



## Lebanon Media Experts Survey Report Draft

The findings reported below are extracted from the survey of expert users (owners, editors, writers/journalists, freelance writer, director, production, speaker/presenter, administration and editor in chief) carried out by Information International for the benefit of ACRI. The survey included a sample of 150 experts from Beirut and its surrounding areas.

The method of sample selection relied on systematic random sampling, based on the list of employees in each organization where the survey's implementation was approved. The stratified sampling procedure was then used in order to select the final number of participants (see Information International report for details; Appendix C).

The refusal/response rate was 22.7%. These response rates may limit the authors' ability to generalise the survey's findings to the entire population.

The survey seeks to examine the media by highlighting three areas of interest, (1) independence of the media, (2) the integrity of the media, (3) and the competence of the media. Each topic has a variety of sub-topics, and when combined they are utilized to analyze each of the three areas.

The findings from the survey are presented in two parts. The first part presents an overview of the major findings from the survey, while the second part presents detailed findings from the individual items in the survey. Appendix A presents the detailed findings for each item from the survey and will be referred to during the discussion of the main findings from the survey below.

### I. OVERVIEW OF KEY FINDINGS FROM SURVEY

#### Main Findings: Dimension Analysis

When items are combined to measure a dimension of a specific principles (e.g. items 1 to 9 as measures of "guarantees of media independence", a dimension of the general "independence" principle), 3 out of the 9 dimensions proved to be problematic.

The most important grievance resided in the "personal independence" dimension [independence]. Although still problematic, the least important complaint occurred in "Explicit and fair regulatory framework for media activity" [independence].

#### Items Rated Most Negatively

An important finding is that the state of the media in Lebanon tends to be negatively evaluated by expert users. Out of the 26 core items, 14 were negatively evaluated.

The domains with the most negative feedback lead to the following conclusions:

- 1- Journalist do not have effective access to government documents of interest to the public,
- 2- The authority responsible for regulating the media does not render fair decisions.
- 3- Journalists are subject to threats of termination of work
- 4- Journalist do not have adequate salaries
- 5- Civil society groups do not provide protection for the journalist's rights

All of these items pertain to the independence principle.



## Items Rated Most Positively

On the more positive end of the analysis, the domains with the most positive feedback lead to the following conclusions:

- 1- Journalists have effective access to non- governmental documents of interest to the public (ind)
- 2- Sanctions against journalists and media organizations (e.g. denial or suspension of credentials, closure, seizure etc.) are not arbitrarily imposed (ind)
- 3- Government censorship does not significantly hinder the independence of the media (ind)
- 4- Journalists decide on the content of their publication/broadcast (ind)
- 5- In general, journalists are governed by clear professional standards (int)
- 6- Journalists generally have sufficient qualifications to perform their duties competently (com)

## Frequencies

The table below presents the highest frequencies on items dealing with clusters of questions.

|                             |  |   | Good/<br>fine/<br>significant | Neutral | Poor/<br>weak/<br>insignificant |
|-----------------------------|--|---|-------------------------------|---------|---------------------------------|
| Guarantees                  | To what extent are the accessible government documents :                   | 6. accurate   | 25.8%                         | 21.1%   | 53.1%                           |
|                             |  | 7. comprehensive  | 18.8%                         | 24.2%   | 57%                             |
|                             |  | 8. Received in a timely manner  | 11.4%                         | 18.9%   | 69.7%                           |
|                             |  | 9. Available without favoritism (towards some journalists but not others) | 14.7%                         | 7.4%    | 44.9%                           |
| Censors<br>hip              | To what extent the media is able to report openly on the following issues: | 20. Political   | 71.1%                         | 2.8%    | 25.5%                           |
|                             |  | 21. Religious   | 32.2%                         | 11.6%   | 56.2%                           |
|                             |  | 22. Corruption  | 31.3%                         | 8.3%    | 60.4%                           |
|                             |  | 23. Social  | 69.2%                         | 11.6%   | 19.2%                           |
| Media outlets' independence | To which degree is the media influenced/pressured by:                      | 26. Government (e.g. head of state, ministers, officials)                 | 66.9%                         | 10.3%   | 22.8%                           |
|                             |  | 27. foreign governments ( e.g. embassies, officials)                      | 60.4%                         | 13.2%   | 26.4%                           |
|                             |  | 28. political groups  | 71.3%                         | 11.2%   | 17.5%                           |
|                             |  | 29. Religious/Sectarian groups  | 58.9%                         | 11.6%   | 29.5%                           |
|                             |  | 30. Social groups (e.g. tribal, ethnic, etc.)                             | 25.9%                         | 18.7%   | 55.4%                           |
|                             |  | 31. Civil society organizations   | 9.8%                          | 16.8%   | 73.4%                           |
|                             |  | 32. Advertisers   | 72.1%                         | 9.3%    | 18.6%                           |
|                             |  | 33. Businesses not related to advertisement                               | 24.1%                         | 17.5%   | 58.4%                           |
|                             | 34. Military, security services or police                                  | 53.3%   | 16.8%                         | 29.9%   |                                 |
|                             | To which degree are the  | 36. Financial   | 95.9%                         | 2%      | 2%                              |



|                    |   |  |       |       |       |
|--------------------|---|--|-------|-------|-------|
|                    | following types of pressures used to undermine the independence of the media:   | 37. political                                | 85.9% | 6%    | 8.1%  |
|                    |   | 38. Legal/judicial                           | 53.8% | 17.9% | 28.3% |
|                    |   | 39. Social                                   | 31%   | 17.2% | 51.7% |
|                    |   | 40. Threats of physical harm                 | 46.5% | 17.4% | 36.1% |
| <b>Diversity</b>   | To what extent does the content of the media accurately reflect the:  | 59. Gender diversity of society              | 55.6% | 16%   | 28.5% |
|                    |   | 60. Political diversity of society           | 72.6% | 7.5%  | 19.9% |
|                    |   | 61. Ethnic diversity of society              | 45.3% | 18.2% | 36.5% |
|                    |   | 62. Religious/Sectarian diversity of society | 66.4% | 10.3% | 23.3% |
|                    |   | 63. Cultural diversity of society            | 50.7% | 11.8% | 37.5% |
| <b>Open access</b> | To what extent are the following factors used by the government to select employees in public/official media:             | 68. Political views/ affiliations            | 83.3% | 5.1%  | 11.6% |
|                    |   | 69. Gender                                   | 39%   | 27.9% | 33.1% |
|                    |   | 70. Qualification criteria                   | 13.6% | 18.6% | 67.9% |
|                    |   | 71. Ethnicity                                | 46.3% | 26%   | 27.6% |
|                    | To what extent are the following factors used by private media organizations to select employees in the media profession: | 72. Political views/affiliations             | 79%   | 7.7%  | 13.3% |
|                    |   | 73. Gender                                   | 39%   | 29.8% | 31.2% |
|                    |   | 74. Qualification criteria                   | 55.6% | 15.5% | 28.9% |
|                    |   | 75. Ethnicity                                | 45%   | 25.6% | 29.5% |
| <b>Eth. stand</b>  | 56. In your profession, how likely do you think journalists accept favors or bribes                                       | 51.6%  | 18.9% | 29.5% |       |

### Opinions on Most Needed Reform in Media Sector

The questionnaire administered to the media experts included a series of “reform” questions. Participants were asked to rate the importance of reform in most of the subsections of the state of the media questionnaire.

Participants indicated the following items as those that require the highest need for reform:

| Item   | X    |
|--|------|
| 67. Reforms are needed to strengthen the competence and qualifications of journalists  | 1.46 |
| 51. Reforms are needed to guarantee the personal independence of journalists   | 1.49 |
| 76. Reforms of existing laws and regulations that specify rules to select media employees are needed to create equal chances of access to the profession | 1.49 |
| 10. Legal reforms are needed to enhance the independence of the media.   | 1.62 |
| 16. Reforms are needed in the regulatory framework to enhance the independence of the media.   | 1.69 |
| 57. Higher professional standards are needed to enhance the integrity of the media   | 1.71 |
| 64. More diversity within the media would enhance the media’s integrity  | 1.71 |

*Note:* Scores represent the average (mean) for each item on a scale from 1 to 5. Scores below 3 reflect a positive evaluation of the item, while scores above 3 reflect a negative evaluation.



Items 51, 10 and 16 pertain to independence, items 67 and 76 refer to competence and items 57 and 64 refer to integrity.

## II. DETAILED FINDINGS FROM SURVEY

### Independence of the Media:

Respondents cite concerns with the independence of the media. The lack of many fundamental guarantees for the independence of the media and the questionable fair regulatory framework undermine the independence of the media. The absence of government censorship strengthens the independence that the media in Lebanon. Journalists are able to report on many issues, but there are still areas in which there is censorship. The respondents cite many influences and pressures utilized to undermine the independence of the media.

#### *Fundamental Guarantees on the Independence of the Media*

- Respondents agree that journalists have effective access to non-governmental documents of interest to the public (64%), but 56% think that journalists do not have effective access to government documents.
- There are mixed views over whether journalists enjoy freedom of expression without fear of reprisal (47% agree, 43% disagree, 8% neutral).
- Fifty-nine percent do not believe that journalists have sufficient legal protection to do their job, and 52% disagree that journalists are able to independently organize their own professional associations.
- Respondents do not think that accessible government documents are accurate (53%), comprehensive (57%), received in a timely manner (69%) and available without favouritism (78%).

#### *Explicit and Fair Regulatory Framework for Media Activity*

- Sixty-one percent think that the authority responsible for regulating the media does not render fair decisions.
- A plurality agrees that the law and regulations outlining the requirements for obtaining a media license are clear (47%).
- A majority agree that the law and regulations clearly state what constitutes defamation (52%), but that the defamation law is misused in practice to threaten the media (54%).
- Fifty-three percent of respondents report that sanctions against journalists and media organizations are not arbitrarily imposed.

#### *Absence of Censorship*

- Fifty-two percent disagree that government censorship significantly hinders the independence of the media.
- There are mixed views on whether self-censorship hinders the independence of the media (42% disagree, 40% agree, 17% neutral), and whether censorship is regulated by explicit directives (41% agree, 39% disagree, 19% neutral).
- The respondents believe that the media is able to report openly on political issues (71%) and social issues (69.2%), but the media is not able to openly report on corruption (60%) and religion (56%). Forty-two percent believe that the media can openly report on other issues as identified by respondents including: economics (57%), culture (28%) and sports (28%).

#### *Media Outlets' Independence from Governmental and Nongovernmental Influences*

- Respondents think that the media is influenced by the government (66%), foreign governments (60%), political groups (71%), religious/sectarian groups (58%), advertisers (72%) and the military/security services (53%).



- A majority agree that the media is not influenced by social groups (55%), civil society organizations (73%), and businesses not related to advertisement (58%).
- Many believe that certain types of pressures are used to undermine the independence of the media including, financial (95%), political (85%), legal/judicial (53%) and threats of physical harm (46%). Fifty-one percent agree that social pressures are not used to undermine the independence of the media.

#### *Personal Independence of Journalists*

- Fifty-seven percent of respondents think that journalists decide on the content of their publication/broadcast.
- A plurality disagrees that journalists are subject to arbitrary criminal prosecution (46%).
- Respondents agree that journalists are subject to threats of termination of work (69%), economic sanctions (63%), and physical harm (51%).
- A strong majority believe that journalists do not have adequate salaries (65%) and civil society groups do not project journalists' rights (54%).

#### *Reforms*

- Respondents identify a need for reforms to guarantee the personal independence of journalists (93%). Legal reforms (86%) and regulatory framework reforms (85%) are necessary to enhance the independence of the media. Reforms are needed to increase the independence of the media from governmental (79%) and non-governmental (78%) influences. Respondents also consider reform of censorship practices to strengthen the media's independence.

#### **Integrity of the Media**

Respondents indicate that there are standards which govern journalists, but are concerned that journalists do not adhere to these professional and ethical standards. The integrity of the media is undermined by the actions of the journalists, not the lack of standards to govern their behaviour. The media does reflect society's diversity which strengthens the overall integrity of the media.

#### *Clear Professional and Ethical Standards*

- Respondents think that journalists are governed by clear professional standards (58%) and ethical standards (49%).
- There are mixed opinions on whether the journalists adhere to professional standards (39% disagree, 36% agree, 24% neutral).
- Forty-eight percent think that journalists do not effectively adhere to ethical standards, and 51% agree that journalists are likely to accept favours or bribes.

#### *Diversity of the Media*

- Most respondents agree that the media accurately reflects society's gender diversity (55%), political diversity (72%), ethnic diversity (45%), religious/sectarian diversity (66%) and cultural diversity (50%).

#### *Reforms*

- Respondents cite the need for higher professional standards (86%) and ethical standards (83%) to enhance the integrity of the media.
- More diversity within the media is identified a necessary component to enhance the media's integrity (83%).

#### **Competence of the Media**

Respondents are concerned with the journalists' access to specialized training, but think that the journalists possess adequate qualifications. Respondents are concerned over the use of additional factors outside of qualification criteria to select employees by the government and private media organizations.



### *Adequate Qualifications of Working Journalists*

- Despite the 62% who report that journalists have sufficient qualifications to perform their duties competently, 44% indicate that journalists do not receive specialized training.

### *Open Access to the Profession*

- Respondents think that certain factors are used by the government to select employees for public/official media positions, such as political views (83%) and ethnicity (46%). There is a small plurality who agrees that gender is a factor used by the government (39% agree, 33% disagree). A strong majority cite qualification criteria as not being used by the government to select employees for the media.
- Many respondents agree that political views (79%), qualification criteria (55%) and ethnicity (45%) are used by private media organizations to select employees in the media. Only 39% agree that gender plays a determining factor in the selection of employees in the media profession (31% disagree).

### *Reforms*

- Reforms are needed to strengthen the competence and qualifications of journalists (93%). Also, reforms of existing laws and regulations that specify rules to select media employees are needed to create equal chances of access to the profession (89%).

## **III. Missing Data Analysis:**

An analysis of missing data yielded significant findings that warrant attention. The overall pattern of missing responses did not exceed 3%. This indicates that the questionnaire, on the whole, did not create unexpected complications for participants. However, closer attention to the pattern of missing data points to

- 1- **Item 56** “In your profession, how likely do you think journalists accept favors or bribes” had the highest rate of missing data with 18% of participants reporting their inability to assess this item. Either participants felt the item to be too sensitive or they did not feel confident enough to provide an assessment on that question.
- 2- **Item 71** “To what extent is ethnicity used by the government to select employees in public/official media” had the second highest rate of missing data, with 14.7% of participants reporting their inability to assess the item.

Analysis based on the 2 items highlighted above need to be treated with caution. Results may be biased by a series of factors. These two items seemed to be the most problematic for our sample. Other items with lower values of missing data may be of interest to authors, and are provided in appendix C, p. 5.

## **IV. LIMITATIONS**

It is important to note that the study does not allow sweeping generalizations about the state of media; the survey used a random sample of media experts, but the sample size is too small to allow for confident generalizations. Furthermore, difficulties accessing these population (see refusal rates) limit the ability to generalize to the population since those that accepted to participate in this survey and those that refused may have different characteristics and perspectives.