

Society

Policy Brief: Media reforms to safeguard democracy in BiH are needed

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Media, Newspapers; Photo: Pixabay

VIENNA – The current global political crisis is reflecting Bosnia and Herzegovina's media sphere thus there is a need to open new discussions related to media and democracy, stresses the new Policy Brief "[Media and minorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina: a path towards an inclusive and democratic society](#)", published within the WB2EU Network.

The Policy Brief recommends that state and entity governmental institutions at all levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina should provide sufficient financial support for all minority groups in the country to create and maintain their media and stresses the need for mainstream and national

media in Bosnia and Herzegovina to significantly increase the production of media content related to different minorities. By doing this, mainstream and national media can become open spaces for cultural cooperation, exchange, and democratic participation thus magnifying their potential as platforms and levers of the democratisation of society, explains the author.

The Policy Brief explores the most significant aspects regarding the role of media in building democracy in terms of reinforcement and affirmation of minorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, whether due to ethnic background, religious belief, sexual orientation, geographic location, income level, etc.

“Democracy and democratization have not only political but also cultural, social, and economic meanings and results”, the Policy Brief notes.

It is explained that media are social institutions organized in such a way as to provide public communication of society and political and cultural belonging for minority groups.

Media representations of minorities and the way they are delivered in society in the news, media, and social media can unfavorably affect the way various minorities perceive themselves and the way others recognize and identify them so it is truly important to underline that media represent an irreplaceable factor in every contemporary society, stresses the author.

“The media do not represent the mere transmitters of information; they also select and shape that information, so it can be argued that social reality is, for the most part, a reality created and shaped by the media”, underlines the Policy Brief and adds that the main problem is

the mechanism of closing society by the media, which particularly applies to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Policy Brief mentions that “one of the best examples when it comes to media and their role in the community is certainly the question of the importance of media for minorities and their cultural identities specifically”.

The author also says that strengthening the visibility of minorities and different types of vulnerable groups in the community is one of the main elements of strengthening democracy in the multi-ethnic community.

The media represent the largest portion of the wider information and communication system, within which the minority media operate as well and it is important to accentuate the difference between the presence of minorities in the media and the media of the minorities themselves, the Policy Brief explains.

“When it comes to types of media in the context of strengthening the cultural identity of national minorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, the press represents a type of media that is exclusively a medium of activist action by individuals from minority groups and not minorities themselves. Due to financial and other issues, we have witnessed numerous failed attempts at starting newspapers and magazines”, explains the author.

She adds that the medium that is used the most in this particular context is the Internet since it enables minorities, regardless of their territorial and other affiliations, to represent themselves most adequately and to communicate with each other in a virtual space that does not belong to

any state.

The media should find a real developmental dialectic about encouraging and strengthening the convergence of different cultural identities and the mutual adoption of different values, notes the Policy Brief and stresses the necessity of the real contribution to the demetropolitanisation of culture, overcoming national cultural autarchism, and the creation of quality media content in the field of culture in the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

“Democracy, the media aspect included, in Bosnia and Herzegovina is seriously threatened today”, stresses the Policy Brief.

Moreover, the author highlights that there is an urgent need for legislative reforms and changes in the domain of media law in Bosnia and Herzegovina to ensure that media is inherently plural, representative, and inclusive, as well as that it is fulfilling the demands of democracy.

“The richness of different cultural identities represents an immanent value of the entire society’s democratisation, but in order to strengthen, ennoble, and enrich this value, it is crucial for the media to understand the essence of the process of culture, its inner need for accepting the Other and the Different as a substance of European integration, if they do not want to be among those who close this exhausted and shattered society but gain the determination and drive to open themselves to adopting and respecting the values of others and the values of spot-on democracy”, concludes the Policy Brief.

The Policy Brief is published in the

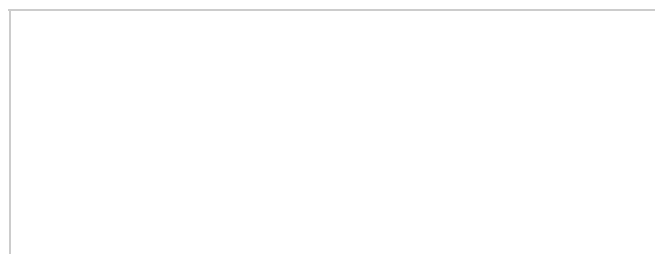
framework of the WB2EU project. The project aims at the establishment of a network of renowned think-tanks, do-tanks, universities, higher education institutes and policy centres from the Western Balkans, neighbouring countries and EU member states that will be most decisive for the enlargement process and Europeanisation of the region in the upcoming years. The WB2EU project is co-funded by the European Commission under its Erasmus+ Jean Monnet programme.

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