

INFLUENCE ON THE MEDIA: OWNERS, POLITICIANS AND ADVERTISERS

CHRISTIAN SPAHR, KAS MEDIA PROGRAM ·
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SOUTH EAST EUROPE – CURRENT OBSERVATIONS

- **Crisis of confidence:** 17 % of Bulgarians and 28 % of Romanians believe in free media (KAS)
- **Print crashes:** Values for objectivity, relevance and trust all under 18 %; run of traditional nationwide newspapers 10-20.000 (in BG)
- **TV unchallenged:** Most used professional media and political news source (60 – 75 %)
- **Media freedom:** Negative tendencies – only 3 SEE countries with small progress (RWB 2015)
- **On the way to EU,** media freedom is not sufficiently acknowledged as critical factor



STUDY: PRESSURE ON MEDIA IN BULGARIA

- **Period of investigation:** January – September 2014
- **1st phase: Research** about **ownership** conditions and **revenues** of media
- **2nd phase: Interviews** with 100 **journalists** from 40 media outlets (national, regional; Print, Radio, TV, Online)
- **3rd phase: Interviews** with **media owners** and media managers
- **Authors** of the study are Dr. Orlin Spassov (Sofia University) and Krum Blagov (“Reporter” foundation, BG).



KEY RESULTS (BULGARIA)

- **Internal censorship:** 30 percent of journalists state that in their media outlet, reporting about **certain topics, persons or companies** is not possible or only with a determined tendency.
- **Every fourth journalist** indicates that **texts** or other journalistic materials of his/hers **have been stopped**.
- 52 percent of journalists say that **politicians exert pressure** on their work.
- Every third bewails **pressure from media owners and advertisers**.
- Deficient **framework conditions**:
 - lack of press code (§) – no legal definition of relation journalist-management
 - collective labour agreements not binding for most employment contracts
 - weak self-regulation, possibly improving (e.g. Committee on Media Ethics)
 - lack of solidarity and “spirit of change” within the profession

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE AUTHORS

- **Ownership** (in BG especially of printed media) hast to become **more transparent** by law
- Political debate about **limitation** of **ownership concentration** in media sectors (TV, Print, ...)
- **Government** as biggest advertiser has to **disclose cash flows**
- **Obligation to label paid content** (text ads) in printed media
- **Equal access** of media outlets to **distribution** and to government information to be ensured
- *Examination and use of experiences from other countries (e.g. Germany, Greece, Slovenia, ...)*



CONTACT

Christian Spahr

KAS Media Program South East Europe

Bul. Yanko Sakazov, Et. 1, Ap. 2
1504 Sofia

Phone: +359 2 94249-71

E-Mail: christian.spahr@kas.de

Web: www.kas.de/medien-europa

Facebook: www.facebook.com/kasmediaeurope

Twitter: @KASmediaSEE | @c_spahr

