

## INDICATOR 5: INFRASTRUCTURAL CAPACITY IS SUFFICIENT TO SUPPORT INDEPENDENT AND PLURALISTIC MEDIA

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### SUMMARY

Croatia is a country with more than 3,000 registered journalists, 4 national terrestrial television channels, 23 local and regional television stations, 150 radio stations, more than 950 newspapers, all for 4 and a half million inhabitants. Croatian citizens do not have problems with access to the media. More and more people use the Internet, according to latest figures, almost 47% of the population.

Citizens of Croatia still receive most information through television, which means that television is the most widespread media in Croatia. National TV stations, public television HRT and commercial Nova TV and RTL are equipped with modern technology, they have digitalised the production of programming, and they are preparing for full transition to digital broadcasting, foreseen in 2011. Public as well as commercial television and radio publish their content on the Internet. Dominant trends in the world's newsrooms such as cross-media production of content have entered into Croatian newsrooms as well. Content is distributed and spread through different media platforms and in different media forms. Content producers are constantly faced with new technological challenges through which they may convey their content. The Večernji list newspaper won the "Cross Media Award" which is given out by the international journalists' association IFRA.

Technological progress has enabled the participation of readers, listeners and viewers in the creation of content. Croatian media has been happy to accept this possibility as well. RTL's central news in their regular news has a segment called Your News in which they publish images and information that the public has sent them. In this aspect, the newsroom of the newspaper daily 24 hours has gone quite far, by regularly publishing recordings of readers on their Internet portal. The publisher of the daily tabloid newspaper "24 hours", which is owned by the same company that holds the traditionally most-read daily newspaper Večernji list, has also launched Internet television. On a daily basis they produce news that is aired and constantly repeated on television receivers of citizens who watch the program through the IPTV service MAXtv, which allows for watching of television only with a telephone connection. MAXtv already now allows the reception of digital television, a digital video store, HD reception, recording, etc.

As they say themselves, "24 hours" initiated the first television news channel and internet reality television, and with this overtook public television, which was the first to announce the launch of specialized channels, both news and sports. In fact, it was three years ago that HRT announced the launch of specialized terrestrial channels, but it was prevented by complaints from the commercial televisions RTL and Nova TV, which considered this move to be anti-competitive. Although within the Law on HRT it holds that HRT has the right to run specialized channels, the lack of distinction and precise legal provisions allowed for different interpretations of two key laws - the Law on Electronic Media and the Law on HRT. The case has not yet been resolved, and public television HRT now lags behind smaller, more flexible, producers of media content, which have launched 24-hour channels through cable television or via IPTV.

When it comes to local television stations, despite the fact that television technology is becoming more accessible, local television stations have financial difficulties, which prevent the production of quality television programs. They face many struggles finding the financial resources necessary to pay the salaries of their people. So far there have not been any examples of an effective association in smaller communities of local newspapers with radio and television stations in order to overcome financial difficulties.

Taking into account standards, the prices of domestic and foreign newspapers in Croatia are too high. Newspapers have seen a decrease in readership due to greater use of the internet as well. Newspaper publishers are hiding the numbers of copies sold, but there are signs that the editions of the newspapers with the highest circulations in Croatia (Večernji list and Jutarnji list) have been the lowest so far. This trend has already been noted in the 2006 report published by the European Journalism Centre. Newspaper companies are investing in multimedia in an attempt to keep selling news on other platforms as well.

The media certainly has sufficient infrastructure to support independent and pluralistic media, however, in Croatia, day in and day out it is apparent that the technological equipment that allows journalistic activity and the availability of media, and does not directly guarantee freedom and pluralism. In a ruthless race for profit, there is less and less journalistic content in Croatia that is the result of investigation, analysis and the desire for new and unbiased information. Foreign corporations have brought with them modern technology, but they have not brought the type of media that exists in the countries that they come from. In Croatia, most of the newspapers are owned by two foreign corporations, WAZ and Styria, who say that they do not interfere in editorial policy of their newspapers as long as they are making a profit. A consequence of the need for quick profits is a market with more and more tabloids, and leading dailies such as the Jutarnji list and Večernji list are increasingly involved with scandals and sensations. Many established journalists have left the newsrooms of these papers because they could not get enough space for analytical articles, and have moved to internet web portals. Blogs, forums, and particularly Facebook, are more and more frequently the forum for civil actions and initiatives, but also for the "dissemination" of journalistic articles which can not penetrate circulated newspapers.

Despite children's diseases that accompany the technological and information revolution in Croatia, it can be said that Croatia has a coherent strategy when it comes to information technology in all segments, including that in previously marginalized communities. The Croatian government has adopted a program for e-Croatia, which aims to transform Croatian society into an information society. The program includes, among others, a strategy for conversion from analog to digital television that provides for a full transition to digital broadcasting by January 1st 2011 and an action and implementation plan for broadband internet development in Croatia.