

Summer School of Media Ethics: Focus on Fair Reporting

YOUNG JOURNALISTS AND PROFESSIONALS FROM EIGHT COUNTRIES LEARN ETHICAL PRINCIPLES OF THE JOURNALISTIC PROFESSION ON INVITATION OF KAS

The KAS Media Program South East Europe has organised a Summer School of Media Ethics for the first time – in cooperation with the Press Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina. From 12 to 17 July 2015, 19 young reporters and journalism students deepened their basic knowledge about independent and ethical reporting in the Herzegovinian town Konjic.

The participants from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia acquired theoretical and practical knowledge about media ethics, media self-regulation and freedom of the press. Main reason for the event: The media scene in South East Europe is much polarised, media often contribute to questionable campaigns – especially in the Western Balkans there are many cases of discriminating comments in the media (“hate speech”).

Ljiljana Zurovac, Executive Director of the Press Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina, together with **Christian Spahr**, Head of the KAS Media Program South East Europe, opened the event and presented the range of topics. The Head of the legal department of the NGO “Access to Information Programme” based in Sofia, Alexander Kashumov, gave an introduction about the Right to Information as well as data privacy. According to him, knowing one’s rights and being able to make use of them, is an important basis in the journalist’s everyday work. Kashumov gave advices how to request access to information: being well-prepared, investigating public registers and

websites of public institutions and contacting several institutions simultaneously.

Psychologist **Aleksandar Jagi Bibanović** drew the young journalist’s attention to fundamental questions of ethics, morality and prejudices. He also mentioned practical aspects from everyday life: how to combine quickness and precise expression, how to handle pressure and how to verify a source.

Press councils as intermediaries between the public and the media

Manfred Protze, member of the German Press Council, provided an overview of a Press Council’s function: voluntary self-regulation of the press, compliance with the press laws and ethical codes, ensuring professional standards in print and online media, guaranteeing freedom of the press. According to Ljiljana Zurovac (Press Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina), press councils protect the public from manipulative reporting. At the same time they preserve the media from political pressure which jeopardises the freedom of the media.

During an exercise, the participants worked on examples in European media from the perspective of a press council’s complaint commission. They detected offences and discussed the cases with the speakers. Subjects like the violation of privacy, the confidentiality of sources and assaults in social media were thereby presented.

Bojan Stanić, PR advisor to Martin Raguž, President of the Croatian Democratic Union

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(HDZ 1990), participated as a guest in a panel discussion. Stanić spoke about his experiences as press spokesperson and PR manager, about the dialogue with journalists, about dealing with critical questions and other tasks of his job.

Aidan White, Head of the London-based "Network for Ethical Journalism", shifted the focus back to the ethical foundations of journalism. Young journalists should not ignore the essence of their profession; they should pursue the following principles: accuracy and fact-based communication, independence, impartiality, humanity and accountability. Journalism should operate in a framework of ethical values and have public purpose. It should be more than the free expression of an opinion.

The participants practice fact checking and speak about protection of sources

Milica Sarić, journalist at the Center for Investigative Journalism in Serbia (CINS), trained the young journalists on important methods from the practice. This included fact checking, interviews and their post-editing, confidential communication and anonymity of sources. **Ermin Zatega**, investigative journalist from Bosnia and Herzegovina, gave further practical examples.

The Summer School of Media Ethics inspired the participants to reflect on the addressed subjects and contributed to their further professional education. The young journalists discovered similar political and social challenges in their countries and participated intensively in the discussions and team work. Respecting ethical standards and human dignity – the participants have learned more about these challenges as an inspiration for their further career.



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