

# Independent media initiatives and projects in South East Europe

**It is not easy for journalists to work independently in South East Europe. From a legal perspective, they are free, but in practice their work is restricted due to non-transparent ownership structures of media outlets, monopolies in distribution, external pressure from political and economic stakeholders, and self-censorship. Critical reporting is often kept to a minimum. Several journalistic networks and media NGOs were established as a reaction to this and in order to support critical journalism. These organisations are often active in the field of investigative journalism.**

Such journalist organisations can differ in their organisational structure and their field of activity. Some organisations work only in one country, others expand their working area beyond a single country. Others do not only operate in South East Europe, but also in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Some networks offer a platform to publish reports beyond mainstream media; others support a professional exchange among journalists. In individual cases, media NGOs support journalists with legal assistance and trainings. Moreover, some organisations offer databases for research purposes. Hence, these journalistic NGOs can be seen as very diverse.

Funding is a challenge for these organisations. One option is crowdfunding. Crowdfunding describes the search for investors and donations via the internet. Usually a certain amount of money has to be collected until a specific date. Particularly in the Anglo-Saxon world as well as in Germany, this way of funding is becoming more and more popular. In South East

Europe, there have been only a few successful crowdfunding projects so far. Especially for media projects, crowdfunding is rather not a promising funding option. Instead, most organisations rely on international donors from the U.S. or Europe. Among others, the European Union supports independent media projects in South East Europe.

In the following overview, different organisations operating in South East Europe are introduced. The list is not exhaustive.

## **Organisations based in Romania:**

### **Casa Jurnalistului, Bucharest**

Casa Jurnalistului was established by Vlad Ursulean and Ștefan Mako in 2012. It is a collective of independent journalist who moved to an abandoned house to run an internet platform. They are publishing reports on several different topics. Furthermore, they organise events. The journalists who are employed by Casa Jurnalistului have worked with media outlets like The Guardian, Channel 4, USA Today and Al Jazeera. Casa Jurnalistului is funded by donations of their readers. Most of their articles are published in Romanian. Meanwhile, certain articles are being translated into English.

<http://casajurnalistului.ro/eng>

### **Romanian Centre for Investigative Journalism (RCIJ), Bucharest**

The Romanian Centre for Investigative Journalism was established in 2001 as a reaction to censorship attempts, corruption and low professional standards in the Romanian media landscape. The organisation offers a platform for

## Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung

**MEDIA PROGRAM  
SOUTH EAST EUROPE**  
DARIJA FABIJANIĆ

**April 2016**

[www.kas.de/medien-europa/en](http://www.kas.de/medien-europa/en)

investigative research in Romania. Besides publishing investigative reports on the internet, RCIJ provides seminars for students and young journalists.

<https://crji.org>

### **RISE Project, Bucharest**

RISE Project is a community of investigative journalists, programmers and activists in Romania. They also have a branch in Moldova (RISE Moldova). The network investigates organised crime and tries to discover money laundering, corruption, smuggling and tax fraud in Eastern Europe.

<http://www.riseproject.ro> (Romania)

<https://www.rise.md> (Moldova)

### **Sponge Media Lab, Bucharest**

Sponge Media Lab was established in Romania in 2011. Meanwhile, it has expanded over Eastern Europe. The founders of the network are investigative journalists, software engineers, cartographers, human rights activists, experts for online legislation and political scientists. The network experiments with different media in general and also with different styles of media reporting. Its purpose is to question the current information systems. Therefore, they launched many different media projects like the media platform *The Black Sea*.

<http://thesponge.eu>

### **Organisations based in Serbia:**

#### **Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), Belgrade/Sarajevo**

The Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) is a regional network with different branches. It employs journalists, editors, researchers and trainers. BIRN offers journalists the possibility for exchanging experiences and practices in the field of investigative journalism. In 2004, the first office of BIRN was founded. BIRN operates in the whole Balkan region with country specific branches in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Romania and Serbia. Moreover, BIRN has a network of journalists from Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Montenegro, and Moldova. The organisation has different media platforms – online, print, TV and radio. Amongst others, BIRN runs 15 websites in different

languages. The news portal of BIRN is called “Balkan Insight”. BIRN tries to achieve well-balanced news coverage of the Balkans.

<http://birn.eu.com/en/page/home>

### **Cenzolovka, Belgrade**

Cenzolovka is a Serbian media platform established by the Slavko Ćuruvija Foundation in 2014. Most of the articles deal with topics of the Serbian media landscape. Cenzolovka publishes analyses, comments and reports by media experts and journalists. Some of the articles on the website of Cenzolovka are from external sources, e.g. Politika. The platform is supported by the Australian embassy in Serbia. In 2013, the Slavko Ćuruvija Foundation was founded by the children of the journalist Slavko Ćuruvija who was killed. The foundation wants to improve the quality of Serbian journalism as well as support local media outlets and investigative journalists. Furthermore, it assists young journalists to establish themselves in the field of journalism.

<http://www.cenzolovka.rs/english>

<http://www.slavkocuruvijafondacija.rs/en>

### **Serbian Center for Investigative Journalism (CINS), Belgrade**

CINS is a Serbian NGO working in the field of investigative journalism. The NGO is funded by donations, in order to avoid political and economic pressure, as this influences the content of many mainstream media outlets. They do not finance themselves through advertisements, in order to stay independent. In addition, CINS does not accept donations from the government and persons or organisations which are part of their investigations. According to CINS, the donations are often linked to a certain project. In general, a donation-based funding is quite difficult to establish in Serbia, as the willingness to invest in independent journalism is rather low. CINS runs campaigns for the equality of all Serbian citizens independently of their sex, ethnical or religious heritage.

<http://www.cins.rs/srpski>

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung

**MEDIA PROGRAM  
SOUTH EAST EUROPE**  
DARIJA FABIJANIĆ

April 2016

[www.kas.de/medien-europa/en](http://www.kas.de/medien-europa/en)

### **Crime and Corruption Reporting Network (KRIK), Belgrade**

Crime and Corruption Reporting Network (KRIK) is a NGO which tries to improve investigative journalism in Serbia. KRIK was founded by a group of journalists who have already dealt with organised crime and corruption for a couple of years. The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and the Open Society Foundation (OSF) helped KRIK to establish itself. The NGO is a member of the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP). Reports published by KRIK cover topics of organised crime and corruption. KRIK is discovering cases of organised crime and corruption in all social classes and are trying to present them in an understandable manner. Furthermore, KRIK runs an online database which offers different documents to journalists and the public.

[www.krik.rs/en](http://www.krik.rs/en)

### **Organisations based in Bosnia and Herzegovina:**

#### **Balkan Diskurs, Sarajevo**

Balkan Diskurs is a non-profit multimedia platform for young journalists, bloggers, multimedia artists and activists. Besides the possibility to publish articles, photos and videos, Balkan Diskurs offers training for young people from Bosnia and Herzegovina – e.g. seminars on following topics: investigative and civic journalism, documentary films and photography as well as journalistic presentation skills. Most authors of the platform are former participants of the seminars, and young journalists. Balkan Diskurs is the result of a project of the Post-Conflict Research Centre in Sarajevo. Its goal is to gather 10,000 US Dollars through crowdfunding. They did not accomplish this aim yet, therefore their work is only possible through the help of international and regional partners. These partners are: Human Rights House Zagreb; Association of Journalists of Macedonia; Center for Independent Journalism, Budapest; Independent Journalists' Association of Vojvodina; Global Voices; Index on Censorship; Warscapes; Insight on Conflict.

<http://www.balkandiskurs.com/en/>

### **Center for Investigative Journalism Sarajevo (CIN)**

CIN Sarajevo is an NGO which practices investigative journalism. The motivation behind their work is to help citizens to understand political and social events. CIN Sarajevo was established in 2004. The organisation publishes local and regional print and online reports. They focus on organised crime and corruption. Furthermore, CIN Sarajevo investigates topics like politics, education, sports, health and job market.

<https://www.cin.ba/>

### **Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), Sarajevo**

The Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) was established in 2006. It is a network of investigative NGOs and independent media outlets of 20 countries in the Balkans, Eastern Europe and Central Asia. OCCRP publishes investigative reports and current news about organised crime and corruption. Moreover, it offers different documents like files of public authorities and company records.

<https://www.occrp.org/en>

### **Organisations based in Kosovo:**

#### **Kosovo 2.0, Prishtina**

Kosovo 2.0 was founded as an NGO. The organisation runs a multimedia website and publishes a print magazine. Moreover, it organises different events. The focus of the platform is a multilingual blogger platform available in Albanian, Serbian and English. Originally, Kosovo 2.0 should have been financed through crowdfunding. However, this did not work out as crowdfunding is not really known in Kosovo. Thus, Kosovo 2.0 is funded through international donors like the National Endowment for Democracy and the Austrian Development Cooperation.

<http://www.kosovotwopointzero.com/en>

### **Kosovo Center for Investigative Journalism (KCIJ), Prishtina**

The Kosovo Center for Investigative Journalism was established in 2010 as a project of the anti-corruption organisation COHU. The organisation took the decision to support investigative journalism and to offer a platform where journalists could publish

**Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung****MEDIA PROGRAM  
SOUTH EAST EUROPE  
DARIJA FABIJANIĆ****April 2016**[www.kas.de/medien-europa/en](http://www.kas.de/medien-europa/en)

their work without pressure or censorship. Most topics focus on economy or public authorities. Twice a month, KCIJ publishes a supplement for the two biggest newspapers in Kosovo: Koha Ditore and Zëri. Moreover, they run an online magazine.

<http://preportr.cohu.org/en/Home>

**Organisations based in Croatia:****Investigative Journalism Centre Croatia (IJC), Zagreb**

IJC is an NGO which was founded in 2003. It supports investigative journalism in Croatia and several other countries in South East Europe. The NGO does not only publish reports, but also offers seminars for journalists and journalism students.

<http://cin-ijc.com/en/>

**KopMedija, Zagreb**

In the end of 2012, the newspaper 21.stoljeće was closed. It was the fourth print media outlet which was closed after Vjesnik, Nacional and Forum. This development led to a higher unemployment rate among journalists in Croatia. As a reaction, the media cooperative KopMedija was established. It publishes the Croatian version of Le Monde Diplomatique. It is the first media cooperative of this kind in the region.

<http://lemondediplomatique.hr>

**Organisations based in other countries:****Journalistic Investigative Centre Moldova, Chişinău**

The Investigative Centre Moldova was established by a group of investigative journalists and three media associations (Association of Independent Press, Association of Electronics Media and the Press Freedom Committee) in April 2003. Besides reports about corruption, organised crime and smuggling, the centre initiates campaigns to inform people about these topics. It supports different databases and a documentary centre for Moldovan investigative journalists. Also, it offers legal assistance.

<http://www.investigatii.md>

**KlinKlin, Sofia**

KlinKlin is a media platform financed through crowdfunding in Bulgaria. It has an interactive design: Readers can suggest topics through different online tools, and the authors of the platform investigate the topics. The platform publishes different media products like articles, reports, analyses, videos, photos, books and even comics. According to KlinKlin, the focus of the platform is to actively involve the readers. The project was recently established. However, the necessary donations which should be gained through crowdfunding were not achieved in February 2016 yet.

<https://www.klinklin.bg/>

**SCOOP, Copenhagen**

SCOOP was established in 2003. The organisation is based in Copenhagen and consists in a network of investigative journalists from South East Europe, Eastern Europe, Russia, the Caucasus, Central Asia and West Africa. Its goal is to connect journalists within and between these regions. Therefore, a lot of reports and investigations are cross-national. SCOOP supports investigative journalists.

<http://i-scoop.org/scoop>

**SCOOP Macedonia, Skopje**

SCOOP Macedonia is an NGO which encourages investigative journalism in Macedonia. SCOOP Macedonia offers professional and financial support for journalists.

<http://en.scoop.mk>



**Konrad  
Adenauer  
Stiftung**

**Imprint**

Konrad Adenauer Stiftung  
Media Program South East Europe

19, Konrad Adenauer St.  
1st floor, apt. 2  
1504 Sofia  
Bulgaria

Phone +359 2 94249-71  
Fax +359 2 94249-79  
media.europe@kas.de