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Executive Summary

The popular term “šestorka” that refers to the ruling alliance of six political party leaders seems to be unavoidable in any discussion regarding the present political and economic situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The power of these individuals is unquestionable, and no serious reform can be passed without their consent. However, the current stalemate in which BiH is embroiled as one of the worst performing Western Balkans’ countries in the European Union (EU) accession process raises the question of whether the spotlight on this “šestorka” is truly relevant. At the same time, six editors-in-chief of daily newspapers (*Dnevni avaz*, *Oslobođenje*, *Večernji list*, *Dnevni list*, *Nezavisne novine*, *Glas Srpske*) along with the influential public TV broadcasters ought to be the rulers of the media market in BiH. They are in charge of informing the citizens on the latest political and economic developments, and at the same time, citizens trust media more than anyone else. Yet, these same citizens are often ill informed on actual current events related to BiH. For example, according to Gallup Survey,¹ 59% of citizens are not well informed on the EU integration process. As such, they cannot form a critical mass needed to exercise the pressure on politicians to advance the EU agenda. It is here where the media should step in. The group of editors-in-chief should form a different kind of “šestorka” – by boosting frequent and high-quality reporting on the EU they should reinvigorate constructive public debate on the EU and push the country towards the European integrations.

The underlying purpose of this paper is to elaborate the role of the media in BiH in informing the public about the country’s relations with the EU, and the manner in which this is done. More importantly, *Populari* aimed to answer the question whether the media can be *the* key factor that could get the “EU snowball” rolling and break the deadlock that BiH is currently in. It has been proven numerous times that media in BiH can create euphoria. One would expect the same élan to be created for one of the very few goals that unite most of Bosnian citizens: the EU.

In order to look into the media landscape in BiH, *Populari* interviewed most relevant actors, such as editors, journalists, information and communication officers, as well as media experts. The findings revealed that even though the mass media recognize their crucial role in the society, their position so far remains underutilized. EU as a topic to be reported about is largely seen as unattractive and hence unprofitable with media following the trends rather than setting them. Instead, it is currently the Delegation of the EU to BiH (DEU) and the Directorate for European Integration (DEI) mostly setting the media agenda through their activities. DEI’s implementation of a clear set of obligations stemming from its own strategy has thus far been slow and unambitious, while DEU might need to revisit its communication strategy and adjust the media projects it sponsors to the Bosnian context better.

1 Gallup (2009) *Gallup Balkan Monitor*. ‘Focus On: Perceptions of the EU in the Western Balkans’, p. 4.

The Power of the Media

BiH celebrates. Edin Džeko, Vedad Ibišević and Zvezdan Misimović are national heroes once again. Days before the great football match in Zenica, tickets could not be found, and the prices on the black market ran over the rooftop. Hundreds of people queued in lines to try to get their piece of hope. The ecstatic atmosphere that overrides politics, poverty and lack of services in BiH was top news across the media for days. The night of March 22 when the former European champions Greece lost against BiH 3-1 was the epitome of happiness in most of the country. The victory brought together politicians, actors, journalists, priests and “ordinary” citizens. The air was vibrating with media headlines:

“BiH National Team United All Nations and Faiths”²;

“Record by Record: Dragons Set Standards”³;

“Dragons can do it!”⁴ etc.



Source: www.sutra.ba

² Sport.ba, 23 March 2013

³ Sport.ba, 27 March 2013

⁴ Dnevniavaz.ba, 22 March 2013

The euphoria that was generated in just one night over a single football match in the World Cup 2014 qualifications, blurred out all negative and gloomy stories, to which citizens are exposed every day through Bosnian media. And instead, it seeded optimism, hope and, most importantly, illustrated the power of the media to set priorities and create a more positive reality. Being in BiH that night meant a brighter future, a possible departure to the Brazil World Cup and a feeling of progress.

The example of euphoria over a football match portrays two interrelated issues important for our context. First, optimism *is* contagious – as even those who care little for the most important sideshow in the world, started enthusiastically supporting the national team by cheering “*Dragons! Dragons!*” after the match in Zenica. And second, mass media *does set* the agenda – as they were capable of putting aside all other news for several days, helping to build the expectations of the public and increasing the pressure on the BiH national team.

In a report published by the Social Issues Research Centre titled simply “*Optimism*”, the authors argue that both optimism and pessimism are “socially contagious” and that this phenomenon can be observed at a national level in different walks of social life, ranging from collective euphoria over a football match to optimism about the political future. How optimistic or pessimistic people are, depends to a large extent on the media and the way they report on events.

“[...] our ideas about optimism, and the extent to which we think optimistically, are formed both individually and socially in relation to the social worlds in which we live. [...] The media were judged to have a large impact on how pessimistic we feel, with 53% of poll participants agreeing with the statement ‘I think that TV and newspapers encourage me to have a more negative outlook on life’. A further 33% agreed that ‘gloomy’ media coverage did not present an accurate picture of the world.”⁵

In other words, the more positive the agenda set and pursued by the media, the more optimistic citizens tend to be. The agenda setting theory supports this view as it is rooted in the idea that the media have the ability to carry the salience of items on their news agendas and then transfer it to the public agenda. Due to the massive influx of information, the media *filters* the information and *decides* on what citizens are exposed to daily. In practice, this means sitting at the editorial board every morning and literally choosing what will end up on the newspapers’ covers: the story on European Union (EU) standards that will improve citizens’ lives in West Herzegovina; or the story about brutal beatings from a crime column; the lack of good governance and citizens’ ordeal with water reductions in a number of Bosnian cities; or the latest celebrity gossip.

5 Social Issues Research Centre (2009) *Optimism*. Oxford, UK.

“In choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality. Readers [and viewers] learn not only about a given issue, but also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position.”⁶

In the words of Bernard Cohen⁷ *“the mass media may not be successful much of the time in telling us what to think, but they are stunningly successful in telling [us] what to think about.”⁸*

More importantly, according to the most recent research in BiH, media is still the institution citizens in this country trust most.⁹

In this context, the football euphoria story is important in that it sets a benchmark and gives us a unique perspective on how any issue that matters to and for the people could be represented in the media and how the news can uplift the nation. Finally, it illustrates how our media is capable of creating a momentum.

Can the same pattern or formula be applied to other more important issues in BiH? Looking objectively at what challenges BiH and its citizens face today, the EU should be on the top of the agenda. The Balkan regatta, whose participants share the single goal of crossing the EU finish line as soon as possible, nowadays enjoys little substantial media attention. In 2013, when EU relations with BiH are stuck in a *status quo*, there is a lot the media could and should educate us about. Still, the media is mostly failing to do so:

“There is a lot of talk about EU in BiH, but little is known.”¹⁰

In this paper, we consider the role of the media in BiH in informing the public about the country’s relations with the EU, and shaping public attitudes towards this organization. In BiH, both the audiovisual and print media do not pay enough attention to the EU, but we demonstrate that even a small change in the media’s coverage of the EU has the potential to have a huge positive impact on the country.

6 McCombs, M. E. and Shaw, D. L. (1972) ‘Agenda Setting Function of Mass Media’, *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36(2): 176-187.

7 Based on the findings of Bernard Cohen, Joseph Klapper and Walter Lippmann about the politics of mass media, opinion and learning, McCombs and Shaw first looked into the agenda setting of the newspapers and television during the 1968 US presidential elections. This initial study was a benchmark that later on developed into the agenda-setting theory.

8 Cohen, B. (1963) *The Press and Foreign Policy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

9 Ipsos Public Affairs and Millennium PR BiH (2013) *The Media in BiH 2013: Media Freedom, Professionalism and Challenges*. Sarajevo, April 2013.

10 Popolari Skype interview with Benjamin Pargan, Editor-in-chief of *Euro Panorama* at Deutsche Welle, 26 March 2013.

EU Rewind

Exactly 15 years ago,¹¹ BiH officially declared its intention to become a part of the EU. Most importantly, BiH's political leaders committed wholeheartedly to follow and implement the EU agenda, signing several strategic documents in the end of the 1990s and the beginning of 2000s.¹² Public support for such policies was high with polls resulting in 88% pro-EU citizens.¹³ The media support was crucial too: they provided daily topics for discussion within the European agenda framework; they provided information that integrated the society around a common goal. Only *Nezavisne novine* increased their EU reporting from the overall count of 19 articles in 2003 to 110 in 2005.¹⁴ In fact, a successful EU integration process does not only require aligning and implementing legislation and creating institutions. It also involves a process of communication, which allows citizens to gain knowledge of the EU and the integration process, and form opinions on the important positive and negative changes stemming from it. The European Commission emphasized this important role, too:

“Communication is a cornerstone of the EU’s enlargement strategy. The benefits and challenges of enlargement need to be better communicated to the public. [...] People need to see that progress towards the EU depends on the pace of reforms in each country. The faster and more effective the reform process within the countries, the more rapid will be their progress on the road to membership and all its benefits.”¹⁵

11 In 1998 a declaration on “Special Relations between EU and Bosnia and Herzegovina” was adopted and led to the establishment of the EU/BiH Joint Consultative Task Force in order to assist in the preparation of contractual relations.

12 The documents signed or adopted include: the Decision on the Initiative for Accession of BiH to EU (1999), Resolution on European Integration and Stability Pact for South-East Europe (1999), Conclusions of both Houses of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly No. 01-020661/03 (2003), Statement made by heads of Political Parties No. 01-50-3-180/04 (2004).

13 This data is according to research ordered by DEU at the end of 2004. The data is cited in Foreign Policy Initiative's analysis 'Preparedness for Stabilisation and Capability for EU Integration', 2006.

14 This data was collected using the widest BiH newspaper database available, the INFOBIRO digital archive.

15 European Commission (2007) 'Enlargement Strategy and the Main Challenges 2007-2008', Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, 6 November.

BiH's European Times

October 5th, 2002 marked the first elections administered by the local authorities in BiH since the Dayton Agreement came into force in 1995. The elections had the highest number of political parties running since the war, and the majority of them at least in some limited form touched on "EU reform"; while some of the parties even ran under slogans that were strongly pro-European.¹⁶ The pro-EU parties entered the ruling coalition composed of SDA, HDZ, SDS, and PDP. The then new Prime Minister Adnan Terzić, who inherited the EU rhetoric that was strongly being advocated by the international community as an engine for BiH's future progress, recalls the times:

"In all honesty, I did not know as much about the EU or the so-called Copenhagen criteria. [...] It took time to get to know the administration, too. [...] We made a big chart with all the names and telephone numbers, all the ministers, deputies, everyone. I needed to know who is responsible for what and to be in contact with all the ministries at all times. [...] More importantly, it was necessary to map up all of the administration and delegate EU tasks."¹⁷

The exercise that brought everybody together was the Stabilization and Association (SAA) Feasibility Study. The "Road map", which listed eighteen most urgent reforms, was sent to BiH. It was taken seriously, and the BiH Council of Ministers (CoM) developed an operational plan with tight budget deadlines. In March 2003, a questionnaire covering all sectors relevant to a future SAA was handed to BiH. Within six months, most of the work had been completed. BiH's answers were discussed with the European Commission in a series of working groups meetings between May and September 2003. As the Directorate for European Integration (DEI) Director at the time, Osman Topčagić, put it:

"This was a period of enthusiasm."¹⁸

¹⁶ For example, PDP's campaign slogan was, "To become European, but to stay Serb", while even the Serbian Radical Party was running under the slogan of "RS in Europe".

¹⁷ Populari interview with Adnan Terzić, Prime Minister of BiH (2002-2006), 2011.

¹⁸ Populari interview with Osman Topčagić, Director of the Directorate for EU Integrations (2003-2009), 2010.

Game Changers: Key Players in Bosnian Media

Everyone appears to agree that the interplay between the media, the state and the society is crucial. Recently, Peter Sørensen, the EU Special Representative (EUSR) for BiH, emphasized:

*“The partnership between BiH society and the EU has to be a ‘half-half engagement’. We will do our part – but will not substitute Bosnians in what they have to do. And by that I do not mean only politicians because BiH society as a whole has a role to play: the media, NGOs, academics [...]”*¹⁹

But in the present abundance of various digital and analogue media, who are the principal actors that are expected to play the vital role of pulling the EU debate to the limelight and bringing about this important change? On the one side, DEI and Delegation of the EU to BiH (DEU) are two key players in BiH that are to set the agenda with their respective public information and communication outreach programmes. On the other side are the traditional mass media outlets across the country. The part they play is perhaps far more important, simply because they communicate directly with the audience: the Bosnian citizens. Their part is to complement the agenda DEI and DEU set, and at the same time generate their own programme and content.

Within the EU as well as in BiH, there is a significant difference between audiovisual and print media and the nature of their work. A special EU regulatory framework exists only for the former,²⁰ particularly TV stations that still have the largest audience. Within this sector, special attention is devoted to the public broadcasters due to their public service mandate and their responsibility to function within the interest of the broader society. While they should in principle also work in a socially responsible manner, in practice print media are largely private and are seen even as a business in itself. For this reason, they fall into an entirely different media category and loose regulation that is largely limited to the principles supporting freedom of the press.

To analyze the largest possible and most relevant portion of the media market, we have decided to incorporate both – public broadcasters and private print media – in our research. Even though the public broadcasters’ audience share and penetration is dropping in comparison to the commercial TV stations,²¹ it is because of their pu-

19 DEU website, “Our Common EU Future”, text by the EUSR Peter Sørensen, 4 April 2013.

20 The EU audiovisual and media policy is codified only in the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (2010/13/EU) pertaining to the coordination of audiovisual media services.

21 Mareco Index Bosnia 2006, cited in Hozić, Aida A. (2008) ‘Democratizing Media, Welcoming Big Brother: Media in Bosnia and Herzegovina’, In Karol Jakubowicz and Miklos Sukosd (ed.): *Finding the Right Place on the Map: Central and Eastern European Media Change in a Global Perspective*. Intellect Bristol: Chicago, USA.

blic service role and the fact that they are largely funded by TV license fee payers, that we chose to talk to all public TV stations in BiH. This incorporates the state level BHT1 (*Television of Bosnia and Herzegovina*), and entity level FTV (*Television of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina*) and RTRS (*Radio Television of Republika Srpska*). The analysis of their reporting on EU-related issues is the first to follow below.

Despite the lack of official circulation data of print media in BiH, we interviewed the daily newspapers that are, according to Mareco Index Bosnia,²² considered as the most influential and as having the highest outreach. Following the division and fragmentation of the media market in the country, we focused on the three largest urban centers and peripheral areas surrounding them. In doing so, we covered *Oslobođenje* and *Dnevni avaz* as the main dailies in Sarajevo, *Dnevni list* and *Večernji list* as the key ones in Mostar, and *Nezavisne novine* and *Glas Srpske* as the major daily newspapers in the area of Banja Luka. We set out the story about how they put forward the EU agenda after the section in which we explore the public TV channels. At the end of the paper, we return to scrutinize DEU and DEI, and their role in changing the EU game in BiH as it is reflected in practice.

Media and the EU: In the Service of the People

“If I would not have to watch it for professional reasons, even I would switch off the TV when EU-related issues come up,”²³

Avdo Avdić, a journalist at FTV confesses. He is one of the TV station’s main journalists working on the EU. Avdić also stresses the fact that journalists perceive the EU as a distant matter, which is therefore not high on their agenda of issues worthy of interest. At the same time he and his colleagues admit, there is very little professional incentive and money given to be creative and for putting forward appealing stories we can all relate to.

Džemal Šabić, the Director, believes bringing the EU closer to the citizens can be and should be done:

“Of course, the EU can be made interesting to the people; they have managed to do that in Croatia very well, for example.”²⁴

With that in mind, FTV has made a strategic decision to only report on the EU during the daily evening news or around that time, which is regularly watched by the

22 Ibid.

23 Populari interview with Avdo Avdić, Editor of News Programme of FTV, 21 February 2013.

24 Populari interview with Džemal Šabić, Director General of FTV, 21 February 2013.

highest percentage of viewers. In theory, this is a good decision. Also, instead of specialized EU programmes (that require a lot of money), which they say are not attractive to the viewers, all TV stations broadcast truckloads of dialogue shows. They bring together a number of different people, moderate discussions among them and cover the EU in a relatively cheap way. But in doing so, very little knowledge about the EU is ever handed over to the final recipients – the citizens. FTV has no specialized EU programme, but like other public broadcasters they have taken over DEU's media reporting project that has been well established in BiH since 2008.

"This is already a well-functioning system, in which we know what is being asked from us and what is to be delivered."²⁵

A lack of EU specialized programme is therefore merely a reflection of a general attitude manifested through sensationalistic and market-driven broadcasting schemes of TV channels in question. The state-level BHT1 with an entire hour per week dedicated to the EU issues ranks the best among the three TV stations, and this is also thanks to the 25-minute *Deutsche Welle* programme they broadcast.

Aside from that, BHT1 introduced *Euroimpuls*, a special TV show dedicated to the EU in December 2005. As its first editor, veteran Haris Kulenović, proudly tells of how he cruised all over the country to find and then present personalized and inspiring stories about the relevance of EU in BiH. He shares heart-warming anecdotes from the team's bus trip to Brussels with secondary school children that had won the EU quiz. He admits it was then perhaps even too early to talk about the EU in Bosnian context. But with other countries in the region making headway, the time is ripe now.

Haris Kulenović's team has largely been reformed last October, and the programme was then taken over by the charismatic Enes Musabašić with extensive international experience. As a returnee to BiH from France he puts claims on understanding what membership in the EU can bring to BiH, and what obligations and other consequences it carries. Presenting such topics to the audience throughout BiH in a weekly 30-minute programme, he continues the successes of what Kulenović has established during the past few years. Musabašić's endeavors to move the programme to a more favorable time slot from mid-week afternoon to evening have, with the support of the energetic information programme editor Suzana Stambol, recently been realized. During our research process, the management seems to have recognized the need for a better reach of the show, which is now being broadcasted at 9pm.

Since early 2012 BHT1 also broadcasts the *Deutsche Welle* produced *Euro Panorama*, which brings relevant and real-life stories from all over the EU – not just from BiH. *Deutsche Welle*, a respectable German international production house, has re-

25 Populari interview with Duška Jurišić, Editor-in-Chief of *Poštено govoreći* at FTV, 21 February 2013.

cognized BHT1 as the most serious partner in BiH, and Benjamin Pargan, editor-in-chief of *Euro Panorama* emphasizes:

“In principle, our cooperation with BHT1 is satisfactory. But we would want better and constant time slots for our programme, so that viewers know when to expect the programme.”²⁶



*Editors of EU specialized programmes broadcast on public TV stations in BiH: Tamara Ćuruvija (EU i mi), Benjamin Pargan (Euro Panorama), Enes Musabašić (Euro Impuls)
(Sources: RTRS, Deutsche Welle, Embassy of France in BiH)*

His assessment implies that there is always room for improvement, although BHT1 demonstrates a certain level of decisiveness to push the EU agenda that is unseen in other public service broadcasters. This has additionally been confirmed by a sole Bosnian correspondent from the EU, Elvir Bucalo, who raised the issue of a lack of interest for EU themes in BiH:

“From the countries in our region, we are the worst in this segment. Albania, for example, has three journalists in Brussels, Croatia seven or eight, and Serbian media cover EU events with three or four correspondents from Brussels.”²⁷

For him, being the only journalist from BiH in Brussels is an advantage in that, particularly in the beginning, he was able to attract special attention of EU officials. Lately, when BiH started lagging behind its neighbors, he openly admits – he is sometimes embarrassed. All in all, even though he works with the local Voice of America at the same time, and used to also cooperate with Radio Free Europe, he can be considered one of the aces up BHT1’s sleeve. Given his willingness to work with anyone, it is especially telling that he is hardly ever contacted by other news media outlets from BiH to feed them with Brussels-based reports.

²⁶ Populari Skype interview with Benjamin Pargan, Editor-in-Chief of *Euro Panorama* at Deutsche Welle, 26 March 2013.

²⁷ Populari Skype interview with Elvir Bucalo, Brussels correspondent for BHRT, 28 March 2013.

This demonstrates that the key in pushing the EU agenda forward is the combination of an active and motivated engagement of the journalistic team, and a keen support from the management. It is also the recipe that turned out well in RTRS.

In the other part of the country, in Banja Luka, the interview with Tamara Čuruvija, RTRS's editor of the international programme, very much resembles the conversation with BHT1's Haris Kulenović. She briefly sketched her professional path, and then shared her five-year-long engagement with the bi-weekly *EU i mi* (The EU and us) programme. It was launched in 2005, not long after BHT1's introduction of *Euroimpuls*.

Like *Euroimpuls* until recently, *EU i mi* also does not enjoy the best possible time interval – it is transmitted every second Wednesday at 4pm. But in spite of the disadvantage of the broadcasting time, Tamara is not displeased – audience penetration is, in her words, good for the programme of this kind and is at around 4 to 5% of the viewers. What is more important, Tamara believes, is the experience of EU. From her story, even a bad listener can sense the knowledge she has come to possess and the relevance of practical experience in the field. She tells:

“Working in the field, especially in Brussels, is far from easy. When you find yourself in a pickle in the middle of Brussels, you simply have to demonstrate all your professional experience as well as resourcefulness. A lot also depends on a journalist’s mileage and continuity of specialization in a certain topic.”²⁸

Of course, EU reporting through specialized EU programmes can still be done in a manner that does not attract special interest from the audience. This largely depends on the creativity of the journalists and their willingness to put that little extra effort into their work in order to make the final product relevant for an ordinary citizen. The table shows the complete picture on number of programme hours dedicated to the EU, accessible on public broadcast channels.

Weekly broadcasting scheme (30 March – 5 April 2013)			
TV Channel	BHT1	FTV	RTRS
Total hours weekly	127	127	123
Informative and educational programme/hours	25	19	24
Programme for children/hours	2	10	8
EU specialized programme/hours	1	0	35 min. ²⁹

Table 1: Broadcasting scheme of BHT1, FTV and RTRS (Source: Dnevni avaz)

²⁸ Populari interview with Tamara Čuruvija, Editor-in-Chief of *EU i mi* at RTRS, 6 March 2013.

²⁹ *EU i mi* is an EU specialized programme that is being broadcasted by RTRS on a bi-weekly basis.

Print Media: A Private Enterprise

Although the print media market has been assessed as very much underdeveloped,³⁰ daily newspapers are read by more than two thirds of the population,³¹ and are thus the second most important feeder of information into the public. Unlike TV stations, they are all privately owned, and their readership mainly depends on national and ethnic belonging and preferences. According to the 2010 BiH Press Council research,³² 11 daily newspapers, 100 different kinds of magazines, 71 specialized magazines, and eight religious magazines are published in the country. Official circulation numbers are not available, because in a competitive market they are considered a business secret. Given that daily newspapers act as private enterprises that must respond to the market demand in order to survive, it is clear that their primary concern is the number of copies sold.

When it comes to the EU, they almost unanimously claim that, in spite of the surveys showing significant support to the EU integration processes among the country's population,³³ the EU does not sell newspapers. Tarik Lazović, deputy editor-in-chief of the most widely read *Dnevni avaz*, openly admits that EU topics are uninteresting:

"We always think about what sells the newspaper from the reader's perspective, what needs to be in the newspaper that would encourage the reader buy it. [...] No one would ever buy a newspaper if the EU is the only topic covered."³⁴

This perception that the EU is dull and the doubt of its relevance in the present situation is also clearly expressed in the explanation of Predrag Zvijerac from Mostar's daily *Dnevni list*:

"We are going to join the EU in 56 years due to a thousand reasons; we are incredibly far away from the EU. Go to Croatia, and you will understand."³⁵

Such attitude towards the EU is then clearly reflected in the daily newspapers' coverage of EU topics. After analyzing numerous daily newspaper articles available both in print and online, a typical report, almost without an exception, reads like this:

30 Jusić, T. (2010) Media landscape: Bosnia and Herzegovina. European Journalism Centre

31 GfK BiH research: Daily newspapers' circulation in BiH (2006), www.klix.ba

32 BH Press Council, 2010

33 Public Survey Research in BiH (2013) IPSOS Public Affairs, The Social Research and Corporate Reputation Specialist

34 Populari interview with Tarik Lazović, Deputy Editor-in-Chief of *Dnevni avaz*, 19 March 2013.

35 Populari interview with Predrag Zvijerac, Deputy Editor-in-Chief of *Dnevni list*, 25 March 2013.

	<p align="center">Renewed EU support for reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Dnevni avaz, 21 December 2012, Source: ONASA)</p>
<p>O R I G I N A L</p>	<p><i>“The EU continues to prove its commitment to the European perspective for Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is now crucial that an effective coordination mechanism is put in place by the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to make the best use of EU support for the benefit of the country’s citizens,”</i> stressed Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighborhood Policy, Štefan Füle.</p> <p>The funding comes under the 2012 annual programme of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). Between 2007 and 2011, the EU already provided €439 million of pre-accession assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The IPA money is allocated based on the actual needs of the countries to implement reforms necessary for entering the EU (political reforms, such as judicial reform, human rights etc.; economic, social and territorial development, with a view to a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth; ability to fulfill the obligations of membership and alignment with EU law; regional integration and cross border cooperation). With this funding, aspiring countries can carry out the necessary reforms and get ready for implementing European standards and policies.</p>
	<p align="center">Renewed EU support for reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Populari intervention)</p>
<p>C R E A T I V E</p>	<p>Only between 2007 and 2011, the EU provided €439 million to BiH in the form of pre-accession assistance. This money went to BiH’s institutions at different levels, mainly for the purpose of increasing their efficiency, and establishing all necessary instruments needed to enter the EU. But the end recipients and beneficiaries of implemented programmes and reforms should be Bosnian citizens. The EU continues to prove its commitment to the European perspective for BiH as it pushed for the coordination mechanism that should clear up the EU path for this country. The mechanism should finally put in place a system where citizens know who is responsible for certain decisions, as well as how and when these should be implemented. It is also important in the context of IPA money, which needs to be more effectively absorbed and utilized since, compared to other countries in the region, BiH is lagging behind in this segment, too.</p> <p>Why is that so?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of competent and skilled staff - Lack of good and viable projects - Lack of agreements on a political level - Lack of vision <p>Why is IPA important, or rather, what does it enable in other countries in the region, e.g. Croatia?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better public health system - Demining - Improving statistics - Managing agricultural funds - More efficient inspections <p>With IPA available to BiH as well, all of the above lies at the disposal to BiH, if measures, such as the establishment of the coordination mechanism, are taken fast.</p>

The pile of articles Populari managed to collect throughout its research, including the one presented above, unfortunately, largely mirrors a few chronic features; first of all, daily newspaper reporting is very procedural, strictly follows press releases sent to them, and is hence dry. Their coverage consists of forwarding technical and not-most-relevant information with hardly any substantial content that carries weight to citizens' everyday life. The article edited by Populari was an example of how daily newspaper published content, acquired from a news agency without any intervention and improvement on their part. This reflects the fact that reporters are primarily reactive and have no interest in the topics they cover. It furthermore emphasizes the lack of reporting skills needed to find and use the information that is most relevant and attractive for their readership and largely available online. An effort to adapt these press releases and make them understandable and relevant to an average reader in BiH is, similarly, rarely made. Maja Rimac-Bjelobrk, Assistant Director at DEI, is critical of this:

“Bosnian media is not interested in the content of the story or of what you know [...]. There are many problems: first, a lack of interest of the media, then, unskilled reporters and journalists, and finally, very few specialized EU desks within the media.”³⁶

Informing citizens of “effective coordinating mechanism” without explaining what it is and what it means in practice, or announcing an influx of millions of Euros into the country from IPA funds without any context with regard to how this money is related to BiH's citizens, may only confuse readers and blur the real meaning behind the story. Seemingly complex concepts and vocabulary misleads readership and the public into thinking that the EU belongs to strictly political and thus abstract domain.

Another issue that is also frequently present is the lack of vision, evident from the media's not thinking ahead or envisioning developments that will take place soon. Such was, for instance, the case with the coverage of Croatia's joining the EU and the question of BiH's agricultural exports to its neighboring country. Little was done to inform and educate the public in advance or to pull the attention of relevant segments of society to these issues in order to put pressure on the people responsible. The coverage in this and other cases was again reactive and only became increasingly present after the momentum on the matter had already waned. Daily newspaper then tend to compensate for this lost momentum with a sensationalistic and negativistic presentation of EU stories, which certainly do not do much good to the general optimism levels in the country. A flick through newspapers' headlines and readers are easily convinced that the EU is by and large related to negative consequences, conditionality and politicized rhetoric:

36 Populari interview with Maja Rimac-Bjelobrk, Assistant Director at DEI, 14 February 2013.

“Kacin: Because of such Political Elite BiH has no European Future”³⁷

“Is BiH Losing Property After Croatia joins the EU?”³⁸

“Füle and Jagland Disappointed Because of the Sejdić-Finci Case”³⁹

“Deadlines Pass, BiH Stays in the same Place”⁴⁰

Further confirming this, it has been conceded several times during the research that negativity sells. Danijel Omeragić from *Oslobođenje*, for example, is blunt:

*“It is a fact that crime section interests people more than any other news area.”*⁴¹

But nonetheless, a majority of newspaper representatives we have had the chance to meet, admitted that it is possible to strike a balance between producing stories that are naturally attractive enough to sell the newspaper, like the crime section, and stories that educate and inform, like stories about the export of poultry meat or potatoes from BiH to the EU. On the basis of the journalists’ and editors’ accounts we considered all of the issues that seem chronic can be broken down to one and the same basic characteristic: creativity combined with genuine interest.

West Herzegovina: An Isolated Island

While most media still see no real potential in reporting on the EU, there is a territory in BiH where the coverage of EU matters is in full swing. In fact, it is a very specific and paradoxical situation taking place in Herzegovina that serves as proof underpinning our hypothesis.

Predominantly Croat-inhabited West Herzegovina deems itself as a part of the EU already. With a large portion of the population in possession of the dual Bosnian-Croatian citizenship, this area of BiH feels a special relation to Croatia and a closer proximity to Croatia’s entry into the EU. *Večernji list*, an Austrian-owned daily newspaper based in Mostar, refers to itself as *“the absolute master of the media space wherever Croats represent a majority.”*⁴² As such, this newspaper is actually on a special mission. Jozo Pavković, editor-in-chief of *Večernji list*, who welcomed us together with one of his key EU journalists, clarifies:

37 Oslobođenje.ba, 19 April 2013.

38 Avaz.ba, 22 February 2013.

39 Nezavisne.com, 3 September 2012.

40 Glassrpske.com, 29 October 2012.

41 Populari interview with Danijel Omeragić, Deputy Editor-in-Chief of Oslobođenje, 19 February 2013.

42 Populari interview with Jozo Pavković, Editor-in-Chief of Večernji List, 25 March 2013.

“With about a tenth of its citizens – and by that I do not only mean Croats but also Bosniaks who hold Croatian passports – BiH is also entering the EU on 1 July 2013. It is a big step and we simply have to write about it.”⁴³

Indeed, their EU coverage attests this. A lot like they assert, various issues related to the EU are present in *Večernji list* every day and throughout all sections of the paper. It is thus not surprising they can boast in the overall success of their annual event *Večernjakov pečat*⁴⁴ attended and praised by the *crème de la crème* of Bosnian society and the international presence in it. This year, the EU’s Peter Sørensen was named the diplomat of the year. According to Pavković, he was among those who recognized the event as a gathering one would expect in an EU environment. So, the EU really seems to be approaching BiH.

But in the end, *Večernji list*’s representatives concede that presenting the EU in a manner that is interesting to an average citizen is a lot easier for them than for dailies in other parts of BiH:

“People here have a direct contact with Croatia and the EU. To us, these stories are a reality that is in no way abstract, but it is understandable that they are a lot more intangible to, for instance, people from Tešanj.”⁴⁵

It is a point that must be considered when evaluating media coverage of EU topics. BiH, most certainly, will not be able to join the EU for at least a few years, and yes, the EU might seem far at the moment, but with Croatia joining the Union soon, the EU is practically coming to BiH too. But it is especially in such circumstances that the media is in a position to utilize its powerful potential, make the EU interesting and selling. Presenting their stories within more positive contexts and with more optimistic connotations, as an opportunity, rather than as a new *Iron Curtain*, the EU-related atmosphere in the country might as well be a bit different. Good examples of newspaper coverage of the EU exist, and all they prove is that where there is will, there is a way. Such was also the initial plan of DEU and DEI, two key organizations that currently serve as the EU agenda-setters in BiH.

⁴³ Populari interview with Jozo Pavković, Editor-in-Chief of *Večernji List*, 25 March 2013.

⁴⁴ *Večernjakov pečat* is an annual event organized by *Večernji List* in Mostar with distinguished guests from political, economic, cultural and sport life. Special awards are given to deserving individuals from various fields.

⁴⁵ Populari interview with Jozo Pavković, Editor-in-Chief of *Večernji List*, 25 March 2013.

International Media Support: Delegation of the European Union

Brussels has developed several strategic communication documents⁴⁶ with the aim to improve knowledge and understanding of the EU by the current and future EU citizens. Institutional body implementing these on the ground in BiH is the Communication Office of DEU and EUSR. Put up in its current formation in September 2011,⁴⁷ as the joint Communication Office of the DEU and EUSR, this department is headed by the 35 year-old British PR expert Andy McGuffie, who previously worked in Kosovo. Together with his team of additional nine people, McGuffie is responsible for all sorts of communications DEU and EUSR conduct with the outside world, both in BiH and Brussels, as well as for the visibility of the EU in BiH. With only general official EU working strategy to rely upon, the Communication team's work is practically based upon a set of internal documents and standard practices in other EU aspiring countries.

First and foremost, on a daily basis McGuffie and his team are the focal point for Bosnian media. They feed them with the most relevant information about the EU in the most effective way. McGuffie explains their routine:

“We answer questions of journalists, on average 35 unique questions per month. This is a rather complex process, as we have to go to different departments, the legal department for example, that are responsible for the specific question. We need to collect answers, compile them, and then go back to the media. What we provide is a coordinated answer of the House. As for TV stations they also come by to film reportages, news or take statements about four to five times a week.”⁴⁸

What McGuffie calls *EU followers* are journalists that focus on and specialize in EU topics – and, talking about the general media situation in BiH, he complains the EU only has a few of them in the country. The problem of a lack of financial resources in local media is seen as the cause for limited or no knowledge on the EU, a general lack of reporting skills and market-driven editorial policies. McGuffie continues:

46 Communication Strategy for Enlargement (2000), Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate (2005), European Commission Action Plan for communication improvement (2005), White Book on European Communication Strategy (2006).

47 Previously, the communication team existed as part of OHR/EUSR Communication Outreach Office.

48 Populari interview with Andy McGuffie, Head of the DEU and EUSR Communication Team and Spokesperson, 5 April 2013.

"We see five to six journalists regularly, and those are the ones that deal with the EU more often than others who are mostly covering general political issues. However, most of them just come and ask us for a statement. They do not have time to work on stories. And they do not research things thoroughly in advance."⁴⁹

To change this "statement-focused" approach in media reporting and in order to build their capacities, in 2008 the DEU/EUSR Communication Team started the outreach programme in partnership with local media. Called the "EU Reportages", the project is designed in the following way: each cycle, which lasts for about six months a year, is marked by three broad topics that the Communication Team identifies together with DEU's Political Office. The partner media editorial boards are then in charge of the way each story within these broad topics is developed. Reportages are published/broadcast once a week during the cycle.

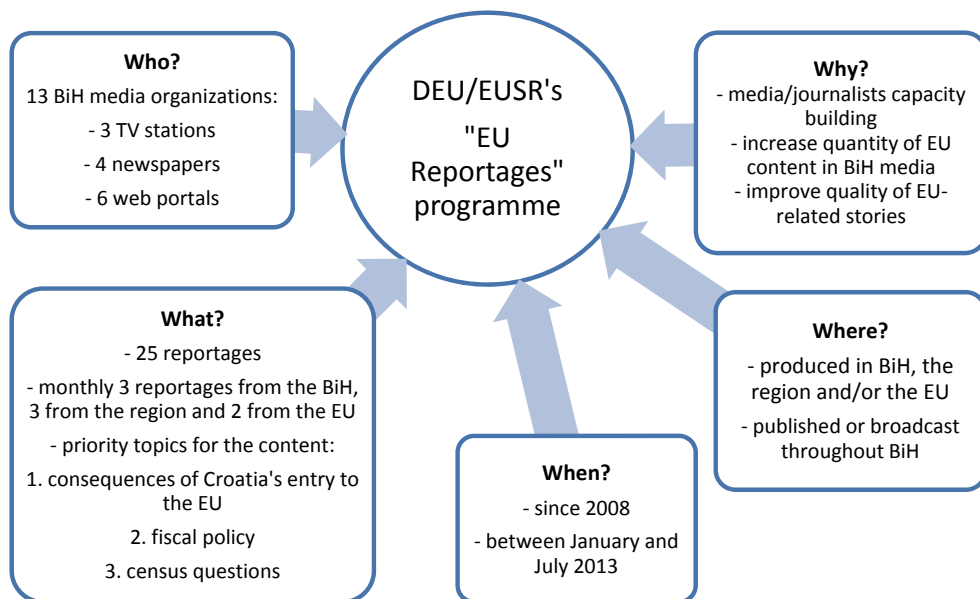


Chart 1: DEU/EUSR "EU Reportages" Programme

But even though this outreach programme has been in place since 2008, little has changed to improve the project or introduce competitiveness among media. The main issue is that so far, there has never been an open call for media participation in the programme. In turn, DEU negotiated agreements only with those representatives of the media landscape it considered relevant. In consequence, participants in the programme have remained the same since its commencement (only the number

⁴⁹ Populari interview with Andy McGuffie, Head of the DEU and EUSR Communication Team and Spokesperson, 5 April 2013.

of web portals has been increasing), meaning that some media have never been a part of the programme or have never been offered to be a part of it.

As it seems, for instance, the participation of the public broadcasters is ensured regardless of their performance in the past years' programme. Treated on an equal footing, all of them are provided with the same resources on disposal, but are free to use them as they will. McGuffie explains:

“As long as the TV station in question provides the agreed outputs respecting the activities agreed in the inception report, respecting the objectives and the contractual provisions, we will not object on precisely how they spend money to make these reportages. Anyone can organize travel, for example, or obtain materials in some other way, we do not mind.”⁵⁰

This raises another question – the quality of outputs. If DEU is really not concerned with how precisely the clips are produced, who produces them, and if the participation in the programme has not been ensured on a competitive basis, how do they make sure that the goal of their project is achieved? Is it realistic to expect media editorial boards and reporters to think out of the box and improve quality and creativity each year without any special incentive? Or, are they ‘safe’ being chosen by DEU based on the fact that they are public broadcasters and thus taken for crucial partners in the project?

A similar situation is present among print media. While DEU claims that an open call for the “EU Reportages” programme is not possible because the media space is divided along the ethnic lines, and because coverage is of paramount importance and must be achieved, one is left to wonder what exactly the criteria for newspapers' participation are. Mostar's *Večernji list* is dissatisfied because of the dubious circulation figures they claim prevented them from participating in the programme as DEU instead negotiated an agreement with *Dnevni list*, the other Mostar-based daily. Experience of their colleagues from Banja Luka's *Glas Srpske* is very much alike. Darko Gavrilović, deputy editor-in-chief of *Glas Srpske* reflects:

“We were not contracted for this project, although I am not sure why not, since we would be more than happy to take part in it.”⁵¹

In contrast to *Večernji list* and *Glas Srpske* that would be pleased to be part of it, Sarajevo-based *Dnevni avaz* decided to participate in this programme only as a web portal, thus leaving the printed version of this paper free from the obligatory – and in their world unmarketable – EU content.

⁵⁰ Populari interview with Andy McGuffie, Head of the DEU and EUSR Communication Team and Spokesperson, 5 April 2013.

⁵¹ Populari interview with Darko Gavrilović, Deputy Editor-in-Chief of *Glas Srpske*, 8 March, 2013.

Domestic Media Support: Directorate for European Integration

Hand in hand with DEU's assistance to local media in pursuing the EU agenda, there is a state-level body partly responsible for that issue, too – DEI. Staffed with over 100 people and established in 2002,⁵² DEI has a special role in supporting Bosnian media. As any other body at the state level DEI too is no exception in one regard: the preparation of various strategies that are supposed to guide their activities.

Following the EU élan that took over the country and accompanying political endeavors, in 2005 DEI prepared and published the *“EU Integration Strategy for Bosnia and Herzegovina.”*⁵³ In Paragraph 5.1 it mentioned activities within the public information program on BiH European integration process for the first time. The short paragraph was expanded in 2007 to a 10-page document, outlining main principles, goals, objectives, expected results and target groups etc. The implementation lasted until 2009, when DEI prepared the rather ambitious Communication Strategy.⁵⁴

This thirty-eight page document describes in detail the plan on how to communicate and inform policy- and decision-makers, opinion multipliers, including the media, and the public on BiH accession process to the EU. Its overarching goal is in line with the goal of the EU Integration Strategy for BiH, which is to ensure the full understanding and unique approach to implementation of tasks within the process of European integration. In a nutshell, DEI must ensure EU topics are accessible to all.

In addition, DEI planned to set up a *core team of journalists*, specialized in reporting on EU-related topics. This is the same team DEU's McGuffie refers to as *EU followers*. These journalists went to trainings, traveled to Brussels and received generous assistance aimed at facilitating their work.

52 Directorate for European Integration of BiH was established by the Law on Council of Ministers of BiH (Official Gazette of BiH, No. 38/2002, of December 18, 2002), tasked with co-ordinating the process of integration of BiH into the EU. The Directorate overtook the role of the former Ministry of European Integration of BiH, which had been established by the Decision of the House of Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH, passed on June 22, 2000.

53 At its 33rd session, held on 3 December 2003, the BiH Council of Ministers adopted a decision, tasking the BiH Directorate for European Integration to establish and coordinate the work of seven consultative working groups, in order to develop the EU Integration Strategy of BiH. Even though, DEI prepared and completed the Strategy, it has never been adopted by the Council of Ministers of BiH.

54 Finally, in 2009 “Communication strategy for public information program on BiH European integration” was prepared and published by European Integration Promotion Unit. It is made with the use of communication strategies from various countries such as Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro.

“Very often we are the ones to tug at their [journalists’] sleeves. The media is only interested in something if they can take advantage of sensationalism, such as, for example, the Sejdić–Finci case, which is everywhere in media as it can be used to affect everyday local politics.”⁵⁵

Assistant Director at DEI, Maja Rimac-Bjelobrck, is a PhD candidate at School of Science in Sarajevo, and she wears two hats: Assistant Director, and Head of the European Integration Promotion Unit. The unit employs seven more people and is divided in the Group for Promotion and the Group for Education. Jasenka Hadžajlija, Head of the Group for Promotion, agrees with her superior Maja, and remembers the time when DEI organized workshops for journalists in 2010:

“[...] in Brussels, the workshop participants [BiH journalists] were provided interlocutors, the most relevant people in Brussels; we literally led them by the hand, and yet nobody did anything. The response level from the media was very low. [...] Newspapers sent their interns and not their top employees, and nobody used this trip to Brussels to conduct interviews and produce stories.”⁵⁶

However, DEI’s story has another side. Fedžad Forto, a journalist in FENA (Federal News Agency) and a winner of the award for the best journalist in the field of EU integration of BiH for 2012,⁵⁷ recalls the activities on setting up the *core team of European journalists in BiH* by DEI and the workshops they organized:

“The lectures were organized twice a month for two or three months, then we went to the final seminar in Brussels. Nevenka Savić, DEI Director, handed us diplomas there. It was the first time participants were given any certificate. But it all faded away. Some participants stopped working as journalists, some changed workplace and started covering other topics. [...] It started well, the core was set up, but in 2010, after the elections, everything fell apart.”⁵⁸

55 Populari interview with Maja Rimac Bjelobrck, Assistant Director in the DEI BiH and Head of the European Integration Promotion Unit within DEI BiH, 14 February 2013.

56 Populari interview with Jasenka Hadžajlija, Head of the Group for Promotion within the DEI’s European Integration Promotion Unit, 14 February 2013.

57 DEI BiH and the EU Awareness project established this award with the aim of creating the core team of EU journalists in BiH, and promoting the role of media in the BiH’s accession process.

58 Populari interview with Fedžad Forto, FENA Acting Deputy Editor-in-Chief, 4 March 2013.



*Award ceremony for the best journalists in the field of EU Integration in BiH in 2012
(Source: BLIN web portal; Photo: DEPO Portal)*

Nevertheless, DEI did organize education for journalists after 2010 as well: five workshops were held in 2011 and three dialogue forums in 2012. But the actual content of these events leaves space for major improvements. Topics such as “EU institutions and the history of enlargement” or “Integration phases to the EU” can be mastered by journalists even without state-level institutions organizing a workshop. There is a great availability of such materials online. At the same time, educational programmes tailored for the media sector even though high in demand are low in supply, judging by the EU topics covered by DEI during the workshops.

Period	Workshop Location	Topics Covered
July – October 2010	Sarajevo	EU institutions and the history of enlargement
	Sarajevo	EU membership criteria
	Sarajevo	Breaking the stereotypes about the EU
	Sarajevo	Changes in the local community
	Sarajevo	Values and ideas of the EU
	Sarajevo	Reporting about the EU and the integration process Obligation to inform citizens
	Brussels	Making the EU discussion more understandable for citizens
December 2011 – April 2012	Sarajevo	Integration phases to the EU
	Banja Luka	Alignment of the legislation
	Mostar	EU institutions
	Brčko	Decision making in the EU
	Bihać	
October – November 2012	Sarajevo	
	Brčko	Effects of Croatia's entry into the EU on BiH
	Bihać	

Table 2: DEI educational programmes for the media (2010 - 2012) (Source: DEI BiH)

The fact that the number of workshops has been declining over the years – seven of them were held in 2010, five in 2011/2012 and only three in 2012 – can be considered alarming with the current state of affairs regarding the EU reforms in BiH in mind. Instead, DEI should keep increasing the volume of education for journalists and help turn the tide in favor of more constructive public dialogue on EU topics. The shortcomings of these trainings are recognized by the media as well. Darko Gavrilović, deputy editor-in-chief of *Glas Srpske*, points out:

“The education offered to journalists should be in-depth, sector-based, and specialized rather than basic. We all know the basic information about the EU.”⁵⁹

While the claim that a lack of partnership with the media is a consequence of the fact that BiH journalists are generally not interested in reporting on the EU topics is valid to a certain extent, DEI on the other hand has set a fairly loose deadline⁶⁰ to implement the activities foreseen in their Strategy. This is an evidently unambitious plan reflected in the fact that so far DEI has failed to impose itself in the media arena as the most relevant Bosnian actor in the EU accession process of BiH. Judging by DEI’s participation in TV dialogue shows, which on average occurred every two months during the last three years, their visibility and presence in the media is extremely low considering the importance of this institution.⁶¹ Even though they have foreseen the production of TV debates and weekly TV shows in the Strategy, their activities remain confined to the domain of press releases and press conferences.

And even though DEI moves in a limited space due to their coordinating function in the greater administrative scheme in the country, its Promotion Group could put in greater effort to motivate the media and give them a boost. A highly suitable manner of doing that is through DEI’s own activities as seen when publishing their “76Q&A” publication.⁶² Welcomed by most journalists who participated in Populari’s research, this publication was seen as concrete and useful material journalists can further work on. This implies that local journalists still can see DEI as a hub to which they can turn not only for information but also for the new ideas and reliable content. Joining their efforts, DEI, the journalists and editorial boards could most certainly contribute to speeding up BiH’s progress towards the EU.

59 Populari interview with Darko Gavrilović, Deputy Editor-in-Chief of *Glas Srpske*, 8 March, 2013.

60 “The communication programme will continue, in one form or another, until Bosnia and Herzegovina has succeeded in its goal of joining the EU, at which point a new information and communication programme will be put in place.” – Communication Strategy for Informing Public about Accession of BiH to the EU, 6. Timeframe, p. 28

61 DEI BiH

62 DEI published electronic edition of the brochure “On the Border with the EU.” The brochure consists of 76 questions and answers about the impact of Croatian accession to the EU in BiH and its citizens. The questions are divided into four categories, and mostly treat procedures and situations in which the citizens of BiH can be found every day. Preparing and publishing an online brochure is one of the activities implemented by the Department in the campaign to inform the public about the implications of the accession of Croatia to the EU in BiH.

The EU Media Snowball

On 8 May, 2013, the Association of BiH Journalists has published research⁶³ that confirmed common knowledge. In spite of all problems the media experience in BiH, citizens of this country still trust this very institution the most. Five hundred and three randomly selected interlocutors all over BiH ranked media as a more trusted source of information than civil society actors, international community or politicians.

To have such a predominant role in society is exceptional and must not be taken casually. Media can change our views, the way we think, and what we think about. Even though the agenda setting theory was developed in a different time, more than 40 years ago, one of its founding fathers, Maxwell McCombs is still convinced of its relevance:

“The media landscape today is marked by a myriad of distribution channels and devices that enable people to follow media content: online media, blogs, social networks are only a few of them. We live in an era of a virtual information surplus. But this does not refute our finding from the 60s that traditional media still define what we think about.”⁶⁴

McCombs confirms that the power of the media is still enormous; they continue to define which topics we find more or less relevant and why. It is therefore no wonder the EU in its policy backs the media as one of the catalysts of democracy and civil society participation. In the context of BiH, its precarious democracy and state of affairs in general, this means that a lot of space is available for the media to bring positive stories to the front pages and breaking news, to influence the EU debate and to turn the situation upside-down.

If words and collocations such as *prosperity, a brighter future in the EU or job creation* were heard or read as many times as *no progress in BiH, no implementation of Sejdić-Finci case, still no agreement in BiH* resonating in the media, Bosnians would surely start thinking that they actually live in a better place. If vague phrases hardly anyone seems to understand, like *Sejdić-Finci, failed state, coordination mechanism and economic collapse* would be replaced with optimism and confidence, Bosnians would become more hopeful. And if internal political arguments that have by now entered all pores of the society were replaced by the benefits life as a part of the EU family might bring, Bosnians would perhaps be in a position to hold the politicians they vote for responsible. Only when the citizens of BiH truly understand what they

63 Association of BiH Journalists published the comparative report 2009–2013: “Media in BiH 2013: Media Freedom, Professionalism and Challenges” supported by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung BiH and conducted by Millenium promocija BiH and IPSOS Puls.

64 Lenart J. Kučić, Delo.si, “The Media is Still Determining What We Are Thinking About”, 13 April 2013.

are missing by the lack of EU reforms can they be sufficiently motivated to actively and constructively engage in the reform process, and exercise pressure on the politicians.

For all these “ifs” to lose their conditionality, the entire society, including the politicians, the media, NGOs and the academia, must come and work together. But first, a critical mass must be created. And this is exactly where the media, be it public or private, can step in and with its power over citizens’ thoughts, ideas and perceptions get the snowball rolling.

To get this media EU snowball bigger and faster, BiH media, primarily editors-in-chief and their editorial boards, need to take full ownership of the EU processes in BiH, by taking on a role of content creators and agenda setters rather than mere content reproducers and followers. To resume this role, it is important to have knowledgeable, skilled and resourceful reporters, whose personal ambitions and interests are tied to BiH’s Europeanization, while editorial boards provide space for the EU agenda. In such circumstances, DEU and DEI, as the political EU agenda setters in the country, would be equal partners to the media in their endeavors to provide the citizens of BiH with timely and correct information. The society would be well informed and capable of making decisions, grounded in facts rather than sensationalistic pieces of information.

While local media have the biggest and most important role to play in changing the society on its way to the EU, DEU and DEI, as the embodiment of the EU integration process in BiH, should also revisit their communication policies and projects. DEU should adapt them additionally to the domestic context, and DEI should simply start effectively implementing its own Strategy and thus increase its presence in public, which is currently flooded by media reports of šestorka’s whereabouts. At the same time, the media might as well look inward and perhaps realize that their own power and the influence of editors-in-chief could be a sufficient reason for a different šestorka, the group of most influential media actors in BiH, united in their agenda to turn the tables in favor of positive reforms. In such circumstances, the EU future of BiH might prove to be the solution everyone is looking for. Jozo Pavković claims this is possible – if there is sufficient will:

“Yes, the media can certainly lead to changes in a society. One meeting of main editors-in-chief is enough to change everything [...]”⁶⁵

65 Populari interview with Jozo Pavković, Editor-in-Chief of Večernji list, 25 March 2013



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