

Master Class for investigative journalists from the Balkans

29 EXPERIENCED REPORTERS DEEPEN THEIR RESEARCH KNOWLEDGE AT THE INVITATION OF KAS AND THE JOURNALISTS' NETWORK BIRN

Selected investigative journalists from 17 countries have visited an international Master Class in Konjic (Bosnia and Herzegovina) from 21st to 27th August. Within the annual BIRN Summer School for Investigative Reporting, they learned the latest trends of data journalism, special strategies for online research and interview techniques. Besides that, international cooperation among investigative reporters was intensified.

The KAS Media Program South East Europe is a co-host and partner of BIRN at the Summer School. "When investigative journalism is practiced professionally and decently, it promotes transparency in politics and society," said the Head of the Media Program South East Europe, Christian Spahr. "Journalists can thus contribute to claim accountability of politicians and make democratic standards stronger."

The trainers from the USA, Great Britain and South East Europe, who were selected by BIRN, are counted among the worldwide best in their field. Therefore, the Summer School was also visited by experienced reporters beyond the Balkan region, who participated at their own expenses. This year participants came, amongst others, from the USA, Great Britain, Ireland, Italy and of course South East Europe.

After an introduction in professional and ethical standards of investigative journalism by lead trainer **Blake Morrison** (Reuters), the guests learned how to analyse publicly available databases and excel tables with

economic data, in order to find hints of corruption. **Crina Boros** from the Centre for Investigative Journalism (CIJ) in London introduced instruments of data journalism to the participants.

The director of the investigation department of British BBC, **Paul Myers**, explained to the journalists how to use Facebook and other social networks for researching profiles. Via the Facebook „Graph Search“, it is possible to find hints for potential business connections or conflicts of interest of CEOs and politicians.

Reporters learn successful global researching

The investigative journalist **Miranda Patručić** from Organized and Crime Corruption Project (OCCRP) presented the internationally popular research project „Panama Papers“ in detail. Thereby the participants could learn how big amounts of data can be analysed in a team and how reporters successfully create international networks. Another topic was the protection of journalists' own data and sources and how to split work efficiently in a team.

Jim Mintz, Professor at the Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism at the Columbia Journalism School (USA), gave advice on how to establish good working relations with whistle-blowers. Amongst other topics, it was discussed how to establish contact with sources and how to build trust.

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According to Pulitzer Prize winner **Martin Kaiser** from Milwaukee (USA) the only obligation of journalists is to report the truth. He considers journalism as a forum for public criticism. An investigative journalist was not allowed to lose sight of his values. Furthermore, the participants discussed in small groups the following questions: Which journalistic tools and instruments are actually useful for the daily work? What are the potential difficulties? Kaiser gave the advice to always seek for contact with colleagues in order to receive feedback for the own work and exchange experiences. In addition, the participants had the opportunity to get together with the trainers and discuss their own story ideas in small groups.

**Participants develop own story ideas –
 BIRN awards two of them**

On the last day, journalists presented their own research ideas, developed during the Summer School, in front of an expert jury. It consisted of the trainers, **Jelena Ćosić**, project coordinator of BIRN Summer School and **Christian Spahr** (KAS). Two of the suggestions received research scholarships of 2,000 Euros each, funded by BIRN. The authors of the story ideas want to address corruption in Romanian public health service as well as the deficient cooperation between Kosovo and Serbia in the field of judiciary.



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