

FREEDOM OF LOCAL AND NATIONAL MEDIA: EVALUATION AND SELF-ASSESSMENT

(Analysis of the Expert Survey Data)

Introduction

In 2009 the *Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression*, along with the local media monitoring, also carried out an expert survey among representatives of media, public and political organizations from all the marzes of the country and the city of Yerevan, to identify the following factors:

- the degree of the media access to data;
- the cases of deterring the media activities, and the role of various public, political and state institutions in protecting the rights of media;
- the degree of the journalistic solidarity and the ways of its enhancement;
- perception of transparency of the media financial activity and of the ownership and activity monopolization;
- relationships between media on the one hand and public and political organizations on the other; in case of the latter – the opportunities of expressing their views and opinions through the media, and their rating of the pluralism level ensured by the media.

Brief overview

The survey results can be briefly summed up as follows:

1. Access of the Armenian media to data is still a serious issue. About 2/3 of the media representatives (journalist experts) that participated in the survey state that not all the data and not always are accessible. There are certain topical areas where the relevant information is either provided with difficulty or not provided at all. The difficulty in accessing data by media is evidenced not only by the media representatives but also by those representing political parties and NGOs involved in the survey (non-journalist experts).
2. While providing data to media, various structures exercise discrimination, depending on the former's being pro-governmental or oppositional, state/public or private, local or national.
3. From the viewpoint of media freedom, of considerable concern are the interferences with their activities, hindrance of various types and suppressions (ca. 46% of journalists face such interferences and suppression sometimes, and 10.3% - frequently). Correspondingly, several entities are pointed out for their most frequent interference in and suppressing of the media activities through various ways and methods (according to

the frequency of indications: law enforcement bodies, unofficial local 'leaders' and criminal circles, the government, the local self-governance bodies, the governmental political parties).

4. In Armenia no firm tradition and stable system of protecting the media and journalists' rights and interests have been formed yet. The level of the journalistic solidarity is still low. Institutions representing various levels of the authorities, in particular – the law enforcement bodies, not only fail to duly protect the rights and legal interests of the media, but often times act as the violators of such rights and interests. This is evidenced not only by journalists, but also by representatives of public and political organizations. Media themselves (especially the TV companies) are also very passive in protecting the other media's journalists. Only 12.7% of the journalists support the opinion that in case of violence applied against a media outlet or a journalist, the other media stand up for the protection of their rights.

5. The media do not adequately perform one of their most important missions in the democratic society – the ensuring of pluralism (more than 40% of the journalists have rated the level of their efforts towards ensuring pluralism during national elections as low or average, whereas ca. 53% of the non-journalist experts are confident that the media seldom or never ensure pluralism). With regard to this issue, media face a number of obstacles quite difficult to overcome especially in the course of election periods.

6. The transparency of the media funding sources is not sufficiently ensured (only 12.3% of the journalist experts think that it is ensured, 43% think that it is not, with some 44% undecided).

7. The broadcasting antimonopoly provision stipulated in the RA Law "On Television and Radio" is not maintained, either (in the opinion of the media representatives' 27.1% it is not maintained, whereas 47.7% found it difficult to answer this question). The violations of the antimonopoly provision and lack of transparency related to the media ownership are also evidenced by 32% of the partisan experts and 23.5% of the NGO representatives. The undecided within these groups make 40 and 41.7%, respectively.

In Summary Tables 1-3 the following data most frequently stated by the journalist and non-journalist experts are shown:

1. data that are the most difficult to be obtained;
2. the most frequently communicated reasons for refusing to provide information;
3. entities most frequently declining inquiries for providing information;
4. entities most frequently requiring that media disclose the secret source of information;
5. themes that most frequently give rise to interfering with the media performance or to applying suppression against them;
6. the most prevalent forms and methods of interference or suppression;
7. factors that most frequently hinder the adequate ensurance of pluralism;
8. tools most frequently used for protection against interferences;
9. entities that impede the media performance the most;

10. entities most frequently defending the legal interests of media and journalists in cases of violations of the latter's rights;

11. the most prevalent forms of contacts between the representatives of parties and NGOs on the one hand and media on the other.

Summary Table 1.

Responses most frequently provided by journalist experts regarding data accessibility

NN	The data that are the most difficult to be obtained	The most frequently communicated reasons for refusing to provide information	Entities most frequently declining inquiries for providing information	Entities most frequently requiring that media disclose the secret source of information
1	On crimes, criminal situation, cases in the phase of investigation	The permission of the supervising body, organization or the immediate supervisor not available	Power structures	Leaders of the state governance bodies or other officials
2	On the performance of the power structures (the police, the prosecutor's office, NSS)	Not convenient now, will provide later	LSGBs	Those whom the specific publication relates to
3	On the activities of LSGBs and the community related issues	The information is not subject to publication (contains a national, commercial or other secret)	All the ministries	Power structures
4	On the activities of the judicial system, on court hearings	Displays of negligence (naming one another for being responsible)	Tax and Customs services	The supervisors or relatives of those whom the publication relates to
5	On the banking system and financial issues	Rejections for no reason or based on an illogical reason	Judiciary	Oligarchs and businesspeople

Summary Table 2.

Responses most frequently provided by journalist experts regarding interference with media performance

NN	Themes that most frequently give rise to interfering with the media performance or to applying suppression towards them	The most prevalent forms and methods of interference or suppression	Factors that most frequently hinder the adequate ensurance of pluralism	Tools most frequently used for protection against interferences
1	Internal policy themes, including Elections, 'March 1' etc.	Request, persuasion, demand	The unfree atmosphere in the country; low level of freedom of expression; suppression and persecution applied during elections (including by the state bodies); the threat of closing down the media	Come up with announcements
2	Influential officials' performance	Influential officials' phone calls	Avoiding any political news broadcasting, adoption of the tactics of not participating in the coverage of specific elections; abstaining from inviting certain political forces out of fear of looking biased	Apply to the law enforcement bodies
3	State agencies' performance	Threat of retribution	Lack of financial resources, financial dependence on the authorities and other pro-governmental entities	Apply to the journalistic organizations
4		Manipulation with	Meekness of the political forces (not all	Apply to the human

		the local patriotism	the political forces have turned to us)	rights advocacy organizations
5		Physical violence	Insufficient professionalism of the media (journalists)	Apply to other media

Summary Table 3.

The most frequent responses reflecting the parties' and NGOs' perceptions regarding media performance

NN	Contacts between the representatives of parties and NGOs, and media	Entities that impede the media performance the most	Entities most frequently defending the legal interests of media and journalists in cases of violations of the latter's rights
1	Media cover the performance of our organization; we provide them information on a regular basis	Law enforcement bodies	Journalistic NGOs
2	I am a correspondent, I submit articles for publication, I am a journalist myself.	Unofficial local leaders and criminal circles	Advocacy organizations
3	I (we) participate in various TV programs	The RA Government	The very media that were subjected to suppression
4	I give interviews to media	LSGBs	International organizations
5	I only contact with media in the status of a listener, viewer or reader (obtaining information).	The parties making up the ruling coalition	Oppositional parties

METHODOLOGY OF THE SURVEY

The survey was carried out with the expert poll method. Two groups of experts were chosen: a) media representatives, b) party and public organization representatives.

A special questionnaire was developed for interviewing each expert group, the replies to which were to include the name of the expert.

The questionnaire designed for the **media representatives** comprised three thematic sections, not counting the so-called "ID" section.

Through the **first** and the largest thematic section we tried to find out the opinion of the media representatives (hereinafter: journalist experts) about the following issues:

1. the degree of access to information, displays of discrimination towards media;
2. data that are the most difficult to access; the agencies most frequently refusing to provide data and the most commonly communicated reasons for such refusals;
3. the level of interference with the media professional activity; suppression exercised towards media and journalists, and the forms and methods of such suppression;

4. the tools for protection from suppression and interference, their effectiveness; the level of assistance shown in this issue by various public, political and state structures, including that of the professional solidarity manifested by other media and journalistic organizations.

In the **second** thematic section we sought to spot the transparency level of the media's financial activities and ownership, including the abidance by the legislative antimonopoly provisions.

The objective of the **third** thematic section was to find out the level of ensuring pluralism by media during the elections of national and local self-governance bodies (LSGB), as well as during the non-election periods, and the reasons that hindered the employment of pluralism.

The questionnaire designed for the representatives of **parties and public organizations (NGOs)** also consisted of three thematic sections, not counting the "ID" section.

First of all, with the help of a starter question we tried to find out the contacts of the experts (their organizations) with media.

The questions of the **first** thematic section were aimed at spotting the level of freedom of the media activities as perceived by the representatives of parties and NGOs, i.e.:

1. accessibility of data;
2. interferences with the media activities, suppression applied towards media and journalists;
3. the structures most frequently impeding the media (journalists') performance and those defending their interests, including the specific steps taken by the expert's organization to the end of defending the rights of journalists.

The objective of the **second** thematic section was to collect the experts' opinion on the level of ensuring pluralism, including the opportunities of their own organizations to express their viewpoints through the media.

The objective of the **third** thematic section was to see whether the experts are aware of the requirement set out in the broadcasting antimonopoly legislative provision.

A total of 272 experts from 10 marzes of Armenia and the city of Yerevan participated in the survey, including 107 journalists and 165 representatives of parties and NGOs. The composition of the experts by marzes is shown in Table 4. The number of the participating experts from marzes is not proportionate to the ratio of the marz population to the country's total population. The presence of media and the actual existence of parties and NGOs in the specific marz were taken into consideration. Since the number of the representatives of news agencies, Internet publications and freelance reporters is too scant, we found it more reasonable not providing a separate analysis for the opinions of these respondents, and included them in those of the TV companies (TVC) and newspapers. In view of the fact that the news agencies and Internet publications are spreading information electronically, we included the media representatives of these two categories into the

group of the TVC representatives, hence in the report they are represented as TV journalists. The freelance reporters were observed within the newspaper journalists' group, taking into account the fact that they mostly publish their articles in newspapers. The radio companies (RC) also go with the electronic media group; however, such media representatives are very few within the experts' cohort. Nevertheless, taking into account the radio media specificity, in the report we observed the RC representatives as a separate journalistic group. Thus, in the analyses the cohort of the journalist experts is presented in three subgroups: TVC-s, RC-s and newspaper journalists (see Table 4).

Table 4

The composition of the opinion poll participants

RA Marzes	Experts												Total
	TVCs (including news agencies and electronic publications)		RCs		Newspapers (including free reporters)		Total of journalists		Party representatives		NGO representatives		
Aragatsotn	1	20.0	-		4	80.0	5	29.1	4	23.5	8	47.1	17
	1.8	0.9			8.7	3.7	4.6	1.8	8.0	1.5	6.9	2.9	6.2
Ararat	2	40.0	-		3	60.0	5	23.8	5	23.8	11	52.4	21
	3.5	1.9			6.5	2.8	4.6	1.8	10.0	1.8	9.6	4.0	7.7
Armavir	7	77.8	-		2	22.2	9	47.4	6	31.6	4	21.1	19
	12.3	6.5			4.3	1.9	8.4	3.3	12.0	2.2	3.5	1.5	7.0
Gegharkunik	5	71.4	-		2	28.6	7	33.3	4	19.0	10	47.6	21
	8.8	4.7			4.3	1.9	6.5	3.3	8.0	1.5	8.7	3.7	7.7
Lori	7	70.0	-		3	30.0	10	35.7	6	21.4	12	42.9	28
	12.3	6.5			6.5	2.8	9.3	3.4	12.0	2.2	10.4	4.4	10.3
Kotayk	6	85.7	-		1	14.3	7	36.8	4	21.1	8	42.1	19
	10.5	5.6			2.2	0.9	6.5	3.3	8.0	1.5	6.9	2.9	7.0
Shirak	7	77.8	-		2	22.2	9	47.4	2	6.9	18	62.1	29
	12.3	6.5			4.3	1.9	8.4	3.3	4.0	0.7	15.7	6.6	10.7
Syunik	4	40.0	-		6	60.0	10	41.7	5	20.8	9	37.5	24
	7.0	3.7			13.0	5.6	9.3	3.4	10.	1.8	7.8	3.3	8.8
Vayots Dzor	2	33.3	-		4	66.7	6	30.0	5	25.0	9	45.0	20
	3.5	1.9			8.7	3.7	5.6	2.2	10.0	1.8	7.8	3.3	7.4
Tavush	3	30.0	-		7	70.0	10	40.0	5	20.0	10	40.0	25
	5.2	2.8			15.2	6.5	9.3	3.4	10.0	1.8	8.7	3.7	9.2
Yerevan	14	28.0	4	8.0	12	24.0	30	60.0	4	8.0	16	32.0	50
	24.6	13.1	100	3.7	26.1	11.2	28.0	11.0	8.0	1.5	13.9	5.9	18.4
Total	57	53.3	4	3.7	46	43.0	107	39.3	50	18.4	115	42.3	272
	100.0	21.0	100	1.5	100	16.9	100	39.3	100	18.4	100	42.3	100.0

PART 1. FREEDOM OF MEDIA

Freedom of expression, information and media is enshrined in Article 27 of the RA Constitution, the Laws "On Mass Communication", "On Freedom of Information", "On Television and Radio" and other legal acts.

Through this survey we sought to find out the insights of the journalists and representatives of parties and NGOs (hereinafter: experts) with regard to the following issues:

- What is the level of the media access to the information owned by various institutions, including state governance and LSG bodies?
- What kind of data are difficult to be obtained by media; which bodies most frequently decline the enquiries and what is the reasoning for doing so?
- Is the rejection a common procedure or a way of discrimination towards some media?
- To what extent may various entities interfere with the media performance or apply suppression towards them?
- Which entities interfere most frequently, for the publishing or not publishing of which data and what are the forms and methods of such interference?
- What is the scale of the demands about disclosing the secret sources of information in the spectrum of suppressions towards media and who are putting forward such demands?
- What kinds of suppression are applied against media and journalists?
- How do the media react to the suppressions and interferences and how effectively?
- Which entities most frequently provide their support to defend the rights of media or individual journalists; in the cases of suppression applied, to what extent and in what ways are the media assisted by other media, public, political, state, journalistic and/or human rights advocacy organizations?
- How do the experts rate the level of the journalistic solidarity in our country and what are their recommendations for enhancing such solidarity?

1.1. Data accessibility

22.4% of the journalist experts expressed an opinion that data are always accessible to media. Among those supporting this view, 3/4 are the more experienced journalists, i.e. with a record of 10 and more years of work in the sphere of journalism. Above 65% of the journalists stated that not all data and not always are accessible, and 12.1% think that data are provided with difficulty.

In the opinion of 2/3 of the party and NGO experts (non-journalist), the data owned by the state governance and LSG bodies are always or mainly accessible to the media, and 29% of them think that such data are mainly or never accessible. The NGO representatives believe in the accessibility of data more than the party representatives (67.8 and 62.0%, respectively).

In the opinion of the journalists, the list of **the least accessible data or those that are the most difficult to be obtained** is headed by the following (the mentioning of the cases of data not provided exceeds 10%):

1. Data relating to crimes, criminal situations, cases in the investigation stage (30.0%). Such data are overly inaccessible for TVC journalists (38.6%). These are overly inaccessible for about 22% of the newspaper journalists, whereas none of the RC representatives checked this list.
2. Data referring to the performance of power structures (the police, prosecutor's office, NSS) (21.5%, including: TVC journalists - 24.6%, RC journalists - 25.0% and newspaper reporters - 17.4%).
3. Data referring to the LSGB activities and community issues (17.8%, including TVC journalists - 17.5%, newspaper journalists - 19.6%).
4. The activities of the judicial system, topics related to the process of court hearings (12.1%, including TVC journalists - 10.6%, RC journalists - 25.0% and newspaper journalists - 13.0%).
5. Data referring to the activities of the financial and banking system, as well as business people (10.3% each, including TVC journalists - 12.3%, newspaper journalists - 8.7%).

In the list of data that are provided with difficulty, besides those mentioned above, data related to the given institution's internal relationships; internal policy issues (including the events of March 1, 2008); activities of the national authorities and government agencies, those of health care institutions; the behavior of influential officials and their entourage are also indicated.

The experts think that the power structures are the ones **most frequently refusing to provide information to media** - 54.2%, the next on the list being the LSGBs with 17.8%. More than 12% of the experts think that the ministries refuse to provide data. The tax and customs services, as well as the judicial bodies refuse inquiries in the opinion of the same 11.2%.

It is noteworthy that TVC journalists are the ones most frequently rejected to be provided information.

Only 1.9% of all the journalist experts have stated that no agency refuses their inquiries for providing information.

The most commonly communicated reason for not providing data that was stated by about 32% of the journalist experts is the absence of the permission of the supervising organization or the immediate supervisor. On the grounds of this reason almost equal rejections are received both by the TVC and the newspaper journalists. Based on the opinions of the experts' 18.7%, the next on the list are the following reasons: "inconvenient now, come/call later" (this way of rejecting happens thrice more frequently in case of the TVC journalists as compared with the newspaper reporters), and "the information you request is not subject to publication since it contains a national, commercial or other secret". More than 10% of the journalist experts

have noted that data are not provided just because of negligence, through trying to put the responsibility on someone else. The ratio of the newspaper journalists that failed to obtain information in this way was thrice more than the TVC journalists that were treated similarly. More than 12% of the journalists have noted that they get refusals without any explanation or reasoning, or based on illogical reasons.

It was also interesting to find out whether not providing information, apart from technical reasons, is a common procedure or just a way of discrimination towards some media. The journalist experts' 1/3 perceives it as a common procedure (this was the opinion of 38.6% of TVC and 30.4% of newspaper journalists). *Bigger still (ca. 40%) is the ratio of those journalists who consider that discrimination is manifested towards media when providing them information.* This was the opinion of about 44% of the TVC representatives, 50% of the RC and more than 32% of the newspaper journalists.

Besides providing a general evaluation of the phenomenon, the journalists also noted about the *bases for such discrimination*. In particular, about 29% think that discrimination is employed taking into consideration the media's being pro-governmental or oppositional. Such discrimination is faced by 1/3 of the newspaper journalists, and about 1/4 of the RC and TVC journalists. The next factor considered is whether the media outlet is national or local (regional). Discrimination based on this factor is faced by ca. 29% of the journalists (exclusively those that represent provincial media). Above 7% of those who explain refusals to provide information by discriminatory attitudes believe that the basis for such discrimination is the media's being state-owned or private, whereas 35.7% just state the fact without mentioning any bases.

1.2 Interference with the performance of media and journalists

The analysis of the survey data showed that about 40% of the journalist experts have not been subjected to any interference or pressure in the course of their activities. The highest ratio within the group of these journalists belongs to the newspaper journalists – ca. 60%. One fourth of the RC and 38.1% of the TVC journalists works without any interference. About 46% of the journalists sometimes have to deal with external interference; in case of 10.3% interferences are often. The ratio of TVC journalists sometimes facing interference is almost twice the size of the group of newspaper journalists dealing with the same problem. 3/4 of the RC journalists also noted that they sometimes deal with interference with their performance. The TVC journalists prevail also in the group of those often dealing with interference – more than 54%.

In relation with the media professional performance interference and pressure exercised against them the opinion of the non-journalist experts is also interesting. Specifically, the NGO and party representatives' 82.6 and 84%, respectively, have stated that they are aware of interference with the media and journalists' professional activities, as well as of suppression and infringements on them.

As for **the themes that became the reasons for interference or external pressure**, in the opinion of the experts, most frequently these were connected with the internal policy issues, including the elections and March

1, 2008 events – about 17%. It should be noted that with regard to these themes the TVC-s were subjected to interference four times more frequently than the newspapers. The next theme that most frequently leads to interference is the activity of influential officials - 14%. The third in this list are the themes related to the activities of state agencies - 7.5%.

The most prevalent forms of interference are the request, persuasion or demand – about 31%. It was exercised towards 38.6% of TVC, 50% of the RC and about 20% of the newspaper journalists. The second large are the calls from influential individuals – more than 23.4%. The third are the retribution threats (15%) to which both the TVC and newspaper representatives are almost equally subjected. In case of the marz TVC journalists the local patriotism manipulation method is also often applied: "we have grown on the same land and shared the same piece of bread – it's a shame!"

The applying of physical violence method as a specific way of exercising pressure on a journalist was noted by more than 24% of the journalists. 41.1% of the journalists also noted that cases of physical violence against them or another journalist of their media outlet were rare, whereas 4.7% of the journalists indicated that cases of such violence were frequent. The ratio of the newspaper representatives that were often subjected to physical violence is four times the number of the TV reporters. No one from the RC representatives was subjected to physical violence.

Another important condition of free performance of the media is the right of keeping the secret information source confidentiality. The survey tried to spot whether **demands about disclosing the sources of information** of journalists are imposed. Such a requirement was never faced by about 58% of the experts. Above 24% noted that this happened sometimes, and about 13% said they were often demanded to disclose the information source. The group of newspaper reporters that often dealt with this demand is more than twice bigger than that of the TVC's.

The next item in the questionnaire – "*Who puts forward such demands?*" was openly formulated, i.e. the experts were to specify the issue themselves, moreover – they could mark more than one options. More than 10 entities were mentioned, of which the following appeared more frequently: "leaders of state governance bodies and state officials" (15%), "those individuals whom the publication relates to, irrespective of their status" (11.2%), "power structures" (8.4%). It should be noted that the state officials and law enforcement bodies addressed the source disclosure demands more frequently to the TVC, rather than the newspaper representatives. On the contrary – individuals whom the specific publication related to, put forward more than thrice as many demands to the newspapers.

Prior to identifying **what the perceptions of the party and NGO representatives about various types of pressure and interventions with regard to the media activities were**, we tried to find out the contacts that the experts of the above mentioned groups have with the media resulting from their performance. Most of all the respondents mentioned that "media cover the performance of their organization; and they provide them information on a regular basis" (36.4%). The ratio of those in the subgroup of the NGO representatives

indicating this way of contacts (45.2%) is almost thrice the size of the corresponding subgroup of the party representatives.

The next most frequently mentioned form of contacting with media is the following: "I am a correspondent, I submit articles for publication, I am a journalist myself" (15.2%). The ratio of these respondents is by 1.2 per cent higher in the group of party representatives.

11.5% of non-journalist experts contact with media through their participation in various TV programs (NGO and party representatives almost in the same proportion). Almost 11% of this group of experts give interviews to media. The same number of people mentioned as the only way of contacting with media their being newspaper readers, TV or radio audience. This last ratio is almost thrice higher in the group of party representatives.

The experts also noted about press conferences held by their organizations. In the group of those maintaining such contacts with the media the number of NGO representatives is 2.5 times more. Besides, those experts have a certain ratio who noted that through media their organizations publish announcements or give comments regarding various issues (6.7%, of which about 73% are party representatives). The same number of respondents noted that they implement joint projects etc. with media.

The party and NGO representatives also confirmed the fact that the media activities are most frequently impeded by the law enforcement bodies (51.5%), oligarchs and businesspeople (47.3%), as well as by local unofficial 'leaders' and criminal circles (26.7%) (multiple response options were possible).

The political and public organization representatives mentioned as the next largest group of entities most frequently impeding the media the RA Government, the LSGBs and the parties forming the ruling coalition (21.2% each). The opposition parties were indicated as entities impeding the media activities by 3% of the experts.

In the opinion of the respondents the RA judiciary and marz authorities also hinder the media activities (11.5 and 16.4%, respectively). Among all the governing bodies, the RA legislative authorities are mentioned as impeding least of all. Quite interestingly, *the judiciary, law enforcement bodies and local unofficial 'leaders' were more frequently indicated as entities hampering the media activities by political rather than public organization representatives.*

1.3. Protection of the media and journalists' rights

The overview of the responses to the questions on this issue showed that in case of physical violence and other types of pressure applied to journalists and media, the media themselves are the ones that primarily come up with announcements (34.6%). The TVCs avail of this method most frequently. The radio journalists replied that there were no cases of violence applied towards them; hence no response tools for such cases were indicated. The next method most commonly mentioned is applying to the law enforcement bodies (about 20%).

The newspaper journalists use this one twice as frequently as the TVC representatives. The journalists' 16.8% turn to journalistic, 11.2% - to human rights advocacy organizations and only 9.3% - to other media for assistance. About 1/4 of the journalist experts stated that in such cases they avail of other tools, including their reacting with their own resources in 62.5% of cases (here the "own resources" are not specified). Then, 16.7% note that they neglect the pressure and do not undertake anything, 8.3% - that they try to change the situation through explanatory work among the impeding entities or inform the supervisors of such entities, etc. Only one TV journalist indicated that under such circumstances he stepped back and stopped further footage.

How effective are the above mentioned tools for protecting the media freedom? More than half of the journalist experts did not answer this question; 14% indicated that *in all cases* the issue is solved positively for them. Such respondents have almost an equal ratio among TVC-s and newspapers. One quarter of the journalists state that the issue is *mainly* solved positively for them. *It is worth mentioning that the number of such respondents among TVC-s is twice more. The ratio of those who mainly or always step back due to pressures applied makes 5.3% among TVC journalists and 13% among newspaper journalists.*

It was interesting to find out the opinion of the party and NGO representatives on **which entities most actively defend the journalists' rights** (with the possibility of checking multiple options). In the opinion of 62.4% of the experts of the group, most of all the journalistic NGOs appear in this role, the next come the human rights advocacy organizations (51.5%). About half of the experts think that the media subjected to suppression are the best to protect themselves from such pressure. The fourth in the list of right defenders are the international organizations (ca. 40%). The fifth among those actively protecting the rights of journalists are the opposition parties - 26.1%. Various levels of the governing bodies, the law enforcement bodies and other structures are perceived as defenders of media rights by a very small number of non-journalist experts (6.6%). Interestingly, only 12.7% think that in the case of violence applied to a media or a journalist all media act in support of their rights.

The state of journalistic solidarity was also an objective of this survey. Above 55% of the journalist experts did not rate in any way the level of support from other media in the case of violence applied. Only 2.8% of them noted that when violence is exercised against a media outlet or a journalist, the other media always provide support. This opinion is wholly expressed by newspaper representatives. In the opinion of ca. 20% of journalists, in such cases the other media often help, whereas more than 22% consider that the other media seldom lend a helping hand to their colleagues or do not help at all.

As for the support provided by journalistic and/or advocacy organizations in the cases of physical violence or other pressure exercised against a specific media outlet or journalist, only 43% of the journalists rated this situation in a way or other. Their 21.5% state that such organizations have always or often provided support. The same number of experts think that the said organizations seldom helped them or did not help at all.

In reply to the question connected with the steps taken generally by all kinds of NGOs and parties in the cases of violence and other suppression applied towards certain media outlets or journalists, 12.7% of the non-journalist experts told nothing, 43% stated that they did not help even once. Quite interestingly, the ratio of NGO representatives in the group that manifested such behavior is more than twice as high as the others'. More than 29% of the non-journalist experts stated that in such cases they assisted the media more than 3 times. About 8% mentioned having assisted 2-3 times. Those that provided assistance once were slightly over 4%.

When the task was made more specific, i.e. the representatives of the parties and NGOs that participated in the survey were offered to provide specific examples of such cases; the *partisan experts* mentioned 11 specific cases of having defended the rights of journalists or media, and the *NGO members* – 22. The cases connected with the following individuals or media outlets were mentioned: Gagik Shamshyan, Edik Baghdasaryan, Argishti Kiviryan, Nver Mnatsakanyan, "HZh" daily correspondent (name not specified), Hovhannes Galajyan, journalists that had produced video materials about illegal construction site (names not specified), "GALA", "A1+" TV companies, "Azatutyun" radio station. Out of the above mentioned ones, the following media and journalists have been provided the most significant support by parties and NGOs:

1. "GALA" TVC;
2. Edik Baghdasaryan, leader of the "Investigative journalists" NGO;
3. Gagik Shamshyan, photojournalist;
4. Nver Mnatsakanyan, "Shant" TVC anchor.

40% of the parties and 15.7% of the NGOs noted about their assistance, although without any specific example of such assistance.

We also tried to find out the journalist experts' opinion about the *journalistic solidarity* in general. To this end, the respondents were offered to rate with the help of a 5-point scale the level of such solidarity, where "1" would stand for absolute lack of solidarity, and "5" – the highest level of solidarity. The marz journalists' 20.6% rated the journalistic solidarity with the lowest points – "1" and "2". The average point – "3" was given by 27.1% of this group, and the highest "4" and "5" were given by 28%. In this respect the newspaper journalists are noted for their optimism among the marz journalists.

In the entire cohort of the journalists (including those in the capital city) the solidarity issue has a different picture. Here the ratio of the lowest ratings – "1" and "2" exceeds the 1/3 level. An average rating was given by about 45%, whereas the highest rating of the solidarity was provided only by about 16%. Within the entire cohort of the journalists, the newspaper reporters again were noted for their comparatively optimistic ratings.

Yet another objective of the survey was obtaining practical recommendations from the media leaders and responsible officers regarding the ways of increasing the level of journalistic solidarity.

Unfortunately, we have to state that the recommendations provided by the journalists are more of emotional slogans type and do not contain practical mechanisms that would lead to increase the solidarity level among media and journalists.

Below we present the most frequent recommendations:

- Ensure the media's independence from the party, caste, corporate influences; increase the degree of journalists' impartiality (39.3%);
- Promote more frequent exchange of experience, information among media; come up with joint publications, press conferences (20.6%);
- Increase the degree of journalists' unity, mutual respect and tolerance; be rid of envy among them; encourage cooperation and humane attitude, avoid discrediting one another (19.6%);
- Increase the journalists' professionalism and the quality of information communicated (15.9%);
- Abide by the journalistic Code of Ethics norms (14.0%);
- Go beyond the commercial interests; abstain from unhealthy competition (11.2%);
- Defend one another's interests in case of suppression applied against journalists; establish journalists' rights advocacy organizations, trade unions (10.3%).

PART 2. ENSURING PLURALISM, TRANSPARENCY OF THE MEDIA FUNDING

One of the primary objectives of this survey has been to spot **the level of the ensured pluralism in the media**, the transparency of their funding sources and ownership, as well as the actual cases, if any, of the ownership of more than one TV company, or radio company or TVR company within the same broadcasting zone by the same individual or legal entity (as a violation of the broadcasting antimonopoly legislative provision). So, we have tried in the course of our survey to get:

1. *the opinion of the journalist experts* on the degree of pluralism ensured by their media during national and LSGB elections and the periods between the elections, as well as on the factors hindering the full exercise of pluralism;
2. *the perception of the journalist experts* on the transparency of information about the media funding sources and owners as well as their awareness of the violations of the antitrust (monopoly) legislative requirement in the sphere of broadcasting;
3. *the opinion of the party and NGO representatives* on the degree of pluralism ensured by media, as well as on the possibilities of freely expressing the opinion of their organizations through the media;

4. *awareness of the party and NGO representatives* about the violations of the broadcasting sphere antimonopoly legislative provision.

2.1. Ensuring pluralism

The journalist experts were offered to rate the level of pluralism ensured in their media outlet with a 10-point score where "1" would stand for 'not ensured at all', and "10" – fully ensured. Only 12.2% of this group rated the level of ensuring pluralism during the national elections as low – 1-4, about 29% rated it as average – 5-7, and the high rating – 8-10 – was provided by more than 54%. In this case the TVC representatives displayed the strongest self-criticism, whereas the RC representatives were the ones that showed the highest self-appreciation.

The ratios of those who rated the level of pluralism during the LSGB elections as low and average have decreased even more (9.3 and 21.5%, respectively). And on the opposite – the number of those that rated it as high increased by 10 per cent.

The ratio of those that provided a low rating to the pluralism ensured during the non-election periods has also decreased a little and (7.5%), on the contrary, that of the high ranking increased, reaching 2/3. In the last two cases the newspaper journalists' self-criticism is stronger if compared with that of the TVC journalists.

As for the group of the *political party and NGO* representatives, their 46.2% support the view that media always or often provide pluralism. The ratio of the partisans that expressed such an opinion exceeds that of the NGO representatives having the same viewpoint. About 53% of the non-journalist experts' group state that media seldom provide or never provide pluralism. In this subgroup the ratio of the NGO representatives prevails.

In addition to the general viewpoint related to the level of pluralism ensured by media, we also tried to find out from the party representatives to what extent their organizations usually face hardships while trying to express their opinions in the media. It turned out that 58% of this group have no such difficulty at all, 34% very seldom get an opportunity of expressing their view through the media, and 8.0% never get such an opportunity (the latter entirely represent the oppositional political organizations).

Having absolutely no difficulty expressing their opinions in media was stated by the Republican Party of Armenia and Prosperous Armenia party representatives, whereas none of the representatives of the Armenian National Congress, and in particular, its member organizations – People's Party of Armenia and Armenian National Movement – stated that no difficulty was ever faced.

At the same time we were interested to identify **the reasons for the inadequate ensurance of pluralism by the media**. First of all, it should be noted that 8.4% of the journalists stated about their providing pluralism adequately, and 28% noted that there were no reasons hampering the ensuring of pluralism. The ratios of the TV and newspaper journalists in this subgroup were almost equal.

As the most common hindrances for pluralism the following ones were indicated: the unfree atmosphere established in the country, low level of freedom of expression, suppression applied during elections (21.5%).

Within the subgroup that expressed these views the ratio of the TVC representatives is obviously high, thus allowing saying that greater suppression is applied against them. The same is witnessed by the following reason mentioned by 7.5% of the journalists (exceptionally TV journalists): "avoidance of political newscasts, adoption of tactics of not participating in the coverage of specific elections, abstaining from inviting certain political forces out of fear of looking biased".

The next factor impeding pluralism is the lack of financial resources, hence – the financial dependence on the ruling bodies and other individuals (14.1%). By the way, among those who noted about this factor the ratio of the press representatives is almost twice higher.

The next in the list of impediments is the meekness of political forces, i.e. their not applying to the media (9.3%). Within the subgroup of those who referred to this issue the TVC representatives, *especially – in the marzes*, obviously prevail, who have repeatedly noted that during elections the political forces prefer to appear on the national broadcasting media. As a factor hindering the adequate exercise of pluralism the lack of journalistic professionalism was mentioned by 6.5% of the media representatives.

2.2. Transparency of the media funding sources and ownership

As for the media ownership and funding sources, only 12.3% of the journalist experts expressed an opinion that their transparency is ensured, 43% stated that it is not, and about 44% of the experts were hesitant to answer this question. Above 54% of the subgroup that pointed to the unensured transparency are the TV reporters, and the ratio of the newspaper reporters thinking likewise is but a little lower, about 46%. All of the radio reporters found it difficult to reply to this question.

The connection that exists between the perceptions about transparency and the journalists' expertise is also very interesting. Here a directly proportional correlation is observed: the more is the expertise, the more the ratio of those with distinct opinions regarding the discussed issue and the less the ratio of the undecided. The same tendency is also observed within the group of those indicating the lack of transparency.

The opinions of the journalists regarding the prohibition of the same individual's or legal entity's being the owner of more than one TV company, or radio company, or TVR company broadcasting within the same area, as defined by the RA Law "On Television and Radio" (broadcasting antimonopoly legislative provision) are structured as follows: 21.5% think the provision is duly applied, 27.1% think it is not, 47.7% found it difficult to answer the question. The ratios of the TVC and RC representatives are almost equal within the group that responded positively regarding the due application of this legislative provision – about 25 per cent. The opposite opinion is expressed by more than 21% of the TVC representatives and about 33% of the newspaper reporters. Within the group of the undecided the ratios of the TVC and newspaper journalists are equal.

The public and political actors have a comparatively more positive viewpoint regarding this issue. 28% of the political organizations and about 35% of the NGO representatives think that the broadcasting antimonopoly legislative provision is maintained. The opposite opinion is supported by 32% of party members and 23.5% of the NGO representatives. The undecided make 40 and 41.7%, respectively.