

MEDIA

SUSTAINABILITY

INDEX

2004



IREX

“WHEN THE JUDGE LOOKS AT YOU AND SAYS, ‘YOU KNOW WHAT? I HAVE LISTENED TO YOU, BUT...’ AND THEN READS THE PREPRINTED DECISION, YOU NO LONGER GET ANGRY BUT JUST LAUGH. THIS IS WHAT WE CALL OUR LEVEL OF PROTECTION,” SAID MESROP MOVSISYAN.





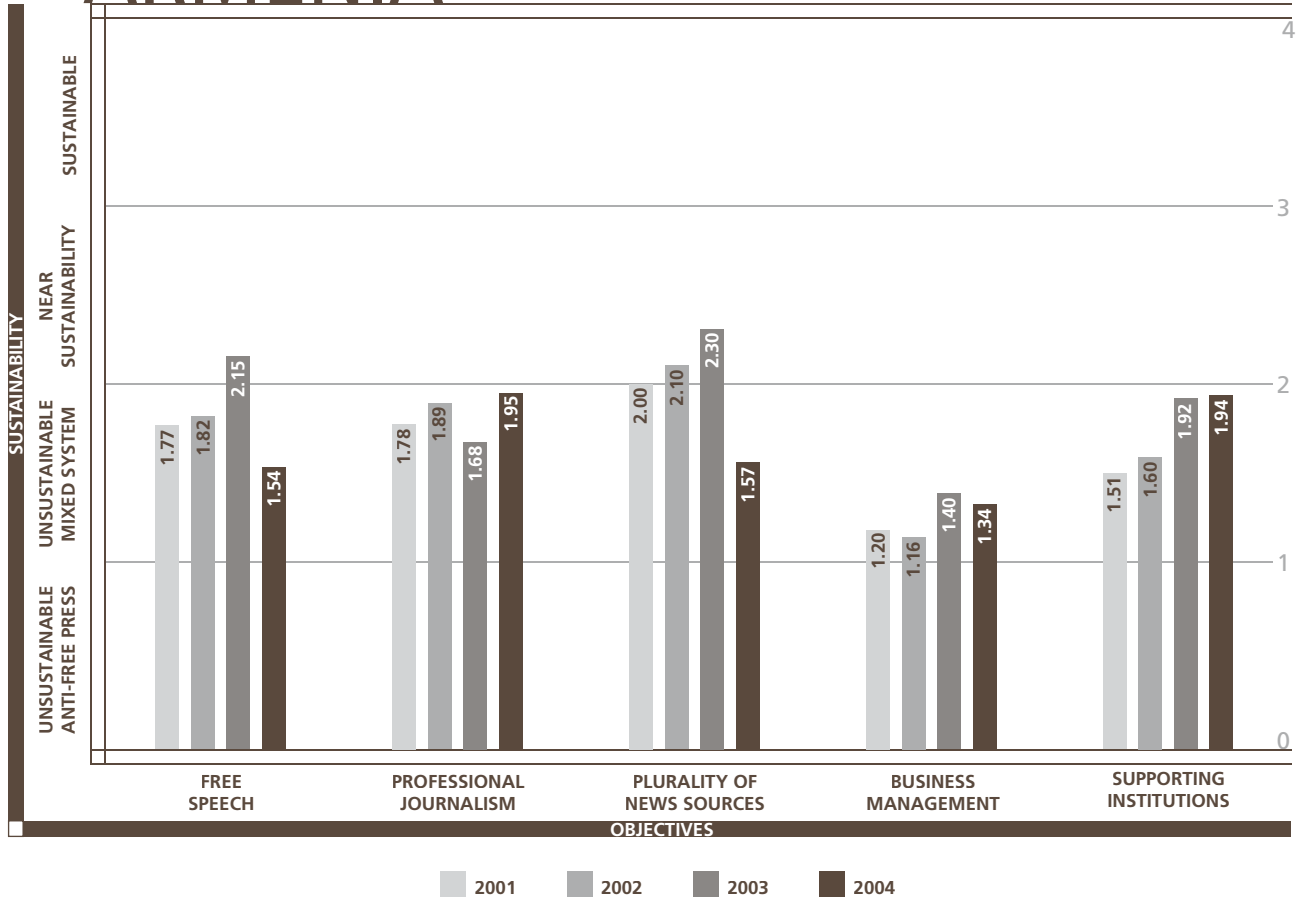
The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development have noted Armenia's slow yet steady economic progress. The annual growth rate of the gross domestic product (GDP) is 13.9 percent, and small and medium-sized businesses account for about 35 percent of the GDP. The private sector produces roughly 75 percent of the GDP, high by regional standards. Armenia's political situation remains comparatively stable, although maneuvering within the opposition has begun in anticipation of the 2007 elections. On the negative side, however, are ongoing tensions with neighboring Turkey and Azerbaijan and the resulting closed borders, leaving only limited road and rail links with Georgia and Iran, as well as the small and declining domestic market of only 3.1 million people.

For the media environment, among the major 2004 developments was the National Commission on Television and Radio's enforcement of regulations against airing pirated films. Copyright violations had been rampant before the April 2004 regulations went into effect, but by the end of the year the number of channels running unlicensed content had been reduced significantly. Also of ongoing concern were the difficulties faced by Armenian media trying to provide objective news coverage when most print and broadcast outlets have political or business sponsors. And for those living outside the capital, Yerevan, there were limits on the number of available news sources. A limited number of newspapers reach the larger towns, but hardly any penetrate to the villages. Only four television stations broadcast throughout most of the republic.

The Media Sustainability Index (MSI) panel noted that over the years, the media environment has not changed substantially. There was some backsliding in terms of protection of free speech during 2004 due to negative developments regarding libel law, licensing, and crimes against journalists. On April 12, 2004, a skirmish broke out between police and demonstrators during a meeting of opposition forces, and several reporters were beaten. The panel noted that this was another threat to free speech.

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX

ARMENIA



Unsustainable, Anti-Free Press (0-1): Country does not meet or only minimally meets objectives. Government and laws actively hinder free media development, professionalism is low, and media-industry activity is minimal.

Unsustainable Mixed System (1-2): Country minimally meets objectives, with segments of the legal system and government opposed to a free media system. Evident progress in free-press advocacy, increased professionalism, and new media businesses may be too recent to judge sustainability.

Near Sustainability (2-3): Country has progressed in meeting multiple objectives, with legal norms, professionalism, and the business environment supportive of independent media. Advances have survived changes in government and have been codified in law and practice. However, more time may be needed to ensure that change is enduring and that increased professionalism and the media business environment are sustainable.

Sustainable (3-4): Country has media that are considered generally professional, free, and sustainable, or to be approaching these objectives. Systems supporting independent media have survived multiple governments, economic fluctuations, and changes in public opinion or social conventions.

The professionalism of journalism was seen as improving somewhat, although overall the ranks of skilled reporters and the quality of the training they receive at the university level do not seem to be increasing much. The plurality of news sources was seen as poorer in 2004 than in prior years, largely because although news outlets may be reasonably plentiful in number, the material they present is very similar and does little to expand the information available to citizens. The ability to effectively manage media businesses was seen as about the same during 2004 as the year before, and support organizations were viewed as somewhat stronger.

OBJECTIVE 1: FREE SPEECH

Armenia Objective Score: 1.54 / 4.00

All MSI panelists agreed that the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia provides for freedom of speech, information, and expression. Most panelists also agreed that the articles conform to international norms and generally favor media. In practice, however,

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

FREE-SPEECH INDICATORS:

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

the effective enforcement of these laws is practically nonexistent. The Radio and Television Law adopted in 2000 and amended in 2001 and 2003 “dramatically hinders a significant segment of mass media from developing,” according to Mesrop Harutyunyan, a Yerevan Press Club expert. The panelists said the regulations are difficult to follow and easy to violate unintentionally.

Panelist Shushan Arevshatyan, director of Radio Van, described how her station was required to pay a penalty for an administrative violation of which no one had been aware, and that legal appeals did no good. “Without any prior notice, they just face you with the possibility of bringing you to trial,” she said. “It is not only that you cannot protect yourself at trial, but also after it.” Mesrop Movsisyan, founder and director of Å1+ TV, said his station lost its broadcasting frequency and was not able to regain it through subsequent appeals. “When the judge looks at you and says, ‘You know what? I have listened to you, but...’ and then reads the preprinted decision, you no longer get angry but just laugh. This is what we call our level of protection,” he said.

“[The Radio and Television Law] dramatically hinders a significant segment of mass media from developing,” noted Mesrop Harutyunyan.

Licenses for terrestrial broadcasting are awarded on a competitive basis by the National Commission on Television and Radio in accordance with the list of frequencies provided by the Ministry of Communication. The panelists were unanimous in their belief that the licensing process cannot be fair and apolitical since President Robert Kocharyan appoints the nine members of the commission. Panelist Levon Barseghyan suggested that the commission serves instead as a punitive and dictatorial mechanism, as in the case of Å1+ TV.

Market entry for media is comparatively free. The tax structure can be considered to be supportive of print media, as the value-added tax (VAT) is waived for the distribution of print media.

Panelists observed that the number of crimes against journalists has risen. A Channel 1 cameraman and reporters from the opposition newspapers *Chorord Ishkhanutiun* and *Haykakan Zhamanak* were beaten during the opposition party meetings on April 12, 2004. Other attacks include the beating of a reporter from the *Aravot* daily who was covering an environmental protection action against cutting trees near the Tsakhkadzor ski resort in August 2004, and the burning

of a car belonging to the editor-in-chief of *Haykakan Zhamanak*. One panelist, Narine Avetisyan, executive director of Lori TV in Vanadzor, described how her car tires were slashed after her station aired a story on illegal construction. "The perpetrators have not been punished

"Reporters will be beaten until they start defending themselves," said Petros Khazaryan.

for most of the crimes. In the cases in which they have been punished, the fines were so negligible that the perpetrators and those supporting them essentially

escaped punishment," said Levon Barseghyan. The panelists did not agree on who should be blamed for the increase in the number of crimes against journalists: the oligarchs, their thugs, or their political backers.

However, panelists did note a positive development regarding implementation of the law in "hindering a reporter from performing his professional duties." This article was applied for the first time in the Tsakhkadzor case. While some felt the fine of approximately \$200 insufficient, the trial itself was considered to have set a positive precedent on behalf of journalists doing their work. "Reporters will be beaten until they start defending themselves," said panelist Petros Khazaryan, president of Kentron TV.

"Without any prior notice, they just face you with the possibility of bringing you to trial. It is not only that you cannot protect yourself at trial, but also after it," explained Shushan Arevshatyan.

The laws and government regulations do not favor state or "public" media over independent outlets, but unofficial favoritism exists in practice. Different forms of this favoritism can be seen in

advertising, orders for certain types of programming being directed to state television regardless of the quality that will be produced, access to information, and content biased toward the government view. Panelists agreed that public television and radio, although called "public," are still perceived as state media in practice.

While libel remains a criminal offense, there have been no actual occurrences of a journalist being charged or tried. However, panelists agreed that since the article is in the criminal code, there is a chilling effect.

Public officials are more protected from libel than are ordinary citizens.

Concerning access to information rights, Levon Barseghyan described how after failing to win a tender for a radio frequency, his organization requested that the National Commission on Television and Radio release the details of the winning offer. The commission yielded to the request only when Barseghyan's firm, fed up with the delaying excuses, offered to provide its own copying machine.

Access to international news sources is unrestricted in the sense that the government imposes no limits. But in practice, slow Internet connections provided by the telecommunications monopoly Armentel limit the accessing of information. The situation is worse in more rural regions, where it can take more than five minutes for a single web page to open via a dial-up connection, the only affordable option. "Low quality and high prices directly restrict access to international information through the Internet," said Levon Barseghyan.

The government imposes no licensing restrictions on journalists, nor grants any special rights. However, accreditation can sometimes be selective (sometimes even subjectively) for special events such as parliamentary assemblies and presidential and ministerial news conferences.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Armenia Objective Score: 1.95 / 4.00

Journalists have begun using multiple sources to check information. However, such cases are rare and biased, or poorly sourced stories are the norm. Objective news is still a significant challenge for Armenian media because most have some kind of association with opposition or pro-government parties and to oligarchs. Outlets that do provide impartial and well-sourced stories are rare.

There are no comprehensive ethical standards for journalists. Although there are professional associations with their own sets of ethical norms, these are limited to their members. "Ethical norms will be in demand and will come to life. They will be more productive and function better than any law with the change of media-financing sources. Now media are mostly fed by oligarchs, and there is no need for an ethical code," said Anahit Harutyunyan, editor-in-chief of *Ditord* magazine, published by the Armenian Helsinki Committee. As an example of unethical conduct,

Journalism meets professional standards of quality.

PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM INDICATORS:

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

Kentron TV's Petros Khazaryan described a personal experience: "The editor calls me, and has a regular conversation with me. Among other things he asks me something casually, and the next day I see printed in the newspaper that their reporter had an interview with me, and I made an official statement. How can I trust the news in this newspaper from that point on?"

Most journalists practice self-censorship, and so do most editors—meaning that each story goes through two stages of self-censorship. This process is again due to the associations that most media have with political parties and oligarchs.

Panelists agreed that journalists should not be afraid to cover key events and issues as long as they are able to do so in a professional manner. Most issues are covered, but the problem is that the viewpoint changes from opposition to pro-government outlet or from public to private outlet. Media avoid certain issues, such as the April opposition meetings that turned into a confrontation between the police and demonstrators. The media hesitated in airing any coverage of this event while they waited to see who would win the power struggle. The only scenes that most private media showed were those provided by the public-

affairs section of the state police, which depicted a demonstrator attacking a police officer. H1 Public TV aired the same footage.

Pay levels for broadcast journalists are not too bad, but those for print media professionals can be quite low. Poor wages are more evident in outlying regions, where the average salary can be as low as \$12 to \$50 per month. Panelists felt that this did not necessarily

lead to corruption, however, and that there is no clear tendency to leave journalism due to low salaries. In some cases, journalists move from one media outlet to another in search of better wages, as pay levels for different jobs at different companies vary widely.

Entertainment programming is abundant but does not eclipse news, which is assumed to have a considerable audience. According to surveys of television program listings, informational programming makes up 17 to 33 percent of the total schedule, depending on the broadcaster.

Providing material of a good professional and technical quality is still a problem for most regional media and at least 20 percent of the local media serving Yerevan, while the national media produce better work in this regard. The technical facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news differ based on media in the rural regions and those in the capital. Furthermore, rural and urban media should be subdivided into print and broadcast, with broadcast media further divided into radio and television. Resources for broadcast media are very limited in Armenia's rural regions, where most modern equipment is obtained through grants; resources are somewhat limited for print media. In the capital, print media have the facilities to gather and process news and information. Most broadcast media are not equipped for modern news production. With the exception of a few stations, facilities and equipment are scarce. There are a limited number of vehicles to take reporters to news scenes and not enough field cameras.

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Distribution systems vary for print, radio, and television media. The distribution system for the press is largely the Soviet model of a single organization controlling

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kiosks that cover 80 percent of the country. New initiatives spring up periodically but are not sustainable enough to transform the system into an efficient model. For radio and television stations, the problem is weak power and poor-quality transmitters, antennae, and relay devices, which result in diminished video and sound quality.

Niche reporting and programming exist and are more evident in print media than in broadcast. But niche reporting is not widespread, and there is plenty of room for development. However, the lack of professional training is one of the factors slowing that development.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES

Armenia Objective Score: 1.57 / 4.00

Armenia can be considered to have an abundant number of media outlets per capita. There were 45

“Lately we have terminated our cooperation with a news agency because the information they provide is of no interest to our audience. Today there are no specialized news agencies that could provide us with the news we need for our audience,” explained Shushan Arevshatyan.

print and 46 broadcast outlets, most in the private sector, at the end of 2004. The numbers were expected to increase, particularly in the print sector, since the requirement of registering newspapers (even those printing more than 100 copies per issue)

Multiple news sources provide citizens with reliable and objective news.

PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES INDICATORS:

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

with the Ministry of Justice was lifted by the new Mass Media Law adopted on December 13, 2003.

A plurality, but not a variety, of affordable public and private news sources exists in Yerevan. There is no such plurality in the countryside. A limited number of print publications reach the larger cities, but practically none reach villages and towns. There are only four national television stations; they do not provide alternative views but rather present the same coverage of the same official events. One is ALM, which covers most of Armenia. Others are public TV station H1, H2 on the VHF band, and Armenia. Among the FM radio stations, only the public station reaches most of the country. Yerevan local stations provide alternative area and international news. According to a panelist, however, they cannot provide alternative national news, given the technical limitations in reaching the regions to gather news. Most of the population can afford to buy newspapers, but as mentioned above, the newspapers simply do not reach most villages and smaller settlements. Therefore, the bottom line is that villages and distant communities do not have access to a variety of print sources and are limited to five national broadcast media. Only one of those outlets, ALM, can be considered to provide alternative, although not necessarily accurate, viewpoints.

The government imposes no legal limitations that would restrict citizens' access to domestic or international news. As previously mentioned, one practical restriction is the poor Internet service offered by the Armentel monopoly. In the capital city, a plurality of Internet Service Providers exists. Among them, one can find a provider with a high-quality dial-up connection. In Yerevan, an increasing number of people can afford a Digital Subscriber Line connection, but the prohibitive cost of setting up and maintaining such lines is a limiting factor. Consequently, subscribers are mostly medium to large companies rather than individuals. In the rural regions, the only option for an ordinary person is a dial-up connection. To use the Internet, users must pay long-distance charges, plus VAT, in addition to the Internet cost. Therefore, access to news sources through the Internet is restricted in rural regions. On the other hand, if people can afford to buy consumer satellite equipment (which is considered affordable for a media outlet), then they can have unrestricted access to international news through satellite channels. Western print media are accessible through subscription, libraries, certain coffee shops, or major bookstores, but these publications are prohibitively expensive for most of the population.

Panelists were unanimous in their belief that public media are partisan. Public media editors also practice self-censorship, making it very difficult and sometimes impossible to serve the public interest. Public media produce educational and cultural programming, but the quality and volume of such content is a matter of dispute.

There are approximately 10 news agencies that mostly provide general news but no specialized coverage of business, sports, or other areas. While independent media cautiously make use of the information provided by these news agencies, most outlets depend on their own news- and information-gathering resources.

"Lately we have terminated our cooperation with a news agency because the information they provide is of no interest to our audience. Today there are no specialized news agencies that could provide us with the news we need for our audience," said Shushan Arevshatyan, director of Radio Van. Roughly 30 percent of the radio stations (AM and FM) produce their own news. FM stations air mostly local events.

Most panelists agreed that media ownership is transparent, and most of the population is aware of who owns the major media outlets. The panelists also agreed that this knowledge does affect the way information is perceived. "If H1 Public TV says something positive about the opposition, everyone understands that there is something behind it. If Ayb-fe

(A1+ TV's weekly newspaper) says something positive about the authorities, everyone understands that something is wrong," said Petros Khazaryan.

National minority issues are covered by the media, but more so by print and radio than by television. Most panelists agreed that the tolerance toward national minorities is high, and journalists covering these communities are not pressured in any way. There are examples of whole pages being dedicated to national minority issues. Sara Petrosyan even reported on debates between two minority groups. Minority-

language information sources exist, and they are legal. Examples include *Rya Taza* (New Way), a Kurdish weekly that has published since 1930. There are also 30-minute daily Kurdish and Yezidi broadcasts by public radio. Many dailies, weeklies, and other periodicals, as well as radio and television news programs, are available in Russian. Newspapers are accessible to all citizens and can be obtained through subscriptions. Tolerance is low for other minorities, such as sexual and faith minorities, and panelists agreed that the population appears not yet ready for such discussions.

"If H1 Public TV says something positive about the opposition, everyone understands that there is something behind it. If Ayb-fe (A1+ TV's weekly newspaper) says something positive about the authorities, everyone understands that something is wrong," recounted Petros Khazaryan.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Armenia Objective Score: 1.34 / 4.00

Aside from circulation revenues, print media largely depend on one source of revenue, either advertising for independent publications or financial subsidies.

Many panelists said that the largest press distribution system, Haymamul (inherited from the Soviet era), does not function efficiently, is delinquent on payments, and allocates newspapers inefficiently. While there are smaller alternative distributors, print outlets that aim to reach as many readers as possible cannot do without the largest distributor. The distribution of broadcast content can also be considered a monopoly since broadcasting must go through the state-run television tower.

Independent media are well-managed businesses, allowing editorial independence.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT INDICATORS:

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

In contrast, printing houses are considered profit-generating businesses. They are now abundant, mainly private, and provide a genuine choice for print outlets and an improving quality of service. Newsprint providers are also mostly private, but these products are imported from countries that do not border Armenia. Therefore, newsprint must go through several customs checks, inflating the price.

Multiple sources of revenue are available for independent broadcast media, aside from various forms

of advertising provided by commercial, political, and disguised commercial or political groups. Revenue comes from the production of video films and video clips, renting out or repairing

equipment, and the production of programs for international partners.

In most cases, revenue sources affect programming content. There is no credible ratings system, while most

advertisers pay for the programming that corresponds to their own taste and audience. Outlets keep certain programs on the air regardless of true audience demand if advertisers are willing to pay for it. For outlets whose primary purpose is not to become a sustainable, for-profit business, content can at times be ridiculous. Panelists offered as an example the rerun of a live morning program after midnight, saying these outlets simply fill their broadcasting schedule with any kind of programming they can find.

The advertising market remains underdeveloped at approximately \$2 million to \$3 million and cannot boost the media market to a sustainable level. There are a number of advertising agencies, but most are not full service. Advertising capabilities are still underused because of the lack of proper training and education. To date, only a few educational institutions teach advertising—and not necessarily well.

Overall, advertising revenues for broadcast media can range from 20 percent up to 90 percent of their total budget, depending on ownership. Print media revenues can range from 10 to 30 percent since their main revenue streams come from subscriptions and circulation. There was little discussion of advertising revenue as a percentage of the total revenue; all panelists agreed that advertising revenue, with the exception of a few outlets, is not in line with accepted international standards. The divergence is more clearly observed with print media.

Most outlets rely on their own in-house advertising departments. They seldom use advertising agencies in any way. In contrast, agencies prefer to work with broadcast media because of the higher volume of business. State regulations allow for no more than 10 minutes of advertising within any given hour (16 percent), and the interval between advertising blocks must be no fewer than 20 minutes. In reality, advertising minutes can consist of anywhere from 20 to 35 percent of prime-time programming hours. It is the National Commission on Television and Radio's responsibility to enforce this regulation, but the enforcement is selective due to the number of outlets and, panelists said, the inclination to ignore certain violations.

Independent media do receive government subsidies, but they are arbitrary and not substantial. Such subsidies are "just enough to pay the electricity bills," said one panelist from a regional outlet.

There have been few reliable market-research studies, and for the most part the existing data are subjective and do not reflect reality. Most research is tailored to serve as advertising and public-relations tools

"Ratings have been ignored because those performing the research adapt the results to their 'associated' companies. Therefore, the big advertisers distrust their ratings," said Levon Barseghyan.

rather than as an aid in formulating strategic plans for better performance. Furthermore, rating systems are underdeveloped in Armenia. "Ratings have been ignored because those performing the research adapt the results to their 'associated' companies. Therefore, the big advertisers distrust their ratings," said Levon Barseghyan, an editor and journalists' club chairman. This attitude holds for circulation figures as well, which panelists said might be overstated by at least 30 percent to impress and attract advertisers.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Armenia Objective Score: 1.94 / 4.00

Panelists agreed that there are no functioning trade associations that unite print and/or broadcast media. It was not until 2001 that the law governing nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) allowed legal entities to unite. Today unions are emerging, but they are in an embryonic state.

About 10 professional associations have been founded to support journalists and protect their rights, but their professional quality and efficacy are a different matter. Among the most active are the Association of Investigative Journalists, Asparez Journalists' Club, Yerevan Press Club, and Journalists Union of Armenia. The fact that such associations exist was viewed as

Supporting institutions function in the professional interests of independent media.

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

a positive sign for future development. However, panelists did not agree on whether these associations succeed in creating a positive image of journalists.

NGOs that support independent media exist. Their activities include judicial assistance to media outlets (both in the capital and in the

regions) that find themselves in litigation with other legal entities or government bodies. NGOs are also involved in drafting legislative amendments, and in some cases they have had positive results. Commenting on their contribution to an amendment, Mesrop Harutyunyan of the Yerevan Press Club said, "Today the Mass Media Law is so liberal that one can say that we do not have a Mass Media Law." A number of NGOs have also contributed to the formation of the Freedom of Information Law, which is considered somewhat progressive.

The quality of journalism degree programs is very low, panelists agreed. "Today we have about 10 well-paid positions for reporters. But there are hardly any well-trained reporters," said Petros Khazaryan, Kentron TV president. The main reason for this is that there are no journalism schools that meet international standards even though almost all existing universities have a journalism department. The degrees being offered have little

to do with today's practical needs, existing journalism standards, or journalism in general. "A girl who had graduated magna cum laude from a department of journalism applied to us and was asked who the Secretary General of the UN is. She replied 'Putin,'" said Mesrop Movsisyan. Shushan Arevshatyan, Radio Van director, recommended that media select potential reporters and send them abroad to study.

"Today the Mass Media Law is so liberal that one can say that we do not have a Mass Media Law," said Mesrop Harutyunyan.

"Today we have about 10 well-paid positions for reporters. But there are hardly any well-trained reporters," noted Petros Khazaryan.

Panel Participants

Nver Mnatsakanyan, news anchor, journalist, Shant TV, Yerevan

Petros Khazaryan, president, Kentron TV, Yerevan

Narine Avetisyan, executive director, Lori TV, Vanadzor

Aghasi Abrahamyan, chief editor, *Kumayri* newspaper, Gyumri

Karen Arshakyan, director, Fortuna TV, Stepanavan

Shushan Arevshatyan, director, Radio Van, Yerevan

Mariam Badalyan, reporter, Armenianow online media, Yerevan

Mesrop Movsisyan, founder, director, A1+ TV, Yerevan

Anahit Harutyunyan, editor-in-chief, *Ditord* magazine, Yerevan

Sara Petrosyan, reporter, Association of Investigative Journalists, Yerevan

Mesrop Harutyunyan, expert, Yerevan Press Club, Yerevan

Levon Barseghyan, founder/chairman, Asparez Journalists' Club, chief editor, *Gyumri-Asparez* monthly, Gyumri

Moderator

Artashes Parsadanyan, Deputy Chief of Party/Media Development Division, IREX Core Media Support Program, Yerevan

Observer

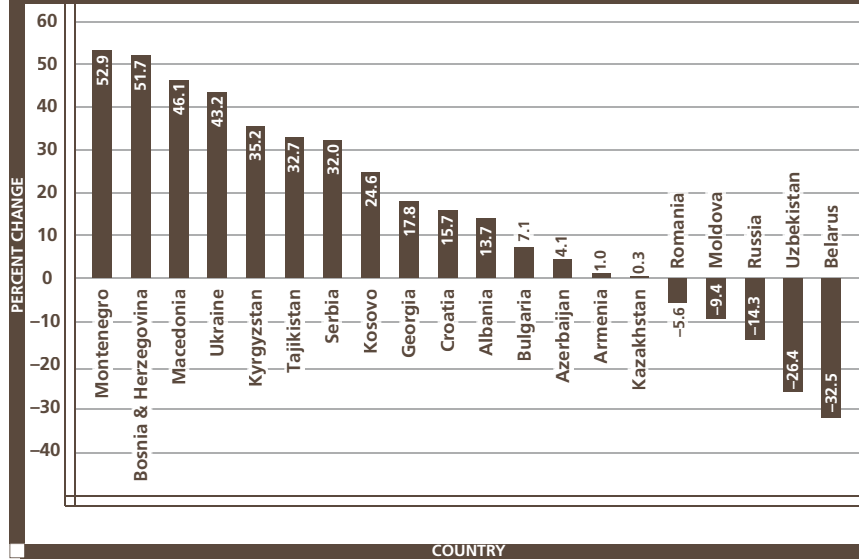
Lilit Voskanyan, project management specialist, USAID, Yerevan

ARMENIA AT A GLANCE

GENERAL

- **Population:** 3.1 million
- **Capital city:** Yerevan
- **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Armenians 97%, Yezidis 1.3%, Russians 0.5%, Assyrians 0.11%, Kurds 0.05%, Greeks 0.04%, other 0.3%
- **Religions (% of population):** Armenian Apostolic 94%, other 6%
- **Languages (% of population):** Eastern Armenian (official language) 96%, Russian 2%, other 2%
- **GDP:** US\$2.8 billion; GDP Growth: 13.9%
- **GNI per capita (Atlas method):** \$950; GDP per capita: \$420
- **Literacy rate (% of population):** 98.3% for age 15 and above
- **President or top authority:** President Robert Kocharyan
- **Next scheduled elections:** 2007

MSI AVERAGE SCORES—PERCENT CHANGE 2001–2004



MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- **Newspaper circulation statistics (total circulation and largest paper):** Maximum circulation is 9,000 copies. The average real circulation for most popular newspapers is 3,000 to 4,000.
- **Broadcast ratings (top three ranked stations):** NA
- **Number of print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** There are 58 print outlets and 10 radion stations. There are 18 local television stations in Yerevan, with a total of 31 in the regions.

- **Number of Internet users:** 50,000
- **Names of news agencies:** Armenpress, Noyan Tapan, Arka, Arminfo, Mediamax, Photolur, New Image, Spyr

SOURCES:

- *World Development Indicators (WDI) August 2004*
- *European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) Report on Armenia*
- *UNDP Human Development Report*
- *United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics*

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