

## Keynote

### Closing the gap

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Mrs. Ambassador,  
Dear partners and friends,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I have attended many conferences on media and politics, but only few of them had such a clear title as this meeting today. "The Media as an Instrument for State Capture" – this describes to a large extent the challenges of the Bulgarian media sector. In probably every country of the world, politicians, companies and other organisations try to influence the media to get their messages published. But it makes a great difference whether this influence follows certain common rules accepted by all players, or not. And it makes a difference how transparent media and political actors are about their interactions, especially their financial relations.

In this regard, I share the opinion of the organisers that there is room for improvement in Bulgaria. It is not a coincidence that the country has constantly deteriorated in international press freedom rankings. The newest rating of Reporters Without Borders, as you all know, shows Bulgaria on rank 106 worldwide, between Nepal and Congo. What is less known about these rankings in the public: They do not just describe the pressure from governments on journalists. In Bulgaria, even the most critical journalists are not systematically persecuted by authorities. After all, the country is a member of the European Union. NGOs like Reporters Without Borders also have a look at the conditions within the media sector. For instance, the ranking I mentioned includes the conditions of journalists at their workplaces, and the freedom media owners give them to report independently.

Therefore, we need to take a look at various forms of pressure on journalists. From politicians, yes. From the state who is the biggest advertiser in many media. But also from private advertisers and other businesses, and of course by the media owners. When I speak with Bulgarian colleagues and experts, they often say that media owners don't have the ambition to offer a good journalistic product, but rather to use media as an instrument for other economic and political aims they have.

As an initiative dedicated to quality journalism and media freedom, the Media Program of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung is eager to support professional projects who throw light on the instrumentalisation of media. In 2014, we published a first comprehensive study on this topic with the help of two renowned Bulgarian experts. One of them, Orlin Spassov, is amongst us today. He found out that at least every second Bulgarian journalist complains about pressure from politics or businesses. Orlin will mention some of the findings later. The current CSD project is even larger because it contains several conferences and scientific analyses, and we consider it to be an excellent follow-up to previous research projects.

I am looking forward to the discussions and studies within this initiative for two reasons: First, to describe carefully the dependencies between media, politics and business, in order to facilitate the debate about the role of media in the democracy of a young EU member state. And second, to provide facts and figures for the necessary and ongoing discussion about modern media legislation and self-regulation of the sector. This can be a valuable support for Bulgaria to close the gap on other EU member states in terms of media freedom.

Thank you very much for your attention.