



Media freedom does not only depend on politicians

“World Press Freedom Day”: KAS puts emphasis on the role of media owners, journalists’ associations and universities

Press freedom in a country does not only depend on the politics. Christian Spahr, head of the Media Program South East Europe of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung underlines this on the occasion of the World Press Freedom Day on 3rd May. “Especially in South East Europe it is visible that deficits of media freedom do not necessary result out of direct pressure from the politics.” All media players bear responsibility for media freedom, Spahr said. The region takes only average positions in global rankings.

Non-transparent ownership structures, high rising costs and a limited self-conception of media as “watchdogs of democracy” harm press freedom as much as political influence, said Spahr in Sofia. Those factors contribute to the relatively bad positioning of the new EU members Bulgaria and Romania and the other Balkan countries in global press freedom rankings. The KAS Media Program pointed out that those rankings do not only measure political pressure, but also the status and freedom of journalists at their workplaces. The most well-known rankings are conducted by Reporters Without Borders and Freedom House.

In the newest Reporters Without Borders ranking the countries of South East Europe are situated between rank 42 (Romania) and 115 (Macedonia, see table). Further examples: Bulgaria is placed 87th, Serbia 63rd out of 179 countries worldwide. The positioning of some of the countries in the region has worsened in the last years. “Politicians and media representatives nowadays have high interest to improve the image of their media sectors”, emphasized Spahr. “In order to succeed in this, all players should reach a common understanding about the framework and common standards for media. A non-existing consensus between politicians, publishers and journalists is often the reason for deficits in the media sphere.” Furthermore, there is an important need of contribution from universities, in order to build a modern professional self-conception of future journalists.

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung is engaged in the education and qualification of journalists in South East Europe, and it supports initiatives for modern media legislation and efficient self regulation. Furthermore, the German NGO promotes the professionalization of political communication. The Media Program South East Europe is working in these fields together with journalists, partner organizations and political stakeholders in South East Europe.

Press Freedom Rankings

