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July 2014



in Moldova

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Domestic Broadcasting ... Puzzles—2014

In what follows, we are going to try a game for adults: making puzzle pieces from the more or less important events in broadcasting and then trying to reconstruct the picture in the field for the first half of the year. To the pieces that we are going to arrange in chronological order, we are going to add short comments if we have room. So...

9 January 2014. The public was informed that three TV channels—Jurnal TV, Accent TV, and RTR Moldova—had been excluded from the basic packages of several important cable operators including Moldtelecom and Sun TV.

16 January 2014. Members of the parliamentary committee for mass media created a working group to come up with a legislative initiative that would regulate the relationship between broadcasters and cable operators.

20 January 2014. The extraordinary parliamentary meeting that was supposed to discuss the situation in mass media, including the case of Jurnal TV that had been excluded from the basic packages of some cable operators for two days, did not take place due to the lack of a quorum after the governing coalition refused to participate.

21 January 2014. The working group for amending the Broadcasting Code was dissolved. Chiril Lucinschi, the chair of the special Parliamentary committee, based his decision on the fact that Communist MPs had got ahead of them and had registered a draft law in Parliament amending the code.

This unprecedented case in Moldova drew the attention of the Council of Europe of Committee of Ministers in late January. Its president, Sebastian Kurz, commented on the situation and reminded the Moldovan delegation that freedom of expression and journalists' rights to freely do their jobs are the basic pillars of democracy.^[1]

Six months later we can say that the situation is foggy, just as has happened numerous times previously. There are several reasons: the imperfection of the legal framework (Broadcasting Code); the constant inclination of those in power, regardless of their principles, to restrain media outlets that are touching sore spots; the proverbial talent of officials to invent incoherent arguments and their limited ability to respond adequately in such cases.

10 January 2014. The Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA) presented a report showing that Russian mass

media dominate the information space in Moldova. The author of the study, David Satter, concluded that through its mass media, Russia strives to promote its political and economic interests to convince former Soviet republics to adhere to the Eurasian Customs Union and to create opposition to the policies of the USA and NATO.^[2]

The strategy for covering Moldovan territory with broadcasting services that was developed for the period 2007–2010 had already stated the following in the “Obstacles” section, “With 72% representing the ethnic majority and 13% representing the Russian minority, over 80 radio and television stations in Moldova broadcast in the Russian language, and only 13 outlets broadcast mainly in Romanian” while the “Risks” section mentioned the “establishment of foreign monopolies in the national information space” and the “loss of the country’s information sovereignty.”^[3]

It would seem that such a warning should have alerted authorities. It didn’t happen, however, and six years later we have the same situation: the domination of intruders in the local information space. What is more serious, no one got into trouble but everyone increased their salaries—obviously not for doing nothing.

21 January 2014. The Apollo Association for Protection of Copyright and Related Rights issued this declaration: “We have a monopolized market for televised advertising and TV channels that benefit from a dominant position in the market, i.e. channels controlled by the mogul Plahotniuc. Another part goes to media outlets belonging to Chiril Lucinschi who has a conflict of interests due to his position as chair of the special parliamentary committee and beneficiary of a substantial income from reproducing two Russian channels.” According to Apollo, AGB Moldova—the company that currently gauges TV audiences—did not enter the market following a tender organized by television stations, agencies and end customers as should have been done. “Based on incorrect data offered by AGB Moldova, financial flows from advertising are then systematically directed to broadcasters belonging to Plahotniuc and to other moguls affiliated with political power through Plahotniuc’s monopolist advertising agency Casa Media and others.”^[4]

Relevant data in the declaration of Apollo are the following: “... according to the actual situation, confirmed by the letter of the state company Radiocomunicatii no 08-04/1001 of 24 December 2013 (copy attached) on 03 December 2013 Prime TV, Canal 3 and 2 Plus television stations had service breaks, and Prime TV,



Source of photo: www.curentul.md

for example, did not broadcast between 00:44 and 18:00 on that day. In the audience measurement report issued by AGB Moldova for 03 December 2013, Prime TV while it was not broadcasting had the largest rating. A similar situation occurred with Canal 3 and 2 Plus which also had service breaks but according to AGB had a rating that exceeded by several times the television stations that were actually broadcasting! Remember that in 2009 PRO TV ordered an audit of the people meter system of AGB in Moldova. The audit was conducted by the French company CESP which has performed studies in almost all European countries including Ukraine and Romania, and its results showed that the sample and panel of households are not according to the standards required to ensure representative data for the entire population of Moldova. In addition, almost one third of the households in the panel were selected in violation of the rules. Since AGB failed to follow the recommendations of the audit, some broadcasters had to appeal to parallel measurements and inform the market about their results.”

It should also be mentioned that in a press release issued after its exclusion from the basic packages of cable operators at the beginning of the year television station RTR Moldova claimed that the state-owned company Moldtelecom JSC exercised its functions in favor of third persons and that, “The entire advertising budget intended for television in 2013 (about 250,000–300,000 euros) was allotted to the television stations managed by the media agency Casa Media and so TV7-NTV, TNT-Bravo and RTR Moldova were excluded from the advertising campaign. RTR Moldova asked the Moldovan government to investigate this case and the legality of the actions undertaken by the state-owned company.”^[5]

As could have been expected, the above undertakings had no logical ending either.

22 January 2014. Former Defense Minister Valeriu Pleșca was to launch a television channel this spring called MBC - the Moldavian Business Channel. It will broadcast economic news and analyses. The station also intends to promote the stories of successful people. Valeriu Pleșca obtained a broadcasting license in December.^[6]

Good news. Good because every new media outlet means a new channel of information for citizens.

22 January 2014. MPs from the Liberal Party registered a draft law in Parliament on the adoption of a new broadcasting code. According to them, the document had received expert opinions from the Council of Europe, the European Broadcasting Union and the OSCE Mission in Moldova; it had been debated in public parliamentary hearings; and it aimed to ensure the compliance of Moldovan legislation on broadcasting with the legislation of the EU in harmony with the best European and international practices.^[7]

Even better news, but it is only news and nothing else. The new draft code has been collecting dust in Parliament since May 2011 with all its European expert opinions, and it was registered in the last year of the term—an election year—by an opposition party. In other words, the draft has minimal chances to be adopted and not because it is bad but because it directly “encroaches” on the interests of some MPs who have property in broadcasting and commercial advertising.

24 January 2014. The Broadcast Coordinating Council granted a license to a regional channel following a contest.

More good news for two main reasons. First, all monitoring of the big broadcasters in the capital city conducted over the past 15 years have proved a consistent fact: information programs cover the events in Chisinau for 70–100% of their duration. It is an opportune moment for television stations with regional content. Second, it is known that local/regional press is the most responsible/credible due to its proximity to the beneficiaries of its media products.

28 January 2014. Mihail Formuzal, the Bashkan of the Gagauz autonomy, decreed that tax authorities and other controlling authorities will not be able to verify mass media until 30 November 2014. He based his decision on increasing complaints about the actions of the tax service toward the region's television stations and cable operators.^[8]

It would be good news for the “Entertainment” section if it didn't reflect relapses in the infamous system where the king, or whatever he might be called, and not the law was at the head of the table. It is absurd to ask the Bashkan for permission to verify anyone, and how should the media of the region react? Chip in for a monument to the “protector”?!

03 February 2014. An agreement is signed between the Government of Moldova and the Government of Romania according to which cable operators in both countries have the obligation to rebroadcast Moldova 1 and TVR channels, respectively.^[9]

The right of the Romanian Television Society to broadcast Romanian public television in Moldova was withdrawn in 2007 under absolutely suspicious conditions, and the network of frequencies that ensures national coverage was then given to a new channel, today's 2 Plus. The winner promised not only heaps, but also helicopters for news reporters. It seems that the BCC members at the time, extremely dazzled, coughed up enough disgraceful votes. The Romanian Society filed a complaint against Moldova at the European Court for Human Rights, but later they reached an amicable agreement, although the station was not given back the frequencies on which it used to broadcast.

24 February 2014. Journalist Lorena Bogza won a lawsuit against journalist Mihai Contiu from the newspaper *Moldova Suverana*. On 20 February of this year, the Supreme Court issued an irreversible decision in favor of Lorena Bogza. *Moldova Suverana* was made to publish a disclaimer on the same page where the denigrating pamphlet had been published earlier and to pay to the journalist damages in the

amount of 31,000 lei. Mihai Contiu is to pay to Lorena Bogza 5,000 lei more in moral damages.^[10]

It is definitely weird when professional colleagues clear scores in newspapers or on the air. Weird because journalists have something else to do - inform, educate and entertain readers, listeners and viewers. No one else but journalists can do it, if they really are journalists. Journalists are the only professionals who are required to collect, verify and process information and bring in into the social circuit. Let politicians harass each other! It is their bread, not journalists'!

06 March 2014. Three new television stations might appear this year in Moldova: a Moldovan channel focused on sports, a channel focused on financial topics, and one on entertainment. This information was shared in an interview with Nicolae Damaschin, a member of the BCC.^[11]

There is a great deal of optimism in that and definitely many expectations from license holders. Not all three channels are already broadcasting, but once established they will definitely face the burning question: where to get money? Exactly two things are known about the Moldovan commercial advertising market: it is rather limited to support several dozens of stations, and it is monopolized. The other variables in the equation are so far unknown.

11 March 2014. Seven employees of Radio Plai resigned claiming alleged arrears in salaries and a view on the work of the station that differs from the employer's view.

It isn't the first and nowhere near the last news of this kind, but it is relevant because it reveals a problem that journalism hasn't solved yet—the problem of clear rules for interactions between employers and employees, employers' organizations and journalists. The legislation has few provisions, and even fewer of them are actually working, so cases of journalistic streetwalking are many.

18 March 2014. During her first visit to Moldova, Dunja Mi-jatovic, OSCE Representative on the Freedom of the Media, said: “Suspension, interdiction of channels in our digital age is a lost fight. After all, people are to decide what to watch. I don't think that the government should tell the population what opinions and voices to listen to (...).

I don't know a single democracy that can suspend a television station; if it does so, it is not a democracy.” This statement was made in the context of the pro-European coalition attempting to protect information space from the propaganda of Russian television stations rebroadcasting in our country.

^[12]

19 March 2014. A day after Dunja Mijatovic's visit to Moldova, the BCC issued a public warning to Jurnal TV and Accent TV for failure to comply with the principles of pluralism of opinions and of informing from several sources. The work of the BCC was criticized by Mijatovic: "The council shouldn't play the role of editor. It should regulate and ensure equal conditions for all. The council shouldn't have favorites. Unfortunately, it is not so at the moment. I would recommend the council to return to its main work and not participate in censorship."^[13]

01 April 2014. The Parliamentary Committee for Culture, Education, Research, Youth, Sport and Mass Media postponed until Wednesday 2 April the announcement of the results of the contest for the six vacancies on the Supervisory Board (SB) of the public broadcaster Teleradio-Moldova. After calling the contest a "show" and claiming that selection was being made according to political criteria, the Communist MPs on the committee left the meeting. Chiril Lucinschi, chair of the committee, rejected these accusations guaranteeing that future members will not be selected according to political criteria.^[14]

We shall emphasize here the committee chair's guarantees that selection will not be based on political criteria. To whom were these revolutionary guarantees given?! Since we have had the BCC and the SB, none of their components has been appointed in a manner different from that based on political criteria. Therefore, an absolute premiere performance has been announced! But then 2 April came...

02 April 2014. The appointment of six new members of the SB of Teleradio-Moldova failed again. It was postponed at the request of Democrat MPs who decided to first discuss this issue at a meeting of their parliamentary group (!).

It's exactly what had to be proven and what was expected. Let's remember that the BCC selected 12 candidates for the 6 vacancies back in December 2013. It should be mentioned that that selection was awry at least for the reason that the one candidate who "failed the exam" was Eugen Ribca, former president of the SB and one of the few lawyers familiar with the field of broadcasting and co-author of several draft laws, including the new Broadcasting Code.

Instead, the test was "passed with excellent marks" by "specialists in the field" who during the early parliamentary elections in 2010 worked as the electoral counsels of people currently in power. It seems, however, that the BCC made a mistake and selected more candidates "with political coverage" than there were vacant positions on the SB thus giving the specialized parliamentary committee such a hard time that even six months later it cannot decide which of the candidates is most party worthy and which party it is.

The erroneous situation at the SB isn't limited to the appointment of its members exclusively based on political criteria. The thing is that according to the current legislation, the composition of the SB (and of the BCC too) must be supplemented/renewed periodically by one third, i.e. by three members and not six. It is a very democratic and liberal principle, but it can be wrecked even by declarations promoting democracy and liberalism. For things to return to normal, the wisest, the most democratic and liberal thing for the special parliamentary committee to do would have been to appoint either three members for a full term or six members with terms expiring at varying times. However, this is quite unlikely to happen. The committee could have made history in its four years, but it did not.

08 May 2014. The government approved the draft program of transition from analog television to digital terrestrial television.^[15]

Finally! The document has had a long history and several titles. In the approved version, it is not a document without a single fault, but it doesn't have as many blemishes as it had initially two years ago, either. Back then, it had undergone expert examinations and debates, and then it was improved in some places. The greatest fear, however, is that its implementation will be unable to avoid the faults of analog television: monopolies and dominance of the market. In addition, for the majority of the population digital terrestrial television is still an enigma, and for broadcasters it is a nebula. Possibly by June 2015, which is the deadline according to the international agreement, the transaction as a technical exercise will be ensured; however, our minds will definitely not be able to understand long after 2015 the benefits of digital television because beyond the technical solution there is essence—an unprecedented diversity of information for the public—but it will be possible only if the capacities of digital television are capitalized on knowingly and with good faith.

27 May 2014. The BCC announced that it would begin monitoring media outlets in order to verify compliance with the obligation to broadcast at least 30% of domestic programs in the Romanian language. The law on 30% domestic production was to enter into force on 1 April 2013, but 11 television and 2 radio stations challenged it in court. Recently, the Court of Appeals dismissed the complaint, allowing the monitoring.^[16]

It should be remembered that initially the Court of Appeals suspended the BCC decision of 28 December 2012 ensuring that at least 30% of weekly airtime would be domestic production in the Romanian language. The Court of Appeals issued its decision a day before the BCC meeting on 2 May 2013 where it was to analyze the report on monitoring the 12 television stations. A



Source of photo:
www.unica.md

year later, the same Court of Appeals decided in favor of the BCC. Essentially, the problem of 30% is a false one given that broadcasters had been asked in a separate decision to comply with the commitments they made themselves when granted broadcasting licenses. Therefore, the true problem was and is the capacity of the BCC to adequately supervise compliance with the legislation on broadcasting, on the one hand, and to produce regulatory acts that would really contribute to the development of mass media on the basis of democratic principles on the other hand.

30 May 2014. The Muz TV channel was closing down; 31 May was its last day of broadcasting. Victoria Bucataru, director of Muz TV, said that the decision had been made by the founder of the channel.^[17]

That was brief. Its bosses probably thought that viewers, so loved by all television stations, didn't need to know more. They must watch, and do it a lot (meaning increase revenue from commercial advertising), and the rest shouldn't concern them!

30 May 2014. The third attempt to elect the Director of Television at the regional public broadcaster Teleradio-Gagauzia failed. The first two attempts were made in September and December 2013.^[18]

What is there to comment on? The example of Chisinau has been contagious in Comrat.

16 June 2014. Several Russian television stations rebroadcasting in Moldova manipulated the public about the tragic events in Ukraine and promoted the idea of separatism. This was the conclusion of the experts of the Association of Independent Press (AIP) who between 18 and 24 April of this year monitored five Russian televisions (NTV, Pervy Kanal, RTR, REN TV and Rossiya 24) that are watched by the citizens of Moldova.^[19]

23 June 2014. The BCC postponed the examination of the results of monitoring Russian television stations because broadcasters asked for more time to examine them.^[20]

29 June 2014. Radio Moldova (Chisinau) and Radio 1 (Tiraspol) launched the first show in the cycle "Poduri-Mosty" ["Bridges"] produced together by the journalists of the two stations.^[21]

For the first time ever, journalists representing public radio stations from both banks of the Nistru are making a media product. It is the first joint project of journalists from Radio Moldova and Radio 1 since 1990. The project is supported by the European Council program "Strengthening trust between the

banks of the Nistru” with the financial support of the Austrian Development Cooperation. As part of the program, in the past six months journalists from Radio Moldova and Radio 1 together produced the concept, format and content of the series at workshops. Unfortunately, the event (and it is an event!) went by somewhat unnoticed as not even the parties concerned, and I first of all mean the public broadcaster, gave it the importance and spread that it deserved. It’s a pity...

4 July 2014. The BCC suspended the broadcasting license of Rossiya 24 television station for “failure to abide by the principle of social and political balance, neutrality and objectivity in informative programs.”^{22]}

It is a separate topic, but it is not a first. Someone parades. Someone protests. The majority are probably indifferent. About ten years earlier, Antena C television station was suspended for 70 days. Then it disappeared. The NIT channel was the next.

Now—Rossiya 24. Is it good? Is it bad? It is easier to close a television station than to cultivate citizens with alert and clear minds who can see the difference between information and misinformation and who are immune to any type of propaganda.

And then in a year of elections, the result must be felt immediately! Paradoxically, in an information age, massive social groups can still be massively manipulated. It probably happens because too many television stations are wearing blinders, and because they can’t see, they have no way to comprehend what is happening. And then comes the rescue: no channel—no problem.

We’ve arranged the pieces of the puzzle. We have a picture of local broadcasting in the months that have elapsed since the beginning of the 2014 election year. Dark colors dominate, but we won’t break the mirror. The colors will definitely become even darker in the autumn. Maybe next year some brighter spots will appear. But not sooner...

Ion BUNDUCHI

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Civil society insists on optimizing access to information of public interest

Information is the oxygen of democracy; democracy would be inconceivable without the free access of the public to information. Nowadays, mass media plays a crucial role in providing the public with news or information about social events, public affairs and politics; however, the media must in their turn obtain this information from those who have it, most of whom are public officials.

According to the study “Mass Media Access to Information in Moldova: Problems and Perspectives” produced by experts from the Independent Journalism Center (IJC), time limits for replies to requests for information were violated in approximately 1/3 of the cases examined, and in 18% of cases, the authors were either refused by or received no replies from public authorities regarding their requests. In Moldova, approximately 400 legislative and regulatory acts covering practically all areas of society—public institutions, economy, culture, science, education, labor, health, ecology, foreign relations—contain provisions concerning access to information, but the Law on Access to Information contains the general principles for requesting and obtaining information of public interest.

Based on the results and recommendations of the study, the IJC developed a set of proposals that it sent to officials who make legislative initiatives (Members of Parliament, the President and the government). The proposals concerned modifying articles 15 and 16 of Law 982-XIV of 11 May 2000 on Access to Information and Article 71 of the Contravention Code of Moldova 218-XVI of 24 October 2008.

The IJC proposals aim to optimize legal rules regulating access to information of public interest. They proposed modifying the procedure for registering requests for information, reducing the time limits for providing information and increasing the penalties for violating legislation on access to information.

Experience shows that requests for information are incorrectly examined within 30 days, the time limit set for examining petitions in the Law on Petitioning. Officials are misled by the fact that Article 15 (1) of the Law on Access to Information requires that requests for information be registered according to the legislation on petitioning.

Therefore, to avoid wrong examination of requests for access to information according to the Law on Petitioning, the IJC proposed that requests for the access to the information be

entered into a separate register, named “Register of the evidence and control of the requests on access to information”.

The Plenum of the Supreme Court explained that the right of free access to official information is a specific variety of the right of petitioning that results from Article 8 (4) of the Law on Petitioning. The time limit of 15 days for providing information prescribed by Article 16 of the Law on Access to Information differs from the 30-day time limit prescribed by Article 8 of the Law on Petitioning and Article 17 of the Law on Administrative Courts, thus the 15-day time limit is applicable.

The IJC also proposed shortening the time limit for providing information that according to Article 16 is “not later than 15 working days from the date of registration of the request” (or about 20 calendar days), and which the authors of the study found to be too long.

Reducing the time limit for providing information in Moldova is justified in the context of implementing the Strategic Program of Technological Modernization of Government (e-Transformation) approved by Government Decision no. 710 of 20 September 2011. Some public services were digitalized, and high-performance databases were created that simplified the process of collecting and accessing the official information.

The time limit of 15 days prescribed by the law to reply to a request is mandatory, and public authorities have the obligation to organize their services to comply with this time limit regardless of the amount of information requested. It is the duty of public authorities to process and store information adequately and for a reasonable time in their databases to make it accessible to interested parties.

In European Union (EU) member states, the time limits for providing information vary but are usually shorter than in Moldova. In Slovakia, for example, authorities must reply to requests for access to official information within not more than 8 calendar days, in Romania and Malta within not more than 10 calendar days while in Norway, Bulgaria and the Netherlands within not more than 14 calendar days.

Furthermore, the IJC proposed increasing the penalties for failure to comply with the Law on Access to Information to discipline public institutions and to provide additional guarantees for the uniform application of the law.

Currently, Article 71 of the Contravention Code stipulates that intentional violations of legal provisions concerning access to information or petitioning shall be penalized with a fine varying between 15 and 25 conventional units on individuals and a fine varying between 30 and 50 conventional units on officials. Provision, upon request, of a reply with evidently erroneous data is penalized with a fine varying between 45 and 55 conventional units on the responsible official.

The IJC proposed that intentional violations of legal provisions concerning access to information or petitioning should be penalized with a fine varying between 100 and 150 conventional units on individuals and a fine varying between 300 and 400 conventional units on officials. Provision, upon request, of a reply with evidently erroneous data should be penalized with a fine varying between 400 and 500 conventional units on the responsible official.

To date, there is no public information indicating the number of persons fined under Article 71.

In many EU members, the explicit or tacit refusal of a designated employee of a public authority or institution to comply with the law on access to information is a misdemeanor entailing disciplinary sanctions for the offender. For example, in Slovakia

the institution violating legal provisions is at risk of a fine amounting to about 2,000 euros.

The IJC proposals were registered as a legislative initiative on 27 June of this year by five members of Parliament from the Liberal Reformatory Party: Vladimir Saharneau, Vadim Vacarciuc, Oleg Bodrug, Vadim Cojocar and Ion Hadarca.

According to the procedure, before being discussed in the Plenum of Parliament, the document is to be reviewed and commented on by parliamentary committees and the Government of Moldova. We can only wait and hope that public institutions want to build a true democracy in which citizens' rights are respected not only in words.

The unrestrained access of citizens to information of public interest and their participation in decision making are two of the most important prerequisites of democratic and accountable governance. Information enables citizens to knowingly assess the actions of the administration on the one hand and to knowingly participate in debates and in making the decisions that affect them on the other hand.

Free access to information of public interest is not a privilege: It is a right!

Oleg POSTOVANU

A Business Idea is Sustainable Only if it Becomes Profitable over Time

The 1990s after the breakup of the USSR can largely be described as a period of transition in most areas. Moldovan mass media also went through a metamorphosis. Centralized television, radio and press were replaced by local and regional media outlets that in many cases did not really understand what quality media was like and how it should be done. The newly emerged media outlets practiced journalism at a rather intuitive level, applying the knowledge gained at specialized seminars. Local media were regarded mostly as a means to inform the public, and only in the early 2000s did mass media (including local outlets) begin combining information with business, since if you want to exist and work, you have to be profitable. There is no other way. The road from informing the public to building a sustainable and profitable outlet was also followed by the local media trust Pro Media Cimișlia which includes Media TV Cimișlia, Radio Media Cimișlia, an online media platform and a news agency. Victor Gotisan spoke with Andrei Bargan, Director of Pro Media Cimișlia, about the role of local mass media and about how a local media outlet can become a business as well as a source of information.



Andrei Bargan, director Pro Media Cimișlia

Beginnings...

The idea of having a local television station in Cimișlia appeared in 1994. The impulse for its creation came from the existence in Cimișlia of a state-owned television tower about 215 meters high that somewhat solved the technical problem of broadcasting. At the time, many believed it utopian to start a local television station for the simple reason that national television at that time used to broadcast only several hours per day. There was total chaos in broadcasting. The Broadcasting Coordinating Council (BCC) did not exist, let alone broadcasting licenses. The local station at Cimișlia had only a sort of accreditation letter from a public committee supervising morality. "We got our broadcasting license later, and in November 1996 the first TV show on CimTV (the first name of Media TV Cimișlia) was aired. CimTV then belonged to the regional executive committee of Cimișlia and broadcast on the frequencies of the ORT channel (Russia) only on Sundays between 12:00 and 15:00. The program schedule contained mostly short newscasts and reports on local events; most of the airtime was given to musical dedications. Overall, the late 1990s can be described as "the golden age of musical dedications," Andrei Bargan said about the stages of founding Pro Media Cimișlia.

True local television emerged only beginning in the autumn of 1997. The first editorial team had seven people and began by editing and airing a full newscast. "Previously, however, we attended various training events, including those at the Internews School of Journalism in Kiev." In 1999, with administrative reforms and the reorganization from raions into counties, the editorial team decided to privatize the outlet. Thus, the company PRO MEDIA SRL was created. Meanwhile, CimTV was transformed into Media TV Cimislia, and in 2003 it obtained a broadcasting license for its own channel—channel 43.

Media as business...

In the beginning, Pro Media Cimișlia was not conceived as a business, firstly because it was a company held by the local public administration of Cimișlia, and secondly, in the 1990s the goal of the media was more information than business. "Somewhere subconsciously we understood that there was an information vacuum and people wanted to be informed. The idea of media business came later... Mass media can become business only when you understand that just like any other

business, the media cannot work at a loss or there would be no point to working. Sure, a local television or radio station is not a filling station that can earn millions, but for 'a piece of bread and butter' as some colleagues say, it is enough. It is important not to think of yourself as the top of the world and not to hire dozens or hundreds of people you will be unable to pay. In our case, if we hadn't been profitable for 18 years, television and radio in Cimişlia would have closed down long ago. Someone said that even the noblest intention is doomed if it brings no profit.

So, we have money for work. In the case of PRO MEDIA Cimişlia, for example, we chose to diversify funding sources which somewhat ensures our existence. About 50% of our income so far has been obtained from projects of foreign funders and about 30% is from services provided to the local public administration under public procurement contracts (100,000 lei annually from the Cimişlia Raion Council and 45,000 lei from the Cimişlia mayor's office). The remaining income comes from brief advertisements (announcements) and 'big' advertizing that slipped through the fingers of advertizing companies in Chisinau (banks, political parties, international companies, etc.)," Mr. Bargan pointed out.

Digitalization and new products launched by Pro Media Cimişlia

Mr. Bargan thinks that digitalization is a scarecrow for local media outlets; however, without human participation and without professionals in the field, digitalization is just a technical solution. Digitalization will somewhat reduce the life-or-death battle for the frequencies provided by the BCC that is going on at the moment. "The danger for us locals is that we might disappear; it was exactly the same issue in Finland about 5–7 years ago. To be honest, I don't really understand what surprises digitalization might bring. At the moment, PRO MEDIA is finishing work on the local TV and radio studio. By the way, it is perhaps the first local studio started from scratch, not re-equipped as studios are at other local stations in the country. So far, we have focused on content of high quality, and now we are working on the technical aspects that require some investment, i.e., replacing transmitters or adapting them to the digital signal, replacing video cameras, purchasing modern digital software, and much more," he added.

Pro Media Cimişlia was initially conceived as a multimedia company. "At the time of foundation, we considered launching other products in the future as well: Radio MEDIA, MEDIA PRESS agency, and websites Radiomedia.md, Mediatvfreevar.com, Aicitv.com and Canalregional.md. Beginning in February 2014, MEDIA TV Cimişlia can be viewed throughout Moldova (IPTV Moldtelecom on channel 906; StarNet on channel 21).



We had and have ideas that we will try to realize. We also thought about starting a newspaper, but those who heard about it immediately nicknamed us CIM TV: teleradionewspaper. Another issue is that we already have a good newspaper in the region, Gazeta de Sud, and we don't want to step into a field plowed by others," Bargan says.

The challenges for local media

Financial. A local media outlet (radio or television) in Moldova can work depending on its income and expenditures. If the former is smaller than the latter, there is no point in continuing. Professionals are mainly concentrated in the capital city or choose to work for large media outlets. Dozens of journalists began their professional work with Pro Media Cimişlia, but good journalists need to be paid, otherwise they leave for other national media outlets. For example, in recent years Costel Rinja left Pro Media Cimişlia for Publika.md, Petronel Petria left for Prime TV, Tatiana Scutaru (Tarlev) has gone to Jurnal TV and Canal Regional, Viorica Radu is now with Radio Noroc and Diana Enache left for Radio Plai to name a few.

Another problem for local media outlets is offices. Many outlets rent them. For example, Pro Media Cimişlia rents offices from the Cimişlia mayor's office for about 5,000 lei monthly. In the near future, though, the outlet is moving into its own offices. "Still another problem would be the broadcasting area of a small radius of 30 kilometers around Cimişlia that I think will be solved with digitalization," Bargan concludes.

Broadcasting licenses. "We tried to create a southern regional radio station but were unsuccessful because the BCC distributes frequencies according to criteria other than territory. However, one of the greatest problems is the small amount of advertising

directed to local media outlets. Most advertising is monopolized by certain agencies and is directed to large media outlets in Chisinau. We have tried to create local advertising agencies, but no consensus could be reached among local operators. Maybe we are too many and too different, or maybe we don't have a healthy competitive advertising culture... I don't know," he added.

Achievements, new business models and future plans...

Usually the success of a media outlet is reflected in the quality of its products and the appreciation of colleagues and national and international organizations in the field. Pro Media Cimişlia doesn't lack any of that; however, our greatest achievement is the media consumer—an ordinary person who receives information by watching Media TV Cimişlia, by listening to Radio Media or by accessing online platforms. We believe that the major achievement of Pro Media Cimişlia is the fact that the local radio and television stations have become a trademark of the town and of the raion. The only indicator that guides Pro Media Cimişlia is consumers' trust.

As long as people watch us, listen to us and read us, we understand that we are appreciated and will keep working. For all of us involved with Pro Media Cimişlia, this project is our child, and we will make all efforts to ensure a future for it and

to develop it. As to new business models for survival, we are at a stage when we are researching and analyzing several ideas; the time will come to start testing them. I've recently read that an attempt was made to include payment for TV programs into utility services (IPTV for example) in a region in Russia. It is an idea, but it would only work if people were richer and if media consumers could without any constraints choose the TV program or package that they want. At the regional level, however, it is difficult to implement in the near future, especially since there is a monopoly in this area," Bargan concluded.

...Instead of a conclusion

Mass media is an area where you need to be able to (re)invent yourself as often as possible. You need to be able to keep in step with events, to learn and apply every novelty in the field, otherwise you risk being overtaken by competitors which means certain media death. Credibility, professionalism and, maybe most importantly for a local media outlet, perseverance are perhaps the three fundamental pillars of daily work. They are the pillars on which the Pro Media Cimişlia team is trying to support its business because, returning to earlier words, it is what a media outlet should be—a business—otherwise you close the door, put a lock on it and go looking for happiness and money somewhere else.

Victor GOTIŞAN

Open Data in Moldova: A New Portal, Old Challenges

On 24 February 2014, the Electronic Governance Center (EGC) launched a new version of the date.gov.md portal which aims to become a single desk with access to open government data. The EGC announced that, “Citizens will benefit from public information of general interest with the help of some innovative instruments,” such as the open technological platform CKAN and API interface, among others.

Strengths: The website has an attractive design, and datasets are structured by “institution” and “groups” (e.g., “finance and budget,” “health,” etc.).

Weaknesses: The search engine and the options for sorting datasets have not been significantly improved. In addition, it contains information about datasets that is not quite as useful for the public such as “maintainer,” “license,” “size,” etc. Also, you can discover the posting date of the dataset only after clicking on the document while on the old website this information was in plain sight.

The 3.0 version of the EGC no longer contains the dataset “performance control,” i.e., the number of downloads, a “trick” that is more important for researchers and journalists than for regular users. It may be a coincidence, but two weeks before the launch of the new version of the date.gov.md portal, the Independent Journalism Center (IJC) made public a report in which it analyzed, among other things, public interest in the datasets published between June and December 2013 according to the number of downloads from the portal. In the following, I will refer to the conclusions of the IJC report.

14 out of 41

The report “Assessing the Opening of Public Government Data in 2013” produced by the IJC with the financial support of the Soros Foundation–Moldova as part of the Good Governance Program showed that between June and December 2013 the number of ministries and central administrative authorities present on date.gov.md remained unchanged at 41 institutions. For 6 months, only 14 out of the 41 public authorities (34%) published new datasets on date.gov.md (Figure 1.1).

Overall, the 14 institutions posted 90 new datasets. The top five positions for the most open ministries and central public authorities on date.gov.md were the Licensing Chamber (with 16 datasets), the State Tax Service (with 14), the Ministry of Transport and Road Infrastructure (12), the Ministry of Health (11), and the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Customs Service (9 each). The Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Environment published 5 datasets each, while the Ministry of Defense and the Public Property Agency posted 3 and 2, respectively. Four authorities posted one dataset each (Figure 1.2)

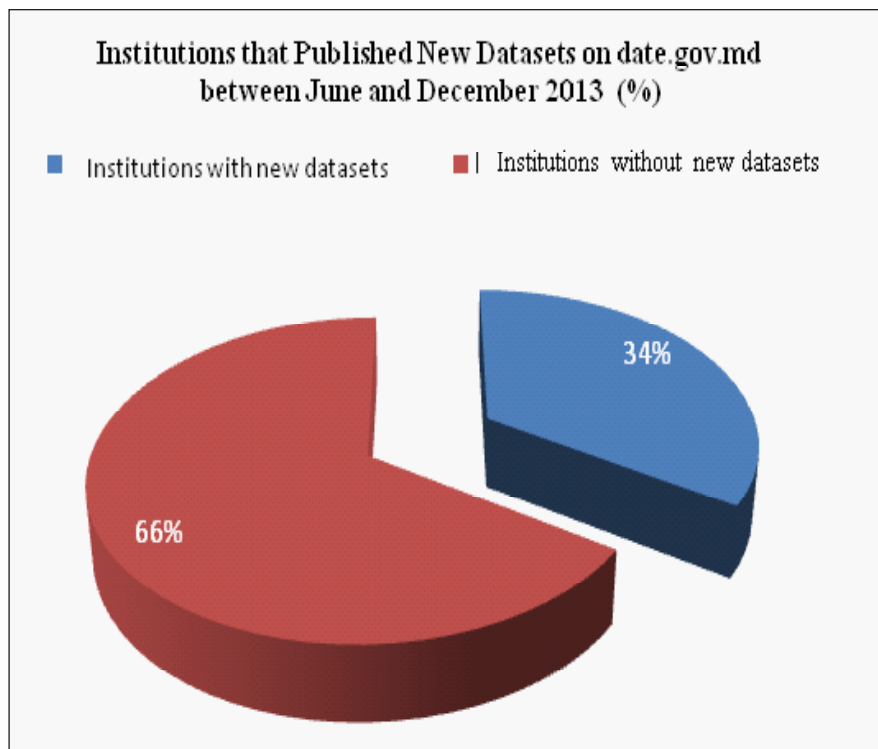


Figure 1.1

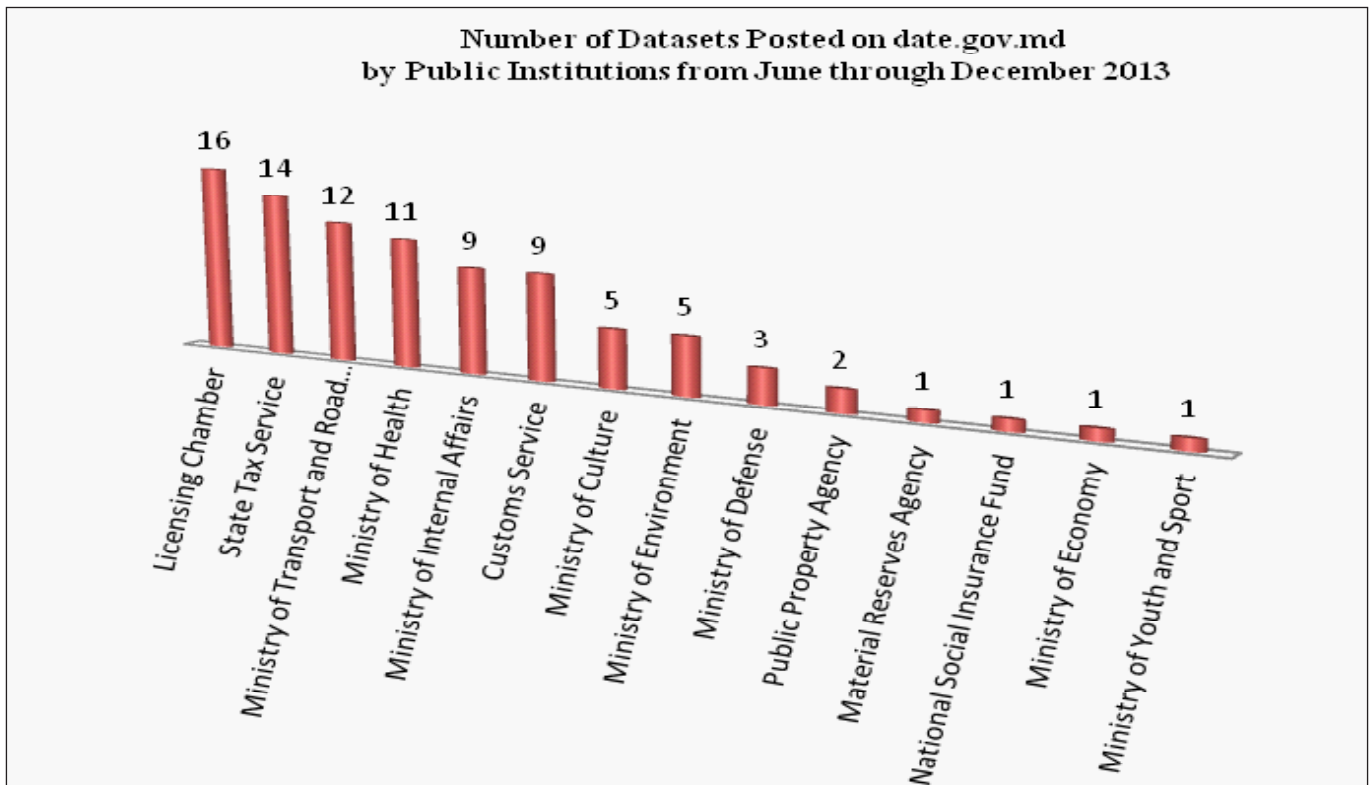


Figure 1.2

A comparison between the leaders from April 2011 to May 2013 (period covered by the first IJC report) and the current leaders shows that two institutions remained in the top five: the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. It should be mentioned that in the previous IJC report the other four leaders were at the bottom of the list. For example, the Customs Service posted no datasets between April 2011 when date.gov.md was launched and June 2013, but within a short time after the IJC report it posted nine.

The Licensing Chamber, the leader between June and December 2013, had posted five datasets before 31 May 2013, over two years after the launch of date.gov.md, while during the later reporting period it posted 16.

The same trend was true of the Ministry of Transport and Road Infrastructure (3 datasets posted from April 2011 through May 2013 and 12 from June through December 2013) and of the State Tax Service (16 from April 2011 through May 2013 and 14 from June through December 2013).

The “price” of public data

To determine the public’s interest in the datasets posted between June and December 2013 and accordingly their

usefulness, the 90 datasets were analyzed in terms of downloads from date.gov.md.

The results indicated reduced public interest in them. In all, 47% of the new datasets were accessed only 11 to 50 times, 29% were accessed from 51 to 100 times and only 20% of all datasets were downloaded more than 101 times. On the other hand, 4% of the datasets were accessed not more than 10 times (*Figure 1.3*).

This situation occurred when according to the EGC the average monthly number of single visitors to date.gov.md was about 3,000, and the total monthly number of (old and new) dataset downloads varied between 9,640 in July and 6,873 in December (*Figure 1.4*).

Following the assessment, the top10 most accessed datasets were ascertained to find out what information was of particular interest to visitors to date.gov.md. It should be mentioned that the top10 included datasets posted by only 5 institutions out of the 14: the Ministry of Transport and Road Infrastructure and the Customs Service (with 3 each), the State Tax Service (with 2) and the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (with 1 each).

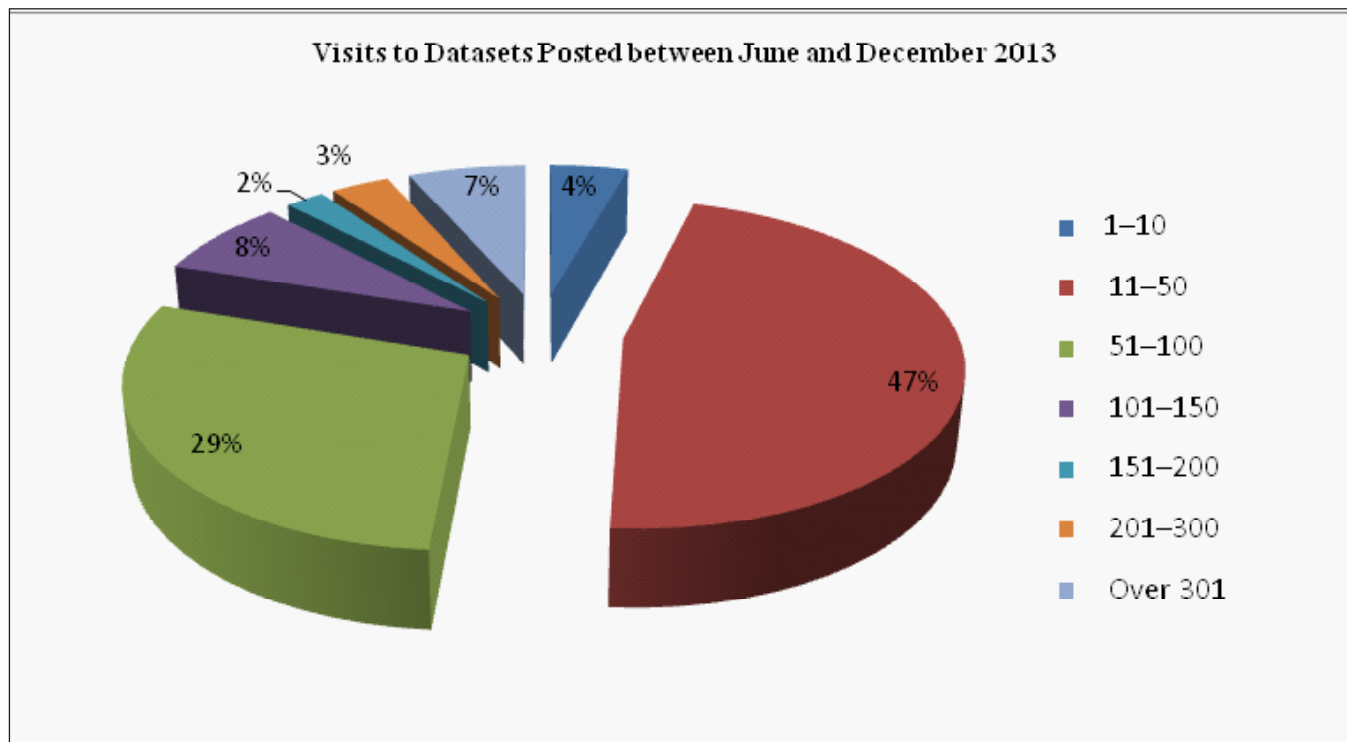


Figure 1.3

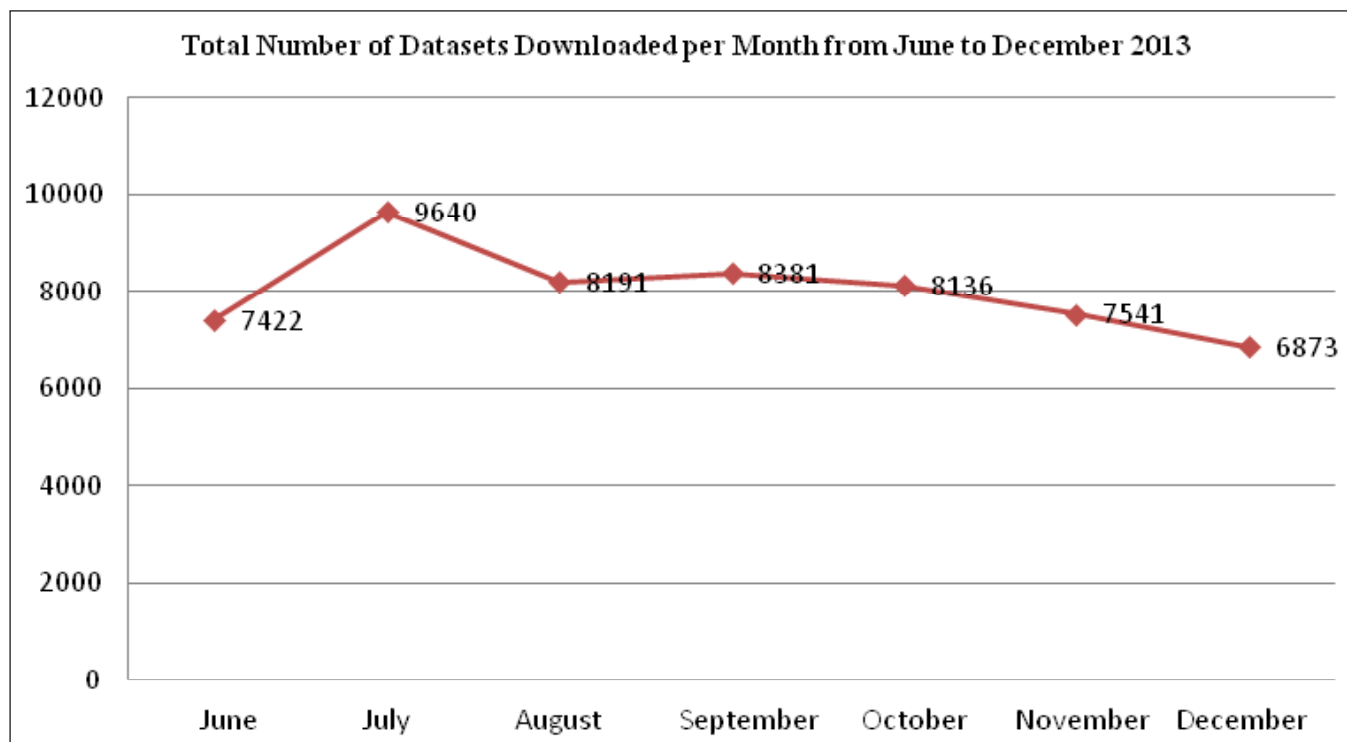


Figure 1.4

The undeniable leaders in terms of number of downloads were the “List of Business Entities Paying VAT” posted by the State Tax Service on 17 June 2013 (with 4,729 visitors) and the “List of Vehicle Technical Inspection Stations Operating in Moldova” posted by the Ministry of Transport and Road Infrastructure on 29 August 2013 (with 2,454). The third most visited was the “Top 100 Exporters in 2012” posted by the Customs Service on 05 July 2013 (with 478 visitors) immediately followed by “Data on the Execution of the Expenditure Estimate for the Road Sector Program Support Project” posted by the Ministry of Transport and Road Infrastructure on 19 June 2013 (with 474).

Visitors to date.gov.md were also interested in the list of business entities no longer paying VAT, the top 100 importers in 2012, data about the execution of construction

work from the road fund, the list of cultural centers and of intellectual property items and the criminal situation in Moldova.

On 24 February of this year, the day when version 3.0 of date.gov.md was launched, the portal contained 709 datasets. On 29 June there were 747 datasets, an increase of 38 in 4 months. We do not know how often these datasets have been accessed, but we do know, however, that together with the launch of the new version of the portal, the Open Government Data (Datele Guvernamentale Deschise) page appeared in Facebook promoting new datasets. The 339 friends of date.gov.md are updated about news on the website, and I'd like to believe that they use open data.

Dumitru LAZUR

Tudor Iascenco: I support the slogan “For professional, non-partisan and profitable media”



Tudor Iașcenco

Director of the regional newspaper Cuvantul from the town of Rezina
President of the Association of Independent Press of Moldova (API)

Source of photo: <http://gdb.rferl.org>

Mr. Iascenco, you have recently been elected President of the Association of Independent Press of Moldova. What does this vote of confidence from the General Meeting of the AIP mean, and what are your expectations at the beginning of your two-year mandate?

For me, the AIP is one of the biggest and most important achievements during my 45 years of work with the media. Thanks to the trust of my colleagues, I have returned to the position of President of the Association 15 years later during which time the AIP has matured and has become one of the most influential media organizations in Moldova. It is now recognized and appreciated not only in the country but also abroad due to staying loyal to its statutory principles: independence from all kinds of authority and from political parties while continuing to pursue its mission to contribute to the development of professional, non-partisan and profitable mass media by increasing the professionalism of journalists, improving the quality and viability of media products and protecting the civil and professional rights of employees of independent media outlets. The AIP has

many important achievements to its credit, but new tasks and problems appear that need solutions. For example, the governance program of the current coalition contains a section on the economic development of mass media. We were glad when this program was adopted. Unfortunately, it has stayed at the level of good intentions as almost nothing has been done. If our fellow professionals were more active and more united, they could have influenced the government to fulfill at least some of the objectives. Now, the AIP is working on its strategy for the upcoming years, and it will include the current problems of the Moldovan media. I hope that other organizations and outlets will also engage in solving them.

What is your opinion of mass media outlets in Moldova? To what extent are they free and independent?

Moldovan media outlets are much freer today than they were five years ago. This is proven by the significant number in the media market and by the fact that all political parties have free access to them. A positive development in this regard was the

Tudor Iascenco, Director of the regional newspaper Cuvantul from the town of Rezina who has been recently elected President of the Association of Independent Press (AIP), gave an interview to Media-azi speaking about the challenges and problems faced by Moldovan mass media.

In his opinion, the media in our country are much freer and more diverse than five years ago, but there is one big problem: A lot of media outlets are concentrated in the hands of the same owners who “prefer the role of anonymous manipulators of public opinion.”

Mr. Iascenco is, however, optimistic, and he believes that even in Moldova it is possible to develop a profitable business in mass media without political masters and funding from obscure sources. Proof of that is Cuvantul which has existed for almost two decades along with other publications that are members of the AIP.

adoption of the law on the denationalization of public periodicals developed and promoted by the AIP. Another issue is, however, the fact that central print and electronic media have recently become more financially dependent on moguls and obscure persons who take influential positions in Moldovan politics and use mass media for their personal and group interests. The main problem is that several media outlets are concentrated in the hands of the same owners who prefer the role of anonymous manipulators of public opinion. In this sense, the AIP can again serve as a positive model: All owners of the newspaper members of our association are known; their names can be found in the print and online versions of publications. In fact in most cases, the owners are actually the journalists working in these newspapers.

How does the fact that the Moldovan media market is dominated by Russian television affect the level of press freedom?

The Moldovan media market is dominated by print and electronic mass media from the Russian Federation. The fact that they are numerous is not a bad thing. The problem is different. First, Russian newspapers and magazines create unfair competition for local media by coming into our media market under preferential conditions. Some leaders in the government recognize this fact but do nothing to correct the situation. And since these media dominate, it is obvious that the greatest amount of advertising (according to some experts over 70%) reach these very outlets; advertising is one of the main sources for the economic development of mass media. But the greatest danger is the fact that Russian media do not inform but rather manipulate public opinion, forcing on it day by day and hour by hour only the opinion of the Kremlin. It has been especially evident over the past years when Moscow launched a very aggressive and hypocritical policy against the former Soviet republics, trying to bring them at any price under a new imperial rule. Today, Russian television stations with their expansionist editorial policies supplemented by the Kremlin's fifth column in Moldova which is heavily supported both financially and organizationally by Moscow are, in my opinion, a great danger for the information and political security of the country. The Broadcasting Coordinating Council and the Supreme Security Council should seriously discuss this problem.

About 20 years ago you founded Cuvantul, the first regional newspaper, a periodical that was independent from authorities and political parties proving, and in Moldova too, there can be press other than the state- or party-owned version. How difficult is it to develop a business editing an independent newspaper outside large cities?

Without a professional, well-intentioned and motivated (including financially) team, it is very difficult to run a successful bu-

ness in print media, especially today when there is increased interest in online media. By the way, after 1995 in the Orhei region there were several attempts to edit local newspapers, but they all failed in my opinion mainly due to the lack of professional teams and the impossibility to distance themselves from authorities/political parties. The law on denationalization of public periodicals somewhat facilitates the emergence of new, non-partisan newspapers; however, for it to really happen, authorities should renounce the practice of controlling mass media, and society should strongly condemn any attempt to interfere with the editorial policies of mass media outlets. On a side note, Cuvantul reporters have recently asked the people of the Orhei region to answer this question: Who in Moldova needs free and non-partisan mass media? People were offered several possible answers: Parliament, the government, local authorities, political parties, the justice sector, non-government organizations, journalists, society. The absolute majority of respondents (including representatives of authorities) considered that the existence of free and impartial media would be beneficial for all these groups, especially society.

If everyone speaks in favor of free media, why don't they do everything in their power to make it exist?

In fact, many say one thing while being guided by other standards. So far, non-partisan media in Moldova have appeared and have developed mostly due to disinterested help from international bodies. Now it is time for our authorities to turn their faces to independent mass media. There are numerous ways to support media outlets (newspapers and radio and television stations) without exercising pressure or interfering with their editorial policies. For example, the state could cover some expenses for publishing and distributing periodicals by means of specialized enterprises or by initiating a facilitating tax policy. In their turn, mass media, if they really wish to be the fourth estate, need to prove that they deserve this role and convince society of it.

When you founded the newspaper, you refused to make propaganda for the party that won elections. Do you know many media outlets that resist the temptation to sing the praises of the government and of politicians in general?

Cuvantul was founded by several journalists who still are both its owners and employees. We are responsible to the almost 5,000 subscribers who have been reading our newspaper for many years. By purchasing the newspaper and the advertising spots, they ensure the income necessary to cover the publication's needs. Every team member has the right and the obligation to cover events in an objective and impartial manner, verifying all information from several sources. The dependence of Cuvantul on local authorities or political parties is

the same as it is on any other subscriber. That is why no single entity can influence the publication's editorial policy. In the beginning there were many who tried by various methods to force conditions on us. We didn't accept them, and for some years now no one has tried to limit our freedom or to "seduce" us. We resist "temptations" although sometimes we have quite serious economic problems. I know that many publications under the cover of freedom of expression prefer various ways of making money, including promoting persons or groups with a clearly dubious image. We try not to engage in such games so as not to damage our reputation.

What is your opinion on the selection of new members for the Supervisory Board of public broadcaster Teleradio-Moldova to fill the positions vacated late last year?

The process of selecting and confirming members of the Supervisory Board is still influenced by political pressure. The attitude of the current government toward the role of mass media in society differs from that of the previous government only in the fact that society managed to impose different standards. There still is a lot to do to achieve the desired situation.

Thank you for the interview and good luck in your work!

Vasile GANCEV

The Press Council of Moldova managed to become an instrument of self-regulation



This spring, the Press Council of Moldova ended its second term. During the first four years of its existence, this self-regulatory body managed to occupy an important place in the media landscape by not only becoming a guarantor of consumers' rights in relations with the media but also by ensuring media security in cases of abuse by the public.

The most important achievement of the council in its first term was disseminating information about its existence and functions so that soon after its emergence, consumers found out about the possibility to express their complaints about the work of mass media and, if the complaints were well founded, to obtain council decisions without having to appeal to a court which is an expensive and much slower process.

The fact that situations in which the media were suspected of violating consumers' rights were discussed and voted on publicly and that media outlets often reacted in a civilized manner by offering the right to reply or by publishing rebuttals immediately after being notified added to the credibility of the Press Council and thus transformed it into an indispensable instrument of democracy and freedom of expression.

The Press Council of the Republic of Moldova was founded by the Association of Independent Press, the Independent Journalism Center, the Committee for Press Freedom, the Union of Journalists of Moldova, the Credo Resource Center of Non-Government Organizations for Human Rights and the Viitorul Institute for

Development and Social Initiatives. The council's work is based on the regulations adopted by the founders, and decisions are guided by the new version of the Code of Ethics that was adopted and signed by almost 100 media outlets in 2011 due to, among other things, the efforts of council members. The powers of the Press Council are stipulated in this document; according to item 7.1 of Chapter 7 on self-regulation, monitoring of compliance with the code and of violations is the task of the Press Council.

While in the beginning the council was supposed to examine only complaints concerning the print media of Moldova, experience showed that it would be logical to also empower it to examine complaints concerning professional ethics against television stations. The reason for this decision, which was later also supported by the founders, was firstly the fact that at that time television stations appeared to be much more indifferent to the rights of media consumers and had a greater rate of violations, and secondly because the Broadcasting Coordinating Council (BCC) is a regulatory structure with a different task, namely to examine and eventually penalize television stations for violations. The Press Council has instead, among other things, assumed the task of solving conflicts by appealing to ethics and good practices thus avoiding penalties for mass media outlets. When, however, violations of ethics were particularly serious, the BCC took these situations under examination and in several cases imposed sanctions according to the current regulations. During its first two terms, the Press Council examined nearly



*The Press Council
Chişinău, July 2014*

120 complaints and self-notifications. The majority of them concerned the violation of the right to reply, the publication of inaccurate information, insufficient protection of victims—especially children in difficult situations—and plagiarism. In fact, the Press Council of Moldova is among the few in Europe that examines plagiarism.

The majority of these complaints and self-notifications were found to be justified and received decisions from the Press Council. A very important aspect under development concerns not only conflict settlement but also avoidance to the extent possible of the recurrence of such situations. For this reason, when the Press Council found violations common to several media outlets, it not only published decisions but also accompanied them with public recommendations aimed at cultivating professional ethics in local mass media outlets. These included recommendations on non-admission of plagiarism, the protection of minors and the coverage of suicides.

In addition, educational work is part of the council's strategy, and over the past four years several publications addressed to professionals have been produced. They include guides for good practices for online media and for media coverage of topics related to the presumption of innocence and to non-discrimination and a guide on style with ethical norms for journalists. Other publications include brochures dedicated to the practice of self-regulation in new democracies and a study on plagiarism. All these materials were disseminated among journalists and explained during workshops.

In its first two terms, the Press Council also conducted important international work joining the Alliance of Independent Press Councils of Europe and becoming a founding member of the regional network of self-regulating bodies of Armenia,

Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, and Ukraine. Participating in the conferences organized by these bodies offered important venues for exchanging experiences and adopting and sharing good practices in self-regulation.

As a member of the regional network, the Press Council of Moldova signed the first cross-border complaint against the talk show "Pust' Govoryat" and its host Andrei Malakhov on Russian television station Pervy Kanal asking the Russian Press Council to analyze and make a decision concerning an ethical violation of the rights of an underage participant from Moldova in a difficult situation. The Russian council examined the complaint and found it to be justified as it met all the standards for a violation of professional ethics.

To date, the members through their work have managed to transform the Press Council into an institution that is well known among both mass media outlets and consumers. The trust that people show by addressing the council enables it to speak with a certain degree of credibility, and the positive changes in mass media behavior are indicative of a successfully accomplished mission that should be continued by ensuring professional ethics and offering support to those who might feel wronged by mass media.

Ludmila ANDRONIC
President of the Press Council



*The Press Council
Chişinău, July 2014*

Alina Radu: “It has been ten years of living with passion in the editorial office”



Alina Radu
the Head of “Ziarul de Garda” Weekly Newspaper
Source of photo:
www.stiripozitive.eu

Naturally the first question to someone running an investigative newspaper would be: How have you managed to stay afloat for ten years without disappearing from view?

We never thought about how long we would stay afloat. We didn't set it as a goal—to stay afloat for five or ten years, for example. When we launched Ziarul de Garda (ZdG), we were just tired of the media we were part of. We used to work in three or four places, and everywhere we saw politically involved owners. We thought of trying to do something ourselves. Back then, the unoccupied sector in Moldovan mass media was investigative journalism. In addition, there was a great need for such journalism in Moldova. So, thus we set off. We were definitely very aware that this project might not last because we had no money and no protectors, but we decided we'd be at peace because we had at least tried to do something we liked and what Moldova needed because it did need it.

In what professional situations did you consider giving the newspaper up?

Six months after starting, we found ourselves in some kind of insolvency, and then we learned a very harsh lesson. We thought that in six months we had proved to everyone that we were very well-intentioned, that we were doing the type of journalism that was very necessary, and that everyone must subscribe/contribute, but we understood that in fact no one was

interested. The lesson we learned was to never again depend on a single funder. Let me explain. We had a grant, and in time it came to an end. To be able to continue, we had to work on credit for a while, but at the same time we submitted proposals everywhere for various grants. Since then, we have never again been at the mercy of a single funder. Due to this lesson we have managed to stay afloat so far.

So, in a way, is it possible to make a weekly newspaper in Moldova that exists more because of grants than subscriptions, or both?

Investigative journalism is the most expensive type of journalism. An investigative reporter produces material over a longer time. So in a way, they produce less than a news reporter, but their product is deeper. And it doesn't bring in money. Everyone doing this type of journalism, including the Washington Post, first makes money from something else and then invests it into an investigative department. When we started in 2004, realities in Moldova were different, and the only way to exist was by getting grants. Back then there was poverty in the press. Now, the range of mass media is very wide, and we have a lot of press and many television stations. If we were to start now, I wouldn't think we would have to live only on grants. The Moldovan public must be educated to finance their own teams of investigative



Source of photo: ZdG, 24 July 2014

journalists because you cannot live on grants forever. You can't justify yourself forever before funders because these grants come exclusively from foreign funders, and you must always explain to these countries why you're asking for their money and the money of their citizens to write about corruption or to make little films about what officials own while our country has no money to support us. It is pure nonsense and can't last forever.

Do readers appreciate the efforts of the ZdG team?

Our readers represent the middle class and the poor. Rich people don't need investigations, or at least they have been showing no interest in them. And what can you expect from the poor? Yes, they support you, write letters and encourage you by saying nice things and sending good wishes, but we know that they are poor, and the only thing they can afford is a subscription of 15 lei per month. From that, however, investigative journalism can't exist. Readers are well-intentioned, good-hearted, kind and responsive; they call us and suggest topics for investigation; they tell us about cases of corruption or human rights violations, but we need to pay our reporters.

...so this is the portrait of a ZdG reader?

Yes, our readers are educated, intelligent, active and well-intentioned; they care about what happens in society and let us know about possible wrongs, but they are poor.

You wrote on a social network that it has been “ten years of your own life dedicated to the readers of ZdG.” What does it mean? That it has been difficult? That it has been a noble gesture?

It means that it has been ten years of living with passion in the editorial office. I really put my soul there. I should confess that I spent very little time with my family during those ten years. I never had a 28-day holiday, as the Labor Code prescribes. I had holidays of not more than a week, during which time I worked from home or from wherever I was. So, I didn't have even a week of total disconnection in all this time. I've worked non-stop for ten years.

Do you think ZdG is a successful project?

I think it is a journalistic success because from its very first year ZdG won awards, the highest journalistic awards in Moldova in the categories of investigative journalism, reporting, photography and TV investigations. It all means success. ZdG has also become over these years a school of investigative journalism. We have had young people spending time here who then left for other outlets and are still very good investigative journalists. I won't hesitate to say that the best ones in the field

passed through us. Still, we have a big failure. ZdG has never been an economic success. We haven't managed or there has been no need to become a financial and economic success.

What does a reporter who wants to work with ZdG need to know about the rules at ZdG?

Reporters at ZdG lead a very simple life. They begin their mornings in the office where they do the most difficult work: constantly voicing suspicions; receiving signals that something is wrong somewhere or spending time and communicating with the most complicated people who are either criminals, or corrupt, or obscure, or liars or thieves. Conversations with these people are mandatory because when you accuse someone of something in an article, you must obtain the opinion of the accused. These conversations are difficult; they consume energy leaving you drained because you see the most difficult people who then come back with threats, complaints, lawsuits, but I don't want to scare potential reporters away from this path. Those who come to ZdG definitely have what it takes to learn. They definitely have the opportunity to learn how to do very good investigative journalism, and I think it is the best school for those who want to do this type of journalism. We are now also doing investigations in print, online, on television and radio. It is an all inclusive school, but you need to have principles of maximum correctness, even in your personal life.

From this ten-year adventure, what other lessons have you learned in addition to the fact that it is not good to depend on a single grant?

I learned that independence is costly, that it is a thing for life and that Moldova needs this type of journalism. I also learned that the people who are at the head of society sometimes don't wish for such a media group to exist. There have been lots of lessons, but these are the most obvious.

How has journalism in our country changed over time?

It has changed enormously, incredibly, but maybe not in the direction I would have liked. I began doing journalism in 1989. Back then journalists had nowhere to learn. There was a single university department of journalism where one of the main subjects was the history of the Communist Party. When the Soviet Union collapsed and we had to do another kind of journalism we had a single television station and a single newscast, but we had to offer something else. We had no open doors abroad; we didn't know where to learn that something else. Then, I met a team at “Mesager” [newscast on national television – translator's note], who learned on the go, working and running. Now, journalists have so many open doors, so many open schools and so many open ways to



*At the round table „Mass-media’s role in covering women’s involvement in public life”, Chişinău
February 24, 2014
Source of photo: API*

learn to do proper journalism according to the principles of professional ethics, but I saw no so much selling of principles and values in 1989, 1990 or 1992 as I see now. I am somewhat discomforted by the fact that reporters with more open professional doors and more freedom give it all up.

What would you tell those who want to launch a newspaper in Moldova on their own? What should they consider in the first place?

When we started, we kept public interest in mind. People needed to know about the situation with corruption, human rights violations, torture or the theft of public money. We really thought about people. Now, if someone were to launch a newspaper, they would need an honest and professionally ethical product because now Moldovan media have gone off the track. If someone concentrated strictly on the public interest, I am sure they would be successful professionally and, again, maybe less successful economically and financially.

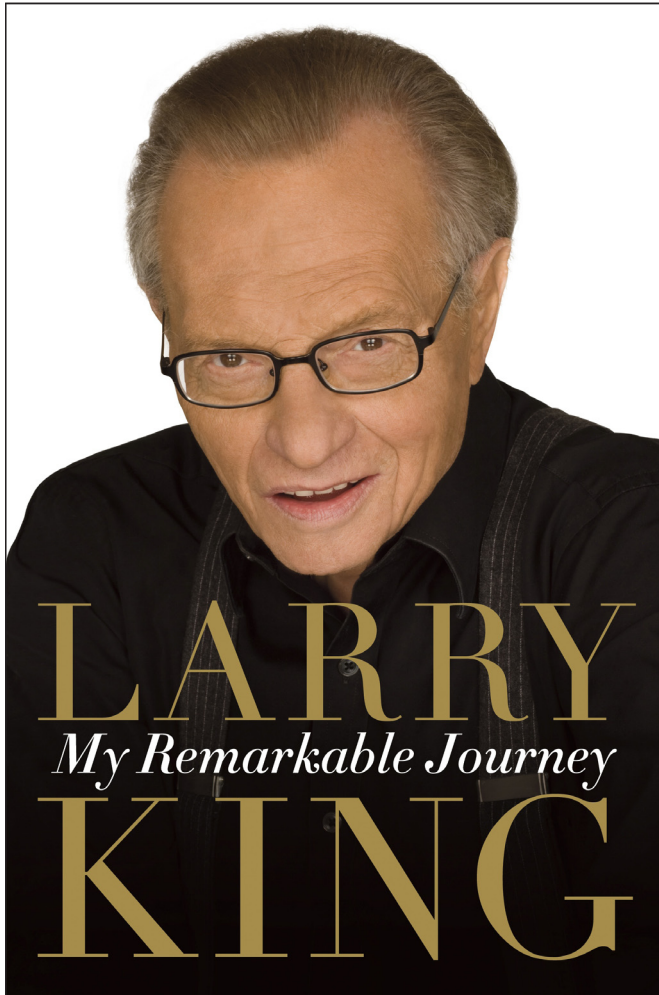
What is, in your opinion, the impact of your work on Moldovan society?

A lot has changed, I think. We were among the first to bring the property of officials into the open. We got it in the neck for that from many places. We were the first summoned to court, but we kept insisting and continued doing investigations. Now, for example, no media outlet shies away from publishing photos or information about the property of officials, so we sort of opened the way for fellow journalists.

We had the most lawsuits and cases in court during these ten years, but we never lost one because if you write correctly and you happen to be tried in court, you win the case. Folks, if you want to do journalism, do it! If you want to tell the truth, tell it! There will be people saying thank you, we learned courage from you.

Maia METAXA

Microphone Man Has Transformed the Interview into an Art!



Imagine ... a small studio, a desk with two microphones on it, behind the desk a map with continents, at the desk a thin man with a baritone voice, glasses, and most importantly pants with suspenders. You didn't get it? Keep reading then...

1. Person – Personality ... or “What am I doing here?” (Introduction)

Some books make you laugh, other books make you cry, and there are also books that you read without feeling the need to constantly check page numbers to see how many are left till the end. *My Remarkable Journey*, the autobiography of Larry King, is one in the last category. It is written in tandem with journalist

Cal Fussman from *Esquire Magazine* and gravitates around the essential question of “What am I doing here?” It is a book that will definitely change the way memoirs are written. It is a book in which the author is face to face with those he “gossips” about (family, wives, children, friends, employers, etc.) while allowing them the right to reply. That particular fact requires the author to be honest and not to cheat as his subjects will expose him.

My Remarkable Journey is a lesson in journalism and in life in which the author and the people in his life tell stories, with the only difference from classical stories being that these stories are true. Larry King is a true storyteller who not only puts his life and memories on paper but also makes the readers (re) invent their lives. The entire book (like the author's entire life) is nothing but a bundle of memories that according to King, “... are all we have. Lose them, and we have nothing. But memories touched by humor, those are the best of all.”

Larry King is perhaps one of the symbols of television without which the history of American journalism couldn't be written. His show “Larry King Live” on CNN has been included in the Guinness Book of World Records as the longest running show in the history of journalism. King is the journalist whose name could be synonymous with interview. He is the journalist who “interrogated” over 40,000 people, from ordinary citizens to dictators and presidents, from professional sports figures to showbiz stars. He is the journalist who interviewed every American president beginning with Richard Nixon and did not hesitate to expose some of their secrets such as Bill Clinton's habit of being late to nearly all meetings or that Ronald Reagan did not make decisions without consulting his wife Nancy, or that George Bush Jr. was never interested in topics he had no clue about.

2. About Life (family, life, friends, work...)

Larry Zeiger was born in Brooklyn in late 1933 at a time when the United States was beginning to show signs of recovery from the Great Depression. Born into a family of Jewish immigrants to a father from Kolomea (now Ukraine) and a mother from Belarus, in his youth he developed two passions: reading and baseball. He lost his first passion when his father died of a heart attack. It was, however, immediately replaced with a new one—radio—which he describes as his “first love.” It was the radio that transformed teenager Zeiger into a “radiomaniac” and made him dream, because the radio first of all meant content

explored through imagination, while television which appeared a little later, attempts to give form to content through images.

Meanwhile, Larry Zeiger became Larry King because sometimes a name, he believed, could make the person, not the other way around. In 1957 he moved closer to his mother and brother in Miami, Florida where he started his career as a radio journalist. Three years later he got a job at a local television station in Miami (without, however, giving up the radio shows that had established him). In the 1960s and 1970s he became one of the best known radio personalities, and in the early 1980s he met Ted Turner, executive director of CNN. In 1985, the first “Larry King Live” show aired on CNN and would continue to be broadcast until early 2010. At the end of 2010 after a short break, he resumed broadcasting but on different media platforms: Hulu (online) and RT Today (TV).

Larry King has always been original and current. On one hand, he has always remained the same but on the other has reinvented himself because he says all persons are influenced by their origins, the times they live in and the difficulties they have to deal with. Strong individuals recognize and take responsibility for their actions. It is what Larry King did with his eight marriages, the tax fraud he was accused of, and the child he knew nothing about for 33 years. Honesty (which is also one of the essential values of a journalist) is the word that defines this “literary confession.”

3. Journalism and “...being in the right place at the right time...”

Larry King is a steadfast determinist especially where journalism is concerned, but beware: His is a determinism that doesn't work if it lacks certain qualities such as the spirit of observation or correctness. According to him, the spirit of observation is perhaps the most important quality of a journalist, and self-confidence and the sense of the right time are qualities in the absence of which you'd better try doing something else.

Throughout the book the author doesn't seem to be saying anything new about the way to practice journalism correctly, but the things he says feel so novel due to how they are said, i.e., honestly and brightly. The secret of the journalistic profession is, according to King, the fact that this profession has no secrets.

Regarding the correctness of a journalist, it should be especially evident in the honest presentation of information. A lying and manipulative journalist does nothing but hide the truth (an essential value of journalism) that sooner or later will come to light. The most important piece of advice from Larry King to journalists can be summed up in just a few words: “Don't lie and be yourselves!”

Also, journalists should be impartial; their opinions have no place in the content published; conclusions should be made by the public, not by journalists. For this reason, journalism is, for King a risk taken, and those who realize that they won't be able to handle it ought to find some other “job to die of hunger” as Gabriel Garcia Marquez put it. The mission of a journalist is to look at things sideways ... from above, from different points of view. Journalists should, according to King, learn to ask themselves the right questions throughout their entire careers and will be guaranteed success if they can make people forget that they are in front of a microphone or camera.

Question: Do you know the main difference between radio and television?

Answer: “There is no difference.”

4. Starting with the Interview, or the Art of Listening to Others

“In the beginning was the question...” would perhaps be the beginning of the Bible if it had been written by Larry King since the question is much more important than the answer because it makes you think. His Bible would end with the sentence, “Not even the interview is the same,” because the profession has also been infested (like the entire field of mass media) with “fast food journalism” (after Michael Arrington). If in past times interviews used to last for about two hours on the average, today you have to manage them within 15–20 minutes or you risk losing your public.

The most important thing for a journalist during an interview is to know how to listen and to forget about “I.” During an interview, the guest is the one who matters, not the journalist. This is where most journalists make mistakes, asking their guests questions solely for the purpose of catching them saying something wrong instead of trying to gather information. Wendy Walker, the producer of “Larry King Live,” once said that Larry's honesty, sincerity and curiosity in asking simple questions guaranteed him the success of phenomenal answers: You can get information from your subjects just by asking them simple questions like “who,” “what” or “why.”

According to King, the perfect subjects for interviews are the ones who first can clearly explain what their occupations are; second are passionate about their work; third, show humor in their attitudes toward work and fourth are reasonably ready for verbal confrontations. On the other hand, the perfect interview is the one you haven't done yet or, in the case of Larry King, the one you missed. As a matter of fact, one of his great regrets was the fact that he didn't have the opportunity to interview Osama bin Laden to find answers to questions about the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001.

With politicians, the most important questions are hypothetical—real traps—because they make them think, analyze and answer immediately without using templates prepared in advance. If they consistently try to rely on “no comment,” remember that every question cannot be answered with that cliché without implying guilt.

Warning! Larry King says that if your subjects (again, especially politicians) say something like “I’m glad you asked that” or “It is a very good question, and it is very good you asked it now,” in fact they are not in the least happy with it but are only trying to win some time by thinking what to answer.

5. Advice for Fellow Journalists

Lesson no. 1 - money. Lesson no. 1: money. Despite an increasing number of people saying that mass media must become a business, journalism should never be seen as such. Information cannot be bought; it should be offered for free because as Francis Bacon put it, “It is power.” A journalist has to first offer that added value to a media outlet before asking for more money in exchange. Larry King is skeptical about so called “journalistic streetwalking” for the simple fact that he sees no reason to change your job only for money because when you feel unhappy with your new job, you will become irritated with the people who convinced you to get it.

Lesson no. 2 - ordinary people! Journalism implies writing about ordinary people who are the most important in our profession because, King says, he has the same interest in a president as he does in a locksmith.

Lesson no. 3 - attention to detail and to things that seem insignificant at first glance. Example: When you have several guests on your show, avoid sitting between them because you risk being seen as an enemy by both sides. Also, we should offer

our opinions only after seeing the full picture, not just the pieces of a puzzle.

Lesson no. 4 - yellow press. Avoid attaching too much importance to it. If you do, you do nothing but sink to the same level.

Lesson no. 5 - the essence of journalism. Be yourself! Period.

6. “What are we doing here?” or the Future of Journalism

It seems that Larry King is not about to put his suspenders aside. He continues with his show, coordinates the work of the Larry King Cardiac Foundation, organizes public lectures, and at 81 years of age attends baseball games with his two children, 15 and 14 years old.

I found *My Remarkable Journey* to be one of the funniest and most sincere autobiographies ever written. In addition to everything said above, it is a book about friendship and about how you can win your family over when you are about to lose it. King is sincere and spontaneous in his autobiography, just as he is on his shows. He is natural; he is himself. It is a story of success in journalism, and all successful people have something that sets them apart from others—the ability to clearly determine their goals because if you learn how to do something, you must do it as well as you can and not back down. Journalism must produce qualitative change is what King seems to be saying, or it would be meaningless. Journalists must ask themselves questions and look for answers in order to keep doing their mission of informing the public.

It is said that Larry King has interviewed 40,000 people. False! It’s 40,001 because reading his book is like being in an interview, only this time I was the one asking questions and Larry King was answering them.

Victor GOTIȘAN

Press freedom in Moldova: progress and deficiencies

In the past year, trends in Moldovan mass media have not shown signs that press freedom is being undermined. This is one of the main conclusions that can be drawn after analyzing the Media Freedom Index of the Eastern Partnership countries from March through June 2013 and from January through March 2014. Although there are signs that press freedom is strengthening, the Moldovan panel of experts drew attention to some unsolved problems that could affect it, namely journalists' access to the Parliament chamber, lack of ownership transparency and monopolies in mass media ownership.

Launched by the Independent Journalism Center (IJC) as part of the Eastern Partnership Media Freedom Watch Project, the Media Freedom Index aims to measure the degree of press freedom in Moldova. The index is produced based on the assessments of a panel of ten independent media experts and indicates deficiencies that mass media outlets face in the following sectors: politics, practice, broadcasting, Internet and new media.

Politics

In both the March–June 2013 and January–March 2014 indexes, politics in Moldova was consistently rated 6 on a scale of 1 to 7. In the first period, the rating was due to amendments to the law on freedom of expression and to the law on the denationalization of state-owned media outlets which were among the priorities of the Government Action Plan for 2011–2014. The panel explained that the rating was due to the human rights guarantees offered by the laws—particularly the law on freedom of expression—that are comparable with those in developed countries. In the second period, in the context of Moldova coming closer to the European Union (EU), the rating was due to a more careful attitude of authorities toward democratic values such as freedom of expression and freedom of information, especially in the context of the conflict in Ukraine that began in the autumn of 2013.

At the conference on the Eastern Partnership Media Freedom Landscape–2013^[1] on 9 April 2014, Petru Macovei, Director of the Association of Independent Press of Moldova, said that, “In Moldova there are no legislative and constitutional rules limiting freedom of expression and press freedom. Moreover, in March 2013, laws were adopted to amend the Criminal Code making the creation of obstacles to the work of mass media a criminal offence.”

Nevertheless, in 2014 the media space in Moldova was affected

[1] http://mediafreedomwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/EaP-Media-Freedom-Watch-Publication_EN.pdf



by direct and indirect threats from some political leaders against journalists, the suspension of online broadcasting of government meetings and the problem of journalists' access to the Parliament chamber which has not yet been resolved. Together they gave Moldova a total of 175 points in Politics, 4 points fewer than in 2013.

Practice

The high frequency of lawsuits against journalists investigating cases of corruption, discrimination by courts against the press and the level of compensation imposed in cases of damaging dignity and professional reputation were reasons that this section of the index for March–June 2013 was rated 5. Nine months later it was rated 6 due to a consistent reduction in the number of final court decisions in cases of defamation and in the amount of the fines levied on media outlets and journalists.

In the above-mentioned periods, there were no cases of arrests, kidnappings or severe pressure on journalists; this indicator received maximum points. The panel did, however, express doubts that these improvements might continue if the government changes.

According to the analysis from January through March 2014, two other aspects affecting the development of mass media in Moldova are self-censorship and the problem of media ownership transparency. The latter, according to the panel,

is one of the main deficiencies of Moldovan mass media. The problem is especially characteristic of broadcast media and of legislation that still uses the term “founder” instead of “owner” which allows fictitious founders and offshore company ownership. Considering the complexity of the problem resulting from this legal error and the situation in the local media market, the panel assigned this indicator the lowest marks in the entire index. The same problem is true of self-censorship which the panel considered to be common practice in the Moldovan press. It is manifested in the manipulative approach to some topics and in the fact that journalists from the media outlets owned by politicians or affiliated with them often avoid covering sensitive topics, cases of corruption or conflicts of interest.

The authors of the study “Is the European Integration of Moldova Irreversible?” launched on 17 June 2014 by the Association for Foreign Policy believe that both existing and new media outlets are often concentrated around political parties or “media moguls,” i.e. business people with non-transparent political and economic interests who intend to increase their influence and credibility in society by means of the media that they are financing. These media often ignore the principle of pluralism of opinions and act as “political bats” against opponents, presenting in a positive light only the activities of their owners. In most cases, the real owners of media trusts are unknown, and the law does not force them to come out into the open.

Broadcasting

The panel also found visible improvement in broadcasting. From a ranking of 5 in 2013, broadcasting ranked 6 in 2014. The elements that had a positive influence were the lack of open political pressure on private television stations and the election of Ecaterina Stratan as Director of the News Department at public TV channel Moldova 1 which ended the uncertainties related to the work of this department.

The *Barometer of Public Opinion* showed that in April 2013 Moldova 1 was the second most preferred by respondents looking for information at 21%, but in April 2014 the public station advanced to first place at 30% followed by Prime TV (21%) and Jurnal TV (18%). However, the Supervisory Board (SB) of the public company Teleradio-Moldova has been non-functional since December 2013: the 6 new members have not yet been appointed although in April 2014 the parliamentary committee

for mass media discussed the 12 candidates for SB membership. This delay lost points for the Broadcasting category; it might have political causes. In an interview for the Media Azi portal on 15 April this year, media expert Ion Bunduchi mentioned that, “The law stipulates neither the time limits nor the manner in which SB members should be appointed. There are only some general provisions that are better suited for politicians from older democracies—people who can act in good faith, thinking about the cause or the public, and not about their parties.”

Internet and new media

With a score of 115 points and a rating of 6 out of 7 in June 2013, from January through March 2014 this category received 139 points and a ranking of 7. This improvement of 24 points is explained by the growing number of websites and information portals and the lack of harassment, arrests or attacks on online journalists and bloggers.

Regarding blocked websites or suspended access to Internet resources, the only relevant case from January through March concerned the website of the *Ziarul de Garda (ZdG)* weekly newspaper which covers cases of corruption, conflicts of interest and abuse of power. In early March 2014, *ZdG* announced that its website had been inaccessible twice in two weeks for several hours at a time. In this context, *ZdG* director Alina Radu suspected distributed denial of service attacks, possibly ordered by a public person who had been the subject of two of the newspaper’s investigations.

Overall, the panel found this media sector to be free with no state or market monopoly of Internet services which allows the free development of online media and the work of bloggers. The panel’s opinions were also confirmed by the opinion survey publicized in late June 2014 by the Center for Sociological Research of Moldova according to which 56% of respondents use the Internet for information often and very often (the sample size was 1,100 persons).

The Media Freedom Index of the Eastern Partnership Countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) is produced as part of the Eastern Partnership Media Freedom Watch Project implemented by the IJC in partnership with Internews-Ukraine between March 2013 and February 2015 with the financial support of the EU.

Cristina BOBÎRCĂ

Media monitoring report: “Media outlets in Moldova are attempting to make the public think and act in a manner compatible with that of their owners”

The phenomenon of manipulation through mass media in our country has become increasingly dangerous, and in the end it is the public (i.e. reader, listener and viewer) that suffers. These findings have been mentioned by experts in the report “Monitoring Media Outlets regarding the Presentation of Topics of Major Public Interest in order to Identify Possible Trends in Information Manipulation” produced by the Association of Independent Press (AIP).

The dictionary of sociology defines manipulation as, “an action intended to make a social actor (person, group, collectivity) think and act in a manner compatible with the interests of the initiator instead of their own interests by using persuasive techniques that intentionally distort the truth giving the impression of freedom of thought and decision.” (C. Zamfir and L. Vlasceanu, 1998).

According to the report on the monitoring of several media outlets to identify trends in the manipulation of public opinion conducted by the AIP between 1 February and 30 November 2014, media outlets in our country are also trying to make the public think and act in a manner compatible with that of their owners.

The results of the monitoring published in quarterly reports represent a deep analysis of the manner in which the main media outlets in the country cover the same topics of public interest, topics concerning certain political or economic actors. The first report produced by the AIP and presented on 16 June this year described some trends in information manipulation used by Moldovan mass media. Monitoring the coverage of events of major public interest by 12 media outlets over three months (February–April 2014), the experts found several cases in which media outlets chose topics depending on the interests/agenda of their owners and not on the interest of the public. Thus, some editorial offices either avoided covering certain topics or presented general, brief information without presenting a complex picture or providing consumers with sufficient information to understand what was happening in certain cases.

According to the report, relevant articles were subjected to a comparative analysis, using as a reference press releases and statements for the media made at conferences/briefings in Parliament or by government and other institutions, public or private. “Qualitative content analysis was the main method used. Considering that manipulation through mass media often occurs by selecting events to be covered and sources to be used, by allowing tendentiousness in texts and headlines, and by selecting videos, photos and captions for them, we measured the frequency with which those topics were approached and the perspective from which it was done, analyzed the sources used, the tone with which subjects were covered in the news and the images and language used,” the report states.

The authors of the report mentioned that monitoring was aimed at encouraging the press to abstain from manipulation and to help consumers of media products see the difference between manipulation and correct and neutral coverage of events.

Therefore, given the importance of ensuring the constitutional right of citizens to information as well as the legal and ethical obligation of media outlets to correctly and objectively inform the public about topics of public interest, mass media should do the following:

- Take into consideration first of all the importance and degree of public interest and not the preferences and agenda of the owners of media outlets;
- Not exaggerate the facts with the intention to demonize or canonize certain persons;
- Cover issues correctly, impartially and neutrally especially when they are controversial;
- Present objectively all sides in controversies abiding by the principle of informing from several sources, including alternative sources;

- Take into consideration the political beliefs of different categories of the population, ensuring balance and social and political pluralism as well as freedom of expression;
- Cover events truthfully and neutrally without distorting reality by using montage and comments.

By following these principles, mass media will educate the public because information will be presented in good faith. Thus, the effects of information manipulation will be reduced, and media consumers will become more knowledgeable.

Lilia ZAHARIA

Memorandum on Press Freedom in Moldova between 3 May 2013 and 3 May 2014

According to international media freedom rankings, between 3 May 2013 and 3 May 2014 press freedom Moldova maintained the same level as in previous years. This lack of significant progress is almost entirely explained by the status quo in domestic politics and in relevant legislation.

The Leancă Government included the same objectives in its program as previous democratic governments had such as modernizing the national public broadcaster Teleradio-Moldova; ensuring press freedom, media pluralism and adequate conditions for media outlets; encouraging investments in the domestic media market and guaranteeing access to information of public interest. However, in the past year no concrete measures were taken to put these objectives into practice. On the contrary, some initiatives were launched that are threatening the development of the media and freedom of expression such as the intention to reintroduce criminal responsibility for defamation or the intention to introduce nontransparent regulation of the Internet.

Working conditions. The situation of the press between 3 May 2013 and 3 May 2014 has been affected by frequent cases of verbal attacks against journalists by politicians. There were also threats and physical aggression against journalists by individuals and restrictions of journalists' access to events of public interest.

The most eloquent example is the limitation of journalists' access to the plenary sessions of Parliament. Media representatives have been required to stay in a separate room in the renovated Parliament building without access to the meeting room while video footage from meetings is shown on the various screens installed in this room. Camera operators are thus unable to film plenary sessions themselves, and they have no control over the views/filming angles of the videos shown on the screens. These technical conditions impede the work of journalists. Both the parliamentary leadership and the leaders of parliamentary majority groups have promised on several occasions to restore the access of the press to the meeting room; however, their promises have not yet materialized into concrete actions.

On 18 June 2013, a group of MPs registered a draft law amending Article 25 of the Law on Government, proposing to terminate online broadcasts of government meetings. The

draft was adopted on the first reading on 18 October 2013. In the opinion of a number of journalists and media outlets, the cessation of online broadcasting will affect the transparency of decision making.

In early 2014, a number of cable operators removed certain TV channels from their basic packages or transferred them to other packages. The channels excluded claimed violations of bilateral contracts signed with service providers, the political nature of these decisions, unfair competition and the limitation of freedom of expression in the broadcasting market. Subsequently, with the involvement of civil society the decisions have been repealed. This situation once again revealed the deficiencies of the Broadcasting Code, and if they are not removed such situations might be repeated.

The legal framework. Between 3 May 2013 and 3 May 2014, no laws or amendments were adopted to correct legislative deficiencies, especially to prevent the monopolization of the media and advertising markets or to ensure transition to digital terrestrial television and the media coverage of elections. Several proposals to amend the Broadcasting Code were registered including a proposal to create an efficient mechanism to implement the law on media ownership transparency and public access to information. The proposed new broadcasting code produced by civil society and sent to Parliament back in 2011 was registered as a legislative initiative. Considering the delays in adopting these drafts, media organizations are skeptical about their adoption by the current Parliament given the contradiction between the declared openness of MPs and their actual efforts.

Public broadcaster. The reporting period was marked by some positive changes at Teleradio-Moldova including in programming and on the webpage; however, the company is undergoing a confusing process of reform with measures launched in 2011 at a standstill. The new salary system has not yet been implemented while digitalization is receiving no funding although it is to be completed by 2015. In late 2013, the Supervisory Board of Teleradio-Moldova lost six of its members thus rendering it unable to make decisions. In December, following a public contest, the Broadcasting Coordinating Council selected and presented 12 candidates to Parliament, but the new members have not yet been selected.

Concentration/monopolization of the media. Moldova still has no media outlets that are sufficiently independent politically and economically to offer fair, objective and balanced information to the public. This situation is due to the fact that a large number of media outlets are owned or controlled by politicians, and they can not remain viable in the media market without the “protection” and financial support of their owners/benefactors. Information about media owners and ownership is not available and, as a result, the journalists who want to cover topics concerning media ownership have to rely on suppositions and connections that can be inferred from editorial policies.

In the past year, media experts requested the adoption of legislative measures that would limit media concentration and exclude unfair competition but to no avail. The continued monopolization of media outlets will lead to their transformation into tools for the economic and political interests of owners and to political and economic blackmail to the detriment of fair reporting. As a consequence, the main role of the media as a “watchdog” to inform society and to monitor the government will be distorted.

Recommendations:

To ensure the true freedom of the press in accordance with the principles of an open democratic society and in line with international standards, Moldovan authorities should:

- o Implement the objectives of the government program;
- o Identify and penalize persons guilty of aggression against journalists, intimidation and harassment of the press, violations of the right of expression and restricting access to information of public interest;
- o Improve media legislation by adopting or amending laws to ensure an adequate environment for the development of independent and plural media. The first steps in this direction should include the following:
 - Repealing the Press Law and transferring its functional provisions not covered by other laws into other legislative acts;
 - Adopting without delay the draft law amending the Broadcasting Code in order to guarantee media ownership transparency and subsequently adopting the draft of the new broadcasting code;
 - Adopting the draft law to amend the Law on Public Procurement by prescribing obligations to ensure the transparency of public procurement in media;
 - Ensuring the transparency of granting and withdrawing broadcasting frequencies and of establishing the mandatory list of programs to be rebroadcast by cable networks while setting clear criteria and conditions for all broadcasters, giving priority to broadcasters producing domestic programs.

Independent Journalism Center
Association of Independent Press
Acces-Info Center
Press Freedom Committee
Electronic Press Association – APEL
Young Journalist Center of Moldova
Association of Independent TV Journalists
Journalistic Investigations Center