

POSITIVE EXAMPLES OF MEDIA INTEGRITY PROTECTION IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE

A COUNTER-SYSTEM, OR HOW TO SAVE JOURNALISM

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INTRODUCTION

Our analysis of good practices in the field of media integrity protection¹ is rooted in the study carried out under the SEE Media Observatory project, and published in 2014 in the book *Media Integrity Matters*.² The research was conducted in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia, and largely explained how corrupt relations in the media system prevent the media in these countries from serving the public interest. However, it did identify some positive examples and good practices where either the regulatory framework and institutions or the media with their journalism were contributing to the protection of media integrity and public interest. In 2015, the Observatory team continued to research certain segments of the relations that corrupt media systems in these countries,³ particularly state-media financial relations.⁴ Additionally, it included Montenegro, Kosovo and Turkey in its research.

The smaller-scale research presented here attempts to illuminate certain positive examples of media policy, of institutions fighting corruption, as well as of media and journalism in the region covered by the 2014 *Media Integrity Matters* report. We shall focus on three countries – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia – since the 2014 media integrity research reports covering them contained a number of such examples, but also on account of the limited scope of this particular study. We selected eight good practice examples, and utilizing case studies and semi-structured, in-depth interviews with leading individuals capable of presenting the selected examples of institutions or

1 This report has been prepared for a round table discussion organised on 14 April 2016 in Sarajevo within the framework of the SEE Media Observatory. The author would like to thank Sandra B. Hrvatina and Sanela Hodžić for their suggestions.

2 See Petković (ed.), *Media Integrity Matters: Reclaiming Public Service Values in Media and Journalism*, 2014.

3 After becoming an EU Member State, Croatia was not included in the research conducted by the SEE Media Observatory in 2015.

4 See the series of the 2015 SEE Media Observatory reports on state-media financial relations at: <http://mediaobservatory.net/media-integrity-reports-2015>. Accessed 15 March 2016.

MEDIA
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media, we have been able to reach certain conclusions. With regard to each selected example, we inquired how it came to be, what legal, institutional and financial framework facilitated it, and how decisive were the personnel structure and the leading individual(s) who conceptually and/or practically directed the functioning of the good practice example in question. Why do these particular institutions and media outlets protect media integrity and work in the public interest, and how did they come to do it? Lastly, we were curious about the ambitions and visions concerning the future of these positive examples.

Our overview aims to present these cases in greater detail, in order to further understand how they came about and how they work. It is not our intention here to idealise or criticise these examples. By viewing them, we wish to ascertain what conclusions their operations offer with regard to the potential for media system reform, since these positive examples are contrasted, within the media system, by a dominant structure of relations whose corrupt character and enormity threaten democracy itself. There is a pressing need to see how to dismantle such a media system and build a new one.

In the field of media policy, we note the positive example of efforts and concrete measures by the media policy department at the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia during the term of Zoran Milanović's government, from December 2011 to January 2016. In the institutional context, we point out the work of Serbia's anti-corruption body, the Anti-Corruption Council, which between 2011 and 2015 published three reports on media ownership and financing, bringing to light the issue of the corruption of the media system, as well as stimulating public debate and, possibly, media reform. Among the media outlets and examples of journalistic production, we focus on BIRN, the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, formally headquartered in Sarajevo, with regional office in Belgrade and branches in many of the countries in the region; the Center for Investigative Reporting (CIN) in Sarajevo; the Sarajevo-based *Žurnal.ba* and Banja Luka-based *Buka*, both online media outlets; Belgrade's *Insajder*, initially a television programme and now an online media outlet; and *Novosti*, a Zagreb weekly which maintains a website and is published by the Serb National Council, an organisation representing the Serbian national minority in Croatia.

In our 2014 report on media integrity indicators, our researchers singled out the media outlets and journalistic production centres presented here as examples of positive practices, based on their journalism and the content they publish, without considering their institutional, financial or legal frameworks.

With one exception, the interviews used for this research were conducted in December 2015 and January 2016. The interviewees included MILAN F. ŽIVKOVIĆ, a media policy advisor with the Croatian Ministry of Culture during the term of Zoran Milanović's government; MIROSLAV MILIĆEVIĆ, the vice president of the Anti-Corruption Council with the Government of the Republic of Serbia; GORDANA IGRIĆ, the regional director of BIRN; LEILA BIČAKČIĆ, the director of the

Center for Investigative Reporting (CIN) in Sarajevo; ELDIN KARIĆ, the editor of the *Žurnal* web portal and the director of the ACCOUNT anti-corruption network; BRANKICA STANKOVIĆ, the editor of *Insajder* web portal and TV production; IVICA ĐIKIĆ, the editor of the *Novosti* weekly; MILORAD PUPOVAC, the president of the Serb National Council, and ALEKSANDAR TRIFUNOVIĆ, the editor of the *Buka* web portal. All interviews but one were conducted in person, recorded and transcribed for the purposes of the analysis. Aleksandar Trifunović was interviewed via e-mail in March 2016.

We will begin our report by identifying basic characteristics of the examined good practice examples in the media and journalism, presenting them in a regional comparative overview. In addition to that we will present good practice examples in, respectively, the field of media policy and the fight against corruption in the media sector individually with no comparative references, since we have singled out only one example per the fields in question. We will end the overview by drawing certain conclusions from the eight cases presented.

1

A COMPARATIVE OVERVIEW OF POSITIVE PRACTICES IN MEDIA AND JOURNALISM

All the examined media outlets and journalism production centres – *Žurnal*, CIN, BIRN, *Insajder*, *Novosti*, and *Buka* – are non-profit. The reason for this is that our 2014 research on media integrity did not reveal a single good practice example of protecting media integrity either among commercial media outlets or at the public broadcasters in any of the countries studied. This fact is interesting in itself if we take into account that our research at the time covered five countries in the region. As a positive example, we did single out the *Insajder* television programme, which at the time of research was being produced for B92, a commercial television broadcaster. However, B92 itself originated from the non-commercial alternative media sphere and only later changed its profile. Also, during our research into the positive examples of media integrity protection, the *Insajder* programme abandoned the commercial broadcasting framework of B92, and became an independent media outlet.

What the six media outlets and journalistic production centres, as well as their leading representatives interviewed herein, have in common is their dedication to, and passion for, journalism both as a profession and as a public service. They seem to have little doubt as to the true purpose of journalism, and dedicated and imaginative as they are, could most likely find ways to do this kind of journalism in any environment.

WHAT THE SIX MEDIA OUTLETS AND JOURNALISTIC PRODUCTION CENTRES, AS WELL AS THEIR LEADING REPRESENTATIVES INTERVIEWED HEREIN, HAVE IN COMMON IS THEIR DEDICATION TO, AND PASSION FOR, JOURNALISM BOTH AS A PROFESSION AND AS A PUBLIC SERVICE.

ESTABLISHMENT AND LEGAL STATUS

Most of the media outlets we single out in this report are characterised by their investigative reporting, i.e. their systematic research into the violations, the corruption and abuses of power as destroyers of society and democracy – employing journalism based on corroborated facts.

The analysis reveals that these six outlets from three countries are commonly driven by the vision of small groups of individuals who refuse to belong to the media mainstream, and wish to establish their own institutional framework: non-profit, enabling journalistic autonomy and service to public, and providing their own means of subsistence. These outlets stem from the inability of journalists to realise their vision and concept of journalism in other media.

All of these media were established in the 2000s; not a single media outlet identified by our research as a positive example of media integrity protection originates from the 1990s or earlier periods.

Žurnal was launched in late 2008/early 2009 by three or four journalists dissatisfied with the situation in the media outlets that employed them at the time. Similarly, CIN was established in 2004 by a small group of journalists inspired and informed by the American model of investigative reporting centres. BIRN was started in 2004 by a group of five or six, mostly female journalists who initially worked within the Institute for War and Peace Reporting in London, and then went on to form their own organisation and media outlet. *Insajder* began in 2004 as a three-reporter team involved in investigative reporting and the making of investigative television news programmes. *Buka* was launched in 2000 by a team of individuals with a background in student movements and publications. The weekly *Novosti* in its present form arrived on the newspaper stands in January 2010 as a result of the transformation of a national minority media outlet into a general-interest weekly within a previously established institutional framework, that is Serb National Council in Croatia. Yet, this media outlet, too, is fuelled by a shared vision of individuals, augmented by a core of journalists of the then already defunct *Feral Tribune*, equally dedicated to independent and critical journalism. It should be noted that of the six outlets identified as positive examples of media integrity protection in the region, two – CIN and BIRN – were formed in the context of international journalism projects, and subsequently began functioning independently.

The media outlets and journalism production centres that are examined here function as non-profit, non-governmental organisations, i.e. citizen associations, founded by journalists, the exception being *Novosti*, a weekly published by a representative and coordinating body of a minority community, which again has citizen association status. *Žurnal*, for example, is published by the Centre for Media Development and Analysis, while *Buka* is published by the Centre for informative decontamination of youth of Banja Luka. In two cases (BIRN and *Insajder*), the main founder(s) of the outlets have established business organisations,

through which they market their journalistic products and analyses. They use this revenue stream to support the activities of the outlet, and to cover the costs of journalistic production. *Žurnal's* publisher Centre for Media Development and Analysis, on the other hand, has founded a sister organisation: ACCOUNT, the Anti-corruption Civic Organisations' Unified Network, which is also a non-profit NGO and is involved in anti-corruption activism.

1.2

FINANCING FRAMEWORKS AND MODELS

Most of these media outlets and journalistic production centres receive their funding from foreign donors. These donations are aimed primarily at funding specific projects, often lasting several years (*Žurnal*, CIN, BIRN, *Buka*, etc.). Some outlets were launched with the help of an initial donation (*Buka* and CIN), or have received aid in the form of free computer software or server space during the beginning stages of their operation (*Insajder*). BIRN received a donation to cover several years' worth of institutional operating costs related to the strategic, long-term reform of internal organisation. *Novosti* has a specific financing model, while *Insajder*, which is at the stage of being established as an independent outlet, is still seeking donors. Apart from these two, each media outlet has a group of regular donors and is actively seeking additional ones. Typically, the departure of a regular donor will present a serious threat to the very existence of the media outlet. The donors include foreign private foundations, and U.S. and European state institutions through their programmes of media development aid. Operations of media-supporting donors in the region would be an interesting subject of research in the context of their role in media system reforms and media integrity protection; however, we were unable to study this aspect in our research.

The financial stability of the media in this study is based on the ability of individuals charged with acquiring donations to generate good ideas and manage the donations well, on good results, and on good cooperation with donors. These are the very media outlets that the donors operating in their respective countries recognise as rare good practice examples, and supply with funds intended for media democratisation. Gordana Igrić says that years of practice have taught her to recognise which ideas and projects to pair with which donors, according to the donors' profiles and strategies. Within BIRN, donations are sought at several levels – regionally, and at the level of the states within which local BIRN organisations operate. To avoid internal conflict and enhance transparency, certain agreements and procedures are in place, while internal departments meet regularly. BIRN's business model consists of a combination of donors, a combination of regional and national project generation and donation seeking, along with a commercial approach to those products that BIRN can conceivably market. BIRN maintains member-organisations in six countries in the region, and a network of journalists and editors in additional four or five countries in the region. BIRN

employs around 200 people on a monthly basis, and requires around 2.3 million euro to cover its annual costs. Eldin Karić stresses the importance of achieving results with the funds received from donors and of building mutual trust with each separate donor: *“I would do nothing to jeopardise that trust. I would sooner act to my detriment and that of my organisation than to the detriment of a donor and of the obligations we have taken on.”* Additionally, Karić stresses, they make sure to explain to donors that they, as a media outlet, require funds for reporting, for the production of content, rather than anything else, e.g. conferences, round-table discussions and the like.

Taking into account their dependence on project financing and the necessity of ensuring continued conditions for journalistic work, the personnel of donation-dependent media must skilfully combine projects and donations to prevent depletion of funds in any particular period. A number of interviewees confirm that, in such cases, certain regular donors are ready to come to their aid and assist them in surviving these periods. Leila Bičakčić states that CIN goes to great lengths to ensure that the managerial part of the organisation, in charge of managing funds and maintaining the stability of operations, in no way encumbers journalists with financial problems, thus facilitating uninterrupted work and regular payment of salaries.

Salaries are regular and appropriate for the countries in which these media operate. Milorad Pupovac, a representative of the publisher of the Croatian weekly *Novosti*, gives perhaps the best explanation of the financial situation of journalists in the media covered by this report: *“Our type of media outlet, with its freedom and with the difficulties this freedom presents in the general public environment, cannot be rewarded at the level that journalists, editors and columnists in the corporate media enjoy. After all, this is a minority media outlet, an alternative media outlet. However, every journalist working for Novosti understands that the funds they are paid, which are stable and guarantee them a level of independence, prosperity and freedom, could hardly be replaced by anything else.”*

These media pay their employees in a regular, legal manner, and never neglect to pay social contributions. *“Everything must be clean. We cannot afford to be like the people we are criticising. That’s the basic idea,”* Eldin Karić says. Leila Bičakčić says that at CIN everyone is employed legally, with strict adherence to labour regulations. *“We pay salaries regularly, and everyone is guaranteed to receive what their contract says. Without discussion,”* Bičakčić says. Gordana Igrić states that BIRN operates in several states in the region, and that the collaborators are thus subject to various legal arrangements. Some receive authorship fees rather than salaries, since the tendency is to seek those solutions that are financially and legally most appropriate for each particular employment status.

In the media presented here, which are funded mainly from donations, the revenue from payment for journalistic content is scarce. CIN permits and encourages other media to publish its stories free of charge. This is also characteristic of the other outlets presented. However, BIRN offers a “premium

content” subscription scheme on its *Balkan Insight* website, aimed at the international public. To date, they have sold 95 institutional subscriptions, while through their BIRN Consultancy company they charge individual customers for analyses of individual topics. *Buka* publishes ads on its website, yet according to Aleksandar Trifunović, advertisers tend to stay away, since successful companies have close ties to politics.

Since becoming independent from the television broadcaster *B92* in early 2016, *Insajder*’s financial model has been based on a few agreements with established media ready to purchase their investigative stories or television programmes. Upon leaving *B92*, they took on the obligation to produce programming for the broadcaster. Additionally, *Insajder* reached agreements with the *N1* regional television network and the *Slobodna Evropa* radio service (*Radio Free Europe*) to publish its programmes within these large media and receive payment as a production company. Simultaneously, they seek donations through the *Insajder* citizens association. Certain individuals agreed to help *Insajder* develop a business plan on a volunteer basis. The *Insajder* founders have firmly decided not to have advertising on the *Insajder.net* website: “*It wouldn’t do to advertise anyone at Insajder.*” However, there are plans to establish topical websites where advertising will be permitted under strict guidelines, and paid access will be available to a database of the documents and interviews collected during research. Brankica Stanković stresses their commitment to keeping their work within regulatory limits, to paying their contributors honestly and regularly, and to fulfilling their obligations. Currently, they employ no one on a permanent basis; however, they intend to employ all their regular contributors permanently as soon as the production revenue starts flowing and business stabilises: “*We cannot allow ourselves a single mistake. Neither I nor anyone else who founded Insajder.net comes from the business world. Our biggest challenge is to keep from making mistakes due to inexperience.*”

Among the media that our report identifies as primarily concerned with public interest and upholding media integrity, *Novosti* is the only print outlet. Given the specificity of its model, we will present it in a more detailed manner.

Novosti works within a different institutional and financial framework. As a weekly published by a minority community, *Novosti* has access to funds from the state budget of the Republic of Croatia intended for the information and cultural activities of minority communities in Croatia. Systemically, the State Council for National Minorities, composed of minority representatives, allocates and decides on these funds. The sums allocated by the Council amount to 80 percent of *Novosti*’s funding. To support the publication of *Novosti*, the Serb National Council must apply annually to the council for project funds. The annual subsidy, intended to cover the publication costs, amounts to around 3 million HRK (approx. 400,000 euro), and is allocated in monthly instalments. *Novosti* generates the remaining 20 percent of its revenue through sales at newspaper stands. However, public funds are essential to the weekly’s operations.

The funds granted to the Council for National Minorities support twenty minority media outlets in Croatia, and reached a substantial level during the term of Ivo Sanader's government. However, each government and parliament has the option to maintain state budget support for minority media at present levels, to increase it, decrease it, or to abolish it altogether – depending on current political attitudes toward minorities' rights and status. Consequently, if the current government decides to alter the existing policies regarding the financing of minority media, the continued existence of *Novosti* in its present form might be threatened.

Novosti employs 16 to 17 people permanently, and on a monthly basis benefits from around 50 outside contributors. It prints 7,500 copies per issue, of which 3,500 are distributed free of charge throughout Croatia via local offices of the Serb National Council. Around 2,000 copies are sold at newspaper stands, covering approximately 20 percent of operating costs. Two years ago, *Novosti* launched its website, where it re-publishes content from the print edition throughout the week, along with a small portion of supplemental content written expressly for the website.

According to Ivica Đikić, the editor of *Novosti*, the public co-financing model is beneficial to the nurturing of quality independent journalism, particularly in serious print media that uphold professionalism and democratic principles. This model, adds Đikić, should become dominant generally, not only in the sphere of minority media.

For the establishment of *Novosti* as a model of media integrity protection, the credit goes to a large extent to its publisher, the Serb National Council. Within the council, however, the conception of *Novosti* as a critical general-interest weekly has grown out of the way that the role of the outlet is seen, understood and advocated for, by the council's president Milorad Pupovac.

He considers *Novosti's* exit from the minority ghetto and its becoming an integral part of the general media space as an act of emancipatory media policy. To him, a ghettoised minority policy is harmful both to the minority community and to society as a whole. *"It is about the openness of a particular community,"* Pupovac claims, *"and about the media being open, critical and analytical, while creating a space of enlightenment, tolerance, freedom, and diversity."* After *Feral Tribune* had folded, *Novosti* gradually integrated some of those journalists into its newsroom, thus combining elements of minority policies and emancipatory media policies.

Pupovac stresses that *Novosti* editorial staff enjoy full autonomy with regard to the publisher. Đikić confirms this, noting: *"People have it good here, in the sense that neither I as editor-in-chief, nor Pupovac as our publisher's representative, will ever tell them not to write something, or that we can't run a piece for political, financial, or some other reasons. That's what matters to people: that they are free to write."*

According to Pupovac, the only question is whether the publisher is capable of securing the funds for work or not: *“We, as publishers, are here to protect our newspaper from anyone trying to influence how much freedom it has, how it’s edited, or what it’s allowed to publish. Journalists must have the freedom they need. People who work at Novosti are people of integrity, and we protect that integrity here.”*

Pupovac names three conditions necessary for such a symbiotic relationship between an emancipatory publisher and professional, critical journalists: 1) a publisher must be willing to adopt the media policy of creating a symbiosis between minority media reporting and national media reporting, between merely an informative media outlet and becoming a critical one; 2) the publisher must be capable of securing funds and justifying the expense to the state; and 3) the publisher must be capable of attracting sufficient big-name journalistic talent able to produce such a quality media.

Eldin Karić, too, sees public financing of serious, high-quality journalism as a long-term solution. *Žurnal’s* investigations into public expenditure on media in Bosnia and Herzegovina showed that around 15 million euro’ worth of public funds are directed to media each year through subsidies, donations and sponsorships, and this amount doesn’t include the funds for marketing and advertising of state-owned companies and public institutions. Karić believes that an initiative should be launched to reserve a certain percentage of these funds to establish a fund for investigative reporting. In addition, fees collected from electronic media by the regulatory authority could be used to establish such a fund. State institutions should be charged with controlling the financial regularity of the fund, but denied any influence over the allocation of money. Karić feels that once regular and decent means of financing investigative journalism became available, and once the profession became a viable way of making a living, there would be an increase in interest, and an influx into investigative journalism by young people identifying themselves with such type of journalism.

1.3

CAREFUL STAFFING AS A PATH TO QUALITY

The interviewees from media outlets recognised for their positive practices of media integrity protection mention that they put serious effort and a great deal of energy into staffing their reporting teams, into taking on new contributors, and training them to meet high standards in their work, especially in investigative reporting. *Žurnal’s* Eldin Karić explains that training takes place through actual work on concrete topics, and through writing. He has no confidence whatsoever in those journalism courses that have been imposed at certain times by donors and non-governmental organisations. According to Karić, these attempts at training are a complete waste of time. Gordana Igrić of BIRN considers the staffing of investigative reporting teams to be most difficult, and adds that it is very easy to attract quality personnel to serve as project managers. The pool of project

managing personnel has built up in the ten-to fifteen-year period of heavy donor investment in NGO's, their projects and their staff.

Both Gordana Igrić and Brankica Stanković find that, in order to build a solid investigative reporting team, it is much easier to engage beginners and work with them from scratch, to train and rear them. *“Even when older journalists join my team,”* Eldin Karić says, *“I have to work with them, and invest a lot of energy in that.”* Simultaneously, Igrić says, it is hugely important to develop a good editorial and fact-checking team, since in investigative reporting errors can cause a great deal of damage. Indeed, her biggest concern, looking at the future of BIRN, is whether they will be able to recruit, develop and sustain their reporting staff in every necessary aspect, and whether they will succeed in building a top-notch editorial team.

At *Insajder*, the introduction of journalists to the system of work and standards consists of a lengthy process of engagement with a wide topic, says Brankica Stanković. Investigative reporting involves a special way of working and thinking, as well as total commitment. Getting there can take years. A number of the media outlets presented here attract journalists through public calls for applications. The applicants' level of formal education is noted, but our interviewees stress that it is in no way a decisive factor. *Buka* has seven employees, all selected through public calls for application. Most have university degrees, while three have earned master's degrees in social sciences.

CIN in Sarajevo has the most advanced system for seeking, selection, and employment of new journalists. It is a long and transparent process. All contributors are employed through public calls for applications, which serves the principle of granting everyone an equal starting position and opportunity to get a job. First, 30 or 40 candidates who meet the specified requirements are selected from a huge volume of applicants. They take an online test, whereby they have eight hours to complete a number of tasks by accessing an online platform that contains raw documents for journalistic investigation and hypothetical situations to solve. Then, ten to fifteen candidates are invited to interviews. A committee consisting of four CIN representatives conducts the interviews and selects three candidates for a final interview, after which the editor decides whom to employ.

However, even candidates selected in such a painstaking way occasionally do not remain with CIN. Some simply do not find their feet, others cannot accept the reality of leaving a story unfinished for months or even a year, and not seeing the results of their efforts. Another special feature of working for CIN is that its journalists do not sign their stories. Articles are consistently signed “CIN”, giving weight to the organisation and contributing to its visibility, while guaranteeing quality – since standards arise from the organisation – and acknowledging that each story is a team effort rather than the work of any single individual.

CIN allows other media to pick up its articles, but not to alter them in any way, and posts the supporting documents online for further investigation and analysis.

The media engaged in investigative reporting stress the importance of fact-checking, of possessing the evidence for the claims they make, and of the credibility of their reporting. In this context, it is crucial to involve legal experts. For example, *Insajder* regularly works with lawyers to ensure legal assessment of all claims and thus avoid lawsuits. Brankica Stanković feels that it was Veran Matić, the chief editor of *B92*, who made the most important decision of *Insajder's* entire tenure with that broadcaster, when in 2004, at the time of *Insajder's* inception, he included a lawyer in its team – despite the initial prejudice felt by reporters against such a precaution. In 12 years of existence, during which *Insajder* conducted more than 500 interviews, gathered thousands of pieces of evidence, and produced 120 investigative programmes, it was hit with only seven lawsuits, and lost none of them.

“Honest work and credibility are paramount. Credibility takes a long time to build, and can be shattered overnight. We cannot afford to make a single mistake.” These are the words of Brankica Stanković, but all our interviewees have uttered similar sentences, particularly those whose media are involved in investigative reporting.

Of all our interviewees, only Leila Bičakčić has an exclusively directorial position. Gordana Igrić combines this job with editorial work and conducting of training courses within BIRN. When the *Insajder* team went independent, the director's job was taken over by Miodrag Čvorović, a programme's producer since its earliest days. Everyone who leads the media included in our regional selection of good practice examples has primarily a journalistic background, and once they had assumed their directorial positions, their main aim remained to guarantee the conditions for quality reporting in their newsrooms.

1.4

AMBITIONS AND PROSPECTS

BIRN operates as the largest and most ambitious media undertaking among those singled out for our research. It is a regional network composed of a regional newsroom for the *Balkan Insight* website and a regional office, as well as a number of newsrooms and offices in various countries in the region. It maintains a network of journalists in countries without offices, 15 websites, and several regional projects engaged in reporting on transitional justice processes and war crime trials. It holds an annual regional summer school of investigative reporting, and it has created a fellowship programme for excellence in reporting. It has a consulting firm and a series of other projects. Given its multitude of facets and capabilities, BIRN stands out as a kind of region-wide public service reporting network. The network, Gordana Igrić notes, has reached a level where the entirety of its operations is increasingly difficult to supervise, and is developing a new set of internal mechanisms to address the issue. The donors' demands are high, and according to Igrić, its quality and skillset have made BIRN a dominant player in the region – to the extent that it, in a way, has

a suffocating effect on new players. To Igrić, BIRN's prospects lie in transmitting its know-how and its model to other regions in Europe and elsewhere in the world. She expects that at some point in the foreseeable future, various reasons will lead BIRN to limit the scope of its operations in the region.

Insajder has ambitious plans regarding its intended array of formats and journalistic products – both in Serbia and regionally. In addition to their work on far-reaching investigative stories, the *Insajder* team has become engaged in daily reporting focused on selected daily topics. The change is significant, not only for the staff of *Insajder*, but for the Serbian journalistic community in general. “*We would like to get involved and show that journalists have fallen asleep and stopped asking questions,*” says Brankica Stanković. Now that their media outlet has gone online, they plan to put more effort into connecting to other investigative reporting sites and networks.

With its ACCOUNT anti-corruption network, *Žurnal*, too, is scaling up its ambitions to establish a pool of media outlets and journalists who will work jointly on more demanding topics and investigative stories throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. This media pool currently includes two television broadcasters and four online outlets (among them, *Buka*, one of our good media practice examples), while a network of radio stations is being established with the identical aim of investigative reporting.

When addressing the prospects of their organisations, several interviewees expressed concern regarding the lack of interest in investigative and analytical reporting among young journalists entering the profession. According to Eldin Karić, “*The next generation of journalists ready to take on investigative reporting, to criticise negative phenomena, and to work analytically, is simply not there.*” All the media outlets we present here as positive examples of media integrity protection employ a certain number of journalists who would otherwise most likely abandon the profession, since there would be nowhere for them to maintain their professional integrity and the freedom to write as they see fit – in other words, to conduct reporting in a professional, analytical and critical fashion. Brankica Stanković is not particularly understanding of her colleagues who have given up on journalism as a profession, but persist in the media, playing at journalism with no regard for its standards or its wellbeing. Says Stanković, “*I don't accept the excuse that journalists self-censor because they are afraid of losing their jobs. If that's the case, get out of the job altogether. If you've chosen journalism, a profession that requires you to serve the public interest, then that's your obligation and you shouldn't be calculating about it. The moment you detect any self-censorship, you should be honest and admit you are incapable of doing this type of work. They call me brave, but it's not about bravery. I simply do not see any other way of doing journalism.*”

According to our interviewees, the citizens' respect for this kind of journalism comes and goes. For example, *Žurnal* and CIN do not attract enough readers to compete with commercial media outlets, but note that members of the public

WHEN ADDRESSING THE PROSPECTS OF THEIR ORGANISATIONS, SEVERAL INTERVIEWEES EXPRESSED CONCERN REGARDING THE LACK OF INTEREST IN INVESTIGATIVE AND ANALYTICAL REPORTING AMONG YOUNG JOURNALISTS ENTERING THE PROFESSION.

do recognise them as reliable sources of information, and turn to them when they experience or observe cases of impropriety or injustice. *“Even if people don’t know exactly what we do, they know we are investigating things, solving things, and seeking some kind of justice,”* Leila Bičakčić says. Aleksandar Trifunović, on the other hand, notes that the public rarely supports *Buka’s* work on critical topics. A portion of the public is always ready to blame journalists for exposing violations, rather than the violators who commit them. In 2015, to mark *Buka’s* fifteenth anniversary, the outlet visited 30 towns throughout Bosnia in response to its readers’ requests. In a series of public discussions and meetings, thousands of participants talked about how the media outlet works, how it is funded etc. Additionally, they were invited to 20 towns that they were unable to visit. The aim of these meetings was to get the citizens acquainted with the outlet, and encourage them to attempt something similar for themselves.

Other segments of the media community occasionally treat these media with a degree of hostility. This is especially characteristic of the media who belong to political and business crony networks, and sometimes run negative campaigns against the media we present in this report and their leading representatives. However, this attitude is not prevalent. Our interviewees list numerous examples of good cooperation and mutual respect with other members of the media community.

1.5

VALUES AND HOW TO PROTECT THEM

“We believe that journalism, true journalism, can be preserved, and that’s what we want to demonstrate,” Brankica Stanković says regarding the *Insajder* editorial staff.

Eldin Karić describes a strategy of alliances between journalists and media outlets, and talks of creating a media pool to reach citizens throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina by way of quality investigative reporting. He believes that the dominant, corrupt media system should be confronted by a counter-system. *“It’s an expansion strategy that consists of literally bypassing the system. It’s a counter-system, really,”* Karić states. *“We can’t survive within the system, so we are creating a counter-system capable of quick responses. You need to recognise and eliminate your enemies while attracting, supporting and helping your friends. You react on a case-by-case basis. It’s a kind of guerrilla journalism.”*

Talking to the SEE Media Observatory in 2014, Predrag Lucić, one of the founders of the *Feral Tribune* weekly, which ceased publication in 2008, also expressed the view that the existing media system, rife with corrupt relations and practices, was not likely to produce an alternative. He explained that it was precisely this sentiment that had led to the creation of *Feral* in the 1990s.⁵

⁵ See video statement by Predrag Lucić at the SEE Media Observatory website. Available at: <http://mediaobservatory.net/radar/journalism-taken-journalists>. Accessed 15 March 2016.

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He further pointed to something that Brankica Stanković echoed during her conversation with us. We used his statement as the point of departure for the regional analysis at the beginning of our book *Media Integrity Matters*. In 2014 and 2016, Lucić and Stanković, respectively, made the following charge: *“It wasn’t any government that wrecked the journalistic profession. It was journalists.”*

Now it seems that only journalists may be able to save it. On the other hand, there is the question of the state’s responsibility for guaranteeing the conditions needed by the journalistic profession and the free media, as cornerstones of democracy, in order to survive.

Drawing on the experience of the *Novosti* weekly in Croatia, Ivica Đikić is unequivocal: *“If the state wants people to engage in serious, incorruptible and analytical journalism, and if it recognises that true journalism is valuable to democracy, I think it will have to find a model of co-funding the publication of serious and quality newspapers.”* He adds that having state support for non-profit websites in Croatia has been a huge step, yet insists that daily newspapers are irreplaceable, and thinks that it would be important to salvage those that wish to operate in a serious manner.

2 A POSITIVE EXAMPLE OF MEDIA POLICY MEASURES

Furthermore, it was Croatia where we located those instruments of media policy that our 2014 research on media integrity singled out as positive examples. During the term of Zoran Milanović’s government (December 2011–January 2016), Croatia’s Ministry of Culture, headed by the minister Andrea Zlatar Viočić, instituted measures to support non-profit media and journalistic projects. According to Milan F. Živković, then an advisor on media policy with the Ministry, these were concrete, interventional steps, taken to address pressing problems (e.g., in the four years following the onset of the 2008 economic crisis, 350 journalists lost their jobs in Croatia). During that period, however, four experts, two employees of the Ministry and two external collaborators, worked to analyse the situation, to foster public debate, and to draft a proposal for comprehensive media policy reform that would offer long-term solutions. These parallel efforts were possible because of the existence of two separate contexts. One was Croatian civil society and non-profit media, who for a number of years, aided by parts of the journalistic and academic communities, expressed the need for systemic solutions to the operation of non-profit media. The other was the decision by the Minister of Culture, at the beginning of her term, to staff the team tasked with forming a media department within the ministry with people striving to change media policies in meaningful ways.

Their ambitions were inspired by critical theory and progressive ideas articulated, in part, during the 2009 student protests and occupation of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb.

Among the new media policy measures was a provision that allowed non-profit media, including non-profit websites, to apply for project funding to the media pluralism fund operating under Croatia's Agency for Electronic Media. Previously, the fund had been exclusively supporting projects of (mostly commercial) local radio and television broadcasters. Another set of measures directed a portion of the lottery revenues towards the funding of non-profit media and individual investigations conducted by unemployed and freelance journalists.

The funds allocated under these measures were hardly substantial, yet their conceptual framework and approach represent a departure from the media policy giving priority to the interests of the (profit-oriented) media industry. As such, they were subject to attacks from the media mainstream, and some of them were targeted as soon as power changed hands in Croatia in early 2016.

In Croatia, the media pluralism fund is replenished by three percent of the monthly subscription fees for the public radio and television broadcaster. The household fee is set at 80 HRK (10.5 euro). Annually, the fund is able to allocate approximately 4.5 million euro, and in 2013, the amendments to the Electronic Media Act enabled also non-profit media, including non-profit websites, to apply for funds. They are entitled to three percent of the available funds, which amounts to around 136,000 euro a year. The bulk of the funds still go to local radio and television broadcasters (46.5 percent each).

Additionally, during the previous government's term, a programme was put in place in Croatia to finance non-profit media from state lottery revenues in the annual amount of around 400,000 euro a year. The government regulates the distribution of lottery revenues by annual decree. While this is a powerful measure, which the government instituted without having to change any laws, it is subject to annual modification, particularly following changes either in government or in the conceptual framework of its media policies. Thus far, around 90 to 100 newsrooms have applied for these funds each year, with an approval rate of 15–20 percent.

In Milan F. Živković's estimation, this measure was merely an intervention, intended to "patch" the media system at a time when many journalists were being let go from the commercial media and starting their own web-based media outlets. The government allocated some funds, however meagre, to those people interested in staying journalists. In this way, it helped them survive while the government searched for a strategic solution to the redistribution of public funds in the media – a solution that would involve measures to ensure long-term systemic support for non-profit journalism.

Ten percent of these funds, around 40,000 euro a year, were used to fund between 35 and 40 individual works of journalism in the approximate amount of one average Croatian monthly salary (1,000 euro gross or approx. 800 euro

net). Unemployed and freelance journalists had the option of applying for one-off sums, which the Ministry termed “journalism grants”. Journalists could apply by submitting proposals for the work they wished to realise.

An expert committee, appointed by the Ministry of Culture, decided on the annual distribution of funds meant to support non-profit media and individual works of journalism. The committee was itself selected via a public call for applications. The criteria for the selection of committee members were clearly established, and the evaluation of applications for the funding of non-profit media projects followed a detailed methodology (comprising 14 criteria in total). The Ministry determined both sets of criteria; however, it worked closely on these criteria with the target public, i.e. the non-profit media community in Croatia.

After the initial call for applications, the public carried out a part of the evaluation of the individual works of journalism that were competing for “journalism grants”. Individual citizens could vote online for works, presented anonymously, and their votes were combined with the evaluations made by the expert committee. The British author Dan Hind’s concept of *public commissioning* was the basis for this system. However, in subsequent years the evaluation process was left wholly in the hands of the expert committee.

In 2013, during Zoran Milanović’s term, the VAT on dailies was lowered to 5 percent in Croatia in order to assist these media outlets (in contrast to the general Croatian VAT rate of 25 percent, the VAT on daily newspapers had been set at 10 percent in 2007). However, Milan F. Živković points out that the idea had been proposed by the financial ministry rather than the Ministry of Culture. The latter held the opinion that the 2007 decrease in the VAT rate, which had enabled Croatian newspapers to save around 40 million euro a year, had done nothing to further the public interest in the media. According to the Ministry of Culture, other measures could be more efficient in supporting quality print media, their reporting and job creation, since lower taxes only seemed to benefit a few daily newspaper owners. The Ministry did succeed, however, in predicating the lowering of tax rates on the introduction, within newspaper companies, of internal statutes regulating the relations, rights and obligations of journalists, editors and publishers.

Simultaneously with the institution of intervention measures, a team with the Ministry of Culture was involved in analysing the situation and fostering public debate on a media policy strategy. The process resulted in a series of documents useful to the makers of long-term media policy in Croatia, “39 Measures for Democratic Media” being one such document.

Asked about the effects of both the concrete measures and the creation of strategic documents, especially in light of the new government’s decision to suspend some of them immediately after taking office in early 2016, Živković replied that some of these steps clearly contributed to the increase in the number of employees at non-profit media. The adoption of statutes in the media

companies gives journalists an instrument that they can wield to their advantage. Even so, *“If we’ve learned anything from working on media policy with the Ministry of Culture, it’s that no government and no political majority will just give things to any struggling community, including the journalistic community struggling for its profession’s survival and decent working conditions. If journalists want either to materialise, they will have to fight. It has been our experience that in the realm of media policy, decisions are usually based around a particular type of stakeholder – namely, the commercial stakeholder, the media owners making the case for themselves. Therefore, the people who work in the media should get organised, make their own case and their own demands.”* He concludes that the Croatian journalistic community, having participated in media policy development and in public debate on media strategy during the previous government’s term, now has a much better understanding of its own aims.

But, how did the Ministry form the team that contributed to the understanding and conception of the media policy recognised by our regional research as a good practice example of media integrity protection? From what sort of background did the team members originate? They were mainly people from youth, cultural and independent print media, defined primarily by their orientation towards critical theory and by the intense self-education gained through their work at the Ministry in the fields of media theory and media policy. *“The state was paying us to learn through daily operational work, and at the same time, to explore how people in other parts of the world address these issues,”* Živković says.

3

A POSITIVE EXAMPLE OF A STATE ANTI-CORRUPTION BODY’S INVOLVEMENT IN THE MEDIA FIELD

As early as 2014, our initial research into the matter of media integrity showed that financial relations between the state, the political parties, and the media were so detrimental to the protection of media integrity that a twofold need existed. First, for a thorough reform of media system, and then for active inclusion – in any media reform – of anti-corruption measures and of relevant anti-corruption bodies.

Our study of good practices includes the example of the Anti-Corruption Council with the Government of the Republic of Serbia. Since 2011, the Council has produced three sizable reports, full of valuable information on non-transparency of ownership, and on financial transactions between state bodies, state-owned companies and media outlets in Serbia. In 2011, the Council published the *Report on Pressure and Control over the Media in Serbia*. February 2015 saw the publication of the *Report on Ownership Structure and Control over Media in Serbia*. Finally, in December 2015, the Council published the report *Possible*

Impact of Public Sector Institutions on Media, through Financing of Advertising and Marketing Services. Apart from data, the reports offered the Council's conclusions and recommendations, and the Council made the raw, unprocessed data available to the public. The reports were translated into English, which made them accessible to the international community. Among experts, politicians, and the general public, the reports increased awareness of the types and the prevalence of those mechanisms that corrupt the media in Serbia. However, the lack of interest on the part of the authorities and the hostile response of the media industry to these reports, to the Council and to its members indicated that key players were unwilling to do away with the corruption in the media system. Meanwhile, its engagement with media earned the Council recognition from international organisations.

What sort of body is it? The Government of the Republic of Serbia established the Anti-Corruption Council in October 2001, during Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić's first year in office. The decision on its establishment was partly revised in 2003 and 2006, yet the Council's remit remained essentially the same. The aim was to found an advisory body of experts to look into various issues of corruption and propose measures for tackling them. According to Miroslav Milićević, the Council's vice president, the Council quickly turned its attention to aspects of systemic corruption, and to conducting analyses of individual areas and cases. The Council's task is to submit to the government reports containing data and analyses that locate potentially corrupt practices and relations within the system. Upon completion of a report, the government has the option of clearing up any issues or expressing its views. Subsequently, the Council publishes the report and presents it to the public. Says Milićević, *"Soon after the Council was established, we found ourselves in a situation where the government simply stopped responding to our reports."*

Since the establishment of the Council, the government of Serbia has changed hands six times, yet the Council had few opportunities to meet with government representatives prior to the publication of its reports in order to agree on appropriate action. The few meetings that have taken place were unsuccessful, and the government and the relevant authorities rarely take any action once reports are published. In a handful of cases, this has led the Council to bring criminal charges related to its report findings, even though, formally, such action does not form part of its obligations.

As conceived, the Council is supposed to consist of thirteen members with permanent tenure, all respected individuals from various social domains whose knowledge and integrity enhance the Council's activities and reputation. By January 2016, almost fifteen years after its inception, the Council was down to six members. Several members have passed away, while a number have quit, frustrated by the Council's limited influence. The Council no longer has a president. Verica Barać, a lawyer by training, a former public attorney for the town of Čačak, and an activist in the anti-war movement, served as the Council's

president until her death in 2012. Currently, Miroslav Milićević, a surgeon and a professor at the Faculty of Medicine in Belgrade, occupies the highest position on the Council as its vice president. He is one of two remaining original members, which lends a level of continuity to the Council's activities. The element of continuity, of permanence of operation, is important to the work of any anti-corruption body, and it is the reason for the granting of permanent tenure to Anti-Corruption Council members.

In order to fill the empty positions, the Council is supposed to recommend new candidates to the government. The government has the option of turning down the Council's recommendations, but is not free to make its own nominations. Even though the Council has recommended several new candidates to the government during the last two years, the government has not even deigned to respond to the Council's recommendations, let alone to appoint any new members. In this manner, Milićević claims, good candidates are dissuaded from potential involvement with the Council, and from its anti-corruption efforts. No one wants to put their name up for nomination simply to be ignored.

Meanwhile, the sheer volume of work is placing an excessive burden on the diminished Council. At the time of our visit, in early 2016, the Council was planning to work on eleven separate reports in one year.

Since it began operating, the Anti-Corruption Council has released more than 40 reports. The Council has no permanent employees. Its budget covers work compensation (rather than salaries) for its members, who are allowed to hire outside collaborators to help them with their analyses and reports. The Council's office is not very large, but it is located in the main governmental building, a situation that they strive to maintain as a symbolic recognition of the Council's significance. It is a little-known yet illustrative detail that the 2003 assassination of Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić took place at the entrance to the government building, as he was heading to his office where the Anti-Corruption Council members were waiting to meet with him.

Generally, one may conclude that the Serbian government, despite being the Council's instigator, has never paid much attention to its efforts and reports. Its main ally in the struggle against corruption has been the public; however, Milićević stresses, the inability of the anti-corruption authority to reach the public severely limits its capacity to get things done. This, he explains, is why the Council decided to focus its reports on the media. During the Council's initial years, while there was a level of enthusiasm present in the media and among journalists, they used to report on its analyses and on the issues it raised. However, it did not take long for the media to limit their reporting on the Council's reports and its battles against corruption. Media coverage became selective and did not delve into the relevant issues, even while the Council was making raw data available for the journalists to investigate further. It was becoming ever more apparent that a wide-ranging blockade had gone

up, one that was also evident in the passivity of the state authorities who should have been studying and processing the cases presented in the Council's reports.

In its first report on the media, the Anti-corruption Council reported on the ownership and control over the media. It found that it was actually unclear who owned most of the major Serbian media. The Council also revealed the series of mechanisms utilised to control the media. It established that these corrupt mechanisms are unaffected by changes in the political leadership. No set of political leaders in Serbia has ever completely unmasked or dismantled them. Milićević relates the problem of the "financial oligarchy" fabricating reality through its use of media to the issue of tabloidisation, which, he estimates, is "rotting the media". This represents a corruption of the media at a level that surpasses that of financing – it is invading and utterly devastating the value system. Investigative reporting, for its part, is subject to criticism rather than support. *"If you want investigative reporting, you need people with expertise who understand phenomena and are willing to investigate them. But there needs to be an environment for them to work in, where people appreciate both the work and journalism as such,"* Milićević says.

The first report on the media resulted in attacks and attempts to put pressure on the Council, particularly on its then-president Verica Barać. In the aftermath of the two most recent reports on the media, the main targets have been the Council's vice president Milićević and its member Miroslava Milenović, who are in charge of presenting findings and analyses to the public. The attempts at pressure include the bringing of criminal charges against members of the Council.

Access to information is an additional positive aspect of the Council's operations. Ever since its formation, the Council's position within the state system has enabled it to request from other state authorities and institutions to deliver required information. According to Milićević, at the very outset, Prime Minister Đinđić demanded that all cabinet members deliver information relevant to their respective departments. Since then, however, several cabinets have come and gone, and some of them have gone two years without communicating with the Council. In some cases, the Council cannot get access to information without first petitioning the information commissioner. Yet, fewer and fewer ministries fail to deliver their information, even if, at times, a second request is necessary. *"We've received a whole lot of information, really a lot of information, but it's all raw data that doesn't mean much outside of an appropriate context,"* Milićević says. He maintains that the Council's analyses are important, but would like to see other state authorities and journalists, to whom the Council grants free access to the data on its website, do more analyses of their own.

There are prospects for the continued work of the Council, despite the various forms of obstruction. Also active in Serbia is the Anti-Corruption Agency, with whom the Council maintains good relations, and which holds a number of other responsibilities. A new bill on the agency is currently at the drafting

stage, and the two bodies are joining their efforts to ensure that the bill's provisions and the agency's competences are as effective as possible. The Council plays a role in Serbia's 2013–2018 Action-Plan for the Anti-Corruption Strategy, the fulfilment of which is subject to monitoring in relation to Serbia's negotiations on its accession to the European Union. A representative of the Council is a member of the state coordination body in charge of the plan's implementation, as are the Prime Minister, and the Ministers of Finance and Justice.

"The government established the Council by a decision, and it can disestablish it as well," Milićević points out; nevertheless, the Council has earned its reputation through its work, not through its position within the system. It is respected both by Serbian citizens and internationally, and along with the Anti-Corruption Agency, other state institutions, and the non-governmental sector, symbolises the struggle against corruption in Serbia. The government neither takes into account, nor responds to the Council's reports, yet the Council and the individuals on it refuse to get drawn into political evaluations and conflicts, and refrain from taking a position regarding any political player. "We have to preserve our integrity. We are not interested in changing the political system or overthrowing the government. Corruption causes immense harm to the citizenry and the public interest, and we work on fighting against it. We do what we can do as the Council. Our third report on the media, the one on the possible impact of public sector institutions through financing of advertising and marketing services, went through 27 drafts before it was completed. Any further action is up to other institutions within the system. If there is no action, that tells you something about the environment in which we operate," Milićević concludes.

4

CONCLUSIONS

How do the media outlets, journalism production centres, media policy measures, and the engagement of an anti-corruption body presented here differ from their counterparts in the region?

Clearly, they all operate under an uncompromising view of journalism and the media as a public good, and as constituting a free, autonomous and responsible vocation that should serve to inform citizens, to monitor those in power, and to uncover abuses of power in an analytical, fact-based manner.

All of them are committed to this idea. Asked how to make the idea of emancipatory media policies as widespread as possible, Milorad Pupovac replies: *"It all depends on the idea that a person has, and under which they operate; whether they possess the strength to uphold it, and to protect it from those who seek to curtail it. If all those conditions are met, then it can be done."* Pupovac stresses the need for such people and ideas to connect, since the space

of freedom in our region and elsewhere will most probably shrink, rather than expand, in the years to come.

It is evident that the human factor – the ingenuity, consistency, and strategic intellectual and operating capacity of people who struggle to launch, advance and protect these ideas in the form of media outlets, institutions or media policies – is of utmost importance.

This links directly to funding sources and models. One key aspect has been the presence of foreign donors, and their strategic cooperation or partnership with and long-term support for people and organisations who steadfastly and consistently uphold free and serious journalism.

The financial mechanisms of support for non-profit and minority media in Croatia have contributed to the integrity of and public interest in the media. In this, they are markedly different from any number of other financial mechanisms operating between the state and media in our region. Recent research of the Media Observatory has provided a critical analysis of these latter mechanisms, and found them to be instrumental in the control and corruption of the media on the part of various political and business interest groups.⁶ There is a need for more detailed comparison of the fundamental characteristics by which the positive and negative mechanisms of public funds allocation to the media differ in our region. Notably, positive mechanisms in Croatia targeted non-privileged, non-profit media. Furthermore, in the process of establishing these mechanisms and defining the criteria for the constitution of relevant decision-making bodies and for the allocation of public funds, Croatian state authorities were systematically consulting and recognising both the media community, for which the mechanisms were intended, and the civil society segments surrounding these media.

The complete absence of public radio and television broadcasters from the array of good practices in media integrity protection is worrying. These media institutions possess, or should possess, powerful financial frameworks by which to uphold the idea of journalism and media as a public good. Yet, during our research, only one interviewee singled out a part of a public broadcaster as a provider of top-notch programming that contributes to the cultural advancement of citizens – *HTV 3*, the Croatian public broadcaster's third television channel, launched in 2012. Here, too, the human factor was decisive. It was Dean Šoša, an editor, who conceptualised such a channel. However, political reality intervened. In early 2016, the advent of the current Croatian government led to the replacement of the public broadcaster's management, and the ensuing personnel changes included the removal of Šoša from his position.

6 See the series of the 2015 SEE Media Observatory reports on state-media financial relations at: <http://mediaobservatory.net/media-integrity-reports-2015>. Accessed 15 March 2016.

THE COMPLETE
ABSENCE OF PUBLIC
RADIO AND TELEVISION
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THE ARRAY OF GOOD
PRACTICES IN MEDIA
INTEGRITY PROTECTION
IS WORRYING.

This is the state of public broadcasters in our region: whenever the concept of emancipatory service to the public emerges within them, it is only a matter of time before it is repressed.

And so, our good examples of media practices originate from the non-governmental, non-profit sector, from beyond the reach of corrupt political and business networks. In the words of Eldin Karić, they constitute a counter-system.

When we consider the sums that our interviewees mention in describing their funding models, we see that they represent a modest portion of the funds flowing through media in their countries. During our conversation, Eldin Karić performed some rapid calculations. He concluded that the annual sum of donations received by non-profit media in Bosnia and Herzegovina from international donors amounts to no more than five percent of the sum allocated to mainstream media by state authorities and institutions through subsidies, donations and sponsorships alone (not counting the funds spent on state advertising and by publicly owned companies). Recently, the Media Observatory studied state-media financial relations in South East Europe. The sums involved are huge, and the funding mechanisms numerous to the point of inscrutability. A thorough reform is called for, one that will take into account the findings of media and anti-corruption analyses, and fundamentally overhaul the media system, so that the non-profit sector, now termed “the third sector” by the few power structures that even choose to acknowledge it, may become “the first sector”. Certain ideas about “emancipatory media policy”, as Pupovac calls it, appear in the media policy outline and the “39 Measures for Democratic Media”, the legacy of the department of media policy with the Croatian Ministry of Culture (consisting of Milan F. Živković, Boris Postnikov, Igor Lasić and Andrea Milat), and the result of a two-year public debate. Most likely, not all of these measures are universally applicable, yet one could hardly claim that the region lacks any concept of an alternative to the existing corrupt media systems.

It is absolutely vital for independent media and democracy in the region to abandon the current media systems where corrupt, clientelist parasites from the realms of media, advertising and politics devour enormous sums of public funding, funds that rightly belong to the citizens, while foreign donors fund the reporting that actually serves the interests of that very citizenry.

The media outlets and journalists engaged in investigative reporting form the bulk of our positive examples. In many of its aspects, investigative reporting is what some term analytical or critical reporting. However, in a narrower sense, it may signify the reporting aimed at uncovering corruption and organised crime. It is our conclusion that the overall conception of critical and analytical reporting, and of investigative reporting as its subset, should inform both the conceptual frame and the investment of effort on the part of journalists, experts, emancipated politicians (as rare as they may be), and donors concerned with preserving journalism as a public service in the region. Merely investigating abuses of power and informing citizens of the negative,

destructive instances of corruption in society does not suffice. Absent the support for other advanced journalism genres, such as cultural critiques, feature stories or reports on foreign affairs, it limits the scope of knowledge that augments the public's ability to view events in a larger context, and to engage them as a culturally aware and active citizenry.

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POSITIVE EXAMPLES OF MEDIA INTEGRITY PROTECTION IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE
A COUNTER-SYSTEM, OR HOW TO SAVE JOURNALISM

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