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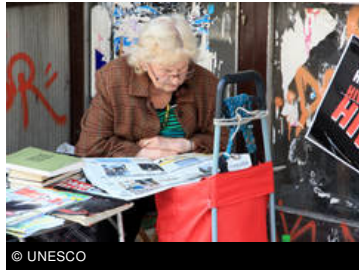
News and In Focus articles

News articles

In Focus articles

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Legal Leaks event in Sarajevo trains media professionals in data journalism



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Data journalism is opening up new possibilities for journalists to produce new types of stories and to present complex information to readers through infographics. This new form of journalism is becoming increasingly popular as an addition to traditional journalism. In a world of ever-growing flow of data, data-driven journalism is becoming an essential part of journalistic work.

To enhance journalists' skills to access information and also to help journalists analyse and present the data they have obtained, a [Legal Leaks training](#) was organized in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina on 10 and 11 June 2014. Organized by UNESCO in cooperation with [Access Info Europe](#), the [Press Council in Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) and [South East European Network for Professionalization of Media SEENPM](#), the event included around 50 participating journalists from around the country.

The journalists were first trained by Helen Darbshire from Access Info Europe to use freedom of information (FOI) laws, which have been in force since 2000 in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Darbshire was involved in drafting the law as part of the team of local and international experts set up in 1999 by the [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe \(OSCE\)](#). At the training, she discussed with journalists the fact that although Bosnia and Herzegovina does not have a constitutional provision on access to information, it is a signatory to international treaties. Moreover, human rights bodies such as the [European Court of Human Rights](#) have recognised that the right to information held by public bodies is linked to the right to freedom of expression.

In her presentation, Maja Brancovic, representative of [Transparency International Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), underlined "the need for harmonizing the state and entity laws, and [of solving] all the other problems that occur during the implementation of the FOI legislation in Bosnia and Herzegovina."

There is an ongoing debate in Bosnia and Herzegovina on how to strengthen the legal framework for the right of access to information, which currently scores 102 out of 150 points on the Global Right to Information Rating.

The session on data journalism was led by Slobodanka Dekic from the [Media Centre Sarajevo](#) and Aladin Abdagic from the [Centre for Investigative Reporting](#). They presented their experiences using the right of access to information to build databases that help them write stories and do visualizations with datasets on topics such as budget spending.

"Using graphics will help your readers understand very quickly the story you want to tell," said Abdagic. "People don't have time to read 7 pages of investigation anymore."

On the second day, the Press Council in Bosnia and Herzegovina trained participants on professional and ethical standards for journalism in the information era. It was emphasized that data should be treated with care and responsibility and that the public interest should be assessed before publication.

A further topic for debate was the role of whistleblowers and the responsibility of journalists to protect those who expose illegal activity. Bosnia and Herzegovina has a draft whistleblower law which only protects those who reveal information about their own organization but not about other organizations. There is a Whistleblower Association which works to expose criminality and to encourage investigations from the police and prosecutors. This organization also works to protect whistleblowers and is calling for a stronger law. In the debate, concerns were raised about the possible liabilities for journalists who handle leaked information. The Access Info team noted that international standards are in development, including jurisprudence from the European Court of Human Rights.

The event took place in the framework of the EU-UNESCO project: "[Promoting Media Accountability in South East Europe and Turkey](#)", which started in January 2013. The training was the third in a series of local events taking place in the region.

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