

**Interview of Head of OSCE Presence in Albania given to the radio station of the  
Journalism Department, Tirana University**

*15 April 2013*

**Question:** Today you signed a memorandum of understanding with our faculty. Briefly, can you tell us more what it is about?

**Ambassador Wollfarth:** It will help to get an insight in the time until the elections of the role of the media, what they report and also it is intended to see what effect it has on the readership, the viewers or the listeners, to help to come to improved media for the next elections.

**Question:** Why did you choose the students of journalism?

**Ambassador Wollfarth:** The University of Tirana and their students are first of all professionally and academically at a very good level and it needs also young and motivated people to do that work.

The students also form the future, the future professionals of this country. And therefore it is also very fruitful to learn at an early stage, to differentiate in certain respects and to learn to manage handling of complicated issues. Handling of information is complicated, it is complex, but it is also of key importance for the life in the country.

For every journalist, like for any other profession, I think it is sometimes very important to think outside their own box, like looking into the mirror and looking almost like another person to oneself, in order to improve and also to see the critical parts.

Programmes like this one can be very constructive, they should be seen as very constructive to improve and to come to an even higher level of professionalism, in this case in journalism.

**Question:** Do you think there is something that can change to make media monitoring better, to improve its functioning?

**Ambassador Wollfarth:** What I have seen throughout the time that I have been working here, and I am speaking on a personal basis, very often I would have wished for a clearer separation between fact and opinion.

But it is fairly good what I have seen in the media, especially in newspapers. In most cases the facts are there, some tend to mix it more with opinion, but when you have the opportunity to look at different outlets then you can find enough facts and presentation of facts to come to your own conclusions.

But at the same time I would like to remind that as an Ambassador, and especially as the OSCE Ambassador, I also have a team that assists me in getting that information. This is not possible for a normal citizen because normally when you work you do not have that much time to do all that work yourself.

The biggest service journalists can provide is having relevant information, factual information at the disposal of the consumers, the listeners, the watchers, the readers.

And in addition, hopefully in separate items, offer opinion pieces, but which are made visible as opinion pieces. And this is of extreme help for good political climate in a country, also for political education, and also for all aspects, civilization and economy, meaning that it is not in contradiction.

**Question:** How do you see the role of the media in Albania? Do you think that they are at the right professional level like other European media?

**Ambassador Wollfarth:** The media are pretty good, but there is room for improvement. A clearer separation between the factual which is there and the opinion, which is also there, would be of help. The media should be seen also largely as an independent sector, and it would be probably good to think of that instrument even more, the Media Club, including academia in discussing among journalists the items relevant for better journalism. I am convinced that through an active Media Club, the level could rise through mutual inspiration between journalists.

**Question:** What would be your message, Mr. Ambassador, for the Albanian students of journalism?

**Ambassador Wollfarth:** My message for the Albanian students of journalism would be 'Make good use of these interesting times you are living in. Stick to the values of true journalism, and this is being factual'. Fact-based and honesty go together, and when you keep that in mind, and do not distort it, then you win and your country wins. Albania, the Republic of Albania is worth it, and for the professional career, if I may add, I wish all the students all the best.

Thank you!