



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Enlargement Directorate-
General



Regional Cooperation Council



International seminar

**South East Europe 20 Years On:
Transformation from State to Public Broadcasting**

Sarajevo, 14 November 2011

Conclusions

Background

Directors general of public service media, senior government officials, representatives of regulatory authorities and civil society (media organisations) from the Regional Cooperation Council's 12 South East European members, as well as relevant international organisations, met in Sarajevo on 14 November 2011, at the international seminar "South East Europe 20 Years On: Transformation from State to Public Broadcasting".

Over 50 participants gathered in order to analyze the state of public service media in South East Europe 20 years into the democratic transition, with a view to outline a future course of action in support of their freedom, independence and sustainability.

The event was co-organized by the European Commission (EC)'s Enlargement Directorate-General and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Secretariat, with support of the European Association of Public Service Media in South East Europe and the European Broadcasting Union (EBU).

The seminar participants,

Recalling the conclusions of the workshop "Building a New South East Europe – Role and Potential of the Media", organized by the RCC Secretariat and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)'s Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo on 15-16 October 2009, when journalists and editors from leading South East European media outlets reaffirmed the indispensable role that journalists play in shaping public opinion and in raising awareness of the importance of establishing trust in the region, as preconditions for sustainable economic and social development of the SEE societies;

Building on the conclusions of the international conference "Addressing Europe's Digital Divide: Towards Sustainable Public Service Media in South East Europe", held in Sarajevo,

on 14-15 October 2010, and organized by the RCC Secretariat and the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), when broadcasters, government officials, regulators and experts from South East Europe agreed that the region's public service media should become engines of technological, economic, political, and cultural development of their countries, supporting integration in the European Union;

Welcoming the establishment, in line with the conclusions of the October 2010 conference and with support of the RCC and the EBU, of the European Association of Public Service Media in South East Europe, in November 2010, as a non-profit professional body of the public service media in the region, as well as the September 2011 signing of the Protocol on Regional Cooperation in Education and Training among members of the Association as a concrete indication of the Association's commitment to regional cooperation;

Responding to the May 2011 European Commission's Speak Up! Conference on Freedom of Expression and Media and its conclusions, with a significant space dedicated to issues of importance to public service media, as well as the 2011-2012 European Commission's Enlargement Package in the part related to Freedom of Expression and the Media;

Recognizing the indispensable role that public service media have in promoting European integration, regional cooperation, building free, democratic, pluralistic, tolerant and inclusive societies, deepening dialogue, reconciliation and building mutual confidence in South East Europe, as well as the challenges they face in fulfilling that role;

Recalling that strengthening the freedom and independence of the media in South East Europe, particularly the public service media, reinforces the rule of law and good governance, as well as the development of democratic, pluralistic and inclusive societies in the region;

Agree on the following CONCLUSIONS:

- South East Europe and its broadcasters have gone a long way over the past 20 years of transformation from state to public broadcasting, despite often difficult circumstances, in terms of legislative framework, freedom of expression and professionalism, but a number of issues remain outstanding and need to be addressed;
- The economic standing, editorial independence and autonomy of public service media need to be improved, to avert political interference, achieve managerial stability, ensure sustainability and stable funding for the public service media, in order for them to fulfill their role;
- Legislative framework as the foundation for editorial and financial independence of public service media needs to be put in place and strengthened by governments and fully implemented by relevant authorities, including regulators, whose independence and professionalism should be guaranteed;
- Future of public service media should be secured and their competitiveness on the media market preserved, to guarantee media pluralism and enable the people of South East Europe to benefit from the public service media remit;
- In providing essential services to citizens – reliable information, life-long learning, access to culture, quality entertainment, but also support for diversity, social cohesion, innovation, preservation of cultural heritage, investment in the creative industries and

regional development – it is imperative that public service media safeguard editorial independence and nourish professional excellence, while ensuring sustainability;

- Public service media and other relevant actors in the society, especially civil society organizations and journalistic associations, should do their utmost to secure creation and maintenance of high-level professional standards, including also through the Protocol on Regional Cooperation in Education and Training among members of the European Association of Public Service Media in South East Europe;
- Investigative journalism at public service media in the region should be strengthened, possibly by creating a pool of educated investigative reporters created at each public service media in South East Europe, who would then join forces at a regional level and create a permanent mechanism of exposing the most endemic problems of the region;
- Further regional cooperation in support of independence and sustainability of public service media among governments, regulators, broadcasters, journalistic associations and civil society organizations is strongly encouraged, also through the European Association of Public Service Media in South East Europe;
- To invite the European Commission, the Regional Cooperation Council, the European Broadcasting Union, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and other relevant international organizations, to support, within their respective mandates, a key role of public service media in democratization processes in South East European societies, in a long term;
- To recommend to the European Commission that, in setting up financial and technical assistance programmes in the field of freedom of expression, it takes into consideration independence and sustainability needs of public service media in South East Europe;
- To support activities of the Regional Cooperation Council towards enhancing freedom and independence of public service media in the region, such as facilitation of establishment of the Association of Public Service Media in South East Europe and development of further initiatives along this line;
- To call upon the European Broadcasting Union and its members to pursue new assistance activities in the region on the basis of solidarity within the Union and of alliances with other international organizations committed to the value and values of public service.
- The European Association of Public Service Media in South East Europe and the European Broadcasting Union support recent developments in license fee collection and appropriate marketing allowance for local production in service of independent and sustainable public service media in The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.
- The public service media will maintain their remit in digital area, and the governments are invited to make all efforts, including financial ones, to foster fast digitalization of public service broadcasting networks.

Sarajevo, 14 November 2011