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Support for ANEM Member and Affiliate Radio and TV Stations in Serbia

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I. SUMMARY:

After an initial period of positive trends, Serbia has since 2002 experienced quite a troublesome transition period. Negative developments culminated in March 2003, with the assassination of the PM Zoran Djindjic, followed by heavy power-struggles between the ruling and the opposition political actors as well as within the DOS coalition itself. Almost all state institutions were paralyzed, most of all the Parliament, while procedure of passing laws to create conditions for reform and democratization as well as programs for resolving huge economic and social problems were replaced by mutual accusations and political scandals brought in public on a daily basis in order to disqualify political rivals.

Political instability negatively reflected on foreign investments and caused further decline of economic development as well as an increase of unemployment. This negatively reflected on advertising investments, which were much below projected. According to local analysts, special Parliamentary elections to take place on December 28 will contribute to de-block work of the main state institution for a rather short immediate period. However, it is unlikely that they will bring political stability and subsequently positive trends in economic and social developments. One can therefore expect that the media, most of all private broadcasters, will continue to face with serious difficulties in regard to generating an advertising revenue that would be sufficient to enable quality program and sustainable development.

As the international donor funding is rapidly withdrawn from the field, independent news media outlets are facing the challenge of continuing their mission in a market that is tipped towards the mercenary commercial stations. They have to undergo a process of readjustment of their operations and programming so as to make themselves best-fitted to the market that is yet to develop while continuing to provide public service contents. These processes are taking place in a situation when the issue of fair licensing, frequency allocation and broadcasters' registration is yet pending, which is blocking the broadcasters' further development. Especially affected are ANEM members and affiliates, who aim to offer the audience quality information and education programming, which is extremely costly and represents a huge burden for their budgets.

Professional media coverage that will reflect the voice of the people and thus help keep the new governments on democratic paths will remain as needed and vital as ever. In addition to thorough reforms of almost all segments of political, economic and social life, the country faces the fight against organized crime and corruption as well as the painful process of facing the recent past. Especially important roles play broadcast media and ANEM members, who have proven so far their leading role on the media scene in Serbia in this respect.

II. BACKGROUND

In 1993 a group of local independent broadcast media in Serbia and Montenegro - Radio B92, Radio Bum 93, Radio Antena M, Radio Bajina Basta, Radio Smederevo, Radio Kragujevac and NTV Studio B - founded the Association of Independent Electronic Media (ANEM). The goal was to unite existing isolated media as the first step towards breaking the state-controlled media's monopoly. A government crackdown on some of the ANEM stations early in 1996 left the Association with only four active members - Radio B92, Radio Bum 93, Radio Antena M and Radio Bajina Basta. In December 1996, this number fell to three when the Serbian government also banned Radio Bum 93. However, building on the political gains of the 1996-97 mass civic demonstrations, ANEM launched in June 1997 a Radio Network with 19 affiliated independent local radio stations (including a small number of television outlets) across Serbia and Montenegro, increasing Network impact and coverage dramatically. In September 1997 ANEM pressure on the government also led to the lifting of the year ban on Radio Bum 93. By June 1998, the ANEM Radio Network had expanded to include 35 stations

and had built a collective audience reach of 1.6 million – rivaling for the first time state-controlled Radio Belgrade (with 2.4 million). However, during 1998 and 1999 government officials stepped up repression against ANEM Network stations, and a number of affiliates were banned or taken over. Then under cover of the NATO air strikes the authorities seized control of the Network flagship Radio B92 and closed down 8 other members. However, by August 1999, all affiliates banned during the NATO air strikes had returned to the air. ANEM, lead by the RTV B92 played a crucial role in overthrowing of the Milosevic regime.

ANEM and its member-stations continued to be in a disadvantaged position on the media market after the fall of Milosevic. A frequency tender is not likely to happen before autumn 2004 (for the national licenses, while regional and local cannot be expected before 2005); privatization of municipality broadcasters has continuously been postponed; the Broadcasting Agency Council is dominated by members who are close to and even directly linked to the authorities which imposes danger of unfair frequency allocation.

A significant drop in advertising investments in 2003, in particular after the assassination of Djindjic, is likely to continue in 2004. This especially negatively affects private broadcasters, for whom advertising revenue represents the only source of income. Although a recovery has occurred mid of 2003, negative economic trends and turbulent political developments interrupted it and decline continued. At the same time, donors are swiftly pulling out of Serbia, which can jeopardize the stations' achievement of self-sustainability. This is in particular so for radio broadcasters, most of the donors who remain active primarily focus on support to TV production projects. Currently only very few donors have small-scale grants for a couple of selected ANEM members and affiliates.

Finally, the authorities are eager to keep a grip over media, not hesitating to use undemocratic means (number of court cases against journalists and media constantly increases, amounting in mid of 2003 to over 200). They will certainly try their best to keep the present situation unchanged at least till the next round of elections on all levels is completed (starting in December 2003 with Parliamentary elections, followed later in 2004 by Presidential and in autumn local ones) and will comply with the democratic standards only if there would be a substantial request and pressure from the international community.

Because of all this, NED grant is vital for the subrecipients to continue to play their important role on fostering democratic values in the Serbian society and shaping a strong autonomous and educated public able to perform a control over the authorities and keep them accountable.

ANEM

Business association of 32 information houses (28 radio and 16 TV stations) and over 60 affiliates.

MISSION

ANEM aims to establish politically independent legal framework and economically viable environment for development of electronic media, and to improve professional and technical standards in the media sphere in order to serve the needs of the audience and public interest in a proper way.

VISION

ANEM aims:

- To be highly professional association of electronic media
- To help the stations become profitable and economically independent, without interfering with freedom of speech principles

- To improve the cooperation with associations and media in the region and world

GOALS

- Establishment of legal framework (adoption and application of media laws) for functioning of electronic media in the country
- Definition of the highest professional and technical standards in the media industry and their application
- Support to electronic media to serve the public interest
- Establishing connections with similar associations in the region of South East Europe for mutual support and cooperation
- Becoming a part of modern international world of media

ACTIVITIES

ANEM main activities are:

- Representing members in negotiations with the government, bodies and organs passing decisions in the media sphere
- Legal help
- Education
- Radio production
- Technical support
- Marketing – representing members with large clients
- Web site – ANEM promotion via Internet
- Local representation of association
- International representation of association
- Audience research of members

COVERAGE

ANEM Radio network covers around 50% of territory of Serbia (without Kosovo), that is, reaches more than 60% of population, while TV network covers 35% of the same territory, that is, 50% of the population.

By regions, the highest number of listeners of ANEM radio members is in central Serbia (48.88%), in Belgrade (25.65%) and Vojvodina (25.46%).

AUDITORIUM

Total auditorium of ANEM radio members is 22,34% of the total population, which is more than 1.280.000 listeners on a weekly level.

On the average, listeners spend 68 minutes a day with ANEM radio programme, and 67 with state-owned radio.

All ANEM members and affiliates share the same code of conduct, which contains guidelines for performance of the high-quality, professional and responsible journalism. The stations are gathered around the basic values and principles of democracy and respect for human rights, which they promote in their program since years. This enabled ANEM to play a crucial role in bringing democratic changes in Serbia in 2000.

However, due to the fact that the Broadcasting Act was passed with a huge delay in July 2002, but has not yet been implemented, many pirate stations emerged meanwhile. Media market is over-crowded (over 1.000 broadcasters) and pirate stations with cheap commercial programming seriously endanger by dumping prices for ads chances for ANEM members to generate substantial advertising revenue. On the other hand, advertising investments have seriously declined in 2003 compared to projections and this trend is likely to continue in 2004, mostly due to bad shape of the Serbian economy and lack of foreign investments. Furthermore, the stations are still exposed to various forms of pressure – both political and economic – performed by local authorities.

Due to these factors, ANEM stations are facing serious financial problems, often not being able to pay for services to third parties and with staff being under-paid or even working for months for free. If lasting longer, such situation can seriously challenge the leading role that these stations play in reform and democratization processes in Serbia.

III. PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The project aims at providing the selected number of ANEM stations assistance as to enable them to cope with hard financial situation caused by legal vacuum in regard to broadcast media on one and extremely weak media advertising market on the other hand. Particularly vulnerable are radio broadcasters, as share of advertising revenue allocated for radio ads is extremely low – 3-4%, much lower than for TV broadcasters and the press.

The **immediate and short-term project objectives** are as follows:

- To provide the selected broadcasters funds to cover their operational costs, without which they cannot survive because of unfavorable market conditions they are exposed to.
- To provide stable funds for the staff payments in order to stabilize the stations personal resources that are vital for the good-quality and variety of programming.
- To enable the subrecipients to keep high level of quality information programming.
- By fulfillment of the listed objectives, the stations would have better chances to keep their high audience rating and thus continue to generate even more substantial advertising revenue, which is vital for achieving their self-sustainability.

On a **longer-run**, the project's main goals are as follows:

- To preserve professional, independent broadcasting media in Serbia as one of key tools for fostering democratization of Serbian society.
- To contribute to positive internal transformation of ANEM and its stronger position as the leading professional association on the Serbian media landscape by strengthening some of its key member and affiliate stations.

IV. PROJECT ACTIVITIES:

The project activities consist of continual work with 9 subrecipients throughout Serbia and assisting them to use the NED grant to improve their performance and move further towards self-sustainability. The subrecipients represent the leading ANEM stations from a point of their program quality and audience rating. Their survival till the tender on frequencies will take place is therefore crucial both for the future of ANEM as well as for successful transition of Serbia.

ANEM member and affiliate stations to be supported

Radio 021 – Novi Sad

A few years ago (01.08.1997.), when Radio 021 started its work, it set a goal, to be a free and open radio station, professional and objective, to foster tolerant dialogue, to be open for multiethnic contents and to constantly perform education for civil society and democracy. Its commitment to democratic changes and the open program concept enabled undisturbed freedom for the editorial board, and from this freedom came the large impact and moral credit, not just for Radio 021, but for all independent media in ANEM. The radio was closed

down twice by the regime of Slobodan Milosevic, and in April, 2000 the radio was completely destroyed in a fire which was placed deliberately or caused by negligence, and in which lives of employees were endangered. After the events of 5th October in Serbia, the station launched its second program, in the languages of minority communities. The goal is to create a new model of the programs for minority communities in Vojvodina, specifically through program de-ghettoisation of language, culture, specific problems and through the promotion of respect for differences. For independent media, such as Radio 021, the serious work is just beginning. There is a need to redefine the station's function, relationship with the large and newly transformed informative systems, keep independence, promote democracy and liberal economy, develop marketing, plan business policy which enables economic sustainability and conditions for gaining profit. The station covers with its signal 70% of Vojvodina's territory and is the most listened to, far ahead of all other broadcasters. After B92, Radio 021 is the most successful radio station in Serbia and one of the leading in SEE region.

Radio BOOM 93 – Pozarevac

Radio Boom93 was established in 1992. godine. Beside Požarevac – native town of Slobodan Milosevic – It covers area of 8 municipalities in the eastern Serbia. Boom 93 has engaged itself against nationalism and criminalization of Serbian society, for respect of human rights, and has promoted open society concept. Program is based on the values defined by the Declaration of Human Rights. Boom93 is one of the founders of ANEM, and is also a member of AMARC, IFJ and SEEMO. The station's director, Milorad Tadic, was the coordinator of ANEM during the hardest time for media in Serbia – from July 1999 till February 2001. The radio is open, informative, independent, professional and urban. It gives a platform to NGOs to present their activities and goals to public. For its long-term engagement for freedom of media and professional reporting as well as for promotion of multi-ethnic tolerance, the station was presented the journalist award “Jug Grizelj for the year 1998. According to Strategic marketing surveys, Boom 93 is the top ranked station in Pozarevac and surrounding.

Radio Ozon – Cacak

Radio Ozon was established in September 1996, under very modest conditions. It had poor equipment and rented transmitter. In the time when Ozon started there were no independent media in Cacak or in its surrounding. The radio had quickly gained great popularity. Radio gave a significant contribution to the final victory of the "Zajedno" Coalition on the local elections. Ozon was in November 1996 for the first time. Thousands of citizens kept gathering day after day and brought their final plebiscite decision that Radio Ozon must continue broadcasting. The number of radio audience and the popularity of radio grew up even more during the post election crisis 1996/97. Protest meetings in Belgrade and other Serbia cities were directly broadcasted. After the constitution of new city's government in Cacak ("Zajedno" Coalition) Ozon remained to be an independent radio station and refused to become a part of radio Cacak that got the status of city's radio. Ozon has become a member of ANEM and continued broadcasting from the trailer on the hill. In spite of all the efforts of the local government which had an intention to close the radio, Ozon remained one of the most popular radio station in Cacak. It is currently located in one-room flat and gathers a team of 11 journalists and technicians.

Radio Patak – Valjevo

Radio PATAK is one of 11 (10 private-owned, 1 state-owned) radio stations in Valjevo. Radio PATAK is the only private-owned radio station in possession of all the licences required by law. The radio has been in operation, uninterrupted, since 01/08/1994, and it

broadcasts round the clock. Information enterprise CENTAR, whose integral part Radio PATAK is, was registered as a joint-stock company, founded by 5 stock holders. Since the very beginning the radio has only provided funds through advertising services we offer. Since 1997 Radio PATAK has been a member of the ANEM. Despite a rather unstable economical situation in the town and the whole country, we have managed to maintain the broadcast and keep most professional staff. At present Radio PATAK has 16 employees. The station has maintained a consistent editorial policy in accordance with the aims defined when it was established. The top priority is truthful, quick and impartial reporting. Patak produces 24 hours of program, out of which 19 hours of own production, comprising informative program, news, reviews, current affairs. Patak is the best ranked station in the area it covers with 34.000 regular listeners.

OK Radio – Vranje

OK Radio from Vranje certainly represents the leading media in the area. It has the most developed information programme, the highest professional standards compared to other media in the region, the highest ranking among audience, and credibility as reliable source of information among all three ethnic communities – Serbs, Albanians and Roma. OK Radio has a potential audience of 500'000, from city of Vranje till eastern parts of Kosovo. Audience surveys conducted since 2000, place the station on the top, with roughly 15% audience share. Team of 32 staff (including management and marketing departments, administration and accounting) is responsible for 24-hours programme, out of which 40% are information and education broadcasts. Several of them are specially dedicated to inter-ethnic relation, among which a central role plays the broadcast “Living Together. Human and minority rights are another special area of coverage. The station is the only to regularly report on human and minority rights’ violations. The mission statement of OK Radio is as follows: “Free and independent, objective and impartial informing. European orientation. Pacific attitudes. Building of the modern civil society. Working on reducing inter-ethnic tensions. Respect for all national and religious communities. Promotion of understanding the differences.”

Radio & TV Bajina Basta – Bajina Basta

The station is located in the town of Bajina Basta, which is situated in the bordering region between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The program has been listened to by the citizens of western Serbia and eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina (in the towns of Bajina Basta, Uzice, Zlatibor, Srebrenica, Bratunac, Visegrad, and others. The Independent Radio Television Bajina Basta started broadcasting on May 15, 1992. Together with Radio B92 from Belgrade and Radio Boom 93 from Pozarevac the station established ANEM. During the war that had been waged in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the station distinguished itself by courage in covering the war developments, especially in the region of Srebrenica. In the era of the regime of Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia the station was often the target for persecutions and bans. During the war in Kosovo, the station was awarded the medal of Radio Free Europe for the best war reporting. The same year it was awarded the most prominent Yugoslav award for free journalism, the “Jug Grizelj” award. The founder and the majority owner of the station is professor Boban Tomic, a well-known member of the independent media circles in Belgrade and internationally. He was the vice president of ANEM, as well as the president of the European Association of Local TV Stations, which is located in Vienna.

STV Negotin – Negotin

Independent television Negotin started working at December 16th in 1991. By presenting an alternative and “other” Serbia STV provoked permanent hostility of the local authorities. In search for always different ways in informing its viewers, STV Negotin covered protests in Negotin during the civil protest in 1996./97. and also informed about protests in other cities, thanks to established co-operation with the Radio B92. This co-operation continued when the

STV Negotin became ANEM member. On Christmas Eve, 6 January 1997, STV Negotin begun with rebroadcast of television program of The Voice of America, "America's calling Serbia", as the first television in FR Yugoslavia that gave the possibility to its viewers to watch this program. The city government of Negotin in that time attacked private property and confiscated broadcasting technique from the building in the city center in 1997. This equipment has been given back, partly damaged, but not before the happenings at October of year 2000, when also the signal of this television was put back to the cable system, from which it has been violently thrown out in year 1996. At the time of general hunt on independent media in Serbia in spring of year 2000, the city government in Negotin continued with fight against the broadcaster, attempting to seal up its premises. The station continues with its independent programming orientation also after the democratic changes in Serbia, trying to promote basic values of democratic and civil society. STV Negotin currently has 6 reporters and 9 technicians as well as 6 to 8 freelance reporters.

Radio City – Nis

City Radio represents one of the main subjects in media scene in Nis. Radio was founded on 1997 and covers the area of city of Nis with suburbs (radius 50km). Program orientation is mostly dedicated to local topics and further tendencies are clearly directed toward creating of urban radio type. Numerous important public, cultural and political figures are everyday guests in program. On-line telephone interviews contact programs and direct reporting from the spot – that all makes City Radio programs interesting and attractive. Beside short news, broadcast on every full hour, City Radio prepares and realizes 15 minutes long daily central news show, called Daily Magazine, broadcasts at 4PM. City Radio has made very recognizable production self-image and it is totally different than all other radio stations in Nis have. Last couple of surveys of listenership, conducted by Strategic Marketing & Media Researching Institute have shown that City Radio has achieved constant increase of rating. On very last survey of that kind, on November 2002, City Radio increased its listenership for 45%. Regarding the length of listening of radio program, City Radio practically does not have rivals. All mentioned very clearly shows that quality of broadcast program is on high professional level. City Radio's journalists are permanent correspondents of BBC, Radio Free Europe and Deutsche Welle. City Radio considers as crucial thing development of tolerant spirit among its listeners as well as to increase confidence between different ethnic groups or minority communities.

Radio & TV M+ – Mladenovac

The station started broadcasting at the beginning of 1997, towards the end of demonstrations provoked by election theft in Serbia in November 1996 and shortly became ANEM member. It is one of rare ANEM members who has regular documents provided for the open competition to Federal Ministry of Communications (FMC); work permission has been waited for ever since. During NATO air strikes M+ Radio was the only radio station in Mladenovac, broadcasting 24 hours program daily, with regular reports coming from towns throughout Serbia and Montenegro. In those days of great temptations, the radio also played a humanitarian roll. Journalists used to go pay visits to maternity wards and houses with then born babies, encouraging the mothers to endure and including them to the "war" programs. The action was called "A Packet to War Babies". During the air strikes a tank of pyralene was brought to the industrial zone of Mladenovac. The workers of "Minel trafo" prevented entering of poisonous matter to the factory yard. M+ Radio journalist was the only one to report of this event. M+ Radio also dared getting a message to citizens at time of floods that followed the air strikes, especially about the water which was not for human usage. While state media willingly closed their eyes for tragic fate of IDPs from Kosovo, M+ Radio reported accordingly and organized humanitarian actions, engaging organizations from Austria, Switzerland and Sweden. M+ also organized the exhibition of the known Yugoslav

caricaturist Koraks, paintings exhibition of Olga Lekic and quite a number of concerts and other manifestations. The station has a good rating in Mladenovac (Belgrade suburb municipality) as well as in the wider area of the central Serbia. One of the most listened programs is “Mladenovac Citizens are Commenting”, which is the informative-political magazine, broadcast every day at 4 o'clock p.m.

Implementation of the grant

All activities in this project as well as the whole program of Medienhilfe is realized in close cooperation with other international organizations engaged in media assistance and development, who are members of the closer donors' group of non-governmental organizations: Open Society Institute – Network Media Program (Budapest) as well as the national foundations in Serbia and Kosovo, the Swedish Helsinki Committee (Stockholm), Press Now (Netherlands), Norwegian People's Aid, IREX ProMedia (USA) and Media Development Loan Fund (Prague). In this way any double-funding of the subrecipients is avoided.

The projects are implemented in direct cooperation with the subrecipients and includes project monitoring, control and evaluation.

V. EVALUATION PLAN:

Continued project reporting, monitoring and evaluation make an important part of the project realization. The monitoring activities to be implemented are as follows:

- Monthly progress reports and final project reports provided by the partners included in the program;
- Regular field visits by the program director and the project officer
- Talks with the media representatives to identify specific improvements and progress;
- Detailed reviewing of the bookkeeping and financial reports of the media included in order to check whether the grant is properly used;

Project evaluation is also continuously carried out and comprises the following:

- Compiling mid-term progress report;
- Delivering final evaluation report.

Criteria for evaluation include the following:

- The extent to which the stations manage to keep the same level or to increase their in-house information and current affairs production;
- Trends in a level of quality of in-house production;
- Development of media management and marketing;

VI. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND:

Medienhilfe was founded in the end of 1992 as a Swiss non-governmental and not-for-profit organization, with the aim to support the independent media and freedom of press in the area of the former Yugoslavia. Since 1993 Medienhilfe has established permanent contacts and cooperation with a number of independent media organizations in the area of the former Yugoslavia. Over 60 different media organizations have been supported, among them 4 network projects composed of a number of particular media or infrastructure projects used by more media.

Medienhilfe has been the implementing organization of the Swiss Government, i.e. of two departments within the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs: 1. Political Division IV, Section for Global Peace Policy and 2. Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. Besides, Medienhilfe started in 2000 to operate as the implementing organization of other governments and has so far cooperation with the German and Irish MFA. Since 2001, Medienhilfe has cooperation with NED, who supported two support programs in Macedonia (2001 and 2002) and one support program in Serbia (2003). We also receive support from Swiss cantons and towns as well as from other donors both in Switzerland and abroad like private foundations, companies, media houses and journalist associations, bigger NGOs, church organizations, and a number of individuals.

Fields of our activities include the following:

1. *Direct support to independent media organizations in the area of the former Yugoslavia*, which includes Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina (both the Federation of B-H and Serb Republic), Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Macedonia.
2. *Research and analytical work*, consisting of: reports and analyses of media issues in the region as well as a position and a role of media in a broader social context; action research on specific issues related media (e.g. media role in social integration, conflict de-escalation and transformation, and peace-building); reports and analyses of alternative sector (NGOs), strategy papers and counseling (for Swiss NGOs operative in the area of the former Yugoslavia).
3. *Strategy and policy papers and counseling on media issues in SEE*, both for the Swiss Government and other governmental, inter-governmental (EU, Stability Pact) and other organizations.
4. *Public activities*, comprising the following: a) Regular issuing of a bulleting (quarterly), which is sent to Swiss NGOs; journalists, media and journalist associations; politicians and individuals interested to be regularly informed on issues related to media situation in the area of the former Yugoslavia; b) Maintaining website with a variety of information in regard to media in the region; c) Organizing special meetings with prominent media and NGO representatives from the area and representatives of the Swiss state bodies; d) Organizing public events with media and NGO representatives from the area of the former Yugoslavia.

Our criteria to choose grantees are as follows:

1. Media who are not owned or controlled by a state or para-state structures;
2. Media whose editorial policy is not controlled or influenced by any political party;
3. Media whose coverage complies with professional criteria and journalist ethics;
4. Media who have engaged against nationalism and have promoted dialogue, understanding and peaceful cohabitation of people with different ethnic and religious background;
5. Media who have been promoting civil society and democratic values;
6. Special attention is given to cross-border and network media projects.

Medienhilfe is a *member of a closer group of donors who have permanent co-ordination of support activities*. This group form: Open Society Institute (offices in Brussels and Budapest, as well as national offices in the area of the former Yugoslavia), Swedish Helsinki Committee, Press Now, Norwegian People's Aid, IREX ProMedia and Media Development Loan Fund (Prague).

Medienhilfe was in 2000 a member of the pool of the implementing organizations for realization of the quick support package for independent media in Serbia initiated by the *Stability Pact*.

Medienhilfe is member of the *expert team who drafted a strategy and policy paper for the EC support program for independent media in SEE* in the next 6 years. The team included representatives of NGOs, governments (e.g. USA and Denmark), private foundation (OSI), Stability Pact and EC.

Totally eight persons are engaged with Medienhilfe. The work is basically done from the office in Zurich, with regular field-travels and visits of partners during the year, 2-3 times a year for each country or region, depending on needs of respective support programs and specific projects. We also have one field project officer, based in Skopje.