



Transitions Online: Regional Intelligence

ANNUAL REPORT

In accordance with the Social Reporting Standard (SRS)

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Tatuli Todua
Georgian Activist



"I think that impact of these changes [on the thinking of my organization] was direct dialogue with society. It is especially important in politically polarized environment where traditional media is partially covering the topics and "spoils" information in favor of one or another political group. Because of using social media, we had direct contact with ordinary people. We were answering their questions, debating with them. This participatory process created more trust from the society. They received different important information directly from us and felt that we are accountable before them."

Mission

TOL's mission is to improve the professionalism, independence, and impact of the news media and civil society organizations, with a special focus on the post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and the former Soviet Union.

What We Do

- Devise new models for financing independent journalism and training in the Internet age.
- Train the next generation of reporters across the post-communist region.
- Facilitate the latest techniques, tools, and trends from West to East.
- Raise awareness of the issues shaping Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and Eurasia, including topics often neglected by the rest of the media.
- Provide an international platform for articles and investigations by journalists censored in their home countries.

In the last five years, more than 2,500 journalists and civic activists from some of the region's toughest countries have passed through TOL's training programs.

Introduction

Transitions is a Prague-based media development organization with a mission of actively championing democracy, pluralism, and freedom of expression. We do this by strengthening the professionalism, independence, and impact of media and civil society organizations, with a special focus on Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and the former Soviet Union.

Given this broad and abstract mission, and the many factors at play in the evolution of the region's post-communist nations, it is necessarily a difficult challenge to measure success. However, there are many indications that TOL is making a measurable and valuable difference.

A number of journalists who have received training and/or worked with TOL have advanced to positions of leadership in the media of former communist nations, and many journalists in the region have been able to delve more deeply into important issues than would have been possible without TOL's encouragement and assistance. Through focused issue-specific projects, TOL has expanded coverage and brought needed attention to important but under-covered issues such as Roma rights and education. And there are growing signs that civic organizations in many post-

communist nations are increasing their impact through social media thanks to training and support provided by TOL.

Subject and Scope of the Report

This report will review the available evidence on TOL's success in advancing its mission to assist in promoting the development of a free and independent media in the former communist nations of Eastern and Central Europe and the Soviet Union, and in supporting efforts to develop a thriving civic sector capable of stimulating an active and public discourse over issues of importance. The report will examine a range of TOL strategies and activities, culling the information available to determine where impact is being made and acknowledging the areas where evidence is lacking or where hoped-for results have not been achieved. Finally, the report will discuss future goals and opportunities for TOL to further its efforts in promoting advancement of free and open societies in formerly totalitarian nations of the region.

The report was completed in early September 2013, in accordance with the Social Reporting Standard. All information herein is the status as of September 2013, excepting instances where it directly refers to the previous financial year 2012.

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The Social Problem and Our Approach

2.1 Subject Area

TOL is mainly a media development and publishing organization with a target group of journalists and other media professionals; however, our new media training work also targets representatives of civil society organizations, including many NGO workers.

2.2 The Social Problem

2.2.1 Description of the Problem

In our target region, democracy, pluralism, and freedom of expression continue to suffer in great part because the media and civil society groups (CSOs) do not play a strong enough, formative role.

As a result – in varying degrees as we cover a vast region, from Prague and Warsaw to Tashkent and Baku – corrupt, inefficient governments prevail, partly because the media and CSOs do not act as effective watchdogs; citizens often don't have access to a wide variety of views and opinions because the media fall prey to government and commercial pressure and practice self-censorship; and normal people fail to obtain information that they can use in their daily lives because journalists do not receive sufficient training in covering social issues, health care, and other pressing issues of the day.

The immediate causes of the problem include: pressure from politicians and financial groups (often one and the same); the financial crisis; and a lack of training for journalists and CSOs. All of these immediate causes have their roots in longer-term problems. In many places of the former Soviet bloc, the political and economic elite hail from the same nomenklatura that ruled the USSR and view the media and CSOs as nuisances rather than an integral part of democracy. The economic crisis has only accelerated longer-term trends both in the region and worldwide: The traditional media are struggling mightily in the Internet era as advertising dollars have moved online; newspaper content has consequently shrunk; foreign news bureaus have been closed; money for investigative reporting has dried up; and many talented journalists have lost their jobs. Commercial pressure has also forced the “tabloidization” of many news media, as they have “dumbed down” their content, adding celebrity news and sensationalizing their coverage of certain issues. And with shrinking news budgets, coverage of complicated, social issues, i.e. subjects that don't usually sell, has also diminished.

In such an atmosphere, most media do not have the funds or enthusiasm to train their reporters in specialized journalism or so-called beat reporting, whereby journalists acquire the skills and knowledge to cover issues such as health, education, minorities, the environment, European integration, economic reform, and so on. In fact, training budgets are one of the first areas to be cut these days. In any case, young journalists in our coverage region traditionally receive few, if any,

training opportunities in the workplace, particularly the farther east you go. Many media outlets are short-handed and have neither the tradition nor the time to provide on-the-job advice and mentoring.

The situation is exacerbated by the poor state of journalism education throughout much of the region. Despite 20 years of international assistance and exposure, many journalism faculties still stress the theoretical side over practical experience and employ many professors who have either never worked in journalism or not for many years. Unfortunately, quality journalism training centers (either non-profit or commercial) have not sprung up to fill the gap everywhere; while some countries are home to well-respected institutions, others have none. Many of these centers have also struggled to find sustainable business models, meaning they are often dependent on the whims of donors.

2.2.2 Scale of the Problem

To cite just one example of the dire situation with the media today: Freedom House's most recent annual survey of media independence, Freedom of the Press, classify 10 of the 12 non-Baltic former Soviet republics as "not free," meaning that these countries do not provide the basic guarantees and protections in legal, political, and economic terms to enable open and independent journalism. Overall, a majority of people of Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia (56 percent) live in "not free" media countries, while 29 percent live in "partly free" countries and only 15 percent reside in "free media" countries—according to Freedom House, the smallest share in a decade. The average for the Eurasia subregion is still the worst in the world, and three of the eight worst press freedom abusers in the world are found in TOL's coverage region.

2.2.3 Previous Approaches to Solving the Problem

Other training organizations, of course, exist, as do other media outlets attempting to cover important topics. Some Internet-based media have emerged over the past decade to diversify the information field and add worthwhile alternatives. But many have found it difficult to generate enough income to finance themselves. Those who have survived so far are often connected with bigger, traditional media (also now in trouble). It is also extremely rare to have a training organization that runs a high-quality media outlet or vice versa. There are very few organizations that treat the region as a whole and can connect talented individuals in region-wide networks. We are also not familiar with any other media development organization that runs commercial training courses as a way of subsidizing the production of news content. There is at least one example of a journalism training center (the renowned Poynter Institute in Florida) owning a newspaper (the St. Petersburg Times) but here the model works the other way around: The newspaper's profits are used to sustain the journalism training, which is the opposite of what we are attempting.

With the media industry in decline, more non-profit models have sprung up in recent years, but most of them still depend on support from foundations or wealthy benefactors. Though the search for different models has become fashionable of late, we are proud to have been an Internet pioneer in this regard, since at the heart of our existence has been our dedication to public service journalism and exploring how quality public service journalism can be sustained in unconducive political, social, and economic conditions (undemocratic or states without much tradition of public service journalism; poor countries or those with very small markets; etc.). That experience over the past 14 years has led us to create the strategy described below.

2.3 Our Approach to Solving the Problem

2.3.1 Vision

From the start, TOL's aim has been to create a public-service-oriented, Internet-based media institution that can tackle the problems outlined above on a variety of levels (symptoms, immediate causes, and root causes) with impact both locally and internationally.

2.3.2 Strategy

The journalism we produce at our magazine, Transitions Online, exclusively covers the post-communist region. The subject matter includes standard political and economic analysis, but also places a special emphasis on themes often neglected by other media, such as the environment, minorities and excluded groups, gender issues, religion, freedom of the press, human rights, etc. Our choice of topics is unencumbered by the profit motive – when deciding to run this or that story, we aren't thinking about whether it will “sell”, though of course we are looking for a mix to attract as many smart readers as possible. We believe strongly in using local voices – people from the countries they cover, who speak the local language and know the local nuances – as an antidote to “parachute journalism”, where some foreign reporters show up for a day or two and write uninformed, stereotypical stories.

In this way, we give local journalists the opportunity to write about topics and issues that they can't write about normally. As described above, this may be because commercial media don't permit them to write about certain topics in any depth or without political bias, or because self-censorship or even official censorship dominates the local media scene (such as the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Russia). We offer these journalists a platform to get their stories out internationally, both directly through TOL, and indirectly through syndication agencies that distribute our content and publication partners. In this way, we have been able to cooperate with brave reporters in the darker spots of the region, keeping alive the “flame” of independent journalism in more repressive places. The publication of these articles has the added advantage of raising international attention on topics that these journalists and our editors believe are important and deserve, in some cases, direct action.

At the same time, we provide training in a wide variety of formats to journalists across the region: on-the-job training during the editing process; distance learning; on-site workshops in Prague and in target countries; and even what we call “shoulder-to-shoulder” reporting trips as experienced

trainers accompany young reporters on their stories out in the field. Many of the training topics focus on specialized subjects underplayed by commercial media; other courses encourage the use of the Internet and new media to foster new, independent voices to counter the traditional, state-controlled media.

We are thus seeding the field with young journalists who understand high standards of journalism who will transfer these skills to their own media, i.e. act as "media multipliers". Instead of trying to improve individual media outlets (which would be virtually impossible), we have singled out individual journalists and empowered them with new skills and knowledge. They can then become innovators within their own media or break out on their own, starting up blogs, launching low-cost Internet publications, or writing freelance. We have thus partially filled the gap left open by the poor and non-existent journalism instruction in many places.

More broadly, TOL's model for producing quality journalism tackles one of the underlying reasons the media has been failing to act as a watchdog and provide citizens with a full range of information on topics affecting their daily lives: The economic models valid for decades no longer work in the Internet age. With the media industry in decline, more non-profit models have sprung up in recent years, but most of them still depend on support from foundations or wealthy benefactors. Our model is a hybrid NGO/commercial model as we continue to seek grants (75-80 percent of our income), but also have multiple, "commercial" income streams (magazine subscriptions, syndication, advertising, and training courses). We are not familiar with any other media outlet that runs commercial training courses as a way of subsidizing the production of news content, either in Central and Eastern Europe or internationally.

We have shown that our model is sustainable to the extent that we have been in this business for a almost 15 years. But the model is still a work-in-progress. If we can build, in particular, the commercial training program to provide a stable financial base for the organization, we will be able to be less dependent on grants and better positioned to increase our impact on the local level. Based on our own experiences so far, we think our model can definitely work for medium-to-small outlets (either web-based or a combination of web- and print-based), as long as those media can keep costs down and can depend on other income streams. We aren't so naïve to suggest that creating training centers connected to professional media can be the "golden egg" that will, alone, save them, but this approach can be a key part of their strategy for not only surviving, but eventually flourishing. That will need a change of mentality among the staff at many media outlets; they will need to stop considering themselves as mere journalists, but realize that they must also become teachers and trainers as a way to keep their publications alive.

It could well be that the future media environment will feature only a handful of economically viable "big" media – but alongside a constellation of smaller, more targeted publications (covering more closely defined issues and localities) that are TOL-style hybrids. TOL could serve as a prime example to show that the media ecosystem can change in this manner, and even better the state of democracy, pluralism, and freedom of expression.

2.3.3 Target Groups

TOL's target groups vary depending on the project, but the vast majority of those who have benefited from our training programs have been young journalists and journalism students under the age of 30. In the early years, more of those reporters hailed from Central Europe and the Balkans. As some of the countries have joined the European Union and donor priorities have shifted farther east, the number of beneficiaries from the Caucasus, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia has dramatically increased and now represents the majority of those who pass through our training programs.

In the mid-2000s, TOL also added expertise in providing training in new media and social media skills. As we found instruction in these areas could also benefit civil society representatives and citizen journalists, our target groups expanded to include many people from other professions, especially activists and NGO workers. In some countries – such as Moldova, Georgia, and others – many students, including some still in high school, have taken part in training activities, learning in-depth about new media for the first time. Many teachers of journalism, either at the time or currently, have also participated in our training program and now pass along acquired knowledge to their own students.

Final, indirect beneficiaries are media consumers around the world who receive unbiased information and analysis through the Transitions Online news site, raising their awareness on key issues facing the region, and citizens of our target countries who benefit through the improved journalism standards practiced by those who have participated in our training programs.

Hamid Tursunov
Kyrgyz Journalist



“The acquisition of the new skills have led to better coverage of stories I send to my editors -- for instance, while writing stories about peacebuilding efforts taken in the southern region of Kyrgyzstan, which is still recovering from the June 2010 mass ethnic violence.”

2.3.4 Activities and Expected Outcome

Area	Goal	Output	Outcome
Online News Platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --To use local voices in order to provide probing, informed --Coverage of their entire post-communist region on issues often underreported or censored in local media. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Screening and recruiting talented local journalists --Publishing articles on often underreported and censored topics --Delivering full version of online magazine to subscribers (private and institutions) --Providing limited access to online magazine to all online readers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Journalists from the regions with limited freedom of press publishing in the internationally read news magazine (journalists) --Individuals worldwide aware of local issues in the post-soviet countries (people) --Institutions worldwide considering information on local issues in post-soviet countries when making decisions (institutions)
Journalism Trainings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --To provide a chance for journalism students to study according to high journalism standards and learn from people from more open countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Training local journalists on high quality journalism OFFline and ONline --Bringing together experienced journalists from BBC, Economist, NYT, Hosp.Noviny, MF, ČT to mentor beginning journalists individually (individual approach as opposed to mass online courses) --Providing training to university students of journalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Local journalists who graduated from media trainings --Experiences journalists who have mentors for local journalists --University students who have completed trainings how to cover underreported and often neglected topics
Financial Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --To contribute toward self-sustainability and make the organization less grantdependent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Developing an online crowdsourcing platform Media Defender as a powerful lifeline for journalists working under difficult circumstances to finance their stories. --Developing business model for an online journalism academy --Increasing the pool of individual donors supporting independent journalists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Journalism projects supported through the online crowdsourcing platform --Editions of online news magazine cross-subsidized by revenues from online journalism academy --Individual donors investing their resources in independent journalists

2.4 Spreading your approach

2.4.1 What do you spread?

We are spreading high standards of journalism and knowledge of the latest tools and techniques throughout Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia. At the core of our approach is quality, unbiased, and independent journalism.

2.4.2 How do you spread your solution?

The main conduits for spreading our solution are the Transitions Online newssite and our training programs.

Transitions Online. With the newssite, we have created a platform for reform-minded journalists and thinkers in a region that is sorely lacking avenues for expression and the sharing of information. This online news magazine provides an opportunity for journalists to write about topics and issues that they cannot write about in their home countries due to political bias, censorship, or other reasons. By providing this space, TOL also offers these journalists a way to get their stories out internationally – directly through TOL and indirectly through syndication agencies that distribute TOL’s content to many other readers.

Training programs. As described above and noted with statistics below, thousands of journalists have passed through our programs, taking part in on-site workshops, online courses, public events, and other activities.

2.4.3 What is the state of your spreading efforts?

The key conduit toward spreading our solution is through the so-called media multipliers. After almost 15 years, our alumni are present in the media throughout the region, at newspapers, broadcast media, websites, and journals where they are now practicing their craft. What we are also doing is placing people with TOL’s strong sense of journalistic truth-telling, ethics, and professionalism, as well as training in best practices, in spots where they can spread the “gospel”, as it were, and make a difference. They are in many influential spots and this influence will surely be pervasive as time goes on and younger people take over more senior positions. A whole generation of TOL students are thus out there, spread among many countries and types of media. These are the seeds of change and empowerment within their own organizations and societies.

That is a significant achievement, and the organization now stands for quality journalism and quality training programs within the region and internationally. However, the state of the media in most of the countries where we operate indicates that much work remains to be done.

Social Impact

3.1 Resources Used in 2012 (Input)

Personnel costs \$328,000

Material costs \$13,000

Services \$1,071,000

3.2 Work performed (Output)

The following work was carried out for the core target groups in the year 2012:

Georgia

- 5 meetings with independent media organizations that received consulting and eventually new, high-quality websites
- 4 workshops for high school students and young journalists in the Imereti region
- 1 participant received a scholarship to take part in a photojournalism course
- Exchange visits were made between Kavkasia TV and Czech Television

Moldova

- 8 workshops
- New media consulting provided to two NGOs
- 2 people received scholarships to attend Prague journalism courses
- 1 Social Innovation Camp to spur new media for social change movement

Central Asia

- Creation of a Russian-language distance learning platform and the holding of 2 courses
- Creation of a new course on digital security
- 2 workshops (one multimedia, one new media for activists)
- New media consulting to 25 organizations
- 1 social innovation camp (co-organization) with 70 participants (50 from NGOs)

Roma Programs

- A work placement scheme for six journalists from Bosnia to spend time with outlets with Roma programming in Serbia and Macedonia.
- A promotion event for a Balkan project in Skopje, with a leading Roma rap band performing.

Next in Line project (reporting on the candidate countries)

- A total of 16 journalists from the five partner organizations conducted reporting assignments working with 14 local journalists.

TOL Magazine

- 124 grant-funded articles in 2012 on a wide variety of topics
- 123,000 unique visitors to the website.

Other (Locations Withheld)

- 36 workshops for local community leaders in around 40 locations to increase civic involvement, especially through online communities
- 3 workshops for 15 independent media in search engine optimization and promotion
- Two hackathons on developing IT tools to solve social problems
- Developed tools to track arrested activists, tested with a test group of ten activists.
- 15 media consulted in using SEO and contextual advertising
- 4 new media workshops, 1 multimedia workshop
- 1 consultancy Assessment for independent media outlets
- Translation of the Mobile Media Kit with special mobile security sections
- Translation of 3 distance learning courses
- Prague New Media Course scholarships

3.3 Impact

TOL has multiple levels of impact. First, through creating a space for local reporters to uphold core industry standards while educating them in journalism skills and new media techniques, TOL is keeping alive the flame of independent and professional journalism in some of the most repressive places in the post-communist region. Second, TOL is acting as a “home” and enabling platform for talented journalists frustrated with state-dominated media or commercial media, empowering them to have much greater impact than they would without support and providing an important outlet for the international publication of their work. Finally, through its pan-regional networks, TOL is raising international awareness around topics that local journalists believe are important and deserve direct action, and which otherwise would not be picked up by mainstream media outlets.

Many of the thousands of journalists that have passed through TOL's training programs over the past 14 years have become influential “media multipliers” by building professional journalism outlets and civil society organizations in their home countries. Empowering individual journalists with new skills, knowledge, and the right networks helps them become innovators within the industry, and encourages them to initiate their own startup blogs, launch low-cost Internet publications, or write as freelancers. TOL's regional network also ensures the transfer of ideas among local journalists.

For example, through the training and alumni network, journalists can learn more about countries such as the Czech Republic that are farther along in their transition, and vice versa.

TOL training helps journalists create better coverage of pressing issues in their communities that do not receive enough attention in traditional media. A Georgian journalist became the first blogger on environmental issues in her country and received an award from the UN for her work. Her 2012 story about Lazika, [http://netgazeti.ge/GE/92/News/8175/President Saakashvili’s project to build a new sea port at the Black Sea](http://netgazeti.ge/GE/92/News/8175/President%20Saakashvili%27s%20project%20to%20build%20a%20new%20sea%20port%20at%20the%20Black%20Sea), was the first report about the president’s initiatives covered by Georgian media, and resulted in a significant public debate. A journalist in Kyrgyzstan benefited from several TOL training events and frequent interaction with TOL editors to improve his reporting on peacebuilding efforts taken in the southern region of Kyrgyzstan, which is still recovering from the June 2010 mass ethnic violence.

TOL training helps activists harness the power of social media. The parliamentary secretary of a Georgian NGO promoting human rights and rule of law used TOL training to create an online campaign to stop the number of MPs in parliament from being increased. Another campaign called “It Affects You Too” pushed parliament to enact changes in election and media legislation. The direct contact with ordinary people and the discussions that took place online created an alternative to the often one-sided information presented in traditional news media.

TOL training helps journalists and activists expand their audiences. Through techniques acquired through TOL workshops, an independent website in our coverage region is increasing its traffic from web searches by 3-4 percent monthly. The visiting rate to the website from Facebook has also increased from 1 percent to 12 percent. A training participant found that social media training allowed the NGO he worked for to expand its audience and achieve broader recognition. The impact of TOL training can also be spread by the participants themselves. For example, a journalist hosted trainings for colleagues on the topics of the TOL workshops she attended.

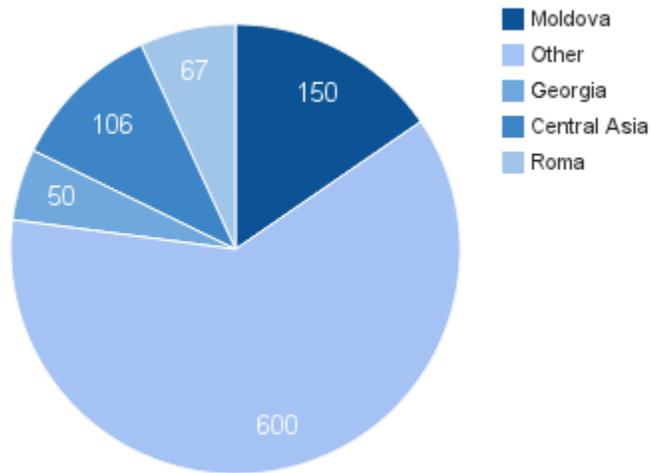
Activist

(Name and Location Withheld)

“Using social media has helped to the greater recognition in society, to the growth of the members and delivering our information to the broader audience.”

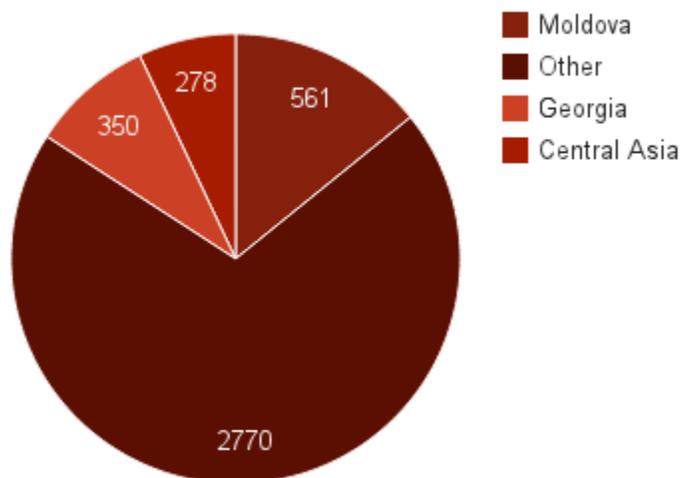
Almost 1,000 people passed through TOL's training programs in 2012.

Number of Training Participants (2012)



And in the last few years, the number is close to 4,000 trainees.

Number of Training Participants (2009-2013)



A Few Sample Projects:

Ecoreporter.ru is a Russian website that TOL recently helped launch to provide analysis and opinion on environmental issues. The site has become a refuge for journalists wanting to escape censorship of their own media on sensitive ecological topics and a friendly outlet for environmental activists to air their concerns.

Europe: A Homeland for the Roma uses multimedia to combat prejudice and increase the visibility of problems that Roma communities face in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and Bulgaria. Over two years, the project's core group of 20 journalists – half of them Roma, half from other communities – will create short films together, as well as a full-length documentary film.

Multimedia and Minorities aims to impel the media in the South Caucasus to play a major role in promoting regional peace and stability through responsible reporting. Thirty journalists and journalism students from Georgia, Armenia, the breakaway regions, and other regions will gain the tools, confidence, and networking opportunities to report fairly on reconciliation-related issues. (Launching in 2013).

3.4 Evaluation and Quality Control

In order to preserve our reputation as a high-quality training provider and reliable partner to our donors, TOL undertakes the following quality control measures:

- Project managers provide monthly implementation reports to the Prague central office.
- Project officers and the project supervisor review these reports and compare them with project plans and timelines, move quickly to solve any discrepancies.
- Each project is tracked using the project management system, Basecamp.
- TOL also follows in a timely fashion the report schedule provided in grant guidelines.
- For the last few years, we have convened a project managers' meeting, gathering together our team in Prague for two days of meetings to discuss issues such as reporting, impact measurement, cross-regional collaboration, and other topics.
- We ran a pilot training alumni assessment for one grant, using a questionnaire and then mapping the alumni, and plan to expand this process for future projects.
- We plan to hire a new staff member later this year who will have impact assessment as one of her main responsibilities. She will be in charge of systematization of field data collection and compilation, and building these processes into TOL's regular working operations.

Planning and Outlook

4.1 Planning and Objectives

TOL is currently finishing up the third year of a three-year strategic plan with these main goals”

- Improve TOL's journalistic and new media/multimedia training programs, in tune with the needs of our target groups and the changing industry.

- Better position the magazine as a top-quality provider of analysis and comment on the region.
- Strengthen dramatically the organization’s technical competencies so TOL can become a leader in Internet publishing and design.
- Increase and diversify income.
- Boost external communication.

Some, but not all, of these objectives will have been fulfilled, and we plan on designing a new plan for the upcoming three years by year’s end. A major focus will continue to be on creating a truly sustainable funding model for TOL, which remains a challenge in the current donor and business environment.

A major goal in coming years will be to improve the monitoring of our impact. A stronger, more active alumni network (see below) should also allow us to track much better the impact of our training. We have sent out periodic questionnaires, but have not followed this up with a concerted effort (phone calls, for example) to generate better results. We have historically been understaffed on the grant monitoring side, but have also failed to properly make the task of monitoring long-term impact a job of our project managers. It is always challenging measuring the impact of training, but we admittedly have to do a better job setting both qualitative and quantitative indicators and then analyzing them in the short-, medium-, and longer-term. This is time-consuming work and we have been understaffed on the grant monitoring side for years, but we now have an organization-wide commitment to dedicate more capacity toward assessing and improving impact.

4.2 Development Potential and Opportunities

- **Increasing local impact**

While we believe our impact on individual journalists and on raising attention to the region’s pressing issues has been considerable—with thousands of journalists passing through our training programs and the publication of thousands of articles—it could be greater. Over the past 14 years, we have created a publishing platform for reform-minded journalists and thinkers in a region that is sorely lacking avenues for expression and the sharing of information. However, with a few exceptions (we translate a small number of articles into Russian), access to the magazine is limited to English speakers. Our articles are sometimes translated by others and reprinted in local languages, but not regularly enough to have the impact on the local level that we would like to have in terms of raising awareness. In order to spark public discussion and possible changes in public policy, TOL needs to explore the idea of appearing in local languages. Publication in local languages would also allow us to increase the impact of our training by extending the pool of contributing journalists beyond mainly English speakers.

- **Boosting interaction and networking with alumni**

Right now, we have also only started to tap into our alumni of our training programs and try to connect them with TOL and with each other, mainly through a Facebook page. However, our strategic plan calls for developing this network much further, and our idea is to work better at enabling and empowering communities of journalists who have participated in our programs and/or read the magazine. We believe that this can be a significant growth area and also enable us to better market both grant- and commercial training courses.

- **Increasing self-generated income from journalism training courses**

Our new ability to offer credit for our courses and growing contacts with journalism schools worldwide should start to generate larger attendance at our courses, with the additional possibility of more specialized courses for individual schools. Despite the crisis facing the media and the disappearance of many journalism jobs, enrollment in journalism schools – public and private, graduate and undergraduate – is actually on the rise. In addition, many universities, especially in the United States, have started to place a greater emphasis on studying abroad, with some instituting a requirement for their students to spend time away from home.

- **Raising profile as a non-profit media outlet with unique business model**

Many more non-profit media outlets have emerged over the past decade, establishing their credibility in the professional community and among the general public. That should increase the interest in TOL's model of using paid journalism training courses to finance the operation of the magazine.

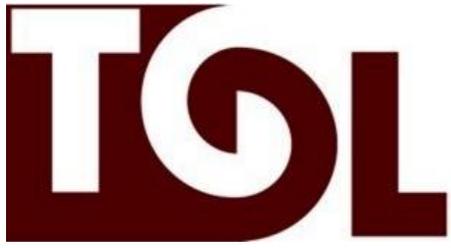
4.3 Risks

- Funding from traditional donors declines, continuing a longer-term trend.
 - Strengthen and expand self-financing activities to fill the gap.
 - Adopt innovative funding strategies, such as crowdfunding.
 - Search for individual donors.
- Key target countries become increasingly oppressive, limiting in-country operations.
 - Create alternative methods to reach target audiences, such as distance education.
 - Protect local personnel through increased security procedures and restricting any publicity around projects.
- Markets for products/services exist, but difficulties remain in reaching them.
 - Hire qualified communications officer to promote programs and market products/services.
 - Revamp promotional material and website.

MananaKveliashvili
Georgian Journalist



“The knowledge I acquired at the trainings organized by TOL greatly contributed to my career. The first workshop I attended was about usage of social media tools in Kutaisi in 2009. Thanks to this training I created a [blog](#). Later I participated in a UN-organized competition, which I won and became the first blogger in Georgia who covers environmental issues.”



Transitions Online: Regional Intelligence

THE ORGANIZATION

Organisational Structure and Team

5.1 Organisational Structure

Transitions (www.tol.org) is registered as a Czech non-governmental, non-profit organization (civic association).

TOL has a three-person management group that oversees operations and an advisory board that meets once a year to review TOL's operational and strategic plan. The organization itself is divided into three departments: editorial (which manages the publishing activities); grants (which administers all funded projects); and business/marketing (which implements TOL's self-financing, social entrepreneurship activities).

The management group is comprised of Jeremy Druker, executive director and editor in chief; Tihomir Loza, deputy director; and Jana Terzimehic Petrlikova, financial manager.

In general, project administration is based in Prague while local project managers operate in the field.

The managing editor of Transitions Online is based in the United Kingdom and manages the magazine on a daily basis, working virtually with editors based in Prague and elsewhere.

Interns play an important role at TOL, contributing regularly to the production of the magazine, as well as in the organization's other departments.

Overall, between 15 and 20 people work at TOL at any given time, though only a small number of these are full-time employees, with the rest working part-time and as consultants.

5.2 State of Organizational Development

TOL was established in April 1999, the month after the publication of the final issue of its print predecessor, *Transitions* magazine. (The print magazine was first published in 1994 by the Open Media Research Institute, a joint venture between Radio Free Europe and the Open Society Institute.) Four of the former print magazine's staff members established Transitions Online as a means of keeping the widely respected, cross-border coverage of the magazine alive.

As noted above, we are now completing a three-year strategic plan and need to assess future priorities based on what we have been able to accomplish and the work that still needs to be done.

In terms of specific projects, we believe the following three have immense potential to boost the organization's international profile:

Media Defender: A platform for crowdfunding embattled journalists working in countries without fully free media. The site will unite people who care about supporting quality journalism and freedom of the press with those on the front line: the reporters themselves.

TOL Media Academy: An online journalism school that offers an alternative form of education to students who are disappointed with the low level of instruction still prevalent in their countries or otherwise shut out of opportunities because of gender, minority, class, or other reasons. Distance learning also allows us to create diverse classes composed of people of different, and sometimes conflicting, nationalities or ethnic groups; we can also reach into closed societies and provide a chance for students to study according to high journalism standards with people from more open countries.

TOL Civic Activist Website: Together with partners from Central Europe, we are creating a website that will transfer Visegrad expertise to Eastern Partnership countries. The site will be a repository for instructional videos (webinars), handbooks, guides, online courses, and other material, available both in English and local languages on topics most relevant to NGOs and other activist groups, with a special focus on the use of new media and social media to raise awareness and mobilize citizens for greater civic engagement. Activists will also be able to network through the site with colleagues working in similar fields across the region.

5.3 Key Personnel

Jeremy Druker is the executive director of Transitions. He holds a bachelor's degree from Harvard College and a master's in international affairs from Columbia University. In addition to being an Ashoka Fellow, he just completed two terms as a member of the board of the Fulbright Commission in the Czech Republic and is a member of the board of Novinarska Cena, the Czech journalism prizes. Jeremy currently teaches a course in social media at New York University's branch in Prague.

Tihomir Loza is deputy director of Transitions. Previously, he worked as a writer and editor for a number of outlets in the Balkans, including the *Oslobodjenje* daily. He was part of the team of producers behind the BBC series *The Death of Yugoslavia* and *The Fall of Milosevic*. Tihomir also worked as an editor with *Transitions* and *WarReport* magazines. At *Transitions*, Tihomir has designed and directed a number of media development projects in recent years, most of which included an e-learning component. Among other programs, Tihomir directed projects focused on reporting the environment; working with Roma journalists; and reporting EU affairs. He regularly writes on Balkan affairs and is a board member of the Humanitarian Law Fund in Belgrade.

Jana Terzimehic Petrlikova has worked as a financial manager at TOL since 2008. Before joining our team she worked for three years in the salary department at the Council of the European Union in Brussels. She holds an MA degree in Economics and Management from the University of Western Bohemia in Pilsen, Czech Republic.

Tina Frankois TOL grant administrator, is in charge of compiling all the necessary reports for the donors, as well as internal monthly monitoring. She has managed Transitions' portfolio of grants since 2007. Ms. Franko previously worked as a freelance consultant in the Project Unit of the Joint Technical Secretariat INTERREG III B CADSES, Neighbourhood Programme.

Katerina Beckova is TOL grant administrator, is in charge of compiling all the necessary reports for the donors, as well as internal monthly monitoring. Katerina is a graduate from the Czech University of Life Sciences in Prague, she has worked for two years at Transitions, administering around 10 projects annually in countries such as Moldova, Russia, Georgia, Central Asia, and others.

Barbara Frye is Transitions Online's managing editor. She has been a journalist for more than 20 years, starting with local papers in her native Baltimore-Washington area in the United States. She has worked as an editor for The Prague Post and other publications in the Czech Republic. Barbara has edited or reported from nine countries and her work has appeared in The New York Times, The International Herald Tribune, The Washington Post, The Christian Science Monitor, and many other outlets.

5.4 Partnership, Cooperation, and Networks

TOL is a founding member of Demas, an independent platform of Czech NGOs working in the areas of democracy assistance, human rights, and civil society in the Czech Republic and abroad. We have also cooperated with: the Open Society Institute (frequent grantee), OSCE (grantee), German Marshall Fund (grantee), European Union (grantee), Internews/USAID (grantee), United Nations Democracy Fund (grantee), and the National Endowment for Democracy (frequent grantee), among others.

Ilya Lukash
Kyrgyz Activist

“TOL trainings gave me the idea how I could use technology to spread the word about human rights issues using social networks and mobile applications. I was able to raise visiting rate to my articles ten percent using such knowledge. And, of course, Transitions helped me to bring together a team to localize Skype [into Kyrgyz] which we subsequently promoted everywhere we could including raising the question about the need for localized software products on TV and radio.”

Profiles of the Organisations Involved

6.1 Organisation Profile

Name	Transitions o.s.
Location <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place where the headquarters of the organisation are located according to the articles of incorporation Additional branches 	<p>Baranova 33,</p> <p>130 00 Prague 3</p> <p>Czech Republic</p>
Legal form	Civic Association

Contact information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Postal address Phone number Fax E-Mail Website (URL) 	<p>Baranova 33, 130 00 Prague 3, Czech Republic</p> <p>420 2 2278-0805</p> <p>420 2 2278-0804</p> <p>jeremy.druker@tol.org</p> <p>www.tol.org</p>
Founding of the organisation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Year of founding Founders 	<p>1999</p> <p>Jeremy Druker, Julia Gray, Luke Allnutt, Aleksandar Brajanoski</p>
Succession plan	none
Link to the articles of incorporation (URL)	http://registry.czso.cz/irsw/detail.jsp?prajed_id=2581832
Charity/ commercial	Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, registration number:

register <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name of the register Place of registration Date of registration 	VS/1-1/39 666/99-R Prague April 1, 1999		
Charity or non-profit organisation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Details of the charitable or non-profit purpose Acknowledgment or confirmation of tax exemption by the relevant authority Issuing authority Statement of non-profit purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transitions (TOL) is a nonprofit organization established to strengthen the professionalism, independence and impact of the news media in the post-communist countries of Europe and the former Soviet Union. We do this through a combination of journalism and media training programs, and the publication of <i>Transitions Online</i> magazine See Annex I Czech Home Office See Annex II 		
	2011	2012	2013
Headcount			
Permanent employees			
Number of full time employees	4	4	3
Number of part time employees	3	1	3
Freelancers	10	11	10
Volunteers include interns?	3	3	4
Sum of employees (total headcount)	20	19	20
Number of full time equivalents (FTEs)	1,625	0,625	1,625

Finances

7.1 Bookkeeping and Accounting

In order to provide an overview we have summarized the most important facts in the following paragraphs. All figures are in thousands of USD.

7.1.1 Bookkeeping and Accounting System

We currently use the double entry bookkeeping method. The software is called Premier. All books are kept in Czech crowns. For reporting in foreign currencies monthly/yearly average exchange rates of the Czech national bank are used.

7.1.2 Annual Financial Statements

We compile an annual Financial Statement internally which consists of a Balance Sheet and a Profit and Loss account and Notes to both Statements. The financial review is carried out by an auditing firm INTEREXPERT neziskovýsektors.r.o., Mikulandská 123/2, Nové Město, 110 00 Praha 1.

7.1.3 Controlling

Excel-based controlling and reporting is compiled on a regular basis and is adapted to meet current demands.

7.2 Assets and Liabilities

7.2.1 Balance Sheet

USD, in thousands	2010	2011	2012
Assets			
I. Intangible assets (e.g., software)	0	0	0
II. Property, plant and equipment	0	0	0
thereof real estate			
III. Financial assets	0	0	0
IV. Accounts receivable	7	6	18
thereof from members/ shareholders			
V. Liquid assets (cash, bank balance)	256	55	228
VI. Accruals and deferrals	56	214	110
Total assets	319	275	356
Liabilities			
I. Loans received	77	132	85
thereof from members/ shareholders			

II. Accounts payable	158	241	103
III. Other debt	0	0	0
IV. Accruals and deferrals	488	444	714
Total liabilities	723	817	902
Assets minus liabilities	-404	-542	-546
Negative equity			
Thereof earmarked for specific purposes			

7.3 Income and Expenses

USD, in thousands	2010	2011	2012
Income			
1. Revenues	1280	1295	1423
of which from public sector contracts	1080	1164	1300
2. Grants			
of which from public sector contracts			
3. Fees			
4. Other income	11	11	60
Total income	1291	1306	1483
Expenditure			
1. Personnel costs	71	373	328
2. Material consumption	21	35	13
3. Services	1166	987	1071
4. Financing costs			
5. Taxes			
6. Other expenditure	44	49	76
Total expenditure	1302	1444	1488
Annual profit (income minus total expenditure)	-11	-138	-5

