

EVENT REPORT

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

MEDIA PROGRAM

SOUTH EAST EUROPE

CHRISTIAN SPAHR

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October 2014

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Recognising the public's wishes is goal for government PR experts

GOVERNMENT PRESS REPRESENTATIVES FROM ALL OVER EUROPE MET FOR THE THIRD TIME AT COMMUNICATIONS CONFERENCE OF THE SEECOM ASSOCIATION

“SEECOM” has become a byword for press relations officers of governments and public authorities – it stands for one of their most important specialist conferences and the professional association of the same name, founded in 2013. More than 50 high-ranking political communicators met at the invitation of SEECOM and KAS for the 2014 SEECOM Conference in Budva, Montenegro.

Don't just talk, provide a service – this would be a free translation of the central theme running through the contributions of the SEECOM 2014. The motto was “Communication of Deeds”: public relations activity of governments should not be about the declaration of intentions but concrete services for the public. The press representatives of governments and public authorities from 13 countries addressed themselves to this goal on 26th and 27th September.

In opening the two-day conference, keynote speaker Alexander Aiken, the Executive Director for Government Communications of the United Kingdom, provided an insight into the attitude taken by his Department: “Communication strengthens democracy. Used wisely it improves lives. Abusing it weakens society. Great communication starts with credible advice.”

According to Aiken, government spokespersons have to address the concerns of the public in their own terms instead of simply explaining the activity of the Cabinet. In addition, internal communication and PR coordination within government authorities

is essential for success. In both respects, discussion with Aiken concluded, there are still deficiencies in many countries.

The professionalism of the PR department is not the only decisive factor, according to Jens Teschke. The Press Spokesman of the German Federal Ministry of Agriculture emphasised how important a good working relationship is between leading politicians and their experts in communication. Press spokespersons should not only offer interpretations but also have an advisory role in relation to their political bosses. The feedback from the audience suggested that this is not self-evident everywhere in South East Europe. The professional profile of the press spokesperson is not yet sufficiently recognised. Not every Head of Government in the region has an official spokesperson to appear in their name. The same is true of ministries.

Europe is a central theme of SEECOM – new Chairman from Bulgaria

A central theme of the SEECOM Association is communication about European integration. Peter Fischer of the Directorate General for Regional Policy of the EU Commission, Tom de Smedt from the EU Committee of the Regions and Ognian Zlatev, Representative of the EU Commission in Bulgaria, among others, took part in a discussion of this topic. Zlatev was unanimously elected as successor to Krunoslav Vidić as the new honorary Chairman of the SEECOM Association (www.seecom.info).



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Imprint

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