

The state of the media in Kosovo

*Cees van Zweeken*¹

Introduction

It is easy to speak about the Kosovo media in derogatory clichés. Kosovo is the only place in Europe deprived of foreign direct investment in the media. Newspaper circulation figures are the lowest on the continent. Radio stations serve as jukeboxes. Commercial television stations excel only in soaps. The public service broadcaster is best known for a gaffe which triggered widespread rioting in 2004. Political interference is rife. Copyright is infringed day and night.

Yet, almost unnoticed, over the past few years considerable progress has been made. Most of the framework of legislation, regulation and education has been put in place, and the media have gradually improved.

The Kosovo Assembly adopted a commendable civil defamation law, which was recently promulgated by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), Kosovo's proconsul. This defamation law, which will open the way to revoking the existing criminal code, was the last part of the legal jigsaw. All other media laws had come into force in the previous two years. Kosovo now has a copyright law which meets European standards, as well as a public broadcasting law and a law establishing the broadcast media regulator. And the existing Law on Access to Official Documents has moved closer to proper implementation through an administrative directive.

The print media have established a multi-ethnic Press Council, which enforces a code of conduct. An Independent Media Commission has started to regulate the broadcast media.

The Kosovo Institute for Communication and Journalism, a centre of journalistic excellence situated on the outskirts of the capital, is running two-year MA courses in journalism. The Kosovo Media Institute will shortly add to this the vital ingredient of mid-career training. However, a lot remains to be done.

Print media

On 8th May 2005 the daily newspaper *Bota Sot* was fined EUR 130,000 for — mainly — breaking the election law.² Having a wealthy owner, it survived.³

¹ Cees van Zweeken was Senior Media Advisor to the OSCE Mission in Kosovo from May 2005 until November 2006.

² The Temporary Media Commissioner imposed the fine for violating the Electoral Rule 10/2004 and the Print Code of Conduct on five counts. These ranged from publishing an opinion poll without indicating the margin of error (EUR 10,000 fine) to failing to ensure that all political parties received fair and equitable news coverage (EUR 50,000 fine).

³ *Bota Sot* only closed down in November 2006, but for a different reason. It had an

However, it would be an understatement to state that fines of that magnitude were having a 'chilling effect' on the freedom of expression in Kosovo⁴; they had a freezing effect. A few weeks later, Pavaresia, another daily, had to close down after receiving a EUR 14,000 fine.

These fines were not insignificant in Kosovo. The maximum amounts British newspapers nowadays pay in libel damages hover around EUR 300,000. But in Britain, daily newspapers typically sell between 300,000 and 3,000,000 copies a day. In Kosovo the combined circulation of all daily newspapers is no more than 30,000, the lowest per capita figure in Europe.

It was not just the magnitude of the fines that was unusual. Even more exceptional was that they were imposed by a regulator, the Temporary Media Commissioner (TMC), appointed by the international community. Kosovo was at that time the only place in Europe, with the possible exception of Belarus, where the print media were still regulated by the state.⁵

By 2005 it had become obvious that Kosovo was lagging badly behind the rest of Europe, including countries such as Bosnia. Until that year the OSCE, which had the media mandate in Kosovo, had focused on media training and the establishment of a public broadcaster. However, these efforts had come at the expense of completing the framework of laws, independent regulatory bodies and institutions for media education. At the start of 2005 this framework was virtually non-existent.

Kosovo had no defamation law, no copyright law, no public broadcasting law, and no law enabling the establishment of an independent broadcast media regulator. It had no self-regulatory institution for the print media, no mid-career training institute for journalists, and only a few poorly-funded and politically-controlled faculties for media studies.

Instead it had a number of arcane regulations, put into place by the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), one of which empowered the TMC to regulate all media.

Press Council

An all-important assignment for the OSCE was to set up a Press Council, which was to be the self-regulatory body for the print media. The establishment of the Press Council was one of the 'standards' Kosovo had to meet for the status talks to be given the go-ahead by the United Nations Security Council. It was also a precondition for the TMC to revoke his powers over the print media.

outstanding tax bill of EUR 450,000.

⁴ This is the phrase commonly used by the European Court of Human Rights to criticise fines and compensation awards that are so high that they have the effect of stifling the freedom of expression.

⁵ In Europe newspapers regulate themselves. The Kosovo print media had adopted a code of conduct, but it was the Temporary Media Commissioner who enforced it. He was appointed by the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), which exercised state-like powers over the territory.

The omens were bad. The establishment of a Press Council had been an objective for many years, but to no avail — all that the print media had managed to achieve was the token signing of a code of conduct which was subsequently largely ignored. In Bosnia, where the international community had put into place a self-regulatory body many years previously, it had failed dismally. And in Bulgaria it had taken 14 years even to establish such a body.

Surprisingly, in Kosovo in early summer 2005 it took the OSCE hardly 14 days to conclude the negotiations with the daily newspapers on the basic principles of the Press Council (to work out the details and finalise the paperwork would require a few additional months). The reason, bizarrely, could be summed up in three words: Temporary Media Commissioner.

The fines imposed on them proved powerful incentives for the editors-in-chief to go along with the plan for a Press Council, as this was considered the only way to break free from heavy-handed regulation by the TMC.

The structure proposed to the editors-in-chief was partly based on lessons learned from Bosnia. There, self-regulation had largely failed because the print media were insufficiently involved, and because the Press Council had no real powers.

Most importantly, however, the self-regulatory system in Bosnia was not cemented by law. As the Media Ombudsman⁶ in Sarajevo pointed out, complainants in Bosnia went straight to the courts, simply bypassing the Press Council. If we wanted to avoid this predicament, the Media Ombudsman said, we had to make sure that the civil defamation law would encourage self-regulation.

Avoiding the mistakes made in Bosnia, the OSCE proposed a beefed-up version of the usual European self-regulatory system to the editors-in-chief:

- the Press Council would have the power to impose fines and force members to print adjudications;
- it would mainly consist of the editors-in-chief, as they were the ones who could enforce the code of conduct in their newsrooms;
- and it would be — partly — financed by the publishers in order to avoid total dependence on donor money.

After the editors-in-chief had embraced its concept for the Press Council, the OSCE proposed to insert two articles in the civil defamation law rewarding membership and ensuring complainants would first go to the Press Council before turning to the courts.⁷ As the process of drafting this law had just begun, the timing was perfect.

All worked out surprisingly well, and in late autumn 2005 the Press

⁶ The Ombudsman, Mr Mehmed Halilovic, pointed to the high price which the print media paid for the failure of self-regulation in Bosnia. Compensation awarded by the courts had tripled after the defamation law had been decriminalised.

⁷ Article 14.6 of the Law on Insult and Defamation reads, 'Compliance with remedial orders or instructions by a Press Council or relevant regulatory body shall be considered as a mitigating circumstance in determining any non-material compensation.'

Council started to adjudicate readers' complaints of breaches of the code of conduct. It consisted of the editors-in-chief (or their deputies) of all but one of the print media outlets, including a Serbian, Bosnian and Turkish one.

Unfortunately, financial contributions by the affiliated papers remained late — or not at all — in coming.⁸ This seemed to be the result of a failure to sufficiently involve the owners of the papers in addition to their editors-in-chief.

Even so, by the spring of 2006 the Kosovo Press Council was fully up and running. For the first time in their professional lives editors-in-chief were sitting together to discuss matters such as copyright, privacy and public interest. Suddenly the code of conduct, which had only been a document languishing in an OSCE filing cabinet, had sprung to life.

Circulation

Of course, self-regulation is only one part of the jigsaw. The quality of journalism is important, but so is the quantity. Per capita circulation figures in Kosovo are dwarfed even by those in countries such as Macedonia and Montenegro. The consequence is that whereas in many Western European countries newspapers remain the most important source of news, in Kosovo their role is marginal.

Unfortunately, this amounts to more than a simple economic problem. Traditionally, the media play a three-fold role in democratic society: They inform the public, they comment freely, and they expose wrongdoing. And, traditionally, it is the print media which are in the forefront of investigative journalism.

In particular, the absence of regional and local newspapers in Kosovo constitutes a severe democratic deficiency. For now, the OSCE monitors local authorities. But one day this will end, and even if it did not, the OSCE does not empower the public with the knowledge to make an informed choice at the ballot box — its reports are internal documents. The lack of regional local newspapers means local authorities go largely unchecked.

There are many reasons for the industry's predicament, such as poor distribution and the lack of foreign direct investment. But one of the main causes is poor reading habits, which hamper any attempt to increase circulation figures or to establish local and regional newspapers.

At a conference on the print media, held on 18th October 2006, the OSCE proposed several remedies.

In order to address the problem of poor reading habits, a children's daily should be considered, to be sent digitally to all primary schools which would then print as many copies as are required for classroom teaching. If the Ministry of Education made this part of the curriculum, instantly a circulation

⁸ This problem has still not been resolved. In March 2007 only Koha Ditore had paid its full membership fee, while Yeni Donem, M Magazin and Zeri had only paid half of it. The other affiliated print media had not paid at all.

of 150,000 copies would be achieved, assuming that initially only 8 to 10 year olds would be involved. This would be five times more than the combined circulation of all other dailies.

PlayBac, the editor of a number of highly successful children's dailies in France,⁹ has said it that is prepared to launch a Kosovo edition, which would draw on the resources of its editorial office in Paris. The editor calculated the price for such an edition to be only EUR 200,000 per annum, a sum that would also cover the salary of one Paris-based Kosovo journalist and two Kosovo-based correspondents.

To fill the gap at a local level, digital newspapers should be considered. Internet-penetration is growing rapidly, although still at a low level, and digital distribution is the only affordable way of providing local news.

Radio and television

If an outsider is asked about the Kosovo media, he is likely to come up with the March 2004 story. The Balkans had witnessed many cases of bad reporting before, especially by Serbian media, but probably nothing as blatantly incorrect as the report by the public service broadcaster (RTK) that month.

Four Albanian children had jumped into a cold and fast-flowing river to escape from a dog running towards them through a field. Three of them drowned. Without checking any facts, RTK reported that the dog had been set upon the boys by Serbs walking down the street across the field. The report caused widespread rioting in which nearly twenty people died, thousands of Serbian houses were torched and several monasteries burned to the ground.

Yet, the boy who had survived stated later: 'There were two Serbs walking their dog. Suddenly the dog started running towards us. They shouted something to the dog. But I don't know what. I don't understand Serbian'.¹⁰

Therefore, the only witness failed to confirm RTK's reading of the incident. The Serbs could have been trying to call their dog back.

Public Service Broadcaster

Could it happen again? At the time, the OSCE decided against replacing RTK's general manager, perhaps unwisely so. Instead, an international consultant was imposed on the company who advised RTK on editorial issues for a year and a half. When he left in the spring of 2006, RTK refused to accept a successor OSCE monitor. To RTK's credit, it has to be said that their reporting has remained rather balanced — almost to the point of being boring. According to opinion polls in 2005 and 2006, RTK was considered the most trustworthy of

⁹ PlayBac distributes four dailies, aimed at children in age groups from 5 to 18. Their circulation figures went up from 27,000 in 1995 to over 200,000 now. They are the only success story in the French print media market. In November 2006 PlayBac launched its first foreign edition, aimed at the American market.

¹⁰ One day after the drowning incident, Fitim Viseli, 13, made this statement to the author, who was the correspondent to the Netherlands Press Association at the time. NPA 25.03.04.

the three Kosovo-wide television stations.

Crises, such as the indictment of the former Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj, passed without RTK inciting any hatred. And minority programming, though still short of the legal requirement of 15% of broadcasting time, has increased. In September 2006 the board even took the bold decision of including minority broadcasting on its satellite channel, which is mainly destined for the — rather nationalistic — Albanian diaspora.

Yet, RTK has remained unpopular among minorities, notably the Serbs. A survey conducted by the OSCE in September 2006 showed that minorities generally disregard RTK's minority programming. This is a serious problem, not in the least for RTK itself. If minorities feel ill-served, this will in time erode the case for public broadcasting in Kosovo.

As has been argued by several experts, the only remedy for this problem is a second public channel for — mainly — minorities.

In June 2006 the OSCE's Media Unit started to circulate the idea of such a channel. Although minority channels are not entirely unheard of in Europe, there was one novelty in the proposal: the existing commercial minority stations would be offered the opportunity to contribute to the channel by selling programming to RTK. Money to buy the programmes would be supplied by the minority fund, which had been established by the prime minister's office.¹¹ (Independent production companies would be offered the same opportunity.)

Initially, the plan was well received. The local minority stations loved the scheme for three reasons. Firstly, it would throw them a financial lifeline. Secondly, they would get Kosovo-wide coverage. And thirdly, they would retain their licences for local broadcasting.

However, after a few months the campaign for a second channel ran out of steam. Minority politicians strongly supported the idea, however the RTK board failed to understand the significance of a powerful gesture to the Serbian community in this year of status talks, and the prime minister's office was at best paying lip-service to the idea. Finally, within the international community there was no unanimous support for a move that would strengthen the public service broadcaster, even though the OSCE's Representative on the Freedom of the Media cherished the idea.¹²

Unpopularity with minorities is not the only problem. As the consultant commissioned by the OSCE observed, RTK had failed to put its organisational structure on a modern footing. There was no categorisation of workplaces, vacancies were filled in a haphazard way at best, and more drivers than journalists were employed.

¹¹ This fund, to which RTK has to contribute 5% of its licence fee revenues, is meant to support minority media. However, its concept is flawed, as it fails to establish a link between subsidies and programmatic output. Subsidies are largely given to buy equipment; there is no guarantee that this equipment is used for the production of minority programmes.

¹² In his report on Kosovo, published on 3rd July 2006, Ambassador Haraszti called the idea 'worthy of support'.

RTK is now reluctantly undergoing a restructuring, following the advice of yet another OSCE appointed expert. However, its future remains in doubt.

The first uncertainty is funding. Although income from the licence fee has dramatically increased, RTK remains Europe's poorest public service broadcaster. It does not own its premises, lacks the funding for capital investments, and cannot increase its footprint from the present 75% of the territory to the legally required 90%. International funding could have become available for enlarging this footprint, had the second channel been materialised, but the board failed to see the window of opportunity.

Secondly, there is a risk of political interference. Under the Independent Media Commission Law RTK has to channel all its revenues through the Kosovo Consolidated Fund, which is a treasury account. This has the potential of compromising RTK's independence. Instead, the law should have obliged the diversion of all revenues to the board of directors, which is appointed by — and should report to — parliament.

The often quoted advantage of this stipulated structure is that RTK's finances become subject to controls by the auditor-general, but widespread corruption in the state sector has shown that this is no panacea. Disposing of commercial revenues through advertising, RTK could quite easily understate its revenues and withhold funds from the treasury account and thus from the Auditor-General's eyes. Indeed, by the end of September 2006 there were suspicions that RTK had precisely done so.¹³

Independent Media Commission

The important task of regulating the electronic media was conferred upon the Independent Media Commission (IMC), the institution succeeding the TMC. The IMC held its inaugural meeting on 28th August 2006, almost a year after the promulgation of the Independent Media Commission Law.

Although its first meetings were business-like, the IMC is expected to face numerous problems.

One of them is acceptance by minorities. As stipulated by the law the IMC council must have minority representation. However, currently all of its staff-members are ethnic Albanians. This has hampered the IMC from being considered neutral by minority media, especially in the predominantly Serbian areas north of the Ibar river.

The IMC is also bound to be torn between RTK and the two Kosovo-wide commercial television stations¹⁴ over the thorny issue of advertising. Under the law the IMC has to decide upon the percentage of advertising RTK is entitled to on a year-by-year basis. It allows the regulator to reduce advertising as it sees

¹³ By the end of September 2006 the auditing report of Deloitte & Touche was already five month late, possibly because of suspicions that RTK had failed to declare large sums of advertisement money. However, eventually the report was published with no irregularities indicated.

¹⁴ TV21 and Koha TV.

fit, provided that RTK's revenues from the licence fee have increased. Thus the IMC is in a position to stifle RTK's growth, withholding funds for enlarging the footprint or investing in equipment.

After the adoption of the RTK law by parliament, the OSCE proposed to stipulate a lower limit of 8% (of broadcasting time) advertising on the public channel. Virtually all public service broadcasters in Europe are allowed to have some revenues from advertising, as this is considered a source of income independent of politicians. Advertising also prevents them from becoming too elitist, as revenues from it depend on the popularity of programmes.¹⁵

However, the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRS)G refused to go along with the OSCE's proposal.¹⁶ Predictably, this was not appreciated by RTK, all the more so because the SRS)G did amend the law to make sure that all its revenues would pass through a treasury-account.

The SRS)G had several reasons for not acting upon the OSCE's advice. One was his general reluctance to intervene too heavy-handedly in the legislative process. But perhaps more importantly, was his susceptibility to the arguments of the 'American lobby'.

The advertising issue had dogged the international community long before the RTK law came up for promulgation. Europeans, who had been instrumental in creating RTK from scratch, believed that the public service broadcaster should have at least some advertising. Americans, however, were convinced that advertising on public channels could only come at the expense of the commercial stations.¹⁷

What has been largely overlooked, however, is another issue: the implications for the IMC.

By refusing to accept the OSCE's proposal, the SRS)G burdened the IMC with the powers to financially make or break RTK. No other regulator in Europe has been given such draconian powers. Given the amounts involved — before RTK started to phase out barter in 2005 it earned almost 1.5 million euros from advertising — the IMC risks being exposed to bribery by both RTK and its commercial rivals.

The IMC's independence is further compromised by its dependence on state funding. The IMC law forces the regulator to negotiate its contribution from the state year by year, thus increasing the scope for political interference.

¹⁵ Critics maintain that too much advertising entails the risk of 'dumbing down'. Therefore, a fixed percentage of 8 would have been preferable to a range of 8-20%. But the OSCE considered that this would have been too big an amendment of the law adopted by parliament.

¹⁶ The SRS)G has the power to amend laws before promulgating them.

¹⁷ This view was rebutted by the International Advisory Group, which was commissioned to draft a report on the issue. The report, submitted in April 2002, concluded that it was wrong to assume that advertisements denied to RTK would automatically go to the commercial channels. However, the report was declared confidential and rapidly shelved by the then TMC, American-born Bob Gillette.

It would have been preferable if the law had fixed the amount of the yearly contribution, doing away with the necessity to negotiate.

Legislation

With legislating being a process rather than an event, Kosovo should strive to improve its media laws in the coming years. Laws in more developed countries have shortcomings too, as was recently shown in the Netherlands when two investigative journalists were jailed for failing to reveal the identity of a source.¹⁸ But often these countries have corrective mechanisms, such as a strong civil society. In the Netherlands the two journalists were set free after more than 3,000 colleagues had signed a petition and mainstream politicians had joined the fray. In Slovenia civil society even forced a referendum on a public broadcasting law which the government had introduced in 2004.¹⁹

As Kosovo lacks such a civil society, a heavy burden lies on the international community — and in particular on the OSCE — to assist the Assembly with media legislation. In July 2006 the OSCE Representative on the Freedom of the Media, Ambassador Haraszti, stressed the need for improvements in his report.

Apart from the RTK and IMC laws, which should be amended (as discussed above), there is scope for improvement with regard to the Law on Defamation and Insult and the Law on Access to Official Documents.

Defamation Law

The defamation law constitutes a major step forward. It decriminalises defamation, rewards self-regulation, places the burden of proof on the plaintiff in public interest cases, allows journalists to protect their sources, and limits the amount of compensation which the courts may impose.

However, it has one severe shortcoming: the inclusion of insult. In committee meetings of the Assembly, Kosovo's parliament, the OSCE strongly argued against this inclusion. But as support from the media and other parts of civil society on this crucial issue was absent, members of parliament could not be convinced.

The key difference between defamation and insult provisions is that the first seeks to protect a person's reputation whereas the latter aims to protect a person's feelings (a purely subjective value which cannot be proven by any objective facts).

¹⁸ On Monday 27th November 2006 a judge imprisoned journalists Bart Moos and Joost de Haas in an effort to force them to reveal their source. The Netherlands came under criticism from media watchdogs such as Article 19 for lacking legislation which allows journalists to protect their sources. Instantly an initiative was taken by members of Parliament to introduce such a law.

¹⁹ The law would have turned the public service broadcaster back into a state broadcaster. The referendum, called by supporters of independent media, was narrowly lost. But eventually the government was forced to water down the law.

Members of parliament insisted on the insult provision, because insult is deemed such an important offence in Kosovo society. However, this is precisely why insult should be eliminated from the law.

If a newspaper called a politician 'an idiot' for spending EUR 200,000 of taxpayers' money on an armoured vehicle, this should simply be considered a — strongly worded — expression of opinion. As such the comment would be protected under the law. But the politician could still claim his feelings had been hurt by the paper, and sue for compensation. Therefore, the insult provision is likely to have a chilling effect on the freedom of expression in Kosovo.²⁰

Law on Access to Official Documents

The Law on Access to Official Documents is another vital piece of legislation. It promotes the principle of open government, and allows the media to scrutinise society. When it came into force in the United Kingdom in 2005, it proved a powerful tool for the press, enabling them to print many scoops.

However, three years after its promulgation the law is barely applied in Kosovo. One reason for this is that the government was slow in drafting a proper administrative instruction, a set of guidelines for civil servants. But evidence in other transition countries has overwhelmingly shown that much more is needed for such a law to work.²¹

Since Kosovo has 44,000 pending court cases, very few people would consider going to court if they believe they have unlawfully been denied access to a document. Therefore, for the law to be enforced, Kosovo should appoint an Information Commissioner who could become part of the Ombudsman's Office. This Commissioner should have wide-ranging powers to force public bodies to comply with the law.

This is a model which functions well in the developed world. In some countries, only notices requiring government departments to disclose information can be vetoed (in the United Kingdom the relevant cabinet minister has the power of veto, whereas in New Zealand a veto requires the collective agreement of the Cabinet). However, in most countries jurisdictions operate without any power of executive veto at all.

Education

By April 2007 all media laws had been promulgated, and the (self-)regulatory bodies were in place. How about the final part of the framework for free and democratic media, education?

Already in October 2005, the Norwegian-funded Kosovo Institute for Journalism and Communication had started its 2-year MA course, filling a gap

²⁰ Significantly, the media were excluded from liability for insult in the Provisional Criminal Code, which should ultimately be replaced by the civil Law on Defamation and Insult.

²¹ In Bulgaria the media tested the law by filing 15,000 requests for documents. Almost all were ignored.

which had existed since the 1999 war. However, an institute for mid-career training was still lacking.

For years the international community had heavily invested in trainings for journalists. In the year 2000 the Canadian government alone spent more than one million Canadian dollars on such training programmes. Until 2005, organising media training was the bread and butter of the OSCE's media department.

However, by 2005 it had become evident that these trainings had borne little fruit. Trainees were usually unmotivated, unless the courses took place in sought-after places. And many, if not most of the journalists who had been trained, had swapped their profession for more beneficial activities.

One reason for this was the lack of ownership. The training programmes were organised — almost imposed — by the international community. Therefore, it was decided to put the media in the driver's seat. In autumn 2006 the OSCE kick-started the Kosovo Media Institute (KMI), which was to be run by representatives from almost the entire media spectrum. The assumption was that the media would be in a better position to assess the training-needs and to offer diplomas recognised by the industry.

Mid-career training

There is little doubt that Kosovo needs such an institution. It boasts 120 electronic media, nine daily newspapers, a number of weeklies and periodicals, and two news agencies. These media outlets employ at least 600 full-time reporters, and 800 others who would qualify for mid-career training (camera crew, technicians, editors, marketing staff, etc.). Although the media have considerably improved their act, shortcomings still abound. There are several ways to enhance the professionalism of the media, such as self-regulation and legislation. But education is crucial.

In 18 former communist countries mid-career training institutes have existed for at least six years for the simple reason that most journalists had either been trained under communism or not at all. If anything, the need for mid-career training in Kosovo is even greater. After 1989, when its autonomy was abolished, education suffered badly under the 'parallel structures'.

As it will take up to a decade before KIJAC graduates start to fill the newsrooms in any numbers, a mid-career training institute is essential for the coming years. This is why KIJAC had envisaged such an institute until KMI started to emerge. At 1,400, the number of potential trainees is high enough to justify the KMI. But its sustainability has been questioned.

Important is KMI's ability to keep costs in check, as donor money will dry up after several years (apart from the OSCE the European Agency for Reconstruction and the Open Society Institute have committed substantial financial support). Having identified affordable premises in Central Pristina and having recruited only two staff members, the institute seems to be off to a sensible start.

Additionally, the affiliated media outlets have committed themselves to support KMI right from the first year. However, these contributions are bound to be small and ultimately much will depend on how the media evolve. If the print media manage to increase circulation figures to the regional average, the advertising market grows, and foreign direct investment in the media starts to flow in, the media should be able to sustain KMI in the medium term.

This is also important for another reason. If experience elsewhere on the continent is anything to go by, the Kosovo media landscape will look completely different in the future. Internet penetration will grow, and so will the potential for internet journalism. Cross-media initiatives, such as distributing news through mobile phones, are bound to happen sooner rather than later. The digital change over, scheduled for 2012, will lead to a proliferation of television stations.

New media require new skills. Print journalism, for example, is not the same as on-line journalism. In helping journalists and other media professionals to acquire these skills, KMI can play a crucial role.

Conclusions

With regard to the media, Kosovo has made commendable progress by putting into place a framework of laws, regulatory bodies and educational institutions.

However, some media laws need to be fine-tuned, as Kosovo can ill-afford less than perfect legislation. Insult should be struck out of the defamation law. The independence of the public service broadcaster and the broadcast media regulator could be better safeguarded. An Information Commissioner should be appointed to make the freedom of information law work.

The public service broadcaster should establish a second channel for minorities. This would also strengthen the case for public broadcasting in Kosovo. The Press Council has the potential of improving the quality of print journalism in Kosovo. However, for the print media to play their watchdog role, circulation figures have to go up. Children should be familiarised with reading the news through the establishment of a daily newspaper to be distributed through the school system. In order to professionalise the media, the success of KMI is crucial. Journalistic standards have risen in recent years, but nowhere near to European levels.

KMI will also be of vital importance for Kosovo to benefit from the opportunities offered by new technologies. New technologies, such as distributing the news through mobile phones, have the potential of gaining access to hundreds of thousands of customers. But they also require new skills for journalists and other media professionals.