

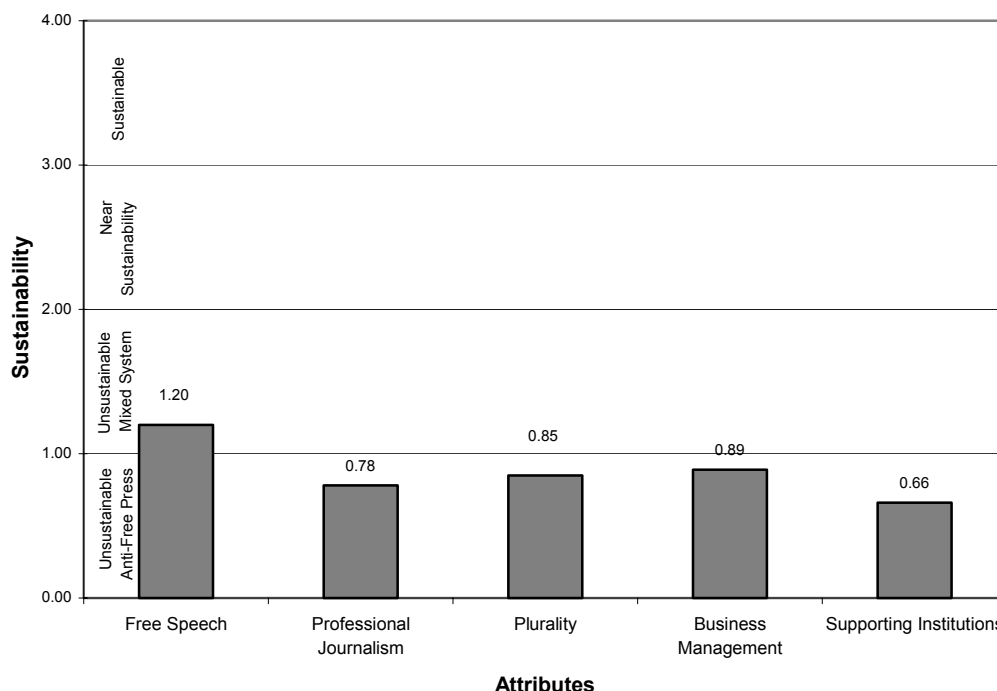
Kazakhstan

Introduction

Very much in the tradition of clan-based rule, President Nursultan Nazarbayev, his family circle, and loyal friends continue in both open and covert ways to supervise media outlets, patronize business development, and keep legal and political progress in check. Electronic media, for example, are totally controlled by the president and his daughter at the national level, and at the local level by *akims* (governors) loyal to the president. Advertising agencies and printing houses have to cautiously select their clients, as tax authorities might bankrupt those who prefer to deal with the opposition media. Censorship is officially prohibited by the constitution, and the Law on Mass Media guarantees freedom of speech. However, the government screens media and their information sources so rigorously that officially proclaimed rights appear to be for show. Even Internet providers are screened for compatibility with government policies. The recent amendments to the Law on Mass Media define any unofficial information as unreliable. What the West would deem useful public information is classified as a state secret and access is, naturally, only granted to outlets that can use it to prove their loyalty. Libel remains a criminal offence and even though journalists and editors are not in prisons, exorbitant fines quite successfully silence media outlets. If there are no good legal grounds to impose fines, tax authorities can also do the job by discovering tax evasion and bankrupting opposition media.

Repeatedly, the MSI panel discussants stressed that journalists feel constrained by their editors and owners to the extent that they not only abstain from writing the truth, but also survive on articles praising officials and business people, and on favorable reporting about sponsors. Even if that is slightly exaggerated, the belief that journalists are beholden to the powerful of the day was obviously a concern during the discussion. Such well-known political pressures are coupled with economic underdevelopment, lack of investment, and chronic poverty in the regions, and their overall effect undoubtedly weighs heavily on all areas of social life. This translates into almost nonexistent independent media, and an informational blackout in the regions created by the inaccessibility of local and foreign print editions and audience confinement to state radio and TV programs.

Media Sustainability Index - Kazakhstan



Scoring System

- 0** = Country does not meet indicator; government or social forces may be actively opposed to its implementation.
1 = Country minimally meets aspects of the indicator; forces may not be actively opposed to its implementation but business environment may not support it and government or profession not fully and actively supporting change.
2 = Country has begun to meet many aspects of indicator but progress may be too recent to judge or still dependent on current government or political forces.
3 = Country meets most aspects of indicator and implementation of indicator has occurred over several years and/or change in government, indicating likely sustainability.
4 = Country meets the aspects of the indicator; has remained intact over multiple changes in government, economic fluctuations, changes in public opinion and/or changing social conventions.

The scores for all indicators are totaled and averaged for each objective.

Each of the objectives can receive a score from 0 to 4:

Above 3: Sustainable and free independent media

2-3: Independent media approaching sustainability

1-2: Significant progress remains to be made; society or government not fully supportive

0-1: Country meets few of indicators and government/society actively opposing changes

Panel members rarely mentioned independent media; instead, they spoke of state, private, and opposition media. Private media are understood as business-controlled, enjoying the support of the president in return for loyalty. These outlets do cater to the interest of the government in the long run, but there is also some room for promotion of owners' business interests. In any case, private media are not *independent* media. Opposition media, on the other hand, are seen as antigovernment, subjective, and one-sided. All discussion participants seemed to be saying that truly independent media need different social, political, and economic frameworks to develop.

Professional reporting and programs are also constrained by the lack of access to uncensored information, self-censorship, and Soviet-era education and training. This is not to say that talented and brave journalists are not trying to make a difference (those working for *SolDat* and *Dozhivem do Ponedelnika* were often mentioned in that respect), but their work is more of an exception than the general practice. Meanwhile, biased reporting with little fact checking prevails and favoritism on all levels is overwhelming.

The need for reform in journalism education is long overdue. But lack of resources, qualified staff, donor interest, and investment, together with authoritarian rule and the practice of journalism to promote interests rather than present objective news and events to the public, still plague this unreformed society.

Attribute #1: Legal and social norms protect and promote free speech and access to public information

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

Panelists criticized the wide gap between Kazakh legislation and its implementation in the field of freedom of speech. Article 20 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan guarantees freedom of expression and prohibits censorship. The Civil Code, the Administrative Code (with provisions on defending the honor and dignity of individuals and compensations for moral damage), the Law on State Secrets (classifying as secrets the information which according to international standards should be made public), and the Law on National Security (with vague provisions which can be used as a ground for legal proceedings against journalists) create legal obstacles to the practice of freedom of expression. For instance, according to the Law on National Security (1999) reporting on ethnic tension and border disputes could be considered a violation of provisions on national security and subject to legal prosecution. There are cases in the eastern and western parts of Kazakhstan and the Karaganda Oblast of journalists being warned by prosecutors for reporting on poverty in rural areas and on Kazakh relationships with China, Russia, and Uzbekistan.

Amendments to the Law on Mass Media adopted at the end of March 2001 place many restrictions on journalists' rights. For instance, any type of information gained from an unofficial source cannot be considered reliable. Internet sources are not considered reliable either. Another provision states that journalists and/or editors are fully responsible for the content of the quotes they use, whereas the source of the information is not held responsible.

The draft Law on Advertising, which is now before the Antimonopoly Committee for debate, interprets any kind of positive coverage of companies or individuals as "commercial information," so media outlets are asked to pay taxes for commercial materials when publishing or presenting such reports.

The way for journalists to defend themselves against freedom of expression violations is to open lawsuits against perpetrators. However, most of the courts are not independent and do not guarantee fair administration of justice. In most cases journalists worry about the content of their reports being manipulated or interpreted as offensive to public officials and there is an acute need for qualified legal advice on journalists' rights and protection against libel charges.

The public is quite indifferent to freedom of speech as a value and speech violations rarely cause public outrage. However, there have been incidents of media organizations reacting against violations: in January 2001, seven TV channels cancelled their regular broadcasting to protest the amendments to the Law on Mass Media. In general, the level of solidarity among journalists is low—they are too dependent on the owner of their outlets, and their freedoms are severely restricted.

Granting licenses to private broadcasters began at the end of 1996 under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Transportation and Communications. After the first tender for radio and TV frequencies, more than 200 media outlets were shut down. Later, the Ministry of Information eased requirements for obtaining frequencies: fees were reduced and regional media were treated more favorably. However, MSI panel participants agreed that all these measures came too late, as many TV and radio stations had already closed down. Some panel members mentioned that licensing still depends upon many factors "beyond the legislative framework." The main principle is loyalty to the government: the proposed programming is screened for allegiance to authorities. Licensing officials often take bribes: as a panelist said, "in licensing we have the complete tyranny of the state; bribes and blackmail accompany the procedure."

The legislative framework for independent media business development is fair in theory; however, there are major obstacles impeding it in reality. The major problem is how the authorities monopolize the media market. The president's family controls the advertising market, which makes it impossible for media to survive financially without being loyal to the government. People with government connections head large media holding companies and under the guise of independent media outlets they monopolize media space and control the market and the information disseminated. The 1991 provision in the Law on Mass Media *against* monopolization of the media market has disappeared in the amended 1999 law.

Formally, tax requirements for private and state media compared to other types of businesses do not differ. Electronic media are exempt from VAT; print media do not pay VAT when they produce and disseminate their own media products. The government widely uses tax authorities to bankrupt independent opposition media, such as the newspapers *XXI VEK*, *SolDat*, and *Dozhivem do Ponedelnika*. *XXI VEK* was shut down after several tax inspections. Copies of *Dozhivem do Ponedelnika* were confiscated from a private printing house and burned in 1999. Such pressures are not just politically motivated but are also used to prevent popular media outlet expansion into the market. A recent example is the tax police raid of the NS Radio office in Almaty in March 2001. The radio was planning to launch a TV channel and was becoming quite popular in Almaty, as well as a threat to the TV Channel *Khabar*, controlled by the presidential media holding. As a result of tax inspection, the radio was declared on the edge of bankruptcy and managers were replaced.

Media owners strictly control management of all media. At the local level, media managers are fully dependent on the *akim* (governor) and his administration. That is why local media are in practical terms the mouthpieces of local *akims* and administrations. In the second half of the 1990s, management in all major private media outlets changed either as a result of tenders on frequencies or under the pressure of unfair taxation. In addition, major publications, as well as TV and radio channels, were shared between big industrial groups, such as the Maskevich group (*Express K* newspaper), the Obliazov group (*Respublica* newspaper, *TV Channel TAN*), and some others.

Although legislation guarantees equality of access to sources of public information, the MSI panelists argued that state-controlled media such as *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda* or the *Khabar* TV channel enjoy preferential treatment. Also, media affiliation to certain government agencies or financial groups plays an important role in securing access to publicly relevant information. Regional newspapers are in a difficult position because of their total dependency on local authorities. If a local newspaper dares criticize an *akim* or his administration, it would never receive any information from them in the future.

One of the mechanisms for limiting access to information is the mandatory accreditation needed to public media events such as press conferences or various official meetings. An amendment to the Law on Mass Media obliges public officials to provide access to public information, but in practice it doesn't work, as the deadline for responding to information requests is 30 days, which makes information outdated. Officials are reluctant to share information with journalists, and their superiors often criticize those who are willing to communicate with the media.

Journalists and media professionals are not only hindered by business practices and access to information but they also face other obstacles—most notably physical harm. In the last three years around 30 journalists have been attacked. Investigations into such cases usually end up in deadlocks and perpetrators are not identified. The other type of prevalent crime is stealing computers with important information. The most recent example of an intimidating assault on a journalist was the beating of Gulzhan Ergalieva, host of the “Public Agreement” talk show on Channel 31, a program sponsored by the Soros Foundation. The Interior Ministry investigated the case and one of the attackers was detained. The Ministry did not make any further comments. In most cases, authorities deny any connection to the professional activities of the victims. In general, Kazakh journalists do not fear for their lives: a panelist said, “our journalists are not afraid for their lives yet, they do not believe that they can be killed because of their profession.”

Participants mentioned that the level of physical harassment against journalists in Kazakhstan is the lowest among the CIS countries. However, journalists do not feel secure because of their high dependency on media owners. They are often intimidated and this is especially true of those who investigate legal, economic, or political scandals and corruption. Due to low salaries, journalists feel very vulnerable and worry about anything that could jeopardize their job security. They also are afraid of being stigmatized as disloyal to the regime, which would make finding other media jobs impossible.

Libel is a criminal offence in Kazakhstan. In 2000, about 70 lawsuits were filed against journalists for libel. So far, none of the journalists has been imprisoned, but a lot of outlets were fined following legal proceedings (the newspapers *Soroka*, *Diapason*, and *Nachnem s Ponedelnika* among others). Such fines are usually more than enough to bankrupt private media (*Soroka* and *Diapason* in fact went bankrupt). One positive outcome was the acquittal of the editor in chief of the *Soldat* newspaper at the end of March 2000; he was sued for defaming the president.

The government imposes no restrictions on entrance to journalism schools. There are seven departments of journalism at state universities all over Kazakhstan. Four years of training in journalism costs US \$600 per year, which is considered an affordable price for most of the students.

All information from international sources appearing in the Kazakh media is carefully screened. Foreign information about Kazakhstan is practically banned. For instance, in the summer of 2000 *Newsweek* and *Time* ran articles on oil-related corruption at the presidential level, yet they were reprinted by only one Kazakh English-Russian newspaper, *All Over the Globe*. The government suspended distribution of the paper and the owner had to sell his business.

New media such as the Internet has also begun to emerge in various ways in Kazakhstan. In January 1999, the government established a billing center at Kazakhtelecom, Kazakhstan's largest telecommunications company, giving the government a centralized means of monitoring Internet access. All Internet providers are obliged to get Internet connection through that center, obviously giving government much control over Internet access. Satellite TV is controlled by the Catelco Company, which allows the government to screen the Russian TV channels rebroadcast to Kazakhstan. Media outlets can reprint and rebroadcast foreign news programming, yet self-censorship is the main factor hindering the free flow of international information into the country.

The Law on Languages requires 50 percent of broadcast programs to be in the Kazakh language. However, most broadcasters ignore this rule because of the lack of demand for Kazakh-language programs.

Attribute #2: Journalism meets professional standards of quality

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

Some panel members admitted that although journalists try to fact-check the information they present, they often fail because reliable information is not always accessible or because journalists are forced to provide favorable coverage. In most cases they cover only one point of view. Other viewpoints and ideas are included only if there are complaints: "Journalists are not always interested in finding the truth," said a panelist. Another panelist argued that good professionals usually provide more balanced reporting. As a positive example the panelist mentioned the newspaper *Novoye Pokolenie* with its special rubric "Point of View."

Participants pointed out that there are two main journalistic styles in the Kazakh media: one is factual reporting and the other is analytical writing. Factual reporting is still rare, while what is considered analytical writing comes closer to the Soviet-style of journalism and is still very popular. This type of writing is more common in Kazakh-language papers. Inclusion of commercial advertisement in media

products is not evenly practiced in the republic. In large cities such as Almaty, Astana, and Karaganda, the market is developed so the demand for media advertising is high. In the regions, however, advertising is far less developed.

Regarding journalism ethics, journalists in Kazakhstan do not follow accepted standards. A panelist stated, “Presently, media organizations have tremendous economic difficulties. Under such conditions they are focused on generating at least a minimum profit to survive.” Panelists admitted that although journalists do not take bribes, they demand payments for positive coverage. This leads to a situation where any kind of positive article is considered advertising and commercial departments block positive materials unless they are paid.

Self-censorship is a widespread practice amongst among Kazakh journalists, as they are frightened of loosing their jobs or becoming targets of moral harassment. Panelists agreed that there are some topics that should not be covered under any circumstances, such as the president and his family, corruption at the government level, oil revenue distribution, and ethnic relations.

Salary levels for journalists are very low except in a limited number of relatively wealthy private media outlets. There is an active outflow from the profession into governmental agencies. Most journalists consider their work as a stepping stone for careers in government agencies or the private sector, hence the commonplace practice of selling articles favorable to politicians and businesses. There is a large gap in pay levels between local or rural journalists and journalists in Almaty and Astana: average local salaries are about US \$50 monthly, while journalists in Almaty make on average US \$200-250. The salary levels of state and private media professionals are basically the same.

Panel members mentioned that a balance between serious news and entertainment exists in the press, but that entertainment programs dominate both FM radio stations and the national broadcast network. The lack of high-quality news programs, rather than audience preferences for more entertainment, is the central reason for the disparity between news and entertainment. Panelists mentioned that audience research is not popular and that there is no opportunity for the public to influence program content.

In terms of hard-hitting news coverage, the participants agreed that investigative journalism does not exist because access to information is blocked, self-censorship is strong, and journalists are not trained in that kind of reporting. Of all the types of niche reporting, Kazakh journalists provide good coverage of economic news and events.

Aside from professional standards or educational background, the Kazakh press is faced with technical and equipment dilemmas. A shortage of video equipment for TV channels is a severe problem affecting the quality of news gathering and reporting. “In most TV channels,” said one panelist, “reporting teams queue for cameras and video editing equipment.” Print media suffer from lack of computers, and the quality of printing is in most cases very low. Undoubtedly, outdated equipment, or utter lack of it, impacts the state of media in Kazakhstan.

Attribute #3: Multiple news sources provide citizens with reliable and objective news

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

Some panel members argued that plurality of news sources exists only in Almaty and other big cities. At the local level, especially in rural areas, people often do not have access even to radio programs. Others disagreed, saying that foreign radio stations broadcasting in Russian and Kazakh are becoming more popular. In many rural areas people listen to Radio Liberty, the BBC, and Voice of America in the Russian and Kazakh languages. National and local radio coverage is also available. Panelists agreed that television remains the most affordable source of information at this time. Print editions are affordable mainly in the big cities, and the price differences between private and state media are insignificant.

Most of the Internet users live in big cities such as Almaty and Astana. Some participants mentioned that the practice of *Samizdat* has been revived in Kazakhstan: for example, materials from Web sites such as www.Eurasia.ru are printed twice a month and distributed among interested readers. The participants agreed that the major foreign publications are available in Kazakhstan, but at very high prices. However, according to the Kazakh Administrative Code, foreign publications cannot be distributed in Kazakhstan if they contain materials that contradict Kazakh legal provisions. This allows officials to arbitrarily ban some foreign newspapers. The government strictly controls information about Kazakhstan from non-state sources. Russian TV channels and newspapers are censored prior to broadcast or distribution in Kazakhstan. Cable TV is available in most cities at affordable prices but foreign media channels like CNN and the BBC are not included in the standard package and cost much more. Cable TV is not available in rural areas.

Participants were of the opinion that all TV news services basically offer the same kind of coverage and comments. The lack of diversity is explained by the existing self-censorship and taboo topics. Opposition outlets have no voice in electronic media and very little in the press. Kazakhstan does not have public broadcasting, as all media are either directly controlled by the president or by private companies and individuals, which are also under the control of the presidential family. The interests of owners affect the type of news, as they try to discredit their business and political rivals. The volume of educational and cultural programs is small, as most of the time TV channels broadcast soap operas, advertising, and news programs.

There are some private news agencies in Kazakhstan, but according to panel members they can hardly be called independent. Among them are Kazakhstan Today, Koda, and Interfax Kazakhstan. Subscription to these agencies is expensive and most media institutions cannot afford it. For instance, Interfax costs US \$300 per month. There are no local independent news agencies in Kazakhstan. Agencies like Reuters, Associated Press (AP), and l'Agence France-Presse (AFP) focus mainly on economic news or oil transactions. Most of the local media cannot afford the services of these agencies.

Media ownership is not transparent at all, yet most people know the owners from rumors. More experienced audiences may find out about owners judging from subtle differences in styles and coverage of topics. As some panelists mentioned, "the main thing media owners are non-transparent about is the fact that people close to the presidential family own media outlets."

In Kazakhstan, there are Korean, Uigur, Ukrainian, Kurd, and German newspapers. However, panelists admitted that the volume of broadcasting in minority languages had shrunk in recent years. This has happened because there are no funds to sustain these programs, rather than due to government interference. The quality of minority programs is low, and issues of importance to minorities are not covered. Their circulation is very small and the quality of printing is rather poor.

Attribute #4: Independent media are well-managed businesses, allowing editorial independence

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

Independent media are clearly hampered by economic conditions, business practices, and holdovers from previous government influence on the media industry. Distribution networks and printing houses do not support the efficient functioning of media. The market for printing services is underdeveloped and the number of printing facilities, both state and private, is very small. The existing printing companies have monopolized the market, which leaves print media with very little choice. The state printing houses’ management is best characterized as “Soviet”: performance is unreliable, managers take bribes for meeting deadlines, and state orders are favored over those of the private outlets.

Some panelists thought that the reasons for the backwardness of the printing facilities are mainly economic: investing in printing in Kazakhstan is not profitable and anyway the press does not have the means to invest. Others argued that obstacles to developing printing are mainly political: the state still controls printing facilities. The printing house Dauyr was mentioned as an example: it is a joint-stock company with the state having the majority of shares. Dauyr, being the largest printing house in the country, provides discounts to state-controlled newspapers, such as *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, and printing them is a priority. Printing houses, under government pressure, set low prices for state newspapers, higher prices for private newspapers, and rather exaggerated prices for opposition newspapers. Possibly the biggest impediment to print is that, according to a provision in the Administrative Code, the owner of a printing house has a personal responsibility for the contents of the material printed by his company.

The practice of self-censorship is also widespread in the printing business. The state uses tax measures to pressure those printing houses that publish opposition press. Consequently local printing houses refuse to handle the opposition newspapers *SolDat* and *XXI Vek* and they have to be printed abroad.

Most newspapers use the state distribution networks, and a few other papers have their own system. State services are mainly used in the regions and there are many complaints about late deliveries.

The main source of revenues for media is advertising, which accounts for almost 90 percent of all profits. Some revenues come from producing ordered materials. Revenues from subscription and distribution are negligible. Most advertisers can influence the content of media outlets, demanding that they not publish any information about their competitors.

The panelists agreed that although the advertising market in Kazakhstan is not highly developed, the progress compared to seven or eight years ago is obvious. As a positive tendency they mentioned the growth of local advertisers’ shares in the market. Panel members also admitted that advertising is almost monopolized by the media controlled by the presidential family (TV channels Khabar and KTK, Radio stations Europe Plus, Russian Radio, and the newspaper *Caravan*).

Local media cannot afford to hire highly professional staff to handle their advertising and marketing. Most world advertising agencies are active in Kazakhstan. Russian advertising agencies are also present in Kazakhstan. There are some local agencies, but their output is a far cry from the world networks and

the Russian agencies. In most cases big agencies work only with big national media companies which have the highest ratings, such as ORT Kazakhstan, Khabar, KTK, Radio Europe Plus, and some others.

The panelists discussed a draft decree that would establish tender procedures for all media to compete for government subsidies to publish official information. According to the tender requirements, only daily publications with circulations of more than 50,000 copies could participate in the tender. Presently, the state distributes some subsidies without tender procedures.

The panelists agreed that the Kazakh branch of the Gallup Media Institute presently has a monopoly position in producing broadcast ratings and media research. Although their research is reliable and objective they are very expensive and not affordable for most media institutions. The main clients of Gallup in Kazakhstan are the big international advertising agencies.

Media outlets in Kazakhstan cannot afford to run market research departments or hire professional market researchers to conduct regular market studies to raise advertising revenues. Audience research is conducted sporadically, and in most cases is the job of editors, who obtain audience feedback by telephone interviews or through mailings.

Attribute #5: Supporting institutions function in the professional interests of independent media

Indicators
1. Trade associations represent the interests of private media owners and provide member services
2. Professional associations work to protect journalists' rights
3. NGOs support free speech and independent media
4. Quality journalism degree programs exist providing substantial practical experience
5. Short-term training and in-service training programs allow journalists to upgrade skills or acquire new skills
6. Sources of newsprint and printing facilities are in private hands, apolitical, and not restricted
7. Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, Internet) are private, apolitical, and unrestricted

There are presently six major active media associations in Kazakhstan: the Association of Independent Mass Media of Kazakhstan and Central Asia (ANESMICA); the National Association of TV Broadcasters; the Association of Kazakh Broadcasters; the Journalists in Trouble Foundation; the International Foundation for the Protection of Glasnost (Adil Sez); and the Kazakh Branch of the Internews International Network. There are two Press Clubs—the Kazakh Press Club and the National Press Club—currently operational in Kazakhstan. However, they are involved basically in commercial activities—organizing press conferences, round tables, and various PR events—and do not represent the interests of media professionals. Occasionally they receive grants from various international donor organizations to hold media seminars and training for journalists and media professionals. Media professionals in Kazakhstan do not have a single trade union, because of the conflicting interests between different media outlets.

The Independent Electronic Mass Media in Central Asia (ANESMICA) is the oldest private media association in Kazakhstan, founded in 1995, and comprises 83 members from TV and radio companies and newspapers from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. The principal goal of the association is “to protect its members on the basis of corporate solidarity.” ANESMICA disseminates information through its member networks on state discrimination against media companies and professionals. In addition, it provides news on the media situation in member countries to about 400 media organizations worldwide. ANESMICA has on occasion initiated legal proceeding against discriminatory government decisions, and the agency also helps TV and radio outlets restore revoked licenses and frequencies.

Adil Sez, registered in 2000, focuses on monitoring violations of journalist rights and on providing legal support to its members. It publishes an annual report on the media situation in Kazakhstan. Adil Sez is affiliated with the Russian Glasnost Defense Foundation, and, according to some panelists, is the only active organization in the field of media development and freedom of speech protection besides the

Kazakh Press Club. The Kazakh Press Club was established in 1995 with the help of USAID, and is now a sustainable Kazakh organization. Besides organizing paid press conferences and other media events, the Press Club launches trainings for journalists and other media professionals with grants from various donor organizations. The club maintains direct contacts with some members of parliament, but is not very active in promoting journalist interests in the parliament.

Unlike ANESMICA and Adil Sez, the Journalists in Trouble Foundation is a fee-based membership organization. There are no specific requirements to join, except the professional one. The foundation offers legal, moral, and financial support. It recently helped Gulzhan Ergalieva after she and her family were beaten in their apartment, allegedly because of her talk show on the private TV Channel 31. Some panel members claimed that ANESMICA has made progress in lobbying the government on behalf of their members. ANESMICA can initiate discussions in the press regarding important professional concerns, organize round tables with the participation of MPs where journalists can voice their problems, and it maintains contacts with at least ten MPs who lobby for journalists' rights in parliament.

The National Association of TV Broadcasters and Association of Kazakh Broadcasters were established in 2000. The national TV channels constitute the membership of the former, which is under the patronage of the president's daughter, Dariga Nazarbayeva. The main goal of the association is to show how "democratic" Kazakh TV has become. The family also controls the other association headed by the President of Channel 31, Arman Baitasov, and it differs from the National Association in focusing mainly on regional TV channels.

Overall, these associations are not popular among journalists, as they are not very efficient or democratic. Also, journalists are reluctant to discuss publicly their problems and as one panel member said, "journalists are afraid of publicity, they avoid speaking about their preferences since they are afraid of losing their jobs. They have to follow the will of their editor or owner." One participant claimed that "by establishing these associations the government tries to establish control over media."

Panelists admitted that the Union of Journalists, dating from Soviet times, is the only trade union in the country. Although the management of the union changed last year, it operates at a very basic level, due to the lack of financing.

The main school of journalism in the country is the Department of Journalism at the Kazakh State University, which trains TV and print journalists, international affairs journalists, and public relations professionals. In addition to the main state university, there are some smaller schools, both private and state-funded, but the quality of education there is low (except at the Kustanai State University). Generally, the faculty at these institutions use Soviet-style teaching methods and teaching aids. Panelists stressed that another major reason for the low level of education is the impossibility of attracting quality teachers, as pay is rather low. Employment possibilities for journalism graduates are limited.

Training abroad and short-term training in-country is sponsored by the United States Information Agency (USIA), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Soros Foundation, the Eurasia Foundation, and the British Council. These programs are administered either by donors or by organizations such as the Kazakh Press Club, Internews, and the Kazakh State University. These programs have so far assisted a very limited number of journalists and generally do not have a wide impact on the quality of professional programs and writing. As one panel member said, "the main drawback of these programs is the lack of sustainability, as trainees usually do not have an opportunity to get further guidance once they finish the course and actually start practicing what they have learned." The Kazakh president-sponsored international education program called Bolashak, which sends young Kazakhs to study abroad mainly in the US and Western Europe, launched a training program in journalism this year for the first time. Panelists mentioned that Kazakh media

professionals need training in media management, reporting skills, marketing, and in some basic legal skills.

List of panel participants

1. Tamara Kaleeva, Director, Adil Sez Foundation
2. Asel Karaulova, President, Kazakh Press Club
3. Galia Ibraieva, Head of the Department for International Journalism at Kazakh State University
4. Steven Schmida, Regional Director, Eurasia Foundation, Kazakhstan
5. Aida Dosayeva, Program Officer, Eurasia Foundation

Observers

Chuck Pope, IREX, Deputy Regional Coordinator for Central Asia Internet Access and Training Program
Sundaa Bridget, Deputy Director, Office of Democratic Transitions, USAID

Panel moderator

Timur Nurpeissov, a political scientist and a journalist with local and foreign media experience.