

The Press Freedom Report in the Republic of Moldova in 2013

SUMMARY

In 2013 the situation of the media in Moldova did not change radically. According to international media freedom rankings, the freedom of the press in the Republic of 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. However, there were more frequent verbal attacks on journalists by politicians due to the concentration of media ownership and the focus of the media on certain politicians who in their turn expressed their disagreement by trying to influence the media agenda. According to the **Press Freedom Report in the Republic of Moldova in 2013**, the media in the Republic in Moldova was partly free, facing the same problems as in previous years. The media legislation was not harmonized with European norms, it was not adopted a new Broadcasting Code although the Code of 2006 is increasingly inadequate and the reform of the public broadcaster Teleradio-Moldova (TRM) stagnated.

Considered to be the turning point in the European orientation of the Republic of Moldova, 2013 marked two major events: the Pădurea Domnească (Royal Forest) case which caused turmoil in Moldovan society and prompted political changes and the Eastern Partnership Summit held in Vilnius where Moldova initialed the Association Agreement with the European Union (EU). Against this background, relations between the media and public authorities deteriorated given the number of journalists and media outlets verbally attacked by high ranking politicians.

The year 2013 featured a number of events that brought positive changes at the public broadcaster “Teleradio-Moldova”, among which the optimization of the programming and of the webpage. However, the reforms launched in 2011 had stagnated. The new salary system has not been yet implemented, while the digitalization is financially uncovered although it is to be completed by 2015. In the autumn of 2013, the Supervisory Board of “Teleradio-Moldova” had only three members in office, being unable to fulfill its duties. In December, following a public contest, the Broadcast Coordinating Council selected and forwarded to Parliament 12 candidates. The final vote on the six new Supervisory Board members will take place in Parliament.

2013 was a tumultuous year for the regional broadcaster “Teleradio-Găgăuzia”. The leadership of the broadcaster changed.

The more frequent verbal attacks on journalists by politicians affected the situation of the press in 2013. This behavior is due to the concentration of media ownership and the focus of the media on certain politicians who in their turn expressed their disagreement by trying to influence the media agenda. Furthermore, the report mentions that in 2013, the legal framework failed to be improved, with few exceptions concerning the modifications to the Criminal Code of Moldova under which precluding mass media activities and censorship of public media qualify as criminal offenses.

As to the lawsuits against mass media and journalists, for some media outlets 2013 was a quite restless year. A pretty high number of cases against media outlets and journalists brought by both legal and natural persons are pending in national courts.

The situation of the press in the Transnistrian region did not change positively this year. The freedom of the press in the region deteriorated and the number of independent media outlets declined, while the access to information was missing and the conditions for journalists were highly difficult, particularly for foreign journalists.

According to journalists and civil society representatives, the year 2013 was marked by challenges that were dangerous for the development of the mass media and for the freedom of expression that caused stagnation in their development and regress in some cases. The prognosis for 2014 is not optimistic though. Having in mind the political conjuncture, the experts are skeptical about the change of the media status-quo.

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