

GOVERNMENT PR AND RIGHT TO INFORMATION CULTURE CHANGE, ACCOUNTABILITY & EU DIALOGUE

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CHANGE OF POLITICAL CULTURE

- Government information: not just for elites – for the public
- Political leaders: not omniscient – open for advice
- Political power: not without limits – subject to public scrutiny
- Development of political systems and communication:
two sides of the same coin

PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY: FROM SECRECY TO COMMON KNOWLEDGE

- “Right to information” laws: strong instrument for journalists and citizens
- Help civil society actors to participate in public debates
- Today widespread adoption of RTI laws – a human right
- Roots: Declaration of Human Rights (1948), ICCPR (1966), Article 10 ECHR
- More RTI laws in Central/Eastern Europe than Western countries
- Legislation of new EU states / candidates in some respects more progressive

CASE STUDY: SERBIA SCORES HIGH – IN THEORY

- The country's RTI law placed first out of 95 states in ranking of "Access Info Europe"
- Criteria: scope of application, permitted exceptions, procedures, sanctions, etc.
- Ombudsman: receives complaints from citizens, decides on contentious cases, issues instructions to public authorities
- Seven years – 15,000 complaints
- Intermediations: 91 percent successful
- Journalists: Good law, but willingness of authorities only average



INVESTMENT IN PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION

- Governments in SEE countries need to explain political changes to citizens
- New EU members and candidates need to be seen as professional partners
- So far too many negative headlines in Western media



BALKANS SEEN BY GERMAN NEWSPAPERS: TOPICS

- Albania: Steps towards EU, reforms, corruption
- Bosnia: Administration chaos, Turkish influence
- Bulgaria: Energy policy (RUS), instability
- Kosovo: International recognition, war crimes
- Macedonia: Authoritarianism, bad EU prospects
- Moldova: Territorial conflict, steps towards EU
- Romania: Rule of law deficits, Roma, corruption
- Serbia: Energy policy (RUS), lack of reforms, crisis



Examples. KAS Press Archive,
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SEECOM: FUTURE PROSPECTS

Two key programmes:

- Transparency, Accountability and Public Participation (TAPP)
- Communicating EU integration affairs



THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION.

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