

VII. Activities of international organizations

The American organization Internews, the Open Society Institute (OSI) and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) appear to be the most regularly active organizations in media support in Tajikistan, with activities already or potentially influencing the media structure in the country. Together, they organized different seminars on legislative issues for journalists.

Internews, which started its activities in Tajikistan in 1995, concentrates on its usual activities: support for private television with training seminars including all professional aspects of TV's work, from management to journalism. Internews is also investing a lot of effort in respect of the legal plan, actively lobbying to bring changes in the "Law on Television and Radio" and other legal texts about media, strengthening the position of the private electronic media, and organizing seminars on legal issues for all journalists, including those working for state media. Feeling the need for a more substantial training program, and willing to organize longer seminars, Internews is planning the opening of a school of journalism next year, in collaboration with OSI. Internews does also distribute some limited grants for equipment for TV stations.⁶⁵

Also involved in journalists' training, OSI is paying particular attention to printed and radio journalism in order to be complementary to Internews. Present training activities mainly consist in sending journalists to be trained abroad, even if, so Zuhra Halimova, Executive Director for OSI in Tajikistan, it is not always easy to find candidates with a sufficient level of English language to really benefit from such an experience. Occasionally, OSI also gives some grants as it did, for example, to the Union of Journalists, to have texts translated such as the Charter of freedom of press, some laws, or a manual for journalists. For next year, OSI is planning to organize training, possibly in collaboration with BBC, for radio producers. Together with Internews, OSI is also willing to start a school for journalists in Tajikistan, possibly with four-month sessions per year, as well as special training for "rural newspapers".⁶⁶

Apart from the organization of seminars on different issues for journalists, OSCE has been developing these last years a concept of "rehabilitation" of district "community" newspapers, particularly in Southern Tajikistan (details in the annexed report on the SDC financed media projects in Tajikistan). Owned by the local authorities, the newspapers rehabilitated within the framework of those projects were a legacy of the old Soviet media structure in Tajikistan. Initially motivated by the idea of providing information to the readers of some areas cut off from the Dushanbe's media during the period of elections (1999 and 2000), those rehabilitation projects did not bring any particular

⁶⁵ CIMERA interview with Christine Kiernan, Country Director, and Bahodoor Kosomov, Managing Director Internews, Tajikistan, September 2000.

⁶⁶ CIMERA interview with Zuhra Halimova.

change to the general media structure in the South. They, nevertheless, sometimes filled a complete gap of local news and allowed journalists from those areas to get back to work, even in a very limited framework. For the future, OSCE has decided to actively support the development of private media. In Kurgan-Tyube, south of Dushanbe, it will launch a private TV-radio company (the radio part being financed by the Swiss Development and Co-operation office from Dushanbe). The structure of the company is entirely private, but a contract will link the Director to OSCE during the whole period of the project. During that time, the functioning of the company will be entirely financed by an external donor, with the aim to give enough time to the station to become self-sustainable. As an implementing agency, the OSCE will have a co-responsibility in the editorial content of the programs, and will exert an overall financial control on the management of the station. The radio part of this project will be of particular interest, for different reasons. First of all, the Kurgan-Tyube radio station will be the first local private radio ever working in Tajikistan. Then, taking into consideration the particularly difficult economic situation of the country, radio represents probably the easiest way to establish a new offer in terms of news among the public.

In the northern part of the country, OSCE is going to implement other projects with the aim to directly support the creation of private-owned media. Two projects are foreseen: the creation of a weekly newspaper and of a press agency in the Leninabad area (Khudjand). The same structure will be put in place, as for the TV-radio in Kurgan-Tyube. The donor will be external (the Dutch Government in the case of the newspaper) and OSCE will be the implementing agency. For the newspaper, the project includes a financial control on the part of OSCE, which will report to the donor on a quarterly basis. The editorial line will be determined by an agreement signed between the newspaper and OSCE, including a series of commitments from the newspaper to respect certain standards in terms of content and management of human resources. The news agency will be working on the model of *Asia Plus* information bulletin: three times per week, with news in English, Russian and Tajik, aiming at providing presently non-existent information about Leninabad oblast. In the future, the agency will try to have correspondents in the whole region of the Ferghana Valley, including Uzbekistan and Kirgizstan. The weekly newspaper to be started in Khudjand will be a generalist one, trying to bring quality news, information and analyses in the region. It is interesting to note that all persons in charge of these projects for OSCE placed accent on the necessity to have an everyday presence in the redaction, whether in the radio, the agency or the newspaper, in order to ensure an optimal follow-up as well as providing permanent training on the spot.