



# AFRICAN MEDIA BAROMETER

The first home grown analysis of the  
media landscape in Africa



AFRICAN  
MEDIA  
BAROMETER

## ETHIOPIA 2010

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# The African Media Barometer (AMB)

The African Media Barometer (AMB) is an in-depth and comprehensive description and measurement system for national media environments on the African continent. Unlike other press surveys or media indices the AMB is a self-assessment exercise based on homegrown criteria derived from African Protocols and Declarations like the “Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa” (2002) by the “African Commission for Human and Peoples’ Rights”. The instrument was jointly developed by *fesmedia Africa*, the Media Project of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) in Africa, and the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) in 2004.

The African Media Barometer is an analytical exercise to measure the media situation in a given country which at the same time serves as a practical lobbying tool for media reform. Its results are presented to the public of the respective country to push for an improvement of the media situation using the AU-Declaration and other African standards as benchmarks. The recommendations of the AMB-reports are then integrated into the work of the 19 country offices of the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation (FES) in sub-Sahara Africa and into the advocacy efforts of other local media organizations like the Media Institute of Southern Africa.

## Methodology and Scoring System

Every two to three years a panel of 10-12 experts, consisting of at least five media practitioners and five representatives from civil society, meets to assess the media situation in their own country. For 1 1/2 days they discuss the national media environment according to 45 predetermined indicators. The discussion and scoring is moderated by an independent consultant who also edits the AMB- report. After the discussion of one indicator panel members allocate their individual scores to that respective indicator in an anonymous vote according to the following scale:

|          |   |   |
|----------|---|---|
| <b>1</b> | Country does not meet indicator               |  |
| <b>2</b> | Country meets only a few aspects of indicator |  |
| <b>3</b> | Country meets some aspects of indicator       |  |
| <b>4</b> | Country meets most aspects of indicator       |  |
| <b>5</b> | Country meets all aspects of the indicator    |  |

The sum of all individual indicator scores will be divided by the number of panel members to determine the average score for each indicator. These average indicator scores are added up to form average sector scores which then make up the overall country score.

### **Outcome**

The final, qualitative report summarizes the general content of the discussion and provides the average score for each indicator plus sector scores and overall country score. In the report panellists are not quoted by name to protect them from possible repercussions. Over time the biennial or tri-annual reports are measuring the media development in that particular country and should form the basis for a political discussion on media reform.

In countries where English is not the official language the report is published in a bilingual edition.

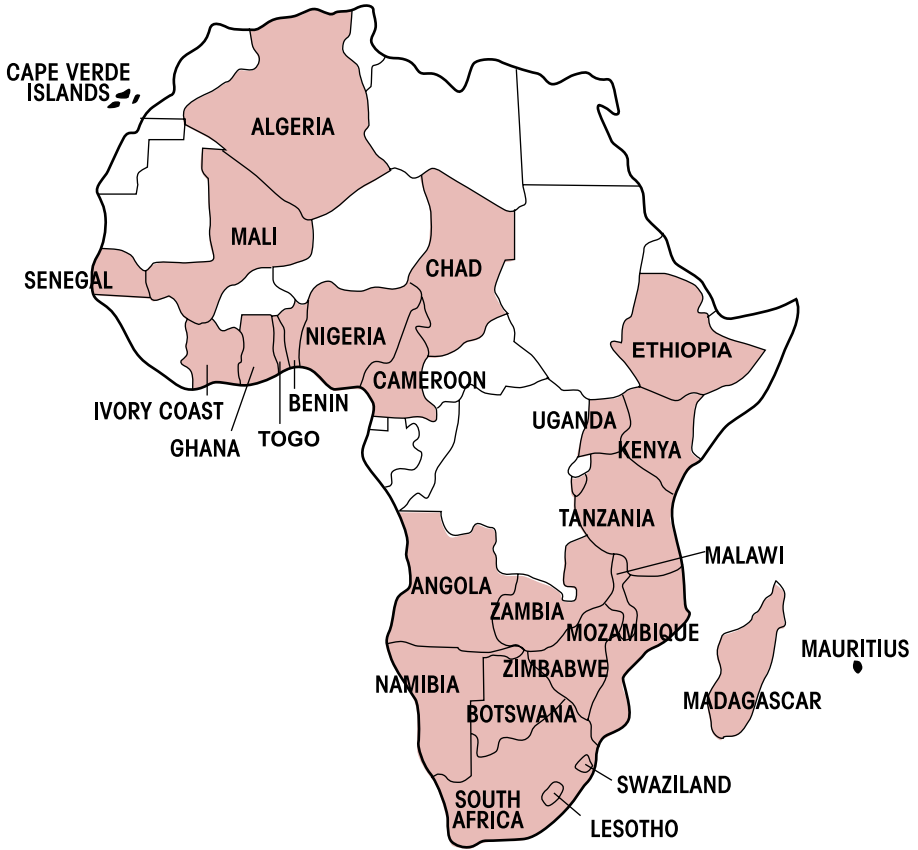
Implementing the African Media Barometer the offices of the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation (FES) and - in SADC countries the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) - only serve as a convener of the panel and as guarantor of the methodology. The content of the discussion and the report is owned by the panel of local experts and does not represent or reflect the view of FES or MISA.

At the end of 2008 the indicators were reviewed, amended and some new ones were added to address the rapid developments in Information Communication Technology.

By the end of 2010 the African Media Barometer had been held in 27 African countries, in some of them already for the third time.

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*See above 27 AMB Countries (2005-2010)*

# AFRICAN MEDIA BAROMETER ETHIOPIA 2010

## Executive Summary

Two major events in the recent history of Ethiopia have left indelible traces in the collective memory of its citizens: the liberation from the Derg regime in 1991 and the violence which erupted after elections in 2005.

The Derg (which means “committee” or “council” in the Ethiopian language Ge’ez) was a communist military junta that came to power following the ousting of Haile Selassie. Headed by Mengistu Haile Mariam it ruled from 1974 to 1991. The Derg was responsible for the death of millions of people through famine, economic mismanagement, enforced resettlements and the “Red Terror”, the elimination of thousands of suspected opposition supporters in urban areas. This dictatorial regime was overthrown by the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), earning the Front (still the ruling party) the deep-seated gratitude of millions of Ethiopians. Democratic rights, including the right to freedom of expression, were introduced and state censorship before publication, which had been in place since 1942, was lifted.

In 2005, elections were held which have been described as the most democratic the country has ever experienced. As results came in, it became clear that opposition parties had won an unprecedented number of seats. When the announcement of the results was delayed, students in Addis Ababa began staging protests which turned violent. After the results were finally declared (372 seats for the EPRDF and 172 for the opposition) some members of the opposition called the elections “stolen”. More demonstrations were held and the police used live bullets, killing scores of protesters. Some journalists were sent to jail while others fled the country.

Given this background some Ethiopians, mainly the older generation, are generally satisfied with the progress made since 1991 while others, mainly younger people, are sceptical about the country’s democratic achievements. This basic difference in outlook was clearly reflected in the panel’s discussions and scoring.

Some panelists emphasised the positive developments since 1991 and stressed that further democratic change can only be achieved in stages. Others argued that 2005 had been the test of the authorities’ tolerance of dissent and events had shown that opposition would not be allowed.

Although the Constitution of 1995 guarantees freedom of expression and the media, fear of speaking openly is widespread. People are generally afraid to

express their political opinions freely for fear of repercussions. Criticism of the government is not welcome even if there are no apparent negative consequences.

Some members of the panel felt that the ability to express one's opinion freely has improved tremendously compared to the previous regimes, and they remain optimistic that things will improve further in the "young democracy" under the current administration. Others felt that the fear of speaking one's mind was being reinforced after 2005 by legal threats and official statements made by government officials.

Some laws on the statute books could be used to limit the right to freedom of expression in an unjustifiable manner. Two outstanding examples are the Anti Terrorism Proclamation 2009 which allows for the "encouragement" of (undefined) "terrorism" to be punished with severe jail sentences, and the Revised Criminal Code of 2004 which provides for criminal defamation.

A new Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation of 2008 requires publishers or news agencies to be registered with a state authority. This registration has to be renewed every three years and can be refused.

The same act regulates citizens' right to access public information which is guaranteed by the Constitution. The act lists a number of exemptions to this right but also provides for a "public interest override", which will oblige an authority to release information if the public interest outweighs the potential harm caused by such disclosure.

Another new piece of legislation is the Charities and Societies Proclamation 2009. It restricts foreign funding for civil society organisations active in the advancement of human and democratic rights to ten per cent of their total funding. This, coupled with the undeveloped culture of grass root level participation in the country, has made fund raising extremely difficult. As a result, activities of civil society groups, particularly in areas of advocacy, have substantially declined.

Broadcasting, radio in particular, is the medium of choice in Ethiopia. Geographical coverage of radio transmissions has reached an estimated 70 per cent, while television coverage is close to 60 per cent. The state-owned Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency (ERTA) operates a National Radio Service and regional radio stations as well as a national television service and some regional TV channels.

The board of the ERTA is selected by the government. Most of the top managers are members of the ruling party and all staff members are government employees. As a consequence editorial independence of the state broadcaster is limited. News bulletins are essentially bulletins about government activities. The coverage does not reflect diverse views but is usually one-sided, lacks depth and falls short of journalistic ethics.



As a result of major structural changes there have been remarkable improvements on ERTA stations since the middle of 2010 in regard to presentation and packaging as well as coverage of a wider variety of issues. New programme structures and new formats have been introduced, interesting and creative documentaries are being offered.

Although the legal basis for the development of private and community broadcasting seems in place, the actual processes to make this happen are very slow. Some panelists said licensing of new broadcasters could only be done gradually, in step with the gradual democratisation of the country. Others argued that more services could contribute to the speeding up of democratisation. Presently, three FM radio stations are privately owned and another is close to the ruling party. The number of community based radios now stands at nine. There is no private TV station yet.

The print media in Ethiopia is characterised by very low circulation figures due to a number of factors: the poor culture of reading among the general public, illiteracy, the cost of newsprint, distribution problems, high copy prices and crippling taxation.

Overall, the quality of the content of the media in Ethiopia needs improvement. The principle of fairness in reporting is often compromised by almost all media, be they private or state. The tendency is to be either pro or against the government. Investigative journalism is rare. While the state media are in the business of image building for the government and thus publish mainly “positive” stories, there is also very little investigate reporting in the private media.

To improve standards in the media, professionals from both public and private media decided in 2009 to set up a voluntary media council. The council is to develop a code of ethics and establish a mechanism for members of the public to lodge complaints against the media in cases where they feel they have been treated unfairly or a story was inaccurate. This move is regarded as a positive sign of diminishing polarisation in the media.



# SECTOR 1:

**Freedom of expression, including freedom of the media, is effectively protected and promoted.**

# Freedom of expression, including freedom of the media, is effectively protected and promoted.

## 1.1 Freedom of expression, including freedom of the media, is guaranteed in the constitution and supported by other pieces of legislation.

The 1995 Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia guarantees freedom of expression under article 29:

1. Everyone has the right to hold opinions without interference.
2. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression without any interference. This right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any media of his choice.
3. Freedom of the press and other mass media and freedom of artistic creativity is guaranteed. Freedom of the press shall specifically include the following elements:
  - (a) prohibition of any form of censorship;
  - (b) access to information of public interest.
4. In the interest of the free flow of information, ideas and opinions which are essential to the functioning of a democratic order, the press shall, as an institution, enjoy legal protection to ensure its operational independence and its capacity to entertain diverse opinions.

While the constitution guarantees the freedom of expression and the media in principle, it also contains a number of possible limitations in its article 29 (6):

... Legal limitations can be laid down in order to protect the well-being of the youth, and the honour and reputation of individuals. Any propaganda for war as well as the public expression of opinion intended to injure human dignity shall be prohibited by law.

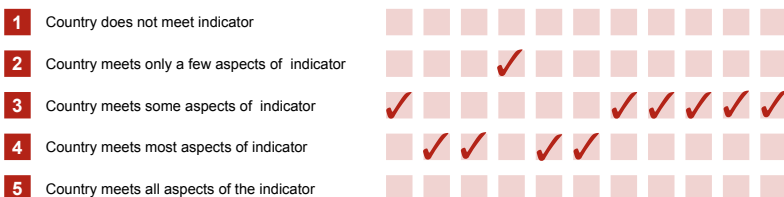
Some laws on the statute books could be used to limit the right to freedom of expression in an unjustifiable manner. Two outstanding examples are the Anti Terrorism Proclamation<sup>1</sup> 2009 or the Revised Criminal Code of 2004 (see indicator 1.3 for details).

<sup>1</sup> "Proclamation" in the legal context of Ethiopia means "Act"

The constitutionality of these acts could be challenged but this can only be done through an application to the House of Federation, the upper house of parliament, which is composed of delegates from regional councils. The House would set up a Council of Constitutional Enquiry to adjudicate such issues.

## Scores:

### Individual scores:



Average score: 3.3

## 1.2 The right to freedom of expression is practised and citizens, including journalists, are asserting their rights without fear.

The two major events in the recent history of Ethiopia – the overthrow of the dictatorial Derg regime in 1991 and the violent aftermath of the elections in 2005 – seem to have shaped the divergent stances of panellists with regard to freedom of expression. Some emphasised the democratic progress made since 1991 and stressed that further democratic change can only be achieved in stages in a country like Ethiopia. Others argued that 2005 was the test of what level of dissent would be tolerated and that opposition would obviously not be allowed. They said that the culture of fear which was broken in that year had surfaced again, with people holding themselves back and saying “What is the point”, “It is not my concern”, “Why should I get myself into this” etc. “If the reward for expressing myself is jail, I would of course be afraid,” said one panellist, sharing his experience when he was detained following the unrest in 2005. Such trauma is still haunting many, especially younger Ethiopians in urban areas.

*“If the reward for expressing myself is jail, I would of course be afraid”*

The fear of speaking openly depends on the kind of issues raised. People are generally afraid to express their political opinions freely for fear of repercussions. On other topics people tend to feel free to express their views, for example in

radio talk shows, as the likelihood of repercussions afterwards is minimal. Criticism of the government is not welcome even if there are no apparent negative consequences. It is difficult to have differences of opinion and be friends at the same time. A notion of “Are you with me or are you against me?” is prevalent.

There is a culture of self-censorship amongst journalists, experts and academics in the country. Older journalists are “moulded by experiences of the previous [Derg] regime”, others by the experiences of 2005 - both tend to practise self-censorship more often than not. Experts give their opinions only without having their names quoted. Reports often refer to anonymous sources and there is general unwillingness among the public to express their opinion to the media for fear of penalties and other consequences like losing their job. One journalist on the panel said: “I censure myself without any pressure.”

*“I censure myself without any pressure.”*

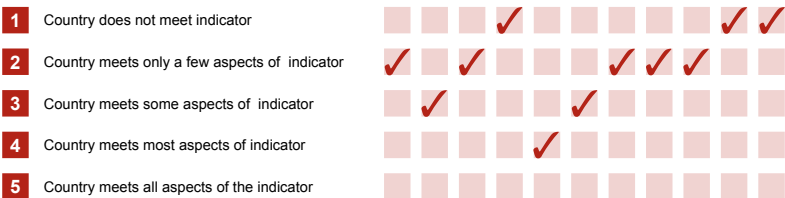
Although the political reason for not freely expressing opinions outweighs other causes, social and cultural taboos are also considered to be contributing factors. The fear of exercising the right to freedom of expression emanates from “not knowing the limits and responsibilities that come along with it.”

Some members of the panel felt that the ability to express one’s opinion freely has improved tremendously compared to previous regimes, and they remain optimistic that things will improve further in the “young democracy” under the current administration.

The panel was united in acknowledging the presence of fear in expressing opinions freely, but divided on whether there are real or more perceived reasons for such fear. While some tended towards the latter, others felt the fear was being reinforced by legal threats and official statements made by government officials.

## Scores:

### Individual scores:



Average score: 2.1

### **1.3 There are no laws restricting freedom of expression such as excessive official secret or libel acts, or laws that unreasonably interfere with the responsibilities of media.**

There are several laws restricting freedom of expression in Ethiopia:

- The Revised Criminal Code of 2004 in its article 613 provides for criminal defamation, on top of civil liability. In proceedings under this code, hearsay and anonymous reports from security officers are accepted as evidence. Where the defamation is against a public official, this will be taken as an aggravating circumstance and entail a penalty of up to one year imprisonment. While the burden of proving malice lies with the plaintiff in the case of civil proceedings, in criminal proceedings it is the defendant who has to show such proof. The accused have the right to be released on bail while the case is ongoing.
- The Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation of 2008 in its article 41 raised the ceiling for compensation in cases of civil defamation through the mass media substantially: from what used to be 1000 birr in the repealed press law to 100,000 birr (6080 US\$) now.

Article 42 allows for the public prosecutor to issue an order to impound a periodical or a book where there is

sufficient reason to believe that a periodical or a book which is about to be disseminated contains illegal matter which would, if disseminated, lead to a clear and present grave danger to the national security which could not otherwise be averted through a subsequent imposition of sanctions...

Such measures are subject to review by a court.

- The Anti Terrorism Proclamation 2009 states in its article 6 – titled “encouragement of terrorism” – that

whosoever publishes or causes the publication of a statement that is likely to be understood by some or all of the members of the public to whom it is published as a direct or indirect encouragement or other inducement to them to the commission or preparation or instigation or an act of terrorism stipulated under Article 3 of this proclamation is punishable with rigorous imprisonment from 10 to 20 years.

The proclamation does not define the term “terrorism” but article 3 lists acts of terrorism such as causing “a person’s death”, creating “serious risk to the safety or health of the public”, “committing kidnapping or hostage taking” and the like.

The inclusion of causing “serious interference or disruption of any public service” in this list is a point of concern: This could compromise the right to freedom of expression and journalists could face terrorism charges if, for example, a report on a certain public service provider resulted in a strike. “Moral support” for a “terrorist act” or “terrorist organization” is – according to article 5 – “punishable with rigorous imprisonment from 10 to 15 years”.

## Scores:

### Individual scores:

|          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |   |   |  |   |   |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|---|---|--|---|---|
| <b>1</b> | Country does not meet indicator               | ✓ |   |   |   |   |   |  |  | ✓ | ✓ |  | ✓ | ✓ |
| <b>2</b> | Country meets only a few aspects of indicator |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |   |   |  | ✓ |   |
| <b>3</b> | Country meets some aspects of indicator       |   | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |   |   |  |   |   |
| <b>4</b> | Country meets most aspects of indicator       |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |   |   |  |   |   |
| <b>5</b> | Country meets all aspects of the indicator    |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |   |   |  |   |   |

Average score: 2.0

## 1.4 Government makes every effort to honour regional and international instruments on freedom of expression and the media.

Ethiopia is a signatory to many international and regional instruments on freedom of expression.

Some of these instruments ratified by Ethiopia include:

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Article 19 states:

1. Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference.
2. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.
3. The exercise of the rights provided for in paragraph 2 of this article carries with it special duties and responsibilities. It may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:
  - a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others;



b) For the protection of national security or of public order, or of public health or morals.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 19 states:

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Its article 9 states:

1. Every individual shall have the right to receive information.
2. Every individual shall have the right to express and disseminate his opinions within the law.

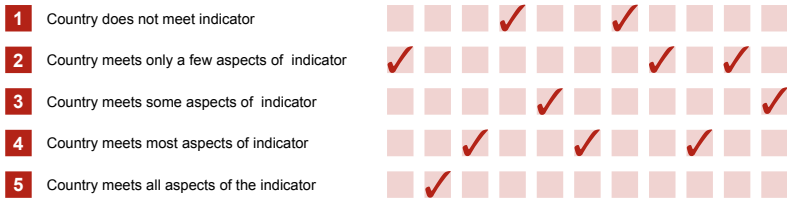
These international instruments, once ratified, are considered as “an integral part of the law of the land” by virtue of article 9 (4) of the Constitution. Article 13 (2) further stipulates that Chapter Three of the Constitution, which deals with fundamental rights and freedoms, should be “interpreted in a manner conforming to the principle of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Human Rights and international instruments adopted by Ethiopia.”

While these provisions exist on paper they are not always applied in practice. The House of Peoples' Representatives (Parliament) ratifies these instruments, but they are not translated into the official working language of the country nor are they promulgated in the official Federal Negarit Gazeta where federal laws are published. As a result, judges are reluctant to refer to international instruments when deciding on cases brought before them. The practical application of these laws is also limited because litigants in a court of law rarely invoke international or regional instruments to claim their right.

However, some panellists felt that “there is no restriction since the option for redress is laid out in the law” and they questioned whether it could be concluded that these rights are not being honoured.

## Scores:

### Individual scores:



Average score:

2.8

## 1.5 Print publications are not required to obtain permission to publish from state authorities.

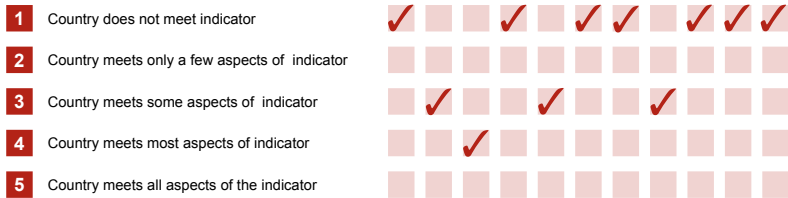
Publishers or news agencies are now required to set up a company in Ethiopia before applying for a certification of registration for print publications. The new Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation in its article 9 states that “anyone who desires to publish a periodical shall register such periodical ... with the Ministry of Information ...” The Ministry of Information has to issue a certificate of registration within 30 days of application. If it does not respond, the periodical or news agency will be deemed registered. However, the ministry may refuse to issue the certificate and inform the applicant, in writing, about the reasons for the refusal.

The certificate of registration is also subject to renewal once every three years. Instances of renewal applications for newspapers and other media being turned down have occurred in the past.

Since the Ministry of Information was dissolved in 2009, it is now the Broadcasting Authority which is in charge of issuing licences for both print and broadcasting media.

## Scores:

### Individual scores:



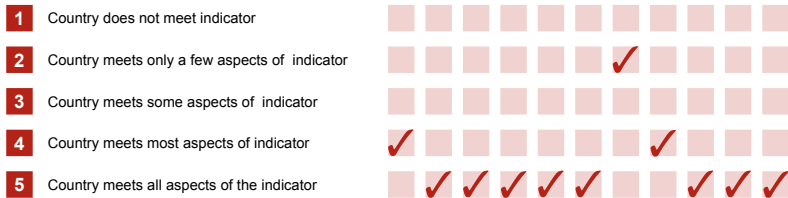
Average score: 1.9

## 1.6 Entry into and practice of the journalistic profession is legally unrestricted.

In Ethiopia anyone can enter and practice the journalistic profession without any legal restrictions.

## Scores:

### Individual scores:



Average score: 4.6

## 1.7 Confidential sources of information are protected by law and/or the courts.

The Revised Criminal Code of Ethiopia accords publishers and editors the privilege of non-disclosure. Article 45 of the code, titled “Secrecy of the Identity of a Source”, states:

The publisher or editor of any publication may not be compelled to disclose the source of any matter printed in a publication.

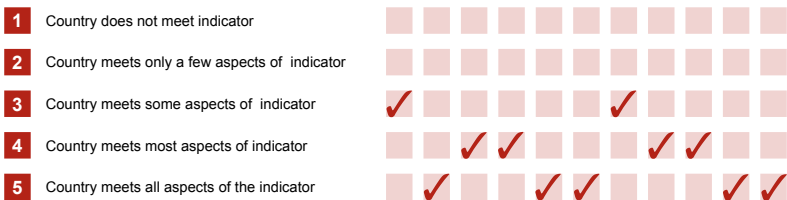
However, sub article 3 of the same provision spells out two exceptions to this rule:

The Court may order the publisher or editor of the publication to disclose the source of information:

- (a) where a crime is committed against the Constitutional Order, National Defence Force or security of the State constituting clear and imminent danger, or
- (b) in the case of proceedings of a serious crime, where such source does not have any alternative and is decisive for the outcome of the case.

## Scores:

### Individual scores:



Average score: 4.3

## 1.8 Public information is easily accessible, guaranteed by law, to all citizens.

The Constitution in its article 29 (3) provides for the right to “access to information of public interest.”

Access to public information is also guaranteed by article 12 of the Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation of 2008 which guarantees “all persons the right to seek, obtain and communicate any information held by public bodies.” The right includes inspection of documents, taking extracts and notes, and obtaining certified copies, diskettes or any other electronic modes.

The right to access public information is not unrestricted. Articles 15 – 25 contain a list of “exempted information” which is “so long that real access is limited”, as one panellist put it. This list includes, for example, information relating to a third party, commercial information about a third party, proceedings of law enforcement and

legal investigation, information in regard to defence, security and international relations and cabinet documents. Article 28 of the proclamation, however, provides for a “public interest override”:

Notwithstanding the exceptions in article 15-25 of this proclamation a public body may not refuse a request for information unless the harm to the protected interest which would be caused by disclosure outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

The process laid out in the law for accessing public information is quite involved and may be considered too lengthy particularly for journalists. The law requires a person to request information in writing or through electronic device from the public relations officer concerned. The latter has up to 30 days to reply, with the possibility of extension in exceptional cases. The public relations officer may also deny information “stating the reasons for rejecting the request on any of the grounds specified” in the law. The law gives the right of appeal to “any person who is aggrieved by the decision of the head of the public body” to the Ombudsman (an appeals body for all administrative decisions) within 30 days. This process could also take another 30 days until the Ombudsman decides on the issue. Considering the time constraints in the media the process to access public information takes too long: “Information delayed is information denied.”

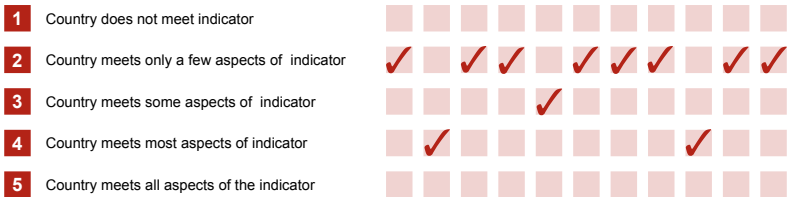
*“Information  
delayed is  
information  
denied.”*

In addition, accessing public information is very difficult in practice due to poor record keeping and record management in the country.

On top of this, Part Three of the Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation, which deals with access to public information has not yet come into effect. Article 48 (2) of the law postpones the effective date by a year “in order to provide public bodies an opportunity to put in place the necessary arrangements to facilitate implementation.” There is also provision for this transitional period to be extended by the decision of the house of peoples’ representatives.

## Scores:

### Individual scores:



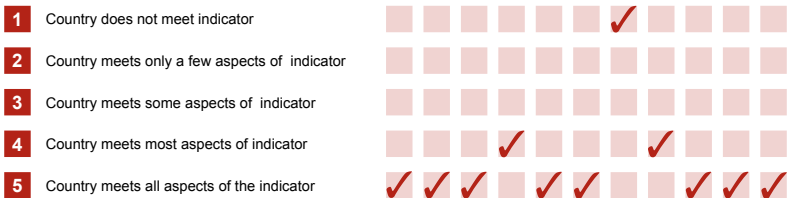
Average score: 2.5

## 1.9 Websites and blogs are not required to register with or obtain permission from state authorities.

There are no requirements of registration or permission by the government if one wishes to launch websites or blogs in the country.

## Scores:

### Individual scores:



Average score: 4.5

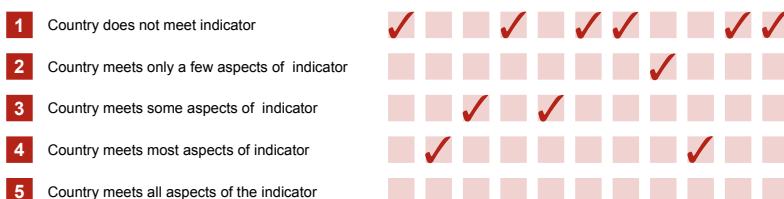
## 1.10 The state does not seek to block or filter Internet content unless laws provide for restrictions that serve a legitimate interest and are necessary in a democratic society.

Although there is no law restricting access to websites, there are some websites, which cannot be accessed in Ethiopia, particularly those with political contents and operated by opposition parties.

It was not possible to assess who is responsible for the blockage. Some members of the panel, however, assumed that this could only be done by the Ethiopian Telecommunications Corporation, sole provider of telecommunication services in the country and owned by the government.

## Scores:

### Individual scores:



Average score: 2.0

## 1.11 Civil society in general and media lobby groups actively advance the cause of media freedom.

In 2009, the Charities and Societies Proclamation came into effect. Since then, the activities of civil society groups, particularly in areas of advocacy, have substantially declined.

The new law recognises three types of associations: Ethiopian charities/societies, Ethiopian residents charities, and foreign charities. Ethiopian charities/societies are "...formed under the laws of Ethiopia, all of whose members are Ethiopians, generate income from Ethiopia and wholly controlled by Ethiopians...if they use not more than ten percent of their funds which is received from foreign sources." The second type, Ethiopian residents charities/societies, "... are formed under the laws of Ethiopia and which consist of members who reside in Ethiopia and who receive more than 10 percent of their funds from foreign sources." Foreign charities "mean those charities that are formed under the laws of foreign countries or which consist of members who are foreign nationals or are controlled by foreign nationals or receive funds from foreign sources."

The law confines advocacy activities, like the advancement of human and democratic rights and promotion of equality, to Ethiopian charities/societies. The other two types of associations can only engage in developmental activities. As a result groups which engage in advocacy work are no longer allowed to receive any

substantial foreign funding. This, coupled with the undeveloped culture of grass root level participation in the country, has made fund raising extremely difficult.

Lack of adequate funding has forced such groups to reduce the number of staff, shut down offices and focus on limited areas of activities. The Ethiopian Media Women Society, for example, which used to get 70 per cent of its budget from foreign sources, has cut down its staff from 12 to 2 after reregistering as an Ethiopian society under the new law. The society was also forced to change its objectives and tone down its advocacy work.

The passing of this new law is seen as a fall-out from the 2005 election campaign when quite a number of non-governmental organisations supporting the opposition had allegedly been funded by foreign organisations.

Prior to the coming into effect of the Charities and Societies Proclamation, there had been some cooperation among the media and civil society particularly in the area of training. However, this cooperation was not to the satisfaction of both sides - both complain that they are not getting enough support from the other. After the coming into effect of the law this cooperation has become even more tenuous.

## Scores:

### Individual scores:



### Average score:

2.4



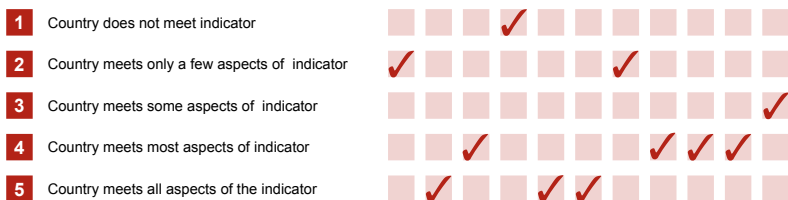
## 1.12 Media legislation evolves from meaningful consultations among state institutions, citizens and interest groups.

Consultations with the public and interest groups are common before laws are passed. For example, there were several discussions held among the various stakeholders before the Charities and Societies Proclamation was enacted over a year ago. Another example is the Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation: the draft was debated for more than six years before the law was enacted in 2008, after the legislator had made several concessions as a result of the discussions held.

However, some panellists doubted whether these consultations were meaningful enough to effect changes in the draft that really mattered.

### Scores:

#### Individual scores:



Average score: 3.5

Average score for sector 1: 3.0<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> For 2009 the indicators were reviewed, amended and some new indicators such as those addressing Information Communication Technology (ICT) were added. Consequently, the comparison of some indicators of the 2005 and 2007 report is not applicable (n/a) in some instances in which the indicator is new or has been amended. Evidently, this has to be taken into account too, when the overall sector scores are compared.



# SECTOR 2:

The media landscape, including new media, is characterised by diversity, independence and sustainability.

## The media landscape, including new media, is characterised by diversity, independence and sustainability.

### 2.1 A wide range of sources of information (print, broadcasting, internet) is available and affordable to citizens.

#### *Print*

The print media in Ethiopia is characterised by very low circulation figures compared to the estimated population size of around 85 million people. The combined number of copies of both private and public publications does not exceed 100,000 per day. The actual readership is higher as it is estimated that every copy is read by five or more people.

There are five state owned publications, including *Addis Zemen*, which is published daily in Amharic with a circulation of up to 15,000 copies, and *Ethiopian Herald*, published daily in English with a circulation of not more than 8000 copies.

The number of private print media has been increasing in recent times. *Addis Admas* (weekly) and *The Reporter* (bi-weekly) are the prominent Amharic newspapers with a circulation of around 30,000 and 10,000, respectively. *Fortune*, *Capital* and *The Reporter* are weekly English newspapers with a circulation of 8000, 6000 and 2000 copies respectively, while the *Daily Monitor* is the only private daily in English with a rather limited circulation of around 1200 copies.

There are a number of factors which contribute to the low circulation figures: illiteracy, the cost of newsprint, distribution problems and a crippling tax levied on the number of copies printed rather than the actual sales volume.

Newspapers are expensive. A private newspaper costs around 5 birr which is double the price of a serving of the staple food, *Injera*. However, the two even more important reasons for the low number of copies in the market are the poor culture of reading among the general public as well as the poor quality of the papers.

There are two news agencies: Walta Information Centre, a privately-owned pro government operation, and the state-owned Ethiopian News Agency.

### ***Broadcasting***

Geographical coverage of radio transmissions has reached an estimated 70 per cent while television coverage is close to 60 per cent. This coverage is projected to grow to 95 per cent for radio and 80 per cent for TV once an expansion project being undertaken by the Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency becomes fully operational.

Radio Ethiopia, which is state-owned, operates a National Service and regional stations. State-owned Ethiopian Television (ETV) runs a national and some regional TV channels.

There are a number of FM stations in the capital Addis Ababa and regional states, only three of them - Zami, Sheger and Afro FM - privately owned. Radio Fana, a radio station affiliated with the ruling party, has around six FM stations outside the capital and also transmits on medium wave.

The number of community based radios now stands at nine, broadcasting between nine and twelve hours per day.

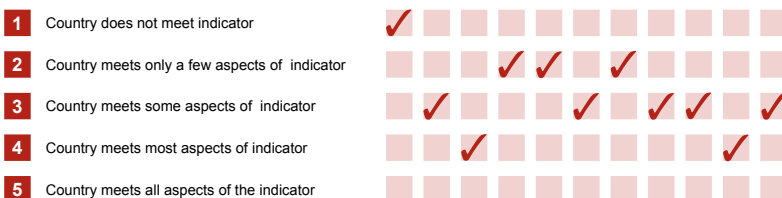
There is no private TV station as yet. The public, however, is increasingly tuning in to free-on-air satellite TV station Arabsat. Subscription services are rare in the country.

### ***Internet***

With only 360 000 internet users (Internetworldstats June 2009), mainly in cities and major towns, penetration is still very low in Ethiopia.

## **Scores:**

### **Individual scores:**



**Average score:**

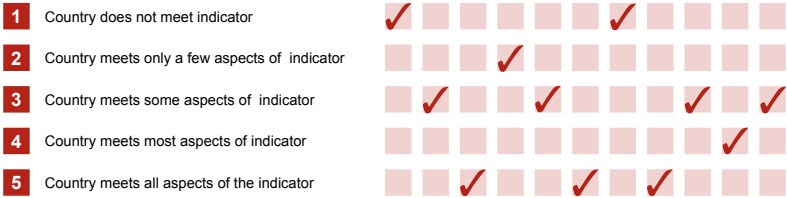
**2.7**

## 2.2 Citizens’ access to domestic and international media sources is not restricted by state authorities.

Citizens’ access to media is mostly unrestricted. People are free to access domestic and international media via satellite or the internet. However, there has been a case of restriction recently when Voice of America, which broadcasts programmes in the local Amharic and Tigrigna languages, was jammed in the run-up to the 2010 elections.

### Scores:

#### Individual scores:



Average score: 3.2

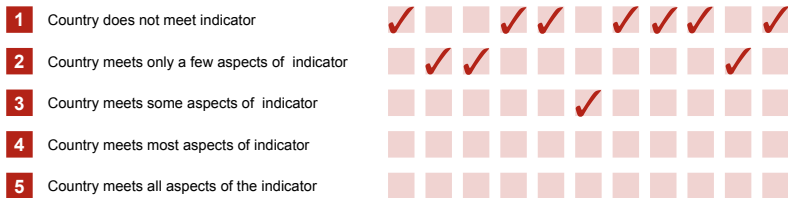
## 2.3 Efforts are undertaken to increase the scope of circulation of the print media, particularly to rural communities.

There is only one printing press in the country, Birhanena Selam Printing Press, which is owned by the state. Publishers encounter problems during the production process which, from time to time, cause delays in the delivery of papers.

Because of the size of the country, distribution of print media in remote parts is very difficult and no real efforts are undertaken to improve the situation.

## Scores:

### Individual scores:



Average score: 1.5

## 2.4 The editorial independence of print media published by a public authority is protected adequately against undue political interference.

Article 29 (5) of the constitution says: “Any media financed by or under the control of the State shall be operated in a manner ensuring its capacity to entertain diversity in the expression of opinion”.

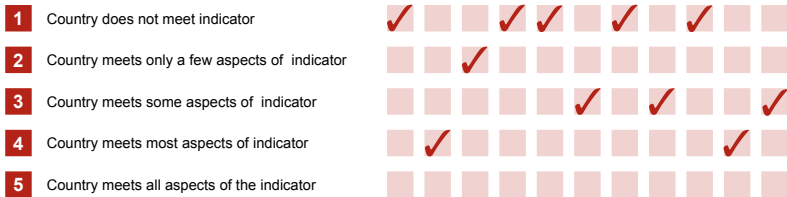
Editorial policies of state-owned media also claim editorial independence. The reality, however, seems to be different. The end product shows that “there is a problem”: the state outlets are obviously used by government to transmit its messages only – with, since the last election in May 2010, “a critical piece once in a blue moon”, as one panellist put it.

*“a critical piece  
once in a blue  
moon”*

Some members of the panel, however, felt that guidance from the government for public media was justified and that this should not be taken as undue political interference.

## Scores:

### Individual scores:



Average score:

2.2

## 2.5 Adequate competition legislation/regulation seeks to prevent media concentration and monopolies.

The Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation of 2008 contains precise regulations for “Mass Media Ownership”. Article 7 (1) states in regard to broadcasting:

Any person who exercises direct or indirect effective control over a company possessing a nation-wide broadcasting license or a broadcasting license for an area with a recorded population of more than 100,000 inhabitants, may not exercise direct or indirect effective control over another company holding such a license and servicing the same or an overlapping market.

The same restrictions apply to periodicals, which are defined as newspapers and magazines.

Sub-article 4 defines “effective control” as holding “directly or indirectly ... fifteen percent or more of the shares or capital of the entity.”

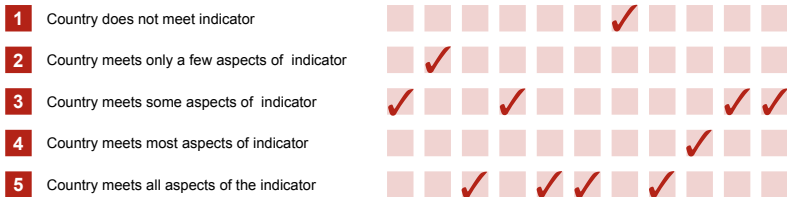
In effect, these provisions mean that no person can run more than one magazine or newspaper, for example. This, no doubt, does prevent media concentration and monopolies.

However, some members of the panel criticised the provisions for being too strict, out of proportion for a sector which is considered to be still in its infancy, and thus preventing the emergence of a vibrant media industry. It was argued that the government introduced these restrictions in order to divide the media into small entities which would not be too powerful for their liking.



## Scores:

### Individual scores:



Average score: 3.5

## 2.6 Government promotes a diverse media landscape with economically viable and independent media outlets.

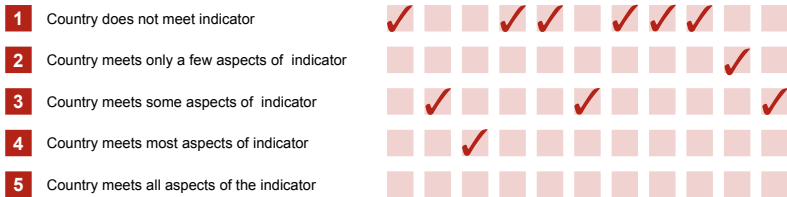
Government has made no real efforts to support the media in the country or to promote diversity.

To the contrary: The legal provisions on media ownership outlined under indicator 2.5 could stifle the development of an economically sustainable media industry. Subsidies and tax breaks are not being considered. Attempts by the media to convince government to change the tax regime for newspapers, based on the number of copies printed rather than the actual sales volume, have failed so far.

Only a small number of private broadcasters have been licensed, although it has been ten years since the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority was established. However, over the past few years some non-state radio stations, including community based stations, have been allowed on air. Heavy taxation on broadcasting equipment restricts further development in this sector, with even replacement equipment supplied within a warranty period being taxed.

## Scores:

### Individual scores:



Average score:

1.9

## 2.7 All media fairly reflect the voices of both women and men.

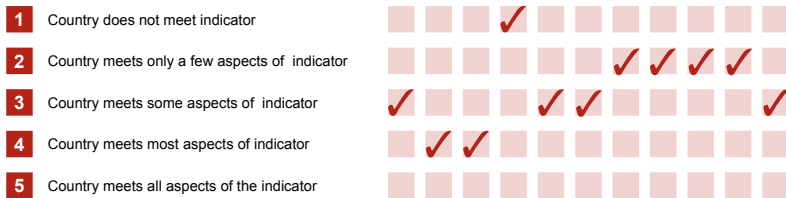
Although there is progress in the Ethiopian media on reflecting the voices of both women and men fairly, sources are still mostly men. One panellist told of an instance where a reporter, sent to write a portrait of a prominent woman, actually came back having done an interview with her husband. Experts asked for their views are mainly male.

In general, Ethiopians are not very outspoken because they do not want to run the risk of making any comment which could be seen as too critical. For women the situation is even more difficult, given that Ethiopia is a male-dominated society. “Lazy and under-resourced” journalists, as one panellist said, are not putting enough effort into getting female voices represented in the media.

Over recent years the topic of gender equality has increasingly come under discussion in radio talk shows and other media.

## Scores:

### Individual scores:



Average score:

2.6

## 2.8 All media fairly reflect the voices of society in its ethnic, linguistic, religious, political and social diversity.

### *Linguistic diversity*

It is nearly impossible to serve all languages spoken in Ethiopia. In the Southern Region alone, for example, there are 43 different languages. The state-owned public media, radio in particular, attempt to provide for linguistic diversity, broadcasting in a number of languages. Radio Fana, the radio station affiliated with the ruling party, also uses more than one language.

Economic reasons make it difficult for the private media to provide services in several languages and therefore they use mainly Amharic, the predominant official language.

### *Religious diversity*

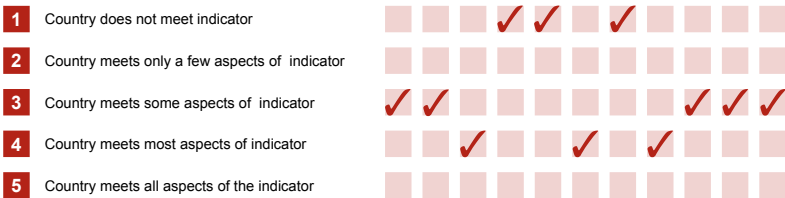
63 per cent of Ethiopians are Christians, 34 per cent Muslims. The state-owned and most of the privately-owned media carry hardly any religious content. ETV, for example, only broadcasts special programmes on the occasion of the most important holidays of the various faith communities as well as their New Year's messages.

In line with the Broadcasting Proclamation 2007, religious organisations are not given broadcasting licences. They are allowed, however, to publish their own print media and most of them do so.

***Political diversity***

The coverage of political views reflects, with few exceptions, the political polarisation in the country.

The state-owned media favour the political view of the ruling party and government and do not give enough space to others. Private print media tend to entertain only the opinions of the opposition, with the exception of a few which try to be balanced by sourcing different views from both sides “to demonstrate that it can be done”. Private radio stations tend to be non-political.

**Scores:****Individual scores:**

Average score:

2.9

## **2.9 The country has a coherent ICT policy, which aims to meet the information needs of all citizens, including marginalised communities.**

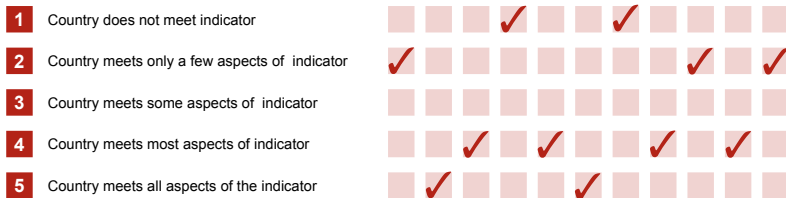
Members of the panel were divided in their assessment of whether the country does indeed have a coherent ICT policy. Some members argued that government recently developed such a policy, including a commitment to set up ICT centres in all communities, connected by fibre-optic cables.

Meeting the information needs of all citizens is seen as a tall order because there is still a huge gap between the demand for and the ability to deliver such services.

Any liberalisation of the communication sector, which is currently under the monopoly of the state-owned Ethiopian Telecommunications Corporation, is not on the agenda.

## Scores:

### Individual scores:



Average score:

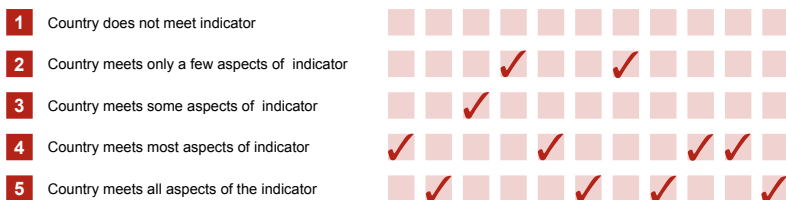
3.1

## 2.10 Government does not use its power over the placement of advertisements as a means to interfere with editorial content.

The government does not have much economic power to influence the editorial content of private media through the placement of advertisements. Only a few public enterprises are in the habit of advertising their services. Government tenders are not published in the private media but only in the state-owned daily *Addis Zemen*. This renders the private media more or less independent from government advertisements.

## Scores:

### Individual scores:



Average score:

3.9

## 2.11 The advertising market is large enough to support a diversity of media outlets.

*The way it works “makes you feel like a beggar”*

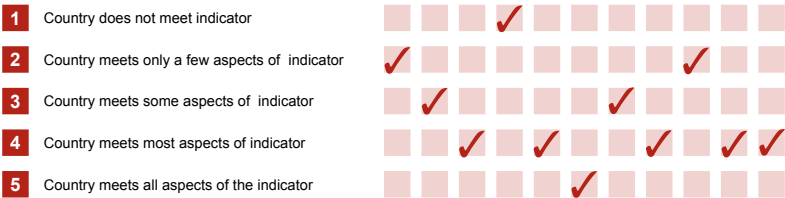
Marketing in Ethiopia is still in its infancy, with the exception of very few companies. Because there is not enough demand for goods in the market and little buying power, advertising is mostly seen as a luxury or a public relations exercise. Some big state-owned enterprises like the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia, Ethiopian Shipping Lines and Ethiopian Airlines, which do not really need to advertise due to their market dominance, are frequent advertisers and sponsor various programmes in the broadcasting sector.

The few institutions that do use marketing seem to have no real strategy for placing their advertisements. The way it works “makes you feel like a beggar”, as one panellist from the media put it.

The panel was divided in its assessment regarding this indicator, with widely differing views on whether the advertising market in the country is large enough to support a diversity of media outlets.

### Scores:

#### Individual scores:



Average score: 3.3

Average score for sector 2: 2.8

# SECTOR 3:

**Broadcasting regulation is transparent and independent; the state broadcaster is transformed into a truly public broadcaster.**

## Broadcasting regulation is transparent and independent; the state broadcaster is transformed into a truly public broadcaster.

### 3.1 Broadcasting legislation has been passed and is implemented that provides for a conducive environment for public, commercial and community broadcasting.

The Broadcasting Proclamation 1999 established the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority as “an autonomous Federal Administrative Agency having its own legal personality”, with the objective of licensing broadcasting services. The Broadcasting Service Proclamation 2007 refined this act and assigns the authority the more specific task of ensuring “the expansion of a high standard, prompt and reliable broadcasting service that can contribute to political, social and economic development and to regulate the same.” Article 16 of the act states that “categories of broadcasting services shall be public, commercial and community broadcasting services”.

The broadcasting proclamation expressly prohibits the issuing of broadcasting licences to a political organisation or to an organisation of which a political organisation, a member of a political party’s supreme leadership or of its management at any level, is a shareholder.

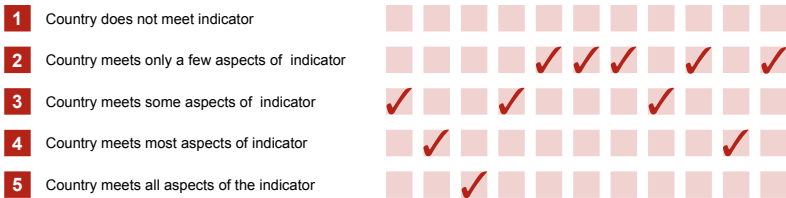
Although the legal basis for an environment conducive to the development of the three sectors of broadcasting thus seems in place, the actual processes to make this happen are very slow. For example, it took one of the panellists three years to get a licence for a radio station. Since then two more private and nine community radio stations have been licensed.

There was disagreement within the panel on the pace of licensing new broadcasting services and its effect. Some said this could only be done gradually, in step with the gradual democratisation of the country. Others argued that more services could contribute to the speeding up of democratisation.



## Scores:

### Individual scores:



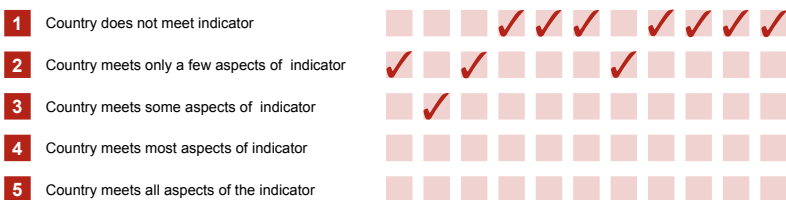
Average score: 2.9

## 3.2 Broadcasting is regulated by an independent body adequately protected by law against interference whose board is appointed – in an open way – involving civil society and not dominated by any particular political party.

The Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority is accountable to the government through its board. Article 9 (2) of the Broadcasting Service Proclamation states that “members of the board ... shall be appointed by the government on the recommendation of the Minister [Ministry of Information].” The number of board members is also determined by the government.

## Scores:

### Individual scores:



Average score: 1.5

### 3.3 The body regulates broadcasting services and licences in the public interest and ensures fairness and a diversity of views broadly representing society at large.

Broadcasting licences are issued through a bidding process. The authority is required by law to invite applications by a notice containing the category of broadcasting service for which the licence is intended, the licence area and the frequency available, among others.

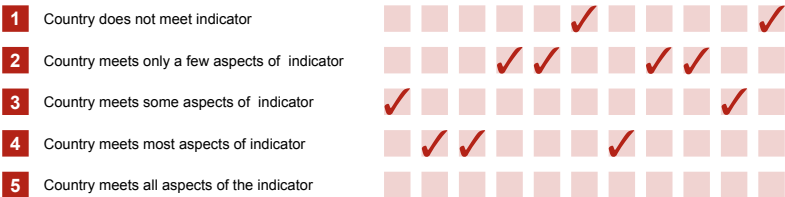
The act in its article 21 (2) sets some criteria for the issuance of licences, such as the “reliability and sufficiency of the applicant’s financial resources to run the service”, “the capability of equipments and technologies”, as well as “the contents of the program submitted by the applicant and social needs covered by the program.”

While the law thus maps out a transparent licensing procedure with a bidding process and clear criteria, there is some confusion as to how state-affiliated stations, like Radio Fana, managed to be awarded frequencies in several parts of the country “without a visible process”.

The authority is said to monitor all broadcasting programmes and, from time to time, sends letters to radio stations complaining about the kind of language used or perceived bias in news coverage.

#### Scores:

##### Individual scores:



Average score: 2.5

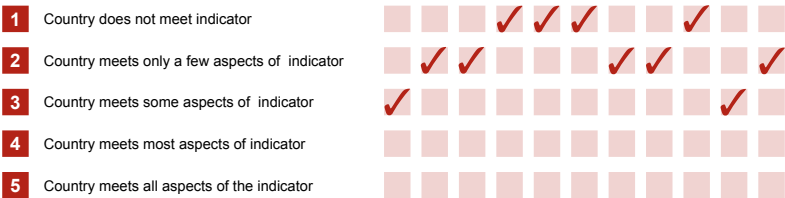
### 3.4 The state/public broadcaster is accountable to the public through a board representative of society at large and selected in an independent, open and transparent manner.

The state-owned Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency is headed by a board appointed by government on the recommendation of the minister of government communications and approved by the Media Standing Committee of the House of Peoples' Representatives. Board members are supposed to come from different sectors of society and include representatives of the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce, the School of Journalism of the University of Addis Ababa as well as lawyers. The chairperson is always the minister of government communications to whom the board is accountable.

With the board of the state broadcaster being selected by the executive in a process which is neither independent, open or transparent, and accountable also to the relevant ministry, none of the requirements of this indicator are being met.

#### Scores:

##### Individual scores:



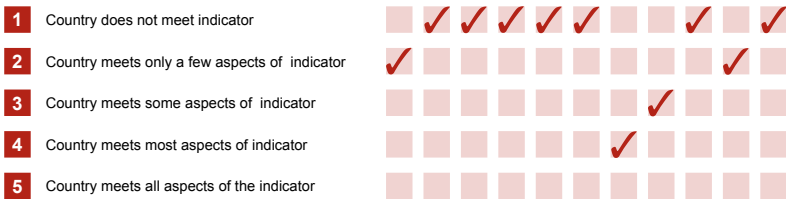
Average score: 1.8

### 3.5 Office bearers with the state and political parties, as well as those with a financial interest in the broadcasting industry, are excluded from possible membership on the board of the state/public broadcaster.

There is no such exclusion from membership on the board of political office bearers or of persons with a financial interest in the industry stipulated in the law.

#### Scores:

##### Individual scores:



Average score: 1.6

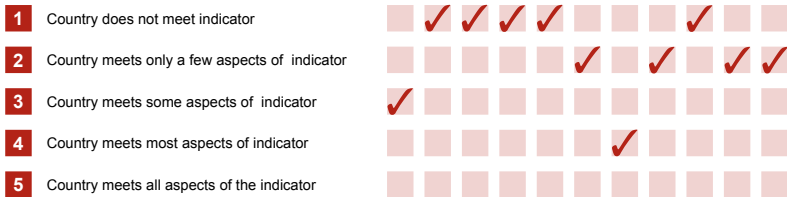
### 3.6 The editorial independence of the state/public broadcaster from political influence is guaranteed by law and practised.

Although the Constitution says that all media under state control should have the “capacity to entertain diversity in the expression of opinion” (article 29 (4)), such diversity is not reflected in the programmes of Ethiopian Radio and Television. This points to a lack of editorial independence, possibly as a result of the fact that most members of the top management are members of the ruling party and all staff members are government employees. One indication of direct political influence being exerted could be the fact that the Head of the Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency was recently elected as a member of the central committee of the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), one of the affiliate organisations of the ruling party.

One panellist asked whether it wasn't the right of the government to use government media, but the majority of the panel disagreed with this view.

## Scores:

### Individual scores:



Average score:

1.8

### 3.7 The state/public broadcaster is adequately funded in a manner that protects it from arbitrary interference through its budget and from commercial pressure.

Ethiopian Radio and Television is mainly – and adequately – funded by the government, with some additional revenue from advertisements.

As the broadcaster itself is committed to promoting government policy, the government does not need to arbitrarily interfere in the affairs of the broadcaster through funding.

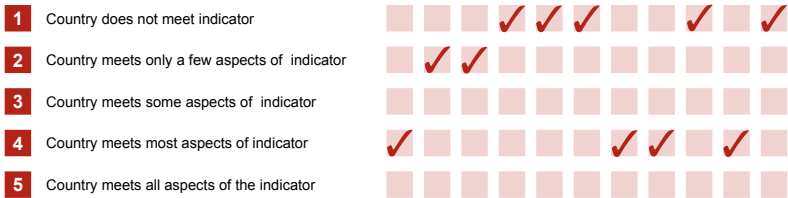
With the development of private broadcasting still in its infancy and television still the exclusive domain of government, Ethiopian Radio and Television is in a very privileged position when it comes to potential commercial pressure: companies “beg them” to give them air time rather than being in a position to exert any kind of pressure.

The panel was divided in its assessment of this state of affairs. Some held the view that all of this was evidence of the absence of any political or commercial pressures. Others argued that the fact that the broadcaster acts as government wishes, even without direct interference, is to be judged negatively.

*companies “beg them [state broadcaster]” to give them air time*

## Scores:

### Individual scores:



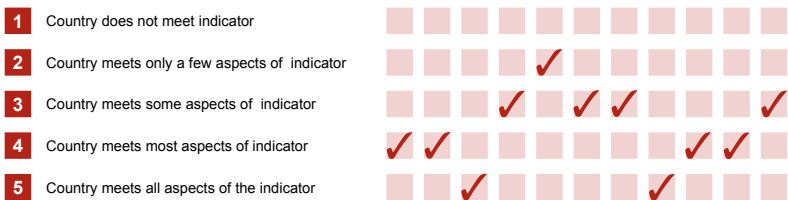
Average score: 2.3

## 3.8 The state/public broadcaster is technically accessible in the entire country.

The geographical coverage of television transmission has reached close to 60 percent, while radio transmission on FM, medium and short wave is close to 70 percent.

## Scores:

### Individual scores:



Average score: 3.6

### 3.9 The state/public broadcaster offers diverse programming formats for all interests.

The Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency (ERTA) broadcasts a variety of programmes for all age groups, offering sports, music, women’s programmes, business news, foreign soap operas and sitcoms as well as special slots for youth and children. Regional television programmes which address the interests of various language groups are transmitted through the national TV network.

Some members of the panel felt that programme content mainly reflected the interests of government, being more “focused on image building and moulding the opinion of the public rather than reflecting the opinion of the public,” as one panellist said. There are few discussions and debates on social issues on TV, but more on FM radio stations.

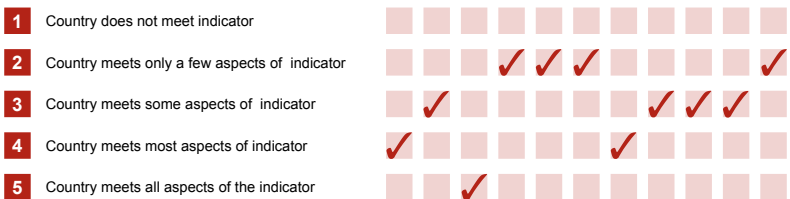
ETV is beginning to outsource the production of educational and entertainment programmes to the private sector. The FM radio stations have so far provided a better opportunity for private producers by outsourcing around 50 percent of their air time.

*“focused on image building and moulding the opinion of the public rather than reflecting the opinion of the public”*

As a result of major structural changes there have been remarkable improvements on ERTA stations since the middle of 2010 in regard to presentation and packaging as well as coverage of a wider variety of issues.

#### Scores:

##### Individual scores:



Average score: 3.0

### 3.10 The state/public broadcaster offers balanced and fair information in news and current affairs, reflecting the full spectrum of diverse views and opinions.

News bulletins on the state broadcaster’s services are essentially bulletins about government activities. News about the Prime Minister is always given the top slot and protocol determines the sequence of stories. Judgment of newsworthiness is often questionable, with the news reporting extensively on school openings, new water boreholes, endless meetings or inaugurations of this and that. Success stories are given priority.

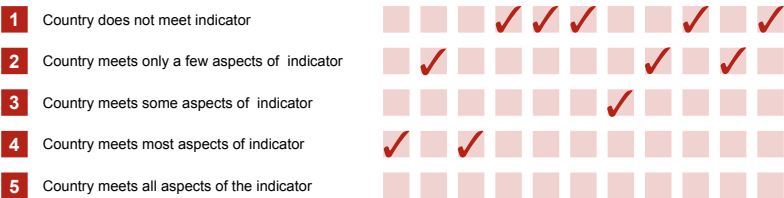
The coverage does not reflect diverse views but is usually one-sided, lacks depth and falls short of journalistic ethics. Efforts to balance political news on the various players are rarely made except during election times. More air time is given to statements of officials rather than those reflecting the views of the public. Much of this could be a result of lack of adequate skills in the journalistic profession, some panellists argued.

*“people are watching – previously, during the Derg regime, nobody watched”*

There were divergent opinions among panellists on the amount of interest among the public in news aired by the state broadcaster. While some argued that only those without satellite dishes watched ETV news, others said that “people are watching – previously, during the Derg regime, nobody watched.”

#### Scores:

##### Individual scores:



Average score: 2.0



### 3.11 The state/public broadcaster offers as much diverse and creative local content as economically achievable.

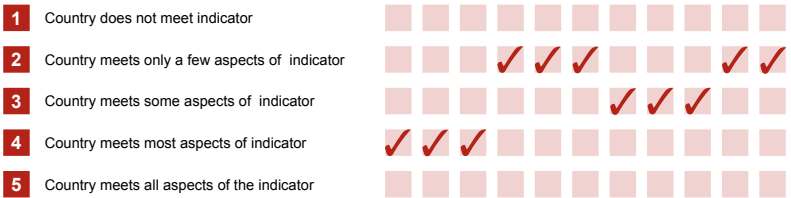
The great majority of Ethiopian Radio and Television's programmes are local productions. However, these are mainly shallow and monotonous.

During recent months, though, following the elections in May 2010, there has been a noticeable attempt to improve output. New programme structures and new formats have been introduced, interesting and creative documentaries are being offered and even regional television programmes now have "creative elements". One example is the soap opera *Gemena*, the first of its kind in the Amharic language, which has grabbed the attention of many viewers.

The reason for these changes is that the state broadcaster was mandated to promote the ruling party by delivering better programmes to the people.

#### Scores:

##### Individual scores:



Average score: 2.9

### 3.12 Community broadcasting enjoys special promotion given its potential to broaden access by communities to the airwaves.

Community broadcasting is defined by the Broadcasting Service Proclamation as "a non-profit radio or television transmission service established by the will and interest of a community and administered and run by the community living in a specific area or who possess a common interest."

The first community radios went on air in 2008, with the number now having reached nine and several others in the pipeline. The government is promoting this development.

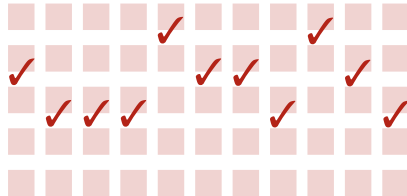
The World Bank and the German aid agency GTZ are assisting with the setting up of community radios by providing equipment, financing training and granting funding for one year. After that the stations have to manage on their own.

One of the conditions for this assistance was that the community stations should be run without any government interference by people living in the community, and that after the initial stages they should be funded by contributions from the community or the support of private companies and sponsors such as health groups. Although running costs are low, with only three employed staff (a station manager, an engineer and an administrator) and programmes being produced or presented by volunteers, the sustainability of these stations is far from secured.

## Scores:

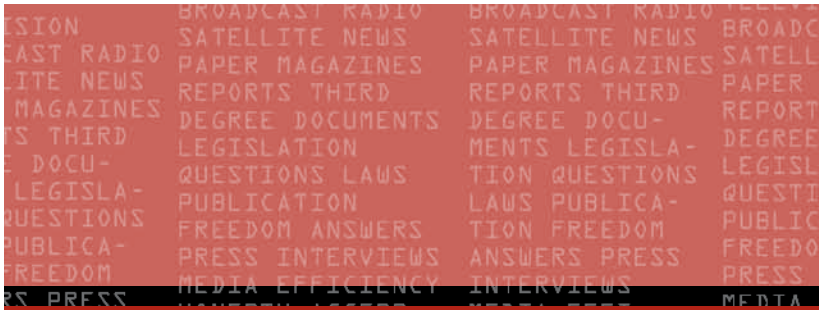
### Individual scores:

- 1** Country does not meet indicator
- 2** Country meets only a few aspects of indicator
- 3** Country meets some aspects of indicator
- 4** Country meets most aspects of indicator
- 5** Country meets all aspects of the indicator



Average score: 3.3

Average score for sector 3: 2.4



# SECTOR 4:

**The media practise high levels of professional standards.**



## The media practice high levels of professional standards.

### 4.1 The media follow voluntary codes of professional standards, which are enforced by self-regulatory bodies that deal with complaints from the public.

There have been several attempts to establish a self-regulatory media council over the past ten years but they never materialised due to the polarisation of the media community between private and state-owned institutions and a lack of funds.

In 2009, professionals from both public and private media met to finally establish a media council. The meeting elected an Organising Committee which reports to the Organising Assembly, comprising all signatories to a founding document, so far 90 percent of all media houses in the country. The media council will develop a code of ethics and establish a mechanism for members of the public to lodge complaints against the media in cases where they feel they have been treated unfairly or a story was inaccurate.

Discussions are still ongoing with the government on the issue of funding. This might be prejudiced with the coming into force of the Charities and Societies Proclamation which prohibits foreign funding for advocacy groups. The organising committee is looking at the possibility of securing outside funding, in addition to local funds, to make the council sustainable.

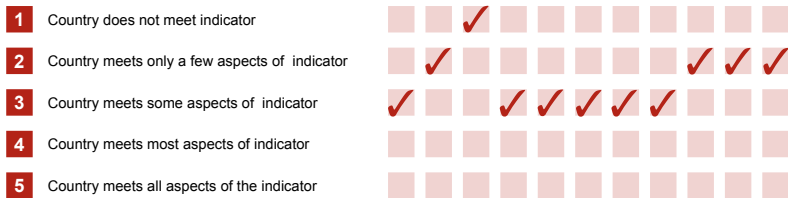
Government gave up its attempt to set up a statutory regulatory body with the enactment of the Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation in 2009, following the commitment of the media to take up the task of regulation themselves.

Some private media houses have their own code of ethics and mechanism to address complaints from the public. They publish corrections when this is found by the editors to be “appropriate”.

The “right of reply or correction” is also provided for in article 40 of the Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation.

## Scores:

### Individual scores:



Average score: 2.5

## 4.2 The standard of reporting follows the basic principles of accuracy and fairness.

Most of the reporting in the country seeks to adhere strictly to the principle of accuracy. Factual errors are rare.

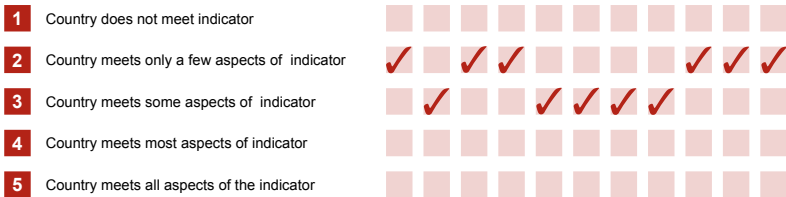
For the state media accuracy is not really an issue because they mainly report on decisions of the government by using its statements.

The principle of fairness, however, is very often compromised by almost all media, be they private or state. The tendency to be either pro or against the government runs counter to the notion of fairness. The state media, when reporting on opposition meetings, for example, tend to project only negative aspects such as organisational mishaps, while the private print publications, for their part, focus predominantly on criticising the government. The problem manifests more starkly in the private media because many of them contain more editorials or opinion pieces than news stories, with the separation between the two too often blurred. There are only very few media outlets that follow the principles of both accuracy and fairness.

There is some hope for the future, though: according to observations made by the School of Journalism at the University of Addis Ababa the number of journalists who understand these principles is increasing.

## Scores:

### Individual scores:



Average score: 2.5

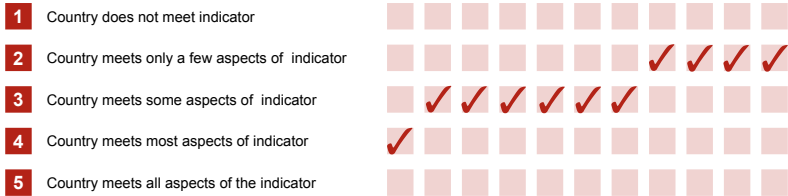
### 4.3 The media cover the full spectrum of events, issues and cultures, including business/economics, cultural, local and investigative stories.

While the broadcasting media focus almost exclusively on cultural and social events, the private print media, particularly magazines, attempt to cover political and economic issues as well. There are over 80 weekly publications in the country, among them 15 sports papers, which all have a niche for specialised reporting. Taken together they thus manage to cover the full spectrum of events and issues (though with a very low circulation). However, the coverage in these small publications is more often than not lacking in substance and quality.

Investigative journalism is extremely rare in almost all media across the board. While the state media are in the business of image building for the government and thus publish mainly “positive” stories, there is also very little investigate reporting in the private media. Even where such reports are published, in many cases there is no follow-up on such stories. Lack of skills, of resources in media houses and of cooperation from the public are the main causes for the absence of exposes. Sometimes journalists come to a dead end after starting their investigation because citizens or whistleblowers fear being exposed.

## Scores:

### Individual scores:



Average score: 2.7

## 4.4. Equal opportunities regardless of race, social group, gender/sex, religion, disabilities and age are promoted in media houses.

There is a deep rooted perception in the country that women are not competent enough for serious tasks in the media: “Journalism is a man’s job”.

Women hardly ever get promoted and to this day senior positions in the media are filled with men. Women are confined to “window dressing” positions, such as those of presenter or junior reporter. One panellist told of a case where she had sent two female reporters to cover an event after receiving an invitation from the organisers. When the two journalists arrived, the organisers said “we wanted senior reporters” right in front of them.

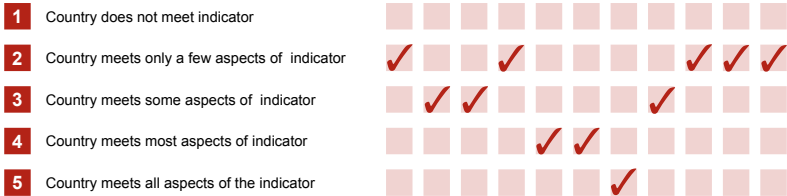
However, some media houses are trying to effect change by providing equal opportunities to women. The state media, for example, have started recently to put women into higher positions in every department. Some of these appointments were the result of affirmative action - to provide the opportunity of on-the-job training, rather than made on the basis of merit.

In most private media houses women are still disadvantaged. At one magazine, for example, the editorial team consists of seven men and two women. Female journalists are usually assigned “soft” stories on lifestyle, women’s issues and the like, assignments which do not prepare them for senior positions.

Some media houses have a conscious policy to promote disabled journalists.

## Scores:

### Individual scores:



Average score: 2.9

## 4.5 Journalists and editors do not practise self-censorship.

*Self-censorship is seen as “the right thing to do”*

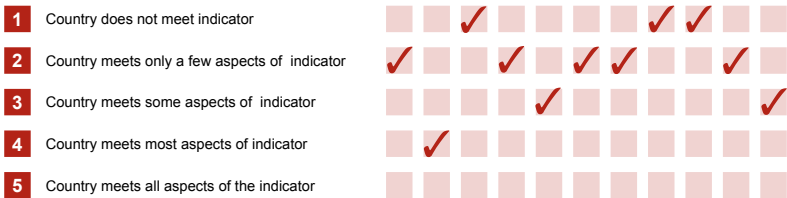
As outlined under indicator 1.2 there is a general culture of self-censorship in Ethiopia. This also goes for journalists.

In the state media many journalists practise self-censorship because their mindset is still shaped by their previous experiences under the Derg regime. This prevents them from being daring in their work. The fear of “external forces” is still prevalent.

Many private media avoid political topics and focus instead on trade and business issues. Self-censorship is seen as “the right thing to do” in order to avoid losing advertisements or jobs. Some journalists do not publish certain stories for personal reasons (“out of kindness”): they do not want to harm persons they know.

## Scores:

### Individual scores:



Average score: 2.1



## 4.6 Owners of established mainstream private media do not interfere with editorial independence.

The Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation in its article 6 expressly protects editorial independence from interference by owners of publications:

The mandate of the editor in chief designated by the publisher encompasses the power to supervise the publication of the periodical and to determine the content thereof in such a way that nothing may be printed therein against his will. Any practice or agreement that restricts this power shall be null and void.

The editor-in-chief is defined in article 2 (11) as the person who “exercises exclusive editorial control”, while a publisher is defined in sub-article 12 as a “person who represents, owns or has a substantial proprietary interest in a mass media or carries on the business of management of a mass media.”

In practice, however, editors of publications are also the owners and the other way round. The strict separation of powers as envisaged by the act is therefore seen as unrealistic. In the few cases where such a separation of roles exists, media owners take great interest in the content of their outlet and are therefore inclined to intervene in the production process: either they are journalists themselves or they do not want to antagonise their sources of income (advertisers). There are only a few exceptions to this general rule.

### Scores:

#### Individual scores:

|          |   |                                     |                                     |                          |                                     |                                     |                                     |                                     |                                     |                                     |                          |                          |                          |
|----------|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>1</b> | Country does not meet indicator               | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>2</b> | Country meets only a few aspects of indicator | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>3</b> | Country meets some aspects of indicator       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>4</b> | Country meets most aspects of indicator       | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>5</b> | Country meets all aspects of the indicator    | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

#### Average score:

2.2

## 4.7 Journalists and media houses have integrity and are not corrupt.

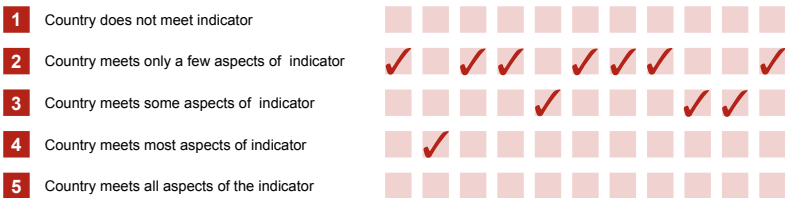
Some media houses have a strict code which deals with payments or other benefits from the public. These codes strictly forbid the acceptance of per diems, free accommodation or even refreshments and journalists who break the code face administrative penalties. Owners or publishers are supposed to cover the expenses of journalists on duty. The Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency, for example, pays transport costs and per diems to its reporters sent to cover an event.

Some journalists, however, disregard such codes. There are those called “cocktail journalists” who prefer to go to events that offer refreshments, and there are others who accept allowances from both their publisher and the event organisers.

“Hard core” corruption, although not yet widespread, is increasing. Some “crooked” journalists accept money (“brown envelopes”) to do or not to do a certain story. They even go to the extent of blackmailing individuals or companies, threatening to publish a story unless they are paid a certain sum of money. One journalist is known to have demanded a payment of 10,000 birr (US\$ 610), failing which he would bad-mouth the company in question in his report. When the company refused the journalist wrote a defamatory story - with the result that the publisher had to pay the company a substantial amount of money in compensation.

### Scores:

#### Individual scores:



Average score:

2.5

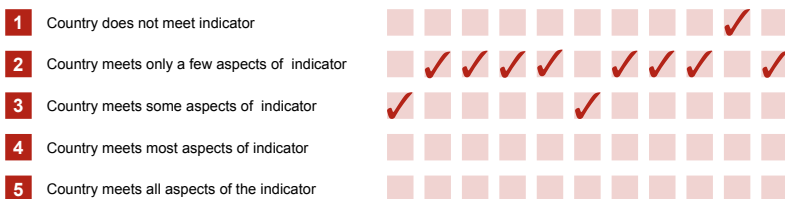
## 4.8 Salary levels and general working conditions for journalists and other media practitioners are adequate.

Journalists and media practitioners at private media are better paid than their colleagues at state media. A junior reporter working in a state media earns around 1700 birr per month (US\$ 100) while the same position in the private media fetches up to 2500 birr (US\$ 150). An editor in a state media receives a salary of around 4000 birr (US\$ 245) while private media houses pay double that amount for employees in the same position.

However, those working in the state media enjoy more benefits in terms of job security and pension schemes.

### Scores:

#### Individual scores:



Average score:

2.1

## 4.9 Media professionals have access to training facilities offering formal qualification programmes as well as opportunities to upgrade skills.

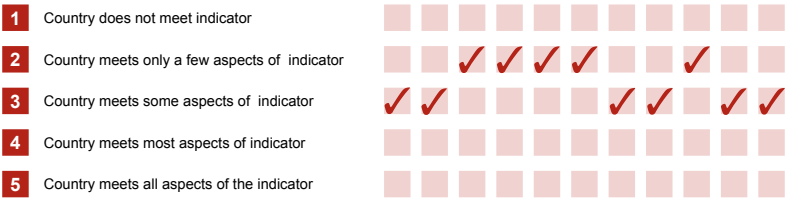
Altogether 21 state and private higher education institutions offer formal qualification programmes for aspiring journalists. Students who pass the national exam after completing grade 12 of secondary school fill out forms to choose their field of study and the institution they would like to attend, in their order of preference. The Ministry of Education then assigns and sends out lists of students to the respective public institutions. This means that some students, especially those who do not have good grades, may end up being placed in a field of study they are not really interested in. Thus, a student with no passion for journalism at all may be assigned to the School of Journalism at the University of Addis Ababa, for instance. The state institutions have no choice but to accept such students.

In many cases, curricula offered at journalism departments are not regarded as adequate for the profession: too much theory, not enough practice. There are now trials with internships where departments send some of their students to work in media houses before graduation.

Universities and journalists' associations offer short-term specialised workshops of up to three weeks and longer-term courses of up to three months. However, most media houses are reluctant to release journalists to attend such courses due to staff shortages.

### Scores:

#### Individual scores:



Average score: 2.5

## 4.10 Journalists and other media practitioners are organised in trade unions and/or professional associations.

Media practitioners have formed quite a number of professional associations but there are no trade unions of journalists in Ethiopia yet.

There is uncertainty whether the law allows the establishment of trade unions by journalists. Article 5 of the Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation states that “journalists have a right to organise themselves into professional associations of their choice.” The law remains silent, however, on whether this right also extends to the formation of trade unions. Most panellists argued that the right to form a trade union applies to all workers and that journalists are no exception. They also pointed to the fact that there is no explicit legal restriction on journalists which denies them the right to form a trade union.

Journalists working for state media would not be allowed to join a trade union because they are public servants. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has demanded that this restriction be lifted by a change in the labour law.

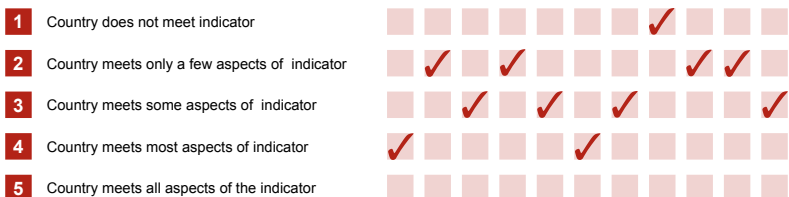
Examples of the many associations legally registered and operating in the country are the Ethiopian Journalists Association, the Ethiopian Women Media Society and the Free Press Journalists Association. Other groups such as photographers or environmental journalists have organised themselves in their own specialised organisations. An attempt to form a Publishers' Association was short-lived.

The polarisation of the media also characterises the professional associations: some are focused on state, others on private media. Most young and upcoming journalists are reluctant to join, although the associations insist that their doors remain open to all.

With the enactment of the Charities and Societies Proclamation these institutions now face major financial problems (see indicator 1.11).

## Scores:

### Individual scores:



Average score: 2.6

Average score for sector 4: 2.5

OVERALL COUNTRY SCORE: 2.7

## Developments over the past few years and the way forward

### Positive developments in the media environment:

- The print media is becoming consolidated and stabilised.
- The media, including broadcast media, is spreading and creating more employment opportunities.
- There are signs of diminishing of polarisation in the media, e.g. progress made towards the establishment of a media council.
- Access to public figures which used to be confined to the state media is becoming easier for the private media as well.
- Taken together, the media is covering a variety of cultures, languages and issues.
- Government's investment in the state media has increased.
- Ethiopian Radio and Television is adopting new formats and modes of presentation.
- More institutions of higher learning are providing training in journalism and the media.

### Negative developments in the media environment:

- The impact of the violence and suppression following the 2005 election is still being felt.
- Government monopoly of television still exists.
- Some new laws, among them the Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Public Information Proclamation, the Anti Terrorism Proclamation and the Charities and Societies Proclamation put serious restrictions on the media and civil society.
- There is no incentive or support from government to encourage and strengthen the development of the private media.
- Absence of a strong and unified national professional association of media practitioners.
- Lack of professionalism and journalistic skills.
- There are no real and ongoing public debates in the media.

## Activities needed over the next few years:

- The media and professional associations need capacity and funding to strengthen their structures.
- The Media Council should be established, a code of ethics be developed and complaints mechanisms introduced.
- Journalists should form a trade union.
- Media groups should lobby for the removal of a number of restrictive provisions on the statute books.
- The government should further liberalise the air waves.
- The government should devise policies to advance and develop the media.

The panel meeting took place at Negash Lodge, Wolliso, from 1st to 3rd October 2010.

### The Panel:

Ms Hana Abate, civil society activist; Ms Emrakeb Assefa, media lecturer; Ms Rahel Ayele, trade unionist; Mr Kumlachew Dagene, lawyer; Mr Samson Hailu, journalist; Mr Siefu Mahfere, religious associations; Ms Elisabeth Mengistu, youth activist; Ms Mimi Sebhatu, media manager; Mr Mogus Teckelmichel, academic; Mr Tsegalul Woldekidan, editor state television; Mr Tafari Wossen, community media.

### Rapporteur:

Mr Mikias Sebsibe

### Facilitator:

Mr Hendrik Bussiek









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