

MEDIA DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

Kosovo in the summer of 1999 was characterised by an almost complete media blackout. Only a few radio stations were left functional. People were

mostly watching satellite TV and broadcasts from Albania. Available information and access to it was insufficient.

At that time a new civil administration was being set up, entire communities were coming back to their places of origin, new economic and political systems, as well as police and justice structures were being created. It was crucial for the international administrators to open channels of mass communication and provide for information needs.

The establishment of the public broadcaster, Radio Television of Kosovo (RTK), in September 1999, was one of the OSCE's first undertakings in its role as the UN interim administration's Institution Building Pillar. To help regulate the media sector the Mission also established the institution of a Temporary Media Commissioner (TMC) in June 2000.

Developing over the years with the Mission's support, RTK has become the media outlet public trust the most. In addition to establishing RTK and ensuring that it provides information and programming in language spoke by different ethnic groups, the OSCE Mission supported development of a number of private media throughout Kosovo. It took the role of a monitor and adviser, providing training as required.

However, unprofessional reporting by a majority of media, including RTK, about the events surrounding drowning of three Kosovo Albanian children in March 2004 fuelled the riots in which dozens of people were killed and two thousand were forced to leave their homes.

It was obvious that journalistic trainings the Mission provided since 1999 were not enough to bring Kosovo's media landscape up to the European level.

Changing its approach, the OSCE appointed an international news affairs consultant to RTK to help improve RTK's news coverage and editorial policy. The Temporary Media Commissioner imposed a fine to all three Kosovo wide broadcasters (RTK, Kohavision, TV 21). RTK had to commit 100,000 Euro for the training of journalists and



The OSCE Mission was instrumental in establishing the RTK, the only public broadcaster in Kosovo.

editors. These trainings are now starting to show the first positive impacts on the broadcaster's performance.

Looking at the current media situation, the biggest problem seems to be that most outlets can hardly be defined as 'media'. They mostly act as entertainment machineries advertising electric blankets and playing turbo folk. Hence, the work of Mission nowadays concentrates on working to reinforce responsible press and identify and support promising broadcasters, journalists and media projects providing Kosovo citizens with high quality information and catering for all communities.

The overall aim is to support professional education of editorial staff and to ensure that all citizens have access to relevant information so that all can actively participate in the decision making and democratic processes.

An additional focus for the Mission will be monitoring media's adherence to newly adopted codes of conduct for print and broadcast media and advising on needed improvements. It will also assist the work of the Independent Media Commission (IMC) which was established as the successor to the Office of the Temporary Media Commissioner. The law on IMC came into force in September 2005.



The Kosovo Press Council, a recently established self-regulatory body of print media, is increasingly taking on the role of monitoring journalists' compliance with the Press Code of Conduct.

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KOSMA

All beginnings are difficult. This one was witnessed in a ten square meter bakery in a Serbian enclave in western Kosovo. Its village "centre" is composed of a health care centre, one EU sponsored fast food booth that has seen better days, a hairdresser's saloon, the UNMIK regional administration located in a trailer, one radio station and the bakery. All in all, a fairly laid back

place that attracted worldwide attention only after the tragic shooting at children in a river in summer 2003.

In September 2004, the village of Goraždevac/Gorazhdevc, accessible only after passing a rigorous KFOR checkpoint, was again the point of origin for a Kosovo wide - this time rather pleasant - excitement. The radio next to the bakery was broadcasting a Kosovo wide radio newscast in the Serbian language. For the first time after the conflict the Serbian speaking population in Kosovo was listening to a supra-regional news programme transmitted by over 20 other Kosovo Serb radio stations all over Kosovo.



Radio is still the main source of information for many of Kosovo's communities.

The new programme, named KOSMA after the Kosovo Media Association comprised of most of the Kosovo Serb radio stations, is produced by four strategically located broadcasters who are connected in a way that allows them an unlimited exchange of programmes and information.

Shifting duties every week one of these four stations is in charge of the newscast production which then gets fed into a specifically designed microwave linkage structure, picked up by the other broadcasters and simultaneously transmitted all over Kosovo.

It is the only radio news programme in the Serbian language that provides its listeners with local, regional and world news, thus connecting remote and heavily guarded villages like Goraždevac/Gorazhdevc with the outside world, its neighbours and the political and social happenings in Kosovo's capital Prištinë/Priština.

The need for the KOSMA project came about just before the first Kosovo Assembly election in 2001 when the International Community realized that a Kosovo wide radio programme was needed to include the Kosovo Serbs in the electoral information campaign and provide them with sufficient information so that

they could participate in the decision making process.

It was the European Agency for Reconstruction who provided the funds to realise the project and it was the OSCE Mission in Kosovo who was chosen as the implementing partner. For the 2001 election the project launch remained imaginary but was in place and set up just in time for the second parliamentary elections in autumn 2004.

It took more than three years to get the project that cost just over a quarter of a million Euros started. The initial response by the listeners showed however that there was a need for it long before that.

OSCE staff accompanied the first couple of weeks of broadcasting by providing in-house coaching.

While in Goraždevac/Gorazhdevc we could not listen to the programme in the radio station that lacks a separated recording studio and is thus prone to negative acoustic feedbacks, we were lucky to be invited by the baker to his bakery. For him we were random passers-bys. "Have you already heard about this new news bulletin? An excellent idea! You have to listen to it. You have to come in. You will hear news about all the regions Kosovo. I cannot remember when was the last time I heard a proper radio news programme here."

Even though the KOSMA network has yet to be extended into the north of Kosovo it can be called a success story. Today even radio stations in Herzegovina and Montenegro re-broadcast the KOSMA newscast and bring Kosovo closer to its neighbours.

Police and media

Relationships between police officials and media professionals are all too often tense. Strict police practices collide with a very assertive information "hunting" techniques and independence many journalists exercise while conducting their duties.

Nonetheless, co-operation between police officers and journalists is a necessity. Both police and media serve the same public and its interests. Lack of communication between the-se two groups results in poor news reporting. Left without information from the official

police sources, journalists may speculate and therefore misinform public or compromise police work.

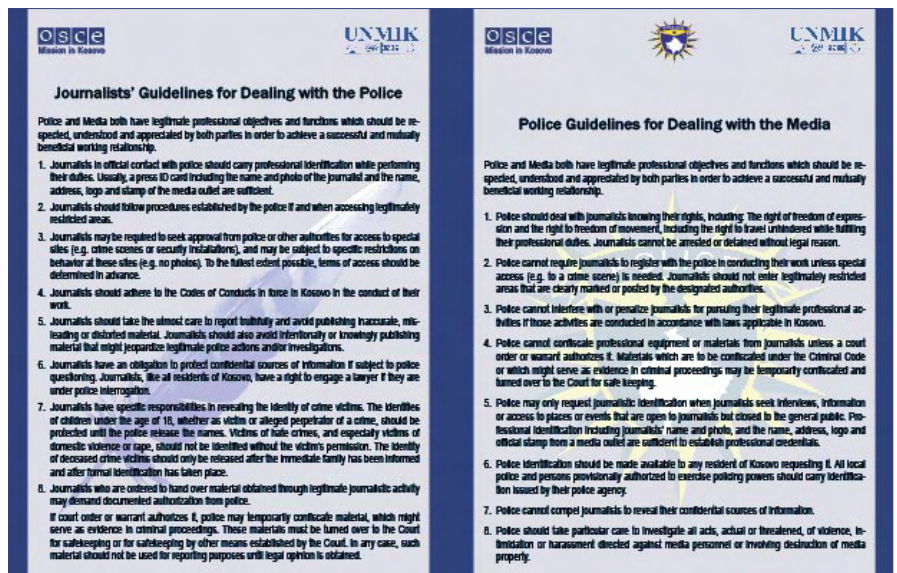
The OSCE Mission in Kosovo is responsible for both media and police education and development. "We strive to improve standards of crime news reporting, increase public awareness about important legal and police issues and emphasize the benefit of professional working relations between the police and the media," said Angela Tenbruck, the Mission's Media Programme Officer.

Throughout 2004 and 2005 the Mission ran a programme to better acquaint media with police procedures and to develop police's understanding for the information needs of the media. According to Michael Schulte-Schrepping, Instructor from the OSCE-run Kosovo Police Service School, the Police and Media Relations programme included theoretical as well as practical exercises. These taught journalists about conduct of police investigations and the need to exercise self-restraint to avoid "contaminating" crimescenes or obstructing and compromising investigations. Police on the other hand were thought about importance of providing as much information as possible and helping journalists answer their call of duty.

"At the simulated crime scenes both journalists and the police were able to test the knowledge acquired," said Mr. Schulte-Schrepping.

Under the programme, the OSCE Mission in November 2005 issued a pocket-sized set of guidelines for the media and the police to follow when interacting. Taken from the existing codes of conduct, applicable laws and regulations, these guidelines address police and media workers and briefly explain how to deal with issues such as confidential sources, confiscation of material, access to crime scenes and protection of data, in particular with a view on the protection of minors as stipulated in the Juvenile Justice Code of Kosovo.

More than 13,000 copies in Albanian, Serbian, Turkish and English languages were printed and are being disseminated to police and media outlets in all ethnic communities.



OSCE developed guidelines provide media and police with a short overview of their basic rights and obligations when interacting with each other.

OSCE's programme officers will visit police stations and media houses, to provide briefings on the guidelines. A briefing was already delivered to the KPS Office returning to the Kosovo Police Service School for the advanced professional development courses.

The guidelines as put together by the OSCE Mission will be updated by local stakeholders in 2006 to correspond with newly adopted media laws and codes of conduct. The stakeholders will include Kosovo's Press Council, Association for Broadcast Media, Association of Professional Journalists, Independent Media Commission, the Radio Television of Kosovo and the future Ministry of Internal Affairs/Police Inspectorate.

Multi-ethnic RTV Herc successfully reaching out to communities

Štrpce/Shtërpçë is a rather unique municipality. It has a good geographical location, its institutions have a genuine multi-ethnic structure, and it also has a multi-ethnic media outlet, RTV Herc.

RTV Herc produces and airs two and a half hours of bi-lingual (Serbian and Albanian languages) newscast a day. The initiative to create such a media product came from the OSCE Mission whose intent was to build local media capacity and to promote multi-ethnic programming.

From December 2003 to August 2004 the Mission worked with this Kosovo Serb TV station implementing a media development and reconciliation project. "TV Herc enlarged its editorial office with both, Kosovo Serb and Kosovo Albanian reporters/technicians and it also upgraded equipment and technical working facilities. All of this improved the quality of its programme," said Bojan Mladenović, TV station's manager.

TV Herc's goal is to highlight local events important for all Štrpce/Shtërpçë communities. It is the first local media in Kosovo to take on such a task.

The OSCE educated, trained and eventually enabled TV Herc's multi-ethnic team - 3 Kosovo Albanians and 10 Kosovo Serbs - to collaborate and jointly produce quality news for the viewers from both ethnic communities. According to OSCE's Project Manager, Milosava Banašević, the Mission also advised the television production and business management on how to put together a viable business plan and run a self-sustainable TV station.

The successful model of multi-ethnic interaction and reconciliation that took place at TV Herc is important not only for Štrpce/Shtërpçë inhabitants but for all of Kosovo and different ethnic communities living here. It is filling the information gap and creates an environment conducive to democratic processes.

The OSCE's involvement with TV Herc these days is purely of advisory nature. "Mission staff members visit the station and provide advice as needed," added Banašević.



Former Head of the OSCE Mission, Ambassador Pascal Fieschi, officially opened TV Herc in July 2004.