

## **Recommendations for serving ethnic minorities on Public Service Media in the Western Balkans**

### **Wealth of Europe**

Each and every minority in society, including cultural and linguistic minorities contribute to the wealth of Europe. Each of them, and in particular the more minor ones deserve special support and care. This is particularly important for linguistic and cultural minorities, whose existence is often endangered due to biological factors, assimilation and other reasons.

### **International safeguards for protection of ethnic minorities**

The European instruments protecting ethnic minorities are:

- The European Convention of Human Rights
- The European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages (CETS 148), adopted under the auspices of the Council of Europe in June 1992, and entered into force on 1 March 1998
- The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, adopted in November 1994, and entered in force on 1 February 1998
- Regular checks and reports

The European human rights standards provide for co-existence and tolerance among different cultures and languages, their free and unimpeded decant, freedom of expression in the mother tongue, and an environment for permanent mutual information and dialogue – in both directions. This is a prerequisite for a well-functioning democracy and the best defence for peace.

### **Role of Public Service Media**

The role of Public Service Media in this regard is crucial. They are the only ones in the plethora of media with a remit and a duty to serve ethnic minorities. The other actors on the media market pursue commercial and other vested interests. They are neither obliged nor interested to serve minorities.

In difference to them, the PSM have to serve all segments of society and have to ensure these services in the highest ethical and professional standards.

## **Positive developments**

The adoption and the implementation of the European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages has positively influenced the PSM content for ethnic minorities in the Western Balkans. With the only exception of Bosnia and Herzegovina due to their Constitution, the PSM in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia offer regularly scheduled content for minorities. The scope, the amount, the quality, the professional approach, and the use of new digital technologies in programmes for minorities have been significantly improved.

CETS 148 provides a solid legal basis for the media activities in this field. Yet, the European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages does not provide quantitative and qualitative criteria and measures. These are prerogative of the primary and the secondary legislation of the countries-signatories.

## **Methodology and background**

The following recommendations aim to boost further the development of PSM content for minorities through a comprehensive analysis of existing practices, needs, aspirations and possibilities.

The recommendations are based on a comprehensive analysis of data, collected through a questionnaire sent out to all PSM in the Western Balkans, dedicated missions on the spot, evaluations of the experts conducted in the period July – September 2021 and deliberations at the Regional Conference on Reporting minorities on PSM in Novi Sad on 7-8 October 2021. The work has been commissioned within the framework of the EC funded project for Technical Assistance to PSM in the Western Balkans.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1. PSM content for ethnic minorities should be done » for minorities by minorities«**

2. **PSM content for ethnic minorities should adhere to best professional standards and practices**
3. **PSM should ensure editorial independence and transparency in the production of ethnic minorities content**
4. **PSM should ensure adequate sourcing for minority content**
5. **PSM should ensure adequate structure for creation of minority content**
6. **PSM should ensure adequate reach of minority programmes**
7. **The work on minority content should be stimulated and awarded adequately and PSM should ensure the necessary professional working force**
8. **PSM should ensure vocational education and regular training for staff working on minorities content**
9. **PSM should ensure adequate prominence of minority content in the overall programme offer and strive to attract young audiences**
10. **PSM should try to reflect ethnic diversity in their mainstream programmes by providing newsroom diversity as well as diversity of sources**
11. **Providing advisory and measurement mechanism could help to ensure adequate presence and quality of minority content in the overall PSM content offer**
12. **PSM should foster and promote exchange of best practice and experiences in the production of ethnic minorities content**
13. **EU institutions could create a limited financial tool to support training of ethnic minority staff and exchange and co-production of content**

## **MISSION**

1. **PSM content for ethnic minorities should be done » for minorities by minorities«**

The PSM content should be produced by professionals with minority background and profound knowledge of their language, cultural heritage and specific environment. PSM employment of minority professionals provides also an opportunity for their academic and professional growth and has a social impact on employment.

If the PSM content for ethnic minorities is produced by other people, there should be clear criteria for specific knowledge and requested skills.

## **PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS**

### **2. PSM content for ethnic minorities should adhere to best professional standards and practices**

The PSM content for ethnic minorities should adhere to PSM professional standards and ethical principles. This is the most important reason and advantage for this content provided by PSM.

### **3. PSM should ensure editorial independence and transparency in the production of ethnic minorities content**

PSM should develop a self-regulatory mechanism, in order to ensure contextual editorial independence but also transparency in the production of minority content.

## **RESOURCES AND STRUCTURES**

### **4. PSM should ensure adequate sourcing for minority content**

The resources for production of minority content should be granted and realised within a transparent annual business plan according to PSM rules. Possible variations within the adopted plan should be managed by the respective editorial ethnic minority units.

Due to lack of personnel, the modern editorial and managerial means of multimedia and multi operative approaches should be introduced to prevent unnecessary duplications and enlarge the operational scope.

PSM should thoroughly analyse the audience of ethnic minority content in order to shape adequately the necessary content and resources.

### **5. PSM should ensure adequate structure for creation of minority content**

PSM should ensure creation and development of specialized units for production of minority content within the overall structure of PSM.

### **6. PSM should ensure adequate reach of minority programmes**

PSM programmes for ethnic minorities should be made accessible to the communities they are meant to serve.

**7. The work on minority content should be stimulated and awarded adequately and PSM should ensure the necessary professional work force**

The ability to work in ethnic minority languages should be regarded as an added value for PSM and should be awarded adequately in the systemization classification or additional favourable remuneration. PSM should ensure engagement of necessary staff for the production of ethnic minority content.

**8. PSM should ensure vocational education and regular training for staff working on minorities content**

PSM should take special care to ensure adequate professional education and training for program makers of ethnic minorities content. Organisation of regular seminars and regional exchange of practices should be encouraged and supported.

## **PROMINENCE**

**9. PSM should ensure adequate prominence of minority content in the overall programme offer and strive to attract young audiences**

The ethnic minorities content should not be regarded as a »ghetto« event. It should be seen as an important dialogue between the minorities and the majority. Therefore, the minority content should be available in the language of the ethnic majority through synchronisation, subtitles or other modern tools, such as speech to text.

The PSM should ensure the presence of ethnic minorities content on all relevant platforms – radio, TV, online, with all digital options, linear and on-demand, as the content offer develops. Special care should be devoted to attracting young audiences.

The ethnic minorities content should be incorporated in a reasonable frame in the mainstream content of PSM, including the usage of original languages with translation.

The authors of minority content should occasionally appear in the mainstream content programs, if possible, also as moderators and anchors. This will show ethnic plurality, diversity, tolerance and co-existence in the society.

**10. PSM should try to reflect ethnic diversity in their mainstream programmes by providing newsroom diversity as well as diversity of sources**

## **ADVISORY AND MEASUREMENT MECHANISM**

**11. Providing advisory and measurement mechanism could help ensuring adequate presence and quality of minority content in the overall PSM content offer**

The ethnic minority content needs support of committed ethnic minority civil society. It could be organised either on the level of dedicated minority advisory body or at the level of the PSM Board with a representative of the respective civil society. The role of these advisory bodies should be to ensure the improvement of the ethnic minority content and to verify their public value. They should not interfere in the editorial independence or in programme and staff matters. They should not have veto on broadcast of programmes. Their role should be to advise, to provide a measurement mechanism and to prevent the predominance of majority decisions over minority's interests.

## **EXCHANGE**

**12. PSM should foster and promote exchange of best practices and experiences in production of ethnic minorities content**

PSM should facilitate and strongly encourage exchange of best practices, content, and co-production initiatives, which will contribute to the enrichment of the offer and quality. All beneficiaries of the project for Technical Assistance to PSM in the Western Balkans have expressed a strong interest in cooperation, the EBU News Exchange

Office based in Sarajevo ERNO could provide professional assistance and a platform for such exchange.

The ethnic minorities without a particular motherland country such as the historically settled in Europe Roma minority deserve special care and support. The professionals with a motherland country should be motivated and allowed to maintain contacts with relevant partners and follow the cultural and linguistic developments and benefit from exchange programs and education.

## **SUPPORT**

### **13. EU institutions could create a limited financial tool to support training of ethnic minority staff and exchange and co-production of content**

The conference in Novi Sad on 7- 8 October 2021 calls on European institutions, and in particular the EU Commission to consider the establishment of *limited funding tool* to support a *launch* of a regional educational scheme for PSM ethnic minority personnel and a program exchange /co-productions.