

# Media Self-Regulatory Organizations Network (MSON)

## MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (STATUTE)

We, the undersigned representatives of media self-regulatory bodies from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Ukraine,

1. Recognizing the role of free and independent media as a fundamental value of any democratic society;
2. Sharing an interest in clear and universally observed professional standards, aimed to ensure that journalism serves the interests of the society and the human rights are observed.
3. Acknowledging the existence of common problems in our countries that relate to the establishment and strengthening of democrat institutions, including the media.
4. Being convinced of the need for developing close regional cooperation of media self-regulatory bodies in view of promoting ethical and responsible journalism in our countries;
5. Considering that the activity of each self-regulatory structure will become more efficient and more professional through an exchange of information, experience and good practices with colleagues from other countries;

Have agreed to create an informal network of media self-regulatory bodies as a platform for regional cooperation and exchange of experience, named: **Media Self-Regulatory Organizations Network (MSON)**, hereinafter referred to as “the Network”.

In addition, the undersigned representatives have agreed as follows:

## **PART I**

### **Objectives, Scope of Activities and Membership Criteria**

#### **Article 1**

##### **Objectives**

The main objectives of the Network are:

1. To promote high-quality, professional media and ethical journalism in their countries;
2. To improve the relevance and effectiveness of media self-regulatory bodies;
3. To support contacts, links and joint co-operation between the Network members for exchange of information, knowledge and experience on common media issues and issues in field of journalistic ethics;
4. To raise the awareness of the Network members, media professionals and society as a whole about the principles of media self-regulation and professionalism;
5. To help in review of cross-border complaints between the countries of the region;
6. Cooperation in resource-raising for joint programs implemented within the Network's scope of activities.

#### **Article 2**

##### **Scope of Activities**

The main areas of activities for the Network are:

1. Exchange of information and media products between the Network members;
2. Joint workshops and other working meetings on topics of common interest, and on the cases examined by individual self-regulatory bodies in order to exchange experience and recommendations;
3. Trainings and educational courses for media professional from the region;
4. Research and publications on salient issues concerning media self-regulation;
5. Joint study visits and exchange of experts;
6. Examination of international complaints for violation of journalistic ethics;

7. Other activities in accordance with the objectives of the Network.

### **Article 3**

#### **Membership Criteria**

An organization shall be deemed eligible to become a member of the Network if the following criteria are met:

1. The organization has journalistic self-regulation as one of the main goals of its activity;
2. The organization operates in the Eastern Partnership region or in the neighboring countries;
3. The organization has a status of a registered or non-registered non-governmental organization and is not affiliated to any specific political or economical interests.

### **Article 4**

#### **Principles of Activity**

1. **Information and involvement:** the Network shall inform all its members of activities undertaken by or with the involvement of the Network. The official working languages of the Network are English and Russian;
2. **Transparency:** the Network shall ensure transparency in all its activities. The documents of the Network are equally accessible to all members of the Network.
3. **Equal rights:** all members have equal right to participate in Network activities and decisions hereon shall be done according to clear principles and procedures established by the General Assembly;
4. **Co-operation:** the Network shall cooperate, among others, with the Alliance of Independent Press Councils of Europe and the worldwide Organization of News Ombudsmen.

## **PART II**

### **Internal Organization and Functioning of the Network**

#### **Article 5**

##### **The General Assembly**

1. The General Assembly (General meeting) is the Network's supreme authority.
2. The General Assembly shall consist of all member organizations each represented by one official representative entitled to vote.
3. Member organizations are free to delegate to the meeting of the General Assembly people other than the official representative. The non-official representatives replacing the official ones shall be entitled to vote.
4. The ordinary General Assembly shall meet once a year. The place of the meeting shall be established by consultation with all the Network members, depending on the financial and other possibilities.
5. The meetings of the General Assembly shall be deemed valid if a simple majority of the official representatives of the Network members do participate.
6. The work of each General Assembly shall be chaired by its chair, elected from among the Network members, in the alphabetical order of the countries represented in the Network.
7. The date (approximate period) of the next General Assembly shall be established at the current General Assembly.
8. The extraordinary meeting of the General Assembly shall be convened at the written request of at least one-third of the Network members. The request shall be sent in written form to the Executive Secretary of the Network. The reasons and suggestions for the agenda of the extraordinary meeting shall be specified in the request.

#### **Article 6**

##### **Competencies of the General Assembly**

The General Assembly shall exert the following powers:

1. Formulate Network's policies, long-term strategies and the activity plan;
2. Make decisions on accession and expulsion of members;
3. Decide on amendments or additions to this Memorandum of Understanding;

4. Decide on procedures of project implementation;
5. Elect the Executive Secretary of the Network;
6. Evaluate the work of the Executive Secretary by endorsing annual analytical and financial reports.

## **Article 7**

### **Voting**

1. The General Assembly shall make its decisions by open voting of the official representatives of the network that are present in the meeting.
2. The decisions of the General Assembly relating to the authorities specified in Para 1-4 of the Article 6 shall be taken on the basis of the consensus, except for the decisions on expulsion from the Network that shall be taken on the basis on the consensus minus one vote. Other decisions shall be taken by a simple majority of the votes of the Network members. The members of the Network who voted against the decision taken by the majority have the right not to participate in the implementation of those decisions.
3. In case of a tie vote, the vote cast by the President of General Assembly shall make the difference.

## **Article 8**

### **Executive Secretary**

1. The Executive Secretary shall be elected among the members of the Network. A candidate who received the majority of the votes of the members that were present at the General Assembly shall be considered elected.
2. The position of Executive Secretary is personal, not institutional.
3. The term in office for the Executive Secretary shall be one year with the possibility of re-election for one consequent term.

## **Article 9**

### **Competencies of the Executive Secretary**

The Executive Secretary shall have the following competencies:

1. Maintain the contacts and relations with the Network members, and manage the Network's information and communication resources (email list, web site, a workspace with access restricted to Network members, data banks etc.);

2. Convene the ordinary and extraordinary meetings of the General Assembly in concordance within the conditions specified in Para 4 and 5 of Article 5;
3. Organizes the General assembly and other Network meetings;
4. Coordination of the activities and events of the Network;
5. Prepare and submits annual reports to the General Assembly;
6. Control over the implementation of the decisions of the General Assembly;
7. Takes actions in view of providing the necessary funding/sponsorships for holding the General Assembly meetings, other events and current functioning of the Network;
8. Prepares and submits applications for obtaining funding for projects aimed to achieve the Network's goals. Project proposals, including the action plan and budget shall obligatorily be consulted with the Network members before filing a request for funding;
9. Represent the Network in its relations with third parties;
10. In carrying out its duties and depending on financial possibilities, the Executive Secretary can hire staff or involve employees on a voluntary basis - on a permanent or temporary basis.

## **PART III**

### **Article 10**

#### **Dissolution of the Network**

1. The Network shall be dissolved if so decided by 2/3 of the members of the ordinary or extraordinary General Assembly meeting.
2. In the case of dissolution of the Network, all agreements with third parties are to be taken over by the member organizations who have signed the corresponding agreements on behalf of the Network.

Armenia	Mr Boris Navasardian, Member of Information Disputes Council
Azerbaijan	Mr Aflatun Amashov, Chair of the Press Council
Georgia	Mr Zvyad Khoridze, Head of the Journalistic Ethics Charter Council
Moldova	Mrs Ludmila Andronic, Chairwoman of the Press Council
The Russian Federation	Mr Mikhail Fedotov, Co-Chairman of the Public Media Complaints Board
Tajikistan	Mr Zinatullo Ismoilov, Chairman of the Media Council
Ukraine	Mr Sergei Guzy, Member of the Committee on Journalistic Ethics

***Signed in the city of Moscow,***

***October 7, 2011***