

“You cannot do investigative journalism sitting at your desk. The investigative story can cost salaries of the entire department for three to four months. We need to have honest journalists who cannot be bribed, who are not involved in any kind of commercial activity with government. The journalists needs to show people the wrong doings.”

Adrian Mogos, Fellow 2009, Jurnalul National, Romania

“... THE ALUMNI INITIATIVE, ESPECIALLY IF YOU ARE DEPRESSED BY HAVING BEEN SPARED ANY OF THE TOP FELLOWSHIP PRIZES, HAS BEEN EVEN BETTER FOR ME. FOR SOME OF MY WORK, IT HAS PROVED ESSENTIAL”

Altin Raxhimi, a freelance journalist from Albania whose ‘delicate research’ into allegations that the Kosovo Liberation Army had maintained prisons, where detainees were tortured during and after the 1999 conflict, opened a whole new debate in highest international bodies.

Partners

Robert Bosch **Stiftung**



In 2003, ERSTE Foundation evolved out of the Erste Oesterreichische Spar-Casse, the first Austrian savings bank. It holds 25.3% of the shares of Erste Group. ERSTE Foundation invests its dividends in social development projects in Austria and Central and South-Eastern Europe. It supports social participation and civil-society engagement; it aims to bring people together and disseminate knowledge of the recent history of a region that has been undergoing dramatic changes since 1989. As an active foundation, it develops its own projects within the framework of three programmes: Social Development, Culture and Europe.

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ERSTE Stiftung



Balkan Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence

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CONTEXT

Journalists from the Balkans did not have many opportunities to travel abroad or to participate in appropriate training. Hence, they are often under-prepared to tackle the challenges of reporting on complex reform issues that have regional or European dimensions. The Balkan Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence has been set up to change this.

The Press Freedom Indices in developing democracies in the Balkans have been deteriorating in the recent years. The increase in tabloidisation of papers,

overworked and underpaid journalists have been a common denominator for all countries. Furthermore, the meagre trainings available to reporters also contributed to the lack of analytical pieces. And yet, there is a constant demand for reports on multifaceted reform topics, which go outside the borders of a single country and transcend into regional and European dimensions. For that reason, ERSTE Foundation and Robert Bosch Stiftung, in cooperation with the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), established the Balkan Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence in 2007.



IMPACT

The Balkan Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence contests the current state of affairs. It gives an exceptional opportunity for journalists to conduct in-depth research and prepare reports, both at home and across Europe. Additionally, the Fellowship encourages regional networking among reporters and advances impartial coverage on topics that are central to the region as well as to the European Union.

However, it does not only assist journalists to expand their perspectives. For all of us reading, watching and listening to the news, it offers new angles of current affairs. And the figures are a firm proof for this claim: only in one year, from 2009 to 2010, the republication of articles in regional print has doubled. In addition, there is a significant growth in the number of applications for the Fellowship, from 81 in 2007 to 149 in 2010.

Photos:

The Balkan Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence brings together ten Balkan journalists each year, who are supported professionally to conduct their own research project.

1 The fellows of 2011, discussing this year's topic "Justice" at a kick off-meeting in Vienna.

2 The winners and fellows of 2008.

“A chance for young journalists from the region to do research in a comparative manner”

Gerald Knaus, Director of the European Stability Initiative, Jury Member



FACTS

Each year, ten journalists from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia are competitively chosen to receive funding and professional support to conduct their own investigative projects on an annually chosen topic. The reporters receive a fellowship of € 2,000, a travel allowance of up to € 2,000 for the research, and a chance to participate in a seven-month programme for professional advancement. There are two seminars, one in Berlin and the other in Vienna, and continuous, on-hand, support from experienced BIRN editors.

Furthermore, the Fellowship enables the journalists to work with a mentor, which is another way of stimulating their critical view of political issues.

The three winning articles are awarded bursaries of € 4,000, € 3,000 and € 1,000. All ten articles are disseminated and republished widely in all local languages as well as in English and German. Once the fellowship ends, the fellows become members of the Alumni Initiative, which is designed to encourage and support their continued cooperation.



Balkan Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence

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