

■ From traditional to online media: Best practices and perspectives

9th South Caucasus Media Conference
Tbilisi, Georgia
11-12 October 2012

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From traditional to online media: Best practices and perspectives is a compilation of all presentations given at the 9th South Caucasus Media Conference, organized by the Representative's office, which brought together international and local experts from three South Caucasus participating States of the OSCE. This publication is designed to serve as a record of the events of that conference and is intended for journalists, government and regulatory officials and students.

The views expressed by the contributing authors in this publication are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media.

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Foreword

Adilia Daminova¹ and Ana Karlsreiter²

Issues related to the transition from traditional print media to online media have become a common subject of debate in newsrooms, academic and governmental halls throughout the OSCE region. That is why the 9th South Caucasus Media Conference was dedicated to the topics related to this transition.

The conference, once again held in Tbilisi with the gracious support of the Georgian authorities, touched upon a wide range of issues, including regulation of the Internet, social media as a tool to enhance the free flow of information and an examination of business models designed to ensure financial stability of online media.

As in previous years, one day of the conference was devoted to discussions of regional trends and developments in the South Caucasus participating States.

A master class on practical aspects of online media regulation was also held for the first time. It allowed participants to improve their knowledge in this important and sometimes controversial topic.

This book is an account of the conference, featuring all the presentations of the speakers. It should serve as a valuable reference book on contemporary media issues for journalists, scholars and officials.

We would like to thank the Governments of Germany, Lithuania, Norway, Switzerland and the United States for their financial support for the conference and this publication.

¹ Daminova is a Project Officer at the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media.

² Karlsreiter is a Senior Adviser to the Representative on Freedom of the Media.

Declaration

The 9th South Caucasus Media Conference, organized by the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media with the assistance from OSCE Offices in Yerevan and Baku, was held on 11-12 October in Tbilisi, Georgia.

Throughout the years the South Caucasus Media Conference has been a unique forum to discuss media issues and co-operation among journalists in South Caucasus.

The two-day conference hosted more than 80 journalists, media experts, parliamentarians, civil society representatives and academia from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

The focus of the conference was social and online media. Conference participants explored issues related to international standards and national practices regarding freedom of the media in social media and online broadcast regulation. Participants also discussed the latest media developments in South Caucasus participating States. Furthermore, legal challenges and policies and practices pertaining to online and social media, tendencies in development of digital media and prospects for online media outlets were discussed during the conference.

The Conference:

1. Welcomes the fact that representatives of the media, civil society, as well as academia from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia were able to take part in the conference and discuss important issues in the field of online and social media on the regional level, maintaining the spirit of co-operation and trust.
2. Acknowledges that online and traditional media provide opportunities to strengthen implementation of existing commitments of the OSCE participating States in the sphere of media freedom.
3. Welcomes the fact that online media allow for more diversity and pluralism and acknowledges that affordable access to broadband Internet should be fostered.

4. Emphasizes the actual benefits that Internet offers, including advancements in education, economy, individual communications, and acknowledges its importance as a tool to seek, produce, receive, and distribute information.
5. Calls on governments to ensure protection of the fundamental rights to freedom of expression and freedom of information by adopting laws, policies and practices that foster and not restrict these rights and by ensuring independent judicial oversight and effective public scrutiny of their implementation.
6. Stresses that restrictions to the right to free expression on the Internet are only acceptable if in compliance with international law and standards, necessary in a democratic society, prescribed by law and are in the public interest.
7. Believes that national laws should facilitate openness and transparency of the Internet, including online media.
8. Urges governments to consider access to and use of the Internet and its services, including social media and social networks, a prerequisite for the exercise of a number of basic human rights, including the right to freedom of expression, and promote the universal access to it.
9. Urges to strengthen multi-stakeholder partnership of governments with all relevant parties to close the “digital divide” among different population groups, promote education on use of new media and foster general access to the Internet.
10. Urges telecommunication companies to safeguard network neutrality to ensure that online information and traffic are treated equally regardless of the device, content, author, origin or destination, as well as ensure transparency of the information about their ownership.
11. Acknowledges the active role that users assume in generating content, thus exercising their right to free expression.

12. Urges authorities to promote the use of social media tools to promote transparency and easy access of citizens to government-held information and information of public interest, as well as strengthen accountability of the officials.
13. Calls for co-operation of the governments with civil society and telecommunication companies to ensure that Internet remains an open forum for public debate and that the rights of the users are protected.
14. Emphasizes that in order to fully exercise their rights, Internet users should be protected from unlawful breaches of privacy.
15. Calls on authorities to ensure that journalists, as well as bloggers and ‘citizen reporters’, can work unhindered.
16. Calls on authorities to stop prosecution of bloggers and online media activists.

Tbilisi

12 October 2012

Opening remarks

Dunja Mijatović¹

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all to the opening of our 9th South Caucasus Media Conference.

Each year it is a special honour for me to welcome journalists, representatives of the media and civil society and academics from all three countries of the South Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

I would like to thank all of you who have come to our conference to discuss topical media-freedom issues. This annual event has become a most important occasion for my Office. It serves as a unique forum for all of us to get together to maintain professional and personal contacts.

I would like to thank Georgia for generously hosting our conference for the ninth time, as well as the authorities of Armenia and Azerbaijan for working with my Office on conference preparations.

I would also like to thank the international and regional experts who have joined us.

I highly appreciate the hard work carried out by OSCE field Offices in Baku and in Yerevan, whose support and assistance made this conference possible.

My thanks also go to the governments of Germany, Lithuania, Norway, Switzerland and the United States for financially supporting this conference.

This year we have come to Tbilisi to discuss new developments in the field of online media. On the first day of our conference we will discuss the new developments and explore what is the “cutting edge” of this rapidly expanding industry.

The need to stay in touch and be online – to be connected – grows stronger every day in our competitive, information-based societies.

¹ Mijatović is the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media.

But, most importantly, from our point of view, these new technologies provide a wonderful opportunity for everyone to capture and report on the world around us.

It has become difficult to say who is a journalist and who is not a journalist these days so I choose not to – and it doesn't matter for my Office because we work under the principle that every person has a right to freely express himself and we will defend everyone whose rights have been violated. The role I am performing is challenged by governments because some, too many in my view, are trying to define who is and who is not a journalist in order to give me guidance on whom to protect and not protect.

At this conference you will have an opportunity to hear more about the notions of citizen-media and grassroots journalism, to discuss legal challenges and issues pertaining to the Internet-content regulation, look closely into Estonia's experience with e-government tools, as well as to explore tendencies in the development of digital media and self-regulation mechanisms.

I would like to use this opportunity to appeal to participating States in the South Caucasus to ensure that the online media, like traditional media, remains an open and public forum for public debate – in line with the OSCE commitments and international free-expression standards; to provide an enabling environment for independent and pluralistic media; to introduce laws that will foster media freedom and not restrict it; to foster the free flow of information across national borders, to permit unhindered access to the Internet and to promote Internet literacy and self-regulation.

OSCE participating States have a lot on their agenda. We are raising these issues on an almost daily basis with the 57 participating States.

Hardly a week passes when I don't have to raise my voice to remind them about the commitments they voluntarily agreed upon.

Tomorrow, experts from South Caucasus will discuss developments in social media, the transformation of traditional media to online media, as well as general media developments in their respective countries. Presentations will describe the situation regarding the use of social media tools in traditional and online media and the role that social and community media play in their countries. This is a session that I'm really looking forward to. I want to learn about the problems you

are facing because there are issues that we miss and need to hear about from you.

My Office continues to follow the media-freedom situation in the South Caucasus and I continue to raise my concerns on issues with the authorities, including government control over broadcast media and the difficulty in obtaining access to government information.

Unfortunately, it is still not safe to be a journalist in this region, where journalists are harassed physically and hit with lawsuits and humiliating smear campaigns.

Journalists are blackmailed, beaten and put behind bars.

This is unacceptable and I will continue to raise my voice to remedy this situation. No one should be punished or put behind bars for articles they have written or reports they have broadcast.

It is a high time for the authorities to stop regarding the media as a dangerous platform that needs to be controlled or silenced. The time has come for these authorities to realize that this attitude toward the media can only weaken the much cherished democratic principles that all of our societies should be based on. The time has also come to finally consider the media for what it is: an essential and unique tool of our democracies that allows every citizen to live an informed life.

Of course all of this sounds ideal and we are very much aware of the fact that we do not live in an ideal world. This is the situation we are facing in this century in countries that call themselves democratic.

Countries making efforts to obstruct the freedom and independence of their media are only contributing to the downfall of their societies' democratic foundations.

I look forward to our discussion on these matters and trust that at the end of the conference we will adopt a declaration which will be forwarded to the authorities in all three countries. I hope that the declaration recommendations will serve as a framework for follow-up activities by the governments, as well as the OSCE and civil society.

I wish you all an interesting and fruitful conference and I look forward to hearing from you also outside this room about the problems that you are facing in your countries.

Transition from traditional to social media: International standards and pressing challenges

Social media and journalism

Christian Möller¹

“We already live in the digital age, a time in which we can create truly democratic cultures with participation by all members of society; and in only a few years from now this participation will virtually include most of the world’s citizens.”

Dunja Mijatović

OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

Social media and social networks change the way news is generated and accessed. They influence media in three dimensions: as a tool for journalists to create content, as a tool to distribute and impart information, and as a tool to seek, receive and access information. The exercise of these fundamental rights by journalists and citizens also relies on unhindered access to the Internet.

Internet access as a human right

Access to and the use of the Internet and all its services – including social media and social networks – is widely considered a human right in the 21st century.

As the Internet increasingly becomes an indispensable tool for all citizens to receive, seek and impart information, access to the Internet becomes closely linked to the basic human right to freedom of expression and, therefore constitutes a human right in itself.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression in a recent report stated that “the framework of international human rights law remains relevant today and equally applicable to new communication technologies such as the Internet.” Cutting off users from the Internet, regardless of the justification provided, is considered a violation of article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).²

¹ Möller is special adviser to the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media.

² “UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression” *United Nations General Assembly. A/HRC/17/27. 16 May 2011.*

In their Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and the Internet, the respective Representatives of the UN, OSCE, OAS and ACHPR said that “giving effect to the right to freedom of expression imposes an obligation on States to promote universal access to the Internet.”³

In her presentation of a study on Internet regulation in the OSCE region in July 2011, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media commented that “[s]ome governments already recognize access to the Internet as a human right. This trend should be supported as a crucial element of media freedom in the 21st century.”⁴

In its 2010 Belgrade Resolution, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly invited the OSCE to enable the Representative on Freedom of the Media “to be more active in the field of promoting free movement of information and knowledge and its free access, as this is one of the pillars for guaranteeing effective participatory democracy and the strengthening of human rights.”⁵

The OSCE PA also stressed “the need for free access to information, especially through an Internet network easily accessible to all population groups.”⁶

The Interparliamentary Assembly of Member Nations of the Commonwealth of Independent States, in a model law on the principles of Internet regulation from 2011, stated that the rights and freedom of citizens, including the right to use the Internet and to access information on the Internet should be assured.

Access to the Internet is not an end in itself. It is only a means to benefit from the many services the Internet offers, e.g. for individual communication, education, e-commerce, entertainment and also journalism.

3 *Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and the Internet* (2011) The United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Representative on Freedom of the Media, the Organization of American States (OAS) Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information, June 1, 2011

4 “Internet blocking practices a concern, access is a human right, says OSCE media freedom representative at launch of OSCE-wide study” *Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Press Release*. July 8, 2011. <<http://www.osce.org/tom/80735>>

5 OSCE PA (2010) *Belgrade Resolution on Free Movement of Information and Knowledge*.

6 OSCE PA (2010) *Belgrade Resolution on Free Movement of Information and Knowledge*.

Social media and social networks

Social media and social networks form ever newer ways to communicate, many of which we could not have imagined just a few years ago, and many to come that we cannot envision today. They make use of innovative technologies and combine them with already existing features to form Internet services which can be used by journalists and citizens alike.

Facebook, Twitter & Co. make it easier than ever before to share information, impart and receive news or comment on and discuss ideas and developments. Bloggers widened the scope of classical journalism and added the new form of “blogging” or “citizen journalism” to the media landscape. Now, social media and social networks add even another dimension.

The term social media refers to the use of web-based and mobile technologies to turn communication into an interactive dialogue. They can be defined as a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of the so-called Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content.⁷

Enabled by ubiquitously accessible and scalable communication techniques, social media substantially change the way of communicating among organizations, communities, as well as individuals and can take on many different forms, including magazines, Internet forums, weblogs, micro-blogging, wikis, podcasts, photographs or pictures, videos, rating, social bookmarking and social networking.⁸

Whereas this definition sees social networking as a part of social media, the distinction between social media and social networks in reality is blurred. Micro-blogging services such as Twitter serve both as personal networking tools and at the same time as a platform to disseminate news – or even undertake journalistic research. Social networks such as Facebook or Google+ are used for individual communication, but more and more also for institutional communication, news distribution, research through crowd sourcing and many more purposes, including many still to be developed.

7 “Social media» *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Social_media&oldid=458549677>

8 “Social media» *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Social_media&oldid=458549677>

Freedom of (social) media?

Beyond the use for individual communication, social networks today serve as an indispensable tool for the work of journalists and bloggers. Research, publication, distribution, funding, collaboration, follow up and discussion – all this happens on social networks and through social media. At the same time users rely on social media and social networks to receive news reports. This multi-dimensional usage of social media and social networks also brings with it implications for the basic right of freedom of the media.

Freedom of the media as a human right is not reserved for media companies or editorial offices. This right cannot be interpreted only in the context of traditional media, but applies to any form of editorial work that is meant for public distribution. As it is a basic human right, there cannot be different subsets for traditional media and new media.

Freedom of the media and freedom of expression are universal rights that apply to all forms of media, no matter whether online or offline, no matter whether professional or citizen journalism, no matter whether print or social media.

The right to freedom of the media also includes the right to seek and receive information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of choice.

Consequently, this means that social media and social networks themselves fall under the protection of the right to freedom of the media, as today they serve manifold purposes in the production and consumption of news.

The protection of Internet services through the right to freedom of expression is also in line with the above-mentioned human right to access to the Internet as well as existing OSCE commitments relating to freedom of opinion and expression and freedom of the media that apply to all forms of their exercise, including digital media on new platforms.

Today's news is social

The online circulation of traditional newspapers is growing.⁹ The use of social media and social networks is increasing rapidly worldwide. In November 2011, the popular social network, Facebook had more than 800 million active users, 75 percent of which are based outside the United States. More than 50 percent of those 800 million people log on to Facebook in any given day.¹⁰

At the same time, Internet and mobile technologies are at the center of how people's relationship to news is changing. The importance of social networks for news consumption is growing. People use their social networks and social networking technology to filter, assess and react to news.

A 2010 study by the Pew Research Center showed that in the United States the Internet has surpassed newspapers and radio in popularity as a news platform on a typical day and now ranks just behind television. Six in 10 Americans (59 percent) get news from a combination of online and offline sources in a typical day.

In the study, 75 percent of U.S. online news consumers say they get news forwarded through e-mail or posts on social networking sites and 52 percent say they share links to news with others via those means. A third of cell phone owners even access news on their cell phones.¹¹

In another 2010 study, about the news consumption and sharing habits of the international readership of CNN, 43 percent of online news sharing occurs via social media networks and tools, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and MySpace, followed by e-mail (30 percent), SMS (15 percent) and instant messenger (12 percent).¹²

Increasingly, online news consumers follow news organizations or individual journalists on social networking sites and journalists distribute news online or

9 "Newspaper Circulation Figures Show Some Digital Growth" *New York Times Media Decoder*, November 1, 2011 <<http://mediadecoder.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/11/01/newspaper-circulation-figures-show-some-digital-growth/>>

10 "Statistics" *Facebook*. <<https://www.facebook.com/press#!/press/info.php?statistics>>

11 "Understanding the Participatory News Consumer" *Pew Research Institute* <<http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Online-News/Summary-of-Findings.aspx>>

12 Indvik, Lauren (2010) Social Networks Dominate Online News Distribution. In: Mashable, October 7, 2010. <<http://mashable.com/2010/10/07/cnn-news-study/>>

share the stories behind the story that did not make it into the print version.

Thus, the Internet with its social media and social networks today form an indispensable infrastructure for the right to seek and receive information – across borders – that is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Citizen journalism

Beyond seeking information online or simply swapping stories and commenting on them via e-mail, some 37 percent of U.S. Internet users also contribute to the creation of news, comment about it or disseminate news via social media sites like Facebook and Twitter. They have done at least one of the following: comment on a news story (25 percent); post a link on a social networking site (17 percent); tag content (11 percent), create their own original news material or opinion piece (9 percent), or tweet about news (3 percent). Among those who get news online, 75 percent get news forwarded through e-mail or posts on social networking sites and 52 percent share links to news with others via those means.

Blogging, vlogging, posting videos, aggregating news, sharing articles online and syndicating content are some of the forms of journalism that the innovative technology of Web 2.0 allows for.

“The idea behind citizen journalism is that people without professional journalism training can use the tools of modern technology and the global distribution of the Internet to create, augment or fact-check media on their own or in collaboration with others. For example, you might write about a city council meeting on your blog or in an online forum. Or you could fact-check a newspaper article from the mainstream media and point out factual errors or bias on your blog. Or you might snap a digital photo of a newsworthy event happening in your town and post it online. Or you might videotape a similar event and post it on a site such as YouTube. All these might be considered acts of journalism, even if they don’t go beyond simple observation at the scene of an important event.”¹³

“There is some controversy over the term citizen journalism, because many professional journalists believe that only a trained journalist can understand the rigors and ethics involved in reporting the news. And conversely, there are many trained journalists who practice what might be considered citizen journalism by

¹³ Glaser, Mark (2006) Your Guide to Citizen Journalism. In: Media Shift, 27. September 2006. <<http://www.pbs.org/mediashift/2006/09/your-guide-to-citizen-journalism270.html>>

writing their own blogs or commentary online outside of the traditional journalism hierarchy.”¹⁴

Another definition of participatory journalism describes it as the “act of a citizen, or group of citizens, playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information. The intent of this participation is to provide independent, reliable, accurate, wide-ranging and relevant information that a democracy requires.”¹⁵

Or, in short: “citizen journalism is when people formerly known as the audience employ the press tools they have in their possession to inform one another.”¹⁶

According to the Council of Europe, “any natural or legal person who is regularly or professionally engaged in the collection and dissemination of information to the public via any means of mass communication” qualifies as a journalist.¹⁷ This would include bloggers who publish new articles regularly.

At the same time, the Council of Europe suggests that with regard to the increasing importance of the Internet as a means of mass communication, there should be a debate on whether the protection of journalists’ sources should be enlarged to other persons engaged in the dissemination of information.¹⁸

In a world in which individuals communicate on public or semi-public platforms, the line between professional journalism and other forms of content production is not easily drawn. Also, collaborative works, such as wikis, make it difficult to identify a single author.

Rather than judging by the origin of content, the content itself should qualify as “journalistic,” and this definition should be broadly applied.

This said, it is crucial to also mention the importance of the right to privacy, data protection and the confidentiality of individual communication, although it might take place on the same platforms as public communication.

14 Glaser, Mark (2006) Your Guide to Citizen Journalism. In: Media Shift, 27. September 2006. <<http://www.pbs.org/mediashift/2006/09/your-guide-to-citizen-journalism270.html>>

15 Bowman Shayne/Willis, Chris (2003) We Media - How audiences are shaping the future of news and information. <<http://www.hypergene.net/wemedia/weblog.php>> (Letzter Besuch 03.11.2011)

16 Prof. Jay Rosen, pressthink.org

17 Recommendation No. R(2000)7 on the right of journalists not to disclose their sources of information.

18 PACE Doc. 12443 The protection of journalists’ sources, Committee on Culture, Science and Education Report, 1 December 2010

Social media and social networks as tools for journalists

Social networks and social media at the same time offer a great tool for journalists for research and as a source for stories. Twitter, Facebook or YouTube offer coverage by other journalists and normal citizens of many events, including events to which there is limited access for journalists, e.g. for safety, financial or other reasons.

The use of Web 2.0 tools for this form of research – or ‘crowdsourcing’ – is still underdeveloped and journalists need to develop skills to check and verify sources in order to guarantee reliable and accurate information. Recent cases¹⁹ demonstrated a considerable lack of fact checking of social media sources by journalists. Awareness should be raised and tools for journalist training in the use of social media and social networks should be developed.

Social networks and social media also enable journalists to collaborate with fellow journalists or citizens (mass collaboration) on the Internet, for examples in wikis or other tools of online collaboration, or through commenting on articles, fact checking and making use of the “wisdom of the crowd.” Accountability is an issue, though when it comes to anonymous wikis and professional journalism ethics should be further developed in this field.

¹⁹ ‘A Gay Girl in Damascus’ comes clean, Washington Post, June 12, 2011 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/a-gay-girl-in-damascus-comes-clean/2011/06/12/AGkyH0RH_story.html>

Internet Regulation: Global Concerns and Evolving Models

Douglas Griffin¹ and Dieter Loraine²

Introduction

Since the advent of the Internet, it has been heralded as an exciting new medium – one that has revolutionized communications, led to citizen journalism, and made many types of commerce easier and cheaper. In 1996, as the Internet was just beginning to take shape on the edges of society, John Perry Barlow issued a letter to governments declaring the “independence of cyberspace”:

*Cyberspace consists of transactions, relationships, and thought itself, arrayed like a standing wave in the web of our communications. Ours is a world that is both everywhere and nowhere, but it is not where bodies live... We will spread ourselves across the Planet so that no one can arrest our thoughts.*³

Barlow's statement was divisive because it drove some digital pioneers to rebel at the mention of any sort of Internet regulation and subsequently encouraged a new realm in which monopolies could flourish. Since then, the Internet has played a part in mass political movements such as the “Arab Spring” and revolutionized business around the world. In 2011 in the United Kingdom alone, the total value of e-commerce was £408 billion and growing at 24.9 percent.⁴ Google, a single private company easily used daily by most people accessing the Internet, is worth more than \$200 billion with annual revenue at \$43 billion.⁵ As for social media, LinkedIn has become the main method for competitive firms to recruit new hires.

¹ Griffin is Director of Albany Associates.

² Loraine is Managing Director of Albany Associates.

³ <https://projects.eff.org/~barlow/Declaration-Final.html>

⁴ <http://www.indez.com/stats>

⁵ <http://uk.finance.yahoo.com/q/ks?s=GOOG>

Some aspects of the Internet have also worried governments that seek to maintain standards of decency in the online realm. How can harmful or illegal content or activity be monitored and prevented when the government has no jurisdiction over the publisher? How can the publisher even be identified? What actions can the government take?

This discussion is becoming increasingly globalized, as the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) considers whether and how to attempt global regulation of the Internet. The ITU is situated under the United Nations, and has organized the World Summit on the Information Society (2002 and 2004) at which international representatives debated a multi-stakeholder approach to Internet governance. The ITU is responding to pressure from governments unable to control the Internet at a national level, and freedom of expression advocates are alarmed that global regulation could diminish the very qualities that make the Internet such an exciting means of communication and such a unique tool for commerce. One of the criticisms of the ITU process has been that the public has little information on the discussions to date. Forums are scheduled throughout the summer, with an Internet Governance Forum scheduled for Baku in November, and a review by the ITU of this very issue in Dubai in December.

Vincent Cerf, Google's "Internet evangelist", writes on the problems that would arise if the ITU moves to bring the Internet under its watch via "international standards" and agreements of Internet governance.⁶ Such legislation is being pushed by China, Russia and others. Cerf's critique of the ITU is the lack of involvement from civil society stakeholders who he claims contributed to the growth of the Internet in the first place. While some believe the ITU can help expand Internet access to developing countries, Cerf thinks that ITU involvement would only hinder economic growth and infringe on basic human rights.

It is interesting to note that Cerf mentions that those calling for ITU regulation of the Internet are wary of large U.S. companies (i.e. Google and Facebook) profiting disproportionately from a lack of regulation. He does not address the details of such concerns, but with the privacy debates surrounding Google⁷ and Facebook's IPO scandal⁸ the question of companies getting "too big for their own good" is understandable from the consumer perspective. However, it is unclear

6 http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/25/opinion/keep-the-internet-open.html?_r=3

7 <http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/02/26/growing-too-big-for-a-conscience/>

8 <http://news.yahoo.com/insight-morgan-stanley-cut-facebook-estimates-just-ipo-051601330--sector.html>

if regulation from a centralized international authority would be effective or in the best interests of the public.

Several attempts at Internet regulation around the World

Three regions that have fairly advanced regulatory systems in place for the Internet are the Gulf States of Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and also China and Australia. While culturally they are dissimilar, their efforts to enforce a regulatory scheme provide lessons for other countries looking to do the same.

THE GULF

The UAE and Saudi Arabia use filtering software at the ISP level, called SmartFilter. The software is meant to prevent access to certain broad categories of content, such as pornography, references to drug use, gambling, religious conversion as well as tools that allow one to circumvent the filters. The major problem with this approach is that it is a blunt instrument, over-filtering acceptable content (i.e., blocking research on the city of Essex, England because it contains the word “sex”) and under-filtering some illegal and offensive content. There is also a negative perception attached to such software as it is usually used by repressive regimes.

AUSTRALIA

Australia’s regulatory body, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), regulates Internet content via a public complaints process. The ACMA is not required to proactively search for violations, rather it operates a co-regulatory scheme, administered by the federal government, involving the public and Internet industry. Once ACMA receives a complaint, it must investigate and if the content is deemed prohibited, ACMA tells the Internet content host to remove the content. Failure to do so results in a fine for the host.

The Australian government has recently announced plans to require Australian ISPs to block access to restricted content online in order to better regulate content hosted both in the country and abroad. The current complaints system does not apply to restricted content hosted off-shore, which is a significant disadvantage as perpetrators can easily export illegal content to Australia.⁹

⁹ <http://www.lawhandbook.org.au/handbook/ch10s04s06.php#>

Australia's Internet Industry Association has developed its own Code of Practice, supplemented by ACMA where necessary. The Code is voluntary and self-regulatory, though ACMA can enforce compliance among Internet service providers and content hosts.

CHINA

China's model of Internet regulation surpasses attempts by most countries and involves extensive government coordination and management. In order for a social media website to run, it must be registered and approved by the government. There are six media regulatory authorities within the Chinese government, including the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Public Security and Ministry of Industry and Information Technology. ICP/IP registration with the appropriate ministry is required for every single web site. Only government agencies are licensed to report news and one agency (Xinhua) has the authority to report important, breaking news.

Social media is available to anyone with a mobile phone in China, but anything that is considered a threat to national stability is monitored on these networks, including rumours about top leaders, news about collective movements and riots, petitions for collective actions and pornography. These pose challenges to individuals that host social media sites, from financial constraints to political issues, making it difficult to make a business out of a social media enterprise. Whereas American companies such as Facebook and LinkedIn have produced billionaires, Chinese social media entrepreneurs are struggling to stay afloat because investors are less willing to take the risk on them.¹⁰

Content is monitored based on sensitive users and words, meaning that certain online personalities are targeted, which raises issues about human rights, privacy and human security. A challenge to regulators and the government (one in the same, really) is that users have developed complex circumnavigation tools to get around firewalls. One example is that individuals can use VPNs to access Facebook, which is banned on Chinese servers. As VPNs are discovered and shut down, their audiences move to new VPNs -- a constant game of cat and mouse, but one that the sophisticated user seems always to win.

¹⁰ Presentation, Alex Mou, Zousa.com Co-Founder and CEO, Oxford Internet Institute, Conference on Chinese Media Law and Regulation, 15-16 June 2012.

The United Kingdom: A changing regulatory model

Usually when discussing problems with regulatory frameworks for media, the target is one of the more embryonic systems, such as Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan, The Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda or Somalia. These are all countries where Albany has worked on regulatory activities since 1997, and all are at different stages of addressing media and Internet regulation. But, recent events in the UK have illuminated certain weaknesses in both the media itself and the regulation of it. So, whilst one may discuss the UK model as a good example, it is also one where we can learn from its mistakes.

Currently in the UK, a country once known as the bastion of freedom of the media and democratic independent regulation, regulation is under scrutiny. Recent events such as the UK media's hacking of mobile phones, alleged bribing of police officers for information on celebrities and politicians, and accusations that people in government were aware of such on goings has brought about a wide-ranging and lengthy inquiry into how the media operate in the UK. Couple this with the prospect of new legislation and technological and market change, and regulation is at the center of great debate about the media. In effect, media regulation is at a crossroads, as it was twenty years ago when one part of the media, the printed press, was told to clean up its act or the government would bring in statutory regulation. It did, through a robust system of press self-regulation. It seems that the time has come again for another long hard look at how regulation can be improved, especially when the Internet is playing an ever increasing role in how we access news, information and entertainment.

The British Home Secretary announced in June 2012 a draft Communications Data Bill that expands the amount of personal online data that telecom operators must store, for up to twelve months, for access by officials (with a warrant). The Home Office claimed that increased data storage, including concerning web sites visited, is necessary because of "criminal and terrorist" use of social media and online gaming sites that allow evasion of existing surveillance. The bill has met resistance among NGOs and MPs who feel it goes too far and will violate innocent civilians' liberties. One MP said the criminals who are meant to be caught by such a bill would be able to circumnavigate data collection by using Internet cafes, proxy servers and hacking into other peoples' wireless networks.¹¹

¹¹ <http://m.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-18434112>

In Albany's experiences of around the world advising on broadcasting, communications and press regulation, we have encountered a myriad of different views and models on how to regulate the media. There is increased discussion of models, especially now as some countries move quickly to digital technology, making current media regulatory practices obsolete virtually overnight. Albany has absorbed many perspectives whilst understanding that you cannot just take one regulatory regime model and transplant it in another country.

However, Albany's work highlights three principles that serve as basic starting points for regulators anywhere:

First, the press (as opposed to the broadcast media), whether in printed form and bought in a shop or as an online publication, should not be controlled by statute.

Second, freedom of expression is a fundamental right for human needs, human rights and social and economic development and should be at the heart of any regulatory regime.

Third, efforts to constrain Internet content, whilst unpalatable to supporters of freedom of speech, are often understandable given the freedom of access and availability. But, we should be ever mindful that people generally value freedom and choice, which is at the heart of the Internet. Regulators should be very careful to approach this matter in a way that preserves the openness and creativity of the Internet rather than regulates for regulation's sake. It is also easy to understand why some governments feel excluded from Internet policymaking and want more control over the process. Indeed, as mentioned above, the UN is wading in on the issue at the end of the year by convening a conference on Internet regulation where there are strong rumours that they will discuss international control over the Internet using the monitoring and supervisory capabilities of the International Telecommunication Union.

Albany has also witnessed more recently that the regulatory status quo may not give viewers the protections and assurances they expect in a world of superfast broadband networks, fixed and mobile devices now delivering content live, on demand and online through connected TVs. As a result there is a need for a much more coherent overall approach to digital media, covering normal linear broadcasting at one end and Internet publishing at the other. A coherent approach means not necessarily a single structure, like a regulatory authority dealing with the entire sector.

In the UK, the future of press regulation is under scrutiny at a time when newspapers are rapidly expanding the scale and scope of their digital services and this needs to be considered in this broader context.

There are four straightforward principles that might help us navigate to a sensible destination for regulating the media in the digital Internet age:

- Any regulatory regime must start and finish with the public interest. Public expectation and trust must override commercial, political or institutional self-interest.
- Where regulation is judged necessary, it must be effective and capable of building and sustaining public trust.
- The approach must work for both ‘traditional’ media such as broadcast and print, which have clear boundaries, as well as digital media whose boundaries are more fluid.
- Finally, but equally important, it must help rather than hinder business to compete, invest and innovate and in doing so, strengthen an economy as a hub for digital services and creativity.

Technology and markets

This section starts by outlining some of the current and future technology that will be driving technology and market developments. It also raises important questions when it comes to how to regulate in these fast moving digital environments. Whilst these examples may be UK-centric, they do provide valuable lessons for other countries embarking on regulatory regimes.

- The UK will have 4G mobile broadband up and running very soon, even before the country has a new communications law. This new technology will provide significant enhancements in mobile connectivity for 98 percent of the UK’s population.
- Tablets such as Apple’s iPads and smartphones will feed off this network, offering mobility-hungry consumers superfast connectivity that will drive new services, coverage and take-up.

- Internet connected TVs will in turn feed on a fixed network of dramatically increased capacity, in parallel with enhancements in terrestrial and satellite distribution.
- Services that combine linear and on-demand viewing will become commonplace. Electronic Programme Guides will go backwards as well as forwards, and searching archives will be standard.
- Social media on the primary screen or in parallel on a second screen will often enrich our experience and sometimes just distract us.

So, what should we make of all this in a regulatory context? Can we balance the freedom of expression needs with regulation when media is moving forward at lightning speed?

In such an increasingly converged world, it is simply not possible to provide the comprehensive audience protection from the Internet world. With so much more content delivered to our televisions, there will inevitably be greater risk in relation to harmful content. With the greater freedom and access comes an erosion of the mechanisms we have historically used to protect audiences. The world in which we are entering is one of robust conventional broadcasting, alongside an incredibly fertile environment of new content and applications.

So, what, then, are audiences' expectations and priorities in this world?

Recent research from OFCOM, the UK's converged regulatory authority, sought to understand the public's expectations when it comes to Internet freedom.¹² Some of the major points of their research are as follows:

- The research indicates that people recognize the importance of the freedoms of the Internet but also see an important difference between the TV in their living room and Internet access through a computer.
- Audiences have continuing high expectations for the regulation of normal broadcasting but want more assurance that content will be protected for video on demand services.

¹² <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/tv-research/946687/Protecting-audiences.pdf>

- Converged or Internet connected televisions, which incorporate broadcast, video-on-demand and open Internet services, are considered to be closer to a TV-like experience. Audiences therefore expect content transmitted over these devices to be more regulated than Internet content accessed through laptops.
- Protecting minors from harmful content is seen as one of the most important parts of existing regulation. Most people want the existing degree of protection, or something better, extended across more audio-visual services and platforms.
- Viewers want to see more provision of information to make sure that they can understand what is regulated and what is not, as part of an overall system of regulation which they can understand.
- Interestingly, people rank the protection of privacy below harm and protection of minors. This is perhaps because people believe that invasions of privacy happen to public figures rather than ordinary viewers.
- But, probably the clearest messages of this research are that people like what the UK model of broadcasting regulation delivers. They want more protection in broadly similar areas of any kind of content that enters the living room through the television. In other words, and perhaps surprisingly, they want more regulation rather than less.

Now, similar research carried out in other countries may provide different views but the point is that to devise regulatory regimes that meet the needs of the audiences, protect freedom of speech but also keep up with the speed of technology, research is essential.

How then should we respond to these challenges and changes?

First, as a principle, we should all strive to preserve the spirit of the open Internet. This is desirable in and of itself. In light of the hundreds of thousands of services emanating from places well beyond national borders and more importantly regulatory jurisdiction, it is also recognition of what is practical.

That is not to say that people should be left unsupported to navigate this virtual world. Governments, regulators and industry should provide clear information, education and a framework of personal responsibility through which individuals and families can exercise informed choice. Policy, both old and new, should be properly communicated to the public.

Furthermore, when something looks, feels and acts like television, but is delivered over the Internet and into people's living rooms, we need something that meets audiences' expectations and provides the right degree of reassurance.

In this context, establishing a core set of principles and aims that are held in common across a diverse media terrain with different regulatory environments may be the way ahead. Such a set of core principles could be established between the different regulators that emerge from the current debate. They might aim to articulate the minimum standards regardless of the nature of the service or its specific regulatory setting.

Indeed in the UK, the codes of practice of OFCOM (the regulator of broadcast and telecommunications), the Press Complaints Commission (the self-regulatory body for the printed press) and the BBC (the public service broadcaster) all have many similar provisions, and work well together.

The UK's Press Complaints Commission (PCC) is run by a group consisting of representatives of both the press and civil society. A few years ago, under mounting pressure from citizens' complaints on Internet publications, they broadened their mandate – with the full blessing of the press – to include those publications that have Internet versions. This has proved to be a great success and has improved the accuracy and balance of reporting online. It is and probably will remain an opt-in process whereby those in the press that agree to be bound by the PCC's rules regulate themselves. This leaves those that do not opt in outside the system of self-regulation. But, many are opting in all the time, and soon more will be in than out.

There was pressure to extend the mandate to all other online publications without a printed version but this would have been impractical and in all likelihood unenforceable. The key here is to get the support of the press before embarking on a self-regulatory regime to include the Internet.

Conclusion

The first goal is the need to understand and to meet audiences' views of what kind of regulation they want and need.

Second, this needs to be balanced with what we know about the nature of different media and the ideals that we value that might be in tension with regulation. The freedoms at the heart of the Internet are one such example.

Third, there is a need for a coherent overall approach to digital media, covering linear broadcast at one end and Internet publishing at the other. Press regulation is under scrutiny around the world at a time when newspapers are rapidly expanding the scale and scope of their digital services. A coherent approach will anticipate this world, one where the rigid boundaries defined by traditional means of delivery will be gone.

Fourth, for regulation to be both independent and effective there is a fairly clear set of criteria that must be met in whole or in large part. Of course, local context in individual countries must always be addressed and acknowledged, but adhering to international standards will ensure that measures are neither too harsh nor too weak.

And finally, we should strive toward simplicity and clarity in the overall regulatory system – an objective that will serve the public well, but also will promote a broader interest in offering a positive environment for investment, innovation and creative businesses.

Above all, and whatever approach is taken, the acid test will remain the ability of the system and its individual elements to build and sustain public trust, support industry growth, keep up with technology and uphold the values of freedom of expression.

Digital media and the Internet market: Audiences, multimedia content and business models

Anna Kachkaeva¹

“In the three short decades between now and the twenty-first century, millions of ordinary, psychologically normal people will face an abrupt collision with the future. Citizens of the world's richest and most technologically advanced nations, many of them will find it increasingly painful to keep up with the incessant demand for change that characterizes our time. For them, the future will have arrived too soon.”

Alvin Toffler, Future Shock

Technology of formation of the future: Architecture of technologies and product technology

Many parents of modern children understand that they are dealing with the “digital generation” which is overtaking them in mastering the possibilities of new communications technologies. This generation of new users of future media content and workers in the coming “impressions economy” are called multitaskers (they are accustomed to using three or four communications devices at the same time and are plugged into several media environments); “visual” (the world is increasingly perceived through the visualization of information with the help of “pictures”); voyeuristic (modern communications have legitimized peeping and life-casting); interactive (connected to the life of people and communities with the aid of mobile devices and social networks); innovative (communication – frequent, accessible, remote access, virtual – is becoming the basis for the “creative” of innovative business, for whom going to an office is optional, as you can have an idea, like-minded people, a notebook computer, and access to the web). Today we can already say that the modern person is above all a communicative person.

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Philosophers of digital media: Multimedia, crossmedia, transmedia

Why is the increase in the role of communications occurring? How is the web, with its horizontal nature of ties, connected to mass and interpersonal communications? Networks have a new power. They connect these two worlds, these two forms of communication, although such a “connection” is not anything particularly new and relies on the already established practice of connections among two models of communication. But the main thing that must be kept in mind, “social media” – new channels of communications – are becoming the drivers of change.

Anna Kachkaeva, Dean of Media Communication Faculty, National Research University – Higher School of Economics (Moscow)

New Internet technologies and mobility are producing a new type of “social product” connected to the architecture of these technologies. The individualization of consumption is growing at the expense of the “narrow attraction of active groups”. Imaginaire relationnelle (relationship virtuality) is being established as an oppositional practice of using the computer as a “rational reality.” Forms of entertainment are becoming more complex and are virtualizing, actively founded on play and scene-making as a way of life (exchange of fantasies, the building of a “spectacle” around oneself [mise en scène de soi], play with identity).

Multimedia, crossmedia, transmedia – these new characteristics of the nature of media, are fundamental. Multimedia leads to an instrumental universality of platforms which become crossmedia, and inherently production is the “subject,” and not the type of media. Transmedia and convergence become a philosophy of content, platforms, new professions and modern consumers of media. The role of journalists is changing. They no longer only record, obtain, film, write. They chose, verify (or don’t verify!), they “package” the information of eyewitnesses, who are armed with mobile telephones, keeping blogs, sending SMS texts, and exchanging information on social networks. Editorial boards are “directing” information streams; media business divisions are involved in cross-marketing. The nature of multimedia influences the competitiveness of mass media, and changes the strategy of traditional media and their online versions as the marketing tool develops the concepts of “augmented reality” and “second life” (a means of virtual existence as a person and as media).

The significance of digital media for an active audience is increasing and the amount of time users spent on the Internet is growing. The user's faith in traditional advertising and marketing is falling. Today, not only the printed versions of newspapers and traditional radio but even mass broadcast television are yielding their positions to the Internet as a channel of communication. Speed, mobility, multimedia, universality, interactivity – these are the key words for the modern editorial office and media space. The audience – increasingly called “journalism providers” – are becoming co-participants in the process of producing multimedia information, primarily visual (photo, video, clips).

Runet and the digital future

The Internet market in Russia (Internet media, media on the Internet, online services) is growing vigorously. The monthly audience for Runet in 2012 in Russia was 57.8 million (50% of the population older than 18 years); the reach was 49%, and the Internet market in Russia in 2011 was worth 54 trillion rubles (1.4 to 1.7% of Russia's GDP, according to the Russian Association of Electronic Communications). In age groups up to 45 years, the Internet supersedes in reach all other media, including television. The audience of the mobile Internet is growing twice as fast as the stationary Internet (source: TNS Web Index, Russia, cities of 100,000+, age 12+, January 2012, Communications, 2011), which makes the Russian Internet market one of the most promising in Europe. The audience for Yandex in April 2012 for the first time exceeded the audience for First Channel on television. Yandex was visited by 19.1 million people a day, and First Channel was watched by 18.2 million a day (figures from TNS). With all the caveats regarding the comparison of results from television-watching and using a search portal, the trend is both illustrative and symbolic. Now even television can only be called the “most mass media” with the addition of caveats. Web viewers on the radio, online broadcasting on the portals of news agencies and radio stations, radio news on newspaper sites, infographics, animation, comics, photo films and audio slideshows are everywhere. This is already the customary selection of content for modern multimedia mass media.

The most important trend in the development of the new media is the speed and presence of millions of non-professionals who compete with professionals in producing content. For Russian media, awareness of the final lost battle for

speed of information with the networks came after the tragic terrorist act at the Domodedovo Airport (social network users overtook all media, and the media widely incorporated the content of eyewitnesses). Any modern editorial board is hard to imagine today without active promotion in social networks, without special columns (variations of diverse mobile reporters), incentivizing (for fame or for money) the former consumers of information to become its producers. Social media, more than traditional media, is oriented to discussion and creation of new values. This natural feature of social media is being used by the more advanced traditional media for creation of a loyal audience and design of new business models in the digital environment.

Modern media helps people to realize themselves, to create social communities, especially in niche markets. Initially these processes are connected to the desire for personal communications, therefore social media is dialogue in essence. Local municipal newspapers, moving to the web, become platforms for resolving problems of local communities. A vivid example is the newspaper of the small town of Berdsk near Novosibirsk and the special project “I want to go to day care!” Young mothers with the help of journalists and the possibilities of social networks (discussion, posting of documents, coordinating of actions and oversight of decisions by the administration) were able to get transparency regarding the allocation of places in day-care facilities, where waiting lists had become a real disaster in Russian cities in recent years). Everything that is collectively created and written collaboratively (blog-hosting sites, pages on social networks, Wikipedia and so on) creates a new social milieu, which is increasingly becoming a driver of social action.

Of course, the web is not only a good thing. The power of the networks, like any good, can be used in different ways. Whatever ends up on the Internet can be disseminated instantly, because “gatekeeping” is losing its meaning at the entrance to a social network, although the meaning is growing of “gatekeeping” to the entrance to the Internet as a whole and the mass communications media of the Internet (to which a social network refers). The power of networks can be realized through corporate control of the telecommunications and the media environment. According to the theory of Manuel Castells, the corporate power of networks is the imposition of products, services, consumption, and the political power of networks is related to the capacity of “gatekeeping” of political networks to media networks. The internal web power is realized through the procedure of controlling the agenda. The web-formed power is in the hands of a group of corporations and holding companies.

Social media and media: Loading the user from the network

Since web power is also power, it is very important to understand how millions of people live in the “networks”. Russia is in first place in Europe in popularity of social networks. The average Russian user spends 9.89 hours a month on social networks, whereas the average European only spends 4 hours.

Recognizing the scale of the coming changes, media managers would like to “marry” television, with its passive viewing, with the activity of the social networks. This is seen as an opportunity to enabling a renaissance in television, which is losing its viewers. The Smart TV technology offers such a possibility (at the technical level – smart-viewers are already being released and have built into them the ability to log on to the web or Skype during TV viewing and share impressions. Samsung and LDG are already offering a payment service through smart wallets), and television corporations -- often the most unprofitable of the traditional media – are beginning to recognize the challenges and develop principles and rules for work concerning television content in social networks. Of course, “big” television can battle with the social networks. But it is more productive, without a doubt, to integrate. For that, the oldest and youngest companies propose different methods:

- organizing offline life around TV, immerse and attract the viewer in the life of the editorial office (editorial meetings at Dozhd’ [Rain] TV in Russia and special sites about how news are made -- “internal editorial interiors” at CNN.
- learning to get satisfaction from telling stories and letting people earn money (competitions for viewers for programming the channel at Current TV and involvement of users in the creation of news content at Russia 24);
- “plant and grow loyalty” -- creating sites and pages on social networks devoted to programs, heroes, actors (examples of serials and comedy shows on the Russian channels TNT and STS).
- make partners, when viewer/users can compete for favorite content, prolong its screen and web life, as for example, the program Top Gear;

- creating a “second life” for television content (Mid-America Novelties, about a store which sells “fashionable goods from Uryupinsk”.) Besides the show on the Internet, there is an online version of the same store where you can really buy the merchandise; there are contents parodying the work of such stores in which the characters on the serial talk to the viewer/user; and the option to buy virtual presents on Facebook in the form of goods from the store. Yet another serial, “Shit My Dad Says” has become a CBS sitcom, made on the basis of a popular account on Twitter (about a man who lives with his father).

Already on the horizon – and the next thing after the stage of “sitting” and “second life” -- is “embedding” so to speak. Already the service Hulu has appeared, which is a television aggregator, offering an app for Facebook with which you can watch video with friends and leave comments, embedded on the video. Or a device which brings video to the user’s television from any source, enabling not only the discussion of impressions from viewing, but the clipping and sharing of videos liked, enabling the creation of your own channel, including your own broadcasting.

Communication with an audience 24/7, the use of transmedia storytelling, the realization of digital special projects, the creation of a second life, “embedding” – are already in the literal sense the integration of people and devices.

e-governance: The Estonian example

Katrin Nyman-Metcalf¹

Introduction

The topic of the presentation at the OSCE regional conference in Tbilisi in October 2012 was “e-governance: The Estonian example”. Under this heading, a practical example of what the use of modern forms of communication technologies mean in practice was given via the example of the very advanced Estonian e-governance. The importance of fully embracing new technologies in order to reap the benefits of an efficient and non-corrupt public administration with maximum transparency and access to information was highlighted, by looking at an example of e-governance in practice and discussing the necessary legal considerations. The topic is linked with freedom of expression, primarily regarding the issue of access to information.

The Republic of Estonia has rightly achieved attention in the world for its use of e-governance, which includes internet-based administration, integrated databases, e-voting and a general e-service-friendly environment. Despite being a small, newly independent and not comparatively rich country by European standards, Estonia has nonetheless succeeded in developing an efficient e-governance system that could serve as an example to other states in transition. Examples of emulators include Georgia, and to some extent Azerbaijan, countries that have borrowed both ideas and solutions for e-governance from Estonia.

In Estonia, after independence was regained in 1991, the government decided to make full use of modern technologies and leap-frog several steps in the development of information society services for the use of the central and local administration. At various levels of society, both in the public and private sector, the importance of information and communication technologies was recognised, making use of the latest technological developments. This became an important part of most state policy and strategy, and resulted in Estonia now advising many countries around the world on use of e-services and e-governance.

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One of the issues that are of interest for many countries is the use of an integrated database, which collects most main registries and allows access via one portal. This is efficient for the users, i.e. private citizens or entrepreneurs, but also for the authorities that communicate with one-another via the integrated system. At the same time, such an advanced system also raises legal, IT-technical and practical questions that need to be addressed.

What is e-governance?

One of the first issues to stress in relation to e-governance is to define what it actually is. Often the term is used just because authorities have web-pages or legislation is available electronically, even if this could be expected to be standard in today's modern government. Many times such web-sites or legal databases are just reflective: they show information in the same or similar format as it has in hard copy. To speak about real e-governance some level of interactivity is needed. Citizens and businesses should be able to communicate with authorities electronically and do various transactions in this manner. Authorities should also be able to communicate with one-another through electronic means.

For successful e-governance it is also essential that it is easy to use and that the user does not have to go to many different places (web-sites) but will find everything in one place, from where the user can be directed to different services easily and effectively. For this, interoperable and secure databases are needed that allow different authorities to use the information and the services that they need to fulfil their designated tasks. The citizen (or business) does not need to know what goes on "behind the screen", but must be able to enjoy secure and efficient services.

In many ways e-services are of great benefit to individuals, businesses and states. It allows for efficient, fast and non-corruptible services that the user accesses at times and in location he or she chooses. The states that have been in the forefront of using e-services (both e-government and e-commerce) can show many benefits. If there have been any disadvantages, these have often not been because of the electronic nature of the service but due to normal human error or carelessness (such as allowing unauthorised access to the services because of lack of security measures). This said, the very aspects of e-services that provide the greatest gains in efficiency and accessibility may also expose the service in question to manipulation that could lead to serious consequences. One simple

example of this is that significant interoperability of databases is very useful in many ways, but at the same time if such a meta-database is not secure, the negative effects if something goes wrong will also be widespread.

eesti.ee

The Estonian integrated e-services can be found at the portal www.eesti.ee. From this page, the user will be directed to different headings under which lists of services are found. The first page allows deciding if to enter as a citizen, an entrepreneur or an official. There is also an alphabetical list of services. The pages are available in English and Russian in addition to Estonian (to the most part). To enter into the system and actually use services, an ID-card and ID-card reader are needed.

Services and forms are grouped under various headings (housing, education and science, environment, traffic and so on). Under each heading, it is possible to get information but also to fill in forms, make applications, give notifications and so on. If a service spans more than one area, it may be listed in several lists, to make it easy for the person to find it. There are special places through which to send e-forms to any state or local institutions. The user can choose the recipient of the form as well as the areas under which to submit the document. Certain common transactions, like establishing a company, are done at a special place, which leads to all necessary places to perform various transactions. It is possible to establish a company in Estonia and have it up and running within 15 minutes. The tax office is another example of an area where almost all transactions are done electronically. In 2011, fully 94% of the declarations of private persons and 97% of businesses were done electronically and it is hoped that this will soon reach 100%. Many different licences and registrations are available to be completed electronically – all via the same portal and the integrated databases.

The fact that Estonia has ID-cards with a chip allows this to be used widely for contacts with authorities as well as for internet banking and other commercial e-services. Because of such widespread use, many people have ID-card readers and are used to using these. Estonia was also an early adopter of e-signatures as well as one of the few countries where legislation for recognition of such signatures was adopted before the technology was generally available. This meant that the introduction could be rapid as it was possible to use electronic signatures in most contexts as soon as people got used to them and had the

requisite equipment. In other countries the legislation was slower and even when signatures could physically be used they were not legally recognised. In such cases people lose the initial interest in the technology and it may take even longer to get people used to electronic signatures.

Estonia has legislation on use of e-signatures as well as e-stamps. There is separate legislation on the ID-cards, which are the means used for e-signatures. The ID card is combined with a unique personal identification code. The certificate service provider for the ID-cards was selected by public tender and is a private company.

The legal framework

In building successful e-governance, addressing practical and technical issues of security is only part of the necessary approach; the perception of people also needs to be taken into consideration. When technology is new, people may be worried just for this reason. If people do not adopt e-services because of whatever fears, the system cannot function well.

There should not be too many special laws on e-governance, instead e-aspects should form an integral part of the governance of the country and the technologies used should just be reflected where needed. A careful review of existing legislation to see that it fits with the new way to handle information and perform transactions is essential. The more established e-governance becomes – the fewer special laws will be needed. This is evident in the Estonian example. One very important area of law for use of modern communication technologies for governance is data protection legislation. Estonia had its first Data Protection legislation in 1996, which is still in force, although amended several times. While data protection (see further below) is not a unique issue for electronic data, new issues nonetheless arise and old issues are set in a new light because of the new technologies.

In Estonia in 1997 a law was adopted on databases. This is one of few examples on a special law on databases and the law was later repealed and replaced by provisions in the access to information legislation. The first such law entered into force in 2001 and in 2002 a new Administrative Procedure law entered into force which took into consideration the use of information and communication technologies. With electronic databases becoming an integral part of public

administration, the need and usefulness of a special law abated. Some special laws are however needed, such as the law for digital signatures.

The Estonian Digital Signatures Act was signed in 2000. Estonia, forced to rebuild the entire administration from scratch following the end of the Soviet occupation, seized the opportunity to make a virtue out of a necessity. Many new laws had to be passed in a short period of time and this was used to adopt modern solutions. Given the basic structure of the Estonian law on administrative procedure, which focuses on the aims and purposes regarding the interactions between citizens and authorities, instead of the exact forms of the same interactions, flexibility in the application of new technology is ensured. For various applications and services which require a specific form, the possibility to use electronic documents was introduced from 2002.

Having decided early on to accept electronic documents it was essential that they meet the same kind of demands on security and reliability as hard copy documents. In Estonia this was ensured by adopting regulations on safety measures to complement the legislation. Principles of Estonian Information Policy were adopted in two batches, the first in 1998 and the second in 2004. Adding to this work, a new Action Plan of Estonian Information Policy (eEstonia) is adopted almost every year.

There is thus currently no separate legislation on the integrated databases, but it has been created and facilitated by changes to other legislation as the system has gradually been built up. When the system was first created there was the mentioned law on databases, which provided for the possibility of the government to adopt regulations in order to create the interoperability of databases. As the system became a regular part of public administration the corresponding rules are now found in other legislation, and access to information is determined based on the relevant law that looks at content of information rather than where and how it technically and practically can be accessed. These latter questions are taken into consideration in regulations and technical systems. The certification authority for electronic information is in fact a private company that carries out duties for the public sector. The system is based on the fact that those responsible for the information ensure that the access to it is in line with access to information legislation. The basic premise is that official information is mainly accessible, but for private data there are various restrictions and data protection legislation applies. Just as in any form of providing access to information, the principle of proportionality is important. If some information should be accessible

and other information in the same document should not be, means of hiding the secret information should be found rather than just blocking access to the whole document.

The integrated databases under the name X-Road was launched in 2001. It started as an environment that would facilitate making queries to different databases. Over the years a number of standard tools were developed for the creation of e-services capable of simultaneously using the data of different databases. The presentation of the X-Road stipulates that it must enable any common data processing operation, e.g. writing operations to databases, transmission of huge data sets between information systems, successive search operations of data in different data sheets, possibility to provide services via web portals, etc.. The process of creation, compilation and termination of state managed databases needs to be firmly regulated. In such regulation the questions of who is responsible, who makes decisions, what legal acts are needed to describe the functions of databases (statute, approved by Government) and who is responsible for data processing will be answered.

In establishing databases and merging previously separate hard copy registers into an interoperable electronic one, the role of basic data will require regulation. In addition, seen from the viewpoint of the user and provider of data, the questions regarding what services need authorization and authentication, who is responsible for the use of data service and how auditing of databases is organized are key issues. For simplicity and efficiency, the principle to ask information from the end user only once is essential.

Data Protection

It is not modern technology as such that presents risks for data protection but the way technology is used, much in the same way as with traditional types of data processing and storing. It may be counter-productive to focus too much on the new technology as it is still the content of different information and the varying sensitivity of it that is the relevant issue. The fears and concerns that are voiced in many instances oftentimes confuse the content of the data with the form of it. What should determine data protection is the content of the data concerned and how sensitive it is – not which form it is in. It is not the colour of the paper but what it says on it that determines who should be able to see it.

Data protection follows certain principles in international (European) instruments as well as in national law. The use of data must be in accordance with law and it must be in proportion with the aim of using and processing the data. Data must be of high quality and correct. The collection and use of data shall follow the principle that no more data will be collected than what is needed given the purpose of the acquisition, and that data shall only be collected once. Information having the nature of basic information shall be collected once and if it is amended it must be ensured that the new information is entered into all relevant databases. Data shall only be used for the purpose it has been collected for, unless the subject agrees it may be used for another purpose. The subject should be informed about what data is collected and have the possibility to correct it, while at the same time the system must be safe against unauthorised access. If data is no longer needed for the purpose it was collected for, there should be a right to have the data removed. As data usage should be seen from the viewpoint of individuals, it is important to know who is the owner of the data, as well as what are the rights of potential users of the information. The most important objective is arguably to ensure data services, not data collection.

Even if automated data processing often means that people are worried about leaks and unauthorised access – partly due to the psychological effects of intangible information, partly due to the fact that so much information is available in one place – there are also ways to make automated data more secure. One example is ensuring that those who look at data leave a “footprint” so the person concerned can see that someone has looked at the information and may ask why. This is the system used for the Estonian integrated databases.

Even if there is no reason to believe that data security is compromised by automated handling of it, there are still some issues that arise in the context of modern technologies. Automated registers allow for various ways to categorise and identify data. The various ways to find data will make more (or less) of it personal data of the kind the directive and national laws want to protect, namely data that gives information about personal matters in such a way that a person can be identified. While the issue is not exclusive to any specific form of data processing technology, automated data processing may nonetheless provide significantly more opportunities for cross-referencing than hard-copy filing, consequently increasing the demand for laws that can ensure both access to and protection of the data.

In the regulations for the Estonian integrated databases duty security managers are required to cooperate with the data protection inspectorate. It is one of many tasks set out in a quite long list of responsibilities of different persons (or authorities) in relation to different control functions, including e.g. external audits. There are also specific instances identified when the Data Protection inspectorate needs to be notified, such as if there has been a security breach and the server needs to be replaced with the back-up server. The Data Protection inspectorate can order audits of databases that will be used as a basis to determine if a certain database can join the integrated system. A database cannot become part of the system unless it meets data protection requirements of the system that it will form part of. The parties (the different databases) are individually as well as jointly responsible for adequate data protection.

e-democracy

One area where Estonia is very advanced in an international comparison is e-voting. It is possible to vote via Internet since 2005 and by mobile telephone since 2011. The numbers of people using e-voting has increased steadily since it was introduced. E-voting is used in parliamentary, local and European Parliament elections. Surveys mapping the reasons to why certain people do not use this type of voting show that this is often linked to emotional issues, such as wanting to vote in person as it is a tradition. There are also differences in e-voting behaviour based on age-groups as well as geographic regions, with younger people in Tallinn and some other areas of the country most likely to use e-voting.

e-democracy is not just voting, but also greater transparency of government work. The Estonian government changed the documents handling system for its cabinet meetings to a paperless, web-based format in August 2000. This was one of the first - if not the first - government in the world to do so. It is now possible to follow a great extent of the proceedings in real time, although legislation on access to information allows for exceptions for access to certain information - regardless of whether it is in electronic or paper format.

The general aim of e-democracy is to support general participation in the democratic process, by making the process itself, as well as the information produced within it, more accessible to the general public. In striving for this goal it is important to recognise that while the introduction of e-services alone is neither a guarantee to increased democracy nor a panacea to all outstanding problems of an existing bureaucracy, it should nonetheless be a given priority in all government reform.

Social media and general media developments in Central Asia

The winner of 2012 Parliamentary elections in Georgia - New Media

Nico Nergadze¹

2012 parliamentary elections were a watershed moment for Georgia. It remains to be seen, how these elections will impact various facets of Georgian life - politics, economics and so on. But one result seems evident – 2012 elections and events leading to it finally established new media as a force to be reckoned with.

Of course, new media mattered before Autumn, 2012 too, but not as much, as Television. The Internet was second-rate information medium – nice to have, but its impact seemed somewhat negligible. Political parties, pundits and experts agreed – whoever controlled TV largely controlled general publics' access to information. The Internet was for making friends, entertainment and sometimes, for sharing opinions. Only few people used it as a source of everyday news.

It all changed over the course of three weeks. Starting from the middle of September 2012, when prisoner abuse videos were released, new media transformed into the vital information source for many Georgians. New media in Georgia has stopped being a second fiddle to the TV and started to emerge as an influential entity with a strong impact on decision makers. The number of people actively seeking information online has grown and this growth seems irrevocable.

To understand the extent of the impact that the 2012 elections has had on the new media development in Georgia, we need to describe the context, in which this change happened.

By the end of the 2000s Georgia seemed like an ideal place for new media. TV and Radio were trusted by few - every single survey that even remotely concerned media showed that. Georgians had good reason not to trust TV. Virtually every expert agreed that no TV station escaped some sort of pressure from interested political parties – governmental or oppositional. New media seemed like an ideal alternative – free, diverse and almost impossible to fully control.

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But its potential always seemed unrealized.

The main reason, why new media mattered so little, was simple. Up until 2012, the internet penetration, while ever-increasing, was still small. In 2010 1,300,000 Georgians, less than third of the country's population were using the Internet, according to the International Telecommunication Union, the United Nations specialized agency for information and communication technologies.

1,3 million still seems like a significant number, but its significance didn't translate into impact. Mainly, because Internet users didn't use the Internet for information. The survey of The Caucasus Research Resource Centers program (CRRC) showed, that only 5 percent of the Internet users in Georgia considered Internet as a main source of information about the current events in Georgia. It didn't rank very high in the list of the secondary sources of information either - with 14 percent, the Internet trailed behind newspapers, magazines, neighbors and family members – seemingly more frequent sources of information.

Unsurprisingly, the discourse about the media freedom centered largely around TV – main source of information for 88% of Georgians, according to the same research. New media remained largely unregulated, uncensored and unused.

But, there were some positive dynamics as well. First of all, even when the sheer number of the Internet users remained low, the “quality” of Internet adopters was high. Those, who used the Internet as an information medium, were more likely to have better education, higher income, more important jobs – i.e. they were decision makers. And the politicians and interest groups started to take notice – their websites became more sophisticated and the efforts to reach out through social media intensified.

At the same time, the sheer number of the Internet users was increasing not yearly, but monthly. ISPs were dropping prices for high-speed internet and introducing new plans that paired Internet fees with cable TV. Computers became more affordable as well. The demand was so high, that the ISPs could not keep with it - for the most of the 2011 the wait for the Internet installation was more than 2 weeks. At the same time, the development of the mobile internet meant that mobile operators could easily bring cheaper Internet into the rural Georgia as well.

By the beginning of 2012 a third of Georgia was using mobile internet. Plus, about 400 000 households were subscribed to the high-speed Internet – either cable or DSL.

As the number of users increased, so did the quantity of Georgians, who considered New Media as a primary source of information. According to GNCC, by the beginning of 2012 this number has tripled. The importance of the Internet still trailed TV by a wide margin, but the gap was closing. At the same time early adopters, the decision makers now had a bigger audience to influence.

In mid-September of 2012 Georgian opposition TV channels showed the videos that showed the abuse of prisoners in Georgian jails. The videos brought one of the biggest waves of protest in Georgian history. Also, for the first time in Georgian history, people had the opportunity to express their anger not only in the streets, but online as well. New Media was ripe to explode and explode it did!

One immediate result of the prisoner abuse video scandal was that most of the Georgian Internet users became information consumers as well, wittingly or unwittingly. It became virtually impossible to log into social networks and not see a headline or video, linking to the information.

As the protests intensified, so did the hunger for information. Georgian TV and radio were unable to keep up with the demand. At the same time, the (justified) distrust of the mainstream media resulted in more people seeking information online.

Since no research has been conducted yet on a New Media in General in September, we will give the data from the website of the Georgian bureau of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, www.radiotavisupleba.ge. Of course, it is not directly representative of the general rate, by which all Georgian new media sites have grown, but it does give a rough estimate of the trends. Anecdotal evidence supports this estimate – other Georgian media sites (www.netgazeti.ge, www.liberali.ge, www.tabula.ge) also report a sharp number of increases in visitors.

In the summer of 2012 radiotavisupleba.ge would get 2-3 thousand visitors daily. On a good day, if a blog post seemed to resonate with the Internet public, this number might double or even triple, but only for a day or two.

The Facebook page of Radio Tavisupleba was also doing fine by the Georgian standards. On September 1, 2012, for example, Facebook Insights showed a PTA index (People Talking About. It is supposed to be a proxy of the capacity of a Facebook page to engage its audience) of 363. This was a normal score for a Georgian new media site.

On September 17, 2012, when scandal from the prisoner abuse videos was picking up the steam, the number of the visitors skyrocketed – that day 20 thousand visitors visited the site. We don't have the exact data for other news sites, but the increase in visitors was noticeable across the board.

Radio Tavisupleba website has had spikes in visitors before as well, but this time was different. First of all, as it turned out, this was not a spike, but a steady increase in the number of the visitors.

For the next month the number of the visitors varied wildly and seemed to roughly coincide with the intensity of the events that were unfolding in Tbilisi, but it always remained at least triple of what it used to be before September. During this time, at its peak, Radio Tavisupleba had up to 40 thousand daily visitors. At its lowest – about 9 thousand.

Overall about 160 thousand unique visitors viewed at least one page of the Radio Tavisupleba website. Of those, more than third were new visitors. The visitors spent a very impressive average of 4 minutes on the site viewing on average 1 more page than the one they landed on.

But the website statistics are just one indicator of the growth of the new media in Georgia. Perhaps even more interesting would be to look at other aspects of the media organization. Radio Tavisupleba, besides its website, uses other tools available for the internet media site – social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter and livestream sites, such as Bambuser and Ustream.

According to influential social media analytical site SocialBakers, Facebook had 850 thousand users, by the beginning of October. (Facebook gained 50 thousand users from May 2012 to September 2012 in Georgia). With the increase of the visitors to the Radio Tavisupleba website, came the increase of the Facebook friends. The more people visited the site, the more they “liked” Radio Tavisupleba page on the Internet. The more likes the page had, more people became exposed to the content of the site.

By October 1 PTA index of Radio Tavisupleba Facebook page reached 4249. The higher the index, more people see the content that the page shares. According to Facebook Analytics and Google analytics, Radio Tavisupleba online news operation, combining the website, Facebook page and other tools, reached more than 440 thousand people.

Again, these are the numbers of just one online news operation. Granted, it is one of the most popular ones, but it is by far not the only one. The visitors to the other websites have skyrocketed as well. The new media in Georgia has grown.

One of the most interesting aspects to consider would be the livelihood of such increase. Maybe the growth was fueled only by the surge in information hunger and the public would go back to their TVs once the elections were over?

It is too early to tell yet, but this does not seem to be the case. Again, if we judge from the number of the visitors to the Radio Tavisupleba website, the number of visitors have declined by the end of September, but it started to grow again after the elections, on October 1. Only this time, the number of visitors has nothing to do with the intensity of the events in Georgia (which remains fairly even). Now the number of visitors seems to only correlate with the interesting articles and quality content.

Which should mean one thing: The new media in Georgia have won a very important battle. They have captured the attention of the general public and showed them the strength of the Internet. The technical hurdles (the low number of the Internet users and general indifference towards the Internet as a news source) have been overcome. Now it's up to the websites themselves to deliver quality content.

Media in Georgia: biased, but pluralistic

Margarita Akhvlediani¹

Media landscape in Georgia: Overview

Newspapers. Up to 600 newspapers publishing in Georgia, 2/3 of them in Tbilisi. Common problems: low circulation, lack of advertisement, lack of finances, poor content, not so many readers, poor websites.

Magazines publishing is on the rise in Georgia, they range from offering a mix of gossip about entertainment and politics on low-quality paper to serious reporting and analysis in good quality cover. Some 7 to 9 percent of the population claimed to get most of their political news from magazines, which is significantly higher comparably with newspapers.

Radio. The number of radio stations has increased over past years. Currently, there are up to 50 radio stations in Georgia, mostly in Tbilisi, although several regional radio stations strongly compete with Tbilisi-based stations for local audiences.

Most radio airtime is filled by music, however news, analysis and talk shows have become pretty popular and take more airspace. Most radio stations are available online. Many have websites with live streaming and programme archive. Websites of some radiostations sometimes are more popular than radio itself, a good example is the Radio Freedom.

About 20 percent of Georgians say they get their political news from radio.

Television is by far the most preferred medium in Georgia, with at least 95 percent of Georgians getting their political news via television. There are more than 40 television stations in Georgia, of which 11 are Tbilisi-based. TVs are strongly divided politically, especially in Tbilisi, and each of them seems to serve the interests of one of two leading political forces, either the United National Movement or the Georgian Dream. More details on the topic is provided below.

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Regional TV stations have limited programming, and have less local viewership than national channels.

Recent changes in ownership of several TV stations indicate that the television landscape will continue to be highly polarized along partisan lines, with a number of channels being controlled by individuals close to political forces of both the incoming government and the new opposition.

Online news media has sprung up in Georgia, users more often perceive news websites as the only source of many-sided information and especially as a place to state contesting views. They do engage investigative reporting and try to do fact-based reporting.

However, they, too, face many troubles, including lack of professionalism. Journalists too often cross the line between reporting to editorializing. At the same time, journalists, compared with previous years, have become less self-censoring.

Independent television studios producing television investigative programmes and documentaries have become an influential part of media space in Georgia. For instance, studios “Reporter”, “Monitor”, GNS have produced a number of much-discussed documentaries about crimes after the Rose Revolution in Georgia.

Statistics on the most popular websites suggest that the internet has seen considerably bigger changes in consumption patterns in recent years than have traditional outlets. For example, the traffic figures of the hugely popular Georgian video-sharing and television-streaming website Myvideo.ge show that an increasing number of people consume television online. Myvideo.ge streams all major Georgian channels and also archives them, so that the programs are available, for free, for 10 days after the broadcast. Nearly half of the traffic comes from people who watch television.

Problems

1. At the beginning of post rose revolution period scandals in media usually led to investigation by authorities. The problem in media-authorities relationship in the recent 3-4 years was seen the tendency which was similar to a popular wisdom of “The dogs bark, but the caravan moves on”. However, because new

authorities are in charge in Georgia since October, as well as other, previously called "opposition" media outlets have taken the scene this trend might have lost its actuality.

2. The particular problem of using force against political opponents through oppression their media related companies had become a real problem in last one-two years, although this trend seems to sink into oblivion, too.

The recent case of this kind was a story over the Global TV, one of the popular service providers across the country, which has been owned by the brother of the tycoon Bidzina Ivanishvili, who made his money in Russia, returned to Georgia, and formed a political movement opposing the ruling party. The authorities moved to seize satellite dishes from a warehouse used by Global TV.

3. Unfair advertising. The advertising market and distribution network in Georgia have been controlled by people associated with the recent authorities. This circumstance significantly hindered financial development of independent media. Until very recently, a few clearly pro-government media outlets were leading in advertising sales. State advertising was distributed among pro-government media - more than 80 percent of state television ads appeared on the pro-government Rustavi 2.

There were also reports of government and municipal officials applying pressure on private advertisers to stay clear of independent media too. For instance, when TV Maestro started offering advertisement time for the symbolic price of GEL 1 (less than US\$1) there were no takers although the placement of the advertisements was during the talk-show "Cell N5," one of the most popular television programs during the 2005–2010 period.

Some heads of oppositional TVs said that many businesses stopped advertising on then opposition channel Kavkasia after they were told by the government institutions not to.

It is important to mention, that the local market in any case is not big enough to sustain many stations. The advertising market is concentrated in Tbilisi, which leaves regional media without means.

4. The Georgian National Communications Commission has been a frequent target of criticism by civil society for the lack of transparency. The procedure

for selecting members also undermines the GNCC's credibility: candidates are selected by the president and approved by Parliament, without any involvement of civil society.

5. The Georgian government has to complete digital switch-over by June 2015, and there will be 175 frequencies distributed in 10 broadcasting zones. However, just three years before the deadline there is no evidence that there are any documents mapping this transition.

The Georgian Association of Regional Broadcasters (GARB), has prepared and submitted to the Ministry of Economy, the GNCC, and other interested organizations a model of the switch to digital broadcasting. However, the document has not yet been considered or discussed publicly by these organizations.

6. Low income. Majority of media companies are financially unstable and therefore are unable to pay decent salaries to media workers. Average salary of journalists working in printed media is 500 Georgian Lari (300 US Dollars), a half of the sum which people hired, for example, in construction get. The biggest two or three TVs pay relatively high wages to their personnel.

7. The lack of information about media ownership was a significant hindrance to the development of free media in Georgia until 2012.

Recently, government interference in the television market has become harder to exercise. As a result of a successful lobbying campaign by civil society groups, amendments to the Law on Broadcasting were passed in April 2011, requiring broadcast media to reveal information about their true owners and publicly available on their websites, and banning ownership by offshore companies, which had allowed the owners of the Georgian nationwide television companies to remain hidden.

The amendment to the law was part of a package drafted by an NGO-backed group of several high-profile media professionals.

The group also wanted to make financial accounting and audit of the broadcasters comply with international standards in order to get complete financial transparency of the broadcasters. However, the Parliament did not pass this particular amendment, arguing that "requiring from broadcasters to make

their audit based on the international standards would significantly increase their auditing expenses, which would be a serious financial burden, especially for small broadcasters in the regions.”

8. Unbalanced reporting. Such key elements in the practice of journalism as impartiality, accuracy and fairness are not popular in media in Georgia, and news coverage on all national stations lacks balance and neutrality, and accountability before the public is extremely low.

News coverage on all national stations lacks balance and neutrality. The stations Rustavi 2, Mze, and Imedi are viewed as supportive of the Saakashvili's party, while TV 9, Kavkasia and Maestro lean toward the Ivanishvili's party.

There is no functional or widely recognized self-regulatory mechanism for journalists in Georgia, except for the Charter of Ethics for Georgian Journalists, which was formed in 2009 by a group of high-profile journalists. Although the charter has got up to 150 signatories, a significant number for the country, there are very few television journalists among them. This fact is of particular significance, since it is the television journalists of the progovernmental and pro-opposition channels who are most frequently criticized by civil society organizations and groups for their biased coverage and misrepresentation of facts. They have done little to improve the content, which remains politicized and owner-dominated.

The owners of media outlets play the greatest role in determining a television station's editorial policy. The owners tend to appoint people loyal to the government as chief producers of news programs. The producers are usually aware of the unwritten self-censorship rules and follow them. As Transparency International Georgia put it: “Chief producers are in charge of communicating with journalists about what topic may be covered and how it should be covered (including the ‘appropriate’ wording for the topic). The phrase ‘it came from above’ has entered journalists’ vocabulary.”

Unfortunately, the TV 9, settled with support of the Georgian Dream, resembles today Rustavi-2 of the period of Rose Revolution. TV9 provides no investigation or critics towards the new leadership, and dedicates a significant part of its news and programmes to uncovering of the bad doings of the recent authorities, sometimes in inappropriate way.

Public broadcaster, created in 2005, has been much criticised lately for having grown “more friendly with the authorities” (Freedom House, Freedom of World Report, 2009). The GPB does investigative reporting only of safe subjects that are not critical of the government. The independent investigative studio Monitori, funded by the European Commission, the US Embassy, the Eurasia Foundation, IREX Georgia, and other international donors claim that they offered its documentaries to the GPB for free and suggested that the GPB management should select the stories it wanted. The GPB refused, saying it could not trust the quality of products by an independent studio, even if it enjoyed the trust of international organizations.

9. Online media enjoys relative freedom in Georgia and provides diverse views. According to different polls, Netgazeti.ge, at the nationwide audience, is becoming a leading voice among online outlets.

This is great news, supported by the fact that reliance on the internet for information is steadily growing: in 2011, some 5 percent of the people surveyed mentioned it as a primary source of news compared with 3 percent in 2009. Eleven percent said it was their second news source, compared with 6 percent in 2009. However, it must be remembered that the number of PCs in households is about only 17 percent of the total. Georgia still lags behind other countries in the region: according to International Telecommunication Union (ITU) data, only 6 percent of the population had an internet subscription in 2010.

Thus, media in Georgia presents two faces: a free and dynamic online environment and a heavily controlled by political forces offline world.

However, while both oppositional and pro-Governmental media report on events in a biased way, other side still is not precluded to freely state its views, which provides a viewer an opportunity to get some real information, spending some time in watching one television after another.

What is a bigger problem is that understanding of media as an information source delusions and instead the entire society starts to believe that media is not a source of information, but a service working to please the customers. Such an understanding threatens to bring the public, the government and the media itself to final destruction.

My dream is to have a luxury of turning on my TV, choosing an information channel, and getting an information not mixed with a joirnalist's, editor's, producer's and owner's view.

New Media of Armenia: Expectations and reality

Manana Aslamazyan¹

I want to provide a picture of the development of the Internet and social networks in Armenia.

The two-minute trailer for a documentary film that you have seen, “Being a Citizen,” briefly describes the most important actions to defend various civil rights in Armenia – on women’s fight to prevent reduction of their pregnancy assistance; on the preservation of the Trchkan Waterfall from destruction; on the campaign against logging of forests to develop minerals... Only seven social campaigns in 2011 are show in the film, but there were many more in Armenia last year. Undoubtedly, one of the reasons for such activism is the growing self-awareness of citizens. But it seems to me that the presence of accessible tools for rapid and mobile notification and uniting of social groups played a significant role in the growth of activism. And above all, social networks serve as this tool – primarily Facebook.

The rate of growth of users in the social network Facebook in Armenia is amazing. According to <http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/armenia> in the last 6 months, this number increased by 65,000 users and in October 2012 numbered 345,140 people, that is 11.63 percent of the whole population of the country. In addition, the largest group of users—35 percent —is made up of people from ages 18-24, and the next largest group or 29 percent of the users is made up of those from ages 35-44. From a demographic perspective, the users are divided approximately in half: 47 percent men and 53 percent women.

It is precisely this young, active group of Internet users who make up the main social segment developing civil society in Armenia. They are the creators of the new content who are raising the most urgent problems, and with a certain youthful fervor and impatience, who are demanding solutions from the authorities. Information which you want to share with others is in fact the new citizen’s journalism. Active users create their own media and sometimes this content is more interesting and relevant than some professional publications.

¹ Aslamazyan is director of the Alternative Resources in the Media Project for Internews.

I know several bloggers in Armenia, such as Ditord and Kornelj, whose blogs are more popular than other sites.

The Facebook phenomenon in Armenia in my view is based on an “older” social network – Odnoklassniki [Classmates]. For now, Odnoklassniki overtakes Facebook in the post-Soviet space since it is a Russian-language network.

The development of the Armenian segment of Odnoklassniki (OK) is related to the fact of a large labor migration of Armenians to foreign countries. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the collapse of the economy as a result of the Armenian-Azerbaijan war in Armenia significantly increased the level of unemployment. The new wave of migration, both seasonal and long-term, led to many families being separated. It was this need for a constant connection between immigrants and their relatives in Armenia which enabled the development of social networks and increased the number of Skype users. Today, OK numbers 800,000 users in Armenia and is actively developing the Armenian-language segment of the web. Little Armenia beats even such countries as the US, Israel and Kazakhstan in the number of regular, active users of this network.

Thus, new technologies play a decisive role not only in raising civic activism but in the maintenance of ties with relatives and friends.

Among the many seminars organized by our project Alternative Resources in the Media, one of the most touching for me is the seminars on computer literacy for pensioners.

Elderly grandmothers and grandfathers who have no understanding at all of the fine points of electronic technology, but who can master several buttons on a simplified computer, are able to chat with their grandchildren somewhere in Siberia or California. This is no longer a rarity. Moreover, I mean not only in Yerevan, where the Internet is much more accessible, but also in the most remote regions of Armenia.

Unquestionably, the development of social networks in Armenia would not be possible without the overall development of new technologies, the mobile telephone and access to the Internet.

Armenia began the process of modernization much later than many of its neighboring post-Soviet countries, so for many years there was just one not very active monopolist in this market. But starting in 2005, when two major Armenian-Russian telecommunications companies appeared in Armenia, the number of users of mobile communications began to grow rapidly. This process was even further accelerated with the appearance of a third provider in 2009. Today, in 2012, 93 percent of the citizens of Armenia have access to mobile telephones. Naturally, it was the competition of new telco players which greatly enabled the growth of the Internet.

Internet penetration in Armenia in 2009 was 15 percent of the population; in early 2011, it was already 30 percent (statistics from CRRC Caucasian Barometer). But by 2012, according to figures from World Internet Statistics, 47 percent of the population of Armenia had access to the web. Moreover, in Armenia people use the mobile Internet far more than in other countries, which is related to the country's mountainous topology.

My presentation is devoted only to new media and I will not speak here about the customary, traditional media – television, radio and print. All of them are present on the Internet and have their own sites, and try to actively promote their programs in social networks. Some of them do this better, some worse.

In recent years in Armenia, there has been a vigorous growth of independent online media. Of course this process has been underway throughout the world, and Armenia is no exception. But it seems to me that more than 80 online publications in a country where the population is only three million is too many because all of these publications are expensive – they all come out in three languages – in Armenian, Russian and English and some even in Turkish. The advertising market cannot sustain such a number of media carriers, both traditional and new. That is why the majority of these online projects do not have serious journalist staff, chase after news to the detriment of any serious analysis, and are endlessly occupied with re-posting news, which is sometimes unverified, sometimes planted deliberately. Of course, for every rule there are exceptions and they exist in Armenia, too, such as the sites www.news.am, www.aragin.am www.tert.am and others. The daily audience of these online publications already exceeds the audience for national television channels.

In my view, there are very interesting processes underway in several of the most serious print publications of Armenia. The newspapers Avarot (Morning) and 168 Zham (168 hours) are now in the process of a real convergence, whereby the sites of these newspapers are not just publishing audio and video, but where the editorial processes and structures are changing. This is when the print edition and the site now live independently, yet nevertheless have a combined life.

Hetq (Track), a respected newspaper of investigative journalism has now given up its paper version entirely and now exists only online. Several years ago, a real Internet television channel www.A1plus.am began broadcasting in Armenia. This channel had lost its broadcast license in its day; however it became a pioneer of Internet television in my view only in Armenia, but throughout the Caucasus as a whole. Last year, a second Internet channel www.civilnet.am began regularly broadcasting. Unfortunately, both channels are experiencing very serious financial difficulties.

But in my view, the most interesting and most promising processes are occurring in the development of citizens' journalism. In Armenia, the blogosphere has been developing for several years and a group of serious, balanced, popular and influential bloggers has formed. This is also a sign of the new times; after all, they are not professional journalists and are well known in the country only due to their regular publications on the web.

But times change very quickly. Another generation is now coming to replace the establishment bloggers who contemplated the times, themselves and processes under way. And let the wise elders forgive me, but these "youth" already in some sense are overtaking them, if not in quality, in timeliness and quantity.

It seems to me all conditions have been met for the development of citizens' journalism now in Armenia. There are Armenian-language web-platforms, seminars to train citizen journalists are regularly conducted both in Yerevan and in the regions. In our project alone, more than 100 were trained in the last two years.

Allow me to introduce several projects in this area which seem to me to be the most promising.

www.mynews.am

A new gamification platform in the Armenian language for citizen journalists. Of course, this isn't Huffington Post or Malaysiakini but it already has 600 citizen journalists registered on the platform who have placed more than 1,400 materials. The most interesting thing on this platform are the constant contests, games and prizes. It's very important that traditional national media has picked up and regularly published materials from the citizen journalists from mynews.am as well as other platforms and blogs.

Citizen journalists actively attract other publications. The Internet channel A1plus has run a feature "Through Your Eyes" for more than a year now; the online company www.panarmenian.net has the column Panreport and so on.

But I would like to talk about an interesting initiative: not only because it is part of the project where I'm working now, but above all because it seems to me such initiatives are extremely important for the development of our countries. For it is obvious to everyone that the number of users of new technologies in the capitals of our countries exceeds the number of users in the provinces, especially in rural areas. "Infotoons" as they are called locally, or infohouses, infohomes, infovillages, infopeople – these words have solidly entered our vocabulary for more than a year. The infohome is a regional center in which regular training for citizen journalists is organized on a permanent basis. We already opened five such "infotoons" under agreement with local NGOs.

At the infotoons, there are constant seminars on various topics related to information – starting with computer literacy and ending with seminars on photo and video editing. People regularly watch and discuss documentary cinema at the infotoons, children and old people come to the infotoons and at an infotoons, you can ask to find information for yourself on the Internet on the most diverse topics and print it out there, if you don't have the Internet available in your own home, and so on. That is, any information which could be imagined by citizens using new technologies is accessible through the infotoons, which became centers for media education in the regions.

The workers at the infotoons travel around various villages and conduct seminars there, organize flashmobs and exhibits. Quite recently, for example, the infotoon in the town of Martuni (that's 180 kilometers from Yerevan) asked

the residents of the town “How can we make our town beautiful” and people voted for the creation of memorials. The infotoon organized a collection of money and in a brief period of time collected 10 million dram (about \$250,000). The infotoon invited five sculptors from Yerevan who worked for an entire month here on an empty lot, living in the homes of local people and as a result created five sculptures. At the present time, the residents of Martuni are voting via the Internet on the places where the memorials should be placed.

Activists at the infotoons were also the main sources of information for another online project, a crowd-sourcing platform at www.iditord.am (Information Observer). During the parliamentary elections in the spring of last year, more than 1,500 facts of violations of election legislation were registered on this platform. A significant part of the information came in fact from the infotoon activists.

It seems to me that this sort of activism is the main role of social media.

A community of people is already forming around our infotoons, around individual activists in other regions. They understand and value the importance of bringing information to citizens and actively using all the capacities of new technologies to solve the urgent problems of life. Crowd-sourcing – that is, collecting information from citizens – is yet another direction of new social media which enables the collection of information from the broadest possible circle of people and on that basis new content is created, and new trends in society are identified.

All of these innovations, technologies and so on of course are developing and disseminating primarily in the online sphere. But it seems to me that the regular meetings of people who know each other only by nicknames is also extremely important.

It is for that reason that it seems to me very important for the development of new media and socially active media to regularly conduct hackathons, TED talks, bar-camps, social innovation camps and other forms of gatherings. In Armenia, the bar-camps were the most successful. Bar-camps in Armenia are six parallel working platforms, dozens of presentations and workshops. The latest, fifth one drew more than 1,300 people.

The Mardamej Social Innovation Camp (SIC) last year and the hackathon of last year produced afterwards a minimum of six projects in which online technology helps to improve offline life – in clinics, transportation and on roads.

Perhaps I am drawing too optimistic a picture and it seems as if there are no problems in this sphere. That is not the case, they do exist and they are related to the most diverse issues – accessibility, price, and the ownership of various tools.

But as with traditional media, the main thing in new media is the content. All these new tools are not worth anything if the people who use them are indifferent, nationalistically inclined, or limited in their views.

Yet they also will become a powerful tool if the people who use them are open to the world, engaged, and civically responsible – that is, if they are infoactivists.

Dominant Trends in the Mass Media in Armenia in 2011-2012

Boris Navasardyan¹

Changes in the media are lately occurring so rapidly and dynamically that a depiction of the static situation as it looks today provides little in terms of understanding the problem. Especially because changes in one dimension, for example, technology, inevitably leave their mark on others – the legislative, political and professional dimensions. Therefore, in my presentation I will try not so much to state the realities at the moment when we Armenian participants left Yerevan for Tbilisi, so much as to describe basic trends, and to bring correctives into the media field even in the hours that we are here meeting and which will define the development of the information space of Armenia in the near term. The determination of trends is like a forecast; it cannot be 100-percent accurate, so certain of my judgments could be debatable.

Since our country is in between election campaigns – parliamentary and presidential – and Georgia is also living with just finished elections, I will start with this topic then. After the spring parliamentary elections in Armenia, the statement “who owns television will win the elections” seems entirely dubious. During the official election campaign, the owners of Armenian television controlled by the government (and the concentration of property here has reached an unprecedented level), essentially rejected the practice of unequal allocation of air time to candidates and political forces. For the first time in the history of national elections in Armenia, both the EPK monitoring provided with the support of the OSCE and the European Commission, as well as international observers and even the Armenian opposition testified that during the period of election campaigning, broadcasters largely provided equal opportunities for campaigns.

Of course, it would be a great exaggeration to attribute this phenomenon by the authorities’ good will, although it was their political decision that influenced the television channels’ behavior. Particular significance was given by the international community, above all the European Union to the quality of these elections, and the importance of evaluations from outside for the

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political leadership of the Republic of Armenia; hence, the interest of the latter in respectable monitoring results does not fully reveal the reasons for the metamorphosis. A significant factor was the awareness that television had lost its monopoly on the formation of public opinion, and the continuation of ruthless exploitation of this resource for the achievement of desired results in elections could be a futile exercise.

To be sure, during this period between elections, control over television content remains for the authorities a fairly important component of the management of political processes and public sentiments. In the absence of the attention of international organizations, a one-sided and selective coverage of events and opinions, and a deficit of discussion of public-interest problems, are, as before, characteristic traits of Armenian television.

Yet the topic of biased mass media broadcasting nevertheless is gradually losing its urgency. It is possible that this South Caucasus conference will be the last where we will speak of the domination of television as the chief source of information for citizens. Already today, the audience for Armenian Internet news sites is comparable in size to the audience for news programs on Armenian television channels. And the situation is radically changing in favor of the former literally every six months.

In this sense, we need to look at the broadcasting legislation from a somewhat different angle. For a long time, this legislation was the number-one topic in the context of securing freedom and pluralism for Armenian mass media. From the moment the Law on Television and Radio was passed in 2000, it needed a conceptual re-working. But despite numerous discussions, alternative draft laws proposed by journalists' organizations, including the Yerevan Press Club and Internews, PACE resolutions and expert conclusions from OSCE and the Council of Europe, the Law, if it was amended, in fact went in the opposite direction from what was recommended.

A key problem all this time has remained the bodies intended to regulate and manage broadcasting – the National Commission on Television and Radio and the Council for Public Television and Radio Company. Precisely their exceptional dependency on the government became a factor leading to the political monopolization of the airwaves. Several options were proposed to obtain at least relative independence for these bodies. In particular, the possibility was studied of forming them on the basis of independent civic

institutions (on the example of councils of public broadcasters in a number of European countries) – with labor unions, industrial associations, organizations representing various social groups, religious communities and so on. This option could have been seen as the most acceptable, but unfortunately, such institutions in Armenia are either not independent (by virtue of the control over them by the government) or not stable (by virtue of the lack of stable sources of existence).

An orientation toward political pluralism in the composition of national regulators could serve as an alternative. Balancing participation in these bodies of representatives of rival parties (50% from the ruling coalition and 50% from the opposition) would create a definitive basis for making decisions in the interests of the whole society. This model, in some respects similar to what was adopted in Georgia, is possible but has a number of flaws – international experience indicates the undesirability of politicizing bodies that regulate broadcasting and manage public TV and radio. There is no doubt, however that with such a model, Armenian broadcasting media would not be so far from the real and diverse information needs of the society as it is now. And when we acknowledge the rapidly growing role of the Internet in informing the population of Armenia, we have to admit that a significant portion of this audience is television viewers' discontent with the quality of news and discussion on the airwaves.

In fact, today, it's evidently already too late to speak about the possibility of a certain independence of the regulators by reflecting among them the pluralism of the Armenian political arena. The opposition in Armenia is so weakened by the lack of resources that it has to survive by attaching themselves to two oligarchs' parties. And restoration of real political pluralism now must be tied to the prospects of economic pluralism, when business circles have free resources that are so independent from the government that they can permit themselves the financial support of opposition parties. But that's a completely different topic and an entirely cloudy prospect.

In other words, thinking about legislative guarantees for an independent broadcasting industry in Armenia today is a big luxury. It remains only to rely on the famous "political will" about which so many speak, like the Abominable Snowman, but which no one believes has ever been seen. Nevertheless, reform of broadcasting legislation, despite the reduction of its strictly political relevance, remains a priority for the media community. For an effective

development of this industry in the period of transition to digital broadcasting, civilized procedures and an informed strategy are needed. Meanwhile, since 2009, there has been talk of a conception for digitalization, but no one has ever seen a serious document that first, justifies the selection of standards; second contains a calculation of resources and technological decisions for a national digital broadcasting network; third, forecasts the long-term expenditures of television companies to use this network; and fourth, proposes a model for subsidies. To be sure, a few years ago, the Ministry of Economics of the Republic of Armenia, which at that period for some reason was involved in broadcasting issues, happily informed the public that Italian specialists, including some from the company Mediaset, would help us in resolving all television problem. These specialists then managed to do some things, but in light of subsequent events around this company, I think no commentary is needed regarding their contribution to the development of the Armenian media industry....

Reforming legislation, when the conceptual issues remain undecided regarding the transition to digital broadcasting is a very complicated task. And yet nevertheless, these journalists' associations, together with their partners and with the substantial expert support of the OSCE and Council of Europe, proposed in parliament draft amendments to the Law on Television and Radio. In particular, it provided for a whole number of procedures which are now absent, but which would have acquired particular importance from the first days of digitalization – the licensing of private multiplex operators, the distribution of channels for these multiplexes, taking into account the public interest in the process of developing the industry, and so on. In connection with the traditional political sensitivity regarding everything that concerns television, there is no reason to expect that the draft will be reviewed in the coming months, as the preparation for the presidential elections is under way. But we do have certain expectations regarding the spring session of the National Assembly.

A special topic is the Public Broadcaster. In the above-mentioned draft law, there is an article providing for more precise regulation of the activity and accountability of the OTKR, which remains as a unique state institution which does not answer to anyone under the law! Meanwhile, as sad as it is to admit, Public Television in Armenia, never having been established, is now leaving the scene as a significant institution. It was stated above that in the current civic and political realities, legislative guarantees for the independent management of OTRK are practically impossible. Accordingly, the chance that it can propose

to its audience in the foreseeable future a diverse and high-quality coverage of current problems is approximately zero. The government, for which the so-called state, and then the so-called public television was one of its chief instruments for guaranteeing its self-reproduction is now successfully resolving this problem through controlled private channels. If until recently, OTRK, enjoying the blessings from above, was an aggressive player in the advertising market and implemented commercial projects with no less effectiveness than the leading private television companies, then today government circles are interested in removing it in general from the ranks of business rivals.

It can be supposed that Public Television, no longer needed, will be left to go fallow with what in the Soviet era were called “the creative intelligentsia,” that is loyal representatives of culture, literature and art. Under market conditions, they feel themselves deprived not only of material assistance but of attention and honors. For several years now, the representatives of the creative intelligentsia have publically complained of the “coercion of bad taste,” “the undermining of the moral foundations of the nation,” and “insufficient propagation of spiritual values” on Armenian television, and have written letters to the president as well. Their claims are largely founded, but the methods which they propose to correct the situation have the scent of mothballs about them with Soviet-era concepts like “Glavlit” (the Soviet Chief Directorate for Protection of State Secrets in the Press, or censor) and “Khudsoviet” (Artist’s Council) and so on. The president’s Public Council took hold of this topic “seriously”. Naturally, private channels that earn money for their owners precisely due to all these “depraved phenomena,” and also extinguish the civic activism of society and its interest in real problems, can hold their own. But, evidently, the upper echelons of government are not opposed to present public television to this still influential sector of the electorate, thus pledging guaranteed support for a certain time. Without advertising, it can fill the airwaves with low-cost broadcasts on just the state budget alone – concerts and shows without commercial pretensions, endlessly long interviews about national culture, domestic films the rights for which do not require the payment of large fees...It doesn’t matter if the broadcasts will have a small audience or that the last modern-thinking professionals will leave OTRK; meanwhile, there will be no worries about the political loyalty of the public channels and their new old heroes.

I will deliberately not dwell in detail on the most traditional of traditional mass media, the paper press in Armenia. Unlike television, it was always if not independent at least pluralistic and reflected the basic contrasts of domestic

political life. But numerous economic problems dictated by poor local market and world trends hardly favorable to print media were aggravated in our country by the awful state policy regarding them in the course of 20 years of independence. As originally a newspaper journalist, with most of my experience in newspapers, it pains me to have to admit that there are no prospects even in the near future for the Armenian print press. The only salvation for them is to go on to the Internet and create convergent editorial offices.

Thus, the dominating role of alternative, convergent media in the Armenian information market is inevitable and it will move from the category of forecasts to the category of reality faster than many of us could have imagined at last year's meeting here in Tbilisi. But that's the topic for another speech, by Manana Aslamazyan, director of the Alternative Media Resources Project. I will just briefly touch upon one aspect of social networks (or social media). Their growing role in the life of Armenian society astounds the imagination. It is a question above all of the development by means of social media of "web" civic activism. Environmental protection, urban planning, elections, corruption – this is an incomplete list of the areas where "web" activism has managed to demonstrate itself fully. If you count the most vivid examples of recent months, when the activism of society has brought a specific result, then it is the achievements of "web" activism that prevail, and not the traditional institutionalized segment of civil society which has developed and been nurtured in Armenia for almost two decades.

Meanwhile, the development of social networks as a resource for information for civic activism contains serious risks. There is too little time between signal and action in order to fully evaluate a situation, its background, and its accompanying factors in order to make an accurate decision. Roughly speaking, all the networks activists have "at their disposal" can be drawn upon effectively to save a tree that is going to be cut down, but meanwhile somewhere else an entire forest can be destroyed. I will deliberately cite an example from an area where "web" activism has been the most organized, concentrated around a few competent informal leaders who cannot be so easily disoriented. But even here, and all the more in other spheres where the planting of disinformation, a provocative signal, an initiative of a manipulative nature are all quite possible. Contemporary PR and political technology are penetrating further into social media, making "web" activism vulnerable, and in recent months in Armenia the attempts to exploit "honest, sincere enthusiasm" for unseemly ends have grown more frequent.

These challenges require a more active participation of professional, responsible players in the information field (journalists, experts, independent representatives of institutionalized civil society) and in social media. Their knowledge and ability to analyze and verify signals in combination with the motivations aimed at operational reaction of “web” activists reduce the likelihood of the prevalence of “bad” content and the manipulation of social media. The advancement of such cooperation is a new and promising direction for the activity of media organizations.

The rapidity of the receipt and reaction to information is becoming a new factor in social segmentation. If “web” activists – mainly young people of student age and also a new type of professionals not strictly stuck to their workplace – manage to achieve in this sense incredible speeds and advantages then the representatives of many traditional professionals are disadvantaged. I recently had repairs done in my apartment and involuntarily entered into the situation of fairly highly-qualified specialists in their field, for example, plumbers who, although they wish to stay abreast of events and in the thick of public life are falling far behind its pace. The majority of participants of our conferences not only listen to speeches but without stopping, continue in parallel to follow what is happening far from this room thanks to laptops, i-phones and so on. Thus we and other categories of society for whom “web” activism is accessible conduct ourselves at work, in the student lecture hall even on public transportation. But unlike you, the hands of the plumber are constantly busy during work hours; his gaze is constantly directed at concrete objects; he doesn’t have time for an i-phone.... Even a few years ago, a person could calmly, without thinking about anything else, work for eight hours, come home, and have dinner and only later, when he had laid down on the couch, take the remote control of the television in hand or the newspaper. Such a regimen would not mean a significant information delay for him. Today, it would undoubtedly mean this.

And no matter how primitive this sounds, the solution for media, which I recently characterized as almost lost for the Armenian news industry, is radio. At that time, it seemed that radio had finally receded to the musical and entertainment niche. Today, more and more Armenian radio stations broadcast news and talk about serious topics. Armradio (FM 107.0) is the main talking media, although only a year ago, only jazz could be heard on this frequency 24 hours a day. I and many others who love to listen to good music in the car regret this “re-branding,” but the plumber and representatives of dozens of other professions, without distracting from their jobs, obtain the opportunity

to listen to news and opinion in a wide spectrum of civic and political topics. Public radio of Armenia has been speaking a great deal. Yerevan FM (102.0) successfully combines quality music with quality news, for which it received the Yerevan Press Club prize this year. Moreover, in rebroadcasting Radio Liberty, Yerevan FM is focused on the high bar of the latter and in its own news shows.

By the way, the return of Armenian radio channels to formats offering civic and political information is largely stipulated precisely by Radio Liberty's broadcasting. For many years, the Armenian authorities thought up various methods to artificially frustrate the access of this radio station to an Armenian audience. Thank God, this didn't work. They had to resort to more civilized forms of attracting radio listeners and stimulate competition to Liberty. Whatever notions were behind this, the audience only gains.

In closing, I would like to cite one more even more convincing "success story" from the life of Armenian media. It is connected to the decriminalization of libel and insult in 2010, which at first was conceived by some of our circles close to the government as a "clever joke". On the one hand, liability for defamation was moved from criminal to civil law, enabling the praise of international organizations, but on the other hand, it became a "club" for opposition and critical media which saw criminal prosecution as the lesser evil than paying compensation for moral damages. The second half of the concept seemed at first to work – judges began to churn out the maximum amounts of compensation for moral harm to litigators, a selection representing the political and business elite, and several publications were threatened with bankruptcy. But the first part of the plot against disobedient media didn't work out – Armenian journalists' organizations, the press itself, and then after them, the international community began quickly to call things as they in fact were. Cases in the European Court for Human Rights loomed ahead, and all calculations indicated that the "clever joke" had not justified itself. The authorities had to extricate themselves from the unpleasant situation they themselves had created.

In May 2011, at the initiative of the Human Rights Defender of the Republic of Armenia, the Council for Information Disputes (CID) was formed, and both of those from Armenia giving a talk today became members. The expert conclusions of the CID on defamation cases in the courts began to really influence law-enforcement practice, and the assistance of the OSCE enabled the establishment of the CID on a regular basis. Already by 2012, it could be

confidently stated that citizens pursuing the goal not of rehabilitating their name, but only punishing journalists through the pocket ceased to obtain what they wished from the courts. The statute in the Civil Code of the Republic of Armenia on libel and insult did not become a “club” against the media. The number of cases began to drop sharply and the chances of regulation information disputes through extrajudicial means rose, in particular, through appeals to the self-regulation body of the Observatory Council on Media Ethics.

The main problem of this structure, created in 2007 at the suggestion of the EPK by the media outlets themselves on a voluntary basis was and remains the lack of informedness and understanding of the principles of activity of the Council on the part of citizens. But the most effective form of solving that problem is the televised versions of the review of specific disputes and conflicts of ethics. The production of this show, named Press Club, has attracted the attention of a fairly wide audience and raised the interest in the activity of the Observatory Council on Media Ethics and increased the number of appeals to it as alternatives to appeals to the court. Today, the Armenian media community is contemplating how to extend to maximum effect the action of the mechanisms of self-regulation to the Internet, especially since there already is a precedent for review by a court of a lawsuit for insult and dignity on Facebook.

The trends analyzed in this report bear witness to the fact that objective processes in the information sphere of Armenia force the authorities to lose their appetites for restricting freedom of speech. Meanwhile, the effort of the political elite to control the mass media is capable of causing serious damage to the development of certain branches of the media industry as occurred in its day with the print media and is now happening with television. Therefore, consistent and coordinated efforts from the journalist community and international organizations are required to advance progressive approaches in this sphere.

Azerbaijan's Critical Voices in Danger: Freedom of expression in Azerbaijan in 2012

Emin Huseynov¹

Despite its stated commitment to democratization, the Azerbaijani government has demonstrated authoritarian tendencies, particularly in persecuting its citizens for disseminating unwelcome information. Though some forms of dissent still exist and are even permitted in certain cases – an argument frequently used by the government in response to criticism by local and international human rights groups – genuine critics of the regime are few and are under severe pressure. Crossing the line by reporting on certain taboo topics – such as criticism of the president or his family – can lead to serious repercussions. The authorities' tactics to silence critical voices include blackmail, intimidation, public humiliation, torture, and arrest on dubious charges, among others.

If harassment and violence against journalists is the most obvious evidence of serious problems with press freedom in Azerbaijan, public indifference and cynicism further aggravate the situation. Despite the country's dire human rights record, many Azerbaijanis remain politically passive. This is in part due to the lack of accurate information via the state-controlled broadcast media, and in part due to intimidation caused by the serious examples the authorities make of those who dare to cross the line, but perhaps also because many see a prospering country with improving standards of living and an unprecedented construction boom. Another major constraint on media freedom is the authorities' tight control over politics, policy-making, and media. Given this environment, existing independent media remain unable to ensure the government's accountability to the public.

This sentiment of resignation is also evident in the media sector. There are very few independent outlets left, as even traditional opposition voices have been silenced through force or other means of influence (for example, an apartment complex, currently under construction, will be offered to journalists and editors, including from the opposition media). Similarly, some opposition outlets have recently softened their tones after receiving government grants. In a marked change over the past year, few media outlets in Azerbaijan are now regarded as independent. In this environment, self-censorship has become as great a challenge as imposed censorship.

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The government has also stepped up activity on the legislative front, enacting and proposing new laws that dramatically reduce the space for the free flow of information and the freedoms of expression, assembly and association.

While fears of a further crackdown may be real, the primary factors driving the marginalization of independent media are the tightly controlled political environment and the lack of public interest in political participation.

The Azerbaijani authorities bear responsibility for the atmosphere of impunity in which physical and moral attacks against journalists encroaching on powerful interests – including, in two cases, murder – are commonly carried out as a way to silence critical voices.

Impunity for violence against journalists

One of the most significant obstacles to freedom of expression in Azerbaijan remains the high frequency of violent attacks against journalists and media workers and impunity for their attackers. This has resulted in widespread practices of self-censorship in the country, as many journalists fear crossing certain lines in writing about taboo topics, such as corruption and the business interests of the president's family.

In March 2005, *Monitor* magazine editor-in-chief **Elmar Huseynov** was murdered in a well-organized attack that appeared to be a contract-style killing. After receiving a number of death threats, he was gunned down in the stairwell of his apartment building in Baku, where he died on the scene. More than seven years later, the authorities have failed to adequately investigate this case and no one has been brought to justice for the attack. Huseynov was well-known as a hard-hitting investigative journalist who was highly critical of the authorities. His case has become deeply symbolic, reminding the Azerbaijani media community of the courage needed to pursue investigative journalism and of the inherent risks associated with this work.

Since Huseynov's murder, there have been more than 200 attacks against journalists in Azerbaijan, including another murder. In November 2011, prominent writer and journalist **Rafiq Tagi** was attacked in the street near his home by an unknown assailant who stabbed him seven times. Following surgery, Tagi had appeared to be in recovery, but he then died four days after the attack under

circumstances the local media community considered suspicious. His death was initially attributed to choking; however, the Ministry of Health later stated that the cause of death was peritonitis. Prior to his death, in an interview given in the hospital, Tagi said a recent article he had written criticizing the Iranian authorities could have been the cause for the attack against him.² A leading Iranian cleric had previously issued a fatwa against Tagi following his publication in 2007 of an article which criticized the role of Islam as hindering Azerbaijan's democratic development, for which Tagi served more than a year in prison in Azerbaijan on charges of inciting religious hatred.

In the first nine months of 2012, there have been a total of 34 cases of violent attacks against 45 journalists and their family members in Azerbaijan. In virtually no case of violence against journalists since Huseynov's murder have the authorities undertaken serious investigations into the attacks and brought the true perpetrators to justice. This has created a climate of fear for the media community and impunity for those who wish to use violence to silence criticism.

Legal repression of freedom of expression

Despite Azerbaijan's commitment to respect and protect the right to freedom of expression through its accession to major international human rights treaties and as provided for in the national legal framework, in practice the authorities do not respect this right. Instead, they use the law to silence criticism and repress dissent. The mere existence of some laws – such as criminal defamation provisions – has a chilling effect on the media community, contributing to the widespread practices of self-censorship in the country. Other laws are applied in a political manner to make examples of critical journalists, bloggers and activists.

Restrictions on freedom of information

In a worrisome move, on 1 June 2012 the Azerbaijani parliament, the Milli Mejlis, adopted a series of amendments to the Law on the Right to Obtain Information, the Law on the State Registration of Legal Entities, and the Law on Commercial Secrets. The amendments permit commercial entities to keep their registration information secret, including information about their ownership and structure.

² <http://bit.ly/xhgk2h>

As is the case with many draft laws in Azerbaijan, the amendments were sent to Parliament without being made public. On 6 July 2012, the president issued a decree giving the amendments the force of law within three months. These amendments contradict international standards for freedom of information and will make it more difficult for journalists to investigate and report on corruption.³

There are further problems with the Law on the Right to Obtain Information, largely due to the failure by many government bodies to comply with the law's requirements for information-owners and other implementation problems. For example, for more than five years the government failed to appoint an Information Ombudsman as stipulated by the law. In February 2011, parliament amended the law, combining the position of Information Ombudsman with that of the existing Human Rights Ombudswoman, which was viewed as a negative step as she lacks independence from the government.

Defamation

Among the most longstanding legal provisions problematic to freedom of expression are the defamation provisions which remain in Azerbaijan's criminal code. Although the "National Action Program for increasing the efficiency of human rights and freedoms in the Republic of Azerbaijan"⁴ provided for the adoption in 2012 of a new defamation law which would decriminalize defamation, at present, defamation remains a criminal offense, carrying a penalty of up to three years in prison. Defamation provisions are not used as frequently to imprison journalists as in previous years, but they are still in use.

The more frequent use of civil defamation provisions to restrict the ability of independent and opposition newspapers to operate presents a serious obstacle to freedom of expression. Highly critical newspapers such as *Azadliq*, *Yeni Musavat* and *Khural* are the most frequent targets of defamation lawsuits, many of which are based on complaints filed by Members of Parliament and other public officials. The heavy damages awarded as a result of these lawsuits contribute to the already dire financial situation of these newspapers, making continued operations difficult.

³ <http://bit.ly/PalyFN>

⁴ <http://bit.ly/PxH3Tw>

In addition to the aforementioned laws, there are a number of other legal barriers to freedom of expression. These include the Media Law; the Television and Radio Broadcasting Law; the NGO law; and the Grants Law. These laws contain problematic provisions and are sometimes applied in a political manner.

Recent years have seen a shift of imprisonment on charges clearly linked with journalists' professional activities – such as defamation – to imprisonment on a wide range of other charges which seem to be unconnected but are intended to make an example of critical journalists, bloggers and activists. These charges include hooliganism, drug possession, weapons possession, inciting hatred, supporting terrorism, tax evasion, extortion, and appealing for mass disorder.

Current cases of detention and imprisonment (as of October 2012)

Nine journalists are currently in detention or in prison on politically motivated charges in connection with freedom of expression:

- **Nijat Aliyev:** editor-in-chief for the website www.azadxeber.com, facing up to three years in prison if convicted on drugs-related charges. He was arrested following his criticism of government polices on issues including religion, LGBT rights, and high expenditures for the Eurovision Song Contest.
- **Anar Bayramli:** reporter for the Iranian broadcaster Sahar TV, serving a two-year prison sentence on drug possession charges following his criticism of Azerbaijan's bilateral relations with Israel and other foreign policy issues.
- **Vugar Gonagov:** Khayal TV executive director, facing up to 10 years in prison if convicted on charges of organizing mass disorder and abuse of office for uploading a video to YouTube showing the Guba regional mayor making derogatory comments about local residents, which led to mass protests and the mayor's dismissal.
- **Araz Guliyev:** editor of the religious website www.xeber44.com, facing up to five years in prison if convicted on charges of hooliganism, following his arrest while participating in a protest of religious followers at an international folklore festival in the southern region of Masalli.

- **Zaur Guliyev:** Khayal TV editor-in-chief, facing up to 10 years in prison if convicted on charges of organizing mass disorder and abuse of office along with Vugar Gonagov.
- **Aydin Janiyev:** Khural newspaper regional correspondent, serving a three-year prison sentence on charges of hooliganism following his publication of articles critical of the religious authorities in the region.
- **Hilal Mammadov:** editor-in-chief of the minority Talysh language Tolishi Sedo newspaper and Talysh cultural activist, facing up to 12 years in prison if convicted on charges of drug possession, high treason, and inciting ethnic hatred.
- **Faramaz Novruzoglu:** freelance journalist, serving a prison sentence of four and a half years on charges of appealing for mass disorder and border-crossing without proper documentation after he used social media to criticize the authorities and call for protests.
- **Avaz Zeynalli:** editor-in-chief of Khural newspaper, facing up to 10 years in prison on charges of extortion and failure to implement a court decision. At the time of publication, he had been detained for more than one year, since his arrest on October 28 2011.

In addition, multimedia journalist and activist **Mehman Huseynov** faces up to five years in jail on hooliganism charges following a scuffle with a police officer while he was attempting to photograph a demonstration in Baku in May 2012. Huseynov's arrest may have been connected with his activism with the Sing for Democracy movement which used Eurovision as a platform to promote democratic change in Azerbaijan, or his photographs depicting human rights abuses by the authorities, which are widely used in the local and international media.

State control over the media

The political climate in Azerbaijan remains hostile to the activity of mass media outlets and citizen journalists. Traditional radio and television broadcasters are under particularly tight government control, either directly or through informal means of pressure.

There are very few independent media outlets left in Azerbaijan, as even many traditional opposition voices have been silenced through force or other means of influence (for example, an apartment complex, currently under construction, will be offered to journalists and editors, including from the opposition media). Similarly, some opposition outlets have recently softened their tones after receiving government grants. In a marked change over the past year, few media outlets in Azerbaijan are now regarded as independent. In this environment, self-censorship has become as great a challenge as imposed censorship.

The four newspapers not sponsored by the state, which seek to disseminate alternative political views, have very low circulation figures, reaching less than three percent of the population. The state economy has been monopolized by a small number of oligarchs, which limits the advertising market, and constitutes another obstacle to the development of independent media in Azerbaijan. Even medium-sized companies and entrepreneurs refrain from advertising in the independent and opposition media for fear of angering the authorities. Restrictions on advertising revenue and printing and distribution facilities, as well as an acute lack of private investment, serve to suffocate the handful of relatively successful independent publications remaining.

Another tactic to keep the relatively independent media marginalized is limiting their access to decision-makers. Top policy-makers and their press officers do not hold regular public briefings. The presidential administration's press pool is a closed group of trusted and easily manipulated journalists. Those who have access to the ruling elite do not ask unwelcome questions, and those who are more inquisitive simply are not given access.

Freedom of expression online⁵

The last several years have seen a marked increase in Internet use, both globally and within Azerbaijan, as technological developments and a rising consumer demand have made it possible for more and more people to access the Internet. In parallel to this growth in Internet use, however, have come increased measures to restrict how people can access the Internet and what they can do online.

As host of this year's IGF, which will take place in Baku from 6 to 9 November 2012, Azerbaijan's record on Internet freedom has become a topic of increasing scrutiny, by actors within the country and by the international community. While the Internet in Azerbaijan can be considered partly free, there are some obstacles which must be addressed to ensure full Internet freedom in the country. Some of these are technical forms of censorship – such as data-filtering and content-blocking – and there are concerns that use of these methods to restrict free expression could increase in the future.

At present, however, the most significant threat to free expression online is the targeting by authorities of individuals who take to the Internet to voice critical opinions. For the most part, Azerbaijanis are technically able to do what they like online, but that does not mean there will not be repercussions. On the contrary, those who cross certain lines in their online postings – such as calling for protest, exposing corruption, or criticizing the president and his family – do so at significant risk.

The government has increasingly attempted to exercise greater control over the Internet, though it remains much less restricted than print and broadcast media, which are the main sources of news for most citizens. In the Law on Mass Media of 1999, the Internet was categorized as part of the mass media. Because of this, all rules applied to the traditional media, which are considered to be highly problematic, could also be used for Internet regulation. The Ministry of Communications and Information Technologies is the major body responsible for regulating the Internet, but experts have emphasized the urgent need for this role to be shared with an organization that is not under state control.⁶ The ministry imposes restrictions on the assignment of the “.AZ” national domain.⁷

⁵ For a fuller picture of the situation of Internet freedom in Azerbaijan, see the report by the Expression Online Initiative, *Searching for Freedom: Online Expression in Azerbaijan*.

⁶ <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/61060>

⁷ IRFS, *Azerbaijan Critical Voices in Danger*, Semi-annual Azerbaijan freedom of expression report, January 01-July 01, 2012, <http://bit.ly/PJqTkC>

While online media are largely free from government censorship, the authorities have expressed a desire to regulate it.⁸ They have a long record of monitoring, interfering with, and sometimes censoring online expression, occasionally blocking pro-opposition and critical websites and prosecuting persons for their online postings. The government was believed to be behind the sabotaging of the e-mail accounts and Facebook messages of critical journalists, human rights defenders and opposition political party activists.⁹ A number of journalists and activists have been imprisoned in connection with critical articles they posted online. At the time of publication, five bloggers and activists remained in prison or in detention in connection with expressing critical opinions online: **Nijat Aliyev, Vugar Gonagov, Zaur Guliyev, Taleh Khasmammadov, and Faramaz Novruzoglu.**¹⁰

No specific legislation restricting the Internet exists, although statements by top government officials suggest that legal mechanisms of control may be forthcoming, including the licensing of Internet-based television programming.¹¹ These worrisome statements, which were mostly made with regard to online video and audio content, show that the state intends to interfere with the online broadcast news not covered by local television and radio, and views that differ from the official positions.¹²

Conclusion

The overall environment in which the Azerbaijani media currently operates prevents it from holding those in power to account, and from providing citizens with quality independent news reporting. When the media is unable to fulfill such intrinsic functions, society cannot properly voice its concerns or canalize its discontent through peaceful, institutionalized means. Until this fundamental right is guaranteed, a more democratic Azerbaijan remains a distant prospect.

⁸ <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/61060>

⁹ <http://bit.ly/WD5PI6>

¹⁰ More information on these cases is provided in Chapter Two of this report.

¹¹ <http://www.today.az/view.php?id=77287>

¹² Rashid Hajili, 'Freedom of Media in Azerbaijan,' Spotlight on Azerbaijan, Foreign Policy Centre, April 2012. Available at <http://fpc.org.uk/fsblob/1462.pdf>

Appendix

Agenda

Day 1, Thursday, 11 October 2012

09:30 – 10:00 **Registration**

10:00 – 10:30 **Opening session**

Moderator: Andrey Rikhter, Director, Office of the
OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

Opening remarks Dunja Mijatović, OSCE Representative
on Freedom of the Media

10:30 – 13:00 **Session I: Transition from traditional to social media.
International standards and pressing challenges**

Moderator: Andrey Rikhter, Director, Office of the OSCE
Representative on Freedom of the Media

Freedom of the media in social networks and social media

Christian Möller, Expert, Office of the OSCE Representative on
Freedom of the Media

The presentation will provide an overview of:

- Web 2.0, user generated content, blogging, social media.
- Social media as a tool for journalists and citizens to seek, receive and impart information.
- The notions of media, citizen media and grassroots journalism.
- OSCE commitments and freedom of expression in social media.

Internet and Internet Protocol television (IPTV) regulation

Douglas Griffin, Director, Albany Associates

The presentation will provide an overview of:

- Legal challenges and issues pertaining to the Internet content regulation.
- How Internet, Internet TV and IPTV regulation fit into the media law framework.
- IPTV vs. broadcasting regulation.
- Means of IPTV regulation: best practices.

11:30 – 12:00

Coffee break

Digital media and Internet market:

Audience, multimedia context, business models

Professor Anna Kachkaeva, Dean of Media Communication Faculty, National Research University – Higher School of Economics (Moscow)

The presentation will provide an overview of:

- Internet market and digital media.
- Tendencies in development of digital media.
- Philosophy and main characteristics of digital media.
- Social media and traditional media outlets.

Importance of self-regulation in upholding freedom of expression

Dieter Loraine, Managing Director, Albany Associates

The presentation will provide an overview of:

- Principles of self-regulation of media.
- Self-regulation mechanisms in the United Kingdom.
- Self-regulation of online publications.

e-Estonia: The use of e-government in Estonia

Professor Katrin Nyman-Metcalf, Head of the Chair of Law and Technology,
Tallinn Law School, Tallinn University of Technology

The presentation will provide an overview of:

- Practical and legal implications of e-governance, using the example of Estonia.
- Challenges when introducing e-governance.
- Access to information in a digital world.
- E-governance and e-services to foster active citizens.

13:00

Group photo

13:30 – 15:00

Lunch

15:00 – 18:00

**Side event: Master class/executive training course
on online and social media-regulation issues.**

Speakers:

Douglas Griffin, Director, Albany Associates, and
Dieter Loraine, Managing Director, Albany Associates

The side event will consist of a facilitated discussion among participants of regulation practices in their countries, different practices of media regulation generally and Internet regulation in particular. During interactive session participants will look at the examples of Internet issues/regulation/practices in other countries, discuss self-regulatory models and how they could be applied to Internet. During break-out sessions participants will divide into groups to discuss hypothetical case studies and draft possible regulatory policy responses.

19:00

**Reception hosted by the OSCE Representative
on Freedom of the Media.**

Day 2, Friday, 12 October 2012

10:00 – 13:00

Session II: Social media and general media developments in South Caucasus

Experts from South Caucasus will make presentations on the developments in social media, the transition from traditional media to online media, as well as general media developments in their respective countries (including current cases, legislative initiatives and challenges). Presentations will describe the situation regarding the use of social media tools in traditional and online media, as well as the role that social and community media play in their countries. An overview of the existing and potential policy and legal responses to social media employed to regulate online content will be presented.

11:30 – 12:00

Coffee break

Moderators:

Ana Karlsreiter, Senior Adviser, Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media
Adilia Daminova, Project Officer, Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

Georgia

The winner of 2012 parliamentary elections in Georgia – New Media

Niko Nergadze, Journalist / Presenter / Blogger, RFE/RL Tbilisi Bureau

Media in Georgia: Biased, but pluralistic

Margarita Akhvlediani, Director, GO Group Media/ Eye Witness Studio / Caucasus Authors School

Armenia

New media in Armenia: Hopes and the reality

Manana Aslamazyan, “Alternative Resources in Media” Project Director, Internews Network

Dominating trends in Armenian media in 2011-2012

Boris Navasardyan, President, Yerevan Press Club

Azerbaijan**News 2.0 Media of the next generation**

Rahman Hajiyeu, Editor-in-Chief, Bakinskiy rabochiy and 1stnews.az

Azerbaijan's critical voices are in danger

Emin Huseynov, Director, Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety (IRFS)

13:00 – 14:30

Lunch

14:30 – 16:00

Closing session: Discussion and adoption of the Conference Declaration

Moderator:

Andrey Rikhter, Director, Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

The session will provide an opportunity to:

- Discuss the draft of the Conference Declaration.
- Provide feedback and additional recommendations to be included in the Declaration.
- Highlight the main messages of the Conference.
- Adopt the Conference Declaration.
- Discuss potential follow-up activities in the region.
- Evaluate the conference.

Closing remarks

Dunja Mijatović, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

Invited participants

ARMENIA

Maria (Manana) Aslamazyan	“Alternative Resources in Media” Project Director, Internews Network
Liana Doydoyan	e-FOI and e-Governance Projects Coordinator, Freedom of Information Center of Armenia
Arpiné Grigoryan	Head of Communications, PanARMENIAN.net
Anna Israyelyan	Editor, “Aravot” Online
Samvel Martirosyan	iDitord coordinator, New Media Expert
Ashot Melikyan	President, Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression
Ruben Muradyan	Vice-Director for IT, PanARMENIAN Media Group
Seda Muradyan	Country Director, Institute for War and Peace Reporting Armenia Branch
Boris Navasardyan	President, Yerevan Press Club
Arthur Papyan	President, Media Diversity Institute, Armenia
Nikolay Torosyan	Editor-in-Chief, emedia.am
Gegham Vardanyan	Producer, media.am website/Internews – Armenia
Anna Zhamkochyan	Senior Expert, Center of Information Studies “Noravank” Foundation

AZERBAIJAN

Emin Abdullayev	Blogger
Rustam Aliyev	Head, Antenn Radio and “Yurd” Online TV
Gulnara Baghirova	Director, Azerbaijan Media Center and International Media Support Azerbaijan Project Manager
Rashid Hajili	Director, Media Rights Institute
Rahman Hajiyev	Editor-in-Chief, Bakinskiy Rabochiy and 1stnews.az
Kamran Hasanov	Senior Advisor, Department on Public-Political Issues of the Presidential Administration
Emin Huseynov	Director, Institute for Reporters’ Freedom and Safety (IRFS)
Khadija Ismayilova	New Media Expert and correspondent, Radio Liberty
Alasgar Mammadli	Media Expert, IREX
Telman Mammadov	Regional Correspondent, Newspaper Azerbaijan
Arzu Naghiyev	Deputy Director, www.trend.az
Ali Novruzov	Blogger
Shahin Rzayev	Country Director, Institute for War and Peace Reporting
Orkhan Yolchiyev	Head, Multimedia and Video News Department, Azerbaijan State Telegraph Agency

GEORGIA

Tengiz Ablotia	Journalist/Blogger, Radio EkhoKavkaza
Margarita Akhvlediani	Director, GO Group Media / Eye Witness Studio / Caucasus Authors School
Elene Aladashvili	Manager, UNDP Media Development Project
Dimitri Avaliani	Editor, Tabula weekly magazine
Edit Badasyan	Journalist, Kavkazski UzelTina Basharuli Training Manager, G-MEDIA, IREX Georgia
Pazvana Bayzamova	Turan News Agency AzerbaijanGigi Bregadze Democratic Governance Analyst, UNDP
Ia Dadunashvili	Development Director, Internews Georgia
Levan Gakheladze	Head, Board of Trustees, Georgian Public Broadcaster
Rusudan Gvazava	Editor-in-Chief, Georgian bilingual English- Georgian newspaper Georgian Times
Maka Jakhua	Director, Projects Department, Association and Radio Mtsvane Talga (Green Wave)
Vasil Kapanadze	Journalist, Rezonansi newspaper
Tamar Khorbaladze	Director, Media Development Fund
Zurab Khrikadze	Peace and Development Officer, UNDP Peace and Development Programme
Nino Kuntsadze	Reporter, Radio Mtsvane Talga (Green Wave)
Natia Kuprashvili	Director, Association of Regional Broadcasters of Georgia

Nino Lotishvili	Intern, UNDP Georgia
Ivane Makharadze	Lawyer, Georgian National Communications Commission, Broadcasting Regulation Department
David Mchedlidze	Editor, Media.ge
Maia Metskhvarishvili	Editor-in-Chief, Netgazeti.ge,
Niko Nergadze	Journalist / Presenter /Blogger RFE/RL Tbilisi Bureau
Avtandil Otinashvili	Editor, Caucasus Press News Agency
Oleg Panfilov	Journalist, Professor, Ilia State University
Tako Paradashvili	Reporter, Media.ge
Natia Sturua	Public Information Specialist, Office of Public Defender (Ombudsman) of Georgia
Sophie Tchitchinadze	Communications Analyst, UNDP
Maia Tsiklauri	Editor-in-Chief, www.media.ge , Internews project
Lasha Tugushi	Editor-in-Chief, Rezonansi newspaper
Eter Turadze	Editor-in-Chief, Batumelebi weekly newspaper
Genadi Uchumbegashvili	Director, Internews Georgia

OSCE Office in Yerevan

Tsovinar Arevyan	National Programme Officer
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Oliver McCoy	Democratization Officer
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OSCE Office in Baku

Nicholas Detsch	Head, Democratization Unit
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Kyrgyzstan

Kubat Kasymbekov	Journalist, Radio Azattyk, Kyrgyzstan
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International experts

Douglas Griffin	Director, Albany Associates
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Anna Kachkaeva	Professor, Dean of Media Communication Department, Academic Adviser of Higher School of Journalism of National research University – Higher School of Economics (Moscow)
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Dieter Loraine	Managing Director, Albany Associates
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Katrin Nyman-Metcalf	Professor, Head of the Chair of Law and Technology, Tallinn Law School, Tallinn University of Technology
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Embassies and international organizations

Batu Tsulukiani	Media development project manager, Office of the Council of Europe in Tbilisi
Guillaume Cassaigneau	Attaché, Embassy of Switzerland to the Republic of Azerbaijan
Florian Gubler	Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Switzerland in Georgia

Observers

Ekaterina Abashina	Ph.D. student, Faculty of Journalism, Moscow State University
Tina Kavadaze	Marketing Coordinator, Albany Associates
Onnik Krikorian	Journalist, Online Media, Caucasus Editor Global Voices (2007-2012)
Joni Melikyan	Analyst, Academic Center for Regional Studies at Slavonic University
Anna Shinkaretskaya	Student, Faculty of Journalism, Moscow State University
Rebecca Vincent	Human Rights Expert

Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

Dunja Mijatović	Representative on Freedom of the Media
Andrey Rikhter	Director
Ana Karlsreiter	Senior Adviser
Adilia Daminova	Project Officer
Christian Möller	Expert
Joanna Jinks	Executive Assistant
Anja Schwabedal	Senior Project Assistant

Press Release

Online media must remain free forum for public debate, says OSCE media freedom representative at media conference in Tbilisi

TBILISI, 11 October 2012 – Online and traditional media alike must remain free forums for public debate, said the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Dunja Mijatović, opening the 9th annual South Caucasus Media Conference in Tbilisi today.

Journalists and civil society representatives from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia taking part in the conference titled “From traditional to online media: best practices and perspectives” will look at international standards and national practices regarding freedom of the media in social media and online broadcast regulation.

“The fundamental human right to freedom of expression and freedom of the media is not only reserved for traditional media, but also covers social media and other forms of new media,” Mijatović said.

“I constantly urge the governments of all OSCE participating States to foster and not to restrict media freedom both online and off-line. Online media can promote diversity and pluralism of opinions and voices. They also support democratic processes and development by providing a direct link between governments and citizens.”

The conference participants will also discuss current issues relating to media freedom in the region.

“I will continue to raise with the authorities of the countries in the whole OSCE region, including the South Caucasus, cases of violence, harassment and even imprisonment of bloggers and journalists, government control over broadcast media and limited access to governmental information.”

The participants of the conference will have an opportunity to discuss regulatory practices in traditional and online media and examine possible regulatory

policy responses in a master class held by Albany Associates, an international communications firm working with governments and broadcast regulatory agencies.

The concluding declaration of the Conference will be available at www.osce.org/fom.

The annual South Caucasus Media Conference is organized by the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. The Governments of Germany, Lithuania, Norway, Switzerland and the United States provided support for the event.



Ia Dadunashvili of Internews and Zurab Khrikadze of the UNDP.
Ия Дадунашвили, Интерньюс, и Зураб Хрикадзе, ПРООН.



A participant reviews the wide range of publications.
Участник рассматривает широкий спектр изданий.



Alasgar Mammadli, a media expert from Azerbaijan, registers for the conference.

Алескер Мамадли, медиа-эксперт из Азербайджана, регистрируется для участия в конференции.



Participants familiarize themselves with the conference agenda.

Участники знакомятся с повесткой дня конференции.



Boris Navasardyan (left) president of the Yerevan Press Club, and a conference participant.

Борис Навасардян (слева), президент Ереванского пресс-клуба, и один из участников конференции.



Conference participants.

Участники конференции.



Discussions continue informally during a coffee break.

Обсуждения неофициально продолжаются во время кофейного перерыва.



Participants gather for casual conversation.

Участники собираются для непринужденной беседы.

