**CONCLUSIONS – MEDIA MONITORING ON THE TOPIC OF THE BRUSSELS AGREEMENT (SEPTEMBER – DECEMBER 2015)**

The Brussels dialogue between Belgrade and Priština, led under the auspices of the EU, viewed from the perspective of legitimacy and participativeness is far from the necessary level of transparency. Both sides taking part in the dialogue have been given the possibility to arbitrarily present the accomplishments and failures in reaching and implementation of the Brussels Agreements. As a consequence, there is a lack of information, documents and actors' willingness to be questioned.

Generally speaking, journalists are facing a great challenge when it comes to the realization of their primary function: to inform, ask questions, analyze and present a relevant image to the public. The work of journalists is mostly reduced to awaiting statements and press releases, as well as relying on what can be read between the lines and unofficial sources.

In such an ambiance, according to the monitoring findings, the media have fulfilled their informative role, with noted promotion of mainly the Government of Serbia. Overall, the media have a positive stance toward the Brussels process. Examples of investigative and analytic journalism are rare.

Looking at the broader picture, such ambiance benefits the critics of the Brussels Agreement who are being excluded from public communication, thus additionally receiving legitimacy and importance, as they are legitimately demanding for the process to be transparent.

Looking at the rhetoric of the dialogue's participants, it is primarily informative and ethno-mobilizing, namely dominated by bureaucratic rhetorical means.

The thematic framework is of a general nature. The main topic is the Association of Serb Municipalities.

The context is reduced to Serbia's Euro-integrations, internal political issues in Kosovo and the debate on the implementation of what was agreed upon in Brussels. The context of reconciliation of Serbs and Albanians as the key precondition for improvement of the ambiance for the Brussels Agreements' implementation is almost non-existent.

With regard to air time distribution, the main negotiating parties have received the most time. However, when it comes to the tone of reporting, the Serbian side is presented extraordinarily positive, whereas the Priština side is presented less positive compared to the Kosovar anti-agreement opposition.

Opponents of the Brussels Agreement have had modest air time, or none at all. The place that should be held by them, as the other side, is occupied by analysts and civil society, thus "creating" media diversity.

To sum up: In order for the Brussels process to be successful in the future, it is of key significance that the Belgrade-Priština dialogue spreads out from Brussels offices, and that actors other than political representatives of Belgrade and Priština become involved in it, primarily in the media, by means of dialogue-oriented TV broadcasts. The fact that this is necessary and welcome is confirmed by the cooperation between the chambers of commerce of Serbia and Kosovo, respectively.

Expanding the list of actors, and particularly including opponents of the Agreement, is the best way to increase dialogue in the society, thus creating a positive atmosphere and contributing not only to the implementation of the Brussels Agreement, but to overall better relations between Serbs and Albanians.

Compared with the previous thematic monitoring, there is a noticeable reporting matrix featured by:

* + Extremely/predominantly positive presentation of officials within the executive (bicephalous) branch of government (President, Prime Minister, Government, ministries)
  + Informative-promotional approach to the topic/problem
  + Journalists remain neutral, keeping their neutrality by simply holding up a microphone
  + Opposing side is rarely presented in the same report; if it is, its purpose is to confirm and interpret the topic. This role is usually assumed by analysts who are “taking the seat” of opposition parties, thus creating an illusion of media diversity in terms of the actors involved
  + The anti-government side is presented either
    - to the same extent or somewhat less than the (pro)government one, with significantly less positive presentation,
    - or with significantly less air time, but in a highly positive manner.

Cases in which the actors are presented sparsely and in a negative light are rare.

Based on the hitherto monitoring, we are able to differentiate three ways of acting by the media:

* Bulletinization – promotional reporting by the media, about topics which were “handed” to them
* Bellwether– the media become a means of labeling and retaliation against those who oppose the controllers of the media, or persons linked with the media's owner)
* Censorship – omitting relevant topics and actors.

**FINDINGS**

* Most of air time and reports on the Brussels Agreement was brought by Radio Television of Serbia (RTS) and TV B92. On average, one in two reports were previously announced. Compared with the monitored Serbian-language media in Kosovo, the Belgrade-based media have reported almost half as much on this topic!
* Unlike the Serbian-language Kosovo media, the Belgrade-based media focused much less on the topic of the Brussels Agreement. Namely, in more than 50% of cases, this topic was merely mentioned (in the context of other topics)
* With regard to genre structure, all media are dominated by reports containing statements. RTS and TV B92 deviate from such a trend, broadcasting slightly more reportage-based contents.
* The monitored television stations had an affirmative-informative approach to the monitoring topic. TV Pink is the outlet that reported in the most affirmative manner on the Brussels Agreement, while at the same time broadcasting – albeit almost half as much – critical contents.
* The actors' rhetorical strategies are mainly aimed at providing information, i.e. (ethno)mobilization. Explanations and analysis were mostly present on RTS and TV Prva, whereas polemics and argumentation dominated on RTS and TV Pink. The most propagandist contents were aired by TV Pink.
* The media are dominated by bureaucratic narration. This mainly relates to TV Prva which is most notable for stating facts, specific and general, consistent exposition and routine narration. Vivid speech was mostly observed in cases of RTS and TV Pink.
* Unlike TV Pink where the presented information is mostly in the context of the Brussels Agreement's implementation, other Belgrade-based television stations have placed the presented information predominantly in the context of Serbia's Euro-integrations, i.e. internal political issues in Kosovo. It should be emphasized that only TV B92, albeit to a very small extent, has placed the information on the Brussels process in the context of reconciliation between Serbs and Albanians.
* The thematic framework concerning all four monitored television stations is featured by predominance of the general narrative of the Brussels process, i.e. the topics that relate to the implementation of the Brussels process. As for concrete topics, the predominant topic is the Association of Serb Municipalities, followed by Chapter 35.
* With regard to the normative argumentation the Brussels Agreements are based upon, the agreements as such are predominant, i.e. regulatory acts of the European Union and Kosovo, respectively. Regulatory acts of Serbia are seldom mentioned.
* The main obstacles to the implementation of the Brussels Agreements, according to actors present in the media, are Priština and the status of the Association of Serb Municipalities.
* The executive (bicephalous) branch of government in Serbia (President, Government of Serbia, and participants in the negotiation process) were the actors with most media air time. In the case of TV Pink, those actors had up to twice as much coverage compared to the second-ranked Priština side, which came in second in case of all analyzed television stations. Compared to the Serbian side, those stations dedicated the same air time to the Kosovar negotiating party. The European Union (both the administration in Brussels, as well as in Belgrade, embodied by the EU Delegation) came in third. Depending on the individual television station, most of the coverage was dedicated to the civil society, Kosovar anti-Brussels process opposition, and Serbs in Kosovar institutions. The least air time, out of all relevant actors, was dedicated to Belgrade-based Serbian opposition parties, both ones in favor of and against the Brussels Agreement.
* With regard to the tone, the most positively portrayed actors are those who negotiate on the Serbian side, whereas the Kosovar negotiating side is presented in a less positive light, that is, more negative than the Kosovar anti-Brussels opposition. It should be noted that during the four-month monitoring, TV Pink has dedicated a total of nine seconds (of negative portrayal) to the Serbian opposition in favor of the Brussels Agreement.