

Unbiased Media Coverage of Armenia-Azerbaijan Relations

March 2013



About the project.

The project kicked off in June 2008 with financial support by the UK Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (FCO). The project aimed at increasing the amount of accurate and unbiased reporting of Armenia-Azerbaijan relations and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, as well as fostering interaction between editors, journalists and media NGOs from Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Why media? Media is a powerful tool for shaping public opinion. Especially in the conflicting societies it may play an important, yet dual and controversial role. While the bias reporting and hate propaganda through media may further escalate the conflict dehumanizing the “other side” and kindling hatred, in the meantime it may objectively portray the reality, make the pacifist discourse audible and become a medium for dialogue. With this in mind, the team behind the project believes that without accurate and unbiased information free of negative rhetoric and stereotype, Armenians and Azerbaijanis will continue to see themselves as enemies without perspective to restore the peace across their borders.

To address these issues, EPF’s Armenia-Azerbaijan Media Bias program coupled research with practice; making a research on public perceptions about media bias, as well as two separate media monitoring assessments to measure changes in bias and to further document the types of inaccuracies that frequently occur in Armenian and Azerbaijani media. Coming to on-the-ground components of the project, a training was held for 40 journalists and editors representing print and online media, as well as TV and radio in each country. In addition, an innovation fund was made available to launch small, cross-border pilot projects addressing issues of bias. Throughout the project EPF worked closely with the program’s four core partners: Yeni Nesil (Azerbaijan), the Yerevan Press Club (Armenia), Internews-Armenia and Internews-Azerbaijan.



Who is Paying Attention to What?

In summer 2008, within the scope of the project, CRRC teams in Armenia and Azerbaijan held focus groups in both countries respectively, and produced a report on public attitudes toward and trust in the media, especially regarding Armenia-Azerbaijan relations.

The report is available at <http://goo.gl/jDDHS>.

Media Monitoring Assessments.

As part of the project two joint media monitorings has been conducted on accuracy and bias in mutual reporting in Azerbaijan and Armenia by Yerevan Press Club and Yeni Nesil. Four TV channels and four newspapers were monitored in each country. First round of monitoring covered the period of September 15-November 15, Second round has covered period of October 1-31, 2009.

The findings are available in English and Russian at <http://goo.gl/HQ1cW>, and <http://goo.gl/YvVTa>.



Small Joint Projects.

Within the framework of the project EPF has supported two small scale Armenian-Azerbaijani joint projects. One of the projects is a documentary telling a story of refugees and ex-combatants from Armenia and Azerbaijan, the other film is focusing on cliché and stereotypes.

Please watch the film by Vahagn Antonyan and Asef Guliev "Image of the Enemy" (He война и не мир) on our Vimeo channel here; <http://goo.gl/WuVCX> (first part), <http://goo.gl/jp8Zc> (second part).

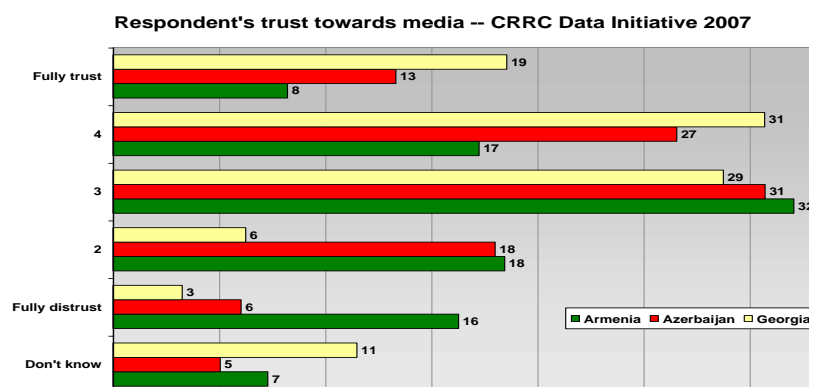
Please watch the film by Kristina Vardanyan and Farman Nabiev "Passenger" (Пассажир) on our Vimeo channel here; <http://goo.gl/GFkmQ>.

Trainings for Journalists.

In February 2009 an in-country training was held both in Azerbaijan and Armenia on self-monitoring to avoid bias and on accurate and objective reporting based on examples from the best international practices on the role of media in conflict areas. Overall 40 young journalists participated in the trainings, 20 from each country. It is noteworthy that among several training materials the Armenian and Azerbaijani translations of the report on public attitude toward and trust in media, as well as the report on the two-month media monitoring in Armenia and Azerbaijan were used by the trainers. Four Armenian and eight Azerbaijani editors joined the last day of the training in Yerevan and Baku respectively.

The three-day regional workshop for the select group of project participants was held on March 27-29, 2009 in Tbilisi, Georgia. 11 journalists from each of Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as four representatives of the EPF's core partners from both sides along with EPF staff from Yerevan and Baku participated in the workshop.

The second round of in-country training was held in early November in Baku and in early December in Yerevan for a new group of Armenian journalists.



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