



PRESS COUNCIL
in Bosnia-Herzegovina

self-regulatory body for print and on-line media

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MEDIA SELF-REGULATION AND PROPAGANDA – MINDSET RESET

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5 years after the war in B&H, a lot of good things were accomplished in the media field

- ❑ Established Communication Regulatory Agency, CRA, for audio-visual media
- ❑ Adopted unique Press Code B&H for all BH journalists
- ❑ Decriminalized defamation by Law for protection against defamation
- ❑ Adopted a law for free access to information
- ❑ Appointed Ombudsman for Media

And the question remained – what to do with print media?

- ❑ Regulation?, or to try something completely new, such as media self-regulation?
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The PRESS COUNCIL IN B&H

- **ESTABLISHED** in 2000; **RE-ESTABLISHED** in 2006 and registered in Ministry of Justice of BiH as an Association
 - **MEDIATES** between unsatisfied readers of **print and online media**
 - **SUPERVISES** the application of the BH Press Code
 - **IMPROVES** professional standards in print and online media
 - **PROTECTS PUBLIC** from unprofessional and manipulative reporting
 - **PROTECTS MEDIA** from political, economic or any other pressures that jeopardize freedom of informing and freedom of media
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VALUES OF MEDIA SELF-REGULATION

- Journalists take care about their professional standards by themselves, without involvement of governments, political parties, or any other influence
- Includes both - media professionals and people / citizens
- Encourages journalists to fight for their independent work
- Encourages people to fight for their human right on accurate and timely information
- Creates a good base for the development of democracy



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- **EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT** – 4 **employees:** Executive Director; Complaints Officer/ a lawyer; Project assistant; Technical secretary + financial services of external independent Account Agency
 - **COMPLAINTS COMMISSION** – 9 **members:** 4 journalists/editors, 3 lawyers, 2 academics
 - **BOARD OF DIRECTORS** – 5 **members:** media owners and editors
 - **ASSEMBLY** – media members, representatives of 2 journalists' associations, Complaints Commission and employees
 - **RADIO REPORTERS,** Your Voice in Media - ZOOM
 - **VOLUNTEERS, cca 400** – Students of Journalism and High Schools' s.
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- **MEMBER of AIPCE,** Alliance of Independent Press Councils in Europe



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VISION

TO BE RECOGNISED by the public as **an expression of a good will of media industry in B&H to apply self-regulatory system** in the print and online media, adhering to the Press Code in everyday work of journalists, and **to be recognized as a tool for protection of citizens** from the irresponsible and unethical print and online media reporting

SUSTAINABLE self-regulatory body for print and online media, recognized by both, a media industry and the BH public **as a tool for protection of media freedoms and professional journalism** from political, economic, religious or any other pressures that jeopardize freedom of informing



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MISSION

- **IMPROVEMENT** of ethical and professional standards in print and online media
 - by supervising **application of the Press Code**
 - by permanent **education of journalists and the public** about necessities to respect **freedom of expression** and **responsible, professional media reporting**
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VALUES

- **FIRST self-regulatory body** for the print and online media in the Region of Western Balkans and SEE, whose establishment is supported by the BH print media industry and journalists' community
 - **GENUINE in B&H**, registered at the state level
 - Has representatives of **MEDIA industry, PUBLIC** and **JOURNALISTS** in its bodies
 - Has **MULTI-ETHNICS** structure
 - **DECISIONS on the peoples' complaints** on unprofessional print and online media reporting, are adopted exclusively **in accordance** with **the BH Press Code's standards**
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MAIN TASKS

- **TO RECEIVE AND TO RESOLVE** complaints of citizens on inaccurate media reporting, by:
 - **Mediation** between complainants/citizens/institutions/organizations and the media editors, with a final result - **publishing of denials, correction or apology**
 - **TO HELP Citizens to protect** their **human rights** to be properly and timely informed by media - **in the public interests**
 - **TO HELP** media professionals **to protect their democratic right to perform a free, responsible and professional reporting**
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Media legislation & Media self-regulation

- The Press Council in B&H **does not have** mandate to punish journalists or media, neither to close down media
 - It uses only **journalistic remedies**, such as publishing of denial, new information, corrections, apology..
 - For defamation, discrimination and hate speech – beside the media self-regulation – there are Law for protection against defamation (civil court), Law against discrimination and Criminal laws (criminal court).
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What are our main problems?

- Political pressures and misuse of Defamation law
 - Poor economic situation in most of the media
 - Boost of online media without transparent contact data, ownership, newsroom staff...
 - Irresponsible reporting, use of internet freedom without responsibility
 - Lack of proper understanding of a role of media in democracy: they have to work independently, in public interest, not in interest of certain political options or corporations
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- In most of the media we have a lot of ethical challenges:
 - breaches of professional standards**
 - one side stories**
 - run for numbers on expenses of professionalism and responsible reporting**
 - sensationalism**
 - a lot of political propaganda**
 - and hate speech**

This is especially visible in online media, and in the UGCs – a space given to people to express their free opinion and criticism

- **Hate speech based on nationalism and prejudices**
 - **Discriminatory speech, offences, defamation**
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Why do we have such a situation?

- Newsrooms' lack capacity and well educated specialists able to report on complex stories
 - Governments/political parties and Corporations in Control
 - Political pressures through economic pressures – leads to sensationalism to gain as many visitors/readers as possible
 - Ethical journalism and editorial integrity are under pressure in a world of “likes” and “tweets”.
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WHAT WE CAN DO TO IMPROVE SITUATION?

EDUCATION

to reset the mindset of different categories related to media

- Journalism is not a free speech, free expression, **it is constrained expression, and it works in a framework of values and ethics**, in framework of professional standards given in the Press Code/Code of Ethics for journalists.
 - Journalism **has public purpose** and it has to be done **in public interest**.
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□ **EDUCATION FOR JOURNALISTS:**

Accuracy - fact-based reporting

Privacy and **Humanity** - to do no harm to anyone

Independence – to report with **NO** propaganda

Impartiality – to tell **all sides** of the story

- Journalists have **to accept and embrace media self-regulation** and **responsibility**
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EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS OF JOURNALISM

- **Media ethics** and professional standards of reporting
 - **Media Legislation**
 - **Mechanisms for protection** of journalists' free work

 - **MEDIA ETHICS SCHOOL** for Students of Journalism, once per year - **Practical 7-days crash course on media Ethics**; the **11th School will be realized on November 2016:**
 - Media Ethics and Media Self-regulation: simulation of work of the Complaints Commission
 - Media legislation; Reporting about minorities and marginalized groups of people; News Agencies' ethics; Editorial and Editors' responsibility; Reporting about gender issues ..
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EDUCATION FOR CITIZENS & PROFESSIONAL GROUPS

by **Info meetings** about:

- **The right to complain** and to fight for their human right, a free, truthful and timely information
- **Media literacy**, the Press Code and Complaints procedure

EDUCATION FOR PUBLIC PERSONS, POLITICIANS

about **their role in democracy** and **responsibility toward media** and through media – **toward people** and their voters:

- Article 10 ECHR
 - Declaration on Freedom of Political Debate in the Media
 - Declaration on the Protection and promotion of Investigative journalism...
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EDUCATION FOR JUDICIARY: **Judges, Prosecutors and Law Students**

- Article 10 ECHR
 - Journalists' professional standards
 - Differences between **opinion and facts** (commentaries and news/facts/investigative articles/satire/cartoons)

 - **Media self-regulation as a tool for pre-courts' mediation**, in accordance with the Article 8 of Defamation law BiH
Benefits of the media self-regulation mediation:
 - resolves a lot of cases prior court procedures
 - fast, free and fair
 - saves money and relief courts from burdens of long time consuming and expensive processes
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Field work and promotional activities

- **RADIO SHOW “Your Voice in Media - ZOOM”**
 - **PUBLIC CAMPAIGNS** – simultaneously in 35 towns, promotion of the complaints procedure, and having survey with more than 1000 people about media freedoms in BiH
 - **CAMPAIGN “STOP! HATE SPEECH”**
 - **WEB SITE** www.vzs.ba
 - **EDUCATIONAL WEB PORTAL** www.edukacija.vzs.ba
 - **FB page** <https://www.facebook.com/VijeceZaStampuBiH>
 - **Twitter** [//twitter.com/VZSuBiH](https://twitter.com/VZSuBiH)
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FINANCES

- **INTERNATIONAL DONORS** mostly - Per year grants

Multiyear supports by: **German Embassy in BiH**/GMFAfairs; **NED**
– National Endowment for Democracy; **CRD** - Civil Rights
Defenders

Per certain projects:

Foundations: UNESCO/EC; EDHR; CoE - Council of Europe; Robert
Bosh Stiftung; Konrad Adenauer Stiftung; Friedrich Ebert Stiftung;

- Local sponsor by small amount for money for certain activities

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- Total Budget per year: **160.000-190.000 EUR**



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Achievements

- **Increased interest of the citizens** to fight for their rights
 - **Increased interest of media editors** to accept a self-regulation, by publishing reactions, denials, apology
 - **Recognition of the Press Council in BiH as the rare positive example in the media field of BiH** in *the EU Progress Reports for BiH*, in the section 2.2. for 2011-2105
 - **Faculties of Journalism added Media ethics and Media self-regulation** as subjects of the regular curriculum
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- **Judges started paying attention on Article 8** of Defamation Law in BiH

 - Press Council in BiH is a **regular consultant** in process of establishment of other self-regulatory bodies in many other post-communist countries, as Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Georgia, Mongolia, Hungary, etc.

 - Very well organized and visited web site
www.vzs.ba www.edukacija.vzs.ba
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