

Needs Assessment of Armenia's Public Television Company

A Report Commissioned by the OSCE Office in Yerevan

Report Authors:

Richard Lucas, Independent Consultant

Michael Randall, Project Manager (Europe & CIS), BBC World Service Trust

Movses Hakobyan, Programme Coordinator for Internews Armenia

Address: BBC World Service Trust, 301NE Bush House, Strand, London WC2B 4PH

Contact telephone: +44 20 7557 3959

Contact email: michael.randall@bbc.co.uk

The views, findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the OSCE or OSCE Office in Yerevan.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	5
2.0. The Mission.....	6
2.1. OSCE	6
2.2. BBC World Service Trust.....	6
2.3. The Assessment Team	6
2.4. Objectives	7
2.5. Activities	8
3.0. Background.....	8
3.1. The Public Television and Radio Company of Armenia	9
3.2. The Council of Public Television and Radio	10
3.3. The Charter	11
3.4. Criticism of PTV	12
3.4.1. Pro-Government Bias	12
3.4.2. Advertising Volumes	13
3.4.3. Prevalence of Entertainments Programming.....	13
3.5. The Political Environment	14
3.6. Changes in the Law	14
4.0. Analysis.....	15
4.1. Political Will at PTV	15
4.2. PTV Management	15
4.3. Market Position	16
4.4. Financial Position	17
4.5. Technical Issues	17
4.6. News Programming	17
4.6.1. News Organisation	18
4.6.2. The “Haylur” News Service.....	19
4.6.3. Politics, Fairness and Balance	22
4.6.4. Editorial Policy	23
4.6.5. Future Developments in News	23
4.7. Current Affairs Programmes	24
4.7.1. Programming Policy	24
4.7.2. Performance Indicators	25
4.7.3. Regular Programmes.....	25
4.8. Other Programmes	27
4.8.1. Armenian Soap Operas	27
4.8.2. The Programme Schedule.....	28
4.8.3. Government-made Programmes	29
4.8.4. Films and Dramas.....	29
4.8.5. Website	30
4.9. Programme Plans	30
4.9.1. Second Channel	30
4.9.2. New Programming Strands	31
4.10. Conclusion	31

RECOMMENDATIONS.....	33
5.0. Building Capacity at PTV.....	33
5.1. Previous Training	33
5.2. BBC Consultancy	33
5.3. Developing Editorial Guidelines	34
5.4. Management Consultancy	34
5.4.1. Financial Management	35
5.4.2. Marketing and Promotion	35
5.5. Newsgathering	36
5.5.1. Deputy Director of News Programming	36
5.5.2. Reporting Skills.....	36
5.5.3. Financial and Economic Journalism	37
5.5.4. Camera Operations and Picture Editing	37
5.5.5. News Graphics	37
5.5.6. News Programme Redesign.....	38
5.6. Programme Development	38
5.6.1. Creative Programming.....	38
5.6.2. Talk Show Production.....	39
5.6.3. Programme Presenting.....	39
5.6.4. Documentary Programming.....	39
5.6.5. Studio Skills	40
5.6.6. Programme Mentoring	40
6.0. Methodology	40
6.1. Project Management.....	40
6.2. Training Methodology	40
6.3. Training Tools	41
6.4. Exit Strategy	41
7.0. Conclusion	42
Annex One: Interviewees.....	43

Executive Summary

In commercial terms, the Public Television and Radio Company of Armenia (PTV) has gone from strength to strength. It continues to lead the ratings and dominate the local advertising market. Projected revenues for 2008 are more than double those of last year. Until now, the focus has been on developing a populist channel which fills its primetime slots with Latin American soap operas, music programmes and reality shows. Most observers agree that the volume of entertainment-based programming on PTV far outweighs the proportion of public service content.

Unsurprisingly, then, PTV has come under fire for its lack of commitment to public service values as well as a perceived pro-government bias. Criticism reached fever pitch during the 2008 presidential elections when PTV was accused of actively discrediting the main opposition candidate and the first President of Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrosyan. The election results sparked violent protests on March 1 which were followed by a three-week state of emergency. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) subsequently stated that the “absence of a truly independent and public service broadcaster” was a contributing factor in the wave of social and political unrest.

President Serzh Sargsyan’s new government has made moves to respond to this criticism. Measures include a draft law aimed at ensuring greater independence for PTV’s governing body, the Council for Public Television and Radio (CPTR). During the BBC needs assessment, senior editorial figures across PTV said that they had been officially given the go-ahead to ensure a greater diversity of views in their news output and to strengthen their public service credentials.

Critics of PTV believe these new freedoms represent little more than a cynical attempt to convince the international community of Sargsyan’s commitment to democratic values. However, there is evidence of real change at the public service broadcaster. The CPTR has announced a raft of new programmes which include a live current affairs talk show, social documentaries and historical dramas. The news output is to be revamped to develop “impartial European-style coverage”.¹

PTV managers said that they want the BBC to help them achieve these goals. Proposals included appointing an international consultant to work as Deputy Director of News over a six- to 12-month period. In addition, they asked for help in drawing up a new Charter, restructuring the station’s management and introducing better performance indicators. CPTR President, Alexan Haroutyunyan, said that PTV was willing to pay for training and consultancy services.

These aspirations, coupled with statements at government level that “we are trying to ensure maximum independence for PTV”², suggest that this is an opportune moment to engage with Armenia’s public service broadcaster. During our five-day visit to the television station, we observed significant potential for improving the quality of existing programming and for developing new strands. Editorial staff demonstrated strong professional skills and seemed eager to take advantage of what one senior manager described as a “political thaw”.

Across the Armenian media sector, there are signs of training fatigue. Short-term initiatives have given media professionals a strong grasp of the principles of independent journalism but a repressive environment has provided few opportunities to put these principles into practice. We, therefore, propose a sustained, collaborative intervention whereby BBC consultants will work with programme-makers to support the development of new strands and with senior managers to reorganise working methods. We

¹ Interview with CPTR chairman Alexan Haroutyunyan, July 14, 2008

² Interview with Naira Zohrabyan, Acting Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Science, Education, Culture and Youth Issues at the National Assembly of Armenia, July 16, 2008

believe that a long-term consultancy programme could achieve significant results in terms of improved outputs and streamlined systems. However, we also acknowledge that PTV's ability to strengthen its public service ethos relies heavily on political will and attitudinal change at government level. It remains to be seen whether the current rhetoric represents a genuine and enduring change in policy or is simply an appeasement tool.

2.0. The Mission

This document represents the findings of a five-day needs assessment conducted by the BBC World Service Trust between July 14 and July 18, 2008. The assessment was commissioned by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) with a view to supporting the further development of Armenia's public service broadcaster.

2.1. OSCE

The OSCE Office in Yerevan began its operation in 2000. The mandate of the Office is broad, covering all aspects of OSCE activities in the politico-military, economic and environmental, as well as human dimensions. It has a commitment to help develop democratic institutions in Armenia; strengthen civil society and promote OSCE standards and principles. Key priority areas include legislative reform in such fields as elections, freedom of assembly and media, as well as promoting freedom of the media.

2.2. BBC World Service Trust

Founded in 1999, the BBC World Service Trust is the international development arm of the BBC and focuses on media capacity-building initiatives in transitional countries. The Trust's portfolio includes the establishment of sustainable training centres in Russia, Ukraine, Bosnia and Serbia. These schools continue to train hundreds of broadcast professionals in a range of technical and ethical skills through on-site workshops, peripatetic seminars and distance learning programmes.

The Trust has a strong track record in developing public service broadcasting operations. In the aftermath of the war in Iraq, Department for International Development awarded the BBC a £6.7 million grant to establish Al-Mirbad, a radio and TV station in Basra which provides a platform for local people to participate in democratic processes. In 2007, the EU commissioned the Trust to deliver a comprehensive consultancy package to Radio Television Afghanistan.

The Trust is currently working at ITV in Azerbaijan to revamp the news output and promote greater editorial independence. This programme is funded by the OSCE. Other similar projects include a sustained intervention at TeleRadio Moldova and a two-year initiative at Radio Television Serbia. Funding has also been secured from the EU to support the development of Georgia's public service broadcaster in the wake of the South Ossetian conflict.

2.3. The Assessment Team

Richard Lucas is an independent consultant who combines substantial editorial and management experience in television and radio with an understanding of the challenges facing electronic media in transitional and post-conflict societies. He is familiar with working in difficult or sensitive political, religious and ethnic environments.

Richard is currently one of the key experts supporting the long-term training and modernisation programme at the public broadcaster in Serbia. Previous to this, he worked for 18 months as senior consultant on the BBC project to launch an independent television and radio station in Basra, southern Iraq. He had particular responsibility for coordinating the preparations to go on air, pre-launch training, devising new programmes, preparing programme schedules, advising on newsroom organisation and monitoring the quality of the journalism.

Other key positions have included Senior Partner for Television, Radio & Multimedia for the Public Broadcasting System in Bosnia & Herzegovina and Director General of Radio Television Kosovo, the public broadcaster established after the 1999 conflict. Previously Richard had a 30-year career in BBC television and radio journalism as news journalist, television producer, editor, political correspondent and senior manager.

Michael Randall has worked for the BBC World Service Trust for the past six years as Projects Manager for Europe & CIS. Focusing on media development work in the former Eastern Bloc, he has designed and managed projects in Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Central Asia, Georgia, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Serbia. Initiatives have included a journalism training programme for Belgrade's leading independent TV station, B92; the establishment of two community radio stations for the Azeri- and Armenian-speaking populations of Georgia; and the development of prison radio networks in the Urals region.

Prior to joining the BBC, Michael was employed by the Institute for War and Peace Reporting where he was Project Director for the Caucasus region. In this capacity he managed a network of 60 correspondents across Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan and southern Russia. Between 1994 and 1999, he worked in Russia as a newspaper journalist.

Movses Hakobyan currently works as Programme Coordinator for Internews Armenia's Centre for Information Law and Policy. A graduate of the American University of Armenia's law department, he has also completed a training programme at the Summer Institute on Global Media Policy at the University of Oxford. Movses has published papers on a variety of media law issues including website-blocking during the 2008 state of emergency and inconsistencies between Armenian legislation and Council of Europe recommendations (2006).

Movses has provided consultancy to Armenian ICT companies in management, marketing, finance and law. He has also made presentations on topics such as "The Legal Regulation of Media Distribution in Armenia", "Foreign Legal Acts Protecting Journalists' Activities" and "Public Service Broadcasting and Regulatory Framework in Armenia".

2.4. Objectives

The needs assessment at PTV had the following goals:

- To establish a rounded picture of PTV's professional standards, the quality and breadth of its programming and the aspirations of its management;
- To explore the political environment in which PTV operates with a view to assessing the level of government support for any internationally-sponsored intervention;
- To develop a proposal for supporting the development of PTV through international support and consultancy;
- To identify partners in Armenia who could support or complement such an intervention.

2.5. Activities

The proposed activities for the assessment were defined and agreed through the Terms of Reference drawn up in September 2007. During the five-day visit, we conducted a series of interviews at PTV with senior editorial figures, managerial staff and journalists. We also reviewed a range of programming, attended editorial meetings and were given an insight into the work of technical departments. Throughout the assessment, staff at PTV were highly cooperative and talked to us frankly about operational, managerial and technical problems. We were given open access to all areas of PTV's operation although time constraints meant that we were not able to visit any of the external production companies responsible for developing PTV programmes.

We also met with media commentators, NGO experts and representatives from other media outlets in Armenia. These individuals were asked to give their opinions on the current state of PTV and to comment on the feasibility of a long-term development programme. The interviews were also helpful in forming a clearer picture of the Armenian media scene and the challenges faced by working journalists. On July 17, we attended a meeting of the OSCE's Media Legislation Working Group which enabled us to discuss our initial impressions of PTV with the delegates and get feedback on some of the proposed methodologies.

The team's legal expert, Movses Hakobyan, was given the task of producing a study of the regulatory framework in which PTV operates and analysing the ongoing draft law aimed at improving this framework. He also provided an overview of media legislation in Armenia.

3.0. Background

For a country of over 3 million people, the media market in Armenia is unusually replete. According to figures given by the National Commission for Television and Radio (Armenia's licensing and regulatory body for the broadcast sector), there are currently 78 television companies in the former Soviet republic, of which three are public, 71 private and four operate according to international agreements (three of these are Russian). The public TV companies comprise H1, Nor Aliq (New Channel) and Shirak TV which broadcasts to the Shirak region only.

There are a total of 18 radio companies, one public, 15 private and two which operate on the basis of international agreements. Public Radio is the only station which broadcasts across the entire country. According to figures released by IREX Armenia in 2007, there are currently about 30 print outlets. Circulation for the most popular newspapers is between 4,000 and 5,000 copies.

The Armenian media market is highly polarised. Most outlets are either pro-government or pro-opposition, with the broadcast media being largely pro-government. Predictably, editorial policy is largely dictated by the political forces which stand behind them. According to the IREX Media Sustainability Index 2007, journalists and editors routinely practice self-censorship for fear of jeopardising advertising contracts or wider business interests.

There continue to be incidents of violent attacks and threats directed at journalists. The Association of European Journalists recorded 13 such cases between 2006 and 2007. In September last year, the Editor-in-Chief of the *Iskakan Iravunk* newspaper was hospitalised after he was beaten up by masked assailants. He believes the incident was connected to negative coverage of the then defence minister, Serzh Sargsyan. Threatening emails were sent to Edik Baghdasaryan, who runs the online newspaper, *Hetq*, demanding the suppression of allegations levelled at the country's leading oligarch, Gagik Tsarukyan, who is also a member of parliament. Recent cases of violence against journalists included the

beating of Lusine Barseghyan, a journalist working for the “Haykakan Zhamanak” oppositional daily and of Hrach Melkumyan, Acting Chief of Bureau of the RFE/RL Yerevan Office, in August 2008.

Armenia’s legal and regulatory environment for the media continues to draw criticism from the international community and local NGOs. The 2007 amendments to the Law on TV and Radio Broadcasting stipulated that half of the eight members of the licensing body, the National Commission for Television and Radio (NCTR), are appointed by the President while the other half are elected by the National Assembly. Media licensing is believed to be “not fair, competitive or apolitical”³. Details of companies bidding for licences are not made public. This means that the principle of one licence per company often can be broken. In 2002, the NCTR refused to extend the licences of two independent TV stations, A1+ and Noyan Tapan, which had both been critical of the authorities. A complaint brought by A1+ was upheld by the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

Media operations in Armenia are governed by complex and sometimes contradictory laws. The Law on TV and Radio Broadcasting (October 2000) is the main legal act which defines the status of TV and radio companies as well as their rights and responsibilities. Article 28 of this law stipulates, “Public television is founded by the Government to ensure the constitutional right of citizens to freely receive political, economic, educational, cultural, children’s and youth, scientific, Armenian language and history, sports, entertainment and other information, important and significant for the public.”

3.1. The Public Television and Radio Company of Armenia

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Armenia’s state broadcaster went through lean times. With a workforce in excess of 3,000, it received minimal levels of funding from the state budget (around \$360,000 in 1998). When the country was hit by severe electricity shortages, the main television channel was able to broadcast for just two hours per day. News output was produced on one SVHS camera and two editing suites.

The state broadcaster was transformed into the Public Television and Radio Company of Armenia (PTV) in January 2001. The main TV channel was rebranded as “H1”. Funding was gradually increased until the station was able to broadcast 24 hours a day and extend its domestic programming. By 2005, PTV was able to satisfy the entry requirements of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and became a member in July of that year.

Today, the number of employees totals 523 of whom 116 work for the “Haylur” news service and 110 are involved in other programme-making activities. A significant proportion of PTV’s domestic programmes are made by external production companies. We were told that this system ensures greater flexibility since the number of staff on full-time contracts is kept to a minimum and PTV can respond easily to new programmatic imperatives.

The television operation is still based in a Soviet-era building on Hovsepyan Street, at least 20 minutes’ drive from the centre of Yerevan. It stands next to the transmitter mast which is owned and operated by the Ministry of Transport and Communications. PTV currently pays the Ministry \$1.6 million a year for transmission services.

³ IREX MSI 2007

3.2. The Council of Public Television and Radio

The CPTR is the public service broadcaster's governing body. Its five members are appointed by the President⁴ and are supposed to represent the fields of journalism, TV and radio broadcasting management, science, culture and the arts. They are supported by an administrative staff of 25. The council's responsibilities include:

- Defining the overall volume of public TV and radio outputs;
- Approving the structure and schedule of the programmes;
- Determining and approving annual expenditure and budget forecasts;
- Appointing the Executive Directors of public TV and radio on a competitive basis and dismissing them from office should they fail to properly carry out their responsibilities.

Although it is nominally the regulatory body for all broadcast media, the National Commission for Television and Radio has no specific legal mechanisms for regulating the activities of PTV. It has a mandate to monitor the content and advertising volume of TV and radio companies, ensuring that they meet the levels set by existing legislation. However, the law remains vague on the measures that can be taken against PTV for infringements of these laws, prompting accusations from civil society groups that the public broadcaster is not properly accountable.

David Sandukhchyan, formerly Head of the Legal Department of Internews Armenia, commented, "The mechanism of governance is not systematised. The rules on how PTV operates are insufficient. Regulations are absent." He explained that, whilst the law obliges the CPTR to present annual reports to the National Assembly, the actual content of these reports is not stipulated.

Certainly, by European standards, the relationship between PTV, its council and the regulatory body in Armenia is poorly defined. In practice, the CPTR has far greater influence over the programming schedule than equivalent organisations in Western Europe, yet there appears to be no system for ensuring that its decisions are shaped by the public at large. In his Model Public Service Law, Werner Rumphorst, formerly Director of the Legal Department at the EBU, writes, "Representatives of the public should ensure the public broadcasting organisation actually fulfils its public service mission in the best possible manner. To achieve this, legislation may be introduced that creates organisations or institutions in which citizens and citizen's groups could play an active role in guiding and assisting the public service broadcaster to fulfil its mission." Examples of this include:

- In Ireland, the 22-member Audience Council meets five times a year to facilitate communication between audiences and the RTÉ Authority (which is both the governing body and the regulator of the public service broadcaster). The Council ensures that programming recognises diversity, encourages tolerance and respects the cultural expectations of audiences.
- Broadcasting Councils form the basis of Germany's public service broadcasters and, depending on the law of each state, have a membership of between 11 to 66 unsalaried individuals. They are delegated by leading groups and members of society such as churches, unions, workers' associations, political parties, sports and cultural associations.⁵

⁴ In contradiction to Recommendation R(96)10 on the Guarantee of the Independence of Public Service Broadcasting of the Committee of Ministers of Council of Europe.

⁵ "Public Service Broadcasting: A best practices sourcebook", edited by Indrajit Banerjee and Kalinga Seneviratne, published by UNESCO, 2005

- The BBC's governing body, the BBC Trust, works closely with Audience Councils in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The councils' role is to bring a wide range of licence-fee payers' perspectives to bear on the work of the Trust.⁶

Furthermore, the procedure for appointing the members of Armenia's CPTR is not seen to conform to European standards. Article 19's Statement on the State of Armenia's Media Legislation (2004) comments, "The governing board's direct dependence on the President almost certainly undermines the broadcaster's ability to operate independently." The following examples illustrate how a high degree of independence has been achieved for the governing bodies of two European public service broadcasters:

- The BBC Trust has 12 members who are appointed following an open and transparent process regulated by an independent body, the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments. Vacancies are advertised and appointments are made on merit. Candidates are shortlisted and interviewed by a panel which is chaired by a senior civil servant from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and includes an independent assessor and the BBC Chairman. The panel's recommendations are put forward to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, then to the Prime Minister and finally to the Queen.
- In France, legislation provides for the establishment of boards of directors for its six public service programming companies. Each has 12 members with a three-year mandate. They comprise: one person representing each chamber of Parliament, four persons representing the State, four qualified persons nominated by the regulatory body and two persons representing the workforce. This structure is designed to ensure that the public programming companies are broadly representative of society as a whole and to prevent undue influence by any particular political constituency.⁷

Relationships with regulatory bodies differ considerably from country to country but, in most cases, these bodies have considerable powers and work to maintain (or restore) public trust in national media. In July 2008, the BBC was fined £400,000 by the British media watchdog, Ofcom, for misleading its audiences by "faking" phone-ins. Viewers were invited to call some BBC programmes after competitions had been closed and prizes already awarded. The French statutory body, the Conseil Supérieur d'Audiovisuel (CSA) is empowered to regulate areas such as election and party political broadcasts but is prevented from interfering in the editorial decisions of the public service companies. It can, however, bring legal proceedings against any such company where the broadcaster is seen to have breached its legal obligations or the conditions of its charter.

3.3. The Charter

PTV's Charter was drawn up in 2001. In effect, it is an Articles of Association document, which defines the company's legal status, its capital assets, the responsibilities of its stockholders and the oversight of its financial activities. The references to the company's public obligations are vague and inadequate.

The Charter is supported by a set of Regulations, which was drafted in 2001 but which has yet to be approved by the National Assembly. It provides some context to the operating framework but again falls short of setting out PTV's public obligations. This document states that the company should ensure diversity of programmes, present a diversity of opinions, reflect the interests of various regions and various sectors of society. But, again, it fails to define editorial policy or establish an ethical code.

⁶ http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/about/audience_councils/index.html

⁷ "Public Service Broadcasting: A best practices sourcebook", edited by Indrajit Banerjee and Kalinga Seneviratne, published by UNESCO, 2005

Conversely, the BBC's Royal Charter is accompanied by an Agreement which guarantees its editorial independence and sets out its public purposes. These purposes are defined as:

- Sustaining citizenship and civil society;
- Promoting education and learning;
- Stimulating creativity and cultural excellence;
- Representing the UK, its nations, regions and communities;
- Bringing the UK to the world and the world to the UK.

They are articulated in considerable detail and are further complemented by the BBC Producer's Guidelines which serves as a point of reference for editorial teams.

3.4. Criticism of PTV

The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Miklos Haraszti, visited Armenia in June 2006 with a view to assessing the state of media freedom. His subsequent report drew attention to "the unsatisfactory transformation of state TV into a public service broadcaster". First and foremost, Haraszti criticised the legislation which defines the composition of the CPTR. "The lack of political independence of the Board is seen as one of the main causes for the lack of objectivity and diversity in the news coverage of the public service broadcaster," he said and concluded, "The channel has yet to play its role as a public service broadcaster." The report went on to recommend that the CPTR should carry out continuous monitoring of the access enjoyed by different political parties to air time and the results of this monitoring should be made public.

Within the Armenian media community, criticism focuses on three key issues which can be summarised as follows:

- A strong pro-government bias, particularly during election periods;
- A preponderance of entertainments programming, thereby undermining PTV's public service values;
- Regular infringements of media advertising laws and aggressive commercial policies.

3.4.1. Pro-Government Bias

During the 2008 presidential elections, monitoring by the OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) showed that the broadcast media, including Public TV and Radio, gave the presidential candidate, Prime Minister Serge Sargsyan "favourable coverage, including his official duties, which granted him an undue advantage". At the same time, the leading opposition candidate, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, was largely portrayed in a negative light.

The ODIHR Report on the 2007 parliamentary elections noted that "...certain elements of *H1* pre-election as well as post-election coverage of some opposition forces raised concern about the channel's objectivity and impartiality in presenting different views in an unbiased manner". The Caucasus Media Institute in Yerevan estimated that, during the same election period, 75% of PTV coverage was devoted to the three parties of Armenia's ruling coalition.

"The public broadcaster is the most influential broadcaster in Armenia and probably the most biased," was one comment made to us by a local media expert. Another said: "They are the most professional and also the most professional in manipulating the truth."

Edik Baghdasaryan, Editor-in-Chief of Hetq Online, which specialises in investigative reports, doubted that current commitments to greater editorial independence were genuine. "They have been told by the presidential administration to start showing the opposition," he said. "Or else the Council of Europe will start discussing the possibility of suspending the Armenian delegation's voting rights."

In a highly polarised environment where most things are seen as black or white, it is always difficult to detect whether critics have an agenda or not. But the similarity of the opinions and the evidence provided by other observers over a period of time seem proof enough that PTV is failing in its obligation to provide the public with even-handed journalism that reflects all points of view in a fair and balanced way.

3.4.2. Advertising Volumes

According to IREX Armenia, PTV rides roughshod over existing legislation which restricts the overall volume of advertising to just 5% of airtime. IREX's monitoring figures for 2006 show that average figures fluctuated between 8% in January and 14% in June. In August 2005, said IREX Director Bob Evans, advertising volume reached a record high of 38 minutes in one hour. "PTV will never become public because it is so profitable," he added.

Grigor Amalyan, Chairman of the National Commission for Television and Radio which is responsible for ensuring that broadcast media do not break the rules, said, "It's difficult to get the balance right between the amount of funding and being able to provide a certain quality of output over 24 hours. It would be impossible to prevent PTV from engaging in advertising in the short term. We would simply have to close it down."

David Sandukhchyan, former Head of the Legal Department at Internews Armenia, said, "PTV needs advertising guidelines. I think there should be clearer distinction between core funding and advertising income. Proper annual financial statements are not published."

3.4.3. Prevalence of Entertainments Programming

PTV's critics say that, by single-mindedly chasing the ratings, H1 keeps public service programming to a bare minimum. Senior managers at PTV defend their programming policy by saying that public response to educational and social strands had been less than enthusiastic whilst Latin American soap operas continued to draw significant audiences. However, Boris Navasardyan, President of the Yerevan Press Club, felt that the proportion of light entertainment was unreasonably high and that, consequently, "people do not feel they are getting a public broadcaster."

This opinion was echoed by Naira Zohrabyan, the Acting Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Science, Education, Culture and Youth Issues at the National Assembly of Armenia. She said, "The prevalence of entertainment programmes is a problem and the justification is that there is public demand for this kind of programming. It should be the task of PTV to create a good balance. I attach special importance to youth, children's and science programmes and they are certainly lacking. We are trying to achieve this gradually and ensure maximum independence for PTV."

3.5. The Political Environment

Heavy criticism was levelled at PTV during the presidential election campaign of February 2008. A report by the Association of European Journalists commented, “Independent studies of the output of PTV during the campaign indicate a concerted editorial policy in which various candidates were allowed ample airtime in which they directed public criticism against the former president [Levon Ter-Petrosyan] but hostile comment about the incumbent government was kept to a minimum”.

On March 1, tens of thousands of people took part in a rally protesting against alleged election fraud. According to BBC News Online, at least eight people were killed and dozens more were injured in the resulting violence. Around 100 opposition supporters and three members of parliament were arrested⁸. A state of emergency was imposed for the ensuing three weeks during which broadcasters could carry only government-sanctioned news. According to several observers, PTV’s coverage of the March 1 rally was heavily self-censored, providing selective coverage of the events.

In the wake of the protests, the Parliamentary Assembly for the Council of Europe (PACE) adopted Resolution 1609 which blamed the crisis, amongst other things, on “the absence of a truly independent and public service broadcaster [which] further exacerbates the lack of trust in the political system”. The resolution urged the Armenian government to guarantee the CPTR’s independence from political interests and to ensure the freedom and pluralism of PTV.

If Armenia fails to address the failings which were outlined in Resolution 1609 and reiterated in the subsequent Resolution 1620, it risks having its voting rights suspended at the PACE part-session scheduled for January 2009.

3.6. Changes in the Law

In June, shortly before the first PACE deadline, a package, *inter alia* including a draft Law on Making Amendments and Supplements to the Law on TV and Radio”, was posted on the National Assembly’s website for public comments. The focus of these amendments is the competitive procedure for appointing members of the Council for Public Television and Radio Company and of the National Commission for Television and Radio. The draft law suggests the following changes vis-à-vis PTV as a public service broadcaster:

- In case there is a vacant position in the Council for Public TV and Radio Company, a temporary competition committee of seven members should be formed by the President with a view to selecting candidates for Council membership.
- Public officials should not be included in the competition committee which will comprise well-known figures in the fields of science, education, culture and journalism.
- Candidates for Council membership should be self-nominated and should present at least three references from local professional NGOs which have been in existence for at least five years.
- The candidate who wins the highest number of votes cast by more than half the committee members will win the competition.
- Based on the competition results, the President will appoint the winning candidate to the appropriate position in the Council.

Naira Zohrabyan, Acting Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Science, Education, Culture and Youth Issues at the National Assembly of Armenia, told the BBC World Service Trust, “I can officially state that we have a commitment to adhere to democratic values and to follow the example of our

⁸ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/7273497.stm>

European colleagues. We acknowledge that the development of public service broadcasting should be a cornerstone of Armenia's democracy – not because the West has told us so but because that is what we want to achieve.”

Zohrabyan went on to say that the draft was currently being considered by European experts. It would then go the plenary session of the parliament and should be made law by November. Whilst the bill does not address all the concerns of the civil society and international community concerning the political independence of the Council for Public Television and Radio, it is seen to be a significant step in the process of developing a robust public broadcaster.

4.0. Analysis

4.1. Political Will at PTV

During our assessment, several respondents from the PTV spoke of a political thaw in relation to media independence and a greater preparedness to enter into a democratic exchange of views. Haroutyun Haroutyunyan, Director of PTV's "Haylur" News Service, commented, "Now it seems that the ice has been broken. We have passed the point of no return." He ascribed this change in mood to a more liberal government and a stronger opposition which "forces the incumbent authorities to get down to business".

Certainly our meeting with the President of the CPTR, Alexan Haroutyunyan, was propitious. He said, "There is now political will to have these things changed but we need help in implementing these changes." Haroutyunyan outlined a package of measures aimed at strengthening the station's public service values and revamping the news output. These included:

- Developing a new charter and editorial guidelines;
- Introducing the role of an internal ombudsman with a view to responding to complaints and criticism;
- Improving the technical infrastructure, particularly of the news studio;
- Bringing the structure and format of news programming in line with international standards;
- Introducing new current affairs programmes, including debates which will feature representatives from both the government and the opposition;
- Developing capacity to produce films and dramas which celebrate Armenian culture.

The CPTR President invited the BBC to nominate an international consultant who would work as Deputy Director of News for six to 12 months. This initiative should run alongside a management training programme. "We would be ready and willing to make changes as you propose," he said.

4.2. PTV Management

The majority of senior managers at PTV felt that a comprehensive restructuring was long overdue. Alexan Haroutyunyan commented, "The management is a cumbersome structure with numerous deputies. It is not about the quality of people which is very high. It's about the system." He mentioned the technical and finance departments as areas in urgent need of an overhaul. His opinion was shared by the Executive Director, Armen Arzumanyan, who said, "There is too much red tape and too much bureaucratic procedure."

The management structure of PTV is, indeed, unorthodox. The Executive Director presides over seven Deputy Directors, four of whom have editorial responsibilities. However, in some areas, key editorial decisions are taken by a General Producer who sits between these two levels of management. Gnel

Nalbanyan, Deputy Director for Public Programmes, believes that the current editorial reporting lines are blurred and inadequate. He said, “The majority of the programmes do not have their own editors. The first problem here is that of organisation. There are very complex relationships between departments. Then we need our broadcasting ethics developed and improved. The code of ethics is not universal.”

Scheduling is the remit of Marat Ordyan, Deputy Director of Programmes, who also coordinates the work of the technical and logistical teams. Ordyan explained that the schedule was largely determined by the Council for Public Television and Radio which decided the overall volumes of various programming strands at an annual meeting. This breakdown is then fleshed out by PTV’s senior management team and the schedule is developed for the coming year.

Another apparent anomaly is the work of the Department of International Relations which has a vast remit and accounts for a significant proportion of the station’s output. With just two members of staff, this department manages the relationship with the European Broadcasting Union but also takes responsibility for programme acquisition and the negotiation of broadcasting rights for sports events. Other areas of endeavour include:

- Sales of PTV productions (esp feature films);
- Organising workshops and seminars;
- Organising festivals (eg Eurovision, Junior Eurovision, Armenian Music Awards);
- Coordinating the relationship with KAYM, PTV’s advertising agency;
- Coordinating the work of the legal and finance departments over programme acquisition;
- Providing information on ratings and market share;
- Coordinating Globecast activities.

4.3. Market Position

PTV’s populist approach and nationwide coverage have enabled it to secure market leadership, but it is a competitive situation. In 2007, according to AGB Nielsen⁹ research, H1 had a 27.6% market share across Armenia. Its nearest competitor, Shant TV, was on 12.4%.

In the same year, H1 boasted nine of the ten most popular programmes, with only Shant’s domestic soap, “Vervaracner”, representing the private sector¹⁰. “Don’t Be Afraid”, PTV’s first new feature film produced by the Yerevan Film Studios, was the most popular programme of the year with ratings of 35.8%. It was followed by the talent music show, “Two Stars”, and Junior Eurovision. H1 also broadcast the most popular sports programme of the year, the Euro 2008 football qualifier between Armenia and Portugal.

It is instructive to look at the comparative figures for Yerevan where the channels compete on a more level playing field. H1 still had a strong lead in 2007, with a share of just below 25%. Shant was on 15% and Armenia TV on 12%. But in the first two months of 2008, PTV dropped to just above 20% while Shant and Armenia TV both increased their share. AGB Nielsen’s statistics are based on a panel size of 240 households, half in Yerevan and half outside the capital.

H1 may or may not retain market leadership in the coming period. The trends would tend to suggest that it could be hard-pressed to do so. PTV therefore faces a strategic choice: to continue trying to outmatch the private sector in the ratings or to strengthen its public service credentials and offer a popular but distinctive service that justifies its public funding.

⁹ AGB Nielsen is one of two media market research companies in Armenia. It was set up with support from IREX in 2005.

¹⁰ Research by Eurodata TV Worldwide / TV MR AM / AGB Nielsen Media Research

4.4. Financial Position

Today PTV is in a solid financial position. In 2008, the allocation from the state budget totalled \$7.6 million whilst a further \$1.86 million was derived from commercial advertising and \$1.54 million from other sources (including election campaigns). The total income for PTV in 2008 was \$11 million, more than \$2 million up on the previous year.

However, Alexan Arakelyan, the chief financier on the CPTR administration, predicts that advertising revenue will fall next year when Latin American soap operas are removed from the schedule and replaced with public service programmes. He explained, “We know from experience that the public dimension does not enjoy a high rating and we expect to get money from the government to cover the loss of advertising”. He said the request for additional funding was equivalent to \$420,000.

Arakelyan believes the company is caught between a rock and a hard place. “If public service programmes are increased, audience figures will plummet. Then the government will ask, ‘Why are we funding a channel which no one is watching?’” he said. However, the council has introduced a range of performance indicators to measure PTV’s fulfilment of its public service mandate and schedule changes are being pursued despite these concerns.

Advertising is sold through an external agency, KAYM. Every year, PTV sets a financial target for advertising income and KAYM sells airtime with a view to meeting and surpassing this target. The agency keeps any residual income as its sales commission. Khoren Beglaryan, the director of AGB Nielsen, said that advertising rates had increased by 10-12% over the past year but that PTV’s rates had remained consistent.

4.5. Technical Issues

PTV’s technical division is managed by Alik Chitchyan who oversees five departments with a total of 140 employees. These include communications specialists, broadcast engineers and the technical staff of “Haylur”, which has a separate production department. The digitisation process at the public broadcaster is still ongoing. The internal equipment has already been procured but external infrastructure is dependent on the Ministry of Transport and Communications which is responsible for transmission.

Chitchyan said that a key requirement across his division was a better understanding of the optimum management structure. He believed the overall number of employees could be radically reduced and wages increased to encourage those with specialist skills to stay in their jobs. Current staffing levels were a legacy of the Soviet period. “The problem is with finding good staff,” said Chitchyan. “No university offers the right kind of training. Specialists are like gold dust. We train up staff then, as soon as they get the right skills, they go to work for other stations.”

4.6. News Programming

Good quality news and information are central to the credibility of a public broadcaster. Providing a comprehensive service of accurate, professional and balanced news is one of the core activities. PTV’s Executive Director, Armen Arzumanyan, told us, “News is our flagship programme where most of our effort has gone. We should be competing to be better and to be the first. What we are doing is gradually and assiduously improving the quality of journalism. We are getting ready for the right political moment.”

At the same time, many senior managers at PTV seemed diffident about defending the quality of a service that has been widely criticised for being too closely aligned to the authorities. Haroutyun

Haroutyunyan, head of the “Haylur” News Service, effectively admitted shortcomings when he said to us, “What is aired does not fully reflect the professionalism of the journalists. We are not satisfied with what we have and we are trying to overcome the challenges.”

It is undoubtedly the case that there are many professional people in the news department, among them some lively and capable young journalists who want to do a good job and who are already producing some good work in less than ideal circumstances. They understand the responsibility of working for a news organisation that carries substantial influence.

“Haylur” attracts a substantial audience. Audience research by AGB Nielsen and Eurodata placed H1’s news programme as ninth in the list of the most watched programmes in Armenia in 2007. But viewing appears to have declined in 2008. From a high of 352,000 viewers in February and a market share of 34%, audiences have dropped month by month to 147,000 in June and a share of 22%. We did not have access to statistics for other broadcasters for this period so cannot say whether the drop is specific to PTV or part of a general trend.

However, we did do a spot-check in the week of our visit to compare H1’s figures with its nearest news rival, Shant TV. On July 15, “Haylur” attracted ratings of 6.2% and a share of 18.1%, behind Shant TV’s “Horizon” which had 10.2% ratings and a 26.7% share. This may have just been a bad day for “Haylur” or a good day for “Horizon”. Shant may have had a stronger peak-time programme schedule that evening. But one observer offered the view that Shant’s news was livelier and carried more stories that “are closer to the people”. We are not in a position to make a comparative judgment but it is noteworthy that “Haylur”, while watched extensively throughout the country, is facing stiff competition.

This should give an additional spur to PTV to strengthen its news output, fully utilise the potential of its journalism staff, and develop an editorial stance which is fair, balanced and even-handed and reflects all relevant points of view on issues of the moment. PTV has some changes planned for the autumn and these are outlined later in this report. The Executive Director told us that PTV’s ambition was to have a “normal European television with regular, proper news”. The President of the CPTR, Alexan Haroutyunyan, said that PTV’s news “should be fully impartial”.

4.6.1. News Organisation

The Director of the “Haylur” News Service is editorially responsible for the news output and manages the daily news operation. In effect, he works as an Editor-in-Chief. He has a Chief Editor whose main task is to check scripts. “Haylur” has around 15 reporters, eight camera crews and six edit suites. It has foreign correspondents in Washington, Beirut and Los Angeles and around six local stringers in the main towns of Armenia. Sport is run as a separate department which is not part of news.

The news facilities are adequate; much of the equipment is around three years old. This isn’t state-of-the-art but it is a good deal better than many other small public broadcasters. PTV uses DV format for capture. Pictures are digitised into a server and there is a local network and computer-assisted playout in the control gallery. Non-linear editing is on Adobe Premiere. The edit suites are makeshift and not acoustically isolated. The studio is of sufficient size but not generous; on the lighting grid there are some huge Soviet-era lights which are still in working order. The whole of the news premises is decrepit and in a poor state of repair, but is to undergo refurbishment this summer.

Journalists and translators work out of a dedicated newsroom which was created about seven years ago as one of the recommendations that came out of a Council of Europe-sponsored consultancy. The news team starts the day with the morning editorial meeting at 10.15am which defines the day’s news coverage and is chaired by the Director of News. In the early afternoon the Director of News, the Chief Editor and

the evening news anchor meet to review the content and running order for the 9pm news. At 5pm, the Director of News prepares the following day's news prospects. This is a good basic structure for daily news planning.

Morning editorial meetings provided external consultants with a useful first impression of a news department's priorities and approach. The following issues are worthy of comment:

- It was good to see reporters actively discussing the assignments they had been given, with constructive suggestions about story treatment and the different elements and angles that could be included.
- It was encouraging to note that several off-diary ideas were brought to the table by the Director of News. The assignments were not limited to planned events. One such story was a tip-off about the gas company's failure to investigate a reported gas leak in a block of apartments for three days. As well as being exclusive to PTV, it was the kind of story that would have wide general interest. The reporter was given time to do the job properly and the story ran two days later in the main evening news. It was an excellent example of television journalism.
- The only off-diary story suggestions were from the Director of News. Individual reporters should also be bringing their ideas to the meeting.
- The Director of News gave his team constructive feedback on the previous day's output. Regular feedback makes an important contribution to maintaining and raising standards.
- There was no reference to any significant or exclusive stories running in other media that morning, whether broadcast, print or online. Some news organisations make it the job of a duty journalist on an early shift to bring a summary of media coverage to the morning editorial meeting.

4.6.2. The "Haylur" News Service

The newsroom is geared towards the main evening news. The daytime bulletins are unadventurous and contain a high proportion of international news. The daytime running orders are decided by the presenter, unless there is something that needs to be referred up for editorial decision. All the news anchors are journalists. The domestic stories of the day start filtering through for the 5pm bulletin, but it is the 9pm news that is the main test of PTV's journalism and editorial values.

Our needs assessment was conducted in mid-July when political activity is already winding down for the summer. This means we were less able to test the criticism of political bias but more able to witness how the newsroom performs when it is not tied to a heavy diet of political and official news.

There was much that was encouraging and we noted the following strengths:

- **Packaged reports on a number of stories were well constructed**

The annual youth camp story which led the bulletin on July 15 was an example of a nicely constructed package. The same could be said of the gas leak story referred to earlier and the investigation into possible water pollution at Lake Sevan. There was also a competent package from the Washington correspondent on the visit of the Armenian Foreign Minister. Although we didn't have a written translation of the scripts, it seemed that the stories were being told in a factual, logical, and clear way. All the main angles were covered and there was creditable use of interview clips and natural sound.

- **Stories were told through pictures**

Where stories had a visual element there were clear signs of the reporter and camera operator thinking about the pictures they needed for their story. Telling a story through pictures is at the heart of good television journalism but, too often, reporters are more concerned about their script than the pictures. Even though there were some good examples of the use of pictures, there were also too many stories – especially political stories and news conferences – where no obvious effort had been put into thinking about pictures.

- **The news agenda made some effort to reach beyond the official world of political events and press conferences**

Maybe it is the July syndrome but the main evening bulletin displayed a variety of stories of broad general interest: a breakthrough in ear implant surgery for children, archaeological and agricultural stories, food prices, water quality, prison inmates taking part in a table tennis tournament, the selection of the contestant for the Junior Eurovision Song Contest and others. The Director of News agrees that “Haylur” needs to move further in this direction and develop a news agenda which reflects the issues that matter to people in their daily lives. News is all about the events, topics and issues that are significant, interesting and relevant to the audience.

- **Judicious use of “stand-ups”**

Modern news broadcasters make regular use of stand-ups (where the reporter speaks directly into the camera), both within recorded and live reports. More traditional news organisations tend to prefer using reporters as off-screen voices. During the week, we saw a number of competent stand-ups including a live report from a chess tournament. “Haylur” has no policy on stand-ups and it should encourage reporters to do more of them. They fulfil a useful journalistic purpose in emphasising the presence of a reporter at the location of an event and they can be helpful when there is a dearth of other pictures. Generally the public likes them, too, because they can see the reporters who are bringing them the news. Stand-ups humanise a news bulletin.

- **Good studio-based interviews**

It was good to see an analyst being interviewed live in the studio – he was commenting on Armenian-Turkish relationships off the back of a journalist’s report. As all the news presenters are journalists they are well able to conduct studio interviews. These can add depth and understanding to the journalism as well as interest and variety to the bulletin. There was only the one example we saw but it is a technique that should be a regular part of the news. We also noted that the standard of news presenting was generally very competent and the operational team in the gallery did a professional job, turning out clean programmes without any glitches.

However, there are plenty of areas for improvement:

- **Too many second division stories from official press conferences**

One could be forgiven for thinking that life in Armenia is lived in press conferences, given the extent to which they dominate news coverage. Some stories seemed hardly worth covering and too many were handled in a dull and un-televisual way – a couple of clips from speakers and the usual clichéd pictures of journalists and cameramen attending the event.

PTV is not alone in filling its bulletin with news conferences. Other Armenian broadcasters are also guilty to a greater or lesser degree. News conferences are an efficient way of briefing a large number of journalists but they rarely provide good material for a TV reporter. The first question PTV should ask is: is this news conference worth attending? If the answer is yes, then more thought needs to be given to making the story interesting for the viewer.

Reporters should use a press conference to gather information but aim to get relevant pictures from another source, building in the time to go to another location if necessary. Journalists should ask the main speakers to give them separate interviews, rather than relying on extracts from what they say at the press conference. Reporters who conduct their own interviews can choose the questions they ask and follow up the story. It also gives them the opportunity to select a more attractive location than the press conference room.

A press conference may be just one side of a story. The journalist's obligation is to report in a fair and even-handed way, so reporters should also think about what other perspectives need to be included in the report.

- **Poor use of reporter packages**

Too many stories were delivered as straight reads from the presenter, covered by mute pictures and sometimes an interview clip. And too many of the presenter scripts were excessively long (in some cases the pictures ended before the presenter had finished the script – this is bad television practice). More of the stories should be told by a reporter using packaged reports.

An example was the UNESCO blood donor day. The first piece was a script read by the presenter, overlaid by pictures and followed by an interview clip. There was then a second piece from a press conference held by a youth movement about their blood-donating activities. It would have been much better to have had a single package with the reporter drawing all the elements together. This could have started with pictures of an ordinary blood donor giving blood and perhaps a clip from them explaining why they give blood. What was routine and unexciting could have been an interesting and well-told package.

- **Little coverage from outside Yerevan**

Maybe the week wasn't typical but, given that roughly half the population lives outside Yerevan, there seemed to be a lack of news from outside the capital.

- **A lack of clear, simple and understandable language**

There is scope to improve the writing style. The audience has only one chance to assimilate the information and stories should be told in a clear, logical and straightforward way. Jargon, bureaucratic language and long sentences should be avoided. The main news angle of a story should always be in the top line.

- **Not enough "lives"**

"Haylur" has access to facilities for live location reporting. We didn't see them used in the week we were there, apart from the chess tournament. Being live at the scene of a story adds immediacy and impact to a bulletin and enables a reporter to be more up-to-the-minute with his or her information. "Haylur" might like to experiment with the "doughnut" technique. This is where a reporter starts the story live at the

location and links into a pre-prepared VT package, then rounds off the report again live at the scene. It can be very effective television journalism.

- **Poor use of graphics**

There is little use of graphics to illustrate stories. Graphics are an important tool in television journalism, useful for highlighting statistics, summarising the main bullet points of a report or for quotations or extracts of statements. They help the audience assimilate often complex information and they provide visual variety to a report.

- **Little attention to daytime bulletins**

Up to 5pm, the bulletins are lacklustre with little fresh domestic material. Sometimes stories from the previous day are given another airing. Unless they have moved on or developed in some way, previous day stories are history not news. International footage is used to fill the airtime. The news department needs to think about how it can get off the mark earlier in the morning to spice up its daytime coverage.

4.6.3. Politics, Fairness and Balance

With the elections over and the political season winding down, we saw no obvious examples of political bias during the week of our visit. Some observers uncharitably suggested that the news agenda was always better when media observers were in town.

Certainly, there is too much of an official agenda to the news and the activities of the President and the Prime-Minister are ever present. It was a little surprising to see one main evening bulletin lead with the story of the annual youth camp attended by Armenians from all over the world. Then we realised that the President was attending. We had clips from his speech, actuality of him talking to young people, and footage of him dancing with them in the evening. Another lead story later in the week told of a Russian Armenian who had made the largest ever individual investment in the country from the diaspora – in response to a call for support from the President. A clip of the President at the youth camp was shown again.

Both were valid stories and possibly an editorial case could be made for leading on them on a quiet news day. But one suspects that, like a lot of state and former state broadcasters, H1's news output automatically gives precedence to the announcements and activities of the state's top officials. During the week, there were a range of stories from government departments and parliamentary bodies, but we also had the visit of the PACE Human Rights Commissioner; a story about a commission raising the issue of the March detainees; and a press conference at which the first President of Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, said the government must take public opinion into account in its policies.

So, it was a mixed picture. There wasn't the time to carry out a detailed analysis of the news scripts, but the simultaneous translation from our interpreter suggested that there needs to be greater effort to explain events; to give them meaningful context; and to help the audience understand the significance of what they are seeing. Making sense of the news is all part of the journalist's job and not to do so lends weight to the perception that news coverage is uncritical.

The Director of News said a big change in their approach had been to eliminate most protocol stories. If so, that is laudable. Protocol stories per se are of little relevance to viewers unless the participants say or do something newsworthy.

4.6.4. Editorial Policy

Many broadcasters and newspapers, especially in the public sphere, have adopted editorial policy guidelines for internal use to help editors and journalists do their job professionally. Editorial guidelines go under different names and are sometimes called “codes of practice” or “codes of conduct”. Whatever the title, the purpose is the same – to set out the professional standards the media organisation expects of its journalists and programme-makers and to explain its editorial position on key areas such as fairness, balance, accuracy and impartiality.

Editorial guidelines take account of legal requirements and any relevant codes adopted by the national media regulator. They provide a more detailed framework of policy and editorial direction for the media organisation’s journalists and programme-makers. Self-regulation of this kind is an accepted principle in many countries.

Editors, journalists and programme-makers at PTV have no such internal policy guidelines to work to, beyond the basic requirements of the law and a broad institutional definition of PTV’s editorial stance (see Section 3.3.). PTV should consider developing and adopting such editorial guidelines, endorsed by the CPTR and annexed to the Charter. It is an area in which the BBC can provide expert guidance if required.

4.6.5. Future Developments in News

Alexan Haroutyunyan, the President of the CPTR, told us that PTV had to work towards achieving European-style news. “We want people to watch us and trust us,” he said. As highlighted above, PTV is looking at the idea of appointing a Deputy Director of News to assist them in the changes. This senior executive would be from outside PTV and Haroutyunyan indicated that he or she need not be from Armenia. Bringing in an experienced, external figure and giving them significant authority in the editorial hierarchy is an interesting proposal.

Changes already in train for the autumn include a better studio, a refreshing of the studio set, new titles, an extra ENG camera and several more news vehicles. PTV is also contemplating increasing the number of foreign correspondents. The President of the CPTR indicated that they would welcome BBC involvement in a longer-term and more fundamental redesign of the news programme.

The news department has recently been bolstered by the appointment of a News Producer, Artak Alexanyan, who has returned to the company after scholarship studies in journalism and mass communication at the University of Utah. His brief is to make the news more dynamic and improve the quality of the journalism. His objectives include:

- A reduction in the amount of official news;
- More ordinary people in stories;
- More interesting stories;
- More “lives”;
- Utilising the TV studio in the radio building for city centre contributors.

This is very encouraging. The changes being planned and the ambitions to improve the news are important steps in the right direction. But it is essential that the changes are underpinned by a commitment to fair, balanced and even-handed coverage if PTV is to fulfil its public service remit and win public trust. There are some good professional skills among the young reporters and a clear wish at all

levels of the department to work in an atmosphere of editorial freedom. They can rise to the challenge if given the chance.

4.7. Current Affairs Programmes

4.7.1. Programming Policy

H1 has the look of a good commercial station and a programme schedule that would not disgrace a commercial broadcaster. It is currently the market leader in Armenia and the management's policy is to keep it that way. Their single-minded focus is on ratings. The President of the CPTR and the Executive Director define public broadcasting as "doing what a commercial broadcaster does but doing it better".

Of course public broadcasting takes many forms and there is constant debate about the role it should play in a competitive, multi-channel world. However, we suggest that this is an imperfect definition of public service broadcasting. Certainly, public broadcasting should aim to "do it better". Setting high standards and a commitment to quality are defining characteristics of public broadcasting. It's also true that ratings are important. A public service which the public does not want to watch is not much of a public service and poor value for public money. There's nothing wrong with taking pride in being the market leader.

But the point of a public broadcaster is that it receives its funding in return for meeting certain public service obligations not required of the commercial sector. These obligations will vary from country to country and are usually enshrined in the law establishing a public broadcaster. A useful reference document is the EBU's Public Service Broadcasting Model Law. As well as its legislative proposal, this document sets out to explain the nature and concept of public service broadcasting and its leading role in a democratic society.

There is broad consensus about the main functions of a public broadcaster which are:

- To provide a comprehensive service of accurate and impartial news, information and analysis so that citizens are well-informed about their society and the wider world;
- To provide a forum for open debate and dialogue in which there is freedom for all points of view to be heard;
- To foster civic values;
- To offer a wide range of high quality programming that informs, educates and entertains;
- To provide something for all sections of society, balancing mass appeal programmes with more targeted programming for particular communities of interest;
- To cover the main national events which foster national identity and bring people together;
- To play an active role in presenting and promoting cultural life, including the culture and traditions of minority groups;
- Through its different programmes, to act as a factor for social cohesion and the integration of all individuals, groups and communities;
- To provide educational programmes and programmes for children;
- To promote domestic programme production.

Many in PTV would accept that its mix of domestically-produced programming is not yet as strong as it should be, despite some good individual programmes and some talented programme-makers. We sensed an attitude at the senior level that too many "public service" programmes would damage the broadcaster by having a negative impact on audience figures (see Section 4.4.).

The European experience is that a competitive schedule containing well-made, engaging and interesting programmes which meet the needs and expectations of the public will always attract good audiences.

4.7.2. Performance Indicators

Alexan Arakelyan, chief financier for the CPTR, said PTV was coming round to the view that it should adopt a wider range of performance indicators to measure its success. The two he proposed in addition to ratings were:

- A public satisfaction or approval rating as evidenced by public opinion surveys;
- The programming mix and its compliancy with legal requirements and Council directives.

In a separate conversation, Deputy Director Gnel Nalbanyan said very little was done to measure the quality of programmes. PTV should come up with a mechanism for doing this, he said. Adopting a number of performance indicators in addition to audience reach and share would be a very sensible move.

There are others that could be considered as well. For example, the President of the CPTR has said he wants people to trust PTV programmes as well as watch them. The level of trust is an important indicator for a public broadcaster. Along with the programming mix, PTV could also consider an indicator on the percentage of domestically made programming in the programme schedule.

4.7.3. Regular Programmes

During our assessment we viewed a cross-section of regular programmes. This is by no means a comprehensive assessment but more of a spot check to get a sense of the programming approach as well as the quality of the output and the editorial content.

PTV has three regular programmes that go under the description of talk shows: “Fifth Wheel”, “My Right”, and “Strange Games”.

- **Fifth Wheel**

This is a studio debate on topical issues. PTV’s website says of the programme: “Specialists with mutually exclusive or opposite opinions are invited to the studio. The problem is presented and attempts are made to find the most efficient solution to the problem through discussion. The audience also participates by direct telephone voting.”

Like much of PTV’s programming, the programme looks good. The set is attractive; the studio direction and vision mixing are very competent. The presenter was dressed informally and he moved the debate along at a good pace. He asked intelligent questions and listened to the answers. The topic under discussion was the prospect of jobs for students emerging from higher and vocational education. It was a strong subject which would have had broad appeal not just for young people but for their parents as well.

The choice of guests was disappointing. Far from being mutually exclusive, three of the guests were from government departments (the state employment agency, the labour market analysis department and the head of vocational training) whilst the fourth was the vice-rector of the state university. They were all good speakers who knew their subject but the programme lacked other perspectives. None of the guests was likely to take issue with government policies. There should have been an employer round the table and

someone from a student or youth group representing the views of the section of the community being discussed.

According to the website, "Fifth Wheel" is aired at 15.50 on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays – well outside primetime viewing. In the programme schedule for the week of July 7, the programme was scheduled for 11.50 on Monday, repeated at 02.15, and again at 02.00 on the following night.

- **My Right**

The website says, "Where can citizens get information about their rights and responsibilities? What is required by the law? How can people protect their rights? These questions are answered in 'My Right'. In the TV court, the petitioner makes demands to restore his broken rights and interests. The defendant in his turn brings facts and proofs. The audience in the studio also takes part in the programme with various views and opinions on the case discussed. At the end, the judge pronounces his judgment."

The programme is an independent production, made by AZD. We were told it is funded by the World Bank. The programme takes real cases but the plaintiff and defendant improvise. The staged court session is chaired by a serving judge who bases his judgments on Armenian law. This is an innovative format and a creative way of educating the public on legal issues. Again, it is a polished programme, interesting to watch and with high production values.

According to the website, the programme airs in primetime at 19.00 on Sundays. It was not in the schedule for the week of July 7. The slot was filled by the opening ceremony of the Golden Apricot film festival.

- **Strange Games**

In a noisy, combative and entertaining way, "Strange Games" discusses the problems of dysfunctional families in front of a studio audience. It is an Armenian Jerry Springer show and the kind of programme one would more usually find on a commercial station.

The edition we saw involved a confrontation between two families whose mothers did not approve of the relationship between their respective son and daughter. It was only when it was pointed out to us that we realised this was not a real-life situation. The participants were ordinary people acting out the confrontation. We assume the audience is aware of this. If not, or if there is a risk that they think it is for real, it raises a significant editorial issue.

The programme itself is very well done. The host makes it a lively, engaging programme with plenty of audience involvement. One can argue that because the situations are not real, the programme is merely entertaining and not the "trash TV" that Jerry Springer is sometimes accused of. The programme is not mentioned on the website. According to the programme schedule of July 7, it aired twice in primetime, at 19.30 on Tuesday and 20.00 on Wednesday.

- **360 Degrees**

"360 Degrees" is PTV's main current affairs programme and, as such, is an important part of the public service remit. The 40-minute weekly programme is made by reporters from the news team and is broadcast on Sunday evenings at 20.00.

The website says, “The informational-analytical programme gives an all-round introduction to the most important events of the current week. The subjects of the stories are main events which have been in the limelight and events which probably weren’t hot enough then but are still key questions for the population due to their widespread or insolvable character.”

The editor, Gnel Nalbanyan, told us that he liked to have five or six pieces in each edition: a political, economic and cultural story, something from daily life and a human interest story. The first programme we were shown did not fit the editorial remit. There were three pieces – one on mushrooms, the second on the development of a more competitive agriculture industry, and the third on old musical instruments. They were all nicely filmed and edited but this was a fairly soft magazine-style approach rather than an analytical programme.

A second programme turned out to be a single-issue documentary on the state of affairs in Nagorno-Karabakh. The reporter went to the front line, talked to military personnel and looked at economic and daily life in the region. It was an interesting, well-made documentary, narrated by the reporter in an informative, level-headed manner. A good programme but, again, not the content we had been led to expect.

“360 Degrees” is a programme that has been criticised by media observers for political bias, however, we cannot offer any objective judgment about the programme based on the editions we saw.

- **Special Zone**

This is a good example of how socially-useful public service programming need not be dull or worthy. The website says: “The programme reveals isolated zones or people that are different from the others....The beauty of human soul, the depth and the creative spirit - this is what we look for in each of our heroes.”

The programme adopts an observational documentary style – rather like “fly on the wall”. It follows individuals and reflects their daily life and the predicaments they face. The subjects are usually those who have social problems or difficulties or are at the fringes of society. This is a social programme with a purpose. The observational documentary style makes good television and the programme is a nice example of the style. It is well filmed and well put together. Each programme takes two weeks to make.

“Special Zone” is produced in-house and has been running for three seasons. It was not on air in the week of July 7.

4.8. Other Programmes

We also viewed “This is Us”, a teenage magazine programme produced by Internews and prepared by teenage journalists from the South Caucasus region. The programme is bright and attractive, has a filmed format and covers teenagers’ interests and social concerns. In the week of July 7 it was scheduled at 12.00 on Wednesday.

PTV has a number of other regular programmes, including stand-up comedy in “Club 32”; music videos with “Top Ten” and “Hot Ten”; a music request programme, “Music Mailbox”; a Thursday evening football programme and a Sunday morning chess programme. Cultural programmes, particularly classical music, are mainly scheduled in the latter part of the evening.

4.8.1. Armenian Soap Operas

Domestically made drama series are universally popular, whether on public or commercial television. In Armenia, Shant TV leads the field with its daily primetime soap “Vervaracner” which has gained a market share of up to 38%.

PTV has now started investing in the genre and has just completed the first season of two domestic soaps, aired four times a week in an early evening slot. The first is “The Way We Live Now” and the second is based on an Argentinian format, “Rouzanna’s Heart”. The Chief Producer, Hrach Qeshishyan, described the opening season as “quite successful”. A third series is about to start production, with a storyline based on village life.

A commitment to domestic production is a distinguishing characteristic of public television and good quality home-made soap operas can make a valuable contribution to peak-time ratings. PTV has said that it is to end its acquisition of Latin American soap series and this commitment, coupled with an investment in home-produced drama series, using local script writers, production staff and actors, is a positive move.

4.8.2. The Programme Schedule

Popular foreign series and films make up a substantial part of PTV’s schedule – on average around eight hours a day between 08.00 and midnight, or 50% of the output, taking the programme schedule of the week of July 7 as a reference point. As this is at the start of the summer quarter, some domestic programming will have been rested until the autumn. Foreign series and films also dominated early and late primetime output during this week. Apart from the 9pm Haylur, domestic programming in the evening peak consisted of the following:

<i>Time</i>	<i>Programme</i>	<i>Genre</i>
Monday		
1920	Club 32	Humour
2000	Handwriting	Government information programme
2030	O2	Government information programme
2130	Concert	Classical music
Tuesday		
1900	Junior Eurovision	Popular music event
1930	Strange Games	Entertaining talk show
2000	Krunk 2008	Popular music event
Wednesday		
1930	Olympic Combined Team of Armenia	Sports documentary
2000	Strange Games	Entertaining talk show
2025	Music Mailbox	Music
Thursday		
900	Football	Sport
2130	O2	Government information programme

Friday

1900	House of Laughter	Humour
1930	Junior Eurovision	Entertainment
2330	On the Ways of the Diaspora	Documentary

Saturday

2020	Zinuzh	Government information programme
------	--------	----------------------------------

Sunday

1830	Golden Apricot film festival	Event
2100	360 Degrees	Current affairs
2140	Club 32	Humour

4.8.3. Government-made Programmes

“Handwriting” is made by the government information service and is a summary of government activities and meetings with policy-makers. “02” touches upon the criminal cases of the last week. According to the programme-makers, “These are cases which are already disclosed or have caused sensations... Defendants, witnesses and the people who disclosed the facts take part in the programme.” It is made by the Armenian Police. “Zinuzh” is described as a “military-patriotic” programme. It is made by the Ministry of Defence and looks at the life and work of the army. We did not view these programmes during the week’s assessment.

As part of the development of programming policy, PTV should be planning to replace these programmes with its own productions. It is not appropriate for a public broadcaster to cede editorial control to the government especially for a programme that reports exclusively on government activities. We note that all the government-made programmes are aired in primetime.

Naira Zohrabyan, Acting Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Science, Education, Culture and Youth Issues at the National Assembly of Armenia, said that PTV was under no obligation to broadcast these programmes. “They are just traditional,” she said and went on to explain that, until last year, PTV had been obliged to air all parliamentary sessions in full. However, this requirement had been lifted and it was now at the discretion of PTV to decide which issues were of wider public interest.

4.8.4 Films and Dramas

The work of the Yerevan Film Studio has seen something of a cautious renaissance over recent times. The studio, which was first established in the 1960s, occupies a block next to the main television building on Hovsepyan Street. Last year, it produced its first post-Soviet feature film, “Don’t Be Afraid”. This five-episode drama focusing on the war in Nagorno-Karabakh topped the ratings in 2007.

Encouraged by this success, PTV has ambitious plans to produce multi-episode dramas based on the works of famous Armenian authors such as Shirvanzade, Aksel Bakunts and Vardges Petrosyan. The Yerevan Film Studio is also working to re-master a vast archive of Soviet-era material which includes documentaries and feature films. Studio director Levon Galstyan said that this process would take four to five years but that the outputs would form the basis of the new cultural channel (see Section 4.9.1.).

Meanwhile, the dubbing department managed by Ruzan Avetisyan processes a vast volume of foreign acquisitions, ranging from the American series “Lost” and “Alias” to Latin American telenovellas costing less than \$100 per episode. The department comprises three producers, six editors and two assistants. They work with around 30 freelance translators and 50 actors. Avetisyan estimates they are responsible for 80% of PTV’s output.

Armenian law requires all foreign-language material to be dubbed into Armenian although some films are broadcast with subtitles. The workflow is highly impressive. Some of the Latin American soap operas are dubbed at a frenetic rate with just two or three actors doing the voices for dozens of different characters. High profile productions such as “Lost” are given a more sophisticated treatment, with each episode taking up to six days to record.

4.8.5. Website

Access to the Internet in Armenia is still limited. The IREX Media Sustainability Index for 2007 puts the number of Internet users at 80,000 – just 2% of the population. However, over the past year, a 256Kb line has become more affordable and the figures are slowly rising.

At the present time, the PTV website’s 2,500-3,000 daily hits come mostly from abroad. Hosted in America, the site is run by a small team including an editor, reporter, translator and designer. It has a modern, fresh design and intuitive navigation. Presented in both Armenian and English, the site’s key sections comprise:

- History of PTV from 1952.
- Information about specific projects (eg the American series “Lost”).
- News on upcoming films.
- The programme schedule.
- Feedback from users.
- The “Haylur” news scripts.

Given the poor Internet penetration locally, plans for upgrading or enhancing the site are modest. The team is looking at the feasibility of introducing streaming facilities with a view to broadcasting key programmes through the Internet. They are also using the site as a conduit for material sent from overseas correspondents.

4.9. Programme Plans

4.9.1. Second Channel

In the longer term, PTV hopes to develop a family of channels including a rolling news service and a finance channel. More immediately, the second channel is to get a makeover within a matter of months. Alexan Arakelyan, from the CPTR administration, said that 300 million drams (\$980,000) of state funding would be made available for the channel. This would be supplemented by around \$300,000 from commercial revenues. He said the channel would use existing frequencies and would gain proper momentum in January 2009.

The Executive Director, Armen Arzumanyan, commented, “Our first public TV channel is more like a commercial TV channel than a public service channel so a decision was taken to have the second channel as a fully-fledged cultural channel. The objective of the first channel is to remain the face of PTV. The cultural channel will comprise 12 hours’ programming which will be repeated. We have collected

together quite a stock of programmes: documentaries, classical music, educational programmes and feature films. We will also produce cultural news.”

The basic concept is clear but a more exact remit has yet to be defined. It was not evident whether any programming would be displaced from the first channel or whether the second channel would be originating entirely new output. It is a strategic change of direction and one that requires clarity in its objectives and goals. PTV will also need to think about how it schedules across two channels, to provide complementary programming and common programme junctions.

The concept of a mainstream popular channel and an alternative, more specialist channel is one that has been adopted by many public broadcasters. However, the first channel should still aim to deliver a broad range of quality programming appropriate for a public broadcaster, and the second channel will still be judged in part by its attractiveness to the audience in spite of its more serious remit.

4.9.2. New Programming Strands

There are plans for new public service programme strands in the autumn including some changes to the primetime schedule. One potentially significant new programme is “Formula”, a live, single-topic current affairs talk show featuring guests with opposing views and a studio audience. It is planned to air this in primetime, at 20.10 on Friday, running up to the news. On other weekdays, this pre-news slot will be taken up with a range of social, interview and political programmes.

“Special Zone” will be broadcast once a week, immediately after the news, then repeated later in the same week. An archive or domestic documentary will be shown on one other day. Latin American soap operas are to be removed from the schedule and the daytime schedule will feature a classic Armenian film. The President of the CPTR has also asked for new children’s programming.

The Chief Producer outlined ambitious plans for three new drama serials based on Armenian classic authors (see Section 4.8.4.). He is also developing a concept for a new health-awareness programme and has identified a young surgeon to present it. Outdated medical equipment is an enduring problem in the Armenian health service and one of the ideas for the programme is to smash a piece of old equipment at the end of the show and donate new equipment to replace it.

If all these plans reach fruition they will, on the face of it, strengthen PTV’s credentials as a public service broadcaster. The plans also have to be seen in the context of the decision to transform the second channel into a culture channel this autumn.

4.10. Conclusion

By European standards, the relationship between PTV, its council and the regulatory body in Armenia is poorly defined. In practice, the CPTR has far greater influence over the programming than equivalent organisations in Western Europe, yet there appears to be no system for ensuring that its decisions are shaped by the public at large.

References to the company’s public service obligations are vague and inadequate both in the PTV’s Charter and in the Regulations of the PTV and Radio Company, the latter being drafted in 2001 but still pending the approval of the National Assembly. Both documents fail to define editorial policy or establish an ethical code.

H1 is not reticent about outsourcing. A number of regular mainstream programmes are made by independent production houses. PTV currently uses about five companies. The Deputy Director for Public Programmes, Gnel Nalbandyan, said PTV should make even more use of external production companies because “they were more dynamic”, and it would help ease the problem of insufficient internal production facilities.

Interestingly, all of the channel’s creative graphics are outsourced to two companies, Triad and Eskiz. They do a very good job – the graphics are of a consistently high standard and the channel looks modern, professional and glossy.

PTV has invested in domestic film production and has begun to make its own popular drama series. It carries a range of big events that one expects of the public broadcaster – like Eurovision and Junior Eurovision, the International Film Festival which was on during our visit and major sporting occasions like the Champions League.

PTV has some creative and innovative programme-makers who know how to make attractive programmes with good production values. The weakness is in the range and depth of its domestic programming and the reluctance to champion public service programming that might impact on ratings. We think PTV’s top priority is to strengthen its current affairs programming. It will be interesting to see how well the new programme, “Formula”, establishes itself. PTV should also develop a broader portfolio of factual output and continue to develop drama genres. It should raise its ambitions in providing programming of a broadly educational nature to different sections of the community. It should end the practice of airing programmes made by the government.

Furthermore, Armenia’s Public Television and Radio needs to define carefully the remit of the second channel and ensure that the two channels provide a complementary service. The mainstream first channel needs to find the right balance of entertainment and public service programming. The changes being proposed for the autumn would suggest that the Council and the management of the company broadly agree with this assessment and are prepared to strike out in the right direction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0. Building Capacity at PTV

At a meeting of the OSCE's Media Legislation Working Group on July 17, we asked delegates if they thought a BBC-led consultancy programme at PTV could deliver significant benefits. Most of those present were highly sceptical. They believed that PTV had little motivation to implement genuine reforms since, in its current form, it was a profitable business which enjoyed strong ratings. Any apparent will to engage with international consultants was, they felt, a cynical attempt to convince the Council of Europe that the government was responding to recent criticism of the media environment.

However, most of the delegates agreed that some kind of momentum could be achieved. Boris Navasardyan, President of the Yerevan Press Club, said that any intervention should be based on strict conditions and the station's management held directly to account. He recommended drawing up a Memorandum of Understanding with PTV which would set out key objectives and performance indicators. Monitoring should be carried out by civil society organisations and the results of this monitoring should be broadcast on PTV.

This approach was broadly endorsed by the members of the Media Legislation Working Group who accepted that, at the very least, a consultancy and training project could have a beneficial effect on an individual level and that this could have multiplier effects within the wider media community.

5.1. Previous Training

As in many former Soviet republics, media professionals in Armenia have become disenchanted with internationally-led training initiatives, particularly those which are short-term and low-impact. This attitude was echoed by several senior managers at PTV. They said that consultants often lacked an appreciation of the conditions in which Armenian journalists worked and were, therefore, unable to offer practical solutions. "A consultant should come and live in Armenia for at least a year before he can tell us anything of value," said one.

However, there have been a number of effective on-site consultancies at PTV. The President of the CPTR, Alexan Haroutyunyan, said that a training programme led by a French trainer in 2007 had led to several major policy changes in the news department. All reports on political figures, he said, were cut from five minutes to one minute. Coverage of "protocol handshakes" was dropped. Recommendations made through a Council of Europe-funded workshop on newsroom management in 2001 had also been implemented.

The Armenian media market has some recourse to professional training services on a local level. Internews Armenia has been running a school of journalism, broadcast production and media management as well as a school of media sales and marketing. Under the auspices of these programmes, more than 500 media professionals have been trained and 20 media outlets outside Yerevan have received technical upgrades. Several journalists and editors at PTV said they had completed Internews training courses and had derived significant benefits from them.

5.2. BBC Consultancy

The core objective of a consultancy programme at PTV will be to realise the station's potential to act as a catalyst for democratic processes in Armenia through developing its public service values. We believe this can be achieved by:

- Establishing an editorial framework to complement the existing PTV Charter and bylaws;
- Optimising the management structure at PTV and streamlining operating systems;
- Revamping the news output and improving newsgathering skills;
- Supporting the development of new programming strands;
- Co-producing selected programmes in collaboration with BBC consultants.

Based on past experience of implementing projects aimed a long-term institutional change, we propose an 18-month consultancy programme incorporating the outputs listed below. Ultimately the actual volume of activities will depend on the level of funding available for this intervention, so, at this stage, the approach represents a “best case scenario”.

5.3. Developing Editorial Guidelines

As highlighted above, PTV lacks a document which sets out its editorial policy and describes the parameters in which its journalists should work. We, therefore, recommend developing a set of Editorial Guidelines to complement and expand on Article 2 of the existing bylaws. They should cover issues such as:

- Accuracy, impartiality and diversity of opinion
- Fairness, contributors and consent
- Privacy
- Crime and anti-social behaviour
- Children
- Politics and public policy
- War, terror and emergencies
- Religion
- Editorial integrity and independence
- Audience needs
- Media law
- Accountability

The guidelines should provide a point of reference for editorial teams but also a public statement of the broadcaster’s commitment to core values. The resulting document should be a journalist’s first port of call when faced with an editorial dilemma and the first line of defence when an editorial decision is questioned. The BBC consultants will ensure that the guidelines are widely disseminated through the organisation and published on the website.

5.4. Management Consultancy

These activities will aim to create an enabling environment in which new skills and approaches can be implemented at PTV. In the initial stages of the project, the BBC consultants will focus on establishing relationships with senior stakeholders and building trust. They will examine managerial procedures and develop a SWOT analysis, highlighting opportunities for enhancing the current workflow. Recommendations will be based on increasing the effectiveness of existing staff and establishing clearer areas of responsibility.

The core strands of the management consultancy programme will comprise:

- **Strategy:** Working in close collaboration with the senior management team, the BBC consultants will devise a strategy aimed at improving resource allocation and programme development. Existing plans for capital investment will also be reviewed and, if necessary, brought in line with the strategic imperatives.
- **Leadership:** When a new strategy has been agreed, the consultancy programme will work to develop managerial skills across key operational departments. This training will look at the characteristics of effective managers as well as perceived responsibilities and duties. Participants will learn how to develop and motivate staff as well as how to establish clear lines of communication. Consultants will devise leadership techniques which properly reflect Armenian cultural realities.
- **Audience Needs:** An underlying theme to all management consultancy activities will be developing a greater focus on audience needs. This may include devising mechanisms through which members of the public can voice their opinions (eg Britain's Voice of the Listener and Viewer). Managers will look at ways of ensuring that outputs address the needs of a broad cross-section of society and, where possible, encourage inclusion and participation. They will also examine how political, social and market pressures can be balanced against audience considerations.
- **Scheduling:** This work will lead to a wider discussion of the existing schedule. Consultants will discuss different formats and genres against the backdrop of wider priorities, both editorial and commercial. They will highlight the role played by TV in the community as a platform for public debate and a facilitator of dialogue between the authorities and the electorate.

5.4.1. Financial Management

As described above (see Section 4.4.), the work of the finance team has become increasingly complex as PTV extends the breadth of its programming and focuses on foreign acquisitions. In response to the requests of Finance Director Karen Tataryan, the BBC envisages a consultancy cycle which looks at a review of the management structure before moving on to specific fields of interest. In particular, Tataryan expressed a need to "improve the interaction between different teams" and introduce new project management systems.

Since few of the local colleges offer training programmes in specialist areas of international law, finance and accounting, PTV urgently needs to gain access to these skills and to introduce ways of managing knowledge within the finance team. Key areas include: broadcasting rights, international contract law, acquisition regulations and international banking systems. The coming months promise new challenges. PTV is planning to develop subscription systems for satellite channels. There is, as yet, no clear strategy as to how this process will be managed.

Consultancy to the finance team should be delivered in small group sessions or through one-to-one coaching. It was encouraging to see that there is a great will to learn within the department coupled with a strong commitment to transparency and best practice.

5.4.2. Marketing and Promotion

Whilst all PTV's advertising contracts are handled by an outside agency, KAYM, marketing and promotion are internal activities, channelled largely through the International Relations Department. Diana Mnatsakanyan, the department's head, highlighted these areas as key development priorities as well as building knowledge and skills around programme acquisition.

This training will look at corporate branding, establishing clear guidelines and ensuring consistency across the organisation. Consultants will examine a range of marketing tools (eg: website, promotional literature, presentations) and give advice on how to improve their impact. Other areas for consideration might include internal communications and computer-based intranet systems.

Participants in the consultancy will also look at the key challenges around marketing and promoting PTV programmes. The training will address technical skills as well as general principles and strategic issues. Sessions will be largely practical, highlighting learning points through developing promos in collaboration with the trainer.

5.5. Newsgathering

As highlighted above, the “Haylur” news service boasts a professional team with a good understanding of editorial processes. It is generally felt that, due to political pressures, this team has not been able to fulfil its true potential. Whilst the programme detailed below incorporates some training in basic journalism skills, it is anticipated that consultants will be able to focus their attention on streamlining the newsgathering process and integrating new editorial guidelines (see Section 5.2) into the working routine.

5.5.1. Deputy Director of News Programming

We support the idea of placing an international consultant in the PTV newsroom over an extended period of time. However, it will be essential for this individual to have a high level of authority and the ability to bring about fundamental changes to the existing workflow. Combining a wide range of editorial and technical skills, the Deputy Director will act as a mentor to rank-and-file editorial staff during the working day. As well as playing a key role in editorial meetings and assigning stories, he/she will provide regular feedback on how topics are handled and material gathered.

In addition, the Deputy Director will address issues of organisation and logistics in the TV newsroom. A specialist consultant will work with senior newsroom staff to review issues around deployment, planning and resource allocation. These skills are central to the smooth running of a busy TV operation and, if properly implemented, will have a positive impact on programme budgeting and editorial workflow. Key stakeholders will look at the mechanics of deploying camera crews and reporting teams as well as developing their planning skills. They will learn to make vital judgments relating to resource allocation, particularly with a view to responding to breaking news or major campaigns.

The newsroom consultant will also advise on editorial activities within specialist fields, providing training where necessary in areas such as politics, economics, culture, education, sport and social affairs. This specialist consultancy will focus on developing sources, understanding the field and investigative journalism techniques.

5.5.2. Reporting Skills

Trainers will work in real time with individual reporters on the job with a view to developing all aspects of reporting skills, from the initial story idea to the finished report or package. The training will incorporate the following areas:

- *News values*: the basic ingredients of a news story (who, what, where, when and why). The importance of proximity, scale, relevance, context.
- *Sources of news*: building and maintaining trust with contacts through responsible reporting and accurate attribution. The dangers of relying on press releases and press conferences.

- *Interviewing skills*: how to prepare for and carry out successful interviews. Examining the motives of interviewees and establishing proper relationships. Dealing with problematic interviewees.
- *Editorial ethics*: impartiality, accuracy, balance, objectivity. The role of the media and the responsibilities of the journalist.
- *Writing for TV*: linking words, pictures and sounds to bring a story to life and take the viewer into the action or the event.
- *TV packages*: construction and innovation
- *Shooting and editing for news*: stand-ups, pieces to camera, composition, sequences.

5.5.3. Financial and Economic Journalism

Specialist journalism is a key asset in public broadcasting. Training in this particular area of expertise was specifically requested by the Director of News. There is an urgent need to build a reputation for objective and impartial business journalism. Business reporting courses will focus on the following areas:

- Maintaining balance, objectivity and integrity in business reporting;
- Recognising the difference between editorial and advertorial; between reporting, analysis and comment;
- Building interviewing skills;
- Developing presentation skills: hitting the right note, responsibility and avoidance of sensationalism;
- Reporting on national budgets and economic reform;
- Reporting on international economic affairs;
- Balancing national and international news; finance and macro-economic items in the Armenian context.

5.5.4. Camera Operations and Picture Editing

We propose advanced training for operations staff in the craft skills of shooting and editing pictures. This training can be extended to journalists to introduce them to lightweight camera operations and to improve their picture editing capability. A number of major broadcasters (including the BBC) have investigated the potential for equipping journalists with camera and editing skills in order to streamline the newsgathering process.

Common themes to this training will include location safety; framing and shooting for editing; focus techniques; exposure techniques; use of light; microphones and sound recording; composition (looking room/headroom) and shot sizes.

Training for picture editors will look at editorial as well as technical issues, promoting an appreciation of how the editing process can impact on the audience's perception of events or people. The practical part of the training will examine advanced technical skills around importing and exporting multi-media; logging and viewing rushes; titling; media management; adding commentary and multi-track audio; compositing (multi-layers, effects and sequences).

5.5.5. News Graphics

The consultant will look at methods for giving programmes a fresh look and feel, thereby improving their competitive edge. Participants will also examine how graphics can be used for presenting complex stories and issues in an accessible form (eg in news and current affairs).

Delivered using the relevant software packages, the training will aim to share current best practice and will focus on the following areas:

- *Creating the image*: starting with character generation and captioning through to complex graphics sequences;
- *Painting, layering and multimedia*: sessions on computer-based painting, layering, sound sequencing and animation for broadcast;
- *Advanced graphics*: participants will learn how to create and maintain graphic sequences for daily broadcasts, including billboards, character generation, sports and weather graphics for use in broadcast news and documentary programmes.

5.5.6. News Programme Redesign

Design and consultancy support for re-launching the main news programme has been requested by the President of the CPTR. The aim will be to improve the aesthetics of set designs as well as to address issues of safety, efficiency and ergonomics. The aesthetic aspect of the consultancy will embrace scene painting, computer graphics and presentation techniques. Participants will gain an improved understanding of the roles of editorial staff and the editorial implications of televisual approaches.

5.6. Programme Development

The coming six months promise to be exciting times at PTV. The Council for Public Television and Radio has announced a far-ranging package of new public service programmes (see Section 4.9.). A 24-hour cultural channel is about to be launched. These developments present a unique opportunity for a highly productive engagement with PTV, ensuring that consultancy and training activities can be directly linked to new programming strands and that new ideas and skills can swiftly be put into practice. The BBC World Service Trust would welcome the chance to support these processes. The current political mood in Armenia and the institutional environment at PTV give good reason to believe that impact will be high and far-reaching.

The BBC, therefore, envisages taking an active role in the development of new programmes and mentoring their roll-out over the project lifecycle. Consultancy offered around programme design will incorporate the following strands:

5.6.1. Creative Programming

Using the expertise of a leading programme commissioner and an executive producer, this workshop will review some of the latest programme ideas and formats on European television and view examples of successful public service programming in different genres. It will include the practical considerations involved in commissioning new programmes from in-house and external suppliers.

The consultancy will cover best practice in competitive scheduling of mixed genre channels, and complementary scheduling of a two-channel service. As highlighted above, it will consider ways of making optimum use of audience research information as well as offering advice on implementing effective presentation and transmission procedures. Senior editorial staff will discover how to interpret audience research data, develop a clear market profile for new programmes and control the quality of output. They will look at the challenges of tailoring editorial output to the perceived requirements of the audience as well as the commercial benefits of focused scheduling, whilst ensuring clear demarcation between editorial and advertising.

5.6.2. Talk Show Production

Participatory programming is a trademark format for public service broadcasting. Not only do talk shows facilitate an exchange of views between disparate lobbies, they also provide an open forum in which the electorate can hold their chosen representatives to account. The training will link in with the studio direction workshops described below. Initially, sessions will bring together set designers, graphic designers, lighting engineers and camera-operators with a view to defining house style. In addition, the consultant will work with presenters on honing interviewing skills and with editors on post-production issues.

Key strands of the consultancy will include:

- *Chairing and organising studio debates:* the consultant will explore the role of the anchor and the production assistants. The emphasis will be on creating an impartial interface which can facilitate a constructive debate around key issues without undue commentary or manipulation. Participants will look at the logistics of a TV debate and devise editorial guidelines.
- *Studio audiences:* the consultants will help devise a system for ensuring a proper representation of different demographic groups and for managing the flow of questions from the audience.
- *Panel selection:* again the aim will be to ensure that the composition of the panel is appropriate and balanced with a view to facilitating an open exchange of opinions which goes beyond party politics. The programme-makers will be encouraged to dilute the familiar line-up of government and opposition politicians with representatives from civil society, international experts and media commentators.

5.6.3. Programme Presenting

An experienced current affairs presenter will lead a masterclass on presenting techniques, including interviewing, chairing debates, and dealing with a studio audience. The workshop will include sessions on:

- Writing introductions
- Using Autocue
- Advice on wardrobe selection and make-up
- Interviewing techniques
- Open gallery talkback
- Live interactive presenting

5.6.4. Documentary Programming

The training will look at the different genres of documentary programming including factual, current affairs, analytical, observational, human interest and travelogue. It will cover the professional and practical skills of documentary production, including research and planning, filming on location, programme structure, and editing and scripting. The workshop will set out to:

- Develop the talent and skill bases which can stimulate documentary production;
- Encourage individual skill development within a practical environment;
- Develop essential team approaches to television production within specialised fields;
- Encourage multi-skilling, leading to a practical understanding of the various crafts needed to produce a documentary, leading to enhanced team-work, skill reinforcement and leadership skills.

5.6.5. Studio Skills

Tailored to PTV's priorities, this consultancy will address traditional topics of acoustics and building noise, studio layout and basic design, microphone theory and selection and basic lighting. There will be a strong focus on the implementation of new technologies, particularly automation and the use of open-source software. Key topics will include:

- Principles of cutting on action;
- Scripting and directing a magazine programme;
- Live and recorded interviews;
- Preparing camera scripts, running orders and time-charts;
- Scheduling rehearsals and pre-recording inserts to live programmes.

The participants will learn how to communicate effectively over talkback and will be encouraged to hone their time management skills. The course will be delivered with close reference to existing programming strands in an effort to improve efficiency, workflow and cost-effectiveness.

5.6.6. Programme Mentoring

The BBC World Service Trust has a strong track record in supporting the development of new programmes through mentoring and co-production. Effectively this means that consultants help to devise programme concepts and advise on editorial as well as technical issues. They work closely with programme-makers during the pilot phase, promoting a “learning by doing” approach. Thereafter, the key stakeholders take full ownership for the product and direct consultancy is phased out. However, experts continue to review outputs and provide feedback where necessary.

We propose adopting this approach during the development and roll-out of the new public service programming strands planned for the coming months. Where appropriate or beneficial, it may be possible to brand individual programmes as “BBC co-productions”. These opportunities can be negotiated on a case-by-case basis.

6.0. Methodology

6.1. Project Management

The project will be managed by a Project Director based in Yerevan and a Project Manager in London. The Project Director will manage relationships with PTV and other key stakeholders. He/she will also support trainers and consultants on the ground, providing briefings where necessary and making sure that consultancy activities are properly “joined up”. The Project Director takes ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the programme is delivered according to schedule and meets its key objectives.

The Project Manager will work closely with the BBC World Service Trust's Head of Training to identify, brief and deploy trainers as well as developing training resources, both on- and offline. He/she will also liaise directly with OSCE over all contractual issues, providing regular interim reports according to an agreed schedule.

6.2. Training Methodology

The BBC utilises a flexible and interactive training methodology, which ensures that training content is responsive to participants' needs and encourages trainees to question their existing working practices.

This facilitates the translation of new ideas and skills into long-term improved performance, thereby increasing the sustainability and cost-effectiveness of training inputs.

Trainers strike a careful balance between theoretical and practical sessions. For example, while group discussion and exercises help to reinforce the tenets of objective journalism, practical tasks enable trainees to apply these principles and to appreciate the importance of teamwork. Training techniques are interactive, avoiding a lecturing approach and crystallising ideas through discussion, demonstration, illustration, role-playing games, brainstorming or practical exercises.

This training process represents a coherent learning cycle, highlighting the correlation between theory and practice whilst offering a high degree of individual support. The flexibility inherent in such an approach builds on existing strengths and addresses weaknesses without promoting a dogmatic insistence on universal or Western models, and all sessions are viewed as an opportunity for dialogue between professionals rather than an attempt to impose preconceived views on participants.

6.3. Training Tools

In-house training for staff will be delivered according to a blended learning methodology, combining face-to-face training with online learning courses. These courses will be delivered through iLearn, an online learning system devised by the BBC World Service Trust for media professionals in developing countries. The courses are composed of a series of modules, which feature a combination of static information, streamed multi-media resources and online questionnaires. Course work is assessed manually by a remote mentor and feedback is delivered through the iLearn system.

iLearn is driven by a sophisticated Content Management System (CMS). This means that authorised iLearn partners can expand the range of courses on offer at any time. All dialogue between the trainer and trainees is conducted through the CMS which also stores a range of detailed user statistics until they are physically deleted. For the purposes of this project, the BBC World Service Trust will develop appropriate courses in Armenian which will be handed over to PTV at the end of the project together with the iLearn software. This means that PTV will be able to use iLearn as an in-house training tool after the initiative has come to an end.

The project team will maintain a close working relationship with other organisations active in the field of media development in Armenia. This will involve maintaining regular dialogue and sharing project outputs as well as adapting lessons learned in other initiatives to the training programme. Possibilities for cross-fertilisation and complimentary activities in partnership with related organisations will be examined.

6.4. Exit Strategy

One of the strengths of the proposed project is that it will build the capacity of an existing institution which will continue to function after the end of funded activities. This will ensure that the various training packages devised and implemented during the project lifecycle will have a long-term future. Furthermore, efforts will be made to develop training resources at PTV and to ensure that core materials are internalised.

The project beneficiary will receive wide-ranging and multi-faceted training, which will enable key stakeholders to dramatically change their working practices in a number of areas. Previous experience demonstrates that journalists participating in training can act as multipliers by passing on new techniques and ideas to colleagues in the workplace.

The practice of targeting key figures at PTV represents an important strategic tool in encouraging institutional sustainability. By harnessing the support of decision-makers, the likelihood of the beneficiary organisation taking ownership of new working methods is greatly increased whilst participants will feel that skills are made relevant to their own needs rather than imposed from the outside.

In terms of PTV's own editorial practices, senior managers will be invited to review programming and scheduling policies, based on a clearer idea of audience needs and serving diverse sectors of the community. By building media capacity at PTV, this project will help feed into the wider movement to ensure that political processes include the voices of all the people and encourage disparate groups to articulate their own views and priorities.

7.0. Conclusion

There is every indication that a sustained consultancy programme at PTV could play a significant role in "ensuring the freedom and pluralism of public television and radio"¹¹. There is good evidence of political will to implement changes in editorial policy and facilitate a democratic exchange of views. Plans have been announced to improve the balance between light entertainment and public service programming. PTV's senior management is eager to demonstrate new liberal attitudes: in August 2008, the President of the CPTR signed a cooperation agreement with the Director-General of Turkish public television. The border between the two countries has been closed since 1993.

However, it is important that any training or consultancy activities are based on clear objectives and measurable outcomes. The BBC would welcome the assistance of local civil society organisations in monitoring the impact of these activities and in holding PTV to account over agreed performance indicators. It is also essential that legislative processes aimed at ensuring the political independence of the Council for Public Television and Radio run in parallel to any capacity-building programme. An enhanced regulatory framework combined with clearly articulated editorial obligations will act to build public trust in PTV and strengthen its public service ethos.

Improved mechanisms for measuring audience needs should also be introduced, thereby enabling programme-makers to shape their outputs accordingly and give the public a greater sense of ownership. This activity may serve to overcome perceptions that an increase in public service programming will lead to a dramatic downturn in PTV's ratings. A good mix of domestic productions which celebrate Armenia's cultural, social and political diversity should act to ensure that a wide cross-section of the community is properly served.

The Public Television and Radio Company of Armenia was the first formally established public service broadcaster in the former Soviet Union. We believe that there is vast potential for making PTV a leader in its field and, thereby, establishing a blueprint for public service broadcasting which could be replicated in countries across the region.

¹¹ PACE Resolution 1609 (2008)

Annex One: Interviewees

- Alexan Haroutyunyan, President of the Council for Public TV and Radio Company of Armenia
- Alexan Arakelyan, Head of Finance, Council for Public Television and Radio Company of Armenia
- Armen Arzumanyan, Executive Director, PTV
- Marat Ordyan, Deputy Director (Programming)
- Gnel Nalbandyan, Deputy Director (Public Programmes)
- Alik Chitchyan, Deputy Director (Technical)
- Haroutyun Haroutyunyan, Deputy Director and Head of the “Haylur” News Service
- Karen Tataryan, Deputy Director (Finance)
- Levon Galstyan, Deputy Director and Head of “Yerevan” Studio of TV Films
- Hrach Qeshishyan, Chief Producer
- Artak Alexanyan, News Producer
- Ruzan Avetisyan, Head of the Film Programmes Department
- Diana Mnatsakanyan, Head of the International Relations Department
- Naira Zohrabyan, Acting Chairperson of the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Education, Science, Culture and Youth Issues (covering media issues)
- Grigor Amalyan, Chairman, National Commission on Television and Radio
- Edik Baghdasaryan, Editor-in-Chief, Hetq Online
- Mesrop Movsesyan, General Director of A1+
- Boris Navasardyan, President of the Yerevan Press Club
- David Sandoukhchyan, Director, Centre for Information Law and Policy, former Head of the Legal Department of Internews-Armenia NGO
- Khoren Beglaryan, Director of AGB Nielsen

