

Mechanisms for Media Funding in Ethnic Minority Language



ENG

About the project:

The project "Freedom of Expression and Freedom of the Media – JUFREX" promotes freedom of expression and of the media in our country and contributes to improving the application of European standards in this area.

Based on the results and experiences of the previous program phase, the project will continue to work with a range of actors responsible for implementing these standards, such as: judges, prosecutors, lawyers, police officers, media regulatory bodies, journalists, students and other media stakeholders.

JUFREX is part of the joint programme "Horizontal Facility in the Western Balkans and Turkey II" – an action co-funded by the European Union and the Council of Europe and implemented by the Council of Europe, which overall objective is to increase compliance of beneficiaries in the Western Balkans and Turkey with European standards and the EU Acquis within the enlargement process, where applicable.

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- The financial sustainability of the media is generally difficult, with special emphasis on local and different non-majority media that does not reach a much wider audience.

The local and non-majority media are largely reliant on the support of international donor funding, rarely on the local authorities in which they operate, and are often based on their political affiliations.

As a result, it negatively affects the maintenance of professionalism and impartiality in their reporting.

Therefore, there should be support through experts to facilitate these media so that they can diversify their income in order to use online mechanisms for financial sustainability.

- Minority media operate as business or non – governmental organizations (NGOs). In this regard, media operating as businesses face difficulties in obtaining donations from funders as most of them donate to NGOs.

The difficulty these media face is also a very limited or non-existent market. This is because most advertisers tend to promote their ads in the national media.

On the other hand, it is a little easier for the media that function as NGOs, as they have a wider range of funders and donors.

But media that operate as NGOs are in competition with CSOs that are better prepared in terms of applications, which local and minority media lack.

Therefore, cooperation of CSOs with local media is recommended in order to complement their functions. CSOs need to promote their activities in places where they operate, and local and minority media acting as NGOs can provide these services.



- In our country, there are 19 licenced television stations, out of which five (5) provide television broadcast services in the Serbian language. On the other hand, there are 89 radio stations, out of which 22 are broadcasting in Serbian, three (3) in Bosnian, and two (2) in Gorani and one (1) in Turkish.

All these media have to pay a certain amount for licensing and frequency acquisition. Amounts vary depending on local, regional or national frequency coverage. Given the difficulties media are facing, being barely able to function due to funding struggles and the Covid-19 pandemic, last year the Independent Media Commission (IMC) asked the government to remove all annual media tariffs, but such a thing has not been approved by the government.

On the other hand, in 2019, the IMC drafted and adopted a regulation on the specifics and method of supporting and allocation of funds for the media in order to promote quality, transparency and educational and informative content for citizens in all languages.

In order for this regulation to work, it is necessary for the Law on the Independent Media Commission to include a provision that the funds collected as part of licensing and frequency allocation go to financially support local and minority media.

Therefore, lobbying by the non-majority media, representatives of the Association of Journalists of Kosovo, the Council of Europe, and the European Commission is recommended in order to include this provision in the law that is being amended and is expected to be adopted in the first six months of 2022.

- Recent technological developments and advances have made it difficult for local and non-majority media to keep pace with technological changes.

These difficulties are due to their low financial capacity. Add to this the fact that we are facing a period of proliferation of misinformation and fake news, it is important to have local and minority media that promote and monitor developments in a fair, impartial and professional manner.

As part of the minority language media initiative, minority languages media networking was promoted.

As a result, we have Serbian media networks TV Mreža and KOSMA.

Therefore, it is important that local and community media create networks and cooperation between them and national media in order to exchange information, news, program content, etc. This way, these media can attract more advertising and funding.

- It is in the interest of state institutions to preserve and promote the languages, cultures and traditions of different communities in our country. There are various strategic documents such as the Community Strategy and the Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma and Ashkali Communities in Kosovo Society

In the past, as part of these strategic documents, it has been planned to allocate funds for the non-majority media promotion and funding, whereas in recent years this planning has been removed from the revised documents.

Therefore, it is recommended to re-establish the provisions for planning financial support to local media, especially the minority language media in our country within the laws.



Conclusions and recommendations

The joint European Union and Council of Europe action on “Freedom of Expression and Freedom of the Media – JUFREX” in co-operation with the Association of Journalists of Kosovo organized the roundtable to discuss specific mechanisms for financing of private media or non-profitable entities that publish content in different minority languages.

Law no. 02 / L-37 on the Use of Languages, adopted in 2006, stipulates that Albanian and Serbian are the official languages and therefore all institutions and public service providers in the country are obliged to ensure their equal use in the judicial system, state and municipal institutions, public enterprises, media, education, social services and the private sector.

Given that this right is provided by the legal and institutional framework, the need for stable and well-established minority media in our society is of vital importance. The purpose of this event was to discuss the challenges and possible solutions to this issue within community.

