



In the context of the *Mediaforum* special it should be noted in advance that typical media projects like literacy or health campaigns for the southern developing countries, don't play a role in Middle and East Europe.

*Renovabis* conceded that media work in the countries of the former Eastern bloc was always of importance. Besides the main areas of concern – pastoral work (including building), social and educational projects as well as the promotion of the laity in the Church – *Renovabis* also referred to media work in the annual reports as an independent area in order to stress the significance.

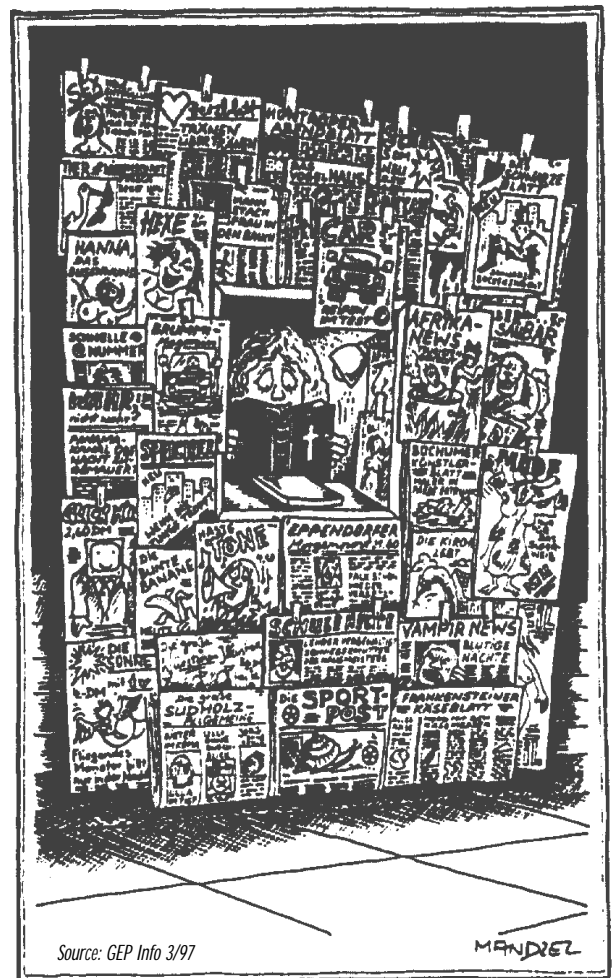
Since the official opening in 1993, 252 media projects have received financial support, which comes to a total of 8.1 million DM. In 1998 alone there were 63 projects approved (5.5% of all projects) with 1.9 million DM (2.8% of the total project budget).

The main emphasis was centred in Poland, where between 1994 and 1998, 34 media initiatives were subsidised with 1.3 Million DM followed by "international projects" (32) and Russia (26).

In the few years in which *Renovabis* exists we can hardly speak from distinct trends, as the countries that *Renovabis* are concerned with are extremely heterogeneous not only with regard to the number of Catholics, but also with regard to the political, economic and social restrictions: While in the Ukraine the religious programme "Credo" has been on air of the state-owned radio station for the past two years, two young people will be trained in Moldavia to bring out the first diocesan newspaper, and in Poland the diocesan radio stations have been struggling for years against commercial competitors to gain the highest number of listeners and are developing new forms of co-operations in order to be more successful on the advertising market.

Moreover, the support of the local Churches of its own media and the extent to which they present themselves in the different kinds of media systems, is according to our experiences very diverse. In some countries Catholic people feel that they are left on their own, many complain that the support of the Church authorities is limited to "verbal" aid.

Contrary to some of our partners in Eastern Europe, *Renovabis* did not see the re-evangelisation, i.e. the providing of religious basic knowledge – which may be justified in the USSR succession states, as they were cut off from world church developments and basic religious information for over 70 years – as the only purpose and priority of Catholic media work. *Renovabis* considered it at least equally important, to stimulate the Church's dialogue with all groups of society, to bring in Christian views and visions in the process of democratisation, to give a voice to the new or old "under-privileged" (social or ethnical fringe groups), to fight for the preservation of God's creation and also to stimulate the recognition of Christian values like tolerance and a peaceful co-existence.



Source: GEP Info 3/97

Even if the media cannot remedy all that is wrong, cannot directly change the living circumstances of poor populations and cannot create democratic states, they do in many cases bring it to the consciousness of society and so bring an awareness to matters of concern. They can also bring new patterns of orientation to the so-called “transformation countries” which help people in this time of great change.

It is much the same in the media’s contribution to evangelisation: Of course books, radio or television programmes can’t substitute a priest, however they can stimulate the discussion about faith, they can reach those with which personal contact is not possible for many reasons, they open an extra dimension for practising Catholics and last but not least media promote the community of Christians with other countries and continents, a matter of concern which e.g. the video journal KANA from Inigo Novosibirsk takes into account.

It has always been *Renovabis*’ most important aim, to help our partners to find their own way and be able to follow it, independent from western help. Therefore one of our priorities has been the training and further education of media personnel. The higher the professional skills are, the bigger the chances are, that through a high communicative competence and effective management and marketing, the initiatives will be able to successfully change the social environment.

This is one of the reasons why *Renovabis* is involved in the foundation of a journalistic training centre, which will be opened up near Warsaw next year. Christian media people from all fields will find training courses to be conducted under the motto “European, professional, Christian” (as in the former Robert-Schuman-Institute in Brussels). The fact that a centre is being built where media people from Western and Eastern Europe work together, underlines a further important matter of concern to *Renovabis*, to contribute to partnership, and to the “exchange of offerings”.

*Renovabis, August 1999*