



MASS-MEDIA FORUM IN REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA¹

(developed at the first Forum edition, 27-28 October 2015;
complemented at the second Forum edition, 2-3 December 2016)

Roadmap for mass-media development in Republic of Moldova

Introduction

The **Roadmap** is a general overview of national mass-media condition at the moment of developing Mass-media Forum, with a highlight on main constraints and problems of the media sector.

The **Roadmap** contains a series of short-term actions, aimed to ensure the development of national mass-media, the establishment and consolidation of a loyal competition climate and publishing independence of mass-media institutions in Republic of Moldova.

The actions were identified and worded out during the Mass-media Forum in Republic of Moldova, edition I (27-28 October 2015) and edition II (2-3 December 2016), including during the thematic workshops.

Constraints

Mass-media Forum in Republic of Moldova identified a series of constraints for mass-media development in Republic of Moldova, *including*:

a) Legal constraints

- legal framework in mass-media sector is not adjusted to European Union norms, and the transposition of EU norms, in terms of democratic journalism, into national legislation and practice occurs at a very slow pace;
- inefficiency of legal norms application for strengthening the media sector;
- limited access to information, unsound operation and arbitrary enforcement of legislation and mechanisms for ensuring the access to public interest information;
- lack of transparency on the most relevant dimensions (degree of mass-media ownership concentration, namely in broadcasting field; operation of commercial advertising market; distribution of frequencies/licenses for operation in broadcasting field etc.), which are crucial for media sector development;
- lack of an appropriate legislative framework and an operational institutional framework, ensuring loyal competition and eliminating monopolist practices from the market;
- vulnerability of decision-making factors towards personal, corporate, political-ideological or economic-financial interests;

¹ Mass-media Forum in Republic of Moldova is organized by Moldova Press Council in partnership with the Association of Independent Press (API), Independent Journalism Center (IJC), Association of Electronic Press (APEL). The Forum resolutions may be accessed [here](#) and [here](#) (in Romanian).

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- lack of policies meant to stimulate internal and external investments in media sector development and encourage the economic growth of independent mass-media institutions;
- limited capacity to protect the national information space against the invasion of foreign media products and ensure the informational sovereignty of the country.

b) Media management constraints

- lack of a general vision or conception/strategy for national mass-media development and lack of media policy sustainability;
- political subordination, integrity problems and mimicry of transparency in the activity of media sector management authorities;
- lack of transparency in managing the commercial advertising market;
- limited institutional capacities and a faulty management which lead to a chaotic development of the field, including an exaggeratedly big number of media institutions in the country's capital as compared to the rural environment;
- deliberate delay and lack of transparency in the process of transition to terrestrial digital television;
- limited number of qualified staff in the field of competition and lack of qualified expertise for anti-competition practices;
- lack of transparency and selective practices while setting tariffs to the services provided by media-related enterprises, including print press distributors;
- reduced impact of self-regulatory mechanisms in media sector management.

c) Educational constraints

- incapacity of training institutions to promptly react to media market needs and discrepancy between these institutions' offer and challenges of mass-media system;
- lack of capacities on behalf of educational institutions to train managers in mass-media sector;
- shortage of scientific developments with practical enforcement in the media sector;
- insufficient competences and abilities to use new technologies in the field.

d) Constraints at media institutions' level:

- political control and political-financial groups' control over mass-media institutions;
- vulnerability and reduced capacity to stand the political and economic-financial pressures, fact which generates including self-censorship;
- limited capacity of media institutions to develop and implement editorial policies compliant with democratic journalism;
- insufficient and inefficient efforts in erecting and fortifying a genuine public radio and television service;
- lack of possibilities/capacities to act in the situation of monopoly on radio-communication services market;
- lack of an internal system, at the level of media institutions, for monitoring and evaluating the quality of media products;
- insufficient cooperation between the specialised associative sector and media institutions in the scope of media sector development;
- faulty compliance with commitments related to deontology norms;
- minimum efforts to grow professionally and imperfect character of the self-regulatory framework for journalistic activity in on-line environment;
- insufficient managerial and financial capacities to capitalise the potential ensured by information technologies.

e) Media content constraints and problems:

- passing-by of public interest in media products, by serving the political interest or in hunt for the sensational;

- massive coverage of less relevant topics for the public, to the detriment of other topics which present real interest to the public;
- small number of events covered by mass-media institutions, fact which cannot create a general overview of reality;
- exaggerated occurrence of subjects produced in the country's capital and an insignificant presence of subjects deriving from the rural environment;
- frequent cases of derogation from professional norms set by Journalist's Deontology Code of Republic of Moldova and good journalistic practices, including:
 - preference of political agenda to the detriment of the public one and massive presence of politicians as protagonists of media products;
 - reduced media pluralism;
 - great occurrence of conflict-bearing news items from a single source, involvement in denigration campaigns, non-observance of presumption of innocence principle, coverage of false and/or non-checked information, etc.,
 - clear misbalance of genders, with predominance of men-protagonists;
 - misbalance between the number of media products displaying events in EU and events in Russia or CIS countries.

Findings and conclusions

The existing constraints and problems have been generated by a lack of real independence of national mass-media, as a result of authorities' indifference to build an information space favourable for strengthening democracy, and also because of a lack of coherent media policies, in general, and a legal framework ensuring loyal competition and eliminating monopolist practices, in particular. Without conscious interventions on all dimensions: regulatory and self-regulatory frameworks; media sector management; competition on media market and commercial advertising market; professional education; access to information etc., it will be impossible to ameliorate the situation. The constraints and problems in the media sector require deep systemic reforms, with a view to counteract the destructive effects generated by misinformation, propaganda, manipulation and informational intoxication.

The participants to Mass-Media Forum 2016 [request](#) the authorities to abandon the defectuous practice of undertaking triumphalist commitments on mass-media segment as objectives, fact which generates the perpetuation of media sector's acute problems, to the detriment of own citizens, and accelerate the real, but not mimed, implementation of provisions of XV Chapter „Mass-media” from [Work program of the Government of Republic of Moldova 2016-2018](#).

Mass-Media Forum in Republic of Moldova suggests the **Roadmap** with the following actions to be implemented during the year 2017.

Table: Actions to develop the media sector in Republic of Moldova

Actions for Republic of Moldova's authorities: Parliament of Republic of Moldova, Government of Republic of Moldova, State Chancellery, Broadcasting Coordination Council, Competition Council, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Information Technologies and Communications, Ministry of Domestic Affairs, Service of Information and Security of Republic of Moldova State Enterprise „State Information Resource Center „Registru” State Enterprise „Cadastru”	
1.	Draft, expertise, publicly debate and adopt the draft Strategy for mass-media development in Republic of Moldova in compliance with European practices
2.	Draft, publicly debate and adopt the following draft laws and amendments to the legislation in force, as part of the Strategy for mass-media development in Republic of Moldova: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a new Broadcasting Code; - a new Law on advertising; - amendment to the Law on access to information and its adjustment to European good practices, including the part related to access to public interest information against payment, with a view to ensure the free of charge and prompt access of journalists and mass-media institutions to the major public interest data from S.E. „State Information Resource Center „Registru” and S.E. „Cadastru”; - draft, expertise, publicly debate and adopt the draft Law on complementing the Law on competition, in order to counteract the concentration of ownership in mass-media and ensure the protection of loyal competition on the advertising market; - draft, expertise, publicly debate and adopt a special Law on protection of Moldovan information space from media viewpoint, which would foresee the terms of access and re-transmission of foreign broadcasters on the national audio-visual market; - complete the Tax Code and the Law on state budget with provisions for fiscal stimulation of investments in mass-media institution development, other facilities namely for the development of independent local/regional mass-media institutions; - adopt the draft Law on state aid for periodicals and establishment of a support fund for them, managed by a Board of Directors, whose members are mainly representatives of trustworthy non-governmental organisations in mass-media sector.
3.	Reject (withdraw) the legislative initiatives for amending the Broadcasting Code which are under examination in the Parliament (no. 125 of 02.04.2015 and no. 218 of 22.05.2015)
4.	Draft, publicly debate, expertise and adopt the following normative documents as part of Strategy for mass-media development in Republic of Moldova: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a Regulation on Commission for culture, education, research, youth, sport and mass-media of Parliament of R. Moldova on assigning the

	<p>members of Broadcasting Coordination Council and Council of Observers of National Public Broadcaster - Company "Teleradio-Moldova", based on exact and measurable criteria;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a new Regulation on Broadcasting Coordination Council activity; - completion of BCC Regulation on assigning the candidates for members of Council of Observers of National Public Broadcaster - Company "Teleradio-Moldova", based on exact and measurable criteria; - completion of BCC Regulation on providing licenses for national and regional multiplexes, based on exact and measurable criteria.
5.	Develop and approve an indirect subsidy program for social-importance print press, by covering eventual increases in distribution tariffs from public budget money
6.	Complete the Government Action Plan for years 2016-2018 with the commitment from its Work Program, chapter XV, p. 9: "Establishment of a favourable climate for advertising market development, non-acceptance of disloyal competition in this sector and proportional quantization of foreign advertising into the national media space"
7.	Guarantee that the digitisation process will not lead to disappearance of local broadcasting content, which is produced by local broadcasters with on-air emission
8.	Conduct permanent monitoring by the State Chancellery to ensure compliance for the following: legal transparency conditions of public authorities/institutions, provision of undiscretionary access to public interest information and sanctioning of violations according to the legislation
9.	Ensure the annual evaluation of the advertising market and concentration of ownership in mass-media sector by the Competition Council (CC), and include such data in CC's annual work report
10.	Conduct the annual evaluation, by Broadcasting Coordination Council (BCC), of broadcasters' ownership regime and audio-visual advertising market, and include such data in BCC's annual work report
11.	Prepare some additional normative documents by BCC, which are legally-binding for broadcasters and which would foresee including the minimum daily emission space for disseminating public interest information, the procedure for providing space for dissemination of public interest information, the modality of record-keeping and reporting
12.	Protect online mass-media against cyber-attacks upon news websites, especially when covering major-interest issues, investigate such cases and publicly communicate the results of such investigations
13.	Prepare a special teaching course on media education (media literacy) and implement it in pre-university institutions

Actions for media institutions, media NGOs and self-regulatory structures:

"Teleradio-Moldova" National Public Company,
"Teleradio-Găgăuzia" Regional Public Company,
Media institutions,
Press Council of Moldova
Media NGOs,
Associative organizations on advertising

1.	<p>Draft, debate and approve, by the Council of Observers (CO) of NPB Company "Teleradio-Moldova", of the following documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a new Regulation on CO of NPB - Company "Teleradio-Moldova", - a new Regulation on NPB - Company "Teleradio-Moldova";
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - new strategic directions of development of NPB - Company "Teleradio-Moldova"; - complement the CO Regulation on assigning/dismissal of senior managers of NPB - Company "Teleradio-Moldova" with exact and measurable criteria for assigning/dismissal.
2.	Organize two public annual debates on task books and activity reports of both the national public broadcaster (NPB Company "Teleradio-Moldova") and regional public broadcaster (IPRA Company "Teleradio-Găgăuzia")
3.	Launch discussions on establishment of Council for Advertising as self-regulatory structure in the advertising sector, the duties of which would include drafting of regulations for advertising activity per fields (outdoor advertising, social-message advertising, political advertising etc.)
4.	Complete the Journalist's Deontology Code in Republic of Moldova with specific provisions related to: on-line media, manipulation and spreading of false information, information propaganda, tolerance and diversity, plagiarism, conflict of interests, awareness clause and censorship. Develop a national campaign by urging mass-media institutions, especially the online sector, to publicly commit to the Journalist's Deontology Code
5.	<p>Promote quality journalism by means of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - monitoring the quality of journalistic products and public presentation/debates of results; - drafting by the Press Council of the guidelines and recommendations on coverage of specific topics/subjects, such as norms for borrowing (retrieving) the journalistic content in online environment, quoting the primary source etc.; - notifications and knowledge-taking of the Press Council in the event of serious violation of journalistic professional deontology, - other actions to encourage quality journalism and discourage non-journalism.
6.	Develop the online debate platform for professionals in mass-media sector www.mediaforum.md in order to facilitate the dialogue about the main problems of journalistic community and the media education platform www.mediacritica.md
7.	Examine the possibilities to identify a mechanism for certification of journalists and mass-media institution representatives
8.	Re-commence discussions on the need to create a journalists' trade-union in Republic of Moldova

Note:

1. The table of actions is approved through consensus, and actions are of advisory nature.
2. Mass-Media Forum organisers express their availability to consult and provide assistance to Moldovan authorities in drafting/preparing legal draft documents foreseen in the **Roadmap**.
3. The manner and degree of **Roadmap** provisions' implementation will be part of the agenda of each further edition of Mass-Media Forum in Republic of Moldova.