

“Media and Cultural Diversity in Serbia” Miroљjub Radoјkovic

Main Characteristics of Mass Media System in Serbia

During the period before 1990 the citizens of former Yugoslavia were denied the right to private possession of the mass media. The right to communicate, in line with socialist ideology, was considered to be a collective rather than an individual freedom. The mass media system was extremely decentralized, with each federal unit (six republics and two autonomous provinces) allowed to develop and care about its own press and broadcasting media. There were eight major broadcasting networks covering federal units in the form of social property, named after the capital cities (RTV Belgrade, RTV Zagreb, etc), 214 local radio stations and some 20 local television emitters. The press consisted of 27 dailies and some 60 local newspapers, and more than 600 factory press outlets.

The last federal government of SFRY, led by Mr. Markovich made the decisive step to liberalize and open for privatization media system through the Federal Public Information Act of 1990. This occurred during the time when former Yugoslavia still formally existed, as republics aiming to secede had not yet been successful. However, by 1990 all the republics had started to behave as completely independent states. In spite of that, all contemporary new states adopted basic principles from the mentioned Public Information Act 1990, fostering three major avenues of mass media transformation: the possibility of foreign investment in the mass media industry up to 49 percent of capital stock, the abolishment of prelicensing of potential media owners and right of private subjects to found newspapers or local broadcasting media.

The process of gradual political disintegration of SFRY was followed by the fragmentation of the former, common information space. The new political masters in ex-federal units, legalized through the first ever multi-party elections, were able to confine their citizens into eight isolated preserves and thus mobilize populist support for themselves like new, by the rule nationalistic, political elites. If the media had not been restricted in this way, there would have been no need for people to fight for press freedom, no need to fight for transmission masts in order to receive signals from other parts of their ex-state, and no need to smuggle newspapers across the newly established state borders. At the top of all of that, telephone lines were cut, Internet lines did not function (in Serbia until 1996) and free movement of people was prevented by introduction of visas and other administrative obstacles. This last remnant from the days of hostile disintegration of ex-Yugoslavia still exists so far Slovenia and Croatia are concerned.

As the events following the break-up of former Yugoslavia showed, after the demise of the one-party state, the media in quite all parts of Yugoslavia hindered rather than advanced processes of democratization. This is particularly true for Serbian media, from which some reverted to the state control, such as the most powerful broadcasting network Radiotelevizija Srbije (see The Broadcasting Act 1991). From pragmatic reasons it was immediately centralized (units in Priština and Novi Sad being submitted to Belgrade) and redefined as watchdog of “national and state interest” under strict control of the Milosevich government. Ordinary citizens were embarrassed by the flood of nationalistic propaganda and manipulative messages in the form of semi-truths, negative stereotypes of national or ethnic groups of “others” and so-called “hate speech” (see Thompson, 1995). The destiny of culture and language followed hand in hand political upheaval as illuminated by the destiny of the former Yugoslavia. They were torn into pieces in favor of small but pure economically exhausted states, which are arrogant and blown out at civilization periphery. Each of them is now celebrating its “liberation” – minded at the same time cultural cleansing in order to be self-sufficient.

During 1990-s the media in Serbia were divided into two groups: pro-regime in one hand and oppositional (or “independent” as they preferred to call themselves) in the other. RTS had at its disposal the best infrastructure (terrestrial) and the biggest number of RTV frequencies. Its infrastructure was not used as a common carrier serving public interest, offering to the public pluralism of information. That is why during this period fight for change had one pivotal goal: to break down monopoly of the state and government over national TV and radio network. This monopoly existed in all aspects: technical, financial, program making and personnel one.

Allocation of frequencies was in hands of government. RTS had the right to hold in reserve large number of frequencies, having at the same time the privilege of lending or denying their use to other broadcasters. If new appearing emitters were obedient to the regime this technical resource was at their disposal, and vice versa.

Some of the currently biggest, private RTV media became leader at the market thanks to the advantages in frequency allocation, e.g. coverage, from these days of authoritarian regime. Regarding the financial aspect, there was a clear difference between the state and independent (opposition) media. The latter had no right to collect subscription, but neither did they have enough revenues from the commercials due to impoverished economy. In many cases, state enterprises did not advertise in press and broadcasting media performing oppositional editorial policy. Pro-regime media were also cleared from disobedient journalists. In the year 1993 some 3000 journalists were fired from state controlled RTV and press. Finally, winning the war inside the media the regime was capable of dictating and controlling great deal of media production. This influence was exercised overtly during all election campaigns until 1996, when the opposition parties have won local elections in 44 major cities for the first time. That part of the media, performing the role of propaganda machine, was finally badly hurt during NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999. Terrestrial broadcasting infrastructure lost 17 from altogether 19 masts. 25 transmitters of RTS and 11 belonging to other, local RTV stations were destroyed additionally. Complete buildings of RTV Priština and Novi Sad were leveled down by air strikes, and the main building of TV Belgrade hit NATO vessel, which killed 16 workers at the same time.

In practice, the position of all independent media was during 1990-s under cross pressure. On one hand, they were struggling for an alternative approach to informing so that the citizens were able to realize their right to know those truths, which were hidden by official media. On the other hand, independent media were by the rule private ones, so they followed the commercial interests. They entered mutual competition, quarrels and accusations, which were weakening all of them. At the same time, economic potential of the country did not provide enough income for the wild proliferation that has been happened. In spite of general poverty the number of media was steadily growing during 1990-s. The number of both press and broadcasting newcomers was in 1997 – 123, in 1998 – 114, in 2000 – 157 and in 2001 – 132 media. (Vodič kroz medije Jugoslavije, 2002, XVI). The same source reports data for 513 radio and 216 TV channels and 656 press outlets in 2001 (ibidem, XI). Currently, the assessments deal with 1200 radio and TV stations in Serbia (nobody knows the exact figure), more than 90 per cent of them completely illegal. Their equipment is often out of date, mutually

incompatible and unreliable. In case of opposition media, a part of equipment was obtained through foreign aids. The main body of the program consists of the cheapest shows, movies, serials, quiz shows and interviews in the studio. A great number of local, even municipality-owned stations do not serve information function at all. Majority of RTV stations is oriented towards entertainment of the lowest taste, presenting video cassettes (mainly the pirate ones), or towards the re-distribution of the programs "stolen" from the satellite dish (without authorization). This is why instead calling them "micro wave stations", they might be called "micro wave ovens", because they simply "warm up" foreign products broadcast them at the local market and gather few advertisements. On the other hand, the political-informative press has decreased to only 12 dailies with aggregate, average, daily circulation of 600 thousands copies only! More than 30 percent of adult population does not read any daily newspaper at all. The percentage of not-readers, so far weeklies are concerned, is doubled (60 percent). Credibility of the newspapers is low and their content is almost the same due to absence of qualified, well paid journalists.

Another common feature of the transition of the media and culture in Serbia during nineties was the magical revitalization of ethnic myths. They were given the role of the ferment for growth of national cultures in order to establish tyranny over language and minds. Ethnic myths were being recycled in all ethnic cultures. The elements of these myths were constituent parts of the "ruling languages" which were to restrain the untamable "I" into an immovable "We". This process was taking place in an industrial way through "consciousness industry". The final products were quite modern since they used popular music, video contents, cartoons, movies etc. (see Cholovich;, 1993). The selection was very simple. Only useful mythological passages have been revived – the more in line with national pride and glory, the better. This is how contemporary speech concerning us and the others, continued to be more and more radicalized. There was no fear of too harsh words, of stereotypes, fanaticism and prejudices. Even if the desirable "We" lacked authority it did not matter. There was always reserve (political) authority to replace the missing one. At the end, the clash of national folks and cultures escalated into real violent clash, that one of civil war.

Similar tendency was visible till first days of XXI century in the states aiming towards European Union, all of them by the rule located at West Balkan. On the road to Europe they have to reconsider both national and emerging European cultural policy and identity. Among the other prerequisites, on which the inclusion or exclusion of Balkan states from European integration depends, there is the demand for harmonization with European cultural standards and norms. Also, in the broad field of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the question of intercultural communication and freedom of the media occupies high place of importance. For, Balkan countries are by the rule multi-ethnic societies. This is exactly the case of Serbia, in which 33% of their citizens (including Albanians at Kosovo and Metohija) do not belong to majority population. Like other Balkan states Serbia is now looking towards European Union, although it lost precious time and some advantages due to tragic mistreatment of other nations and national minorities and misunderstanding with the spirit of unifying Europe. Serbia is the best example of a society, which till recently was politically guided completely opposite to all changes taking place in European community. In words of one social scientist: " We can observe that since 1989 Europe has witnessed a rise of nationalism, especially in the South-East, and the coming to the fore of groups, which are xenophobic, racist or ethnicist and have a strong tendency to exclude the Other. These developments represent a serious danger for the collective representation of an open Europe with flexible frontiers, an Europe that defines itself as an association of all those who share the principles that express Europe's specificity". (Berting, 2001, 44). It is not necessary to repeat at this place, what contribution of Serbian previous government was to these wrong tendencies. During last decade of XX century, it pushed the state at the track of exclusion from Europe. At the same time, Serbian citizens were isolated becoming a "ghetto society", which among other things was prevented from intercultural communication with the rest of the world and its immediate environment. Official propaganda of former authoritarian regime abused this fate to create a myth of "international plot" against Serbian nation, hampering additionally efforts of small groups that remained in intercultural communication with surrounding "others" and European community of states. After upheaval in October 2000 the situation has changed completely. New government started encompassing social reform that opens Serbian society towards European integration in all aspects.

Media of national minorities

If one wants to measure intensity of intercultural communication coming out from cultural diversity, one must take into consideration, among other things, structure and way of functioning of mass media both of majority and minority population. Though the notion of culture have a broader meaning, mutual, permanent influence of people leaving at relatively tight space contributes to the wealth of cultural varieties. Usually it is the protection of customs, folklore, literature, artistic creativity and use of media what constitutes the main issues of culture of minority communities.

There is a certain paradox concerning treatment of national and other minorities in Serbia so far their mass media are concerned. As one of republics of ex-Yugoslavia, it was offering the advanced context for free and broad intercultural communication. Concept of federative state, rights of minorities, power of local governments, self-management, respect of cultural uniqueness and linguistic equality – all these achievements were better elaborated than in European Community until 1990-s. In the field of communication the policy of "positive discrimination" of minority media was performed. According to this concept, ethnic minorities were being favored in such a way that they were all represented in public offices and institutions proportionally to their real participation in the population. This policy had as its outcome the forming of the informative institutions of all national minorities and their supporting with no regard to economic sustainability. This meant that media of minority groups were highly subsidized, that neither the scarcity of the audience nor the scarcity of market constituted any threat. All this was being done in order to realize truly the principle of communication equality of these social sub-groups. Thanks to such a policy, public and mass communication in Serbia was conducted in fifteen languages and all national minorities had at least one relevant means of public communication in their jurisdiction.

Serbia entered the transition period with a very high and hardly maintainable amount of minority media. Just to remind, Radio Novi Sad had the program in Hungarian language that lasted 24 hours, what was unprecedented worldwide. Television Novi Sad also recorded a similar expansion – it was making programs in Hungarian, Rumanian, Slovak and Ruthinian. On the radio " the program in Slovak usually lasted 7 hours a day, in Rumanian also 7 hours a day and in Ruthinian 4 hours a day...Towards the middle of 1992 Radio Novi Sad also

started the programs in Ukrainian and Roma language...RTV Pristina also records a similar expansion. It had to satisfy the information needs in Albanian and Turkish and from 1992 it also made programs in Romany. The programs in Albanian lasted 10 hours a day, on 2 TV channels and 34 hours a day on 3 radio stations. According to the Statistic Yearbook 1990, Serbia also had quite large number of newspapers in the language of national minorities: In Albanian – 27 titles, in Hungarian – 18 titles, in Check and Slovak – 26 titles...In addition to this, the Assembly of Autonomous Province of Vojvodina was the founder of three more newspapers in Rumanian and as many (3) in Ruthinian." (Luvich, 1993, 55-57). Radio Belgrade and Radio Nis were serving communication needs of Bulgarian national minority located at the East Serbia. Apart from outburst of nationalistic policy, economic disaster and international sanctions were responsible for collapse of the policy of "positive discrimination" of minority media in Serbia. Catastrophic economic situation has ruined the federal, republic and province budgets and caused the reduction of all kinds of expenses. This also applied to the subventions for the media of national minorities, which were reduced but not completely canceled. However, dependence of minority media on state subsidy represented later a tool by which the regime of Milosevic was able to make moves towards "negative discrimination" of these media. This had been extremely successfully exercised on Kosovo and Metohija, because of attempts of the Albanian minority to form an illegitimate Republic of Kosovo and a parallel government. Serbian government dissolved Albanian publishing company "Rilindija" and transformed it into a state-owned company ("Panorama"). With the introduction of the state of emergency at Kosovo and Metohija (1991) RTV Priština was made part of state-owned RTS. 1300 out of 1800 Albanian journalists were fired or boycotted the new employer. At the same time the amount of the programs in Albanian was drastically reduced. After 1992 there were 3 hours of program a day and 16 hours of radio program – only one half of what there was before. Even worse, this program in Albanian language was only translation of official propaganda from Serbian information sources. (see Radojkovich, 1996) Kosovo crisis finished in the armed conflict, which was resolved by NATO intervention 1999. According to Resolution number 1244 this Province is brought under UN protection and Serbia has currently no legal rights and duties in media field. Hence, changes that happened during nineties brought about an ambiguous political situation so far the treatment of national minorities and their media was concerned. In spite of that, all preconditions and needs for intercultural communication survived, since Serbia remained and still is a real multi-ethnic society

With the upheaval done in October 2000 Serbia has turned itself towards European perspective again. New elected government of DOS (coalition of 18 ex-opposition parties) opened the process of harmonization with EU laws and rules. The same is true regarding the national minority cultural rights and media. European standards require any state to secure through the publicly owned media minimum of information, education and entertainment to all minorities in their mother tongue. (European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages, 1998, paragraph 11) Also, another standard invites states to secure any technical and financial help to the members and associations of minority groups, in order to enable them to found their own mass media as well as other cultural institutions. (Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, 1998, paragraph 9). Hence, any country that wants to join to the European Union has to fulfill these standards and principles. Interestingly enough, first attempt in Serbia to comply with European standards goes back to 1993, when the working paper "Democracy and Minority Communication" (Beograd – Subotica, 1993) under the auspice of federal government (FRY consisting of Serbia and Monte Negro) was made public. In its paragraph 13 was stated: "Everybody is free to start private and joint foundations for development of radio-television stations or programs in the language of minority communities, as well as for development of programs and the media aimed at mutual understanding and connecting of different national and ethnic communities." Apparently, lawmakers were following the intention of Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. For, their recommendation was to establish a special budget line from which the individuals and associations of national minorities could have lent "soft" credits in order to start their indigenous media. Unfortunately, this policy has never come into being, since Milosevic conquered power at the federal level soon, closing at the same time the space for pro-European efforts.

Contemporary situation of minority media

Current media restructuring in Serbia has been marked by harmonization of their legal framework with European standards and norms. This endeavor should change their structure by introduction of a set of so called "media laws". It is composed out of 5 new Acts: Public Information Act, Broadcasting Act, Telecommunication Act, Advertising Act and Freedom of Information Act. All of them are basically prepared by domestic experts and specialized NGO-s, with the support of OESCE office in Belgrade and help of Council of Europe consultants. In this regard, one can notice that representatives of civil society have an important word in this process. But, since they are not final lawmakers in many cases their drafts were distorted through the legislative process in undesired directions. So far, three new, first mentioned acts came into power. For the purpose of this report, the Broadcasting Act 2002 and Public Information Act 2003 are the most important ones, as real promoters of substantial changes. The most important novelties, which Broadcasting Act has established, are: independent broadcasting regulatory body, public service companies for Serbia and Vojvodina, dual property of electronic media and introduction of new forms of broadcasting stations. On the other hand, Public Information Act is important too, because it denies the right of state, or any state institution, to found and possess mass media. This is substantial change, bearing in minds the fact that founder of many media of national minorities are assemblies of municipalities and Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. Hence, such media must get new (private) owners until 2005 according to Public Information Act 2003. Broadcasting Act 2002 calls for the change in media ownership structure too. In line with European standard, it requires dual media ownership – with public services at one side, and private broadcasting media at the other. It has no consequence upon printed press. Similar to other European countries, Serbian newspapers are already privatized, since the state plays the role of founder only in three out of 12 existing daily papers (one of them in Hungarian language). Quite contrary, within the plenty of over 1200 broadcasting stations, there are still some 175, or 14,5% in quasi- state ownership. Those are by the rule RTV stations of local governments, e.g. municipalities. As a remnant of "social property", they will have to be privatized until year 2005. In some municipalities, this kind of local broadcasters serve the cultural and informational needs of national minorities in their mother tongue. This is the case with local, municipality broadcasters in five communes located at north top of Vojvodina, in several municipalities with majority population of Rumanians, Slovaks and Ukrainians in

this province too. Albanians living in three southern communes of Serbia (Bujanovac, Preševo, Medvedja) got first local radio station ever thanks to help given by international community and new Serbian government in 2001. Similarly, Muslim population concentrated in west corner of Serbia (Sandžak) enjoys foreign aid in order to improve its culture. For the time being this group manifests its cultural identity mainly by insisting on use of new, Bosnian language. This time the official policy tolerates this endeavor. In this light one must look the establishment of new University for Sandžak area. This year a new radio station is also erected in city of Novi Pazar. Local station called "Stoplus" will be financed next two years directly by French government. But, to repeat, all broadcasters mentioned above must change the ownership structure after 2005. Therefore, quite all-national minorities have expressed fears of possible deprivation from means for intercultural communication through restructuring imposed by new legislation.

The lawmakers were aware of this risk. Therefore, the Broadcasting Act secures (paragraph 78) obligation of new-established public services (both in Serbia and Vojvodina) to dedicate "appropriate" amount of their programming to cultural, informational and educational needs of all national minorities living at their territory of coverage. Serbian public service network therefore broadcast daily program in Roma language since members of this group are spread around the whole Republic. Another beneficiary is national minority of Bulgarians being served twice a week. In addition, there is local station "Radio Caribrod" in city of Dimitrovgrad (next to the border with Bulgaria), which broadcast in Bulgarian language. Public service in Vojvodina will continue to serve communication needs of Hungarians, Rumanians, Slovaks, Ukrainians, Ruthinians and Roma in their mother tongues. Because they are not all confined in few, typical municipalities, a complete TV channel of public service of Vojvodina is foreseen to serve this purpose. In addition, many local RTV stations operate and will continue to operate in languages of national minorities. If they will be privatized or transformed into new kind of local media is to be seen in next years. Privatization is not the single perspective ahead.

Not only private, but also a new form of local RTV stations is guaranteed By the Broadcasting Act (paragraph 95). If members of national minorities could not buy (privatize) local stations in municipalities where they are concentrated, they can transform them into Civic Media. Such a medium of civil society has clear theoretical justification: "The press is free when it does not depend on either the power of government or the power of money". (Kean, 1991, 150) Theoretically, such a position is very suitable for realization of communication equality of national, cultural and linguistic minority groups. For, if the government of nation-state establishes (and finance) minority media, this solution turns easy into paternalistic policy. On the other hand, if only market rules decide about the fate of minority media, they have poor chance to survive, because they are unprofitable business (market). Hence, appropriate way out, foreseen by the Serbian Broadcasting Act, is to restructure local, minority media into non-profit, public foundation. Of course, this legal form can't automatically guarantee financial viability. Therefore, the law gives considerable advantage to the civic media in advance. It offers license, e.g. frequency use, to the civic media for free. Additional sources of their income could be donations from abroad and home, projects grants obtained from domestic state and local governments, sponsorship, donations from citizens as tax deductible expenses, etc. Non-profit foundation as media form does not mean that all collaborators will work for free. Certainly, some staff, doing the most sophisticated jobs, will get salaries. But, program production and creativity must depend as much as possible on volunteers and amateurs, e.g. ordinary citizens, being keen to express and self-reflect their local, national, cultural or linguistic self-being and identity.

So far, response to this novelty is poor. Big, traditionally recognized, national minorities still have the tendency to (re)call upon "established rights" from the time of socialist past and its policy of "positive discrimination" of national minorities. They hesitate to enter into restructuring of local, municipality media in either new direction (privatization or civic media), although deadline to do it is approaching fast. Among newly recognized and organized minorities, Roma (Gypsy) groups are the most enthusiastic to take part in restructuring process. Hand in hand with official recognition of themselves as new, institutionalized, national minority, they establish new, non-state (but basically commercial) means of mass communication. Those are: the press agency (Rompress), TV station "Nišava" and radio under the same name with 24 hours transmission in Nis, new radio station in Valjevo, etc. Since Roma are spread around the whole Serbian territory, they want to establish specialized national radio and TV channel as well. Assembly of Vojvodina founded in 2003 publishing company "TNEM", which prints the paper under the same title. With the wider use of media of communication, the process of standardization of Roma language (dialects) is gradually taking place. This is also an interesting, unique cultural change. On the other hand, among thousands of non-governmental organizations in Serbia only few, deeply rooted into citizenship and future directed ones, are preparing to use the legal offer for establishment of civic media. As an early bird of this kind, radio "Stav" in city of Leskovac could be mentioned. It is worth noting that possession of broadcasting organization is not necessarily the best way to fulfill cultural and information needs of minority groups. In order to let all kinds of such groups to speak for themselves, in manner they prefer, Broadcasting Act 2002 gives them opportunity to use the form of independent program production companies. It is to say that much more groups could make their documentaries, music, plays, folklore etc. in form of ready-made radio or TV products than to finance and feed with it complete RTV station. Any potential producing group will have low expenses and even better access to the public. For, all broadcasters, being public service or commercial ones, are obliged by law to dedicate minimum 10 per cent of their annual output to performances prepared by independent program producers. In this way, a large space for dissemination of messages created by minority groups is open. At the same time, their cultural achievements could be in many cases more visible (disseminated by large emitter) than using low-power, local broadcasting media. So far, independent program production form is used by three groups of free-lance journalists (in Belgrade and Novi Sad). Because this practice shows good results (rating and number of re-broadcasters), it is to expect national minorities and sub-culture groups to follow the same path in near future.

"The protection of cultural heritage and cultural identity of minority communities was most developed, and still is, in Vojvodina. In this Autonomous Province there is long lasting tradition of institutionalized cultural creativity of minorities, as well as its improvement through the work of amateur associations". (Bašić, 2002, 54-55) This is only to say that in Vojvodina intensity of multicultural ties is most intense. It is almost impossible to find any region in Europe with such a cultural and linguistic variety. Therefore, diversification of national and other minority media is biggest in this Province. It will be shown by overview that follows in accordance with the size of these groups.

Hungarians are typically settled down in Vojvodina. There is no single municipality in this Province without

Hungarian citizens. With more than 340 thousands Hungarians are second large national minority of Serbia (after Albanians if Kosovo and Metohija is included). They represent majority of population in 7 (out of total 45) municipalities in northern part of Vojvodina. In line with these facts Hungarians have schools, University, theaters, and media in their mother tongue.

This national minority has daily newspaper "Magyar Szó", appearing six times a week, with average circulation around 10 thousands copies. The same printing house "Forum holding" publishes family journal "Het Nap". Other printing houses are private enterprises. They publish three journals for kids and youth in addition. The Official Gazette of Autonomous Province of Vojvodina is published in Hungarian language too. In three smaller cities (Kanjiža, Kovin and Temerin) there are Hungarian weeklies. Local newspapers in 6 municipalities (Bačka Topola, Bečej, Vršac, Kula, Kovin and Novi Kneževac) are bilingual, e.g. appear in Serbian and Hungarian simultaneously. There are also 10 Hungarian journals. Television program in Hungarian is broadcasted at TV Novi Sad, TV Kovačica and TV Pančevo. First mentioned TV emitter has its regional center in Subotica. Radio program in Hungarian language broadcast public service Radio Novi Sad and 10 local, municipality radio stations. There are also 6 private, commercial radio stations that broadcast in language of this national minority. Rumanian national minority has its publishing house "Libertatea" founded by assembly of Vojvodina. Printed press published by this company encompasses one political weekly, two journals for kids and youth ("Tribuna tineretului", "Bucuria copilor") and journal for literature and culture ("Lumina"). In addition there are 7 publications more in Rumanian language. By the rule, they are private endeavors in villages having neither safe source of financing nor regular timing of appearance. TV Novi Sad broadcasts news bulletin in Rumanian language daily and 3 specialized programs in addition. In other municipalities there are no Rumanian TV programs. Radio Novi Sad broadcasts four segments in Rumanian daily, and 4 other local municipality stations have radio program in this language too.

Main newspaper for Slovak national minority is "Hlas ľudu", the weekly with circulation up to 5 thousands copies. It belongs to the publishing house founded by assembly of Vojvodina. Other publications under the same roof are children, youth and family journals ("Zornjicka", "Vzlet" and "Rovina" respectively). Television program in Slovak is supplied by public service TV Novi Sad, on average 45 minutes daily. There are 3 local, Slovak TV stations – in Bački Petrovac, Kovačica and Vojlovica (Pančevo) covering all municipalities where this minority is located. Radio Novi Sad broadcasts on average 5,5 hours of programs in Slovak language. There are 3 local radio stations (Bački Petrovac, Stara Pazova and Kovačica) broadcasting in the same language, and 8 other local radio stations using it as second one.

Ruthinians have as most important newspaper weekly "Ruske slovo". This publication and additional cultural journals in mother tongue survive thanks to subsidies enabled by Province of Vojvodina (the circulation of the weekly mentioned is only 1600 copies). Since 1975 TV Novi Sad has been transmitting 6 hours of programs in Ruthinian language by a week. Radio program lasts 4 hours a day at Radio Novi Sad. Three local, municipality stations (Vrbas, Kula and Šid) also broadcast parts of their programs in Ruthinian language.

Ukrainian minority in Vojvodina can rely upon TV Novi Sad with 30 minutes of program twice a month. Radio Novi Sad broadcasts 1,5 hours in their language weekly, and local radio station in Verbs 1 hour weekly. Croats are represented with 2 hours of radio program at Radio Subotica every work-day, and with one hour of TV program monthly on TV Novi Sad. Germans have half hour of radio program every Friday at Radio Subotica in their mother tongue. They are preparing to start TV program at public service of Vojvodina soon. In 1999 Matica Aškalija Jugoslavije was established in Novi Sad. This group of people of Muslim religion (some 30.000 in Vojvodina) has once a month their own TV program at TV Novi Sad.

Conclusion

Any kind of communication, including intercultural one, cannot be imagined in our days without use of mass media. They are also part and parcel of important cultural institutions of any nation or minority community, hand in hand with theaters, museums, schools, cinemas, etc. In the most common and implicit interpretation, mass media come under the notion of "institutions of importance for dissemination of culture, education, and preservation of national identity". It is taken as granted because the media, in their operation, always perform educational and cultural function, use the mother tongue and reinforce certain social values and cultural identities. So, regardless if one speaks about cultural issues of Europe, a nation state or a national minority, one must bring mass media into the focus of discussion. That was exactly the intention of this paper, Number and disposition of different minority media is an apparent indicator of cultural diversity in a given country. The same is true for Serbia today. Hence, in order to use the potential of minority media for cultural dialogue and interaction to flourish, they must be stimulated to perform truly intercultural communication role. For, national and other minorities in Serbia are located very much like "Russian dolls". It is to say, that many minorities live and work together at the same territory. If one minority represents the biggest number of dwellers, it comes into position to build its cultural institutions easier. Than, it often neglects the culture, identity and language of other, smaller groups living in same area. Doing so, it neglects European standards and ideals. There is not always fair coverage of different national and linguistic minorities in specialized, local media. In the past, it was seen that Albanian media did not refer to the language and culture of Turkish minority at Kosovo and Metohija, for example. Hungarian local media in Vojvodina did not report regularly about the life of Rumanians or Slovaks living in the same municipality, or vice-versa. In Western Serbia (Sandžak) media of Serbs also neglected Muslim population in local media there. Hence, one can conclude that the real, multicultural composition of local areas is not always properly expressed through means of public communication. This is a kind of shortcomings that cannot be cured by the implementation of new legislation only. Hence, stimulation of intercultural communication, driven by variety of cultures of existing minorities and majority, will remain very important task for all institutions dealing with cultural policy in Serbia.

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