MISSION

We champion democracy and freedom of expression by strengthening the professionalism, independence, and impact of media and civil society organizations. We focus on Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and the former Soviet Union.

ACTIVITIES

Training
Training journalists and other media professionals in post-communist Europe and Central Asia has always been a key part of Transitions’ mission. We run a variety of programs – residential, distance learning, seminars, internships and coaching – with two main aims: to offer practical journalism training, and to help participants either improve existing media outlets or set up new ones.

Transitions Online magazine
Since its foundation in 1999, Transitions’ flagship publication, Transitions Online magazine, has become the leading Internet magazine covering Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and the former Soviet Union. With contributors throughout the region, Transitions Online is committed as a public-service media entity to using local voices to provide probing, informed coverage of these countries. This reportage also includes cross-regional analysis, with the hope that readers in countries at a different stage of transition to democracy and a market economy will benefit from the lessons learned by those that have moved at a faster pace.

HISTORY

Transitions (TOL) was founded as a Czech nonprofit organization in April 1999, the month after the final issue of its print predecessor, Transitions magazine, was published. The history of that print magazine dates to 1994, when it was first published by the Open Media Research Institute, a joint venture between Radio Free Europe and the Open Society Institute (OSI).

Four of the former print magazine’s staff launched TOL as a means of keeping the widely respected, cross-border coverage of the magazine alive. With the financial and professional support of OSI’s Internet Program and the Media Development Loan Fund, TOL began publishing exclusively online in the summer of 1999.

Starting with “on the job” training for contributors in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Transitions has grown into a significant regional training organization. In addition to journalism training, we are now acknowledged as regional experts on Internet-based media.
TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN 2010

January 2010
New Media for NGOs
In a Prague workshop that took place from 24-29 January, designed specially for the nonprofit sector, participants learned – and practiced – ways to use new media to more effectively accomplish their organizations’ goals. A number of trainees were awarded grants to take part in the seminar, including several from Moldova, Belarus, and other Central and Eastern European countries.

April 2010
Transferring Lessons Learned to Georgia
In Tbilisi, TOL led a two-day new media workshop from 11-12 April, with special sessions for journalists/media representatives and civic activists/NGO people. More than 40 participants from all over Georgia heard about the latest tools and techniques from TOL's new media training team: Dan McQuillan, Suw Charman-Anderson, Douglas Arellanes, Kevin Anderson, Emin Huseynzade, and Elza Ketsbaia. Topics covered included: social media for social impact; e-campaigns - local and international examples; privacy and security issues; social tools for organizing information; aspects of social media relevant to traditional media; and transforming mass media into social media.

May 2010
Out in the Field in Prague
In early May, TOL contributors from across Central and Eastern Europe were joined in Prague by two journalists from Africa. Guided by two TOL trainers, they produced a multimedia-journalism package on Czech education, as part of our Reporting Education project.

Social Media for Social Change
More than 50 participants attended a workshop on new media tools in Chisinau, Moldova, on 15-16 May. Trainees ran the gamut from civic society and new media activists, to journalists and businesspeople. Lead trainer Kevin Anderson, a former digital research editor at The Guardian, said he was “impressed by how many concrete ideas the participants brought to the training. They had clear plans for how they wanted to use new media and were often looking for practical knowledge of how to achieve their goals.”

Czech Elections: The Russian View
Ten young Russian journalists, hailing from St. Petersburg all the way to the Russian Far East, arrived in Prague just in time for the Czech parliamentary elections on 28-29 May. For three days they learned about election coverage with media trainer Kevin Burden. Then the group was turned loose to cover the Czech elections. They came back with thoughtful stories, perceptive photo essays, and even humorous commentaries on the Czech political system. Among the highlights was an interview with the former foreign minister, Karel Schwarzenberg, when he visited a local pub during a campaign stop.
Colorful but Colorblind
In May, Romanian and Bulgarian journalists of different ethnic backgrounds gathered at two workshops in Bucharest and Sofia to work toward remediying anti-Roma stereotyping in the media, as part of the Colorful but Colorblind project. From taking part in workshops on audio and video storytelling, to carrying out fieldwork, to editing their work in the lab, participants had a chance to throw themselves into a fully hands-on learning experience.

June 2010
Multicultural Multimedia
In June, 10 journalists from the Czech Republic took part in a training workshop focused on using multimedia tools in telling stories on topics related to the country’s Romani community. The workshop is part of the Colorful but Colorblind project, which takes place simultaneously in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia and works toward remedying anti-Roma stereotyping through the media in the target countries and internationally.

Filling the Gap
The city of Shirvan, Azerbaijan, is in an area poorly covered by traditional media. Recent flooding in that region prompted TOL to hold a workshop for journalists, NGO workers, and students on 2-3 June that taught them how to use different tools to spread information – including the news related to the flooding – online. Another workshop was held in Sumgayit, Azerbaijan, on 7-8 June.

July 2010
New Media for NGOs
In a Prague workshop that took place from 11-16 July, designed specially for the nonprofit sector, participants learned ways to use new media to more effectively accomplish their organizations’ goals. Four of the trainees were awarded grants to take part in the seminar. They came from Georgia and Moldova, where they write for online publications and actively promote new media.

Learning How to Dig
Students and journalists from around the world learned about a variety of investigative journalism topics at a seminar led by award-winning trainers on 18-23 July. Several participants joined the training thanks to grant sponsorship, including a Georgian journalist who produces investigative films and an Azeri reporter at the Institute for War and Peace Reporting.

News on Neweurasia
The Kyrgyz team at TOL’s partner citizen-journalism site, Neweurasia.net, had a pretty busy June, as one might imagine. Our bloggers posted continuous updates, analysis, photos, and video on the violence in southern Kyrgyzstan and its aftermath, logging more than 100 posts in Russian and more than 40 in English.

New Media Road Show
Almost 100 people in eight cities attended TOL new media workshops targeted at people working for local NGOs and media outlets throughout Azerbaijan in July. Half of the cities – Gazakh, Imishli, Shirvan, and Sumgayit – hosted TOL workshops for the first time. The events were funded by IREX and the OSCE.
August 2010

Back to School in Liberia
More than half of Liberia’s schools were damaged during the country’s civil war, and many still suffer from neglect. In one of TOL’s first forays out of our “traditional” region, former TOL managing editor Timothy Spence, now a media consultant, led a training program sponsored by the Open Society Institute’s Education Support Program. In the process, Liberian journalists Ora Garway and Nat Bayjay took an in-depth look at education in their West African country.

September 2010

Online in Adjara
A training course in online media kicked off in Batumi, in the Adjara region of Georgia, in September and concluded at the end of October. TOL and the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs’ Journalism School conducted a free, month-long course for working journalists funded by the Open Society Georgia Foundation. Longtime TOL trainer Doug Arellanes launched the course with a week of sessions on the latest in new media trends and tools, followed by local Georgian trainers.

Roma Beyond Stereotypes
Transitions and its partners – the Media Development Center (Sofia), the Center for Independent Journalism (Budapest), Memo 98 (Bratislava), and the Center for Independent Journalism (Bucharest) – announced the launch of Colorful but Colorblind, a collection of 25 short films about Romani communities. Produced in cooperation with the University of Miami, the stories are the centerpiece of an 18 month-long training and production project, involving 50 journalists from Romani and majority communities in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia.

Innovating in Azerbaijan
TOL held Azerbaijan’s first Social Innovation Camp on 18-19 September, with funding from IREX and NED. Over those two days, around 60 developers, designers, and social innovators competed in teams to build web-based tools for solving social problems. Another 40 people participated in concurrent training in online campaigns, e-marketing, and the latest new media trends and tools.

October 2010

Turning Serbian Journalists Green
Sixteen journalists completed an online course in October on reporting environmental issues, understanding science, and investigative journalism techniques, using the BBC iLearn distance-learning platform. The training, part of the Reporting the Environment in Serbia project, is implemented in partnership with the Novi Sad School of Journalism; BEZK, the Prague-based publisher of Ekolist.cz; and Ekopolis, a Nis-based organization dedicated to promoting better coverage of the environment in Serbian media. The training combines distance learning, seminar instruction, and work on concrete stories in the field, and is co-financed by the European Union within the Strengthening Serbia-EU Civil Society Dialogue Project.
November 2010

Teaching Old Media New Tricks

At the end of October, TOL presented three, one-day new media clinics in the Georgian cities of Tbilisi, Kutaisi, and Batumi for journalists, citizen journalists, and online activists as part of a year-long program supported by the Czech Foreign Ministry and NED. Two foreign experts, new media specialist Jakub Gornicki (Poland) and TOL's project manager for the Caucasus, Emin Huseynzade, led these informal meetings, during which the groups discussed new media strategies and tools with ample time for questions about their current and prospective online projects. And in related news, Huseynzade gave a presentation in Tbilisi at a Eurasia Partnership Foundation meeting for participants from across the Caucasus on 22 October. He spoke about the use of online media in the information wars between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and Russia and Georgia, and how journalists and activists sometimes become tools in these campaigns.

How Green the Serbian Media

Twelve participants of the Reporting the Environment in Serbia project took part in a training seminar in Novi Sad on 23, 24, and 25 November, with trainers from Serbia, the Czech Republic, and the UK. Along with instruction and exercises for the trainees, the event featured a roundtable discussion on the state of media coverage of the environment in Serbia, with key stakeholders from Serbian civil society, academia, and media. The project is co-financed by the European Union within the Strengthening Serbia-EU Civil Society Dialogue project, which is managed by Serbia’s delegation to the European Union and implemented by GOPA Consultants.

December 2010

The Roma Reality

The Colorful but Colorblind project was presented at an event in Brussels on 13 December. Attended by Roma and human rights activists from all over Europe, the Roma Reality in Europe event was hosted by ERGO Network, which links Roma grassroots organizations. The event featured a screening followed by discussion, with project manager Tihomir Loza taking part. A number of films from the project were shown at this occasion along with Guilty Until Proven Innocent, a documentary on the Roma in France by the Romedia Foundation.

Online Activism in Ganja

On 21-22 December, TOL's new media team headed to Ganja, Azerbaijan’s second largest city, to run a workshop for a group of 15 people, consisting of students from Ganja State University and the Azerbaijan State Agricultural University, professionals from different companies and organizations, and journalists. Newcomers to new media, with a special interest in online activism, were especially encouraged to participate. During the two-day seminar, the trainers demonstrated new tools for e-campaigns and blogging, which sparked a discussion on activism in the Ganja region. The use of mobile phones for reporting purposes and content creation was also high on the agenda. The workshop was the last activity of a project financed by the OSCE designed to spread new media knowledge throughout the country.
TRANSITIONS ONLINE MAGAZINE IN 2010

Transitions Online started off the year with a joint multimedia project with EurasiaNet looking at the fortunes of towns through which the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway will soon pass.

Later, through a partnership with Neweurasia (our partner Central Asian blogging network) and our own resources, the magazine offered a mix of analysis and on-the-ground reporting as the situation in Kyrgyzstan shifted throughout April and June. Of particular note was an article entitled “North and South,” which told the story of the April revolution through the different experiences of Kyrgyzstan’s two largest cities, Bishkek and Osh; and “Gunfire, Panic, and Rumors,” which chronicled the plight of one Uzbek family during the ethnic violence in June:

As in years past, TOL’s OSI-sponsored Roma journalism training project produced a wealth of important material, including reports on refugees in Kosovo, a Romani imam in Macedonia, sex education in Bulgaria, and tuberculosis in Romanian prisons.

Transitions Online also ran several special reports throughout the year, which explored education in post-conflict societies, the changing nature of philanthropy in TOL’s coverage region, the role of Chinese money and investment in Central Asia, and the changing face of cities in Central and Eastern Europe.

The magazine also kicked off a regular feature on contemporary film in Central and Eastern Europe, and continued profiling important personalities from across the region. One of the highlights in that regard was an in-depth look at Yuri Luzhkov, then the long-serving mayor of Moscow, as the author offered a prescient look at a larger-than-life figure whose days in office were numbered.

Transitions Online ended the year with an ambitious project chronicling life in Belarus at the time of the presidential elections. The project included a website with profiles of the candidates as well as multimedia pieces on Belarusians from all walks of life: professors, journalists, artists, political activists, and people on the street.
FUNDING

Diversity
From its launch in 1999, Transitions has sought to break away from grant dependency by diversifying its income. The majority of our projects are funded by donors, but self-generated, non-grant income is an important source of funding.

Self-generated income
In addition to receiving grants, Transitions generates its own income through the sale of training courses and the Transitions Online internet magazine. In 2010 self-generated income amounted to $164,000, some 14% of the organization’s annual budget.

Training courses
TOL Training holds intensive, practical courses that attract young journalists, students, and media professionals from all over the world. Courses held in 2010 addressed international reporting, investigative journalism, photojournalism, and new media. In addition to open courses, TOL Training also arranges tailor-made courses for universities and other training organizations. A highlight of the year was once again the regular January visit of 54 master’s students from Hong Kong Baptist University for a course in international reporting.

Sales dropped 28 percent to $101,862, under pressure from continued belt-tightening related to the global economic downturn and a strong Czech crown relative to the U.S. dollar. Nonetheless, TOL Training managed to hold all of the courses planned for the year and continued to make a positive financial contribution to Transitions.

Transitions Online magazine
Independent income is especially important for the Transitions Online Internet magazine, which covers political, social, cultural, and economic developments in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The magazine does receive some grant funding, but self-generated income is essential in maintaining comprehensive regional coverage and editorial independence. Income is gained through sales of subscriptions, reports, advertising, and syndication.

The magazine also faced a tough economic environment during 2010, as libraries started to impose budget cuts and syndication income came under pressure. Against this environment, it was pleasing to see a small growth in magazine sales, which grew by 7 percent in 2010 to reach $62,000.
Donors in 2010
Embassy of the United States Prague
European Commission, DG Justice, Freedom and Security
Fund for Central and East European Book Projects (CEEKP)
HIVOS
International Media Support (IMS)
Internews
IREX
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic: Department of Human Rights & Transition
Promotion Policy, Transition Promotion Program
National Endowment for Democracy (NED)
NESsT
Open Society Georgia Foundation
Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)
The Open Society Institute-Assistance Foundation (OSI-AF) /Azerbaijan
OSI Central Eurasia Project (EurasiaNet.org)
OSI Education Support Program (ESP)
OSI Media Program
United Nations Democracy Fund
PROFIT & LOSS STATEMENT
For the year to 31 December 2010

REVENUES
Grants $1,061,968
Exchange-rate profits $10,980
Other revenues $197,081
Total Revenues $1,270,029

EXPENSES
Materials and energy costs $20,773
Services $1,147,234
Personnel $70,261
Taxes and fees $352.00
Interest $3,693
Exchange-rate losses $28,152
Other costs $11,250
Total Expenses $1,281,715

Profit / (Loss) ($11,686)
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