

2018

ANNUAL REPORT

Media
Association of
South-East
Europe



Media Association of South-East Europe is professional association established by six most circulated, read and influential professional private media from the region.

This is a self-driven initiative, based on the urgent need for improving media situation in the entire South-East Europe, and this process has to be led by media themselves.

Reason for establishment of the Association is primarily focused to improving and fostering editorial autonomy and responsible journalism under condition of a level playing field for all on the market and high legislative and regulatory standards defining the media sector.

Media Association of South-East Europe has six founding members: Adria Media Group – Belgrade; Grupi KOHA – Prishtine; Koha Production – Skopje; Oslobođenje – Sarajevo; Sloboden Pečat – Skopje and Vijesti – Podgorica.

As of November 1st, 2018, weekly Kapital – Skopje joined MASE, while we are pending accession of Adria Media Zagreb – Zagreb which will commence from the beginning of 2019.

I KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Since its establishment in mid-April 2018, Media Association of South-East Europe has conducted number of different activities.

This includes organization of high-level debates on media sustainability and business models, capacity building of its members, advocacy for more effective oversight on media scene by the European Union and fight for freedom of media and journalists.

1. Conference - Media sustainability and media business models

In cooperation with Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) missions to Montenegro and Macedonia, we have organized a Conference on Media Sustainability and Successful Media Business Models.

First conference of such kind, strictly focusing on media business, was attended by highest-ranked and most influential stakeholders from South-East Europe.



Among 150 participants we had OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Prime-minister of Montenegro, owners, directors and editors-in-chief of over 50 media, social media influencers, regulatory institutions, ambassadors and representatives of the diplomatic corps.



2. Workshop - Business view on publishers' data



For all media, members of MASE, we have organized a targeted capacity building on management of different types of data publishers collect on its online readers and how such data can be used for additional profit generation.

The workshop was held by the top management of American-Polish company deep.bi which developer special predictive analytics software.

3. Initiating more effective monitoring of the European Union

Having in mind significant problems of unlawful competition in the media market of the South-East Europe as well as common attempts to suppress freedom of speech by the authorities, MASE addressed heads of the

European Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament.

We have requested from the leaders of the EU to strengthen continuous, in-depth monitoring of media freedom in the South-East Europe, and effectively react when those freedoms are endangered.

Based on our initiative, the EU informed us they have secured more strict monitoring of the media scene in the South-East Europe, provided additional responsibilities to their peer-review missions, as well as secured completely new funding line for media in this part of Europe, to support their viable projects.

4. Fighting for the freedom of the speech

Media Association of the South-East Europe used its and influence of its members to react in any case of violence against journalists or media in the South East Europe.

Since our establishment, we have strongly and publicly condemned violence against journalists and advocated for complete judicial resolution of each of these cases.

This include murder attempt of Olivera Lakić, journalist of the daily Vijesti, attack on Vladimir Kovačević, journalist of BN Television, illegal imprisonment and property taking of Saranda Ramaj, journalist of Koha Ditore, as well as verbal attack of the Montenegrin President on daily Vijesti.

5. Influencing media scene on the Western Balkans

Representatives of the Media Association of South-East Europe attended all relevant meetings, seminars and conferences related to media market, media operations and freedom of the speech in this part of the Europe.

This includes EU-Western Balkans Media Days organised by the European Commission, South-East Media Conference organised by the OSCE, Digital Media Conference organised by BIRN, etc.

In addition, representatives of the MASE attended number of direct meetings with various members of the diplomatic corps and donor community, to strengthen its position in the SE Europe and ensure funding for future operations.

6. Partnering with other organizations

So far, MASE has achieved significant support from the OSCE Mission to Montenegro which supported two events of our organization.

In addition, we became members of the consortium which jointly applied for a European Commission's grant for media capacity building and won the completion. Partners in the consortium are: Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), European Broadcasting Union (EBU); International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), Thomson Foundation and Center for Investigative Journalism.

In addition, we have partnered with other media, outside MASE on seeking support for projects which will improve managerial capacities of media. This include SME from Slovakia and Adria Media Zagreb, which after that support decided to become member of MASE.

II PLANS FOR 2019

Media association of South-East Europe has extensive plans for 2019 which fall under five main pillars – capacity building of its media members, development of new media services, improving business environment for media operations, supporting freedom of speech and reducing ethnical and other hatred in the region.

2. Capacity building of its media members

MASE plans to organize several events in order to strengthen capacities of its members to produce more quality content and to be more competitive at the media market.

2.1. Mobile journalism workshop

MASE plans to organize a Mobile journalism workshop to educate journalists from editorials of its member media to use mobile telephones as devices to prepare media content. In this sense, we plan to educate journalists to develop complete news-pieces using solely their cell phones, which will be available for publication on portals and television. Journalists will be able to learn how to record videos properly, in a format adjustable to portals and TV, montage and video editing, as well as to comprehend all materials into a single news piece.

2.2. Personalization of the digital content

We plan to organize a targeted workshop with software developers for members of the Association to explore opportunities for improving existing news portals. Namely, in accordance with the global trends, more and more media seek opportunities to prepare media content in such way to make it

fully personalized for an individual user. In more detail – if a single person / reader is interested only in content related to e.g. black chronicles or politics, portals would more and more offer such content, while reducing other types of content user is not interested in – e.g. sports and entertainment. In this way, portals will ensure more loyal users, which will spend more time reading content, because they will not be “spammed” with other content they find not that interesting.

2.3. Improve CMS

Each members of the association will be offered with opportunities to improve their existing CMS in cooperation with relevant developers on a global level. Namely, MASE plans to cooperate with those developers and jointly fundraise to ensure improvements of various software which will allow portals to generate more incomes and to become more sustainable. This will be ensured through implementation of improved CMS which will allow more information on users to be collected, leading to better marketing monetization, as well as through exploring possibilities for introduction of subscriptions and paywalls on the content.

2.4. More effective operations and editorial integration

MASE plans to offer their members with opportunities to work with prominent global experts who can bring more effectiveness in the existing editorials, as well as offer solutions for integration of some and/or all divisions among editorials and/or media (e.g. print, digital and TV). This will allow media to operate with reduced costs, making them more sustainable and able to invest more in additional human resources and/or services to readers.

2.5. Increase quality of reporting

We will use our infrastructure and fundraising possibilities to organize series of workshops for journalist and editors employed in media which are members of MASE. Therefore, we plan to organize series of events to additionally strengthen capacities of media to report on foreign and interior policies, politics, economics, topics of interest of the society, culture, etc. This will be done in cooperation with prominent media, editors and journalists from the European Union, US and other developed countries with significant track record of media professionalization and freedom of speech.

3. Content sharing

Under the Association, we will offer our members to exchange content and to develop new, joint information with additional quality. In that sense, we will create unique software, which will allow all members to access, insert and edit the same content, which will in future enable them to create joint stories and news pieces of different sort. In addition, we plan to start developing and publishing joint content related to the foreign policy and national hatred which will serve as a test for future joint content development related to other relevant topics.

4. Paper

We will seek opportunities for joint purchase of paper among members of MASE, to be able to get lower prices in the era where print media face more and more difficulties in operating. Namely, media market for print is globally shrinking every year, leaving less and less space for media to issue print edition in a sustainable manner. Prices of paper constantly increase, as well as transport and printing, while at the same time circulation is reduced. Under those circumstances, media have to find way to make their operation less costly, and cluster purchase of paper might be one of those solutions.

5. Increasing membership

MASE will continue to promote its activities and to seek opportunities for attracting new members which are at the same time professional, independent and credible. Therefore, MASE will try to attract members in new countries (e.g. Albania and Croatia) as well as to extend their membership base in the existing countries. This will lead to increased influence of the entire Association, but also more opportunities for cooperation among media which are under the Association's umbrella.

6. Protecting journalists and freedom of the speech

In any case where a journalist or media are attacked in the Western Balkans, no matter to their affiliation to MASE, the Association and all its members will conduct extensive media campaign for protection of media and adequate prosecution of perpetrators of those crimes.

