

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX

2008

**The Development
of Sustainable
Independent Media
in Europe and Eurasia**



MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX 2008

The Development of Sustainable Independent Media in Europe and Eurasia

www.irex.org/msi

Copyright © 2008 by IREX

IREX

2121 K Street, NW, Suite 700

Washington, DC 20037

E-mail: msi@irex.org

Phone: (202) 628-8188

Fax: (202) 628-8189

www.irex.org

Project manager: Leon Morse

IREX Project and Editorial Support: Blake Saville, Drusilla Menaker, Mark Whitehouse

Copyeditors: Carolyn Feola de Rugamas, Carolyn.Ink; Kelly Kramer, WORDtoWORD Editorial Services

Design and layout: OmniStudio

Printer: Kirby Lithographic Company, Inc.

Notice of Rights: Permission is granted to display, copy, and distribute the MSI in whole or in part, provided that: (a) the materials are used with the acknowledgement "The Media Sustainability Index (MSI) is a product of IREX with funding from USAID."; (b) the MSI is used solely for personal, noncommercial, or informational use; and (c) no modifications of the MSI are made.

Acknowledgement: This publication was made possible through support provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under Cooperative Agreement No. DGS-A-00-99-00015-00.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed herein are those of the panelists and other project researchers and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or IREX.

ISSN 1546-0878

USAID

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is an independent agency that provides economic, development, and humanitarian assistance around the world in support of the foreign policy goals of the United States. The agency works to support long-term and sustainable economic growth and advances US foreign policy objectives by supporting:

- Economic growth, agriculture, and trade
- Global health
- Democracy, conflict prevention, and humanitarian assistance

USAID provides assistance in four regions of the world:

- Sub-Saharan Africa
- Asia and the Near East
- Latin America and the Caribbean
- Europe and Eurasia

With headquarters in Washington, DC, USAID's strength is its field offices around the world. They work in close partnership with private voluntary organizations, indigenous organizations, universities, American businesses, international agencies, other governments, and other US government agencies. USAID has working relationships with more than 3,500 American companies and over 300 US-based private voluntary organizations.

IREX

IREX is an international nonprofit organization specializing in education, independent media, Internet development, and civil society programs. Through training, partnerships, education, research, and grant programs, IREX develops the capacity of individuals and institutions to contribute to their societies.

Since its founding in 1968, IREX has supported over 20,000 students, scholars, policymakers, business leaders, journalists, and other professionals. Currently, IREX is implementing 40 programs in more than 50 countries with offices in 17 countries across Europe, Eurasia, the Middle East and North Africa, and the United States. IREX serves as a major resource for universities, governments, and the corporate sector in understanding international political, social, economic, and business developments.

In spite of efforts to bring legislation more in line with European standards, no significant changes occurred in 2007 regarding freedom of the media. Partisanship and self-censorship continue to undermine the quality of reporting in Moldova. Citizens do not have free access to multiple sources of information, especially in rural areas.



MOLDOVA

The year 2007 saw many local elections in Moldova, including the battle for Chişinău mayor. While the Communist Party (PCRM) won a third of the vote, the democratic opposition parties created alliances and managed to secure non-communist administrations in about two-thirds of the districts. In Chişinău, the communist candidate for mayor lost in a landslide to a young liberal, and the PCRM could not preserve its majority in the capital's city council.

After the elections, Moldova's president agreed to the conditions Russia put forward in exchange for lifting the embargo on Moldovan wine. Closed-door negotiations on the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict continued. Unfortunately, improving relations with Russia coincided with worsening relations with Romania, to the point of throwing out of the country two Romanian diplomats in late 2007. The Moldovan authorities accused Romania of "permanent aggression" because Moldovans living in Romania are treated, ethnically and linguistically, as genuine Romanians.

Chişinău also focused on its relations with the EU, anticipating the completion, in February 2008, of the EU-Moldova Action Plan. Although Brussels officials mentioned some "progress" towards democratization, they also pointed to problems with judicial independence and freedom of the media.

In spite of efforts to bring legislation more in line with European standards, no significant changes occurred in 2007 regarding freedom of the media. Partisanship and self-censorship continue to undermine the quality of reporting in Moldova. Citizens do not have free access to multiple sources of information, especially in rural areas. Profitable media businesses are an exception, although advertising revenues have been growing. Trade associations face a media community divided along political lines, and the authorities turn a deaf ear to NGOs supporting freedom of expression.

Therefore, panelists' scores show that the media in Moldova still face an "unsustainable, mixed system." Moldova remained in the lower third of countries in Europe and Eurasia based on overall score. As with last year, only Objective 5, Supporting Institutions, achieved a score greater than 2.00.

MOLDOVA AT A GLANCE

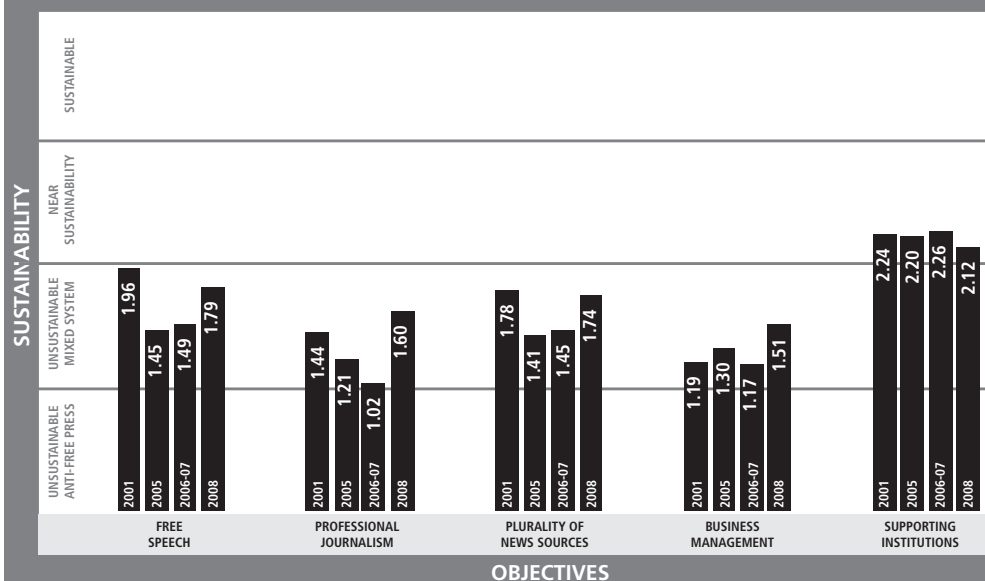
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 4,320,490 (July 2007 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Chişinău
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Moldovan/Romanian 78.2%, Ukrainian 8.4%, Russian 5.8%, Gagauz 4.4%, Bulgarian 1.9%, other 1.3% (2004 census, *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Eastern Orthodox 98%, Jewish 1.5%, Baptist and other 0.5% (2000 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages (% of population):** Moldovan (official, virtually the same as the Romanian language), Russian, Gagauz (a Turkish dialect) (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2006-Atlas):** \$3.744 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2007)
- > **GNI per capita (2006-PPP):** \$2,880 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2007)
- > **Literacy rate:** 99.1% (male 99.7%, female 98.6%) (2005 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Vladimir Voronin (since April 4, 2001)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** Print: approximately 170 total newspapers in magazines, primarily in Romanian and Russian; Radio: 46; Television stations: 38 (www.moldpresa.md; www.cca.md)
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** N/A
- > **Broadcast ratings:** top ranked television: TV Moldova 1; top ranked radio: Radio Moldova
- > **News agencies:** Infotag, Basa-press, Reporter.MD, Moldpres (state agency), Info-prim Neo, InfoMarket, Deca-press, Flux, Novosti/Moldova.
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** \$23 million (Advertising Agencies Association of Moldova, 2007)
- > **Internet usage:** 727,700 (2006 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: MOLDOVA



Unsustainable, Anti-Free Press (0-1):

Country does not meet or only minimally meets objectives. Government and laws actively hinder free media development, professionalism is low, and media-industry activity is minimal.

Unsustainable Mixed System (1-2):

Country minimally meets objectives, with segments of the legal system and government opposed to a free media system. Evident progress in free-press advocacy, increased professionalism, and new media businesses may be too recent to judge sustainability.

Near Sustainability (2-3):

Country has progressed in meeting multiple objectives, with legal norms, professionalism, and the business environment supportive of independent media. Advances have survived changes in government and have been codified in law and practice. However, more time may be needed to ensure that change is enduring and that increased professionalism and the media business environment are sustainable.

Sustainable (3-4):

Country has media that are considered generally professional, free, and sustainable, or to be approaching these objectives. Systems supporting independent media have survived multiple governments, economic fluctuations, and changes in public opinion or social conventions.

OBJECTIVE 1: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Moldova Objective Score: 1.79

Panelists gave most of Objective 1's indicators scores similar to the overall average. However, two of them, Indicators 8 and 9, media access to international news sources and free entry into the journalism profession, scored roughly a point higher. On the low side, Indicators 2 and 5, broadcast licensing and preferential legal treatment for state media, received scores well below the average.

The majority of the panelists believed that media laws in Moldova are "quite good" and, as in previous years, the problems facing freedom of expression and access to public information are due to flawed implementation and lack of enforcement. The situation has worsened in terms of the frequency with which journalists are subject to assault. Petru Macovei, president of the Independent Press Association, believed that, "The year 2007 was a negative year for the media in Moldova, especially for the media that are independent from the government and the governing party. There have been many cases in 2007 when pressure was exercised on the media, access to information was denied, media outlets were harassed in courts and journalists were subject to straightforward assaults, all of which shows that there can be no talk of any sort of alignment to democratic standards. On the contrary, one should speak about Moldova's alienation from such standards, which has been confirmed by the seven ECHR [European Court of Human Rights] rulings made in 2007 against the Moldovan government in media cases."

Article 32 of the Constitution of Moldova guarantees the freedom of expression to all citizens. However, it is the same article in the Constitution that prohibits "defamation of the state and the nation, incitement to war of aggression, to national, racial or religious hatred, incitement to discrimination, territorial separatism, public violence, as well as other forms of expression threatening the constitutional order." Article 34 of the constitution guarantees access to information to all individuals. The panel participants welcomed the government's legislative initiative, approved on November 8, 2007, to eliminate from Article 32 of the constitution the phrase "undermining and defaming the state and the nation" in view of adjusting the laws to the provisions of Article 10 of the European Convention for Human Rights. This proposed amendment is pending Parliament's review and approval.

Moldova also has a press law, passed in 1995, and a broadcasting code, passed in 2006. The Press Law, in Article 1, "guarantees to all individuals the right to express freely their

views and ideas, to access truthful information on domestic and international events." It also prohibits "censorship of any type against periodicals and news agencies, interference with their information gathering and dissemination work." The Broadcasting Code "aims at, inter alia, guaranteeing to broadcasters the right to editorial freedom and freedom of expression, and establishing democratic principles for the operation of broadcasting in Moldova." No government authorization is needed for Internet access.

Article 304 of the Criminal Code is out of line with the European standards, since it provides for "a fine of 10,000 lei or 180 to 240 hours of community work or up to 2 years of imprisonment" for "libel against the judge or the person conducting the prosecution or contributing to justice, accompanied by charges of a serious, extremely serious, or exceptionally serious offense in connection with case reviews in court."

Another criminal offense is the "illegal collection and purposeful, unauthorized dissemination of information protected by law and concerning private life" (Criminal Code, Article 177), "the disclosure of criminal prosecution information in violation of an interdiction imposed by the individual conducting the criminal prosecution" (Criminal Code, Article 315), and "defiling the flag, coat of arms, or anthem of the Republic of Moldova or of any other state" (Criminal Code, Article 347). Additionally, the Administrative Code provides for up to 30 days imprisonment for libel and verbal abuse.

LEGAL AND SOCIAL NORMS PROTECT AND PROMOTE FREE SPEECH AND ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION.

FREE-SPEECH INDICATORS:

- > Legal and social protections of free speech exist and are enforced.
- > Licensing of broadcast media is fair, competitive, and apolitical.
- > Market entry and tax structure for media are fair and comparable to other industries.
- > Crimes against journalists or media outlets are prosecuted vigorously, but occurrences of such crimes are rare.
- > State or public media do not receive preferential legal treatment, and law guarantees editorial independence.
- > Libel is a civil law issue; public officials are held to higher standards, and offended parties must prove falsity and malice.
- > Public information is easily accessible; right of access to information is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Media outlets have unrestricted access to information; this is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Entry into the journalism profession is free, and government imposes no licensing, restrictions, or special rights for journalists.

Petru Macovei, president of the Independent Press Association, believed that, "The year 2007 was a negative year for the media in Moldova, especially for the media that are independent from the government and the governing party."

Anatol Golea, manager of TV7, expressed the opinion of the majority in the group when he said that "a number of laws on press freedom, access to information, and protection of journalists were passed as part of the EU-Moldova Action Plan implementation. But these documents, including the Broadcasting Code, are only declarative and their implementation can be substantially improved." Alexandru Dorogan, chairperson of the Association of Electronic Press (APEL), said in a January 3, 2008 interview with Info-Prim Neo news agency, "There have also been positive changes in legislation, especially in broadcasting, when the Broadcasting Code was passed and when, finally, we became able to hear more local music on more radio stations and speak seriously about the share of own and relayed TV programming. However, this is about all in terms of positive developments, as the current government continues turning the media outlets against each other and manipulating them, maintaining its control over 70 to 80 percent of the media and being unhappy, to boot, for not controlling the whole lot."

On May 3, 2007, Monitor Media news agency reported that a joint declaration by 15 foreign embassies and international organizations with offices in Moldova declared that the country had taken a step back, triggering concerns regarding how serious it is about keeping its commitments regarding media freedom. The signatories of the declaration reminded the Moldovan authorities about the numerous commitments and promises Moldova had made in relation to a number of international conventions and other documents.

Cases of freedom of speech violations usually do not trigger major public attention, since they are covered by only a small number of local television stations (all stations with national coverage are controlled by the authorities). Violations of freedom of speech and denied access to information can be challenged in court; however, the courts unfortunately do not always make their decisions independently.

Radio and television licenses are issued by the Broadcasting Coordinating Council (BCC), which, according to the majority of panel participants, does not behave as an independent body. Article 19 of the Broadcasting Code was

worded in such a manner as to allow the authorities to preserve their grip on the BCC and the public broadcaster Teleradio-Moldova (TRM) by selecting the BCC members according to how loyal they are to the PCRM rather than according to professional criteria.

"Broadcasting licenses are issued by the BCC on a competitive basis, but the process lacks transparency and comes under political pressure from the authorities," said Angela Zaharova, editor and anchor at Elita TV in Rezina. One BCC decision that triggered a public scandal was the withdrawal of the frequency used by the Bălți station FM-103.5, which was then awarded to a station set up on the day before the BCC's decision. Radio FM-103.5 was the only station in Bălți broadcasting original programming. Since its founding in 1994 the station had never been penalized or warned by the BCC.

On February 19, 2007 Monitor-Media reported that the head of the OSCE mission in Moldova, Ambassador Louis O'Neill, expressed his concern regarding the negative trends in Moldovan broadcasting. Speaking about the case involving the Bălți station, O'Neill said that this decision needed to be explained and justified in order to avoid the impression of being politically or financially motivated. Colleen Graffy, Deputy Assistant Secretary at the US State Department, said in February 15, 2007 interview to Monitor Media that BCC's arguments explaining their decision to suspend the license of FM-103.5 were not clear, and the measure was overly harsh since the Broadcasting Code stipulates that the radio station must first be warned publicly, then sanctioned, and only after that deprived of its license.

In June the Center Against Economic Crimes and Corruption (CCCEC) started a criminal investigation of an alleged case of bribery involving €60,000 requested by some BCC members. Six media NGOs (Independent Journalism Center, APEL, Union of Journalists of Moldova, Association of Independent Press (API), Center for Journalistic Investigations, Press Freedom Committee) issued a joint declaration in which they expressed their concern about the actions of the CCCEC. "Violation of procedures, intimidation through interrogations, 'warnings,' forced delivery to the CCCEC offices of individuals who were not suspects, mentioning €60,000 in the context of the Moldovan realities in which broadcasters operate: all these aspects raise questions as to the strength of the grounds on which the charges are based," the declaration read. The organizations signing the declaration also stated that it was likely that "the Center Against Economic Crimes and Corruption was used by the government or other interest groups affected by some of the decisions the BCC had taken in order to exercise pressure on its members and stop attempts to improve the situation in Moldovan broadcasting."

On July 31, 2007 BCC chairperson Corneliu Mihalache was removed from office by a majority vote of BCC members for "failure to disclose official documents." However, the new chairperson, Vlad Țurcanu, was unable to carry out his duties since *Monitorul Oficial* refused to publish the BCC decision in question, quoting ridiculous reasons, which prevented the decision from becoming effective. Later, a new majority emerged within the BCC, which chose a new chairperson, loyal to the PCRM, and *Monitorul Oficial* did not hesitate this time to publish the relevant BCC decision.

On October 2, 2007 Info-Prim Neo reported that 10 media and human rights NGOs published a declaration in which they showed that the procedure started by the BCC to reallocate the frequency previously used by the Romanian Television Corporation to broadcast its public channel TVR1 to Moldova was illegal and, consequently, the outcome of the competition for the frequency was illegal too.

A declaration published by the founders of Radio Vocea Basarabiei on December 19, 2007 stated that the BCC had not awarded the station a single license, although it had applied for 10. Vocea Basarabiei is among the few radio stations producing its own programming and giving radio access to the opposition. "Everything BCC does has led to the concentration of broadcasting in the hands of the authorities," said panelist Veaceslav Țibuleac, Vocea Basarabiei's manager.

According to Dmitri Kalak, laws are sometimes used as a "pretext to crack down" and for passing "questionable decisions." The majority of panel participants consider that the legal grounds on which the TVR1 license was reallocated were not strong enough. However, "BCC awarded broadcast licenses to state supported NIT TV for absolutely all the channels made available. The applicants already operating in certain communities covered by the licenses put up for competition were not awarded any. Elita TV managed to expand its broadcast area only by taking the BCC to court," noted Zaharova.

The most recent example illustrating the lack of fairness and transparency in BCC's decisions could be observed during its December 18, 2007 meeting, which canceled the competition for a number of frequencies due to the fact that some applications were incomplete. "The law says that incomplete applications are not even admitted to the competition. My question is why should the applicants who do submit complete files suffer a setback in this case [because others did not]?" said Zaharova.

Other than broadcast licensing, market access and the tax system for media are comparable to other business areas. Print media are exempt from VAT, with the exception of

"Although the Supreme Court of Justice has recommended to judges to offer less protection to public figures in defamation cases, this is not happening in practice", said Vladislav Gribincea.

advertising. "Formally, the legislation guarantees unrestricted market access for independent media. However, the legal and regulatory framework is not encouraging for the media and media support mechanisms are not widely used, which reduces the possibilities for a pluralist and independent media landscape to develop," said Petru Macovei, director of the Independent Press Association.

The year 2007 witnessed an increase in the number of cases when the police or others abused journalists and denied them access to public events. On January 15, 2007 the offices of the *Timpul de dimineata* daily were stormed by some 50 people, throwing eggs at the journalists and abusing them verbally. It seemed that the group, which included priests, was angry about a story published two days before, where the paper stated that Prime Minister Vasile Tarlev had turned the Nativity of Christ Cathedral in Chișinău into an election pulpit on the occasion of Julian Calendar Christmas by holding a speech in front of the churchgoers as they were attending mass. The police did not interfere in the protests.

On March 27 a PRO TV team was taken into custody as they were filming a group of liberal politicians on their way to the graves of the pre-World War II National Assembly members, where they were planning to lay flowers. DTV and TV7 journalists were treated brutally and their videotapes were erased.

On April 22 a citizen distributing free issues of *Democratia* newspaper on the streets of Chișinău was placed in custody by the police under the pretext of violating public order by engaging in a forbidden activity. According to a statement made by *Democratia*, two police officers from the Rascani police precinct in Chișinău seized 67 issues of the publication.

On June 8, the police raided, without a warrant, the offices of Euro TV Chisinau, which had reported on violations of the electoral legislation and showed on-air a number of ballots found in the neighborhood of the television station's premises. Instead of starting an investigation into the matter, the police chose to harass the journalists.

On August 17 Communist MP Boris Ștepa assaulted the cameraman from TV Prim Glodeni, who was filming a heated

discussion during a meeting of the Glodeni city council. On September 11 the police tried to prevent journalists from filming a protest meeting held in front of the Foreign Ministry in Chişinău by covering their camera lenses.

PRO TV journalist Angela Gonta and cameraman Vlad Culiomza were assaulted by police on October 19 as they were reporting on the eviction of a person from an apartment building in Chişinău. On December 28, a UNIMEDIA (a popular news site) reporter was assaulted by unidentified individuals while he was filming President Vladimir Voronin at the opening of the country's main Christmas tree in central Chişinău.

The cases of aggression against journalists are usually covered by the opposition media. The authorities usually do nothing to punish the perpetrators.

Public media are not legally entitled to preferential treatment. In reality, the authorities discriminate, both economically and in terms of access to information, against media that express critical views of the government. The public media and the media loyal to the authorities are given preference when public agencies, ministries, and state enterprises buy advertising. The way the Council of Observers is selected and approved allows the authorities to maintain their control over TRM. The authorities subsidize the former governmental papers *Moldova Suverana* and *Nezavisimaya Moldova*, which have been privatized but have maintained their old editorial policy. For example, according to a June 14, 2007 Monitor Media report, the government decided to pay MDL 84,000 to help "the NGOs of the Moldovan Diaspora" subscribe to the former governmental papers *Moldova Suverana* and *Nezavisimaya Moldova*.

Further, district councils publish local newspapers whose editorial content is under their control. "District authorities force their employees to subscribe to the so-called 'district newspapers' funded from the local budgets," said Angela Zaharova.

In terms of legal guarantees of editorial independence, in practice there is very little at state media. Although there has been some progress at TRM, it has yet to become a truly public broadcaster. The BCC is still under control of the state. Further, the privatization of the Chişinău city broadcasters, Radio Antena C and EuroTV, in essence became a splitting of property between the PCRM and the Christian Democratic Popular Party (PPCD). Editorial independence has so far not flourished despite the privatization.

Any individual who feels defamed may file civil charges, according to article 16 of the Civil Code. The offending information must be retracted damages paid unless the

defendant can prove that the information is true to the smallest detail. The law does not impose a ceiling on how much damages an individual can ask for. Good faith, journalistic ethics, and public interest are not relevant defenses. The defendant must also prove that any editorialized judgments are supported by the facts as well.

"Although the Supreme Court of Justice has recommended to judges to offer less protection to public figures in defamation cases, this is not happening in practice. Moreover, politicians tend to win defamation cases quite often, and damages awarded to them are not lower, and sometimes are even higher, than damages awarded to regular citizens. One tends to think that this is happening due to the limited independence judges have, who are tempted to side with politicians even on claims that are obviously unfounded by issuing poorly justified rulings," said Vladislav Gribincea.

Internet providers, however, are not held liable for the content published by their clients online.

According to the Access to Information Law passed six years ago, any individual legally residing in Moldova can request any information or documents from authorities or public institutions without having to justify their request. All the panel participants agreed that public information has not become more accessible. "Low and middle rank public officials avoid speaking to journalists without approval from their superiors," said Petru Macovei, director of the Independent Press Association.

Vasile Spinei, Acces-Info director, felt that "The Access to Information Law is an instrument that could substantially improve the work of journalists, especially since this important piece of legislation has exhaustive provisions on the judiciary and other forms of protection of the right to access to information. Unfortunately, in contrast to the high number of cases of denial to access of information, there are few cases of journalists going to court." Not all journalists are aware of how to request public information, although there are many media NGOs educating journalists and civil servants on the access to information legislation, both in Chişinău and in the provinces.

On March 23, 2007 the Parliament passed a law abolishing the live broadcasts of Parliament sessions on national radio and television. The sessions can be broadcast only with a decision of the TRM management. In late June, the private radio station Vocea Basarabiei declared it was ready to broadcast the Parliament's sessions live at its own expense, but no decision has been made as yet on allowing this.

On February 9, 2007 a Bălți judge asked DECA-press news agency reporter Ana Butnariuc to leave the court as it was holding a public hearing involving a former communist MP. The judge gave no reasons, saying only that it was his prerogative to request so. On July 19, 2007 the president's press service denied access to journalists into a meeting of the president with Bălți city officials. Moreover, the representative of the press service forbade journalists to make recordings while the president was speaking with a group of pensioners in one of the city's residential areas, justifying this ban by saying "the official part has finished." Dmitri Kalak, deputy chief editor with *Ekonomicheskoe obozrenie* newspaper, noted that "some journalists are not performing up to professional standards, which is used as a formal reason to deny them access."

The government does not restrict in any way the access of the media to foreign news and information sources, including online. The only real hurdle is the media's financial capacity.

Any individual may become a journalist. The government imposes no restrictions, in terms of licensing or otherwise, except for the accreditation requirement. Journalists are required to receive accreditation in Moldova under the Press Law of 1994. Most of the accreditation provisions therein concern the accreditation of foreign journalists in Moldova (articles 21, 22, 23, and 25). Foreign journalists are accredited in Moldova by the Foreign Ministry in accordance with the Regulation on the Accreditation and Professional Activity of Journalists in Moldova, passed by the government in 1995.

Article 21(2) of the Press Law provides the legal requirement to seek accreditation with public authorities: "Periodic publications and news agencies may accredit journalists with public authorities, as well as for artistic and sports events, according to the relevant procedure." This ambiguous provision has caused internal regulations to emerge, whereby public institutions establish their own journalist accreditation rules. Some of these regulations were never made public. Some authorities abuse these provisions and refuse to accredit journalists.

On December 20, 2007 a team of journalists from Romania were denied access to a press conference given by President Voronin. The president's press service stated later that the journalists in question "were not accredited by the Foreign Ministry to work on the territory of Moldova." In reality, however, Razvan Emilescu (Radio Romania) does have an accreditation from the Foreign Ministry, while Flori Tiulea (Rompres) had applied for accreditation in June 2007 but has not received yet a response, reported Monitor Media on December 21, 2007.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Moldova Objective Score: 1.60

In this objective, most indicators scored very close to the overall average. Indicator 7, modern equipment, was the leading indicator, slightly more than a half point ahead of the average. Trailing by a noticeable margin, however, was Indicator 5, pay levels for journalists.

The majority of the panel participants believed that in general Moldovan journalists do not observe professional standards. Fact checking, the use of multiple sources, interviewing experts, and background research are all well known rules but are applied only selectively. "The media are generally dominated by 'news-peg journalism,' when a newspaper or a newscast is composed exclusively of reporting from various meetings, press conferences, or press releases. It is seldom that the views of all of the participants in an event are reported, it is also seldom that multiple sources of information are used," said Dmitri Kalak, deputy chief editor of *Ekonomicheskoe obozrenie*. The rest of the panel participants agreed with Kalak when he said that sometimes even the "reputable" media use yellow-journalism techniques. "A trend has emerged, where the media loyal to the authorities use yellow-journalism methods to lash out at political opponents, and they often resort to deceptive moves in order to provoke the opposition," remarked Vasile Botnaru, Radio Free Europe bureau chief.

Petru Macovei, API director, said that "certain unscrupulous individuals take advantage of the journalists' lack of professionalism in order to discredit others. Here is an example: during the local elections of 2007, news agencies

JOURNALISM MEETS PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF QUALITY.

PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM INDICATORS:

- > Reporting is fair, objective, and well sourced.
- > Journalists follow recognized and accepted ethical standards.
- > Journalists and editors do not practice self-censorship.
- > Journalists cover key events and issues.
- > Pay levels for journalists and other media professionals are sufficiently high to discourage corruption.
- > Entertainment programming does not eclipse news and information programming.
- > Technical facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news are modern and efficient.
- > Quality niche reporting and programming exists (investigative, economics/business, local, political).

Sorina Ștefârță, chief coordinating editor at the Timpul daily, said that "it's up to the media outlet. As in Moldova the media are divided along political lines, it is quite usual to read the same news in three or four versions."

failed to double-check and disseminated a fake piece of news announcing D. Chirtoacă's withdrawal from the race for Chișinău mayor."

Sorina Ștefârță, chief coordinating editor at the *Timpul* daily, said that "it's up to the media outlet. As in Moldova the media are divided along political lines, it is quite usual to read the same news in three or four versions. For example, a news story about the president attending the opening of an apartment block for the military becomes a NIT TV piece about President Voronin's efforts to help the military." "All too many journalists are selective about events and report on them with bias," said Vasile Botnaru.

In Moldova there is a Code of Professional Ethical Principles for Journalists, adopted in 2000. These principles are similar to the rules widely accepted by international journalism associations. The Code states, among other things, that "the journalist must clearly differentiate between information and opinion, use only information that he considers reliable and comes from known sources; such information must be reported in an impartial manner; the journalist must not receive any direct or indirect compensation from third parties for the publication of any opinion or information; the journalist must respect the privacy of individuals." Unfortunately, the Ethics Committee of the Union of Journalists of Moldova has no practical power, although there have been numerous cases of serious ethical violations. Some examples of blatant ethical violations that the discussion participants mentioned were most of the *Moldova Suverana* articles signed by Mihai Conțiu and a program entitled *Masked Stories* on NIT TV. Dmitri Kalak observed that "payments for reporting on certain events is the norm in Moldovan journalism." One could not really say that this feature is characteristic only of private media or of a certain generation or category of journalists.

All the panel participants agreed that for economic and political reasons there is self-censorship in both public and private media; one of the reasons for this is journalists' fear to lose their job or upset certain political circles or certain officials. Kalak believed that the main reason why self-censorship exists is the lack of truly independent media

in Moldova. "Most print and broadcast media are controlled by political parties or businesses, which pursue their own interests." Self-censorship also involves editors and publishers.

Most of the panel participants agreed with Sorina Ștefârță, chief coordinating editor at the *Timpul* daily, that "stories are more important depending on what outlet covers them. For example, at Moldova 1 and NIT the news that President Voronin gave away some cell phones is more important than the assassination of the ex-prime minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto." Some private radio and television stations are also "careful" in their news coverage, lest they upset the authorities. The printed press are generally bolder and less dependent on the authorities than the broadcast media, whose licenses might not be renewed when they expire. Editors run the risk of being fired if they select and cover stories independently. This is true of both private and public media. "If there were no press conferences, the Moldovan media would be out of a job," said Vasile Spinei.

Eugen Urușciuc noted that most national media focus on events in the capital and are not interested in stories from the provinces. The low frequency of minority publications, except for the Russian and Gagauz ones, does not allow them to cover all the major events in a given period of time.

The panel participants all agreed that the wages journalists and other media professionals receive are not high enough to discourage corruption. This is true of both print and broadcast media. "The wages are much lower than the value and the social status a journalist ought to have," according to Sorina Ștefârță, chief coordinating editor with the *Timpul* daily. "Journalists often work without having a contract," said Nicolae Pojoga, photojournalist and senior lecturer at the Journalism Department of the State University.

"In Moldova journalists receive salaries (especially in the print media and most public media) which are not competitive with salaries paid in other professional areas and are not encouraging for journalists. Hence, many journalists seek additional jobs, working for two to three outlets at a time," said Petru Macovei.

The wages of journalists in the state media are lower than in private outlets, although the difference is not significant. Broadcast media tends to pay higher than print media. The average wage in print media is \$150 to \$200 monthly, while in broadcasting it is \$200 to \$250. Accepting bribes to produce favorable news stories is a widespread practice among journalists in Moldova. The situation of journalists working in small districts and towns is especially difficult. The average salary of a journalist working outside of Chișinău is about \$100 per month.

Entertainment programs overshadow news programs, although there has been a trend towards expanding the news coverage in broadcasting and news space in print. According to Anatol Golea, “Entertainment programs do not overshadow news programs, because they are very few. However, the newscasts are few too.” Most radio stations have hourly, five-minute newscasts, which are based on news agency feeds. Television stations lag behind the news, as there are no television newscasts during the day, only in the evening. The morning news broadcast by public stations usually repeats the news of the previous evening. Introducing day-time newscasts would attract more viewers to those stations.

The majority of panelists believed that the broadcast media are better equipped, although of all the television stations only the public television stations are able to provide live broadcasts from remote sites. Veaceslav Țibuleac, manager of Vocea Basarabiei radio station, noted “The technology available here is at least one generation behind. The quality of broadcasts is quite low.”

“Print media show a lack of modern printing technologies. Existing printers work in only one format, and the only color printer, owned by Prag 3, is outdated,” said Val Butnaru, manager of *Jurnal de Chișinău*. Newspapers do not have professional cameras and licensed publishing software, and do not subscribe to picture databases. The media in the provinces are equipped worse than the media in Chișinău.

Regarding niche reporting, the participants’ general opinion was that quality stories and programs are quite rare in Moldovan media. The main reason for this is the lack of money. As there is neither operating funds nor investment, the experience and knowledge of journalists trained by the Independent Journalism Center or abroad cannot be used effectively. Some media report better than others on specialized areas. For example, the public media conduct no investigations, preferring stories about how the government implements its strategies in various areas. The print media tackle economic issues in a more competent manner and more thoroughly than the broadcast media.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES

Moldova Objective Score: 1.74

A few indicators scored near the average score for Objective 3, but most received scores noticeably ahead or behind the average. On the high side, Indicators 4 and 5, news agencies and private broadcasters produce their own news programming, received scores more than half a point ahead of the average. Indicators 3 and 6, state media reflect the

“National coverage is a monopoly of the government. There are few alternative sources of information in rural areas,” said Vladislav Țibuleac.

political spectrum and transparent media ownership, received scores roughly a point lower than the average.

Most of the panel participants believed that obtaining multiple sources of information is still a problem, particularly in many rural areas. The population is still too poor to have a high level of access to the Internet, satellite television, and other paid news services.

There are private newspapers distributed nationally as well as local private newspapers. About seven percent of the population can afford to buy national newspapers. The papers published in Chișinău reach villages in the country with a delay of often two or three days.

Besides the TRM, there are three other quasi-national television stations—NIT TV, Prime (relaying the public Russian station ORT), and 2 PLUS (now using the frequency that used to be operated by the Romanian public station TVR1)—that are all controlled by the authorities. “National coverage is a monopoly of the government. There are few alternative sources of information in rural areas,” said Vladislav Țibuleac.

In some district towns there are television stations providing local news and information. Recently, cable television

MULTIPLE NEWS SOURCES PROVIDE CITIZENS WITH RELIABLE AND OBJECTIVE NEWS.

PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES INDICATORS:

- > A plurality of affordable public and private news sources (e.g., print, broadcast, Internet) exists.
- > Citizens’ access to domestic or international media is not restricted.
- > State or public media reflect the views of the entire political spectrum, are nonpartisan, and serve the public interest.
- > Independent news agencies gather and distribute news for print and broadcast media.
- > Independent broadcast media produce their own news programs.
- > Transparency of media ownership allows consumers to judge objectivity of news; media ownership is not concentrated in a few conglomerates.
- > A broad spectrum of social interests are reflected and represented in the media, including minority-language information sources.

“State-owned and public media are now more biased than ever,” said Sorina Ștefăruță. Dmitri Kalak had a different opinion, remarking that 2007 saw “a significant improvement at TRM, whose bias decreased significantly.”

has started to develop in Moldova’s villages. According to Monitor Media, in late December BCC data showed 20 percent of the 1500 villages with cable television. Panelists were hopeful that cable television would begin to address the problem of plurality of television news outside of the cities.

In radio, again, only TRM has national coverage, and there are a few other stations covering about two-thirds of the country. One of them is the former Chișinău City station Antena C, which has been privatized and is currently controlled by the PCRM. TRM dominates the rural landscape and covers stories from the angle of the party in government.

According to the November 2007 Public Opinion Barometer commissioned by the Institute for Public Policies, only 3.6 percent of respondents said the Internet was the most important news source, while 4 percent placed the Internet second. There is no official data on the popularity of blogs and news by SMS, but their popularity is on the increase.

Controlling broadcast licenses is the only, albeit indirect, way by which the government prevents citizens from having access to national and international media. One example in this respect, according to the panel participants, is the illegal auctioning of the frequency that used to be operated by the Romanian public channel TVR1; this was done to squeeze this station out of Moldova after relations between Moldova and Romania started to worsen. The legislation does not restrict listening to foreign broadcasters or reading foreign publications. However, with the exception of Russian publications, one cannot find print media from any other country due to economic reasons. Furthermore, in many ways Russian broadcasts still play a dominant role in Moldova’s information sphere.

The majority of the panel participants believed that Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova are not truly public institutions. The Popular Republican Party (PPR), an opposition party existing outside of the Parliament, broadcast a statement, covered by Monitor Media, on April 6, 2007 criticizing the public broadcaster TRM for not covering opposition parties. “Even when TRM reporters are there when an opposition party organizes a public event, the coverage is tendentious and

biased,” read the statement. It provided another example, when TRM did not cover four press conferences given by PPR. However, TV Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova cover, exclusively in a positive light, even the most insignificant events attended by PCRM leaders. A monitoring exercise has shown that Radio Moldova, unlike TV Moldova 1, is beginning to improve its professional standards by taking up the principles laid down in the Broadcasting Code and News Programs Ethical Rules. However, the share of news and stories told from an angle suitable to the government is still significant.

The media monitoring conducted during the local elections in June showed that “the public stations Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova covered the electoral activities and statements of the country’s president, the government, and the speaker of the Parliament intensively, giving preference to the governing party and ignoring the opposition. Election news was usually based on information originating with the Central Elections Commission and election councils, but not with the candidates themselves. Most newscasts were obviously designed to influence the audience in favor of the government by covering events only from the official angle. It was only towards the end of the campaign, just before the election day of June 3, and after a warning from the BCC regarding the lack of plurality of views and balance, that Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova started broadcasting information issued by the opposition. It is significant to note that on the morning of the second round of elections Moldova 1 dedicated more time in its newscasts to the president’s Bicycle Race Cup than to the elections themselves.

Monitoring carried out by 10 media NGOs, including the Independent Journalism Center (IJC), APEL and Acces-Info, between November 19 and 25 showed that “a high number of news items and stories are praising the government and are biased.” “State-owned and public media are now more biased than ever,” said Sorina Ștefăruță. Dmitri Kalak had a different opinion, remarking that 2007 saw “a significant improvement at TRM, whose bias decreased significantly.”

“Unfortunately, the state-owned media do not tackle the main issues affecting our society, such as corruption, poverty, migration, and the worsening of the situation in the villages. In some cases they mimic debates by inviting only people who are dependent on the authorities, complacent or incompetent. Even education and cultural programs are used for brainwashing,” noted Nicolae Negru, chief editor of *Mass Media in Moldova*.

Besides the state-owned news agency Moldpres, which covers news from the angle of the government, there are also several private news agencies in Moldova: Basa-Pres (whose owner is also the manager of Moldpres), Infotag, Info-Prim Neo, Reporter.md, InfoMarket, Deca-press and

Novosti-Moldova. The news agency Flux resumed operation in August. Private agencies can sell their product to any client, although not all media outlets can afford to subscribe. As a rule, the print and broadcast media quote their sources of information. News from international agencies is accessed on the Internet.

Private radio and television stations usually produce their news programs in-house. Besides simple news bulletins, PRO TV, NIT, Euro TV and the radio station Vocea Basarabiei also produce debates and cultural programs. In the country as a whole, original newscasts can be found at Radio Moldova, Vocea Basarabiei, Radio Free Europe, and BBC; the latter has a daily 15-minute program exclusively on Moldova. Two television stations complete the list: Moldova 1 and NIT. In Chi in u, the following stations produce local news: PRO TV, NIT, TV 7, TV 21, N4, and Euro TV. The news produced by private stations that are loyal to the authorities (NIT, N4) is not very different from the news broadcast by the public stations. The private stations PRO TV, TV 7, TV 21, Euro TV and Vocea Basarabiei cover their stories from multiple angles. In Bălți, Comrat, Cahul, Cimișlia, Edineț, Rezina, etc., there are local radio and television stations producing in-house newscasts in Romanian and Russian. "Broadcasters produce their own news, which, however, generally reflect the viewpoint of certain political forces and deny airtime to the opposition," said Anatol Golea, TV7 manager. "The media offer consumers ready-made opinions rather than facts. Radio Antena C, for example, included in its 11 p.m. news on December 11, 2007 an item six minutes long because it quoted an entire article from *Moldova suverna*," reported Angela Zaharova, of Elita TV Rezina.

According to the new Broadcasting Code and other laws, media outlets are under the obligation to identify their founders, although the founders are not always the true owners. "More often than not, the founders are just front people or businesses, while the true owners remain in the shadow and one can only guess who they might be. This situation is created by the absence of legal requirements regarding the disclosure of the owners' identity. This is why it is inaccurate to speak about monopolies or oligarchies in the media in Moldova. Disparate data about the concentration of several institutions in single hands do not warrant statements about monopoly or oligarchy," said Dmitri Kalak.

However, most of the panel participants believed that there is enough evidence showing that a number of radio and television stations have been bought, through front men, by the governing party, such as the city stations Antena C and Euro TV, which were privatized in early 2007 and ended up in the grip of PCRM and PPCD. "The local elections this year showed this to be true. PCRM has secured a monopoly in

broadcasting, as all nationwide television stations are in the hands of this party if we are to judge by their coverage of the elections," said Angela Sirbu. There have been no foreign investments in Moldovan media so far, and panelists felt that in the current environment there is no interest from investors with the exception of those from Russia.

Social issues are covered by the media from the viewpoint of the governing party. There have been no cases of journalists being harassed for covering minorities. Minority-language media face only financial difficulties. TRM has programs in Russian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Gagauz, and Yiddish. There are also publications in Russian, Ukrainian, Gagauz, and Bulgarian (the Jewish community publishes a newspaper in Russian). "The information space in Moldova is dominated by the language of the Russian minority. Other minority languages are for 'internal use,'" said Sorina Ștefârță. Private community media usually cover the entire range of social issues, albeit with a heavy dose of self-censorship.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Moldova Objective Score: 1.51

Most panel participants believed there has been a positive development in this respect determined by the rapid development of the advertising market. All indicators scored very close to the average with the exception of Indicator 5, government subsidies for private media, which scored a bit more than half a point higher.

Profitable media still represent an exception rather than the rule, however. Dmitri Kalak said, "Most media are

INDEPENDENT MEDIA ARE WELL-MANAGED BUSINESSES, ALLOWING EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT INDICATORS:

- > Media outlets and supporting firms operate as efficient, professional, and profit-generating businesses.
- > Media receive revenue from a multitude of sources.
- > Advertising agencies and related industries support an advertising market.
- > Advertising revenue as a percentage of total revenue is in line with accepted standards at commercial outlets.
- > Independent media do not receive government subsidies.
- > Market research is used to formulate strategic plans, enhance advertising revenue, and tailor products to the needs and interests of audiences.
- > Broadcast ratings and circulation figures are reliably and independently produced.

Vasile Botnaru said, "The independent media are not able to work in a free market because the Moldovan market is dominated by shadowy rules such as 'might makes right.'"

politically committed and profit is not their primary concern." The lack of investments is another factor hindering the development of both private and public media as profitable and professional businesses. The commissions made by small circulation newspapers fail to secure the revenues necessary to buy modern equipment. The same is true of printing operations, whether private or public. There are only two printers in Chi in u, one of which is owned by a party leader and the other one by the state. The poor quality of the print repels advertisers, who seek color and perfect print.

Private media draw funding from a number of sources, such as sales, advertising, and sponsorships. Public media are funded mainly by the state or local authorities (in the case of district newspapers), which renders them dependent on the political circumstances of the day. Unfortunately, advertising agencies do not work with all the newspapers and broadcasters. The private media critical of the government are avoided by some advertisers, even though their circulation may be higher than that of other media. State-owned companies, ministries, and governmental units advertise exclusively with the media that are loyal to the authorities. Private newspapers depend on politicians—whether opposition or in government—as they depend on sponsorship and political advertising. Vasile Botnaru said, "The independent media are not able to work in a free market because the Moldovan market is dominated by shadowy rules such as 'might makes right.'"

The advertising market in Moldova has seen a rapid development recently. In June 2007, it was estimated at \$23 million, which is 71.5 percent more than in 2006. "One of the indicators measuring the development of the market is the advertising expenditures per capita. This figure is directly proportional to the GDP per capita, which is an area where we are lagging behind," said Galina Zablovski, executive director of the Advertising Agencies Association of Moldova, to Basa-press.

About 57 percent (\$13 million) of advertising goes to television; television advertising grew by 85.7 percent in 2007. Radio gets about 11 percent (\$2.5 million), with a growth of 66 percent; print media get 8.7 percent (\$2 million), with a growth of 33 percent; and the Internet gets only 2 percent

(\$500,000), with a growth of 42 percent. The balance went to non-media advertising.

As compared to neighboring countries, Moldova is far behind in this area, however. "We have the lowest television advertising prices in the region, which means that there is potential here for massive development. We started at the very bottom, this is why we have to move quickly," said Serghei Starush, director general of the Star Communications Group.¹

There are more than 140 advertising agencies, but only a few of them play a significant role in the market. These are the multinationals, which arrived here in the region along with their clients. "Last year saw a major move, when Video International (which according to some estimates controlled 60 percent of television advertising) was pushed out of the market by a local company. Some television stations tried unsuccessfully to become involved in this business, and they had to give in to those who 'distribute' the advertising," noted economic analyst Vlad Bercu in a January 9, 2008 Moldova Azi article.²

"In 2007 there were positive changes in advertising. Newspapers receive advertising from advertising agencies," said Anatol Golea. About 60 percent of television advertising goes to only one station with national coverage. At all the other stations' advertising takes up about 7 percent of airtime, according to Golea. The Broadcasting Code limits advertising to 12 percent of airtime. The advertising market is only beginning to develop outside the capital and major cities. "I've seen advertising salesmen and businesses saying they were not interested in the local media," said Sorina Ștefăruță. "The advertising market is not looking yet at local broadcasters," said Zaharova.

Save for a few exceptions, the share of advertising revenues in Moldovan media is much below generally accepted standards in other countries. The revenues of the print media largely depend (60 to 70 percent according to the panelists) on subscriptions and sales. The situation is somewhat better in broadcasting, although not in local broadcasting.

As a rule, independent media receive no subsidies from the government. If private media received such subsidies, the government would expect positive coverage. However, as noted above, the government is an important advertiser and places those ads exclusively with media it sees as loyal to the parties in power.

As revenues are low, market research by Moldovan media is rare. Kalak thought, "For many publications advertising is an

¹ <http://www.azi.md/comment?ID=47617>

² IBID

important source of revenue. Therefore, in order to secure advertising they are ready to violate journalistic ethics or not run a story in return for advertising. Under the circumstances, one can't speak about market research and strategic planning." "The managers of local media have no access to professional advice. In order to put together a development program, the manager of a local television station has to turn to experts in other countries," said Angela Zaharova.

Audience measurements have been done in broadcasting since 2003 by the local offices of independent international companies. In 2007, 11 television stations were monitored. Advertising agencies generally recognize the results of the measurements. There is no circulation audit in Moldova. Therefore the circulation disclosed by newspapers (a legal requirement) is oftentimes phony. "I find it alarming that the media tend to inflate their circulation and pay for fake ratings in order to attract advertising. Although independent companies are measuring the ratings of broadcasters, not all advertisers recognize the results," said Kalak. "Local TV stations can't afford to assess their audience, which stalls any business dialogue with advertising agencies," said Zaharova. "It is imperative that the print media become engaged in circulation audits, and radio stations should be monitored more thoroughly in order to avoid an arbitrary distribution of advertising, which is happening now," said Vlad Bercu. Veaceslav Țibuleac felt that, "There are no credible organizations to monitor audiences, circulation, and Internet statistics."

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Moldova Objective Score: 2.12

The majority of the panel participants believed that this objective is stronger than the other ones, although it is not developing as needed. Individual indicators scored close to the average, with two exceptions. Indicator 1, trade associations, scored noticeably lower than the others. Indicator 3, NGOs supporting the media, scored nearly a point higher than the average.

There are two trade organizations working for media owners and providing services to members: API and APEL. API was founded in 1997 by the first independent local newspapers and by two news agencies with the purpose of providing support to politically independent media. API's slogan is "For a professional, unbiased, and profitable press." Today, API has a membership of 17 national and regional newspapers, three news agencies, IJC, and two freelance journalists. Over the years API has undertaken many activities, including providing legal, moral, and financial support to independent

"While API has shown over the years that it is capable of defending the interests of the print media, one could not say the same about broadcasting," noted Angela Zaharova.

publications and journalists, advocating their civil and professional rights, and providing training and professional development opportunities. It created a database to facilitate information exchange among members. It has tried to improve the newspaper distribution system and helped members secure new equipment, newsprint, and supplies needed to publish and distribute newspapers.

APEL was founded in 1999. It represents 22 broadcasters, production studios, and broadcast professionals. It is also works to improve media laws and protect the freedom of expression. APEL is on the frontline in the effort to transform TRM into a public broadcaster. APEL developed a draft law for this and lobbied, together with other NGOs, for its passage. It has monitored the implementation of the new Broadcasting Code, passed by Parliament in 2006. The political disagreements among the media represent a serious hurdle in the work of professional organizations in Moldova. "While API has shown over the years that it is capable of defending the interests of the print media, one could not say the same about broadcasting," noted Angela Zaharova.

The professional associations of journalists are also not very successful in bringing together journalists who are on different sides of the political spectrum. The Union of Journalists of Moldova (UJM) has lost a major part of its

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS FUNCTION IN THE PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA.

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS INDICATORS:

- > Trade associations represent the interests of private media owners and provide member services.
- > Professional associations work to protect journalists' rights.
- > NGOs support free speech and independent media.
- > Quality journalism degree programs that provide substantial practical experience exist.
- > Short-term training and in-service training programs allow journalists to upgrade skills or acquire new skills.
- > Sources of newsprint and printing facilities are in private hands, apolitical, and unrestricted.
- > Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, Internet) are private, apolitical, and unrestricted.

There are no legal restrictions on Internet access, neither for the public at large nor for journalists. Internet services are provided by Moldtelecom and many private providers, which have to use Moldtelecom's network.

membership. It is in conflict with the authorities, which are unresponsive to UJM's attempts to involve the government in supporting the media. Any journalist can become a UJM member, regardless of educational background, who has worked in the field for at least three years. UJM is a member of the International Federation of Journalists and associate member of the Romanian trade union MediaSind. The League of Professional Journalists, founded in 2004 by journalists who had left UJM because of its conflict with the authorities, exists only on paper and has no activities. The Association of Business Journalists provides professional assistance to journalists reporting on the economy.

The most active NGOs supporting independent media and fighting for the freedom of speech are the IJC, Press Freedom Committee, Acces-Info, and Media Impact. They monitor media laws and develop draft legislation to improve the legal framework governing media. They also provide legal assistance in court, train journalists, and work to bring them together. They work not only in Chişinău but also in the provinces. However, their watchdog role would have been much less effective had they not had support from abroad (from OSCE, Council of Europe, EU, and the US). Despite the efforts by NGOs and professional and trade associations, it is the international organizations that are most able to have impact in dealing with the government.

Journalism schools in Moldova (State University, International Free University of Moldova, European Studies University, State University of Comrat) are not attractive to media specialists who might serve as professors because of the low pay, while the young teachers do not have enough media experience to teach practical techniques. Journalism schools also lack equipment. Therefore, the media are not happy with the quality of the graduates. Paradoxically, although more and more journalism students graduate every year, the media in Moldova cannot find good journalists to work with, especially in fields requiring specialized knowledge, such as business, science, and culture. The panel participants mentioned the good quality of the IJC's Advanced Journalism School graduates, which has up-to-date equipment and emphasizes

practical training. Students also have opportunities to study abroad. Some of them return to Moldova.

Reporters, editors, and managers have the opportunity of upgrading their professional knowledge in short-term courses organized by IJC, UJM, API, APEL, Acces-info, and Media-Impact with support from international organizations. There is demand for courses in online journalism, photo journalism, management, advertising, design, radio journalism, and television. Course participants are usually granted permission to attend by their management. Participants attend for free, as the courses are underwritten by foreign donors.

Newsprint suppliers are private companies and there are no restrictions on newsprint supplies. Access to printers is not restricted either; there are both state-owned and public printers. The quality of printing services, at both state-owned and private providers, is of inferior quality due to the lack of money for equipment upgrades.

The newspaper distribution system outside Chişinău is a *de facto* monopoly of Poşta Moldovei, which commands monopolistic fees. Poşta Moldovei delivers the papers with delays, as newspaper distribution is not its main business. Private distributors have emerged recently in Chişinău and Bălţi, although most newsstands are affiliated to Moldpresa, the successor company to the state-owned Moldsoiuzpechat. Outside the capital, even if sufficient investment could be found to develop an alternative nationwide distribution system, it would likely not survive because of the small print runs of most newspapers.

Most transmitters are managed by the state company Radiocomunica ii. Sometimes, the transmitters mysteriously break down, as happened early this year when the Antena C journalists organized protests against the privatization of their station. Some television stations have their own transmitters, however.

There are no legal restrictions on Internet access, neither for the public at large nor for journalists. Internet services are provided by Moldtelecom and many private providers, which have to use Moldtelecom's network.

List of Panel Participants

Vasile Botnaru, bureau chief, Radio Free Europe, Chişinău

Anatol Golea, manager, TV 7, Chişinău

Vlad Gribincea, attorney, Lawyers for Human Rights Association, Chişinău

Dmitri Kalak, deputy editor-in-chief, *Ekonomicheskoe obozrenie*, Chişinău

Petru Macovei, executive director, Association of Independent Press, Chişinău

Nicolae Pojoga, photojournalist, senior lecturer, Journalism Department, State University of Chişinău

Vasile Spinei, chairperson, Acces-Info Center, Chişinău

Sorina Ştefârţă, coordinating chief editor, *Timpul de dimineaţă*, Chişinău

Veaceslav Țibuleac, manager, Vocea Basarabiei Radio, Chişinău

Eugen Uruşciuc, editor-in-chief, Deca-press, Bălţi.

Angela Zaharova, editor and anchor, Elita TV, Rezina

Angela Sirbu, director, Independent Journalism Center, Chişinău

Moderator

Nicolae Negru, editor-in-chief, Mass Media in Moldova, Independent Journalism Center, Chişinău

The Moldova study was coordinated by, and conducted in partnership with, the Independent Journalism Center, Chişinău.