

ADJARA TV AND RADIO PUBLIC BROADCASTER



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Introduction

Transparency International Georgia has been monitoring the Public Broadcaster for years and has been studying to what extent are the principles of transparency and good governance followed, and to what extent the Public Broadcaster fulfills its important role, as defined by law.

The goal of the following report is to present results of a study of the Adjara Television and Radio Public Broadcaster, to evaluate its performance and to present existing institutional problems, as well as, to provide recommendations for their effective solution.

An interim [report](#) about Adjara TV and Radio Public Broadcaster was published in March 2017 and it reviewed the situation under the former management. The following report contains an analysis of situation under the current management and the current challenges.

Key findings:

- Development of an organizational structure remains a challenge at the Adjara TV and Radio Public Broadcaster. A new structure document, a strategy document and a 5-year plan of technical development need to be approved;
- Approval of the organizational structure of the Adjara TV and Radio Public Broadcaster is directly connected to the creation of appropriate position descriptions and contract signings, as well as, with the development of a fair compensation system;
- The issue of buildings of the Adjara TV and Radio Public Broadcaster remains a challenge;
- Monitoring of attendance and evaluation of effectiveness of employees of the Public Broadcaster of Adjara Radio and TV remains a challenge;
- The Council of Advisors of the Adjara TV and Radio Public Broadcaster continues to work without the fifth member.

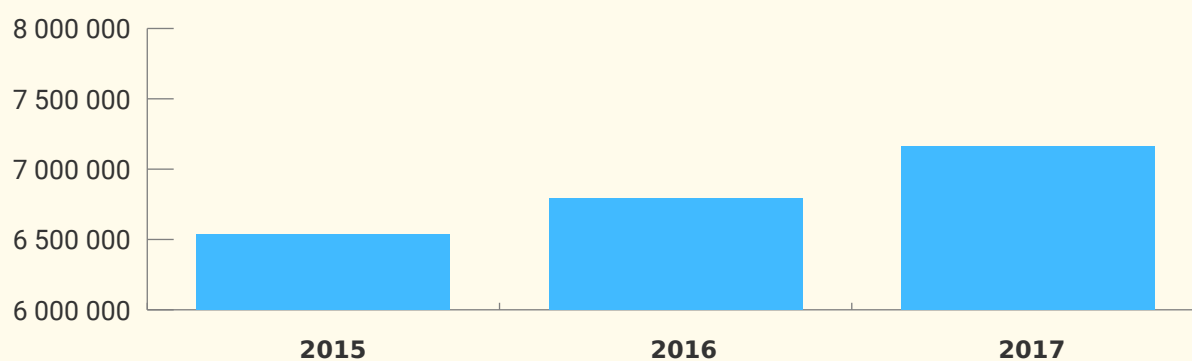
Establishment of Adjara TV Public Broadcaster

The Adjara TV and Radio Public Broadcaster was established by the legislative amendments of 2013. The Adjara TV and Radio used to be a sub-divisional agency of the government of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara for years.

Coverage of the Adjara TV reaches the whole Georgia and its aim is to cover not only regional issues, but all current events of the country.

Financing of the Adjara TV and Radio is defined as no less than 15% of the total budget of the Public Broadcaster. Budgets from the last three years are displayed below:

BUDGET OF THE ADJARA TV AND RADIO PUBLIC BROADCASTER



Despite the financial resources, the Adjara TV is still not regarded as a significant player on the media market. Criticism regarding the broadcaster's affiliation with the ruling political party has been widespread.

A new director and ongoing reforms

The Council of Advisors of the Adjara TV and Radio Public Broadcaster supported the candidacy of Natia Kapanadze and elected her for a 3-year term on the position of the director. Kapanadze started on the position on December 21st of 2016. The new director has been associated with initiation and implementation of various reforms.

Under the new management, strategy and structure documents of the broadcaster have been developed. Based on the structure document, the positions of deputy directors have been eliminated, which are usually considered as extra barriers and the resources have been redistributed in the following manner:



According to the 5-year technical development plan, technical recalibration of the broadcaster requires a high amount of resources, therefore, according to this plan, the process will be implemented step by step.

The document has been sent for approval to the Council of Advisors in July 2017, however, discussions have dragged out. Consultations are continuing to this moment, including with non-governmental organizations.

Various development processes of the broadcaster are connected to the approval of these documents, especially that of the structure document. Until the approval of the structure document, position descriptions for the employees cannot be established and therefore, redistribution of human resources and functionalities, as well as, review of labor contracts are delayed.

Transparency International Georgia believes that acceleration of this process is important, to ensure that the broadcaster can plan a flexible working system, employees have fair compensation, and for the organization to find and distribute financial resources for implementation of the reforms.

TV programs and ratings

In the recent period, many new or renewed programs and projects have been aired on the channel. It is important that based on a memorandum between Adjara TV and Studia Rec a series of journalistic investigations have started, which examine transgressions within the Adjara region.

Other noteworthy programs such as the projects of Radio Liberty (programs by Salome Asatiani and Gogi Gvakharia), which have been canceled on the First Channel, will be aired on Adjara TV, with the support of donors. Program of Gogi Gvakharia, [“Anareklebi”](#) is already on air. Another program that covers the issues of European and [Euro-Atlantic integration](#) and which has been canceled by the First Channel, will also be aired on Adjara TV.

Despite the aforementioned news, ratings remain a significant challenge to Adjara TV. The ratings of the channel are measured by Tri Media Intelligence, according to its data, the rating of the channel declined significantly in May 2017. If in May 2016, the channel had a rating of 0.8 and was ranked number 8 among the broadcasters, in May 2017 the rating fell to 0.16 and the channel moved down to the 16th position¹. One of the reasons for this trend could be a decrease in the number of mechanical products (e.g. films and TV Series), as the ratings show, these were the most popular products on the channel. The mechanical products made up 70% of the channel's programs and often violated licensing rights, which has been mentioned in the [documents](#) of the monitoring service of the Adjara TV and Radio Public Broadcaster.

After the fall in the ratings, the management hired TVMR Georgia to study the audience of the channel. The study presents data on who watches the channel, what type of programs are popular and [concludes](#) that a “gold mine for the future programming is family TV watching model”. One of the reasons for the low ratings also could have been the instability of the channels program grid, as times and days of programs varied significantly and remains a significant issue to this day.

The broadcaster also held an internal idea contest, in which every employee could take part. The goal of the contest was to improve TV, radio and internet platforms based on new ideas. The employees presented 53 ideas for radio and TV. 6 radio programs have been selected and 2 have been renewed.

¹ Percent of viewers from the whole population

Council of Advisors and fulfillment of priorities

The Council of Advisors of the Adjara TV and Radio Public Broadcaster consists of 5 members, however, the chairman of the council resigned in August 2016 and since then there are only 4 members on the council. Nata Imedaishvili is an acting chairperson of the council. The fifth member of the council needs to be selected by the Supreme Council of Adjara, however, the Council doesn't fulfill the obligation assigned to it by the law.

The functions of the Council of Advisors are [defined](#) by law². It approves the staff of the Adjara TV and Radio Public Broadcaster, proposed by the director, and their salaries, salary fund, defines main provisions of labor contracts for employees of Adjara TV and Radio and etc. It is responsible for the development of program priorities of the channel and its oversight.

Fulfillment of the priorities of the broadcaster remains a problem. For instance, the channel doesn't air any programs for children. According to the Law on Broadcasting, a broadcaster has an obligation to outsource 25% of its products to external studios. Currently, no programs of Adjara TV are produced outside of the broadcaster. According to the management, they plan to take this issue into account in the next year's budget, however, initially only 8-10% of the production will be done outside of the broadcaster, and an action plan will be defined based on this experience.

According to Nata Imedaishvili, "personal experience, experience of others, studies and functionalities of the public broadcaster" were taken into account when designing the new priorities, however, the priorities are defined very broadly and criteria for their achievement is also not clearly defined.

Additionally, the program priority document defines which type of programs get a specific share of the whole grid (for instance, news programs 30%, educational programs 40% and etc.). Therefore, priority achievements can be evaluated based on times allocated to the various types of programs. It is recommended that additional criteria be used for the improvement of the products.

In the process of defining priorities, it is crucial to take into account resources of the channel and opinions of the management, as well as, their full engagement in the process to achieve the priorities effectively.

Lack of motivation among employees

The management associates the approval of the new structure document with solving the issue of attendance of employees at work. According to the director, 10-12% of employees didn't show up at work or had an improper attendance. After the approval of the new rules regarding the attendance in May, the situation has improved. According to the director, this issue is associated with contracts, as they are not individual and do not include a clause regarding attendance and whether regular attendance of a concrete employee is mandatory or whether their performance is evaluated based on the amount of work done by them.

Lack of motivation and indifferent attitude towards work remain [significant issues](#) for the broadcaster. It is important that an appropriate mechanism is created in a timely manner and that it defines which employee has what responsibilities and appropriate measures be taken towards the employees that do not fulfill their contractual obligations.

² Paragraph One of Article 39⁹ of the Law on Broadcasting

Labor disputes

While the process of recruitment at the Adjara TV has become more transparent, enabled by the approval of the [new recruitment](#) rule document, several people have been fired under the new management. The first [public dispute](#) case happened in March 2017 between the director Natia Kapanadze and a member of the Council of Advisors Irakli Baramidze. The reason for the redundancy of one of the operators was a utilization of a video camera with the Adjara TV logo for a filming of a wedding. The person was given a permission to take the camera by Baramidze, despite the fact that he was not authorized to give such a permission. The case is currently in court.

Another case concerned firing of an anchorwoman of TV program “Hashtag”, Nino Gorjelidze. She published a video address, where she mentioned several issues in regards to the employment contract that caused a conflict with the director - Gorjelidze was asking for a clause about editorial independence to be included in the contract, as well as, an increase in number of her team members, an increase in the salary by GEL 300, 8 hour work day and holidays. Gorjelidze [left the station](#) and was given 2-month salary as a severance package. Gorjelidze brought the dispute to Public Defender’s Office, arguing that she was discriminated against, however, the case was suspended due to lack of any signs of discrimination.

The head of legal affairs at that time, Malkhaz Bolkvadze also made a complaint against the director in the [Prosecutor’s Office](#), arguing that he was discriminated against. According to Bolkvadze, the ground for discrimination was giving him a task that wasn’t part of his job, as well as, a rejection of his vacation time request and a demand from the director to attend work even when he was sick. According to Kapanadze, Bolkvadze wasn’t fulfilling tasks given to him, causing dissatisfaction. The Public Defender’s Office was tasked with studying possible signs of discrimination. Natia Kapanadze suspected that Bolkvadze brought the complaint to the Prosecutor’s Office at the orders of someone that didn’t wish for editorial independence at the channel. Bolkvadze was also fired from his position later for not fulfilling his obligations and he is also suing in court.

Procurement

Procurements conducted by the broadcaster also remain a problematic issue. According to the [audit report](#) of 2015-2016 several issues have been found at the organization. Including instances when procurement category and service provided were not properly aligned, change to contract provisions with a service provider without providing any reasons and award of contracts to companies that have not presented all required documents and etc.

Questions regarding procurements were also raised in the March 2017 report of [Transparency International Georgia](#), showing that the issue remains problematic this year as well.

For instance, in May 2017 Adjara TV and Radio announced a tender with an ID SPA170007185 for an acquisition of renovation services. Later, the contract was amended and the budget was increased without providing any grounds for such increase.

Almost none of the tenders announced by the broadcaster in 2017 include a requirement of a previous experience documentation.

Television building and work environment

Appropriate work environment remains an issue at the Adjara TV and Radio Public Broadcaster. [Transparency International Georgia](#) raised the issue of an inappropriate building for journalists in the March 2017 report. The building of the Adjara television has a status of cultural heritage. The journalists have to work in a building that is unsafe and isn't adopted for work conditions. Due to the lack of space, the broadcaster has some studios outside of the building.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that this building or any other property acquired by the broadcaster before 2014, including several land slots and buildings on those lands, are on the balance of the government of the Autonomous Republic, therefore the broadcaster has no authority disposing them.

According to the third [quarter report](#) of 2017 of the broadcaster, a temporary solution has been found by a renovation of the third floor of the building. At this moment part of the television is situated here, however, water is leaking and there are no appropriate working conditions.

Transparency International Georgia believes that negotiations with the government of Adjara should be accelerated, and the Supreme Council of Adjara should be actively engaged in this process, so that they can take appropriate decisions regarding the property and the issue that has plagued the broadcaster for years can be finally solved, especially taking into account the fact that it concerns such important topics as safety and dignified working conditions of journalists.

Radio

[Changes](#) have affected the radio platform of the public broadcaster, as well. The issue of airing new programs has been agreed upon. However, the issues of wide coverage of government activities, [not covering problematic issues](#) and presenting the ruling party in a particularly positive light remains problematic.

Another problem that concerns Radio platform is the fact that its signal doesn't reach Tbilisi, which according to the director, requires legislative amendments.

Website

Content for the website is created separately and the number of visitors has increased. If the number of daily visitors in March 2017 was 1000-1500 users, today the number is 4000-5000. Activity on Facebook page has also increased.

Recommendations

- The documents of strategy, structure and 5-year development plan of the organization must be approved in a short period of time. Thus, descriptions of employee positions must be created, labor contracts must be reviewed and a fair system of salaries must be established;
- An effective system for oversight of employee attendance and their effectiveness at work must be established;
- The Government of Adjara must solve the issue of the building of Adjara TV and Radio in a timely manner through a negotiation with the management of the broadcaster, and the Supreme Council of Adjara must be actively involved in this process;
- The Supreme Council of Adjara must fulfill obligations defined in the law and must select the fifth member of the Council of Advisors;
- The relationship between the Council of Advisors and the management should be more active, as this will increase the effectiveness of the results;
- The priorities of the Adjara TV and Radio defined by the Council of Advisors must be more clear and mechanisms for their achievement must be improved.