

Keynote

Journalistic Education: Challenges and Perspectives

Christian Spahr, Director Media Program South East Europe

Ladies and gentlemen, dear students, colleagues and friends,

I'm glad to be here today and to have the second public discussion about journalistic standards at the University of Belgrade in just a few months. I remember we were here in October 2013 to discuss media legislation and good examples of self-regulation in the media sector. These days, we have gathered a group of experts in journalistic education in Belgrade, and we would like to share some key findings with you. Thank you, Miroljub, for the invitation to be your guests for this debate.

The media landscapes in South East Europe have experienced enormous changes since the emergence of democracy in the 1990s. Freedom of the press and liberal markets have facilitated the creation of many new newspaper titles, radio and TV stations and later online media. However, favourable conditions for free media did not appear at once, just like democratic changes had to be introduced step by step in the political and economical spheres and society.

The political and social role of journalists and media outlets has dramatically changed. Before, they had to be a pillar of the power. Now, in democratic societies, they are considered to be public watchdogs and work in the presumed interests of the public. It is their task to inform as independently as possible in order to encourage public opinion making.

In the last 25 years not only political, but also technological revolutions took place. Mobile phones and the Internet conquered the world faster than any new technology before. Now, especially the young and urban generations consider the Internet to be a more important information source than traditional media.

These radical changes – both political and technological – have had a deep impact on journalistic education. Faculties and providers of vocational education schemes had and have to discuss and implement new values in their curricula. They constantly have to keep up with the technological developments and include new methods of reporting and writing in their programmes. Besides that, the ratio of theory and practice is being discussed time and again.

This ongoing process is especially challenging in young democracies like Serbia and its neighbour countries. The developments in the political culture and the education of media representatives cannot be seen separated. Models of journalistic education also have to take into account the relation between politics and media, different professional role models of politicians and journalists, but also common ethical standards.

For this reason, the Media Program South East Europe of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) has founded a working group with experts from universities and media NGOs all over the region. Three of them are on this panel now, from the three biggest South European countries, Romania, Serbia and Bulgaria. They will give us short estimations of the situation in their countries, to be followed by a debate in which you are welcome to ask questions.

I have the pleasure to invite first Prof. Liana Ionescu from the University of Bucharest to give us an impression about the challenges of journalistic education in Romania.

Thank you for your attention.