

# Working Paper

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**NEVENA RŠUMOVIĆ**

**The Uncertain  
Future: Centers  
for Investigative  
Journalism in Bosnia  
and Herzegovina  
and Serbia**



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# The Uncertain Future

## Centers for Investigative Journalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia

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Nevena Ršumović



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1.	INTRODUCTION	8
2.	THE MODEL: NON-PROFIT INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM ORGANIZATIONS	11
3.	INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING AND CONTEXTUAL CHALLENGES	16
4.	SUPPORTING DEVELOPMENT OF INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING IN BIH AND SERBIA	23
5.	CASE STUDIES	31
5.1	THE CENTER FOR INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING (CIN)	31
	The Establishment of CIN	31
	The Model	32
	Donor Assistance to the Center	35
	Effects of CIN Stories	36
	Reputation and Cooperation with Local Media	37
	Pressures and Threats	38
	Legal Insecurity and Floating Laws	39
	Sustainability of CIN	39
5.2	THE CENTER FOR INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM SERBIA (CINS)	40
	The Establishment of CINS	40
	The Model	42
	Donor Assistance to the Center	43
	Cooperation with Local Media	45
	Interaction with Politics and Businesses	46
	Reactions of State Institutions	46
	Sustainability of CINS	47
6.	FINAL REMARKS	49
7.	BIBLIOGRAPHY	52
8.	ANNEX 1: LIST OF INTERVIEWS	56
9.	ABOUT AUTHOR	57

# 1.

## Introduction

In the past decade, independent nonprofit centers devoted to the production of investigative journalism according to the highest standards were established in the Western Balkans, joining a world-wide trend of investigative journalism migrating from mainstream media into specialized organizations. This study focuses on two such centers – one in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and one in Serbia - aiming to understand how such a model of an organization, successful primarily in the U.S, but also in several other places, can operate in the specific conditions of the media markets of the two countries. As the examined centers have as their role-models mainly similar centers in the U.S, the question is how applicable the U.S. nonprofit investigative journalism model is in the Western Balkan countries and are we, possibly, witnessing what Zielonka and Mancini dub “the opaque imitation of external models” referring to imported models that “have been put in practice in very different environments from those in which they originated”?<sup>1</sup> Additionally, the study examines the role of the specifics of donor assistance in the Western Balkans on the operation and future of these two centers.

While there are many definitions of investigative journalism, there is a broad understanding among professionals that its components are “systematic, in-depth, and original research and reporting, often involving the unearthing of secrets.”<sup>2</sup> We could add that it covers issues which are in the public interest. It often entails heavy use of public records and data-driven journalism, and focuses on social justice and accountability.<sup>3</sup> While some claim that all good reporting should be investigative, the reality is that methods of investigative reporting can take years to master.<sup>4</sup> Kaplan warns that investigative journalism “should not be confused with what has been dubbed “leak journalism” – quick-hit scoops gained by the leaking of documents or tips, typically by those in political power,”<sup>5</sup> which is a common case in the Western Balkans.

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<sup>1</sup> Jan Zielonka and Paolo Mancini, *Executive Summary: A Media Map of Central and Eastern Europe* (Oxford: University of Oxford, 2011), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> David E. Kaplan, *Global Investigative Journalism: Strategies for Support: A Report to the Center for International Media Assistance* (Washington: Center for International Media Assistance, 2013), p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

Donors recognized the contribution of investigative journalism to accountability, development and democracy and included it in programs aimed at strengthening independent media, fighting corruption and promoting accountability, good governance and democracy.<sup>6</sup> In the Western Balkans, donors have used three main approaches aimed at fostering development of investigative reporting. Attempts have been made to develop it by provision of trainings, through grants for investigative reporters, but also through the creation of nonprofit centers that specialize in investigative reporting as a response to various impediments to practicing it in the mainstream media.

The development of investigative journalism nonprofits in the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, including the region of the Western Balkans, was not only due to the lack of funding in the mainstream media, but “can also be seen as investigative journalism trying to deflect pressure from political, commercial or other special interests.”<sup>7</sup> These independent, often non-profit centers are almost entirely dependent on donor funding. They use cutting-edge research methods, such as data driven journalism, publish mainly on the Internet, foster cross-border investigations, and seem to fill the void created among the traditional media.<sup>8</sup>

The question is, however, whether such centers in the Western Balkans are able to follow in the footsteps of successful examples abroad. Therefore, this exploratory study provides an analysis of two independent investigative journalism centers in Serbia and BiH dedicated to the production of investigative stories of the highest standards of Western journalism. The study is focused on the Center for Investigative Journalism Serbia (CINS), based in Belgrade, and the Center for Investigative Reporting (CIN), based in Sarajevo. While these centers resemble similar media operations in the Western countries of developed democracies, such as the U.S., this analysis examines the challenges that the two centers face in the context of their respective countries, such as dealing with shrinking international donor support and ensuring long-term self-sustainability, integration in the local media landscape and willingness by mainstream media to publish their stories so they can reach a wider audience in order to achieve policy impact.

In order to answer these questions, the study first provides an overview of the trend of investigative journalism nonprofits and a brief analysis of the centers that CIN and CINS used as their role-models. Second, it outlines the problems in the media landscapes of BiH and Serbia which have an impact on investigative journalism. It then offers an overview of the assistance to investigative reporting in the two

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<sup>6</sup> David E. Kaplan, *Empowering Independent Media: U.S. Efforts to Foster a Free Press and an Open Internet Around the World* (Washington: Center for International Media Assistance, 2012), p. 84.

<sup>7</sup> Margo Smit et al., *Deterrence of Fraud with EU Funds through Investigative Journalism in EU-27* (Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department D: Budgetary Affairs, 2012), p. 54.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 32.

countries, followed by in-depth case studies of the two selected centers, based on interviews with their managers, funders and independent media experts. Finally, it provides a conclusion of the findings pertaining to the success in transposing the models upon which the centers were established and key contextual factors that influence their operation and perspectives for sustainability.

## 2.

# The Model: Non-Profit Investigative Journalism Organizations

The model of nonprofit investigative journalism organizations is a global trend. It began in the U.S. in the 1970s<sup>9</sup> and '80s with only a small number of such organizations, as it has always been a challenge to obtain support for investigative journalism in commercial media<sup>10</sup>. Scaling back of investigative reporting in traditional media was triggered by the widespread availability of free-of-charge news due to technological advancements, declining news budgets and shrinking audiences.<sup>11</sup> As a consequence, in the Northern European countries, professional associations of investigative journalists have been emerging since the 1990s, relying on the U.S. investigative tradition and the model of Investigative Reporters and Editors, the largest and oldest association of investigative reporters in the world.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, investigative journalism centers have developed in the UK, “with its Anglo-Saxon watchdog attitude”, and in the countries of the former Eastern Bloc of Europe,<sup>13</sup> where the trend began in the late '80s. The latter are, interestingly, not characterized by the development of professional associations.

There are now more than 100 nonprofit organizations devoted to investigative journalism around the world.<sup>14</sup> They include reporting centers, training institutes, professional associations, grant-making bodies (which typically allocate small grants to journalists to do investigative stories), and regional and global online networks. The majority of these organizations are based in the U.S., while a quarter

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<sup>9</sup> Starting with the Berkeley, CA-based Center for Investigative Reporting in 1977 (Kaplan, *Global Investigative Journalism*, p. 29).

<sup>10</sup> Kaplan, *Global Investigative Journalism*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>11</sup> Margo Smit et al., *Deterrence of Fraud with EU Funds through Investigative Journalism in EU-27*, p. 31; Kaplan, *Global Investigative Journalism*, p. 16.

<sup>12</sup> Margo Smit et al., *Deterrence of Fraud with EU Funds through Investigative Journalism in EU-27*, p. 31.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p. 32.

<sup>14</sup> “The number of nonprofit investigative reporting groups has jumped from only three in the late 1980s to more than 100 today, with vibrant centers in such diverse places as Romania, the Philippines, Jordan, and South Africa,” notes Kaplan (*Global Investigative Journalism*, p. 11). “When CIMA surveyed nonprofit investigative journalism centers in 2007, it found 39 in 26 countries, with more than half of those appearing since 2000. A follow-up 2012 survey shows that this rapid growth has continued, with 106 nonprofits in 47 countries.” (*Ibid*, p. 28).

are located in the Eastern Europe and former Soviet states.<sup>15</sup> There are considerable differences among them in terms of their staff and budget, from very small organizations in developing countries, to powerful ones, such as ProPublica<sup>16</sup> in the U.S. which relies on multimillion-dollar funds.<sup>17</sup> Referring to centers dedicated to producing investigative reporting, Sullivan notes that “sometimes these are the only independent news organizations in a country, and many have become important locally as a unique source of investigative news.”<sup>18</sup>

Despite the growth of nonprofit investigative journalism organizations, they “are not appropriate everywhere, and not every model will work in a given environment,” notes Kaplan.<sup>19</sup> Several organizations around the world are dormant or defunct due to different reasons, such as the lack of funding or fundraising, managerial problems, small and uncompetitive markets or poor editorial standards.<sup>20</sup> However, they have proven to be “viable organizations that can provide unique training and reporting, serve as models of excellence that help to professionalize the local journalism community, and produce stories with social and political impact,” observes Kaplan, adding that different regions and markets require different programs.<sup>21</sup> Sullivan notes that although supporting investigative centers is expensive, it is a “very good approach in countries with little or no independent media.”<sup>22</sup> A very successful example outside of the U.S. is the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, which has persisted for nearly 25 years owing to various context-specific factors, “including a reformed legal environment, a lively and competitive press [which has been the market for the Center’s stories], public support, high standards, strong leadership, and a small but critical endowment.”<sup>23</sup>

The investigative journalism nonprofit sector worldwide is heavily dependent on donors. Some 84 percent of such organizations cited grants and donations as their major source of income,<sup>24</sup> while in a survey by the Center for International Media

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<sup>15</sup> Kaplan, *Global Investigative Journalism*, pp. 26-33.

<sup>16</sup> *ProPublica* is the first ranking nonprofit among the largest investigative journalism nonprofits in the U.S. with the 2011 annual budget of \$10,100,000. The second one is *Center for Investigative Reporting* with \$5,200,000 and the third one *Center for Public Integrity* with \$5,100,000, according to data by Investigative Reporting Workshop and CIMA (Kaplan, *Global Investigative Journalism*, p. 31).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>18</sup> Drew Sullivan, *Investigative Reporting in Emerging Democracies: Models, Challenges, and Lessons Learned* (Washington: Center for International Media Assistance, 2013), p. 24.

<sup>19</sup> Kaplan, *Global Investigative Journalism*, p. 25.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>22</sup> Sullivan, *Investigative Reporting in Emerging Democracies*, p. 32.

<sup>23</sup> Kaplan, *Global Investigative Journalism*, p. 37.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

Assistance (CIMA) only 53 percent stated that they have a developed sustainability plan<sup>25</sup>. The development of investigative reporting globally has attracted millions of media development dollars from international donors, especially from the U.S. and the Northern Europe, and some private foundations - notably the Open Society Foundation.<sup>26</sup> However, this type of aid has been recognized as “a major gap in international media assistance” as the funding is “largely episodic” and constitutes a small part of the overall funding targeting media development as investigative reporting programs are estimated to attract about 2 percent of the nearly \$500 million provided for international media assistance annually, according to CIMA.<sup>27</sup> Some 70 investigative nonprofits around the world received a total of \$8 million annually, according to an estimate by CIMA.<sup>28</sup> In 2007, only \$2.6 million went to investigative reporting nonprofits in developing and democratizing countries.<sup>29</sup>

One of the main challenges for investigative journalism nonprofits around the world is sustainability. Many are trying to find solutions to the issue as few working models for it exist.<sup>30</sup> “Even in the United States, organizations that have many donors available to them are struggling with this issue. It is a problem that the journalism industry as a whole must confront,” notes Sullivan.<sup>31</sup> Investigative reporting is never sustainable even in the West as it is expensive and generates few stories.<sup>32</sup> For instance, the 35-year old Center for Investigative Reporting in California has been donor supported for all its life.<sup>33</sup> 90 percent of its \$US 10.5 million budget comes from donations, while the center also charges for re-publishing of its stories.<sup>34</sup>

The growing U.S. nonprofit investigative sector benefits from a strong tradition of philanthropy and a large domestic market from which to solicit support relying on the wealth and population of the nation.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, in the U.S. the funding is increasing, coming from “local philanthropists, community and family foundations, and national foundations with interest in media and public policy.”<sup>36</sup> Also, the U.S. tax law is favorable

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p. 11.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, p. 12.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p. 14.

<sup>29</sup> Sullivan, *Investigative Reporting in Emerging Democracies*, p. 22.

<sup>30</sup> Drew Sullivan, former Director of the Center for Investigative Reporting (CIN) in Sarajevo, BiH, President of the CIN's Board and Editor with the Organized Crime and Corruption Project (OCCRP), interviews with the author, July 8, 2013 and August 18, 2013.

<sup>31</sup> Sullivan, *Investigative Reporting in Emerging Democracies*, p. 20.

<sup>32</sup> Drew Sullivan, interviews with the author, July 8, 2013 and August 18, 2013.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Jodi Enda, “Staying Alive,” *American Journalism Review*, August/September 2012.

<sup>35</sup> Kaplan, *Global Investigative Journalism*, p. 27.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p. 16.

for the development of nonprofits – it prescribes a tax exemption for nonprofits and a 100 percent tax deduction for contributions by donors.<sup>37</sup> A survey of the members of the Investigative News Network, a consortium of 64 nonprofit, nonpartisan news organizations that produce investigative and public interest journalism, shows that foundations and philanthropists are the source of 70 percent of their funding, while only a small amount comes from other sources – membership (7 percent), distribution (10 percent) and training, events and advertising (13 percent).<sup>38</sup>

A look at the largest and best known investigative journalism nonprofits in the U.S. shows that they rely on donations to produce stories with great effects. The Center for Public Integrity receives support from foundations and individuals and does not accept contributions from governments.<sup>39</sup> In 2012, the organization attracted close to \$US 9 million in tax-deductible grants and contributions, while other sources constituted only some 2 percent of the total revenue.<sup>40</sup> 85 percent of the annual budget comes from foundations, while individual donors finance the rest, with a small amount of money coming from advertising, e-books and online crowdfunding.<sup>41</sup> The center distributes its investigations through its website and to an impressive number of all forms of media - broadcast, print, online, and blogs - in the U.S. and around the globe.<sup>42</sup> It also shares its work with a variety of NGOs and advocacy groups.<sup>43</sup> Along with influencing journalists, policymakers and activists, many stories have effects in investigated entities changing their behavior and in the swift reaction by responsible authorities.<sup>44</sup> One of the largest U.S. investigative non-profit news operations, Pulitzer Prize-winning ProPublica, has annual operating costs of around \$10 million.<sup>45</sup> It is dependent on contributions and grants from institutions and individuals<sup>46</sup>, with a diversified donor base. Yet, one benefactor - the Sandler Foundation - has been providing a significant part of the funding. It committed up to \$10 million annually for three years, making the establishment

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p. 34.

<sup>38</sup> Enda, “Staying Alive.”

<sup>39</sup> “Frequently Asked Questions”, Center for Public Integrity, <http://www.publicintegrity.org/about/our-organization/frequently-asked-questions> (Accessed on September 20, 2013).

<sup>40</sup> Center for Public Integrity, *Worldwide Watchdog: Annual Report 2012* (Washington: Center for Public Integrity, 2012).

<sup>41</sup> Enda, “Staying Alive.”

<sup>42</sup> Center for Public Integrity, *Worldwide Watchdog: Annual Report 2012*.

<sup>43</sup> “Frequently Asked Questions.”

<sup>44</sup> Center for Public Integrity, *Worldwide Watchdog: Annual Report 2012*.

<sup>45</sup> ProPublica had the largest annual 2011 budget of \$US 10,100,000 among largest investigative journalism nonprofits in the U.S. (Kaplan, *Global Investigative Journalism*, p. 31).

<sup>46</sup> “Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax,” Center for Public Integrity. [http://s3.amazonaws.com/propublica/assets/about/propublica\\_990\\_2012.pdf](http://s3.amazonaws.com/propublica/assets/about/propublica_990_2012.pdf) (Accessed on September 20, 2013).

of ProPublica possible in 2008.<sup>47</sup> In 2012, the foundation's contribution made close to 40 percent of the funding, while in 2013 the figure is likely to be below a third.<sup>48</sup> ProPublica diversifies its funding sources so that it is increasingly less dependent on the Sandler foundation.<sup>49</sup> In 2011 it had over 2,500 donations from small givers<sup>50</sup>. It also experiments with earning revenue, such as selling its e-books and receiving payments from magazines that publish its work, but the earnings are minimal<sup>51</sup>. The center mostly does not sell its stories, but allows their re-publishing for free<sup>52</sup> forging partnerships with dozens of news organizations for increased visibility and impact<sup>53</sup>. It publishes stories on its website shortly after a chosen partner has published it.<sup>54</sup> The center's stories have a great impact in triggering investigations, changes in regulation and other actions by responsible authorities.<sup>55</sup>

A look outside of the U.S, on the renowned Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, also reveals dependence on donor funding. A very important element of the center's success has been an endowment from the Ford Foundation, which accounts for 30% of the center's annual budget of about \$500,000 and provides it with basic financial flexibility and security.<sup>56</sup> Also, the center attracts about 20% of income from journalism training services and selling stories to other media. Nevertheless, international grants have been a major support to the center's work.<sup>57</sup> A reformed legal environment after the end of the Marcos regime in 1986 and public support have been fertile ground for the effects of the center's stories. "There were congressional hearings; people were fired for what we wrote. There were enough checks and balances for investigative reporting to generate either reform or some action," said Sheila Coronel, the co-founder and longtime executive director of the center.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Enda, "Staying Alive."

<sup>48</sup> Justin Ellis, "ProPublica at Five: How the Nonprofit Collaborates, Builds Apps, and Measures Impact," *Nieman Journalism Lab*, June 10, 2013.

<sup>49</sup> Enda, "Staying Alive."

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> "Steal Our Stories," ProPublica, <http://www.propublica.org/about/steal-our-stories/> (Accessed on September 20, 2013); Emma Goodman, "Could the Non-Profit Model Be the Saviour of the Newspaper Industry?," *Editors Weblog: A Publication of the Worlds Editor Forum*, February 6, 2009.

<sup>53</sup> Ellis, "ProPublica at Five".

<sup>54</sup> Goodman, "ProPublica: Could the Non-Profit Model Be the Saviour of the Newspaper Industry?".

<sup>55</sup> "Impact in 2012 (from our annual report)," ProPublica, <http://www.propublica.org/about/impact-in-2012> (Accessed on September 20, 2013).

<sup>56</sup> Kaplan, *Global Investigative Journalism*, p. 17.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p. 18.

<sup>58</sup> Kaplan, *Global Investigative Journalism*, p. 16.

### 3.

## Investigative Reporting and Contextual Challenges

Investigative journalism in the mainstream media is rare in Serbia<sup>59</sup> and BiH<sup>60</sup>, with some notable exceptions. In Serbia, there are sporadic, scattered examples of investigative journalism stories, difficult to catalogue as investigative journalism is far from being a continuous practice in the media. “Investigative reporting in Serbia is above all a result of enthusiasm of individuals and not a strategic decision by the media,” says Milorad Ivanović, editor at weekly *Novi Magazin*.<sup>61</sup> Media do not have funds or human resources for investigative feats and the business and financing system of media is such that investigative reporting is not rewarded as it does not increase the audience or advertising income.<sup>62</sup> Real investigative journalism is not visible as such stories appear only once in a while, while pseudo-investigative texts “scream” from front pages – stories that look investigative at first sight, but are a result of pushing documents to journalists and media from power centers. Therefore, the public cannot discern the real from pseudo-investigative journalism.<sup>63</sup> Worthy examples of investigative work surface on the occasion of the annual award for investigative reporting administered since 2006 by the Independent Journalists’ Association (NUNS) and the U.S. Embassy, the recipients of which are often young reporters, some of whom attend investigative reporting training. Notable but rare examples of high quality investigative journalism in Serbia are the national B92 TV’s series “Insider”, renowned among the general public and known for complex and dangerous investigation, the work of the nonprofit Center for Investigative Journalism Serbia (CINS) which is re-published in Serbian media, and the online-only media outlet *Južne vesti* which covers only southern Serbia

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<sup>59</sup> Jovanka Matić, PhD, Media Researcher, the Institute of Social Sciences in Belgrade, interview with the author, August 16, 2013; Milorad Ivanović, Editor, Belgrade weekly *Novi Magazin*, interview with the author, August 21, 2013.

<sup>60</sup> Mehmed Halilović, Legal Adviser for Media Issues, Internews in BiH, interview with the author, August 16, 2013; Boro Kontić, Director, Mediacentar Sarajevo, interview with the author, August 19, 2013; Amer Džihana, Director of Media Policy and Research, Internews in BiH, interview with the author, August 23, 2013.

<sup>61</sup> Milorad Ivanović, interview with the author, August 21, 2013.

<sup>62</sup> Jovanka Matić, interview with the author, August 16, 2013.

<sup>63</sup> Milorad Ivanović, interview with the author, August 21, 2013.

with hard news and investigative stories. Public media are not known to produce investigations,<sup>64</sup> while the public service broadcaster Radio-Television Serbia (RTS) is “biased and burdened with self-censorship” with no serious investigative journalism<sup>65</sup>.

In BiH investigative reporting is considered “extremely limited, rare, and heavily dependent on international funding and/or the enthusiasm of certain media outlets or journalists.”<sup>66</sup> The circumstances in the BiH media are such that there are no ambitions or financial conditions for the media to develop investigative reporting and get support from owners and publishers for it.<sup>67</sup> Also, there is a lack of adequate expertise, where most media are led by editors of low quality and journalists who have no knowledge of professional investigative reporting.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, journalists often tend to label as investigative journalism stories that do not satisfy adequate criteria.<sup>69</sup> Such stories are often politically biased, descriptive rather than based on facts – in a word unprofessional.<sup>70</sup> However, the key problem seems to be controlled media where even the best editors do not have freedom and therefore cannot do much<sup>71</sup>. The most prominent example of investigative journalism provider in BiH is that of the nonprofit Center for Investigative Reporting (CIN), whose content is re-published in other BiH media filling the investigative void. The public broadcaster Federal TV, catering to the Federation BiH entity, has recently been producing some investigative work.<sup>72</sup> While some stories of the weeklies *Slobodna Bosna* and *Dani* are often labeled investigative, it is highly dubious if they conform to the widely accepted criteria for what constitutes investigative reporting.

A part of the reasons for such a situation lies in the specifics of the media landscapes of the two countries, characterized by small and financially weak markets which favor populist content, low professional standards in journalism, political and economic pressures on the media and the significant influence of the state, as well as threats against journalists and problems in the application of

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<sup>64</sup> International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), “Serbia,” in *Media Sustainability Index (MSI) 2013: The Development of Sustainable Independent Media in Europe and Eurasia* (Washington: International Research and Exchanges Board, 2013), p. 124.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, p. 123.

<sup>66</sup> International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), “Bosnia and Herzegovina,” in *Media Sustainability Index (MSI) 2013: The Development of Sustainable Independent Media in Europe and Eurasia* (Washington: International Research and Exchanges Board, 2013), p. 26.

<sup>67</sup> Mehmed Halilović, interview with the author, August 16, 2013.

<sup>68</sup> Boro Kontić, interview with the author, August 19, 2013.

<sup>69</sup> Mehmed Halilović, interview with the author, August 16, 2013.

<sup>70</sup> Boro Kontić, interview with the author, August 19, 2013.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Mehmed Halilović, interview with the author, August 16, 2013.

legislation relevant for journalism. Media in the two countries are burdened with a host of problems which have a negative impact on the practicing of investigative journalism:

- The state still exercises significant influence over media in both countries.<sup>73</sup> Although data on the number of media outlets partly or fully owned by the state in Serbia are not publicly available, different sources indicate that it retains sizeable media ownership - some 14% of all media and 19% of broadcast media.<sup>74</sup> In BiH, some 30% of TV stations and almost 50% of radio stations depend on financing by the authorities at various administrative levels.<sup>75</sup> A large number of the media are financially dependent on state financing, be it through advertising of public companies or direct state subsidies. For example, it is estimated that almost 25% of the total income of the Serbian media<sup>76</sup> comes through advertising from the state budget<sup>77</sup>.

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<sup>73</sup> Nidžara Ahmetašević, "The Business of Ethics, the Ethics of Business: Bosnia and Herzegovina," in *Media: The Business of Ethics, the Ethics of Business*, ed. Manuela Preoteasa (Bucharest: Center for Independent Journalism, 2005), p. 63; Slobodan Kremenjak and Miloš Živković, "Serbia," in *The Media in South-East Europe: A Comparative Media Law and Policy Study*, ed. Beate Martin et al. (Berlin: Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 2011), p. 126; Jovanka Matić, *Serbian Media Scene vs. European Standards: Report Based on Council of Europe's Indicators for Media in a Democracy* (Belgrade: Association of Independent Electronic Media - ANEM, 2012), pp. 59-61; Anti-Corruption Council of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, *Report on Pressures on and Control of Media in Serbia* (Belgrade: Anti-Corruption Council of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, September 19, 2011), p. 16; United States Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, *Bosnia and Herzegovina 2012 Human Rights Report* (United States Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 2012), p.12; Ljiljana Zurovac and Borka Rudić, eds. *Shadow Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina: Indicators for Measuring Media Freedoms in the Countries Members of the Council of Europe* (Sarajevo: Press Council in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Association of BH Journalists, 2012), p. 36.

<sup>74</sup> Matić, *Serbian Media Scene vs. European Standards*, p. 68.

<sup>75</sup> Zurovac and Rudić, *Shadow Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina*, p. 36.

<sup>76</sup> This spending from the state budget, which enables "personal and party promotions in the media", is estimated by the Anti-Corruption Agency (2011) to exceed 15 million EUR annually, in addition to which media receive estimated 21-25 million EUR through public tenders. Compared to the total amount of advertising in the media market, which is estimated at approximately 160 million EUR, it can be concluded that the state institutions are a source of almost one quarter of the total income of the Serbian media (Anti-Corruption Council of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, *Report on Pressures on and Control of Media in Serbia*).

<sup>77</sup> For instance, through campaigns aimed at promoting activities of various ministries. "The most expensive campaigns so far have been "Let's Clean Serbia" by the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, the promotion of the 'startup' loans by the Ministry of Economy, "Kosovo Is Serbia", the vaccination campaign against A H1N1 flu virus, the anti-smoking campaign, etc. For example, there is no advertising programme whose production was paid by the Ministry within the campaign "Let's Clean Serbia" where [former] Minister Oliver Dulić does not appear as the protagonist," notes the Anti-Corruption Council Report (Anti-Corruption Council of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, *Report on Pressures on and Control of Media in Serbia*, pp. 16-17).

In BiH, the Republika Srpska government exerted pressure on a selection of media by providing them with direct budgetary incentives for the fourth consecutive year in 2012.<sup>78</sup>

- There are also political and economic pressures influencing editorial policies in both countries.<sup>79</sup> For example, the European Commission (EC) reports on Serbia warned in 2011 and 2012 that “a few economic and political actors” control the advertising access to media, which entails “a significant risk” of influence on the media and of self-censorship.<sup>80</sup> Also, there are “neither legal nor institutional guarantees of public service broadcasters’ editorial autonomy”<sup>81</sup> and surveys suggest that the reporting of both PSBs - Radio Television of Serbia (RTS) and Radio Television Vojvodina (RTV) - favors government representatives<sup>82</sup>. In the case of BiH, the EC warned in 2012 that political pressure on the media remains a concern.<sup>83</sup> The U.S. State Department noted in 2012 that media in BiH “were subject to undue influence from government, political parties, and private interest groups.”<sup>84</sup> Also, “public broadcasters at the state and entity levels faced strong political pressure

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<sup>78</sup> United States Department of State, Bosnia and Herzegovina 2012 Human Rights Report, p. 12; Radenko Udovičić, “Bosnia and Herzegovina”, in *Country Reports on Media Freedom* (South East European Network for Professionalisation of Media, 2012), p. 17.

<sup>79</sup> Anti-Corruption Council of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, Report on Pressures on and Control of Media in Serbia, pp. 16-17; European Commission, Serbia 2012 Progress Report (Brussels: European Commission, October 10, 2012), p. 14; European Commission, Commission Opinion on Serbia’s Application for Membership of the European Union: Commission Staff Working Paper: Analytical Report Accompanying the Document Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council (Brussels: European Commission, October 12, 2011), p. 25; European Commission, Bosnia and Herzegovina 2012 Progress Report (Brussels: European Commission, October 10, 2012), p. 16; United States Department of State, Bosnia and Herzegovina 2012 Human Rights Report, p. 12, pp. 14-15.

<sup>80</sup> European Commission, Commission Opinion on Serbia’s Application for Membership of the European Union, p. 25; European Commission, Serbia 2012 Progress Report, p. 14.

<sup>81</sup> Matić, *Serbian Media Scene vs. European Standards*, p. 66.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, p. 67.

<sup>83</sup> European Commission, Bosnia and Herzegovina 2012 Progress Report, p. 16.

<sup>84</sup> United States Department of State, Bosnia and Herzegovina 2012 Human Rights Report, p. 12.

that sometimes resulted in a lack of objectivity and impartiality.”<sup>85</sup> Overall, there is strong political parallelism<sup>86</sup> in the media in both countries<sup>87</sup>.

- The political and financial pressures go hand in hand with small, oversaturated and poor media markets<sup>88</sup> with small advertising revenues and a “fierce” battle for audiences<sup>89</sup>. In Serbia, there is an excessive number of issued broadcast licenses relative to the size of the advertising market<sup>90</sup> causing a lack of media diversity and pluralism as the media are fighting for ratings by producing cheap programs likely to attract audience<sup>91</sup>. Similarly, in BiH media there is a proliferation of entertainment content due to fast commercialization in the highly saturated media market.<sup>92</sup>
- Also, there are problems in the application of legislation relevant for journalists’ work,<sup>93</sup> while threats against journalists remain a concern in both

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini, *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>87</sup> See chapters by Davor Marko, “Media Reforms in Turbulent Times: The Role of Media Assistance in the Establishment of Independent Media Institutions in Serbia”, Working Paper Series on International Media Assistance in the Western Balkans, Working Paper 6/2013, prepared in the framework of the Regional Research Promotion Programme in the Western Balkans (RRPP) (Sarajevo: Analitika – Center for Social Research, 2013) and by Tarik Jusić and Nidžara Ahmetašević, “Media Reforms through Intervention: International Media Assistance in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, Working Paper Series on International Media Assistance in the Western Balkans, Working Paper 3/2013, prepared in the framework of the Regional Research Promotion Programme in the Western Balkans (RRPP) (Sarajevo: Analitika – Center for Social Research, 2013); also see European Commission, *Bosnia and Herzegovina 2012 Progress Report*, p. 16; Hawley Johnson, “Model Interventions: The Evolution of Media Development Strategies in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Macedonia from 2000 to 2007” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2012), p. 154.

<sup>88</sup> Aida A. Hozić, “Democratizing Media, Welcoming Big Brother: Media in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” in *Finding the Right Place on the Map: Central and Eastern European Media: Change in a Global Perspective*, ed. Karol Jakubowicz and Miklos Sukosd (Bristol; Chicago: Intellect, 2008), p. 159; Johnson, “Model Interventions,” p. 128; Jovanka Matić and Larisa Ranković, “Serbia,” *Media Landscapes*, European Journalism Centre; Kremenjak and Živković, “Serbia,” p. 126.

<sup>89</sup> Hozić, “Democratizing Media, Welcoming Big Brother,” p. 159.

<sup>90</sup> Matić and Ranković, “Serbia.”

<sup>91</sup> Kremenjak and Živković, “Serbia,” p. 126.

<sup>92</sup> Hozić, “Democratizing Media, Welcoming Big Brother,” p. 159.

<sup>93</sup> European Commission, *Bosnia and Herzegovina 2011 Progress Report* (Brussels: European Commission, October 12, 2011), p. 16; European Commission, *Bosnia and Herzegovina 2012 Progress Report*, p. 17; European Commission, *Commission Opinion on Serbia’s Application for Membership of the European Union*, p. 25; International Research and Exchanges Board, “Bosnia and Herzegovina,” p. 22; Matić, *Serbian Media Scene vs. European Standards*, pp. 11-12; Zurovac and Rudić, *Shadow Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina*, p. 19.

countries<sup>94</sup>. Although libel was decriminalized in BiH, there are doubts about the impartiality of the judiciary, particularly where the plaintiffs are in position of power.<sup>95</sup> In Serbia, defamation was decriminalized only in December 2012<sup>96</sup> and prison sentences for libel were abolished in 2005<sup>97</sup>. “Civil and criminal libel cases are sometimes used to exert undue pressure on journalists” in Serbia, notes the EC in 2011.<sup>98</sup> As Zielonka and Mancini observe, in a politicized state “legal enforcement favors partisan political interests,” actors are not treated equally, “norms do not have universal application” and there is only “a selective accountability.”<sup>99</sup> Hence the selective application of laws in both countries. The EC notes that violence and threats against journalists in Serbia remain a concern and calls for a more proactive approach by the police and the judiciary.<sup>100</sup> The inefficiency of the court system in prosecuting these deeds, which are often left unsolved,<sup>101</sup> contributes to self-censorship<sup>102</sup>. In BiH “a growing number of journalists and editors are subject to physical violence and intimidation, including death threats” and “journalists investigating corruption have faced intimidation,” noted the EC in 2010,<sup>103</sup> while in 2011 it warned that threats and violence against journalists have continued and that follow up by police and the judiciary remains insufficient<sup>104</sup>.

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<sup>94</sup> European Commission, Commission Opinion on Serbia’s Application for Membership of the European Union, p. 25; European Commission, Serbia 2012 Progress Report, p. 14; International Research and Exchanges Board, “Serbia,” p. 119, p. 122; Kremenjak and Živković, “Serbia,” p. 126; European Commission, Bosnia and Herzegovina 2010 Progress Report (Brussels: European Commission, November 9, 2010), p. 16; European Commission, Bosnia and Herzegovina 2011 Progress Report, p. 16.

<sup>95</sup> International Research and Exchanges Board, “Bosnia and Herzegovina,” p. 22.

<sup>96</sup> “Zakon o izmenama i dopunama krivičnog zakonika,” [Law amending the Criminal Code], *Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* 121/2012, Article 14.

<sup>97</sup> European Commission, Commission Opinion on Serbia’s Application for Membership of the European Union, p. 25.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Zielonka and Mancini, *Executive Summary: A Media Map of Central and Eastern Europe*, p. 3.

<sup>100</sup> European Commission, Commission Opinion on Serbia’s Application for Membership of the European Union, p. 25; European Commission, Serbia 2012 Progress Report, p. 14.

<sup>101</sup> In the past 18 years 3 journalists have been killed - Dada Vujasinović in 1994, Slavko Ćuruvija in 1999 and Milan Pantić in 2011 - and there was a bomb attack on a journalist (Dejan Anastasijević in 2007), while the perpetrators of these deeds have not been found to date. Three journalists are under police protection (Matić, *Serbian Media Scene vs. European Standards*, p. 44). Also see: International Research and Exchanges Board, “Serbia,” p. 119.

<sup>102</sup> Kremenjak and Živković, “Serbia,” p. 126.

<sup>103</sup> European Commission, Bosnia and Herzegovina 2010 Progress Report, p. 17.

<sup>104</sup> European Commission, Bosnia and Herzegovina 2011 Progress Report, p. 16.

- And last but not least, there is a general low quality of reporting<sup>105</sup> and a notable pressure from PR departments on media to publish their content<sup>106</sup>. This has to do with the fact that newsrooms are understaffed, with journalists forced to be general-assignment reporters, pressured to fast production of content, often several stories a day.<sup>107</sup> Largely outdated and theoretical curricula of university level journalism programs do not help the quality of journalism.<sup>108</sup> The IREX Media Sustainability Index (MSI) shows a decline in the score for professional journalism in BiH from 2.30 in 2009 to 1.60 in 2013, while the score for plurality of news sources dropped from 3.02 in 2009 to 2.20 in 2013.<sup>109</sup> The score for professional journalism in Serbia has been low since 2009 when it was 1.89, while it is 1.67 in 2013. The score for plurality of news sources in Serbia dropped from 2.64 in 2009 to 1.94 in 2013<sup>110</sup>.

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<sup>105</sup> International Research and Exchanges Board, "Serbia," p. 124.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, p. 121.

<sup>107</sup> International Research and Exchanges Board, "Bosnia and Herzegovina," p. 24, p. 26.

<sup>108</sup> United States Agency for International Development (USAID), *Bosnia-Herzegovina Democracy and Governance Assessment* (Washington: United States Agency for International Development, May 2007), p. 58.

<sup>109</sup> International Research and Exchanges Board, "Bosnia and Herzegovina," p. 18.

<sup>110</sup> International Research and Exchanges Board, "Serbia," p. 116.

## 4.

# Supporting Development of Investigative Reporting in BiH and Serbia

There is an absence of data on foreign assistance aimed at development of investigative journalism in BiH and Serbia<sup>111</sup> and only partial data on foreign assistance to media in general in the two countries is available<sup>112</sup>. Still, it is estimated that BiH received a minimum of \$US 131 million for media assistance in the ten years from 1996 to 2006, although the figure may be significantly higher as information from many organizations and government agencies is not available.<sup>113</sup> Similarly, it is difficult to piece together an estimate for the amount of foreign media aid to Serbia due to scattered, partial and unavailable data, but it is likely that in the period 1997-2012 the Serbian media sector received at least EUR 55

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<sup>111</sup> For example, numerous investigative journalism projects were built into larger assistance initiatives, such as in the case of the support of close to \$2 million to Serbia and Montenegro by USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) between 2000 and 2002, and hundreds of small material assistance grants, including to investigative journalists, disbursed by OTI from 1997 to 2000 (Cook and Spalatin 2002, p. 1, 8, 11).

<sup>112</sup> Rhodes notes the absence of reliable data on media interventions in the Western Balkans till 2005, both for the region and individual countries, and only a partial availability of data after 2005; Rhodes, *Ten Years of Media Support to the Balkans*, p. 10.

<sup>113</sup> Johnson, "Model Interventions," p. 102; also, for an estimate for BiH see Jusić and Ahmetašević, "Media Reforms through Intervention"; In four years, between 1996 and 1999, the U.S. government, solely through USAID, injected \$38 million towards media related programs in the country (Johnson, "Model Interventions," p. 102).

million or \$US 73 million,<sup>114</sup> while Marko (see chapter in this volume) provides an estimate of EUR 90 million spent on media development in Serbia from 1991 to 2012. Within the media assistance programs, some funds were allocated for the support of investigative reporting.

In BiH, investigative journalism programs were funded with the intention to foster the watchdog capacity of journalists, with many goals, including promoting transparency and good governance, testing the political system and new legislation, fostering accountability and dealing with corruption and political abuse.<sup>115</sup> “Donors such as IREX and USAID were earnest supporters of investigative journalism in Bosnia, believing that additional support could provide local outlets with the time, budgets, and editorial capacities to produce credible, fair, and factual stories up to American or European standards,” observes Johnson.<sup>116</sup> A notable project that emerged is the Center for Investigative Reporting (CIN), which received kick-start funding from USAID in 2003 within the scope of the Civic Society Strengthening initiative.<sup>117</sup> “Between 2000 and 2003, the institutional structures and legislative procedures required for democratic development of the media sector were put in place,” notes Johnson,<sup>118</sup> and by 2003 a programmatic shift took place which included the role of media in supporting good governance, a component of which was fostering local content production, particularly investigative reporting in selected media outlets<sup>119</sup>. As for the training in investigative journalism, the leader in the past decade was Mediacentar Sarajevo, a local media-development operation, as a keen provider of long-term trainings, supported by various donors.

In Serbia, there were numerous initiatives aimed at fostering investigative reporting, but due to the absence of literature which would document these, only

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<sup>114</sup> Between 1997 and 2002 the U.S. Government donated close to \$13 million to Serbian media development (Rich McClear, Suzi McClear and Peter Graves, *U.S. Media Assistance in Serbia July 1997–June 2002*. Washington: United States Agency for International Development, Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination, 2003), p. 25. The EU supported more than 80 media and communications projects between 2000 and 2010 with 17.7 million EUR (European Commission. *Mapping EU Media Support 2000–2010*. Brussels: European Commission, 2012), p. 26. In the period 2007 - 2011 Serbian media received more than EUR 20 million in foreign donor assistance (European Union and A.R.S. Progetti S.P.A. *Technical Assistance for Evaluation of Sector of Civil Society Organizations (CSO), Media and Culture Implemented and Financed by IPA Programme, EU Programmes and other Donors in the Republic of Serbia: Draft Evaluation Report (15 March 2013)*, p. 5. Between 2005 and 2006, the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR) allocated 2.8 million EUR to media development, including for projects fostering investigative reporting (“EAR Media Fund,” Medija centar, 2006). The USAID-funded media development project in Serbia, implemented by IREX between 2008 and 2012, had a four-year budget of \$8.8 million (Rich McClear. “*Rich McClear CV*”. 2012).

<sup>115</sup> Johnson, “Model Interventions,” p. 138.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, p. 139.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, p. 110.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

a snapshot can be provided here. Between 2005 and 2006, the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR) allocated 2.8 million EUR to media development, including for projects fostering investigative reporting.<sup>120</sup> In the period 2007-2010, the EU defined the need for the development of the media sector in Serbia in line with the best European practices, particularly in the area of quality programming and investigative reporting.<sup>121</sup> The main outcome of the assistance was the production of content which otherwise would not be seen or would be minimal in Serbian media, including investigation of corruption, although some of the best stories either did not reach the publishing phase or were published in political “squaring accounts” due to the pressures on media.<sup>122</sup> A notable example of donor support is the nonprofit Center for Investigative Journalism Serbia (CINS), which will be discussed in detail in this paper. Rhodes notes that in the Balkans “the greatest share of media support was devoted to training and education.”<sup>123</sup> It seems that that has been the case with investigative reporting in Serbia, as well. The leaders in investigative journalism trainings have been the Independent Journalists’ Association of Serbia (NUNS) and CINS, as well as the Serbian chapter of the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), a regional network of hubs which act as news media, producing analytical and investigative stories, but also as training centers, relying on donor funding.

Although there is an absence of literature which would systematically document forms of media assistance efforts towards development of investigative reporting in BiH and Serbia, evidence points to three main avenues of donor assistance, sometimes overlapping:

- **Training and mentoring:** Numerous investigative journalism trainings have been conducted in Serbia and BiH in the past decade. Apart from short-term trainings that last only a few days with dubious results considering the sophistication of the investigative trade, some last for months based on the blended-learning model, as a combination of face-to-face sessions and online mentoring, and involve the production and publishing of investigative stories. Rhodes notes that “training formats linked to concrete journalistic activity and production have been most successful.”<sup>124</sup> Much training was done by experienced local investigative journalists savvy in international investigative

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<sup>120</sup> “EAR Media Fund.”

<sup>121</sup> European Union and A.R.S. Progetti S.P.A. *Technical Assistance for Evaluation of Sector of Civil Society Organizations (CSO), Media and Culture Implemented and Financed by IPA Programme, EU Programmes and other Donors in the Republic of Serbia: Draft Evaluation Report (15 March 2013)*, p. 28.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid*, p. 5.

<sup>123</sup> Aaron Rhodes, *Ten Years of Media Support to the Balkans: An Assessment* (Media Task Force of the Stability Pact for South East Europe, 2007), p. 12.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*, p. 32.

standards, but also by international experts. Mentoring is complementary to classroom training and generally entails experienced editors or reporters working with local journalists who are undergoing training, helping them produce stories according to international standards.<sup>125</sup> The approach has, for instance, been used by CIN in BiH<sup>126</sup> and CINS in Serbia, as well as by BIRN, as these organizations have been training and mentoring their reporters on-the-job to enable them to conform to the highest standards of investigative reporting.

In BiH, the most notable training program in the past decade was provided for several consecutive years by Mediacentar Sarajevo, based on the blended-learning method and six-month cycles. The stories produced by participants, some of which were awarded, were featured in the media of the region. The program first targeted journalists from former Yugoslavia, and then from BiH. Its effective format served as a blueprint for similar trainings by NUNS and CINS in Serbia. The key challenge, however, was publishing the stories, considering the various pressures and influences that the media operate under. In the early 2000s, Mediacentar Sarajevo ran a series of donor-funded trainings on computer assisted reporting with local trainers. Since 2003, Mediacentar Sarajevo has been operating a website for media professionals (first at Netnovinar.org, now at Media.ba), which features a significant number of educational articles on investigative journalism and a vast array of educational material about journalism in general. It used to feature a database of journalists in the region, facilitating their networking for work on cross-border projects, and a mailing list for communication among investigative reporters. Supported by various donors over the years, the project has been heavily promoted across the region and has gained recognition in the media community.<sup>127</sup>

In Serbia, NUNS and CINS ran an investigative reporting school from 2007 to 2012 based on a blended learning model, with long-term training cycles, and the stories produced were published on the CINS website. It was funded by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). The added value of the program was that it served as a recruiting center for CINS journalists. NUNS implemented an investigative training focusing on transparency of local self-governments with the EU Delegation in Serbia in 2011 and 2012, as a six-month long in-house training for 4 local weeklies where investigative reporters from Serbia and BiH acted as mentors helping the media produce stories. The cooperation between NUNS and the U.S. Embassy yielded

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<sup>125</sup> Kaplan, *Empowering Independent Media*, p. 89.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> The website won the 2006 Transparency International BiH award for the advancement of investigative reporting.

short-term trainings on investigative and computer-assisted reporting conducted by U.S. trainers.

BIRN Serbia provided trainings focusing on monitoring public finance, including a long-term training in 2010 for reporters with some investigative experience, with mentoring by experienced investigative reporters/editors and production of stories, with 6-month long training cycles. The problems were mainly the access to information at the local level and the lack of expertise at the local level to help journalists understand public finance data and financial reports. The added value of the program was in BIRN recruiting contributors for its online editions from the program participants. One of BIRN's investigative trainings lasted for two years (2009-2011) for the same group of participants, focusing on monitoring public finance. In between four training sessions a year, the participants worked on stories published on BIRN's online publications and in the participants' media. Although BIRN conducted a donor-funded, long-term, in-house investigative training for a local newspaper in 2009 with local mentors, the question is whether such projects are sustainable in the long run, as they are expensive and local print media in Serbia are in very poor financial shape. As of 2012, BIRN Serbia has developed a free online resource for journalists featuring databases on public finance ([javno.skockajtebudzet.rs](http://javno.skockajtebudzet.rs)) with thousands of documents collected by the BIRN team. The BIRN Summer School in investigative reporting targeting journalists from the Western Balkans was organized for the 4th time in 2013 by the regional network, with renowned international and local trainers. BIRN has also published an investigative journalism handbook "Digging Deep" in cooperation with the Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism of the Columbia Journalism School. Since 2007 BIRN has implemented a regional program Balkan Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence, which includes BiH and Serbia. Within the program, which produces some investigative stories, journalists receive funding for the work on stories and cooperate with a mentor throughout the investigation. A recent project worth mentioning is that funded and organized in 2013 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Serbia. It provided a comprehensive training in investigative reporting for a group of young journalists who were given internships in prominent Serbian NGOs to produce investigative stories and disseminate them via social media.

- **Funding investigative projects:** While commercial media have been known to receive funding for investigative projects, there is no information that could help us understand the scope of such activities in BiH and Serbia. Rhodes notes that there have been numerous grants for investigative content in the Balkans.<sup>128</sup> For instance, weekly news magazine *Dani* in BiH received

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<sup>128</sup> Rhodes, *Ten Years of Media Support to the Balkans*, p. 24.

substantial financial and technical support.<sup>129</sup> An example of an organization which allocates small grants to individual journalists to work on stories is SCOOP, based in Denmark. It supported investigative journalism in the Balkans from 2003 to 2012 when it ran out of funds for the region, while it still operates in other countries and regions. It provided individual journalists with the opportunity to pursue projects that their media organizations could not due to financial reasons or lack of will. A journalist would submit a project for the story and the expenses, including the journalist's salary for the duration of the project, would be covered. Some dozen SCOOP-financed stories from the Balkans received various national, regional and international awards.<sup>130</sup> Between 2004 and 2006, USAID supported more than 340 investigative and in-depth reports made by print, radio, and TV outlets in BiH. Several of these reports resulted in action aimed to address the problems which the stories exposed.<sup>131</sup> Internews in BiH, funded by USAID, is carrying out a media support program in the period 2010-2015, a component of which is strengthening investigative reporting, worth some \$US 200,000, implemented mainly through small grants awarded to media outlets and individual journalists for the production of investigative stories.<sup>132</sup>

- **Supporting investigative reporting centers.** Support to the nonprofits can be in the form of a fund which kick-starts it,<sup>133</sup> such as in the case of CIN in BiH, or more usually as funding for investigative projects. Both CIN in BiH and CINS in Serbia have been running mainly on funding for investigative projects. Details on the forms of support to nonprofits in BiH and Serbia will be discussed in the following two case studies, but suffice it to say here that although significant results have been achieved in terms of their development, a large question mark looms over their sustainability. In Serbia, a nonprofit center, Pištaljka ([www.pistaljka.rs](http://www.pistaljka.rs)), established in 2010 and funded by international donor organizations, publishes investigative stories on corruption on its website, approximately three a month, while 50% of its funding is aimed at advocacy activities regarding the protection of whistleblowers.<sup>134</sup> All of

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<sup>129</sup> Johnson, "Model Interventions," p. 139.

<sup>130</sup> For more information on the awards, see: <http://i-scoop.org/scoop/balkans/category/awards/> (Accessed on September 20, 2013).

<sup>131</sup> United States Agency for International Development (USAID), *Giving Citizens a Voice: Strengthening Independent Media in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Final Report* (Washington: United States Agency for International Development, 2006), p. 11.

<sup>132</sup> Amer Džihana, interview with the author, August 23, 2013.

<sup>133</sup> Kaplan, *Empowering Independent Media*, p. 93.

<sup>134</sup> Vladimir Radomirović, Editor-in-Chief, Pištaljka.rs, interview with the author, September 17, 2013.

its funding is ad-hoc, project-based and short-term.<sup>135</sup> There are also some other organizations with investigative output. Although BIRN Serbia produces investigative stories and conducts investigative reporting trainings, it is not a clear-cut case of an investigative nonprofit, as a great deal of its output is not investigative and, pressured by the increasingly dwindling support for journalism trainings, it has diversified its portfolio to different projects in the areas of good governance and public finance. While Mediacentar Sarajevo had projects focusing on investigative reporting, it has not managed to obtain continuous funding for these activities and thus it did not sustain investigative reporting as one of its core activities. The reason is likely that it is increasingly difficult to obtain funding for training.

Apart from these three major avenues with efforts that were directly aimed at supporting investigative journalism in BiH and Serbia, other donors' initiatives indirectly contributed to the development of investigative reporting. Most notably, the introduction of an adequate legal framework in the form of Freedom of Access to Information laws in both countries and decriminalization of libel and defamation were necessary preconditions for the development of investigative reporting.<sup>136</sup>

Despite efforts aimed at developing investigative journalism in BiH and Serbia, their effects and results are challenged by contextual factors. Although there were numerous grants for investigative content production, the long-term results of many such grants are not yet visible as much investigative journalism which is not subsidized by grants stops and, with some important exceptions, support for content has typically not resulted in continued practice "mainly because of owner and editorial decisions and market realities."<sup>137</sup> Numerous short-term trainings, lasting several days, without work on stories with mentoring, are of dubious effect considering the complexity of investigative methods and practices. Although long-term trainings, involving story production, yielded investigative-savvy individuals, it is questionable whether they could continue to produce demanding investigative work in their newsrooms for various reasons, most notably lack of support from editors, lack of funding and the political affiliations of the media. Also, former participants of investigative training programs do not have in their newsrooms the quality mentoring and strict scrutiny over their stories which would guarantee that the media would not be sued. Therefore, legal insecurity and disrespect of laws by public institutions limit the effects of investigative reporting training programs in the long run. Additionally, it has become increasingly difficult

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> On donor efforts in respect to legal reforms please see Marko, "Media Reforms in Turbulent Times", as well as Jusić and Ahmetašević, "Media Reforms through Intervention".

<sup>137</sup> Rhodes, *Ten Years of Media Support to the Balkans*, p. 24.

to obtain funding for general investigative journalism trainings, which are thus nowadays rare to find.

In sum, it seems that nonprofit centers devoted to the production of investigative journalism which is republished by other media are the answer to ensuring a continuous supply of investigative journalism in the media sphere of both countries. As a founder of CIN noted, the large international development programs have insisted on the approach that the media in BiH just needs to be trained better, which had little effect.<sup>138</sup> Therefore, CIN founders believed that an independent operation devoted exclusively to upholding the highest standards in investigative journalism is the answer to the lack of such journalism in the country.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Drew Sullivan, interviews with the author, July 8, 2013 and August 18, 2013.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

## 5.

# Case Studies

The following two case studies analyze two nonprofit investigative journalism centers in the Western Balkans dedicated exclusively to the production of investigative stories in accordance with the highest international standards - the Center for Investigative Reporting (CIN), based in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Center for Investigative Journalism Serbia (CINS), based in Belgrade. The case studies tackle several aspects of the operation of these two organizations. First, they outline how the centers were founded and what foreign organizations their founders used as role models, as well as how they operate at present. Second, the case studies explore the type of donor assistance the centers receive. Further on, they show the achievements and the challenges to the operation of the centers. Finally, they cover the issue of the centers' sustainability.

### 5.1 The Center for Investigative Reporting (CIN)<sup>140</sup>

#### The Establishment of CIN

CIN was established in 2004 by New York University (NYU) and its subcontractor Journalism Development Group (JDG), a limited liability company based in the U.S. JDG was established by two U.S. journalists – one was the first director of CIN and the other worked as its editor. CIN was launched with a three-year, \$1.7 million grant to NYU<sup>141</sup> which lasted from 2004 to 2007 and was a key to the center's early success. It was officially registered as a nonprofit local organization, association of citizens,<sup>142</sup> in 2005. As of 2006 it operates independently of JDG. The board of directors, which includes two foreigners, oversees CIN's local management. CIN's

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<sup>140</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the information on CIN was mainly collected from the interview with its director Leila Bičakčić, conducted on June 10, 2013.

<sup>141</sup> United States Agency for International Development, *Bosnia-Herzegovina Democracy and Governance Assessment*, p. 59.

<sup>142</sup> This is a form of nongovernmental organization in BiH.

activity is the production of investigative stories in accordance with the highest international standards.<sup>143</sup>

The initial CIN expertise was international. NYU provided training curricula used by its journalism school, with an emphasis on investigative reporting. In the first months after the establishment of CIN in 2004, JDG experts, and later visiting lecturers from NYU, conducted intensive training for local journalists. The training continued for another three years on-the-job. The international editors guided the development of each story from the beginning to the end as the editorial expertise needed for the center could not be found in the BiH market.

CIN's average yearly budget is around 300,000 – 325,000 EUR. In 2011, CIN had the 6<sup>th</sup> largest annual budget among non-U.S. nonprofits devoted to investigative journalism, totaling \$468,000.<sup>144</sup>

In 2013 the center has a staff of 17. There are 10 reporters, an editor-in-chief, deputy editor and an assistant editor who also works on the English edition of stories as all the stories are also published in English on the CIN website. CIN has maintained 10 reporters on its staff as an optimum number for its organizational structure. As the editor spends a lot of time working directly with reporters, developing and following the investigative process, which is not the case in traditional media, a larger number of reporters would not be feasible. Reporters mainly work on a contract basis, as freelancers would. The reason for this is the high contributions to the state for fully employed staff. The contracts are tied to the length of individual project funding as the salaries are paid from donor funds, and are above the country's average for the profession.

CIN produces 40–50 complex investigative stories a year, with no fixed monthly output. Additionally, there are smaller feature or news stories, sometimes as a follow up to big projects. In 2012 there were 230 such smaller stories. The center plans to enrich its stories by adding short videos and visualizations which should give visibility to the large quantity of information collected during investigations. The hope is that these products would increase the number of readers.

## The Model

JDG's plan was to form a center in BiH based on the practice of investigative reporting in Anglo-Saxon countries, primarily in the U.S, which was a novelty in the Balkans. "CIN was designed to specifically address the state of media development in BiH at the time," comments Drew Sullivan, former CIN director, now president of its board.<sup>145</sup> According to him, despite hefty media assistance to BiH by 2003,

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<sup>143</sup> United States Agency for International Development, *Bosnia-Herzegovina Democracy and Governance Assessment*, p. 59.

<sup>144</sup> Kaplan, *Global Investigative Journalism*, p. 31.

<sup>145</sup> Drew Sullivan, interviews with the author, July 8, 2013 and August 18, 2013.

the media was failing to meet international standards, with the basic problem being a visible lack of expertise. Hence, the standards could not be improved by in-classroom training, neither could the media be changed from within, as the “media was inherently prone to being co-opted by political and financial interests” and “the toxic politics of BiH made it impossible to have a truly independent media organization in BiH.”<sup>146</sup> Sullivan believed that a fundamental new standard was needed, especially in investigative reporting. Therefore, JDG proposed a concept that would always guarantee one independent media organization in BiH – to leverage international standards into local media by controlling one news organization and designing it from the start to meet the highest standards.<sup>147</sup>

As the formation of the center was a foreign initiative, there was great concern that CIN reporters would not embrace the center as strongly as if the idea was theirs and they fought for its existence. However, after the center was localized, over time the CIN staff took ownership of the center, which was crucial to its survival.<sup>148</sup>

The center’s founders looked to foreign models of investigative nonprofits. The concept came from JDG, based mainly on two models - the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism in Manila and the Center for Investigative Reporting in California, but modified to meet the needs of BiH.<sup>149</sup> “We understood upfront that Bosnia was unique even in the Balkans and that no model could be transposed exactly. We knew both centers served more as inspiration than blueprints (...). Naturally, we learned as we went along and adjusted things as best as we could,” Sullivan says noting that CIN mostly implemented the planned model.<sup>150</sup>

However, there is a series of differences that CIN’s founders were aware of when basing their project on the role-model centers. Sullivan points to these.<sup>151</sup> On the financial side, there was no robust market in BiH for selling the content to, so CIN focused more on Europe and generally outside of the region to sell the content, having worked with some prominent media organizations. The belief that income could come from BiH television proved to be mistaken because of “corruption in local TV media.”<sup>152</sup> Also, as BiH did not have a lucrative news industry and advertising was more political in the Balkans than in the countries of CIN’s role-models, the center’s model did not include a plan to rely on advertising, although there is a plan to monetize the website, drawing on the diaspora. Additionally, as there is no tradition of fundraising through small contributions from individuals in BiH,

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

that source could not be counted on, but there was a hope to draw small funds from the diaspora. Considering the political influences on the media in BiH, CIN's founders knew they would have to spend much more time than their role-models in protecting the center from political interference and paying attention to that issue in general. Also, they knew that the BiH media environment was "far more toxic and corrupt than in the Philippines and the U.S." and that journalism standards would be lower than in San Francisco or Manila<sup>153</sup>.

"We expected to spend more time training and we designed the copy flow and news gathering process to be much more structured than they would have been in other centers. Journalism ethics are also different and we had to set strict rules on ethics to protect the center's reputation. Consequently, early on, things were very structured, there were more rules and we moved slowly making sure we didn't take on too many new tasks," Sullivan comments.<sup>154</sup>

The CIN founders were aware of some advantages the center would have as well.<sup>155</sup> For example, the product offered by the center would be unique in BiH and the region as there was no investigative reporting of the sort CIN was doing. Moreover, media were not interested in producing corruption and organized crime reporting as it is dangerous, difficult and expensive. Also, given the low standards in BiH media, it was to be expected that the public would appreciate the "good, fair and independent journalism" to be offered by CIN.<sup>156</sup> Knowing that corruption would remain a problem in BiH, and at the same time high on donors' agenda, it was to be expected that such a situation would translate into funding for CIN – eventually EU funds – available for a long time. Furthermore, it was also expected that the international community would remain engaged in BiH with likely a decade or more of heavy funding until BiH was well on its way to EU. The founders of CIN also hoped to generate income from regional and international media with the assumption that news from BiH was of interest to Europe and that CIN could produce the highest quality journalism. Knowing that BiH has a large diaspora, they hoped to leverage their interest. Also, as the Organized Crime and Corruption Project (OCCRP), a not-for-profit, joint program of a number of regional non-profit investigative centers

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

and for profit independent media stretching from Eastern Europe to Central Asia,<sup>157</sup> was planned as soon as CIN was set up, the costs for all regional member centers, including CIN, could be lowered by splitting them among OCCRP members, such as those for commercial databases, media insurance and international editors.

## Donor Assistance to the Center

CIN relies only on donor assistance and has a rather broad donor base. Apart from the hefty kick-start grant from USAID, its single largest donor is the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), which has supported CIN since 2007, first with a three-year project, and now with a four-year core-support grant aimed at raising CIN's capacities. The Open Society Fund Bosnia and Herzegovina (OSF BiH), the Dutch Embassy and the British Embassy are other long-term funders, although their funding has not been continuous, but has run on a project-by-project basis. The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) has been providing project-based funding, but the cooperation has been continuous, on a yearly basis. CIN has also received EU funding. In addition, the center applies with projects to various international donor funds available in BiH and in the Balkans and to a smaller extent gets assistance through the OCCRP network's funders. Hence, the center manages to have relatively stable funding by establishing long-term cooperation with donors, and by diversifying the donor base.

Most of the grants that CIN acquires are tied to civil society projects as dedicated media funding was significantly reduced even before CIN began fundraising in 2007, after the initial three-year USAID grant had expired. For instance, as OSF BiH does not have a media program, it supports CIN through joint cooperation on projects in different thematic areas, where CIN's role is producing investigative stories.<sup>158</sup> Typically, the center applies with donors for support for stories, but not for training and capacity building, as donors generally do not provide such funding. This also means that the approach of most donors is to support ad-hoc, individual,

<sup>157</sup> "About us," Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), August 24, 2007, <https://reportingproject.net/occrp/index.php/en/about-us> (Accessed on June 3, 2013). OCCRP was established in 2006, based in Sarajevo. As an umbrella group it helps the member centers achieve sustainability and improve standards (Sullivan, *Investigative Reporting in Emerging Democracies*, p. 14). Members of the network get funds for collaborating on cross-border stories, as well as access to libel and slander insurance, commercial databases and help in capacity-building (Kaplan, *Global Investigative Journalism*, p. 29; Sullivan, *Investigative Reporting in Emerging Democracies*, p. 14). OCCRP coordinates story production among the centers and helps with editing, fact-checking and ensuring that the stories meet international standards, while it also packages and distributes stories (Kaplan, *Empowering Independent Media: U.S. Efforts to Foster a Free Press and an Open Internet Around the World*. 2012, p. 58).

<sup>158</sup> Mervan Miraščija, Law Program Coordinator, Open Society Fund Bosnia and Herzegovina (OSF BiH), interview with the author, July 10, 2013.

shorter-term projects. For instance, OSF BiH generally tries to bridge difficult times for CIN with ad-hoc projects as it is unable to provide institutional support.<sup>159</sup>

There are only rare cases where donors are prepared to provide substantial longer-term institutional support that is strategic and not project-based. Apart from the initial USAID grant, SIDA has been interested in building CIN's capacities to help its sustainability. It cooperates with CIN on the potential commercialization of its products. To this end, the SIDA grant has enabled CIN to work for almost two years with a consultant who helped them produce business and marketing plans and different guidelines. The consultant worked with the administrative team, but also with journalists on improving newsroom efficiency. OCCRP also provides capacity building support to CIN. It purchased computers for journalists and donated some of the video equipment. Two consultants paid by OCCRP worked with the editor on the newsroom management for three months in 2013. CIN's journalists also take part in the investigative work of OCCRP, and the network covers the costs of the investigations and of the journalists.

However, in spite of their longer-term engagement with the center, there has been little systematic coordination among donors although CIN has been trying to initiate a formal form of this for years. However, there is occasional communication among donors in order to avoid overlap.<sup>160</sup>

## Effects of CIN Stories

Research that CIN conducts periodically shows that an increasing number of citizens recognize the name of the center and not only its stories. Assessing the impacts of the foreign media assistance in the period 2007 - 2011, the EU draft report notes that CIN's production had an impact on the media which republished its content, and on the public, as well as, very recently, on the Government.<sup>161</sup>

Many of CIN's stories had effects in the reaction of the responsible authorities. As the greatest success among the center's stories, its director singles out one from 2006 which exposed a dubious government privatization deal which secured the prime minister of the Federation BiH a nearly free apartment. Charges were pressed against the prime minister and he was eventually removed from the position. Another story recognized by CIN as a great success led to the firing and pressing of criminal charges against the director of the port of Ploče in Croatia. One story resulted in the BiH Chamber of Lawyers initiating an automated system of choosing pro bono

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ivana Cvetković Bajrović, Senior Program Officer for Europe, National Endowment for Democracy (NED), interview with the author, June 10, 2013; Mervan Miraščija, interview with the author, July 10, 2013.

<sup>161</sup> European Union and A.R.S. Progetti S.P.A, *Technical Assistance for Evaluation of Sector of Civil Society Organizations (CSO), Media and Culture Implemented and Financed by IPA Programme, EU Programmes and other Donors in the Republic of Serbia: Draft Evaluation Report (15 March 2013)*, p. 30.

lawyers, after a pro bono lawyer representing clients at the Court of BiH earned almost half a million EUR within a year in compensation from the state, due to his developed network of contacts who recommend him. Some other outcomes of CIN stories were: the indictment of a former director of the Indirect Taxation Authority of BiH; the resignation of a judge from the War Crimes Chamber in the State Court of BiH; the resignation of the State Court judge; the closure of a university; the indictment of a police officer for vehicular manslaughter, and many others.<sup>162</sup> Hence, it seems that the authorities have recognized CIN findings as firmly corroborated, so that they cannot ignore them and thus follow up with appropriate procedures.<sup>163</sup>

## Reputation and Cooperation with Local Media

It is important that media organizations in BiH accept CIN as an equal partner considering that it operates as a media agency offering its stories to the media and has no other way to publish its work except on its website. Not surprisingly, the relationship between CIN and the media outlets in BiH has been both fruitful and challenging, while its reputation among media outlets and journalists has been slowly but steadily growing.<sup>164</sup>

Many media outlets carry CIN stories more or less regularly. Some 3-5 media carried CIN stories daily, on average, in 2012, most notably daily papers and major online news portals.<sup>165</sup> However, the publishing of CIN content by media in BiH is influenced by the specifics of the local media market and the media culture. The media market in BiH is split among the three ethnic groups, but the situation is favorable for CIN - it can publish the same story in two or three dailies simultaneously because the papers are not competing as they cater to different audiences. However, BiH media carry CIN stories selectively, depending on their political affiliation, ownership and other influences, as they are divided according party, ethnic and other affiliations. For example, CIN decided not to offer its stories to the daily *Nezavisne Novine*, which caters to Republika Srpska, due to the paper's strong political affiliations. Also, some media in BiH perceive CIN as competition and are thus reluctant to publish its stories.

Despite the interest of BiH media in publishing CIN's stories, the center has never sold a story in the local market. This is because current prices for content are far below what a CIN story costs due to the investigation and all the administrative costs, and the dire financial situation of BiH media severely limits their capacity

<sup>162</sup> Drew Sullivan, interviews with the author, July 8, 2013 and August 18, 2013.

<sup>163</sup> Mehmed Halilović, interview with the author, August 16, 2013.

<sup>164</sup> Boro Kontić, interview with the author, August 19, 2013; Amer Džihana, interview with the author, August 23, 2013; Mehmed Halilović, interview with the author, August 16, 2013.

<sup>165</sup> Leila Bičakčić, interview with the author, June 10, 2013; Mervan Miraščija, interview with the author, July 10, 2013.

to purchase CIN's stories.<sup>166</sup> Consequently, the center does not have contracts with the media which publish its stories. CIN has not offered syndication contracts to BiH media because they would entail exclusivity clauses and the center's stance is that exclusivity can be guaranteed only to the media who pay for stories. As media in BiH are not ready to pay for CIN stories, the center opted to offer its stories to whichever media organization is interested.

It seems that other media rarely follow up CIN stories. While the center's director states that other journalists do use CIN's information as a source and that they continue to research CIN stories published even several years previously, independent sources think that follow ups by other media are rare or nonexistent<sup>167</sup>. The problem seems to be that most media in BiH quickly abandon exclusive information and focus on their own exclusive stories without paying attention to the stories of others.<sup>168</sup>

Inevitably, CIN has also faced a lot of criticism among local media, especially in the beginning, and there were instances of negative stories written about CIN, dismissing its concept and predicting its closure.<sup>169</sup> There were various reasons for this - from professional envy and a misunderstanding of the concept of a non-profit investigative reporting center, to the political interests of those media that criticized the work of CIN. For example, a Montenegrin daily which is a mouthpiece of a high-profile politician investigated by CIN, wrote negatively about the center in order to diminish the impact of its findings.<sup>170</sup>

## Pressures and Threats

There have been pressures on and threats against CIN journalists. The more recognized CIN is as a source of information which conveys a different picture to that which politics would like to present, the more it is exposed to pressures. For example, after CIN published a series of award winning stories, the lawyers of the story's protagonist sent a letter to CIN's funders urging them to stop funding the organization that, allegedly, spread lies. However, the donors were united in their stance of not intervening in CIN's editorial policy. There was also one instance of a death threat to a CIN journalist. There have been threats of lawsuits and actual lawsuits against CIN, but it has won all of them.<sup>171</sup> Other pressures include the withholding of documents,

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<sup>166</sup> Mehmed Halilović, interview with the author, August 16, 2013.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid; Boro Kontić, interview with the author, August 19, 2013.

<sup>168</sup> Mehmed Halilović, interview with the author, August 16, 2013.

<sup>169</sup> Drew Sullivan, interviews with the author, July 8, 2013 and August 18, 2013; Mehmed Halilović, interview with the author, August 16, 2013; Boro Kontić, interview with the author, August 19, 2013.

<sup>170</sup> Boro Kontić, interview with the author, August 19, 2013.

<sup>171</sup> Drew Sullivan, interviews with the author, July 8, 2013 and August 18, 2013.

threats of sending various inspectors to the center and using politically aligned media to publish negative stories about CIN. However, CIN has successfully dealt with all these challenges and has maintained its independence.

## Legal Insecurity and Floating Laws

A significant challenge to CIN's work comes from disrespect for the Freedom of Access to Information (FOI) law by the authorities and the instance of 'floating laws'<sup>172</sup> – laws that are often changed. For example, recently proposed changes to the FOI law, if adopted, would severely impede access of information.<sup>173</sup> "If we want to stay independent, we cannot acquire documents 'under the table'. We have to use legal channels to access information (...) If this possibility is curtailed for us, I am not sure what our options for investigative work will be," states CIN director Leila Bičakčić<sup>174</sup>.

Moreover, inadequate implementation of existing FOI legislation often creates obstacles for the center as the authorities are not used to the openness that the legislation requires.<sup>175</sup> Consequently, CIN was forced to go to the court in order to obtain information that was withheld by state institutions, and won the first court cases against the authorities for withholding information.<sup>176</sup>

## Sustainability of CIN

In spite of good cooperation with donors, financial sustainability remains a great challenge for CIN. The projection that the center would cover 50% of its financial needs from commercial contracts in five years proved overly optimistic as CIN's commercial income is almost negligible. In 2012 it constituted 1.3% of the center's income, gained through CIN journalists delivering trainings and presentations. Given the circumstances, CIN is not likely to become a fully self-supporting media organization, bearing in mind that similar organizations in much more developed media markets of the West are struggling to find a formula for generating income beyond donations.

Unlike in the cases of similar centers in other countries, such as the Philippines, an endowment is not an option for helping the sustainability of CIN. When CIN and

<sup>172</sup> Zielonka and Mancini, *Executive Summary: A Media Map of Central and Eastern Europe*, p. 6.

<sup>173</sup> Leila Bičakčić, interview with the author, June 10, 2013; Mehmed Halilović, interview with the author, August 16, 2013.

<sup>174</sup> Leila Bičakčić, interview with the author, June 10, 2013.

<sup>175</sup> Mehmed Halilović, interview with the author, August 16, 2013. For information on the implementation of FOI laws in BiH, see European Commission, *Bosnia and Herzegovina 2012 Progress Report*, p. 17 and European Commission, *Bosnia and Herzegovina 2011 Progress Report*, p. 16.

<sup>176</sup> Mehmed Halilović, interview with the author, August 16, 2013.

SIDA discussed options for ensuring long-term sustainability of the center, they explored the idea of an endowment which would secure funding to CIN through interest. However, it was not feasible in BiH due to the unfavorable conditions for securing a deposit. Another idea was a property endowment where CIN would be given a building and would lease a part of it. However, a legal assessment done by SIDA and CIN could not devise a model to protect the property in the case of CIN being sued and losing in court.

It seems that the sustainability of the center will depend on its capacity to do substantial fundraising in the foreseeable future. In order to do that, CIN has to become fully integrated into the local media market, so that it can demonstrate to donors that there is a need and a market for its stories, and that the stories can have a significant reach and impact. However, so far the integration of the center into the local media landscape is only partial at best. “We are at a juncture between the media and the civil sector. Civil society considers us a media organization, while the media consider us a member of civil society,” explains the center’s director Leila Bičakčić.<sup>177</sup> Furthermore, it is possible that the media do not perceive CIN as a part of their community mainly because of its funding sources, as CIN is independent of the media market in BiH and does not share all the problems of other media which are struggling to survive.<sup>178</sup>

When these limitations of integration into the local media sphere are combined with a weak market which prevents the commercialization of the center’s services, and with relatively unpredictable donor funding - mainly accessible ad-hoc, along with the unavailability of funding targeting media development specifically, ensuring the center’s sustainability remains a tough call for the foreseeable future.

## 5.2 The Center for Investigative Journalism Serbia (CINS)<sup>179</sup>

### The Establishment of CINS

CINS was established in 2007 as a section of the Independent Journalists’ Association of Serbia (NUNS). It became an independent legal entity in 2012,

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<sup>177</sup> Leila Bičakčić, interview with the author, June 10, 2013.

<sup>178</sup> Amer Džihana, interview with the author, August 23, 2013.

<sup>179</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the information on CINS was mainly collected from the interview with its director Branko Čečen.

registered as a nonprofit foundation<sup>180</sup> established by NUNS. CINS currently operates in NUNS premises and has the same management board as NUNS. Its goals are the production of investigative stories and an increase in such content in the Serbian media.

The organization was a product of conversations between several entities - the NUNS leadership, the leadership of the investigative journalism school - organized at the time within NUNS and funded by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), NED representatives and OCCRP.<sup>181</sup> OCCRP wished to see investigative centers spring up in the Balkans and helped this process. NED and OCCRP thought that a home was necessary for those trainees of the NUNS school who excel so they could continue their good work. Hence the establishment of CINS and later its choice to separate from NUNS.<sup>182</sup> CIN in Sarajevo also played a role in nudging NUNS towards establishing CINS.<sup>183</sup> NED only made a recommendation in that sense, without setting any conditions.<sup>184</sup>

The center operates with a relatively small team considering the complexity of its investigations. There are 11 people at the center: director, editor-in-chief, another story editor, web editor and 7 investigative journalists. They produced more than two stories monthly in the last year (2012-2013). As these are complex investigations that last for months, CINS director Branko Čečen thinks that it is an excellent output for such a small team. Also, the traffic to the CINS website has increased almost ten times in the past two years.

CINS has acquired a good reputation among media and civil society organizations in Serbia and internationally,<sup>185</sup> receiving numerous local and international awards for its work. For example, for each of the last three years, CINS journalists received the yearly award for investigative journalism in Serbia “Freedom Day”, awarded by NUNS and the U.S. Embassy. One of the awards was for a story done with BIRN Serbia. One of the center’s journalists was in the OCCRP team which won the 2011 Daniel Pearl Award for Outstanding International Investigative Reporting. He also won the third award of the Balkan Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence in 2011 and the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) fellowship in 2012.<sup>186</sup> CINS is a

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<sup>180</sup> There are two types of nongovernmental nonprofits in Serbia – association of citizens and foundation. The association of citizens is established by individuals, while a foundation can be established by a legal entity.

<sup>181</sup> Ivana Cvetković Bajrović, interview with the author, May 31, 2013.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Milorad Ivanović, interview with the author, August 21, 2013.

<sup>186</sup> “Stevan Dojčinović”, BIRN Summer School of Investigative Reporting, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/birn-summer-school/stevan-dojcinovic> (Accessed on June 2, 2013).

member not only of OCCRP, but also of the Global Investigative Journalism Network, and various informal networks.

CINS is also a provider of trainings. Recently it delivered donor-funded trainings for two Serbian NGOs in investigative techniques and searching databases and social networks respectively. However, the funding for general investigative trainings targeting journalists is increasingly less available and thus CINS has not been in a position to do these recently.

## The Model

Several role-models influenced CINS, including U.S. investigative nonprofits. When the current CINS director was appointed in 2010, he was guided by the success of different investigative journalism operations. The achievements of CIN in Sarajevo showed that such an organizational model could work in the Balkans. A positive example from Serbia was the investigative series “Insider”, which airs on the national TV B92 approximately every six months, with high international standards and excellent impact. Important influences were two U.S. investigative nonprofits – ProPublica and the Center for Public Integrity. As the CINS director sees the U.S. centers as tightly organized “machineries” producing stories in a planned and organized manner, they were the best example for CINS, although the U.S. model of nonprofits was used in a flexible manner, considering the different circumstances in which CINS operates.

There are important differences when these foreign models are implemented in Serbia. First, relying on donor assistance only, CINS often has to adapt to donors’ goals, project themes and deadlines. The center’s director believes that is not the case with U.S. nonprofits as they have secure funding for years ahead which enables them to choose freely the topics of investigation. Second, as the human and other resources of CINS and its production are still very limited, the models the center looks up to could only be transposed to an extent. Third, CINS operates in a small, poor and very controlled media market, and in a general environment with incomparably less money to support investigative journalism than is the case in the West. Therefore, some modes of income, such as the purchase of CINS stories or citizens’ donations, cannot be counted on. Furthermore, CINS stories, offered for free to Serbian media, are sometimes rejected with no explanation, because the media have to consider their political and other affiliations, including sources of funding. In addition, as the level of political culture in Serbia is very low, CINS’ work lacks impact in the form of tangible consequences, which the CINS director believes is different in more developed societies. Regardless of the significance of CINS discoveries, there is usually no follow up by the state in holding the perpetrators accountable. Neither is there follow up by the media after the initial publication of a CINS story. Finally, the availability of educated and professional journalists is significantly larger in countries with more developed media, while CINS has to create quality investigative journalists from scratch, educating and coaching young journalists.

## Donor Assistance to the Center

Relying entirely on donor assistance, CINS developed into an independent organization with permanent staff and a broadened funding base.<sup>187</sup> It attracts on average about \$US 150,000 in donations annually; the amount of donations has increased by more than 50% since 2010, although the center would need approximately \$US 250,000 in annual budget to reach its full potential - with the given newsroom staff, but with strengthened management capacities and its own premises. The single biggest donor to the center is NED, while other significant donors have been the U.S. Embassy, IREX Serbia (now closed) and the Balkan Trust for Democracy. However, the center's operation is challenged by fairly fast diminishing donor support and donors having increasingly fewer funds. This creates a significant and a very realistic risk of gaps between spells of donor funding, jeopardizing the center's financial ability to pay the journalists and costs of investigations.

Most of the donations to CINS have been directed at the production of investigative stories and usually do not contain funds for capacity building. However, some organizations helped in that way, such as NED, and OCCRP as a partner organization. They jointly funded the new CINS website to help the commercial viability of the center, and OCCRP provided funds for security equipment and training.<sup>188</sup>

Although OCCRP does not operate as a donor organization, there is a spill-over of OCCRP funds to CINS. An international editor, paid by OCCRP, worked at CINS for two and a half years taking on the additional roles as advisor and educator. Some dozen projects were carried out in cooperation with OCCRP, most often consisting of multiple stories. When CINS has an idea for a cross-border investigation, OCCRP covers the costs and involves appropriate centers from the network in the project. CINS is also involved in a couple of special OCCRP projects.<sup>189</sup>

CINS has not received institution-building funds. However, as NED's grants contain operation costs, unlike other donors' grants which cover only activity-related costs, institution building becomes a side effect of their assistance, although they cannot specifically focus on it.<sup>190</sup>

While most of the CINS funding has been short-term and ad-hoc, NED prefers a long-term approach to the center.<sup>191</sup> NED's support to CINS has been training and

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<sup>187</sup> Janet Rabin Satter, Assistant Program Officer for Europe, National Endowment for Democracy (NED), interview with the author, May 31, 2013.

<sup>188</sup> The equipment includes software protecting CINS' computer networks, while training covers dealing with tapped phones and encrypting electronic communication.

<sup>189</sup> The project 'People of Interest' features open databases with documents that can be extracted from public records on subjects (people and institutions) of OCCRP's members' stories. Within a project focused on investigating media ownership, CINS covers Serbia.

<sup>190</sup> Janet Rabin Satter and Ivana Cvetković Bajrović, interview with the author, May 31, 2013.

<sup>191</sup> Branko Čečen, Director, CINS, interview with the author, May 29, 2013; Janet Rabin Satter and Ivana Cvetković Bajrović, interview with the author, May 31, 2013.

product-oriented. The first four years of NED support (2007-2012) went through NUNS as projects on a yearly basis for the investigative journalism school, which yielded all but one member of the CINS staff. When CINS registered as a separate entity in 2012, NED began supporting it directly with funding for investigative projects. Although there were four year-long projects between 2007 and 2012 funded by NED, they were building on each other and were, essentially, the same program, amounting to long-term support of sorts.<sup>192</sup> Although NED representatives are aware that continuous multi-year support would be better than project-by-project funding, NED can only disburse year-long grants due to administrative constraints.<sup>193</sup>

There is help with costs for human resources through cooperation with other organizations. The editor-in-chief is kept on a retainer by the Organized Crime and Corruption Project (OCCRP) as all the stories he does individually are within the scope of the cooperation between CINS and this network. OCCRP also engages CINS journalists on a story basis, in which case the stories belong to both organizations. One editor is paid by Sarajevo CIN and works for both centers within the scope of a cross-border project, producing stories of importance to both Serbia and BiH. He also edits CINS stories done outside of this project. After the end of the project, the plan is that editor should become a CINS staff member.

There is no formal donor coordination for CINS. Nevertheless, NED representatives routinely meet with other donors of their grantees in order to avoid overlapping and combine efforts to the best possible effect.<sup>194</sup>

Donors encourage plans for sustainability, but they do not require them. Although donors' perception of journalism is based on the Western experience, according to the CINS director, they have always demonstrated understanding for the different conditions in Serbia when working with the center. NED does not formally require sustainability plans from CINS, but encourages it to diversify its funding base and to explore the commercial avenues outlined in its strategic plan.<sup>195</sup> NED realizes that sustainability is not just financial and it is not realistic to expect an investigative center to rapidly manage to rely solely on commercial income.<sup>196</sup> Also, as it is the nature of a non-profit to rely on donor funding, NED tends to view sustainability as based on the potential of buy-in for the service or product of an organization and on whether the service it provides to the society is crucial enough for its democratic development.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Janet Rabin Satter, interview with the author, May 31, 2013.

<sup>193</sup> Ivana Cvetković Bajrović, interview with the author, May 31, 2013.

<sup>194</sup> Janet Rabin Satter and Ivana Cvetković Bajrović, interview with the author, May 31, 2013.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Janet Rabin Satter, interview with the author, May 31, 2013.

<sup>197</sup> Ivana Cvetković Bajrović, interview with the author, May 31, 2013.

## Cooperation with Local Media

One of the key preconditions for the successful work of a non-profit investigative reporting center such as CINS is the depth and scope of its cooperation with the media. CINS needs the Serbian media outlets to carry its stories in order for the stories to be relevant and effective. When offering a more exclusive story for publishing, CINS allows weeklies to publish it 2 days ahead of the story appearing on the CINS website, and half a day for dailies. In some cases, the deal is that the stories appear on the CINS website when the print media arrive on kiosks. So far, that relationship has been rather ambiguous.

It seems that not many Serbian media re-publish CINS stories. Several media outlets carry CINS stories relatively regularly, most notably non-tabloid media, such as the daily *Blic* and the quality daily *Danas*. Quality daily *Politika* has published CINS stories on organized crime. News weekly *Novi Magazin* carries CINS stories on a regular basis. However, only two TV stations sometimes carry CINS findings, *TV B92* and *TV Pink*, both with national frequencies, and two radio stations, *Radio B92* and *Radio S*.

The relationships and cooperation with media outlets in Serbia is an unpredictable affair. For example, CINS had a deal with the weekly news magazine *NIN* to publish a CINS story in more or less every issue and the two organizations actively cooperated and communicated regarding stories to be published. However, with the change of *NIN*'s editor, this cooperation has changed as the weekly became more selective regarding CINS stories it is prepared to publish. Moreover, CINS' experience is that the media, being under various influences, carefully choose the stories they publish due to the various affiliations and pressures they are under, or they do not publish them at all. Therefore, it is rather difficult to forge long-term deals with Serbian media to publish CINS stories.

Many media do not carry CINS investigations and are reluctant to cite them except when it is politically opportune for them, which is a manifestation of the position of the media as clients to external political and business interests.<sup>198</sup> "For clientelistic media all means are allowed, and their journalists, I think, are not aware that they are doing something deeply unprofessional," comments Jovanka Matić, the media researcher with the Institute of Social Sciences in Belgrade.<sup>199</sup> There are examples of CINS stories cited in other media two years after they were published by the center because the parties in power and thus political circumstances changed. There is also resistance among media managers to publish sensitive stories. For instance, CINS could not publish stories about a prominent Serbian tycoon in other media until he was arrested. Tabloids, in particular, carry CINS stories opportunistically, when the stories become useful for their political and business interests.

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<sup>198</sup> Jovanka Matić, interview with the author, August 16, 2013.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

Tabloids carry CINS stories a lot as there is a very developed tabloid market in Serbia and the papers are in a fierce competition for unknown and important information. However, they often provide inadequate or no attribution to CINS and selectively publish CINS findings, in combination with their own information, giving an inappropriate context to the center's stories.<sup>200</sup>

Ultimately, the center has not succeeded in selling its stories to the Serbian media. The media are not financially capable of paying the actual cost of elaborate investigations, which is far beyond the market price of a story. Also, forging longer-term syndication deals with media pressured by various influences is not possible because they pick and choose the stories to be published according to their vested interests.

All in all, the center has not fully integrated into the Serbian media sector mainly because the media are serving the interests of political and business groups. "CINS is still somehow on the outside, as a self-sufficient body, and there is no effort by the media or by CINS to create a symbiotic relationship," comments Matić.<sup>201</sup>

## Interaction with Politics and Businesses

It seems that the center has a rather delicate relationship with the spheres of politics and business. According to its director, the center has an influence on the political and business scene in Serbia, judging by the pressures it faces, such as attempts to stall the publishing of a story or pressure to stop an investigation by persons from an official's entourage. CINS has also received warnings to withdraw an already published story lest it be involved in a political conflict, with grave consequences for the center. There have also been instances of various sources telling CINS that there is an intention to cause them physical harm or to compromise them. Although there are many threats to sue CINS, they were sued only once and won in court. Additionally, sources sometimes refuse to talk to CINS, as in the case of a story debunking a city-level initiative, after which no city officials were at liberty to communicate with the center. Companies belonging to the most powerful tycoons and those dependent on their business networks demonstrate their resistance to CINS through refusal to talk to the organization and the attempts to influence media not to publish CINS' work.

## Reactions of State Institutions

Sometimes CINS stories have surprising positive effects, notwithstanding the lack of satisfactory follow up by the responsible state institutions. After a series

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<sup>200</sup> Branko Čečen, Director, CINS, interview with the author, May 29, 2013; Jovanka Matić, interview with the author, August 16, 2013.

<sup>201</sup> Jovanka Matić, interview with the author, August 16, 2013.

of CINS texts about a case of fraud, a large number of individuals, companies and institutions who were victims of the fraud joined forces and thus increased their chances of winning in court. However, action by the responsible state institutions, such as the prosecutor, is usually not taken following CINS stories. Most likely, this is a result of the party state and the lack of rule of law in Serbia<sup>202</sup> where the prosecutor and other bodies react only when they get a signal from the top - and the signal is usually not forthcoming.<sup>203</sup> Nonetheless, CINS' director singles out the Anti-Corruption Agency, as it follows up on the center's stories with appropriate procedures.

## Sustainability of CINS

At this stage it is rather difficult to predict CINS' chances of becoming a sustainable organization with steady and relatively predictable sources of income and a developed market for its services and products. First of all, the financial security of the center is an issue due to donor dependence. The only alternative to donor dependence is finding a model for diversification and commercialization of services,<sup>204</sup> which is a tough call given the poor and oversaturated market, the high costs of CINS operations and the investment these activities would require. So far, the center has not managed to sell its stories to the media, and has no commercial sources of revenues.

Such a difficult situation has a rather negative effect on the center's capacity to reward the staff properly and focus on long-term development. For example, none of the staff are employed, but are engaged on temporary contracts as external associates, and their salaries are generally low. The salaries are ensured only on a project-by-project basis, as there is no long-term core support, and they change depending on the success in winning projects. They are close to the country's average, but significantly smaller than they should be considering the long work hours and danger the journalists are exposed to. CINS endeavors to keep the

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Milorad Ivanović, interview with the author, August 21, 2013.

<sup>204</sup> CINS' director thinks that there are significant chances that within the next two years 20-30% of the income will come from sources other than donors, which is in the center's business plan. Forms of financing other than donations require capacities and investment, which CINS is working on. The center plans to establish independent media projects, registered as separate legal entities, that could thus implement for-profit projects without jeopardizing the center's independence. The plan is to diversify sources of income. One avenue is TV production, where the products could be sold in the international market, donor base could be broadened to international calls for proposals pertaining to TV production, and people and equipment could be leased. The plan is for the new website to have a daily production so as to attract more users and feature international ads, while also serving as a marketing tool for the TV production and commercial news web projects. (Branko Čečen, director, CINS, interview with the author, May 29, 2013).

salaries proportional to the experience of staff members. On average, in the last year (2012-2013), senior reporters earned 350 EUR, beginners 250 EUR per month.

The situation is further complicated due to the difficult relationship with local media, continuous political pressure, and the general unwillingness of state institutions to follow-up on CINS stories and enforce laws by starting investigations based on the stories, all of which limits CINS' effectiveness and impact. Other restrictions such as undeveloped commercial potential and the limited prospects for it, financial insecurity stemming from dependence on short-term donor funding, and non-responsive state institutions and local media, significantly limit the capacity of the center to reach sustainability. It is thus caught in a vicious circle of absence of financial resources and human resources with management skills; the two factors reinforce each other, and prevent or slow down the center's development.

## 6.

# Final Remarks

Having conducted an analysis of donors' efforts aimed at supporting investigative reporting projects and organizations in BiH and Serbia, one has to ask again the underlying research question of this study: Is it possible to introduce, in a sustainable manner, investigative reporting practices and non-profit centers into media contexts that lack the basic preconditions necessary for the development of investigative reporting? The answer seems rather multifaceted and far from obvious or definite.

For example, the effects of investigative journalism training programs and assistance for story production are questionable. The direct results of the numerous donor projects and programs aimed at improving the skills and knowledge of local journalists and the media about high-quality journalism are not readily apparent as the participants of such programs have had to return to media outlets that lack the basic resources to put the skills and knowledge they gained into practice. However, the potential cumulative impact of such initiatives should not be dismissed, as knowledge and skills spread through newsrooms, NGOs, and journalism schools. The long-term impact of such efforts remains a worthy subject for future studies, though it goes beyond the ambitions of this research. Similarly, the effects of the assistance towards the production of investigative content by media and individuals are unclear as the practice rarely continues beyond donor support due to unsupportive newsrooms and lack of funding.

When looking into the effects of the two non-profit investigative reporting centers that were the focus of this paper, the situation becomes much clearer. Namely, both centers have a regular output of high-quality stories, featured in the media of their countries and have achieved some significant impact with their stories. It is safe to say that CIN and CINS are functional media organizations, which fulfill a need in media markets with a serious lack of professional investigative reporting and a lack of independent media. However, their influence is hampered by a rather delicate relationship with media outlets that should, but rarely do, carry their stories, most notably due to the political and business interests of the media, consequently limiting the reach and impact of the stories. Although offered for free, the stories are sometimes not published because of political parallelism, business parallelism<sup>205</sup> and the influence of state politicization on the media<sup>206</sup>.

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<sup>205</sup> Zielonka and Mancini, *Executive Summary: A Media Map of Central and Eastern Europe*, p. 4.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2.

Hence, although many stories of the two centers are published by local media, still more are not and only rarely, if at all, do local media follow-up on them. Even more problematically, in many instances the centers' stories are used opportunistically by media which cater to the interests of their political and business patrons, in order to bash political and business opponents. Moreover, the impact of the stories is further limited by virtually non-existent follow-up by responsible state institutions in the case of CINS, although the situation is better for CIN as the examples provided earlier demonstrate.

Both centers are faced with various political pressures, threats, and some legal insecurity. As Voltmer notes, political elites operate in continuity, even after autocratic regimes have ended; they are used to subservient media and find it difficult to accept media which act as their opponent rather than as their mouthpiece, so they continue with "pressure, threats and editorial interference."<sup>207</sup> Nevertheless, the centers are successful in dealing with these challenges and maintaining their independence. However, it seems that the most significant threat so far to their sustainability is total dependence on donor support, and their inability to commercialize any services or products. The primary reason for such a situation is the small, financially weak and very controlled media markets in which they operate, combined with the high costs of investigative stories production.

In effect, the sustainability of the analyzed centers in BiH and Serbia will depend for the foreseeable future on their capacity to successfully raise funds from donors. Here, the main challenge for the continuous development of the centers has to do with the nature of donor aid. The funding that the centers depend on is mainly ad-hoc and short-term, which impacts their financial security. A potentially more significant positive impact of donor funding is further limited by the absence of systematic and strategic cooperation and coordination of donor efforts towards the centers. "Although the range of activity is broad, international efforts to support the spread of investigative reporting appear largely uncoordinated and without a central strategy. As in media development generally, a lack of communication among donors and competition among implementers is often blamed," notes Kaplan.<sup>208</sup> Rhodes states that "*Donor coordination* is considered a *conditio sine qua non* of media aid, which also establishes a common ideal in difficult situations: increasing impact."<sup>209</sup>

Finally, considering diminishing donor support and the lack of funding alternatives, the centers are in a precarious position. The nonprofit centers in BiH and Serbia devoted to the production of investigative stories according to the

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<sup>207</sup> Katrin Voltmer, "How Far Can Media Systems Travel?", in *Comparing Media Systems Beyond the Western World*, ed. Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 235.

<sup>208</sup> Kaplan, *Global Investigative Journalism*, p. 24.

<sup>209</sup> Rhodes, *Ten Years of Media Support to the Balkans*, p. 10.

highest international standards are a part of the world-wide trend of investigative reporting, seeking refuge in independent organizations and away from the difficult conditions in the mainstream media which hamper the development of investigative projects. While the donor dependence of the two centers examined in this study is not an exception, as even the most reputable nonprofit investigative journalism centers in the world are heavily reliant on donor assistance, such a position is problematic in the local circumstances, with dwindling donor support and infinitely fewer possibilities for financial assistance than their role-models - primarily those in the liberal media system<sup>210</sup> of the U.S. Additionally, they are faced with solving the puzzle of commercializing some of their income in hostile market conditions in order to reach partial sustainability, which at present seems to be an impossible aim. Unless donor organizations assume a strategic and coordinated approach towards the two functional centers, which perform an important societal role by providing much needed investigative journalism in countries which suffer from a serious lack of it, the centers seem to be facing an entirely uncertain future.

Considering the absence of literature that would systematically examine investigative reporting programs and projects in the countries of the Western Balkans, further studies could focus on the donor support to investigative reporting in the countries of the region, cataloguing the modes of assistance, providing data on the amount of assistance, explaining donor approaches and the effects and results of these initiatives, as well as their challenges and problems. The studies, which would be a much needed research tool, could also provide recommendations for further support to such programs and projects and for prospects for their sustainability beyond donor support.

As this exploratory study was limited to the analysis of the models of two nonprofit centers for investigative reporting in only two countries of the Western Balkans, Serbia and BiH, further studies could broaden the scope of the analysis to similar centers in other countries of the region, strengthening the comparative aspect of the research. One vein of research could focus on the transposition of foreign models of nonprofit investigative journalism centers to the region with a view of the contextual challenges for their operation, while the other could explore donor assistance strategies towards these organizations and the potential for their sustainability in commercial services and products.

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<sup>210</sup> Hallin and Mancini, *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*.

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## 8.

### Annex 1: List of Interviews

Amer Džihana, Director for Media Policy and Research, Internews in BiH; interview conducted on August 23, 2013 over the phone.

Boro Kontić, Director of Mediacentar Sarajevo; interview conducted on August 19, 2013 over the phone.

Branko Čečen, Director of the Center for Investigative Journalism Serbia (CINS), Belgrade; interview conducted on May 29, 2013 in person.

Drew Sullivan, Editor, Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP); interview conducted on July 8, 2013 and August 18, 2013 via email.

Ivana Cvetković Bajrović, Senior Program Officer for Europe, National Endowment for Democracy (NED); interview conducted on June 10, 2013 via Skype.

Ivana Cvetković Bajrović, Senior Program Officer for Europe, National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and Janet Rabin Satter, Assistant Program Officer for Europe, National Endowment for Democracy (NED); interview conducted on May 31, 2013 via Skype.

Jovanka Matić, PhD, Media Researcher, Institute of Social Sciences, Belgrade; interview conducted on August 16, 2013 via email.

Leila Bičakčić, Director of the Center for Investigative Reporting (CIN), Sarajevo; interview conducted on June 10, 2013 via Skype.

Mehmed Halilović, Legal Advisor at Internews in BiH; interview conducted on August 16, 2013 over the phone.

Mervan Mirašćija, Law Program Coordinator, Open Society Fund Bosnia and Herzegovina; interview conducted on July 10, 2013 via Skype.

Milorad Ivanović, Editor at weekly news magazine *Novi Magazin*, Belgrade; interview conducted on August 21, 2013 via email.

Vladimir Radomirović, Editor-in-Chief of the online publication *Pištaljka.rs*, Belgrade; interview conducted on September 17, 2013 over the phone.

## 9.

# About Author

Nevena Ršumović holds an M.A. in Political Science, with the certificate in Political Communication, from the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest. She also holds an M.A. in Media Innovation Management from the Berlin University of Professional Studies in cooperation with the Forum for Journalism and Media from Vienna, as a grantee of the City of Vienna and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. She obtained a B.A. in English Language and Literature from the University of Belgrade. Nevena has more than a decade of professional experience in media development focusing on journalism-related projects, having worked as a project coordinator and trainer with IREX ProMedia in Sarajevo and Mediacentar Sarajevo. She was also editor-in-chief and editor of the Mediacentar Sarajevo's online publication Media.ba (previously NetNovinar.org) targeting media professionals. Working for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Serbia from 2010 to 2012 as a project coordinator she implemented activities towards furthering freedom of information, capacity building and outreach for the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection. She also implemented a project for the Commissioner from 2012 to 2013 focusing on advocacy efforts pertaining to the rights of whistleblowers and creating a law aimed at their protection. She was engaged as a consultant on several media and journalism-related initiatives, including by UNDP and IREX Serbia.



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