

Editors from South East Europe on a KAS study visit in Berlin

GERMAN AND EUROPEAN FOREIGN POLICY AND THE EU PERSPECTIVES FOR THE WESTERN BALKANS WERE THE MAIN THEMES OF A STUDY VISIT TO GERMANY

European politics under the influence of the refugee crisis and EU enlargement was the main theme of a visiting delegation of the KAS Media Program South East Europe, with ten political editors and TV presenters from the Balkans, Romania and Moldavia. From 5 to 11 June the journalists gained information about the media system and political communication in Germany.

For crisis management in the EU and the further development of Europe many eyes are directed towards Berlin. In addition to migration and financial policies, geopolitical aspects are the main focus of interest of many journalists from South East Europe when they think of Germany. Ten well-known heads of news departments, commentators and TV presenters accepted an invitation from the KAS to Berlin to form their own impression at first hand from politicians and media experts. A further goal was the exchange of views about media policy in South East Europe. The study visit was organised in conjunction with the KAS Domestic Programs Division in Berlin.

In his opening remarks, the Director of the KAS Media Program South East Europe, **Christian Spahr**, suggested that the public in Germany had little knowledge of the political aims of countries in South East Europe, and, to some extent, Germany's motives were also in need of explanation.

Together with the group, **Frank Priess**, Deputy Head of the Department for European and International Cooperation of

KAS, and KAS Media Coordinator **Rahma Janetzke** discussed the topics of asylum policy, the elections of 2017 and the situation of security policy in Europe. **Jens Paulus**, Head of Team Europe/North America, explained the international working model of the German political foundations. Here he emphasised that German foreign policy was firmly anchored in the Western alliance. The goal had to be a stronger consensus in foreign and security policy within the EU. **Florian C. Feyerabend**, with responsibility for the Western Balkans in the KAS European team, and the Head of Domestic Programs Division **Henri Bohnet**, exchanged views on the political situation with the visitors from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia.

Communications for Angela Merkel: Insights into the Federal Press Office

During a visit to the Federal Press Office the delegation heard how daily communication of the German Government and of Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel is organised. The Deputy Government Spokesperson Georg Streiter explained the duties of his office with its staff of 450 and its co-operation with the Federal Chancellery. The Federal Press Office is not restricted to informing the media. It also addresses the general public and is responsible for internal briefings of the Government.

Bastian Hein, with responsibility for policy planning in the Federal Chancellery,

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informed participants about a citizens' dialogue initiated by Chancellor Merkel in April 2015. The Government wanted to discover peoples' ideas about the quality of life and what was important for them. To do so, the Government sought direct contact with citizens. Participants in the dialogue were randomly selected and could address personal questions to the Federal Chancellor. The results were evaluated in scientific analyses (www.gut-leben-in-deutschland.de).

The visitors from South East Europe also had a lively discussion with CDU online expert **Anja Pfeffermann**. She explained the Party's strategy for dialogue with citizens on the Internet. Younger voters were addressed through WhatsApp, but letters to first-time voters were also still customary. A party must also be capable of reacting in social networks such as Facebook. It must communicate transparently and use comprehensible language in dealing with users' comments.

Part of the further programme was devoted to foreign policy. **Knut Abraham**, Head of Division for Central and Eastern Europe in the Federal Chancellery, highlighted two challenges for German foreign policy: the relationship with Russia and the development of the Western Balkans. In both areas a common level of communication was needed in Europe. In the relationship with Russia, extensive trust which had been lost had to be regained.

Hans-Joachim Falenski, foreign policy adviser to the CDU/CSU group in the Bundestag, said that all countries of the Western Balkans should become member states of the EU when they meet the conditions. He referred positively to the normalisation process between Serbia and Kosovo and Montenegro's progress in the accession process. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, particular interests among the political forces had brought progress to a halt, and increasing Islamic influence was creating additional problems.

Gunther Krichbaum, Chairman of the Committee on the Affairs of the European

Union of the Bundestag, described the intensive co-operation with the countries of the Balkans as a common priority for Germany and the EU. Particularly for the younger generation in South East Europe, new opportunities were opened through EU integration. Krichbaum emphasised that the EU needed a common security policy in the region. He expressed his support for a broadening of the sanctions against Russia in reaction to the frozen conflict in Ukraine, referring in this context also to the Republic of Moldova and Georgia.

The German media landscape was a further focus of the visit. In the ARD Capital Studio television correspondent **Michael Stempfle** explained the model of the ARD and the funding of public service broadcasting in Germany. Participants discussed with him the different presentation of themes of migration in German and South East European media. Stempfle also mentioned the online version of the Tagesschau with news in Arabic. At the BILD-Zeitung, the visitors experienced a video conference of the editorial staff and discussed the selection of stories with Chief Reporter for Politics **Hans-Jörg Vehlewald**.

Regional reporting in Germany and the relationship of the media and PR

From **Norbert Wallet**, Head of the Berlin office of the Stuttgarter Nachrichten daily, the group learned about the work of regional correspondents in Berlin. In his view, it is important for regional newspapers to analyse political decisions for their particular relevance for local developments. The relationship between journalists and press officers in Germany was also discussed. Also taking part in the programme were **Pascal Thibaut**, President of the Association of the Foreign Press in Germany (VAP), and **Sonja Volkmann-Schluck** from the Network for Reporting on Eastern Europe (n-ost).

All participants expressed high satisfaction with the insights into politics and the media in Berlin and emphasised the value of the discussions, above all, for their future reporting of foreign and security policy.



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