

SCS Balkans: Balkan Media Assistance Program (BMAP)

Overview

The Balkans Media Assistance Program (BMAP) (2017 – 2021, \$8 million) is a USAID funded initiative focused on making media more competitive in local and regional marketplaces and strengthening the sustainability of the independent media sector across the Balkans, particularly in the digital space.

Balkans Context

Media outlets in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia face a hostile environment for freedom of expression and are increasingly vulnerable to political and financial pressures. Across the region, political capture of the media and advertising markets within already weak economies has left independent media, particularly online outlets, unable to compete with the imbalanced yet entertaining pro-government news outlets that pull in the most advertising revenue.

Major Program Components

Provide outlets and media partners with solutions for more substantial and stable resources to operate as viable enterprises through:

- Coaching and mentoring for media partners and outlets to improve their business practices
- Awarding of Technology Investment Grants to assist media partners with improving their production and distribution platforms
- Establishment of a comprehensive online learning and information exchange platform
- Support to help identify sales- and revenue-generation opportunities
- Training media partners on how to create and develop strategies to analyze audiences for expansion and engagement and monetizing traffic for advertisements

Strengthen the ability of content producers to engage wider audiences and expand reach across the region by:

- Providing technical assistance to media partners to help improve their digital content production capabilities

- Awarding grants through a semi-annual competition to promote production of engaging digital content for local and regional audiences
- Promoting regional content sharing between media partners

Foster stronger partnerships to advance solutions on common challenges in the digital space:

- Providing consultancies to promote and embed convergent media principles
- Organizing an annual Balkans Media Innovation Lab event for journalists, activists, artists, and software developers to share ideas and develop pilot concepts
- Hosting an annual regional Media Forum to bring together professionals from independent media in the region to share learnings and promote collaboration

Achievements

- Conducted organizational assessments with each Key Partner (12)
- Supported 37 projects to enrich the media market with high-quality, innovative, and engaging content
- Facilitated 862 training days for journalists (target for Y1 was 280 and for Y2 was 20)
- Increased audiences of BMAP-supported media outlets from 20 to 55 percent
- Thanks to a BMAP Technology Investment Grant, BMAP's Key Partner in Montenegro livestreamed an event that reached 18 percent of the total country's population
- Hosted Media Innovation Lab in November 2018
- Hosted annual regional Media Forum in January 2019
- Launched www.BalkansMedia.org learning platform

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