially, would constitute a divergence from international norms.

On the subject of municipally owned or -funded media, the 2006 report describes the dilemma posed by the large number of local and regional broadcasters in Bosnia and Herzegovina owned or funded directly by municipal or cantonal government, which comprise almost 30% of the radio and television market and which the report calls "a legacy of the pre-war era when most of the broadcasters were controlled directly by the State." The report distinguishes these small publicly owned and financed broadcasters as a separate phenomenon altogether from the state- and entity-wide public service broadcasters, noting that they "should be interpreted as a transitional feature of the media environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and considered in the perspective of the ongoing privatization process" (RAK and AGCOM, 2006, pp. 51, 82). The concern regarding these broadcasters is that they do not operate as either independent media or *public service* media, and are too easily captured by the interests of municipal and cantonal elites and other political manipulations.

It is in this context that the report brings up the potential for community broadcasting as an alternative to the process of privatization of these stations, which has failed to make any real headway, on the one hand, and to transitioning them into public service-oriented stations with greater regulatory obligations, on the other. The report suggests that "the issue might be dealt with through the introduction of different licenses for 'community broadcasters'", which would allow for "simpler regulation" (RAK, 2006).

At the May 2010 conference "Local Media, Citizen Participation and Governance: Global Trends and Local Practices" in Sarajevo, this possibility of transitioning municipally- and cantonally-owned stations into community radio stations was again raised as an opportunity to resolve the problematic status of these broadcasters and generate "enormous interest" in the new Special License Aimed at Specific Social Groups. If the stations could be transitioned into civil society ownership, it would keep them from further over-saturating the commercial radio market, which existing commercial broadcasters oppose. Public entities could still cooperate with the stations, but ownership would shift to groups with greater independence from party and local politics.

While the 2006 RAK/AGCOM report represented initial efforts to explore the development of community broadcasting, it is important to note that the formulation of the current Special License for Terrestrial Broadcasting Stations Aimed at Specific Social Groups was enacted four years later, and used a different definition of community media. RAK set out to develop the license in line with international standard practices, and was especially informed by the example of the United Kingdom (Mijatović 2009).

The licensing scheme that eventually emerged, however, does not identify the social benefit of community media in the way that the definition of community broadcasting in the legislation of the UK and other European countries does. UK legislation, for example, broadly defines community stations as those which operate '…primarily for the good of members of the public or of a particular community and in order to deliver social gain, rather than for commercial reasons…(serving either geographic, or neighborhood communities or communities of interest)' (Ofcom, 2010). The criteria for consideration of long-term community radio licensing include four required elements: social gain and access, programming, evaluation and measurement, and finance and ownership. Specifically, applicants have to provide evidence of social gain and/or public service broadcasting; not-for-profit status;

accessibility for people living within the area; training and community participation; and engagement with disadvantaged and underserved people and communities. In Hungary, meanwhile, community media is defined as "a broadcaster which agrees to serve national, ethnic or other minority goals, cultural aims or a disadvantaged group, or intends to serve as the public life forum of a community…provided it is not-for profit" (Act 1, 1996 Media Law, Article 2 as cited in Gosztonyi 2007).

In comparison, the license as it has been formulated by RAK appears to impose a more narrow scope. In particular, while British legislation allows for a community broadcaster to identify the community it serves as the residents of a town or neighborhood (geographic community), and allows for more broadly conceived self-defined 'communities of interest', the Special License in Bosnia and Herzegovina is only available to non-profit groups which explicitly represent the interests of a narrowly-defined social group, and does not allow for 'geographic communities' to apply.

6. Why has community radio failed to develop in Bosnia and Herzegovina?

Community radio stations have come to play an important role in the peace process in several post-war or conflict environments, such as Colombia and South Africa. The failure of community media to emerge as a sector in the past decade in Bosnia and Herzegovina is rooted in a complex confluence of issues related to political, ethnic and civic development as well as the specifics of broadcasting policy and regulation. Specifically, the way local political elites, to a varying extent, discourage or suppress criticism raises serious concerns that existing regulations do not sufficiently address

the potential for nationalist leaders and political parties to co-opt a nascent sector like community broadcasting, if the prevention of such influence is not at the heart of the way the sector is developed from the start.

The broader question that arose in this research, however, is whether the political and civic environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina is mature enough to sustain community media. A number of elements figure into this question. The following points seek to outline some of the main aspects of an arguably dysfunctional civic and media environment, which has offered scarce opportunities for a community radio sector to develop as it has in other post-conflict countries.

Amidst greatly varying local contexts, resistance to independent broadcasting. The ability of community-oriented media to function is in many ways a product of local political context. As evidenced in the case studies below, the hurdles which community-oriented stations face greatly depend on whether the local government is supportive, or at least not adversarial or hostile. Vesta Radio, for example, benefits from the relatively favorable socio-political environment of Tuzla, a city where the ruling Social Democrats were never displaced by nationalist parties and which remains fairly multiethnic.[10]

In less favorable environments, the development of community-oriented media is hampered by incompetence and ignorance on the part of local officials and politicians regarding what civil and community radio is and how it could benefit their region. Amidst the ethno-political polarization that marks political and administrative discourse in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is disproportionally dominated by conflicts about

10 For a somewhat romanticized account of how the mayor, government and local civic associations of the city helped "the people of Tuzla to resist the intolerance sweeping their nation", see Joshua Weiss 2002.

which entity, canton, ethnic group and political party controls what administrative domain, local administrators tend to see everything as political, and the development and support of individual media is just seen as part of the political game. While among the stations visited for this research Studio 88 in Mostar had faced the most concrete political attempts to obstruct its work, the issue of government interference in the media is currently especially salient in the Republika Srpska.[11]

Reform needed in existing broadcasting sectors. The impact of an ethnically divided public service broadcasting structure, deemed "incomplete, unsustainable and politicised"[12] as well as "subject to constant political power struggle and maneuvering, and characterized by a continuous state of crisis" (Jusić and Džihana 2008, p. 83), burdens the overall structure of the media system. The establishment of an integrated public service broadcasting system, overseen by a single corporation, is considered a key element of both "rational and sustainable" public

11 In the Republika Srpska, almost all the media are directly or indirectly under the control of RS Prime Minister Milorad Dodik (Bieber 2010). In January 2008, Balkan Insight reported that "some independent media and NGOs have complained that they are being directly or indirectly threatened and that their work is being hindered because they have criticised Dodik and/or his government". It cited TV stations deemed too critical and boycotted by the Dodik government; a magazine that had to discontinue its print publication after its advertisers, faced with targeted government inspections, withdrew; journalists and a magazine owner's family receiving verbal threats and even being physically harassed, with the police refusing to investigate; and an NGO representative claiming "that there are now no media organisations in the RS which dare to report about the government's illegal activities." In November 2009, the Dodik government repeated its demand that legal actions be taken against local media and Western officials it accused of "satanizing" and "conspiring" against the Republika Srpska (Balkan Insight, 2008; Balkan Insight, 2009; see also Freedom House, 2009).

12 Interview with owner of Studio 88, Mostar.

service broadcasting and future progress on social integration, but has been systematically blocked by political actors.[13]

Oversaturation and political control impede the development of a healthy local and regional media system. In 2005, some "30 per cent of all existing radio and television stations [were] owned by, and [..] almost fully financially dependent on, local or cantonal authorities and governments," meaning "they could potentially be exposed to many pressures that can hardly be registered, let alone resisted." The privatization process of these stations has run aground "although all preconditions are in place," because the local authorities were "not ready to give up control of these outlets" (Open Society Institute, 2005).

Remarks by Dunja Mijatović, then Director of Broadcasting at the Communications Regulatory Agency, in our interview in 2009 suggested that little to nothing had changed since, and that the cause for the stagnation of the process was almost exclusively the lack of political will on the local, cantonal and entity levels (Mijatović 2009). The owner of Studio 88 directly linked the overcapacity of radio stations to issues of corruption, observing that it is hard to maintain editorial independence if you are unable to financially sustain yourself: "there's not enough advertising revenue for so many stations and so the corruption pays the bills, because they can not survive any other way."

13 "A rational and sustainable public service broadcasting system for BiH requires a single company, one legal entity, with multiple channels. As long as there are three separate companies with separate laws for each entity broadcaster, plus another for the Statewide broadcaster, true public service broadcasting will hardly ever happen, especially bearing in mind that the political structures in BiH have yet to understand the very concept of public service broadcasting, let alone accept it." (Open Society Institute, 2005, p.314). See also Freedom House, 2009.

The structure of licensing and programming offered few prospects for community media. Until the current move to implement a Special License for non-profit radio stations, the media licensing system offered only one entry point for independent media ownership: private ownership. It did not distinguish between civil society ownership and commercial ownership, thus ensuring that civil society groups faced the same commercial pressures as any commercial station, and received no benefit, incentives or funding for their public service and community-minded role. These financial pressures make it difficult for stations to focus on minority interests, languages or ethnicities to the extent they might want to.

Misperceptions about the distinctions between community radio and local radio. Local radio is defined merely by the audience being served and the geographic reach of a station, and can be run on a commercial basis or as a government-owned or -funded station. Community radio should be defined by its social mission and objective as well as its geographic focus; its editorial independence; its accessibility for and the participation of local residents; and its operation as a non-profit entity, in which any income is reinvested in the station.

The conflation of community and local radio may lead potential operators to approach community stations as if they were 'regular' local media, which would make stations vulnerable to take-over by profit-driven companies or individuals, as well as to political interference and pressure. It is a threat that underlines the importance of securing community media as a formal and legally protected distinctive sector.

It was in recognition of this risk that the RAK - eager to avoid the prospect that new stations granted frequencies under the Special License would over time morph into mainstream stations competing for the same audience as commercial media - vigilantly formulated criteria for the Special License that precluded licensees from broadcasting advertisements and restricted the Special License solely to stations representing specific social groups.

These stipulations, however, point to other misconceptions of what community media must be and can be: a misconception that stations must not be community media if they take advertising; and that community media must speak to a very narrowly defined social group, rather then the local community as a whole.

In most European countries, community radio stations can in fact broadcast limited commercials and seek sponsorships. The key characteristic, instead, is that they operate as not-for-profit media, reinvesting revenue back in the station, with ownership in the hands of a civil society organization. Likewise, the social mission of community media in many countries is secured not by allowing the stations to only speak for a single, specific social group, but by criteria on programming and participation that make sure the stations actively engage community groups.

The result is that the Special License for Specific Social Groups, in not allowing commercial funding and in failing to provide or encourage any other means of financial support, or other incentives for non-profit groups, reveals a lack of understanding of the mission of community media and what kind of enabling legislation actually fosters an emergent community media sector.

Community media policies have come from the top rather than the grassroots. When the Special License was developed, it was not a result of successful advocacy by an active civil society, but rather of an initiative of the regulator itself, who deemed it "important to introduce this kind of broadcast service". While this is quite rare and commendable, it made it all the more essential to gain extensive civil society input. The regulator incorporated an eight-month public consultation in the process of formulating the new license for non-profit radio, but the response during this public consultation period, where it concerned the establishment of the Special License and the rules governing it, was "minimal, almost non-existent" (RAK, 2010). The result is that the Special License is seen as the outcome of a mostly top-down decision-making process: "[t]hese policies normally come from the bottom up, but that hasn't happened here." (Mijatović 2009).

As a result, the policy does not seem to sufficiently address what social groups or existing stations would actually need to make operating on such a license viable for them. Moreover, the interviews conducted for this research revealed that the motivations behind the new policy are viewed with some distrust. They laid bare suspicions that the process would fall prey to corruption and the new non-profit licenses would be granted to stations directly or indirectly controlled by the country's political parties - suspicions which might be fed by the ease with which an NGO can be established, and by the convoluted and informal ties that exist in some instances between political parties, business entities and NGOs. Mijatović stated the potential of nationalist political parties to use the Special License to set up their own stations was not "a legitimate concern," citing general licensing criteria that would address this (Ibid.). It remains, however, a concern that should be addressed in any revisions to the existing legislation, and to implementation policies.

Lack of active civil society. Even though Mandić emphasized that public consultations on other media regulatory issues in the past had attracted wide interest (RAK, 2010), the lack of input on the development of the Special License does relate to the broader problem of the lack of civic engagement described in the interviews conducted for this research. While areas of civic engagement certainly exist in Bosnia and Herzegovina, community advocates described the challenges posed to their work by a non-participatory culture in which critical civic participation was not encouraged by local authorities - and often not felt to be worthwhile by the population at large. There was a general sentiment expressed that people in Bosnia and Herzegovina find it difficult to change anything, and a concern that there needs to be more inspirational examples to draw on.[14]

14 Echoing this complaint, the owner of Studio 88 said: "People here are so passive, [..] nobody will move." She argued that this is "the card" that local politicians who pursue personal or party interests over those of the community "are playing on": assuming that the population will remain passive.

Assistance fatigue. While the support of international donors was often crucial in the foundation and growth of community-oriented stations, a certain fatigue has set in regarding the nature of the support offered, and there seems to be a mismatch with what these media most need. Interviewees observed that a disproportionate focus of available funding was on workshops and trainings, rather than on the concrete development and implementation of media projects. This mismatch has become more pressing as the level of international support in the region has declined, in some cases resulting in an over-built capacity within some NGO sectors, and left many NGOs ill-prepared for the transition to self-sufficiency and without sustainable models to function independently.

On the flip side, international organizations and donors are exhibiting a greater hesitancy in supporting media projects in the light of what is seen as a degree of overspending in a previous generation of projects and a failure of those projects to achieve the intended results.[15]

15 One of the interviewees highlighted the case of Nezavisne Novine, a newspaper that received generous international support when it emerged as a vocal critic of the then-nationalist Bosnian Serb establishment, publishing remarkable revelations about war crimes. In the early years of this decade, USAID touted its support of the newspaper, which had a circulation of about 8,500 at the time, "through a number of projects", highlighting how it was "proud to have supported" the opening of the Nezavisne Novine printing plant with a $500,000 business loan. The newspaper has, as RFE/RL reported in 2009, "experienced a marked editorial shift since Dodik came to power, becoming a firm backer of the prime minister and his policies" and defending him throughout ongoing corruption probes. In 2008, the newspaper received a $3.65 million loan from the Republika Srpska Investment and Development Bank (IRB), and in the same year teamed up with Integral Inzenjering, a construction company owned by a close Dodik ally, to purchase Republika Srpska's only other daily newspaper, Glas Srpske (USAID, USAID (2), RFE/RL , 2009).

7. Examples of community-oriented radio stations in Bosnia and Herzegovina

What do these stumbling blocks tell us about what conditions would need to be in place to facilitate the development of community radio in Bosnia and Herzegovina? To what extent would the proposed legislation be able to fulfill those steps? The missions of a few stations help illuminate the overall landscape of community-minded radio stations, and how each sees itself in relation to local government. The aim of this section is to unpack a range of different models of community-oriented stations in operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

7.1. NGO-owned radio

Vesta Radio in Tuzla sees itself as a community radio station, although it operates on a commercial license. Vesta is in fact built around a dual structure to facilitate pursuing broadcasting on a commercial basis in the cause of furthering non-profit goals: Vesta is both an NGO and a radio station. The radio station, which was launched in 2001, is run as a project of the Vesta NGO. The mission of Vesta NGO is to "advocate active citizen participation through civil education programs and lead initiatives of social change that encourage equality among all community stakeholders as well as sustainable, locally-focused economic development." It does so through initiatives that promote human rights, tolerance and mutual respect, encourage citizen involvement in political processes and democratic decision-making, and develop participatory media. Recent projects of Vesta NGO in Tuzla include projects addressing gender stereotypes among youth, improving energy efficiency, and supporting the organizing capacity of farmers; the NGO is also involved in the development of a civil society network in the Balkans.

The co-founders of Vesta NGO and radio had found themselves doubting like many, at the end of the war, whether they should leave the country or stay and try to create a life for themselves and their families and "try to do something for the development of post-war Bosnian society."[16] They opted for the latter. In the late 1990s, they were working with an international NGO on national economic development issues, and with its help, began to draft a proposal for a radio station - not an atypical trajectory for community radio stations around the world. Neither had a background in radio or in running an NGO, but they have stayed committed to use the Vesta project as a way of making a difference to their local community: "we know we could earn more money doing something else. The station could earn lots more in advertising if we played turbo folk."

It took the station some two years of lobbying, using international actors and NGOs as conduits to open negotiations with the regulatory agency, to gain a broadcasting license. Its launch came at a time when the regulatory authority was looking to reduce the number of radio stations in an over-saturated and unsustainable market; Vesta Radio was the only new station granted a license at this time.

The mission of the station has not changed since its inception: "VESTA Radio is grounded in the same principles as its parent organization and believes that a healthy democracy depends on community involvement, open dialogue on important local and national issues, and active and independent media."[17] Vesta Radio reaches several municipalities in Tuzla canton with a potential listenership of 300,000.

Vesta sees itself as a partner to local government, sharing a mission to promote local development: "Our aim is to help citizens be more involved and take part in decision-

16 Interview November 11, 2009. Quotes in this section are from this interview, unless otherwise specified.

17 Vesta, About us: Protecting citizens' rights, supporting civic engagement, and promoting participative media, available at http://www.vesta.ba/en/aboutus , (accessed January 14, 2010).

making processes, and to encourage social responsibility on the part of government to involve citizens in the process." They do so in two direct ways. On the one hand, Vesta NGO works together with local government in applying for projects together. On the other, Vesta serves as a government watchdog, and the radio station plays an important role in this:

> "If government forgets something, we need to pay attention and remind them …so it is a partnership but sometimes we need to raise our voices… For example, if there is a lack of money in the budget for funding women in sports, we don't want to ask the mayor, why don't you allocate more money to women's sports. Instead, we ask female athletes or a local sports club how they feel and put pressure on decision makers this way, by representing the voice of the people on air in this way, and letting everyone know we are paying attention."

This kind of interaction, Vesta acknowledges, is facilitated by the relatively favorable local political environment. "We are really specific in Bosnia, in terms of [our] position," Vesta answered when queried about other cities where the kind of working relationship they have with local government would be possible.[18] Vesta emphasizes how it uses its position as an NGO to propose projects and seek external funding for local solutions: "we can't just criticize and hope something will happen." Some examples of recent projects Vesta has been involved with include trainings for local entrepreneurs in agriculture and financial management. While these are Vesta NGO programs, the project activities spill over into Vesta radio programming, spurring public affairs programming and service announcements on such topics. "We don't distinguish Vesta NGO from Vesta Radio that much from an outside perspective. We see Vesta Radio as a tool for communicating with the public. [..]Commercial radio

18 Recounting a visit to another city, one of the interviewees said, "If you ask us now, would you like to have a radio in that kind of place, that would be very, very difficult; and it would be impossible to make a partnership with the local government, because .. community radio should protect marginalized people and fight for democracy and human rights, and if you have a mayor and a leading party that are very nationalistic, there cannot be a partnership."

would charge us for any message they would broadcast on their station. On the other hand, Vesta Radio would not exist without the support of Vesta NGO."

The philosophy of the organization is reflected in the programming of the radio station. Though music makes up the majority of the content, as is the case with most community radio stations, the overall sensibility is that of a station with a human rights mission:

> "That's how we attract people. We don't want to just be a boring local radio station that talks about local...problems all the time. No one would listen to us after a few weeks. We want to be a normal radio station that plays modern music like other commercial radio stations, but we also utilize the radio to address issues and offer a space for information and for local groups to communicate to the public."

Citizen empowerment is an important goal for Vesta, and is achieved through trainings and providing access to community groups to produce radio. Youth groups, blind people, and bee keepers, to name a few specific groups, have had programs on air to discuss issues that affected their lives. The program with the association of blind people was especially successful: at the end of the trainings, after the series of broadcasts had called attention to the fact that people with disabilities need better representation and access to resources, three members of the association were hired by government. Vesta feels this was accomplished by example.

After the war, in 1998, the population of Tuzla was, according to one source, 63% Bosniak, 15% Croat and 9% Serb, with the rest of the population made up of other ethnicities, those of mixed ethnicity and self-identified Yugoslavs.[19] While the station

19 European Centre for Conflict Prevention 1999, "Tuzla, City of Hope in War-Torn Bosnia," in: 35 Inspiring Stories from Around the World, Utrecht, European Centre for Conflict Prevention, pp. 156-159, available at http://www.gppac.net/documents/pbp/1/7_tuzla.htm, (accessed January 18, 2010). The interviewees from Vesta roughly estimated the population breakdown of the municipality to be 50% Bosniak, 30% Croat and 20% Serb.

does not base its programming on ethnicity, Vesta says that its producers reflect the cultural diversity of the locality. The station specifically tries to reach out to under-represented or small minorities such as Turks and Slovenians. In order to be more successful in outreach, however, Vesta says, the station would require more funding to hire people, so it could really develop a volunteer program, and offer more opportunities for more citizen participation. That said, the station has had over 700 volunteers and students participate in some capacity in Vesta Radio since its inception.

Unlike many projects that are launched with international donor support, Vesta made self-sustainability a goal. In the beginning, Vesta staff worked as volunteers, borrowing money to cover the costs of utilities. Today it has fifteen paid employees, six of whom work full-time at the radio station, and it is able to cover 90% of its operational costs from advertising revenue. Should the station begin to run a profit, those proceeds would be invested in the Vesta NGO and its civic mission. The station's mission determines the limits of possible revenue sources, however: the station has turned down advertisers whose values conflicted with its mission.

Vesta has expanded its media scope by creating a local online news portal, which, while not running a profit, is increasingly where Vesta's audience goes for the latest news, and it has created a subsidiary commercial marketing and production company for outside clients, which provides an additional revenue stream. A similar revenue stream is being used by student radio eFM Sarajevo (see below).

Even though it operates on a non-profit basis and sees its mission as representing local civil society, Vesta has decided not to respond to the new opportunity to seek licensing as a non-profit radio station. Its primary reason not to do so is that the new legislation would not allow them to keep airing commercials. Four years ago, when the regulatory agency started to make plans for introducing community radio licenses, Vesta elected not to push for this because under the plans being devised they would have "lost more than they gained".

Like Vesta Radio, Radio Balkan was started by an NGO and seeks to function as a community-oriented radio station on a commercial license. The station is based in Banja Luka in the Republika Srpska and is a project of the Youth Communication Center.[20] The youth center uses the station to promote youth activism and participation, and actively train and involve students and volunteers in programming, news production, and other aspects of running the station. Their format is primarily youth-oriented pop music, while avoiding turbo folk.

Launched in 1997 as the first youth radio station in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the station has three specific goals: to support and promote projects of the Youth Communication Center; to provide training programs in journalism, radio production and sound engineering; and to cooperate with other radio stations across the country and region. The Center itself was founded the previous year by students from Banja Luka University who realized that "apathy and pessimism amongst youth could not create a better future", and that they had greater strength in numbers than as individuals. They wanted to respond to what they described as a period of deeply rooted national prejudices, a divided country led by nationalistic parties, and the misuse of media by politicians. They felt there was no chance to hear the voice of "ordinary young people", who inherited but did not create this situation; and they wanted to create a space for youth to speak their minds and speak up about their needs and concerns in this traumatic, post-war environment. Concerns included the inability to travel, problems in education and employment, high rates of suicide, war traumas, and how to be active participants in the peace-building process.

Recent programs include "Grey Zone", a show dedicated to encouraging youth to try to influence authorities, and urging local government to involve young people in decision-

20 Youth Communication Center Banja Luka: http://www.okcbl.org/index.php?lng=en, (accessed October 6, 2010).

making. The show highlighted success stories of youth initiatives and youth leaders, and focused in particular on issues such as employment, ethnic relations, and participation in political life. This program as well as other similar programs has been supported with funding from the Ministry for Family, Youth and Sport of the Republika Srpska Government. Other shows focus on student issues, student life and education reform; volunteerism; law and judicial reform; women and human rights. The station is actively involved in program exchanges with partner stations eFM, Vesta and X Radio Mostar.

7.2. Independent, local commercial radio

Studio 88 is different from a community radio station in many ways. It operates under a commercial license, and is owned and run by a single individual. Unlike the stations in Tuzla and Banja Luka, Studio 88 is not connected to an NGO, and does not offer local organizations direct access to producing their own programs. Its programming, however, is strongly focused on the same kinds of community-oriented goals that guide programming at Vesta; the station's owner defines its mission as "the democratization of society".[21] The station has no commercial aim. Operating in a highly dysfunctional political and ethnic environment, the station fulfills a unique role in Mostar and the region of Herzegovina, promoting critical, civic engagement with local governance, interethnic dialogue and reconciliation, and the representation of community groups that find little voice on regular commercial stations or public broadcasters.

The idea to found a radio station of this type emerged in 1997. Mostar was a divided city, and some journalists from both East and West Mostar felt they were hampered

21 Interview with Amna Popovac, November 12, 2009. Quotes in this section are from this interview, unless otherwise specified.

by censorship. The station's current director, a former IT engineer with an education in business management who later took part in training programs at the BBC and the Mediacentar Sarajevo, at the time had no background in broadcasting. But she was working for an international NGO and had gained experience in grant writing. She worked with journalists and technicians to draft a program schedule and a business plan and seek funding. It took two years before the station could be started with a grant from USAID. The first four years, Radio 88 was based in dominantly Bosniak-inhabited East Mostar because it would have been too dangerous for its staff to work from West Mostar, which is mostly populated by Croats - though the hostility the station has faced was by no means limited to the city's Croat nationalists.[22]

22 The city of Mostar is sharply divided, with mostly Croats populating West Mostar and Bosniaks making up most of the population of East Mostar. During the war, the city was engulfed by especially violent and long-running hostilities. First, the Yugoslav People's Army besieged the city in 1992; subsequently, Croat forces laid siege to the parts of the city under control of the Bosnian Army for nine months. Much of East Mostar, including the famous Old Bridge, was reduced to rubble during the shelling, and "the predominantly Croat west river bank was 'cleansed' of Bosniaks." (BBC News, 2005).

Entrenched ethnic polarization has dominated the governance of the post-war years, and the resulting deadlock has prevented a meaningful reintegration of the city's public services and utilities and cultural institutions. In reports to the Secretary-General of the United Nations (2008; 2009), the High Representative noted that the rhetorics of the main Croat parties "have raised concerns among Bosniaks in Mostar that the Croats aim either to repartition the city or to claim it as their own" and that the continued political impasse "raises questions about the sustainability of a unified Mostar in the absence of the persistent engagement of the international community." In a report to the European Parliament (2007), he noted that "the most serious [..] cases of nationally motivated violence or vandalism [in the country] took place around Mostar and in areas of Bosniak return to the RS" (Office of the High Representative, and EU Special Representative 2007; 2008; 2009).

Many of the challenges the radio station has faced establishing itself are tied up in the far-reaching ethnic segregation and dysfunctional municipal governance that mark Mostar. By late 2009, the city had been without a mayor for over a year, because the Croat and Bosniak factions in the city council were unable to agree on a candidate. Since the drawn-out political crisis prevented local government from passing a full budget, basic city services could not operate or had to grapple with minimal, provisional budgets.

With everything from kindergartens and schools to syndicates segregated by ethnicity and even basic services like garbage collection divided between the two parts of the city, it also means that there is little space for residents who do not identify with either camp exclusively or wish to interact in multiethnic communities. Radio 88 is now based in a narrow stretch of downtown Mostar where the front line was located during the war. The station moved there in 2003, on purpose. "I waited for almost two years for this house to be on sale to buy it," the station's owner said. "This is no man's land. This is neither Serb nor Croat nor Bosniak [territory]. So that is our statement."

Increasingly, however, the station's multiethnic character has strategic advantages as well; for advertisers, for example, it can be a draw. "When someone … wants to reach both Croats and Bosniaks, they choose us", says the station's owner.

When the station first started broadcasting, programmers aimed to address everyone from 7 to 70 year old. But soon the station's management realized it would have greater success with more focus, and now its primary target audience is women aged 25 to 45, many of whom are single and many of whom are mothers with small or teenage children. This choice of focus has a business as well as a social element. On the one hand, women are an attractive target audience for advertisers because they are often in charge of the family budget. There are also signs that women have made the transition to postwar life better, and face less unemployment, than young men. On the other hand, women turned out to be more open to the station's pragmatic, multiethnic message. A gender divide is reflected in the station's staff as well, notes

the owner: "even when I open a vacancy, I have more female than male applicants, while the other radio stations have the opposite problem."

The station employs twelve paid workers, with different ethnic backgrounds. Half of them are journalists, three do marketing work and two are technicians. The station's staff strive to create what the director repeatedly called a 'normal' working environment, meaning one where all ethnicities work together pragmatically in order to pursue professional, uncensored journalism. "We are showing by our example," the owner says, "that people can live together. They don't need to love each other, but they can live next to each other and work for mutual benefit."

Compared to its fraught early years, the station has made headway with the local community. For the first few years, the owner recounts, "nobody would say publicly that they listened to us". In contrast, now both Croats and Bosniaks are calling in "when they have something to say … Serbs, Jewish, all populations, they call us". Listeners recognize the station as a force of change and expect it to act on any grievances they may have: "so now we are receiving emails saying [things like], could you please talk about when they are going to repair ... this road they promised to finish before the last elections". Studio 88's audience ratings, the owner says, now stand at 14% in a Herzegovinian region of some 250,000 residents.

The station has also established itself as a media player which politicians can no longer ignore. In the early years of the station's existence, local authorities would use a range of instruments to intimidate the station's staff, from retaliatory police actions to misinformation campaigns. Faced with enmity from both Bosniak and Croat parties, the owner recounted, "it was very hard to make someone come here for an interview, or even give an interview [remotely], without coming". While tension persists between local authorities and the station and harassment of its reporters still occurs, an element of grudging respect has entered the equation: "now they are afraid of us … we don't have any more problems reaching them or getting a statement from them."

The change is partly rooted in the failure of previous attempts to intimidate the station, partly in its increased audience, and partly, the owner maintains, in a reticent acknowledgment of its role in reporting local politics: "we never represent one side of a story – we always invite all concerned parties. This is why people respect us now". Whether they are government representatives or ordinary citizens, people "are ready to come when we invite them". The station makes sure to take pictures of visiting politicians too, and post them on its Facebook page to strengthen an affirmative cycle, in which fear of being associated with the station is steadily eroded.

The underlying question remains what broader social impact a station like Studio 88 can have on a society as divided as Mostar's in the face of much larger social and generational trends pulling different ways. A whole generation is now growing up in Mostar in ethnically insular communities, separated from each other to a much greater extent than its parents were at the same age. It leaves young people more vulnerable to stereotypes, fear and propaganda. On the other hand, Studio 88's owner observes, "even though children and teenagers go to different schools, they go out together to the same discos, [...] they go to the coast together." In its own way, she hopes, Studio 88 helps such trends along: "all these children, who were born or who were five years old when the war started and who don't remember Mostar how it was … we give them the chance to grow up as normal people, in a multinational society."

In its programming, Studio 88 aims to present this alternative vision, encouraging its listeners to identify with the city's multiethnic past rather than its ethnically polarized present. Every Thursday, Studio 88 broadcasts "Rondo", a program named after a part of town built during the Austro-Hungarian empire, where, before the war, "everyone who was someone" would gather and mingle. In the program, Studio 88 encourages older generations to come on air and talk about what life was like in pre-war Mostar and discuss the city's vibrant cultural traditions.

Despite the incremental increase of the station's reach, it faces challenging financial conditions. USAID contributed funding until 2006, but sourcing funding from international donors has become hard. International organizations have scaled back their activities, and increasingly restrict themselves to funding individual and uncontroversial deliverables, like roundtables and workshops. The station therefore financially relies on advertising. It broadcasts 5-7 minutes of commercials per hour. Advertising revenue also comes in through the station's Web portal, which provides access to many of its programs for listeners outside Mostar, such as emigrants from the town now living in Italy. But the economic crisis is set to make a dent in advertising revenue in 2010, as local purchasing power declines.

The allocation of government funding for local media, including funding administered by local government in projects funded by international bodies like the European Commission, lacks transparency. It is a lack that rouses suspicions of the money being assigned on partisan or ethnic basis rather than on merit. The owner of Studio 88, which has never received such funding, is currently engaged in a legal battle with the cantonal government over the distribution of such funds.

One strategy which Studio 88 hopes will help tackle issues of financial sustainability, and already serves to streamline its news reporting, is the delegation of national news coverage to a production house. The owner of Studio 88 is also 50% shareholder in Media Service, which produces seven hourly, 5-minute news updates a day, and 15 half-hour shows. They are used by a network of 34 local radio stations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. By relying on the Media Service news briefs and programs for their coverage of national news, the stations in the network can focus the work of their own reporters on covering local issues and free up time for more in-depth reportage. Each of them in turn can contribute to Media Service for use by other stations news items they produced on regional issues that have national relevance.

The issue of financial sustainability plays a significant role in the perception of the new non-profit radio licenses among the currently existing community-oriented broadcasters. The take of Studio 88's owner was no exception. There are already far more stations on air in Bosnia and Herzegovina than the economy can sustain, she argued, which from her vantage point is the more urgent airspace issue. She faulted the regulatory agency for not actively monitoring the broadcasting record of the stations it licenses once they go on air, even though, she claimed, many of them are lacking in professional and technical capacity or are even kept on air artificially through ties with political parties or entities. In this context, adding more electronic media to the overcrowded market would only exacerbate problems of media sustainability and increase the kind of financial dependence that fosters corruption.

7.3. Student radio

eFM is a student radio station broadcasting since 1997 and creating independent radio aimed at students, youth, and marginalized groups, with a mission to give generations of people who grew up in the war and those growing up after it, a "fresh clean voice". eFM was started as a United Nations BiH mission-owned radio station set up to assist the Students' Union of Bosnia-Herzegovina at the University of Sarajevo with the slogan "106.5—Keepin' You Alive, eFM Radio." The station started broadcasting with $20,000 in equipment from the UN from a wrecked barrack, and soon after was able to garner additional funding and support from the European Union, Norway, Canada and the International Fellowship of Reconciliation.

The station quickly gained credibility and listeners for their broadcasting of music, entertainment and news. In particular, an interview with the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for ex-Yugoslavia gained the station respect and popularity. The station eventually became an independent radio station that operates

today with a commercial radio license. Today, they are part of the CrossRadio network, a program exchange platform involving student and youth radio stations across ex-Yugoslavia as well as Switzerland and also offer training for students in radio production, including a series of radio dramas produced with a local expert. Though the station offers access and opportunities for students, they feel the demand for such is not really there. eFM has also been an important promoter of various issues around youth, diversity and culture. In 2008, the station received threatening letters (along with other media) following their on-air announcements and support for the Sarajevo Queer Festival.

eFM operates like many student radios, with a combination of paid and voluntary staff, focused on music and commentary geared towards a younger and somewhat more alternative audience. The station funds itself through a combination of sources, including proceeds from a sister commercial production company, similar to that of Vesta's. The lack of funding from advertising is the station's biggest critique of the community radio legislation. The station has also encountered some issues recently over reduction in frequency range owing to the fact that their transmitter is located on top of a building that has placed a large billboard blocking their antennae. Zoran Ćatić, editor-in-chief of eFM, offers a general critique about implementation of existing broadcasting laws rather than the laws themselves: "legislative frameworks are wonderful, but like everything else in this country, they can't be implemented the way it is now done" (IREX, 2008).

Student radio in the Balkans in general has played an important role in the democratization of the airwaves, in providing for youth and more alternative culture interests and eclectic music, with most stations operating with commercial licenses as their only option. The stations typically do not engage directly with local governmental issues and politics, though they often broadcast comedic or satirical shows that address a range of current affairs, as does eFM. Student radio eFM is

mostly geared towards providing a music and cultural alternative rather than the more labor-intensive news and public affairs programming. Regardless of the variety of formats, student radio is an important part of the broadcast fabric and needs to be considered in a discussion of community radio, as their role and function is related yet distinctive.

8. Lessons learned from the experience of community-oriented, commercial media

Each of the stations discussed in this chapter represents an attempt to realize the civic ideals underlying community media. The stations pursue a variety of organizational models, are based on a commercial footing or use commercial strategies, and have come to construct business models that vary from the conventions of community radio in distinct ways. However, they see their primary mission as social; their goal is to facilitate community empowerment, civil dialogue and interethnic reconciliation; and their broader objective is to promote democracy and human rights. They consider the commercial activities they undertake as wholly subservient to those goals, not aimed at making a profit. They also work to varying degrees with volunteers and students, providing them with radio and journalism experience and training.

In order to appeal to the local community, fulfill the social needs of a variety of social groups, and influence local political and social discourse, the programming of these stations needs to maintain a finely tuned balance. Commitment to standards of 'professional' journalism needs to be paramount, with the stations seeing themselves as playing a watchdog role when covering local government. However, music makes up the bulk of programming. This is partly done in order to draw a wider audience for the public affairs and news programming, which is not unlike

strategies pursued by community media internationally, but serves also as a cultural marker. ”We know we could earn more [advertising] money...by playing turbo folk," said Vesta Radio, "but we don’t want to do that."[23]

In the absence of institutional structures codifying the primary civic mission and the non-profit basis of these stations, however, the functioning of the stations as community radio-like media is tied to the individuals who own and run the stations and their economic stability. This means that the stations are not insulated from the whims of future management changes and function as they do because of the commitment of a few visionaries.

To what extent the radio stations are having an impact in instilling civic, interethnic values in the communities they serve is difficult to quantify, because of the much larger social and generational trends pulling different ways. Their experience can, however, tell us a number of things about the factors that determine the capacity of a community-oriented station to establish itself and survive in a troubled environment. In outlining the lessons learned, we have broken down by topic the following areas:

8.1. Revenue and funding

- Commercial revenue is imperative to sustainability, and makes up the bulk of income for current community-oriented stations. The single biggest hurdle posed by the new Special License for potentially suitable applicants, therefore, is the inability to broadcast advertising. Representatives of the four stations we interviewed agreed that non-profit radio stations should be

23 Interview November 11, 2009.

allowed to gain revenue through commercial advertising, as long as it is reinvested in the station.

- The entrepreneurial "sister" endeavors that some community-oriented stations have established, such as commercial production, marketing or news production companies, contribute significantly to their financial security.
- Considering the overcrowded market of commercial broadcasters in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is arguably a need for complementary governmental financial support to guarantee the survival of community radio stations, which would have to be disseminated by an independent body. This question, however, needs to be considered in the context of the concerns outlined in this chapter about the effects that dependence on government funding has had on many local public broadcasters in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the issues of government pressure that broadcasters have experienced and the difficulties of establishing independent bodies in the current, politically and ethnically polarized environment. Adequate measures would therefore have to be devised in the design of any system to allocate and manage such financial support, and to insulate the stations from governmental and partisan pressures as best as possible.
- Financial and organizational support by international NGOs and donors can be extremely valuable for community media sustainability, especially at the start. Over time, however, dual concerns emerge that both funders and the stations receiving funding have to address. On the one hand, stations which depend on funding that could suddenly cease have to ensure a sufficient capacity and awareness to develop self-sustainable strategies in time. On the other hand, funders need to ensure that the form of support given still matches the actual needs of the stations and is not overly driving the mission of the station itself. While a community-oriented station may primarily be keen to receive general operating support or financial support for an event or

broadcast, the donor might prioritize short-term deliverables in the form of meetings and reports. In this regard, it would be valuable if specific support were available for research measuring the impact of various forms of funding, as well as for the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of stations and programming on local communities.

8.2. Human capital and resources

- The depth of personal commitment and strong leadership on the part of organizers and owners has proven crucial to their survival and growth.
- Stations that emerged from NGO initiatives, or were established by people working for NGOs at the time, benefited from a synergy of missions, resources, and capacities, in particular from the availability of grant-writing experience and familiarity with possible funding sources.
- Some of the founders of community-oriented stations benefited from visiting community radio stations abroad when they were developing the concept and business model of their stations.

8.3. Interaction

- The opportunities and hurdles a station faces vary greatly with the local context. The presence or absence of a supportive or at least functional local government can tremendously facilitate or complicate the management of an independent, community-oriented station.

- With a growing number of people in Bosnia and Herzegovina online, the reach of community-oriented radio stations is significantly improved by their expansion into online radio broadcasting and news portals. The relatively low Internet penetration in the country and the separate advantages of the different media, however, mean that there is still a distinct need for analogue community radio as well.

9. The path ahead: International prospects and best practice

While the World Association of Community Broadcasters (AMARC) has identified the lack of proper enabling legislation as the biggest single barrier to the sustainable development of community media, the lack of an enabling environment in broader social, political and civic terms is at least as severe a constraint in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Both the practitioners working in community-oriented media and the policy makers who drafted the Special License are battling, in some regards, socio-political trends that threaten to take Bosnia and Herzegovina further away from ideals of interethnic dialogue, civic participation and good governance.

Nevertheless, there are still ample opportunities to create or improve policy, regulation and legislation that bolster the likelihood of establishing a fully functional community radio sector. For community radio to flourish, there needs to be an enabling environment, and not just a policy on paper.

When participatory, community-oriented broadcasting is not granted distinctive recognition, or is left to the commercial sector, the stations tend not to last over time. It is therefore crucial that community media are institutionally recognized as a formal "third sector," alongside commercial and public service media, if stability of a community media sector is to be encouraged. To effectively establish such a sector,

the regulatory facilitation of such a community media sector should aim to support grassroots initiatives, and empower media makers and community advocates already pursuing community-oriented media endeavors.

Best practices internationally suggest that key elements of creating an enabling environment for community media include:

- applying clear criteria to ensure that all - and only - participatory, open and community driven organizations have an opportunity to apply for community media licenses and support;
- securing the participation and investment of community-oriented local media and media professionals, as well as civic and community groups and advocates and local authorities, in the policy-making process to ensure it is driven by the needs and wishes on the ground;
- facilitating mixed models of funding that include some form of ongoing and renewable government subsidy in addition to some form of commercial revenue;
- recognizing the social gain that community media provide and the different ways in which different types of community stations can provide it;
- supporting research, impact measurement and audience studies to facilitate the need of community media to evaluate the services they provide.

Fundamentally, none of these elements can be realized without the political will on the part of the policy makers to recognize and support sustainable community media as an important part of national media strategies to ensure greater participation, pluralism and representative democracy.

9.1. Licensing that builds sustainability

What follows is a list of principles for issuing licenses in ways that will enable community radio stations to become sustainable.

- Fair and equitable distribution of frequencies between public service, commercial and community broadcasters. Legislation should reserve a portion of radio frequency spectrum for non-profit community broadcasting (10-15% of the FM bandwidth is the norm, but 20% is often considered ideal in order to best meet the demand for community broadcasting). Allocation of frequencies – which are a public resource – reinforces and validates community radio as a sector.
- Minimal or no license fees for community radio.
- Licensing processes for community radio should be fair, open, transparent, set out clearly in law from the start.
- Criteria for licensing should hinge on the core defining principles of community ownership, participatory practice and non-profit status. Some countries also ban ownership by political parties in order to avoid "capture" by party politics and to prevent stations from becoming the mouthpiece of a particular party.
- The least invasive technical limitations should be applied; restrictions on coverage area, antenna height, or transmission power are not recommended.
- The regulatory agency should have sufficient capacity to handle community radio applications, publicize application windows, and offer licenses for long enough periods of time for stations to have the chance to develop. Five-year renewable licenses tend to be standard.

9.2. Policies that ensure financial sustainability

The question of whether or not governments should directly or indirectly finance community media can be controversial. In some places, direct state support would dramatically reduce independence or create the perception that the media are the voice of government. However, most policies that encourage long-term sustainability do include some form of indirect government support at the state level, although additional funding may also be made available on a fair and equitable basis at municipal or cantonal levels.

In addition to general financial support for community media, there are also examples of the state providing earmarked funding for expenditures of stations that go beyond basic operational costs, such as funding for technical support, trainings, equipment purchases, and research and development in the form of evaluations and listener surveys.

Governments could also consider providing indirect funding such as fee and tax waivers or reduced service fees on basic costs such as rent or utilities, or provide incentives by relieving community media of some of their economic burdens, for example by offering concessions on rates for public utilities like electricity and water; free or reduced Internet and telephone connectivity; access to low-cost satellite and mobile phone services; access to solar or wind power; tax-exempt status as non-profit organizations and exemptions from sales tax and import duties on equipment purchased abroad; and access to training programs and employee benefits.

Government support, in order to ensure independence, should be administered through an independent public body, separate from the regulatory agency or any government ministry. The body should include both government and civil society representation.

Mixed funding models would create opportunities for community radio to balance their funding sources, and should include a combination of:

- State-generated financing distributed through an independent body;
- Commercial revenue and sponsorship;
- Community-led fundraising and local forms of support, including fundraising events, fees for services, listener contributions, merchandise sales, etc.
- Support from international, regional, national or local foundations, agencies (such as the EU), etc.

Examples of state financing include:

- A community radio fund paid into by the state (e.g. Hungary or the UK; in South Africa, the fund also includes support from the media industry and donors);
- A tax on cable or telecommunication operators (e.g. Colombia);
- A percentage of the license fees paid by commercial stations (e.g. Denmark)
- A percentage of the advertising revenue of commercial stations (e.g. France);
- A proportion of the general license fee for public service broadcasting (advocates argue for this in the UK);
- Indirect public funding through the implementation of employment support, skills development and lifelong learning, social inclusion programs, cultural programs, youth programs, or neighborhood regeneration support (e.g. South Africa or the UK);
- Support from local councils, local community funds or regional bodies (e.g. the UK, the Netherlands.).[24]

24 For more examples of local support, see Lewis 2008.

9.3. Digitalization

While establishing a functional community media sector is itself a challenging task, policy makers and practitioners alike have no choice but to plan for digitalization of broadcast frequencies. There are decisions and debates about the digital switchover taking place that will have a major impact on the future of community radio, and the growth of digital radio provides both opportunities and risks for community media. Opportunities include greater frequency availability - the so-called "digital dividend". But without public service obligations in place, there are no guarantees that this new airspace will result in greater opportunities for community media. Policy makers and advocates therefore have to make sure that overarching debates about the future of broadcast media in the digital era should engage with the needs and interests of local communities and small-scale, not-for-profit media, if a truly pluralistic media environment is to flourish.

With a basic legal and regulatory framework for community media only in its infancy, and a public broadcasting service system that is both incomplete and under threat, the challenges posed by digitalization may seem daunting. In 2008, the Open Society Institute observed that "there is still no regulatory framework for digitalisation," that "no thought seems to have been given to the funding that will be needed to achieve switch-over," and that public service broadcasting "has been in such turmoil for years that it has no capacity to engage in such a complex project."

On the bright side, however, it is encouraging to see the regulatory agency establishing a first licensing opportunity for community radio, and an expressed desire to see this sector grow. Hope also stems from the persistent examples of local radio which perform an important role as local governance watchdogs, sometimes in constructive cooperation with local government, and expanding online as well. They demonstrate a demand for radio that actively promotes human rights and an open

and democratic society, and a willingness among motivated professionals and volunteers to offer it.

10. Policy recommendations

The political will to create an enabling legal and policy environment for community media, on the part of state, entity and local government as well as regulatory bodies, is fundamental to the long-term sustainability of a community media sector. At the same time, practitioners, funders and advocates need to make use of the opportunities for policy dialogues which the RAK has provided, in its establishment of an initial Special License and its eagerness to hear and incorporate feedback. Core community media policy issues that should be voiced include the following:

- **Community media should be recognized as a distinct "third sector" alongside but complementary to private and public media**, to be supported and encouraged through specific and explicit licensing arrangements that guarantee fair and equitable access to the radio spectrum for civil society and community-based organizations.
- **Community media policies should be designed with sustainability in mind.** There should be measures in place at the time the policy is created that guarantee access to a variety of funding mechanisms and a policy environment that supports the development of local, community media. There should be no restrictions on funding sources other than those deemed necessary to maintain the character of the service and to avoid unfair competition.
- **Community media policies can only be as strong as the broader environment.** A strong media environment is one which provides safeguards for the rights of journalists, freedom of expression, and the rights of woman, racial, ethnic,

religious and other minorities; recognizes the role of non-profit organizations; and encompasses a legal system with the capacity to enforce these rights. A strong civic and community environment is one where people feel that they can influence public policy and decision making, and one where mechanisms are in place so public input can be heard and can matter. More initiatives are needed that encourage public participation, foster the growth of citizen advocacy and train "change-makers".

- **Definitions vary, but certain policy principles should be followed.** There is no "one-size- fits-all" approach to defining community media. The specific shape and feel of each national system will differ because it reflects local conditions and cultures. However, in most places, community media are recognized at the very least as media that are not-for-profit, participatory and produced for and by a local audience.

  Experience from places where sustainable community media policies are in practice or in development suggest that the defining features of community media in policy should also include: independence from government and commercial entities; community service targeting geographic communities or communities of interest; community ownership and management; operating for social gain, not private financial profit.

Regarding the role which the Special License could play in facilitating a community radio sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina, this chapter identifies two major hurdles for potential beneficiaries in the way it is formulated:

- **The narrow definition of community media as stations owned by organizations representing a specific, individual social group.** This risks excluding non-profit stations that fulfill criteria of access and participation that set community media apart from local public service broadcasters, but serve the public interest of the overall local community, or provide access to a

variety of individual social groups. Many community radio stations in Europe do a combination of both, which suggests that a more flexible approach in this regard would be more realistic.

- **The specification that precludes stations operating under the Special License from raising revenue through advertising,** while not providing alternative funding mechanisms that would make ad-less broadcasting financially sustainable, risks leaving community media bereft of the independent funding that secures their survival and strengthens their independence from governmental interference.

The question of independence from government is crucial, regardless of what level of government. But this can be difficult to ensure in areas where local government might be marked by high levels of corruption, or dominated by a small number of powerful elites. For this and other reasons, it is important for community media policies to feature "counter-corruption mechanisms", or ways to avoid co-option by local elites. When community media become mouthpieces for local government, they lose credibility. One way of helping prevent control by government, or perceptions of control, is to channel any government support through an independent body.

Support from an independent regulatory agency makes a difference. Public consultations on licensing and regulatory policies, annual plans, codes and procedures should also include input from community media advocates and practitioners. Bosnia and Herzegovina has an advantage in that there exists support for the development of a community media sector within the RAK, as well as recognition of the interest the Council of Europe and European Parliament are taking in community media. The regulatory support, however, is weakened when an adequate policy dialogue about developing a community media sector fails to develop between the regulatory body and the relevant civil society actors.

The concerns voiced by some interviewees about the new non-profit license present a two-fold challenge to the RAK. On the one hand, there is a perception, which perhaps looms especially large in the run-up to the October 2010 national elections, that the allocation of licenses might fall under the sway of party political interference. On the other hand, even if such suspicions are groundless, they reveal a pervasive distrust in national institutions in Bosnian society and among the stakeholders in media and civil society. Such distrust has the capacity of making even well-intentioned new policies run aground, as they discourage stakeholders from engaging with the new opportunities. It is, therefore, extremely important that the allocation of licenses takes place under fully transparent procedures.

Finally, we return to the defining feature and challenge of the radio landscape in Bosnia and Herzegovina – the oversaturation of the commercial market for local radio, and the over-centralization of local station ownership in the hands of cantonal or municipal governments. Community radio should be considered a possible vehicle through which to address these concerns. For example, the broadcast frequencies of municipally (or 'publicly') owned stations could be opened up for applications to the community media sector. This would ensure that the currently publicly-held licenses stay in the hands of the public, and the already-struggling local commercial radio market is not flooded with further competition. A community radio sector that is allowed limited advertising does not compete with for-profit, commercial radio stations, nor would it be at risk of being captured by local political interests as is the case now, when it is in the direct hands of municipal ownership.

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COMMUNICATION AS A PREREQUISITE FOR PARTICIPATION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL: THE CASE OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Snežana MIŠIĆ-MIHAJLOVIĆ and Mirna JUSIĆ

1. Introduction

The notion of *citizen participation* has become inescapable in the theory and practice of public governance. Citing several authors, Irvin and Stansbury note that "the arguments for enhanced citizen participation ... often rest on the merits of the process and the belief that an engaged citizenry is better than a passive citizenry" (Irvin and Stansbury 2004, p. 55). These arguments, among others, pertain to the fact that citizen participation in defining public policy increases the probability that policy will be founded on citizens' actual preferences and that the public will show more sympathy for the difficult decisions made by government representatives, thus affording these decisions greater support (Ibid.).

Citizen participation is likewise considered one of the solutions to the problem of "democratic deficit" (i.e. distrust in the government, often manifested in low voter turnout during elections): through direct participation citizens can restore trust in the authorities, and the authorities can restore their legitimacy. This presupposes that citizens are able to express their views and act through new and inclusive mechanisms and that institutions should become more responsible and accommodating through changes in institutional design (Gaventa 2004, p. 17). Participation is considered particularly suited to the local level of government given the opportunity it provides for direct engagement in the process of decision-making on services that fall under the competency of the local level of government (Moynihan 2007).

Strengthening the communication capacities of local authorities so as to involve citizens in the decision-making process in a meaningful way is often stressed as a recommendation for improved participation (cf. Gaventa 2004; Yeomans and Adshead 2003). As Milosavljević notes, "an uninformed citizen cannot participate in the management of local affairs or exert influence on the work of municipal bodies

and control their work" (2010, p. 55). Therefore, one might say that providing citizens with quality information on the opportunities, processes, and results of participation is a key prerequisite for successful participation.

In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, citizens rarely avail themselves of the participation mechanisms provided by law. According to the 2009 Report on Citizen Participation in Decision-Making Processes in B&H by the Centers for Civic Initiatives of B&H, 34.7% of citizens state they have some experience in participation through their neighborhood communities, and 25.5% through their citizen assemblies. Other methods, such as referendums, popular initiatives or public debates, are employed to an even lesser extent (CCI B&H, 2010, p. 14). All this indicates that, in addition to other potential causes, there exists a communication problem between citizens and their local government with regard to participation. Namely, a sizable percentage of citizens express an interest in the workings of the government (64.7%) and in their own participation in decision-making processes (90.5%), but only 34.1% of respondents say that they have been invited to participate in decision-making processes. In addition, not more than 36.8% of those surveyed say that they know that the effort put into citizen participation yields results (CCI B&H, 2010, pp. 6-7). A separate survey conducted in two Bosnian-Herzegovinian municipalities (Doboj Jug and Petrovo)[1] shows that

1 S. Mišić conducted a qualitative analysis of three participatory processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina in two municipalities, with a focus on identifying the factors for success and failure in regard to the willingness and administrative capacities of the local authorities to involve citizens in their activities; citizens' motivation and capacities to participate; as well as the diversity and level of institutionalization of participatory mechanisms in application, including communication channels and mechanisms of feedback for citizens on the process of participation. The three participatory processes took place in two municipalities in a predominantly rural area of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the two entities (with different legislative and institutional frameworks), where municipal authorities have significant experience in applying (innovative) participatory practices. Both municipalities are participants of the Municipal Development Project (MDP), funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) since 2001, and thus have access to donor support for advancing good governance, including participation (Mišić 2010).

most of the reasons for citizens not to participate have to do with "insufficient information on ways to participate." The survey found that about 56% of citizens felt insufficiently informed and unprepared to participate (they did not know how and why to participate), while only 26% felt prepared for participation.

Proceeding from this data, we shall focus on communication mechanisms and practices that local governments in Bosnia and Herzegovina employ to motivate and promote high-quality direct citizen participation at the local level. In a more narrow sense, the present paper deals with various aspects of *providing information* on participatory events to citizens before, during, and after the events themselves. In other words, we are interested in whether and how local government secures the information necessary for citizens to know how to participate; why to participate; what options they have at their disposal; and what the effects and results of their participation or otherwise are. Providing information is, in this context, understood as a prerequisite both for motivating citizens and for their ability to participate.

The basic question we are seeking to answer is: To what extent are the legal framework and communication practices in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina stimulating for citizen participation in decision-making at the local level? In other words, we are trying to gain as clear an insight as possible into the ways in which municipalities avail themselves of communication channels and techniques as a prerequisite for and integral part of participatory processes at the local level, and into how the area is legally regulated. In this sense, we primarily analyze the legal

framework and the degree of institutionalization[2] of communication as a prerequisite for participation, assuming at the outset that participatory mechanisms can only be efficient through institutionalization and continuity.

The basic proposition of our paper is that there is something of a communication breakdown, i.e. a lack of continuous, systematic, institutionalized communication between local governments and citizens, which significantly disrupts meaningful and effective citizen participation at the local level. This situation (in addition to other factors, such as no tradition of direct participation, the transitional nature of the society, and the low level of citizens' education) contributes to the low level of citizens' knowledge on their right to participate and the mechanisms of participation, as well as on the reasons for and goals of participation, and to the lack of information on the results of participation. In a broader sense, a communication breakdown can contribute to a low level of citizens' trust in the local government and cause general apathy with regard to participation.

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[2] Relying on the work of Coffman (2004, p. 5), by institutionalization we consider several aspects:
- Planned, and not reactive or *ad hoc*, communication activities;
- The allocation of (financial, human, technical) resources;
- A clear division of responsibilities;
- An active management of communication processes – communication activities, both internal and external, are familiar to all and coordinated;
- Regular, continuous, basically routine communication activities;
- The implementation and support of communication processes by all segments of the organization – communication embedded in the organization;
- The determination by the organization of the best modality of communication in terms of quality – the existence of standards, rules of procedures, and protocols that are adhered to;
- Regular evaluations of communication practices and results, and a continuous process of learning and improvement.

For the purposes of this paper, we have analyzed the legal and institutional frameworks as prerequisites for the institutionalization of communication practices in the domain of citizen participation. The analysis has also included the statutes of eight municipalities and sought to identify the extent to which the municipalities work out the legal provisions in their own statutes. In addition, we have conducted interviews with ten representatives of municipal public information services. Our analysis used existing reports, communication strategies of several municipalities, and other relevant documents and materials. Due to limited time, we have not analyzed the content of the messages sent out to citizens by municipalities, although that is an area that requires attention; the primary focus of the paper is on the legal framework, the manner in which information is provided to citizens, and the capacities of municipalities to do so.

The first portion of the paper provides a theoretical framework in an attempt to define the concepts of participation and communication and establish a clear differentiation between the two notions. Likewise, it indicates the significance of communication for citizen participation at the local level. We will then attempt to place the state of things in Bosnia and Herzegovina into a broader context, pointing to the legal frameworks and practices of certain member states of the European Union. In the section dealing with Bosnia and Herzegovina, we first provide an overview of the legal framework and practices in the domain of citizen participation at the local level. This is followed by a review of the legal framework specifically related to transparency of local government and its communication with citizens, as well as an analysis of concrete communication practices and the level of the institutionalization of communication within local administrations in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

It is important to note that this paper does not deal with feedback mechanisms and the ways in which citizens communicate their attitudes, needs, and demands to their local governments. The paper, likewise, does not focus directly on the very application of participatory mechanisms at the local level in Bosnia and Herzegovina,

or on whether they represent an *actual* form of participation in the sense that citizens are able to influence the decisions of local authorities. We shall not deal with the aspects of mutual and inter-group communication within participatory mechanisms; neither shall we go deeper into the dynamics of the balance of power between stakeholders. Finally, this paper shall not deal with participatory media[3] and other forms of participatory communication. The focus is, therefore, on the side of the equation that concerns changes in the institutional design of the government for the purposes of *better governence* and *public accountability*[4] in general.

2. Why participation?

Direct citizen participation is almost considered incontestably good – few will question its purpose and efficiency in the decision-making process. On the other hand, some authors stress the potential problems of citizen participation that ought to be avoided: among other things, the organizational costs of participatory processes and loss of time due to the participatory nature of decision-making; the problem of citizen representation by those who are perhaps not representative of all layers of society; a lack of actual power or authority on the part of citizens for taking decisions (the absence of "voice"), which might result in post-participation discontent; as well as potentially poor or selfish decisions made by actors participating merely to satisfy their personal needs (Irvin and Stansbury 2004, pp. 59-60).

3 Other authors in this book, e.g. Coyer and Gosselin, provide an insight into local and community media.

4 Yilmaz and Beris (2008, p. 24) describe *public accountability* as the "obligation of public institutions ... to describe publicly, fully, and honestly the manner in which they perform the duties that have an important impact on the public".

According to Arnstein, citizen participation is "a categorical term for citizen power. It is the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future. In short, it is the means by which they can induce significant social reform which enables them to share in the benefits of the affluent society" (Arnstein 1969, p. 216). The author stresses that participation without power constitutes a hollow and frustrating process for those without power, providing those in power with an opportunity to claim that all sides have been taken into consideration, while in reality only some actually profit (Ibid.).

Citizen participation in public governance is nothing new, but it has been discussed increasingly often over the past few decades in the context of public administration reform, particularly the movement for greater decentralization of governance. Participation has in parallel gained momentum in the domain of development after developmental agencies started employing participatory research and planning methods in the 1980s, having realized that "[t]he ineffectiveness of externally imposed and expert-oriented forms of research and planning became increasingly evident" (Cooke and Kathari 2001, p. 5). Thus, the techniques of participatory planning have become part of "the routine of executive agencies in the public sector" (Mosse 2001, p. 17).

With regard to public administration reform, participation is most often raised in the context of *governance* as distinguished from the notion of *government*.[5] The term

5 Stoker (1998) asserts that *governance* as well as *government* has the goal of creating conditions for ordered rule and collective action; the difference is not so much in the goals as it is in the process itself. There exists a basic consensus in the literature on the topic that *governance* refers to the development of governance styles, and that the boundaries between the public and private sectors have become blurred; governance mechanisms do not depend on recourse to authority or sanctions of the government itself (Stoker 1998, p. 18).

new usually accompanies *governance* in the discourse of public administration reform.[6] Blomgren-Bingham, O'Leary and Nabatchi (2005, p. 547) speak of *new governance* as networks of public, private, and non-profit organizations represented as "the new structures of governance as opposed to hierarchical organizational decision making," while governments are involved in new, "quasi-legislative" processes that imply "deliberative democracy, e-democracy, public conversations, participatory budgeting ... and other forms of deliberation and dialogue among groups of stakeholders or citizens"[7].

For Moynihan (2007, pp. 56-57), citizen participation is part of a worldwide shift towards "postmodern values", characterized by a lack of trust in formal institutions and the desire for participatory democracy. In brief, what permeates all the above-mentioned concepts and movements, whose boundaries are often blurred, which is

6 Stoker offers several propositions on the notion of governance: 1) it refers to the set of institutions and actors from within and outside the government; 2) it indicates the blurred boundaries and responsibilities in solving economic and social issues; 3) it indicates that the power of institutions depends on their collective action; 4) it refers to autonomous networks of self-governing actors; 5) it recognizes the capacity to solve things without relying on the orders or authority of the government – the government can employ new tools and techniques to govern and guide.

7 Rhodes to some extent refutes the idea that governance empowers citizens, with several limitations that have already mentioned by authors such as Arnstein or Irvin and Stansbury, such as the possible lack of authentic discourse within networks, or limitations on providing information imposed by the authorities, and consequently citizens' limited knowledge. However, the main and essential problem remains that of accountability, bearing in mind the simultaneous existence of representative democracy and participation in institutional networks (that should be providing certain formerly centralized services), which perhaps do not have to be formally accountable. This begs the question of whether government should regulate the network and "guard" public interest, or whether it has the legitimacy or authority to occupy a privileged position within the network, without simultaneously endangering the discourse of the network (Rhodes 1996, p. 667).

also noted by Moynihan, is citizens' disappointment with Max Weber's traditional, bureaucratic model of public administration, in which bureaucracy has all the power and discretion in decision-making. Moynihan describes the shift towards "alternative models of accountability," including the participatory model, which constitutes a way of performing external monitoring of the representative government. According to the author, participation is particularly suited to the local level of government given the opportunities it provides for direct engagement in the decision-making process (Ibid., pp. 57-58).

In the development discourse, the current approaches to citizen participation have also been recognized through the lens of governance; there is, thus, talk of "participatory governance and citizen participation." In other words, the focus has moved from the participation of local populations in international development projects to the institutionalization of participatory mechanisms in the public administration system: "As participatory approaches are scaled up from projects to policies, they inevitably enter the arenas of government, and find that participation can only become effective as it engages with issues of institutional change" (Gaventa 2004, p. 17). Regardless of the strategies and models employed, participatory approaches thus have a greater potential influence once participation has become a legal right, complementary to other rights such as the right to free and fair elections and the right to expression (Ibid.).[8] Hickey and Mohan (2004) define "participatory governance" as the "[c]onvergence of 'social' and 'political' participation, scaling-up of participatory methods, state-civic partnerships, decentralization, participatory

8 The right to information, and the right to "voice," which can be applied through the media, may also be added to this list of rights (Pettit et al. 2009, p. 445).

9 Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP), prepared in a participatory manner in developing countries, with the support of the World Bank and the IMF.

budgeting, citizens' hearings, participatory poverty assessments, PRSP[9] consultations". Participation thus becomes a *civil right* and not a civil obligation (Ibid., p. 8).

Accordingly, "the recent broadening of the participatory agenda, to encompass institutional issues of governance as well as development policy and practice requires an engagement with wider debates concerning the changing state, in relation to processes of democratization and decentralization" (Ibid., p. 4). Good practices in some developing countries, such as Brazil or India, have confirmed that institutionalized participation at the local level (e.g. through mechanisms of participatory budgeting) can be very successful, which has provided an impetus not only for international agencies that seek to replicate such practices around the world, but also for other public administrations (Gaventa 2004).

Nevertheless, the legal framework alone is insufficient for participation: it is necessary to determine new rules for involvement in the process and new rules for decision-making, but also the rights and responsibilities of different sides in the participatory process, which rests on the question raised by Rhodes: Who takes the responsibility for the decisions? (Gaventa 2004, p. 23; Rhodes 1996, p. 667). Additionally, local self-government needs to address the issues of power and representativeness within participatory spaces.

Considering the context is also necessary for successful participation: To what extent do the citizens have trust in their local self-government? Is there a strong civil sector and support from political parties and other stakeholders for participation? How open and transparent is the local government? The case studies that Gaventa refers to show that these are some of the prerequisites for successful participation. In addition, the author believes that successful participatory practices require focus on both sides of the equation – on reinforcing the citizen's "voice", on the one hand, and on reinforcing the government's ability to understand the voice, on the other – through, among other things, various forms of consultations with citizens; standards that citizens can refer when it comes to public

accountability; changes in the organizational culture of public administration; and the introduction of laws making participation in governance a *legal right of citizens* (Gaventa 2004, p. 18). Accordingly, in addition to a legal framework inviting participation, there is a need to reinforce the capacity of public self-governments (alongside the capacity of citizens) in order to "be responsive to community participation, and to learn how to change their roles, attitudes, and behaviors in the new environment." Gaventa notes that elected government representatives and officials cannot be expected to possess the necessary skills or support systems allowing them to function effectively in an environment of participatory local self-government, given that for decades they were trained to work "for the community" and are now expected to work "with the community" (Ibid., pp. 21-22).

3. Communication, information and participation

It is difficult to distinguish between communication with, or more specifically, providing information to citizens on participation, and participation itself. Although some authors assign providing information to citizens a lower position among different levels of participatory practices (e.g. Arnstein 1969), we consider communication processes an integral and exceptionally important part of citizen participation in decision-making processes at the local level. For the purposes of this paper, which deals primarily with communicating about participatory mechanisms, *communication* constitutes an integral part of and basis for any participatory mechanism. We set out from the idea that communication with citizens before, during, and after a participatory event is an indispensable prerequisite for participation, and that communication, be it one- or two-way, is inherent to any participatory mechanism. Even "strong" forms of participation such as referendums

or civic initiatives may be considered as forms of communication because in this way citizens articulate their will and convey it to decision-making bodies.

It is also noteworthy to mention here that the terms ”information” and ”communication” are often used interchangeably and refer primarily to ”public communication,” as defined by Rowe and Frewer, i.e. *providing information* to citizens.

Different authors classify public communication or providing information to citizens in different ways. For instance, Rowe and Frewer have developed a typology of four classes of mechanisms or types of communication: information broadcast via the media being an example of the first class; public debates[10] an example of the second; information centers, cable television and the Internet an example of the third; and citizen telephone hotlines an example of the fourth. They distinguish between communication types by several characteristics (controlled or non-controlled selection of participants; clearly defined or flexible information; indirect or direct communication; the presence or absence of public initiative in obtaining information) (Rowe and Frewer 2005).

There are also other classifications of providing information: the publication on citizen participation published by the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM) of the Republic of Serbia, divides information into *passive* and *active*. The domain of passive information includes activities related to the

10 In this case, participants are mostly listeners and rarely have the opportunity to ask questions. Other definitions (Arnstein, Milosavljević) instead assign public debates to the sphere of consultations, which is a definition that the authors of this paper, too, are more inclined to when it comes to the domestic context.

11 This also implies the production of a bulletin or a registry index on the activities of the municipality, as well as the submission of an annual report on the implementation of the law to the commissioner in charge of information of public interest or, in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to the ombudsman (SCTM, 2006, p. 13).

right of free access to information[11], but also direct communication of officials with citizens, in cases where citizens request certain information. On the other hand, "an active provision of information entails the local government's initiative in familiarizing citizens with its activities and future plans." Various methods and channels can be employed for this form of providing information, depending on financial and material resources and the needs and creativity of local administrations. This form of providing information also means that municipal bodies do not understand their constitutional and legal obligations of providing information in too narrow a sense, and that they inform citizens on all issues of significance to the municipality and its development. Actively providing information also implies that municipalities educate citizens on their right of participation and carry out surveys as to how familiar with or well-informed citizens are on the exercise of their rights (SCTM, 2006, pp. 13-14).

Some of the previously mentioned methods of active provision of information are:

- Publishing official documents in official gazettes or other official publications;
- Publishing special publications elaborating specific plans on creating a policy ("green" or "white" books);
- Publishing legislative drafts in order to take public opinion on board;
- Publishing regular reports (general or specific);
- Publishing handbooks, brochures, leaflets, posters, etc.;
- Citizen attendance of assembly sessions and sessions of other bodies;
- Communication via the media and the Internet;
- Public meetings (SCTM, 2006, p. 16).

Communication is mentioned as a key skill that government representatives must develop for interaction with citizens, which also implies reforming the bureaucratic culture and organization, e.g. through systems of effect and incentives

rewarding pro-participatory actions; systems of consultations and mutual planning with the communities; and clear-cut and accessible processes of transparency and information distribution, etc. (Gaventa 2004, pp. 21-22). In order to achieve effective participation, it is necessary that citizens are able to observe tangible results and proof that their participation is making sense after all (Ibid., p. 23), which means that government representatives must provide feedback.

In order for local administrations to appropriately employ communication techniques and channels for the purpose of developing citizen participation, a certain level of institutionalization of communication activities is necessary. Communication processes may be institutionalized in part through public relations strategies (or communication strategies) that define forms of providing information to and consultations and dialogue with citizens. Nevertheless, the institutionalization of communication within the local administration is a process and activity that is in itself much broader in scope than mere drafting and adoption of communication strategies, and as such involves a number of aspects, as noted previously (cf. Coffman 2004).

Also, as Yeomans and Adshead note (2003) in their case studies of the local level in the United Kingdom, the public relations function alone cannot be wholly responsible for the course of participatory events, nor can it solve the problems of power and inequality within such events. Rather, public relations serve as a basis for participatory methods (Ibid., p. 258).

Baker, Addams, and Davis' study on critical factors for improving municipal public debates in the United States confirms this claim. The authors consider communication that takes place before public debates a critical factor, given that studies have shown a positive correlation between media coverage of a certain public issue and the awareness and attitudes of citizens on the issue. Consequently, the authors recommend better cooperation between municipalities

and the media in order to cover relevant issues and in doing so encourage citizens to participate (Baker, Addams, and Davis 2005, p. 495). Moreover, given that one of the studies that the authors cite found that the majority of the U.S. population, who show less political interest, would not actively participate in issues of public significance regardless of the information provided to them, the authors suggest that public officials must simultaneously employ several methods and strategies to provide information (Ibid., p. 496).

The authors also discuss the critical factor of feedback on final decisions reached and activities undertaken by the government after public debates. Their statistical analysis proves that there is a significant correlation between the success of a public debate and subsequent public meetings, where the results and conclusions of the debate are discussed. In other words, effective communication after the participatory mechanism itself may help in building citizens' trust and encouraging further citizen participation (Ibid., p. 498).

4. Legal frameworks and practices in european union countries

In the European context, participation, consultation, and the right to information have found their place not only in national legislations, but also at the European level. In 1985, the Council of Europe adopted the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ECLS), which constitutes a legal obligation for member states that ratified it. The charter cites the right of citizens to participation in local affairs, emphasizing that citizen participation can be most directly effected on the local level, although, as Williams states (2002), it does not regulate in detail how this

right might look like in practice. The charter is a "shield" guaranteeing the autonomy of local government through an international statute (Ibid., p. 8).

Another significant document is Recommendation 19 (2001) of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe[12] on citizen participation in public life, which, among other things, recommends to the governments of member states to "frame a policy, involving local and – where applicable – regional authorities, designed to promote citizens' participation in local public life, drawing on the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government[;] ... adopt ... the measures within their power, in particular with a view to improving the legal framework for participation and ensuring that national legislation and regulations enable local and regional authorities to employ a wide range of participation instruments to encourage citizen participation in public life" (Articles 1 and 2).

Member states are also urged to accept the basic principles of encouraging citizen participation contained in Appendix I to Recommendation 19 (2001). Among other things, in the context of communication, these principles cite "[guaranteeing] the right of citizens to have access to clear, comprehensive information about the various matters of concern to their local community;" "[according] major importance to communication between public authorities and citizens and [encouraging] local leaders to give emphasis to citizens' participation and careful consideration to their demands and expectations, so as to provide an appropriate response to the needs which they express" (Articles 1 and 4).

12 For more information on the documents preceding this recommendation, cf. elaboration of the Recommendation (Council of Europe, 2001). For other relevant documents at a multi-national level, cf. Milosavljević 2010, pp. 7-9.

Appendix II of the Recommendation (2001) states the measures and steps for encouraging and reinforcing citizens' participation in local public life. In order to achieve greater transparency in the way the local self-government operates in the domain of the decision-making process, measures that could be taken include publication of the agenda of local council meetings, which should be open to the public; provision of reserved time slots for question-and-answer sessions; publication of minutes of meetings and decisions. In the context of transparency, it is also pointed out that information on the activities of the local self-government should be made available by creating information centers and public databases; making use of information technology; simplifying administrative formalities and reducing the costs of obtaining copies of documents; etc. In addition, local self-governments should adequately inform the public on their administrative bodies and their organizational structure, as well as on proceedings in progress that have a direct effect on citizens (Appendix II, A, Article 5).

Member states should opt for "[implementing] a fully-fledged communication policy, in order to afford citizens the opportunity to better understand the main issues of concern to the community and the implications of major political decisions which its bodies are called upon to make, and to inform citizens about the opportunities for, and forms of, participation in local public life" (Ibid., Article 6).

Communication thus also constitutes an educational measure employed in order to increase citizens' awareness of participation.

Communication is particularly emphasized in the steps and measures concretely related to encouraging direct public participation in the decision-making process at the local level as well as the management of the local community's affairs: promoting dialogue between local elected representatives and citizens; making local authorities aware of techniques of communicating with the public and the ways in which the public play a direct part in the process (e.g. through handbooks, conferences, seminars, an up-to-date website); an understanding – based on surveys and

discussions – of the strengths and weaknesses of various participatory instruments; and keeping an open mind to innovation and experimentation aimed at better communication between the local authorities and citizens (Ibid., C, Articles 1 and 2).

Governments are encouraged to use the resources at their disposal in the domain of new information and communication technologies by undertaking measures to promote their use by local authorities and to take decisions that imply a greater degree of deliberation and discussion and exchange of information and opinions through various mechanisms such as citizens' meetings, forums, groups, committees, round tables, opinion polls, etc. (Ibid., Article 3). The establishment of a systematic citizen information feedback mechanism is additionally noted as a type of measure (Ibid., Article 6).

Apart from this, the "Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority," which encourages the use of information and communication technologies for the promotion and application of the right to participation, was adopted in 2009 (Council of Europe, 2009, Article 2.iii).

In his 2002 study, Williams looks at participation in the legal and institutional frameworks in the national contexts of several Western countries. Using the examples of the United Kingdom and Finland, two developed democracies within the European Union, Williams especially describes in great detail the segment of communication in relevant legislation.

When it comes to participation, in the United Kingdom the Citizen's Charter of 1991 codified the condition that governments must consult citizens on their experiences in using services (Clarke 2002, in: Williams 2002, p. 5). The 1991 and 2000 laws on local government define participation to a certain extent. Under the 1991 law, local self-government is obligated to consult taxpayers as part of a review of the administration's performance, but it is not specified what consultation implies. In the

document "Modern Local Government" (1998), the government proposed that consultations on issues within local competencies be made obligatory at the local level. There is no recommendation for specific forms of consultations; rather, each local government should decide which methods are the most appropriate for its specific context (Ibid., p. 10).

The Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity was adopted in 1988 and is in accordance with the 1986 and 1988 laws on local self-government. The code covers in detail issues of topics, contents, costs, style, format, advertising, publicity of the work of councilors, etc. Amendments to the code adopted in 2001 concern, in addition to new information and communication technologies, recommended practices of public participatory mechanisms (referendums, petitions) included in subsequent legislation (Department for Communities and Local Government 2006).[13]

In the United Kingdom, the Royal Commission on Local Government recommended as early as in 1969 that more positive practices of public relations ought to be employed in order to increase the democratic value of local governments (Richardson, in: Yeomans and Adshead 2003). About a dozen years ago, the U. K. Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) launched a program to improve local government which required local governments to, among other things, analyze and improve processes of communication through benchmarking.[14] Under the program's "democratic and community engagement" theme, communication (with

13 Nevertheless, as indicated on the IDeA website, most lawyers agreed that the law was poorly drafted and that thus local authorities could hardly know whether they are in violation of the law (IDeA, 2010).

14 Measuring results achieved in relation to earlier results and identified indicators of success.

clients and citizens) is defined as "providing information to and encouraging feedback from all segments of the community," "convincing and influencing", and, through appropriate use of various media maintaining communication networks (Yeomans and Adshead 2003, p. 249).[15]

A survey conducted in Great Britain in 2007 on a sample of 298 local governments shows how seriously local authorities take the significance of communication. Namely, 77% of all local authorities measure the impact of communication on citizens; a typical communication team consists of 1 to 5 persons (54%), while 24% of those surveyed have a team consisting of more than 10 persons, and 4% larger than 30 persons. To inform citizens, officials most often employ: local or regional media (77.07%); the local government's bulletin (75.95%); citizens' forums or panels (40.98%); brochures (28.34%); public building campaigns (16.39%); text messages (11.48%); public debates (14.25%); etc., while 69% of communication teams are involved in processes of engaging with the community. The high level of integration of communication with participatory mechanisms is also illustrated by the fact that 19% of communication officials see "managing consultations with citizens" as a priority, while 34% state that this is largely their focus. However, 49% do not consider engaging with the community a point of focus (which might mean that the above-mentioned citizens' forums and panels are employed for one-way provision of information rather than for community engagement) (Karian and Box 2007, pp. 8-29).

15 IDeA offers so-called community communication tools (branding, media relations, internal communication, crisis communication, e-communication, etc.). The website also quotes numerous examples of good practices in the area of communication with citizens at the local level (IDeA, 2010).

Despite what may be an incomplete legal framework, the practice in the United Kingdom nevertheless has yielded significant successes in providing information to citizens at the local level, and even in the area of engaging with the community, despite the fact that information officials may not consider citizen participation their highest priority.

A further example of the institutionalization of participation and mechanisms of consultation and communication in general is that of Finland, where the Law on Local Self-Government (1995) specifies ways in which citizens may participate and exert influence, including – in addition to participation mechanisms such as the referendum – providing information, organizing public debates and polling citizens prior to adopting decisions. Moreover, the law stresses the obligation of the local authorities to inform citizens about issues currently under consideration or in procedure; plans that relate to citizens; and on decisions taken and their subsequent results. Polls are to be conducted on issues related to local services, funding, environmental protection and land use, with an obligation of informing citizens on ways in which they can submit their questions or opinions to decision-makers. As Williams notes, local authorities have a legal obligation to make the consultation and decision-making processes as transparent as possible (Williams 2002, p. 14). In late 1990s, in addition to the law itself, the Finnish Ministry of the Interior launched a five-year national initiative to reinforce participation at the local level through cooperation between local authorities and the civil sector, with the goal of, among other things, increasing interactive information and dialogue between local government and citizens (Ibid., p. 15).

An example of good practice from our region that Milosavljević notes is the Bulgarian Law on Local Self-Government and Administration, which regulates that municipal council acts must obligatorily be published via the media and the Internet; at the same time, the mayor is obliged to secure an adequate space in the municipal

building holding copies of all published and unpublished municipal council acts of the last ten years, with access for all citizens during the municipality's office hours. Citizens can receive copies of the acts for a minimal photocopying fee (Milosavljević 2010, p. 58). This solves the problem of limited funding that some municipalities have for publication of official municipal gazettes, although they are required to do so by relevant laws, which is, for instance, the case in Serbia.

5. Participation at the local level in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina is an administratively complicated country comprised of the state level, two entities (the Republika Srpska, RS, and the Federation of B&H, FB&H), and Brčko District as an independent administrative unit. The RS is centralized and consists of 62 municipalities, while the FB&H is extremely decentralized, with ten cantons and 79 municipalities (Agency for Statistics of B&H, 2010). The entities in Bosnia and Herzegovina are responsible for the local level of government.

At the international level, Bosnia and Herzegovina has ratified the European Charter of Local Self-Government. At the local level in Bosnia and Herzegovina, direct democracy is ensured through the Law on the Principles of Local Self-Government in the FB&H (2006) and the Law on Local Self-Government of the RS (2004) (hereinafter: LFB&H and LRS, respectively).[16] The laws prescribe *transparent work* of

16 Under both entity laws on local self-government, units of local self-government are towns and municipalities. In addition to the above-mentioned municipalities, there are two further administrative units of local government – the City of Sarajevo and the City of East Sarajevo.

17 These are laws regulating the transfer of competencies and affairs from higher-level government bodies to units of local self-government.

local self-government bodies and *forms of direct participation of citizens* in local self-governance. In addition to these laws, the decentralization process in Bosnia and Herzegovina resulted in a series of sectoral laws[17] guaranteeing civil political rights. The specific procedures for organizing citizen participation mechanisms are regulated by municipal statues and special decisions. Citizens' right of access to information is secured through the state and entity Laws on Freedom of Access to Information.

The LFB&H and LRS define the following as possible forms of participation: referendums, citizens' assemblies, civic initiatives, neighborhood communities, and citizens' associations. In addition, the LFB&H lists non-governmental organizations, while the LRS also lists citizens' panels, proposal schemes, and citizens' hours in municipal assemblies. While in the FB&H the neighborhood community is an obligatory form of local self-governance, the RS defines it as an optional form of citizens' association by interest (LFB&H, 2006, Articles 43-46; LRS, 2004, Articles 99 and 106). Both entity laws leave open the possibility for local authorities to also introduce other forms of direct citizen participation as long as they do not run counter to existing legislation.

Both laws also leave open the possibility for citizens to file complaints about the work of bodies of local self-government units and the mayor (LRS, 2004, Article 81; LFB&H, Article 46). The LRS also envisages that bodies of a local self-government unit must ensure that there is a public debate held on draft statutes, draft budget decisions, and other acts regulated by law and statute (Article 104).

The laws broadly define participatory mechanisms, while municipal statutes elaborate in more detail the mechanisms important for a particular local community.

18 The conclusions were drawn on the basis of a detailed analysis of the statutes of the Municipality of Doboj Jug (FB&H) and the Municipality of Petrovo (RS), and a review of the statutes of the municipalities of Doboj (RS), Doboj Istok (FB&H), Gračanica (FB&H), Maglaj (FB&H), Modriča (RS), and Usora (FB&H).

Once the entity laws on local self-government entered into force, the OSCE and entity associations of towns and municipalities developed guidelines for the harmonization of municipal statutes with the new laws. Based on the guidelines, in the majority of cases, municipalities defined three basic forms of direct citizen participation: referendums, citizens' assemblies, and civic initiatives. The statutes also define neighborhood communities as a form of citizen participation in decision-making on affairs of immediate interest to citizens. On the basis of an analysis of several municipal statutes from both Bosnian-Herzegovinian entities, we can conclude that only a small number of Bosnian-Herzegovinian municipalities institutionalize other forms of citizen participation by their statutes[18].

An analysis of the existing legal framework shows that local authorities are obliged to involve citizens, and that the basic legal preconditions for citizen participation are in place. Although the legal framework could be more stimulating, the conclusion is that the laws are not as poor as their application at the local level. The laws define a very small number of options, but are not restrictive; thus, in practice there are a number of other mechanisms in use, with novel democratic features and two-way communication (multisectoral bodies, forums, workshops, etc.). In this sense, it can be said that units of local self-government are highly autonomous in applying the various forms of citizen participation, but they do not exercise their autonomy sufficiently. The Centers for Civic Initiatives estimate that in the past five years only 25-30% of Bosnian-Herzegovinian municipalities have adopted decisions aimed at increasing citizen participation (e.g. decisions on public debate procedures, on neighborhood community polls for the purpose of prioritizing projects, on the procedures and criteria for selecting NGO projects)[19].

19 The Centers for Civic Initiatives have in the past several years promoted decisions on the institutionalization of citizen participation in Bosnian-Herzegovinian municipalities.

However, there have been no studies on the extent to which municipalities institutionalize various forms of participation.

Apart from formal modes of participation, informal modes of participation, which are often "legally intangible," are also employed in practice. Informal modes often occur as supplemental forms of citizen participation and can be highly significant in communities where the formal modes do not allow for quality dialogue or the representativeness of participants. In Bosnia and Herzegovina there is a number of innovative citizen participation practices, which various international projects seek to institutionalize.

Given that after the war traditional participation mechanisms such as neighborhood communities have faced a number of problems, such lack of authority and control over financial resources, inconsistent sources of funding, non-transparent selection of leaders, and the lack of formal procedures defining their obligatory participation in decision-making processed (Bajrović and Stojanović 2008, pp. 29-39), survey findings indicating weak participation (CCI B&H, 2010, p. 14) are hardly surprising.

This is certainly one of the reasons why in Bosnia and Herzegovina the topic of citizen participation in decision-making has become omnipresent in the discourse of the international community, which has been insisting on participatory practices for the last ten years, mainly in the context of development planning at the local level. Some of the projects with citizen participation components have been the OSCE projects UGOVOR ("contract") and the Local First Initiative; the Municipal Development Project (MDP) funded by the Swiss government; UNDP's Rights-based Municipal Development Program (RMAP) and Integrated Local Development Project (ILDP); the Regional Environmental Centre's (REC) Local Environmental Action Plans (LEAP), and others. Many international organizations hire Bosnian-Herzegovinian NGOs and agencies such as the Banja Luka-based development agency EDA or Centers for Civic

Initiatives as partners in the implementation of these and similar projects. The projects have provided great support for the promotion of citizen participation at the local level; nevertheless, the problem lies in the fact that higher levels of government do not give long-term support to these efforts once international projects in individual municipalities have been complete, and the question is to what extent these activities are continued upon cessation of donor support.

6. Transparency and communication with citizens at the local level in Bosnia and Herzegovina

6.1. Legal Framework

The entity laws on self-government regulate provision of information to citizens through the principle of transparency, i.e. good governance, which is legally binding for all Bosnian-Herzegovinian municipalities. The new approach to publicity of work, as Milosavljević (2010, p. 55) notes, "is expressed in the notion of transparency". Publicity of work is also in accordance with the above-mentioned section of Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe R(2001)19 on transparency.

There are minor differences in the way in which this principle is regulated in the two entity laws on local self-government. For instance, the LFB&H prescribes transparency as "a precondition for effective political oversight and guarantee that the bodies of the local self-government unit will implement their duties in the interest of the local community" (LFB&H, 2006, Article 39). Under the LFB&H, citizens have the possibility to attend council sessions. Municipal statutes and rules of procedure ensure free access

to the sessions of the municipal council and its working bodies for citizens and representatives of the media. Under these documents, citizens and the local media are only denied information classified as a state, military, official, or business secret. On the municipal side, representatives of the mayor and the council may give information and notifications to the public and "may decide that in the preparation and adoption process of a general act to publish its text at all the stages of the legislative process via the media" (LFB&H, 2006, Article 42). Although affirmative in principle, such provisions do not oblige the local government to prepare information for and deliver it to citizens, but merely create the "opportunity" for doing so, which as such is not binding. Local government bodies are obliged to report annually and thus inform the public on achieved results in comparison to the planned program objectives. The council is obliged to regulate by statute the transparency of its own work (LFB&H, 2006, Articles 39-42). Obviously, the obligation of reporting annually does not encourage an improved quality of providing information to citizens or any serious effort of the local government to increase the quality and frequency of its communication with citizens. It is a fact that each municipal council has the special obligation of regulating its own transparency, but this leaves a wide margin for the councils to define the transparency of local government in exceptionally restrictive and limited ways, whether because of narrow political interests, a lack of knowledge on the subject matter itself, or a lack of funding.

The LRS defines in somewhat more detail the ways of providing information and the types of information obligatorily published. In addition to providing information via public media, the law envisages the organization of regular press conferences. It is interesting that the law prescribes precisely this specific communication tool, one that is not necessarily appropriate to all types of information and usually used on special occasions; at the same time, the specific tool is regulated at a very general level. It would be more appropriate to prescribe different ways of providing information to citizens in a separate rulebook or guide, instead in the law itself.

Furthermore, according to the LRS, local administrative bodies are obliged to present to the public annual reports on results achieved and regularly publish data on the number of employees in the administration broken down by staff category and on all changes in the organization, scope of work, daily office schedules, etc. Thus, local bodies are obliged to regularly publish only basic administrative information, while the obligation to provide information to citizens on the implementation of their activities applies only to annual reports, which is most likely insufficient to provide information to citizens in a quality fashion.

Also, bodies of local self-government units need to ensure conditions for an unimpeded provision of information to the public (LRS, 2004, Articles 78-82). The LRS prescribes the municipal assembly's obligation to deliberate on and reply in writing to civic initiatives, as a form of participation, within 60 days of receipt, i.e. to inform citizens of the outcome of the initiative (LRS, 2004, Article 103).

According to the LRS, decisions and other general acts are published in official municipal gazettes (LRS, 2004, Article 75), while the LFB&H in this regard specifies only that a municipality's budget will enter into force after its publication in the municipal official gazette (LFB&H, 2006, Article 18). Both laws state that bodies of local self-government units are obliged to provide citizens or legal persons with a response within 30 days of receiving a complaint (LRS, 2004, Article 80; LFB&H, 2006, Article 46). Finally, both laws state that citizens may attend assembly/council sessions, in accordance with the terms and conditions prescribed in the assembly/council's rules of procedure (LRS, 2004, Article 81; LFB&H, 2006, Article 40).

Municipal statutes should elaborate on legal provisions in more detail and they mention as basic channels of information the media; the municipal bulletin; the publication of decisions and other municipal acts (e.g. in the official gazette); public

20 For instance, the Statute of the Municipality of Petrovo in the RS defines as an obligation holding press conferences at least once every three months.

sessions of the municipal assembly/council and municipal working bodies (with the presence of the media and interested citizens); an information desk in the municipal building; and press conferences[20]. Statutory arrangements differ negligibly from one municipality to the next and as a rule do not define in sufficient detail the practical aspects of the implementation of communication processes and participation mechanisms. The statutes of individual municipalities are often no more detailed than the laws[21]. At the same time, higher levels of government (the entities) provide no guidelines in the form of rulebooks, guides, codes, or any other support documents that would make it easier for municipalities to define precise communication mechanisms and practices.

The laws on freedom of access to information ("Zakon o slobodi pristupa informacijama", hereafter: ZOSPI) at the Bosnian-Herzegovinian and entity levels are particularly important for transparency. In accordance with the ZOSPIs, municipalities are obliged to designation an information officer, and to create and keep up-to-date citizens' guides and indexes or registers of information. Some municipalities mention this obligation in their statutes. The LRS states that only the municipal assembly may pass a decision on withholding information, in accordance with the law (LRS, 2004, Article 76). With a view to evaluating the levels of transparency and accountability of public administration in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in 2005 Mediacentar Sarajevo conducted a survey on the extent of adherence to the ZOSPIs by public institutions. At the local level, 60.8% of the responses from local governments were in accordance with the ZOSPI; 8.2% were

21 The conclusions are drawn on the basis of a detailed analysis of the statutes of the Municipality of Doboj Jug (FB&H) and the Municipality of Petrovo (RS), and a review of the statutes of the municipalities of Doboj (RS), Doboj Istok (FB&H), Gračanica (FB&H), Maglaj (FB&H), Modriča (RS), and Usora (FB&H)

not in accordance with the law; while 30.9% of requests never received a reply from the authorities (Mediacentar Sarajevo, 2006b, p. 32). This is not surprising given that the law has been assessed as an advanced legal text; as a result, certain obstacles occurred in its implementation as public institutions do not have sufficient human and technical capacities to respond to requests in accordance with the law (Transparency International, 2006, p. 199).

6.2. Communication Channels between Local Government and Citizens

In addition to press releases, municipalities use the local media, press conferences, municipal bulletins and official gazettes, notice boards, neighborhood communities, and official web sites as important communication channels[22]. Generally speaking, it can be said that there is good cooperation between local government and local media; several municipalities have contracts with local media for broadcasting information or programs related to the municipality.[23] It is also necessary to note here the significance of neighborhood communities as a means of providing information to citizens in some municipalities: municipalities communicate with citizens through their neighborhood communities by displaying written material and notices, as well as by holding public debates.[24] Nevertheless,

22 The conclusions are drawn on the basis of a detailed analysis of the statutes of the Municipality of Doboj Jug (FB&H) and the Municipality of Petrovo (RS), and an observation of the statutes of the municipalities of Doboj (RS), Doboj Istok (FB&H), Gračanica (FB&H), Maglaj (FB&H), Modriča (RS), and Usora (FB&H).

23 Cf. fn. 21.

24 Cf. fn. 21.

in view of the surveys finding that, due to their current organization and lack of funding and human resources, neighborhood communities' efficiency after the war has been poor (Bajrović and Stojanović 2008), the question arises of how truly relevant neighborhood communities are in providing information to the public at the local level.

Most municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, or precisely 124 municipalities (87%), run functioning official websites.[25] Moreover, a search with the key words "public debate" (and variations thereof) on existing websites reveals that as many as 90 municipalities (72%)[26] have posted on their official websites calls for participation in public debates or information on the organization of a public debate in the municipality. This confirms that the public relations services of individual municipalities regularly use the Internet as a means of informing citizens on the possibilities of consultations. However, citizens themselves are as of yet unaccustomed to, or are unable to, use the Internet as a means of obtaining information,[27] as is evident from the results of a CCI survey (CCI B&H, 2010, pp. 16-17). Another possible reason is that the information itself is not adequately presented on municipal websites; that the site is not functioning or that the municipalities use

25 An analysis of the municipal websites for the needs of this paper was conducted in mid-2010.

26 It should be noted that the search did not consider other types of public calls to participation. It should also be considered that many official websites do not keep news archives, thus their news are only dated back to the beginning of 2010 (partially because some are new), so this data should be taken with some reserve. It is possible that the percentage of municipalities publishing some types of call to participation or consultations is much higher.

27 According to the 2009 annual survey of the users of RCA's permit to provide internet services in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the rate of internet usage in Bosnia and Herzegovina was at 37% (available at: www.rak.ba).

Table 1: Ways of Providing Information to Citizens on the Activities of the Local Government (in percentage)

Ways of providing information	Local media	Municipal leaflets and brochures	Municipal information officers	Via friends, relatives, and neighbors	Neighborhood community council	Other, online
2007	85.2	26.3	24.7	78.3	24.4	0.6
2008	82.2	24.4	26.9	79.1	29.0	2.3
2009	77.9	20.4	15.2	81.1	20.3	2.2

(Source: CCI B&H, 2008; 2009; 2010)

outdated technologies; that the sites are not interesting; and that their content is not promoted properly so that citizens are simply unaware of the sites. This is confirmed by the results of a 2006 analysis of the websites of several municipalities that showed that municipal websites that offered sufficient information from the purview of the municipal bodies were most often conceptually outdated.[28]

In practice, there are significant differences from one municipality to the next in providing information to citizens at the local level. Some municipalities communicate only to a very low extent; others use traditional media, while some have very sophisticated web-based communication platforms (cf. Isanović in this publication).

CCI surveys on citizen participation conducted in the past three years show that, over the years, citizens have been informed on the activities of the local government mainly through the local media or via friends, relatives, and neighbors. Interestingly enough, more than 80% of citizens obtain information informally, via acquaintances

28 An analysis of the functionality of municipal web sites is provided in Adla Isanović's paper in this publication.

and relatives, while formal information mechanisms – municipal leaflets and brochures, municipal information officers, but also municipal websites – play a much less significant role in providing information (cf. Table 1).

Several problems directly affecting the quality of communication with citizens are to be noted in a certain number of municipalities[29]. First, media relations are for the most part maintained without a plan, on a needs basis, and are usually reactive, i.e. take place mostly at the request of the media. Municipalities are usually unable to continuously monitor and evaluate communication activities, and are therefore rarely able to evaluate their quality and results. Generally speaking, communication is not standardized or coordinated, so that different services often publish different, visually and content-wise inconsistent materials.

6.3. Strategic Communication

Some municipalities have sought to institutionalize providing information to citizens through communication strategies or plans, developed mainly with the support of international organizations. On the basis of the communication strategies available from a search on official websites, interviews with municipal information officers conducted for the purposes of this paper, and the fact that the "Media and Communication" component of the OSCE's Local First Initiative has created or will create communication strategies, we can conclude that about 40 municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina (approx. 28%) have or will in due time have communication

29 The results of the review of communication capacities and practices in 6 municipalities (Modriča, Maglaj, Gračanica, Doboj Jug, Doboj Istok, Doboj) may be seen in the official communication strategies of each of these municipalities for the period between 2007-2009 (strategies available in the authors' archive).

strategies. Nevertheless, this figure should be taken with a grain of salt given that no detailed surveys have been conducted as yet, and that some municipalities either do not have websites or have not published their communication strategies online.

There is no data on how many municipalities have implemented strategies or how many regularly update them. A rough analysis of the communication strategies indicates that their quality varies: many do not include action plans or budget projections, which goes against the basic postulates of strategic planning. The lack of a strategic approach to communication, the absence of communication plans, budgeting and a clear allocation of duties makes everyday work difficult and prevents planned problem-solving in this area, thus diminishing the significance and possible positive effects achievable through a more serious approach to communication with citizens.

Even in cases where municipal strategies have been officially adopted by councils/assemblies and include budgeting and action plans, the available analyses often indicate a very low level of implementation. The estimated level of action plan implementation for the most part does not exceed 20%, and most of the activities are carried out in an *ad hoc* manner. In addition to the lack of funding, the greatest problems for the efficient realization of communication

30 Due to the lack of comprehensive research, the assessment of the communication and public relations capacities in this paper is focused on a brief situation analysis of four Bosnian-Herzegovinian municipalities for which there exists data on communication capacities for the period between 2003-2010. The municipalities in question are: Doboj Istok, Doboj Jug, Petrovo, and Usora. Mediacentar implemented corresponding analyses and support for the reinforcement of the communication capacities of these municipalities with the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (under the Municipality Development Project in Bosnia and Herzegovina).

strategies are considered to be overly ambitious strategic goals; the lack of management support in the implementation; the lack of support within various municipal services; the lack of human and financial resources, etc.[30]

Where they have been adopted, however, communication strategies have opened up a new chapter in the strategic development of public relations in municipalities, and have moved things forward. This is primarily evident in the improvement of external communication through redesigned websites and municipal bulletins, and in the attempts at creating visual identities, which has improved the image of the municipalities. The technical capacities for communication have been upgraded, and municipal public relations officers state that the relations with the media and the organization of public events have been improved, although relevant protocols are often not institutionalized.[31] It is encouraging that in most municipalities the role of public relations officers has been defined through a formal staffing plan, making providing information their primary function, although it does happens that, when need be, they also perform other functions.[32] This is a serious step forward in comparison with the situation of only a few years ago.

6.4. Projects for the improvement of communication capacities of local governments

31 Interviews conducted in 2010 in nine Bosnian-Herzegovinian municipalities – Bosanski Petrovac, Laktaši, Široki Brijeg, Prnjavor, Tešanj, Višegrad, Travnik, Jablanica, Trnovo (FB&H).

32 Interviews conducted in 2010 in nine Bosnian-Herzegovinian municipalities – Bosanski Petrovac, Laktaši, Široki Brijeg, Prnjavor, Tešanj, Višegrad, Travnik, Jablanica, Trnovo (FB&H).

In order to reinforce communication capacities at the local level in Bosnia and Herzegovina, various projects have been implemented, initiated mainly by the international community. In 2002, OSCE provided training for municipalities in the area of communication through the project "Public Communication Initiative"[33], and in the period 2005-2008, through the project UGOVOR, the organization secured support for the implementation of the ZOSPI at the local level. An assessment of training needs at the local level in Bosnia and Herzegovina made in 2009 by UNDP (2009a, 2009b)[34] confirmed that there is a need to reinforce communication capacities, i.e. public relations at the local level in Bosnia and Herzegovina. An ongoing OSCE project, the Local First Initiative, includes a "Media and Communication" component, through which municipalities are, among other things, afforded support in drafting communication strategies and preparing training in the area of public communications (OSCE, Local First Initiative 2009, pp. 61-65). In the period 2005-2007, the first phase of the Governance Accountability Project (GAP[35]), in cooperation with OSCE, also helped several Bosnian-Herzegovinian municipalities develop communication strategies. During 2006, the Municipal Development Project (MDP), in cooperation with Mediacentar Sarajevo, helped municipalities to develop communication strategies. In addition, UNDP B&H has contributed to reinforcing capacities in the area of public relations through

33 According to the data at the disposal of the OSCE, over 100 municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina have undergone the OSCE's public communication initiative (e-mail communication with the competent person from the OSCE).

34 The assessment was conducted in the FB&H and RS within the Municipal Training System project implemented by the UNDP.

35 The first phase of the Governance Accountability Project was funded by USAID and SIDA.

36 These are only some of the projects implemented in the area of communication.

different projects (Support for the Result-oriented Approach - Partnership for Local Development SUTRA, Municipal Training System in B&H).[36]

To this day there have been no detailed surveys done in Bosnia and Herzegovina to evaluate the impact of implemented projects on municipal communication capacities, particularly in the sense of their institutionalization and sustainability. However, it can be said that these projects have been key to developing communication in municipalities, and that without them little would have been accomplished. Namely, the higher levels of government in Bosnia and Herzegovina, under whose authority the municipalities find themselves, have no such projects, do not assist existing projects, and do not support any sort of systematic continuation of project activities once donor projects have been completed. It is positive that local governments gladly participate in such projects, aware of the importance of communication, and often provide part of the funding necessary to develop communication capacities. This also indicates that municipalities are aware of the extent to which their communication capacities are underdeveloped and of their own rather limited resources, because of which they must rely on donor assistance if they wish to make any serious advances.

7. Final considerations

This research set out with the assumption that communication is an integral part of any participatory mechanism and that providing information before, during, and after a participatory event is a necessary prerequisite for sustainable and meaningful citizen participation. Taking into consideration data revealing an exceptionally low level of citizen participation in decision-making processes and

the very low level of citizens' information and knowledge about participatory opportunities, mechanisms, and the purpose of participation at the local level (CCI, 2008; 2009; 2010), we wanted to explore whether and to what extent the legal framework and the level of institutionalization of communication at the local level have contributed to this poor situation. In other words, we set out to establish whether the existing legislation and institutional arrangements in the area of citizen participation, transparency, and providing information to citizens at the local level were stimulating a more intense involvement of citizens in decision-making processes.

If we look at the legal framework and specific practices in the European context, we shall see that participation, consultation, and the right of citizens to information are present to a significant extent both at the European level and in the national legislations of EU member states. The preconditions for encouraging and guaranteeing the most active citizen participation possible in decision-making processes have been created, and the legal framework and ancillary measures, such as codes and rules of procedure, oblige the local government to encourage citizen participation and communicate with citizens as actively as possible. In examples such as those of the United Kingdom or Finland, the local government is obliged to employ a whole range of mechanisms and undertake a multitude of activities in order to inform citizens and encourage them to participate. In the United Kingdom, the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity, adopted in 1988, specifies the ways in which local government needs to communicate with citizens and ensure the publicity of its own work. The code provides guidelines on topics, style, costs, advertising, public relations, usage of new information and communication technologies, the publicity of participation mechanisms such as referendums and petitions, etc. (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006). Thus, higher levels of government provide the necessary guidelines through laws, codes, and other documents that significantly

assist the local government in implementing the principles of transparency in its work and active communication with citizens, which in turn also helps citizens to participate on issues of significance for the local community.

An analysis of the legal framework and ancillary documents, such as municipal statutes, shows that in Bosnia and Herzegovina the applicable entity laws regulating the area of local self-government are harmonized with the European Charter of Local Self-Government, which represents a broad framework for the organization of communication and participatory processes at the local level. Transparency, as defined by laws, implies municipal communication with more than one external public, and the only target group mentioned in the laws is the citizens (the general public). Furthermore, publicity of work involves one-way communication – providing information, from the government to the citizens, which ensures the transparency of work of public bodies and creates a precondition for participation. Free access to information likewise contributes to the transparency of work of local self-government bodies.

However, the above-mentioned laws do not mention the need for dynamic two-way communication and the use of varied communication channels for the purpose of involving different social groups in decision-making. The laws leave the local administration too much room for maneuver and are neither sufficiently binding nor stimulating to a more progressive development of transparency mechanisms or a more active provision of information and two-way communication with citizens. Also, it is evident that there are no documents at the entity level to regulate this area better, i.e. offer some sort of guidelines for providing information set up broadly enough to suit the specific contexts of individual municipalities but still sufficiently precise to ensure that the technical framework – the law on local self-government – is properly upheld (cf. Williams 2002), like the Code for Publicity of Authority in the United Kingdom. The existing legal framework leaves it to each municipality to work out these aspects in more

detail for its own purposes in municipal statutes, decisions of the municipal assembly/council, and municipal strategic documents. Bearing in mind the limited capacities of municipalities in the area of strategic planning, information, and communication, it is hardly surprising that municipal statutes are often very general and in principle rarely offer more precise guidelines on how to communicate with citizens.

Milosavljević notes the same using the example of the RS. The author believes that legal arrangements in the domain of transparency offered in the LRS are good, if consistently adhered to, but at the same time he considers it a duty of municipal and town authorities to regulate their activities and procedures in such a way that allows citizens and legal persons to exercise their constitutionally guaranteed rights and legally protected interests in a simple and efficient fashion, and thus exercise their duties in the context of transparency. Such provisions are to be found solely in Article 82, according to which the buildings housing municipal bodies must prominently feature the names of the administrative bodies on the building; a layout of the rooms inside the building; and on the doors to the rooms the names and job titles of officials. Milosavljević believes that the principle of transparency must be elaborated in a whole set of provisions, e.g. laws and statues, quoting the Statute of the City of Banja Luka as an example of insufficient elaboration of the principle (Milosavljević 2010, p. 56). He notes that "the regulations on the principle of transparency of the municipal bodies and the manner in which they provide information on their wok are not particularly detailed, nor can it be said that the relevant are at a level that full transparency demands" (keeping in mind that provisions may be elaborated in more detail in the rules and procedures of the assembly) (Ibid., p. 57).

In a legislative framework set up so broadly, the dynamics in this domain is mainly dictated by international organizations, which use their own strategies and projects to encourage a participatory approach to decision-making and building

communication capacities, while higher levels of government in Bosnia and Herzegovina, above all the cantonal and entity levels, are marking time or seriously lagging behind these initiatives.

Generally speaking, public relations in local administrations have been on the rise in the past decade. This is particularly reflected in the adoption of a strategic approach (drafting communication strategies, communication plans, protocols, and media guides); in the creation of the post of a public relations officer; in the development of official municipal websites; in the training of staff; and the strengthening of technical capacities for internal and external communication. However, the majority of municipalities still do not have a strategic and planned approach to communication with citizens, but rather perform these activities without a plan and ad hoc. In addition, the manner of communicating itself is fairly traditional and uninventive, and the potentials for new information and communication technologies are not used to their full capacity; instead, communication is based primarily on traditional mass media.

In terms of the aspects that Coffman (2004, p. 5) cites in the context of the institutionalization of communication, the available data show progress in the municipal planning of communication activities; allocation of financial and technical resources; appointment of public relations officers; and regular implementation of communication activities. However, even in more advanced municipalities, these activities have yet to become a matter of routine – communication has not yet become embedded within local administration. Only a very small number of municipalities have developed the appropriate standards, rulebooks and protocols, and even there where they do exist they are not implemented in a satisfactory manner and there is no regular evaluation of communication practices aimed at learning and continuous improvement. A significant portion of planned activities are still not being implemented, above all due to the lack of necessary support from the management of the local administration (the mayor) in terms of allocating the

required human and technical resources or funding. Organizational support within the institution in the sense of cooperation among all municipal sectors and levels of decision-making is often lacking. This shows that the level of understanding of the importance of communication for the efficient operation of the local administration remains low, and that communication practices and transparency mechanisms have yet to be properly institutionalized.

8. Recommendations

Based on the findings of our research, we provide here a set of recommendations related to the legal framework; the code of transparency and communication with citizens; the necessity of involving higher levels of government in this domain; and the further development of municipal communication capacities.

8.1. Making the legal framework more precise

- Vague and weak provisions on transparency and providing information to citizens should be removed from the laws, and these activities and principles should be made binding.
- Above all, relevant entity legislation should specify in greater detail the framework mechanisms for the development of transparency and for the best possible communication with citizens.
- In particular, the laws should stress the obligation of municipalities to establish citizen feedback mechanisms through polls, consultations, and the like. The organizers of participatory events must establish channels for

regular provision of information to and receiving feedback from citizens in order to create an atmosphere of trust and boost motivation for participation (Kurtić 2009).

- The laws need to establish an obligation for municipalities to regularly provide citizens with information on their activities and decisions as frequently as possible and in as many ways as possible.
- The laws need to establish an obligation for municipalities to use modern information and communication technologies in providing information to citizens.
- The laws necessarily must establish an obligation for municipalities to develop strategic communication plans and budgets for communication activities.
- At the entity level, it is necessary to draft a special code (protocol or guide) for transparency and communication with citizens to provide all municipalities with precise guidelines on how to achieve transparency and how to communicate with citizens in a quality, proactive manner. On the basis of this document, the municipalities would be able to relatively easily harmonize their statutes in order to satisfy certain standards of transparency and communication with citizens, such as those seen in the examples of good practices mentioned earlier. In this way, communication is encouraged by higher levels of government and constitutes a strategic field for all local communities.

8.2. A code (protocol or guide) for transparency and communication with citizens

37 In accordance with the above-mentioned criteria for effective participation (Rowe et al. 2004).

When drafting a code, attention should be paid to having communication practices contribute to meaningful participation. It is, therefore, necessary to take into consideration the following factors[37] and phases:

Communication before the participation process:

- Timely information on participatory mechanisms in the municipality in order for citizens to be able to get involved on time;
- Clarity of message (e.g. a call to citizens to participate in drafting certain public policies), which implies that the purpose of the participatory mechanism itself, as well as the way in which decisions are made, is clearly defined; the municipality should likewise offer citizens an explanation as to why it has chosen a particular (appropriate) participatory mechanism.

Communication during the participation process:

- Access to regular and complete information during the participatory process itself, e.g. providing information to participants on individual meetings in a timely fashion and timely delivery of material for the next meeting;
- Transparency of the process in the sense that it is made clear to citizens how, for example, the members of a partner group or participatory committees were elected, or how consensus was reached within a participatory mechanism. This implies that the information on the participatory mechanism (e.g. the criteria for member selection and project selection, in case of development and other plans; minutes of meetings; council decisions) is available on demand in accordance with the law on the access to information.

Communication after the participation process:

- Feedback information on the outcome of participation (e.g. delivering the document drafted through a participatory mechanism once it has been

adopted by the council/assembly; information on project implementation) in order to keep citizens motivated to continue to take part in similar processes.

8.3. Involving higher levels of government

- It is necessary for entity and cantonal authorities to get involved in this field more actively and to encourage and assist municipalities in developing citizen participation, transparency and active communication with citizens, above all by improving the legal framework but also by providing financial incentives wherever possible. It is especially important for higher levels of government to get involved in ongoing donor activities and help with the further development of successful projects and initiatives. The experience of the United Kingdom and Finland, described in this paper, show that the long-standing efforts by national authorities to institutionalize consultations and communication with citizens at the local level have strengthened the democratic culture in those countries. Their public policies in the field of providing information to citizens have been continuously improved and have contributed to the creation of a vibrant and conducive environment for interactive dialogue between local authorities and citizens.

8.4. Further development of municipal communication capacities

- It is necessary to continue with projects to assist local administrations in developing their communication capacities and improving their transparency. In this regard, it is necessary to insist on long-term, strategic projects and the evaluation of project performance in order to achieve quality and sustainable results.

- It would also be useful to condition any donor assistance in this area on a certain financial participation by the local administration itself, which would demonstrate the readiness and commitment of the local administration to develop its own communication capacities and improve its transparency.

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NEW MEDIA, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Adla ISANOVIĆ

1. Introduction

Although the achievement of political participation and the level of political engagement of citizens depend on numerous factors[1], sociological, media and political communication research indicates that use of media content and access to relevant information (which provides material for political dialog), as well as citizens' political discussions, play a key role in the motivation for participation in the governance process (see, for example, Segaard 2005, p. 531; Shah, Cho, Eveland and Kwak 2005). However, although there are many more channels today for dialog and participatory communication, numerous studies show that over the last several decades political participation even in developed democracies has been in continuous decline (see Bošnjak et al. 2008; Schuler 2003; Putnam 2000) and that apathy has developed among the electorate. Research (Bošnjak et al. 2008, p. 748) which analyzes political apathy among citizens points to different factors that have contributed to this situation: decline in "political tolerance"[2]; loss of "interpersonal trust"[3]; doubt in

1 "Numerous determinants of (non)participation are suggested: political tolerance, interpersonal trust, political efficacy, access to information, social capital, cost of invested effort and time, demographic characteristics, and interest in politics" (Bošnjak, Galešić and Kliček 2008, p. 748).

2 Lack of *political tolerance* is believed to be directly related to a "perceived threat uttered by opposing groups, which is related to certain personal characteristics, level of education and political activism" (Bošnjak, Galešić and Kliček 2008, p. 749).

3 With regard to *interpersonal trust*, Bošnjak, Galešić and Kliček (2008, p. 749) note (referring to Cohen 1971; Nugent 2001) that it is a key element of social capital and as such essential for citizens to be able to govern themselves. They add (referring to Nugent, 2001) that citizens' trust in all levels of governance has dramatically declined in the last three decades.

"political efficacy"[4]; problem with "access to information"; weakening of "social capital"[5]; doubt in profitability of invested "time and effort"[6]; "demographic characteristics"[7]; and poor "interest in politics".[8]

These negative trends are also visible in today's Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H), a country with an extremely complicated, costly, inefficient and cumbersome administrative apparatus that is very distant from citizens and their problems[9]. In terms of "government effectiveness", B&H is at the very bottom of the global ranking

4 *Political efficacy* – deeply rooted and wide spread skepticism is noticeable with regard to one's own political power and the likelihood that our voice will change anything. This is also evident in percentages of citizens who vote in elections, especially among the younger population (Bošnjak, Galešić and Kliček 2008, p. 749).

5 The *social capital* factor is used to express the ability of members of a community or group to act collectively in order to achieve common goals. Key elements of social capital are interpersonal trust and active engagement in different forms of association. It is believed that the absence of some of these elements, i.e. decline in social capital, is directly correlated with the development of political indifference among citizens (Bošnjak, Galešić and Kliček 2008, p. 749).

6 Political participation requires *time and effort* and with the modern pace of life fewer and fewer citizens are ready to invest these in active civic engagement (Bošnjak, Galešić and Kliček 2008, p. 749).

7 The factor of *demographic characteristics* is related to the idea that the politically active portion of citizens is demographically different from the group of less active citizens. Namely, according to a number of theoreticians, the active population is more usually made up of males, people with higher education, etc. (Bošnjak, Galešić and Kliček 2008, pp. 749-750).

8 *Interest in politics* is a key factor in the development of citizens' political engagement. For the majority of the population, politics does not play a primary role in their personal lives, which certainly affects their willingness to become actively engaged (Bošnjak, Galešić and Kliček 2008, p. 750).

9 Around 50% of GNP is currently spent on the government system (source: CIA "The World Factbook", available at: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bk.html, (accessed July 6, 2010). The public administration offers services to citizens in 141 municipalities, 10 cantons, two entities, Brcko District and at the level of the B&H state (source: Statistics Agency of B&H, available at http://www.bhas.ba/eng/BiHStats.asp?Pripadnost=4&mode=dark,) (accessed April 1, 2010).

table, while independent studies which measure levels of democracy place it very low in the international ranking of democratic systems.[10] Research shows that considerable distrust of authorities is present among citizens. Nearly one-half of citizens have little or no trust in municipal and entity governments, whereas nearly three-fourths have no trust in the state-level authorities. In addition, a large number of citizens (around 90%) believe that the public sector is corrupt (UNDP/Oxford Research International, 2007, pp. 13-17). Surveys have found that "a collapse of social trust has occurred in B&H" and that it practically does not exist. According to UNDP/Oxford Research International research, only 7% of citizens believe that people can be trusted, while 93% think that one should be cautious in relations with people. Further, 62% of respondents, if given the opportunity, would leave B&H to live somewhere else. In terms of this factor, compared to other countries, B&H is at the very bottom of the international ranking table (UNDP/Oxford Research International, 2007, pp. 21-23). In this context, citizens' interest in politics is very low and studies indicate "(…) that non-engagement is the fundamental determinant of the relationship between citizens and politics" (UNDP/Oxford Research International, 2007, p. 24) because no other country in transition has a similar percentage of respondents who say they are not interested in politics whatsoever (24%) or are not especially interested (33%) (UNDP/Oxford Research International, 2007, p. 25). Consequently, citizens' participation in the political process is rarely implemented and voting remains the primary form of their political participation.[11]

10 The Economist Intelligence Unit's Index of Democracy ranks B&H as the 86th country (out of 167), placing it among countries which are considered hybrid regimes, (*The Economist Intelligence Unit's Index of Democracy*, 2008, p. 6).

11 Voting – 81%; discussion with others on politics – 42%; political party membership – 16%; civic activist group membership – 14%; demonstrations – 9%; use of violence or force – 6%; analysis for B&H 2007, (UNDP/ Oxford Research International, 2007, chart summary, p. 26).

Evidently, citizens' disconnection from political processes and their increasing distrust of political leaders and government institutions pose a serious problem for the development of democracy in B&H and sufficient reason for establishing and developing new models of communication between citizens and public administration, as well as new mechanisms for citizen participation in decision-making processes. As the Strategy for the Development of an Information Society in B&H recognized in 2004, the administration is sluggish, inefficient and quite costly and "an undoubted need exists for functional and more efficient governance", whereas "improvement of efficiency and quality of public governance services through implementation of information and communication technologies would considerably affect overall trends, as well as economic and other forms of prosperity throughout the whole territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina" (Council of Ministers of B&H and UNDP, 2004, p. 75).

Considering that mainstream media – press, and then radio and television – have played an important role in the strengthening of political democracy in developed countries, researchers are today rightfully wondering whether we can expect the same from new media in "new" democracies, i.e. in countries affected by the wave of democratization in the late 20th and early 21st centuries (Coleman and Kaposi 2006, p. 7). What can we expect from new media in the process of development of democracy in countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, in which political democratization and computerization of society are occurring in parallel? To what extent are government institutions able and willing to use new information and communication technology (ICT) to encourage the participation of citizens in decision-making processes? More precisely, the question is to what extent and in what way the potential of new ICT is used in the process of development of political participation of citizens and how the widening of the rift between citizens and public administration can be stopped. Bearing in mind the fact that the authorities in B&H have "recognized" the need for the revitalization of society by introducing new ICT

(Ibid., p. 15), as well as that the "rift" between them and citizens is growing deeper, this question is especially topical in the process of the democratization of Bosnian and Herzegovinian society.

The focus here is on local government because local government bodies in principle have better predispositions than state authorities for an efficient implementation of the political participation of citizens. More precisely, because it is easier to identify public interests at the local level and to observe the effects of adopted decisions on citizens' everyday lives in local communities, local government bodies are able to develop institutional solutions whereby new ICT can be applied with a view to achieving democratic goals and, consequently, can lead to the advancement of citizens' political participation (Takao 2004, p. 240).

> "The political community at the local level consists of a smaller population with less divided community interests, influenced not by ideologies or class-based needs but rather by specific local needs; this gives the mayor or the governor an opportunity to more readily identify interests which have become aggregated and articulated by through e-participation." (Takao 2004, p. 260).

In the present analysis of e-governance, we proceed from the assumption that ICT has the potential for the development of political participation of citizens and greater transparency of governance, but one should not forget that such success and development will depend on different factors – from the dominant democratic perspectives, online presence and services of the administration, through human capacities to infrastructural and other conditions[12]. We would like to point out the role of new technologies in the process of implementation of principles of good local

12 It is important to emphasize that this does not suggest that the model of citizens' *online* communication with (local) government can completely replace their model of "*offline* conduct", i.e. their direct engagement in a real, physical sense, because these two models complement each other (see Torpe 2004, p. 5).

governance and to map the current situation, i.e. to analyze to what extent and in what way municipal governance bodies in B&H are using new ICT for the promotion and development of citizen participation in local communities. Development of e-democracy (electronic democracy) may help in overcoming or at least reducing the problem of poor political participation of citizens, both in "older" and more developed democracies and in countries such as B&H. Therefore, the two key questions which this paper seeks to answer are:

- To what extent, if at all, do local governments in B&H use new ICT, i.e. Web channels and tools, to make its work more citizen-friendly; to be more accountable and transparent; and to urge greater participation of citizens in decision-making processes on issues of importance to the local community?
- Which factors can affect the process of development of e-governance and e-democracy at the local level in B&H?

In order to offer answers to these questions, after outlining the basic methodological postulates, the present paper defines key terms and concepts and then points to global trends and practices in the introduction of e-governance and development of e-democracy at the local level. It then deals with the contextual determinants of the development and use of ICT as a means of interaction between local administration and citizens in municipalities in B&H. This is followed by an analysis of the content and services of websites of several municipal administrations in B&H, which looks at the ways in which local government uses new media and Web tools to provide better information and ensure a stronger two-way flow of information, greater interaction and, finally, greater participation among citizens and other interest groups within the local community. We will end the chapter with a conclusion based on the results of the analysis, which will show whether and in what way Bosnia and Herzegovina's e-readiness and municipalities' Web communication facilitate the exercise of fundamental rights which ensure efficient civic participation in community governance: the right to information, consultation and participation in decision-making.

2. About the methodology

This study combines information collected from secondary sources and primary research focused on an analysis of local governance websites in B&H. Based on existing reports and available information, we will seek to position B&H both in relation to countries in the region of Southeast Europe and in relation to broader trends in developed countries.

It is important to point out that there is no single international standard for measuring e-readiness, but there is relevant research and there are widely accepted methodologies which measure the development of an information society (e.g. SIBIS methodologies of the European Union[13], as well as the methodologies of the United Nations[14] and the World Economic Forum[15]), on which our study relies. For example, the United Nations indicators are divided into indicators for households and for the business sector. The World Economic Forum indicators fall into three groups: an environment index (market, political, legislative and infrastructural); readiness index (individual readiness, business readiness and government readiness); and use index (individual use, business use and government use).[16] To

13 Source: Statistical Indicators Benchmarking the Information Society, available at: http://www.sibis-eu.org/ (accessed October 4, 2010.).

14 Measuring ICT: The Global Status of ICT indicator. Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development, Partnership on measuring ICT for development, 2005, UN ICT Task Force.

15 World Economic Forum, ICT, March 2005.

16 "Development of Information Society: Report on E-Readiness for 2005", (UNDP B&H, 2006, pp. 9–10).

measure the level of computerization of e-governance, the European Commission has adopted a scale of 0 to 5, with 0 being a situation in which information on services is not available on a website and 5 being a situation in which service is fully customized to the individual user, automatized and proactive[17]. According to "eEurope 2005" standards, the development of e-governance is monitored on the basis of the development of 20 public services, divided into services for citizens and services for companies.[18]

Analyzing local administration websites, we will show in what way and what types of information and applications local governance bodies offer citizens and other groups to facilitate their access to information and provide better services and, in general, to stimulate citizen participation in local community governance. For the purposes of our analysis of the websites, a questionnaire had been taken over from the Segaard study (Segaard 2005) and adapted for the purposes of this study (see questionnaire in Annex 2). The questionnaire noted which ICT applications and information on the abovementioned websites may have affect the online participation of citizens (Segaard 2005, p. 14).

Since there are 141 municipalities[19] in B&H, as well as due to the objective limitations of this research in terms of time and resources, a sample was created based on data from the annual report of the Communications Regulatory Agency

17 Source: "Strategy for the Development of Electronic Governance in the Republic of Croatia for the Period from 2009 to 2012", p. 15, available at: http://www.e-hrvatska.hr, (accessed July 5, 2010).

18 "Development of Information Society: Report on E-Readiness for 2005", (UNDP B&H, 2006, pp. 9–10).

19 According to the data of the Statistics Agency of B&H, there are 79 municipalities in the Federation of B&H and 62 municipalities in the Republika Srpska, available at: http://www.bhas.ba/eng/BiHStats.asp?Pripadnost=4&mode=dark, (accessed April 1, 2010).

of B&H on the provision of Internet services in B&H in 2008 (CRA, 2009, p. 11).[20] Specifically, taking into account that citizens' online presence is a prerequisite and a key factor for the development of e-governance and the strengthening of e-democracy, for the purposes of this research we chose only cities/regions in which the number of Internet subscribers made up more than 10% of the total size of the local population (see Annex 3). Based on this type of selection, we created a sample of 25 local administration websites in B&H (see Annex 1) of the following cities or regions with their municipalities: the city/municipality of Travnik; Istočno Sarajevo (Han-Pijesak, Kalinovik, Lukavica, Pale, Sokolac, Trnovo); the region/municipality of Livno; the city of Sarajevo (Centar, Novi Grad, Novo Sarajevo and Stari Grad); the city of Banja Luka (Banja Luka, Srbac, Čelinac, Kotor-Varoš, Kneževo, Gradiška, Prnjavor, Laktaši); and the region of Mostar (Mostar, Čapljina, Čitluk, Neum, Prozor, Stolac, Jablanica, Konjic).

3. Local community, e-participation, e-democracy and e-governance

ICT has in different ways fundamentally changed the world we live in, as well as the way the world is governed. The strong development of new ICT, especially the Internet, has created new possibilities for the dissemination of information and for the creation of new platforms for public dialog and the organization of citizens. It

20 Based on an analysis by city and on its annual survey, CRA created an overview of the total number of Internet subscribers by city/region in B&H in 2008, whose results are shown in Annex 3. Source: "Annual Survey of Holders of CRA Permits for Provision of Internet Services in Bosnia and Herzegovina for 2008", CRA, 2009, p. 11., available at: http://www.cra.ba/bs/depts/observ/default.aspx?cid=5244, (accessed April 1, 2010).

is for this reason that new potential is seen in the application of ICT in the revival of citizen participation in democratic societies (Takao 2004, p. 237). It is believed that easier access to official documents and political information will increase the transparency of the political process and advance citizens' information, which may potentially lead to their greater involvement in decision-making processes. ICT and the Internet are not democratic in and of themselves, just as no other medium is. However, online communication offers citizens different opportunities for obtaining information, for discussion, as well as for organization around common interests (relatively fast, simple, far-reaching, with lower costs and potentially higher effects). Consequently, it holds significant potential for the implementation of citizens' political participation in the governance process.[21]

In the context of the increasing use of ICT and attempts at the re-conceptualization of democracy in the information age, the terms ***e-participation*** (electronic participation) and ***e-democracy*** (electronic democracy) are being used increasingly often. E-democracy is generally accepted as a way of improving and strengthening democracy through the use of new ICT and strategies in political and governance processes in local communities, countries and on the international stage (which in combination with social and political measures comprehensively improves democratic procedures). E-participation, which offers an opportunity for citizens to network and organize themselves and to initiate communication and dialog, as well as an opportunity for easier and more efficient contact with elected representatives that does not require the physical presence of actors "here" and "now", is in direct correlation

21 In addition, networked computing operates according to principles fundamentally different from those of broadcast media: access, participation, reciprocity, and many-to-many rather than one-to-many communication (Jenkins and Thorburn 2004, p. 2).

with e-democracy and e-governance because it facilitates their technical implementation[22].

There are several reasons why the concept and introduction of e-democracy and participatory democracy practices have lately been a frequent topic of discussion in Europe and elsewhere. Tuzzi, Padovani and Nesti point out the three main ones:[23]

1. The evolution and spread of ICT in European countries in the last 10 or so years and the central role it plays in many different aspects of life have resulted in ICT applications becoming more and more important for political systems. Namely, new technologies are changing relations which had been based for many years on the concept of representative democracy and are enabling horizontal exchange and a more direct participation.
2. The potential for the revival of democratic practices and the development of opportunities for active citizenship are surfacing at a time of evident distance between the political elites and the majority of the population, where examples are accumulating which point to the limitations of public institutions in responding to the needs and priorities of specific groups and communities (which is often interpreted as the need for more direct civic engagement in political processes).
3. As Blumer and Coleman point out (2001), following the Cold War the end of the 20th century was marked by a certain turnaround from aggregation of

22 In order for e-participation to be successful, the ruling structures must create an environment which will enable citizens to have their voice heard. In addition, it is especially important that they create mechanisms that provide feedback to citizens, who should know whether their views and opinions are seriously considered.

23 They also mention numerous additional reasons for debate such as the problem of unequal access to infrastructure, know-how, skills, etc.

> preferences[24] to the idea of the active citizen and deliberative opportunities, as prerequisites for democratic consent and legitimacy (quoted in: Tuzzi, Padovani and Nesti 2007, p. 32).

Over the last several years, thanks to an increasingly important role of ICT, the relationship between citizens and public administration has been changing to their mutual benefit. In an attempt to explain this transformation of the relationship, new concepts such as ***e-government***, ***e-governance*** and ***e-democracy*** have been introduced, which, although different, are all related to the use of new information and communication technologies and strategies for the purpose of improving the results of governance and civic engagement (JANUS, 2001, quoted in: Tuzzi, Padovani and Nesti 2007, p. 33).

Although e-democracy underlines the deliberative[25] qualities of citizens, who are assumed to think about current debates and express their opinions, it does not replace representative democracy or any other type of democracy. It is rather considered a supplement in the dissemination of democratic values, i.e. a

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24 The aggregative model understands democracy as the process of aggregation of citizens' preferences in the process of decision-making and political elections, i.e. as a process in which different interests are competing. According to this view, the democratic process is used to identify citizens' preferences, which are summed up to determine the policies that society should accept. Advocates of this model maintain that democratic participation should primarily focus on voting, in which the policy that wins the largest number of votes is implemented.

25 Deliberation (*lat. deliberatio = thinking, consideration, discussion, consultation*) indicates the engagement of individuals and their discussion on relevant political decisions, with decisions being accepted as legitimate only if they are justified, well-argued and the result of a rational collective process of discussion and cooperation. In terms of democratic procedures, the deliberative concept of democracy emphasizes the necessity of citizen participation in political life and a well-argued and rational process of making generally justified decisions.

supplement in the strengthening of democratic processes through the use of ICT. Specifically, it concerns the use of those information and communication tools which advance the communication process within a society and facilitate the promotion, protection and exercise of citizens' communication rights[26] (Tuzzi, Padovani and Nesti 2007, pp. 31–32).

There are different definitions of e-democracy, ranging from a "minimalist definition of e-democracy (in which citizens would enjoy electronic access to information possessed by authorities and which would offer the possibility of interaction with government officials and conducting online transactions with the administration)" to a "more comprehensive understanding of democracy, which entails 'more active involvement of citizens (…) and the opportunity to act directly as well as through elected representatives in order to govern themselves and their communities' "(Norris 2003, p. 3, quoted in Tuzzi, Padovani and Nesti 2007, p. 33).[27] All these different perspectives seem to recognize the need for civic engagement and participatory communication, although with the help of ICT this kind of engagement can be achieved in different ways and on different levels – informational, consultative and/or on the level of active participation (Tuzzi, Padovani and Nesti 2007).

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26 Communication rights, as fundamental human rights, and democracy are interdependent. The respect for and promotion of communication rights contribute to advancing democratization of society. Application of new ICT can advance the exercise of communication rights, but, as contemporary theoreticians warn us, if obstacles which impede the full exercise of these rights are not removed – in the sense of a digital divide, censorship and so on – the democratic potential of ICT cannot be realized (Tuzzi, Padovani and Nesti 2007).

27 In the context of local governance, the concept of e-democracy can be linked to two traditional roles of municipalities: (1) political mediation with a focus on decision-making, participation and democratic values, and (2) administrative mediation with a focus on service to citizens (Segaard 2005, p. 2).

In addition, the concepts of e-government and e-governance need to be defined. Whereas e-government[28] concerns the provision of government services with the help of ICT (enabling the administration to offer traditional and new services in a different and more efficient way), e-governance entails a "broader concept and understanding of the role and position of state authorities and ruling structures, as well as their attitude to citizens in society" (Boban 2008). In other words, e-governance can be interpreted as a common denominator of e-democracy and e-government (Segaard 2005, p. 2). It is related to the whole process, which often includes a reengineering of the business process and a reform of governance in a significantly deeper sense, with all the operations of public administration being directed toward its beneficiaries[29].

Irrespective of the technologies that facilitate them, we can identify three fundamental rights related to civic participation in the process of governing the local community in a democratic society:

28 Although they may use similar techniques, e-government differs from e-democracy. Whereas e-democracy underlines the deliberative qualities of citizens, who are assumed to be thinking about current debates and expressing their opinions, e-government primarily views citizens as beneficiaries and clients with different needs and wishes who should be addressed in the most efficient and economical way (Segaard 2005, p. 2). For example, enabling citizens to get data, permits, documents, annual reports and so on as easily as possible; helping legal persons and companies with the settlement of their tax dues and electronic procurement; facilitating efficient cooperation between different government institutions; as well as better communication and coordination within individual government institutions. Therefore, e-government enables a more pleasant, less costly and efficient interaction with citizens, legal persons and companies as well as within the administration itself.

29 In this way, public administration provides its beneficiaries (citizens, business entities, its own officials, and other institutions) with continuous access to services, at the same time doing its work in a simple, efficient and low-cost manner, and ensures two-way communication between beneficiaries and service providers through democratic dialog and citizen participation in decision-making.

- the right to information, which encompasses citizens' rights of access to information about the situation in the local community, work, the plans of local governance bodies, as well as all other information of public importance[30];
- the right to be consulted, which implies the right to dialog with governance bodies and the right to make proposals, remarks, criticism, etc.[31];
- the right of citizens to participate directly in decision-making.

Today, new ICT, which public administration institutions are using more and more in their everyday work, play an increasingly important role in creating conditions for the exercise of the abovementioned rights. With regard to the right to information, practices aimed at improving the transparency of political processes use ICT to organize and deliver to citizens information that would otherwise be unavailable, including textual, audio, video and other reports delivered through digital channels, from simple websites to new Web 2.0[32] participatory technologies. Often these technologies facilitate the delivery of individualized content to end-users.

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30 Information – a basic principle of the policy to encourage citizens to participate in the political decision-making process (as pointed out in Recommendation 19 "Participation of citizens in public life at the local level" of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, 2001). For more, see for example: *Direct participation of citizens in public life at the local level*, regular conference of cities and municipalities, Belgrade, 2006.

31 Some of the traditional forms include the assembly of citizens; the right of citizens to petition and criticism; participation of citizens in the work of different assembly bodies, etc. (Bošnjak, Galešić and Kliček 2008, p. 748).

32 The Web 2.0 trend in Web technology provides interactive two-way communication between users and Web applications and between users and other users, turning a user from a passive into an active participant.

As for the right to be consulted so that a public sphere can be created in an online space, chat sessions are used for real-time dialog between citizens and representatives of authorities; discussions on online forums on issues of common interest; and exchanges of opinion in thematic discussion groups (newsgroups), among others (Trechsel, Kies, Mendez and Schmitter 2004; Peart and Diaz 2007).

Finally, the right to direct participation in decision-making is exercised with the help of ICT, which can facilitate the active participation of citizens in the decision-making process. Thus, in order to strengthen citizen participation in the governance process, different techniques and tools are used, including electronic voting, electronic consultation, web and email surveys, mailing lists, direct participation of citizens in decision-making (such as budget allocations).

Globally speaking, new technologies significantly contribute to public administration reform and public sector transformation, which in contemporary societies must enable consultation with citizens in the decision-making process as well as their active participation in decision-making.

As can be established, new forms of governance are increasingly consultative (Blumer and Coleman 2001, p. 6) and new technologies play a key role in this transformation process because they can promote citizen participation, which has led theoreticians to conclude that potentially "e-democracy can be a tool for strengthening democracy, as 'participation serves three important democratic values: legitimacy, fairness and efficiency of public action' " (Fung 2005, p. 46, quoted in Tuzzi, Padovani and Nesti 2007, p. 34).

As Segaard (2005, p.10) concludes, the reason why e-democracy and local governance which is based on e-democracy and e-governance are not viewed as a substitute for representative democracy lies in the fact that the conditions for it have not yet been created: a high degree of ICT competence; a high degree of Internet

use and citizens' motivation to use electronic devices in a political context; as well as of economic resources, motivation and technological competence at the political and administrative levels in municipalities (Segaard 2005, p. 10).

Political elites and municipal governments certainly have a key role to play because the development of e-participation in individual communities depends on their visions, readiness to share political power with citizens and their use of ICT.

Development of infrastructure and facilitation of citizens' access and competence in using new technologies are certainly essential factors in the development of e-participation at the local level, but in order to develop citizens' motivation to use this potential it must be proven to them that their electronic participation does have an effect on the political process (Segaard 2005, p. 11).

What is also present, however, is doubt in the potential of ICT as useful democratic instruments due to the fact that the technologies of democracy are changing faster than its nature; that the use of ICT in the work of the administration may lead to the exclusion of some categories of citizens (because not all citizens are digitally literate and not all utilize the potential of online media); and that the appearance and development of new communication models are a result of the mutual interaction between technological, political, social, cultural and economic forces. In other words: "Different cultures and different political regimes will use technology in development in radically different ways, as comparison of the early development of television in Britain, United States or Nazi Germany dramatically illustrates" (Jenkins and Thorburn 2005, p. 5).

4. Techniques and tools of e-democracy

Bearing in mind the speed and scope of the transformation and development of ICT, it is hard to imagine and grasp all the things that can be done with it or to see the limits of the application of new information and communication technologies and strategies in the work of local administration. However, general trends and examples of successful practices point to different ways in which local administrations can use new tools in the process of informing and consulting citizens, in developing democratic practices, as well as in providing both traditional and new services in an efficient way. Depending on which aspect of democracy it promotes, e-democracy may apply different techniques and tools: "(1) to increase the transparency of political processes; (2) to strengthen direct involvement and citizen participation; and (3) to promote quality opinion-making by creating new spaces for providing information and for deliberation" (Trechsel, Kies, Mendez and Schmitter 2004, p. 10). Experience and practice have shown that technologies which have the potential to develop the abovementioned aspects of e-democracy include (but are not limited to) (IDeA, 2009):

- *Social media networking*
    - Specifically, social networking websites (such as Facebook, Twitter and others) may be useful for engaging with groups interested in a particular problem or issue and citizens who otherwise would not be consulted through other channels, as well as for targeted campaigns and mobilization of groups for certain activities. Users of these sites can interact quickly and easily, exchanging opinion and information via e-mail, instant messages, comments, pictures or video content (all tools that are an integral part of social networking sites) (IDeA, 2009). In order to inform citizens and to increase the

transparency of the political process, numerous local administration bodies in the world, in addition to official websites, use other online channels and platforms for informing citizens and for press releases. For example, local government's messages distributed via social networking sites may potentially quickly, easily and at no cost reach a large number of citizens and also be further redistributed. For example, the British city of Coventry uses Facebook for communication with citizens on development of the city center.[33] Another example is the case of British councils, which during extreme weather conditions in early 2010 provided snowfall updates directly via social media.

- *Blogs*
  - Blogs, as a form of online journals, enable citizens to follow the progress of a project or campaign. Like social networking websites, they allow people to leave comments and post pictures, audio/video and textual content (IDeA, 2009). A large number of local administration bodies in Europe have introduced the practice of communicating with citizens using blogs. The Brighton and Hove city councils, for example, offered its elected members the opportunity to create blogs to communicate with citizens, which more than half of them accepted and used for informing citizens about their views, initiatives, petitions and so on (IDeA, 2009).
- *Online forums*
  - Forums, or online discussion platforms, allow two-way communication among citizens themselves, as well as between citizens and politicians/officials, which thanks to the nature of the technology can

33 Coventry City Centre plans: http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=41296119424, (accessed October 10, 2010).

take place in real time or not in real time. Online forums are particularly efficient for networking among people with similar interests, for exchanging information, developing new ideas, and certainly also for consulting citizens in the process of creating plans and strategies of public administration bodies (IDeA, 2009).

- *Digital video*
  - o Digital video, which a considerable number of citizens and institutions today produce relatively easily and cheaply and share with the broader community, may be useful in informing the broader community about a particular project or problem and also in documenting and conducting campaigns, etc.
- *Podcasting*[34]
  - o Podcasting allows both citizens and local administration to create audio/video channels and to distribute content which users can view whenever they wish (for example creating an audio podcast channel of a local governance body for reaching the visually impaired or an audio/video channel for people who prefer sound/video over written messages, etc.) or to register to directly receive content from audio/video channels.
- *Webcasting*
  - o Webcasting, in real time or on demand, is an efficient channel for audio/video content which allows people to follow the progress of assemblies and other meetings and events organized by local administration bodies.

34 Podcasting, coined from the words iPod and broadcast.

- *RSS*[35] *feed*
  - o RSS, allowing the user to automatically collect in one place the latest news or documents from a number of different websites, enables the user to choose and follow content of interest.
- *User-generated content*
  - o User-generated content, or media content produced by end-users (such as content on YouTube), is also used in cases where citizens want to inform local administration bodies about their problems. For example, FixMyStreet (www.fixmystreet) allows users to report, check and comment on information about local problems (such as streetlights, damage, etc.). All posts are sent to the relevant authorities and website users can follow what is being done to solve the problem. Another example is the Love Lewisham website (www.lovelewisham.org), launched in 2004 to allow citizens to report problems such as those related to crime or the environment. Today, it allows citizens to report a problem via the website, iPhone, SMS or MMS[36] and then to follow the status of the case.
- *Instant messaging*
  - o A simple form of real-time communication, it enables communication between two or more persons, usually through text (for example via MSM – Microsoft Messenger and so on). Some public administration officials in the world offer this feature for dialog with citizens.

35 RSS – *Really Simple Syndication*.

36 Multimedia Messaging Service, or MMS, is the standard format for sending messages with multimedia content (photographs, video, audio, etc.) via (mobile) telephone. it expands the capabilities of SMS (Short Message Service), which can be used only for sending text messages.

- *Different platforms: websites, microsites, Flickr, YouTube, SMS, digital television, etc.*
  - o The websites of local administration bodies have proven to be particularly useful and cheap channels for informing citizens and for dialog with them. Research shows that a typical website costs a twelfth of a telephone call and is much cheaper than consultation through direct contact (Society of Information Technology Management, 2009).
  - o Microsites, as small self-standing websites separated from the main website, are useful for creating sites for a particular government function or project.
  - o Flickr (www.flickr.com) is a website for storing photographs and video clips and offers a cheap and simple way of including citizens in the process of documenting processes, situations and events at the local level.
  - o YouTube (www.youtube.com) – a site for exchange, assessment and comments on video content, just like Flickr.com; it reduces the cost of storing content and enables mobilization even of those users who may not be consulted through other channels.
  - o SMS (Short Message Service) is one of the most developed applications, which in the case of local administration is used to send information and reminders on recycling deadlines, elections and other events, as well as on the status of citizens' cases, traffic, etc.
  - o Digital television enables the broadcasting and viewing of websites via television and can be an efficient channel for interaction with citizens who do not have access to computers with an Internet connection (IDeA, 2009).
  - o Digital television enables the broadcasting and viewing of websites via television and can be an efficient channel for interaction with citizens who do not have access to computers with an internet connection (IDeA, 2009).

The above are some, but not all of the potential tools and technologies for the development of e-participation at the local level. Besides, none of these tools is

democratic in and of itself. They are democratic only if they are directly tied to current decision-making processes and the implementation of decisions.

5. Electronic readiness and electronic participation in B&H

Southeast European countries, including B&H, in 2002 recognized the need to introduce e-government services and integrate them in a comprehensive process of public administration reform. By adopting the Policy[37] and Strategy for the Development of and Information Society[38] and by developing an Action Plan[39], B&H committed itself to developing an information society (2004). The strategy clearly points out the need to reengineer public administration and develop its infrastructure, but also the need to facilitate the revitalization of society by introducing e-services and e-democracy.

However, the question remains as to what extent B&H's is really e-ready[40]. How are plans being implemented and does the current application of ICT in public

37 Policy for the Development of an Information Society in Bosnia and Herzegovina, adopted by the Council of Ministers of B&H in 2004.

38 Strategy for the Development of an Information Society in Bosnia and Herzegovina, adopted by the Council of Ministers of B&H on November 16, 2004.

39 Action Plan for the Development of an Information Society in Bosnia and Herzegovina, adopted by the Council of Ministers of B&H on November 16, 2004.

40 "A government's electronic readiness is a function of the state's networking readiness, its technological and telecommunications infrastructure, degree of civic access to electronic services and existence of government political and protective mechanisms" (Zarimpas, Grouztidou and Anastasiadou 2009, p. 141).

administration facilitate e-participation among citizens as a prerequisite for the implementation of e-governance and the development of e-democracy at both the local level and higher administrative levels?

5.1. Legislative framework

In terms of basic legislation related to electronic administration, the following documents have been passed in B&H: the Law on Electronic Signature[41] (2006); the Convention on Cyber Crime[42] (2006); the Law on Communications[43] (2002); the Law on Protection of Personal Data[44] (2006); and the Law on Electronic Legal and Business Transactions[45] (2007). The existing legislation, as an important indicator of e-readiness, shows that B&H has created some of the formal prerequisites for tackling the process of development of e-government, but the lack of important documents envisaged by the Strategy for the Development of an Information Society in B&H[46] suggests that a lot of work remains to be done in creating a favorable environment. Table 3 provides a comparative overview of development of the legislative framework in B&H and countries in the region as of 2008, which shows that B&H was late in undertaking activities related to passing laws on electronic documents.

41 Law on Electronic Signature (Official Gazette of B&H, no. 91/06).

42 B&H ratified the Convention on Cyber Crime in 2006.

43 Law on Communications (Official Gazette of B&H, number 33/02).

44 Law on Protection of Personal Data (Official Gazette of B&H, number 49/06).

45 Law on Electronic Legal and Business Transactions (Official Gazette of B&H, number 88/07).

46 See overview of laws to be passed or amended in the chapter on e-legislation of the Strategy for the Development of an Information Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2004, pp. 35-27.

Table 3. Progress in legislative framework

INDICATOR	Albania	B&H	FYROM	Montenegro	Serbia
Legislative framework for e-signature	√	√	√	√	√
Legislative framework for e-business	●	●	√	√	●
Law on electronic documents	●	◊	√	√	◊
Law on cyber crime	√	√	√	◊	◊
Law on telecoms	√	√	√	√	√
Law on protection of personal data	√	√	√	√	●

√ done ● under implementation ◊ no activity taken

Source: eSEE Working Group and bSEE Taskforce, "Overview of the status of implementation of the set of basic e-Government Services as stated in eSEE", eSEE Agenda Plus, Annex 1, January 2009 (Zarimpas, Grouztidou and Anastasiadou 2009).

5.2. Other factors affecting levels of development, e-governance and e-democracy

The World Economic Forum in the "Networked Readiness Index" report for 2009-2010 ranked B&H as the 110th out of 133 countries. In the report for 2008-2009, B&H was the 106th (out of a total of 134 countries) and in 2007-2008 it was in the 95th place (out of a total of 127 countries). These rankings show that B&H is lagging behind other countries and that it has fallen even lower on the global scale (The World Economic Forum, 2010, p. 193).

In the report for 2009-2010, individual indicators show that it is with regard to the factor of environment that B&H ranks lowest on the global scale (125th place – market environment; 126th – political and regulatory environment;, and somewhat better for infrastructural environment, 79th place). An additional problem is readiness, with government as the biggest problem (readiness indicators: 63rd – individual

readiness; 117th – business readiness; 129th – government readiness). The use indicator shows that government bears a lot of responsibility for the country's low position on the global scale (use: 69th place – individual use; 117th – business use; 131st – government use) (The World Economic Forum, 2010, p. 193).

According to a United Nations survey, the e-government readiness index represents the degree of fulfillment of preconditions for free access to information and services (which includes official online presence, availability of telecommunications infrastructure and human development potential). Research shows that B&H is at the lowest level of development of e-government in Southeast Europe and offers a very small number of services (most services are still being developed or are non-existent) (UN, 2008). In terms of five levels of sophistication of e-government[47], B&H badly lags behind other countries in the region and in the rest of Europe. The index of its e-government readiness is very low, as the United Nations survey shows (UN E-Government Survey, 2008).[48] The e-government readiness index for B&H, according to the survey, is below the regional, European and world averages. For 2008, it was 0.4509, placing B&H at the 94th place (South East Europe – 0.5642, world – 0.4514), and in 2005 it was 0.4019, placing it at the 84th place in the world (e-government readiness index for Southeast Europe – 0.4654, world – 0.4267). Unfortunately, this research, too, confirms the same trend of falling behind and a drop in the readiness index, which creates an increasing gap between B&H and developed countries, as well as other similar economies from the region (UN, 2008).

According to the UN survey, the official online presence index for B&H (Web Measure Index), which measures online presence and services offered by state

47 1. emerging, 2. enhanced, 3. interactive, 4 transactional, and 5. connected.

48 This research however, does not include a specific assessment of the development of e-governance at local levels.

websites, together with the presence and services offered by ministries of health, education, labor, social affairs and finance, is quite a bit lower than that of other former Yugoslav countries[49]. The same is true for the infrastructure index (which the UN based on five indicators of infrastructure capacities[50]). Specifically, the Bosnian and Herzegovinian Web Measure Index[51] for 2008 was 0.2943, while the infrastructure index was 0.1887 (UN, 2008, p. 178). Indexes indicating the small number of PCs in households (0.060 or 5.43%) and less widespread mobile telephones (0.316 or 48.25%) and broadband Internet (0.032 or 1.02%) particularly contribute to the low infrastructure index in B&H (UN, 2008, p. 178).

Yet, what is noticeable is the steady rise in the number of Internet users; improvement of access speed; reduction of costs for end-users; growth and development of broadband connection[52]; and improvement of Internet services in general. Individual use is not the primary problem anyway, as is shows the World Economic Forum research, which places B&H at the 79th place (out of 133 countries) in this regard (The World Economic Forum, 2010, p. 193).

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49 The only exception in terms of infrastructure, according to the survey, is Montenegro, which has an even lower index.

50 The infrastructure index is the median value of the following indicators:
1. Internet users index – number of Internet users per 100 persons
2. PC index – number of computers per 100 persons
3. Mobile telephony index – number of mobile telephones per 100 persons
4. Main telephone lines index – number of telephone lines per 100 persons
5. Broadband index – number of broadband Internet subscribers per 100 persons

51 "The Web Measure Index 2008 is based on a five-stage model which builds upon the previous levels of sophistication of a Member State's online presence. As a country migrates upwards through the various stages, it is ranked higher in the Web Measure Index." (UN, 2008, p. 15.)

52 Broadband Internet is the key factor in the increasing use of Internet and electronic services.

Unfortunately, currently it is mostly the urban population that has access to information and communication technologies and services. As the Bosnian and Herzegovinian Development Strategy states, the digital exclusion which affects the rural population is "one of the main obstacles to the development of an information society in B&H".[53]

E-government readiness certainly depends on the available infrastructure, as well as on human capital, because its development will depend on citizens' literacy, relevant education and the skills they have. This is why the measurement of the human capital index[54] is an important indicator of readiness. UN human capital data (UN, 2008, p. 171) show B&H's relatively good development in a global context, where it holds the 77th place[55]. On the other hand, data show that B&H is at the very bottom of the European scale, which is certainly worrisome.

5.3. E-participation index

As e-participation has the potential to contribute to greater transparency of administration and to advance citizen participation in the governance process, the e-participation index is also extremely important since it shows how a country can

53 Strategy for the Development of an Information Society in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2004, p. 15.

54 In the human capital index, two-thirds of measurements are related to adult literacy (2/3 adult literacy) and one third to the degree of coverage, i.e. the ratio between the number of citizens included in the education system and the total population size for a certain education age (1/3 gross enrolment).

55 Australia, Denmark, Finland and New Zealand top the scale with the same human capital index – 0.9933.

access this tool and use its potential. The e-participation index assesses the quality and usefulness of information and services provided to citizens for the purpose of engaging them in public policy through ICT. Online informative and participatory services are analyzed, with questions grouped into three categories:

- e-information[56],
- e-consultation[57],
- e-decision-making[58].

The UN 2008 survey shows that, with respect to the e-participation index, B&H ranks low on the world scale, holding the 98th place (of a total of 170 countries analyzed).

6. Analysis of municipality websites in B&H

Although citizens' political discussion takes place through different network channels, the present study focuses on the conditions for political participation that

56 "E-information - The government website offers information on the list of elected officials, government structure, policies and programmes, points of contact, budget, laws and regulations and other information of public interest. Information is disseminated through a number of online tools such as: community networks, blogs, web forums, text messages (micro democracy), newsgroups and e-mail lists." (UN, 2008, p. 18).

57 "E-consultation - The government website provides the tools necessary for e-consultation. It allows citizens to set the agenda for the debate through e-petitioning. The government ensures that its elected officials have a website to communicate directly with their constituents. It maintains an archive of their discussions and provides feedback to citizens." (UN, 2008, p. 18).

58 "E-decision-making - The government is willing to take into account the e-inputs of citizens into the decision-making process. The government informs its citizens on what decisions have been taken based on the consultation process." (UN, 2008, p. 18).

municipalities create through their websites, which serve as channels for informing citizens and for their participation. This is why it is very important to pay attention to the key factors in the development of municipal websites as efficient channels for providing political information to citizens and for their participation. These key factors are the presence of relevant political information and the opportunity for citizen participation.

Relevant political information that creates preconditions for participation includes information on the composition of councils, bodies, organs and departments and relevant information on their initiatives, current issues and plans, as well as on political processes or any individual queries or initiatives of citizens.

Websites, combined with the abovementioned technologies, can considerably contribute to:

- advancing the process of providing information to citizens (more information and audio-visual content that is easily available, detailed and relevant, with quick, regular, easy and simple uploading and updating, and delivery to a large number of people at relatively low cost);
- advancing the process of consultation and participation of citizens (by allowing citizens to report on problems in the local community as well as to directly voice their views on decisions and on the monitoring their implementation; by soliciting their comments, opinions and initiatives; forwarding their initiatives to relevant institutions of the system; acquainting them with proposed decisions and including them directly in the democratic process);
- providing old and new interactive and personalized services (submitting various requests; following the status of cases online or using mobile technologies, as a 24/7 service, quickly, easily and at a much lower cost) and enabling cooperation and organization among citizens, as well as inter-institutional communication within administrations.

With regard to the participation options offered, nearly all local governance bodies which use the potential of ICT offer citizens at least the basic options of electronic contact and communication with administration representatives and an online platform for consultation and deliberation (e.g. forum, chat options, electronic petitions, online polls, comments, etc.).

Different online communication models enable citizens to gain know-how, exchange opinions and become involved in local policies (exchanging opinion via discussion forums, e-mail or mailing lists; organizing online communities and working in them; directly contacting authorities using online channels, etc.). Extremely important for the successful implementation of these goals is the degree of development of three basic aspects of official local administration websites:

- **content**, or what kind of information is available to citizens,
- **functionality**, or the usability of websites for interest groups, and
- **interactivity**, or two-way/multiple-way communication between citizens and governance structures as well as among citizens (Segaard 2005, p. 6).

Segaard analyzes these three aspects in relation to Dahl's criteria for an ideal democratic process and in relation to citizen participation (Segaard 2005, p. 7), which is the approach that this study will apply as well. Whereas website content and functionality create preconditions for citizen participation, the interactivity aspect is directly related to citizen participation and shows in what way and to what extent it is possible to participate in the decision-making process using this online medium (Figure 1).

Figure 1 illustrates in what way these three aspects support democratic criteria. Quality of content promotes citizens' understanding by offering general information on the municipality and the local political agenda. A high level of functionality, i.e. accessibility of the website to the public, promotes inclusion in political processes, whereas interactivity supports the efficient participation of citizens and their control

Figure 1

Website aspects	Democratic criteria (Dahl 1989)	
Content	Understanding	*Conditions for citizen participation*
Functionality	Inclusion	
Interactivity	Effective participation	*Directly related to civic participation*
	Agenda control	

Source: Segaard, S. 2005, "Citizen Participation ICT and new opportunities for citizen participation", p. 7.

of the political agenda (if it is placed within a political framework and depending on whether it is one-way or two-way). Two-way communication between citizens and the municipality is considered more democratic than one-way communication, which does not include an interactive component (Segaard 2005, p. 5).

6.1. Content

In our analysis of municipality websites, we looked at what kind of information was available to citizens and what kind of information was missing. We divided website content, according to its nature, into two groups:

- general information on the municipality (municipality facts and figures; general information on municipality services; information on the municipal administrative structure)
- political information (information on political organizations and current political issues; additional information and documents related to current political issues).

The analysis of the abovementioned websites shows that the content of selected websites is modest and does not use the full extent of their media potential in order

to create preconditions for the political participation of citizens. Most of the available information is general information on the municipality (facts and information about the municipality, its services and organizational structure, i.e. departments). All websites, without exception, offer more or less extensive general information on the municipality (historic, geographic, demographic data; information on schools, cultural and other institutions operating in the area) and such information is often placed in the foreground. Primary users of such information are not necessarily citizens of that particular local community.

A smaller portion of content is related to political information (information on political organizations and agencies – structure of the local government, political parties, individual politicians; information on current political issues – reports and documents such as budgets, political agendas, schedules of future political meetings; additional information and documents related to current political issues, rights and laws). Detailed information on the institution of the municipality concerning the services it offers and its departments is often placed in the background, although primary users of such information are citizens of the local community (unlike the primary users of the general information about the municipality). Exceptions, for example, are the websites of the municipalities of Centar, Novi Grad, Novo Sarajevo, Stari Grad, Travnik, Laktaši and Livno, which provide more information of this type.

A small number of municipality websites, in addition to general information, also offer some specific information on municipal administrative structures and employees. Political information such as information on political organizations and agencies and individual politicians is practically non-existent. An exception is usually information about the head of municipality, taken from his/her biography, in which his/her program is also mentioned (which is also standard for all analyzed Web practices). Detailed information on other representatives, members of political parties and other bodies is either non-existent or restricted to the indication of party

affiliation, year of birth and perhaps level of education. Even such modest information is an exception rather than the rule.

Information on current issues and plans is rare and usually consists of an annual budget proposal. Additional information in the news/current events sections usually includes press releases on the start/completion of works or projects, visits/statements by the head of the municipality, etc. Among the exceptions, for example, are the abovementioned Sarajevo municipalities, which offer more information on current issues, plans and projects.

Additional documents and information on current issues, discussions and decisions are rare, as is information on laws and citizens' rights related to these issues (an exception is the Centar Municipality website, which contains an online service for providing free legal aid within the scope of work of the municipal departments and a section with questions and councilors' initiatives).[59] Other than municipal bulletins in pdf format, which are common and can be downloaded, there is practically no supplementary information.

Further, it is evident that there is no standardization in the creation of domains and Web addresses. Namely, although it is very important for names of official administration websites to have a recognizable form – so that users can find/recognize them among many other websites – this aspect has not been given the attention it deserves. The domains of the analyzed websites are not uniform, nor is it obvious that they are official public administration websites. If we look at the names and extensions (Annex 1), we will notice inconsistencies in naming as well as extensions (.com, .com.ba, .net, .rs.ba, .rs.com, .org, .ba).

59 However, these websites are not updated regularly (last update in 2008). The research was carried out in the late summer of 2009.

6.2. Functionality

In our analysis of the functionality of websites, we focused on the following aspects:

- search options (generally for the whole website, specifically for individual documents and sections),
- content index (menu/icons, A-Z index, website map),
- services for special groups of users (voice versions, enlarged text versions),
- ”help”/”how to use” sections
- different language options/alphabets (Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, English, other languages/Latin, Cyrillic),
- option of ”e-registration” for political documents and reports or the political agenda.

Nearly all websites offer the option of content search for the whole website and it is used with the help of a search box. However, practically not a single website has a special or advanced search option (for example searching within a section with documents). Websites do not have an alphabetical content index either (A-Z), which could facilitate the search. On all websites, content is accessed primarily through menus and icons.

As access must be provided for all citizens, it is important to give attention to particular groups that may have special needs in using this content. Namely, good practices show that the functionality of websites is improved if we add voice versions and enlarged text views (for groups such as the visually impaired). Not a single one of the analyzed websites has voice versions or the option of enlarging text size.

There are no instructions for users either, or so-called Help sections that would explain to users in what way they can use the full potential of the website and its services.

Finally, one of the most important problems is language representation. It is noticeable that there is no common practice in the choice of language. Although it would be logical for all websites to be in the official B&H languages (Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian), in the official alphabets (Latin/Cyrillic), and also in at least one foreign language for broader interest (such as English), that is by no means the case. Namely, websites usually use one alphabet (either Latin or Cyrillic) and one language variant. Exceptions to some degree are the websites of the municipalities of Travnik (with Bosnian, Croatian and German options); Kneževo (with "local" and English options); and Laktaši (with Latin, Cyrillic and English options).

A small number of websites offer part of their content in a foreign language – usually a small portion of content which is rarely updated and as a rule in English. Some websites have a button on the menu for a different language option which is not yet available (e.g. Novo Sarajevo Municipality).

Some websites offer the option of registering for RSS feeds, but none offers the option of free subscription to political documents and reports or automatic receipt of information on the political agenda.

6.3. Interactivity

Analyzing interactivity, we looked at the presence of those website elements which allow citizens to communicate more intensely with the local government, as well as among themselves, on issues of importance to the local community:

- contact information (official e-mail address of the local government; mail and e-mail addresses and telephone contacts of individual politicians, political parties, municipal departments, etc.);

- online debate forums (and whether citizens can suggest a new discussion; whether the municipality has fixed topics; whether discussions are related to current political decision-making processes; whether it is stated that discussions are censored; when the last content was posted; whether politicians participate in debates, etc.);
- online chat room[60] (and whether citizens can suggest a new discussion; whether the municipality has fixed topics; whether discussions are related to current political decision-making processes; whether it is stated that discussions are censored; when the last content was posted; whether politicians participate in debates, etc.);
- online polls (whether polls are connected to current political decision-making processes);
- listening to political debates online and whether citizens can make comments on debates and receive feedback;
- direct (live) video streaming of political debates and whether citizens give their comments;
- web conferences;
- whether it is stated that politicians take political comments and feedback into consideration.

Our analysis has shown that interactivity on the surveyed municipality websites is basic and contributes to a very small extent to the development of online citizen participation. It is mostly restricted to providing basic contact information in the form of official e-mail and mail addresses and telephone numbers, which is the type of information offered by all municipalities. Moreover, for some municipalities their

60 Chat pool/room, in which two or more users simultaneously communicate through computers and networks in real time.

official e-mail address is the only e-mail address that is available. Individual politicians e-mail addresses and telephone numbers are usually not provided, except for the head of municipality and municipal departments. There are no contact details for political parties or working bodies, either. It is noticeable that individual e-mail addresses are more rare and it is unknown whether anyone replies to e-mails or how often it is done as none of this information is offered.

Some municipalities offer an online contact form which citizens can use to write a comment or question and send it by e-mail. It is not clear from these forms if such queries are actually processed and if citizens receive an answer, just as it is unclear who answers the questions asked or how soon one can expect an answer.

Citizens' questions/comments are not available to the broader community either, i.e. there is no platform for discussion and comments. It is not clear how these comments are treated in the decision-making process, nor are they summarized on one page so that the voice of citizens can be heard. Therefore, the potential offered by online discussions remains unused, despite being one of the simplest methods of including citizens.

Online debate forums exist only on a handful of websites. Even when they do exist, they are not an efficient channel that promotes citizen participation. Namely, discussions that take place on these forums in most cases are not connected to current political decision-making processes; politicians and representatives of authorities do not participate in them regularly; the presence of a municipal moderator is not visible; and looking at the frequency of posted content, we can conclude that they are not especially active. It is not evident from the examples how online discussions are related to the decision-making process. As for online debates, there is no "chat pool/room" that would allow easier communication between representatives of authorities and citizens. Generally speaking, the practice of local politicians participating in online debates was not identified in the analyzed examples.

What does appear on a number of websites are online polls, but it can be concluded from the analyzed examples that they are not directly connected to the current decision-making process. Issues which were topical included questions such as: "Are you satisfied with the new website?", "Are you familiar with the municipal Development Strategy…?" and so on.

There is no option for online watching/listening to sessions or public debates and there are no web conferences that would allow live meetings or presentations to be held via the Internet.

It is not evident from the analyzed examples if representatives of authorities seriously take into consideration citizens' (online) political comments and in which cases consultation of citizens influenced the decision-making process.

7. Concluding remarks

The United Nations, World Economic Forum and eEurope 2002 indicators (including the indicators of development and availability of infrastructure, readiness of government institutions, individual readiness) show that Bosnia and Herzegovina's level of development in these areas is low and that it seriously lags behind other countries in the region and in the world in general, although its individual and infrastructure readiness is growing. The same sources indicate that an important role is also played by the political and regulatory environment, e-governance readiness, as well as by the way in which the government uses ICT; B&H fares poorly in all these areas. Yet, although we are not among developed countries in technological terms, research shows that B&H has the basic ICT structure which enables the development of an information society and that infrastructure readiness is not the primary obstacle to the development of e-participation and e-democracy and the

implementation of e-governance. On the other hand, digital exclusion of individual social groups and insufficient development of e-literacy certainly pose a significant problem.

Analyzing the three main aspects of online services offered by local bodies of governance – the content, functionality and interactivity of websites – it can be concluded that the content is the top priority for their creators. Unfortunately, the content of most analyzed websites is static. In most cases, websites are created primarily as a passive source of information for citizens on municipality activities, and rarely as a platform for boosting citizen participation and a tool for strengthening local governance. Better-developed websites offer additional online services, but in the vast majority of cases even they are limited to downloading electronic forms. The exceptions are large and developed municipalities[61], which offer the option of following the status of cases and the like. In short, use of ICT by Bosnian-Herzegovinian municipalities is still at an early stage of development and websites are mostly informational, to some extent helpful, but hardly or not at all participatory.

Therefore, the potential of new technologies is not sufficiently used to facilitate online citizen participation. Municipalities are introducing electronic services "more easily" than tools for electronic participation, which is still in its infancy. Generally speaking, local administrations primarily use online technologies as a channel for disseminating their information rather than truly developing a platform for including citizens in the public policy-making process.

It seems that municipal administrations lack awareness and a sense of obligation to facilitate citizen e-participation and to provide citizens with information on the

61 Large and developed municipalities such as the municipalities of Centar and Novi Grad Sarajevo.

potential forms, purposes and results of their participation. In other words, it seems that there is no awareness that, using the potential of ICT, citizens need to be consulted and mobilized to participate in decision-making processes at the local level. Generally speaking, at least as far as websites are concerned, municipal administrations remain closed to the voices and activities of citizens. Paradoxically, in a world of two-way, decentralized communication, municipal websites in B&H remain highly centralized, non-transparent and essentially closed to the interests, voices and activities of citizens.

We can conclude that most municipalities in B&H have taken the first steps toward publishing information on the Web, but mainly with the goal of providing better basic information to citizens, and rarely that of facilitating direct citizen participation in decision-making processes. We can almost say that this is a formal, minimal fulfillment of their informational function, while the municipalities, when it comes to their websites, essentially remain closed to citizen participation. Information is, indeed, necessary for democracy, but as Schudson recognizes, "information itself is inert", never basic and only important to the citizen (Schudson 2003, p. 59). New technologies, therefore, cannot contribute to democratization if the political elite are unwilling to share power with their citizens (Tapio and Jarmo 2006). That there is still no true sharing and distribution of power with and toward citizens can be seen from the analysis of local administration websites.

As greater citizen participation in the decision-making process gives greater legitimacy to decisions made by local government bodies, it is necessary to work extensively and continuously on the development of online services, tools, channels and techniques of communication and interaction between the local administration and citizens, which can considerably promote citizens participation in decision-making. This is especially important in a society such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has been characterized by the collapse of social trust and social capital and the

general distrust of citizens in their own political power to influence the decisions of the government, which in turn is unable to recognize and solve their actual problems.

Electronic participation and electronic democracy can have a real effect only if we reach a critical mass of active citizens. As citizen motivation is a major challenge in B&H, it is necessary to show to citizens that their e-participation can actually influence political decisions. This means that their views, opinions and discussions in discussion forums, chat rooms and other forms of participatory communication must be connected to the current decision-making process. In addition, it must be shown on the websites themselves in what way citizens' involvement influences decision-making processes and ultimately the living conditions of the local community. In other words, in order to motivate citizens to participate, it must be made visible to them that their participation is integrated in the actual decision-making and public policy-making process. Further, resonant and effective campaigns are needed in order to achieve maximum citizen participation. Unfortunately, the findings of our analysis show that this is not the case in Bosnian and Herzegovinian municipalities.

As key documents on governance development emphasize, government representatives are expected to promote transparency in political decision-making, as well as the quality of citizen participation in political processes, with the help of new information and communication technologies. If we expect local administration bodies to work transparently, to inform citizens about their activities and decisions in a timely fashion and to include citizens more intensively in decision-making processes, then the Web is certainly one of the cheapest and most efficient tools. Of course, although this chapter discusses the role of Internet and PC technologies, it is important to point out that e-democracy does not only concern these channels of communication. Media convergence does not restrict local governance to websites; it opens up many new channels for participatory communication, such as mobile telephones, social networks and digital television.

Electronic participation, or electronic governance, ultimately will depend on the opportunities available to citizens, which the authorities must provide. Given that local administrations have better predispositions for the political participation of citizens, because decision-making at the local level directly affects citizens' lives and because their common interests are easier to identify than the interests of citizens in larger administrative units, the role of new technologies in the operation of local government should have particular importance. Unfortunately, the potential offered by these new technologies has not yet been sufficiently used, and citizens remain excluded from the decision-making process.

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Annex 1: Municipalities and their web-site

1. Municipality Novi Travnik: http://www.novi-travnik.com.
2. Municipality Travnik: http://opcinatravnik.com.ba.
3. Municipality Han-Pijesak: http://www.hanpijesak.net.
4. Municipality Pale: http://www.pale.rs.ba.
5. Municipality Sokolac: http://www.opstinasokolac.org.
6. Municipality Trnovo: http://www.trnovo.ba.
7. Municipality Livno: http://www.livno.ba/.
8. Municipality Centar Sarajevo: http://www.centar.ba.
9. Municipality Novi Grad Sarajevo: http://www.novigradsarajevo.ba.
10. Municipality Novo Sarajevo: http://www.novosarajevo.ba.
11. Municipality Stari Grad: http://www.starigrad-sarajevo.ba.
12. Municipality Srbac: http://www.srbac-rs.com.
13. Municipality Čelinac : http://www.opstina-celinac.com.
14. Municipality Kotor-Varoš: http://www.opstinakotorvaros.org.
15. Municipality Kneževo: http://www.opstinaknezevo.rs.ba.
16. Municipality Gradiška: http://www.opstina.gradiska.com.
17. Municipality Prnjavor: http://www.opstinaprnjavor.net.
18. Municipality Laktaši: http://www.laktasi.net.
19. City of Mostar: http://www.mostar.ba.
20. Municipality Čapljina: http://www.capljina.ba.
21. Municipality Čitluk: http://www.citluk.ba.
22. Municipality Neum: http://www.neum.ba.
23. Municipality Prozor Rama: http://www.prozor-rama.org.
24. Municipality Jablanica: http://www.jablanica.ba.
25. Municipality Konjic: http://www.konjic.ba.

Annex 2: Questionnaire

Content	General information on municipality	Facts on municipality	
		Facts and information on services provided by municipality	
		Information on municipal administrative structures	Departments and institutions/services
			Employees
	Political information	Information on political organizations and agencies	Structure of local government
			Executive Board Council
			Political parties
			Individual politicians
		Information on current political issues	Reports and documents, such as budget
			Political agenda
			Schedule of future political meetings
		Additional information on current political issues	Supplements
			Information on judicial and legislative rights
Functionality	Search options	General search for whole website	
		Specific search for specific section, such as political documents section	
	Content index	Menu/icons	
		A-Z index	
		Website map	
	Services for specific groups	Voice	
		Large text version	
	"Help"/"how to use" website		
	Languages/Alphabets	BOS	
		CRO	
		SER	
		LAT	
		CYR	
		ENG	
		GER	
		OTHER	
	Option of e-registration for:	Political documents and reports	
		Political agenda	

Interactivity	Contact details	Official e-mail address of local government	
		Individual politicians	Address
			Telephone
			E-mail list
		Political parties	Address
			Telephone
			E-mail list
		Municipal departments/services	Address
			Telephone
			E-mail list
	Is there an online debate forum?		
		Can citizens suggest a new discussion?	
		Does the municipality have a moderator?	
		Are discussions/themes linked to current political decision-making processes?	
		Is it stated that the debate may be censored?	
		When was the last post sent?	
		Do politicians participate in debates?	
	Is there an online chat pool?		
		Can citizens suggest a new discussion?	
		Does the municipality have a moderator?	
		Are discussions/themes linked to current political decision-making processes?	
		Is it stated that the debate may be censored?	
		When was the last post sent?	
		Do politicians participate in debates?	
	Are there online polls?		
		Is the poll linked to current decision-making processes?	
	Is there an option of audio listening to political debates?		
		Is it possible to provide feedback online?	
	Is there an option of live video watching of political debates (web broadcasting)?		
		Is it possible to provide feedback online?	
	Web-conferences		
	Is it clearly stated that politicians seriously take into consideration feedback on a policy?		

Annex 3. Number of internet subscribers in 19 Bosnian and Herzegovinian cities/regions

City/Region	Population size of city/region	Number of ISPs	Number of dial-up subscribers	Number of broadband subscribers	Total number of subscribers
Sarajevo	401.687	18	14.458	52.555	67.013
Banja Luka[62]	450.899	13	34.437	20.811	55.248
Tuzla[63]	544.560	21	13.564	21.624	35.188
Zenica[64]	385.002	12	6.307	13.223	19.530
Bijeljina[65]	143.199	9	5.103	7.291	12.394
Mostar[66]	222.645	11	8.059	16.399	24.458
Prijedor[67]	172.504	8	3.758	3.879	7.637
Doboj	80.464	7	3.518	3.971	7.489
Bihać[68]	270.932	6	4.626	9.086	13.712
Zvornik[69]	137.391	6	2.809	2.136	4.945
Travnik	51.446	6	8.705	5.280	13.985
Teslić	49.021	4	1.919	445	2.364
Derventa	42.747	4	1.132	1.280	2.412
Istočno Sarajevo[70]	40.315	5	6.713	2.793	9.506
Trebinje[71]	67.604	6	4.563	2.005	6.568
Bugojno	37.441	3	3[72]	700	703
Livno	32.422	2	4.478	2.788	7.266
Goražde	31.556	4	243	1.105	1.348
Foča[73]	74.870	5	2.422	1.863	4.285

62 Region Banja Luka: Banja Luka, Srbac, Čelinac, Kotor-Varoš, Kneževo, Gradiška, Prnjavor, Laktaši.
63 Region Tuzla: Tuzla, Gračanica, Lukavac, Gradačac, Živinice, Brčko, Banovići, Čelić, Srebrenik, Kalesija, Kladanj.
64 Region Zenica: Zenica, Kakanj, Tešanj, Breza, Maglaj, Olovo, Visoko, Zavidovići, Žepče, Usora.
65 Region Bijeljina: Bijeljina, Lopare, Ugljevik.
66 Region Mostar: Mostar, Čapljina, Čitluk, Neum, Prozor, Stolac, Jablanica, Konjic.
67 Region Prijedor: Prijedor, Kozarska Dubica, Novi Grad, Kostajnica.
68 Region Bihać: Bihać, Cazin, Sanski Most, Velika Kladuša, Ključ, Bosanska Krupa.
69 Region Zvornik: Zvornik, Milići, Bratunac, Srebrenica, Šekovići, Vlasenica.
70 Region Istočno Sarajevo: Han Pijesak, Kalinovik, Lukavica, Pale, Sokolac, Trnovo.
71 Region Trebinje: Trebinje, Bileća, Gacko, Ljubinje, Nevesinje.
72 Number of subscribers for the city of Bugojno is not complete because BiHNet its subscribers for this city submitted collectively to subscribers of Travnik.
73 Region Foča: Foča, Čajniče, Rogatica, Rudo, Višegrad.

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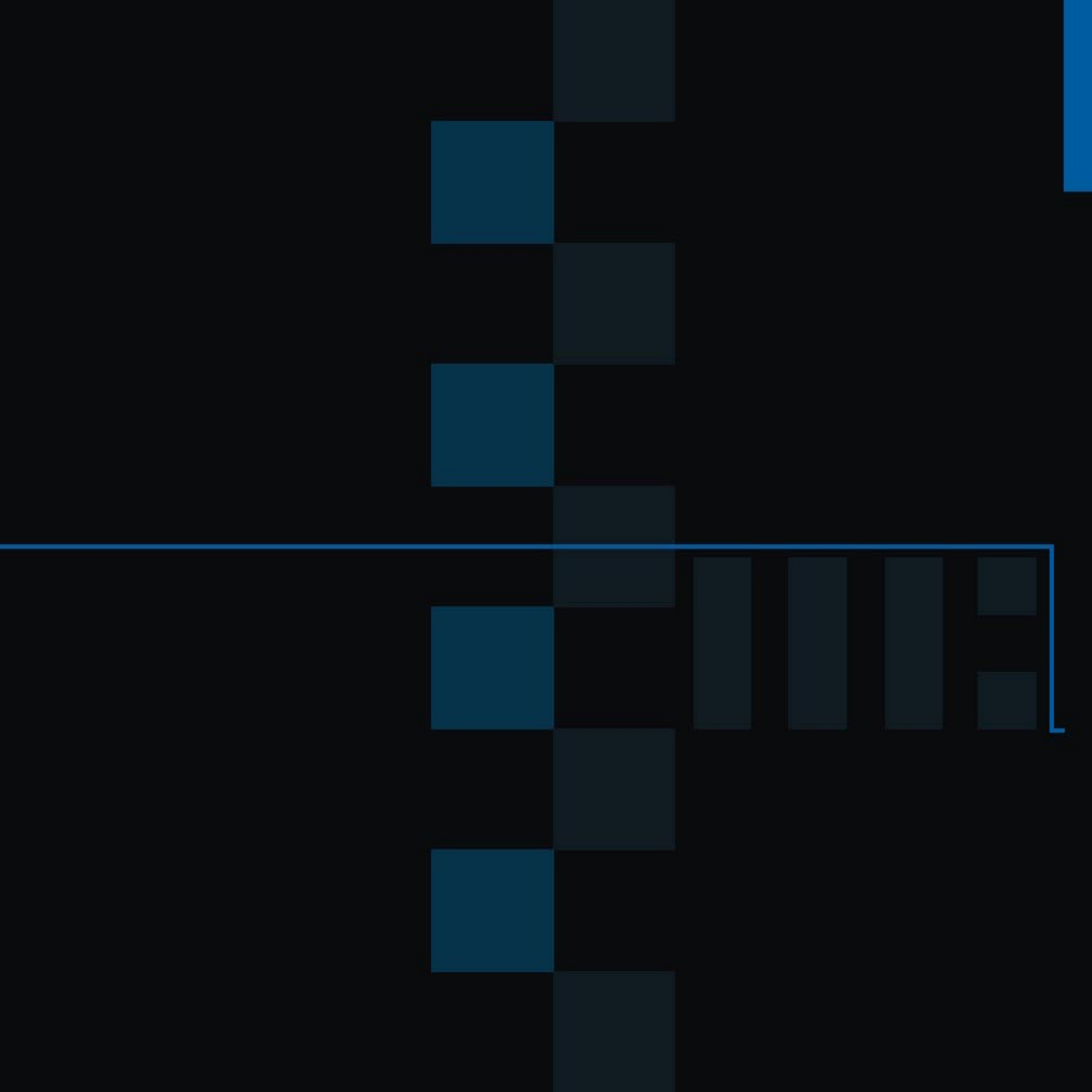
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