

MEDIA DEPARTMENT

IDG Meeting on the Media

OSCE Mission to Serbia

- Assist the Ministry of Culture in the media reform – public debates, transparency and inclusiveness
- Support better communication between media and judiciary – consultations and training
- Monitor media freedoms
- Enhance dialogue between local authorities and journalists
- Strengthen independent regulatory bodies
- Improve professional news production standards, especially in local and regional media

Ministry of Culture and Media

- Thankful for the initial guidelines they received from the OSCE, as they inherited different draft laws and the Media Strategy, brought by the previous Government. Also faced various pressures from different media groups. Eight months for the Strategy implementation were lost due to general elections, but they will do their best to fulfil obligations. Consultations in Arandjelovac marked the beginning of the concrete joint work on the implementation of the Media Strategy, with the tight deadline set in the Action Plan for March 2013.
- Working group set by the Ministry is currently working on the draft Law on Public Information. Thanks to the OSCE the process of media legislation reform is speeded up and the draft Law should be ready for public discussion by the end of January 2013.
- The Working Group will also work on the draft Law on Electronic Media, almost ready for public discussion but with some remaining dilemmas regarding public service broadcasters.
- The Draft Law on Media Concentration and Transparency of Ownership, finalized in 2009 and at the time blocked by the media industry, will be reassessed and aligned with the current situation, prior to public debate.
- Active in State's withdrawal from the media. The provision of the draft Law on Public Companies, allowing public companies to be founders of media outlets, was changed, due to the close monitoring and speedy reaction. There will be another action related to the article 20 paragraph 34 of the Law on Local Self-Governments, stipulating that municipalities can own media outlets. The Self-Governments justify this by the need to ensure the right of national minorities to be informed in their own language, however national minority programmes in such media are extremely rare and insufficient, with propaganda taking most of the space.
- Valuable help from IREX, OSCE and EU in the entire process, with permanent consultations.
- On 20 December Yugoslav Review, previously owned by the State, became part of the Official Gazette; the goal is to withdraw from Radio Slavija and news agency Tanjug by March 2013

Needs of Ministry of Culture for 2013:

- Need the support for the implementation of the Media Strategy;
- Ministry hosts major ministerial media conference on freedom and democracy in digital age, on 17 and 18 October 2013. Assistance in organizing parallel sessions would be welcomed.
- Needs help in creating joint strategy for educating the public on media literacy, gender equality, children and media issues, national minorities. Research related to the protection of equality, conducted among journalists, demonstrated the lack of journalists' understanding of LGBT rights and violence against women. Ministry of education needs to be involved.

The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

- In 2012 the Embassy of the Netherlands contributed to various media projects with the amount of approximately € 150.000. Many of these projects do not concern only media, but some other important topics such as human rights. Most of them have started in 2012, but will continue and end in 2013.
- Media freedom remains one of the priorities of the Netherlands Embassy in Belgrade in 2013 and therefore projects in this field will be supported. The exact amount available is not known yet, but it can be expected that the amount for media projects will be smaller than that spent this year since the whole budget will decrease. Support to media projects is given through the MATRA program, information to be found at <http://serbia.nlembassy.org/services/development-assistance/bilateral-cooperation-with-serbia.html>. Data will be updated as soon as the budget and priorities for 2013 are confirmed.

The Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia

- The adoption of the Media Strategy by the Government in October 2011 was an important step in the process of European integration and an important element of the political criteria as noted in our Progress Report for 2012 and the Opinion on Serbia's membership application.
- We were encouraged to hear that the Ministry of Culture's Working Group is preparing media legislation, as a follow up and implementation of the Media Strategy.
- Should be a priority to harmonise the existing laws which contain contradictions on establishment and financing of the media.
- An important step has already been taken – the amendments to the Law on Public Companies have ended the possibility for state authorities at all levels to establish Public Companies dealing with provision of information (i.e. media).
- Despite these positive developments, we still have serious concerns on the continuous direct state financing of the media at various levels. We continuously stress that state funding of the media and their parallel presence at the commercial market is contrary to State Aid rules and seriously distorts competition. This relates to the respect of the international agreements.
- We stand ready to continue providing expertise on media legislation. Staff of the EU Delegation is actively following the Working Group participating at its sessions. They also act as link with EC services in Brussels for advice on harmonisation with EU legislation as was done during the process of preparation of the Media Strategy.
- We encourage the involvement of representatives of media associations in the work of the Working Group as was the case for the preparation of the strategy.
- The EUD remain committed to support the process of reforms of the media sector and the implementation of the media strategy through IPA 2012. It includes a service contract of € 1,2 million focusing on regulation of the state ownership within the media sector and transformation of media, regulation of state financing of the media in line with state aid rules, the transparency of media ownership and prevention of media concentration, regulation of the media operating according to the public service standards and media in the languages of minorities, the advertising market etc.
- In addition, IPA 2012 will support investigative journalism through a call for proposals of € 1,8 million for media programmes focusing on rule of law, in particular on: good governance, transparency and accountability of public administration, human and minority rights, fight against corruption and organised crime.
- We started the tendering procedure. It is important to have full commitment of the new team from the Ministry namely for jointly define priorities for the project.

Serbian European Integration Office

- In regard to the activities related to improvement of donor coordination in Serbia and in line with the Document "Setting up a more effective donor coordination mechanism in Serbia" SEIO welcomes the initiative on establishment and functioning of donor coordination group for media. The group shall contribute to better exchange of information between national stakeholders and donor organizations related to support to national priorities in the media sector and better planning and programming of international assistance in line with national priorities in media sector.

Embassy of the United States

In 2013, the U.S. Embassy's Press Office looks forward to several points of cooperation, including plans to:

- Develop and strengthen media training for journalists and interested media professionals on topics of joint interest (i.e., human rights, Euro-Atlantic integration, economic and media literacy).
- Explore development of media literacy training/curriculum
- Monitor and advise, as requested and appropriate, the assessment and implementation of media laws

USAID

- Very limited support to media organizations is possible through Civil Society Forward programme

The Italian Embassy/Italian Development Cooperation

The Italian assistance to Serbia for 2013 is focused on two main areas:

- Public Administration Reform – Budget Support

Project “Support to the Serbian Economy through the supply of goods to five line ministries in Serbia”

(Total amount: approximately 7,5 million Euro)

- Competitiveness – Industry (including SMEs)

Project “Credit Facility to Support Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises through Local Banking System and to sustain the local development through Local Public Utilities”

(Total amount: approximately 15,00 million Euro)

The projects have a small communication component that is under evaluation.

Embassy of Sweden/SIDA

- Sweden does not have media as one of the cooperation areas in the current cooperation Strategy with Serbia (although we were among biggest donors to media during 90-ees).
- Some support is provided though through our support to the civil society through Civil Rights Defenders (CRD): support to Pescanik, ANEM, Local Press Association and Independent Journalists' Association. Main focus of this support is legal protection of journalists but also improved access to information.
- New Development Cooperation Strategy for Serbia will be prepared during 2013 and it is planned to cover period 2014-2020. Priority areas are not defined so it is not easy to say now if and how we are going to support media in Serbia.
- Some possibilities to provide support to the Ministry of Culture and Media exist in our ongoing projects such as support to Public Administration Reform.

UN Office of the Resident Coordinator

- The work of over 20 UN agencies active in Serbia includes significant training of journalists for the topics such as: violence against women, small arms light weapons, children's rights, gender, national minorities, discrimination, corruption and others. Note was taken from the Ministry of Culture's address that the work in these activities should continue and get up scaled.
- UN does a lot of programme advocacy and uses the opportunity to promote good results achieved through its programmes with a view of promoting UN values.
- Social media are used extensively to communicate messages in Serbia and abroad.
- A lot of work is done also with media at the local level where UN has a series of programmes implemented.

- Future activities that will be relevant for cooperation of the IDG sub-group on media:
 - HSTF JP implemented in South West Serbia that is starting now will do a lot of work in promoting human security, inter cultural dialogue, human rights, education etc. Social and local media will be actively involved in the implementation of this programme. The programme will last for 2 years.
 - Post 2015 national consultations will be conducted in Serbia in the period January-April 2013 and will include, among others, a large media and social media campaign that will facilitate communication and access to people of Serbia and citizens and collect their view of the development priorities for the period after 2015. These consultations are a part of the large global process to which Serbia will contribute.
 - Alliance of Civilizations (AOC) is about to inaugurate its second Regional Action Plan for the period 2013-2014 that will include a number of activities that are linked to the AOC main objectives: culture, media, youth and migration. Ministry of Foreign Affairs is chairing an AOC working group in Serbia where the relevant ministries take part, including Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Education.