

Center for Independent Journalism - www.cji.ro

Activity Report - 2011

About CIJ

CIJ is a non-governmental, non-profit organization acting for professional and responsible media by keeping the professional standards and securing an honest and balanced media environment. CIJ supports the freedom of expression as a pre-requisite for a real democracy. CIJ facilitates the social dialogue by supporting democratic changes, encouraging the citizens' participation and acting for the responsibility of the decision makers.

The Center for Independent Journalism is the only organization in Romania dedicated to the training of media professionals and one of the strongest NGOs in the country. Its activity is highly appreciated by the media professionals, the civil society and the business partners and is accepted and appreciated as a partner by most public institutions in Romania. The center's advocacy work has resulted in important developments: the access to information law was passed and protected against attempted restrictions, a draft law on the public media and amendments to the broadcast law were worked out and are now pending debate in the Parliament, a law on the public news agency was adopted and implemented, important changes to the Penal Code were promoted.

In almost 18 years of activity, over 15,000 people benefited from the CIJ activities and programs: journalists, other media professionals, young faculty students in journalism and other various domains.

I. PROGRAMS

1. Non-linear Journalism – November 2009 - December 2011, a program aimed at training journalists in the creation of multi-media products, educating the publishers in the use of online tools to consolidate their position on the market. In the first part of the project, a training module was developed and implemented by CIJ.

In the second part of the project, the CIJ staff traveled across Romania, talked to journalists in 6 cities (Brăila, Galați, Iași, Botoșani, Bacău and Focșani) and visited newsrooms. Issues discussed were related to transition from paper to online formats, building interest communities around the newsrooms, use of social media to enhance the newspapers' products and ethics in the online environment. As a result, some newspapers changed their approach to the use of social media, while other decided to introduce editorial policies for their online products.

The project was supported by **Trust for Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe** and developed in partnership with the Romanian Press Club and Association of Local Editors and Publishers (APEL)

2. Health Reporting Training Program (HEART) –. November 2010 – October 2012 - an EU program aimed at improving the quality of the health reporting in the EU and the candidate countries by developing training tools and curricula, as well as a comprehensive D-base. The program is developed by a consortium of seven organizations and coordinated by the Greek partner (Prolepsis – Institute of Preventive Medicine, Environmental and Occupational Health). In the reporting period, CIJ completed the research phase and disseminated the results. The project is funded by EC – Education and Culture DG – Life Long Learning Programme.

3. Curbing the Governmental Advertising Abuse – a program aimed at monitoring the way the state authorities use the public funds for advertising, as well as advocating for a clear and transparent legislation that would prevent the discretionary use of public money. Under this program, a monitoring report was produced that revealed a massive erosion of the transparency of the public authorities in allocating state advertising contracts (for example, in 2011, only two out of the 345 procedures we examined fully respected the law).

The program was supported by Open Society Justice Initiative (New York) and closed on February 15, 2012

4. Access of Roma population to Health Services – the third edition of a program aimed at exposing the problems faced by the Roma communities in exercising their rights to health care. Using a collective reporting approach, the program generated multi-media content mixing analysis, investigations, reportages and interviews. The output was translated into English and is free to use for all media interested.

The program is supported by the Open Society Institute - Network Public Health Program.

(Reports submitted).

5. Colorful but colorblind, 2010 - 2011 – an EU project working towards remedying anti-Roma stereotyping through the media in the target countries and internationally. By focusing on media training, collaboration between Roma and non-Roma journalists, and educational outreach to young people, the project simultaneously encouraged a more nuanced coverage of Roma issues, greater participation of Roma journalists in mainstream media operations, and encouraged inter-cultural dialogue and mutual understanding.

The project was developed by a consortium of 5 partners and coordinated by Transitions Online. Program closed in late July.

6. Colorful but colorblind – follow-up. Building on the success of the initial program, the partners developed a follow-up workshop, to help the participants refresh their knowledge and gain more practical skills. They produced another series of multi-media materials about the life in the Roma communities in Romania – and two more are under preparations for each team (three teams per country). Program will close in September 2012.



7. Mental Health Journalism Fellowship – a program aimed at promoting a responsible reporting and on mental health issues and fighting stigma associated with mental illness. The program is coordinated by the Carter Center in Atlanta and grants two fellowships in Romania, every year. This year, CIJ adopted a new approach to fellowships, calling for collaborative projects that involved both fellows (usually they work individually), with a multi-media output. This is a revolutionary approach, as the format of the fellowship was not changed ever its inception, ten years ago. The fellowships encompass September 2011-September 2012 period.

8. Multicultural Europe in the Media – 2010 – 2011. The goal of the project was to enhance the professional capacities of the journalists working in the public radio and television in an attempt to create a multicultural platform meant to foster a multicultural society and to promote multicultural communication. NGOs dealing with minority issues represented another target group. A round table discussion gathered both journalists and NGO activists at the end of the program. The project was initiated by Mira Media (The Netherlands) and developed in cooperation with Multicultural Institute (*Czech Republic*), Peace Institute (Slovenia), Center for Independent Journalism (Hungary), Media Development Center (Bulgaria), Association of Ukrainians in Poland (Poland), Sollentuna Föreningsråd (Sweden), Society of Goodwill (Slovakia) and Media Watch (Denmark).

9. Roma Voices in Society (second edition) – The main goals of this project of the Center for Independent Journalism, Budapest were to fight against prejudiced and stereotyped media portrayal of Roma in the mainstream media, strengthen the voice of Roma journalists and ease social tension through creating and broadening channels of communication between Roma and non-Roma. The project aimed to reach the online audience - especially young people - and provide unique content from a special angle by using new media technology on the Roma community. 22 materials have been produced under this program and placed online, in Romanian and English. The stories are available on the project's website (www.sosinet.hu - 'szomszédolás' = neighbours).

The program is financially supported by Open Society Foundation Media Program.

10. Summer school for high school students – a project aimed at educating the high school kids in the civic participation and the critical consumption of media, by having them “play journalists” for a week. The program was supported this year by the “Dinu Patriciu Foundation” and by the Romanian Commercial Bank. Twenty students participated in the intensive training programme which concentrated on “Resources” - how to evaluate and manage your needs and resources (financial, time, or human resources). The journalistic products are available at <http://blogoliceeni.ro/> - a website devoted to CIJ youth programs.

11. **Parlamentor** – a program aimed at involving Romanian citizens (especially university students) in the work of the European Parliament. It included the development of an [online platform](#) for discussions and online meetings with MPs and other relevant experts, offline meetings with the students and a contest (a series of quizzes and an essay contest). Some 2000 people participated in the online courses and over 500 in the quiz contest. Four people (two students, one military navy officer and a forest ranger) won the contest and got to visit the European Parliament and the European Commission in Brussels. The program was run in partnership with Hotnews.ro and ended February 28. The project was co-financed by the European Parliament.

12. **Strengthening the institutional and professional capacity of the public broadcaster Tele-Radio Moldova, 2010 – 2011.** As the local partner of the Center for Independent Journalism in Chisinau, CIJ Bucharest was responsible for developing and organizing training sessions in Chişinău and study trips to Bucharest. Reputed Romanian journalists and CIJ trainers conducted training sessions in Chişinău, while the directors of the national public radio and television visited media organizations and associations in Bucharest.

13. **Closer to Oxford – a series of debates and critical lectures in universities.** The program included students from Bucharest, Cluj, Iaşi and Timişoara, and aimed at familiarizing the university students with the practice of academic debates – still little known in Romanian universities. Together with the organization The Policy Center for Roma and minorities, CIJ was the partner of ARDOR in this project supported by Trust for Civil Society in central and Eastern Europe.

14. **The Role of Social Dialogue in Promoting Active Social Inclusion** – a project initiated by CRIES organization in Timişoara. CIJ is a part of the Bucharest Group of Local Initiative in this project which aims at defining for the first time the well-being indicators as seen by the 21st century Romanian cities. CIJ not only hosted the project meetings and training sessions for the Bucharest partners, but also moderated three groups of participants. CIJ participates on a voluntary basis in this project co-financed by the European Social Fund – Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2013.

II. In addition to these projects, CIJ also ran a full array of other activities in the service of the community and its main constituency, the media sector:

Advocacy: CIJ maintains a strong advocacy component to its work, on a daily basis. The main topics addressed are: freedom of expression, media legislation, transparency and accountability of public institutions, good governance (including its ethical aspects), education (in respect to access to education, civic education in schools, curricula development and ethical academic environment). We also participate in public events related to our health projects, gathering information, disseminating our results and connecting the media with specialists. Of great importance for us are the “digital rights” and the laws regulating the Internet and

the electronic communications, such as the Data Retention Act (declared unconstitutional in Romania, but for which EC started the infringement procedure) and ACTA. We are also involved in a permanent fight against discrimination of any kind. CIJ is a member of “România Curată” Alliance (Clean Romania), an informal alliance of NGOs dedicated to good governance and maintaining a website dedicated to content specialized in monitoring public authorities.

Consultancy

- **for public TV:** In September 2011, CIJ signed a partnership agreement with TVR (the public TV) to commonly work on the development of a new mission statement and a clearer definition of the public mandate. We identified a set of core values that the public broadcaster will embrace and stand for. Based on them, a new vision and mission will be formulated and later on, the first TVR Charter will be drafted. Under the program, CIJ helped the public television to broaden its public presence and better connect with some of its most targeted audiences. Thus, CIJ facilitated and moderated the meeting of the President of TVR with journalists writing about media and with environmental NGOs (separate meetings). More meetings are under preparation (watchdog and democracy NGOs, political parties, business leaders, religions, etc...).
- **for journalists and media outlets on content:** CJI has acted as a consultant and ombudsman for media seeking guidance, especially in ethical issues. Thus, *Ziarul Hunedoreanului* and *Gazeta de Sud* frequently address CIJ for its opinion in ethical dilemmas (main issues; protection of minors, fairness, presumption of innocence) or on how to handle their online content.
- **for journalists and media outlets on legal issues:** CIJ is frequently approached with legal questions regarding new legislation in force (especially the Civil Code that went into force in October 2011) or the protection of journalists. While CIJ does not have a lawyer or any legal capacities, we explain to those who approach us what their legal rights and leverages are and, whenever possible, assist them in finding professional help.

Training for NGOs: CJI staff appeared in various events organized by other NGOs and shared its experience in advocacy. Thus, in September, CIJ delivered a session dedicated to advocacy for the organizations participating in the Forum of Environmental NGOs (Miercurea Ciuc). Two days later, we delivered a training session for journalists and communicators of the public authorities in Bistrița (organized by the local Chamber of Commerce), focusing on EU Digital Agenda and the impact of new technologies on public communications. In October, CIJ delivered a training session on advocacy for a group of young artists, trying to expand the skills to informal groups and bring to the “classical” advocacy a creative streak that would increase its appeal to the public and thus its efficiency.

CSR support: CIJ worked with Avon Cosmetics in promoting their Fight Breast Cancer events in Craiova and Timișoara, cities where the company donated expensive diagnosis equipment to be used for free by the local citizens. CIJ

organized short briefings, visits to the sites for the interested journalists and facilitated the press conferences.

Social networks: CIJ increased its online presence, by keeping active its Facebook account (currently counting over 1800 members), as well as those of its staff (we cross-pollinate the “official” FB page with the personal ones, in order to increase the impact). CIJ maintains its website (a new version is under preparation) and a newsletter.

III. Courses

CIJ maintained the tradition of organizing professional courses (“Writing for the screen”, “Voice coaching”, “Producing an online publication for high-school students”) for working journalists or journalism students.

