

## **MEDIA DEPARTMENT**

### **Key activities in 2012**

#### **Reporting on elections in 2012**

In spring 2012, elections will be held across Serbia, for the national parliament, the provincial assembly in Vojvodina, and the local municipalities. Well-informed and impartial journalism is essential for voters in order to have an understanding of the issues at stake, the policies of the different parties, and the choices they will have to make at the ballot box. To achieve better reporting on the 2012 elections, the Department will organize a series of activities, including consultancy visits and workshops on elections' coverage for editors of broadcast media throughout Serbia and a practical production workshop for TV stations in South West Serbia. Also, a series of roundtables with representatives of the Republic Broadcasting Agency and the Press Council will be organized in all of Serbia's regions, in order to explain the rules of covering the elections and to promote impartial and balanced reporting.

#### **Topical educational programmes**

During 2012, the Department will continue to organize topical educational programmes, including seminars, practical workshops and roundtable debates dedicated to reporting on politics, the economy, organised crime, corruption and the integration of minorities. The Mission will also organize seminars for local and regional broadcasters to help them prepare for the upcoming digitalisation, helping to ensure their right to be consulted and involved in the process.

#### **Support to news production**

The Mission will continue to enhance professional standards of regional media outlets in order to help them produce quality news coverage of relevant issues especially in areas outside of the national capital region. This will be accomplished through organization of training courses, workshops, seminars, in-house training programmes and expert advice by local and international media professionals..

#### **Online journalism**

In the past two years, the number of online media outlets has rapidly increased in Serbia, in contrast to the decline and closure of many print and broadcast media channels within the same period. In recognition of the need for improvement in this field, the Media Department will organize a second workshop on online media development for journalists from East, South and Central Serbia. In co-operation with the Deutsche Welle Academy, the workshop will be held in Nis in June 2012.

#### **Media Legislation**

The Media Department assists the authorities in drafting and amending media laws in line with international and European standards. In this endeavour, the Department is supporting the implementation of key principles of the Media Development Strategy and the alignment of media regulatory framework with the *acquis communautaire* and best European practices in order to strengthen the protection of human rights and

democratic values in Serbia. This should set the groundwork for effective resolution of short- and long-term challenges in this sector and provide a scope for more sustainable media outlets, more effective media legislation, and highlight opportunities for further development and diversification of the media landscape. Together with the Ministry of Culture, Media and Information Society, the Mission supports the Working Group tasked with amending the Broadcasting Law in order to make it more accurate and to harmonize it with the Audio Visual Media Service Directive. In its strategy-related and legislative activities, the Department co-operates closely with the EU Delegation and the Council of Europe.

### ***Monitoring of implementation of key media legislation***

The Media Department monitors the implementation of key media legislation such as the Law on Public Information and the Broadcasting Law. It also provides a forum for public discussion on pressing issues in the field of media legislation, such as the withdrawal of the state from the media and transparency of media ownership, state aid to media and transition to digital broadcasting. The Department supports the development of professional, accountable and independent regulatory bodies for electronic media.

### ***Support to the Judicial Academy in Media Legislation Training***

The OSCE Mission to Serbia, together with the Independent Association of Journalists' of Serbia, will support the Judicial Academy in training judges and prosecutors on media legislation and freedom of expression under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights and in line with the practice of the European Court for Human Rights. This training is part of a broader effort to support the Academy in developing the curriculum for permanent judicial training on media legislation. Coherent implementation of media legislation is an important asset for protecting the freedom of information.

### ***Consultations for Media and Judiciary Associations***

In order to bring journalists, judges and prosecutors face-to-face and offer each side a perspective into the challenges they face in their professional activities, the Mission is supporting the consultations of journalists' and judiciary associations. Consultations should contribute to a mutual understanding and lead to accurate reporting on judicial matters, while providing the judiciary with an insight into the circumstances in which media professionals conduct their work, particularly when it comes to reporting on issues of public interest.

## **Freedom of the Media**

### ***Monitoring and reporting on the freedom of the media in Serbia***

Journalists' safety goes hand-in-hand with freedom of expression, which is essential for nurturing democracy. Within its role of monitoring the state of the media in Serbia, the Media Department closely co-operates with journalists and journalists' associations in safeguarding media freedoms.

The 2012 priorities include:

- Investigating the cases of media rights and freedoms violations, assaults on journalists, various threats etc;
- Monitoring important trials against journalists and the media;
- Co-operation with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and journalists' associations from Serbia regarding the cases of infringing media freedom.

***Supporting the journalists' associations in creating a safer media environment***

The Mission will support the journalists associations' project aimed at the establishment of an online data-base registering attacks on journalists. In co-operation with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, the Mission will promote the OSCE standards related to journalists' safety. This should help the creation of a safer media environment where journalists will be able to fulfil their vital watchdog function.

***Supporting the Press Council***

The first self-regulatory body in Serbia, Press Council started operating in September 2011. The Media Department will assist the Press Council in its promotion among the media and in gaining the necessary credibility among the general public. In that regard, the Mission will assist the Press Council in promoting the best standards and practices in self-regulation.

***Outreach events***

In order to promote media freedom and professional journalist standards the Mission will continue to organize various public events. The main outreach events for 2012 will be the ***World Press Freedom Day, Right To Know Day, promotion of free access to public information, university lectures, World Press Photo Exhibition*** (to be organized with the Royal Netherlands Embassy, Dom Omladine Belgrade and EXIT festival in July), ***cooperation with EXIT and SHARE festivals***. These outreach activities will be particularly valuable in raising awareness of the OSCE standards and commitments to freedom of expression and free flow of information at the local level.