

РЕЗУЛЬТАТЫ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ

«МАСС-МЕДИА КАЗАХСТАНА:
КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ ИГРОКИ, ВОЗМОЖНОСТИ,
ПОТРЕБНОСТИ И РИСКИ»

ЗЕРТТЕУ НӘТИЖЕЛЕРІ

«ҚАЗАҚСТАН МАСС-МЕДИАСЫ:
НЕГІЗГІ ОЙЫНШЫЛАР, МҮМКІНДІКТЕР,
ҚАЖЕТТІЛІКТЕР МЕН ҚАУІП-ҚАТЕРЛЕР»

RESULTS OF RESEARCH

«KAZAKHSTAN MASS MEDIA:
KEY PARTICIPANTS, POSSIBILITIES,
NEEDS AND RISKS»

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RESULTS OF RESEARCH

■ «KAZAKHSTAN MASS MEDIA:
KEY PARTICIPANTS, POSSIBILITIES,
NEEDS AND RISKS»

INTRODUCTION

The Research «Kazakhstan Mass Media: key participants, possibilities, needs and risks» was carried out in 2009 by the International Centre of Journalism MediaNet under the auspices of Soros Foundation - Kazakhstan. The research covered 10 regions of Kazakhstan (Almaty city, Astana city, Akmolinsky region, Aktyubinsky, Almaty region, Atyrau area, East Kazakhstan, Zhambylsky area, Karaganda region, Kostanajsky region, North Kazakhstan, South Kazakhstan areas).

The principal objective of the research was definition of key needs for development of mass media in the republic, the basic risks of mass media, issuance of recommendations for media and donor community, state authorities and media structures.

About 350 journalists, editors, proprietors of mass media, publishers, representatives of state authorities, non-governmental organizations, state and private educational institutions preparing journalists, have taken part in the research.

The research included three stages:

- During the first stage the information on the key participants of mass media market – print and electronic publications of republican and regional level, was collected and processed;
- During the second stage more than 280 interviews with journalists, editors, proprietors of mass media, publishers, representatives of institutions of higher education, state authorities and nongovernmental organizations in 10 regions of Kazakhstan was carried out; also approximately 70 brief questionnaires was sent and received by e-mail from regional journalists;
- The third stage was the processing and analysis of the information and preparation of recommendations.

During the research its authors used open sources of information, databases of the state authorities, data of mass media. All the extracts from interviews introduced in the final document, were published anonymously.

The basic results of the research which is one of the most large-scale reviews of mass media activity in the republic for the last years, are as follows:

- The research is actually the joint portrait of the republic mass media – journalists as viewed by journalists; at the same time reporters and editors within the research submit their own view of the existing problems and decisions which can be used for the development of mass media;
- The research set the existing key problems of media community;
- The basic needs of mass media which were first of all concentrated in economic and creative areas, have also been defined;
- The key risks of mass media have been revealed.

The analysis of problems, needs, possibilities and risks allows to correct the directions of support of mass-media and the help programs for them carried out by media organizations and donor community. It will also improve the understanding of mass media sphere situation among journalists and editors and other interested parties – state authorities, nongovernmental organizations, institutions of higher education, international and local media structures.

The final document is the review of key conclusions from the research which are divided into blocks according to the covered questions. The document also includes the review of media landscape of the country and the recommendations prepared based on the results of the research.

The findings and conclusions from the research do not necessarily represent the point of view of its authors and Soros Foundation - Kazakhstan, but result from the review of the opinions collected during the project work.

THE MEDIA LANDSCAPE OF KAZAKHSTAN

Mass media in Kazakhstan

In Kazakhstan, there are more than 2970 registered acting mass media out of which more than 200 are electronic¹. Mass media are concentrated mainly in cities – the capital, Almaty and the regional centers. At the same time the regional newspapers of the limited circulation are still issued.

The bulk of publications (more than 85-90 %) in Kazakhstan are non-governmental. The state publications work in all regions of the country under the auspices of local akimats (executive bodies) and maslikhats (representative bodies). In Astana and Almaty, several state republican newspapers and magazines are published, the republican state television and radio stations broadcast.

At the same time, in spite of the official statistics showing that the majority of the publications in Kazakhstan are independent, the bulk of mass media are loyal to the state authorities due to the familiarity of mass media owners with state authorities, receipt of public funds by mass media and other reasons.

During the last years there is the popular practice of public contract in mass media, irrespective of the form of their property, republican and local state authorities tender for publication of socially crucial information on various themes in mass media. Mass media submit applications for the tender and those mass media usually win who are loyal to the state authorities. In 2009, mass-media have received an order of 1,1 billion tenge (7,3 million US dollars)² within the public contract from the Ministry of Culture and Information of Kazakhstan. Thereat, the same editions receive the public contract for the state information policy every year.

The proprietors of mass media in Kazakhstan are often the commercial corporations, financial and industrial groups, in the regions - usually large and medium businessmen. As a rule, the proprietors do not reveal the information that they are the owners of mass media: the official proprietors are the private companies or intermediators.

In the republic there are several large media holdings which are owned by the financial and industrial groups or large businessmen. Public mass media are also grouped into holdings («Arna media» holding - TV channels «Khabar», «El Arna», «Kazakhstan», CaspioNet, radio stations «Kazakh radio», «Khabar», «Shalkar», newspapers «Kazakhstanskaya pravda», «Eguemen Kazakhstan», news agency «Kazinform» etc.), and the mass media owned by the governing party «Nur Otan» (TV channel «Astana», radio stations NS and RDV, newspapers «Liter», «Aikyn», «Turkestan» etc.) are also united into holding. Other holdings are not the formal structures.

In Kazakhstan, the division into supporting government and oppositional mass media is widespread, at the same time the last group includes

1. The data of the Ministry of Culture and Information of Kazakhstan Republic of September, 2009.

2. The data are received from the site of the Ministry of Culture and Information of Kazakhstan Republic.

no more than 10 newspapers which are published under the auspices of opposition parties and activists. There are practically no neutral mass media in the country – support of some political or financial group is notable and it can be seen in publications and their tonality. Or mass media prefer apolitical view, trying to keep away from dangerous themes.

Despite the undertaken efforts the gap between Kazakh and Russian speaking mass media of the republic which exist almost as in parallel worlds during the last years, is not reduced. The mass media published in two main languages of the country, do not collaborate and cooperate except for those publishing houses which have newspapers or magazines in Kazakh and Russian languages. But even in these editorial offices the cooperation between Russian and Kazakh speaking journalists is minimal.

It also influences on the content of the publications which sometime can be opposite – the Kazakh language mass media do not discuss the problems which are usually touched by the Russian speaking publications and on the contrary. It results in worse or even contradictory informing of people and increasing misunderstanding between different language groups.

Besides, there is the discord in thematic preferences, views of coverage, professionalism of Kazakh and Russian speaking mass media.

Republican mass media

Not less than quarter of all mass media in Kazakhstan are republican. The print mass media are distributed via public and private networks of distribution, electronic mass media use the public aerial networks, broadcasting via cable networks and satellite becomes more popular.

Less than 10 aerial TV channels in Kazakhstan cover broadcasting for more than half of the republic population (public TV channels «Khabar», «Kazakhstan» and «El Арна», private KTK (Commercial Television Channel), NTK (New Television Channel), «Rakhat», «7th channel», “Astana” and «31 channel»). Approximately half of these channels broadcast from Astana, the rest - from Almaty.

The most of republican print mass media have central offices in Almaty and are printed in large printing shops of Almaty and regions (mainly, Karaganda, Aktobe, Shymkent).

The overwhelming majority of the republican mass media position themselves as social and political i.e. universal covering almost all themes, in the republic there are about 20 acting well-known business editions (newspapers and magazines).

According to the official information, there are more than 10 acting news

agencies in Kazakhstan. At the same time, five agencies are large, the majority of them have central offices in Almaty (except for the public «Kazinform» and joint Russia-Kazakhstan agency “News-Kazakhstan”).

All republican print and electronic editions have large correspondent’s offices in Astana and the network of stringers (out-of-staff correspondents) in the majority of Kazakhstan regions, at the same time just some editions have correspondents abroad.

Regional mass media

In all Kazakhstan regions there are all in all not less than 50 public and private acting mass media. At the same time, in a number of regions the quantity of print and electronic mass media considerably exceeds the existing number of mass media in other regions. It depends to a large extent on the quantity of people and concentration of pressure groups (large financial groups, enterprises, business) which are usually the owners of local mass media, in a region.

So, the leading regions by the number of mass media in Kazakhstan are Karaganda region, Pavlodar region, Aktyubinsk region, South Kazakhstan, East Kazakhstan and Atyrau region¹ where many publications known for their professionalism and authority not only in these regions but also outside, are concentrated.

The outsiders by the number of mass media are Kyzylorda region and North Kazakhstan where there are far less of mass media than in other regions which can be explained by a smaller number of population in comparison with other regions.

In the republic for the last years there is the obvious separation of regions and the mass media published in them, by a language principle. In south and western regions of the country there are much more of newspapers published in Kazakh language, in north, center and east – in Russian. At the same time, in a number of regions (for example, in Kyzylorda region) the broadcasting is in national language since it is the need of the population, mainly the ethnic Kazakhs.

At the republican level the Russian language editions which number exceeds the quantity of the Kazakh language newspapers and magazines, remain the leader position among print editions. However from the middle of 2000s there is the tendency of increasing the number of Kazakh language editions and reduction of Russian language publications that is caused by the increase in number of the national language-speaking population.

1. Analysis of the open sources – data bases, information from the state authorities and non-governmental organizations.

Internet media

In the republic, according to the information of 2008, about 14 % of population is the Internet users¹. Upon the growth of Internet users' number there is also the increase of Internet editions. At the same time the majority of them position themselves as infotainment rather than social and political.

Internet versions of print editions (for example, "Time" ("Vremya"), "Liter" newspapers) are also popular. Newspapers usually do not prepare special materials for online version, they just publish the materials of the print version. Readers are attracted by the possibility of commenting the articles.

The popularity of Internet resources which have been working for 5 and more years, collect and distribute news and analytical materials about the situation in Kazakhstan and abroad, has considerably increased.

The number of bloggers – the authors of network diaries - has also been increasing for the last two years. New blogs are being opened now as on the earlier known resources, such as Livejournal.com (its popularity is decreasing due to the constant blocking in Kazakhstan since October, 2008) or LiveInternet, but also on the local resources opened rather recently. The majority of network publications are devoted to everyday life problems and events, less frequently authors of the diaries write about politics and economics.

Incline to the entertaining content is distinguished in the majority of Internet resources in Kazakhstan that can be explained by the inquiry from the users which are mainly the young people, as well as the popularity of the operating social-political resources which are difficult to compete with.

After rough debates and acceptance of the amendments to the legislation on the information and communicative networks (Law on Internet) in Kazakhstan in August, 2009, there is strong anxiety about the possible introduction of censorship on the Internet, which is indirectly proved¹ by the introduction of pre-moderation on many resources, increase in number of moderators and strict rules of registration, sending of messages and commenting on sites. At the same time it is impossible now to evaluate the negative effect of the new law on the activity of bloggers – the civil journalists – who were also rather close-tongued in description of political events in the country before introduction of the amendments.

1. The data of the Agency of Informatization and Connection of Kazakhstan Republic

Media organizations

There are more than 15 active republican and regional non-governmental organizations in Kazakhstan who proclaim their mission to be the assistance to the development of freedom of speech and mass media.

Media organizations render the legal aid to journalists (International Fund of Protection of Freedom of Speech «Adil Soz», MEDIALIFE fund in Karaganda etc.), implement training programs for the journalists qualifications upgrade (International Centre of Journalism MediaNet, «Internews-Kazakhstan», the North Kazakhstan Legal Media Centre etc.). Organizations implement several projects at once in various directions.

In Kazakhstan there is no professional union of journalists which would be aimed at assertion of the journalists' labor rights. In the republic there is the professional association of mass media workers – the Union of Journalists of Kazakhstan, as well as the organization which unites the electronic mass media – National Association of Broadcasters. Several international non-governmental media organizations – the representations of Internews Network, Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) etc., work in Kazakhstan.

The majority of non-governmental organizations work on the grants of local and international donor organizations, such as Soros Foundation - Kazakhstan, OSCE Center in Astana, Friedrich-Ebert Fund, embassies of the Great Britain, USA, Netherlands, USAID etc. The media organizations in regions also participate in tenders for the public social contract that the republican organizations do less frequently.

DEVELOPMENT OF MASS MEDIA IN KAZAKHSTAN

Kazakhstan mass media actively progressed in the early 1990s after proclaiming the independence of the country. Every year new editions appeared and tried to attract the reader by outstanding materials and new forms of journalism. At present the majority of those editions do not exist any more, upon that several the most remarkable editions which represented independent journalism of Kazakhstan, for example, "Caravan" newspaper which has undergone set of changes and shifts of owners since 1991 when it had started to be published, are still working.

In the end of 1990s, many of the independent TV and radio stations which were popular and independently criticized the state authority, had to close. Since this moment when their place was taken by new electronic mass media or the old ones had been significantly changed, TV and radio of Kazakhstan had practically ceased to be considered independent and critical.

During the research it was being determined how the mass media varied for the last three-five years based on the opinion of mass media workers, representatives of state authorities and the non-governmental organizations, teachers of higher educational institutions. The majority of the respondents agreed that there had not been any considerable changes in mass media.

More than half of the interrogated (53 %) people stated that they had not been noticing any development of mass media in Kazakhstan. One of the main reasons for that is considered to be the absence of sufficient financing as well as the strict limits which the journalists are exposed to.

«Mass-media develop poorly. There is the obvious lack of good mass media. There are no any conditions that help strong development. There is the obvious regress on TV and radio»¹.

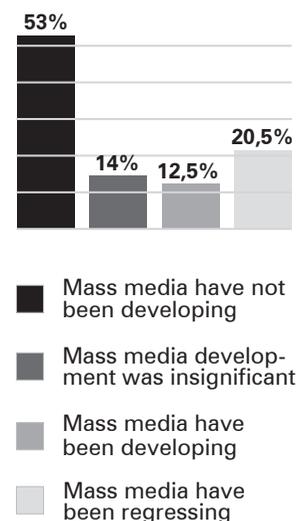
«Mass media have been staying for a long time at one and the same level. In some media there is the regress because the society becomes more and more closed..

«The public mass media are at one level of development since there are coordination».

«Journalists of the public mass media do not need to be occupied with their professional duties, i.e. search for the truth and submit unbiased materials. They only have to follow the instructions of their management and give positive materials about the government, authorities, officials. Therefore, the journalists professionally degrade».

Thus, upon the estimation of how the mass-media will develop the next years the opinions of the interrogated respondents are divided into two approximately equal groups (about fifty-fifty). So, little more than a half of the respondents think that mass media will develop, little less than

Development of mass media



1. From now on – citations from the personal interviews and focus groups carries out during the research

a half does not expect any considerable progress in mass media. Both groups agree that the development of mass media will be influenced by two factors: financial and political.

So, many editors and proprietors of mass media specified that they had to close new projects, give up the plans of development of their mass media due to serious reduction of advertising and financing volumes in comparison with the previous years. Some part of the editors and proprietors noted that they were ready to introduce new ideas after being assured of returning of the previous volumes of advertising.

Journalists and editors also specified that the development of mass media greatly depends on a political situation in the country and readiness of the state authorities to give mass media more freedom.

Editors considered the tendency for more control of mass media, especially electronic mass media, by the government, to be alarming. At the same time, many editors agreed that in case of derestriction of mass media by the state authorities, many mass media could become more popular and prepare much more interesting and informative materials.

The majority of the interrogated respondents agreed that the next years regardless of the crisis, there would be the technical development of mass media which had also been noticeable during the previous years. The representatives of print editions expected improvement of design and imposition of publications, journalists of electronic mass media - quality of broadcasting as well as the development of a satellite and cable broadcasting which was the strong competitor to the aerial TV channels and radio stations.

Journalists also noted that they expected growth of Internet projects which would meet the requirements of society and would not be only entertaining.

At the same time the majority of experts considered that the audience of mass media would remain rather passive the next years and would not require the improvement of quality of analytical information, expressing interest only to current events.

FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE OF MASS MEDIA

Kazakhstan is traditionally qualified as the country where mass media is not free. The republic constantly takes the last places in the lists of Freedom House human rights organizations and «Reporters without borders», many international organizations note that mass media in the country work under the control of the authorities, journalists can not freely describe political, economic and public events and the phenomena. Upon that, the situation of mass media freedom in Kazakhstan have been constantly deteriorating during the last five years.

The research showed that Kazakhstan journalists and experts in media sphere held the same view as the international researchers and organizations. Reporters and editors regardless of the form of ownership of the editions they work in, noticed that it was impossible to consider mass media in their regions and in republic as a whole, to be free.

«Probably on the certain themes journalists write independently, but in general - no. Because mass media are not considered as business projects».

«No, I do not consider mass media to be free. And this is not due to pressure or intimidation of journalists by the authorities, but because of the fact that editorial bodies are afraid to outrun some limits which they established by themselves. Many journalists do not have such culture – to ask questions, they write only what speakers say».

«Mass media are free within the order and wish of the authorities, founders. But, there are more impartial mass media, there are very few of them».

«Any mass media is owned by somebody and carries out any certain policy».

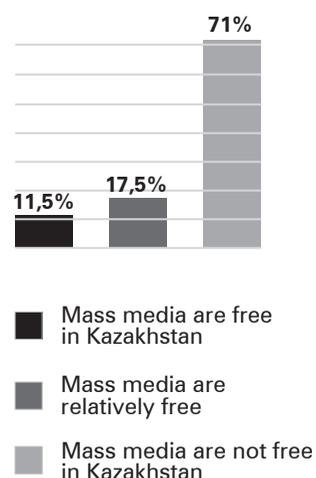
Many interrogated editors and journalists noticed that the concept of mass media independence was relative, some part of them said that freedom of mass media did not exist at all, but the absolute majority agreed that the Kazakhstan mass media – both republican and regional – is not free.

Censorship and self-censorship

The overwhelming majority of the Kazakhstan media specialists (more than 65 %) are sure that the censorship in Kazakhstan exists to a greater or lesser degree. Upon that, almost all reporters, editors and proprietors specify that the main problem in this sphere in the republic is not the censorship in its classical understanding, but self-censorship of journalists.

Journalists note that it is already a long time that the authorities do not need to check up all materials issued in various editions, since reporters and editors know well those frames which exist in editions. Correspondents of several state editions and TV channels noted that they had a list

Freedom of mass-media



of persons and the themes that could not appear in publications or on TV. Besides, some part of editors told that they constantly kept in touch with the representatives of one or another state authority (their level depends on an edition caliber) for correction of materials.

Almost half of the interrogated respondents consider self-censorship to be one of the main problems of journalists. Editors also note that reporters are afraid to prepare articles and reportages about social and political problems as it can lead to lawsuit, claims from officials and loss of job.

Besides, proprietors and editors noted that they were not ready to risk and publish problem materials because of the possibility to lose financing i.e. the state social contract that confirmed the existing and pronounced fears, that introduction of the state social contract had become some kind of a block for development of the independent mass media.

«Direct censorship does not exist. The censorship exists in such a form when proprietors, editors, publishers, journalists – everybody perfectly understand the consequences of the publication of one or another material. This is the reason of the self-censorship».

Influence on mass-media

Upon the estimation of different powers influence on mass media, opinions of the interrogated within the research representatives of mass media divided approximately into fifty-fifty. About third of them noticed that mass media were largely influenced by the proprietor, about 40 % of the respondents noted that the greatest influence was rendered by the authorities.

Characterizing such influence, journalists marked it to be more likely negative, since the authorities and proprietors usually set limitations to journalists and editors in a choice of themes and freedom of events description.

Editors also specified that business as the principal advertiser imposing its conditions, increased its influence on mass media, in this connection mass media had to limit publications because of concerns to lose earnings from advertising.

At the same time, the interrogated respondents considered that the least influence on mass media was exerted by the editor who, as per their opinion, extremely rare defined a policy of the edition.

Part of the interrogated respondents specifying that influence on mass-media is rendered first of all by its proprietor, mark it as the positive factor, since it is his function to establish and maintain partnerships with the authorities and business, and it is the proprietor who works as a kind of shield protecting the edition from attempts of external pressure.

INFLUENCE OF MASS MEDIA

Mass media in the different countries act as the observer or the active player on a political and public field, supervising politicians and public figures and making comments on their actions. Not only in Kazakhstan, but also in the Central Asia, the role of mass media is more likely to inform population about the events and phenomena, journalists extremely rare act as analysts and experts predicting development of events.

The majority of the interrogated respondents noticed during the research that mass-media in the Kazakhstan society did not play the role which they could play.

«Mass media can solve small problems, help people. The main thing is to keep away from politics, from the big politics. The big politics begins already from akim of a region».

«The authorities defer to mass media, the local authorities consider mass media to be the assistant, prompter, react to publications».

«Mass media can only state events, there is no profound analysis and ways to solve problems, there are no expert opinions on mass-media field».

«Mass media do not have any more that role in a society that it had earlier. Many people already imagine who owns the specific mass media. If earlier people did not fully understand who lobbies whose interests, now many readers, viewers already understand that one newspaper defends interests of opposition, another – the government, therefore the trust to mass media has been shaken».

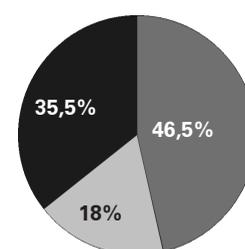
«It is a long time that mass media is not the authority among people. Sometimes the audience knows more than you».

Upon that, part of the interrogated representatives of media sphere thinks that the role which at present mass media of the republic plays, is sufficient enough for rendering influence on solving the problems. The majority of reporters and editors also noted that mass media still influence on the formation of public opinion: citizens defer to journalists.

Trust to mass-media

During the research the interrogated respondents also answered the question on how much, in their opinion, the audience trusts the Kazakhstan mass media. More than 60 % of media sphere workers are absolutely sure that readers and viewers trust mass media, approximately 20 % believe that the audience trust mass-media, but not always, the others are sure that it is a long time that there is no trust in journalists in a society.

Role of mass-media in a society



- Mass media do not have any role
- Role of mass media is insignificant
- Mass media have serious role in the society

Thus, the majority of the interrogated respondents nevertheless tend to think that the mass media are more trusted than are held in distrust in a society.

At the same time, upon estimation of the level the mass-media influenced on the decision-makers, the majority of journalists noted that mass media almost did not render such influence. Officials rarely see mass media as allies or opponents, and more often prefer not to notice work of journalists, or sceptically consider activity of mass-media. Limitation of activity of many editions to information function and considerable reduction of volumes and level of analytics in mass media conduce to it.

«There are some mass media which the authorities and society defer to. But the matter of trust in mass media I put in doubt».

«Mass media are trusted by simple readers. They actively apply with their problems, questions. There is a mutual support between us and the population».

«Mass media are powerful only in some certain problems, the serious problems are not settled».

«The trust in mass media to a large extent depends on education, place of work, standard of living of the audience – that certain reader who is considered as the object of influence. In the cities people are more critical, in regions mass media are traditionally trusted».

At the same time the interrogated respondents note that in each region and at the republican level there is a number of editions which are considered to be influential, after the publications in these editions some problems can be solved or officials may react to the existing situation.

Journalists pointed out such mass media almost in each region, upon that, usually private editions were mentioned – newspapers and TV channels having big circulation or geographical coverage of audience. The state editions which, as per the interrogated respondents, the population treated more likely with distrust rather than trusted them, were named less frequently.

At the same time, many regional journalists, editors and proprietors noted that the republican mass media were nevertheless much more influential and could rise and discuss those problems which could not touch regional mass media. Reporters often pointed out that those mass media became influential which raised the most acute problems, carried out journalistic investigations and published critical materials. Such editions more often provoked interest of simple people and officials.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Access to information remains one of the most considerable problems for Kazakhstan mass media. It is still extremely difficult for journalists to receive information from the state authorities.

The interrogated journalists and editors point out that the laws on mass-media and public service regarding submission of the necessary and required information to reporters actually do not work. State bodies do not observe the time established by the law and sometimes absolutely ignore inquiries from editions or provide formal replies which cannot be used for preparation of a material.

There is still a problem of oral comments reception from officials by phone, the majority of large government officials ask for the inquiries in written form, and the answers to the enquiries are extremely slow therefore the materials lose applicability.

Another problem is unwillingness of the state authorities to work with critical and oppositional editions as well as with the journalists who prepare problem materials. Only the journalists of the state editions noted that it was seldom that they had problems with access to the information – state authorities usually willingly answered to their inquiries, not being afraid of a negative or critical view. Such selective treatment of mass media creates unequal work conditions for journalists.

«Notwithstanding that we co-operate with Akimates, press offices, sometimes it is difficult to get information, this is not due to some negative relation of government to mass media but because of their inability to perform their work properly. In some structures there is no well established work with mass media».

«In our country it is very difficult to get information from the state authorities. Before you get to a minister it is necessary to reach the as sistant of his assistant».

«We do not face some special difficulties upon access to the information, except the cases when the person who should know, does not know and starts to send from one office to another. You simply waste time and then find out that this specialist actually knows nothing. State authorities may give the information if there is some advantage for them. If it is a problem material, then only by written inquiries which are answered by formal replies».

«The basic difficulty is bureaucracy and sometimes unwillingness to contact. State authorities do not want to give the information which does not paint them».

«Written inquiry to the state authorities is a losing matter; they will answer too late or provide incomplete information. Though, it depends on the question: praising can be received right now, they may even call to make personal interview but the problem question will cause suspicion and fear».

One more problem upon access to the information is considered to be the lack of experts on different themes which can be commented by journalists. Upon that, the interrogated respondents note that it is the extremely difficult for them to increase such list of contacts, especially in regions: the journalists working there had to apply for comments to the experts in other cities, particularly, in Almaty and Astana.

PREPARATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF JOURNALISTS

The representatives of Kazakhstan media sphere consider staff deficit and unprofessionalism of journalists to be one of the main problems in the field of mass media. Upon that, this problem, in their opinion, increases every year.

The journalists consider one of the principal reasons of the journalistic unprofessionalism to be the low educational level, limitation of the professional activity of journalists in the republic by information work and shortage of professional development programs for reporters and editors.

Journalists point out that in higher education institutions students receive insufficient knowledge of the modern journalism requirements and realities, and the graduates of education institutions are actually re-educated when start to work in editions. Thereupon, editors specified the necessity of a closer work with high schools and update of their programs making it more accented on practice than on theoretical preparation.

Less than 65 % of the interrogated during the research respondents are familiar with the activity of the media organizations working in various regions of the country. Approximately half of all participants of the research attended various training programs.

Reporters and editors, marking the great demand for retraining and professional development, noted the insufficiency of the level offered them by the non-governmental organizations.

«The trainings conducted by the non-governmental organizations, are often more suitable for the graduates of high schools than for professional journalists, so it turns out, that if you have an experience, you attend the trainings only to exchange, share some knowledge but you receive almost nothing».

Media experts also marked the necessity of more focused work of high schools as well as the media organizations on some specific directions of journalism, mainly in the field of business journalism and in the legal sphere. Notwithstanding the fact that there are a lot of programs in this sphere, many editions still require development of competence in the legal sphere. Journalists note that they do not have sufficient information on how they can protect themselves in case of filing lawsuit against them or accusation of slander.

Many editors and journalists underline that they are ready to be teachers of high schools and trainers as the majority of editions require new qualified staff and, thus, there is now a problem of finding them and preparation.

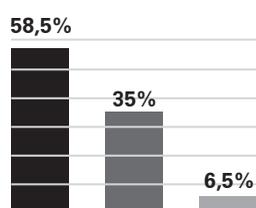
THE LEGISLATION ON MASS MEDIA

The legislation on Kazakhstan mass media includes the big block of laws regulating the matters of the journalists and editions activity, establish responsibility for offences. There is the criminal responsibility for the slander in the republic, at present one journalist serves sentence on the impeachment for slander in the institution of confinement¹.

The overwhelming majority of media experts participating in the research, noted that they were familiar with the legislation on mass media and consider it to be necessary to introduce there a number of changes.

More than 70 % of the interrogated respondents consider the law to be imperfect. Many of them noted that the law on mass media was not necessary at all, or, regardless of the way the law is going to be, emphasized that the document would not work.

How much you are you familiar with the law on mass media?



- I know the law on mass media well
- I know just some articles of the law
- I do not know the law on mass media

«There are too many prohibitions and limiting things which do not allow journalism to move to a high level».

«There are a lot of defects in the law. There are some points which almost do not work in actual practice».

«It is difficult to consider the Kazakhstan legislation on mass-media to be liberal, it is more likely a kind of stopper for journalists. There are a lot of norms which forbid and very little which grant rights».

«The part of the law on mass media which obliges the government officials to give mass media the information, actually does not work. It has already been a long time that this block needed amending or it was necessary to enact the new law».

Journalists criticize the Kazakhstan legislation on mass media for uncertainty and inflexibility as well as for lack of the norms which would support mass media in case of information search or access to it.

The media community also marks the inadequacy of the punishment provided by the legislation for slander, as well as the absence of restrictions – of the sum of indemnifications and limitation periods – in the suits to defend honor and dignity.

Thereupon, the interrogated journalists and editors pointed out the amending of two blocks of Kazakhstan legislation on mass media.

The first one is enactment of the specialized law on access to information which would oblige officials (some part of the journalists also mentioned business structures) to answer quickly to the inquiries of journalists and to provide the demanded socially significant information. Upon that, the interrogated respondents specified the necessity to provide for the sanctions on the infringers of this principle.

1. Journalist from the North Kazakhstan, Vadim Kuramshin, was condemned for slander for 3 years and 10 months.

The second one is decriminalization of punishments for slander, limitation of the sums of penalties for damaging honor, dignity and business reputation as well as the establishing of the limitation periods in such matters.

Besides, journalists suggested making the laws on the state secret and bank secret which seriously limit work of reporters putting at hazard performance of journalists' professional duties, more exact. In particular, the interrogated respondents consider that journalists cannot be made liable for disclosure of secrets as they receive the information from the source¹.

Journalists also suggest refusing from, as they think, currently existing «unnecessary restrictions» for registration and activity of new mass media. In particular, the legislation restrict the foreigners right to possess shares in the Kazakhstan mass media to the level of 20 %, the foreign citizens cannot be the editors of the Kazakhstan publications etc.

The interrogated respondents also critically treat the recently enacted law on the Internet, and offer to change it having been excluding blogs and other Internet resources from among the mass media or to repeal the law as it has not introduced any positive changes but only entered new additional restrictions not only for Internet community but also for mass media.

1. In 2009, Ramazan Eserguepov - the editor-in-chief of the newspaper «Alma-Ata info», was condemned for three years of imprisonment for disclosure of the state secrets. The disclosure performed in the form of publication of the letter from the Director of the National Security Committee Department of Zhambyl region to the head of the republic National Security Committee. It became the first case in the history of the Kazakhstan journalism when the journalist had been condemned by such article.

SELF-REGULATION OF MASS MEDIA

In Kazakhstan for the last ten years there have been several attempts to develop the ethical code of journalists, and none of its was successful. Only in some editions of mass media in the republic there are own ethical rules or codes.

The Kazakhstan journalists are quite often exposed to criticism from public organizations, authorities and simple citizens for infringement of the elementary ethical standards which is expressed in the publication of screaming headings, offensive or immoral photos or the materials which discredit honor and dignity. Editions consider the majority of such claims to be inconsistent.

Meanwhile, the volume of claims to mass media for indemnification of moral harm from publications, increases every year. Such claims are often used as the way to put out of business the annoying mass media, but also the cause for the claims is quite often the unethical publications in mass media.

Journalists of the republic sceptically treat the idea of working out the uniform professional Code of ethics, considering such document to be hardly working, and some editions may continue to break ethical standards to fit the current situation.

«The Journalist Code of Ethics is Utopia».

«Each edition should simply have its own set of rules which would allow new journalists appearing in editions, to pattern his/her way of writing within the edition».

«It would be quite good to have such ethical code, but it is difficult to imagine how to make it work».

Journalists of many editions note that they cope with problems without any ethical code, being guided upon writing of materials by the elementary norms of morals.

Some part of journalists considers that the code of ethics can become one more stopper for mass media, and, consequently, may be used by the authorities to hinder journalists and editions from their professional work. Thereupon, in case of such document acceptance, the journalists recommend to discuss it thoroughly in order its norms helped the journalists in the future but not hindered.

Attitude to the bodies of mass media self-regulation

For the last years the bodies of mass media self-regulation have been established and working mainly in the countries of Europe which have

considerable democratic traditions. As a rule, in these countries claims to mass media with the requirement of moral harm indemnification are something unusual, and the sums of penalties are small or not used at all.

Self-regulation bodies which receive appeals from citizens and organizations against publications in mass media, consider them and impose fines upon mass media, or refuse to applicants, thus, regulating the arising disputes.

The research showed that the Kazakhstan media community practically did not know what the self-regulation bodies were and just had heard that such organizations existed abroad.

Journalists of only one area of Kazakhstan - Karaganda region, are well informed on the self-regulation bodies where the first republican social council considering the claims to mass media, is working now ¹.

Journalists as a whole are rather critical about the idea of establishing the mass-media self-regulation bodies which would be engaged in consideration of disputes between editions and citizens or legal entities.

The interrogated respondents noted that they could not imagine the form such bodies would be established in. One of the main questions for journalists is who will be a member of such a body, what basis its members will be elected on, whether the council decisions will be obligatory for execution.

Reporters and editors doubt the competence of the councils and its objectivity as they do not see in the regions and at the republican level a lot of compromise and competent persons who could suit all mass media.

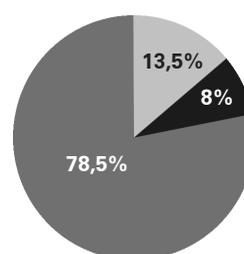
Less than third of the interrogated respondents marked that they were ready to trust the decisions of such councils and follow them. Many editions noted that they could make the decision whether they would participate in such a work only when they obtained a fuller picture of establishing and functioning of such councils.

Establishment of journalists' trade union

The overwhelming majority of mass media editions in Kazakhstan have no trade unions. In the republic there is only one professional association of mass media employees – the Union of Journalists of Kazakhstan which is not the classical trade union.

Meanwhile, the overwhelming majority of media sphere representatives do not consider it to be necessary to establish Kazakhstan trade union

Do you know what the bodies of mass media self-regulation are?

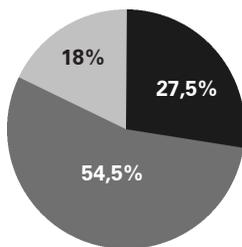


- I know it well
- I do not know
- I know but slightly

1. The council was established by the social fund MediaLife, www.medialife.kz

of journalists since they think that it will not manage, firstly, to unite all workers of the sphere and, secondly, to become really working structure.

Whether it is necessary to create the trade union of journalists in Kazakhstan



- Yes
- No
- I do not know

«Journalism is not the profession that everybody has a worthy trade union. We tried to establish something like that, but we had not received response from management and even not all our employees went in for that».

«The trade union is necessary only for young journalists».

«The similar organizations are created from time to time, but then they disappear. In my opinion, the specific character of the creative profession does not allow to create steady and stable trade union».

«Any general professional trade union would stand us in good stead. The question is that on our end the trade unions as a whole play an insignificant role because they are managed by inactive people. It could be possible to establish trade union, but whether it is necessary»?

The interrogated respondents as a whole note that they can not imagine the uniform republican trade union of journalists which, in case of its establishment, most likely, will not be well working structure.

At the same time, journalists note that it does not cancel the fact that it is necessary to protect the labor rights of journalists, especially in regions of the republic where they are very often violated. Thereupon, probably, it is necessary to discuss creation of local trade union organizations which would work with small group of journalists.

NEEDS OF MASS MEDIA

Almost all Kazakhstan journalists think that mass media need improvement of their quality. It can be obtained, first of all, via the development of professionalism of journalists and editors.

The overwhelming majority (over 90 %) of the media sphere experts interrogated within the research, noted that they were interested to attend trainings and seminars in various fields. Upon that, the specified range of such training programs occurred to be quite broad.

The most part of journalistic audience is interested in business journalism. Reporters and editors note that they have serious vacancies in knowledge of financial sector, work of banks, functioning of financial institutions, they poorly know macroeconomics and some of them do not know the economic processes as a whole.

The big group of journalists is interested in learning the legal sphere – issues of mass media activity regulation, ways of a legal protection of journalists, court work and legal methodologies.

Besides, journalists and editors consider the following themes to be interesting and worth learning: the international standards of journalism, ways of the foreign editions work, international journalism, ecological journalism, political review, coverage of conflicts, social questions.

Approximately 60 % of editors and proprietors of mass media noted that they were ready to learn mass media management as they see vacancies in knowledge of this sphere.

Editors also noted that they were ready to assist in increase of the educational level in universities/institutes as they were interested in new professionals to come for work – graduates of educational institutions.

Media experts, together with the creative requirements, put also economic needs of editions on the first/second places. Journalists and editors noted that there was the necessity to increase a number of advertisers, improve relations with business and create conditions for the long-term relations between editions and business structures.

Thereupon, the necessity to improve work of commercial and advertising departments of editions and increase level of their professionalism via the new training programs was specified. At present, only the limited number of editions can afford to attend such master classes due to its high cost and small number of the programs.

Besides, editors also spoke for the establishment or development of some special councils which members would be the representatives of editions and business structures, and within its frameworks they could enter into and discuss cooperation.

Only the small number of editions noted that they had acute technical needs, such as improvement of material resources, purchase of new equipment. Regional and small editions usually have such needs, they mark the necessity to update the equipment which they use for work, and one of the purposes is a purchase of their own printing shop due to high prices for the services of the printing shops where they print their publications.

In Kazakhstan there are almost no editions which would independently participate in the grant programs of the international donor organizations and offer their own projects directed on the development of different directions of journalism. Upon that, over 70 % of the editions are interested in participation in such programs and are ready to direct to donors the applications with project proposals, as the editions constantly generate and discuss new ideas.

KEY RISKS OF MASS MEDIA

Risks of the mass media in Kazakhstan are concentrated in two fields: politics and economics. Upon that, these are the economic risks which journalists and editors consider to be the key risks for editions.

So, more than 60 % of the respondents interrogated during the research, noted that the basic risks for their editions was the loss of advertising or financing. It could result in closing of editions or the essential reduction of its staff. Upon that, editors and proprietors pointed out that the influence of the economic risks considerably increased during the last one and a half or two years. Only 20 % of the interrogated respondents considered the financial situation of their editions to be stable, the others mentioned that they knew about the problems due to the reduction of advertising volume and leaving of advertisers, in particular, the construction companies and banks.

The Kazakhstan media community, specifying the advantage of the current situation, notes that after the crisis in the market there are to be only the strong players who can keep reader and advertiser due to use of the new interesting approaches and forms of presenting the information.

At the same time, many editions note that they need to improve quality of management against the economic risks that would strengthen the stability of editions and help to cope with the similar crisis situations.

Among the political risks media experts pointed out the increase of pressure from the authorities, or the attempts to get the media sphere under the total control. Journalists see such tendency in all regions of the country.

Within this tendency, journalists marked the strengthening of the state social contract during the last years which was used by the authorities as the element of mass media activity control. The similar problem was also considered to be the acquisition of a variety of editions by the governing party «Nur Otan» in the end of 2008, and some interrogated respondents consider it to be the negative fact as they believe that the mass-media entering into the party holding, cannot be considered any more to be the objective upon covering the situation in the country.

Journalists of the regional mass media also consider that the next years the risk of property redistribution will increase in media sphere in regions of Kazakhstan. The influential groups will try to get under control the most independent and outstanding editions which can lose, as a result, their poignancy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the legislation change

- To bring the legislation into compliance with the European and international standards in the sphere of freedom of expression.
- To decriminalize the punishment for slander and insult.
- To make the punishment for attacks, attempts and murders of journalists and employees of mass media more severe.
- To introduce a state duty for the sums of claims to mass media for moral damage indemnification.
- To limit the sums of the fines imposed on mass media for damaging honor, dignity and business reputation, to expand for this purpose the recommendations of the Supreme Court as to the collections from the mass media.
- To limit the periods of limitation for the claims to mass media for moral damage and harm indemnification to one year.
- To enact the law on access to information for journalists and citizens, with its wide preliminary discussion and having taken into consideration the recommendation of public organizations.
- To make the punishment for hindering the professional activity of journalists more severe.
- To make the punishment for the failure to submit by the civil servants the information requested by journalists, more severe.
- To revise or cancel the law on information and communicative networks, having refused from considering all Internet resources to be the mass media.
- To enact the amendments to the legislation on mass media which prohibit monopolization of mass media.
- To consider the possibility to cancel or change the restrictions to possession of the share in the Kazakhstan mass media by foreign citizens and companies.

To the state authorities

- To introduce the institution of public control over the state contract distribution in the sphere of information policy carrying out. To make the procedure of distribution of the money within the limits of the state contract to be more transparent. To create a public council for the state contract distribution control.
- To introduce the institution of public control over the state mass media activity, to establish the corresponding public councils.
- To communicate with a civil society and media organizations on the reformation of the Kazakhstan legislation in the sphere of mass media.
- To refuse acceptance of the mass media legislation amendments without wide discussion with media community as exemplified by the last amendments of the mass media law and aversion of the civil society opinion upon discussion of the Internet law.
- To enhance control in the sphere of journalists access to the information, to develop instructions for officials and special press departments.

To media community

- To expand the interaction between Kazakh and Russian-speaking mass media in order to overcome the arising barriers and provide citizens with the full information about the events in the country in both languages. To establish social council on the interaction between the mass media published in the state and official languages.
- To activate participation in a dialogue with human rights institutes and media institutes on the reformation of the Kazakhstan legislation on mass-media.
- To make structure of the mass media property in the republic more transparent that would promote the best understanding of mass media positions in a society.
- To activate cooperation with universities/institutes and educational structures for improvement of the situation in professional training.

To the media organizations and donor institutes

- To enhance monitoring of execution of the obligations in the sphere of the expression freedom by Kazakhstan.
- To carry out the regular researches in the sphere of programs of training and re-training of journalists.
- To continue and expand the legal training of journalists.
- To be focused on several programs of journalistic training, in particular, those which promote development of pluralism of opinions and freedom of speech: journalistic investigation, analytical journalism.
- To develop training and re-training programs on financial and economic journalism.
- To establish constantly operating expert group analyzing the problems of media community for the development of recommendations in the sphere of mass media.
- To expand interaction of media organizations working for the purpose of mass media development, to carry out more coordinated policy in the sphere of help programs.
- In case of discussion of the Journalists Code of ethics to involve international experts in this work, to accept such document only after the wide discussion in media community.
- To continue discussion of the necessity to introduce bodies of mass media self-regulation in the republic, to introduce such practice only as a pilot project and to enter rotation institute and accurate observance of the representation principle of the various parties and representatives of a society in such bodies.



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