



STANDARDS OF MEDIA RELATIONS IN GEORGIA

LEGAL ANALYSIS

2012

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**“Let the people know the facts
and the country will be safe”.**
Abraham Lincoln

1. INTRODUCTION

Recently a number of flaws have been revealed in the process of relations between media representatives and public agencies. Some of the journalists reported that purpose of press centers was to plan how to prevent public officials from commenting, as opposed to simplifying the communication.

Representatives of regional media were facing particular problems in their relations both with municipal as well as central administrative agencies.

Frequently some media representatives had no access to meetings or presentations scheduled by administrative agencies.

Media was clearly divided into the categories of pro-governmental and anti-governmental. All media organizations criticizing the government were deemed as anti-governmental – they lacked access to information and the privilege of receiving information from the authorities, whereas the so-called pro-governmental media managed to easily receive information from both sources. It must also be taken into account that during pre-election process talk show shots on both types of television channels frequently resorted to the use of biased and discriminatory comments.¹

The US Ambassador to Georgia H.E. John Bass also commented about media environment in Georgia. In his interview with Rezonansi newspaper, the Ambassador noted: media is an addition to the polarized political situation in the country. Media outlets are often adjusted to the various political spectrums and as a result to the people and outside the country and local government representation, the specific media outlets are associated with the specific political viewpoints”.

He thought that frequently there were cases when officials make decisions regarding access of information to journalists and invitation to the events according to which political power they are associated with.

The Ambassador noted: “It’s important that media outlets have

¹ http://qartia.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/report-3part_sept-2012.pdf

equal access to the public or other events and to exclude the cases of selection.”²

Notably, the work of media was made particularly difficult starting from Spring 2012, after the Chamber of Control of Georgia (that has now been renamed as the State Audit Office started interviewing citizens. On March 20, 2012, a statement was published on the official website of the SAO³, stating that “administrative proceedings were ongoing at the Office of Political Party Funding Monitoring, into the illegal funding of members of the legal entity of public law Georgian Dream by natural person Bidzina Ivanishvili, from his personal account...” In relation to these proceedings, head of the SAO Levan Bezhashvili informed journalists on March 13, 2012, that they are “verifying whether financial reporting of political parties throughout the regions is in compliance with law... information is verified and collected, then examined against declarations submitted by political parties to the Chamber of Control for ensuring transparency of their work.” Notably, these interviews occurred in various regions of Georgia. Most frequently, citizens were summoned to offices of local municipalities. Although the proceedings were administrative in nature, journalists were prohibited from attending. The Georgian Media Legal Defense Center made a statement in response to these developments, calling law enforcement authorities to examine in details and investigate into alleged illegal disruptions of journalistic reporting in the process of questioning of citizens by the Chamber of Control of Georgia.⁴

Furthermore, rules of movement within offices of municipal authorities in various regions of Georgia were modified and tightened. Later, with the involvement of GYLA’s lawyers, unlawful acts issued by Ozurgeti and Chokhatauri Sakrebulo were deemed null and void. In particular, Ozurgeti Municipality Sakrebulo and Chokhatauri Municipality Sakrebulo deemed individual administrative legal acts adopted by Chairpersons of these Sakrebulo as null and void on April 25, 2012 and May 25, 2012, respectively. These acts had been issued to regulate rules of admission and movement of citizens in offices of legislative agencies, placing illegal restrictions on their freedom of movement.

² <http://www.epn.ge/?p=110696>

³ <http://control.ge/news/id/428>

⁴ http://www.gyla.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1231%3A2012-03-14-09-39-34&catid=1%3Alatest-news&Itemid=177&lang=ka

These acts had been issued by unauthorized individuals, regulating temporary or permanent and multiple use of the general rule of conduct. Under the Law of Georgia on Normative Acts prohibits adoption of a normative act in the form of an individual legal act and vice versa. Furthermore, order of Sakrebulo Chairperson in both cases applied not only to representative but to executive agencies as well.

Citing the order adopted by Sakrebulo Chairperson, on March 13, 2012, journalist Nato Gogelia was not allowed to access offices of Chokhatauri Municipality Gamgeoba. Therefore, she was unable to drop off an application requesting access to public information. Similar fact occurred on March 16, 2012, in Ozurgeti, against journalist Zhana Megrelishvili. She was prevented from dropping of an application with the Governor's Administration.

Journalists filed for administrative proceedings in court, requesting annulment of the foregoing individual administrative-legal act. Their interests were defended by GYLA's lawyer. Both cases were concluded successfully, without main hearing in court. Sakrebulo of both Ozurgeti and Chokhatauri deemed individual administrative-legal acts adopted by their respective Governors as null and void immediately after bringing the case against them in court.⁵

As the impugned act was deemed null and void, journalists withdrew their case from preparatory stage and received their refunds for fees paid for the court proceedings.

Notably, later in July 2012, the procedure of movement in Kutaisi City Hall was amended. "Restrictions imposed against journalist entailed prohibition for media representatives to access the building by passes. Passes in their turn are issued only when the respondent is willing to meet the journalist. Ketis Deisadze, Lead Press and Public Relations Specialist at Kutaisi City Hall, explained that there was no order placing restriction on movement of journalists within the Kutaisi City Hall offices. Later she stated that due to amendments to the internal regulations, journalists now had to obtain an pass in order to access the building and reach respondents",⁶ which was protested by local journalists.

Thus, recently a number of instances of disruption of journalistic reporting were revealed, related to movement within administrative of-

⁵ http://www.gyla.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1362%3A2012-07-02-11-32-24&catid=1%3Alatest-news&Itemid=177&lang=ka

⁶ <http://news.ge/ge/news/story/22958-tavisufali-media-shezhgudvebis-gareshe>

fices and procedures of interviewing a respondent.

GYLA believes that relations with media by administrative agencies remain one of the pressing issues in Georgia. Notably, with financial support from OSCE Mission to Georgia, on October 18-19 in Daba Gudauri, first working meeting with representatives of press offices and journalists was held on FOI issues. The meeting aimed at identifying standing issues in this field and facilitating discussions about ways to regulate these issues. Representatives of press services, PR offices, televisions, radios, newspapers and news agencies from across various regions of Georgia participated in the working meeting. Participants identified the following key problems:

- Lack of uniform standards in the field of duties and responsibilities of press services;
- Low quality of independence of press services;
- Problems in providing complete information in an operative manner;
- Failure of law enforcement authorities to provide information;
- Rare application of legal mechanisms by journalists
- Trend of unsubstantiated refusal to provide access to public information.

It must be highlighted that by 2012 the foregoing issues remained to be problematic.

Research Methodology

The research focused on analysis of relations with media in Georgia founded on facts observed by GYLA and public information it had requested from various public agencies. To this end, we applied to Ministries, courts and regional administrative agencies with following inquiries:

1. Is there a special document within your agency, stipulating standards of relations (communication) with media? If yes, please provide the documentation
2. If no, what rules apply to movement of a journalist within the building, scheduling an interview and interviewing a public servant? Please provide applicable regulations
3. Which documents regulate movement of citizens within offices of your agency? Please provide relevant documents

4. Which department is tasked with media relations in your agency? (Please, provide POCs)
5. Which department is tasked with relations with citizens in your agency? (Please, provide POCs)

The research consists of the following parts:

Introduction – describing problems in relations with media

Body – analysis of public information provided by public agencies

Conclusion – based on components examined, GYLA offers legal methods and recommendations for solving the problem.

Research Goal

Researching standards of relations with media

Identifying standing problems

Raising public awareness

Offering ways to solve the problem

Key findings of the research:

Administrative agencies have developed different standards of relations with media

In most of the cases relations with media are not regulated under a particular act

Existing problems are to a certain extent related to approach of influential political figures with media

Recommendations

In the nearest future working on the development of standards of relations between administrative agencies and media must be commenced

Certain changes must be made to approaches/policy towards media representatives

It is important for media to take its work standards to a higher level on their own – we believe that one of the steps for increasing trust is recognition of standards of ethic by media

2. STANDARDS OF RELATIONS WITH MEDIA – ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC INFORMATION REQUESTED BY GYLA

Public information from administrative agencies was requested in 2012. Notably, all addressees provided their responses; however, frequently information was incomplete and provided in violation of deadlines established by the General Administrative Code of Georgia. To simplify perception of contents of the information provided, below are individual answers received from each agency:

Ministry of Culture and Monuments Protection

The Ministry informed us that relations with media and movement of citizens within offices of the Ministry is regulated under the Ministry's regulations. Article 2 of the Regulations deals with functions of the office and objectives of the Ministry. Under subparagraphs "e" and "o", admission of citizens, facilitation of registration of visitors and control of adherence to universally recognized principles and norms of relations with international protocol and media in the work of the Ministry falls under the purview of the office.

Further, we were informed that relations with Media are handled by media relations division (Tamar Chikhladze), and relations with citizens are handled by media relations division and administrative department (Tamar Chikhkadze, Giorgi Machitashvili).

Under Article 5 of the Regulations, media relations division is part of the office of the Ministry. Its duties and responsibilities include relations with media, informing public at large about ongoing processes at the Ministry and its activities by means press and other media outlets, daily monitoring of press and electronic media reports, and providing summary of reports to leadership of the Ministry, monitoring news programs on a regular basis and registering those related to events organized by the Ministry.

According to the information provided by the Ministry of Culture and Monuments Protection of Georgia, there are some applicable standards with the Ministry of relations with media and citizens; however, they are general and we recommend that these standards be formulated in a separate document in details.

Ministry of Justice of Georgia

The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) of Georgia has responded that

1. Media relations at the MOJ are coordinated by the Public Relations

Division under the Ministry's administration, whose duties and responsibilities include providing working conditions for journalists, responding their questions, organizing interviews and briefings. Any journalist can attend public events at the MOJ. There is a website available for additional information.

2. Journalists have freedom of movement at the MOJ. Further, visit of a journalist must have a prior consent of the public relations office of MOJ's administration, in order to ensure that maximum assistance is provided to the journalist concerned.
3. Admission of individuals in the administrative offices of the MOJ is regulated under the November 17, 2010 Order of the MOJ N647.

Under Article 1 of the Order, for the purpose of ensuring the MOJ's normal functioning, public order, enforcement of discipline and security, access to the administrative offices of the MOJ should be allowed to natural persons who have been issued a one-time pass (visitor's card) by specialists of the MOJ's administration (department), upon registration of a request for a pass in corresponding software by authorized individuals and upon presentation of an ID card, a passport or a driver's license by the individual concerned. If there software program has suddenly stopped running, request for an access pass can be made upon verbal instruction of an authorized individual after they state their respective personal code.

4. Relations with media at the MOJ fall under the purview of the Public Relations Office. We were provided with name of the POC and respective contact details (telephone number and e-mail).
5. Relations with citizens at the MOJ are the responsibility of the administration. Name of the POC was provided.

Notably, the information provided provides a detailed description of issuing of an access pass and procedures for entering the building, for which there is a special staff of the Ministry. There are no special documents at the MOJ determining relations with media. This function has been undertaken by the MOJ's Public Relations Office.

Journalists enjoy freedom of movement in the MOJ offices; however, the visit of a journalist must have a prior consent of the public relations office of MOJ's administration, in order to ensure that maximum assistance is provided to the journalist concerned. Thus, freedom of movement of a journalist largely depends on instructions of the Public Relations Office.

Prosecutor's Office of Georgia

The agency reported that Public Relations Division under Administrative Department of the Ministry of Justice coordinates media relations in the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia. It provides working conditions for the journalists within the Prosecutor's Office, gives answers on the questions, organizes interviews and briefings. Any journalist is free to attend public events at the Prosecutor's Office. As for additional information about activities of the PR division, the Office redirected us to its official website, yet the specific link was not indicated.

General Prosecutor's Office also provided that there are no restrictions on journalists' movement in administrative building. Yet, with a view to ensure maximal assistance, their visit should be negotiated with PR division of the administrative department under the Ministry of Justice.

As for citizens' admission in the administrative building of the General Prosecutor's Office of Georgia, it is regulated by the Minister's Order#647 of November 17, 2012. However, notwithstanding our demand the document was not submitted. We managed to receive the document from the Ministry of Justice.

According to the response of the General Prosecutor's Office, media relations are the competence of the PR division of the Administrative Department under the Ministry of Justice. The Ministry submitted contact information of the individuals obliged to communicate with media and citizens.

Standards applied in the General Prosecutor's Office of Georgia and the Ministry of Justice of Georgia are identical.

The Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs

The Ministry submitted the Minister's Order#191 of December 30, 2011 on "Citizens' admission and media relations in the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs" and the Order #23 of July 28, 2010 on "Approval of the protection regime within the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs."

According to Article 3, Order #191, Public Relations division of the Ministry became obliged to:

1. Receive mass media representatives in administrative building of the Ministry;
2. Agree interviews with management of the Ministry and other employees;

3. Make statements on behalf of the Ministry when necessary.

The Ministry informed that according to the Regulations of the agency, media relations are carried out by Public Relations division of the Ministry. The name of the contact person was submitted.

It should be noted that notwithstanding our demand, the Regulation, entailing media relation (communication) standards, was not submitted.

According to Paragraph 1, Article 191 of the Order#191, the Office of the Ministry should ensure:

1. reception of public by the Minister during the working hours (upon agreement with the Minister) on the issues that fall within competence of the Ministry;
2. unrestricted admission of public within working hours by the first Deputy Minister and other Deputy Ministers on the issues coordinated by them;

The Order also provides that when necessary, heads of the structural sub-units and other employees of the Ministry should ensure unrestricted reception of citizens during working hours on the issues under their competence.

Order #23 defines rules of citizens' admission in the Ministry. According to Article second of the Order, individuals are admitted in the administrative building of the Ministry by one-time passes issued by competent officials of the Ministry. The Order also specifies that an individual should submit ID Card of the Georgian Citizen, passport or a military ticket, driving license or other identity card issued by the state agency. Article 9 of the same Order defines admission rules in the Ministry, without a pass and with or without a vehicle, as exceptions.

Admission of citizens in the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs is prescribed in details. As for media relations, it is important to determined the issue as well.

Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources of Georgia

The Ministry reported that according to the Regulation of the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources of Georgia Public Relations Department ensures media relations in the Ministry, which in exercise of the function (coordination of interview process with the Ministry employee) is governed by applicable legislation of Georgia, including the Regulation of the Ministry. Information on contact persons was

also submitted.

As for citizens' movement in the administrative building, the Ministry provided that according to the Regulation, Records Management division is competent on the coordination of citizens' reception. In particular, upon application of interested individual it ensures organization of meetings with relevant official of the Ministry. We were also informed that strangers are allowed in the Ministry by special passes. We also received information on contact persons from the mentioned division.

The Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources of Georgia submitted responses on our questions without attaching relevant documents. It was figured out that the Ministry does not possess a special document determining media relations.

The Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia

The Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia reported that recording of public official by a journalist, taking of an interview and movement in the administrative building should be negotiated with Public Relations Department, since according to the Regulations of the Ministry, the Department is in charge of fulfilling this obligation. Information provision division of the department ensures contact with media. Information on contact persons was also submitted.

The Ministry also informed that citizens' movement within the Ministry is regulated by the Minister's order #1-1/1284 of June 7, 2012 on "Granting authority to issue admission passes in the administrative building of the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia". According to the Order employees of the Ministry are admitted in the administrative building via electronic ID Cards of a Georgian Citizen, furthermore, the document also envisages the list of competent persons eligible to issue the pass and relevant rules connected thereto.

The Ministry reported as well that citizens' letters and applications are examined by relevant structural units of the Ministry in view of their content. In addition, information service of the Ministry provides hotline service to the citizens. Contact information was submitted.

Even though the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Develop-

ment of Georgia specifies the rules for citizens' relations and their admission in administrative building, we lack opportunity to review media relations' standards since submitted information was too general.

The Ministry of Environment Protection of Georgia

The Ministry of Environment Protection reported that media relation standards are not regulated by any special document in the agency. Journalists are free to receive information on any topic and to agree interview with required public official in Public Relations Service. Information on contact person was also submitted.

As for relations with citizens, the Ministry submitted Minister's Order #i-31 of January 25, 2010 which regulates citizens' admission issues in the administrative building. According to the order there is an approved schedule for citizens' meetings with officials of the Ministry, furthermore the document defines that the office of the minister should ensure organizational arrangements of meetings with officials of the Ministry.

Information submitted by the Ministry of Environment illustrates that it has no established standards for media relations and no stipulated procedure for citizens' movement.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia

The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia reported that according to the "Regulation of the Public Affairs Department of MIA", approved by the Minister's order #532 of July 17, 2012 communication with public and mass media is the competence of this department and it is chaired by the head of Public Affairs Department.

The MIA also provided that rules on movement of employees and strangers on the places under the protection of the MIA are regulated by the order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

The MIA failed to submit sufficient information. The documents acquired by GYLA on the official website of the Ministry illustrate that the agency does not possess specifically prescribed standards for media and public relations.

The Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia

The Ministry reported that Public Relations Service coordinates media relations there. The Service has the following competencies: to provide working conditions for journalists in the building of the Ministry, to provide answers on the journalists' questions, as well as to organize interviews and briefings. Movement of journalists within the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia is not restricted; however the visit should be agreed in advance with public relations service of the Ministry, with a view that journalists were able to receive maximal aid.

The Ministry also informed that it does not possess any individual or normative administrative act determining citizens' movement in the building.

Public Relations Service is in charge of media relations within the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia. The Ministry also submitted information on the contact person.

It should be noted that in the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure, media and public relations are regulated in an oral form and there are no written standards. In view of this, fulfillment of the standards in practice is questioned.

The Ministry of Corrections and Legal Assistance of Georgia

The Ministry informed that,

1. The division for mass media relations under the administrative department coordinates media relations within the Ministry of Corrections and Legal Assistance of Georgia (MCLA). It provides working conditions for journalists in the building of the ministry, answers questions, and organizes interviews and briefings. Any journalist can attend public events at the Ministry.
2. Movement of journalists is not restricted in the administrative building of the Ministry. However, the visit should be agreed with mass media relations division in advance, with a view to provide maximal assistance.
3. Individuals are admitted in the MCLA administrative building by special passes for an invited guest with the help of a special software. The Ministry provided that the issue is regulated by Article 9 of "Internal Regulations of the MCLA Office" approved by the Minister's Order #90 of June 15, 2012, yet notwithstanding our request the document was not submitted.

4. Mass media division of the administrative department is in charge of media relations. Information on the contact person was also submitted.
5. Administrative department carries out relations with citizens. No information was submitted about the contact person.

It should be noted that media relations within the Ministry are regulated only by Article 9 of internal regulations and in the oral form. There are no stipulated standards for media relations in the Ministry.

Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Affairs of Georgia

The Ministry reported that:

1. No legal act has been adopted by the Minister of Health, Labor and Social Affairs of Georgia regulating media relations standards;
2. According to paragraph a) Article 186 of the “Regulation of the Ministry of Health Labor and Social Affairs of Georgia” approved by the government resolution #249 of 2005, Public relations department is in charge of media relations.
3. Rules of citizens’ movement in the Ministry are defined by the Minister’s order #01-92/o of April 17, 2012 on “Admission of citizens in the building of the Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Affairs and organization of disclosure of public information.”
4. Public relations department is in charge of public relations within the Ministry as per paragraph c) Article 186 of the Regulations of the Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Affairs of Georgia, approved by the Government’s resolution #249 of 2005.

In view of the above, no special rule has been adopted for media relations in the Ministry.

The Ministry of Finance of Georgia

The Ministry of Finance of Georgia reported that media and public relations in the Ministry are regulated by the Regulations of the Ministry, yet the document was not submitted.

In addition, the Ministry informed, that public relations division of the bureau of the Ministry of Finance ensures relationship with media and citizens, as well as logistic division of the administrative department of the Ministry of Finance and permit bureau. The names of contact persons were also submitted.

According to the information acquired by us on the official website of the Ministry of Finance, there are no specified standards for media and public relations in the Ministry.

The Office of the State Minister on Diaspora Issues

The office of the State Minister on Diaspora Issues reported that media relation standards are not regulated by any special document. As for the question about the procedure for movement of journalists in the administrative building, the Office of the State Minister provided that since the Office is located within the building of the Government Chancellery, the agency is authorized to disclose requested public information.

In this state agency, press-speaker (the chief specialist) is in charge of media relations. Communication with citizens is undertaken by correspondence letters as well as via the web-page. If there is a necessity, citizens are admitted in the administrative building with passes in the relevant departments (administrative department, reception, the topic according to the competence.) We were also informed that contact information is indicated on the official website of the Office of the State Minister on Diaspora Issues.

It should be noted that mentioned topics are not regulated in the Ministry.

The Office of the State Minister on Euro-Atlantic Integration

The Office of the State Minister on Euro-Atlantic Integration reported that it is located in the Government Chancellery and therefore, citizens' movement is regulated according to the rules established by the government chancellery.

They also informed that Natia Chikovani, adviser of the Minister is in charge of media relations, while Tamar Melashvili, head of administrative department, coordinates public relations.

The response received from the Office of the State Minister on Euro-Atlantic Integration similarly to the response from Office of the State Minister on Diaspora Issues proves that the office has no special document determining media and public relation standards.

The Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories Refugees and Accommodation of Georgia

The Ministry provided that it has not specially elaborated document envisaging standards for relations with media. According to the established practice, a journalist communicates with PR Service of the Ministry, and afterwards movement in the administrative building and taking of an interview is allowed.

Citizens are admitted in the building by means of passes. The special form of the pass is established by the Minister's Order of January 31, 2007. Notwithstanding our demand the order was not submitted by the Ministry.

Public and Media Relations division under the Ministry is in charge of relations with media and citizens, yet the name of the contact person was not submitted by the Ministry.

According to the information submitted by the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories Refugees and Accommodation of Georgia it is evident that the Ministry has no determined standards for relations with media and citizens.

Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reintegration

Submitted response provided, that the office of the state Minister does not possess a special document on media relations standards. A journalist, willing to record the employee of the office should negotiate the interview with him/her, or with Tamar Kochoradze- responsible person on media relations (head of the Division for Relations with International Organizations and Project Management).

The Office is located in the administrative building of the Government Chancellery of Georgia. The agency has not specially elaborated document in terms of citizens' movement in the administrative building.

Elizo Lomidze, a contact person from Political Analysis and Public Relations Unit is responsible on public relations.

According to the information submitted by the Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reintegration, it is evident that the agency has no special document determining standards for media relations. The standards for citizens' movement in the administrative building are not provided either.

The Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia

According to the submitted letter, Public Relations Department is functioning within the Ministry for communication with public and mass media. Regulation of the Public Relations Department was approved by the Minister's order #2-23 of February 2, 2012. According to Article 2, Paragraph b of the document, the key functions of the department are the following: to have relations with mass media and to inform public about the implemented activities within the competence of the Ministry. According to Paragraph 1, Article 5 of the Document the division for Relationship with Press organizes press-conferences and briefings, prepares press reviews, ensures accreditation of journalists in the Ministry, and promotes meetings of interested individuals with high officials of the Ministry.

Through its internal audit, the Ministry ensures transparency of the implemented activities, promotion and establishment of public control mechanism and etc.

Information submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture illustrates that it has standards for public and media relations, yet the document is general.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia

The Ministry informed that

1. Media relation issues within the Ministry are Regulated by the "Rule of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia on relations with mass media" approved by the Minister's order #266 on November 17, 2006. The Order provides that all units of the Ministry are obliged to submit information about ongoing issues to the Department of Press and Information systematically. The Department arranges special press-conferences and briefings, as well as negotiates the interviews and questions among media representatives and the Minister and deputy Ministers. The rules for conduct of briefings are also specified.
2. Conditions for public movement in the central office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are prescribed by the "Rules for ensuring security in the administrative building of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia and its nearby territories" approved by the Minister's order #94 of April 24, 2009. The order envisages the rules for issuing one-time passes and the list of eligible persons to do so. Amendments introduced to the order were also released by the Ministry.

3. Ia Makharashvili, Irakli Vekua, Nino Tinikashvili, Maia Abulashvili, Khatuna Darakhvelidze, Eka Janjgava, Bela Gomurashvili and Maia Shalibashvili, employees of Press and Information Department are in charge of media relations within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
4. Structural units of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also carry out public relations with citizens on the issues within their competence.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has specifically determined standards for relations with media and citizens.

The Ministry of Defense of Georgia

Information submitted by the Ministry provides that:

1. Public Affairs Department of the administration of the Ministry coordinates media relations. It is in charge of organizing meetings, press-conferences and briefings with public and media representatives, organizes mass media visits on military spots.
2. The relevant individual-administrative act of the Minister regulates the issue of admitting individuals in administrative buildings of the Ministry.
3. The Head of Public Affairs Department of the Ministry is in charge of media relations.
4. Public Relations Department of the Ministry administration is in charge of public relations.

Government Chancellery of Georgia

The Chancellery reported that Press Service of the Prime-Minister of Georgia (contact person: Zurab Gvenetadze –Head of the Service) ensures coordination of media relations, provision of answers on journalists' questions, organization of interviews and briefings and unrestricted movement of journalists in administrative building of Government Chancellery of Georgia (with advance agreement).

The standards of relationship with media as well as rules for citizens' movement in the administrative building of the Government Chancellery are not regulated legally. The special security service, upon preliminary notice of the relevant official of the Chancellery, implements control on citizens' entry in administrative building.

Records Management Service (contact person: Levan Erikashvili, head of the Service) of the administrative department of the Chancellery is in charge of public relations.

Information submitted by the Government Chancellery of Georgia illustrates that the agency has no established standards for media relations. It does not either possess determined rules for citizens' movement within administrative building. It is a problem for the agency since responsible persons have to define the manner of conduct on each specific case. It might lead to establishment of non-uniform practice.

The State Audit Service

The State Audit Service carries out relations with mass media with Pati Mamiashvili's assistance, a chief specialist of the organizational division of administrative department of the State Audit Service. We received her contact information. Other employees of the same department are in charge of public relations and their contact information was also submitted. We were also notified that in view of public interests and stated issues, relevant structural unit of the State Audit Service carries out public relations.

As for citizens' admission in administrative building of the State Audit Service, the agency submitted Order #173/42 (June 3, 2009) of the head of Chamber of Control on "approval of the rule on issuing ID Cards for the employees of the Chamber of Control, temporary one-time, special and car passes and citizens' admission in administrative building of the Chamber of Control" and the Order #38/37 (March 12, 2012) of the head of Chamber of Control "on introducing amendments to the Order #84 of June 8, 2007 in terms of approval of the Internal Regulations of the Chamber of Control of Georgia."

The Order stipulates the rules of issuing passes, as well as procedures of control, including carriage of prohibited object in the administrative building. We, however, have not received information about the type of prohibited objects. Upon oral order of the competent official, individual also became obliged to leave at the security desk communication and other technical facilities together with prohibited objects, during his/her temporary stay in the administrative building.

It should be noted, that according to media relation standards established by the State Audit Service, "competent persons" are granted wide discretion and in certain cases it allows application of divergent standards.

Tbilisi City Hall

Public and Media Relations Service chaired by Tamar Kukhrashvili is established within administration of Tbilisi City Hall with a view to ensure relations with media, movement of journalists in the building, negotiation of an interview and recording of public officials. As for relations with citizens, it is provided by organizational service – Citizens' Service Center (division), chaired by Nana Kajaia, within administration of Tbilisi City Hall.

Admission in administrative building of Tbilisi City hall is regulated by resolution#63 (January 22, 2008) of the head of administration. The document specifies that individuals in the building are admitted via passes. The resolution also provides the list of officials who are eligible to issue the passes.

Information submitted by Tbilisi City Hall illustrates that the agency has no special document determining standards for media and public relations.

Tbilisi Local Council

The office of Tbilisi Local Council submitted its decision #1-4 of October 13, 2006 on "Approval of the Regulations of Tbilisi Local Council and its Structure" and "On Admission Procedures in the building of Tbilisi Local Council", order #642 (June 25, 2008) of the head of the office of Tbilisi Local Council.

We were also notified that in Tbilisi Local Council media relations are regulated by Public and Media Relations Unit of the Local Council, while records management unit is in charge of public relations. We also received names of the heads of departments.

According to Article 13 of the decision#1-4 (October 13, 2006) of Tbilisi Local Council, one of the key objectives of recordings management unit is citizens' reception, registration of their letters, applications and recommendations and preparation of statistical data.

According to Article 15 of the decision, key objectives of Public and Media Relations Department is reporting on the activities of the local council, informing mass media representatives on the planned activities, organization of press-conferences and briefings, annual accreditation of journalists in the local Council, analyses of materials broadcasted by press and mass media, cooperation with mass media and civil organization representatives.

The order #642 (June 25, 2008) on "Admission Procedures in the

building of Tbilisi Local Council” adopted by the head of the office of Local Council provides for the form of one-time permit for admission of citizens in the building and the list of individuals authorized to issue such permits.

Submitted information illustrates that Tbilisi Local Council has determined standards for relations with media and citizens and has defined rules for citizens’ reception. Yet, it should be noted that standards are general and do not specify what is implied under cooperation with mass media and civil society organizations.

The Supreme Court of Georgia

The Supreme Court of Georgia informed that Public and Media Relations Department (Nana Vasadze, the chief consultant) is in charge of media relations. The functions of the Service are defined by the Regulation of the Supreme Court that is available on its official web-page.

According to the information provided on the web-page “with a view to establish effective system of information submission on the operation of the Supreme Court of Georgia, Public and Media Relations Department”

- a) arranges briefings, press-conferences and other events;
- b) meets press and other mass media requirements according to the rules established by Georgian legislation;
- c) prepares press-releases, newsletters and other print materials;
- d) coordinates relations among media and speaker judges from other courts;
- e) implements accreditation of journalists in the Supreme Court;
- f) collects and analyzes information from print and electronic media.

The Supreme Court also informed that Public Relations Sector of the Common Department (Zviad Khujadze, the chief consultant) is in charge of public relations. In the building, the regime of pass is applied from the third floor, while citizens are able to receive all interesting information in public reception located on the ground floor.

There is no special document determining media relations.

Kutaisi Appeal Court

Kutaisi Appeal Court informed that according to the staff list, Khatuna Omnadze, press secretary of Human Resource and Organizational division is in charge of press and media relations. Therefore, with assistance of press secretary and speaker judge it is possible to plan media communication (an interview). As for citizens' movement in the court, the issue is regulated by the order#69 of June 1, 2012 and order #83 of June 19, 2012 issued by the head of the Appeal Court. Although the copies of the documents were released, they mainly provide the rules for photo, audio, video recording in the court building, as well as specify the rules for audio recording, stenograph and retransmission.

The court also reported that administrative office and citizens' reception unit are in charge of relations with citizens.

It should be noted, that according to submitted information Tbilisi Appeal Court has no standards for media relations, yet the emphasize is made on interview planning.

Tbilisi Appeal Court

Tbilisi Appeal Court informed that according to the staff list, press secretary of the head of the court is in charge of press and media relations. By August 9, the position was vacant, yet it is unknown if the position was occupied by anybody. The court also reported that upon advance agreement with the head of the bureau, communication (interview) with media may be planned with the assistance of the speaker judge.

As for citizens' movement in the court building, the court submitted the copy of the order#061/3 of May 31, 2012 issued by the head of Tbilisi Appeal Court which mainly regulates the rules for photo, audio, video recording, as well as defines the rules for audio recording, stenograph and retransmission.

The court also reported that administrative office and citizens' reception division are in charge of public relations. The hot-line of Tbilisi Appeal Court was also submitted.

It should be noted, that according to submitted information, there is no media relations standard in the Appeal Court, they are only limited to planning of interviews. Moreover, in the moment of disclosing information the position of a person responsible on media relations was undefined.

Tbilisi City Court

Tbilisi City Court reported that according to the staff list, no structural unit is determined within the court in the form of a division, unit or service for media relations and Ketevan Basilashvili (press secretary), the leading specialist of the office and Gvantsa Mikuchadze, a consultant for press and media relations fulfill the function.

The court also informed that press secretary of the court and responsible persons for media relations are governed by the order of September 6, 2010 issued by the head of Tbilisi City Court. The document specifies their competencies, yet the document was not submitted.

As for citizens' movement in the court building, the court submitted copy of the order#28/01 of June 19, 2012 issued by the head of Tbilisi City Court which mainly regulates the rules for photo, audio, video recording, as well as defines the rules for audio recording, stenograph and retransmission.

The Ministry also submitted hot-line and information on the contact person.

It should be noted, that according to submitted information, there is no media relations standard in the City Court, they are only limited to planning of interviews. Moreover, in the moment of disclosing information the position of a person responsible on media relations was undefined.

Constitutional Court of Georgia

The Constitutional Court reported that media relations are regulated by Article 42 of the court regulations. The Article provides that "No later than two days prior to the hearing, the press-secretary of the Constitutional Court warns mass media representatives on the date of the session and the topic to be discussed. If mass media representative is willing to implement radio, video or audio recording of the hearing, prior to the start of the hearing it applies to the specific court which examines the issue and makes decision on admissibility before the start of the hearing. Within three days after adoption of the decision, press-secretary of the Constitutional Court informs mass media about the act adopted by the court." The guard service is responsible on citizens' movement in the court building (Article 32¹ of the Organic Law of Georgia on Constitutional Court). Liana Begiashvili, head of organizational service is in charge of relations with citizens.

It should be noted that according to Article 32¹ of the Organic Law of

Georgia on Constitutional Court, the guard of the Constitutional Court should keep public order and security in the court building and on its territory. The document, however, does not provide any information about the function of the Constitutional Court in terms of citizens' movement.

The Constitutional Court failed to submit its regulation, but information acquired by us illustrates that media relations are specified there, yet regulations in terms of citizens' movement and relations needs to be determined.

Kutaisi City Hall

According to the resolution #79 (February 4, 2011) of Kutaisi local council on "invalidation of September 30, 2009 resolution #229 of Kutaisi local council concerning "approval of Regulation of the office of Kutaisi City Hall and the sample of the seal" and on approval of the Regulation of Administrative Service of Kutaisi City Hall and the sample of the seal", the media and public relations division of the administrative service of Kutaisi City Hall is in charge of cooperation with mass media. The Regulation specifies the obligations of the division, in particular, it

1. Organizes participation of representatives of Kutaisi City Hall in TV and radio programs with the guest and expert status;
2. Prepares text for dissemination in print media;
3. Organizes press-conferences, briefings and presentations;
4. Prepares texts to high officials of the city hall for public presentations/interviews, briefings, press-conferences;
5. Organizes public relations events: press-tours, open day meetings, round tables and etc.;
6. Processes TV-radio programs, print materials/books, booklets, journals, newspapers and etc/projects, which promote solving of public relations objectives in Kutaisi City Hall;
7. Disseminates information about anticipated events, implements accreditation of journalists;
8. Prepares press-releases on anticipated events and activities in the City Hall;
9. Cooperates with civil society organizations and mass media, takes care of systematic informing of the society on the activities of the City Hall and future perspectives;

Information on contact persons was also indicated.

The order #424 (October 15, 2010) of the head of Kutaisi local council on "Approval of Regulations of Kutaisi City Hall" regulates citizens' (including journalists) admission in the administrative building of Kutaisi City Hall. Articles 19 and 20 determined the rules of citizens' admission and electronic passes.

Kutaisi City Hall also provided that responsible person on citizens admission is in charge of organizing citizens' reception and submitted contact information of the official.

Kutaisi City Hall has specified standards for media relations, yet the rule for admission of citizens and media representatives are not separated.

Kutaisi Local Council

Kutaisi Local Council submitted its resolutions # 1 of July 2, 2010 and #79 of February 4, 2011 and certified copy of the order # 47 of March 1, 2007 and #424 of October 15, 2010.

Along with other issues, the resolution #1 of July 2, 2010 regulates citizens' participation in the activities of the local council. Order #47 of March 1, 2007 of the head of the local council specifies procedures for citizens' reception by high officials and members of the local council. The order also provides that secretary of the administration ensures citizens' reception with members of the local council.

As for other documents received from Kutaisi local council, they have been examined in the Chapter of Kutaisi City Hall.

In view of the above, it is evident that similarly to Kutaisi City Hall, Kutaisi Local Council has specifically determined standards for media relations and rules for citizens' reception.

Batumi City Hall

Administration of Batumi City Hall reported that media and public relations within the agency are regulated by the Regulation of administration of Batumi City Hall approved by the decree #43 (August 2, 2011) of Batumi local council.

According to Article 7 of the Regulation, along with other issues, Media and PR division of Batumi City Hall:

1. Organizes meetings of City Hall representative with mass media, arranges press conferences, prepares press-releases and newslet-

- ters for dissemination in mass media, and coordinates relationships with various agencies and press centers;
2. Organizes meetings of mass media representatives with City Hall employees, negotiates time and place of meeting, organizes publication of materials transferred by the City Hall to mass media for publication;
 3. Coordinates fulfillment of stipulations envisaged by procurement agreements made among mass media and Batumi City Hall according to the Law of Georgia on “State Procurement;”

In response to our letter, Batumi City Hall submitted Irina Shervashidze’s contact information, press-speaker, head of Mass Media and PR Division.

As for public relations, we were informed that according to Article 11 of the Regulations of Batumi City Hall, Records Management Division with the system of passes ensures meetings of citizens with certain officials of the City Hall. In addition, the City Hall also submitted contact info of Amiran Gogiava, assistant of a Mayor, responsible person on citizens’ admission. Article 12 of the Order #363 of October 20, 2011 on “General arrangements for operation of “one window” principle in Batumi” provides that assistant of the Mayor ensures citizens’ reception with the Mayor whilst the adviser of the deputy Mayor organizes citizens’ meetings with deputy Mayor.

In view of the above, the agency does not possess a special document for media relations.

Poti City Hall

Poti City Hall does not possess a separate document stipulating standards of relationships with media.

The agency reported that public information is disclosed according to the rules established by the General Administrative Code of Georgia.

In Poti City Hall, the issue of citizens’ admission in the administrative building, including journalists, is regulated by the Resolution #15/55 on “Approval of the Regulation of Administrative Service in Poti City Hall” adopted by Poti local council on December 29, 2010. Article 10 of the Resolution contains stipulations on media relations, yet it misses the part of relations with citizens.

We were also informed that Tamar Janashia, head of PR division of the Administrative Service under Poti City Hall is in charge of relations with media and citizens.

Information submitted by Poti City Hall illustrates that the Resolution regulates only some issues of media relations and does not determine relations with citizens.

The Office of Batumi Local Council

According to the letter of Batumi Local Council, media relations and citizens' movement are regulated by the Organic Law of Georgia on "Local self-governance", Regulation of Batumi Local Council and the Regulation of the Office of Batumi Local Council.

Guranda Abuladze, head of Mass Media and PR division of the Local Council is in charge of media relations.

Members of the Local Council, assistant of the head of the local council from administration, Bakur Bokhvadze from the law department, Tea Sarjveladze from official correspondence, citizens' applications and HR division are in charge of relations with citizens.

Paragraph 6, Article 4 of the Regulation of the local council specifies the place for citizens and journalists willing to attend the session. Citizens' and media representatives' right to attend session is incorporated in Paragraph 3, Article 55. According to Paragraph 4, the office of the local council provides their accreditation.

Batumi Local Council does not apply the special document regulating relations with media and citizens. Submitted document does not either determine procedure of movement in the administrative building. It specifies that citizens are entitled to attend sessions.

Poti Local Council

In Poti Local Council media and public relations are regulated by the General Administrative Code of Georgia, Regulation of Poti local council and the Regulation of the office of the local council. The document, however, regulates public involvement in the activities of the local council generally.

Shorena Chikoria, assistant of the head of Poti local council on PR relation issues regulates media and public relation issues.

Poti local council failed to submitted requested documents, yet the materials acquired with GYLA efforts illustrate that media relation standards are not determined in the public agency, while citizens' movement and relation issues are general.

Administration of the State Envoy (Akhmeta, Gurjani, Dedoplistkaro, Telavi, Lagodekhi, Sagarejo, Signagi and Kvareli municipalities)

Administration of the state envoy has not a special document specifying media relation standards. According to clauses f) and g), paragraph 1, Article 11 of the “Regulations on State Envoy” approved by the Presidential decree #406 of June 27, 2007 relations of State Envoy’s administration with mass media, including interview negotiation and recording of the state official, are the competence of the administrative service, in particular Khatuna Gulisashvili, acting chief specialist of the service is in charge of the field.

We were informed that there is no restriction for admission and movement of a journalist or any other individual in the administrative building during working hours envisaged by the Georgian legislation.

According to clause c) Paragraph 1, Article 11 of the “Regulations on State Envoy”, Administration Service carries out public relations, works on citizens’ recommendations, applications, complaints. Natia Katsiashvili, Marina Gaganashvili, Tamta Bitskinashvili and Teona Chavelashvili are contact persons.

Information submitted by the administration of the state envoy, illustrates that the agency has neither determined standards for media relations nor specific rules for citizens’ movement in the administrative building.

Office of local council of Telavi municipality

The letter received from the municipality provides that according to the Organic Law of Georgia on “Local Self-Governance”, self-governing agency is not authorized to establish media relation standards by any document or to regulate citizens’ movement there. Any individual and journalist can move without restriction in the administrative building and can meet with any public servant.

Administrative service of executive branch of local municipality is in charge of media relations, while public service bureau coordinates public relations in the agency (Lela Baghatashvili, is the contact person).

In view of the above it is evident that local council of Telavi municipality has no special regulation on media and public relations.

Executive branch of Telavi Municipality (Gamageoba)

In its letter Gamageoba provided that there is no special document specifying media relations' standards in the agency. It also reported that the agency has not determined rules in terms of journalists' movement, agreement on the interview or recording of the officials. Movement of citizens in the administrative building is unrestricted.

Tekle Ianvarashvili, a leading specialist from records management, HR, analysis and information division is in charge of media relations in Gamageoba. As for public relations, Lela Baghatrishvili and Lela Bekauri from public service division of the Administrative Service of Gamageoba and Manana Giunadze and Nino Khushitashvili from public service division in local council, are responsible persons.

Submitted materials illustrate that in Gamageoba of Telavi municipality public and media relation standards are regulated in an oral form.

LEPL Social Service Agency Akhmeta Branch of the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia

In response to our application, the agency reported that information can not be disclosed for the lack of relevant legislative act in Akhmeta regional department. With the request of information the branch applied to legal department of the agency, since according to implemented structural amendments, legal department of the agency was responsible on disclose of the relevant public information.

The Social Service Agency of the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia

In the agency relations with citizens are implemented through public reception. It operates in working days throughout the full working hours. In view of their needs, public reception directs citizens to different structures or/and functional departments. There are no restrictions in the system in view of their admission and consulting.

Agency's relations with interested individuals are regulated by the General Administrative Code of Georgia. The terms for disclosure of public information apply to media representatives and any other individuals. The system does not have any separate act determining different conditions for media relations.

Information submitted by the Social Service Agency of the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia illustrates that

the agency has neither determined media relations' standards nor specified rules for citizens' movement in the administrative building.

Rustavi

Materials submitted by Rustavi Local Council and Rustavi City Hall illustrate that there are no special rules or restrictions on journalists and citizens movement in the administrative building of local self-governing bodies. Therefore Press Service of Rustavi City Hall chaired by Ninutsa Kordzaia, head of the Service, is in charge of media relations. She coordinates communication of high officials of local self-governing bodies with media representatives, broadcasting of information, interview recording and etc. As for relations with citizens, public reception is operating in Rustavi local self-governing body (Nino Kharalashvili, head of the division) with "one window" principle, yet the form of the service does not hinder the citizens in meeting with high officials or ordinary citizens on the topical for them issues.

Kareli Municipality

The agency does not possess a special document regulating citizens' and journalists' movement in the municipality. According to the rule established by the legislation, journalists are entitled to enter the organization and record the respondent and receive necessary information with the help of the press service. Kareli municipality undertakes media relations through its administrative service.

Gori Municipality

The agency does not possess a separate document regulating mass media relations standards. In view of the needs, a journalist communicates with specially allocated employee of local council or executive body of local municipality and with their assistance contacts with respondents. Giorgi Gviniashvili, a chief specialist on public and media relation issues is in charge of media relations in the local council. As for executive body of local municipality, Natia Khachiuri, a head of Information Protocol and Foreign Relations division is a competent person in this field.

Kaspi municipality

We were informed that Dali Korkomashvili, a chief specialist of the Administrative Service is in charge of public relations in compliance with the functions provided for in the “job description” of the Administrative Service.

Ozurgeti

With the request of identical information we applied to Ozurgeti branch of MIA. In response to the application head of the MIA reported that admission of employees on the places protected by MIA are regulated by the Order of MIA. (See the paragraph of the research Ministry of Interior of Georgia)

3. SUMMARY

Revealed problems

Analysis of received information from administrative agencies revealed the low standard of media relations in the country.

In Georgia there are only some state agencies with specially elaborated document for media relations. It should be stressed, however, that the documents does not encompass all necessary topics. For example, December 30, 2011 Order#191 of the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia on “Admission of citizens in the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and on the relations with media representatives” and June 28, 2010 Order#23 “On approval of the security regime of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia” regulate relations with media. The documents, however, does not specify condition for admission of journalists on the territory of the Ministry. The issue is regulated by public admission standards.

Though the Ministry of Foreign Affairs prescribes in details media and public relations issues, the agency is still considered as one of the closed state sectors by journalists.

The Ministry of Agriculture is among rare exceptions. Information submitted by the agency illustrates that it has worked out standards for media and public relations, though the document is general.

According to the information submitted by Tbilisi local council, it has determined standards for relations with media and citizens, and has stipulated rules for public admission in the administrative building. Yet it should be emphasized that media relation standards are gen-

eral and do not specify what is implied under cooperation with representatives from mass media and civil society organizations.

Kutaisi City hall has specified standards for media relations, though the agency does not separate admission rules for ordinary citizens and media representatives.

The document worked out by Kutaisi local council specifies admission rules for citizens and media representatives in the administrative building. It should also be stressed that a document elaborated by the local council requires substantial change.

In majority cases media relation issues are not regulated by special documents. Furthermore, we meet no indications in any other document on the manner to negotiate interview with administration representative and on the period of advance informing on the planned event. By October 20, 2012 following state agencies possessed such regulations:

The Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia

The Ministry of Justice of Georgia

The Chief Prosecutor's Office of Georgia

The Ministry of Sport and Youth of Georgia

The Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources of Georgia

The Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia

The Ministry of Environment Protection of Georgia

The Ministry of Interior of Georgia

The Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia

The Ministry of Penitentiary, Probation and Legal Aid of Georgia

The Ministry of Labor, Health Care and Social Protection

The Ministry of Finance of Georgia

Apparatus of the State Minister of Georgia for Diaspora Issues

Apparatus of the State Minister of Georgia for Integration in European and Euroatlantic Organizations

The Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from Occupied Territories, Settlement and Refugees of Georgia

Apparatus of the State Minister of Georgia for Reintegration

The Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia

The Ministry of Defense of Georgia

Chancellery of the Government of Georgia
The State Audit Service
Tbilisi City Hall
Tbilisi Sakrebulo
Supreme Court of Georgia
Kutaisi Appellate Court
Tbilisi Appellate Court
Tbilisi City Court
Kutaisi City Hall
Self-governance City – Kutaisi Sakrebulo
Batumi City Hall
Poti City Hall
Batumi Sakrebulo Apparatus
Poti Sakrebulo
Apparatus of Telavi Municipality Sakrebulo
Telavi Municipality Gamgeoba
Akhmeta Regional Department of the LEPL Social Service Agency of
the Ministry of Labor, Healthcare and Social Protection of Georgia
Legal Entity of Public Law Social Service Agency of the Ministry of
Labor, Healthcare and Social Protection of Georgia
Rustavi
Kareli Municipality
Gori Municipality
Kaspi Municipality
Ozurgeti

Listed state agencies regulate media relations only with general norms and mainly it is unclear what will be considered by PR Services as undue fulfillment of activities.

Analysis of received information illustrates that notwithstanding their general nature, relations with media and administrative agencies are more regulated formally, whilst in practice situation is complicated. The problem might be caused by the state's political position.

It should be considered that government's attitude to media is of a decisive importance for promotion of freedom of expression. Frequently, messages of politicians have major effect on public servants' con-

duct. In view of this, GYLA's Media Legal defense Center made official statement on one of the President's speeches. Specifically, on May 10, 2012 President Mikheil Saakashvili assessed activities of some media representatives in a negative context in Ilia Chavchavadze museum at the presentation of the Computer Education Dissemination Society. As he noted, "Alia" and similar newspapers and "some Nazi elements" would have "engulfed and torn off" them (Ilia Chavchavadze and Iakob Gogebashvili). As Saakashvili stated they preach "ignorance" (citation from Ilia Chavchavadze). "They belong to marginalized group and will never return and rejoin the primary part of the society" – the President added.

Only public is authorized to evaluate the product prepared by media representatives, save for the cases when media activities come in conflict with Georgia's legislation.

We consider impermissible instructing journalists by the supreme state official on the type and manner of submitting information to public, as well as any attempt to form media representatives into a marginalized group.⁷

We should highlight that one of the main obstacle of the journalists is relations with judiciary and attendance at the government sessions. Generally, the sessions are closed and only in exceptional cases, upon the decision of the government, the session may be announced public.

It should be noted that after October 1, 2012 Parliamentary Elections state police towards media representatives, changes gradually. The October 16, 2012 statement of Giorgi Tugushi, acting Minister of Corrections and Legal Assistance of Georgia should be considered as a step forward.⁸ It granted 51 persons (8 representatives from media among them) authority to enter prison establishments under penitentiary department without special permit.⁹

Moreover, by the time of preparing the previous report, discussions were underway for alteration of the rule of audio-video recording at the court sessions. Upon the initiative of the Ministry of Justice, photo and video recording may be restored in the court halls. According to the draft, the court is obliged to ensure audio-video recording of the court process. Amendments should be introduced to the "Organic

⁷ http://www.gyla.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1293%3A2012-05-11-17-16-35&catid=1%3Alatest-news&Itemid=177&lang=ka

⁸ <http://www.media.ge/stories/akamdesadiqavitpatimr>

⁹ <http://www.ick.ge/ka/rubrics/main-news/62-bnews/12735-----51--.html>

Law of Georgia on Common Courts". Alexander Baramidze, deputy Minister of the Justice reports that public broadcaster would have unrestricted right to photo-video recording. It is authorized to carry out unlimited photo, video and audio recording and broadcasting of the court process and to transfer the recordings to other media upon their request.

With the consent of the court other mass media are also authorized to implement photo, video and audio recording upon their justified request. The right, however, may be restricted by the motivated judgment of the court, the draft provides.¹⁰

In view of Georgia's reality, we consider that establishment of the common standards of relationship with media would be the best way out for elimination of the gap.

Anticipated obstacles in the process of working on changes

The process of working on changes might face major problems such as identification of the journalists' status. Along with development of the internet, the interest towards online publications and bloggers' activities has increased gradually. In future, great number of media representatives may create problems to administrative agencies. There is a risk that due to limited space of administrative agencies, not all interested individuals will have opportunity to attend public sessions. Internet resource may be considered as the way out from the problem. For instance the sessions may be conducted in "live stream."

In view of the analyzed information it is evident that amendments need to be introduced to number of legislative acts with a view to establish media relations' standards. In addition, it is decisive to work out a unified document stipulating in details relations of administrative agencies with media and citizens.

Yet we emphasize that media, itself, should move to higher standard of activity. We believe that acknowledging of ethic standards –becoming a party to the charter of journalists' ethic is considered to be one of the steps forward to raising trust.

The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association is ready to participate in law formation process with a view to develop media standards.

¹⁰ <http://www.liberali.ge/ge/liberali/news/113151/>