Time to Change or Stand Fast?

Report of the Commission on Radio and Television Policy: Central, East and Southeast Europe

Chaired by

Ellen Mickiewicz
James R. Shepley Professor of Public Policy Studies
Director, DeWitt Wallace Center for Media and Democracy,
Duke University
Fellow, The Carter Center

Erhard Busek
President, European Forum Alpbach
Special Coordinator, Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe
Coordinator, Southeast European Cooperative Initiative

Rapporteur – Craig LaMay, Northwestern University

October 19-20, 2007
Vienna, Austria
The 2007 meeting of the Commission on Radio and Television Policy: Central, East and Southeast Europe was dedicated to the topic “Time to Change or Stand Fast?” Our discussions centered around questions of media independence, especially as they pertain to recent developments in countries such as Russia. I am convinced that the improvement of democracy depends on the independence of media. The permanent struggle for an independent media is crucial for the establishment of sustainable democratic societies.

The participants in this year’s Commission meeting examined the crucially significant challenges of covering war. The group asked whether traditional understandings of “war” are still applicable. Contemporary conflicts are more complex and asymmetrical with less formally outlined contours than historical wars; this fact complicates the work of journalists engaged in objective reporting. Journalists face new questions about journalistic ethics when confronting the enormous flood of information sources, including sources that are compromised or that inspire doubt. Participants also paid special attention to the issues of election coverage, of stereotypes and identities, and to the specific situations in Croatia and Ukraine.

I am delighted that the work of the Commission on Radio and Television Policy continues to be a success. The depth of the open discussions and the dedication of its members to finding solutions to current challenges are impressive.

My cordial thanks go to Ellen Mickiewicz and her team from Duke University for the excellent cooperation, and to the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation for hosting the meeting. I especially appreciate the kind support by the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, the City of Vienna, Volksbank International AG, Wolf Theiss Attorneys at Law, and UNIQA Versicherungen AG.
In 2007 the Commission on Radio and Television Policy decided to reexamine the difficult questions of covering war, journalism ethics, the blogosphere, and immigration, both resident and temporary. The participants in the Commission were taken aback by how different and more difficult these questions had become since we first discussed them more than a decade ago.

Wars occur frequently now among people who have lived side by side. Civil wars can be a by-product of globalization, especially when control of a natural resource is the driving issue. Very often, reporters are writing or photographing their own tortured families, and reporters themselves have become targets, whereas in the past there was a tacit understanding to spare the media. In turbulent times, the only witnesses may be resident journalists, victims, or refugees from the region. The Commission discussed strategies for framing these first-hand accounts with as little bias as possible.

The blogosphere has changed the way many people learn what is happening in the world. There is reasonable doubt about the accuracy and fairness of blogs. That they are here to stay is indisputable. We should be training ourselves to identify accuracy by cross-referencing, and to be able to construct a context when one is missing. Much can be learned from blogs; they represent a huge number of people and display a bulldog-like tenacity in going after a contested “fact”. Valuable though that be, the larger questions about the journalistic standards of bloggers should be brought up early in education.

We could not have had such an excellent and useful meeting without the help of Dr. Erhard Busek, Mag. Gerald Rosskogler, and the European Alpbach Forum. I thank the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation for hosting the meeting. I appreciate the generous support from the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, the City of Vienna, Volksbank International AG, Wolf Theiss Attorneys at Law, and UNIQA Versicherungen AG.
Commission on Radio and Television Policy:  
Central, East and Southeast Europe

Time to Change or Stand Fast?

Vienna, Austria  
October 19 – 20, 2007

Participants & Observers

CO-CHAIRS
Erhard Busek  President, European Forum Alpbach;  Special Coordinator, Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe
Ellen Mickiewicz  James R. Shepley Professor of Public Policy Studies, Duke University;  Director, DeWitt Wallace Center for Media and Democracy

PARTICIPANTS
Manana Aslamazyan  President, Educated Media Foundation (formerly Internews Russia);  Media Development Specialist, Internews Network, Russia
Agron Bajrami  Editor in Chief, Koha Ditore, Kosovo
Boris Bergant  Deputy General Director, Radio i Televizija Slovenija, Slovenia
Friedhelm Boschert  Chairman, CEO, and President of the Board, Volksbank International AG, Austria
Nuri M. Colakoğlu  Vice President, Dogan Media Group, Turkey
Kathleen Frankovic  Director of Surveys and Producer, CBS News, USA
Dusan Gajic  Coordinator, South East Europe TV Exchanges (SEETV), Brussels
Mehmed Halilovic  Federation Assistant Ombudsman for Media, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Miklos Haraszti  The Representative on Freedom of the Media, OSCE, Austria
Markus Heidinger  Wolf Theiss, Attorneys at Law, Austria
Ryszard Holzer  Deputy Editor in Chief, Puls Biznesu, Poland
Fivos Karzis  News Editor and Producer, City of Athens Radio, “Athens 984,” Greece
Maryte Kontrimaite  Lithuanian Journalists Society, Lithuania
Craig L. LaMay  Commission Rapporteur; Associate Professor, Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University, USA
Radomir Licina  Chairman of the Board and Senior Editor, DANAS, Serbia
Pavol Mudry  Director, SITA News Agency, Slovakia
Friedrich Orter  Journalist, Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF), Austria
Daina Ostrovska  Director of Programs, TV3, Latvia
Petar Pountchev  President of the Board of Directors, Radio FM+ Group, National Network;  Member of the Board of Private Radio Association of Bulgaria
Alina Radu  Director, Ziarul de Garda, Moldova
Andrei Richter  Director, Moscow Media Law and Policy Institute, Russia
Kenneth S. Rogerson  Director of Undergraduate Studies and Lecturer, Terry Sanford Institute of Public Policy, Duke University, USA
Rainer Rosenberg  Head of Special Programs, City of Vienna Radio, ORF
Dietrich Schwarzkopf  Former Program Director, ARD; Former Vice President, ARTE, Germany
Colin Shaw  Former Director British Broadcasting Standards Council;  Former Chief Secretary, BBC
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position/Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andriy Shevchenko</td>
<td>Member of Parliament, Ukraine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savik Shuster</td>
<td>Writer and Host, “Freedom of Speech,” ICTV, Ukraine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milan Šmid</td>
<td>Professor, Department of Journalism, Charles University, Czech Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zrinka Vрабец-Мојзес</td>
<td>Anchor and Journalist, Radio 101, Croatia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver Vujovic</td>
<td>Secretary General, South East Europe Media Organization (SEEMO), Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander Wrabetz</td>
<td>Director General, Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF), Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eser Akbaba</td>
<td>South East Europe Media Organization (SEEMO), Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otto Andre</td>
<td>Senior Manager, Marketing &amp; Communications, Volksbank International AG, Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rudolf Bretnischer</td>
<td>Fessel GfK, Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vera Budway-Strobach</td>
<td>Program Manager, Policy Association for an Open Society (PASOS), Czech Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinhard Christl</td>
<td>Head of Department, Journalism and Media Management, University of Applied Sciences of the Viennese Economic Chamber, Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivana Cucujic</td>
<td>South East Europe Media Organization (SEEMO), Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milena Dimitrova</td>
<td>Journalist and Commentator, <em>Trud</em> (daily), Bulgaria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silvia Ettl-Huber</td>
<td>Head of International Journalism Center, Danube University, Krems, Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manfred Eulert</td>
<td>European Association of Danube Journalists, Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Freund</td>
<td>Media Communications Department Head, Webster University Vienna, Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutz Gaede</td>
<td>Deutsche Journalistenschule, Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Goiser</td>
<td>PLEON Publico Public Relations &amp; Lobbying, Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabine Hartzhauer</td>
<td>Head of Business Development &amp; Marketing, Wolf Theiss, Attorneys at Law, Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Kress</td>
<td>European Association of Danube Journalists, Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Kudlak</td>
<td>Deputy Director, International Press Institute (IPI), Vienna, Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erna Lackner</td>
<td>Media Spokesperson, European Forum Alpbach, Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia Leopold</td>
<td>European Forum Alpbach, Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan Milford</td>
<td>Managing Director, Institut für den Donauraum und Mitteleuropa (IDM), Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knut Neumayer</td>
<td>Program Director Europe, Erste Foundation, Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diana Orlova</td>
<td>Press Freedom Advisor, International Press Institute, Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heinz Pechek</td>
<td>Managing Board Member, Bundesverband Materialwirtschaft, Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine Power</td>
<td>Press Freedom Advisor, Middle East Coordinator, International Press Institute, Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klaus Proempers</td>
<td>ZDF South East Europe, Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Rogerson</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerald Rosskogler</td>
<td>Managing Director, European Forum Alpbach, Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernhard Seyringer</td>
<td>Society for Cultural Policy, Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathias Stamm</td>
<td>Deutsche Journalistenschule, Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelley L. Stonecipher</td>
<td>Assistant Director, DeWitt Wallace Center for Media and Democracy, Duke University, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Surovic</td>
<td>European Association of Danube Journalists, Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin Traxl</td>
<td>Head, Cultural Department, ORF Television. Austrian Broadcasting Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otto L. Tremetzberger</td>
<td>Board Member, Austrian Association of Community Radio Stations, Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara Trionfi</td>
<td>International Press Institute (IPI), Vienna, Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikolaus Wisiak</td>
<td>General Manager, Pre TV, Vienna, Austria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Time to Change or Stand Fast?

Introduction

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and most of the authoritarian governments of Central, East and Southeast Europe, most of the media sectors in those regions have significantly transformed themselves, and several countries have greatly improved the environment for free media and free expression. However, the developments have not been uniformly toward the establishment and protection of a free press. Some countries that struggled early – Ukraine, for example – have improved the environment for independent journalism considerably in recent years, while others – Russia, notably – have seen the breathing space for news and public affairs reporting grow more constricted. These mixed developments were the focus of the 2007 meeting in Vienna of the Commission for Radio and Television Policy, which, as Commission co-Chair Erhard Busek emphasized in his opening remarks, is committed to the idea that “the improvement of democracy depends on the independence of media.” The Commission then examined several issues that challenge the exercise of media independence everywhere but are especially important to post-Soviet Europe’s new democracies, namely the coverage of war, journalism ethics, the fair and full coverage of elections, the use and abuse of polls, and news coverage of minorities and vulnerable populations.

In each of these areas, said Commission co-Chair Ellen Mickiewicz, “we have seen problems emerge that we once thought were solved.” In some cases, she said, almost all of the gains of the preceding years have been lost. Mickiewicz noted, for example, that one Commission participant, Manana Aslamazyan, head of the Educated Media Foundation (formerly Internews Russia), was at the time of the October meeting living in Paris because it was unsafe for her to be in Moscow. Aslamazyan herself said that independent journalism in Russia has largely been crushed by violence, “conformism,” and self-censorship. In broadcast news, she said, “you know in advance what the news readers are going to say, time and again.”

Other challenges are new. Communications technologies that over the past decade have changed the economics of news everywhere are having the same effect in the Commission regions, fragmenting audiences and undermining what were once reliable business plans. In large parts of the world, journalists are no longer seen as neutral observers of political and military conflict, but as unilaterals and thus legitimate targets. The number of journalists killed around the world has gone steadily up each year for the past several years. The mobility of reporting tools makes it possible for journalists to get to scenes of military conflict more easily and stay longer than they once could, greatly increasing the risk to their safety.

But there is good news, too. The map of Southeast Europe and the composition of the European Union have both been remade in the past decade, with many more countries committed to democratic futures. Ukraine has become, in Andriy Shevchenko’s words, the country of “recovered journalism.” Informal networks of journalists have arisen throughout Central, Southeast and Eastern Europe that strengthen the legal and normative standing of press freedom. Against this mixed record, the 2007 Commission meeting asked, what are the realistic opportunities for journalists to improve their craft and strengthen its standing as an institution that supports the formation of civil society and democratic governance?

Covering War

There is no subject like war – the organized, mechanized, mass destruction of lives and property – to confound journalistic notions of objectivity, fairness and balance. This is true even for wars in which journalists are non-partisan observers, not allied by citizenship, kinship, religion, or ethnicity with the combatants they cover. But for many Commission participants, the
experience of war has been deeply personal. As Mehmed Halilovic said in his opening remarks on the subject, “Before the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, I was a Middle East correspondent, and as a reporter I was able to cover both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Iraq-Iran War, and the Israeli invasion of South Lebanon. But when it came to covering war in my own backyard, it was impossible to talk about neutrality and objectivity.”

That experience, Halilovic said, changed his views on war reporting. “Our duty is to provide facts,” he said, “but how can we get facts, from which side? Do we do our job properly if we find a third party who can provide ‘objective’ facts and argument?

“In our case, we witnessed massacres in Sarajevo during a three-and-a-half year siege. Each day there were thousands of incoming shells, and many of their victims were very young. Only on a few occasions was there any doubt about who committed these crimes. What was the job of journalists then? To tell the story from inside the town? From the hillside where the Bosnian Serbs fired the shells? Do we do our best professional job when we tell the public what happened, or do we give them contradictory reports from both sides? We relied on United Nations troops for facts on most occasions, but they, too, had contradictory reports. Someone in a UN unit, depending on where he was from, would also have an interest in the presentation of a story.”

Making matters more difficult, Halilovic said, is that local journalists often do not enjoy the access to the warring parties that international journalists do (because they are seen as partisans), and so they can find themselves with no way to gather the information they need, never mind verify it. To some extent, said Friedrich Orter, foreign correspondent for the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF), the problem of maintaining professional distance in war now affects all reporters. “In recent years, war reporting has been transformed by being able to transmit live from the battlefield,” Orter said. “No longer do you get what you need and get out. And the more time you spend on the firing line, the more likely you are to get hurt.” It is all the more difficult to hold one’s sources at a professional distance, especially if you depend on them for your safety. “We need new strategies for newsgathering in war,” Orter said. “When we work independently of armies, we are precluded from getting the information we need. Alternatively, when we work with armies we become a part of the war machine we seek to cover.”

Journalist Agron Bajrami, editor in chief of Koha Ditore in Pristina, said that in the long build up to and during the 1998 war in Kosovo, journalists like himself were unavoidably “perceived as part of the conflict.” Part of that perception was the creation of the government in Belgrade, “which thought of us as representing Albanian positions and so considered an enemy,” Bajrami said. The government clamped down on domestic coverage of the conflict, forcing local media to rely on reports from international news agencies like Reuters and the Associated Press.

But “when you report war as a member of society involved in war,” Bajrami said, the usual norms for reporting are all but impossible to maintain. “I have had the unlucky situation of finding out that a family member was killed, then have to treat that death as a news item. You have to cry for 20 minutes first. You can’t be ‘unbiased.’ And in a country where journalism is traditionally not very professional, suddenly, in the midst of war, we are supposed to become professional?”

In discussion among Commission members, co-Chair Erhard Busek observed that many modern wars are simply not “wars” in any traditional sense and asked if it was wise to cover them that way. German broadcast news executive Dietrich Schwarzkopf pointed out that most of today’s conflicts are not between nation states but between factions in civil wars. Other conflicts are asymmetric, between conventional military powers and guerrilla fighters. These factors have made modern war “informal,” Schwarzkopf said – there is no declaration of war beforehand and no concluding peace treaty afterward. (The Kosovo War, for example, was concluded by a ceasefire, not a treaty.) All of these factors, in turn, have made war much more unpredictable and lethal for non-combatants, particularly for civilians – and for journalists, too.

Nuri Colakoğlu of Turkey’s Dogan Media Group added that journalists who cover war have to be more knowledgeable and sophisticated in their choice of sources because there are
now so many of them, from military officers to civilian eyewitnesses to international aid
organizations. There is sometimes so much information, so much of it conflicting, that the
modern war correspondent needs to be much more responsible in deciding what to report and
how to report it. Fivos Karzis of Greece said that commitment to that kind of reporting is costly.
“Foreign news is already in decline because of expense,” he said, “and live coverage of wars is
very expensive. Embedded journalism is a way to cope with those costs, but it is an invention of
the military.”

Serbian journalist Radomir Licina spoke for many at the Commission meeting when he
said that it was simply impossible to cover war “professionally and impartially,” and the
“simplification” that characterizes so much war reporting may even be necessary to make sense
of the “evil that is war.” The best journalists can do, Licina said – and what they often fail to do –
“is to do the job right before the war begins. Explain and analyze the causes of conflict.
Explain and analyze the evidence offered by those who argue for war.”

Bajrami said news organizations must also “cover the post-war properly. If you don’t,
you are preparing for the next war. What happens to the civilian population after war? Do
refugees go back? What happens to the people who don’t go back? Journalists need to go and
check on the stories they hear, they need to get the best version of the truth they can, even if they
can’t get all of it.”

Based on this discussion, the Commission made these recommendations:

News organizations should avoid except by quote the use of ideological terms to identify any
conflict, for example, “the war on terror” or “freedom fighter.”

During conflicts, especially civil wars, a member of one side or a victim should not be excluded
as a source because of imputed bias. If there is a justified suspicion of bias, it should be included
in the report.

A New Look at Journalism Ethics

The ethical dilemmas that face journalists who are trying to gather information and report
it responsibly are in broad terms universal. Moldovan journalist Alina Radu summed them up as
“how to tell the truth and work as a journalist.” Political pressures can certainly affect
journalists’ ethical decision-making, but decisions made for economic reasons are probably more
common and more easily rationalized away as just part of the business. Former British
Broadcasting Corporation executive Colin Shaw described the problem of (lowering)
professional standards in journalism as the direct result of increased competition in the media
sector. Much of that competition is not for primary content but for audience attention and
advertising revenues, Shaw said. This, combined with declining government allotments to public
broadcasting services, has created an environment where news and public affairs programming
are increasingly (and necessarily) conceived and packaged as entertainment.

In some of the transition countries represented by the Commission membership, the
ordinary dilemmas that face journalists are made more difficult by the presence of widespread
corruption and, with it, the potential for violent retribution against journalists and their sources.
Radu, for instance, talked about a story involving the sexual abuse of Moldovan girls and women
by United Nations soldiers, including U.S. soldiers. In covering this story, Radu said, she did not
use the names of victims of abuse or the name of a U.S. soldier who had admitted to buying and
selling girls. Radu was concerned that without identifying the victims or perpetrators by name,
the story was not credible. Even then, Radu said, two of the female sources for her story were
killed, “so we had to stop everything.”

There was some discussion about blogs as a non-traditional but potentially useful way of
exposing corruption. The theory was that such publication could provide some of the anonymity
required by dangerous stories or, alternatively, that it would encourage further investigation and publicity by international news stories. During the Balkan wars, said Slovenian broadcast executive and journalist Boris Bergant, the Internet was used intensely both by journalists, by partisans and by expatriates “to express themselves and to get additional information.” The problem, Bergant said, is that many online information sources provide no context or information that reporters can use to check the information they find there. Young reporters, said Slovakian journalist Pavol Mudry, don’t always have the discipline to distinguish credible from non-credible online sources, and sometimes bristle at their editors’ insistence that stories be verifiable or even that sources be identifiable.

This problem of accountability in online publication led to disagreement among the Commission members as to whether such blogging was either ethical or professional – in short, whether it deserved to fly under the banner of “journalism.” Czech media scholar Milan Smid said that blogs were not yet journalism but could be “if they respect traditional methods and standards for reporting.” Polling expert and CBS News executive Kathleen Frankovic argued to general agreement that “partisan and ideological voices constitute the blogosphere” and that most were not credible as news sources because they did no original reporting and no fact-checking of the stories they picked up from and passed around the Internet’s “echo chamber.” Nonetheless, Frankovic pointed out, there have been important news stories that broke first in blogs (in the United States, for example, reporting on about the politically motivated firings of several Justice Department lawyers began on a blog, “Talking Points Memo,” more than a year before it broke in the mainstream media ). On other occasions, bloggers have served as the de facto fact checkers on stories that were first published in the more traditional news media (for example, a CBS News report on President Bush’s military service), only to have their key findings called into question after further investigation by bloggers. In other parts of the world, for example the Arab Middle East, mainstream media will often report on stories that break on blogs but that they could not themselves report independently for fear of government sanctions.

After some discussion on the journalistic merits of blogs, Andriy Shevchenko asserted that the point was academic, that Internet publication by non-journalists had already changed the economic and social environment for news. “If bloggers do not fit into the standard definition of journalism,” he said, “then it is time to change the definition.” The citizen journalism movement wherever it exists often presents itself as the antidote to corporate media, which after all are owned or managed by individuals, political parties and politicians, or private corporations which naturally want to use their media to advance their interests. Nor is there any reason to think, Shevchenko said, that journalists who work for mainstream media are necessarily more “professional” than their blogger brethren. “Envelope journalism” – the reportorial practice of taking payment for writing or publishing stories favorable to powerful interests – is still common in much of the world, including many of the countries served by the Commission.

Based on this discussion, the Commission made these recommendations with respect to journalism ethics:

Because there are more sources of information than ever before, including especially blogs, journalists should be held to high ethical and empirical standards in newsgathering and reporting. Those standards should be emphasized in journalists’ training and in media literacy.

To ensure credibility, journalists and news organizations should never accept external payments or favors in return for favorable news coverage.

Election Coverage

Few matters are as controversial or as difficult as the use of broadcasting during political campaigns. Candidates and political parties want access to broadcast media to make themselves
and their views known, and media want to exercise editorial discretion in determining who gets that access. The result is a public policy dilemma: If citizens are to exercise their right to vote meaningfully, they must be able to see and hear candidates talk about their positions. But which candidates? Some or all? A policy of unrestricted access will almost certainly create chaos on the air that serves no one. All democracies, therefore, have devised complex rules about the use of broadcasting in campaigns, though those rules vary widely and no system is ideal. The United States, for example, is the only major democracy that does not by law provide some grant of unpaid time to candidates for national office; candidates instead must raise money to purchase broadcast time. In the United Kingdom, by contrast, political advertising is prohibited and free time is awarded to political parties according to formula.

For many of the countries served by the Commission, public policy on broadcasting and elections is still a work in progress. In Turkey, said Nuri Colakoğlu, public policy on political broadcasting has developed hand in hand with election law generally. Under current law, he said, no political advertising is allowed on television (though print and billboard advertising are okay), with the result that local television stations (of which there are more than 220) accept “under-the-table payments for giving candidates the opportunity to appear on news and talk shows and talk about anything they like.”

In Greece, said Fivos Karzis, the regulation of political broadcasting was not even an issue in 1974, when the country emerged from military dictatorship. But in the last decade, with the rise of private broadcasting and powerful media moguls, Greece has tried to control and make transparent the ways in which candidates use the airwaves. Parties and candidates may not purchase airtime; rather airtime is awarded to each party according to formula. Winning candidates are required to make public a detailed financial report within three months of an election. The report must include all media expenditures, which are limited according to the size of a politician’s constituency. A politician who fails to make such a report can lose his or her seat. Greece also provides its candidates with some free time, and it tries to distinguish between uses that are essentially political and those that are legitimate news. Each candidate is entitled to one appearance in a national broadcast and two appearances in local broadcasts (of which only one may occur in the last week of a campaign). The problem with this regulation, Karzis said, is its narrow interpretation of what counts as a candidate’s appearance. At present, he said, “even the shortest statement in a news story counts.” Finally, seeking to curb the influence of pollsters, Greece only allows the reporting of polls in print publications and not in electronic media at any time during a campaign and no poll publication of any kind in the two weeks before an election. The results of this “over-regulation,” Karzis said, are mixed. On the one hand, this regulation has diminished the natural advantage that incumbents have in a campaign. On the other hand, some of the law’s prohibitions, particularly on the use of polls, have created a bull market for rumors in the absence of solid reporting.

Kathleen Frankovic, director of surveys and producer for CBS News, agreed that polls can as easily distort public opinion as inform it, but only when journalists do not know (and therefore do not report) essential details about how a poll was conducted and by whom and whether its data yield any valid conclusions.

Election-day exit polls are particularly troubling, Frankovic said, because they are often conducted by people who support one candidate or another. If journalists know that, they do not always report it. If they did report it, several essential questions would follow: Where was a poll conducted? Who was included in the survey sample? Does the poll reflect a particular region, or the country as a whole? Who were the interviewers who did the poll, and were they properly trained? These questions are especially important, Frankovic said, because exit polls are often used to determine whether there was electoral fraud or cheating.

Of course, cheating can occur somewhere other than in the counting of ballots. Election law in Croatia, said Zrinka Vrabec-Mojzes, is fair on the surface, but the problem lies in political appointments to government-controlled television. “We think lots of advertisements for ruling party candidates on national television were never paid for by the party but by tax money,” she
said, “but we can’t prove it” because no law compels transparency in campaign finance. In Bulgaria, said journalist Georgi Gotev, elections are a “bonanza” for broadcasters, who routinely air as “news” what are in fact political spots prepared by campaigns.

Another problem in countries that grant politicians free time is the decision about which candidates qualify for it. Early experiments in the Commission region proved unmanageable. In 1990 Czechoslovakia, said Milan Smid, every party in the national elections – more than two dozen of them – were given four hours of free time. The result for voters, Smid said, was “boredom,” and viewers quickly tuned out. Today the Czech Republic continues to give free time to candidates, but has not solved the problem of how to deal with fringe parties. Vanity candidates and one-issue candidates are common in every democracy. In the United States, for example, more than 200 people declare themselves candidates for president every four years.

How is a media system supposed to treat fairly these candidates’ demands for time while not creating a riot of competing voices on the airwaves? Or worse, run the risk of turning political broadcasting into a farce? There is no perfect solution to this dilemma. In the United States, for example, candidates have no right to free time but must pay for it. The only exception to that rule is when a candidate makes a non-news appearance in a broadcast, which would then entitle all other candidates for that same office to equal time. When former President Ronald Reagan was running for re-election, for example, U.S. television stations could not broadcast any of his old movies. If they had, the stations would have had to give all other candidates for president – typically more than 200 – an equal opportunity to appear on the air. Historically, the problem with this system has been determining when a candidate’s appearance constitutes news, in which case it does not trigger the equal opportunity rule, and when it is not news.

By contrast, almost all other democracies give candidates or parties, including fringe candidates, some measure of free time. In Croatia’s most recent national elections, said Vrabec-Mojzes, one candidate used his free time to take out his false teeth to show viewers. Another used his time to promote his company. A third prayed. “Needless to say,” she said, “we thought editors should have been given some opportunity to screen some of these candidates.” In Britain, political advertising is not allowed, and there, too, said Colin Shaw, political broadcasts must invite every candidate for an office to participate, “no matter how wild or weird” the candidate or the party platform. When a candidate for an office is mentioned even in a bona fide news story, every other candidate for that office has the right to be named, too. The other candidates have to be mentioned on air only once in the day, however, so a newsreader will typically list all of them in a single newscast late in the day.

The Commission concluded this part of its discussion with these recommendations:

*Journalists should make every effort to report on expenditures and contributions to politicians, candidates and/or parties. The government should publish this information regularly as a public record.*

*When reporting poll results, media outlets should always identify when, where and how a poll was conducted, what organization conducted it, who paid for it, the number of persons polled, and the exact question(s) asked.*

**Values, Stereotyping and Identity**

One of the world’s most ambitious projects in democratization is the creation of a Europe united by common political institutions and a common market. Historically, Europe has been united through blood and conquest (under Charlemagne, Napoleon and Hitler). The post-World War II effort at peaceful and productive union began with the 1952 creation of the European Coal and Steel Community – essentially a partnership between Germany and France. Thereafter a series of treaties created new political institutions and, for much of Europe, a common
currency. But both those who are skeptical of a united Europe and those who support it question
the idea of a common European identity. Who or what is ‘Europe’?

This question has been put in sharper relief in the last decade as the European Union has
grown from 15 countries to 27, almost all of the new entrants from Central and Southeast
Europe. Most of the new members were once Warsaw Pact countries, and some are new states,
such as Slovenia and Slovakia, emerged from dissolved ones.

Immigration both within Europe and from outside – from North Africa and South Asia,
for instance – has also challenged the idea of a common European identity. Then there is Turkey,
granted accession status in 1999. If admitted to the European Union, Turkey would, within a
generation, eclipse Germany as its most populous member, and thus under current rules would
command a large number of seats in the European Union’s legislative bodies.

In discussion at the 2007 Commission meeting, Boris Bergant, the new vice president of
the European Broadcasting Union, said that “despite years of intercultural dialogue, there is still
a division between old and new Europe.” This division, Bergant said, will continue at least for a
time. “Only the younger generation will change the course, because they travel around all of
Europe much more.” Often they are traveling as immigrants looking for work, but rarely are
they well integrated into their new societies. Often they are poor. Rarely do they speak a
language other than their own.

Even more dramatic, Bergant said, is the separate existence lived by immigrants from
outside of Europe. Many European countries have immigrant populations of 10 percent or more,
he said, and yet these people are all but invisible in the media. “In spite of the fact that Arabic-
speaking nations are part of French life, for example, they would never appear on the screen. The
same is true in Germany, where it is nearly impossible to see someone on the screen who
represents even large minorities [such as the Turks].” The traditional news approach to these and
other minority groups such as the Roma. Bergant said, is to do programs “specific to them and
broadcast over their own media. Instead, journalists should integrate programs about these
groups into daily news programming.”

Former German broadcaster and journalism educator Dietrich Schwarzkopf said he
doubted that complete integration of large minority groups was even possible. More than 14
percent of Germany’s population is from Turkey, he said, and another 11 percent are from the
Balkans. The Turks, in particular “tend to form separate communities. They have a high
unemployment rate, are a mostly young demographic, and watch television programs in their
own language.” The media in Germany try to depict these minority groups in a balanced way,
Schwarzkopf said, including the violence that comes out of those communities and the violence
that is sometimes directed at them.

In Latvia, said Daina Ostrovska, the media are divided into those that serve Latvian-
speaking and those that serve Russian-speaking audiences. The latter constitute about a third of
the population, and though they are well integrated into the country’s social and economic life,
the news media will often imagine and exploit differences between them. “The Russian
government has tried to influence the Russian press in Latvia,” Ostrovska said, “and with some
success.” Often local Russian-language media are “intentionally negative about Latvia and very
positive about Russia.”

But some of the most exaggeratedly xenophobic media are in Western Europe, said
Bulgarian journalist Georgi Gotev. In Britain, he said, the British tabloids “went out of their way
to find negative stereotypes about Bulgarians” when that country, along with Romania, was
admitted to the European Union last year. “There were stories that immigrants from these two
countries would flood Britain and cause problems,” Gotev said. In Austria, said Commission co-
chair Erhard Busek, “The papers are not only reporting immigrant stereotypes, but advocating
for them. We have the large-circulation tabloids like the Kronen Zeitung campaigning against
illegal immigrants and asylum seekers. Good journalists are not really touching on the subject of
immigration.”
There was no consensus in the Commission’s discussion on just what “identities” were at risk, if any, in a Europe transformed by immigration and economic integration. One Commission member rejected the new Europe-old Europe distinction as the politically harmful creation of U.S. President George Bush. Many Commission members from the “new” Europe seemed to think there was something to it, at least with respect to economic differences between old and new. But all agreed that news and public affairs media should not passively report or repeat injurious stereotypes (or outright fictions) about immigrant populations; these serve only to isolate immigrants further and create distrust. The challenge of adapting to demographic change may be the greatest challenge facing Europe, said Agron Bajrami. “In the Balkans, we have been witnesses to how stereotyping leads to violence. Most journalists are blindly reporting the stereotyping that comes from politicians. Some journalists may say that our job is to report those things, but we have to resist the negative spin that comes with them.”

From its discussion, the members of the Commission made these recommendations:

*Journalists should not ignore in their reporting ethnic, racial, religious and other minority communities resident in their countries. That reporting should not be unduly politically correct and should be without prejudice.*

*Reporting on minorities should not rely only on a limited number of community spokespersons. It should employ first-hand observation of and interviews with members of minority groups less prominent than the voices usually heard in news reports.*

**Conclusion**

Journalists in democratic societies repeatedly confront reporting challenges that cannot be solved without having to choose between competing ethical and social values. Many journalists in the transition states served by the Commission have barely had an opportunity to adapt to those challenges, to establish their independence and professionalism, before they have been confronted with technological, political and economic changes that have transformed the environment in which they work. How they and their countries adapt to those challenges – in law, in professional norms, in their media system architecture – is one of the compelling stories of democratization.
In special reports for the 2007 Commission meeting, journalists from Ukraine and Croatia described continuing problems for independent journalism in their respective countries. Andriy Schevchenko, a broadcast journalist and now a legislator from Ukraine, described his country as a place of “recovered journalism.” Despite poor reporting and low ethical standards, he said, Ukraine is on the verge of making significant positive changes to its media system. Within a year or two, a public broadcasting system will replace the old, politically controlled state broadcast media. State print media will also be largely privatized, in part because new legislation will allow greater foreign investment. The hope is that foreign investment will make ownership in Ukraine’s media more transparent and less political.

The bad news for Ukraine, Schevchenko said, is the almost routine way in which journalists and news organizations take payment for stories. A report in an evening newscast, he said, can run from $25,000 to $70,000. “It’s illegal, but it happens. It’s cash, so there are no taxes, and you get it right away.”

In Croatia, said Zrinka Vrabec-Mojzes, media reforms have stalled in large part because there is no longer broadcast monitoring by Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The major power in the Croatian broadcast market is state television, which commands some 80 percent of the prime time audience, gets 70 percent of all broadcast advertising, and also earns revenues from a license fee. Public television is also a political institution, Vrabec-Mojzes said, with most of its major executive appointments held by nationalists left over from the era of Franjo Tudjman, Croatian president until 1999. Not surprising, political broadcasting in Croatia tends to favor strongly the ruling party. With Boris Bergant, Vrabec-Mojzes urged that monitoring of public broadcasting regulation and governance resume in Croatia and throughout the Balkans.
The Commission on Radio and Television Policy

The Commission on Radio and Television Policy was founded in 1990 by former U.S. president Jimmy Carter to encourage democratic media policies and practices. Today, the Commission brings together media practitioners, managers and experts in both the public and private sectors from more than 20 countries in Central, East, Southeast and West Europe and the United States, to discuss and debate alternatives for media policymaking. Ellen Mickiewicz, Director of The DeWitt Wallace Center for Media and Democracy at Duke University, and Erhard Busek, former Vice Chancellor of Austria, director of the European Forum Alpbach, and Special Coordinator for the Stability Pact, co-chair the Commission’s annual meetings.

The idea for the Commission was born in the mid-1980s when Dr. Mickiewicz began working with former President Carter on issues of international security and arms control. They discovered that changes in the way the Soviet Union used television signaled an extraordinary departure from past policy. In the fall of 1991, the first official Commission meeting was organized at The Carter Center in Atlanta, Georgia, bringing together media practitioners, experts and policymakers from both the United States and Russia.

The Commission adopted a unique format. First, it is preceded by a small planning meeting in which a working group examines an emerging media policy issues and identifies the dilemmas and trade-offs involved in varying policy solutions. These form the agenda for the larger Commission meeting. Second, when the Commission meets, it does so to construct a comprehensive menu of policy options and the trade-offs of each so that participating members can consider a range of alternatives to meet local needs. Third, the Commission formulates recommendations which place the policy options in the context of a freer and more responsible media. They move through difficult and often contentious negotiations, from varying positions, to a set of strong recommendations.

Since 1991, the Commission has met annually and made substantive recommendations on a range of policy issues, including the following:

- **November 1992, Alma Ata, Kazakhstan**: *Television News Coverage of Minorities*
- **November 1993, The Carter Center, Atlanta, Georgia**: *Changing Economic Relations Arising from Democratization, Privatization, and New Technologies*
- **September 1994, St. Petersburg, Russia**: *Broadcaster Autonomy and the State*
- **October 1995, The Carter Center, Atlanta, Georgia**: *Pluralism in the Electronic Media: The Role of Technology*
- **September 1996, Salzburg, Austria**: *Principles and Paths for Democratic Media*
- **September 1997, Vienna, Austria**: *Globalization and Public Broadcasting*
- **October 1998, Vienna, Austria**: *Television and Political News.*
- **October 1999, Vienna, Austria**: *Globalization and Political News*
- **November 2000, Vienna, Austria**: *Global Media, Expanding Choices, Fragmenting Audiences: Dilemmas for Democracy*
- **October 2001, Vienna, Austria**: *Crisis and the Press: Balancing Civil Liberty, Press Freedom and Security*
- **October 2002, Vienna, Austria**: *Media Dilemmas: Covering Ethnic and Other Conflict*
- **November 2004, Vienna, Austria**: *Media Coverage of Crime Corruption and Economic Development*
- **October 2005, Vienna, Austria**: *Media Regulation, Censorship, and the Potential for Corruption: Practices Protecting or Controlling the Public*
- **October 2006, Vienna, Austria**: *The News Abroad: Foreign Conflicts, Foreign Publics, & Foreign Coverage*

Until 1996, the Commission focused on media policy development in the former Soviet Union and a small number of countries in Eastern Europe. Then, in 1997, the DeWitt Wallace Center at Duke University became the Commission’s home and its focus expanded, becoming more regional to include East and West Europe and the United States, as well as the European part of the former Soviet Union. This has provided a far broader range of models with which to consider policies for democracy and media and enables the Commission to include countries in which public-service broadcasting is the preferred model, as well as the United States where commercial broadcasting both preceded and overshadows public broadcasting.

One of the most often noted results of the Commission has been its guidebooks. The first of these, *Television and Elections,* is available in more than a dozen languages. There have been three editions in Russian and two in Ukrainian. The USIA makes it mandatory for some of its training programs. It has been used in the Romanian, West Bank and Bosnian elections. A prominent Lithuanian translated the book into his own language and was subsequently sent to Bosnia to advise on the elections. He found the book’s Bosnian translation being used there. The book has influenced parliamentary debate and parts have been written into Russian law. Three additional guidebooks have been published, *Television/Radio News and Minorities* (Russian, Belarussian, and Lithuanian and forthcoming in Kazakh and Ukrainian); *Television, Radio and Privatization* (English and Russian); and *Television Autonomy and the State* (English and Russian). An update of *Television and Elections* and a compendium volume entitled *Democracy on the Air* were published in November 1999.

The Commission is headquartered at the DeWitt Wallace Center for Media and Democracy at Duke University’s Terry Sanford Institute of Public Policy. The Center is founded on the premise that free and responsible news media are essential for a democratic society. Its research, undergraduate and graduate classes, international media policy development, and a media fellows program – the largest in the U.S. – are dedicated to encouraging open and responsible media policies and practices around the world. (www.media.duke.edu/dewitt).
DeWitt Wallace Center for Media and Democracy

The DeWitt Wallace Center for Media and Democracy of the Terry Sanford Institute of Public Policy at Duke University was founded on the premise that free news media are essential to the sustainability of democracy. Combining scholarly research and real-world experience, the Center supports a policy of democratic free media in the United States and around the globe.

Policy Development
The Center convenes international meetings of news executives, broadcast regulators, public opinion analysts, journalists and scholars to debate the pros and cons of media policy choices facing emerging democracies. Some of this work, in collaboration with former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and The Carter Center, has resulted in recommendations for a range of policy options addressing political advertising, election coverage, ethnic conflict, public service broadcasting, media ownership, and broadcaster autonomy. Recommendations on the role of television in elections were cited in a 1993 decree on election coverage policies in Russia and have been used by journalists and policymakers during elections in the Baltic countries, Ukraine, Bosnia and the Middle East. The Center’s publications have been translated into more than a dozen languages, are used in journalism schools in the former Soviet Union and USIA training programs in Eastern/Central Europe, most recently in Bulgaria and for the 1999 Russian parliamentary elections, and have been distributed in Africa and Haiti. In 1998, the Center co-sponsored an international conference on Media and Development in Ethiopia. The conference was co-chaired by former President Carter, DeWitt Wallace Center Director Ellen Mickiewicz, and Aspen Institute Vice President Charles Firestone. Participants included Ethiopian government officials, including the Vice Minister of Information and Culture representing the Prime Minister, as well as representatives from the private press, scholars, foundations, corporations, NGOs and international press organizations. Conference recommendations are being used as the basis for a series of policy development and training activities in Ethiopia and at Duke University.

Research and Education
Undergraduate and graduate classes are designed to offer future journalists – and private and public sector leaders who will interact with them – a thorough understanding of the role of the news media in the policymaking process. Through instruction and internships, students learn about the principles and the practice of journalism, while mastering the broader background of studies in public policy, politics, economics, history and other liberal arts. They have opportunities to study with the following leading research scholars as well as prominent journalists, commentators and policy makers: Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist William Raspberry of The Washington Post, former Time Magazine associate editor and senior writer Susan Tifft, electronic publisher and former entertainment lawyer Kip Frey, and documentary photographers Alex Harris and Margaret Sartor. Our faculty and research fellows examine timely media issues, such as the impact of TV violence (James Hamilton), the role of television in democratization (Ellen Mickiewicz), the quality of democratic media in the global marketplace (Frederick Mayer), and the relationship between media ownership and press policy (Susan Tifft).

Media Fellowships
More than 600 print and broadcast journalists have studied at the DeWitt Wallace Center from the United States and abroad. Fellows study public policy, politics, international affairs, environment, economics, history, business, law, and new media technologies. Graduates of this professional development program have won top journalism awards, established innovative news programs and independent broadcast stations in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, launched an on-line news service in Africa, and assumed leadership positions in media enterprises all over the world.
European Forum Alpbach

Every August since 1945, the European Forum Alpbach has taken place in the Tyrolean mountain village of Alpbach. For almost three weeks, Alpbach becomes the “Village of Thinkers” or the “Other Magic Mountain,” as it was called by the Forum’s founding father, Otto Molden.

Speakers and participants, both renowned experts and students, from all parts of the world, from science, business and politics, meet in Alpbach to discuss current questions in an interdisciplinary way. The open character of the event creates an atmosphere of tolerance for a variety of opinions and contributes to finding a consensus beyond national, ideological or disciplinary barriers.

The program of the European Forum Alpbach is comprised of three main parts:

**Seminar Week**
10 to 12 seminars on different scientific topics are held on six half-days. The seminars are conducted by high-level experts and encourage open discussions.

**Alpbach Symposia**
Conferences lasting two or three days each are organized on the general themes of architecture, reform, technology, politics, economy, and health. Additionally, specialized workshops are offered in the fields of banking, film and EU networking. The “Tyrol Day” deals with the achievements of Tyrolean science.

**Alpbach Summer School Courses**
The Summer School courses are dedicated to the issue of “European Law and European Integration.” The target group is students and young graduates.

The scientific program is accompanied by a comprehensive cultural program. The exhibitions, concerts, and lectures held in the setting of the European Forum Alpbach help young artists present their works to the public. The “fireside talks” – spontaneously organized meetings with high-level personalities – are especially notable events at Alpbach.

The participation of numerous young people is made possible by a scholarship program. The success of this initiative, financed by the philanthropic support of foundations, enterprises, and public institutions, enables the participation of more than 400 scholarship holders from different countries every year.

The Alpbach Initiative Groups and Clubs play a significant role in the success of the scholarship program. These sister institutions of the European Forum Alpbach have been founded in numerous European countries. In addition to fundraising and advertising for scholarships, they represent the idea of Alpbach all year through the organization of regular meetings and of local Alpbach events.
Meanwhile, more than 2,500 persons from over 50 countries accept the invitation to participate in the European Forum Alpbach. Everyone interested can take part in the events. The official working languages are English and German.

The administration of the European Forum Alpbach is carried out by a non-profit organization with the same name located in Vienna and chaired by Erhard Busek. The permanent office in Vienna prepares the annual Forum together with cooperating institutions and organizes special events on political and social questions during the year at different venues in Austria and other European countries.