

INTRODUCTION

Information has always been a feature of power. With information comes power and, with the exclusive control and use of information, power is augmented. In the past two decades, the world has been swept by the wave of freedom of information laws. These laws grant every individual a human right to access to information held by government bodies. Large part of this revolution has been the countries in the process of democracy building, transiting from the authoritarian rule to democratic society.

This master thesis explores the exercise of the access to information, as human right, in the two transitional countries of Southeast Europe, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. The aim of the research is to provide answers to the following questions: What were the main driving forces for introducing and monitoring the implementation of access to information in both countries? How much does existing arrangements regarding access to information (normative, institutional, political) influence the implementation of the FOI laws? Are the citizens of BIH and Serbia able to effectively exercise this right? In which way has the access to information contributed democracy building in the two countries?

Result of the comparison will allow drawing on the models and means in which this right can be enhanced. In this sense, the comparison of the Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia are particularly fruitful. The two countries have been facing almost the same challenges of transition: widespread corruption, lack of media freedoms, undeveloped or problematic civil society, weak state institutions. Even with the war in Bosnia, transitional narratives are similar. At the same time, the two countries opted for different models of access to information, where only one actually works.

The sources that will be consulted are books and academic articles of relevant authors from the field of freedom of information, freedom of expression, accountability, civil participation, democratization, media and civil society. I use the legal analysis of the FOI laws and strategies, existing empirical researches and report on implementation. Interviews with experts in the fields, researchers, journalist and civil society representatives will be included, too.