



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
The Representative on Freedom of the Media**

Best Practice Sharing Conference on Public Service Broadcasting Models

**Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
22-23 May**

Opening Statement by Dunja Mijatovic

22 May 10:00 h

- Almost one year ago we held the 15th Central Asia Media Conference here in Bishkek and it is with great pleasure that I am again a guest of this beautiful city.
- It was also one year ago that we decided to organize a regional conference on public service broadcasting.
- Kyrgyzstan is the first country in Central Asia with a public service broadcaster. The first phases of such a transformation are the most challenging ones.
- I am pleased that our conference brings broadcasting and media policy experts from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova and Mongolia and Germany.
- We all share an interest in exchanging experiences about public broadcasting and the various ways and models to reform a State broadcaster.
- Established in 2010, the Kyrgyz Public Broadcasting Company has only recently gone through intensive changes and they are fresh in mind. We hope to gain from their experience.

- These two days we have not come together to only look at achievements and successes of public service broadcasting models in all these countries.
- The transformation from State television to public service broadcasting is not easy after so many years. There is no easy solution. But the healthy impact it has on a society and its democratic development are worth the often painful efforts.
- There is a lot to gain: Better than most other broadcasting models, a public service broadcaster is able to create social cohesion and national identity as well as promote a country's common culture and heritage in a credible, trustworthy and natural way.
- In contrast to state-controlled broadcasters it offers the credibility and a plurality of viewpoints, and for more creative and editorial freedom – all of which can result in a more attractive and competitive programming.
- In contrast to a commercial broadcaster, it can also afford to ignore the pressure of the market and cannot become the political instrument of its owners or sponsors.
- What makes public service broadcasting so unique is that it is controlled by the public, funded by the public and made for the public.
- Thus, it diminishes undue control by the state and also by big financiers – two major problems in this region.
- I hope that the discussions here will show also the potential of the model to solve two major problems that are frequently debated in broadcast media in Central Asia and beyond.
- The first problem is the discussion about the so-called “Information Security,” a term that is often misunderstood as the need for more control over the broadcast media allegedly needed to exercise sovereignty over one's territory. I hope that the discussions here will show that information security is not about territories but about hearts and minds of people in the country, whose trust in their authorities depends on objective, relevant and credible information. Public Broadcaster are a way to re-establish the link to the audiences that often migrate to alternative information sources as satellite channels or the Internet when they feel that the information offered by the national broadcaster has nothing to do with their lives.
- The second problem is the frequent complaint that broadcast media is too often used as a political instrument if it remains in the hands of single potent

investors or under control of the government. Here, public service broadcasting can be a solution and provide balanced reporting in public interests rather than in someone's interest.

- Public service broadcasting if it follows the basic principles and best practices that we will discuss here today and tomorrow can help to reestablish stronger bonds and reconnect to national audiences by funding and reporting that is only accountable to the public.
- 'Thank you's go to:
 - The Government of Kyrgyzstan and OTRK for being great host
 - The OSCE Centre in Bishkek and Internews Kyrgyzstan for helping organizing this conference.
 - The other OSCE field operations that supported us by bringing country delegations here.
 - And last, but not least, the donors
 - o Finland and
 - o The Netherlands

I am looking forward to a lively discussion.