

ANALYSIS OF MEDIA REPORTING ON CHILDREN IN CHILDREN'S HOME
"MLADOST" BIJELA

This analysis was carried out in March 2014 for the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of Montenegro and UNICEF by Ms. Zdenka Jagarinec, Slovenian journalist and editor with more than 20 years of experience, and Mr. Ugljesa Jankovic teaching assistant at the Faculty of Political Science in Podgorica.

The analysis and assessment of media reporting on children in the Children's Home "Mladost" in Bijela was made based on 207 media reports published in Montenegro in the period between 1st December 2013 and 31st January 2014. The analysis covered media releases from six daily newspapers – *Dnevne novine*, *Vijesti*, *Pobjeda*, *Dan*, *Večernje novosti* and *Blic*, one weekly magazine - *Monitor*, three portals – *Cafe del Montenegro*, *Portal Analitika* and *Bankar.me*, and four TV agencies – *TVCG*, *TV Prva*, *TV Vijesti* and *TV Pink*.

The names of media agencies and donors/visitors to "Mladost" in the context of specific media reports have been removed from the text.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ANALYSIS OF MEDIA EXPOSURE OF CHILDREN IN THE CHILDREN'S HOME "MLADOST", BIJELA	3
I. Statistical analysis of media reporting about children from the Children's Home "Mladost", Bijela	3
II. Analysis of media reporting from the aspect of rights of the child	6
III. The context of media reports about children from the Children's Home "Mladost", Bijela	10
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	14
ANNEXES	17
Annex I: Excerpts from Laws, Documents and Guidelines	17
Annex II: Case study Kolasin	21
Annex III: Examples of reporting about children in Slovenia	23

ANALYSIS OF MEDIA EXPOSURE OF CHILDREN IN THE CHILDREN’S HOME “MLADOST”, BIJELA

Media have an important impact on the social position of children. Mass media inform, but also shape the attitude of not only individuals, but state institutions, local community, NGOs towards the problems of children in residential care. Media are children’s rights promoters, but at the same time, the manner in which children are presented to the public by the media can violate their rights and be harmful to them. For that reason, the media are equally important as a partner with regard to social policy of the state, especially the policy related to children without parental care.

To what extent and how the media in Montenegro follow the life and problems of children in Bijela? What are the most frequent concrete media violations of rights of children, their dignity and integrity? How to reduce the damage that media, often with the best intention, cause to the interests of children?

I. Statistical analysis of media reporting about children from the Children’s Home “Mladost”, Bijela

The analysis and assessment of media coverage about children from the Children’s Home “Mladost” in Bijela is based on 207 media reports in Montenegro in the period from 1 December 2013 to 31 January 2014. Press clipping and audio-visual recordings were prepared by a professional agency *Arhimed*. This media clipping included six daily papers and one weekly, three portals and four TV stations.

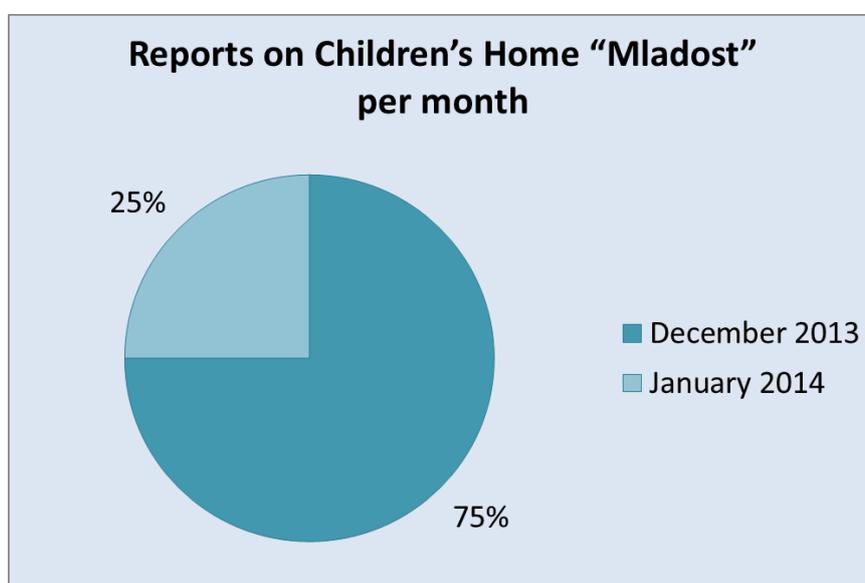
a) Number of media reports about the Children’s Home “Mladost” in the 60-day period, according to the type of media

The table below presents the number of media reports according to the type of media:

Type of media	Number of reports
Daily papers	145
Weeklies	1
TV	17
Portals	45
Total	207

Table 1: Number of reports about the Children’s Home “Mladost”

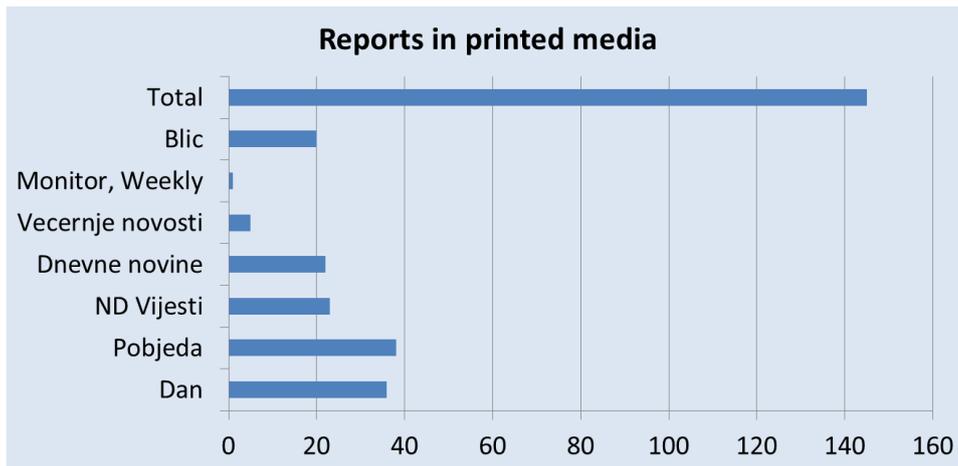
Having in mind that there were 207 media reports in the observed period, it can be said that in the period of 60 days the average number of reports was more than 3.5 reports per day. Such a high number of reports on the one hand is the result of an increased interest of the media and the public in children living in the Children's Home "Mladost" in Bijela during Christmas and New Year holidays. This is best evidenced by comparing the number of reports in December, before the holidays and in January. Namely, Graph 1 below shows that approximately three quarters of all reports were published in December 2013, and the remaining quarter in January 2014.



Graph1: Share of reports about Children's Home "Mladost" per month

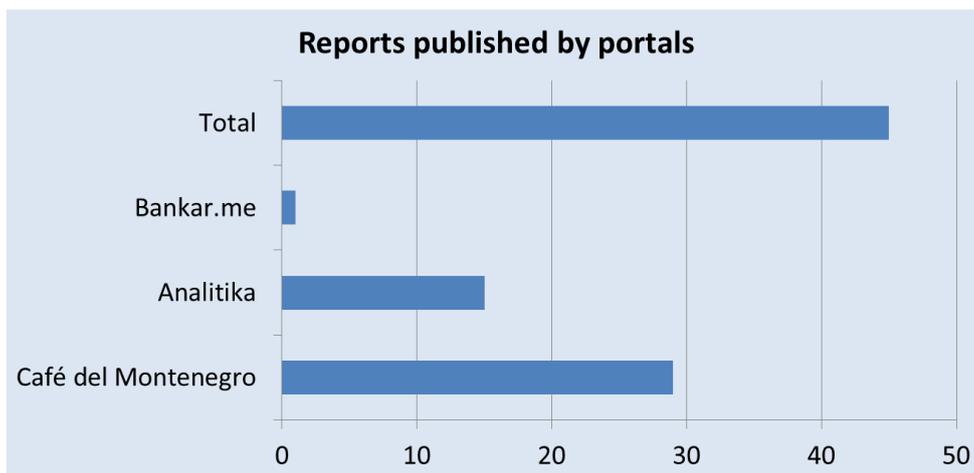
On the other hand, it should be mentioned that excessive attention of the media given to the children in the Children's Home "Mladost" is not limited to the holidays. Previous analysis of media reports shows a similar picture: in the first half of 2013 only, there were 162 reports about children from Bijela published in the media (source: *Arhimed*).

Graph 2 below presents the number of reports by media houses – print media only. Most of the articles were published by the Pobjeda daily and the Dan daily. Namely, these two newspapers published an article in which they have at least mentioned the Children's Home "Mladost" almost every day and a half. Three dailies – Vijesti, Dnevne novine and Blic mentioned the Children's Home "Mladost" every second day.



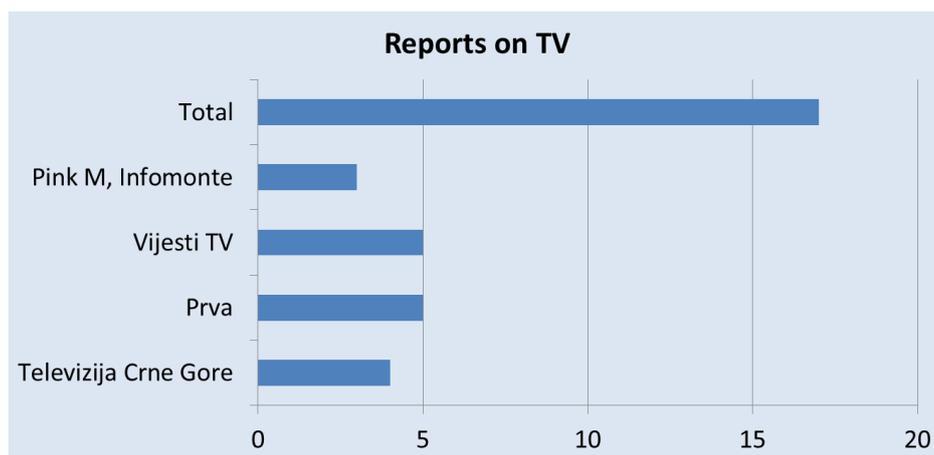
Graph2: Number of reports in the print media

When it comes to portals, as presented in Graph 3 below, most of the articles were published on Cafe del Montenegro, practically one every second day, and portal Analitika published one article every fourth day.



Graph3: Number of reports published by portals

TV stations broadcasted in total 17 reports about the Children’s Home “Mladost”. This is 8.2% of all reports. Differences in the number of reports between the various TV stations are smaller than the differences between newspapers, as presented in the Graph 4 below.



Graph4: Number of reports on TV

b) Reports according to the media genres

Out of the total number of 207 articles/shows, 191 were news, out of which 10 were event announcements. News is the most widespread form/ media genre that tells the viewers who, when, where and what happened, and news also deliver a standpoint, thus it is important how it is written/edited. 16 reports/shows out of the total of 207 reports represent complex journalist forms: one TV documentary, and one TV investigation, 9 printed press investigations/ detailed reports, 1 interview and 4 reportages, out of which 2 on TV, and 2 in newspapers.

II. Analysis of media reporting from the aspect of rights of the child

a) The right of the child to privacy and dignity

Our of 207 analyzed reports, in two cases the right to privacy was absolutely violated (when it comes to international standards, the most important standard is defined in Article 16 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and in the national legislation of Montenegro, the most important standard is defined in Article 150 of the Law on Social and Child Protection of Montenegro, and in Articles 4 and 10 of the Law on Personal Data Protection³, see Annex

³Article 150 of the Law on Social and Child Protection: “All information about personal and family circumstances of the beneficiary” (in our case – Confidential information according to that Law is the very fact that the child is placed in an institution; confidential is also information that “other persons give about children” and information ‘presented by the beneficiary about himself or herself’). Article 4 of the Law on Personal Data Protection: “Protection of personal data shall be provided to every individual, regardless of nationality,

1): in the story about a boy who slept for days in the park and in the story about the girl who ran away from home. (Annex 2 contains a brief analysis of the previous case of the girls in foster care in Kolasin, because this is a rather compelling example, although this analysis does not include the date on which this report was published).

The media published personal data about the boy: name, age, place of residence and a whole set of negative details about the family. There were also inappropriate titles about the boy in the media: “Center for Social Work: A minor called Grba should be placed in the Children’s Home in Bijela”, “Epilogue of the [name of the daily newspaper] story: Grba will go to the Children’s Home “Mladost” in Bijela” and the text: “A minor named Nedeljko Grba who slept for days in various parks in Podgorica”. In the article about the girl, her age and data about her family were published. The media published that it “urgent psycho-therapeutical action is necessary... as well as involvement of a child psychologist and therapy with medical drugs”, “because the parents expelled her from the house due to the alleged problematic behavior”, “and the sister no longer wanted to take her in”.

***Comment:** In these reports the boy and the girl were negatively presented: as vagrants with bad habits and dysfunctional families. Having in mind that children are not to be blamed for the poor family situation, and that vagrancy and escape from home are essentially the result of family situation, any negative presentation of children would cause long-lasting harm to their dignity. Journalists often forget that personal data does not involve only the name and surname, but any characteristics, specific circumstances, family and other ties, on the basis of which one could establish who the person in question is. The publication of personal data in these articles was not in the interest of the public, but simply satisfied the curiosity of the readers, and most probably contributed to the better sale of the daily paper. The publication of such data was not aimed at better informing the public and at the same time, it was not in the best interest of the child.*

domicile, race, skin color, sex, language, religion, political or other belief, ethnicity, social origin, property, education, social position or other personal attributes”. Article 10 of the same Law: “Personal data may be processed with the prior consent of the data subject”, and “The consent referred to in Paragraph 1 of this Article shall be given by the guardian on behalf of the person deprived of the capacity to transact business, and by the parents or adoptive parents, that is, guardian, on behalf of a minor, unless the consent is contrary to the interests of the minor”.

b) The right of the child to special protection of visual identity: photos/video and audio recordings

In 145 reports about the Children's Home "Mladost" in Bijela published in various newspapers, 55 were photos published, which is, on average, one photo in every third article. Reports on TV were accompanied by video material of children who were accidentally recorded during the numerous visits to the Children's Home "Mladost" in Bijela.

The International Federation of Journalists warns that journalists "have the duty to guard against visually or otherwise identifying children unless it is demonstrably in the public interest" (Annex 1).

Comments: It is completely unacceptable to publish the photo of a boy from the mentioned article about the boy who slept in parks and in which all of his personal data were published. Not only is the photo explicit, and anyone can identify the child based on it, in addition, the boy is standing behind a fence that resembles prison bars. Coincidentally, the same newspaper has the highest number and the best professional editing of articles on various aspects of residential care for children without parental care.

In most of the remaining photos, almost thirty present sponsors, donors and visitors surrounded by children. These "fire-extinguishing" photos serve as evidence of good deeds and often as promotion for the donors, while the children are more or less decoration.

Another example of completely unacceptable reporting is the publishing of seven photos of children with disability in a long feature article about children with disability; one of the photos shows a child in a wheelchair hiding her face with her hands, because she obviously does not like the attention; in addition, all children in these photos can be identified/recognized.

TV stations broadcasted images of children in all their reports. In a documentary broadcasted by one TV station, two women are talking to the camera about the procedure and why they decided to adopt a child, or to become foster carers. In the 23 minute long documentary, there were numerous images of babies in cots, children doing something at the table, or children playing, but mostly close-ups from the Children's Home "Mladost".

Comment: These are heartbreaking images of children from the children's home, showing sad faces of abandoned children. In contrast, the children in the care of the two women who speak about their fostering/adoption experience are cautiously recorded, from the back, and in color. Children from the children's home who are presented in this documentary are not saying anything, they are there as a background material for the story. The good intention of the author to promote the idea of adoption and foster care in Montenegro, according to the ethical standards for media reporting about children, is not an excuse for media to use images of children without parental care without consent. The protection of the best interest of a child is more important than the promotion of the rights of children and the presentation of issues they face (UNICEF's Principles for Ethical Reporting about Children, Article 3; see Annex 1 of this report).

Best practice examples:

- Along with the article in one daily newspaper "Hiding children", there is a photo of a boy with Down syndrome hugging a young woman with a big smile on his face. The boy is obviously happy and trusts this person, and she accepts his hug with pride and a smile. This photo supports the contents of the article, complements the words with a positive message and causes positive emotions among readers.
- The second best practice example involves photos of children from the children's home, made from a distance or sideways (the same daily).
- The third example involves another daily newspaper, which observed minimum standards with regard to right to privacy and blurred the eyes of children on the photos (two articles).
- One TV station report on the occasion of the visit of 120 bikers to the Children's Home "Mladost" represents an example of a quality report in terms of content, as the main story is about how the children felt about this visit by the bikers, however, the children were visually "abused" in this story. The camera was searching for faces and recorded passers-by, thus violating their right to privacy. The TV crew should have obtained consent to record each individual child (as it must obtain permission to record any child in general), and children from the Children's Home "Mladost" need even greater protection, because they have a heavy burden of personal experiences on their shoulders, some of them being victims of violence or similar.

Additional best practice examples from the region are given in Annex 3.

c) *The right of the child to have his or her view and to express that view*

Out of 207 reports in the media, none presented the views of children currently living in the Children's Home "Mladost", rather, all reports express the views of journalists about the life in the children's home, or present children and life in the children's home to the public. TV stations publish short statements by the children, but in most cases the children simply thank the donors for Christmas presents and other gifts, while in the newspapers there are no statements of children from the Children's Home "Mladost" at all.

Comment: *In two TV reports statements given by children harm their dignity; in the first one, a boy speaks with great difficulty and is hardly understandable, another boy does not know the answer, and in another a girl says that she wants to live with her sisters. The first example perpetuates stereotype understanding that children in institutions are less articulated and slow in thinking. The second example provokes compassion of the viewers, and simultaneously breaches the privacy of the girl and her sisters. In addition, in most reports, children appear as a homogenous unit. Such an approach encourages other stereotypes about children from the Children's Home "Mladost" in Bijela.*

The examples of best practice involve reports in which two of the former beneficiaries that used to live in institutions are presented, one of which lived in the Children's Home "Mladost", and a girl who lived in a foster family. Their experiences and views are different, thus valuable, in order to learn about the problems of children living in institutions.

III. The context of media reports about children from the Children's Home "Mladost", Bijela

a) *Research and reporting about social policy*

Only 16 out of in total 207 articles about children from the Children's Home "Mladost" published in the period December 2013-January 2014 are complex in form and content. In these rare cases, media agencies monitor the reform of formal care for children without parental care, that is, the transformation of the Children's Home "Mladost" in the long run into a service that will support foster families and adoptive parents. Some articles and reports

promote the foster care campaign implemented by the Government of Montenegro in cooperation with UNICEF, “Every child needs a family”, and examines the existing system that does not correspond to the contemporary standards of care for children in smaller, more intimate environments.

The highest number of complex and rich-in-content reports were published by one particular daily newspaper – six reports about foster care, adoption, about persons with disability, about the problem of hiding children with disability. Another daily published two longer articles about foster care and a new concept of placement of children without parental care. One portal published an interview with the UNICEF Montenegro Representative, another daily newspaper published a longer article about adoption, another daily published two articles about New Year’s visits to the Children’s Home “Mladost”, and another portal published one longer text about the Children’s Home “Mladost”.

As for TV stations, one of them paid most attention to children in institutions through the aforementioned documentary that lasts for 23 minutes and promotes foster care and child adoption. Another TV station broadcasted a report about the Children’s Home “Mladost” and child adoption in the duration of 4 minutes.

b) <i>“Madam Tussauds” Syndrome</i>

All other reports, or 191 articles, have a completely different context – they involve news or reports about visits to the Children’s Home “Mladost”. The media merely transmit the media statements by entrepreneurs, companies and institutions whose representatives visit the Children’s Home “Mladost”, bring presents and emphasize their own role in the whole story. In the articles which are news about donations and visits to the Children’s Home “Mladost”, the visiting organizations, institutions and companies are explicitly named in the media reports. Sometimes the media visit the children’s home on their own initiative and report about visits, and even more so about the visitors.

Such an attitude of the media towards the interests of the institution and numerous visitors can only be characterized as servile. It is understood as normal media coverage of one of the state institutions, and readers and viewers respect good intentions and assistance of good people to children in the Children’s Home “Mladost”. To some extent, the management of

the Children's Home "Mladost" has something to be proud of. What used to be a completely closed institution is now transformed into the most open institution of this type. But on the other hand, "Mladost" is home to the children who live there. Every day visits disturb the children - visitors take tours of the institution and enter private premises of the beneficiaries – their bedrooms, bathrooms and joint premises.

The children in these articles and shows act as puppets, as a stage for the promotion of individuals, politicians, companies, associations, interest groups, fans, and even state institutions. Visitors come and take photos with children. The Madame Tussauds syndrome applies to all the media – to a lesser or greater extent.

c) Rating and explicit commercialization

It is difficult to draw the line between empathy for children in institutional placement on one hand, and commercialization and exploitation of children to increase circulation or the number of viewers/readers. Inspiring emotions, especially compassion, represents one of the most common ways to increase the number of viewers. In almost every report or announcement in TV programs the following words are repeated: little kids, big heart, emotions, presents, touching, unfortunate, sad or happy and grateful. One of the objective indicators of commercial reporting about children is the explicit mentioning of companies and products in the reports about the Children's Home "Mladost".

In their reports, the media focus on donors citing the full name of the company or individual owner, details about the donation and value of presents in kind or financial assistance.

d) style/language used in the media reporting about children in the Children's Home "Mladost"

Most of the articles/shows reflect an outdated attitude towards children living in residential care, they are presented with pity, heartbreaking words and as helpless human beings. Their autonomy is not recognized. Children develop their capacities and in parallel with that obtain a scope of rights. The media report about the events in the Children's Home "Mladost", about adoption or foster care as a "humanitarian activity", "champions of humanity", "champions of heart and charity", and further mention "caravans of humanity", "giving is divine", "candy

for smiles of children in Bijela”, “little ones”, “small token of care, and hearts are full”, “warm heart”.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The assumption that media in Montenegro are intensively following the developments in the Children's Home "Mladost" and that the number of articles and reports about children in the home has exceeded the limits of acceptable media coverage proved to be very pertinent. In the period of 60 days, from 1 December 2013 to 31 January 2014, media published 207 newspaper articles and reports on web portals and TV stations. The media also published 55 photos of children and video material of the beneficiaries of the Children's Home "Mladost", from babies to older children. In these articles and reports the media seriously violated the right of children to privacy, and in minimum two cases they revealed not only the name, age, place of residence, but also details about their family circumstances, their behavior and health status.

The analysis of media reporting about the *Children's Home "Mladost"* in Bijela showed that numerous visitors come to the children's home on a daily basis, including donors, representatives of institutions, politicians, individuals, sportspeople, practically – whoever wants to come. People from the outside visit the premises of these children, their bedrooms, bathrooms and shared space every day. The Children's Home "Mladost" is also visited by numerous journalists, sometimes invited by the management, but in many cases invited by the donors. Journalists randomly select children who are not prepared to give statements, due to which they have difficulties in expressing themselves, thus only reinforcing the stereotypes about children from Bijela.

Recommendations:

- a) Montenegro already has the Law on Social and Child Protection, the Law on Personal Data Protection and the Media Law, thus, it has the necessary legislation to protect the personality and rights of the child in formal care. The responsibility of the line ministries and other relevant state authorities is to ensure the enforcement of existing legislation (See Annex 1).
- b) The management of residential care institutions must regulate the issue of visits; partially in consultation with children, the management needs to set the rules about visits to children's private premises. Donations and presents are not an entry ticket for the visitors. Donors make agreements with the management of the children's home only and have no right to enter the children's premises, only in exceptional cases. In addition, it is

necessary to provide information to the PR department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the management of the children's home about the concrete "information" activity of the media agency interested in making a specific type of program that directly or indirectly relates to children in the children's home. The contact person mediating this type of communication should be the PR Department of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare. The interested media must provide detailed information about the manner in which the specific media report will improve the lives of children in the children's home.

- c) It is desirable to create the possibility for the PR department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare or an authorized person on behalf of the management of the institution (or if a PR department is established in "Mladost") to review the material about children in the Children's Home "Mladost" that the media plans to broadcast, in order to prevent broadcasting of reports that could potentially harm the children in the children's home. Competent bodies, primarily the PR department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare should have the possibility to prevent further collection of information or broadcasting of already existing information if it is assessed that the content could be harmful for the interests and integrity of the child.
- d) The guardianship authority i.e. the responsible center for social work can give consent when it comes to the participation of children in the media. Legal regulations mentioned in the Laws listed in item a) apply to all the media. The PR department of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare is already responsible for overseeing media visits to the Children's Home "Mladost", although visits by other subjects remain unregulated. Entry into the Children's Home "Mladost" should not be allowed without adequate permission from the Ministry, in accordance with the existing laws. Visitors cannot bring with them or themselves invite journalists to accompany them during the visit to the Children's Home "Mladost". For each statement they take from children, journalists are obliged to explain in advance the topic and questions for discussion. The PR department of the Ministry or the management of the Children's Home "Mladost" in agreement with the Ministry and the children, will decide who, when and about what can talk to children in the children's home.
- e) The media are obliged to observe the existing legislation. The media publish the names of all the donors, companies or entrepreneurs, political parties, foreign companies who give donations to the Children's Home "Mladost". Commercialization has no limits. The

media are obliged to avoid explicit announcements of company names and names of other donors, as in most cases while they do a good deed they also ensure marketing for themselves. The practice of publishing in the media the name of each donor, company or entrepreneur, political parties, foreign companies for the purpose of commercialization must be harmonized with the existing laws.

- f) In their reports, the media should limit the collection of data about children in the Children's Home "Mladost" and about their activities to reasonable information that will not classify children without parental care as desirable population for media exploitation.
- g) In the future (aside from the implementation of laws in practice), self-regulation of the media agencies will probably be key, i.e. journalists themselves. In addition to the full understanding of and respect for children and their rights which should be expressed by all media actors, insisting on self-regulation of all journalists writing or publishing reports about children, would prevent potentially negative or disputable presentation of children in the media, and this is supported by numerous media experts. Irrespective of all the regulations, protocols and other documents, this would probably be the best way to protect the privacy and personality of children in the media.
- h) Finally, the organization of a round table is proposed on the topic of media reporting about children in the Children's Home "Mladost", and to present the rules of operation with regard to access and visits to the Children's Home "Mladost". Journalists, editors, representatives of the Ombudsperson's office, NGO representatives, representatives of the judiciary and the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare should discuss the media reporting about children, especially children placed in institutions, their views regarding violations of the right to children's privacy and whether this violation of the right to privacy should be defined as a criminal offense.

ANNEXES

ANNEX I: EXCERPTS FROM LAWS, DOCUMENTS AND GUIDELINES

Law on Social and Child Protection of Montenegro

Article 150: “All information about personal and family circumstances of beneficiaries that service providers keep about the beneficiary shall be confidential.

Confidential information about beneficiary may be used by the service provider only for the purpose of service provision.

The beneficiary shall have the right to protect confidentiality of all personal data from the documents processed for the purpose of service provision, reporting on the work of the institution or other service providers, including those concerning his personality, behaviour and family circumstances and ways of using social and child protection services.

Confidential information shall also include:

- 1) The fact that beneficiary is exercising the right or service;
- 2) The type of right or service provided to the individual beneficiary;
- 3) Name, address and other personal identification data about beneficiary;
- 4) Data contained in the user's application;
- 5) Information that beneficiary communicates about him/herself;
- 6) Information that other persons communicate about the beneficiary;
- 7) Data about the beneficiary obtained during the provision of service;
- 8) Assessments, findings, professional attitude or opinions of service providers about the beneficiary;
- 9) Data contained in the reports of health care facilities for the beneficiary;
- 10) Information about the beneficiary, such as: beneficiary's photos, drawings made by the beneficiary during the process of service provision, single-handedly written statements or comments and remarks of the beneficiary, a written record of service provider or beneficiary, audio and video recordings made in connection with the use of service, etc.;
- 11) Content of correspondence with other institutions or organizations, if that correspondence contains information about beneficiary or other persons connected with him/her.”

Law on Personal Data Protection of Montenegro

Article 4: Protection of personal data shall be provided to every individual, regardless of nationality, domicile, race, skin color, sex, language, religion, political or other belief, ethnicity, social origin, property, education, social position or other personal attributes.

Article 9, Paragraph 1: “personal data shall mean any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person”.

Article 10: “Personal data may be processed with the prior consent of the data subject”. In addition, “the consent shall be given by the guardian on behalf of a person deprived of business capacity and in the case of a minor by the parents or adoptive parents, or by a guardian, unless the consent is contrary to the interests of the minor”.

Media Law of Montenegro

Article 22: “Media shall protect the integrity of minors... Media are forbidden to publicize the identity of a minor involved in a criminal act, either in the capacity of a victim or a defendant. As an exception from Paragraph 3 of this Article, the identity of a minor, sentenced for a criminal offense by a final judgment, may be publicized if there is an overriding interest of the public to be informed”.

Code of Conduct of Montenegrin journalists, Article 9, A journalist is obliged to protect integrity of adolescent persons, different and disabled persons a) The media is obliged to comply with the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and to research with special care the information that effect children’s interests, b) The media is obliged to exercise special sympathy when interviewing, photographing or filming children under the age of sixteen.

Manual on the Rights of the Child by the Ombudsman of Montenegro

The Ombudsman directly encourages the child: Do the adults respect your privacy?

“You have the right to the protection of the law against interference with your private life, family, home, correspondence and attacks on your honor and reputation. Your right to privacy and protection of your personality should be observed by your parents and other family members, in school, teachers and other school personnel and students among themselves, employees in social and other institutions, journalists, police officers, judges and lawyers, as well as all others who, due to the nature of their business, may learn some personal data about you, the publication of which could be unpleasant and embarrassing for you”.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 3 Best interest of the child: All organizations dealing with children must act in accordance with the best interest of the child. The state will provide adequate care for the child if his or her parents, or other persons entrusted with parental duties, fail to do so.

Article 12 Respecting the views of the child: A child has the right to express his or her views freely and to have that view considered in the matters or procedures affecting the child.

Article 13 Freedom of expression: A child has the right to receive and impart information if such information is not harmful to him or her or others.

Article 14 Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

Article 16 Protection of privacy: A child has the right to privacy. It is prohibited to interfere with private and family life, correspondence and to attack honor and reputation of the child.

The child has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 17 of the Convention emphasizes the role of the media in dissemination of information that have a positive impact on children.

IFJ Guidelines for reporting on children;

Journalists and editors shall strive to maintain the highest standards of ethical conduct in reporting children's affairs, and in particular they shall:

- "avoid the use of stereotypes and sensational presentation to promote journalistic material involving children"
- "guard against visually or otherwise identifying children unless it is demonstrably in the public interest"
- "give children, where possible, the right of access to media to express their own opinions, without inducement of any kind"
- "use fair, open and straightforward methods for obtaining pictures and, where possible, obtain them with the knowledge and consent of children, or responsible adult, guardian or carer"
- "media should not report about conditions in which children live as mere circumstances only, but should continuously speak about the process that lead to or still leads to the occurrence of such circumstances".

In addition, these guidelines state that media: are obliged to disseminate information about rights of children and their safety; they must demonstrate special sensitivity when dealing

with children's issues, they must observe the media space and media contents for children; they must apply the highest professional and ethical standards in reporting about children; they must investigate all possible consequences of publishing materials about children; they must allow children to express their opinion in the media; they must ensure independent control of information that a child gave, but in a way to avoid putting the child at risk; they should never use children's photos of erotic character; they should check the credibility and competences of any organization that represents the child and speaks on his or her behalf.

UNICEF Ethical Guidelines for Reporting about Children

1. The dignity and rights of every child are to be respected in every circumstance.
2. In interviewing and reporting on children, special attention is to be paid to each child's right to privacy and confidentiality, to have their opinions heard, to participate in decisions affecting them and to be protected from harm and retribution, including potential harm and retribution.
3. The best interests of each child are to be protected over any other consideration, including over advocacy for children's issues and the promotion of child rights.
4. When trying to determine the best interests of a child, the child's right to have their views taken into account is to be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.
5. Those closest to the child's situation and best able to assess it are to be consulted about the political, social and cultural ramifications of any reportage.
6. Do not publish a story or an image which might put the child, siblings or peers at risk even when identities are changed, obscured or not used.

II. Very detailed Guidelines for interviewing children

MediaWise Manual in cooperation with UNICEF

In the chapter "Children and the Family" (pg.11) it is stated: "When writing about children placed in public care – a children's home, boarding school, foster family, or 'respite care' - ...have you asked the children and included their views?"

Chapter "The Child's Identity" (pg.19) Have you recorded the child's identity in your coverage? Did you check with the children and their parents about how they want to be described?"

ANNEX II: CASE STUDY KOLASIN

The article entitled “*Boys raped them, assaulted them and extinguished cigarettes on their bodies*” for which it turned out only a few days later that it was all invented, represents an example of media reporting about children that should not be published by any media agency. Three girls have allegedly admitted to their foster parents that older boys have raped them on several occasions while they were living in the Children’s Home “Mladost” in Bijela. The article is unprofessional from the journalistic point of view, it is sensationalist, and it insults children and violates their legal rights.

The article is **unprofessional** in journalistic terms, because it does not respect the basic criterion of fair journalism, which is to observe “the highest standards **with regard to data accuracy** in media reporting about issues involving children” (the first obligation in the document Guidelines and principles of the International Federation of Journalists for reporting on children). The author of the information failed to check the story with a sufficient number of sources, especially having in mind the severity of charges – a criminal offense of sexual abuse of children. The journalist and the editor published this article without obtaining confirmation from any of the official sources – the prosecutor’s office, the police, the center for social work, the director of the Children’s Home “Mladost”. They only had the statements of the foster mother and the “neighbour of the family where the sisters were staying, who did not want her name to be mentioned”. The author of this article uses the words “allegedly”, “we learned from unofficial sources”, “it is clear”, “they claim that”, which confirms that the author knew that he does not possess credible information. The article is **sensationalist** because it begins with the striking title showing the worst circumstances of a criminal offense and uses strong words in the text that follows: “they had hysterical outbursts”, “a very difficult and painful story”, “the most terrible thing I have ever heard and it is horrible that...”, “I am shocked”, “shocking news”. The author did not observe the fundamental principle of ethics – **the best interest of the child**. The public has the right to be informed about the abuse of children placed in institutions and the duty of the journalist is to report about this, but it is also the duty of the journalist to “carefully consider the effects of publishing each material related to children and to reduce the harmful effect to minimum” (IFJ Guidelines). In this article the journalist caused a lot of damage to the girls, because he published sensitive and intimate details, including health information about them: “they were forced to satisfy them orally”, “they were forced to oral sex every day”, “they were forced to

dance naked', 'foster mother took one of the girls to gynecological examination and I know that she had an infection', 'I know that since the first day of their arrival to Kolasin the girls have been taking therapy due to the stress they suffered'. The whole story left permanent consequences for the girls, they were ashamed and the story **violated their dignity**, primarily because it revealed all these facts to the public, but also because of the bad journalist practice, and the girls turned out to be liars. The article induced a stereotype about the Children's Home "Mladost", that the children are bad and not socially adapted, or perhaps that many if not all girls get raped there and that all boys are potentially violent.

The journalist and the editor have violated the **right** of the girls **to privacy**, the right emphasized by all international documents and guidelines on the rights of the child. This case is specifically mentioned by the Ombudsperson of Montenegro in the brochure Children and the media (2010): "Always change the name and blur the face of the child if you know that the child is victim of sexual abuse or exploitation". The journalist failed to observe those guidelines, he published sufficient data that there was no doubt who the girls were: "sisters P.P. (10), M.P. (8) and V.P. (7)", "placed in a foster family in Kolasin", "foster mother, who is a mother of four children and worked for thirteen years in an institution for children without parents in Romania". It is certain that there are not that many foster families with such characteristics in Montenegro, especially in Kolasin with the population of 3000. If there were still those who did not recognize the girls, the journalist added information about the father of these girls: "accusations by B.P. that his three juvenile daughters were raped and abused while they were staying in the 'children's home'".

ANNEX III: EXAMPLES OF REPORTING ABOUT CHILDREN IN SLOVENIA

Best practice example: “Godparents in Slovenia”

In a whole set of humanitarian activities in Slovenia, following the beginning of the economic crisis, a best practice example is the activity of the Union of friends of youth Ljubljana Moste-Polje (Zveza prijateljev mladine Ljubljana Moste-Polje), that developed from a local activity into a state-wide one. In the activity “Godparents in Slovenia” - “Botrstvo v Sloveniji” individuals donate EUR 30 per month to a child whose parents cannot pay for expensive extra-curricular activities, such as sports or arts.

After a year this activity was supported by Val 202 (program of Slovenia public radio and TV station), they broadcasted a set of 10-minute shows in which they presented each time the story of one family. But increasingly, the children were not only speaking about their wishes to attend ballet classes, play the piano, practice gymnastics or soccer, but about hunger, shame and loneliness. By admitting the state of poverty, Val 202 unexpectedly initiated a public discussion, the Government got the message that it needs to change social welfare legislation, 2876 children got a “godparent” and a total of EUR 1.3 million were collected.

How did Val 202 provide media support to the activity Botrstvo u Sloveniji? All of the 52 shows were recorded by a journalist who prohibited posting of video recordings on the portal. Contacts between children and the donors were published without names being used, donations go directly for the payment of meetings, lunches or in the form of payment orders. In the radio station, no one but her knows the names of the families – she edits herself the recorded materials. Names of the family members were changed, there is no mention of the specific places of residence or regions, no specific diseases are mentioned, names of streets and schools are not published. In two cases, children were identified in the local community, but their identity did not reach the media.

An example of good response of the institutions: the “Anja” case

After the divorce of her parents, the 12-year old Anja did not want to live with either one of her parents. She contacted the media to help her find other parents, or otherwise she intended to commit suicide. The daily paper Slovenske novice godine published her story with all the personal information in it. After that, most of the other media agencies reported

on the continuation of this story, with all the details about the girl and her family – until the TV show Trenja was broadcasted by one of the commercial TV stations.

Prior to the beginning of this show, which was broadcasted live, the Ombudsperson at the time sent a warning to the editors of this show: “that... in the preparation of this article and reports involving children, a journalist should be especially careful, and that in search for higher number of viewers, it is often forgotten that the rights of the child must be respected”. At the same time, the district prosecutor issued a temporary instruction prohibiting the producers of the TV show Trenja from publishing the identity of the girl, her photos, recordings, data, comments and views about this case. A similar prohibition was issued by the father of the girl with regard to two additional media agencies. The editors were forced to change the concept of the show.