

Annex A (updated end of May 2002)

Crisis Assistance – Survival for professional minority and community media

1. Background

The outbreak of armed inter-ethnic violence took Macedonia in spring 2001 to the brink of a civil war. Due to the political crisis, the media market almost completely collapsed with hardly any money invested for advertisements anymore. The companies restrained advertisements and withhold their money due to unsecured situation. Even after the armed clashes stopped and the cease-fire achieved with the Ohrid agreement, the companies only very slowly restart investing in advertisements.

The media in Macedonia suffered from this development in a double way. While the income was collapsing due to the lack of advertisement, the costs for the media operation were raising due to increased needs for reporting and due to the general rise in prices.

To bridge the fast growing gap between the expenses and the income, the international donors agreed in April 2001 to establish a common International Media Fund IMF for Macedonia. Nine local electronic media (radio and TV) were selected due to their importance for the respective community (Macedonian / Albanian / Roma) and due to their ongoing professional reporting during the crisis. The stations were granted financial contributions to the operational costs to cover the loss and to assure the stations survival. We are convinced that only with this support of the basic running costs these media can have the necessary basis for more detailed program production projects, inter-ethnic cooperation with other media and further plans for continued, professional research and reporting.

2. Stations included in the Crisis Assistance

Nine local radio and TV stations have been supported between spring 2001 and spring 2002 by the International Media Fund IMF, to be able to continue their regular, professional work.

2.1. TV ART, Tetovo, Albanian-language

2001 was a difficult year. Though seemingly more quiet, 2002 could bring further trouble, as there is still tension regarding the implementation of the Framework Agreement of 13 August. The Tetovo region, where the fighting broke out in the late winter months of 2001, continues to suffer not only under the violent atmosphere, but also under the curfew that is still being upheld daily from 11 pm to 6 am. Nevertheless, in spite of these troubles and in spite of the current uncharacteristically harsh winter, TV ART has been able to continue its fully independent, objective broadcasting on a regular basis.

Between October 2001 and March 2002, the income situation of TV Art improved thanks to a higher advertising. Additionally, in spring 2002 TV Art got several grants by international donors as the Swedish Helsinki Committee, Press Now, IOM, and some embassies. Medienhilfe applied for a grant for the station's operational costs and received the general approval prior to receiving the contract. In the meantime, we dropped the station from the Crisis Assistance support, but keep it in our support program for specific productions ("Villages").

2.2. Radio Plusforte, Tetovo, Macedonian-language

One of the basic needs of the people in the Polog region (Tetovo-Gostivar) is access to professional, objective quality information void of nationalistic affiliations. Radio Plusforte has been able to manage this task well. It has continued to base its broadcasts on sources from the ethnic Macedonian, as well as the ethnic Albanian sides. As an example, information from the Ministry of the Interior, led by the hardcore nationalist Ljube Boskovski, has always been double-checked with the Center for Crisis Management and counterbalanced with the opinions of authoritative personalities within the ethnic Albanian community. "The ethnic Macedonian audience sometimes gets nervous about this procedure, but they are likely to get used to it," Radio Plusforte reports, "as everybody needs to receive accurate information."

While Radio Plusforte reported a 50-percent increase in advertising income throughout the period of October–December 2001, this positive development unfortunately did not last long. A continuing problem is the late payment of debts by the advertising companies. As more and more Macedonian owned private

enterprises are leaving the Tetovo town and region, also the income from advertisement is steadily reduced. To keep the voice of Radio Plusforte on the air and to have a reliable source of information for the ethnic Macedonian population in Tetovo, Radio Plusforte even more depends today on financial assistance for its operational costs.

2.3. TV ERA, Skopje, Albanian-language

TV ERA has increased its in-house production steadily during the last year and has hired new employees. TV ERA is proud to state that the trend of marketing income is on the rise as a consequence of the audience increase as well as the program improvements. The station will be back to self-sustainability according to its business planning by mid 2002. Medienhilfe therefore dropped TV ERA from the list of beneficiaries in the Crisis Assistance project.

2.4. Radio Vat, Skopje, Albanian-language

2001 was a very difficult year for Radio Vat. The progress and continued informative reporting could only be achieved thanks to international support. Radio managed with this assistance to achieve an audience increase and is now among the most popular informative media in Macedonia. Of particular success was the substantial quality increase of Radio Vat's journalists.

Radio Vat significantly improved its advertising income and got grants approved this spring by Swedish Helsinki Committee and Press Now, which secures it stable operation till the end of 2002. Medienhilfe therefore dropped Radio Vat from the list of beneficiaries in its Crisis Assistance project.

2.5. TV BTR Nacional, Skopje, Roma-language

TV BTR was having some rough times during the armed conflict in 2001, as some of its journalists and cameramen had been attacked on several occasions, teams have been maltreated at police checkpoints and political parties attempted to force their own censorship on its program. TV BTR nevertheless was able to resist these attempts and apart from psychological hardships, no member of the reporting teams was hurt during their work in critical fighting areas.

The current financial situation of TV BTR is heavily influenced by the state of affairs in the country and the corresponding reluctance of businesses to advertise in media. This insecurity may be responsible for the fact that in spite of the recent calmer period the financial situation of TV BTR has not considerably improved. TV BTR continues to be dependent on funds.

Medienhilfe keeps the Crisis Assistance to TV BTR as planned in the budget.

2.6. TV Sutel, Skopje, Roma-language

Thanks to greater efforts during the second half of 2001, TV Sutel was able to sign a few advertising contracts. In spite of the new own income, TV Sutel remains dependent on grants to continue its level of informative programs and professional coverage of events.

In spring 2002, Open Society Institute – Network Media Program and Foundation Open Society Institute – Macedonia provided substantial grants to TV Shutel, covering the station's operational costs for 2002. Therefore Medienhilfe dropped TV Shutel from the list of beneficiaries in its Crisis Assistance project, but keeps it within support for specific productions ("Cohabitation").

2.7. Radio Cerenja, Stip, Roma-language

Radio Cerenja is clearly the weakest partner supported by the IMF, with the most problems to generate its own income. The primary reason is its character as a community radio for the local Roma population which is economically the poorest section of Macedonian society, whereas other businesses are hardly interested in advertising for an audience that cannot afford their products. All the more has Radio Cerenja reason to be proud about its first, small advertising contract in October 2001.

In spite of the desperate situation, Radio Cerenja has big plans for the future. Firstly, Radio Cerenja attempts to expand its broadcasting to eastern Macedonia. Secondly, it would like to employ a number of correspondents in other towns. For these projects they need training. In addition, Radio Cerenja would like to employ more people on salaries, rather than honoraria.

With the help of the IMF-grant, Radio Cerenja has been able to maintain a reasonable level of informative programs to the local Roma population, which to a large part is dependent on this radio as the only source of information, owing to the high percentage of illiteracy among them. While Radio Cerenja will never rank very high in audience and market research, it is indispensable to many people in and around Stip for this reason.

Medienhilfe increased the support to Radio Cerenja.

2.8. TV Zdravkin, Veles, Macedonian-language

TV Zdravkin is satisfied that the Macedonian Broadcasting Council chose three of their projects for support. A porcelain factory and its new owner have demonstrated considerable interest in advertising in and cooperating with TV Zdravkin. TV Zdravkin will come back to self-sustainability mid of 2002 thanks do better marketing and higher income from advertisements. Therefore Medienhilfe dropped TV Zdravkin from the list of beneficiaries in its Crisis Assistance project

2.9. TV TERA, Bitola, Macedonian-language

TV TERA was relieved about receiving substantial support from the IMF, after it had suffered severely under the unexpected escalation of the armed conflict in Bitola itself during spring 2001. After recovering from that blow and increasing its incomes from advertisement again and being one of the largest and most professional media all over Macedonia, TV Tera does not need support for operational costs anymore and can manage with grants for specific productions. Medienhilfe therefore dropped TV Tera from the list of beneficiaries in the Crisis Assistance project, but keeps it on the support for productions.

3. Conclusions and Outlook

The Grant from the International Media Fund IMF for operational costs decisively helped the nine Radio and TV stations during the crisis year 2001 to continue their independent, professional broadcasting. Their sound business economy is the most important basis for concrete, informative and educational program productions, with which our partners distinguish themselves from the large number of other broadcast media that mostly produce cheap entertainment programs.

With the slow recovery of the economy – and thus the advertising market in the media – most of the stations assisted managed to get out of the deepest crisis and get back to regular operation. Especially minority stations however still need assistance to survive and provide proper and professional information to the respective audience. Medienhilfe wants to bridge the gaps for those stations still most in need of financial assistance and so far not covered by other donors. Medienhilfe will help these stations to fulfil their mission and to support their respective community with fair and balanced reporting, independent information and coverage supporting the peace and reconciliation process in Macedonia.

4. Risk and chances of the project (SWOT-Analyse)

STRENGTH	WEAKNESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct contribution to peace building by strengthening minority stations and professional media • Radio and TV stations participating with high profile in the respective local ethnic community • Strong local roots of media involved and high ratings • The project makes an important difference for the respective minority population • Direct impact on the ability to survive and produce quality broadcast content • Strong contacts and long lasting cooperation of Medienhilfe with project partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak position of minorities in general • Lack of backing in political and media circles of Macedonia • Highly politically and financially distorted media market • Questionable economic perspective of the media involved (market viability and sustainability)

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve position of ethnic minority population • Increased amount and quality of minority broadcasts • Increased networking among stations involved • Increased inter-ethnic cooperation and exchange 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political clashes and lack of overall perspectives • Further deterioration of minority situation and polarization • No specific threats on project level

5. Results expected and criteria for evaluation (Logframe)

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Result expected station / population</i>	<i>Criteria for evaluation</i>
Contribution to operational costs of local electronic media	Survival of the station assured	evident
	Increased audience rating	Regular media research
Journalist training provided	Higher content quality	Regular Media monitoring
Management training provided	Improved market position	Bookkeeping review
Technical training provided	Better production	Internal and external evaluation
Networking on program production and program exchange	Better coverage of topics relevant for all parts of Macedonian society	Evaluation of production realized by programs made available
	Better exchange and networking	Self-evaluation by the stations
<i>Results for the audience / the whole population:</i>	Better information about relevant developments in Macedonia	Research with questionnaire might be done by stations
	Successful realization and implementation of framework agreement (Ohrid Agreement)	Decreased level of political conflict, lasting peace agreement, no new outbreak of violence
	Improved every day situation	Freedom of movement
	Social integration, political participation	Level of every-day security participation in elections
	Multi-ethnic co-habitation	Return of minorities to war-affected areas
