

MEDIA

SUSTAINABILITY

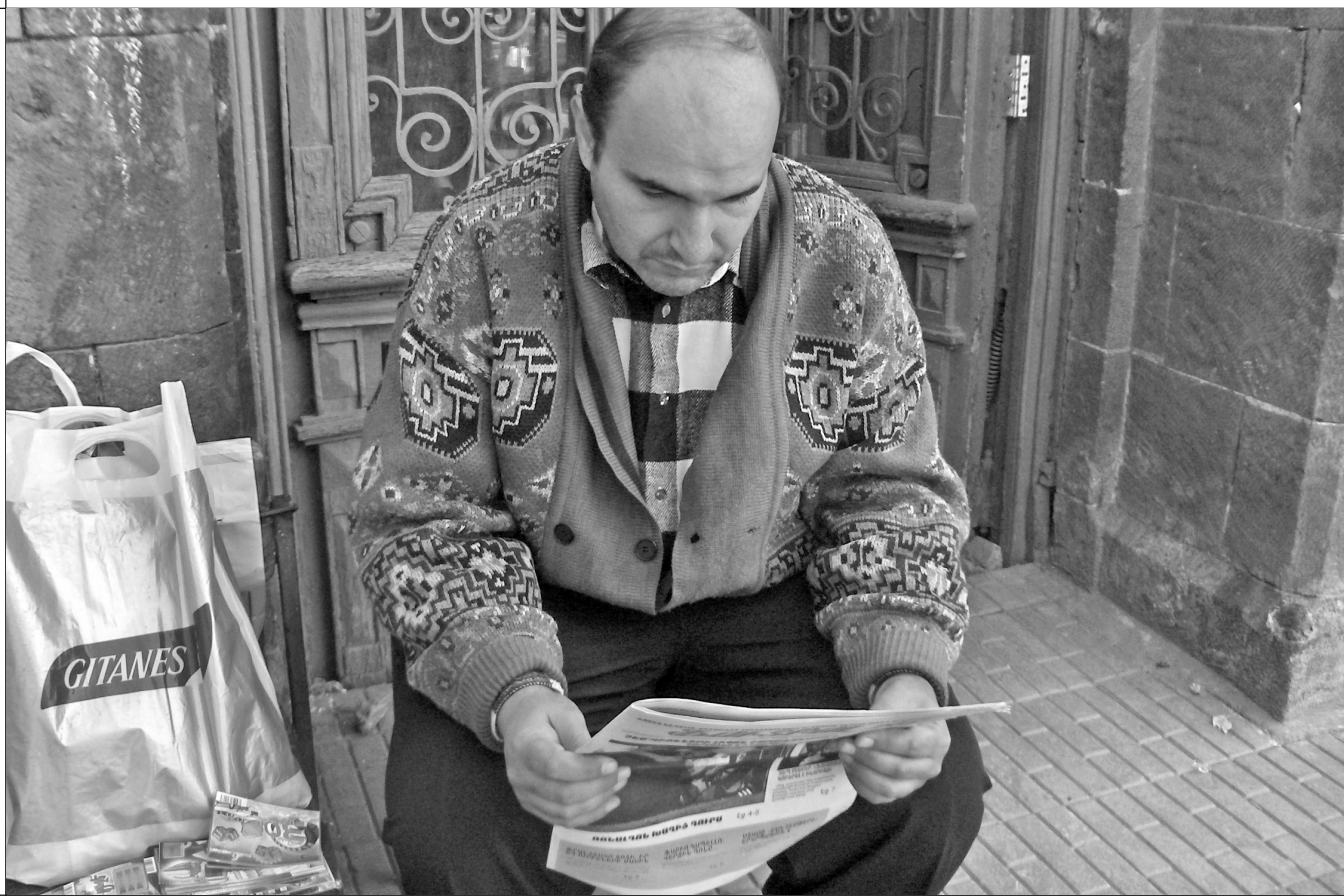
INDEX

2005



IREX

OVERALL, THE MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX (MSI) PANEL [IN ARMENIA] FOUND THE SECTOR ESSENTIALLY STAGNANT DURING 2005. THE ADVANCES IN MEDIA LAW AND A YEAR RELATIVELY FREE OF ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS LED TO THE ONLY SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT IN THE MSI RECORDED BY THE 2005 PANEL.





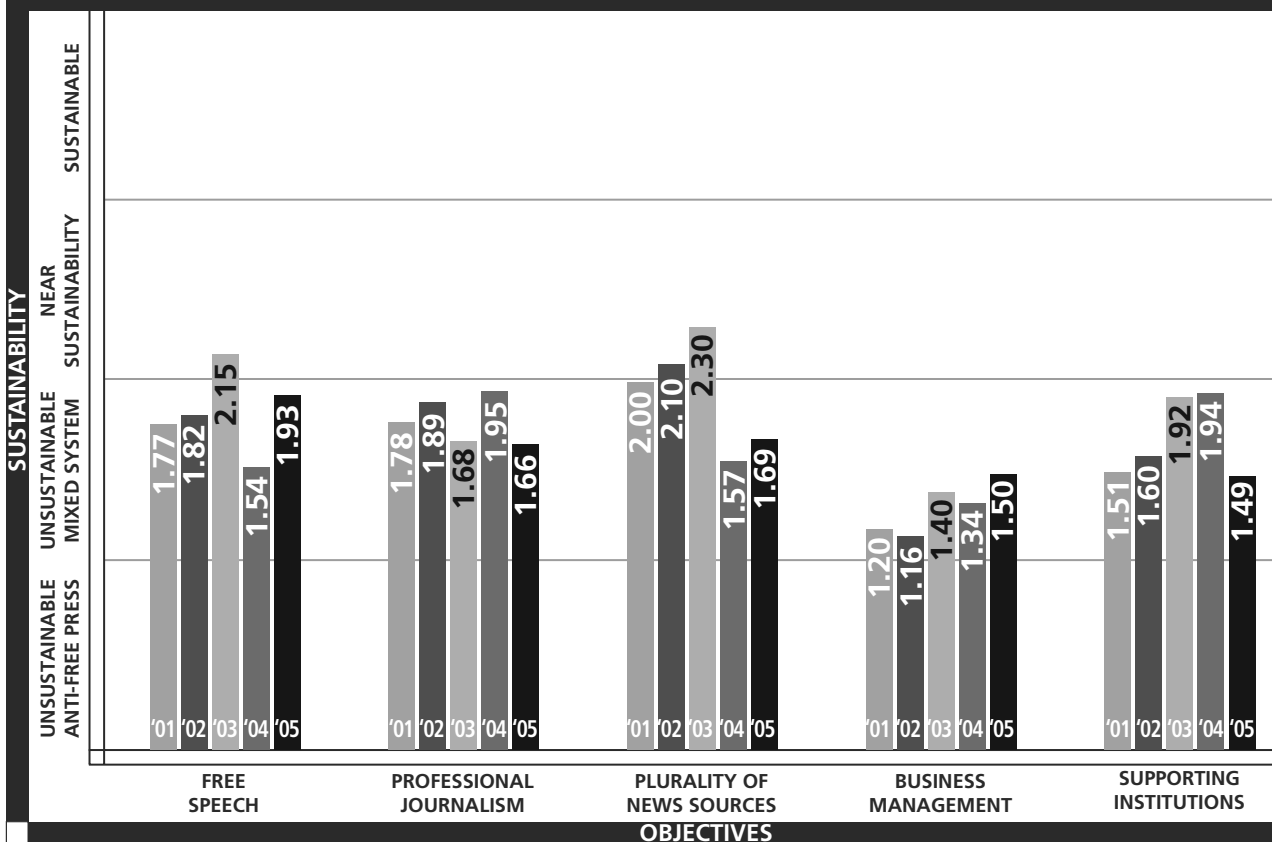
Preparations for a referendum on constitutional amendments and provincial and local elections preoccupied Armenia during 2005, as did the ongoing Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and what Armenians marked as the 90th anniversary of the 1915 genocide by the Ottoman Empire. Amid the domestic and regional political concerns, the International Monetary Fund issued reasonably optimistic predictions for 8 percent growth in gross domestic product (GDP) during the year, fueled by higher copper prices.

In the media sector, a new copyright law was drafted and submitted to the government in September. The proposed revisions to the law adopted reflect international practice in protecting not only the work of writers and artists, but also computer software and database programs. A new law on access to information was put into effect and passed its first court trial when the mayor of Yerevan was required to turn over documents sought by an investigative journalist.

Overall, however, the Media Sustainability Index (MSI) panel found the sector essentially stagnant during 2005. The advances in media law and a year relatively free of attacks on journalists led to the only significant improvement in the MSI recorded by the 2005 panel, which increased the ranking for the free-speech objective from 1.54 to 1.93. The panel nonetheless noted that the situation could change during the heated run-up to the elections.

The panelists saw further decline in the professionalism of journalists resulting from self-censorship, ethical breaches, and the failure to produce fair, well-sourced, and balanced reporting. The ranking for that objective declined to 1.66, from 1.95 during 2004. The assessment of the plurality of news sources was almost unchanged, with panelists noting that even the relatively large number of media outlets did not guarantee that a variety of information would be available. Management of media businesses improved somewhat, but scores remained quite low. Supporting institutions for the media were seen as declining in strength, due mainly to the lack of trade associations and the poor quality of university journalism programs.

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: ARMENIA



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: FREE SPEECH

Armenia Objective Score: 1.93 / 4.00

Panelists agreed that the Constitution provides for free speech, and the guarantees generally are in line with international standards, except regarding libel, which remains a criminal offense. Panelists also agreed, just as they did in 2004, that in reality there are no mechanisms actually protecting freedom of speech. Furthermore, panelist Avetik Ishkhanyan, editor of *Ditord* magazine and chairman of the Armenian Helsinki Committee, explained that although freedom of speech is valued, violations no longer cause public outrage as they might have in previous years. "Even homicide doesn't cause public outrage nowadays," Avetik Ishkhanyan said.

Panelist Petros Khazaryan, director of Kentron TV, said the public equates criticism of the government with free speech and is satisfied with that. "In a broader sense, our society is resistant to freedom of expression," he said, noting the public outrage that often follows controversial opinions expressed during discussions of political and social issues on his television show.

The law on access to information was a significant advance when it came into effect in January 2004. Levon Barseghyan, founder of the Asparez Journalists' Club, said the law on radio and television concerning content that would be deemed "unacceptable" provides for a list of limitations that theoretically could circumscribe free speech and, given the flexible standards of the legal system, be used against media outlets should political pressures be applied.

The MSI panel agreed that media-outlet licensing is not fair, competitive, or apolitical. If the television stations operate within the legal limits and abide by the licensing regulations, registering the actual number of employees, declaring actual advertising revenues, and adhering to advertising regulations, "they will go bankrupt in a month and just shut down because they won't be able to compete," said Petros Khazaryan. "Therefore, they have to compromise with the licensing bodies."

Several panelists said the decision-making by licensing regulators is not transparent, and open voting has been replaced by closed sessions. The fate of applications now rests with "one person appointed by one person," said Levon Barseghyan, meaning the head of the National Committee on Television and Radio, who is appointed by the president. "In my experience, they always avoid giving you any sort of written and signed documentation to your inquiry," added Shushan Arevshatyan, director of Radio Van.

Market entry and the tax structure applied to media companies largely equates with other businesses,

although in general taxation is not applied uniformly and fairly across all companies regardless of the sector, panelists said. "Today media outlets operate under the same conditions as, say, a sausage plant or a taxicab service," said Aram Mkrtychyan, director of Radio Hay. Other panelists noted, however, that the licensing requirement for television and radio outlets sets a distinctive limit on market entry for the broadcast industry.

In terms of crimes against journalists, "this year has been uninteresting," said Sara Petrosyan, a reporter from the Association of Investigative Journalists. By contrast, incidents in 2004 included attacks on journalists during an opposition party meeting and an

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Legal and social norms protect and promote free speech and access to public information.

FREE-SPEECH INDICATORS:

- > Legal/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 the offended party 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.

environmental protest. Avetik Ishkhanyan wondered whether the difference was “because reporters have become more reserved after last year’s incidents,” and panelists suggested that the situation could change as regional elections and the constitutional referendum approached.

No laws favor public media over private outlets in terms of access to information, but panelists reported that in addition to government subsidy, state television gets favored treatment in the form of programming production ordered by the state.

“Today media outlets operate under the same conditions as, say, a sausage plant or a taxicab service,” said Aram Mkrtchyan, director of Radio Hay.

Libel remains criminalized. That it is not prosecuted as such should not be a reason for complacency since “it is hanging over our heads like the sword

of Damocles and can fall at any time,” said Avetik Ishkhanyan. “If it [the criminal code on libel] hasn’t been applied, it means we don’t live in a constitutional, rule-of-law state and it will be applied when needed.” Another panelist, Petros Khazaryan, said: “Libel is not punished for purely libel. If there’s no political background in the libel, say whatever you like, you won’t be sued, and that’s not right either.”

Theoretically, a law governing public information makes it accessible to all journalists. “In fact, we now have a very good law which can be a vital tool in hands of our reporters in demanding access to information,” said Aram Mkrtchyan. The law urges state bodies, local self-government bodies, state budget-sponsored organizations, organizations of public importance, and their officials to make available information requested by the media, with the exceptions outlined in Article 8 covering state, official, bank, or trade secrets. The law was put into action in February 2005, when the Court of Cassation ruled in favor of Edik Baghdasaryan, president of the Association of Investigative Journalists of Armenia, in his suit against Mayor Yervand Zakharyan. The court obliged the mayor to make available information on all decisions regarding land allocations in the public park surrounding Yerevan’s Opera House taken from 1997 to 2003 made by Zakharyan and his predecessors. One panelist noted that although the law provides for access when sought by journalists and others, there are no regulations in place that allot proactive responsibility on an official to publish information.

All panelists agreed that media outlets have unrestricted access to international news and news sources, although low-quality Internet services may limit the ability to access the material. Entrance to journalism schools is not controlled by the government, and there are no license requirements for journalists.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Armenia Objective Score: 1.66 / 4.00

MSI panelists were critical of the lack of professionalism among journalists and noted a further decline in this objective compared with 2004. In particular, they noted that reporting generally is not fair, objective, or well-sourced. Arevhat Grigoryan, a former reporter, said, “Reporting is not impartial from the point of gathering the information, and even if reporters seek out varied sources, they skim off the information they receive to match what they need” to support their biased approach.

In addition, the panelists said, self-censorship is rampant among journalists and editors. “There is some kind of a silent compromise between the media, the reporters, and those who have the authority to pressure them,” said Petros Khazaryan. “The reporters avoid criticism as much as possible, and the others avoid suing unethical reporters in the same manner. Many

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).

times you see an obvious lie, but the media outlet isn't pursued, which is not right. In the long run it is the society that suffers from this compromise."

Panelists agreed that newspapers in particular cannot be balanced even if they want to because their funding would stop. Objectivity, they agreed, is not what the outlets' backers are paying for. However, while many reporters as a result do not verify the information they present, Sara Petrosyan said some reporters are more professional and there is variation among media outlets. She noted that some journalists work under conditions where the time pressures are such that they cannot fully verify information. There are outlets that are even upfront about their lack of fact-checking: "We have a unique phenomenon," said Aghasi Abrahamyan, editor-in-chief of *Kumayri* newspaper. "Every now and then you read, 'According to unverified information' or 'We learned from untrustworthy sources,' and dirty text follows about someone."

Balance comes to some extent from the varied available media. "If you want to read different points of view, you have to buy different newspapers, since you seldom get to read different viewpoints in the same newspaper," Avetik Ishkhanyan said.

Panelists observed that almost all media outlets have verbal or formal codes of ethics, and the Yerevan Press Club and other journalistic associations have developed codes for their members. However, attempts to make those codes into widely accepted standards for the majority of outlets have not been very successful. All panelists agreed that media professionals tend to accept payments or gifts in exchange for inserting information into articles and programs.

Panelists also agreed that journalists and editors practice self-censorship. "But they aren't starting the self-censorship at the media outlet—they are getting used to it from their universities and colleges. When they come here [media outlets], they do not have those principles of objectivity and justice seeded in them to start with," said Petros Khazaryan.

Some panelists mentioned that coverage tends to focus on politics and the powerful, rather than individuals. Petros Khazaryan noted a US newspaper where coverage of a woman being saved from muggers made the front page, while reporting on the presidential election was relegated to the fourth page. "It is totally different here—we do not care much for the problems pertaining to the individual, and they take fourth or fifth place," he said. Another panelist suggested that there is less segmentation in the Armenian media market, making coverage

more uniformly focused on government and politics. Panelists agreed, however, that there are events that if covered would have undesired consequences for editors and reporters. One example cited was the war in Chechnya, which is little covered because it is thought that reporting on it would mean spoiling Armenia's relationship with Russia.

Pay levels vary from outlet to outlet and between broadcast and print media. Panelists observed that for broadcast media in the capital, Yerevan, pay levels could be considered satisfactory, but the situation is very different for print media and for regional media. Panelists noted that although low pay is among the causes of corruption, it is not the main one. Some panelists argued that it is an individual matter and that there are journalists who do not engage in corruption irrespective of pay levels while there are well-paid journalists who still feel free to take bribes. One panelist noted that at some outlets certain advertisers consider their business to oblige only positive coverage and that this could qualify as an indirect form of bribery.

Panelist Levon Barseghyan contended that entertainment programming increasingly eclipses news and information programming in terms of airtime.

"There is some kind of a silent compromise between the media, the reporters, and those who have the authority to pressure them," said Petros Khazaryan.

Other panelists disagreed, contending that the quantity of news programming hasn't been affected by the growth of entertainment shows. Petros Khazaryan noted that Hay TV, an entertainment channel, had started to air newscasts.

The technical facilities at many television stations have been upgraded significantly, but there remains a problem with finding personnel sufficiently trained to operate the equipment and make maximum use of its features, panelists said. Others noted that this modernization has not reached regional outlets. "Eighty percent of regional outlets handwrite the material," Levon Barseghyan said.

Niche reporting exists in rudimentary form but needs further development. "Today our media is not segmented," said Aram Mkrtchyan. "We don't know which channel is the news channel, which is the sports channel, which is the entertainment channel. All [channels] aspire to be public stations. And the same with newspapers—they are all social-political."

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES

Armenia Objective Score: 1.69 / 4.00

A plurality of affordable public and private news sources exists. But plurality doesn't mean variety. Panelists differed in their views regarding citizen access to domestic or international media but were unanimous in saying that state media do not reflect the views of the entire political spectrum.

"It would be better if we had just three [television channels], but three that would provide varied coverage," said Petros Khazaryan. "Thirty cameras surround one interviewee, one asks questions, and then the exact same thing is printed or broadcast everywhere," concurred Mesrop Movsisyan, director and founder of A1+ TV.

The overall economic situation across the country means that news sources are not broadly affordable, Mesrop Movsisyan said. "People don't even buy newspapers, let alone the Internet. They don't even dream of it." Avetik Ishkhanyan suggested that people reject buying newspapers not because they cannot afford them but rather because they are not interested. "During tense political situations all papers are sold out," he said.

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.

The majority of private media outlets cover only local areas, but approximately 30 percent also provide national coverage in full or in part. H2, Shant TV, ALM, and Armenia TV are among them. Residents of larger cities have greater access to media sources, compared with those in smaller towns. Many villages do not get any newspapers at all. "In some small towns there's just one kiosk, which operates for half an hour at best," said Levon Barseghyan.

Restrictions on citizens' access to domestic or international media depend at least in part on the political situation, panelists said. "Let's remember: When a serious [political] situation arises, suddenly (Russia's) NTV, Euronews, etc. are switched off," Avetik Ishkhanyan said. "In a simple, ordinary situation there are no restrictions, but should it get worse, the accessibility potentially gets restricted." This tactic of switching off stations, ostensibly for technical reasons, began in 2003 prior to the presidential elections. In this initial case, NTV was brought off the air and then turned on again before being shut down altogether. After remaining unused for months, the frequency is currently broadcasting a Russian channel, Kultura.

There are no legal limits on distribution on international news sources. Foreign print editions are available but only in limited places and at prices too high for ordinary citizens. Citizens do have access to the Internet, and nowadays many can afford to view foreign media online. However, the technical quality of Internet service, including the connection speed, remains poor, especially outside of the capital. "It's been a month since I'm trying to send Levon a simple e-mail," said panelist Arevhat Grigoryan.

Panelists agreed that state media do not reflect the views of the political spectrum. "At best, they are made fun of," said Arevhat Grigoryan. An exception noted by panelists was the allocation of limited airtime (three minutes) for political announcements or advertisements, which is provided for by law, and the broadcasts of parliamentary sessions, during which all the members of the national Assembly, including the oppositionists, have the opportunity to present their views.

Panelists agreed that independent news agencies gather and distribute news for print and broadcast media. There are five major news agencies, and they provide their news to independent print and broadcast media in a nondiscriminatory fashion. Media outlets in the capital can afford the services, but as for the regions, opinions differed. Levon Barseghyan—from Gyumri, the second-largest city in Armenia—said the services, with a monthly fee of \$50, are not affordable for regional outlets, especially newspapers. But another

regional panelist, Sergey Serobyen—from Fortuna TV in Stepanavan—disagreed, and Mesrop Movsisyan noted that there are free services, too.

Around 70 percent of media outlets produce their own news programs, but most of them do not differ significantly in content from the state media.

Panelists observed that media ownership is not transparent. “We all know who the owners are, but it isn’t due to the transparency,” said Arevhat Grigoryan. De jure and de facto owners differ. “Quite often reporters themselves don’t know who are the real owners of the media outlet they are working for,” said Levon Barseghyan.

There seems to be resistance to the inclusion of a variety of social issues in the private media, in part because providing this coverage is not a direct source of revenue for the outlets, according to panelists. Journalists are not harassed for covering national minority issues, but the tolerance for reporting on sexual and religious issues remains low. Minority-language media exist and are legal.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Armenia Objective Score: 1.50 / 4.00

Panelists agreed that the majority of media outlets do not operate as efficient, professional, and profit-generating businesses. There are more media outlets, especially broadcasters, than can be supported by the Armenian economy and the modestly developed advertising industry. As a result, many rely on sponsorship from vested interests that expect to influence coverage in return for their financial support.

Most panelists agreed that some of the television stations are kept alive “artificially,” for motivations other than their commercial potential. There simply is not the advertising revenue to support nearly 20 stations in the capital alone, let alone to pay for production of quality programming. “Certain business elements do exist in media outlets, but the majority relies mostly on ‘sponsors,’” panelist Petros Khazaryan said.

Shushan Arevshatyan objected to that evaluation, saying that her station did not have a sponsor. “I wish we had one,” she said, and Aram Mkrtchyan agreed, saying that in the radio industry, there are no sponsors. Panelists concluded, however, that for the most part media outlets do not strive to become profit-generating businesses because, as Levon Barseghyan put it, “they are addicted to drugs,” meaning the financial support from political or oligarchic backers.

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.

Distribution is still one of the major factors hindering development of the print media. The largest press distribution system, inherited from the Soviet era, does not function efficiently. While there are smaller alternative distributors, print outlets that seek to reach as many readers as possible cannot avoid the largest distributor, Haymamul, which, according to the panelists, is at times delinquent on payments to publishers and does not effectively distribute the newspapers.

Media receive revenue from political, oligarchic, and media investor sources. Beyond backers, revenue sources are advertising, sponsorship,

production, creeping-line announcements, paid airtime, and grants. Not surprisingly, sources of revenue often influence the media content. Print outlets are particularly likely to be backed and influenced by political forces, having fewer other options for revenues, the panelists said.

Local agencies dominate advertising. Although fairly numerous, most of the agencies are not full-service and

“Certain business elements do exist in media outlets, but the majority relies mostly on ‘sponsors,’” panelist Petros Khazaryan said.

overall the industry is poorly developed in the capital and worse outside of it. No credible information on the size of the advertising market is available.

Most private media managers are not skilled in using advertising to produce revenues. The advertising agencies themselves work more actively with broadcast outlets, compared with newspapers. The law allows for no more than 10 advertising minutes within any given hour, but deviations are frequent, particularly during the prime viewing time.

Advertising revenue can account for up to 90 percent of broadcast outlet revenues. At print outlets, however, the major source of revenue remains circulation and subscriptions.

Independent media outlets, mostly newspapers in regions, do receive some government financial subsidies, but they are negligible and do not influence management policies, panelists said.

The panelists agreed that there is essentially no reliable market research, and therefore it cannot be used in any way. The same view was taken of ratings: None are produced to international standards, so they are not reliable in terms of methodology and are subject to corruption. As for the circulation figures, newspapers tend to exaggerate them for advertising purposes, and there is no objective audit.

Journalists, the Asparez Journalists' Club, and the Yerevan Press Club.

International NGOs and donor organizations work to support free speech and independent media to the degree that they can, given the deep problems in the media sector. The organizations provide legal assistance to outlets, including helping them present their cases in courts. They also actively engage in drafting potential legislation and amendments related to media. The NGOs try to serve as watchdogs and react to violations of media freedoms by organizing demonstrations and rallies.

The situation is quite bad at university journalism programs, panelists said. There are more than enough state and private universities and colleges offering journalism degrees, but the quality is very poor. The majority of students who apply to study in the discipline are not among the highest caliber, and this ultimately yields unsatisfactory results and leaves media outlets unhappy with the quality of graduates.

The provision of substantial practical experience is also poorly organized and overseen, leaving students little opportunity to prepare for entering the profession. "During their practical studies, they just come and hang around and don't gain anything from the program," said Petros Khazaryan. There are programs that enable students to get journalistic degrees abroad, but the

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Armenia Objective Score: 1.49 / 4.00

There was no discussion on industry associations, as there are none that represent the interests of private media owners. Professional associations to protect the rights of journalists do exist, but panelists said their efficiency leaves much to be desired. Quality university journalism degree programs remain a major deficit, denying media outlets a source of trained staff. These shortcomings led the panel to record a significant drop in this objective from 1.94 in 2004 to 1.49 in 2005. Panelists did note, however, that nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) engage in drafting legislation and amendments and endeavor where possible to support media freedoms.

There are approximately a dozen journalists' associations, but they are not sufficiently well managed or strongly supported by members. They also face formidable challenges in the media industry. "There are professional associations, but they are not able to protect," Mesrop Movsisyan said. Among the most active are the Association of Investigative

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 private, apolitical, and unrestricted.
- > Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, Internet) are private, apolitical, and unrestricted.

opportunities so far are not sufficient for making a change, even if participants do return eventually and bring in new expertise.

The Open Society Institute's Mass Media Program supported development of the academic program for the first-year students at the International Journalism Department at the State Linguistic University. Undergraduate and graduate journalism curricula also have been adopted at the Yerevan State University. Panelists mentioned in particular a course on "Human Rights for Journalists."

There exist short-term training opportunities for practicing media professionals, set up primarily by international rather than local organizations. Progressive media outlets support staff participation in professional development opportunities, and the courses offered by international organizations generally are free. IREX, through the Core Media Support Program for Armenia supported by the US Agency for International Development (USAID), organizes trainings and onsite consultations for media outlets

in areas ranging from journalism to advertising and sales. The program assists commercially viable outlets through provision of loans for development. The Caucasus Media Institute provides vocational training and resources for journalists in a postgraduate setting. Internews offers professional development in specialties including camera operation, management, production, computer graphics, marketing, and sales.

Panelists agreed that overall, sources of newsprint and printing facilities are in private hands, apolitical, and not restricted. "At least people print whatever they want, and you can't say that there are serious restrictions," said Avetik Ishkhanyan. Printing houses are managed as profit-making businesses.

Panelists agreed that the channels of media distribution are not apolitical, however. Access to the Internet is not explicitly controlled by government or conglomerates, but the mere fact that the telecommunications monopoly Armentel possesses the only legal uplink facility with restricted capacity creates a serious restriction.

Panel Participants

Husik Arestakesyan, News Editor and Journalist, Shant TV, Yerevan

Petros Khazaryan, President, Kentron TV, Yerevan

Aghasi Abrahamyan, Editor-in-Chief, *Kumayri* newspaper, Gyumri

Sergey Serobyan, Deputy Director, Fortuna TV, Stepanavan

Shushan Arevshatyan, Director, Radio Van, Yerevan

Aram Mkrtchyan, Director, Radio Hay, Yerevan

Arevhat Grigoryan, Media Program Officer, Caucasus Media Institute, Yerevan

Mesrop Movsisyan, Founder and Director, A1+ TV company, Yerevan

Avetik Ishkhanyan, Editor-in-Chief, *Ditord* Magazine; Chairman, Armenian Helsinki Committee, Yerevan

Sara Petrosyan, Reporter, Association of Investigative Journalists, Yerevan

Levon Barseghyan, Founder and Chairman, Asparez Journalists' Club; Editor-in-Chief, *Gyumri-Asparez* monthly, Gyumri

Moderator

Artashes Parsadanyan, Deputy Chief of Party, IREX Core Media Support Program for Armenia

ARMENIA AT A GLANCE

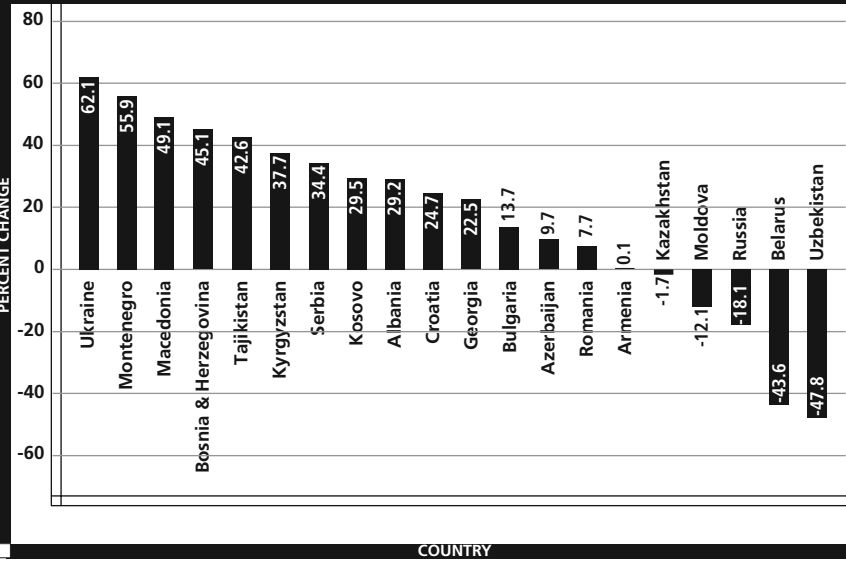
GENERAL

- **Population:** 3.2 million
- **Capital city:** Yerevan
- **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Armenian 97%, Yezidi 1.3%, Russian 0.5%, Assyrian 0.11%, Kurd 0.05%, Greek 0.04%, other 0.3% (Ukrainian, Jewish, Oud, etc.)
- **Religions (% of population):** Armenian Apostolic 94%. Others: Armenian Catholic, Armenian Protestant, Russian Orthodox, Jewish, Greek Orthodox, Assyrian Nestorian
- **Languages (% of population):** Eastern Armenian 96% (official), Russian 2%; Others: Western Armenian, English, French, German, Kurdish, Greek, Hebrew-Yiddish
- **GDP:** \$2.8 billion
- **Literacy rate (% of population):** 98.3% (15 years and older)
- **President or top authority:** President Robert Kocharyan
- **Next scheduled elections:** Presidential 2007, parliamentary 2007

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- **Newspaper circulation statistics (total circulation and largest paper):** The maximum circulation cited is 9,000 copies; the average real circulation for most popular newspapers is 3,000 to 4,000 copies.

MSI AVERAGE SCORES—PERCENT CHANGE 2001–2005



- **Broadcast ratings (top three ranked stations):** NA
 - **Number of print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** 30 print outlets; 11 radio stations; 18 local television stations in Yerevan (airing their own production in full or in part; three relay Russian channels—Channel 1, RTR, Kultura—and one relays CNN); 31 television stations in the regions
 - **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** NA
 - **Number of Internet users:** 50,000
 - **News agencies:** Armenpress, Noyan Tapan, Arka, Arminfo, Mediamax, Photolur, New Image, Spyrur
- SOURCES**
- World Development Indicators (WDI), August 2004
 - European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) Report on Armenia
 - UNDP Human Development Report
 - United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics
 - International Monetary Fund

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