



Media in Montenegro

between the stranglehold of power and the struggle for the profession

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Podgorica, 2020

From hard censorship to subjugation of RTCG



The most important factors at the root of the long-lasting and serious problems in Montenegrin media are the persistent attempts of the authorities to put media under their control. Overall, we can observe serious problems arising out of all three forms of censorship - hard, soft and self-censorship, compounded by deficiencies in the existing framework and practice of self-regulation and public regulation, and by political 'subjugation' of public broadcaster RTCG.

Hard censorship is the most measurable and oldest form of pressure. It includes attacks on journalists and media property. The assassination of the co-owner, CEO and Editor-in-chief of daily Dan, Duško Jovanović, was the beginning, according to official data, of a series of 92 attacks on journalists and media property in Montenegro between 2004 and the end of 2019¹. Most of these cases were never properly closed. Especially disturbing were the attacks in 2018 on Olivera Lakić from daily *Vijesti* and in 2007 on Tufik Softić from weekly *Monitor*. This shows that the institutions in charge work neither responsibly nor professionally, mostly due to political constraints, given that most of these attacks were directed at journalists and media with a critical attitude towards the ruling party and its associates. This is why Montenegro is considered an unsafe country for journalists and media determined to tackle the most sensitive issues of government's accountability, corruption and organized crime.

Soft censorship is a newer, less visible but dangerous form of pressure that has already left serious marks on the Montenegrin media sector, undermining its market. It is implemented primarily through politicized, discretionary and

¹ 85 attacks by December 2017 (Statement by D.Pejanovic, Ministry of the Interior. April 2018), four in 2018 (Lakić, Sadiković, Jovanović, property of the newspaper Sloboda), and three in 2019 (Popadić, Adrović, Otašević).

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non-transparent allocation of public funds, subsidies, and commissions, e.g. for advertising, to the media. It therefore constitutes misuse of public money, creation of monopolies, abuse of regulatory and inspection powers and unlawful pressures. Previous studies by the Centre for Civic Education (CCE)², which was first to raise this issue in Montenegro, demonstrate that access to various forms of public funding for media is directly related to how favourable or critical their reporting on the government's activities is. Those who report positively on the government and the ruling party members receive the largest amount of funds, while others are denied state financing and commissions. The authorities have tried to ignore or deny the findings of CCE's researches for years, despite the fact that they have been regularly cited in numerous international reports. The problem was finally recognized and addressed in a satisfactory manner in the new Draft Media Law, adopted by the Government of Montenegro at the end of 2019.

Self-censorship emerges as a consequence of the hard and soft censorships. Fewer journalists are ready to dedicate themselves to professional and investigative journalism, and this has an impact on the overall decline in the reporting quality which is currently at a worryingly low level in Montenegro.

Self-regulation has been virtually halted at a very early stage by deep polarization in the media sector – a polarization that was only heightened by the negative actions of the authorities³. One of the first victims was the Code of Journalists, whose provisions are violated ever more frequently and openly. It should be

² Previous publications and studies on this topic can be found at <http://cgo-cce.org/en/izdavastvo/demokratija-izdavastvo/#.XqrNCagzblU>

³ Centre for Civic Education (2019) "The Conscience of the Fourth Estate". Available at <http://media.cgo-cce.org/2019/02/Fourth-Estate-Conscience.pdf>

noted that individual self-regulators (covering one or two media) demonstrated a higher degree of commitment and professionalism than the Media Self-Regulation Council (MSRC), which is closer to the authorities. It would therefore be counterproductive for the authorities to continue the practice of privileged support to the Media Self-Regulation Council (MSRC), as foreseen by the Draft Media Law. Such an approach is contrary to the principle of self-regulation and continues to strengthen divisions within the media sector, without contributing to the necessary improvement of ethical standards.

The Agency for Electronic Media (AEM), the public regulator, has not so far consistently applied the Law on Electronic Media, which led to failures to respond adequately, including the final measure - revoking the operating licence for those who drastically or continuously violated the Law. Such (non) work of the AEM stimulated unfair competition in the media market and allowed marketing revenues to be channeled to broadcasters who failed to produce sufficient programming material in Montenegro, as they committed to do by the rules of obtaining a broadcasting license, and for some of them it is even questionable whether the extent of production fulfils the minimum obligations under the licenses. The fact that AEM turned a blind eye to the violations of programme principles and standards for themedia friendly to the authorities also undermined not only the media market, but also professional standards and ethical norms. Instead of being the bulward of the principles that govern the provision of audio-visual media services, AEM often cooperated in breaking those principles by failing to consistently apply the Law to all media⁴.

The takeover of RTCG by the ruling party represents the most direct demonstration of political pressure on media in the last four years and has been identified as such by relevant international reports. In 2016, the RTCG Council appointed as Director-General a person who is a professional and not affiliated to any political structure, thereby causing the ruling Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) to lose control over the public broadcaster RTCG. Improvements in RTCG's programme were soon evident, especially in the expansion of the space for plurality of opinions, but also in the reporting on a

⁴ Centre for Civic Education (2019) "Controlled Chaos in electronic media". Available at <http://media.cgo-cce.org/2019/08/Kontrolisani-haos-u-regulaciji-elektronskih-medija-ENG-web.pdf>



broad, and to the authorities' uncomfortable range of issues: the primary tasks of a genuine public service broadcaster. DPS responded with a campaign that lasted nearly a year and succeeded in unlawfully 'cleansing' the RTCG Council of disobedient civil society members and replacing them by its loyalists. This was followed by unlawful dismissals of the managerial and editorial staff. Today, RTCG is exactly what DPS wanted it to be - closed to argumentative, different and critical opinions, with occasional simulations of this otherness through the voices of the already identified new forces among the DPS' 'players'.

Journalists and critically oriented media remain a target

The number of attacks on journalists went down in 2019, but none of the most serious older cases, such as the murder of the co-owner, CEO and Editor-in-chief of daily Dan, Duško Jovanović (2004), the attempted murder of journalists of daily *Vijesti* and weekly Monitor, Tufik Softić (2007) and Oliver Lakić (2018)⁵, has been resolved.

In 2016, the Government of Montenegro established a commission with the task of monitoring the actions of state institutions in investigating attacks on journalists and media property. After the expiry of its two-year term, the mandate of the Commission was extended by another two years. In both periods the Commission faced (in)direct obstruction of its work. The president of the Commission, Nikola Marković, has repeatedly complained about the lack of political will to properly investigate the cases of attacks against journalists⁶.

⁵ The attack on Oliver Lakić was first qualified as attempted murder and later requalified as infliction of serious bodily injury - <https://www.vijesti.me/tv/slucaj-napada-na-oliveru-lakic-kako-je-pokusaj-ubistva-postao-nanosenje-teskih-tjelesnih-povreda>

⁶ <https://www.dan.co.me/?nivo=3&rubrika=Drustvo&datum=2018-03-29&clanak=640576>



In 2019, three new attacks on journalists occurred in Montenegro⁷, one of which was physical, while the other two were qualified as intimidation or verbal threats. In two cases, targets were journalists of privately-owned outlets - dailies *Dan* and *Vijesti*, and the third was the director of *Radio Tivat*, a local public radio station.

The journalist of the daily *Dan*, Vladimir Otašević, was physically assaulted, while the reporter of daily *Vijesti* from Ulcinj, Samir Adrović, and the director of *Radio Tivat*, Dragan Popadić suffered verbal threats (intimidation). The perpetrators and their motives are known in all three cases.

Otašević was physically attacked by Mladen Mijatović, a police officer who was in the company of the controversial businessman Dragan Bećirović (he is unofficially his bodyguard) and Senior State Prosecutor Miloš Šoškić. Otašević took a photo of Bećirović and Prosecutor Šoškić with his mobile phone while they were leaving the mobile phone store in the business center Delta City in Podgorica. This provoked a reaction from Mijatović reaction, who approached and had aggressive physical contact with the journalist, as can be seen in the surveillance camera footage published in the media.

Popadić was insulted in a public space and threatened by local businessman Rade Arsić, who was dissatisfied with Radio Tivat's coverage of the legal proceedings launched by the Arsić family.

Samir Selović, a brother of a local head of the Muslim community (imam), threatened *Vijesti*'s reporter Adrović via Facebook due to his dissatisfaction with his coverage of an event in Šas, in which imam Jetmir Selović was involved.

⁷ Regional Platform <https://safejournalists.net/me/homepage/>

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The suspects in the cases of attacks on Popadić and Adrović were both prosecuted, while charges against the suspect in the attack on Otašević were dismissed. On 11 July 2019, the Misdemeanour Court in Kotor fined businessman Arsić. The trial against Adrović's attacker has not yet been finalized. In the case of the attack on Otašević however, the Basic State Prosecutor's Office in Podgorica dismissed the criminal complaint against the suspect in the attack on Otašević, concluding that his actions 'do not contain the essential elements of this criminal offense, nor any other criminal offense that ought to be prosecuted ex officio.'

Although the Police sent encouraging signals nine months after the wounding of the journalist of daily *Vijesti*, Olivera Lakić, the optimism turned out to be misguided and the messages merely meant to 'appease' interested international parties, in particular the European Commission ahead of the publication of its annual report on Montenegro. Namely, in February 2019, Deputy Director of the Police administration, Enis Baković, informed the public at a press conference⁸ that police had evidence that a criminal group, allegedly organized by Filip Bešović from Podgorica, was behind the wounding of journalist Lakić. However, no conclusive evidence to demonstrate that the police were on the right track was subsequently presented to the public, nor was any such evidence presented to the Commission for monitoring investigations of attacks on journalists. In its most recent report, the European Commission again raised a series of complaints and recommendations to the responsible judicial authorities in connection with this case.

There is no progress in solving the attack on the journalist of daily *Vijesti* and weekly *Monitor*, Tufik Softić, which is qualified an attempted murder, while the

⁸ <https://www.glasamerike.net/a/crna-gora-policija-napad-novinarka/4794467.html>

attack on Mladen Stojović (2008), a freelance journalist from Bar, was put ad acta due to the expiry of the statute of limitation.

In the case of the attack on Stojović, the Commission identified omissions in the investigation that suggest that the local prosecutor, Milenko Magdalinić, has tried to avoid closer investigation into the allegations that controversial businessmen Branislav Brano Mićunović and Radojica Božović have been behind the attack. The Commission, in its report, provides an excerpt from a brief official note according to which 'Stojović told police officers Nedović and Milošević that the only motive for the attack on him could be his participation in the show *Insider* aired on *B92* television, in which he appeared and spoke about shady transactions in the football sectors of Serbia and Montenegro. Among other, he had mentioned the involvement of Branislav Brano Mićunović and Radojica Božović.'⁹ Mićunović and Božović were interrogated ten years later, two months before the expiration of the statute of limitations was declared, and after the Commission identified omissions. The manner in which this was conducted suggests that it was merely a formality. Mićunović refused to comment at all, and Božović denied any involvement in a written statement.

'Further efforts are needed to prosecute the cases effectively and without delay, also in order to avoid the application of the statute of limitations. Authorities are expected to demonstrate zero tolerance for threats or attacks against the media, and should refrain from making statements that may create an environment not conducive to freedom of expression,' noted the European Commission's 2019 report on Montenegro, stressing that 'progress in addressing violence against journalists and media is still very limited, with old cases remaining unsolved'¹⁰. Not until 15 years after the murder of Duško Jovanović (27 May 2004) did the authorities acknowledge omissions in the investigation that led to this crime remaining unresolved to this day, and possibly forever. Participating in the Roundtable '*Media and Media Environment in Montenegro*', organized by the parliamentary EU Integration Committee, Director of the Police Administration,

⁹ Report on the work of the Commission for monitoring actions of responsible authorities in the investigation of cases of threats and violence against journalists, murders of journalists and attacks on media property for the period from 23 January until 23 May 2017

¹⁰ <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-montenegro-report.pdf>



Veselin Veljović, stated that the omission was made by the prosecutor whose name was not mentioned, and who allegedly choose to interrogate the suspect, Damir Mandić, on the following day, instead of the evening of the assassination. interrogate the next day, not on the same evening. Mandić, who was later accused of complicity and sentenced to 18 years' imprisonment, had consulted a lawyer on the following morning and choose to exercise his right to silence, and thus did not repeat to the prosecutor what he had beforehand told to the police. The prosecutor in question was Novak Ražnatović, who soon afterward left the Prosecution and continued working as a lawyer.

Regarding the acknowledgment by the director of Police administration, President of the Government's Commission for monitoring investigations of attacks on journalists, Nikola Marković, who is the deputy editor-in-chief of the daily *Dan* said that ' the authorities and responsible institutions are scandalously attempting to relativize their responsibility for fifteen years of inaction in indentifying Duško Jovanović's killers and those who ordered his murder.'¹¹

The Commission has for a long time recommended to the Government to involve foreign experts in order to resolve the most serious cases of attacks against journalists. The president of the Commission announced in early 2020 that the Government had finally approved the hiring of a foreign expert, but that 'it remains to be decided whether it will be the FBI, New Scotland Yard or some partner German service.'¹²

According to the Commission's data, the statute of limitation will irrevocably apply to the assassination of Duško Jovanović from 27 April 2034. The statute of limitation on the case of attempted murder of the journalist of weekly *Monitor*, Tufik Softić, applies from 1 November 2022. In May 2018, the statute of limitation applied to the unresolved case of the assault on journalist Mladen Stojović expired. The statute of limitations on the four attacks on the property of the daily newspaper *Vijesti* from the first decade of the 21st century expired in 2019. Then in early April 2020 the Police administration

¹¹ <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/ubistvo-dusko-jovanovic-tuzilac-umor/30171641.html>

¹² <https://www.vijesti.me/tv/emisije/markovic-strucnjak-iz-fbi-skotland-jarda-ili-njemacke-sluzbe-pomagace-komisiji>



declared ¹³that it had arrested two persons suspected of burning five official cars of *Vijesti* during July and August 2011 and February 2014. The Police have unofficially announced that they identified as suspect Radoslav Gile Stanišić who is on the run due to charges of another crime. Stanišić, who is considered a member of the criminal group from Podgorica known as the 'Zagorič gang', denied, through the media, any involvement in the attack on the property of *Vijesti*. The editor-in-chief of *Vijesti*, Srđan Kosović, said that they were interested in 'whether the suspect is merely an executor who was directly responsible for the crime, or the actual mastermind of the operation'. He also claimed that 'if he is the mastermind of the operation, it can only mean two things given that he has just been discovered - that he is more powerful than the authorities or that he has worked with support of the authorities. Both options are devastating to the Montenegrin society.'¹⁴

The European Commission, as well as other relevant international institutions and organizations, have warned for years that no progress has been made in investigating cases of violence against journalists, both recent and old ones, despite promising statements by government officials. They also warn that the pressure on journalists and the media continues. The lack of results of the authorities in investigating and prosecuting attacks on journalists and the media reinforces the impression of impunity for these crimes, as well as the conviction that the authorities have some interest in not addressing this issue.

¹³ <https://www.vijesti.me/vijesti/crna-hronika/policija-rasvijetlila-smo-slucajeve-paljenja-vozila-vijesti>

¹⁴ <https://www.vijesti.me/tv/emisije/paljenje-vozila-vijesti-ili-je-nalogodavac-jaci-od-vlasti-ili-je-imao-podrsku>

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Money for the obedient

On the 2019 Media Sustainability Index, compiled by the international organization IREX, of Montenegro¹⁵ scored 2.45¹⁶, which classifies Montenegro as a country with “nearly sustainable” media.

There are more than 140 media outlets in Montenegro. Print media are a minority - four daily newspapers and one weekly. There are also several local newspapers with small circulation and one electronic news agency. There are 52 radio stations, of which 37 are privately owned and 15 are public radio broadcasters. Only national public radio station (Montenegrin Radio - RCG) has two channels. There are 19 TV stations, but the public broadcaster Montenegrin Radio and TV (RTCG) has three TV channels. There are three privately owned television stations with a

15 The Media Sustainability Index is obtained by analyzing the state of freedom of speech, the plurality of media available to citizens, professional journalism standards, the business sustainability of the media and the efficiency of institutions that support independent media. The average values of all indicators, obtained from local media professionals and experts, are used to calculate unique results according to these criteria, and unique results to obtain a total score for each country. Countries whose overall score is between 0 and 1 are characterized as anti-free and media in them as 'unsustainable'. Countries with a score between 1 and 2 are considered 'unsustainable mixed system' and those with a score between 2 and 3 are seen as 'nearly sustainable media'. Countries with a total score between 3 and 4 are considered to have achieved 'sustainability' in the media field.

16 [https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/pdf/media-sustainability-index-europe-
eurasia-2019-full.pdf](https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/pdf/media-sustainability-index-europe-eurasia-2019-full.pdf)

national frequency and 11 cable channels. There are also five local public television stations.

According to the analysis of the Trade Union of Media, which was compiled on the basis of the financial statements taken from the website of the Department of Public Revenues of Montenegro¹⁷, the 70 largest media in 2018 had around €35.7 million in revenues and nearly €35.4 million in expenditures. Almost half of the revenues (at least 16.5 million euros) come from public sources, i.e. from the budgets of the state and local self-governments. Of that money, €12.5 million has been allocated to RTCG, the national public broadcaster¹⁸.

Data of the Department of Public Revenues of Montenegro, which were published in the media, indicate that media organizations entered 2018 with a tax debt of €2.6 million¹⁹. There are no media outlets on the list of biggest debtors published by the Department of Public Revenues in late November 2019.²⁰

The Government has repeatedly provided state aid to private media, in ways whose legality is highly questionable, to say the least. This included writing off debts worth €1,847,189 that were owed by private broadcasters to the Radio Broadcasting Centre in March 2017. However, the total amount of this type of state aid is far higher, as pointed out by Minister of Culture Aleksandar Bogdanović in July 2019, at the Global Conference for Media Freedom in London. On this occasion, Minister Bogdanović said that 'since the opening of negotiations with the European Union, the Government of Montenegro bought on the non-discriminatory basis debts of commercial broadcasters in the amount of seven million euros';

¹⁷ <https://safejournalists.net/me/montenegrin-media-in-2018-earned-36-million-euros-profit-300000-euros/>

¹⁸ <http://www.rtcg.me/sw4i/download/files/article/FINANSIJSKI%20IZVJESTAJ%20RTCG%202018.pdf?id=2203>

¹⁹ <https://www.novosti.rs/vesti/planeta.300.html:728626-Dugovi-gase-crnogorsku-sedmu-silu>

²⁰ <http://www.poreskauprava.gov.me/vijesti/216256/AzURIRANA-CRNA-LISTA-PORESKIH-OBVEZNIKA.html>



presenting this as an 'example of supporting the development and protection of media pluralism'²¹.

'Montenegro Media Sector Inquiry with Recommendations for Harmonisation with the Council of Europe and European Union standards'²², prepared in 2017 for the Council of Europe finds that 'the most critical area is the direct and indirect use of public money in the media, which lacks the transparency and fair application of State aid rules'. It is further noted that 'various formal or informal mechanisms' have been put in place to allow some of the media to artificially survive,' such as writing off their debts to various public institutions and state owned companies or groundlessly favouring them in terms with public advertising money or other public support schemes.'

The 2019 European Commission report on Montenegro, states that 'concerns about transparency and non-discrimination in state advertising persist'²³ and the Reporters Without Borders 2019 World Press Freedom Index states that 'the vast majority of public institutions support the pro-government media by placing advertisements in their publications.'²⁴ Freedom House, in its Freedom in the World 2019 report, also noted that 'The government frequently denies opposition media outlets advertising contracts from publicly owned or controlled entities.'²⁵

Non-transparent and discretionary forms of public financing for the media whose editorial policy favors authorities at the national or local level has first been uncovered by the Centre for Civic Education (CCE) which has continued to point to this problem in its analyzes, advocating for equal opportunities for all media in Montenegro.²⁶ The CCE gathered

21 <http://www.mku.gov.me/vijesti/205588/Ministar-Bogdanovic-govorilo-tokom-prvog-dana-Globalne-konferencije-o-slobodi-medija-u-Londonu.html>

22 <https://rm.coe.int/analiza-medijskog-sektora-u-crnoj-gori-sa/16807b4d7d>

23 <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-montenegro-report.pdf>

24 <https://rsf.org/en/montenegro>

25 <https://freedomhouse.org/country/montenegro/freedom-world/2019>

26 <http://cgo-cce.org/en/izdavstvo/demokratija-izdavstvo/#.Xqr3N6gzblU>



financing data on the basis of requests for free access to information sent to various public sector bodies. Its figures therefore reflect those sent by the authorities, and they are by no means final, as some institutions persistently refused to divulge information – among them some of the largest advertisers – and only about 70% of them submitted the requested data. Nevertheless, CCE's reports reveal that public sector bodies are significant investors and consumers in the media market, but also that there are objectively unclear criteria for such consumption, but that their consumption is not based on objective criteria, i.e. it does not reflect the media's popularity or audience size or the citizens' trust in the media, but is rather based on whether the outlet in question reports flatteringly or critically about the authorities' work.

When gathering the information for its studies, the CCE also encountered some atypical examples of non-transparent media financing. Thus, Press LLC from Podgorica, the owner of portal Analitika, signed in 2015 several contracts according to which it received payment to publish on its portal information of interest to the contractor over a set period. According to the findings of the CCE researcher, Press LLC signed such contracts with two municipalities, two independent state agencies and one ministry²⁷. The authors of the Montenegro Media Sector Inquiry with Recommendations for Harmonisation with the Council of Europe and European Union standards, whose report cited CCE's findings, concluded among other that 'public financing should not be used to support 'pro-government media' because it is a highly destabilizing factor, threatening not only the integrity of the market, but also undermining the principal role

²⁷ <https://www.pcnen.com/portal/2016/12/29/novinarstvo-s-cijenom/>

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of the media as well as citizens' trust in the media.' State Department in its Country Report on Human Rights Practices in Montenegro also cites CCE's findings to express concern about this practice²⁸.

This issue has finally been addressed in a satisfactory manner in the draft Law on Media proposed by the Government of Montenegro, which incorporated CCE's recommendations. The law is currently under consideration by the Parliament. Its Article 10 stipulates the obligation to enter into the Media Records, in addition to the basic information, '1) information on the amount of financial resources allocated to media for the provision of public services in accordance with this Law; 2) data on the amount of funds received from the public sector, here understood to mean entities designated by the law on budget and fiscal responsibility (hereinafter: the public sector); 3) changes of recorded data and date of change of data,' with the note that the data referred to 1) and 2) must be submitted by the founder of the media. In addition, a separate chapter of the law introduces three new articles that define in detail the transparency of public financing to media.

Article 15 obliges public sector bodies to publish on their website by 31 March of the current year records on payments to the media for advertising and other contracted services from the previous year, including those funds sent through intermediaries or agencies, and to clearly differentiate payments for advertising from payments for other media services. The Draft Law also emphasises that public procurement rules must apply to

28 <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/montenegro/>

advertising procedures. Furthermore, Article 16 specifies the obligation of public sector bodies to submit records of payments to the media on any basis to the Ministry of Culture, to be consolidated and published in the form of an annual report for the previous year on its website until 1 January of the current year.

In this way, the Government has effectively acknowledged the problem of discretionary financing of the media and found a way to regulate it. It should be emphasized that these solutions are a novelty, not only for Montenegro, but also for other countries in the region which are facing the same problem. In this area at least, Montenegro has been making progress, although the law is still in a draft stage. It would not be good if the changes were to take place during the parliamentary procedures that would result in design flaw and thus invalidate this important legal improvement. Of course, it will be important to monitor the implementation of the adopted legal solutions, which should provide a fair market opportunity for all media.

The Draft Law on media also envisages establishment of a Fund for the promotion of pluralism and media diversity, to be financed from the state budget in the amount of 'at least 0.08% of Montenegro's current budget defined by the annual Law on the budget'. However, the Draft Law does not oblige the State to keep this Fund constantly functional, but stipulates that 'the State may provide part of the funds from the budget of Montenegro for the purpose of providing public services, in order to exercise the rights guaranteed by the Constitution and the law'. It prescribes that the money would be used 'for: 1) non-commercial media content of public interest, in the languages of minority nations and other minority national communities; and 2) non-commercial media content of public interest in non-profit print media.' The funds, as prescribed, would be allocated 'according to the manner and conditions set by an act of the Ministry', would be allocated once a year through a call for proposals managed by the Council of Regulators for Audiovisual Media Services (60%) and an Independent Commission established by the Ministry (40%). The money allocated by the Council will be in the sub-fund of commercial and non-profit media, and the one allocated by the



Independent Commission will be in the sub-fund for daily and weekly print media and online publications. The list of eligible areas that the Draft Law prescribes, although formally extensive (16 areas), bypasses some substantively important areas that could encourage development of investigative journalism and professionalism in the media.

The Draft Law on Media also contains a provision that has been criticised during the public debate, because it prescribes that the allocation of funding should favour those media organizations that are members of a collective self-regulation body. Current practice suggests that this would a priori favour the pro-government media gathered in the Media Self-Regulation Council, which would mean that equal opportunities for the media are narrowed through this mechanism.

Self-regulatory or a political court

The Code of Ethics of Montenegrin Journalists was adopted in 2002 by five main journalistic and media associations. The text of the Code was amended at the end of 2015 through a joint effort of the representatives of the most prominent media.

Media Self-Regulation Council (MSCR)²⁹, a collective self-regulatory body funded in March 2012 by a group of public and private media, has for years sought to impose itself as an impartial and credible self-regulatory body responsible for all media in Montenegro. However, the suggestions addressed to it by independent experts³⁰ were not accepted until 2017, when MSRC finally ended the practice of ruling on complaints against media who are not its members and acknowledged the fact that it was not the sole guardian of the Code³¹.

²⁹ <http://www.medijskisavjet.me/index.php/mne/o-nama>

³⁰ [https://www.hraction.org/2012/10/19/monitoring-novinarskih-samoregulatornih-tijela-u-crnoj-gori/](https://www.hrraction.org/2012/10/19/monitoring-novinarskih-samoregulatornih-tijela-u-crnoj-gori/)

³¹ Centre for Civic Education (2019) "The Conscience of the Fourth Estate". Available at <http://media.cgo-cce.org/2019/02/Fourth-Estate-Conscience.pdf>



Privately owned dailies *Vijesti* and *Dan*, as well as weekly *Monitor*, have had readers' protectors (Ombudspersons) since 2013 and 2014, and these continued to operate in 2019. The two remaining private daily newspapers published in Montenegro (*Pobjeda* and *Dnevne Novine*) belong to the group of about twenty print and electronic media that founded the MSRC.

Another collective self-regulatory body was founded in 2012 by a group of local media and periodicals, but it was short-lived, and no activity was recorded in 2019.

For a large number of new electronic media (electronic publications) recorded by the Agency for Electronic Media (AEM), there is either no reliable data on their owners and editorial teams or they do not have any form of self-regulation.

The MSRC website states that its commission for complaints decided on only one complaint in 2019, which was rejected³². The Ombudsperson of the daily *Dan*, Ilija Jovičević, received eight complaints in 2019 and all were rejected³³.

The Ombudsperson of the newspapers *Vijesti* and *Monitor*, Paula Petričević, received 25 complaints in 2019. She upheld two complaints fully, five partially, and eight readers' complaints about media reporting were resolved through mediation. Other complaints were rejected. The

32 <http://www.medijskisavjet.me/index.php/mne/zalbe-i-postupci/90-odluka-po-zalbi-branka-radulovica-protiv-pobjede-16-07-2019>

33 <https://www.dan.co.me/ombudsman/index.php?nivo=2>

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Ombudsperson of *Vijesti* and *Monitor* once acted on her own initiative, pointing to the importance of mediation in self-regulatory practice. 'If we want readers to have confidence in the self-regulatory mechanism of *Vijesti*, the agreements reached through the mediation process must have equal meaning and equal obligation for all,' Petričević wrote³⁴.

Although the Radio and Television of Montenegro are the founders and members of the Media Self-Regulation Council, issues regarding violations of professional principles and standards, which are defined in the Rulebook on Programme Principles and Professional Standards of RTCG³⁵, are addressed by the Commission for Complaints of listeners and viewers, whose recommendations RTCG adopts or rejects.

MSRS announced in mid-2018 that it was suspending activities due to lack of funds. The work of the MSRC in the first two years was funded from the state budget and money from international donations, and later, the budget, via Ministry of Culture, discretionally funded its work. Although the Statute of the MCRC³⁶ envisages financing from the membership fees, there is no information whether this was ever a practice and if so, what percentage of the costs of the joint regulatory body had been covered by member contributions.

The daily newspapers *Dan* and *Vijesti*, as well as the weekly *Monitor*, fund the activities of their self-contained self-regulatory bodies from their own resources.

34 <https://www.vijesti.me/ombudsman/dodatan-oprez-pri-izvjestavanju>

35 <http://www.rtcg.me/rtcg/dokumenti/regulativa.html>

36 <http://www.medijskisavjet.me/index.php/mne/dokumenti/ostali-dokumenti>

The MSRC has not amended its Statute and Rulebook of the Commission for Complaints, and there are therefore still no binding sanctions for the media that violate the Code of Journalists of Montenegro. These documents do not even prescribe a mediation process between the media and those who believe its reporting had violated the professional ethical standards.

Contrary to the MSRC, the acts on the establishment of self-contained self-regulatory bodies in the dailies *Dan* and *Vijesti* and weekly *Monitor* have specified sanctions that apply to the media should the Ombudsperson conclude that its reporting had violated a provision of the Code of Journalists of Montenegro. The acts establishing the office of the Ombudsperson also prescribe the possibility of mediation.

The Government's Draft Law on Media also reveals that the Government has not given up on intervention in the media self-regulation, through its intention to privilege a friendly self-regulatory body. On several occasions, senior Government officials publicly stated that the Government will fund self-regulation, thus demonstrating a fundamental ignorance of the concept of self-regulation and intention to de facto turn it into regulation. The Draft itself stipulates that 'the media may form a collective external self-regulatory body and any media may form an internal self-regulatory body', but other provisions quickly turn to favouring one self-regulatory body. More specifically, the draft law stipulates that in allocating money from the Fund for the promotion of pluralism and media diversity, 'priority is given to the founders of media who are members of external self-regulatory bodies.' By channeling financial support to the media who agree to a certain form of self-regulation, the law thus automatically privileges one group of pro-government media, a fact that was immediately pointed out by representatives of civil society in the working group that prepared the Draft Law on Media, and during public debate on the Draft Law, but also in their later discussions of this provision.

The Draft Law also prescribes public funding for self-regulation through annual allocation of funds for the operating costs of various self-regulation mechanisms, based on the received applications for funding. It is clear that there is no genuine desire of the Government to support



professionalization of the media, as this could be done through many other mechanisms that are deliberately bypassed. It is also clear that the concept of self-regulation would become void if it were to be funded by the state, instead of the media outlets investing in it.

At the same time, the Draft Law on the National Public Broadcaster Radio-Television Montenegro (RTCG) stipulates that the national public broadcaster, which is one of the founders of the Media Self-Regulatory Council (MSRC), will in the future will have a self-contained self-regulatory body - the Ombudsperson - but will not have access to the funds of the Fund for promotion of pluralism and media diversity.

The regulator wakes up only when the authorities press a button

The Agency for Electronic Media (AEM) has failed to position itself as an independent regulator, the role assigned to it by the Electronic Media Law. The election of a new director at the end of February 2019 confirmed that its independence was highly questionable: Goran Vuković, the new director of AEM, was an electrical engineer at AEM for years and is a close relative of a senior DPS official, Miodrag Vuković.

In its 2019 Report on Montenegro, the European Commission expressed serious concern about the continued political interference in the work of the AEM³⁷.

Confirmation of the existence of direct political influence on AEM's decisions is the sanctioning, in February 2020, of two cable TV stations (Happy TV and Pink M), both based in Serbia. These channels had strongly attacked the Montenegrin authorities for the adoption of the Law on the

³⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-montenegro-report.pdf>



Freedom of Religion, and the Council of the Agency for Electronic Media (AEM) qualified their criticism as incitement to hatred, discrimination, and intolerance towards persons of Montenegrin ethnicity. Council of the Agency for Electronic Media banned all broadcasting by these two channels 10 May 2020. This could have in itself been defensible if it was in line with a consistent policy by AEM. However, for years, the Council of the Agency for Electronic Media tolerated serious violations of professional standards at the expense of opponents of the Montenegrin authorities in the programme of the same Pink M television, responding merely with warnings after numerous complaints. The warnings continued to be the only measure the AEM took despite their evident ineffectiveness and despite the fact that each warning contained a clause that stated that in case of repeated violations the next measure taken will be more severe³⁸. This did not happen, however, until the operators began to demonstrate their lack of professionalism at the expense of the Montenegrin authorities. For almost eight years, AEM has also failed to uphold Article 82 of the Electronic Media Law, which obliges cable operators to protect minors from inappropriate content. It was not until February 2019 that AEM adopted amendments to its 2011 Rulebook and imposed time limits for certain content to protect the minors.

The non-governmental organization Media Center, which initiated amendments to the rulebook, said the initiative would not have been accepted 'if the AEM had not received a clear political order from the

38 Centre for Civic Education (2019) "Controlled Chaos in electronic media". Available at <http://media.cgo-cce.org/2019/08/Kontrolisani-haos-u-regulaciji-elektronskih-medija-ENG-web.pdf>

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authorities to block the broadcasting of Happy TV and Pink television, which became undesirable in Montenegro once they began to criticize public officials! The aforementioned channels have been broadcasting 'reality' programmes throughout the day, via cable operators. Even once the amended Rulebook came into force, the Media Centre again had to intervene at the end of March 2019, to remind the AEM to apply its own rules and 'force cable operators to restrict the broadcasting of content that may harm minors.'

As concerns complaints against electronic publications, the AEM declared it did not have jurisdiction over those and stating in its decisions on such complaints that 'the Rulebook on programme standards in electronic media prescribes standards for the providers of AVM services (broadcasters and cable operators) but not electronic publications'³⁹. The Electronic Media Law (Article 144, paragraph 1) prescribes the procedure for 'complaints by a natural or legal person regarding the operation of a provider of AVM service or electronic publication', but the Rulebook does not, in fact, mention AEM's competencies with regard to the programming standards of electronic publications. This means that the law and the by-law are aligned, which the fact which was used by AEM to avoid responsibility for such cases, although it is indisputable that the higher-ranking act, i.e. the Law, gives it the jurisdiction over electronic publications.

Although in recent years many objections were raised against the AEM taking over the responsibilities that should lie with self-regulatory bodies

39 <https://aemcg.org/?s=portal+vijest%2C+prigovor>

and not the public regulator, the Draft Law on Audio-Visual Media Services stipulates, as mentioned above, that the AEM should 'decide on complaints by individuals and legal entities against the operation of AVM service providers and distributors of linear AVM service' (formerly: decide on complaints by natural and legal persons against the operation of AVM service providers). The new draft also introduces the obligation for the Agency to 'encourage the promotion of self-regulation and the use of co-regulation.'

The Draft Law on Audiovisual Media Services, which is to replace the current Law on Electronic Media, also changes the name of the independent regulator, renaming the Agency for Electronic Media into Agency for Audiovisual Media Services. Apart from this minor alteration, however, the Draft Law introduces no new provisions that would guarantee the independence of the regulator. Solutions that would have accomplished this had been proposed by civil society representatives, but none was accepted. This also led the Media Center to prepare a different version of the law, offering solutions that would ensure the independence of the Agency. The Media Center's proposal stipulates that nominations for membership of the Council of the Agency should not be evaluated by MPs in the Parliament of Montenegro, in order to eliminate the influence of political parties on the work of the Agency. It also envisages eliminating the methodology for the assessment of nominations that had been proposed by the Ministry of Culture in the current Draft Law on AVM Services.

The proposal of the Media Center also differs from the official draft in that it envisages removal of broadcasters' associations (commercial and public) from the circle of organisations authorized to nominate members to the Council, as their participation in the work of this body represents a potential conflict of interest. This would reduce the number of members of the Council by two, which the Media Center proposes to replace by representatives of non-governmental organizations dealing with the protection of human rights and freedoms.

The Media Center believes that the law should oblige the regulator to regularly assess whether the audiovisual media service providers are



observing its production and programming standards. Such analyses would be conducted done at least every six months and would provide an overview over 'which AVM service providers fulfill the legally prescribed obligations and obligations arising from the authorization for broadcasting (own production, etc).'

RTCG - an example of authorities' resistance to European standards

In 2019, the national public broadcaster RTCG faced criticism and loss of public trust after the authorities openly undermined its independence in a campaign that lasted from autumn 2017 until mid-2018. The campaign began with unlawful dismissal of two members of the Council and continued with the establishment of a controlled majority in that managerial body, which then proceeded to unlawfully dismiss the Director-General of RTCG, Andrijana Kadija and in her place appointed Božidar Šundić. Šundić himself then illegally dismissed Director of TVCG, Vladan Mićunović, and the editor-in-chief of First Programme TVCG, Aleksandar Mirković, as well as his entire editorial team. All this was done despite stern warnings coming from the European Union, influential EU Member States, the US and international organizations. The reactions of all these international actors, as well as those of Montenegrin NGOs and media associations, were unanimous in condemning such action, but this had no effect on the authorities' determination to take over RTCG.

The depravity of the campaign is also reflected in the three-layered performance mode which in parallel worked to regain the control of RTCG, beat back the critical NGOs that worked hard to protect RTCG's independence of the RTCG, and testing EU's limits in terms of tolerance towards violations of EU standards and good practices to



which Montenegro had committed itself as part of European integration. The case of RTCG case is therefore more than a story about media freedom and its limits- it is a mirror of dysfunctionality of the rule of law in Montenegro and the lengths to which its authorities are willing to defy European standards in order to preserve their party's interest, regardless of the damage it may do to interest of the public. The case of RTCG also revealed that, for the first time since Montenegro's independence, the ruling structure is ready to confront its main partners - the EU, its Member States and the US - in order to preserve its grip on power, and this opened the eyes of many in the EU to the true nature of the regime.

In response to the Government takeover of RTCG, the civil movement 'Resist' organised citizen protests in the streets of Podgorica for several weeks in early 2019, to demand resignation of the new Director-General and the current members of the Council of RTCG. In response, the new Director-General openly said that he and the management are not in the service of the public and that they will not resign. 'As far as management and RTCG are concerned, we work in the service of the state,' Šundić said in an interview with daily *Pobjeda*, and thereby acknowledged that he and the new management of the national public service broadcaster are violating the Law on RTCG, which prescribes something completely different⁴⁰.

40 The activity of public broadcasting services referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article will provide public audio-visual services that satisfy: democratic, social, cultural, educational and other needs of public interest of all segments of Montenegrin society; provides the exercise of the rights and interests of citizens and other entities in the field of informing, regardless of their political, religious, cultural, racial or sex affiliation, Article 2, paragraph 2

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Faced with public and harsh criticism of its editorial policy, at the end of February 2019 the Council unanimously decided to form a commission whose task will be to analyze the news programme of TVCG. The decision was made at the suggestion of a member of the Council, Milan Radović, who, according to the Mina News Agency, thought there was significant decline in the compliance with journalistic principles and standards at TVCG, and pronounced one-sidedness in reporting. However, it is unknown whether this commission was ever formed or if it conducted any analyses. Certainly, no findings were reported to the public, and Radović himself never spoke publicly on this issue again.

At the end of 2019, the responsible courts adopted final verdicts that formalized already expressed judgement by expert as well as lay public that the dismissals of RTCG and TVCG management had been illegal. The Supreme Court of Montenegro confirmed that Andrijana Kadija was unlawfully dismissed as Director-General of RTCG. At the end of December 2019, this court rejected the request to revise the decision of the High Court in Podgorica, which had previously confirmed that Kadija had been unlawfully dismissed⁴¹. The Supreme Court also confirmed that Aleksandar Mirković had been unlawfully dismissed from the post of the editor of the First TVCG programme, rejecting RTCG's request to revise the verdicts to that effect previously passed by the Basic Court in Podgorica and confirmed by the High Court.⁴². Finally, the Supreme Court of Montenegro also confirmed the verdict of

41 <http://www.rtcg.me/vijesti/drustvo/263491/vrhovni-sud-kadija-nezakonito-smijenjena.html>

42 <https://www.vijesti.me/vijesti/drustvo/vrhovni-sud-mirkovic-nezakonito-smijenjen>

the Basic Court in Danilovgrad that the former Director of TVCG Vladan Mićunović had been unlawfully dismissed⁴³.

In mid-2019, a new RTCG Council was elected. Its president remained Ivan Jovetić, and among other members reappointed to the Council were Goran Sekulović and Milan Radović, who initiated the dismissal of Andrijana Kadija. Newly appointed members are Ilija Despotović, Nikola Tatar, David Delibašić, Pavle Radovanović, Predrag Marsenić and Bojana Jokić.

Several prominent non-governmental organizations warned that the procedure for appointment of the new members to the Council in the Administrative Committee of the Parliament of Montenegro had again violated the Law on National Public Broadcaster RTCG⁴⁴. Namely, the Administrative Committee accepted as valid the documentation of non-governmental organizations that nominated candidate Goran Sekulović, although these organisations are not active in the field of human rights protection in the manner prescribed by the Law. Legal criteria have been ignored for a significant number of NGOs that have proposed Sekulović, including, for example, pensioner's associations, folklore ensembles, vocal and instrumental groups and theatres, as pointed out by the objecting non-governmental organisations. Their response also notes that the same is true of a significant number of NGOs from the media field that supported Milan Radović's candidacy.

According to the Centre for Civic Education (CCE), Center for Development of Non-Governmental Organisations (CDNGO), Institute Alternative (IA) and Center for Monitoring and Research (CeMI) the candidacy of Pavle Radovanović was also disputable, as at the moment of submitting his candidacy for the membership of the RTCG Council he had been appointed by the Government of Montenegro to the Commission

⁴³ <http://www.rtcg.me/vijesti/drustvo/257460/vrhovni-sud-micunovic-nezakonito-razrijesen.html>

⁴⁴ <https://institut-alternativa.org/en/dps-against-eu-and-us-in-new-action-of-retaining-control-over-the-rtcg/>



for European Integration and was the Head of the Working Group for preparing and conducting negotiations on Montenegro's accession to the EU for Chapter 3 (Right of establishment and freedom to provide services). His nomination therefore violated Article 26 of the Law on the National Public Broadcaster RTCG, and the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) had also pointed to this formal obstacle to the appointment of Radovanović as a member of the RTCG Council. Although ACA's opinions had previously served as basis for dismissal of some members of the RTCG Council who were not exactly made-to-order by the ruling party, in this case its warning was ignored, which only reinforces the perception that the Administrative Committee is using double standards to shape the Council according to the preferences of the ruling party.

The newly appointed Council has on several occasions publicly criticized some editorial errors of TVCG, but has not done anything to even suggest they would depart from the policy laid out by the Director General Šundić as 'service to the state', 'Service to the state' has, in the current circumstances, been recognized by parts of the national public and the relevant international partners to mean toeing the party line, which is why this practice raises 'serious concerns'.

The Council strongly condemned the TVCG's reporting on the attack against the journalist of daily *Dan* at the Business Center Delta and requested an internal investigation into this case. On several occasions it also upheld complaints filed in response to some editorial failures.

However, the Council failed to set the goal of making RTCG the most trusted media in the country, to lay out the precise timetable for achieving this goal and to hold the management accountable if they fall short, as had been suggested by the civil sector.

The Council also ignored requests by the NGO Media Center to publicly explain why TVCG broadcasted live celebration of the anniversary of the privately owned daily *Pobjeda* and how much it costs to hire TVCG technicians and staff to have this broadcast in primetime.

The Council had also been delaying, for a long time and without



justification, the publication of the latest annual public opinion poll on RTCG conducted by IPSOS in October 2019⁴⁵. According to an analysis by the NGO Media Center⁴⁶, the latest survey shows substantial decline on key measures of public opinion compared to previous years, and the decline in confidence in TVCG demonstrates that citizens are not satisfied with the work of this publicly funded broadcaster.

According to a survey done by NGO Juventas, 76.5 percent of respondents said RTCG's independence was important to them, with 62.3 percent qualifying it as highly important. The survey indicated that 36.8 percent of respondents believe RTCG is not independent from political influence, while 25.1 percent said it was partially independent, and only 25.1 percent of respondents thought RTCG was mostly or completely independent⁴⁷.

The European Commission's 2019 Report on Montenegro found that political interference in the work of the national public broadcaster remains a matter of serious concern⁴⁸. This critical position was even more sharply expressed by the head of the EU Delegation to Montenegro, Aivo Orav, who tweeted that 'the latest EC report on Montenegro sent a clear message about the importance of remedying continued political

45 <http://www.rtcg.me/sw4i/download/files/article/TV%20RTCG%20BRAND%20EQUITY%20AND%20IMAGE%20STUDY%202019%20MNE.pdf?id=2358>

46 <https://www.pcnen.com/portal/2020/03/24/analiza-objavljenih-nalaza-istrazivanja-javnog-mnjenja-o-rtcg-2/>

47 <http://www.rtcg.me/vijesti/drustvo/233440/gradjanima-vazno-da-rtcg-bude-nezavisan.html>

48 <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-montenegro-report.pdf>

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interference in the national public broadcaster RTCG. It is a matter of serious concern, which requires resolute steps.' The tweet was shared by top EC officials, including EU Commissioner Johannes Hahn, as well as the United States Embassy in Montenegro.

The Media Center drew public attention to the fact that the Draft Law on National Service Broadcaster (RTCG), adopted by the Government at the end of October 2019, contains provisions on the appointment of members to the RTCG Council that are substantially worse than the current ones. Namely, the Draft Law on RTCG prescribes that members of the RTCG Council are appointed by the Parliament of Montenegro, and that the working body of the Parliament (Administrative Committee) will prepare a shortlist of candidates for the Council based on the biography and experience of candidates, MPs' interviews with candidates and the number of institutions or NGOs that supported the candidacy of each candidate. In this way, the majority in the Administrative Committee would decide on the candidates and only those who get the support of the ruling majority could enter the RTCG Council. This would in effect formalize the ruling party's influence on appointments to the RTCG Council.

Getting back from the 104th place in 2019 to the 45th from 2006

There is a worrying continuity to the decline of media freedom in Montenegro. In 2019, Montenegro ranked 104th among countries in the Reporters Without Borders' World Press Freedom Index. As a reminder, in 2006 Montenegro was 45th on the same list⁴⁹.

In the reports of the European Commission and other relevant international institutions and organizations, the problems that have been noted for years still remain unsolved, and some get even more complicated, despite the authorities' alleged commitment to promote media freedom.

In order to address the fundamental issues identified here, it will be necessary to implement a series of measures over a relatively short period, which should, inter alia, include:

- Serious and significant deepening of efforts and intensification of investigations into the attacks on journalists and media property, with concrete and measurable results, which include identification of persons who ordered the attacks;
- Adoption of the Draft Law on Media with several important changes of the current proposal, in order to: 1) strengthen the position and responsibilities of the Editor-in-Chief and increasing

⁴⁹ Decline in media freedom in Montenegro according to World Press Freedom Index of the Reporters Without Borders- 2019 – 104 (32.74), 2018 – 103 (31.21), 2017 – 106 (33.65), 2016 – 106 (32.79), 2015 – 114 (34.63), 2014 – 114 (34.78), 2013 – 113 (32.97), 2012 – 107 (39.00), 2011 – a survey was not conducted, 2010 – 104 (28.50), 2009 – 77 (17.00), 2008 – 53 (10.00), 2007 – 58 (19.00), 2006 – 45 (11.59)



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the protection of his/her rights; 2) promote functional respect for plurality and autonomy of the work of self-regulatory bodies by encouraging the media to invest in this area without attempting to use public financing to transform self-regulation into co-regulation or regulation, 3) narrow down the priority areas of the Fund for promotion of pluralism and diversity in media in order to create more space for media development and investigative journalism, 4) strengthen the responsibility of the media founder and Editor-in-Chief for the content of reporting, while protecting individual journalists, 5) shorten deadlines for media intervention to remove and sanction inappropriate users' comments 6) protect journalists' sources in accordance with international standards, including in particular the recommendations of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and refrain from repressive measures to force journalists to disclose their sources as that may have a chilling effect on individuals' willingness to relate information to the media.

- Adopt the Draft Law on RTCG with amendments that would guarantee financial and editorial independence of RTCG and the managerial bodies of RTCG. This entails: 1) abolishing the obligation to sign a contract between the Government and the RTCG, 2) enabling the RTCG to be financed from donations as well, for all its programme content, 3) strengthening the programme and financial transparency of RTCG, 4) removing the provision that calls for the establishment of an RTCG Financial Board and leaving the managerial responsibilities with the RTCG Council and Director General of the RTCG, while strengthening the role and the independence of the RTCG Council, in particular through the structure, appointment and accountability procedures for the Council members, and 6) specifying sanctions for the Director-General of RTCG for the failure to implement an annual programme and financial plans, as well as decisions of the Council.
- Adoption of a new Law on Audiovisual Media Services, as proposed by the non-governmental organization Media Center, which would guarantee the legal framework for the independence of the Agency for audio-visual Media Services (current AEM) and its managerial bodies.



- New calls for appointment of members to the RTCG and AVM councils. The appointment procedures should be conducted according to new rules that will comply with the above-mentioned provisions for the strengthening of independence and plurality of members of those councils;
- Create an environment that will in practical ways allow media regulators and public service broadcasters to operate without the burden of inappropriate political interference and pressures, in accordance with law and professional standards;
- Develop as soon as possible by-laws for the Media Law in consultation with media organizations and NGOs dealing with the media;
- Support self-regulation through establishment of an annual financial award for the best performing self-regulatory body (having defined precise performance standards in consultation with the media organizations and NGO dealing with media);
- Support the initiatives to introduce media literacy into the formal education system and create a plan for their implementation with the involvement of educational institutions, media organizations and NGOs dealing with the media.

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**DEBERÍAN
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QUIR Y NO
NO VALE.
CE MAS**

En el riesgo de
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