

Public Service Media in Bosnia-Herzegovina: A Crisis of Legitimacy and Sustainability

Lejla Turčilo

Introduction

The extraordinarily complex state structure and divided society of Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) is directly reflected in the structure and work of public service media (PSM)¹ in the country. The public broadcasting system is neither a system nor public – a topic that has been discussed at great length in previous research and analysis² due to the fact that PSM operate under strong political pressure (which is reflected in the content of the programme itself and directly affects the level of trust the public has in PSM), burdened with problems of economic sustainability (especially the case with BHRT, the state-level part of the PSM), unable to cope with the demands of digitalisation (the entire country is behind of the curve on digitalisation due to the lack of political will and readiness to complete the process) and losing legitimacy as an institution that should put the public interest first.

It can be asserted that PSM in Bosnia and Herzegovina has struggled to fulfil all of its key tasks. It is in fact debatable whether there is such a thing as public service media at all, since most programming fails to meet even the minimum standard with regards to independence, diversity, balance, content quality, non-discrimination or serving the needs of the public – the basic principles of modern public service media. The crisis of legitimacy is existential.

¹ In this paper, we use the term 'public service media', although, by many parameters (such as political independence, economic sustainability, high level of professionalism, digital content etc.), B&H public service media are not that. It is more a public broadcaster without adaption to modern times, which is explained in more details in the paper.

² Nidžara Ahmetašević and Tea Hadžiristić (2017) The Future of Public Service Broadcasting in B&H. http://www.analitika.ba/sites/default/files/publikacije/psb_bih.pdf; Lejla Turčilo (2017) System of Public Broadcasting in B&H: Is There a Solution, http://safejournalists.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/PBS-analysis_Turcilo.pdf.

History of PSM in Bosnia-Herzegovina

At the end of the war in 1995, the media system in Bosnia and Herzegovina was divided along entity and ethnic lines, meaning that every ethnic group (Bosniaks, Croats, Serbs) was mainly oriented towards certain media outlets they considered 'their own'. The international community perceived public broadcasters as an important integrative element of Bosnia-Herzegovina's society and thus put the reform of PSM at the top on their agenda. The reform started in 1998, when the Office of the High Representative (OHR)³ called for the creation of a public service broadcasting system. Although this process started 21 years ago, it has not yet been completed and far from all elements of the PSM are functioning.⁴ The idea was to create a state-wide public broadcaster that would overcome ethnic divisions and serve as a source of information for all citizens. The process of its establishment was in effect a process of transformation of previously state-owned media – before the war, there had been Television Sarajevo, TVSA, a part of the Yugoslav system of PSM – which had to go hand in hand with the development of a system that would work in accordance to the idea of public interest journalism. Neither was an easy task in the war-torn post-communist country. Negotiations among political representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding the legal framework for the public broadcaster fell through. Thus, four years later in 2002 the Office of the High Representative imposed a set of laws establishing the PSM by decree. 'After 2003, the involvement of the OHR in PSB⁵ has been reduced as the European Commission took the lead, making the establishment of a functional PSB system a condition for EU accession. Consequently, in 2005, changing the legal framework for PSM was made an official condition for signing the Stabilization and Association Agreement between the EU and B&H. Since then the process has been in the hands of the political elites of B&H, which has arguably led to strife and stagnation.⁶

³ Office of High Representative, here more information on the institution, <http://www.ohr.int>.

⁴ Corporation of the PSM has never been established, which will be further discussed later.

⁵ Short for Public Service Broadcasting.

⁶ Nidžara Ahmetašević and Tea Hadžiristić (2017) The Future of Public Service Broadcasting in B&H, http://www.analitika.ba/sites/default/files/publikacije/psb_bih.pdf.

Structure of PSM in Bosnia-Herzegovina

The media scene in B&H fraught with complexity due to the fact that, beside the Public Broadcasting System, there are 81 local public media – municipal, city, cantonal radio and TV stations (12 regular TV stations, 62 radio stations, and 7 TV stations that air their programme via alternative electronic communication networks).⁷ They operate according to local laws and are mainly financed from local budgets, although nominally answering to the description of public media. However, in this analysis we will discuss the PSM system at state-level only.

According to the legal framework the Public Broadcasting System of B&H includes one state-level and two entity-level broadcasters:

- › The state-level public broadcaster of B&H (*BHRT*), consisting of one television channel (*BHT*) and one radio channel (*BH Radio 1*)⁸,
- › the Radio Television of the Federation of Bosnia & Herzegovina (*RTVFBiH*), consisting of one TV channel (*FTV*) and one radio channel (*Radio FBiH*)⁹, and
- › the Radio Television of the Republika Srpska (*RTRS*), consisting of one TV channel (*RTRS*) and one radio channel (*Radio RS*).¹⁰

The fourth element of this system is prescribed by law. It is called the Corporation – an umbrella organisation in charge of equipment, development, strategic planning, coordination between the three other elements of the system, revenue collection and distribution, etc. The Corporation, however, never actually became operational due to the lack of political will to establish unified PSM for the entire country. This is the reason why we say that the process of establishing functional PSM in Bosnia and Herzegovina has never been completed.

The fact that the operational, functional and complementary system was never implemented has led to numerous problems affecting PSM operations and ability to serve public interest. The three existing elements of the system have become competitive rather than complementary. They set and follow their own

⁷ Uredile Sanela Hodžić and Anida Sokol (2018) Javni lokalni mediji između javnog interesa i finansijske ovisnosti. Sarajevo: Media Centar, http://media.ba/sites/default/files/javni_lokalni_mediji_izmedu_javnog_interesa_i_finansijske_ovisnosti_final_za_stampu.pdf.

⁸ Website BHRT, <http://www.bhrt.ba>.

⁹ Website RTVFBiH, <http://www.rtvfbih.ba>

¹⁰ Website RTRS, <http://www.rtrs.tv>.

A Pillar of Democracy on Shaky Ground

separate agendas, do not share human and technical resources nor do they share their respective revenue as required by law. The result is PSM that are dysfunctional, divided, and distrusted.

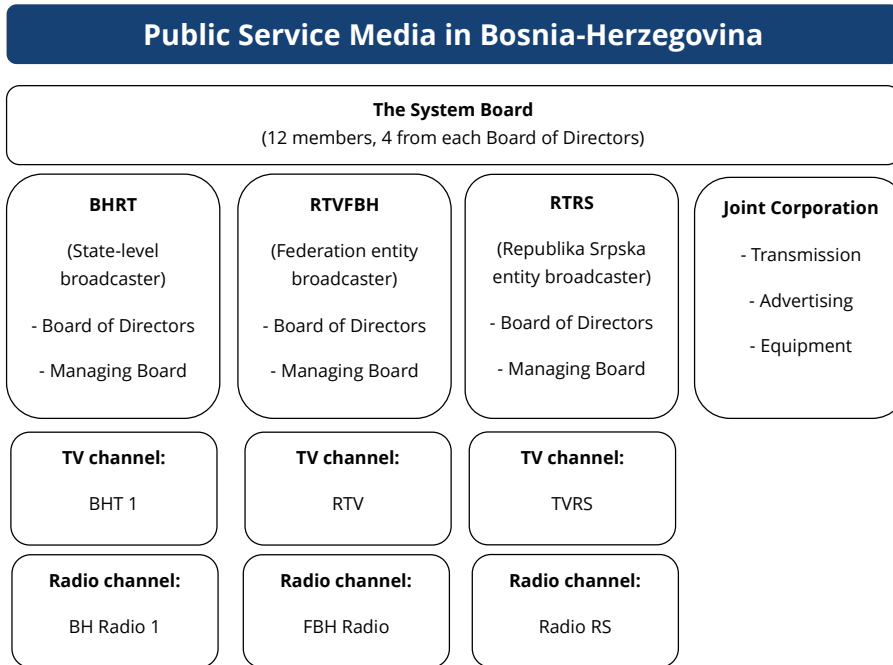
In terms of management, all three broadcasters have their own Steering Boards and Managing Boards. The Steering Board of BHRT has four members – one from each of the three constituent peoples (Serbs, Bosniaks, Croats), and one representing 'Others'. The Parliamentary Assembly of B&H appoints them on the basis of a list provided by the Communications Regulatory Agency. The fact that a state body appoints the members of the Steering Board of a corporation supposed to serve the public interest, along with the fact that the Parliamentary Assembly is not obliged to appoint the people ranked highest on the list made by the Communication Regulatory Agency¹¹ means that the appointment process is subject to direct political influence.

Both the RTRS and RTVFBiH have the same structure but, unlike BHRT, their respective Steering Boards do not need to have equal representation of all constituent peoples. For example, the current Steering Board of the RTRS has only three members: one is Bosniak, one is Serb, and one is Montenegrin, i.e. belongs to the 'Others' category. There is no Croat. The RTVFBiH has not had a proper Steering Board in the past 5 years¹²; none was appointed due to lacking political will. The previous Steering Board continues to operate in a caretaker capacity that is not grounded in law.

It is even more than obvious from the structure of PSM and the management model that the three broadcasters operate separately, which is why we say that the Bosnian public broadcasting system is not a system at all.

¹¹ In 2016, first ranked on the list of Communication Regulatory Agency were: Drago Martinović (as a Croat), Rade Simović (as Serb), Emir Hadžimuratović (as Bosniak) and none of them were in the end appointed. See Visoko.co.ba (2016) Rang lista RAK-a za UO BHRT-a ne odgovara strankama: Hoće li biti imenovani sposobni ili podobni?, 9 December, <https://visoko.co.ba/rang-lista-rak-a-za-uo-bhrt-a-ne-odgovara-strankama-hoce-li-bit-i-imenovani-sposobni-ili-podobni>.

¹² More on political games related to Steering Board of the RTVFBiH on: Lejla Turčilo (2018), Imenovanje UO RTVFBiH – Zakonsko ili dogovoreno rješenje?, http://safejournalists.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Lejla-Turcilo_bosanski.pdf.



Structure of PSM in B&H (source: Nidžara Ahmetašević and Tea Hadžiristić (2017) *The Future of Public Service Broadcasting in B&H* http://www.analitika.ba/sites/default/files/publikacije/psb_bih.pdf)

Political pressure and influence on PSM, economic (un)sustainability and lack of public trust

The general idea of the international community to establish a public service media which would overcome ethnic and territorial divisions in Bosnia and Herzegovina has not succeeded, not only because the Corporation has never been implemented, but also because the appointed steering boards operate under strong political influence. Also, all analyses of media content and media monitoring conducted to date, especially during pre-election campaigns¹³, have shown that

¹³ See BH. Journalists (2018) U prve dvije sedmice kampanje najviše medijskog prostora dobili aktuelni nosioci javnih funkcija, 26 September, <https://bhnovinari.ba/bs/2018/09/26/u-prve-dvije-sedmice-kampanje-najvise-medijskog-prostora-dobili-aktuelni-nosioci-javnih-funkcija>; BH. Journalists (2016) Finalni izvještaj o monitoringu izvještavanja medija u predizbornoj kampanji – Lokalni izbori 2016, 20 December, <https://bhnovinari.ba/bs/2016/12/20/finalni-izvjetaj-o-monitoringu-izvjetavanja-medija-u-predizbornoj-kampanji-lokalni-izbori-2016>; Media Plan Institute (2010) Kako su mediji pratili izbornu kampanju, December 2010, <http://www.mediaonline.ba/ba/pdf.asp?ID=452&n=KAKO%20SU%20MEDIJI%20PRATILI%20IZBORNU%20KAMPANJU>.

A Pillar of Democracy on Shaky Ground

PSM mainly promotes the interests of political elites and not the general public, especially when it comes to entity broadcasters, which have become institutions *per se*, completely reflecting entity and ethno-national divisions as well as the politically competitive nature of the state of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

As mentioned in previous analysis¹⁴, the original sin of constituting PSM not according to the law but according to 'what was possible at that the time' or according to 'the political will of actors involved in the process' has led to a system that lacks political independence and accountability. Once the politicians had agreed to create a system that would serve their own needs, the development of the system that should have been was essentially abandoned in favour of one that reflects the existing minimum of consensus. The idea that the state and entity parliaments should play a key role in the appointment and removal of members of the Steering Boards of public broadcasters seems to be a logical consequence of this approach. But this type of appointments process not only allows direct political control of the selection of editors and of editorial policy. It is more than obvious that with politically controlled steering boards, management, and editorial structures (there are, of course, exceptions but they are not the rule) public service media cannot be expected to provide balanced, fair, impartial reporting or to honour other principles and standards that would cater citizens with quality information and representation of the interests of everybody.¹⁵ A number of cases of questionable editorial decisions made by BHT show that political appointments and political influence on the PSM are directly reflected in programme content. One example is an interview with the Head of the Medical Clinic in Sarajevo, the wife of former Presidency Member Sebija Izetbegović. Not satisfied with how she was presented in the interview, she prevented the segment from being aired and forced the journalist to conduct a supplementary second interview. The channel eventually broadcast a combination of the two interviews, which she had signed off on.¹⁶ Another example is the controversial decision of the Editor-in-Chief of BHT to suggest

¹⁴ Lejla Turčilo (2017) System of Public Broadcasting in B&H: Is There a Solution, http://safejournalists.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/PBS-analysis_Turcilo.pdf.

¹⁵ It is fair to say that there are journalists and editors in PSM who do their job in accordance to professional standards, but in terms of editorial policy serious problems with impartiality, under-representation of minorities etc. are evident.

¹⁶ More on this on: Lejla Turčilo (2017) Approach of the Public Broadcasting Service B&H (BHRT) in Case of the Interview with dr. Sebija Izetbegović: One or two interviews – numerous unanswered questions, 6 December, <http://safejournalists.net/postupanje-javnog-rtv-servisa-bih-bhrt-u-slucaju-snimanja-intervjua-sa-dr-sebijom-izebegovic-jedan-ili-dva-intervjua-bezbroj-neodgovorenih-pitanja>.

to their news anchors not to wear the symbol of Srebrenica on Srebrenica Genocide Memorial Day.¹⁷

When it comes to the quality of programme content, as already mentioned, the three public broadcasters have acted as competitors rather than complementary sister services from the very beginning. This has a direct effect on content quality. For example, FTV positions itself almost as a commercial station, with low-cost content such as cheap reality TV shows from Croatia, soap operas, etc., which is not the role a public service broadcaster should play. On the other hand, the FTV is able to survive economically and is in significantly better financial shape than the BHT. Other signs of competitiveness involve the use of resources, often including the same content. Sporting events, for example, are broadcast on all three channels but with three different commentators. Another area of inadequate cooperation is the funding of transmitter stations. In theory, the BHRT should receive 50 percent and entity broadcasters should receive 25 percent of the national licence fee revenue, but this system was never actually implemented. The failure of the Corporation has hindered and significantly slowed the switch to digital broadcasting, which has not yet been completed in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

When it comes to the financing of public service media, data on budgets, incomes and the collection of fees from citizens are hard to obtain and lack in transparency. A monthly fee of 7.5 KM (3.84 Euro) is collected from citizens via their electricity bills. But data on how much money is actually collected and distributed among the three elements of the PSM is hard to come by. In its report to the Parliament, the BHRT stated that in 2016 it sustained a financial loss to the tune of 9 million KM (approximately 4.6 million Euro) while collecting a total of 21 million KM (approximately 10.8 Euro).¹⁸ By contrast, the BH Telecom stated in 2009 that it collected 145.8 million KM (74.8 million Euro) between 2004 and 2009. BH Telecom is a telecommunications company that used to collect the licence fees through the phone bills at the time.¹⁹ Hardly any additional data on the matter is available.

¹⁷ Klix.ba (2018) Radoja preporučio da voditelji BHRT-a ne nose Cvijet Srebrenice, sada dobija prijetnje smrću, 12 July, <https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/radoja-preporucio-da-voditelji-bhrt-a-ne-nose-cvijet-srebrenice-sada-dobija-prijetnje-smrcu/180712031>.

¹⁸ BHRT (2017) Programski izvještaji BHRT za 2016. godinu, Poslovodni odbor, <http://www.bhrt.ba/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Izvje%C5%A1taj-o-radu-i-poslovanju-Radiotelevizije-Bosne-i-Hercegovine-za-2016.-godinu-bosanski.pdf>.

¹⁹ BH Telecom (n.d.) E-glasnik: Naplata RTV takse od strane telekom operatora, <https://www.bhtelecom.ba/fileadmin/eglasnik/pdf/4.1.pdf>.

A Pillar of Democracy on Shaky Ground

The collection of licence fees is not only a significant technical but also a political issue, directly related to the public broadcasters' lack of political independence. To be specific, the RTRS positioned itself as a separate media establishment from the very beginning, with a separate infrastructure hub in Banja Luka that treats the fees collected in the area as its own private revenue. The political bias of RTRS and its close links to RS political power are mentioned as a problem in almost all relevant studies and media monitoring reports.²⁰ On the other hand, certain political representatives of the Croatian people who hold government office, dissatisfied with the lack of Croatian-language channels, directly called for boycotting the payment of the licence fee. Their appeal was successful with some citizens in the western part of Herzegovina, resulting in the lowest collection rates on record. The non-collection of fees was most significant for the BHRT, which is nearing a state of complete financial collapse.²¹

A telling illustration of how the public broadcasters and their biased reporting are perceived, and of how ready the general public is to financially support it, is the fact that 78.15 percent of the respondents in a recent study on media freedom in B&H²² said that the survival of public broadcasters should be ensured by abolishing licence fees and be financed from the budget of the State and the entities instead. This indicates two problems with how citizens view public service broadcasters. On the one hand, citizens see the broadcasters as media serving the State and the entities and promoting the interests of their elites, meaning that those elites should therefore pay for the service. On the other hand, citizens misunderstand what financing broadcasters from the general budget really means. That the citizens want to transfer the responsibility for financing public service media to the State and

²⁰ Monitoring of BH journalists in the period of election campaign, and other numerous studies, accentuate political dependency of RTRS as one of the key problems of media scene in the RS.

²¹ Although latest data on budgets and financial flows of the public broadcasters are not available, since they do not publish annual report on their website since 2016 and also do not want to share data on how much money they collect from the fee collection, most of their managers, in January 2019 Steering Board issued a statement that financial collapse of the BHRT is happening, saying that B&H might become the only European country without PSM (see Hayat.ba (2019) BiH bi mogla biti jedina država u Evropi bez javnog rtv servisa, 29 January, <https://www.hayat.ba/vijest.php?id=20568>). In the meantime, a model of collecting the fee through electricity bills has been developed, so situation has become slightly better, but still we do not know how better, since the data are not available.

²² Borka Rudić (2017) Rezultati istraživanja o medijskim slobodama u Bosni i Hercegovini u 2017: Novinarstvo, javno mnijenje i medijske slobode, Presentation, http://safejournalists.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/03.05.-Prezentacija_-_Istrazivanje-o-medijskim-slobodama-u-BiH-3.5.2017.-BHN.pdf.

entities is actually an indicator of their low level of political literacy and poor understanding that tax money is ultimately their money. Even if they do see that the public service media is subject to political influence, they do not see that it would still be them who would be footing the bill, if funding were to come from the budget of the central government. They also do not appreciate that the financing of public service media from the state budget would be tantamount to transforming the public service media into state media. Public service media is established to serve the interests of the public and is therefore financed by the public. State media, at least in non-democratic societies, usually serves the interests of elites. Citizens should be made aware of what funding the PSM from the state budget would imply.

To conclude, we may say that poor implementation of the laws pertaining to PSM, political pressure that caused the public broadcasters to lose political independence, as well as inadequate editorial policy internally created a crisis of legitimacy of the public broadcasting system in Bosnia and Herzegovina among the general public. This, together with the economic difficulties PSM face, makes its future uncertain.

Adaptation to digitalisation

In Bosnia, digitalisation – the process of transition from analogue to digital broadcasting – was launched in 2006 with the establishment of the DTT Forum (Digital-Terrestrial TV Forum), a body of experts on digital transmission.²³ The Forum was tasked with preparing a national strategy for the introduction of DTT standards in B&H, forwarding it to competent state institutions for adoption and informing the broader public about the process – an excellent idea, which regrettably was never fully implemented in practice. The Strategy on Digital Switch-Over was adopted in 2009 and the first deadline for transition to a digital signal was set to 2011. Despite this, the transition has not yet been completed. The first phase of installation of the new equipment in three major cities (Sarajevo, Banja Luka and Mostar) started in 2014 and was completed in 2016. In the summer of 2016, it was announced that digital broadcast would finally commence, but few days later, the RTRS announced that they were not ready to do so at the same time as Sarajevo and Mostar, without giving the public any specific reasons for the delay. The first phase of installation was completed at the end of October 2016 with a digital test signal. The second

²³ www.dtt.ba.

A Pillar of Democracy on Shaky Ground

phase started in 2017, the plan being to integrate additional cities in B&H to digital broadcasting and connect the country with its neighbours. This was supposed to have been done by early 2018, but the schedule slipped once again.

*'Apart from a complicated bureaucratic procedure with regard to procurement, structural problems built into the PSM system of the B&H also slowed digitalization significantly. Legally, B&H's digital transmitting equipment ought to be in the possession or in the control of the joint Corporation, but since the Corporation was never established, there is no dedicated body in charge of the process. Equipment was thus in the possession of each broadcaster, which fragmented and further complicated the process as mentioned in the episode where the RTRS attempted to set up a digital signal on its own.'*²⁴

Thus, digitalisation also became both a political issue and a sign for how dysfunctional both the system of government and the public broadcasting system are. At the time of writing, it is still unclear when the whole process will be completed.

In terms of online content, the BHRT has a website – www.bhrt.ba – with live streams and a Facebook profile – www.facebook.com/www.bhrt.ba – with 11 458 followers. A mobile application and a redesign of the website were announced in May 2019 but have not been presented yet. There is a live stream available but no content created specifically for online distribution.

The difficulties around digitalisation are one of the key reasons why we may say that the old-fashioned public broadcasting service has not yet been transformed into a modern public service media. Specifically, public service media should be a public broadcaster that is independent, works in the interest of the public and meets the digital needs of citizens. Digitalisation, as a process of switching from analogue to digital broadcasting, has not been completed in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which means that many services – TV on demand at the PSM, for example, among others – are not yet available. Thus, we may say that citizens in Bosnia and Herzegovina still do not have modern, digital public service media that meet their needs in terms of proper information, education, and orientation in society.

²⁴ Nidžara Ahmetašević and Tea Hadžiristić (2017) The Future of Public Service Broadcasting in B&H, http://www.analitika.ba/sites/default/files/publikacije/psb_bih.pdf.

Conclusion

The entity broadcasters' lack of political independence, the troublesome financial situation of the state broadcaster, the failure of the Corporation, the unclear vision and strategy for the development of the public broadcasting system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the lack of support from the public for a genuine public broadcasting system – a system that is technologically obsolete and overburdened in terms of human resources – is a fitting description of the state of the public broadcasting system in Bosnia and Herzegovina today.²⁵ It is not unfair to say that Bosnia and Herzegovina does not have a public broadcasting system that is an unmitigated public good and that guarantees quality information – an institution that has a role to play in every prosperous state and democratic society. The dominant ethno-national forces do not want and do not need a system that is both functional and civic-oriented. On the contrary, they promote the idea that the current public broadcasting system in B&H is so burdened with problems and incapable of resolving them that the only solution is to split it along entity and ethnic lines.

However, it should be kept in mind that a public broadcasting system that works in the interest of citizens and the public is a precondition for the survival of democratic values in every democratic country and society. It follows from this realisation that the PSM reform is an important aspect of negotiations with the EU regarding B&H accession (as a part of Chapter 10 of the acquis). In this context, meaningful, politically conscious, and strategic discussion and dialogue about what the public broadcasting system in Bosnia and Herzegovina needs is, without doubt, the first step in solving the problems that have piled up. Recommendations put forward by previous research include.²⁶

- › It is necessary to start from the concept of a public broadcaster as an institution whose fundamental role it is to serve the interests of the general public – specifically, an institution that upholds the right of all citizens to fair, objective, impartial, balanced reporting and to high-quality, balanced

²⁵ More on this in Lejla Turčilo, Belma Buljubašić (2017) Media and Shrinking Space in B&H: Silenced Alternative Voices, Sarajevo: HBS, https://ba.boell.org/sites/default/files/schrinking_spaces_-_studija_-_eng_-_26-10-2017_-_web_1.pdf.

²⁶ Lejla Turčilo (2017) System of Public Broadcasting in B&H: Is There a Solution, http://safejournalists.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/PBS-analysis_Turcilo.pdf; Lejla Turčilo, Belma Buljubašić (2017) Media and Shrinking Space in B&H: Silenced Alternative Voices, Sarajevo: HBS, https://ba.boell.org/sites/default/files/schrinking_spaces_-_studija_-_eng_-_26-10-2017_-_web_1.pdf; <http://www.bhrt.ba/vijesti/bih/preporuke-sa-konferencije-o-nacionalnom-javnom-servisu-bih>.

A Pillar of Democracy on Shaky Ground

and professionally created programme content that is inclusive in terms of all minority groups and that enables all citizens to consider themselves well-informed and well-represented.

- › Discussions regarding the application of existing legal solutions or the adoption of new ones should be based on European experiences and practices while respecting the specifics of the B&H context but bearing in mind the EU integration processes and the need to harmonise normative regulation with European standards and principles.
- › The focus should be shifted from politicised to policy solutions in order to bring the system in line with the standards and principles of democratic public service media.
- › Laws on public broadcasting should be amended to ensure stable and adequate financing of public service media and to create a joint service of all three public broadcasters for collecting licence fees to ensure proper funding of the PSM.
- › The Council of Ministers should adopt a programme of reform for the Public Broadcasting System of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- › The Council of Ministers should establish a 'Task Force' for the implementation of these reforms and a Working Group to prepare amendments and harmonise public service media law with representatives of the international community.
- › Civil society should continue to mobilise citizens and exert pressure on B&H authorities in order to ensure adequate funding and an environment conducive to the normal operation of public service media.
- › The digitalisation process should be completed and content production should be modernised accordingly.
- › Steps should be taken to improve the image of the public broadcasting system in the general population in order for citizens to better understand its social role, its importance for themselves, and the importance of their support for the system.

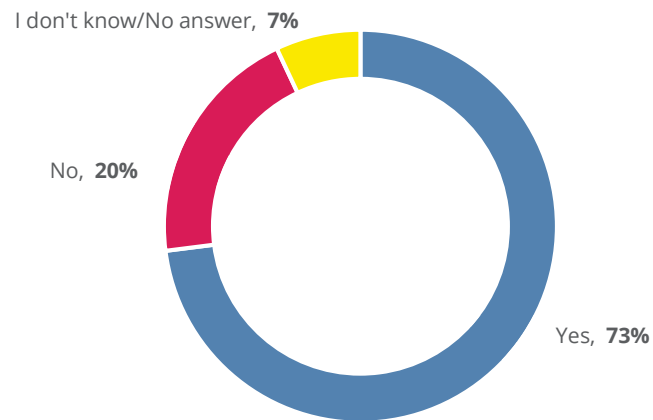
Bosnia and Herzegovina needs a strong, self-sustainable, democratic, digital public broadcasting system that serves the interests of all citizens. At the moment, unfortunately, it appears that the political structure of the country does not permit any such system to be established.



Lejla Turčilo, PhD, is a professor at the Department of Journalism and Communication Science at the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo, where she teaches the courses: Theory of Media, Media and Politics, Online and Digital Communication and TV Journalism. She authored the books *Views on Media and Society: Articles, Essays, Research* (2017), *Take the Money and Run: Politics-Media-Business in Global Society and in B&H* (2011) and *Online Communication and Offline Politics* (2006). Turčilo has published more than thirty scientific and professional papers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, France, Belgium, Germany, USA and Colombia. She has participated in numerous scientific and professional conferences, symposia and congresses in Bosnia and Herzegovina and abroad.

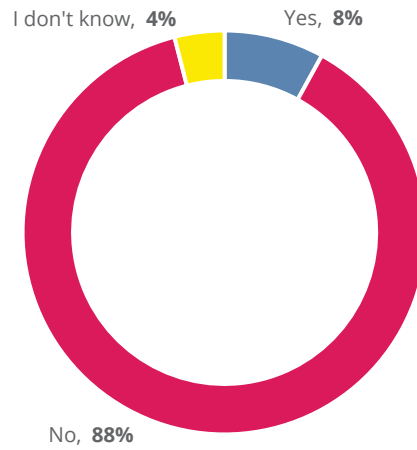
Opinion Poll Bosnia-Herzegovina

Chart 1: Are Public Service Media (PSM) important for democracy in your country? (Base: Total Bosnian sample, in percent)



Bosnia and Herzegovina can be described as a specific example, where the central authorities have to align their activity with local/regional and cantonal authorities. This is reflected by the opinions of citizens about public service media. Looking at the overall picture in the country, 73 percent of citizens believe that PSM are important for democracy in their country (see Chart 1).

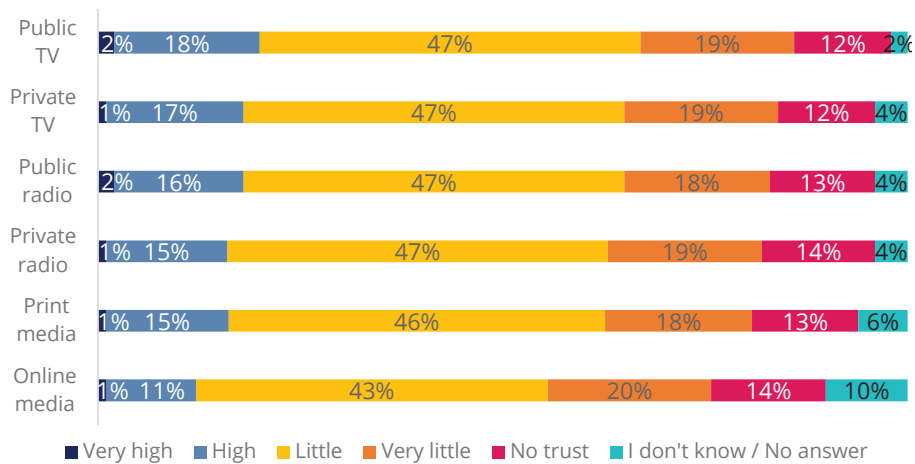
Chart 2: In your opinion, are PSM free from political influence in your country? (Base: Total Bosnian sample, in percent)



It is the general opinion of citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina that PSM are under political influence by centres of power. Almost 9 out of 10 respondents have expressed this view (see Chart 2). The share of people with this opinion is the highest among citizens with university education. 94 percent of respondents in this group believe that PSM are under political influence.

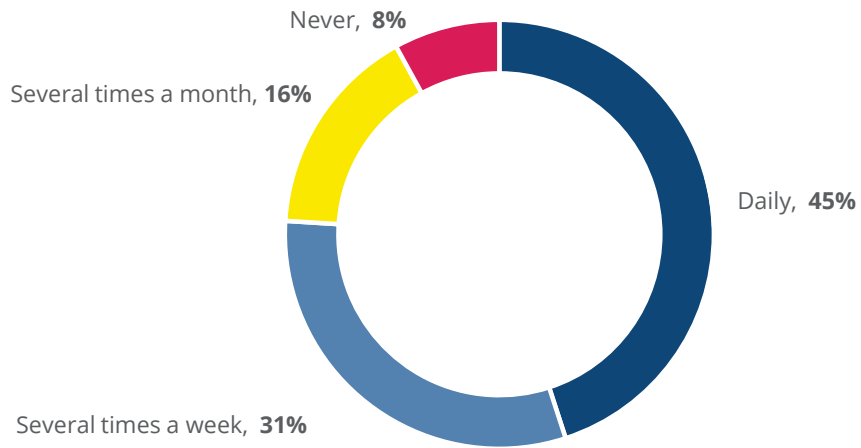
A Pillar of Democracy on Shaky Ground

Chart 3: How much trust do you have in following media? (Base: Total Bosnian sample, in percent)



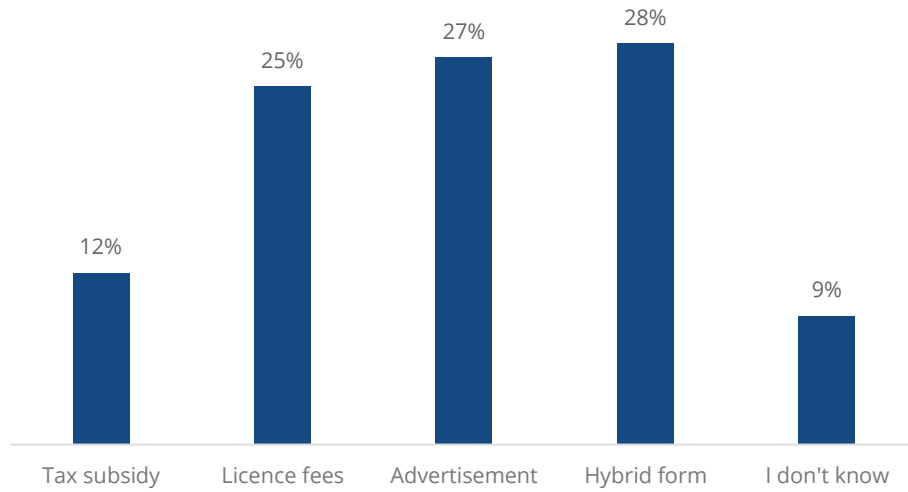
But political influence is not seen only in PSM but also in other media channels. Overall, distrust of all types of media is high, without any media enjoying greater trust than others. Online media are trusted by an even smaller share of the respondents. This does not mean that people distrust online media more than other media channels but that the number of people who do not know how much trust they have in online media is higher than for the other channels (see Chart 3).

Chart 4: How often do you use the services of Public Service Media (PSM)?
(Base: Total Bosnian sample, in percent)



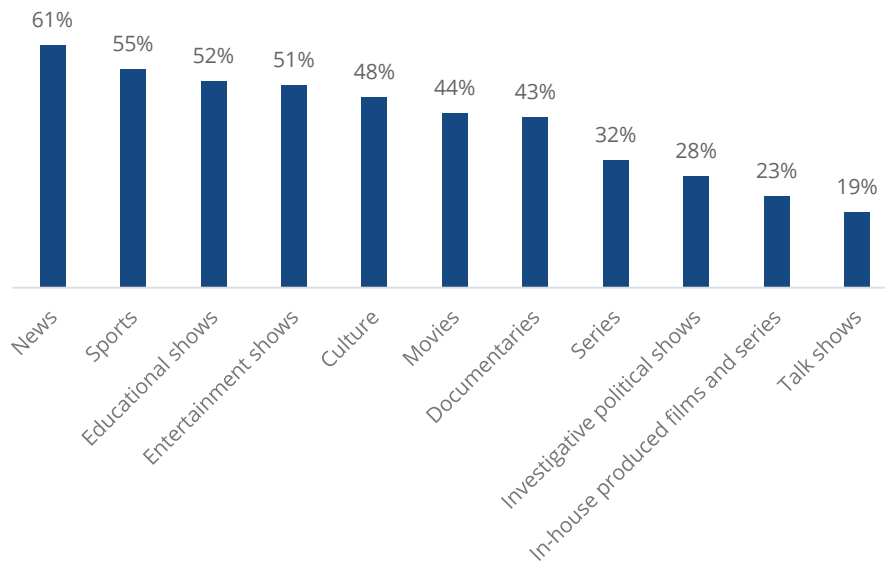
While Bosnian citizens do not differ in terms of their perception on the importance of PSM for democracy, there are differences in the frequency of PSM use among the different age groups. Only one-third of younger people (aged 18-29 years) use PSM daily as compared to almost two-thirds (59 percent) of senior citizens (64+ years).

Chart 5: What type of funding do you prefer for PSM? (Base: Total Bosnian sample, in percent)



The citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina have almost equally distributed preferences with regard to the most preferred source of funding for PSM: licence fees, advertising and a hybrid model (respectively: 25 percent, 27 percent, 28 percent). Tax subsidies are the least favoured form of funding (see Chart 5). The hybrid model is most popular with Bosnian citizens holding university degrees (39 percent).

Chart 6: What kind of content should PSM present? (Base: Total Bosnian sample, in percent, multiple answers possible)



Regarding PSM content (average results in Chart 6), Bosnian citizens repeat gender-based differences: male citizens would like to see more sport programmes (72 percent as compared to only 39 percent of women), while female respondents would like to see more entertainment shows (mentioned by 58 percent as compared to 45 percent of men). Citizens aged over 64 years prefer watching news (81 percent) while citizens with university degrees would appreciate good culture (63 percent) or documentary programmes (58 percent). In the entire sample (see Chart 6), the most popular content is news (61 percent).