



2nd Academy on Media Law in South East Europe

Sarajevo, 3-5 September 2013

**Closing address by Goran Svilanovic, Secretary General,
Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)**

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and gentlemen,

- I am happy to be able to greet you in Sarajevo today, at the closing of the second edition of the **Academy on Media Law in South East Europe**, on behalf of the **Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) as its founder**.
- It makes us proud to have many of you return to the Academy after the first edition last year in Zagreb, but also to see new faces – this shows that the Academy is growing both in size and popularity, and widening its influence.
- The economic crisis that has hit South East Europe (SEE) has made the freedom of expression issues even more complex, with political interference and economic pressures hindering the development of media independence. A deepening of the dialogue between state actors and media and non-governmental community is the niche the RCC considers of a paramount importance for strengthening the freedom of expression in SEE, securing the well-being of a society, its economic prosperity and development, in line with goals of SEE 2020 strategy the countries of the region are currently preparing under RCC coordination.
- The media, including public service broadcasters, have to be able to sustain themselves, thus minimizing external pressures and nourishing media pluralism. The role of governments and other state actors is to solidify foundation for media independence. The support of the EU in this respect is

essential. Establishing a closer link between the freedom of the media and the accession criteria by the EU could serve as an additional deterrent to the efforts to exercise control and influence over the media.

- The RCC is ready to contribute to this process in a strategic and targeted manner, linking activities in media field with SEE 2020 goals to the benefit of societies in the region and their faster integration into the EU.
- The RCC focuses on strengthening regional know-how and exchange on the legislative framework for freedom of expression and its implementation, to solidify the foundation for free media and raise awareness of their importance in a society. It supports regional efforts to safeguard independence and sustainability of public service media in South East Europe, as providers of essential services to citizens.
- The RCC will continue to act as a facilitator, **bringing together best resources of our region** around the same, common goal, to maximize knowledge, impact and avoid duplication, at the same time serving as a link to the European Union and other interested partners of the region.
- This is what we are trying to achieve with the Academy. And it would not be possible without our partners who have decided to support it: the **Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, the OSCE field operations in South East Europe, the European Broadcasting Union, the European Association of Public Service Media in South East Europe, ARTICLE 19, and the US Embassy in Sarajevo.**
- As a result of your expertise, work and recommendations, the **European Commission** has also recognized the value of the Academy, and decided to support it both on policy level through its report on media and freedom of expression in Western Balkans and Turkey, released in April this year, and financially, by designating funds for its functioning in the next three years, through the RCC's budget – for which we are extremely grateful.
- With this strong backing by the European Commission, and with the backing of our long-standing partners, we are now able to make a longer-term planning on how **to make the Academy more active and more influential**, to make the recommendations by the Academy members find their way into legislation and regulation on national and EU level.

- We will aim at defining a more precise strategy of the Academy for the next years, including activities such as lectures at faculties of law and journalism throughout the region, creating a database on media legislation, and a pocketbook on media freedom in South East Europe. Your input in this respect is instrumental, and I thank you for that.
- Finally, let me thank the whole project team: Boyko Boev, Zenet Mujic, Jagica Cvrk and Lejla Babovic for the hard work in making this year's Academy a success, as well as all the involved colleagues at partner institutions for their dedication and support.
- We look forward to continuing to work with all of you on the 3rd edition of the Academy on Media Law in South East Europe!