



# Armenia

## Alternative Resources in Media and Freedom of Expression

### *Project Goal*

The goal of Alternative Resources in Media (ARM) Project is to enhance and improve access to pluralistic and unbiased information in Armenia via traditional and alternative media through the use of new information technologies. This four-year USAID-supported project, launched in November 2010, is implemented by EPF in partnership with Internews Media Support NGO and Yerevan Press Club and is led by Internews Network (USA).

The activities within the ARM project are a part of EPF strategic Freedom of Expression (FoE) and Media program, which is built on the recommendations of the 2009 research on the FoE situation in Armenia. Its aim is to expand opportunities for public to engage in open and transparent discussions on policy issues affecting their lives; to give expression opportunities to a wider range of viewpoints in the media; and to provide a forum

for discussion between policy-makers and the general public, which will result in more responsible decision-making on democracy, freedom of expression, European integration, migration, conflict, and youth issues.

### *Impact in 2010*

In 2010, six talk shows on Freedom of Expression issues were produced and aired by Yerkir Media TV channel and rebroadcast by Hamaspur TV network in six regions of Armenia. According to the rating data by AGB Nielsen Media Research, talk shows had on average 3,000 viewers per each airing only in Yerevan, while some topics, particularly a discussion on the Armenian youth's perspective on Armenia-Turkey relations and the "Armenia-Turkey Media Border" documentary, were considered as highly interesting.

As a result of close cooperation between EPF and Yerevan State Linguistic University (YSLU), a masters-level course entitled "Issues on the

## MISSION STATEMENT:

To empower people to effect change for social justice and economic prosperity, through hands-on programs helping them to improve their *communities* and their own *lives*.

*"Congratulations with Freedom of Expression talk shows! I hope, this will oblige people to read our Constitution or at least the Article 27, which is violated every day in Armenia. I also congratulate Yerkir Media channel for trying to overcome overwhelming censorship and taking first steps to become "free media."*

**Azat Vshtuni,**  
Article 27 talk show viewer

Right to Freedom of Expression in Armenia" was elaborated and integrated in the curriculum. 32 students in total enrolled in spring and fall classes of 2010. The course will continue in fall of 2011.

In October 2010, an open grant competition entitled "New content through new technologies" was announced as a part of the ARM project to build strong foundations for the development of alternative media and new ways of information dissemination. The competition solicited applications from traditional media outlets, NGOs, production companies and individuals for a) production of innovative content on television, print, radio and online media outlets; application of multimedia platforms to increase accessibility of such content; b) development of citizen journalism, and c) production of video materials. During the first stage of the competition fourteen applications were selected, out of 82 inquiries and 36 full proposals submitted. The winning projects include establishment of a network of multimedia journalists in Armenia, development of an I-Report application in Facebook, and coverage of political, social and environmental news using satire.

In December 2010, EPF organized a large-scale consultation on alternative resources in Armenian media based on creative games technologies. 50 participants, media professionals, NGOs, government officials, business community, high-tech industry, international organizations and representatives of general public discussed issues related to consumer demand for media content, cultural environment surrounding media

production, challenges facing the modern digital world as well as media market approaches. The results of the consultation are available on-line ([http://www.epfound.am/index.php?article\\_id=375&clang=0](http://www.epfound.am/index.php?article_id=375&clang=0)) and will inform the future strategies of the ARM project.

### *Main Activities in 2011*

In the coming year, EPF's Caucasus Resource Research Centers will conduct a representative survey of 1,500 respondents throughout Armenia to reveal media preferences of the public, their expectations on media content and format, perception of freedom of media and censorship, and trust in the media. In-depth interviews and focus-group discussions among media experts in Armenia will complement the research.

Starting March 2011, 11 talk shows will be aired on Yerkir Media TV. The shows will address FoE issues in the areas of youth, European integration, Armenia-Azerbaijan and Armenia-Turkey relations. Sensitive topics such as bloggers and Armenia-Azerbaijan dialogue will be publicly discussed on TV for the first time ever in Armenia.

A research on FoE, human rights and democratic values in Armenian fiction will be announced in February 2011 to enable the public to see if and how fiction has addressed these issues and renew their interest in literature, as well as to make fiction more attuned to the public interest and need. The research results will be published, disseminated among wider audiences and discussed.

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