



# The Public Broadcasting System in B-H Between Ethnic Exclusivity and Long Term Sustainability

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## Executive Summary

The international community's efforts to establish a functional and self-sustainable Public Broadcasting System in B-H have not been fully successful, although its efforts date back since 1998. Instead, heated discussions are still present on the political stage throwing into question the entire organization of the Public Broadcasting System. Consequently, public television programs are not yet accepted by a big part of the population of Bosnia-Herzegovina and this is especially pronounced in the case of Croats. Although many important questions have been raised regarding equity of each of the B-H constituent peoples in staffing and program production, the whole debate is further every day from objective indicators that could show whether certain solutions are applicable or not. After all, *"the paradox is that the concept of the public broadcasting system we are discussing today has already become obsolete in Europe, except no one has told us yet."* (Kontic, 2006)

One of the purposes of this paper is to examine the issue of reform and creation of a sustainable public broadcasting system of Bosnia-Herzegovina from the aspect of exercise of ethnic rights and equality of each of the B-H constituent peoples and citizens, but also to point to other elements - legislative framework and existence of political willingness for its change, efficiency of the system (funding, human resources), complementarities of programming of public broadcasters within the broadcasting system, challenges imposed by competition of commercial televisions, as well as the pending convergent, multi-channel and digital environment - without which a public television system for all citizens of a country cannot be imagined. Therefore, this paper aims to enrich the current discussion on PSB so that solutions based on facts can be made which have a chance of long-term success.

The study findings support wide-spread opinion that RTRS is an almost exclusively Serb national television and that RTVFB-H is a dominantly Bosniak television. On the other hand, the research revealed significant participation of Croats in the RTVFB-H news program and dismiss the qualification that this TV station is an exclusively Bosniak broadcaster. Besides, this paper presents and interprets various data on financial, staffing and organizational aspects of the public broadcasters, exposing a lot of inconsistent solutions that are applied today, and proposing measures for overcoming them.

Instead of proposing a set of radical measures on how to organize the PSB, this paper analyzes policy options that are already on the table and gives recommendations for improvement that will be feasible without much political willingness and without requiring a lot of investment. Three main policy options are discussed - (a) to do nothing or almost nothing, (b) to create three separate exclusive language broadcasters plus one state broadcaster, and (c) to create two or three thematic channels that will overcome ethnic divisions.

By analyzing each of these options, the study concludes that it is necessary to adopt the already proposed legislative framework as soon as possible in order to allow the functioning of the Corporation of PSB which should enable more compatible operation of public broadcasters. Also, there is no doubt that existing laws guarantee equality of each of the B-H constituent peoples and citizens, but its implementation is a question of practice (political willingness first of all). The greatest responsibility for implementation of laws lies on public television supervisory boards and directors and therefore measures are recommended that will in the short-term period lead to equality in those program segments where this is easiest to achieve (equal use of language in foreign subtitled programs) and where it is most important to achieve (editorial positions, as well as presenter and journalist positions in the news program). In addition, guidelines are provided for other stakeholders on how to contribute to long-term sustainability of public broadcasters and equal representation of constituent peoples and other citizens in staffing and programming.



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## 1. Introduction

In every country process of social integration largely rely on media and communication systems. Although television is not the only one generator of mass public imagery, it is inscribed with special powers. For European countries where exist dual broadcasting systems (comprising of public and commercial broadcasters) special role in creating social cohesion was proscribed to public service broadcasters. Although the public service programming remit vary from country to country there is a core of common features which are universally valid. One of these features is social integration function of PSB. As David Levy points out:

*"It serves as a reference point for all members of the public and is a factor for social cohesion and integration of all individuals, groups and communities."* (Rumphorst, 2004)

For Bosnia and Herzegovina, country which was devastated and divided by the war from 1992-1995, questions of social integration and establishment of public service broadcasting that will reach the whole of (or at least majority of) bh. population are inextricably intertwined in the sense that PSB accepted by all citizens and ethnic groups is pre-condition for any further process of social integration.

However, despite the international community's efforts dating back since 1998, the Public Broadcasting System in B-H has not been fully established yet and heated discussions are still present on the political stage throwing into question the entire organization of the Public Broadcasting System. Consequently, public television programs are not yet accepted by a big part of the population of Bosnia-Herzegovina and this is especially pronounced in the case of the Croat people.

It is entirely certain that the abovementioned debates on the PSB do not follow the logic of discussions on the future of public television in Europe. While, on one hand, questions are being raised in Europe regarding the future, goals and obligations of public television in the context of a multi-channel, digital environment, which are imposed by a redefinition of public interest categories and which allow particular audiences to get desired contents through diverse thematic, commercial channels, rather than exclusively through public television (Jakubowicz, 2006), on the other hand, in Bosnia-Herzegovina public interest is primarily defined as ethnic interest and the entire PSB reform is primarily determined by questions on what each ethnic community will get and to what extent. In this, one forgets that the term "public" means addressing all citizens who live in the territory of the country, not just particular ethnic communities. As Kontic (2006) points out *"if a political settlement is ever reached, i.e. if the law on public radio and television in BiH is ever passed, only then will it become clear that the system has, in the meantime, become cumbersome, dysfunctional and at odds with media trends. We live in an environment where decisions are made every millisecond, where the technology changes as rapidly as the weather; so the local habit of taking years to resolve any issue followed possibly by three-fold signings on parchment can no longer be taken seriously, not even as a bizarre custom"*.

One of the purposes of this paper is to examine the issue of reform and creation of a sustainable public broadcasting system of Bosnia-Herzegovina from the aspect of exercise of ethnic rights of each of the B-H constituent peoples, but also to point to other elements (funding, efficiency, program quality, etc.) without which a public television service for all citizens of a country cannot be imagined. Therefore, this paper aims to enrich the current discussion on PSB so that solutions based on facts can be made which have a chance of long-term success.

In the methodological sense, this study is a result of combining a primary and secondary research process. Through interviews with representatives of public broadcasters and political parties, original data, opinions and stands were obtained on current problems in the creation of PSB, as well as perspectives for further development of reform. In addition, primary data were also received through monitoring and analysis of programming on all three B-H public televisions in terms of representation of language in news programs and foreign sub-titled programs, as well as data on programs aimed at preserving and fostering the traditions and cultures of the B-H peoples. (For detailed methodology used for this analysis, see Annex 1). On the other hand, secondary data were received by analyzing the legislative framework regulating the public broadcasting system in B-H and interpreting various documents, reports and analyses already written about the issue of creation and reform of PSB in B-H and analyses concerning the future of public service broadcasting in Europe.

This study, along with an introduction, contains three more chapters. The second chapter describes the historic context in which the process of transformation of former state televisions into the public broadcasting system of B-H developed. Today's situation with the system is then described in detail, both from a legislative viewpoint and from the position of funding, human resources, equality of all citizens and peoples with regard to staffing and programming, mutual relations of the public broadcasters that make up the system, and in the context of upcoming tectonic changes in the understanding and consumption of television programming brought about by digitalization and convergence.

The third chapter, based on an interpretation framework determined by parameters described in detail in the previous chapter, evaluates solutions, i.e. proposals for further transformation of the public broadcasting system in B-H.

Finally, in the fourth section, based on evaluation of alternative policy solutions, the results of the study are summed up and recommendations are made to different parties, with the aim of boosting the quality of the entire public broadcasting system to satisfy the particular interests of each constituent people and ethnic minority, but also to promote the values that represent Bosnia-Herzegovina's cohesive tissue.



## 2. Problem description

### 2.1. Historical background

Bosnia-Herzegovina saw the end of the war with three ethnically divided broadcasting systems. In the Republika Srpska, Serb Radio-Television was created and it was under the direct influence of the ruling Serb Democratic Party (SDS). In one part of the B-H Federation, in the territory of the former Herceg-Bosna, program was aired by Croatian RTV from Zagreb. The previously only Bosnian-Herzegovinian television TVSA, renamed during the war into RTV of Bosnia-Herzegovina, succeeded more or less in maintaining a multiethnic character despite becoming a dominantly Bosniak television during the war (Durakovic, 2007) and tried to keep the status of the official Bosnian-Herzegovinian radio and television station, but it practically covered only that part of the B-H Federation inhabited by a Bosniak majority. (Media Plan Institute, 2000) At that time two completely diametrical stands - that they want nothing in common because they have their ethnic televisions (Serb and Croat national parties) and that B-H already has Radio-Television of B-H where nothing should be changed (Bosniak parties) prevented even the thought of creating a common radio and television in the spirit of the Dayton Agreement. (Media Plan Institute, 2000).

Faced with existing (ethno-national) informative barriers, even the international community in B-H wandered in coming up with ways to eliminate the communication segregation. In April 1996 (Brunner, 2002) an entirely new commercial network was created, TV OBN, which covered the whole country and in which the international community invested some 20 million euros, but it was abandoned after several years and became a private TV company (Kotic, 2006). It was only three years after the war that the international community in B-H represented by the Office of the High Representative (OHR) focused on transformation of state-run RTV stations into public services.

The first steps towards creating PSB for the benefit of all citizens in B-H were initiated by OHR in July 1998. In the following years the Office of the High Representative passed several decisions (July 1999, October 2001, May 2002, June 2003) which created three main broadcasters in B-H - PBS B-H (BHRT-- a country-wide public service), RTV Federation B-H (RTVFB-H), and RTV Republika Srpska (RTRS).

Hence, the whole process of reform of PSB was characterized by lack of political will on the part of all parties to follow the reform road charted by the international community. Practically all decisions and laws in this field were ultimately imposed by the Office of the High Representative.

The main directions of reform with regard to Serb RTV were reflected in renaming it into Radio-Television Republika Srpska (RTRS), with the aim of emphasizing that this television belongs to all citizens of the RS and that it is not an ethnic Serb TV broadcaster (HR decision, 1999a), and in linking up this television into the B-H Broadcasting System together with the other two broadcasters, which again meant delegating certain powers to the level of the System, as well as coordination and joint appearance with the other broadcasters that make up the system. Also, it was very important for the international community to move this television from the patronage of SDS hardliners, which was achieved by relocating its seat from Pale to Banja Luka. On the other hand, in terms of regulating Croatian broadcasters operating in B-H, OHR (HR decision, 1999) called on HRT from Zagreb to adhere to international conventions and by 1

October 1999 to stop broadcasting its program in B-H by the terrestrial network, which it did. In addition, the Independent Media Commission (IMC) of B-H passed a decision allowing the largest Croat TV company - EROTEL TV, founded after the war, to broadcast on 11 TV transmitters instead of the previous 41, in effect reducing the station's coverage to the area of Mostar city and western Herzegovina (Marusic, 1999). After the company refused to comply with the decision, the IMC passed a decision prohibiting it to broadcast. With the assistance of SFOR, on 14 February 2000 the transmitters on which the TV station was broadcasting were seized and EROTEL was shut down. According to CRA Report (2001) EROTEL TV was among those broadcasters that have been subject to the highest number of decision in relation to their breach of the CRA Rules and Regulations and the operation of the physical enforcement of the close-down decision on Erotek TV has been the a first one of that kind. On the other side, it is important to note that an OHR decision from July 1999 had stipulated that on the newly-created RTVFB-H, *"One of the channels shall, as a rule, use the Croatian language and the other channel shall, as a rule, use the Bosnian language."* (HR Decisions, 1999). However, as Udovicic observes (2000), it was becoming increasingly certain that constituency would be restored to Serbs in the Federation and the consciousness also prevailed that the public service should be the medium of everyone, rather than a roughly carved up ethnic testing range, and so the international community gave up on two channels in two languages and the 2002 law prescribed that Federal Television shall broadcast on just one channel, but that it shall use all three languages of the constituent B-H peoples. Bosnian-Herzegovinian Croats were thus left without an exclusive Croat channel. Legislative solutions envisioned their participation in RTVFB-H programming together with Bosniaks and then, through further reconstruction of PBS and creation of the nation-wide public broadcaster BHRT, also with Serbs and Others.

The Bosniak side also entered the whole reform led by institutions of the international community dissatisfied. Primarily there was dissatisfaction with the abolishment of the former RTV B-H which meant the creation of RTVFB-H covering just one part of the country and the very uncertain creation of a nation-wide public broadcaster. Besides, the entire reform course was reflected in building a new system, but primarily based on former resources of RTV B-H controlled by the Bosniak party. Namely, during reconstruction RTVFB-H was practically left without assets and got only two percent of assets of the former Television of Bosnia-Herzegovina, while BHRT got the rest. On the other hand, RTRS did not bring any resources into BHRT. In this situation, RTVFB-H is forced to pay BHRT for all services for production of its own program. In addition, the reconstruction plan for the public broadcasting system in B-H, developed by a BBC expert team, envisioned the sale of the television building in Sarajevo (Glas Javnosti, 2003), whose maintenance was estimated as too costly, and constructing new buildings for public televisions in Sarajevo, but also in Banja Luka. However, as Udovicic (2004) observes, it was unthinkable for RTV employees in Sarajevo to sell what was their property until yesterday in Sarajevo in order to make a building for RTRS in Banja Luka. Therefore, employee syndicates in Sarajevo rejected the plan. Preoccupied with maintaining status quo, RTV employees in Sarajevo, together with Bosniak and Bosnian political forces, did not offer any alternative solutions and viewed the international community's reform efforts quite indolently. When the 2005 Law on the Public Broadcasting System of B-H was passed, no voices were heard from the professional community or Bosniak and Bosnian political parties questioning the envisioned manner of funding the system. Only several years later, when all that was left to do was to implement the law, desperate cries came from these circles trying to stop the implementation of the law because it was financially utterly unfavorable for RTVFB-H.



## 2.2. Present situation

The latest legislation from October 2005, first one passed by B-H law makers but again upon insistence of the international community, anticipates four components within the B-H Public Broadcasting System. These are entity televisions - RTRS, RTVFB-H and radio-television that covers the entire country - BHRT. The fourth component is the Corporation of Public Broadcasting Services in B-H which actually brings all these three components together and at the same time coordinates their work. The full legislative framework envisions the adoption of four laws - *The Law on the Public Service Broadcasting System in B-H* (hereinafter *System Law 2005*), *Law on the Public Service Broadcasting of B-H* (hereinafter *BHRT Law 2005*) in the Assembly of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and *Law on the Public Service Broadcasting of FB-H* (hereinafter *RTVFB-H Law*) and *Law on the Public Service Broadcasting of RS* (hereinafter *RTRS Law 2006*) in the entity assemblies. At state level the laws were passed without support from Croat delegates and they initiated a procedure of protection of vital national interest, which is why their request arrived before the B-H Constitutional Court. The appeal to the Constitutional Court basically alleged that the proposed law places Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina, that is to say their culture and tradition heritage, in a discriminatory position in relation to the other two peoples, because Croats are prevented from having a radio-television channel in their own language, while the other two peoples practically have that. In relation to this, it is stated that the other two channels (RTV FB-H and RTV RS) *de facto* broadcast exclusively in the Bosnian and Serbian languages and that "*Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina cannot be satisfied with occasional news shows and other special occasion shows, on Catholic holidays, most often in poor Croatian language.*" (Constitutional Court of B-H, 2005) In this regard, creation of a different Public Service Broadcasting System was proposed, to be made up of four public broadcasters: RTV BHRT, a nation-wide broadcaster; RTV FB-H Sarajevo, a Federation of B-H public service in the Bosnian language; RTV FB-H Mostar, a public service in the Croatian language; and RTV RS Banja Luka, a broadcasting service in the Serbian language. In addition, it was pointed out that the proposed law does not define mechanisms for implementing programming principles from Article 26 of the law, giving those responsible in the staffing structure freedom of choice, as before, to independently assess when and how much each of the official languages will be heard in public media programs and when and to what extent ethnic, religious, traditional, religious and cultural characteristics of the constituent peoples will be respected, all of which is absolutely unacceptable for the Croat people in Bosnia-Herzegovina. (Constitutional Court of B-H, 2005). However, the Constitutional Court, without the votes of Croat judges, threw out the request concluding that the proposed law is not destructive for vital national interests of the Croat people in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The Republika Srpska National Assembly passed the law on RTRS in May 2006, but the law on RTVFB-H has not been passed yet. As in the case of state laws, the Croat caucus filed a motion with the FB-H Constitutional Court for protection of national interest. In this case, since this court passes decisions in a different way than the state court, by decision of two Croat judges the law was declared detrimental to Croat national interest because some of its solutions do not provide guarantees that they will not be discriminated against in the equal exercise of rights specified by the Constitution of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the draft law was returned to the FB-H Government for revision. (Constitutional Court of FB-H, 2006). It is interesting that in its decision the FB-H Constitutional Court Council did not support the creation of a so-called Croatian language channel; instead it stressed that it holds that such important issues prescribed in the draft law that are related to the exercise of programming principles do not contain specific legislative elaboration regarding their implementation and manner of protection which would ensure satisfactory effects in their implementation, and also that pro-



tection from outvoting one of the constituent peoples in decision-making was not provided. After that, OHR experts did some more work on the Draft Law on RTVFB-H and the FB-H Government voted in favor of it, but again without votes of Croat members of the Government. The same thing was repeated in the FB-H Parliament. The draft law was sent again to the FB-H Constitutional Court. (Dnevni avaz, 2008)

The most important measures the Government built into the new draft are reflected in heightened responsibility of the RTVFB-H Supervisory Board, which according to the draft is obliged to relieve the director general of his duty if the CRA assesses that s/he is not carrying out his/her duties and that such failure resulted in serious violation or breach of rights of any of the constituent peoples or others. Also, the parliament was empowered to dismiss the Supervisory Board in cases when the CRA establishes that the board did not comply with requirements from the license granted to the system and/or license granted to the service which led to serious violation or breach of interests or rights of any of the constituent peoples or others. In addition, it was prescribed that a member of the same constituent people cannot be director general in two subsequent mandates.

The stalling tactics employed by the local political forces in adopting the necessary legislation for the operation of a long-term sustainable public broadcasting system of Bosnia-Herzegovina, coupled with a rather inconsistent approach used by the international community, which often gave up on the principles it stood for which are related to *"best international practice,"* (HR Decision, 1999) in favor of achieving compromise primarily with political forces from the Republika Srpska, which reluctantly gave support to the creation of a single public broadcasting system, produced a very heavy load for the Public Broadcasting System of B-H and for each of the broadcasters individually.

The unenviable position that the public broadcasters are in 10 years since the start of reform is reflected primarily in unresolved funding, big problems related to human resources and adequate ethnic representation, failure to meet legislative requirements related to equal representation of language and contents related to traditional heritage of constituent peoples and others, failure to create and operate a Corporation which is supposed to coordinate the work of public broadcasters, and the consequential competitive instead of complementary activities of public broadcasters.

As a consequence of these structural problems within the System, citizens' trust in public televisions is low and there are considerable differences in acceptance of the system among the different ethnic groups, with non-acceptance of the RTV system on the part of the Croat people being the most evident. It seems that with this pace of establishment of the broadcasting system, we can expect that as soon as it is created we will reach the conclusion that such a concept no longer exists anywhere. As Kontic explained (2006), *"The paradox is that the concept of the public broadcasting system we are discussing today has already become obsolete in Europe, except no one has told us yet"*. But, let us look more closely at the basic problems that public televisions encounter.

### **2.3. Funding**

Regular operations of public televisions in B-H, according to the System Law, are primarily financed by revenues from RTV subscription fee and advertising. Each of the three PSBs operates as an independent company responsible for its own financial operation. The System Law





2005 envisions collecting the licence fee at one central account and distributing it among BHRT, RTVFB-H and RTRS, based on the formula 50:25:25 respectively. Advertising revenues are treated the same way as the licence fee. This mechanism of distributing resources as Jusic and Dzihana (2008) explained *“is in accordance with Horowitz’s integrative model which recommends such unproportional distribution of resources so that smaller groups are strengthened by subsidies from larger groups”*, but having in mind that Federation of B-H is as twice as RS populated, and that advertising revenues of RTVFB-H are four times bigger than RTRS’s revenues, it is hard not to agree that this system of finance is in strong favour of RTRS at the expense of RTVFB-H. Further, it is obvious even now, although distribution of advertising revenues is still not become effective, that it will significantly subdue ability of RTVFB-H to finance its own activities. Having in mind that this outlet had lost its properties during the process of restructuring RTV system, this loss just deepened perennial financial crisis: the Federation audit office described RTVFB-H as illiquid. Total debts amount to KM 3.9 million, exceeding the total capital of the company. (Audit Office for the Institutions of F B- H, 2007:8).

The level of collection license fees in 2006 was 63 per cent and it is still considerably below the planned projection of 85 per cent that is supposed to secure financial sustainability for the PSBs. (BHRT Report, 2007:1). But there are considerable differences between Telecom operator which are official collectors of the tax. The lowest percentage of collection of monthly licence fee is in areas with Croat majority. HT Mostar, which collects the fee in areas mostly populated by Croats, collected no more than 28 per cent of the fees due, RS Telecom, which collects the fee in areas populated mostly by Serbs collected 55 per cent, while BH Telecom, which collects the fee in areas populated mostly by Bosniaks, collected some 81 per cent. (BHRT Report, 2007:26)

Finally, BHRT and especially RTVFB-H found themselves in unenviable positions regarding their ability to pay their debts, while RTRS stabilized its operation (from 2003 to now). RTVFB-H, as it was said before, is thus insolvent. BHRT also has problems paying debts. According to data from the BHRT Report (2007:52), total debts at the end of 2006 were KM 16,292,187 and the company’s credits were KM 19,209,354. The report states that debts cannot be settled without additional financial inflow to what is presently available.

#### **2.4. Human resources**

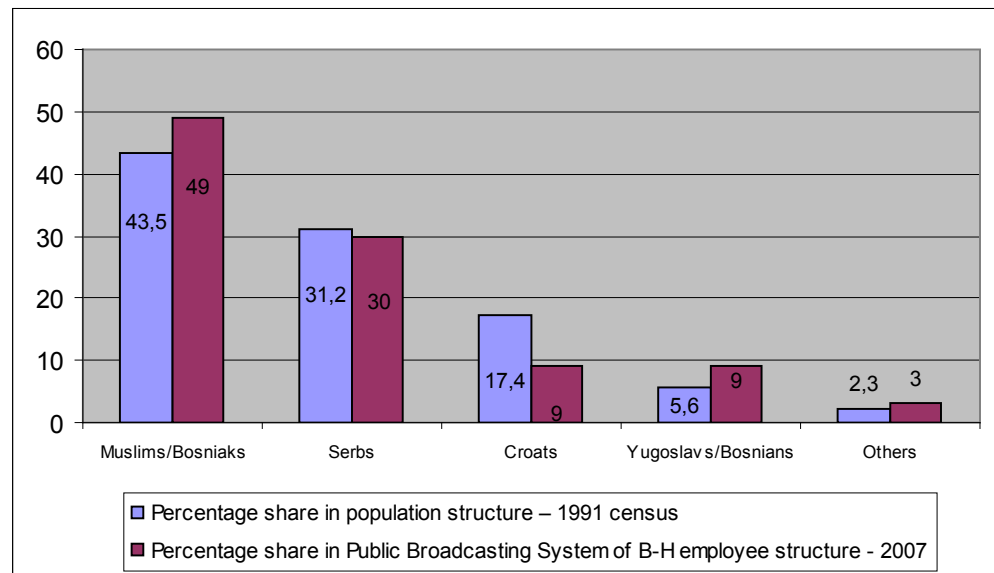
Altogether public broadcasters employ a staff of 1,904. Of that, RTRS has 498 employees, RTVFB-H has 409, and BHRT has 326. In addition to that, BHRT employs 691 temporary workers, who are supposed to become employees of the Corporation once it is created. (Jusic & Dzihana, 2008)

In late 2003 the High Representative to B-H warned the management of the Public Broadcasting System of B-H that they will lose 1.5 million euro in aid if they reject a plan made by a BBC team on reform of three public broadcasters, which among other things entailed the dismissal of 500 employees. (Glas Javnosti, 2003). But the syndicate refused the request. Also, in a B-H Parliament discussion from December 2007 on surplus staff, public television syndicates responded in the same way, labeling any discussion on this matter *“an across-the-board judgment.”* Still, it is hard to take for granted that this number of employees is adequate, especially bearing in mind the very grave financial situation of the public broadcasters and the generally low purchasing power of the population and undeveloped local advertising market. Public television managements often reach for examples from the neighborhood to prove that the staff

size is not such a big problem. Former BHRT Director Drago Maric says that the staff size is not so big because HRT from Zagreb employs 3,200 people. (Udovicic, 2006). However, if we compare HRT's total annual revenues for 2005 with the revenues of all three public broadcasters, we will see how unrealistic the comparison is. Namely, all three broadcasters' total revenues in 2005 were 41,128,553 euro, while at the same time the total revenues of HRT amounted to 199,968,000 euro. (Perusko, 2008) This means that HRT in 2005 had almost five times as much revenue, while the staff was a little more than 1.5 times bigger in size. Comparing staff size and total revenues with RTV Slovenia, which has roughly the same number of employees - 2,115, we will get similar results, i.e. that RTV Slovenia's revenues are more than 2.5 times higher than Bosnian public broadcasters' revenues and in 2005 they amounted to 109.8 million euro (Milosavljevic, 2008). If, on the other hand, the public broadcasters' staff size were to be compared to local commercial stations, even more devastating results would be obtained. For example, NTV Hayat employs around 200 people. Taking into account that in this comparison we have three public TV channels and four public radio channels on one hand and a commercial TV channel on the other, nevertheless we cannot escape the impression that there is considerable surplus staff on public televisions.

Another problem related to the employed staff is the inadequate ethnic structure. Compared to the 1991 census of the population, according to which B-H was inhabited by 43.5 percent Muslims (today Bosniaks), 31.2 percent Serbs, 17.4 percent Croats, 5.6 percent Yugoslavs and 2.3 percent Others (Federal Bureau of Statistics), the biggest deviations are reflected in the almost halved representation of Croats.

**Graph 1:**  
**Difference between percentage share in population structure and percentage share in PBS of B-H employee structure-2007**



Looking at the individual broadcasters, the data obtained shows unsymmetrical ethnic representation at the public broadcasters. On RTRS Serb employees are represented with 93 percent, while two-thirds of RTVFB-H and BHRT employees (including Corporation employees) are Bosniak.

The inadequate ethnic structure of staff is a result of several factors. First of all, a legacy of the war are the exclusively Serb RTRS and the dominantly Bosniak RTV B-H from which RTVFB-H and BHRT were later created. In addition, political pressure, primarily expressed through the operation of Croat political parties which declare the present broadcasters as Bosniak and Serb



and call for boycotting subscription fee, has left its trace on Croat journalists' and editors' wish to become involved in the work of these televisions. Slavo Kukic, RTVFB-H Supervisory Board President, states that *"not infrequently in the past five years we had situations in which quality journalists, whose engagement had been agreed, subsequently - due to political pressure they were subjected to and with apologies for having to do that - called off the arrangement."* (Vecernji List, 2007). The third, but not less important cause is failure on the part of public broadcasters' managements to act toward systematic improvement of the ethnic structure. This inaction on one hand is motivated by keeping status quo, which is evident on the example of RTRS where attempts to improve the ethnic structure are symbolic and are reflected in announcing vacancies for journalists and language editors *"who are familiar with the languages of the Bosniak and Croat peoples,"* while at the same time opportunities are missed to appoint non-Serbs to editorial and managerial positions of responsibility. This way, the company's entire managing board, which has the biggest responsibility in running the station on a day-to-day basis, is made up of only Serbs. On the other hand, it is evident that RTVFB-H and BHRT managements are reluctant to talk about ethnic representation. In these companies' annual reports, no data can be found on the ethnic structure of employees, although it is a legally prescribed obligation for public broadcasting services in carrying out their activities and in the staffing structure, to implement relevant provisions related to equal rights of constituent peoples and others in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The environment that the public broadcasters are operating in is simply being forgotten and professionalism is stressed as the only criterion for employment in these companies. This kind of understanding, of course, does not help as it is evident that the structure is inadequate and that this issue, like all others, should be approached rationally and that medium-term measures need to be taken to balance the ethnic structure. Finally, one should not forget that the unenviable financial situation of the public broadcasters does not allow managements to act efficiently towards achieving a better balance in the employee ethnic structure, because hiring new staff requires considerable financial investments.

## **2.5. Equality of Peoples in Terms of Language, Culture and Tradition**

Programming principles prescribed by the most recent legislation on the system and services also stipulate equal use of the three languages, as well as contents that correspond to the traditional heritage of all three peoples.

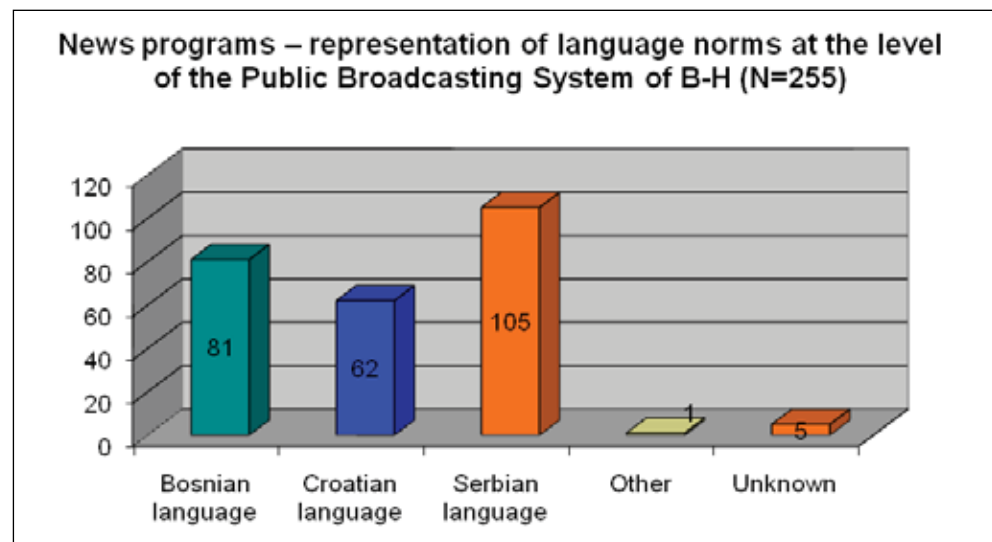
- Public service programming shall respect the national, regional, traditional, religious, cultural, lingual and other characteristics of the constituent peoples and all citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina.
- Public service programming shall also affirm the cultural and other needs of national minorities in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Public service programming shall respect the rights of the constituent peoples and others and shall be edited equally in the three official languages and two alphabets.
- In the production of their own programming and programming in co-production, public services shall ensure equitable representation of contents that correspond to the traditional heritage of all three peoples and adequate representation of others. (Article 26, System Law 2005)

However, practice so far has shown that representation of the mentioned languages and contents is inadequate. In terms of language spoken on public televisions, there is a principle that a journalist has the right to choose on what norm they wish to speak and all three public broadcasters have created language editing departments which are in charge of standardizing

language according to the selected lingual norm. In light of the inadequate ethnic structure within the public broadcasters, the logical conclusion is that the lingual situation is no better. Still, managements are given the possibility, by selecting presenters in news programs and by selecting translators and language editors in foreign sub-titled shows, to ensure better representation of all three peoples in these kinds of programs. However, is this so in reality? Do these companies' managements really do that? The answer is offered by monitoring of language used by news program presenters and language in foreign sub-titled programs, which was carried out as part of this research. (For detailed methodology, see Annex 1)

The results show that at the level of the whole system (i.e. all three broadcasters together), use of Serbian language is in the forefront in news programs, but use of the other two languages is also noticeable, and therefore we cannot speak of their total marginalization.

**Graph 2:**  
Representation of language norms in the news programs at the level of PBS



However, if use of language is viewed at the level of individual TV stations, the results are more devastating. The exclusively used norm in RTRS news programs is Serbian language and Cyrillic alphabet. On the other hand, on RTVFB-H the Latin alphabet is used exclusively and use of the Serbian language was registered in just two cases. The RTVFB-H information space is predominantly ruled by the Croatian (51%) and Bosnian language (46%). Representation on BHRT is the most balanced, but still with significant dominance of the Bosnian language (50 percent), while representation of Croatian (23%) and Serbian language (20%) is under one-third. However, situation with primetime news programs on BHRT is very different with more than half programs broadcasted in Serbian language.

By analyzing representation of lingual standards in foreign subtitled programs, even more devastating results are obtained, especially bearing in mind that minimum funding is needed to provide equality in this segment.

The Bosnian language is most represented on RTVFB-H (88%) and BHRT (67%), while Serbian is almost exclusively used on RTRS (99%) and to a certain extent on BHRT (22%), while in FRTVFB-H subtitled programs it is not represented at all. The Croatian language is marginalized to a great extent. It is entirely absent from RTRS, while on BHRT (9%) and RTVFB-H (12%) it is represented in very small percentages. Representation of the Cyrillic alphabet in foreign subtitled programs is marginal. It is not present at all in BHRT and RTVFB-H programs, while in RTRS programs it appears in just three out of 65 shows. There is no doubt that the issue of



subtitling programs in Cyrillic requires certain technical preconditions and it is therefore hard to expect its equal use in this program segment. Still, its complete absence from foreign subtitled programs on two broadcasters demonstrates that these companies' managements do not meet their legal obligations.

With regard to programs related to culture and tradition of the constituent peoples, as well as all B-H citizens, the monitoring results point to several worrying omissions on the part of public RTV companies. Looking at the level of all three televisions, Croats are again in the worst position with five percent of programs in this field related to them. However, a considerable number of programs (42%) are aimed at all citizens (including Croats), partly relativizing this situation. The situation at RTRS is the most worrisome. In the monitoring period, out of 21 shows 18 were devoted to the tradition and culture of the Serbian people, while only two shows covered all B-H citizens. Lack of shows devoted to the tradition of the Serb people on RTVFB-H is also symptomatic. In the show *Mozaik religija* (Mosaic of Religions) this television covers religious issues related just to Islam and Catholicism, neglecting Orthodoxy and Judaism which are also present in B-H. Unlike RTVFB-H, BHRT in its weekly program presents all four religions.

## **2.6. Corporation of Public Broadcasting Services:**

### **Complementarities or Competitiveness in Public Television Programming**

The Corporation was supposed to be founded on 16 January 2006, but this did not happen because the Law on the Public Broadcaster in the Federation of B-H did not pass and that prevented appointing the new Board of Governors of the Corporation (System Board) without which is impossible to register the Corporation as a legal subject.

According to System Law 2005, The System Board coordinates activities within the system, proposes the amount of the monthly RTV licence fee and supervises its collection, acts as Supervisory Board of the joint Corporation of the PSB System, and adopts programming codes for the whole PSB System, through which it protects languages, culture and tradition of constituent peoples and minorities in B-H.

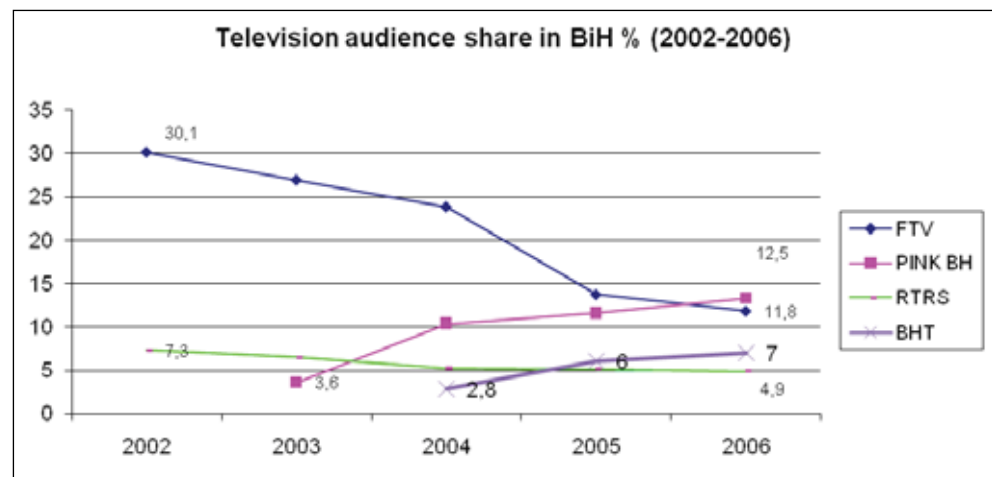
The System Law 2005 defines the broadcasters' independence as well as their mutual relations. Article 4 prescribes the autonomy of public televisions in all important segments of production and presentation. On the other hand, content compatibility is not mentioned directly, but only as coordination of resources for gathering contents for news programs. Still, certain mechanisms for establishing compatibility of program contents are to be found in the authority of the Supervisory Board of the System to *"coordinate the harmonizing of program schedules through cooperation among supervisory organs and managements of public broadcasting services"*. (System Law, 2005:8-D)

Hence, it is evident that the legislative solution does not envision a significant integration of the System because the individual broadcasters are autonomous in all important segments of production and presentation. However, without the existence of a System Board, coordination among public broadcasters is reduced to a minimum and they openly act as each other's competition. This is most evident in the news program schedules which overlap in news broadcast times or broadcast with very little time in between, although all three broadcasters, via the terrestrial and especially cable network, are available in most of B-H. If we take into account that production of news programs is among the most expensive TV productions and that there is a single funding system at the level of the entire system, the question is raised as to why these news programs exist in the form they are in now?

Federal Television (TVFB-H) has calculated that its news programming costs at least KM 13,000 per day (Lonic, 2007). Assuming the other two PSBs spend the same amount, more than KM 14 million is spent on these programs annually. This means that one third of the funds raised from the licence fee in 2006 were spent on these programs. It is clear that this sum includes much wastage of taxpayers' money; sending three crews to cover one event cannot be justified. However, although the plan made by the BBC expert team had envisioned the creation of a single news collection system, as RTVFB-H Director Jasmin Durakovic says, this proposal was subsequently abandoned. Of course, this was done due primarily to accommodate requests by political parties from the Republika Srpska which see the RTRS channel primarily as having all characteristics of a state television rather than an entity television.

It is evident, therefore, that reconstruction of the Public Broadcasting System in B-H, characterized by international community leadership and resistance of local political forces, has not yet led to the establishment of a system of public televisions that would be financially viable in the long run, with an adequate number of employees corresponding to B-H's real potentials, with balanced staffing, programming and lingual policies allowing all citizens and peoples in Bosnia-Herzegovina to feel that these televisions are their own. And finally, instead of complementarities, the public televisions have started to compete in producing equal or almost equal contents, neglecting the fulfillment of program quotas imposed by CRA decisions. This competition neglect the fact that the B-H public television system does not operate in a vacuum, but rather in quite a vibrant environment of commercial televisions, as well as television stations from neighboring countries which are increasingly available to B-H citizens via cable networks, and that the public TV audience share has considerably dropped over the last several years, which is more than evident from the chart below.

Graph 3:  
Television audience share in B-H (2002-2006) Source: MIB (2007)



Coupled with all this, if we bear in mind that 2012 was chosen as the year of transition from analogous to digital broadcasting in Europe and that our televisions are already now having problems regarding compatibility with European televisions, and that digitalization requires considerable financial resources which are nowhere in sight for the time being, we must ask ourselves if the unpreparedness for change on the part of political parties, as well as public service managements and employees, will contribute to the implementation of the European model according to which public televisions are labeled as carriers of the digitalization process?





### 3. Policy options

Taking into account issues related to the legislative framework and existence of political will for its change, efficiency of the system (funding, human resources), exercise of equality of citizens and peoples in public television programming, complementarities of programming of public broadcasters within the broadcasting system, challenges imposed by competition of commercial televisions, as well as the forthcoming convergent, multi-channel and digital environment, it is necessary to assess how much the present options for restructuring the system contribute to positive resolution of these issues.

#### 3.1. Marginal changes of existing policy solution

It is hard to imagine that the present situation of legislative incompleteness might become permanent, simply because procedures and mechanisms are in place that can lead to completion of the legislative framework, although this process is quite slow. In relation to overall reform, the Bosniak and Serb sides basically support the present situation with some, but not major, changes.

Although the SDA, one of most significant bosniak political party, declares that the best solution for B-H is one state radio-television covering the entire B-H territory and serving all its citizens, the prevalent opinion is that it is impossible to achieve this solution at this moment. (Dnevni avaz, 2007)

Therefore, representatives of Bosniak parties have not come out with an elaborate idea of how to rearrange the public broadcasting system; instead, in amendment procedure in the FB-H Parliament House of Representatives, they voted for amendments under which marketing revenue will not be shared according to the principle stipulated by the framework Law on the System, but will *“primarily be used for funding one’s own activity.”* Parliament passed the amendment with strong suggestions from the RTVFB-H administration which is sending clear signals that implementation of the stipulated distribution of marketing revenue would spell disaster for the company’s business.

As for political will to apply the solution adopted by Parliament, it should be stressed that this will be difficult because it contradicts the Law on the System, which it should be harmonized with. This means that the Law should be changed at state level, for which, since this is not a harmonized approach of all parties from FB-H, parties from the Republika Srpska will hardly have understanding. As for contributing to efficiency of the system, this solution would maintain the present balance of power among the broadcasters, which means that RTVFB-H would most likely remain the strongest link in the system, but BHRT would not be strengthened, which certainly is the goal of Bosniak political parties. In addition, it is certain that RTVFB-H would become even more commercialized because this would be the only way to independently boost its revenue, although even now it is the most commercial part of the System and marketing revenue makes up 40 percent of its total revenues. This would question the fulfilment of its public service obligations because there would be less and less room for public interest contents.

On the other hand, Serb political parties insist on full implementation of the latest legislative framework. President of the BHRT System Board from the RS Nikola Deretic insists that the Law adopted in 2005 must be implemented in its entirety (Dani, 2007). However, when speaking about this, RS representatives first of all refer to implementation of distribution of marketing

revenue which would favor RTRS, but they do not ask in what way RTRS provides equality of all three constituent peoples, although there are numerous indicators, visible to everyone, that determine it to a big extent as a Serb ethnic broadcaster. On the other hand, politicians from the RS not infrequently use the opportunity to take action against BHRT as the roof broadcaster, which undoubtedly undermines the establishment of the system.

For example, in January 2007, after several allegedly unpleasant questions to RS Prime minister the RS Government decided to cease cooperation with BHRT, and later denied its journalists access to governmental press conferences. Later on, journalists of BHT1 found themselves barred from entering the building where the RS President was holding a press conference. (Irex, 2007) As a result, the Steering Board of the BHRT dismissed General Director Drago Maric on the very day his term in that post would have ended. During the crisis, Rajko Vasic, Spokesman of strongest political party from RS, SNSD said: *"BHT1 is nothing, someone just declared it as belonging to the state, but it simply cannot be sold and has no justification on the market, or viewership either"*. (Dnevni avaz, 2007) Vasic, also, show that their support to the proposed concept of the public broadcasting system is very questionable, saying that it is best for each of the three peoples in B-H to have their own television and just form a joint coordination body working in the interest of the economy and citizens. (Dnevni avaz, 2007)

The legislative solution advocated by RS representatives is already within reach and will certainly come to life soon. However, it is entirely certain that it will lead to a crisis of the system, because it will be shown soon that RTVFB-H will not be able to function in a way even remotely similar to what it is now. It is very likely that the number of employees at this company and the amount of their salaries will soon be on the agenda. On the other hand, silence of political representatives from the RS regarding unequal treatment of constituent peoples in RTRS programs and employee structure and lack of will to improve things in a significant way will certainly not contribute to achievement of equality. Furthermore, insistence on defining RTRS as a state channel instead of entity channel will undoubtedly toughen competition among members of the Public Broadcasting System and contribute to further uncontrolled expenditure of joint financial resources. However, complementarity for now is only wishful thinking. As Mehmed Agovic (2007), Director General of BHRT said: *"It would be logical in such a system, in such a division, to make a complementary program schedule, conditionally speaking, for the entire system, which means that entity televisions must be concerned with their local area, entity, region, city, etc. State television must deal with matters speaking about something of interest, something that interests the public with regard to the operation and existence of the state and its life. It must show them everything that is important in the world. Third, enable them to see all important cultural, sports, world events"*.

### **3.2. Three ethnic channels, plus one state channel**

The strongest political party with a Croat determination, HDZ B-H, demands the creation of special channel broadcasting in the Croatian language. Their demands have been supported by all Croat delegates in the state and federal parliament, at least in the part related to efforts to stop proposed legislation. Although they are sometimes inconsistent, that is to say sometimes they mention three channels and sometimes four, in an appeal filed with the B-H Constitutional Court, they stood for the creation of three channels, in Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian, plus a fourth channel as a nation-wide broadcaster. In addition, sometimes they insist on a channel broadcasting in the Croatian language and sometimes they speak of a right to a Croatian televi-



sion channel, i.e. right to an information system. Josip Peric, Head of the Croat Caucus in the B-H Federation Parliament House of Peoples, explained:

“The Republika Srpska has all rights; they behave like a state, while Croats are denied all that. Croats want a channel in the Croatian language or some variant where they will have a feeling that this television is also theirs.” (Nezavisne novine, 2007)

The main argument for the request is that *“Croats are just asking for what the other two peoples have”* and it is underlined that RTRS is a Serb television, RTVF-B a Bosniak one and that BHRT is some kind of a Bosniak-Serb amalgam in which the Croat component is not recognizable. As a concrete result of establishing a channel in the Croatian language, subscription fee will be paid more, which will contribute to stabilization of the financial situation for public televisions, new channels with an ethnic prefix will be watched more, which will restore or strengthen citizens’ trust in the system, and as Peric says, *“even politicians in elections will stop promising a Croatian language channel”*, which implies that political tensions in the country will calm down. The request for creating a special channel was supported by other important Bosnian Croat institutions. In the Declaration on the Constitutional and Legislative Position of Croats in B-H (2005), passed in Neum in October 2005, the need is expressed for the Croat people to have separate public channel broadcasting in the Croatian language.

Let us look now at how the request relates to the evaluation criteria we listed. HDZ B-H refers to unquestionable support of all Croat citizens for their request. The usual argument for this is the low level of payment of subscription fee in Croat-majority parts of B-H. At the same time, HDZ representatives not infrequently call on citizens to boycott paying the fee or by their own example suggest that. As Peric said *„I first of all do not pay tax (...) I first of all will not pay tax as a matter of principle. You can make me do that only in court”* (Nezavisne novine, 2007). Still, HT Mostar, which collects the fee in areas mostly populated by Croats, collected in 2006, 28 percent of the fees due, which is a small percentage compared to BH Telecom which collects 81 percent of the envisioned fee, but it shows that almost one-third of the Croat population does fulfill the obligation to pay tax. On the other hand, other political parties with a Croat determination are not quite so resolute that the solution offered by HDZ is the most fortunate one. A representative of the second strongest Croat political party, HDZ 1990, Martin Raguz, said: *“I am afraid this issue has been overly reduced to the story of the Croatian channel. It is true that the present situation is not satisfactory for the Croat people, both in the sense of program representation and in terms of staffing positions.”* (Nezavisne novine, 2007a)

Meanwhile, the president of the Croat Peasants Party of B-H, Marko Tadic, presents a totally different opinion and maintains that there should be one public broadcaster in B-H, where all three peoples will be represented based on parity. *“The existence of three channels is not a good solution because it would mean ghettoization. On the other hand, as long as HTV exists, it will be the most watched program for us.”* (Nezavisne novine, 2007a)

If, on the other hand, we speak of willingness of Bosniak and Serb political parties and international community representatives to accept the solution advocated by HDZ B-H, it must be noted that there is no support of this kind. Bosniak political parties view the demand for a Croatian channel as a tacit request for an exclusive Croat entity in B-H. SDA Vice-President Sefik Dzaferovic explained: *“I reject any story of division of television into ethnic channels because that would basically mean further deconstruction of B-H”* (Dnevni avaz 2007). Serb political parties have not declared themselves on this issue, but it would be hard to imagine them choosing

to change the stipulated solution because it is very favorable for them financially and it also confirms RTRS's independence on all important matters. International community representatives are absolutely against the HDZ proposal because it would mean, among other things, the total collapse of the concept they have been building for a full 10 years. High Representative to B-H Miroslav Lajcak recently commented on requests for a Croatian-language public TV channel: *"If someone wants a television which broadcasts in only one language and for only one people, then, in accordance with market economy, they can set up a private TV house and no limitations will be imposed."* (Kukic, 2007).

The next question is how the proposed solution would contribute to improving the system's efficiency, i.e. how it would regulate the issue of funding and staffing. It is certain that with the creation of a Croat channel the collection of subscription fee among the Croat population would rise. However, even if the level of collection by HT Telecom becomes 100 percent, a scenario absolutely no one in B-H believes in, the total annual revenue would rise by 5.6 million KM. Bearing in mind that the total revenues of all three TV stations in 2006 were 91 million KM, this would mean a rise of six percent. The question is whether this money would be enough to make a new RTV building in Mostar which does not exist now, to buy all required technical equipment in order to create preconditions for the operation of another TV program, and to hire some 100 new workers to operate the new television? Another question that would be raised strongly in the implementation of this scenario regards surplus employees at RTV Federation - Studio Sarajevo. Would there be funds in the anticipated rise in cash inflow to create programs to take care of dismissed employees or would they just have to be released into the street? Another question that is raised is what to do with Croat employees already working at RTV Federation? They have agreed to work in the given environment and they have not spoken up once with a letter of support for the creation of a separate Croat channel.

It is also entirely certain that the creation of two channels instead of one within RTVFB-H would lead to reduced marketing revenue, which made up as much as 40 percent of the television's total revenues in 2006. Namely, the trend of consolidation in the marketing industry has not bypassed B-H and in this market, in addition to the public service, only three commercial networks with national coverage succeed in taking a significant part of the marketing cake. Therefore, it is entirely certain that RTVFB-H's market position would be weakened, but no one can say with certainty that this lost portion would be taken over by the newly-created Croat television rather than by commercial televisions. So it might happen that what the system gains in one place, it loses in another.

The next criterion is equality, i.e. in what way the creation of the channel would contribute to balanced representation of programs in languages of the constituent peoples and programs corresponding to their traditional heritage? It is entirely certain that additional statistical indicators at the level of the system would give us more adequate indicators than we have now, but it is also certain that at the level of the individual public televisions we would have mono-ethnic televisions with little or no rights of those who do not declare themselves as the majority ethnic group. This solution would probably be more likely to succeed in completely territorially divided communities. But is this the case with the Federation of B-H? What rights in this case does a considerable portion of the population of Bosniak ethnicity in Mostar have? Or, what about significant Serb refugee groups in Drvar, Glamoc and Bosansko Grahovo? Which television should produce programming from the Central Bosnia Canton which is made up of both Croat and Bosnia populations? All these cases, and there are more, speak in favor of the fact



that lingual or ethnic exclusivity excludes a considerable portion of the population. Would this lead to revolt among these population categories and make them refuse to pay subscription fee, which would again bring us to a similar or same situation as we have now?

HDZ proposals do not say much about potential cooperation and programming complementarities among the projected public broadcasters. Still, if RTRS is used as the model, and it is, then it is certain that such cooperation would be reduced to a minimum. This would consequentially mean that instead of today's paradoxical three news teams, an absurd four teams would be sent to cover an event, additionally burdening the public televisions' impoverished budgets.

### 3.3. Thematic channels

From the professional community, what can be heard most often is that an entire system based on an ethnic principle is absurd and that it does not suit the country's needs. For example, Agovic (2007) said: *"I myself think that the ethnic criterion in forming any kind of body in media is inadmissible, it's trouble. (...) From the professional viewpoint of the trade, it should be done differently and there is no need to reinvent hot water; it's all clear. People who have been in this business for some time will tell you in a second how this should be organized in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but it is as it is."* A similar idea, although a bit more ethnically sensitive, is presented by Jasmin Durakovic, Director General of RTVFB-H: *"The right proportion for the PBS is that there are not three channels, but two for all. The first channel should be representative and Bosnian-Herzegovinian, professional, nation-wide and with the best production, like HRT 1. The second may have regional quotas for certain programs, ethnic contents"*. There are some other variations, such as Vlastimir Mijovic's, who calls for *"one public/state television with three channels, not three (or four) with one frequency. Then, like all normal people, on the first channel we would have a news/documentary program combined with local TV production, on the second imported entertainment and our own foolishness, and on the third a combination of sports and transmissions of parliament sessions"* (Oslobodjenje, 2007), but what is common to all these ideas is creation of thematic channels, which allows contents to be developed among several channels and creates preconditions for boosting program quality. Instead of, for example, having TV stations producing three news programs parallel with each other, they would produce one, resulting in considerable economies for investment in other program segments. From the aspect of sustainability of the system, this model has an advantage over the existing one because it allows funds to be spent more rationally. Instead of three crews, one news crew would be sent to cover an event. It is also certain that program quality would be boosted because money would be spent more rationally, allowing quality of local production to be raised to a higher level and better quality foreign production to be purchased. As for achieving equality, speaking in principle, the system does not offer anything less than the present legislation. As Kukic (2007) wondered: *"How could anyone, unless they had ulterior motives, have anything against a Radio and Television of Bosnia-Herzegovina which would have a balanced structure of journalists and editors and which would, in all programming genres, devote equal space to all ethnic, language, cultural, regional, religious and other differences? Also, who could be against a program in which, owing to the staff balance, everyone would speak the language they consider their own so that Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian would be spoken at the same time, especially since we are dealing with very similar languages, thus enabling viewers and listeners to master their own language, as well as the languages of their fellow citizens?"* However, creation of thematic channels in contrast to ethnic/entity channels most certainly does not enjoy political support, primarily from parties from the RS which do not want to question in any way the existence of RTRS in the form it is in now, and most certainly from many Croat political parties either, which strongly advocate for the creation of channels based on lingual exclusivity.

### **3.4. Digital environment**

Finally, the question is how digitalization of television would effect the implementation of above mentioned policy options? On one hand, digitalization would make introduction of a new channel easier because it allows transmission of a larger number of channels on one frequency. Hence, technical transmission capacities would even favor the creation of the channel. On the other hand, digitalization would not significantly reduce costs of program production, which is what costs the most. Digitalization of television might also open up some new ways of broadcasting fuller programs related to the traditional heritage of the constituent peoples. Namely, digital TV allows asynchronic watching of programs, unrelated to the time when certain programs are produced and broadcast. This would mean that viewers can program the television set to watch programs that interest them the most at a time that suits them the most. Besides, new digital environment will put stronger competition in front of PBS' because a number of new thematic channels will appear. If at that time PBS would be weak and dysfunctional as it is today, certainly it will not have anything valuable to offer to the audience.





## 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

It is entirely certain that radical changes to the current concept of the Public Broadcasting System in B-H are not possible with the current constellation of political forces. In this regard it is too utopian to suggest solutions that other “normal” countries have. Legislative reform should be adopted as soon possible in line with the proposal initiated by OHR because it will allow the Corporation to be set up and the system to function. Subsequently, once the system starts living, legislative amendments should be proposed to improve it.

### **Recommendations for Law Makers / legislative authorities at state and entity levels:**

- Pass the Law on RTVFB-H in the form the FB-H Government sent to Parliament.

With regard to ensuring financial sustainability of the system, the central issue is whether the prescribed system of funding public televisions will lead to the system’s consolidation. For now there is indication that the system favors RTRS and it is very likely that BHRT with full implementation of the Law will be additionally reinforced. However, the question is whether RTVFB-H can survive the new system of distribution of marketing revenue as the broadcaster is not solvent even now. Therefore, from a financial point of view the very functioning of the conceived public broadcasting system is very uncertain. There are three mechanisms that can lead to improvement of public broadcasters’ financial circumstances. The first is increasing the level of collection of subscription fees. However, the basic precondition for this is political will on the part of government representatives, which is still not sufficiently present for different reasons. The broadcasters themselves can do little in this regard as long as political and public figures call for boycott of subscription fee. A viable solution for restoring government responsibility regarding payment of subscription fee would be commitment on the part of governments on different levels to compensate part of the money that is not collected from subscription fee. This solution, already familiar in B-H in connection to revenue from healthcare contributions, would prevent irresponsible calls to citizens asking them to boycott subscription fee, because political officials instead of citizens would have to pay the stipulated amount from budget funds.

In addition, it is necessary to eliminate practices by broadcasters themselves which sometimes make inappropriate moves that give revolted citizens motive to refuse to pay RTV tax. The second way to alleviate financial difficulties is to increase the amount of tax. This idea is especially popular with public broadcasters’ managements which stress that the 6 KM tax is among the lowest in Europe and that the amount has not changed since the system was established although another TV channel was launched in the meantime (BHT). However, this solution would certainly encounter a lot of resistance among tax-paying citizens because it will be shown that those who do not pay tax can continue to do that without any consequences, while regular payers will be “awarded” for their loyalty with an increase in the amount they must pay.

The third way is reflected in a more rational internal organization of the system itself. This primarily means creating a single news collection service which will serve all three televisions under the same conditions, as well as redesigning the entity televisions’ news programs so they do not compete with BHRT, but rather fill the voids that this broadcaster leaves open. This would lead to significant economies and the broadcasters would be left with more money to invest in quality programming. Also, it is important to start a fact-based debate about the num-

ber of employees in the PBS, since refusal even to talk about it will not resolve the situation. By a combination of all these measures, financial consolidation of the system is possible. Still, it should be noted that the order of applying these measures by no means can start with increasing RTV tax. This should be the last measure following the unification of news programs and increase in the level of collection of tax.

**Recommendations for Law Makers / legislative authorities at state and entity levels:**

- Initiate a debate on fairer distribution of resources from subscription fee and marketing among public broadcasters.

**Recommendations for managements of public broadcasters:**

- Harmonize public broadcasters' operation by establishing a more efficient news program at the level of the system, which should result in economies in its production.
- Produce a feasibility study on justification for the present number of employees and introduce a restrictive hiring policy for new staff.

**Recommendations for the Office of the High Representative (OHR):**

- In case of lack of political willingness to achieve a higher level of collection of RTF tax, impose solutions envisioning budget compensation of resources lacking for normal operation of the PBS.

**Recommendations for the Communications Regulatory Agency (CRA):**

- After public service managements rationalize their expenditures and after authorities ensure a higher level of collection of RTV tax, approve the requested increase in tax.

The present legislative solutions allow for equality to be achieved among constituent peoples and others both in staffing and in program production. The problem with inadequate Croat representation at the level of the System can be solved to a big extent by setting up a production center in Mostar, which the Law on BHRT stipulates. The biggest problem is insensitivity of public broadcasters' managements in approaching this issue. This is especially true with regard to equality in program production. Namely, for adequate representation of all three languages in translations of foreign programs only good will is needed, because all three televisions have language editing departments that can language edit articles in any of the language norms. As for representation of language and staff in other programs, improvements can also be made, as RTVFB-H has already shown by providing adequate representation of Croatian language in the news program. More radical changes in the ethnic structure of public televisions, along with management willingness, also require government support and resolving major financial issues at these TV companies. But these objective circumstances should not be an excuse for managements for inaction and they should come out with clear plans on how to improve the situation in the medium term. On the other hand, improving ethnic structure in the most responsible positions should not be delayed and this is especially true of RTRS which in this regard is an exclusively Serb television.

**Recommendations for Law Makers / legislative authorities at state and entity levels:**

- Supplement laws at the level of B-H and RS with amendments which the FB-H Government, as recommended by OHR, has built into the new draft law and which envision greater responsibility of public televisions' directors and supervisory boards with regard to achieving equality of constituent peoples and other citizens of B-H.



**Recommendations for managements of public broadcasters:**

- Ensure legally prescribed equality in use of language and alphabet, as well as in programs related to tradition of constituent peoples and others.
- In a short-term period, provide equality of language in foreign subtitled programs and in news programs, as well as balanced ethnic representation in editorial positions.
- Create plans to provide legally prescribed ethnic representation at the level of the entire staff in a medium-term period of two to five years.

**Recommendations for the Communications Regulatory Agency (CRA):**

- Actively start monitoring the achievement of equal rights of constituent peoples and others in public television programming.

## Appendices

### Methodological framework

The empirical research was organized around the following questions:

- Is there a disproportion in use of the languages of the constituent nations in broadcasting of PSBs?
- Is there a disproportion in presenting the national traditions of any of the three nations in the programs of public service televisions?

In order to reach the research goals, a methodological framework for monitoring and analyzing public television programs (BHRT, RTVFB-H, RTRS) was developed.

Programs were recorded and monitored over the period of one week, followed by a composite week constructed over seven weeks for all three public televisions. As Hansen et al. explained: *"A sampling strategy often used for obtaining a representative sample of television coverage is that of one continuous week - Monday to Sunday - followed by a "rolling" or composite week, that is Monday of one week, Tuesday of the following week, Wednesday of the following week, and so on."* (1998:103). For this research we recorded and monitored programs in the week from 10.09.2007 to 16.09.2007 and constructed a week that includes 17.09.2007 - Monday, 25.09.2007 - Tuesday, 3.10.2007 - Wednesday, 11.10.2007 - Thursday, 19.10.2007 - Friday, 27.10.2007 - Saturday and 4.11.2007 - Sunday. In total we monitored programs for 14 days.

For examining the usage of language norms of the constituent nations in the broadcasting of PSBs, two samples were constructed. The first one was related to the news program and the second to foreign programs that are titled (documentaries, serials, films). This was done because managements of public broadcasters have direct influence on the proportion of usage of each language in these kinds of programs. Namely, the linguistic policies of all three PSBs are based on journalists having the right to choose which language they will use, and in this regard no one has the right to tell them which language to use. On the other hand, the PSBs have language-editing services that make sure the language spoken by journalists is in line with the norms of the Bosnian, Serbian or Croatian language. So far these services have covered the work of news program journalists, as well as subtitled foreign films, serials and documentary programs.

#### (a) News programs

The news program includes all daily news shows. The number of news programs broadcast in the monitoring period on public televisions is shown in the table.

The standard Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian languages are very similar and the biggest differ-

Table 1:  
Number of news programs  
broadcast by public televisions  
in the monitoring period

Broadcaster	Frequency	Per cent
BHRT	84	33
RTVFB-H	85	33
RTRS	86	34
<b>Total</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>100</b>

ences among the languages are related to vocabulary. A table of characteristic vocabulary for each language was created. The main source of differences among the languages was the book "Current Orthographies of the Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian Languages: Similarities and Differences" /Bosanski, hrvatski i srpski aktuelni pravopisi: sličnosti i razlike/ (Muratagic - Tuna, 2005). Also, monitoring of the first seven primetime news programs of each public broadcaster helps to describe differences between language norms.



Table 2:  
 Differences/similarities in vocabulary in Croatian, Bosnian and Serbian languages

	English	Croatian	Bosnian	Serbian
1	Abroad	Inozemstvo	Inozemstvo/inostranstvo	Inostranstvo
2	Again	Ponovno	Ponovo	Ponovo
3	Also	Također	Također	Takođe
4	Ambassador	Veleposlanik	Ambasador	Ambasador
5	Approval	Suglasnost	Suglasnost/saglasnost	Saglasnost
6	Attend	Nazočiti	Prisustvovati	Prisustvovati
7	Attention	Pozornost	Pažnja	Pažnja
8	Chairman	Predsjedatelj/Predsjedavajući	Predsjedavajući	Predsjedavajući Predsedavajući
9	Christ	Krist	Krist/Hrist	Hrist/Hristos
10	Colleague	Kolegica	Kolegica	Koleginica
11	Comma	Zarez	Zarez	Zapeta
12	Consortium	Kolegij	Kolegij	Kolegijum
13	Consumer basket	Potrošačka košarica	Potrošačka korpa	Potrošačka korpa
14	Cooperation	Suradnja	Saradnja/suradnja	Saradnja
15	Council of Ministers	Vijeće ministara	Vijeće ministara	Savjet ministara
16	Criterion	Kriterij	Kriterij	Kriterijum
17	Defense	Obrana	Odbrana	Odbrana
18	Degree	Stupanj	Stepen	Stepen
19	Dry	Suh	Šuh	Suv
20	Euro	Euro	Euro	Evro
21	Europe	Europa	Evropa	Evropa
22	Family	Obitelj	Porodica	Porodica
23	Fatherland	Domovina	Domovina	Otdžbina
24	Foreground	Prvostupanski	Prvostepeni	Prvostepeni
25	Guarantee	Jamstvo	Garancija	Garancija
26	Happy	Sretan	Sretan	Srećan
27	High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council	Visoko sudbeno i tužiteljsko vijeće	Visoko sudsko i tužilačko vijeće	Visoki sudski i tužilački savjet
28	History	Povijest	Historija	Istorija
29	Hour	Sat	Sat	Čas
30	Imprison	Uhititi	Uhapsiti	Uhapsiti
31	Influence	Utjecaj	Utjecaj/uticaj	Uticaj
32	Insist	Inzistirati	Insistirati/inzistirati	Insistirati
33	Keep silent	Šutjeti	Šutjeti	Ćutati
34	Kosovo	Kosovo	Kosovo	Kosmet
35	Longer	Dulje	Dulje/Duže	Duže
36	Million	Milijun	Milion	Milion
37	Ministry of Interior Affairs	Ministarstvo unutarnjih poslova	...unutarnjih/unutrašnjih poslova	...unutrašnjih poslova
38	Misuse	Zlouporaba	Zloupotreba	Zloupotreba
39	Municipality	Općina	Općina	Opština
40	Murder	Ubojstvo	Ubistvo	Ubistvo
41	Music	Glazba	Muzika	Muzika
42	Names of months: January, February,...	Siječan, Veljača...	Januar, Februar	Januar, Februar
43	Overall	Uopće	Uopće	Uopšte
44	Period	Točka	Tačka	Tačka
45	Personally	Osobno	Osobno/lično	Lično
46	Political party	Politička stranka	Politička stranka	Politička partija
47	Project	Projekt	Projekt	Projekat
48	Promotion	Promoviranje	Promoviranje/promovisanje	Promovisanje
49	Report	Izvešće	Izveštaj	Izveštaj
50	Safety	Sigurnost	Sigurnost	Bezbjednost
51	Salary	Plaća	Plaća	Plata
52	Scientific	Znanstveni	Naučni	Naučni
53	Special session	Izvanredna sjednica	Vanredna sjednica	Vanredna sjednica
54	Statement	Priopćenje/Saopćenje	Šaopćenje	Šaopštenje
55	Switzerland	Švicarska	Švicarska	Švajcarska
56	Table	Stol	Sto	Sto
57	Thousand	Tisuća	Hiljada	Hiljada
58	Under way	U tijeku	U toku	U toku
59	United Nations	Ujedinjeni narodi	Ujedinjeni narodi	Ujedinjene nacije
60	Urgent steps	Žurne mjere	Hitne mjere	Hitne mjere
61	Use	Uporabiti	Upotrijebiti	Upotrijebiti
62	Viewers	Gledatelj	Gledatelj/Gledalac	Gledalac
63	Vote	Glasovati	Glasati	Glasati
64	Who, what, someone, no one	Tko, što, netko, nitko	Ko, što, neko, niko	Ko, što, neko, niko
65	Worker	Djelatnik	Djelatnik/radnik	Radnik
66	Yesterday	Jučer	Jučer	Jučer

The main task of the coders was to determine which language norm was used by program hosts (Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian or Other - in case where the language spoken is not in accordance with the previous three norms). The coders had to write down at least three examples for every decision they made. It is important to note that the decision to monitor the language norm only of the program host was deliberate. Namely, managements of broadcasters have mechanisms for selecting program hosts, i.e. language norms that will be spoken in the news programs. On the other hand, the share of reporters and their language norms are influenced to some degree by the nature of events and this is not under complete control of managements. Also, the coding sheet included a question on usage of two alphabets, Latin and Cyrillic, in news program subtitles. The Bosnian language uses both the Latin and the Cyrillic alphabet (the latter, however, only formally), the Croatian uses only the Latin alphabet, while the Serbian uses both Cyrillic and Latin. (See: Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Differences\\_between\\_standard\\_Bosnian%2C\\_Croatian\\_and\\_Serbian#Phonemes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Differences_between_standard_Bosnian%2C_Croatian_and_Serbian#Phonemes))

Finally, two news programs after midnight on BHRT were excluded because they were without a host. Also, three morning news programs on BHRT and one afternoon news program on RTVFB-H were not recorded due to technical problems. These six cases are presented in the table of results in the category "Unknown".

### (b) Foreign subtitled programs (documentaries, serials, films)

The number of foreign subtitled programs (documentaries, serials, films) broadcast by public televisions in the monitoring period is shown in the table.

Table 3:  
Number of foreign subtitled programs broadcast by public televisions in the monitoring period

Broadcaster	Frequency	Per cent
BHRT	58	28
RTVFB-H	84	41
RTRS	65	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>100</b>

Apart from differences in vocabulary, the three languages in B-H differ in orthography. The Croatian language alphabetically transliterates foreign names (but not from Russian, and all other languages using Cyrillic alphabet), while the Serbian language performs a phonetic transcription of them whenever possible, regardless of the alphabet. Officially, the Bosnian language follows the Croatian example and this is especially true for public broadcasters, while one can find a different practice in books and newspapers. (See: Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Differences\\_between\\_standard\\_Bosnian%2C\\_Croatian\\_and\\_Serbian#Phonemes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Differences_between_standard_Bosnian%2C_Croatian_and_Serbian#Phonemes))

Also, when the subject of the future tense is omitted, producing a reversal of the infinitive and auxiliary "ću", only the final "i" of the infinitive is elided in Croatian and Bosnian, while in Serbian the two are merged into a single word. For example: "Bit će." (Croatian and Bosnian), "Biće." (Serbian).

The coders had to determine which language norm was used for writing in the programs (Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian or Other - in case where written language is not in accordance with the previous three norms). The coders had to write down at least three examples for every decision they made. Also, the coding sheet included a question on usage of the two alphabets, Latin and Cyrillic, in these programs.





**(c) Programs devoted to culture and tradition of B-H peoples and citizens**

The number of programs devoted to culture and tradition of B-H peoples and citizens broadcast by the public televisions in the monitoring period is shown in the table.

Broadcaster	Frequency	Per cent
BHRT	24	32
RTVFB-H	29	39
RTRS	22	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4:  
**Number of programs devoted to culture and tradition of B-H peoples and citizens broadcast by public televisions in the monitoring period**

This section included documentary, cultural, religious and some specific music programs (festivals). It is important to note that the monitoring period overlapped for a while with a Muslim holiday - Ramadan - so it was reasonable to expect a higher degree of coverage of topics related to Muslims-Bosniaks. The coders' task was to assess whether these programs were devoted to the tradition and culture of Bosniaks, Serbs, Croats, national minorities (Others) or all citizens of B-H. They had to explain their judgments by narrative descriptions.

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