

# Gender equality and media regulation study

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## Armenia







# ARMENIA Gender Equality and Media Regulation Study

## Acknowledgements

### Lead Researcher:

Tsovinar Nazaryan

### Editing:

Agneta Söderberg Jacobson, Senior Advisor Gender, Fojo Media Institute

### Proofreading:

Jean Mujati, Programme Coordinator, Fojo Media Institute

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### Acronyms

CEAMJ – Code of Ethics for Armenian Media and Journalists

CoE – Council of Europe

CPB - Council of Public Broadcaster

DV – domestic violence

HRD – Human Rights Defender (ombudsman)

MEO – Media Ethics Observatory

MSLA - Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs

NGOs – non-governmental organisations

TV – Television

TVRC – Television and Radio Commission

### Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in this work do not necessarily reflect the official policy of Fojo Media Institute, its partners and funding agencies.

This study has been conducted in collaboration with the Department of Journalism, Media and Communication (JMG) at University of Gothenburg. Funded by Sida and supported by the International Training Programme “Media Development in a Democratic Framework” implemented by Niras, Fojo Media Institute, International Media Support and Global Reporting.

## PREAMBLE

Freedom of expression and gender equality are core human rights. But women's voices and perspectives are still missing in most of the news media all over the world. The 6th Global Media Monitoring project indicate that women make up only 25 percent of the news subjects and sources. Could regulation and/or self-regulation of the media be part of the problem - or part of the solution - to increase gender balance in the media?

This mapping project, initiated by Fojo Media Institute in collaboration with Gothenburg University's Department of Journalism, Media & Communication (JMG) and other partners<sup>1</sup> is one in a set of country case studies conducted to understand how gender equality and women's freedom of expression are integrated in media regulation, self-regulation and within media inhouse policies.

The foundation for this work is The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action for the Advancement of women (BPfA) adopted at the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women (1995) that called on governments and other actors to "increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision making in and through the media and new technologies of communication", (Strategic objective J.1.) and "promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media" (Strategic objective J.2.).

Similar to provisions in other policy instruments prior to and following the BPfA's adoption, area J intimated at possible tensions between guaranteeing (women's) freedom of expression on the one hand and media independence on the other hand. Freedom of expression and media freedom however, are not mutually exclusive. Both are necessary for democracy and protected in international standards. Only in a society where there is a plurality of voices that participate in an accessible and dynamic public sphere is there room for the development and improvement of democracy.

The case studies were implemented in some of the countries where Fojo is active, namely Armenia, Bangladesh, Rwanda, Somalia, Sweden and Zimbabwe. The case studies accompany a broader global study of gender in media law and policy at international, regional and country levels spanning more than 100 nations.<sup>2</sup>

The national studies are based on a pre-formulated framework of questions and tables that then was adapted for the individual country. The inclusion of Sweden as a case was due to both the fact that Fojo Media Institute is based in Sweden and that Sweden has a high standard of living that includes a strong infrastructure both regarding gender equality and freedom of expression. (Due to time restrictions, the Swedish report is quite brief).

Ultimately, the global study and the individual country studies presented within the framework of Fojo Media Institute and its partners, seek to guide media development bodies and other stakeholders in their work to promote gender equality in and through the media with full respect for other human rights involved, particularly the right to freedom of expression and freedom of information.

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<sup>2</sup> Global GMR-report 2nd edition

## KEY FINDINGS GLOBAL REPORT

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action for the Advancement of women (BPfA) adopted at the Fourth UN World Conference on Women (1995) called on governments and other actors to “increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication”, (Strategic objective J.1.) and “promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media” (Strategic objective J.2.). Similar to provisions in other policy instruments prior to and following the BPfA’s adoption, area J intimated at possible tensions between guaranteeing (women’s) freedom of expression on the one hand and media independence on the other hand. Freedom of expression and media freedom, however, are not mutually exclusive. Both are necessary for democracy and are protected in international standards. Only in a society where there is a plurality of voices that participate in an accessible and dynamic public sphere is there room for the development and improvement of democracy.

This study initiated by Fojo Media Institute in collaboration with Gothenburg University’s Department of Journalism, Media & Communication (JMG) and other partners is one in a set of country case studies conducted to understand how gender equality and women’s freedom of expression are integrated in media regulation, self-regulation, and within media in-house policies. The case studies were conducted in countries in which Fojo is active, namely Armenia, Bangladesh, Rwanda, Somalia, Sweden, and Zimbabwe. The case studies accompany a broader global study of gender in media law and policy at international, regional and country levels spanning more than 100 nations.

Key findings in the global study include the following:

- Transnational policies with gender and media provisions tend to remain at the level of generalities, focusing commonly on gender-based discrimination, gender stereotypes, the role of stereotypes in socialisation of children, and violence against women.
- There are inconsistencies between commitment to gender equality in national policies, and to gender equality in media policies and legislation. Widespread interest in general gender equality at national levels does not appear to filter into media regulation to the same extent.
- In the five out of ten national media policies with provisions related to gender equality that were sampled, it is the right to non-discrimination on the basis of a list of identities, including sex or gender, that is protected, making this the single most common issue at which regulators draw the line on media freedom.
- In industry self- and co-regulation, the few instruments with gender-related provisions address a handful of issues, including non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, and most prevalent – treatment of sexual assault survivors. Some provide for content monitoring and mandate the respective authorities to investigate complaints, however the extent to which complaints mechanisms function as intended is limited.

- Only a fraction of media organisations have gender equality, equal opportunities or gender diversity policies in place. The global study considers the scope and obligations derived from the protection of gender equality and freedom of expression as human rights by international and regional mechanisms. It assesses how such transnational principles inspire national legal systems regulating media, underlining that:
- The role of freedom of expression within the context of democratic societies would deem certain provisions aimed at restricting or limiting the dissemination of opinions and ideas contrary to the notion and principles of gender equality excessive and disproportionate, and therefore unacceptable within the context of a free, open, and pluralistic public sphere.
- An alternative method to promote gender equality in media would be to establish proper and efficient self- or co-regulatory mechanisms, which can also be promoted through appropriate media policies and legislation.
- Effective promotion of gender justice needs to be connected to the adoption of specific policies rather than to the mere enforcement of legal and regulatory provisions.
- It is important for civil society and academia to pay particular attention and increase research and advocacy regarding gender equality on social media. It would also be necessary to promote and/or regulate increased transparency of platforms with regards to the impact of their content moderation policies on gender justice.
- Where legal restrictions are not acceptable, alternative positive policy measures to address possible societal risks could be applied. These include: reinforcement of codes of ethics for journalists, specifically covering gender treatment issues; promoting media pluralism and reinforcing the role and mission of public service media; training of journalists and media professionals on freedom of expression; and the right to equality and non-discrimination.

The global study offers a set of recommendations and a pathway to catalyse the effectiveness of policy and legislation in addressing gender equality issues and enabling women's freedom of expression in and through the media.

Ultimately, the global research and the detailed country studies seek to guide media development bodies and other stakeholders in their work to promote gender equality in and through the media with full respect for other human rights involved, particularly the right to freedom of expression and the right to information.

## SECTION 1. COUNTRY PROFILE: ARMENIA

Although women's rights have been in focus of some groups in Armenia for decades, the concept of "gender" and gender-sensitive issues arose relatively recently and were not received with an equal enthusiasm. Gender agenda often becomes a target of conservative groups, including those affiliated with political elites. Taking into account that the Armenian media are extremely politicised (Discrimination and Violence on TV and Online News, 2019), the gender equality agenda is often manipulated for political reasons. The current government came into office with a stronger stand for gender agenda, but further progress was slowed down because of many challenges.

Ethnic Armenians are the predominant population in the country. Most identify themselves as Apostolic Christians. Armenian is the official language of the country (it was official along with Russian in the Soviet Union, too). Other ethnic groups also live in Armenia; they include Yezidis, Assyrians, Molokans, Greeks, Kurds, and others.

In Armenia, only men and women are recognised as gender identities. Identity documents are issued with two options for the line "Sex": either male or female. Some people have changed their gender and were provided with new identity documents by the state, still they are considered either men or women depending on what their new name and sex is.

Armenia's cultural traditions have been created throughout centuries and influenced by its neighbours and invaders. Located in the Caucasus, South-East Europe, a Christian country since 301 A.D., Armenia features both European and oriental value-based traditions.

The country is a member of the Council of Europe, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, a member of the European Union's Eastern Partnership. Having a large democratic reform agenda aligned with the USA and Europe, at the same time, Armenia has heavily depended on Russia because of security reasons. After withdrawing from signing an Association Agreement with the EU in 2013, Armenia entered the Russia-led European Economic Union and signed another agreement with the EU (Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement, CEPA).

Armenian women enjoy the right to vote since 1919 (in the First Republic). Their higher education rate was one of the highest in the Soviet Union.

Armenia has regained its independence in 1991 after 70 years of Soviet rule. Already in late 1980s, new press started to emerge, some of the publications – in samizdat format until the Soviet Union collapsed. Since Armenia transitioned to a free market economy, private television (TV) channels were also founded. At the same time, the collapse of the Soviet economy, the consequences of the earthquake of 1988, inflows of refugees from Azerbaijan, blockade of Armenian borders by Azerbaijan and Turkey and other factors caused severe economic instability and poverty in the population which therefore affected the purchasing power of media consumers. Circulation of print media declined drastically.



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The following period (2008-2018) was marked with a rapid development of internet connection and growth of online media in the country. Although TV remained mostly controlled by ruling elites, alternative discourse was still available to smaller audiences thanks to online and print media. Social and political activists started actively using social media, especially Facebook, for information exchange and mobilisation for action. In 2018, mass protests resulted in the so called “Velvet Revolution”. Nikol Pashinyan, a former journalist, took the lead of the country as the prime minister. Increase of media and other freedoms was recorded by international organisations, but it was shuttered in the last year, especially in relation to the conflict with Azerbaijan.



## SECTION 2. METHODS

This research employed qualitative methods to study if and how gender equality is integrated into media regulation and self-regulation in Armenia. An extensive desktop study was followed by a range of interviews and inquiries sent out to relevant actors in the area of concern. The aim of the desktop study was to draw a larger view and understanding of the Armenian gender and media policies in published legal documents. Next, the research narrowed the scope down to where gender equality and free media policies intersect. It was done by inquiries, interviews, and surveys of the relevant actors of the studied area.

First, the study looked at the international context on gender equality in the media. This includes both global and regional agreements and other documents providing rules and recommendations on the subject. The study considers those international documents that are or may be related to Armenia among other participating countries.

On the national level, first the Constitution and then the legislation of Armenia were examined from the perspective of media freedom, gender equality, and their intersections. This work reveals the legal grounds for gender equality policies in general and particularly in the media. To have a complete look on the Government's policies on the subject (gender equality generally and in the media), the research examines other legal acts adopted by the Government and its agencies (beyond those adopted by the Parliament). Further, individual inquiries are sent to relevant actors, particularly to the Government agency responsible for gender equality policies, to fill in gaps, such as information on the lack of laws and policies or implementation of the existing ones. Finally, the acquired information on the legislation and the Government's policies are analysed against the international context studied in the initial stage of this research.

Apart from examining the legal framework of the only media regulatory authority in Armenia (the Television and Radio Commission, TVRC), more information on their gender policies (in decision-making and in internal organisation) was requested from the TVRC through a questionnaire and later through an additional inquiry.

To understand how Armenian media self-regulates when gender issues arise, both a desktop research and surveys were employed. The largest self-regulatory body (Media Ethics Observatory, MEO) that includes tens of media outlets is analysed from the perspective of gender sensitivity. Its Code of Ethics is scrutinised from the perspective of gender equality issues in the media. Besides, the research examines MEO decisions related to gender discrimination complaints.

A structured questionnaire was developed and sent out to a pool of selected media outlets. They were sampled based on the size of their audience: five largest national broadcasters, four largest radio broadcasters, five most viewed online media, and five most circulated daily newspapers. Apart from this, their websites were examined to find any published policy on media ethics.

Some ethics codes of other media outlets not selected for this survey are also examined for comparison and a wider understanding of general ethics culture in the media. Public TV is the only interviewed media outlet that replied to the survey in detail. It is financed by public means and regulated by the TVRC.

Since Armenian media are mostly regulated by the law and by themselves (apart from the media producing audio-visual content), the research looked at related cases among court decisions archived in a centralised database called Datalex.am. Its search engine found 13 results with the word “gender”. Six of them are cases related to gender discrimination by and against journalists. Available research articles and reports on the matter were studied.

To study how journalism education reflects on gender-sensitive topics, journalism education programmes of two major universities were examined. For additional information, inquiries were sent to professors at these universities.

In general, most inquiries were used for checking and cross-checking the non-existence of certain policies, rather than finding the existing ones that are published.

Finally, the research developed a discussion on the gender equality approaches in the Armenian media regulations and self-regulation. It concludes with recommendations on how to improve the situation.







## SECTION 3. FINDINGS

### 3.1 THE STATE

Armenia is a signatory of several major international conventions and agreements promoting human rights. This includes the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the European Social Charter. Armenia has also signed the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention), but has not yet ratified it due to harsh criticism by conservative groups.

#### **Constitutional bases for gender equality in the media**

The principles of equality of human beings and of freedom of expression are stipulated in Armenia's Constitution (adopted in 1995 and amended twice by national votes). It states that everyone is equal before the law (Article 28) and prohibits discrimination (Article 29):

*Discrimination based on sex, race, skin colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion, world view, political or other views, belonging to a national minority, property status, birth, disability, age, or other personal or social circumstances shall be prohibited. (Constitution of RA, 1995)*

The above-mentioned constitutional clauses make up the basis for non-discriminatory understanding of the concepts of “citizens”, “everyone”, and “human beings” in legal documents, such as the Constitution itself, laws, decrees, and other regulations.

A separate article is devoted to the legal equality between men and women (Article 30). “Actual equality between men and women” is declared as one of the main objectives of the state policy (Article 86). Besides, the Constitution protects women against dismissal from work “due to reasons related to maternity” (Article 57).

As to the media, several articles of the Constitution guarantee the freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of expression, and right to receive information (Articles 41, 42, and 51 respectively). The Constitution also guarantees ideological pluralism and multiparty system in the country (Article 8).

In sum, gender equality and media freedoms correspond to the Armenia's national and international commitments. Still, while the idea of free media has already created some historical heritage in the new Armenian democracy, the concept of gender equality is something new in Armenia and it still has to make its path through.

## Legislation on gender equality

A gender equality law, the Law on Ensuring Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men adopted by the National Assembly (the Parliament of Armenia) on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013 and amended in 2020, is the main law defining state policies in the field of gender equality. It prohibits gender discrimination in any forms. It defines indirect forms of gender discrimination, among others, also as “reproducing gender stereotypes through mass media, education and culture”.

As to the GE Law, the public governance and self-governance agencies write annual reports on their actions for gender equality and submit them to the relevant state authority. They also may publish the reports in mass media. The relevant state authority, which is the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MSLA), is obliged to produce annual reports on the gender equality situation. The report shall be published in the media (Article 14). As explained by the MSLA in response to our questionnaire, they present the collected data every February. It is subsequently published by the Statics Committee.

The law defines that public policies on providing gender equality should be monitored according to the Government’s decisions (decrees). Armenia’s Gender Strategy for the years of 2019-2023 was adopted by the Government’s decision in September of 2019 (Gender Strategy 2019-2023 and Actions Plan, 2019). In several weeks, the Prime Minister’s decision was issued to establish the new Women’s Council (Council on Women’s Affairs) and the Vice Prime Minister was appointed as the head of the Council (Decision on Creating a Council on Women’s Affairs, 2019). These two documents play a central role in the public policy on gender equality. They will be discussed in more detail in the Section 3.12 on Policies and in 3.13 Indicators.

**Table 1. Central authorities regulating gender equality**

Authorities in charge (ministry, agency etc.)	Authorities responsible for regulating media in terms of gender equality
Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs:  Department for Equal Opportunities, Division on Human Trafficking and Women Issues	None

As the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs mentions in the answer to our research questionnaire, the MSLA is “the policy-making lead on gender and the implementer of all related projects”. Its activity is guided by the Gender Strategy 2019-2023. “The Gender Strategy is aimed at creating favourable conditions for the realisation of opportunities for women and men in all spheres of public life. The development of the strategy was carried out on a participatory basis, involving various stakeholders in the field,” reads MSLA’s answer.

Being an early signatory of the CEDAW, Armenia committed itself to ensure the Convention's implementation and monitoring, to conduct actions for prevention of domestic violence, and to consider gender-sensitive element in annual budget planning. This commitment was part of Armenia's agreements with the European Union on trade («GSP+», 2014), on fiscal reform (2015), and on budget support (2016).

Civil society organisations expected a more radical law on domestic violence, still EU agreed on the Government's version of the law which was adopted as “On the Prevention of Family Violence, Protection of Persons Subjected to Family Violence, And the Restoration of Family Cohesion” on December 13th, 2017 (National Assembly, 2017). As one CSO representative noted, the EU approach was that “it is better to have something than nothing” (Nazaryan, 2017).

According to the decree N 1685-□ of the Prime Minister (28.12.2018) deriving from the DV law on “Family Cohesion” (Article 14), a Council on Preventing Domestic Violence was established. The MLSA (at that moment, led by a woman, a former journalist and disability activist) has the right to appoint members to this council. The member list was confirmed by the Prime Minister (decree N 1685-□). The council was headed by the Vice-Minister of MLSA, representatives of state agencies, including the law enforcing bodies, but mostly of NGOs and social institutions (Decree on Approving the Memberlist of the Council for Preventing Domestic Violence, 2018)

Besides the above-mentioned laws on domestic violence and on equality between men and women, the Government has proposed a law against all forms of discrimination, but it faced a severe backlash from conservative groups and remained draft (Draft Law on Ensuring Equal Rights, 2018). The same was the fate of ratification of the Istanbul Convention.

### **3.1.1 LEGISLATION**

Gender-sensitive approaches in the media are regulated by particular clauses in the gender-related and media-related laws but there is no specific law on the matter. As explained previously, the concept of “gender” is relatively new in Armenia and faces much opposition while making its way through the laws.

The Law on Ensuring Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men provides that the mass media support the progress of gender equality through relevant content (Article 17, clause 2). This responsibility is further prescribed to the public broadcasters in the Audio-Visual Law. Private media are not required to promote anti-discrimination content.

The Article 17 foresees support to the gender equality by the civil society. CSOs are granted the right to take part in developing and realising decisions, projects and actions by the governance and self-governance bodies (clause 1, point 1); to reveal breaches of gender equality and submit them to the authorised public body for monitoring (clause 1, point 2); to carry on a monitoring on Armenia's international commitments (point 3);

to provide expertise and analysis of relevant legal acts (point 4); to draft alternative reports on the area of gender equality policy (point 5); to provide campaigns on gender equality through the mass media (point 6); and to take other actions to support the public policy (point 7).

The Article 22 §1 of the Domestic Violence Law prohibits publication of any data that may disclose the identity of the DV victim. The Law also provides that publications on DV shall contain contacts of hotlines and similar services that allow readers to report on DV (Article 14, §7). Besides, statistics of DV cases should be published by the authorised body on its website (14, §2).

**Table 2. Type of legislation adopted for the promotion of gender equality in the media**

Title	Issuer	Date published	Clause number	Clauses
Law on Ensuring Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men	National Assembly	2013	Article 6	Indirect forms of gender discrimination are:  1) reproducing gender stereotypes through mass media, education, and culture
			Article 9	The monitoring of the implementation of public policy on ensuring gender equality  2) annual reports of the governance and self-governance bodies may be published in the media
			Article 14	The government introduces annual report in the first trimester of the year and publishes it in the media
			Article 17	2) provides that the mass media support the progress of gender equality through relevant content  CSOs are granted the right to:  6) provide campaigns on gender equality through the mass media
On the Prevention of Family Violence, Protection of Persons Subjected to Family Violence, And the Restoration of Family Cohesion	National Assembly	2017	Article 22	Publication of any information that may disclose the identity of the victim is prohibited



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Thus, gender-related laws seek the support of journalists but do not impose any responsibility on them. Even in the case of the above-mentioned Article 14, §7 of DV Law, it is not clear whether the responsibility for publishing of confidential data lays upon the media or the source of information. However, according to the Law on Mass Media, a journalist is “not liable for dissemination of secret information as stipulated by law, provided the information in question was lawfully obtained, or it was not apparent that the information was secret according to the law. If the implementer of media activity has disseminated information the secret nature of which has been evident, it will be exempt from liability if dissemination of information was done for the sake of protecting public interest” (Law on Dissimination of Mass Information (Mass Media Law), 2003)

**Table 3. Gender equality-related requirements in the national legislation on public service media**

Requirement	Document title	Comment
1. Protection of human dignity	Law on the Mass Media, - Articles 7, 8, and 9 - Civil Code, Article 19 - Criminal Procedure Code, Article 16	The law requirements are related to all media, not only those financed by public sources
2. Protection of human rights	Law on Audio-Visual Media	This requirement is indirectly stipulated in the Requirements 4 and 5
3. Gender equality	Law on Audio-Visual Media	This requirement is stipulated in the Requirements 4 and 5
4. Prohibition of discrimination based on national, racial, gender or religious affiliation	Law on Audio-Visual Media, Article 9 Law on Advertising, Article 8	The requirement is related to all audio-visual media, not only the public service media
5. The public broadcasters provide programmes aimed at overcoming stereotypes including features of national, racial, religious, and gender discrimination	Law on Audio-Visual Media Article 22	This requirement is set on the public media, but not the private
6. Avoiding discrimination based on sex/gender	Law on Audio-Visual Media	This requirement is indirectly stipulated in the Requirements 4 and 5
7. Avoiding hatred based on sex/gender	Law on Audio-Visual Media	This requirement is indirectly stipulated in the Requirements 4 and 5
8. Avoiding stereotypes/sexism	Law on Audio-Visual Media	This requirement is indirectly stipulated in the Requirements 4 and 5
9. Sexist language	Law on Audio-Visual Media	This requirement is indirectly stipulated in the Requirements 4 and 5
10. Equal representation/treatment of women, men, and recognized gender minorities	Audio-Visual Law, Articles 23 and 35	
12. Diversity	Law on Audio-Visual Media	This requirement is indirectly stipulated in the Requirements 4 and 5

Armenian media-related laws provide general requirement of respecting human dignity in all media. They include few clauses specifying gender-sensitive requirements.

Particularly, the laws protect one's private life and confidential information from publication in media. The Mass Media Law provides that the media cannot publish confidential information or information about one's private life; they cannot publish audio-visual materials that were obtained without consent of the person featured in the material (Article 7). At the same time, journalists are not held responsible for publishing confidential information if it was leaked by another person and they were not aware of its confidential nature (Mass Media Law, Article 9).

Public court hearings can be filmed on video "only upon a court decision, for the purpose of protection of public morals, public order, state security, and the private life of the parties, as well as the interests of justice" (Criminal Procedure Code, 1998).

The Civil Code (1998) guarantees the right of a person to refutation and to response in a media outlet if they find a publication in that outlet false or defaming for them (Article 8). Civil Code also protects people's dignity from defamation in the media: "If the communications impugning the honour, dignity, or business reputation of a citizen were distributed in media of mass information, they must be retracted in the same media of mass information" (Article 19).

The legal provisions mentioned above do not specify if the subject is a woman or man. In the same way, the Law on Audio-Visual Media prohibits "discrimination based on national, racial, gender or religious affiliation" to all audio-visual media, public or private, and requires from the public broadcasters to "provide programmes aimed at overcoming stereotypes including features of national, racial, religious and gender discrimination" (Law on Audio-Visual Media, 2020). This requirement is not imposed on the private media although the gender equality and domestic violence laws expect that media should promote gender-sensitive content in their programming.

Gender-balanced reporting/sourcing is not a specific requirement in the legislation. Gender balance in internal structures of media organisations is only required from the TVRC that oversees activities of audio-visual media. The law was adopted in 2020 when all seven members were already appointed, each for a six years' term, and all of them appeared to be men. The law promises to correct this gender imbalance in the future.

### **3.1.2 POLICIES FOR THE PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY IN THE MEDIA**

Armenia's Gender Strategy 2019-2023 is the main document that defines the public policy on gender equality. The Strategy is described as based on the Constitutional norms, particularly on the Articles 30 "Women and men shall enjoy legal equality" and on the Article 86 §4 ("promoting actual equality between women and men") in the state policy, as well as on the Law on Ensuring Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men deriving from the Constitutional provision on prohibition of discrimination based on sex (Article 29).

Strategy refers also to the Gender Equality Conceptual Framework adopted by the Government in 2010, as well as to Armenia's international commitments within the framework of UN and the country's European integration.

To describe the situation in the country, the Strategy refers to the Gender Gap Index studies in Armenia. Particularly, the Report 2017, as described in the Strategy, notes that school textbooks and the media promote gender stereotypes. Men also occupy top positions 2,4 times more than women; only 8 women are elected as community leaders out of 500 communities; only every fourth seat in the Parliament is occupied by women (now they occupy every third seat, according to the law amendments before the elections in June 2021).

The Priorities defined by the Strategy are the following: 1) Improving mechanisms for promoting women's progress and equal participation in decision making and governance. 2) Overcoming gender discrimination in social-economic life and improving women's economic opportunities. 3) Ensuring full engagement and equal opportunities for women and men in education and science. 4) Equal opportunities for women and men in terms of health. 5) Prevention of gender discrimination. Each priority lists specific goals and expected results. The activities for implementing the Strategy are described in the Action Plan annexed to the same Government decision. The Strategy also defines its implementation indicators, responsibilities of the relevant agencies on different levels, financing, and potential challenges. The indicators will be discussed in detail in the following section.

Priority 5 states, among other expected results, that the mass media should provide gender-sensible content. This task is assigned to the Public TV. (The Public TV's gender policy will be discussed in the section 3.4. This provision envisages that the media should be sensitised on the matter, which also means inclusion of gender component in the training of journalists. This task is assigned to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. In their answer to our inquiry, the MLSA informed that one training was organised on equality and gender-based violence for Armenian journalists and media workers. It was carried out jointly with the Council of Europe and MSLA. These are the only provisions that prescribe any role to the media in gender equality promotion.

The Strategy assigns the MLSA as the focal point for summarising the reports of the Government and regional governance bodies and publishing an annual final report. According to the written response to our inquiry, the MSLA is also responsible for fulfilling Armenia's commitment to the implementation of the Recommendation on Gender Equality and Media (CM Rec(2013)1) adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the CoE where Armenia is a member. The recommendation defines 16 measures to be implemented in six areas: review and evaluation of gender equality policy and legislation; adoption and implementation of national indicators for gender equality in the media; provision of information and promotion of good practices; promotion of effective media accountability channels; promotion of research and publication; promotion of media literacy and active citizenship. Apart from publishing a Handbook on the implementation of the Recommendation CM Rec (2013)1 by member states, the Council of Europe also published another handbook for Armenian media titled "Guideline on Gender Equality and Violence against Women, for Armenian Journalists and Media Workers". It was developed in the framework of the CoE project Path towards Armenia's Ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

Following the adoption of the Gender Strategy, a Women's Council was established by a decree of the Prime Minister. The Vice-PM Tigran Avinyan (male) was appointed as its chair. The new decree formed also a working group and defined its working rules. The Council included male and female parliamentarians from different factions, vice ministers from all ministries and deputies from state agencies, representatives from the office of the President, of the Ombudsman, of the RA TV and Radio Commission, and of women NGOs. After the elections of 2021, having the Council members moved to other positions in the Government and the Parliament, the Council had to undergo a transformation.

### 3.1.3 ANALYSIS

This research has not revealed any policies specially developed for and directly related to the regulation or self-regulation of gender equality in the media, both in content and structures. Studied policies mostly refer to the general constitutional norm on prohibiting discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, sex, social status, and other characteristics. Still, specific policies promoting gender equality in the media (content and structures) are not yet in place, except for several clauses (provisions) in the Gender Strategy and media ethics codes.

On national level, public policies are developed for media freedom and for gender equality separately. They intersect in a few provisions. Yet, a specific policy promoting gender equality in the media is not developed by the Government or its bodies. Here, it should be noted that in Armenia other wordings of the idea of equality, i.e. between men and women, are more acceptable than the idea of "gender" itself.

The "Guideline on Gender Equality and Violence against Women, for Armenian Journalists and Media Workers" published by the CoE in Armenia is the only comprehensive document focusing on the coverage of gender issues in the country. This document has been mentioned in the response of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to our questionnaire.

The government agencies collaborate with their international partners in running relevant projects, such as with the Council of Europe and UNDP (see below about the UNDP's "Women in Politics" project).

### 3.1.3 GENDER EQUALITY INDICATORS

As presented in the previous section, the Armenian Government has not developed specific guidelines to promote gender equality in the media, but it welcomes the Guidelines for Armenian journalists introduced by the Council of Europe and takes part in the actions foreseen by the CoE project supporting Armenia to make its path toward ratification of the Istanbul Convention.

Still, several provisions on promoting gender equality in the media are stipulated in the laws related to gender and to media, as well as in the Gender Policy Implementation Strategy 2019-2023 (adopted by the Prime Minister's decree). The latter defines indicators to measure the implementation of the Strategy in part V (Indicators of the Strategy Implementation).

Some indicators focus on awareness-raising actions among employers, but there are no particular obligations imposed on the media (although media coverage is mentioned as a step in several priorities of the Strategy. See part III)

Only two indicators are related to the media. One indicator of progress is that journalists are provided with trainings on gender-sensitive topics, their understanding of the subject grows after a training, and the number of journalists taking part in gender trainings grows year by year. The other indicator of progress is that the number of gender-sensitive TV programmes and films grows year by year. These two tasks are the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and of the public broadcasters (TV and Radio) respectively.

Since information is not available on how these tasks are implemented, they cannot be measured against UNESCO's gender-sensitive indicators, although they are related to these indicators (UNESCO, 2012).

**Table 5 – Country indicators on gender equality in the news media (content, staffing etc.)**

Document title	Indicator Type (select from dropdown list)	Indicator (cut & paste from document)
Gender Strategy 2019-2023	Preventing gender discrimination	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Media representatives participate in trainings on gender equality. Every year there are 5% more participants in trainings than in the previous year. After a training, at least 70% of attendants know more about gender equality than before the training.</li> <li>2. Every year more TV programmes and film series are produced on gender-sensitive topics.</li> </ol>

The data on the implementation of these two tasks is not available publicly. Responses to our inquiries helped to obtain some data, but it does not provide a comprehensive understanding of dynamics. Annual reports of the MSLA were used for national statistics on the gender equality situation. However, these reports do not reflect the situation of gender equality in the media. For example, the Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia has published a large report Women and Men in Armenia, but their gender statistics do not include media's gender policies (ARMSTAT, 2021).



The CoE's analytical report on Gender Equality and Media (Report of the Progress made since Recommendation CM/Rec(2013)1) introduced data on policies and indicators in different member states, but was not able to reveal and verify the state of their implementation apart from respondents' self-evaluation (Gender Equality and Media, 2019, p. 14).

### 3.2 MEDIA REGULATORY AUTHORTIES

Armenian media are mostly regulated by law and by formal or informal self-regulation. The TV and Radio Commission is the only media regulatory body in the country and its authority is limited to the audio and visual media.

In responding to our questionnaire<sup>3</sup>, the TVRC notes that it is an independent regulatory body formed according to the Constitution and is guided by the Law on Audio-Visual Media and other regulations. It is authorised to conduct monitoring over the broadcasting media and to act as a regulator. The respondents could not provide any data on gender equality in regulations. As to the complaints, the TVRC has not received any complaints related to gender discrimination neither within, nor from the outside stakeholders of the Commission. TVRC's annual report does not reflect on gender-sensitive coverage in the regulated media (Annual Report on TVRC's Activities in 2020, 2021).

The TVRC is formed according to the Constitution. Its seven members are voted in for a period of six years. Providing the figures on the gender balance in the Commission, the response mentions that according to the Audio-Visual Law (Chapter 6, Article 35, point 1), the TVRC members will be further elected with regard to certain "gender representativeness". For now, all seven members of the Commission are men. They were elected before the adoption of the Audio-Visual Law. The staff is composed of 16 men and 33 women, as provided by the TVRC in the written response to our questionnaire.

Responding to our additional inquiry,<sup>4</sup> the TVRC replied that it conducts monitoring over the broadcasting media according to the Audio-Visual Law's Article 13 (point 3). Through a sampling procedure, the Commission monitors audio and video news of each broadcaster at least five days a month. "According to the Law, it is the Broadcasters who develop and implement their programming policy, and the Commission is not authorised to intervene in the programming policy of a Broadcaster", says the response of the TVRC. They found that our questions on gender-sensitive media content were out of their scope of duties.

The Human Rights Defender (Ombudsman) of Armenia monitors human rights violations by official bodies and prepares reports on them. In his annual reports, he reflects also on women's rights, but he has no leverage over other institutions and media. It is up to individual organisations if they take these recommendations into account or not. In his annual report of 2018, the Ombudsman posits that mass media play a significant role in creating and promoting gender bias against women (Annual Report: Excluding Discrimination Against Women, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> 24.09.2021

<sup>4</sup> 12.10.2021



Among issues related to gender equality, violence against women and domestic violence are in special focus of the Ombudsman. As explained in the response of the HRD Arman Tatoyan, this data is collected and analysed by the Research and Education center of the HRD administration and further summarised in the HRD's annual report. Statistical data is collected and analyzed only on the issue of violence.

As to the gender related issues in the media, the HRD's response says that their public relations office pays special attention to the gender reporting in the media. Upon necessity, the HRD has made public statements, provided awareness-raising videos, organised seminars discussing gender issues with journalists, as well as organised awareness-raising campaigns on preventing violence against women and on the value of women's resources. "Working with the media in this area, the Human Rights Defender is led by the principle of settling issues through discussions. Demanding explanations or making decisions in regard to breaches are out of the Defender's authority", the statement informs.

For the purpose of this research, court cases were studied: 13 civic cases related to gender equality were included. Six of them are disputes between media and citizens. Several other cases have been heard by administrative and criminal courts. See for example:

[http://www.datalex.am/?app=AppCaseSearch&case\\_id=38562071809915086](http://www.datalex.am/?app=AppCaseSearch&case_id=38562071809915086)

#### Table/Box

Regulator	Example
TV & Radio Commission (constitutional body)	Seven out of seven elected members are men. 16 men and 33 women are recruited in the staff of the TVRC.

### **3.3 SELF-REGULATORY BODIES**

Armenian media are mostly regulated by law and by formal or informal self-regulation. The TV and Radio Commission is the only media regulatory body in the country and its authority is limited to the audio and visual media.

#### **Table: List of self-regulatory bodies**

Self-regulatory bodies (in the country)
Media Ethics Observatory (MEO), initiated by the Yerevan Press Club and several other prominent media NGOs <a href="https://ypc.am/self-regulation/media-self-regulation-initiative/">https://ypc.am/self-regulation/media-self-regulation-initiative/</a>
Information Disputes Council, founded by the Freedom of Information Centre NGO <a href="http://www.foi.am/en/IDC/">http://www.foi.am/en/IDC/</a>

Armenia is rather small and centralised around the capital Yerevan. There are regional media outlets and regional journalistic organisations but not regional self-regulatory bodies. Media Ethics Observatory (MEO) is the largest self-regulating body established by the initiative of the media NGO Yerevan Press Club and other prominent media NGOs. Its activities are grounded in the Code of Ethics of Armenian Media and Journalists (CEAMJ) signed by tens of media outlets and eight media NGOs who agreed to deliver their disputes to the MEO. Information Disputes' Council is another self-regulatory body founded by the Freedom of Information Centre NGO.

The CEAMJ rules reflect on gender-sensitive issues mostly against the general background of anti-discrimination commitments- “5.1. To avoid prejudice against people on the ground of their race, sex, age, religion, nationality, geographic origin, sexual orientation, physical handicap, looks or social status.”, “5.2 Not to promote in any way ethnic or religious hatred and intolerance, or any discrimination on political, social, sexual, and language grounds, exclude hate speech”, (Code of Ethics of Armenian Media and Journalists, 2007). Some provisions require avoiding gender discrimination. Specific provisions sensitise journalists to the nuances of work with victims of violence and trafficking. No chapter or provision is specifically devoted to providing gender equality in media structures and media content.

The Code of Ethics of Armenian Media and Journalists is signed by 69 media organisations and supported by eight media NGOs. It was signed in 2007 and edited in 2021.

The equality and gender/age-sensitivity provisions in the Code of MEO:

### 3. Editorial Independence

3.5. Set rules of conduct on social networks for the editorial staff and follow the compliance with thereof. These rules, in particular, should contain at least the following:

- Not to disseminate statements or write posts on social networks that may be perceived as manifestations of racial, gender, religious, political or other discrimination. This also applies to posting photos and videos.

[...]

- To moderate comments on publications on social network pages of media, if possible, deleting entries of an openly offensive nature, containing hate speech, calls to violence or other actions prohibited by law;
- If the media has not noticed any comments of an openly offensive nature, containing hate speech or calls for violence but the person to whom such entries were addressed notified the editorial staff about that, then upon notification it is necessary to delete or close such entries within a reasonable time.

### 4. Respect for Privacy and Other Human Rights

This principle entails the following obligations for editors and journalists:

4.3. To be especially tactful when the sources of information or the heroes of publications are children or minors. Be careful when disclosing the identity of juvenile detainees, defendants, convicts, and victims of sexual crimes.

5. Respect for Representatives of Different Groups and for Universal Values This principle entails the following obligations for editors and journalists:

5.1. To avoid prejudice against people on the ground of their race, sex, age, religion, nationality, geographic origin, sexual orientation, physical handicap, looks, or social status.

5.2. Not to promote in any way ethnic or religious hatred and intolerance, or any discrimination on political, social, sexual, and language grounds, exclude hate speech.

5.3. Not to advocate pornography, violence, war in any form; not to deny genocide and crimes against humanity.

7. Integrity in Covering Elections and Referendums This principle entails the following obligations for editors and journalists:

7.4. To give all candidates equal possibilities for presenting their platforms and views in the media, and to apply single tariffs when allocating paid space or airtime in media

(Code of Ethics of Armenian Media and Journalists, 2007)

The Media Ethics Observatory has made several decisions and expert commentary about complaints on gender discrimination in the media. Some complaints were submitted by NGOs advocating for women's rights and gender equality. One sound example was in 2016. A woman and her parents were axed by her ex-husband right on their doorstep. The mother died, and the woman and her father survived despite heavy injuries. The shock of this crime was doubled when it became known that months ago the perpetrator had been hosted in a talk show and introduced as a victim of his ex-wife. After the incident, Anna Zhamakochyan and the Coalition Against Violence filed a complaint against the TV station. The MEO concluded that the TV station had violated journalistic ethics particularly publishing secretly recorded conversations, details of the woman's private life, and presenting a one-sided story. The MEO appealed to the TV station to be more tactful and to keep in line with Armenian legislation and universal norms of ethics (Media Ethic Observatory, 2016).

....

Information Disputes' Council is another self-regulatory body founded by the Freedom of Information Centre NGO. The NGO is founded by journalists advocating for freedom of information, adoption of the relevant laws, and their implementation. The Law on Freedom of Information ensures that any citizen (not only journalists) can request and receive information from the state and local self-governing bodies, state offices, organisations financed from "the state budget, as well as private organisations of public importance and their state officials" (Law on Freedom of Information, 2003). It does not provide any details on gender equality. The leader of the NGO, Ms. Shushan Doydoyan, is a former journalist. Inquired about any complaints on gender equality, she said that they have not received any requests that were specifically related to gender discrimination and they do not collect statistics based on gender.

According to the new law on TV and Radio (Audio-Visual Law, AVL), all the broadcasters are obliged to have their ethics codes and mechanisms for reviewing the cases of breach of the code.

They may be sanctioned if they do not employ self-regulatory mechanism for reviewing disputes (Law on Audio-Visual Media, 2020). After adoption of the Audio-Visual Law, most TV stations simply joined the CEAMJ. So did the public TV-broadcaster. Discussion on this will be elaborated in the Section 3.4.

Many media outlets have their ethics code, but few of them have a self-regulatory body in place. Aravot daily stands out by appointing a media ombudsman, but unfortunately, they could not afford keeping this position for long time.

#### On ethics codes

Media NGOs and associations have been actively promoting journalistic ethics in the media. This includes developing ethical standards and promoting their adoption among the media, as well as doing monitoring, research, and providing trainings for journalists.

However, the issue of gender equality in the media is the number one topic only for a few of these organisations. Most codes of ethics reflect on gender equality issues in the scope of the general antidiscrimination understanding. The Association of Audio-Visual Journalists is focused on the problem of covering survivors of trafficking. They have developed special video-guidelines demonstrating survivor-sensitive coverage techniques.

Journalists for Future have monitored media content related to violence against women. The study was carried out and published in collaboration with the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure, Oxygen Foundation, the UK-based Good Governance Foundation in the framework of the project “Women in Politics” carried out by the UNDP.

Following the monitoring of the coverage of domestic and sexual violence against women, the Coalition to Stop Violence Against Women has recently published a research paper that analyses problems of and provides recommendations for professional coverage of the topic in the media (2021).

The above-mentioned guidelines and recommendations do not oblige the media to follow them.

### **3.4 MEDIA ORGANISATIONS**

The following media organisations were invited to respond to the survey (individual questionnaires were developed for the TV stations and press, and one for the public TV-broadcaster). The respondents were five largest national TV broadcasters: Public TV, Kentron TV, Shant TV, Armenia TV, Yerkir-Media TV; four largest radio broadcasters: Public Radio, Radio Yerevan, Radio Hay, Radio Jan; five most viewed online media (including those acting as online-TV): Radio Liberty, Civilnet.am, Factor.am, Hetq.am, News.am, Infocom, A1+; six most circulated daily newspapers, including state official Hayastani Hanrapetutyun, ruling party’s Haykakan Zhamanak, and four other dailies: Aravot, Hraparak, Azg, Zhoghovurd.

Only Public TV provided detailed answers to the survey, while most media did not answer back. The questionnaire was trying to find out if the media have adopted gender policies – both on organisational and content levels.

Since 2019, the Public TV has joined the Code of Ethics of Armenian Media and Journalists, as many other broadcasters have done upon requirements of the Audio-Visual Law. Principles of journalistic ethics are not included in job contracts. As to gender equality, the Public TV is led by the CEAMJ's provision 5.1 that requires to avoid any prejudice based on people's characteristics such as sex and sexual orientation. Asked about policies employed at the Public TV, the respondent states that all policies listed in the questionnaire are in place. However, these policies are not published in written form. The Public TV has not developed a gender-specific policy document. The respondent's letter explains: "Gender reporting policy is implemented by decisions made by editors, producers, and authors in the course of production. It is not reflected in documents, but in scenario proposals which are working documents and are not published because of copyright concerns."

The respondent explains the need of employing gender policy by the need of the Armenian society, as well as by Armenia's international commitments, including the international standards and principles of public broadcasting that have been adopted by the Armenian Public TV when joining the European Broadcasting Union.

Policies and monitoring on female representation as sources of information and opinions, on gender-sensitive language, on gender equality in the TV station's internal structures are not employed by the public broadcaster.

The media have signed memorandums on election coverage, but they did not touch upon the gender equality, despite the fact that female quotas is a requirement for political parties running for Parliament in Armenia. At the elections of 2018, woman had to represent at least a fourth of the party list running for the Parliament, and at the elections of 2020, they had to occupy one third of the party list and further on in the Parliament (Women's Political Empowerment in Armenia, 2021).

Two representatives of the Public TV have attended a week-long training on gender-sensitive budgeting. It was organised in the framework of the European Union's technical support to the financial reform in Armenia. The public broadcaster is determined to employ gender-sensitive budgeting and its strategic goal is defined as follows: "Raising public awareness on gender issues and problems, as well as preventing gender discrimination through broadcasting gender-sensitive programmes".

The Council of Public Broadcaster (CPB), the body overseeing the management of the CJSC Public TV Company of Armenia, as well as Public Radio Company of Armenia and Shoghakat TV company, has the authority "to oversee the broadcasted content and to review citizens' complaints", as the respondent explains, adding that the CPB has not received any complaints related to gender equality.<sup>5</sup> The TV has not encountered any disputes related to gender discrimination.

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<sup>5</sup> Quote from the website: "According to the RA Law on Audio-visual Media, the Council consists of seven members - the Chairman of the Council and six members, who are appointed by the Prime Minister on a competitive basis for a period of six years. The council organises its activities through the state institution 'Administration of the Council of Public Broadcaster'." <https://www.tvradiocouncil.am/en/members>

**Table 9. Gender structure of the staff, Armenian public broadcaster**

		Women	Men
1.	Head/s	7	8
2.	Deputies	-	2
3.	Middle positions	17	28
4.	Journalists and other employees	14 journalists 176 other employees	10 journalists 316 other employees
	In total	214	364

As the data provided by the Public TV show, there is certain gender balance in the leadership although generally, more men are employed than women.

**Table 10. Gender equality measures employed by the public broadcaster**

Name of Media organisation	Circulation	News organisation	Content measures
Public TV	Nation-wide	Yes	Yes

Apart from joining the CEAMJ, several media have their ethics codes, but none mentions gender specifically. Some samples were provided.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.aravot.am/9254-2/>  
<https://hetq.am/hy/code%20of%20ethics>  
<https://iravaban.net/ethics-rules>  
<https://www.civilnet.am/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Civilnet-brandbook.pdf>  
[https://pjc.am/hanrayin-lragrutyan-akumbi-koghmic/?fbclid=IwAR0KIPW-7W5onT3\\_IKXeez1x5Zv0L93ugM9wQD4aOOJ117jPdJTWZ8vCEhIk](https://pjc.am/hanrayin-lragrutyan-akumbi-koghmic/?fbclid=IwAR0KIPW-7W5onT3_IKXeez1x5Zv0L93ugM9wQD4aOOJ117jPdJTWZ8vCEhIk)

The studied ethics codes neither reflect on gender equality particularly nor provide guidelines on the coverage of gender-sensitive topics. Most of them reflect on and stem from the constitutional norm that discrimination is prohibited.

“Aravot” daily’s Ethical Code does not reflect on equality issues. Aravot is one of signatories of the MEO Ethics Code and it has its own ethics code. It also had a “media ombudsman”.

Hetq.am, an investigative journalism online and print outlet, has adopted its Ethical Code in 2002. It does not reflect on equality issues but only on fair journalism. Lragir.am, online news and analysis website, has published its Code of Ethics on the homepage. It reflects only on fair and unbiased journalism but not on equality issues.

Iravaban.net, online news on legal issues, founded by Armenian Association of lawyers. This online media outlet has a Code of Ethics, but it does not specify gender issues. Besides, the journalists are also guided by the Association’s Code of Ethics. Civilnet.am online news website refers to ethics in two paragraphs in its Brandbook, but it does not contain gender-specific rules.

### **3.5. JOURNALISM EDUCATION**

Desktop research covering the main journalism schools’ websites<sup>7</sup> did not show any course on gender equality. Journalism programmes include courses on media regulation and ethics, but no details are provided. A number of journalism professors were contacted and inquired on the subject. They confirmed that specific courses on gender equality are not taught at these two major universities.

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<sup>7</sup> Yerevan State University and Linguistic University after Brusov



## 4. DISCUSSION

On the generally gender-blind background in Armenia, there is a major challenge: media fight for their freedom and are free mostly, but they often refuse to consider ethics and self-regulation. What should a government do to not limit media freedoms but also to promote ethical and gender-sensitive media content? This issue is even more challenging in Armenia where the media are extremely politicised. The mere idea of regulating transparency of media's financial sources and political-economical affiliations encounters a sharp criticism of the media. Many fear that attempts to regulate ethical journalism may be either used for or interpreted as a means for limiting media freedoms. Political fluctuations have always affected Armenian media, so legislation changes in the media landscape have been mostly initiated for political reasons. The question of the media's financial and political transparency also arose because of political reasons.

The analysis of the data acquired for this study suggest that the situation of gender equality in the media content and media structures would improve if a law on eliminating all forms of discrimination would be adopted. In such a law, media's responsibility not to publish gender-based discriminatory content and to avoid harmful gender stereotyping could be referred to. Other relevant laws, such as the Mass Media Law, Civil Code, Civil Procedure Codes and Criminal Procedure Codes could also provide specific clauses against gender-based discrimination.

Numerous media studies have confirmed that female sources of information and especially expertise are often underrepresented in Armenian news media. Gender-balanced reporting/sourcing should be promoted through different kinds of mechanisms, preferably on industry level through self-regulatory mechanisms. Gender balance within a media organisation's structure could be promoted through state policy (as part of a general drive for gender equality in the workforce). The issue needs to be addressed by different stakeholders in the industry (media associations etc.) and target the "glass ceiling" for women in their career advancement. In Armenia most journalists are women, but men occupy most top positions in the media.

Media workers and journalists should be provided with trainings on gender-sensitive reporting. Media NGOs that have the experience and knowledge in training of journalists, as well as NGOs advocating for women's rights and gender equality may be engaged in the training of journalists on the matter. Capacity-building activities should be put in place for organisations providing trainings for journalists and other activities to promote gender-sensitive media content and structure. An award on gender-sensitive journalism may be founded to encourage the media and journalists to excel in gender-sensitive reporting.

The Ministry of Education and Science should get involved in promoting education on gender equality. This includes encouraging the universities' journalism schools to provide special courses related to gender studies and gender-sensitive journalism. The Ministry of Education and Science could also initiate cycles (i.e., annual) of research on gender equality in the media and provide funding to the best research proposals. The research results should be delivered to the relevant state agencies responsible for gender equality and fair media.

The TV and Radio Commission could be granted more leverage over the public and private broadcasters and more capacity for monitoring and preventing gender discrimination in the media. A section or chapter on gender-sensitive content and media structure in their annual report may inspire the broadcasters to excel in gender-sensitive approaches both towards content and internal structures. It should be possible for the Commission to withdraw advertisements and programmes that promote gender discrimination. The composition of the TVRC should be gender balanced. Its members should be provided with training and expertise on gender sensitive media.

Apart from joining common ethics codes, public service media should develop their own gender-specific guidelines for journalists. Other media may develop their own or join other guidelines. The public service media should also develop a gender-sensitive human resources policy and inform job seekers about it. Media associations and media organisations (content producers, outlets) should be encouraged to emphasise gender equality among other forms of equality in their ethic codes. Media associations and researchers may develop special ethics codes on gender-sensitive reporting and invite the media to join them.

Organisations like media NGOs, the TVRC, Human Rights Office, which monitor the media and oversee complaints over gender discrimination, as well as relevant ministries, should consider collecting targeted statistics on gender equality in the media (content and structures).

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