

deScripto

A Journal of Media in South East Europe

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DOSSIER

Media Literacy



Letter from Editor-in-Chief

Dear Readers,

Our observation of media and media development is generally very focused on media production, in particular on journalism. We think journalism is the definitive factor between true and false information. As long as we think, communication was done just by the sender, by his power, influence and competence, that long the question of the media effects concentrates on sender-side. With the full knowledge that communication is finally performed on the side of the receiver – because his interpretation decides the direction of the construction of reality – the question of communication competence (media literacy) of the receiver is raised. In this sense media competence has to be evaluated as a cultural good that is worth being developed through educational programmes. Those programmes could enrich the cultural and political meaning of reading, listening and watching media in transition countries.

The contemporary transformation going on in the media landscape in all new democracies in South East Europe

(with its main problem issues: foreign involvement, high ‘tabloidisation’) shows clearly that it cannot be just the professional side, which takes over the obligation to establish sustainable conditions for media quality. There is another partner, the audience, linked to its societal environment, that has to come clear with its obligation for societal communication competence (media literacy). There is no sense in compensating the dilemma of the society on shoulders of individuals or the dilemma of role carriers of one sided (journalists’) competence.

That is the reason to hope that the deScripto project will be a factor for ensuring your awareness of the consequences of undeveloped quality of media usage.

With best wishes for a good, successful and meaningful 2008,

*Yours sincerely,
Thomas A. Bauer, Editor-in-Chief*



Letter from Publisher

Dear Readers,

At the end of 2007, we present to you Numbers 3 and 4 of our magazine deScripto. This time we decided, having had a longer summer break (because of the students from the university who are working for deScripto), but also the upcoming holidays (Christmas, New Year), to publish two numbers in one. During next year, 2008, we will continue our tradition of publishing deScripto four times a year. However, we are planning some changes in the structure of the magazine, but the basic idea of deScripto as a magazine for media and journalism in South East and Central Europe will continue.

I would like to use this opportunity to thank two persons from the University of Vienna, who have been a big help with this project from the very beginning: Axel Maireder and Kristina Benkotic. Kristina was also for several years my assistant at SEEMO. Also, I would like to thank Thomas Bauer as Editor-in-Chief of deScripto.

Speaking at the end of the year about the media situation in South East Europe, I am very unhappy knowing that the media situation still is very bad in some countries. In Serbia SEEMO has registered several serious threats against journalists in 2007, including a bomb attack on the home of Dejan Anastasijevic from the weekly Vreme.

There were also several serious threats in Serbia against media outlets from representatives of political parties. SEEMO also reported in the past weeks about pressure by the state on media in Slovenia. Slovenia has an important role, not only as a country that will have the EU presidency in the first half of 2008, but also as a country that is very often taken as a positive model for all other countries in the former Yugoslavia region. It means, if something is happening against accepted media standards in Slovenia, and the Slovenian state tolerates it, this could be misused by politicians also in some other countries of the former Yugoslavia with a comment “if it is possible in the EU-country Slovenia, why shouldn’t we do it.”

Of course, it is also important that the media respect professional standards. The media should use a language that supports a culture of dialogue and mutual understanding. The media should be open and ensure access to all political actors. A free, independent and responsible media are basic conditions for a democratic country.

*Oliver Vujovic
Publisher
Secretary General SEEMO*

Table of Contents

DOSSIER MEDIA LITERACY

- 4 Understanding Media
Media Literacy as Key Competence
- 8 Students on TV
Media Education in Schools
- 10 Money Mongers Will Always Win
Learning Media at Free Radio Stations
- 12 Closing the Digital Gap
Internet Literacy in Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova

REPORTS

- 14 Different Systems, Same Prospects
Turkish and Austrian Journalism Students on Media Education
- 16 Your Excellencies!
Recent SEEMO Protests and Press Releases
- 20 Review
Recent Publications
- 22 Preview
Upcoming Events

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DOSSIER MEDIA LITERACY

Understanding

In a media society, understanding the world needs the understanding of the media. Therefore media literacy is the key competence for a reasonable adoption to the social and cultural environment.

By Thomas A. Bauer

The social world we live in is a complex building of connections, symbols and communication. What we experience as a society in general, we define as a connective structure of mutual awareness, of relations, of communication, and of interaction, culturally memorised in symbolic programmes and relationally structured in social orders. Since the world we live in always demands us to make smaller or bigger decisions, there has to be some measure of reference that is taken by everyone as a last (and by that as a first) sense focus. Since a human being is willing to give

The concept of competence, referring to the principles of communication, says that awareness, perception, and attention are habitual measures of an active mind and not unavoidable reactions by chance or coincidence due to an extraordinariness of an object.

some significance to personal and social life, it remains a life long question of sense that is only available within a social and cultural context. Thus we generate a configuration of cultural knowledge, which is never a closed system but an open source model of competence for a meaningful life.

Competence in that context of course is a normative term. It is the key term of the normative theory, which assumes that there is a level of achievement where (and when) mankind reaches this, has to become independent from destiny, has arrived to the point of extinguishing uncertainty, and has come to an autonomous power of self-responsibility

and rationalised decision. The philosophical challenge to explain competence is to name the conditions of generating, developing and preserving that concept of power, as well as to clarify the cognitive, social and cultural – even transcendental – costs and to define the borders in case that competence comes to its end or turns into ideology, or crosses the border from where the concept of competence changes into a syndrome of overestimation.

A theoretical communication concept of competence may protect us from such an overestimation, the same as communication itself theoretically represents the principle of observation. Observation needs the decision to observe. The theoretical architecture of competence is that of a multi-level building, since there are many disciplinary levels of constructing the notion of competence, which in itself holds the balance between two sources of energy; order and/or chaos, knowledge and/or assumption, information and/or fantasy. The resource of that source is communication as a means for construction of sense and reality. A decision can only be made within the context of communication. Communication makes the difference, while the decision makes the distinction. The concept of competence, referring to the principles of communication, says that awareness, perception, and attention are habitual measures of an active mind and not unavoidable reactions by chance or coincidence due to an extraordinariness of an object. The extraordinariness of an object is not a feature of an object itself, but one of perception – the same as the order of an object is also (just) one given to the object while perceiving it. This principle of active construction of mea-

gg Media

ning and sense through communication is the fundamental concept of any theory of competence. It pretends that competence is a construct qualified by communication and communication is a construct qualified by competence. One suffers from the other's insufficiency (Bauer: 2006/a). All these remarks concerning the notion of competence had to be done in order to argue the communicative construction of society and the societal construction of communication. The fact that society is constructed by its (non-media- and/or media-mediated) communication makes it worth taking a look at the quality of communication. The fact that communication (non-media- and/or media-mediated) in its cultural construction is preconditioned by societal structures makes it worth taking a look at the (civil and political) quality of society. The theoretical decision for society conceptualisation in a sense of an event of social communication and communication as a question of its societal conditions is to be taken as a precondition for reflection of the relationship between society and media, or put simply, the relationship between the quality of society and that one of its media. In that sense, the normative understanding of society, by which communication and/or media competence becomes arguable, should be kept in mind as a specification of societal and social competence and as a cultural resource of society building.

Social Change – Media Change – Competence Change

Media competence as a theoretical construct is a normative notion of coming along with and within a media-mediated

public knowledge environment. That includes the necessity of getting educated and trained in soft skills, so to say, in individually different and differentiable qualifications. The content and the claim of soft skills changes with the structural change of media. The net-media opens the system for so many more possibilities for realisation of personal skills, needs, and interests, but also set so many more demands for coming along with multi-optionality, polysemy, uncertainty and open horizons. Particularly the net-media in their structure and in the social character of their usage

Particularly the net-media in their structure and in the social character of their usage represent the fact that an economically organised and globalised world stakes its interest - according to what is meant by an open society - on an expressive individualism.

represent the fact that an economically organised and globalised world stakes its interest - according to what is meant by an open society - on an expressive individualism. Obviously, there is a transactional circular process between media usage and media competence that would need much more media-educational awareness as it does in reality: The civilised usage of media sets upon media competence, as it also opens and develops the cultural level of competence of life styling. The cultural good of media competence opens the civil use of the media and via this interprets an advancing view of the contemporary changes in moral order of the society – what again forces (develops) the change of cultural usage of media.

The social reality in the sum is the universe of discourses by which we try to give sense to our inner and outer experiences. In order to state the meaning of thoughts and experiences, we need an agreeable format of symbolic interaction, which is in almost all cultures that of a story. Telling stories turns a possibly open and casual agglomeration of news (information) into a rationally coherent connection.

Using and “reading” media in a reasonable way needs to be aware of the semantics of media on the one hand, and to be conscious of the cultural mind in ones own head on the other.

The events themselves are not dependant upon time and do not have a time structure. It is the distinctive consideration that uses the measure of time as a model of knowledge in order to connect the one with the other, as well as to separate the one from the other, in the way in that our view of things gets confirmed. Giving a chronological connectivity to whatever we become aware of is an intellectual (cultural-cognitive) intervention and thus – though it is a cultural enrichment – is the first step in reducing complexity from the state of contingency and non-directivity to the one of relational certainty and certain relationality.

Recalling the notion of media being a cultural agency of social practice makes clear that media is also a (in a media society: the) place of social change, where all the cultural alterations happen not just by coincidence, but by a reflective image of communicative relations differently delivered and built through symbolic interaction.

This is both by interpersonal and by mediated communication. Social changes happen in a way of social and cultural practice that – how system theory explains – controls, steers and rebuilds itself through social practice. In that sense, media have to be taken into responsibility for social change. And social change has to be taken as the framework for the development of societal competence in using and understanding media, not only as a means, but also as a content of societal communication. That interrelated relationship between change and media challenges the educational discourse (pedagogy).

Competence always has been a goal of education and pedagogy, since educational and learning programmes aim to bring young people to the state of ability, capacity and responsibility in all socially relevant fields of behaviour (Wagner 2004).

Education works theoretically and practically in the direction of an ideal typical assumption of an individual and

tries to challenge the learning capacity of individuals according to a system of socialisation. Within the educational (practical) context, the term of competence includes:

- Ability (to know which operations and how to use them in case of something),
- Capacity (to have the cognitive, affective and active means and preparedness - skills),
- Responsibility (to be conscious of what something means for oneself and/or for others - consequences and possible effects),
- Morality (to be aware of the implicated values when making personal decisions).

The world we live in is, in general, a mediated environment of gestures, pictures, languages, and symbols. To be able to live with all that and not to get lost in translation depends on capacity of an open mind and on ability of a flexible attitude.

That demands from the educational systems to become creative in developing media literacy – the key competence in using the media in a reasonable and culturally advanced way.

The social environment is not as easy and as clearly organised as it once was or as we think it was. It is multi-cultural and multi-optional – which means: using media implicitly is a challenge of decision among various options.

Using and “reading” media in a reasonable way needs to be aware of the semantics of media on the one hand, and to be conscious of the cultural mind in ones own head on the other. Such a combination of cultural intelligence is not given by nature, it has to be trained culturally. ■

South East Europe Media Handbook 2006/2007

Editors: Oliver Vujovic and Radomir Licina



Volume One

S·E·E·M·O

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Volume I

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Macedonia (Republic of Macedonia - Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Moldova and Montenegro.

Volume II

Romania, Serbia / Kosovo, Slovakia, Slovenia, Turkey and Ukraine.

Students on

Many South East European countries see the growing need for media education in schools. However, not all proceed at the same speed, with Slovenia being cutting-edge.

by Markus Zuba und Lucia Schwerwacher

In the Czech Republic media education classes will be added to the curriculum in the very near future. Jaroslav Faltný, of the Research Institute of Education in Prague, says that elementary schools will start offering such classes this autumn. Czech high schools will then follow suite in 2009 and teachers are currently attending training programmes for their new challenges. In Greece, on the other hand, media experts are still trying to convince the government that media education is a necessity. Michael Meimaris, Director of the University of Athens' Research Institute of Applied Communication, points out that parents and teachers frequently express concerns over the

"The pupils should learn to be critical and independent in their use of media."

Bernarda Frass

media usage of children. So far, however, these concerns have not resulted in any reforms of the educational system. "Usually, any efforts towards the direction of including media courses in school curricula do not get approved," says Meimaris. "It's an ongoing discussion that has not been resolved into anything specific yet."

One country that is quite far along in this process is Slovenia. Karmen Erjavec, Assistant Professor at Ljubljana University's Faculty of Social Sciences, explains that after the fall of Yugoslavia, the entire education system in Slovenia was restructured. As a result, media education has been officially part of the curriculum at Slovene schools since 1996. Media education classes in Slovene schools are provided as both compulsory and optional courses. For example, media education is covered as part of the Slovene language classes from the 5th to the 9th school year. Additionally, media education and media literacy topics are an important part of the civil education and ethics classes

in the 7th and 8th school year. In these classes the goal is "to become well informed about ethical issues in different areas of communication: advertising, television, film, print journalism and the internet," informs Erjavec. In the last three years of the nine-grade primary school, pupils have the opportunity to take optional one-year courses on TV, radio and print journalism. Bernarda Frass teaches such classes at Osnovna sola Vrhovci (Primary School Vrhovci), a school in Ljubljana. The teachers must already be qualified to teach Slovene language classes. Before they can start teaching media education classes, they have to attend a three day course that gives them the necessary background and qualifications.

The media education classes for the pupils consist of one hour per week. About 50% of all pupils choose a media education class as one of their optional courses. Frass explains this popularity with the difference between the media education classes and regular classes. The curriculum allows teachers a lot of freedom in how they teach the classes. As a result, and unlike the routine of regular classes, media education offers excursions, group work and generally an alternative way to get necessary grades.

One destination for these excursions is RTV Slovenija, the national public broadcasting company of Slovenia. There, the pupils are able to get a look behind the scenes at radio and television broadcasting, and to meet and talk to working journalists. Later, the pupils can experiment with creating their own broadcast or newspaper article as group projects. The main goal is to show the difference between commercial journalism and quality journalism as well as to motivate the children to be creative themselves. "The pupils should learn to be critical and independent in their use of media," says Frass. According to her, the most popular aspect of the classes among the pupils is to film themselves and get to watch the results. While many of the chil-

TV

dren are very insecure at first, they quickly start to enjoy it. As a result, many of them get a lot better at doing public presentations in general.

By now, media education is a part of the curriculum for Slovene kindergartens as well. After a trial project in the year 2000 that introduced basic media literacy topics to select kindergartens, the rest followed. For this very young age group of four to six year old children, the main goal is to raise awareness of what makes news different from advertising and what the difference between “real” and “fictional” means.

It is, of course, up to the individual kindergartens as to how engaged they become in media education. According to Rado Wechtersbach, from Slovenia’s National Education Institute, “Media education (in kindergartens) is mostly

concealed within kindergarten’s different daily activities such as talking about writing, drawing, dancing, singing, playing and so on.” However, some kindergartens like Vrtec Rogaska slatina (Kindergarten Rogaska slatina), a group of four kindergartens in the Slovene municipality of Rogaska slatina, have come up with ambitious projects. In the case of Vrtec Rogaska slatina it is a project called “How To Get On TV”.

However, just getting on TV or working there is not the ultimate goal. What matters is what kind of message is being sent out by the journalists and what kind of journalism they practice. What matters even more is how the media they create is seen by the consumers in the public at large. The children in kindergartens and schools today are the journalists as well as the consumers of tomorrow. ■



Money Monger Always Win

Ideally open for everyone, free radio stations ensure free speech for alternative world views. But their financial situation is difficult. Neither supported by the state nor by commercial sponsors, they struggle for their right to participate in the public discourse of their countries.

by Juliette Bendele and Merleen Egger

When there is no radio which satisfies your needs, then you have to take matters into your hands and create your own radio station. Maybe that was the thought that motivated students to realise their own alternative radio platforms, for it is one of the various definitions of the significance of free radios: “It provides an opportunity to express thoughts and play music that do not conform to the majority. It is a filter for people who listen to experimental music and who respect a different choice of culture,”

“Free radio stations offer an uncensored channel for communication both between people and for projects devoted to different concepts and tools.”

Milos Vojtechovsky

re,” states Peter Gonda, student and anchorman of Radio Tlis, a free radio in Bratislava.

“Free radio stations offer an uncensored channel for communication both between people and for projects devoted to different concepts and tools,” Milos Vojtechovsky, a professor at the Film and TV School of the Academy of Performing Arts (FAMU) in Prague, points out. Free radios are important to ensure free speech for minorities and for the promotion of alternative views on society.

Often free radio stations and schools or universities are related to each other. Vojtechovsky explains that the free radio station Radio Lemurie in Prague can only be realised

because of the unpaid work of students of FAMU, who provide programmes for it. A lot of time and work is put into the station to ensure freedom of expression for those who are at risk of not being heard.

Another motivation for people to invest their time in free radios is “to reach people who miss underground culture and diversity in commercial or state radios,” as Gonda from Radio Tlis explains. The programme of Radio Tlis is made by students together with people who have been expelled or who have already graduated from school. Each of them wants to learn how broadcasting works. These volunteers are not paid but they become better and better in making radio programmes. They get a media education for free and the opportunity for learning by doing. That is the “payment” that lasts a lifetime. Slovakian National Radio for Students’ Radios organises a competition every year to give the students feedback on their work.

Radios like Tlis and Lemurie are low or no-budget projects. They have to struggle for their financial survival even though some of them, for instance Radio Tlis, are in the broadest sense supported by universities. Due to the financial and frequency shortages, free radios are mostly a local phenomenon. Beside these obstacles, legal regulation is quite blurred. “Student radios are a very greyish part of the law, no one knows what they really are,” says Gonda. “For example, we have no treaties or contracts with schools or student houses. They can kick us out immediately if they want to.”

S Will

Free radios are not only a phenomenon of Czech Republic and Slovakia, they are important for media landscape in many countries. Slovenia was the first country amongst those in South East Europe to have a free radio - Radio Student. Hungary went one step further and can be proud of two free radio stations in its capital Budapest: Radio Tilos and Civil Radio.

All these radios depend on cooperations with other free radios or collective projects. An example of such a collaboration is Mobile Studios, a collective project realised by four countries: Serbia, Slovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria. From April to May 2006, the Mobile Studios travelled as a nomadic multimedia platform from Berlin to Belgrade and Bratislava, from Budapest to Sofia. The Laznia Center of Contemporary Art in Gdansk provided a Mobile Webcast Studio that transmitted to corresponding issues regularly. The Mobile Studios were an internationally networked pilot project of a mobile, autonomous production laboratory for young artists, musicians, performers and cultural programmers. It was a moving gallery that crossed boundaries, with exhibitions and performances of local artists in public space. Even the audience had the possibility to express itself by using a microphone that was accessible to everybody. "We wanted to get know our listeners better, to come closer to them," says Gonda, "but it was not as successful as we hoped, even though a lot of money, given by the European Union, was spent on this project."

Although sometimes disappointing, these collaborations are very important for those countries which have no free radio stations such as Romania, Bulgaria and Poland. "Cooperation projects are the core of the work of free radios," says Vojtechovsky from Radio Lemurie. Romania and Bulgaria try to counterbalance the absence of free radio stations with media art laboratories, which are allowed to

broadcast their programmes. They are non-profit associations of artists, informatics engineers and understand themselves as do-it-yourself media makers. They want to ensure media literacy for the next radio generation by supporting four themes: education, art and culture, technologies and self sustainability. In Romania the artists broadcast via "Dmedia", a multi media institute based in Sofia. "Interspace" is the platform for Bulgarian artists to perform and broadcast their thoughts and music. Those radios establish communities that can only satisfy their intellectual needs in listening to broadcasts with alternative background, compared to state run radio stations.

Free radios would like to provide diversity and multiplicity but at the moment they are concerned about their small communities and can only aspire to very limited goals.

"I hope that in some broader future more net radios will be established and that people will get used to the idea of listening to net radio."

Peter Gonda

Vojtechovsky adds: "We are not yet capable of thinking about the whole Czech Republic media landscape, but we will be."

Gonda, first sounds pessimistic: "Money mongers will always win," but then talks about his visions with hope: "I hope digital broadcasting mixes things up. At least it will be easier to get a license when digital broadcasting becomes a standard in Slovakia. I hope that in some broader future more net radios will be established and that people will get used to the idea of listening to net radio. One day I would like to go for a project and get a frequency or licence exactly with some kind of community or underground radio, but that is far future. I hope one day it will be possible..." ■

Closing the Digital Gap

As the internet becomes increasingly important for communication in a society, the development of literacy that deals with its applications is a major goal. Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova are different examples on how countries deal with this new challenge. *By Philipp Teich and Anna Stöger*

Without a doubt, the internet has become one of the most important means of communication worldwide within the past 15 years. As a matter of fact, most people realised that the web is more than just a forum to chat with people around the world or download music on one of the countless P2P (peer-to-peer) sites. It is rather a characteristic for a whole new way of life - the information era has

Internet literacy is the ability to competently use the internet as a communication, information and creation tool. To possess this ability is becoming a necessity in our society which is dominated by this cultural commodity.

long begun. Without at least fundamental skills in terms of computers and data processing, the individual could be lost in times where most things are expected to be done and arranged via new media.

Internet literacy is the ability to competently use the internet as a communication, information and creation tool. To possess this ability is becoming a necessity in our society which is dominated by this cultural commodity. Dividing social groups within societies and countries into those who are able to use the internet and those who are not, is widening social and economic gaps.

In many European countries, the improvement and widening availability of fast internet connections as well as the increase of service providers has made it mandatory for the

governments to act and to offer free information technology education in schools, universities and within further training programmes run by local employment offices.

But what is the situation like in South East European countries? How do these young democracies make sure that their citizens will not get lost in the vast world of new media and virtual databases?

A Matter of Education

“In Romania, kids in the second grade of elementary school can enrol for optional internet courses. Apart from this, there is an official programme to enhance the knowledge of how to use new media at most high schools,” reports Valeria Buta from the Petru Major University in Targu-Mures, Romania.

She also states that most of the people have access to the internet at home: “Teenagers and people under thirty make up the biggest part of internet users in this country.” Very often kids teach their parents how to use computers, some software or how to surf the data-highway.

But what about childless people, senior citizens or the unemployed?

According to Buta, there are programmes to teach these people media literacy and common software applications like Windows Office for use in their daily life or extended vocational training for succeeding in the labour market or for re-entering it.

Furthermore, there are also various private institutions and

some universities that offer computer and internet training that one has to pay for. “These courses have a high standard, but unfortunately not everybody can afford them,” Buta complains.

We find a similar situation arising in Bulgaria. “Children teach their parents in terms of new media and computers, plus internet cafes play a decisive part in people’s acceptance and knowledge of the internet,” explains Svetla Petkova from the Bulgarian Association of Information Technologies (BAIT) in Sofia. She adds an interesting thought: “I think many senior citizens aren’t interested in new media like the world wide web at all. Unfortunately it will be very hard for them to keep up with these new technologies and their effects on our society.”

Although the Bulgarian government started new programmes to spread internet literacy among the people, students aged 50 and above can hardly be found in these courses.

Finally, there is Moldova, which after years of political instability and economic issues is behind most European countries. As a matter of fact, beside many open problems, the backlog pertaining to the internet infrastructure is becoming a major issue in Moldovan politics. One of the main goals is to build up an e-government.

Dumitru Chitoroaga, Grant Manager of The Soros Foundation – Moldova, a non-governmental, non-profit and non-political organisation which aims at developing an open society, says: “Yet for that to happen many governments’ business processes must be re-engineered at both the front- and back-office, and linking these together. This is not an easy task but, as other countries demonstrate, it is also not impossible, especially if the government possesses sufficient political will, patience, consistency and responsiveness to citizens’ needs. E-government may truly become an engine for Moldovan public sector reform.”

Wide spread competent usage of the internet amongst the population is a goal that seems to lie far in the future, because still the internet is on the outside margin of everyday life in Moldova. Just about 11% of Moldovans use the internet.

In most Moldovan schools internet infrastructure is ill-equipped and information technology education hardly exists. The main task will be providing access, technical equipment and, finally, the ability to use it to the population.

A Matter of Technology

There are internet labs in almost every school throughout Bulgaria although technical standards and the quality of new media education vary and depend on the area the school is situated in. “Of course you will find a lot of schools equipped with broadband connections in a big city like Sofia, but in rural areas slow 56k modems and old computers are the regular equipment,” Petkova states. So it is difficult for teachers in such areas to show their pupils the whole spectrum and possibilities of Cyberspace due to a lack of appropriate equipment - a problem which can only be solved by more investments by the government.

There is also a lot of work to be done in Romania. Buta from the Petru Major University hopes that the government, assisted by the EU, is going to improve the technical standards in schools especially in rural areas. “Otherwise,” Buta is concerned, “the gap between scholars in urban areas and small villages will become bigger and bigger in terms of media literacy.”

Maybe the situation will change within the next few years to come. The so called “i2010” programme, initiated by the European Commission, plans further support and development of new media within the EU.

“Children teach their parents in terms of new media and computers, plus internet cafes play a decisive part in people’s acceptance and knowledge of the internet.”

Svetla Petkova, Bulgaria

“Moldova is moving the same direction as most European countries, but slower. The main task is to speed up this movement.”

Dumitru Chitoroaga, Moldova

“It’s a great opportunity for our country; Romania has a lot of potential in the IT-sector. It takes time though,” Buta summarises. There are about fifty children per computer in Moldovan schools.

The government is trying to fulfil the “Salt” programme, which aims to equip educational institutions with computers, connecting them to the internet and implementing informational and communication technologies into the education system.

Dumitru Chitoroaga of The Soros Foundation in Chisinau concludes that “Moldova is moving the same direction as most European countries, but slower. The main task is to speed up this movement.” ■

Different Systems Same Prospects

The mass media play an important role in conjoining countries. But how will the journalists from tomorrow be educated? In Istanbul a group of Austrian PhD- and Master-students compared notes and exchanged experience of the Media and Communication Science Studies of the Istanbul University and the University of Vienna in order to point out the differences and resemblances of their faculties.

By Juliette Bendele

Isn't it paradox? People who study communication and media science develop a certain distance to their subject: "It is impossible for me to relax while watching TV. I can't stop challenging the media, but I think we are educated to be immune to brainwashing. It doesn't effect us any more," says Bahar (26), a Turkish Master student to the Austrian participants during a meeting in December 2007 between Turkish and Austrian PhD- and Master-students in Istanbul.

This critical attitude concerning media conjoins the students of both countries in spite of different cultures and curricula. „I think it is important to have the choice between different media alternatives. When there is real media plurality, you will always find a media you can trust in," says Christine (25), Austrian Master student. Bihter (23) agrees but confines: "It is not possible to trust media, when all media lie in one person's hand, like Berlusconi's media-empire in Italy. Sometimes I fear that media will never be independent."

Astonishing is that both student groups come to an agreement, although their curricula are so different. In Austria each person who graduated from high school is allowed to study Communication and Media Science. That leads to the fact that in Vienna more than 1.000 students enter the study of Communication and Media Science each year. "We don't have access control at the moment, but maybe we will have it in the future. There are so many people stu-

dyng the same subject. But still everyone becomes a lonely rider, who just tries to pass his study, neither colliding nor cooperating too close with his competitors," pictures Martin (26) the situation in Austria.

This is unimaginable for the Turkish students. They have to pass a test before they can access the academic study and the allocation of places is short: there are 45 places for Master students in Communication and Media Science, which means 15 places for each of the three degree programmes and there are only five places for the PhD students. Hahen (27): "It is not easy to become a student, but when you have passed the test, you will be supported by the professors. There is a close personal contact between lecturers and students."

At the beginning of the Communication and Media Science study in Turkey, you have to choose your favourite degree programme. Then the study is ready-made and the students can follow directives and complete the optional subjects in their own faculty. In Austria students have to attempt courses from other faculties to complete their electives and achieve a specialisation. For Austrian students it is not obligatory to have work experience in a media company in order to get a degree. Exactly the opposite is the case in Turkey: Students have to undertake an internship for two months. It is possible to fragment the internship during the study. At the end of their practical training they receive a progress letter from the media company. Although

it is not obligatory in Austria, it is important to undertake an internship if the students want to improve their qualification for working in a media company. “They won’t look twice at your curriculum vitae, when there is no internship listed,” says Anna (24) and concludes: “It is not binding but important.”

Another similarity between both countries is the student’s concern that they will not be employed by the media and communication industry.

“It’s so hard to get a job and if you do, they just employ you as a trainee. That means you won’t get paid for at least two years”, says Bahar. Demotivated by the reality, many Turkish students do not want to work for the daily press, some of them prefer to write for scientific or cultural magazines. Unlike the Austrian students: Many of them want to write for a newspaper or to work for a broadcasting company. Although the degree programme nowadays is trying to give more practical skills, the alternative to universities, the colleges of higher education, offer a programme to educate journalists. Most of the companies prefer alumni from those schools, because there the students really learn the practice of journalism.

“Our situation is similar to the situation in Turkey. Often

we have to start as freelancers. You get money, but no reliability. You can lose your job every day and will not get compensation,” says Anton (26) from Austria.

But nothing will prevent those students from completing their life’s dream. The internet raises their hope and expectations for the future: “It is a new interactive media concept and the last place where real free speech is possible,” says Bither. Both students groups would like to learn more about the internet during their studies, but due to being quite new, the internet has been carelessly handled at the universities.

Prospectively the students expect a boom concerning the internet on both levels: the science and the media site. “What could hold the internet up?,” asks Christine. „It is cheap, everyone with a computer has access to it and it can diffuse information faster than any other media!” ■

Top: Turkish students listening to their Austrian counterparts in a discussion on journalism education

Bottom: Prof. Bauer, Vienna University (center), Prof. Gezgin, Istanbul University (center right) and PhD students discussing cooperation possibilities in front of Austrian and Turkish students in Istanbul

Photos: Juliette Bendele



Your Excellencies!

Recent SEEMO Protests

Protest Montenegro, 3 Sep

SEEMO is alarmed at the recent attack on a director of a newspaper in Montenegro.

According to information before SEEMO, on 1 September 2007, during the early morning, Zeljko Ivanovic, founder and director of the daily *Vijesti* from Podgorica, was beaten by three unknown assailants near a restaurant, where the newspaper had celebrated its 10 anniversary.

SEEMO is deeply concerned about the attack. We ask Your Excellencies to ensure an immediate investigation into this case, to take all necessary legal steps to find the perpetrators, and to protect the life of Ivanovic.

We would also like to remind Your Excellencies that Dusko Jovanovic, director of the daily *Dan* was killed on the night of 27 May 2004 in front of the newspaper's editorial office in Podgorica. The murderer or murderers of Jovanovic remain free. Last year, on 24 October 2006, Jevrem Brkovic, a leading novelist in Montenegro, was attacked by masked assailants, while his driver Srdjan Vojcic was shot dead, close to the place where Ivanovic was recently attacked.

Protest Turkey, 1 Oct

SEEMO is deeply concerned about the death of Kasim Ciftci, owner of the *Hakkari Province Voice*.

According to information before SEEMO, on 22 September 2007, at 12.30, eyewitnesses saw two people arguing near the ruins of old Van City, southeastern Turkey. Suddenly, the conversation turned into a fight, when the other man shot Ciftci and then left the area.

SEEMO is deeply concerned about the attack. We urge Your Excellencies to do everything in your power to investigate this case and to prevent such cases from occurring in the future. Media workers must be able to work freely.

Protest Macedonia, 2 Oct

SEEMO is deeply concerned about recent physical attacks by security and police forces on journalists in Macedonia.

On 25 September, after a debate in parliament over electoral reform, Lirim Dullovi, a reporter for the private TV station A1, was assaulted by a person with the initials B.A, a security guard of the ethnic Albanian party Democratic

Union for Integration (DUI). One day after this incident, Igor Ljubovcevski, a camera crew member of the private TV station ALSAT-M, was physically attacked and injured by the Macedonian police. The incident happened in the town of Tetovo after Ljubovcevski refused to hand over his video footage to the police.

During these two days camera crew members for several other TV stations were also forced to hand over their video material to the police.

SEEMO supports the initiative of those Macedonian journalists who boycotted the government press conference on 27 September out of protest against the physical attacks on their colleagues. SEEMO also welcomes the police warrant issued against B.A. for assault and battery charges in the Dullovi case and urges the authorities to investigate the police attack on Ljubovcevski.

SEEMO strongly condemns physical attacks on journalists and would like to remind Your Excellencies that an open media environment, allowing for the free work of media representatives, is a fundamental principle of any democratic society. Violence and threats, as well as other pressures on journalists, have no place in a democratic society.

Press Release Slovenia, 2 Oct

IPI calls on Slovenian government to hold an independent inquiry into allegations of political pressure on the media, expresses support for petition by Slovenian journalists

The International Press Institute (IPI), the global network of editors, media executives and leading journalists in over 120 countries, and its affiliate, the South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), have expressed their support for the "Petition Against Censorship and Political Pressures on Journalists in Slovenia", signed by 438 journalists from the major media outlets in Slovenia and sent to the heads of state, prime ministers and parliamentary speakers of all EU member states.

The concerns outlined in the Petition correspond to the issues brought up in an IPI/SEEMO press release of 31 August.

One of the allegations mentioned in the press release was that the Slovenian government is indirectly influencing the media through its exploitation of business relationships

with companies that have financial holdings in a range of media organisations. "Business relationships and share holdings should never be used by the government as leverage to induce independent media organisations to publish favourable news stories," IPI Director Johann P. Fritz said at the time.

IPI also shares the concerns expressed in the Petition over the number of instances of censorship exercised on individual journalists who have written articles critical of the government of President Janez Janša.

Slovenia will take over the presidency of the European Union (EU) during the first half of 2008 as the first of the new member states that joined the EU on 1 May 2004. Countries that assume the EU presidency must lead by example. If the principle of editorial independence is breached, it is not only of serious concern for the media, but also for the public who rely on their information. IPI therefore calls on the Slovenian government to hold an independent inquiry into the allegations of political pressure on the media.

Three months remain until Slovenia will assume the presidency of the EU on 1 January 2008. This allows the Slovenian government enough time to set up an independent inquiry and to ensure that the executive branch of government is always held at arm's length from the media.

If no progress is made in this direction, IPI/SEEMO will be obliged to send a high-level mission of international media representatives to Slovenia at the beginning of 2008 to investigate the situation of the media environment and put pressure on the key decision makers to ensure editorial independence.

Press Release South East Europe, 6 Nov

SEEMO is deeply concerned about the worsening situation for journalists in the South Eastern European (SEE) region.

SEEMO is alarmed at the activities of the Croatian police against freedom of expression and the fact that Zeljko Peratovic, a Croatian investigative journalist and blogger, was briefly imprisoned starting on 17 October. He was later released after spending 20 hours in prison. According to the police in Zagreb, Peratovic allegedly published state secrets on his blog. The equipment and materials, including three PCs, which the police took from Peratovic during a raid on his home office, have not been returned to him.

SEEMO is also concerned about an attack against

media companies in the Sandzak region of Serbia. On 7 October, TV Jedinstvo was attacked by unknown persons after airing an interview with a religious leader who is close to a local political party. The assailants demolished equipment of TV Jedinstvo and pulled a gun on the staff. They also physically attacked the editor Ramiz Etemovic. In addition, the local radio station Sto Plus was targeted at the beginning of September when the transmitters of the radio station were demolished. On 10 October, there was an explosion close to the transmitters of the same radio station on Sultenovacko brdo in the town of Novi Pazar. Radio Sto Plus is owned by the private Belgrade news agency Beta. The local media in the Sandzak region have been the victims of the conflict between two leaders of Bosniak parties. The local authorities of Sandzak have banned access to the municipality for those journalists whose writing is described as "unfavorable". Several journalists have said they have had problems in reporting during recent weeks. These include: Ivana Milic, correspondent of the Belgrade RTV B92 and a journalist of TV Jedinstvo, Refik Sadikovic, editor-in-chief of the religious publication Glas Islama and Enes Halilovic, correspondent of the Belgrade news agency Fonet and the daily Blic. At the same time, several Islamic religious leaders have verbally attacked several political independent media for "conspiracy against the Islamic community".

Also in recent weeks, there have been statements against media from political representatives in Belgrade who are close to the government. The politicians cannot accept the right of journalists and media in Serbia to make critical reports about the state, and they do not accept the decisions of journalists to carry out interviews with persons who do not share the Serbian government's point of view.

SEEMO also condemns an attack in Kosovo on 17 October, when Vesna Bojicic, correspondent of the Voice of America in Pristina, was beaten in her apartment in Caglavica by an unknown man in a black uniform. During the attack, the perpetrator criticized the reporting of Bojicic, and her "pro-Kosovo Albanian" views.

SEEMO is also critical of police officers in Moldova who, on 19 October, attacked two members of the staff of Pro TV from Chisinau, the journalist Angela Gonta and the cameraman Vlad Culiomza. This happened when the Pro TV crew was making a report about a police raid on a house in Chisinau.

Finally, on 1 November, Tufik Softic, a journalist of Radio Berane and a local correspondent of the daily Republika, was beaten by two persons and injured in front of his house in the center of Berane, a Montenegrin town. Exactly two

months earlier, Zeljko Ivanovic, founder and director of the daily *Vijesti* from Podgorica, was physically attacked by several assailants near a restaurant, where the newspaper had celebrated its 10th anniversary. Ivanovic was injured in this attack and received medical help. One year earlier, on 24 October 2006, Jevrem Brkovic, a leading novelist in Montenegro, was attacked by masked assailants, while his driver Srdjan Vojcic was shot dead, close to the place where Ivanovic was recently attacked. Dusko Jovanovic, director of the daily *Dan*, was killed on the night of 27 May 2004 in front of the newspaper's editorial office in Podgorica. His killer remains free.

Commenting on these press freedom violations, SEEMO Secretary General, Oliver Vujovic, said, "SEEMO strongly condemns these threats, as well as any government or state actions, including at the police and municipality levels, that restrict the work and movement of journalists. I am very concerned about the worsening working conditions for journalists in the SEE region. For this reason SEEMO will continue to monitor media developments in the region, especially in Croatia, Moldova, Montenegro, and Serbia".

Press Release Macedonia (Republic of Macedonia - FYROM), Serbia, Cyprus and Slovenia, 23 Nov

SEEMO strongly condemns recent attacks on media outlets and journalists in South East Europe (SEE).

According to information before SEEMO, on 19 November 2007, the transmitter of the private TV station ALSAT-M that covers the Kumanovo region in northern Macedonia was destroyed. On the same day, in Suva Gora, the station's electrical supply was interrupted and a driver for ALSAT-M transporting the transmitters was robbed. Significantly the building where the ALSAT-M transmitter was stored also contains the transmitters of other media, however, only the equipment of ALSAT-M was damaged. Furthermore, during the past two weeks, the signal of ALSAT-M has been periodically blocked in the regions of Tetevo, Gostivar and Kumanovo; in particular during the transmission of news. ALSAT-M has also come under pressure from state representatives during recent weeks. On 25 and 26 September, journalists and TV crew members of ALSAT-M were attacked by police. SEEMO reported about these incidents at that time.

SEEMO is also concerned about the pressure by some companies on media in Serbia. We are especially concerned about the problems faced by editors and journalists of the daily *Politika* in Belgrade. Based on an editorial in *Politika*,

published on 16 November 2007, the newspaper is under pressure from representatives of the Delta Holding company. According to *Politika*'s editor-in-chief, Ljiljana Smajlovic, the President of Delta Holding,

Miroslav Miskovic, has made several telephone calls to editors and journalists of the newspaper, criticizing them for their "lack of patriotism" and accusing the newspaper of not supporting his business empire. SEEMO believes that these calls may represent an attempt to influence the newspaper's reporting.

In another incident, Delta Holding has threatened to use Serbia's laws against "anybody who states anything untrue about Delta Company or their management."

Every company has, of course, the right to contest the accuracy of the reporting about its activities, but, given the fact that Delta Holding is one of the largest companies in Serbia, it must accept criticism as well as investigative news stories about its activities. The problems of attempts to influence the media in Serbia highlight the need for a voluntary and independent complaints mechanism, in order to resolve these issues.

At the same time, SEEMO condemns the fact that Cedomir Jovanovic the President of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), initiated on 21 November a criminal investigation against six media representatives in Serbia. Jovanovic found the reporting of these six media unacceptable and claimed that media are supportive of commercial interests. SEEMO believes that Jovanovic must accept that journalists have the right to report critically about him.

SEEMO also condemns the latest attack on the newspaper *Africa*, which has for years been a target of those who are against freedom of opinion in north Cyprus. During a demonstration several days ago in front of the newspaper's building, members of the ultra-right organization the Grey Wolves, accused *Africa* of being anti Turkish and the voice of the Kurdish population.

Finally, SEEMO would also like to announce that, together with the International Press Institute (IPI), it will carefully watch developments in Slovenia over the forthcoming weeks after an IPI fact finding mission visited Ljubljana on 8 and 9 November.

In this connection, we are surprised that the Slovenian Prime Minister, Janzes Jansa, said on 19 November that Slovenia's image was being tarnished from within, and singled out the petition signed by 571 journalists against governmental interference in the media as a prime example of this movement.

Commenting on these press freedom violations, SEEMO Secretary General, Oliver Vujovic, said, "SEEMO strongly

condemns these attacks, as well as any government or state actions, including at the level of the police, as well as by companies and political parties that restrict the work and free movement of journalists, freedom of expression and investigative journalism.”

Press Release Montenegro, 19 Dec

SEEMO has been informed about a lawsuit dated 6 September 2007 against Zeljko Ivanovic, founder and director of the daily Vijesti from Podgorica, Montenegro, Ljubisa Mitrovic, the editor-in-chief of Vijesti, as well as the publishing house of Vijesti.

According to the information made available to SEEMO, the civil lawsuit for defamation has been filed by Milo Djukanovic, president of the Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro (DPS). The case is based on comments Ivanovic made in reaction to an assault on him on 1 September 2007.

During this attack, to which SEEMO reacted at the time, Ivanovic was beaten by three assailants. Based on the arguments of the defence attorney, Branislav Lutovac, Article 20 of the Montenegro Law on Media states that, whilst a legal action can be brought against the author of the defamatory statement and the publisher, the lawsuit against the editor-in-chief is unfounded.

Another point made by Lutovac regarding the trial is that both the plaintiff and the defendants were prevented from testifying at the preliminary hearing, where basic information regarding the case would normally be collected.

This is in direct violation of the Law on Legal Procedures in Montenegro. SEEMO has also been informed by the defence that Djukanovic has demanded an unusually large sum of compensation for the alleged damage suffered, namely one million euros. Such a sum could have serious financial implications for the media company, and could force it into insolvency. This would create a worrying precedent for freedom of speech in the country. Speaking about the case, Oliver Vujovic, SEEMO Secretary General, said that "according to international principles, compensation that could close media organisations is not acceptable. Such excessive sanctions exert a chilling effect, not only for the publication involved, but also for the protection of free speech."

In addition, the case law of the European Court of Human Rights has found that excessive defamation damages are a direct violation of the applicant's rights and deemed unnecessary in a democratic society. SEEMO would like to urge the Parliament of Montenegro to introduce a regulation similar to Article 43 of the Montenegro Law on Media,

which places limits on sanctions, including damages in defamation.

SEEMO will continue to follow this case and strongly believes that the law should not be used to undermine the freedom of the press by applying excessive sanctions. In democratic societies, damages in civil law should be proportionate and fair, and should not excessively penalize the media organisations or force them into insolvency.

Review

Zgrabljic Rotar, Nada [Ed.]: *Media Literacy and Civil Society*. Mediacentar: Sarajevo 2006.

By Angelika Truttenberger

The book, consisting of essays written by ten different authors, all having a university background, surely gives a deep insight into the topic of media literacy. Sometimes straight scientific, sometimes more popular, it is all in all a good mixture, providing the reader with a variety of perspectives and meanings of media literacy, being both theoretical and practical. The focus is not only set on South East Europe, though a big part is dedicated to this region, but also includes the discussion of media education concepts on a global level.

The aim clearly is to find ways to protect children from harmful media content and make them critical media users. Outstanding amongst this collection are only two purely theoretical texts, one putting media literacy into the context of cultural studies, the other dealing with the art of media, while it seems unclear why the latter was included, having nothing to do with media literacy. Several authors deal with the problem of what media literacy in schools should look like and in general there is consensus that the task is to educate pupils in both actively producing media content and critically analysing the media. Especially interesting are two reports about the results of empirical studies in Croatia and Serbia. The Croatian research studied the communication of different aged children with their parents about media content, the Serbian one dealt with the presentation of a child in Serbian media. Both came to an alarming conclusion.

Even though large parts of the book are very interestingly written, it has to be said that the long theoretical and not easily understandable passages seriously narrow the circle of possible readers. One has to have a basic knowledge of media theories, as gained in studying communication science, to really being able to read through the whole book. Furthermore, the meaning that media can have for a democracy is in my opinion not discussed in this book. Media is mostly presented as endangering and as influencing, and that is why media literacy has to be taught: to protect children from the media.

To educate critical media users and citizens, and make children understand that media construct reality is of course a

good point. However, the book leans to blaming the media for all the bad in the world, backed by citing disputable authors such as Marshall McLuhan and Neil Postman through vast parts of the book. What most authors in this book miss is criticism of their own assumptions, not dealing with alternative arguments.

The last essay, for example, demands that books should again be used in media education, because reading is a very important communication competence and cannot be left out. This is justified by citing authors that write that we will all get stupid watching television, because television only bombards us with pictures, not letting us to think. Another author almost equals media content to advertising, letting the reader think, advertisement is all media consists of.

In my opinion, the book is sometimes too critical about media, but as it also contains really interesting approaches and thoughts, it is in every case worth reading.

The book was published in the Bosnian language but there is also an English translation of the book. ■

South East Europe Media Organisation - SEEMO

The South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), an affiliate of the International Press Institute (IPI), is a regional non-governmental, non-profit network of editors-in-chief, media executives and leading journalists from newspapers, magazines, radio and TV stations, news agencies and new media in South East Europe. SEEMO was founded in October 2000 in Zagreb, Croatia.

One of SEEMO's main activities is protecting press freedom. Over 60 per cent of SEEMO's press releases and letters of protest to governmental and other officials have had positive results in the past. Every SEEMO protest is distributed to more than 12,000 addresses: to leading regional and international media, national and international governmental and non-governmental organisations, politicians, and also public persons and institutions.

During the last four years, SEEMO has assembled over 3,000 editors-in-chief, media executives, leading journalists and public persons from the region in various meetings. Helping journalists means also furthering their education. Several workshops and seminars were organised in the field of education, especially for investigative reporters and representatives of minority media.

SEEMO regularly publishes deScripto, a quarterly media magazine for South Eastern Europe, which is committed to the enhancement of a climate of critical reflection on media culture and communication, in and among the South East European countries. South East Europe Media Handbook (SMH) is an annual publication covering media developments, which includes selected media contacts.

SEEMO also gives two annual awards for outstanding achievements in the field of media: "Dr Erhard Busek - SEEMO Award for Better Understanding in South East Europe" and the SEEMO Human Rights Award "SEEMO Award for Mutual Cooperation in South East Europe".

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Preview

Upcoming Events

SEEMO 2008 Project: Women, Men and Media in SEE.

For more details: www.seemo.org

April 2008 - SEEMO Media Handbook 2007/2008

(Volume I and Volume II).

For more details: www.seemo.org

May 2008, Slovenia - Public Broadcasting in South East Europe

For more details: www.seemo.org

June 2008 - CEI Award for Outstanding Merits in Journalism

by SEEMO and CEI.

For more details: www.seemo.org

14-17 June 2008, Serbia - Belgrade: IPI World Congress, 57th General Assembly, SEEMO Regional Meeting of Private News Agencies and SEEMO Conference on Media, Marketing and Business.

For more details: www.ipibelgrade.com

October 2008, Montenegro - South East European Investigative Journalism Investigative Forum.

For more details: www.seemo.org

November 2008 - Dr. Erhard Busek SEEMO Award for Better Understanding 2008

For more details: www.seemo.org

November 2008, Sofia - Bulgaria: South East and Central Europe Media Forum (SECEMF), by WAZ, KAS and SEEMO

For more details: www.secemf.org

10 December 2008 - SEEMO Human Rights Award 2008

For more details: www.seemo.org

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