

Time for community media in Central and Eastern Europe



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ABSTRACT: While the community media sector may be reported as established and well developed in Western Europe, it has grown considerably more slowly in almost all countries in Central and Eastern Europe. The literature on community media in Europe is also Western oriented — most of the publications about this sector centre on countries which were located on “the better side” of the Iron Curtain and have been written by Western authors. This paper is the first attempt to look at the problem of community media in Central and Eastern Europe in general and present the specific problems of community media development in this region from an Eastern perspective. According to the Mapping Project of Community Media completed by the Community Media Forum Europe in 2012, the community media sector is legally recognized in only four countries from this region.

KEYWORDS: community media, community radio, radio, media in CEE, third sector of broadcasting, broadcast media



INTRODUCTION

Community media are experiencing a great interest among scholars. Only in recent years have plenty of interesting publications emerged concerning this subject matter. These publications were mostly written by Western authors and deal primarily with community media in the Western World. However, there is also a growing interest in the situation of community media in other parts of the world, like Africa, Asia and Latin America. A significant gap can be seen concerning research on community media in Central and Eastern Europe. There are very few researchers dealing with this subject matter. Notable examples are Gergely Gosztonyi and Gabriella Velics (Hungary), Mojca Plansak (Slovenia, Macedonia), Kate Coyer and Joost van Beek (Hungary, Bosnia and Herzegovina), Henry Loeser (Czech Republic), Urszula Doliwa (Poland), Miroljub Radojkovic and Larisa Rankovic (Serbia). They publish various reports about the situation of community media in their respective countries but such publications are not often put into a broader regional context.

The main aim of this article is to create a general overview of the situation of community media in this region. The inspiration for writing this article was a conference organized by the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters and Central European University in Budapest from November 2012 entitled “Public Policies and Media Pluralism. The future of Community Radio in Central and Eastern Europe,” which was a unique chance to meet community media representatives from across Europe. The additional inspiration was the Pan-European Community Media Mapping and Rating Project conducted in 2012 and by the Community Media Forum Europe — an organization founded to strengthen the participation of the “Third Media Sector” in the media landscape. During this project there were some basic statistical data about the sector collected, including countries from the CEE region.

The main research method was desk research. There were several academic and non academic publications, documents and legal acts analyzed concerning the situation of community media in particular countries of the region. The authors also contacted some of the respondents of the above mentioned survey to collect additional data, especially about countries which were till now “blank spots” on the map of community media research (Lithuania, Estonia, Romania). When preparing the paper an analytical comparative method was applied, with elements of case study and historical approach. The term Central and Eastern Europe is used in a broader context than just geographical. Talking about CEE, the authors think about all the countries which were located in the Soviet sphere of influence before 1989.

COMMON HISTORY, COMMON PROBLEMS...

There are important differences between media systems typical for countries which were behind the Iron Curtain and those with a long democratic history. There are, however, other important factors which influence media systems in Europe. Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini divided Western media systems into three main models: Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralist Model, Northern European or Democratic Corporatist and North Atlantic or Liberal Model (2004, p. 68). The roots of the models mentioned above, as shown by Mancini and Hallin, are in the history and culture which dates back far before the Iron Curtain emerged. They suggest that especially some of the Central European countries, like Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic tend to be close to the Democratic Corporatist model of media (Hallin, Mancini, 2004, p. 303), which is characterized by high newspaper circulation, external pluralism especially in national press, politics-in-broadcasting system with substantial autonomy, strong professionalization, institutionalized self-regulation, strong state intervention but with protection for press freedom, press subsidies, strong public-service broadcasting etc. (Hallin, Mancini, 2004, p. 68). Eastern authors rather suggest “Italianization” of the media in the region characterized by: greater or lesser state control over the media, political party influence on the selection of

topics and the structure of media organization, a high degree of integration of the media and political elites as well as ethical divisions among journalists and media personnel (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2011, p. 26). The authors stated a hypothesis that the experience of communism for the societies of Central and Eastern Europe has such a strong effect that makes at least some problems with media development and community media itself more or less universal for the region. More than two decades after the fall of communism, the legacy of communism still plays a role in CEE countries, which follow their own, a bit different to the Western World model of society and media development. As Voltmer (2008, p. 37) points out, the media systems of new democracies cannot easily be classified into the three models proposed by Hallin and Mancini. "Instead, the specific empirical configurations of the relationship between the media and their political, economic and cultural environment suggest that emerging democracies develop unique types of media systems that differ significantly from those in established democracies."

Along with numerous positive political and social changes that have happened in the CEE region after 1989, general democratization, building of institutions and joining the European Union, there are some negative trends as well: a growing distrust in public institutions, populism and apathy (Skąpska, 2012, p. 3). The process of transformation of this region is still not finished. As Karol Jakubowicz rightly noted: "If the goal of political change is described as electoral democracy, then it has proven possible to create such (unstable) systems in many post-communist countries. If the goal is taken to be liberal democracy, as it should probably be, then there is still a long way to go [...]" (Jakubowicz, 2011, p. 15). He recalls Dahrenhof's comment that in a post-communist country it is possible to conduct constitutional reform in six months, economic reform in 6 years but even 60 years may not be enough to create something which he calls "social foundation." The pace of development of the social capital in post-communist countries is much slower than the dynamics of economic development. The main social problems observed by sociologists in CEE regions are as follows:

the weakness or even lack of civil society,
the leading role of the state and "the political society,"
the low credibility of the authorities elected in general elections,
the low level of the identification of the society with democratic processes and procedures (Jędrzejewski, 2010, p. 44).

There are significant democratic deficits observed, such as: poor representation of citizens' interests, low level of political participation beyond voting, frequent abuse of governmental officials, elections of uncertain legitimacy, very low levels of public confidence in state institutions and persistently poor institutional performance by the state (Jakubowicz, 2011, p. 17).

Media systems in CEE have to face obstacles such as lower level of economic development in comparison to the Western World — a late start has resulted in

lower technology and new media penetration (Głowacki, 2012, p. 142), the high degree of foreign concern over ownership in the media market (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2011, p. 36), the political influence in the media market, especially public service broadcasting.

THE IDEA OF COMMUNITY MEDIA

Communication rights such as access to information and freedom of expression which is independent not only from government but also from commercial factors, constitute the foundation of democracy. Community media create a sphere which, in practice, allows societies to take advantage of communication rights.

Diversity of definitions and contexts in which community media exist, seems to complicate understanding of what community media really are. The rise of digital media does not make things simpler for researchers. However, there are some common elements of community media characteristics which are present in almost all definitions such as: a non-profit nature as well as independence from authorities and commercial subjects. Yet talking about community media we usually have much more in mind. Taking this complexity into account, Kevin Howley focuses on community media's functional role in society, stressing that it "encompasses a range of community-based activities intended to supplement, challenge, or change the operating principles, structures, financing, and cultural forms and practices associated with dominant media" (Howley, 2010, p. 2). Their role in diversely structured societies is varied. In societies with a dominant liberal media system, such as the United States, community media are often supplementing commercial media services. In societies with a strong public broadcasting community, media challenge the public broadcaster's construction of a unified, homogenous national identity. They have a specific place in post-colonial societies, contributing to their transformation and revitalization in different spheres. Community media also sometimes appear in opposition to state propaganda in authoritarian societies (Howley, 2010, p. 2).

The development of the third, additional to public and commercial, sector of broadcasting is recommended in European Union documents, for example in the Resolution of 25th September 2008 on Community Media in Europe (European Parliament, 2008), as well as the Council of Europe documents — the Declaration of the Committee of Ministers on the role of community media in promoting social cohesion and intercultural dialogue (Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, 2009). However, community media coverage in the CEE region is still limited.

THE GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION OF COMMUNITY BROADCASTING IN CEE

In 2012, the Community Media Forum Europe conducted a mapping project of community media in Europe. According to the project results in January 2012 there were more than 2000 community radio and more than 521 community television

stations active in Europe. But the great majority of them were located in Western Europe. Many countries from the CEE region did not even reply to the survey. Such was the case with Albania, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Russian Federation, Slovenia and Ukraine. Others reported not having such a sector at all, like Armenia, Georgia, Kosovo, Latvia, Moldova, and Slovakia. Community media are recognized by the law only in a few countries. These are Hungary, Serbia, Poland, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Others sometimes have the third sector of broadcasting but under a different label than “community media” and function as, for example, “non-commercial,” “student” or “NGO” radios.

Table 1. Community Radio/Television Stations in Europe — January 2012

Country (community media regulated by law and recognized as such)	Radio	Television	Governmental support
Albania	—	—	
Armenia	0	0	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3	0	
Bulgaria	—	—	
Croatia	6	1	G
Czech Republic	2	0	
Estonia	4	0	
Georgia	0	0	
Hungary	40	0	
Kosovo	0	0	
Latvia	0	0	
Lithuania	6	3	
Macedonia	3	0	
Moldova	0	0	
Poland	8 + 31	0	
Romania	1	1	
Russian Federation	—	—	
Serbia	9	7	
Slovak Republic	0	0	
Slovenia	—	—	
The Ukraine	—	—	

Source: Community Media Forum Europe (2012).

Whereas the third sector of broadcasting is an established component of the media landscape in almost all countries of Western Europe, the situation is significantly different in countries from CEE. In this region, community media are struggling for their rightful place. However, there are some indicators which suggest that in CEE the interest in community media development is growing.

One of them is the increasing number of countries in which the third sector is legally recognized. What is more, in 2012 in Poland and in the Czech Republic there were public consultations announced regarding the development of community media. There is also a growing interest of regulators from other countries observed in “community media” issues. Representatives from CEE countries are present on the board of the Yearly Working Group on Local and Community Media of the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities. This region is represented by members from Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Macedonia, Czech Republic, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Kosovo (EPRA, 2012).

FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

In the opinion of media researchers, community media played an important role during and after the wars in former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, serving as an important platform of discussion, creating a sense of belonging. Community media in Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia were open spaces and thanks to which these nations can face their violent past (Plansak, Volic, 2009, p. 79).

Serbia

The number of community media in Serbia, as well as in most CEE countries, is small (Radojkovic, 2009). Serbian Broadcasting Law passed in 2002 envisages three types of broadcasting media: public, commercial and the “media of civil society” (the term used by the Law). This Law (Act 95) defines the media of civil society as media outlets — radio and TV stations — whose role is to satisfy specific interests of particular social groups and citizens’ associations (Parliament of Serbia, 2002). The programs could only have local reach, and radio and TV stations can function solely on a not-for-profit basis. Funding for these media outlets could come from grants, citizens’ donations, sponsorships and limited advertising. These media outlets are exempt from paying licence and broadcasting fees. There are, however, no other systematic solutions for supporting sustainability of such initiatives.

According to the data of the Republic Broadcasting Agency from April 2013, there are nine radio and three TV stations registered as media of civil society, coming from all parts of Serbia. They are founded by various citizens’ associations such as Roma, Romanian and Bosniak minority organisations, NGO Forum focusing on women’s rights, and other non-profit groups. Apart from them, there are a number of religious broadcasting media outlets across the country.

Slovenia

Radio Student from Ljubljana was created by a Student Association in 1969 and is often reported as the first community radio station in Europe (Buckley, 2011, p. 7).

Radio Student is a non-profit, urban community radio station whose primary goal is not only the promotion of the student community but also the interests of social and cultural minorities. Radio Student is a well-known and powerful radio station with 5 full-time employees as well as over 250 co-workers. The yearly budget of this station is, in comparison to other community broadcasters, big and oscillates around 450,000–500,000 Euros. The main sources of funding are the Student Organisation of the University of Ljubljana, marketing services and different projects. Some money also comes from donations (Mohoric, 2012).

In 1990 the second well-known student community radio station in this country was created. This is Radio MARS which is located in the second biggest city in Slovenia — Maribor (Plansak, 2011, p. 227). Radio MARS is reported as being very participatory oriented. For example, every year this radio station announces an open call for members of the community who are interested in the production of any kind of media content dealing with “belonging” or “identities.” Radio MARS is open for Serbian, Bosnian, Macedonian and other minorities (Plansak, Volcic, 2009, p. 82). The third community radio station in Slovenia is Radio Romik in Murska Sobota broadcasting for the Roma community (Plansak, 2011, p. 227).

Macedonia

The system of functioning community radio in Macedonia may be reported as atypical. Some community stations function within the framework of public broadcasting. One of them is Kanal 103, established by students in 1991. At the beginning, the primary goal of this station was to deliver alternative music from the USA and England, but it also played an important role talking about independence issues (Plansak, 2010, p. 464). This station uses a low power transmitter to broadcast for the citizens from the capital city of Macedonia — Skopje. In the Law on Broadcasting Activity from 2005, in Article 10 it is specified that educational, cultural and other institutions and citizens’ associations and foundations may establish a non-profit broadcasting institution with the aim of providing for the needs and interests of specific target groups (Government of the Republic of Macedonia, 2005). Such entities are excluded from the advertising market.

Croatia

In Croatia the third sector of broadcasting is not called “community media” but “non-profit media.” However, taking into account other features of this sector, such as its diversity as well as governmental financial support for such initiatives, Croatia may be called one of the leaders in the field of community broadcasting in the region. According to the Law on Electronic Media from 2009, non-profit broadcasters in Croatia should broadcast at least 50% of its own production of news and current

affairs, cultural, educational or entertainment, of which at least 25 percent must be other than entertainment. Advertising is limited to 3 minutes per hour (Perusko, 2011, p. 13).

The oldest non-profit broadcaster was Radio Student established at the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Zagreb in 1996. In 2012, there were six active radio stations within this legal framework. One was a national Catholic broadcaster, five of them were local broadcasters: two student, one licence belongs to a primary school, one to religious Radio Maria, one station was defined as a station fighting against cancer and promoting a healthy lifestyle. In 2012, there was also one non-profit student cable television created. What might be interesting in Croatia is the Fund for Promotion of Pluralism and Diversity. This Fund is supported by 3% from of the licence fee collected by the public service broadcaster). In 2012 six existing non-profit broadcasters obtained 100 000 Euros from this Fund (Strika, 2012).

Bosnia and Herzegovina

In Bosnia and Herzegovina a possibility to apply for a licence for civil society media aimed at specific groups was introduced in January 2010. For such a licence “non-profit organizations or registered civil groups with the aim of protecting rights and interests of certain social groups and promotion thereof” might apply (Coyer, Beek, 2010, p. 142). However, existing community-oriented stations operating with commercial licences had shown no interest in changing their licences into these dedicated civil society media. The main reason was the fear of losing advertising revenue, which was the most important financial source.

In 2011, a new law emerged, but very similar to the previous one. The existence of community radios is now regulated by the article of the Bosnia Rule 58/2011 on provision of Radio Media Services (Council of the Communications Regulatory Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2011). The law continues to deny community media access to funding from advertisements, preventing the satisfactory development of this media sector. According to the Communications Regulatory Agency, which sent the data to the Community Media Forum Europe Mapping Project, as of January 2012 only three radio stations obtained such a status.

Kosovo

Kosovo declared its independence in February 2008. It has been formally recognized by most EU countries, the United States and a number of other countries around the world, but it has not yet obtained a seat in the United Nations. In Kosovo community media sector is not legally recognised. However, there is a special fund for minority and unfavoured media. Stations may apply for such a grant for up to seven thousand Euro.

In scattered enclaves in the southern part of Kosovo, where a tiny part of the Serbian minority population lives, there is a network of five radio stations called Radio Kosma. The network has been functioning since 2003.

FORMER REPUBLICS OF THE SOVIET UNION

In countries which were within the Soviet Union Borders before 1989 and sent a survey questionnaire for the CMFE Mapping and Rating project, the community media sector may be reported as underdeveloped. Community media are not legally recognized in the Republic of Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The situation is similar in Estonia and Lithuania. In Latvia in Section 7 of the Electronic Mass Media Law adopted 12th July 2010 there is a recognition of non-commercial broadcasters which should provide a service for a particular audience with common interests (Parliament of the Republic of Latvia, 2010).

Estonia

According to Urmas Loit from the University of Tartu, there are four stations which are similar to the community radio model (2013, personal communication). One of them is Radio Juminda Poolsaar — targeted at the local community on the Juminda Peninsula. The station operates solely on a volunteer basis recruited from the inhabitants of 10 villages of the peninsula. The station does not broadcast advertising (Alas, 2012). The Christian stations are also similar to the community ones. They mainly work with the help of volunteers, the content is very much of a public character and financing is largely based on donations. Recently one more community radio has emerged in Estonia (Loit, 2013, personal communication). This is Uue Maa Maailma Raadio (Radio of New World), a community radio covering an area close to Tallinn city centre. This station broadcasts once a month on 92.4 MHz and on the Internet. It is based on volunteer enthusiasts and supported by The National Foundation of Civil Society.

Lithuania

Although the community media sector is not recognized in this country, Birute Kersiene, the Head of Public and International Relations of Radio and Television Commission of Lithuania reported on having six similar to the community model radio stations and one television broadcaster. These are Radio Nano (Siauliai University Gymnasium), Studio 7 (Kaunas Students' and Young People's Entertainment Center), Start FM (Vilnius University), Radijo Klubas (Siauliai Didzdvaris Gymnasium), Gaudeamus (Kaunas University of Technology), Baltupiu radijas (Vilnius Baltupiai Gymnasium). There is also a TV community broadcaster called PTV run by V. Krusna individual enterprise under the name "PTV" (Personal communication, 2013).

OTHER PARTS OF POST-COMMUNIST EUROPE

The situation of community media looks similar in countries which were semi-independent before 1989. However, in these countries there is a growing interest in the development of the third sector of broadcasting.

Hungary

Hungary is definitely a leader in community radio in the region. First of all, because the third sector of broadcasting has been legally recognized in this country for a long time, secondly, because there are several stations functioning within this legal framework and last but not least — there is a governmental system of financial support for such initiatives. The first alternative radio station in Hungary, besides some pirate episodes in the 1950s, was Tilos Radio which started broadcasting in August 1991. Shortly after Radio Tilos, Szubjectiv Radio from the University of Pecs was born along with other community oriented broadcasters (Velics, 2012, p. 266). In that time — in 1992 there was also the organisation established which represents community broadcasters until today — Szabad Rádiók Magyarországi Szervezete (Hungarian Federation of Free Radios) (Gosztonyi, 2010, p. 303).

The first Broadcasting Act in Hungary became law rather late — in 1996. However, in this first act all three sectors of broadcasting were recognized: public, commercial and not-for-profit. Under this Act a special fund for not-for-profit stations was introduced as a part of the Broadcasting Fund, primarily dedicated to the public sector (Bajomi-Lázár, 2003, p. 108). In 2002, a significant modification of the third sector of broadcasting regulations was made. Since 2002 low power stations, up to 10 watts, could apply for a licence using a special simplified procedure (Velics, 2012, p. 271). In 2010 in Hungary there were 68 non-commercial radio stations which definitely made Hungary a leader in the field of the third sector of broadcasting (Velics, 2012, p. 271). The situation radically changed in 2011 when the new Broadcasting Law 2010 imposed by the new government of Viktor Orbán came into force. The definition of the third sector was changed and this sector was renamed. Since 2011 such stations are called “community broadcasters” which may seem a step in the right direction. However, the new definition is reported by the community radio representatives from the Hungarian Federation of Free Radios as too broad which causes significant problems for the distinctiveness and sustainability of this sector (Gosztonyi, 2012). A great majority of stations which obtained this type of licence come from the commercial sector. Most of the previous “non-commercial” stations were closed (Velics, 2012, p. 278).

Poland

The first complex act regulating a broadcasting system in Poland after 1989, The Broadcasting Act, was passed in December 1992 (Parliament of the Republic of

Poland). There was no recognition of community media sector in this act. In 2001, a new category of broadcast media — “social broadcaster” was introduced in this law. In practice, only religious broadcasters benefited from this legal framework. The exclusion of “social broadcasters” from the advertising market combined with no governmental support for such entities resulted in a lack of interest in applying for such a status among, for example, NGOs. In 2012, there were only eight radio “social broadcasters.” All of them are connected to the church — seven broadcast locally and one is a powerful nationwide radio station called Radio Maryja. Other stations which try to fulfill at least some of the community media goals have commercial licences. Similarities to the community media model may be found, for example, in stations run by universities, by religious institutions, by local governments and by NGOs. Their service can be treated as a supplementation to social broadcasting in Poland. What might be important, is the fact that there is a growing interest in the change of the ineffective model of the third sector of broadcasting. In 2012, the National Broadcasting Council announced public consultations concerning media reform, including the third sector of broadcasting model as an important part of these consultations. The development of this sector is also included in the Regulatory Strategy for the Years 2011–2013 (National Broadcasting Council, 2011) as well as the new Strategy of the Development of Social Capital in Poland (Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, 2012).

Czech Republic

There is no community media sector recognized by law in the Czech Republic. What is more, even some non-commercial, non-public radio initiatives are a rarity in this country. A not-for-profit broadcaster is the Catholic Church, which runs Radio Proglas across the country. Several years ago an FM licence was awarded for Radio Student in Brno. The radio had to function as a commercial radio financed by advertisements — this was too demanding for their founders and the station was taken over by a fully commercially oriented broadcaster (Loeser, 2013a, p. 135). There are also some community oriented radio initiatives online (ibid.). Very interesting initiatives are also Radio R, at Masaryk University and Roma Youth Radio from Brno. Roma Youth Radio is something more than just an online radio. This project seeks to provide radio broadcasting solutions for NGOs serving the Roma minorities of the Czech Republic and promote the idea of community broadcasting itself (Loeser, 2013b). In 2012, public consultations concerning community media development by the Czech media regulator were announced (RRTV, 2012). Nico Carpentier — Associate Professor at the Communication Studies Department of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB — Free University of Brussels) and Lecturer at Charles University in Prague — as a media expert — prepared a detailed guideline on the development of Czech community media (Carpentier, 2012).

Romania

In the Audiovisual Law of Romania one can find a definition of a television or radio community service. It is a service that broadcasts audiovisual programs dedicated to the public of a specific community (Romanian Parliament, 2009). An example of community radio in Romania may be Radio Shalom run by the Jewish Community Center. To strengthen the visibility of the community media subject matter in this country, AMARC Europe — the organization gathering community radio representatives from the whole Europe — held its conference, Community Radio in Europe: Broadcasting on the Edge, in Bucharest, Romania, 12–14 December 2008. It is worth underlining that despite in the CMFE Mapping and Rating Project the Romanian regulator reported on having only one radio and one TV community station, there are 13 radio entities as voting members registered in AMARC Europe (AMARC, 2013).

CONCLUSION

The idea of community media in the CEE region is increasingly gaining recognition. However, there is still a long way to go to make the situation of this sector at least similar to the Western European standard. In the authors' opinion, the development of this sector of media is closely related to the social development in CEE. The history of community media shows that the introduction of such a sector in many countries was a result of strong bottom-up movements.

The social, economic and political factors discussed in this article resulted in significant problems in community media development in CEE which may be summarized as follows:

1. The lack of political will to modify the law addressing community media. The authorities, who are more or less keen to have, as far as possible in the democratic system, control over the media, are not especially interested in the development of an additional, independent sector. But there are some indicators that this situation is changing for the better in some countries (Croatia, Serbia, Poland, The Czech Republic). Unfortunately in others, especially in Hungary, the opposite can be observed.

2. Low voluntary involvement. Community media are mostly based on volunteers' involvement. This region, apart from a few exceptions is still coping with a low level of volunteers in comparison to the old EU. As Bogdan Voicu and Mălina Voicu summarize — residence in an ex-communist country has a negative impact on the level of volunteering, which is a result of years of discouraging civil society and any individual initiative during communism (Voicu, Voicu, 2009).

3. Limited knowledge about the idea of community media and possible benefits from the community media sector. The social awareness of what community media are in CEE is very low. The research conducted by Urszula Doliwa in the years 2009–2012 in Poland shows that even representatives of non-commercial radio

initiatives declare that they have never heard about the idea of community media (Doliwa, 2012). Research among Serbian journalists and media employees also showed that there is little knowledge about this subject matter (Radojkovic, 2009).

4. Weak community media movement. This point is closely related with the previous two. There is little knowledge about the idea of community media so radio activists are not aware what they are struggling for. As the Polish consultations concerning “social broadcaster” status showed, non-profit media representatives often understand that the situation on the broadcast media market must be changed, however they do not fully understand what they can demand and what arguments they may use (National Broadcasting Council, 2012). Researchers from this region reported very weak or even non-existent community media movement in their countries (Loeser, 2013a; Doliwa, 2012).

5. Limited governmental and non-governmental sources which may be used for community media support. The CEE region, despite many positive economic changes is still far behind Western economics. It makes the governmental as well as private support for media initiatives more difficult. The crises in Europe even intensified this problem (Velics, 2012, p. 280).

6. High copyright fees. Existing stations with non-commercial goals often had to struggle with high copyright fees. The royalty organizations often do not have special rates for such organizations. How to overcome these fees is often one of the main problems for community radio initiatives (Johánek, 2013; Doliwa, Falkowska, 2010).

7. Spectrum occupied by the commercial and public sector. There is very little space on the airwaves left and free frequencies are found in unattractive areas for advertisers. It makes the emergence of new entities on a large scale very difficult.

The conclusion of this research is that the development of community broadcasting has to face many obstacles, among which is the lack of an overall enabling environment which plays the most important role. In many countries from the region this sector of broadcasting is not legally recognized and in others the legal framework of the third sector is not precise enough (Hungary) or too strict which limits the number of potential beneficiaries of such regulations (Poland). The general problem of all the countries from the region is the lack of financial support for this sector or limited sources for this goal (Hungary, Croatia). Although this subject matter is becoming more and more popular in the region, it is difficult to escape the impression that CEE is still at the beginning of the “community media’s long march.”

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