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## ***Online Journalism in Southern East Europe***

### ***Güney Doğu Avrupa'da Çevrimiçi Gazetecilik***

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#### **ABSTRACT**

*Media may direct individual or society towards some ideas and actions. Technologic convergence moved broadcasting and publishing into digital media. This study analyzes design characteristics and contents of news web sites in Southern East Europe. Thus, contributions to positive and negative efforts in the context of social cohesion and separation efforts investigated. Some of analyzed features of news sites are medium profile, user profile, membership, news topics, multimedia usage, usage of social media, multi-lingual publishing/broadcasting.*

**Keywords:** *New media, Southern East Europe, news site, online content, multimedia.*

#### **ÖZET**

*İletişim ortamları, birey ve toplumu etkileyip, bazı fikir ve eylemlere yönlendirebilir. Teknolojik yakınsama, yayıncılığı sayısal ortama taşımıştır. Bu çalışma Güney Doğu Avrupa'daki haber sitelerinin tasarım ve içeriklerini incelemektedir. Böylece haber sitelerinin toplumsal birleşme ve ayrışma bağlamındaki çabalara katkıları araştırılmaktadır. Haber sitelerinde incelenen bazı özellikler şunlardır: Yayın profili, hedeflenen kullanıcı profili, üyelik, haber konuları, çoklu ortam kullanımı ve tarzı, sosyal medya kullanımı, çok dilli yayıncılık.*

**Anahtar kelimeler:** *Yeni iletişim ortamları, Güney Doğu Avrupa, haber sitesi, çevrimiçi içerik, çoklu ortam.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Most of the discussion on the future of journalism framework is developing some of the main themes produced in the United States such as: What are the business models related to digital publishing and broadcasting? Is there a failure of journalism? How institutions can add amateur journalists to news production routines? Is usage of abstracts and links of contents of various sites stealing? There are other developments in the field of journalism also. Each country's practice of online journalism has its own problems. However, status assessments are being made across national borders (Anderson, 2011). Between 2007 and 2009, press in Germany has lost 10 percent, press in France has lost 4 percent of its revenues (OECD, 2010). In this, as in the United States, the most important reason is the rise of digital media and journalism. Internet use in Germany is not as developed as the United States. But, the German press is much more stable. In this example, we see that the US-based discussions should not be taken for granted directly. Journalism environments of different countries must be analyzed comparatively, and difference in approaches and trends in journalism should be understood. The economy, technology and government policies, developments related to these fields, decisions and practices of the media are problems related to the source of journalism in general.

The role played by media in post-communist transition period of the Southern East Europe countries is important (Gallagher, 2000). In this period, a lot of restrictions on pluralism of ideas and policy perspective were seen. The region is an example of using the internet in real time of war and after. It should be examined in this respect also (Spasov and Todorov, 2003, p. 11). Media in Southern East Europe countries was not as free as it is now. After 1989 conversion and substantial rebuilding years, one of the main issues in politics was the media. Answers searched for following questions: How will the mass communication be organized? How will main media organs reflect views of people other than the ruling party? How will private newspapers use freedom of the press? To which extent the state will remove the monopoly on electronic media? In particular, in Bulgaria, Romania and Albania, the state media is an important means for communist leadership to control the population. Some governments of Southern East Europe countries are still very resistant about free access to information. Freedom of the press in these countries is fragile and it is supported and strengthened by outside influences. For example, in Serbia, people who does not compromise on communism, turned to nationalism to maintain their monopoly power and noticed that the most effective tools are the media. Serbian media, until the 1980s was far more egalitarian than in other communist countries. It was later cleared of liberals and reformers who are rejecting to escalate conflicts between other nationals like Albanians and Croats. Irresponsible handling of sensitive national matters destroyed the nascent democratization initiatives. While Yugoslavia was falling apart, the media of main republics supported and strengthened local elites. These elites, to preserve their power, pioneered to conflicts of identity first in Serbia and then Croatia. Media pluralism, severely weakened by abuse of nationalism. This was a sign of worse times, in an environment revealed by the conflicts between minorities and majorities about ethnic policies and countries. Journalism flourished in the Southern East Europe in transition from communism to democracy. In 1990, 900 new newspapers have been launched only in Romania. These initiatives led by the

individuals related in politics, but who does not support parties, lasted until governments regulate the press. However, the situation was different in certain places. Considering the events of 1991-1995, Slobodan Milosevic administration's effects on media in Yugoslavia, is said to exemplify the following: "It was as if all television in the USA had been taken over by the Ku Klux Klan." (Holbrooke, 1998).

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, despite the terms of the war between 1992-1995, there were large amounts of radio and television organization. The absence of a strong state authority, the focus of the survival of Sarajevo's government militarily, allowed the consolidation of special radio and television stations. In the spring of 1996 the government-controlled territory had 40 radio and 77 television stations. This was a remarkable media concentration in an environment where the normal condition of life is totally eliminated in many other aspects (Budalic and Wheeler, 1996). In methods used by the Southern East Europe states to control the media, legislative arrangements and stopping the distribution are precedence (Gallagher, 2000). The following international legal texts regulating the media are considered valid in the Southern East European countries: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Protocol (UN, 1966) European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR, 2012). In the Southern East Europe, media organizations coming together and blocking attempts to the negative responses towards media freedom, is limited. Instead, supports of these foreign non-governmental organizations are more important: Freedom House, the Institute of War and Peace Reporting, the Soros Foundation, Article 19 (Freedomhouse.org, 2012b). At times, when local administrations censorship efforts are concentrated, Radio Free Europe and BBC World Service's Southern East European region broadcasts relayed world news to the public (Radio Free Europe, 2011).

Information technology changes fast and provides many opportunities to liberals living in countries ruled by despotic regimes and making their voices heard. However, in line with these, the pressure of these regimes on the media is exacerbated. In countries like Albania, there have been a large number of Internet users capable of transmitting information to the world about the crisis in the Southern East Europe. Most of the Eastern Europe region has a high level of expertise. This also makes the Internet a medium effective in transmitting political information. In the early 2000s, countries such as Croatia, largely silenced, but primarily with the free communication organs, they could not make their voices heard in cyberspace. But this situation is changing because it is beyond the control of authoritarian leaders. In Serbia, the Belgrade based B92 free radio station broadcasts silenced by the state by electronic means in the winter of 1996. However, international support on the Internet has made efforts of the Serbian government ineffective (Borchanin and Moffett, 1997). In the Southern East Europe, there are very different ethnic, cultural and religious elements. In such an environment, for media to transfer news and conflicts with a balanced and non-emotional manner is very difficult. Media was used for incitement and incubation in many conflicts. Conflicts and economic problems, also has given the media a great power to raise or appease them (Gallagher, 2000).

## 2. MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF ONLINE JOURNALISM

In the discussions about old and new communication media, sources of the main differences are official and structural features (Opgehaffen, 2011). Scholars have described online communication media on the basis of features such as speed, modularity, numericalness, simultaneity, automation (Dahlgren, 1996; Deuze, 2003; Rafaeli, 1988). Three features are frequently encountered with: multimedia, interactivity, and hypertextuality. These features are also used when defining online journalism (Deuze, 2001; Franklin et al., 2005). Therefore scholars consider them among the most important features of online journalism.

Studies investigating the use of convergent multimedia in online journalism environments, has shown that online journalism failed to carry out the full potential of combining different media formats (Jankowski and van Selm, 2000; Paulussen, 2004). Interactivity, one of the online features, is a very complex concept. Interactivity has the potential to make news readers a part of news experience. From studies on this subject, two basic dimensions of interactivity raising the user participation distinguished: control over the content and dialogue (Cover, 2006; Heeter, 1989; Kiousis, 2002; Rafaeli, 1988; Steuer, 1992).

Studies investigating the use of interactivity feature showed that, in online journalism, opportunities provided by this feature are not used enough (Oblak, 2005; Schultz, 1999). Online publishers interested in interactivity features, but have difficulty using them and adding it to their news systems (Chung, 2007). Linking to different information is, perhaps the most obvious feature of computer-mediated news communication environments. The hyperlink structure is the essence of Web. With hyperlinks, passing from media to media, article to article becomes much easier. Hyperlinks, provides a connection between different contents and environments. The distinction between internal and external hyperlinks is important (Deuze, 2003). The former refers to link to content within the same site; the latter refers to link content or information anywhere in the Internet. Studies in this field demonstrated that limited numbers of online news sites are using external hyperlinks. Links to external sites are also often used if the site is non-competitive (Dimitrova et al., 2003; Oblak, 2005). Absence of external hyperlinks' popularity means, owners of the sites thinking that users may move away from tasks associated with the possibility of generating profits for the web site; or may not come back from another site and reduce the site's advertising revenue and users (Cohen, 2002). As a result, particularly in digital newspapers, domestic hyperlinks are used more frequently than external hyperlinks (Oblak, 2005).

In terms of design and content presentation, the main features offered by online news sites could also include: PDF version of the printed publication, Web TV, Web Radio, illustrated news, infographics, news blogs, discussion forum, online survey, e-mail newsletter, text view for the visually impaired, RSS feed (Opgehaffen, 2011). CSS is also used in the design of online news sites (Cascading Style Sheets) and is a step forward in technological possibilities provided by HTML; it makes possible to create templates for the site, can be used to replace the style of letter, color, font, size characteristics. The most important feature of CSS is flexibility in design. Adobe Flash based flash videos facilitates transfer over the Internet. RSS (Really Simple Syndication or Rich Site Summary), provides news with the shortest path, away from the complexity and without going to the actual site. RSS feeds, takes story from

published page and displays by RSS reader software or browser. News sent with a headline, picture and logo in XML format. To read the news, user clicks on a headline and goes to the web page containing the full story.

### **3. RESEARCH METHOD**

For this study the following was investigated: media profiles of the countries, profiles of some publications, user profiles, multimedia usage and style of related sites, social media usage in sites and multilingual publishing and broadcasting features. Research methods were literature review and web site content and structure analysis.

### **4. FINDINGS BY COUNTRIES**

In this paper the following countries were examined: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia.

#### **4.1. Albania**

In the country media is very diverse and strong and constitution guaranteed freedom of the press. However, media organizations and news media often exhibit the political prejudices of their owners, who are affected by economic or political interests. The publication and broadcasting of slander and libel is a crime. If government sees a media company as an obstacle, it may impede its work. In 2009 elections all the television companies had supported either Democratic Party government or Socialist Party opposition and the legal broadcasting times and shares of small parties not provided to them. Albanian Radio and Television Corporation make public broadcasting. It is financially dependent on the state and stands for the government. Three privately owned television stations has national broadcasting feature. Other smaller television and radio stations has poorly organized work environment. Albanians reaches to foreign radio and television broadcasts over its neighbors Greece and Italy. Daily and weekly print publications have low circulations. Media is supported by a small number of advertisers and media owners. Media companies makes self-censorship in the interests of themselves. Journalists are under constant moral pressure because contracts are inadequate and salaries are paid irregularly. In 2009, 45 percent of the population accesses the Internet. There is no government restriction on this subject. Access is limited in the rural areas (Freedomhouse.org, 2012).

Motto of albaniannews.com, The Albanian Daily News (TADN) site is “Albania’s most trusted English-language news site”. Site is running daily since April 1995. It is a subsidiary company of Independent Albanian Economic Tribune Ltd. which is founded in 1991. Newspaper offers information in the fields of news, business, arts and entertainment. Since it started to publish color pages in the printed edition, its readers are increased. According to introduction page, high standards of objective journalism and independence give the publication dignity (Albaniannews.com, 2011). TADN distribution system is based on diversity. Print subscriptions are possible. ADA Group media organizations include, The

Albanian Daily News, Klan Magazine and Media 5 Publishing. Accessing online content is subscription based.

English.albeu.com Albeu News From Albania site offers free access to the news. A team of ten people runs site. It is an independent news site making instant news updates 24 hours a day and based in Tirana, founded in July 2003. Introduction page, announces that precision and objectivity binds visitors to the contents (Albeu.com, 2011). Focus of the site is Albanian visitors between the ages of 16-35. Site visitors are from Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Germany, Italy, Sweden, USA and Greece. Mobile version of the site is located at <http://m.albeu.com>. Site infrastructure updated in August 2010. It is the first news site developed and updated in Albania. The site has a daily e-mail news bulletin for subscribers. Users are informed via Facebook page. Site has RSS feeds, Digg and Stumbleupon shortcuts.

Balkanweb.com offers comprehensive free news content with subsections. Video and photo presentations are also offered. With Pressdisplay.com cooperation, the daily Gazeta Shqiptare newspaper and supplements can be reached as PDF format. Site has RSS feeds, Digg and Stumbleupon shortcuts. News can be translated with Google Translate following languages: Italian, English, French, German, Spanish and Romanian.

#### **4.2. Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Freedom of the press in Bosnia and Herzegovina is protected by both constitutionally and Dayton Peace Accords. Even freedom of information preserved by law, institutions respond slowly to requests of journalists. Political leaders establish pressure on the media. Ethnic divisions hinder free flow of information. Domestic and foreign investment in the media is insufficient. The media and journalists face lawsuits as a result of their works. There are public broadcasting institutions for two constituent units of the country: Bosnian and Croat population with the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbian Republic. This leads to a complicated and expensive order. The central broadcaster is the BHRT. Because of the political pressure on BHRT, employees do not work independently. According South East Europe Media Organization (SEEMO), there are journalists who resigned from political pressure. In the country, an independent communications regulatory authority gives broadcasting licenses and monitors radio and TV broadcasts. For printed publications, a self-regulatory body, the Press Council investigates violations of the Press Law. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, including three public broadcasting institutions, 42 television and 141 radio stations, there are a total of 183 audio-visual media. This is much higher than the country can support as a limited advertising market. Most radio stations are local, and focus on entertainment broadcasts or local political and ethnic issues. 128 registered print media are divided into many ethnic and ideological power lines. Circulation does not exceed a total of 90 thousand with seven daily newspapers. The government of Republic of Serbia, increased concerns of editorial independence by deciding to support the nearly 3 million 600 thousand U.S. dollars to public and independent media organizations. Internet access in the country is unlimited and 38 percent of the population uses internet (Freedomhouse.org, 2012).

All major daily newspapers, weekly magazines, radio and television stations have web sites. Majority of media websites are quite modest. Only some of the portal and web sites contain Web 2.0 type features. Mostly there are no special web content teams in the media. Web content transferred from already published printed versions of newspapers and magazines or radio and TV stations newsletters (European Journalism Center, 2010). Dnevni Avaz daily newspaper has made significant progress in this regard. Its Web site developed rapidly and became 14th in Bosnia-Herzegovina's top 100 sites list of Alexa.com. In the same list, Radio Sarajevo web portal ranks 39th, Oslobođenje daily newspaper site ranks 78th. The country's most visited and independent news web portal that is not connected to any institution of the media, Sarajevo-x.com blog and forum community, ranks 7th (Alexa.com, 2011).

Internet-based TV (IPTV) services are still in its infancy in the country. BH Telecom, offers IPTV to ADSL connections to subscribers. Bosnia lags behind Europe on Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT). There is a forum for the digital switching on DTT. Forum created a strategy that has been adopted by the Council of Ministers (DTT Forum, 2009). Leading news sites in the country include: dnevniavaz.ba, oslobođenje.ba, radiosarajevo.ba and sarajevo-x.com. Social media and RSS feeds are offered in all of these sites, but there is no option of foreign language content.

#### **4.3. Bulgaria**

In the country self-expression and press freedom are constitutionally secure and the government usually acts accordingly. There are severe penalties for slander and libel against broadcasting. Courts usually decide in favor of press, in cases opened by government officials against the press. Bulgarian National Television (BNT) and Bulgarian National Radio, sometimes criticizes the government, however both have weak legal protections against political pressures. According to OECD, in 2009 elections, BNT followed by pro-government stance and private televisions broadcasted in favor of opposition. There is diversity of opinion and depth of the printed media. Reporters may be vulnerable to pressure and intimidation by economic, political and crime-related stakeholders. Those who practice this are usually left untouched, and this also causes journalists' self-censorship. Foreign media companies are in an important role in press and broadcasting. Different foreign companies have three main TVs. German WAZ media group has two newspapers.

Traditional media embraces Internet that has developed in Bulgaria rapidly. 45 percent of the people accesses Internet and there is no government restriction. However in rural areas access is limited (Freedomhouse.org, 2012). Use of the internet is concentrated under the age of 15 and 70 percent of the audience uses broadband, 30 percent uses wireless and satellite access. Internet access is for news, sports and online radio and TV. All major newspapers have online presence. It became apparent for them, that the Internet versions are needed for circulation. Especially some readers of print publications are literally migrated to Internet. Web sites of national daily newspapers are not frequently visited. Standard, Dnevnik and Sega newspapers web sites attract readers more than their printed versions. Dnevnik.bg and pari.bg sites publish news summaries in English. Standartnews.com has English version. Three major television stations have improved web sites. Access to these sites is high,



especially among Bulgarians abroad. Bulgarian television sites can be followed simultaneously. Social networking sites like Facebook is popular for publishers who want to communicate with users. Mediapool.bg is a prestigious site, prominent among educated users. Major online media in Bulgaria consists of the following sites: bgnes.com, bnr.bg, bnt.bg, btv.bg, darikradio.bg, dir.bg, dnevnik.bg, globalvision-bg.com, mediapool.bg, novatv.bg, segabg.com, standartnews.com, novinite.com, vesti.bg (European Journalism Center, 2010b).

#### **4.4. Croatia**

Freedom of the press constitutionally protected in the country. However, it can be suppressed by the government. Journalists investigating corruption and sensitive issues, are being threatened, fired, or sued. Media is under the pressure of business world. Media bosses, do not want to lose advertising revenue in the times of economic decline. Therefore, they limit negative news related to the government and influential companies. State owned HRT television is ahead in the market. However, it is criticized editorially about government influence. Critical media working on social problems are clearly undergoing censorship. Contrary to the law on electronic media, president's party works finds air time close to an hour.

Other than HRT, there are 20 privately owned televisions. Nova TV and RTL broadcasts entire Croatia. There are 146 radio stations and 21 of them state-owned. Only four of them were covering whole country in 2009. Contrary to audio visual media, all printed newspapers are owned by individuals or companies. Two major companies in the field of printed media are partly German-owned Europa Press Holdings (EPH) and Austrian-based Styria. According to media law, a private organization cannot control more than 40 percent of the market. However, Styria has 46; EPH has 43 percent of the sector.

More than half of the population has access to the Internet (Freedomhouse.org, 2012). Increasing Internet users provides a fertile environment for developing portals. All the major newspapers have web sites, and they are among the top 20 most-visited sites. Leading web contents include other things than news, i.e. entertainment, jobs, health and lifestyle. HT's T-portal and Iskon's net.hr are among the leading Internet content companies. These sites provide entertainment contents and public news agency HINA's news. Jutarnji.hr and vecernji.hr are two leading newspaper sites. Readers are increasing. However, online advertising level is around 3 percent of total advertising revenues of media. Other than those listed, the following sites in demand: infotrend.hr, index.hr, 24sata.hr and regional content site slobodnadalmacija.hr. Nova TV, offers contents in the form of on demand news videos (European Journalism Center, 2010c).

#### **4.5. Kosovo**

40th article of the constitution provides freedom of expression in the country. The lack of international consensus on Kosovo's independence obstructs efforts on media freedom. The judicial system remains weak, between the UN and local regulations. The journalists are

rarely exposed to legal intervention while working. Journalists are not blocked with slander, however, unable to access public information sometimes. Media is organized by the Independent Media Commission since 2006. Process of licensing of audio-visual media is complex and inconsistent. However, selection of the Independent Media Commission is apolitical. There is no official censorship. But the journalists are undergoing pressure by authorities and business world. Self-censorship is a problem in some areas. Media ownership is private in general. Editorial independence generally supported by the business community and is weak. Public television, Radio Television Kosovo (RTK) is the focus of political and economic interests. According to SEEMO, this is a problem, because RTK formerly was a representative of pluralism and diversity of Kosovo. Government also supports a new channel: TV Klan Kosovo. Local press depends on government advertisements, frequently criticizes independent media and announces government agenda. Most of the media companies are financially in difficult situation. Public media bodies are tax-exempt and advantageous.

In Kosovo, 20 percent of households have Internet access. Blogs generally not used as a source of news, but has been continue unhindered. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other social networking and video sharing sites are popular and not blocked by the government (Freedomhouse.org, 2012). Newkosovareport.com is a leading contributor of news sites in Kosovo. The site is intended for foreigners, provides regional news, free of charge and can be accessed from mobile phones. Site provides membership and accessible from RSS, Facebook and Twitter. Site content is shared with a Creative Commons License. Other news sites include: kosoalive.com, shqipmedia.com, kosovodaily.com and kosova.com.

#### **4.6. Macedonia**

Macedonia's constitution contains fundamental issues of freedom of press and expression. Government representatives are generally sensitive to these issues. Journalists do not imprisoned but they may be subject to criminal and libel cases. Legal infrastructure about the right of public access to information has been completed. However, there are issues of access. Radio Broadcasting Council that regulates the television broadcasts and public broadcaster Macedonian Radio and Television (MRTV) are financially dependent on government because the licensing system that must support them is not running. MRTV broadcasts tend to favor the ruling party. However private media outlets make more balanced broadcasts. Macedonian language publications focus on the ethnic majority parties. Albanian language publications, focuses on the Albanian parties.

In Macedonia, there are many media compared to the population. There are five private, one public national television channels, many local television and radio stations and ten daily newspapers. German WAZ Media Group has three major newspapers. The government is the largest advertiser. It supports friendly media. Ethnic political party leaders are either owners of or related to some of the newspapers and television stations.

Although there are infrastructure barriers and financial difficulties, Internet access is free. 52 percent of the population accesses the Internet (Freedomhouse.org, 2012). Leading news sites

include: forum.com.mk, kapital.com.mk, koha.mk, makedonskosonce.com, novamakedonija.com.mk. Koha.mk also offers mobile access and PDF archive.

#### 4.7. Montenegro

Montenegrin media institutions include: 108 national 7 foreign media office, 45 print publications, 43 radio stations, 15 TV stations and a news agency. Online news content is 4 percent of the total media content. Press, radio and television stations produce remaining contents. The distribution of media ownership is as follows: 32 percent private, 22 percent state, the rest belongs to individuals and non-governmental organizations. There are four daily, three weekly, eight bi-weekly newspapers. The country has a total of 2000 media workers. 40 percent of them are university graduates. About 30 percent of them experienced more than ten years (Montenegro Media Institute, 2011).

The country's leading Internet news sites and their features are as follows: Pobjeda.co.me; free news content and e-mail newsletter subscription. Antenam.net/sajt; live radio broadcast, free downloadable audio archive of broadcasts, free news content. Montenews.me; newsletter subscription, RSS, Facebook and Twitter content. Rtcg.me; audio-visual program, archive, free news content and site membership. Rtvln.com; online TV channels, free news content. Dan.co.me; yellow pages and free news content. Pcnen.com; free news content, blogs of journalists and columnists.

#### 4.8. Serbia

Freedom of the press is protected by the constitution and there is respect about it. However, especially in 2009, the government intervened the media. Publishing slanderous and degrading content can lead to imprisonment and fines. There is no official censorship. However, journalists apply self-censorship on issues related to war crimes and Kosovo's independence. Journalists' sensitive political, cultural and economic publications, leads to threats and crimes against them go unpunished or remain unsolved. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the United States, some journalists in Republika Srpska exposed to the oversight of the government, phone tapping and economic pressures. RTS1 public broadcaster operates two television channels and Radio Belgrade and it is the dominant news source in the country. However, most of printed and audio-visual media has private ownership and independent. Privatization of government-owned media channels completed. Private media cannot receive state support. As Tanjug news agency, the public broadcasting organizations are strongly supported by state.

42 percent of the population accesses the Internet. There is no access restriction. But the government can monitor electronic communications (Freedomhouse.org, 2012). According to data from May 2010 in Serbia there are 66 Internet publications. Profitability is still marginal in terms of Internet media in general. According to 2009 data, the Internet media has, 1.6 percent of all media revenues or 2.5 million Euros. Traditional media slowly transforms into the Internet media. The concept of convergence in the media is very little known in Serbia. B92 began Web publishing in 1995 and is ahead of other web sites in country. It is the first

institution in Serbia that has a super news desk which produces content for radio, TV and web sites. Journalists in this desk generate content at the same time to these three platforms with teletext, WAP and SMS environment. Some radio stations banned by the regime until 2000. But Internet is used effectively in broadcasting. Social network Facebook is especially popular with profile of over two million Serbs (European Journalism Center, 2010d). The leading sites and their features are as follows: Emg.rs; site membership, RSS feeds, free news content, Del.icio.us, Digg, Facebook, and Newsvine infrastructure. Novosti.rs; free news content, news voting, readers' forum, publishers' blog, video and photo news. Pressonline.rs; free news content, e-mail newsletter, desktop news alert software, online hypermarket to buy from clothes to food. Mondo.rs; modern site design, free news content, video and photo galleries, readers' forum and a YouTube video channel. Among other leading news sites in the country are blic.rs and krstarica.com.

## 5. CONCLUSION

News sites of all the countries studied, adhered to the basic levels of online journalism characteristics. In the use of multimedia, sites are actively adding image and video content particularly to their text-based news. However, links to different sources in news are still missing. In terms of linking, traditional media web sites are failing more than online only news sites. Design and content delivery technologies, CSS, Flash video, and RSS are widely used, which has become the standard in international news sites.

Southern East Europe countries saw regime changes, ethnic and religious conflicts. With the transition to democracy and market economy, they are also modeling Western countries in media and freedom of expression issues. For most countries the legal infrastructure problems are over. Especially for the young audience, Internet is an attractive environment in all the Southern East Europe countries.

However, conventional practice of publishing in traditional media must be transferred new communication environments. In this regard, previous generation of broadcasters must transfer their knowledge and positions to new generations. Among the projects on this subject, an example may be Sarajevo based Mediacentar (Mediacentar, 2011). Founded by The Open Society Fund of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995, the formation is an education, research, and application institute in the field of publishing. Mediacentar has been training the proper subjects of international journalism. Focus areas include: publishing, audio-visual production, media research, public relations, training and consultancy, organization of various cultural events. The institute publishes, regional cultural and literary magazine Sarajevo Notebooks. Mediacentar initiative forms a remarkable transformation in independent and professional journalism in South Eastern Europe.

Internet, have developed differently than the western democracies in South East European countries. There are significant differences in the use of the internet, depending on whether or not there is the network, general condition of the telecommunications system and consumption habits of media. This part of the Europe, at least as complex as other parts of the continent. Because of its diversity, South East Europe is not a periphery. Although it is

seen as a single place, it simultaneously offers various wealth. This is its contribution to Europe's identity.

South East European countries faced development of telecommunication technologies, electronic media and digitization of information. This occurred in direct proportion to their cultural heritage and traditions. This situation is technically different from developed countries of Western Europe. However, ethics, responsibility and basic courtesy in publication of different types of content are the same as them. Internet should not be put behind the fence with additional regulations. However, users must receive a minimum level of media literacy education. Thus, they can access and use different content. Adults may maintain their habits. However, new generations should be approached in light of this information to achieve and establish a balance between real and virtual world.

After this study, following research can be done and issues can be explored: text analysis of different web sites from various ethnic backgrounds in Southern East Europe, in-depth interviews with journalists from different countries and backgrounds, expansion of research to other Southern East Europe countries.

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