

Preface



Dear readers,

Democracy cannot exist without free media. Journalists must be able to work independently – without political or economic influence or any other reprisals. This is also a recognition of the terrible history of the Second World War and the totalitarian rule of the National Socialists over a huge part of Europe. For this reason, public service media were established in (West) Germany after 1945 after the model of the BBC. It was without question a gift for Germany and its democratic development.

Public service media – in Germany as well as in other European countries – have a legal task. They are exclusively committed to the welfare of all and must not unilaterally support a party, organisation or any other type of grouping. Its programmes should inform, educate, advise. They can and should also entertain. Its contents, whether on television, radio or online, still stand for seriousness and credibility. Despite all doubts, trust in public service media remains high in many countries. This is confirmed by regular opinion polls across Europe. In almost all countries in which the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) is represented, the public broadcasters are ranked in the first place. But this trust is not self-evident. Even public service media must always face social and, above all, technical developments, reflect repeatedly on its foundations and mission and find answers in the democratic discourse.

This book gives an overview of public service media in South East Europe; referring to the ten countries, which the Media Programme of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung covers. From Croatia to North Macedonia and Bulgaria to the Republic of Moldova, liberalised media markets have emerged following the collapse of socialism and its state-controlled media systems. State broadcasters have become public service media. For the first time, essential information about individual public broadcasters is being gathered. Media experts from the respective countries write, among other things, about the history, the legal framework, the financing model and organisational structures in place. The chapters are supplemented with the results of a

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recent representative opinion poll commissioned by the Media Programme and conducted by the research institute Ipsos. We have asked the same six questions in all ten countries. In the results summarised for the entire region, two answers are very clear: almost 70 percent of respondents say that public service media are important for democracy. Unfortunately, almost 65 percent see these channels under political influence. In South Europe, in particular, this discrepancy becomes visible and audible at demonstrations when people take to the streets against their government. Then usually public service media are focus of protests and have been criticised as mouthpieces of the government.

As a Media Programme, we want to strengthen the role of free and independent media and improve the work opportunities for journalists. Freedom of the press and expression are central pillars of democracy. Here in South East Europe, we accompany the process of transformation – towards a united democratic Europe. In doing so, public service media play an important role. I am convinced that if public service media do not exist, one should invent them. They are essential for democracy – if they can act free of political influence and are well funded to fulfil their tasks.

We wish you enjoyable reading!

Hendrik Sittig
Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.
Head of KAS Media Programme South East Europe