[BA] Conference on the “Transformation from State to Public Broadcasting"

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The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) was founded in early 2008, as the successor to the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe. Its main aim is to promote regional cooperation, as well as to support European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the aspiring countries. So far, much of its activities were dealing with the media sector, also, in particular were dealings with public broadcasting services bearing in mind their role in building democratic, pluralistic and inclusive societies in the region.

In mid-November 2011, a gathering of more than 50 directors-general and representatives of regulatory authorities, civil society and senior government officials, took place in Sarajevo. This seminar-like event was co-organised by the European Commission’s Directorate General Enlargement and the RCC Secretariat, supported by the European Association of Public Media in South East Europe, a branch unit of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) recently formed to address burning issues public service broadcasting is facing in the region, and by the EBU. This conference was titled “South East Europe, 20 Years On: Transformation from State to Public Broadcasting.” It was a follow-up to the project called “Enabling the Pivotal Role of Sustainable and Independent Public Service Media for Freedom of Expression and the Media in South East Europe”, developed by the EBU. The RCC’s twelve South East Europe members discussed and analysed the current state of public broadcasting and possible ways ahead to improve their status and position.

The EBU Head of Member Relations emphasised in his keynote speech that the public broadcasters of South East Europe “need to be strengthened so that they can become truly independent and sustainable” adding that proper funding is of crucial importance for their independence. This statement suggests that public broadcasting in the region is not yet independent or properly funded.

In this context it should be noted that the total revenue of BHRT, an umbrella public broadcaster in Bosnia and Herzegovina (see IRIS 2011-7/10), has dropped by 20 percent in the first six months of 2011. Its subscription fee, i.e., a tax imposed by law for the possession of a radio and television set, is the lowest in Europe, less than EUR 2 per month. Besides this, the collection rate of the subscription fee is about 60 percent and showing a trend of further decrease.

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"South East Europe, 20 years on: Transformation from State to Public Broadcasting", Keynote speech delivered by David Lewis, Sarajevo, 14 November 2011

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