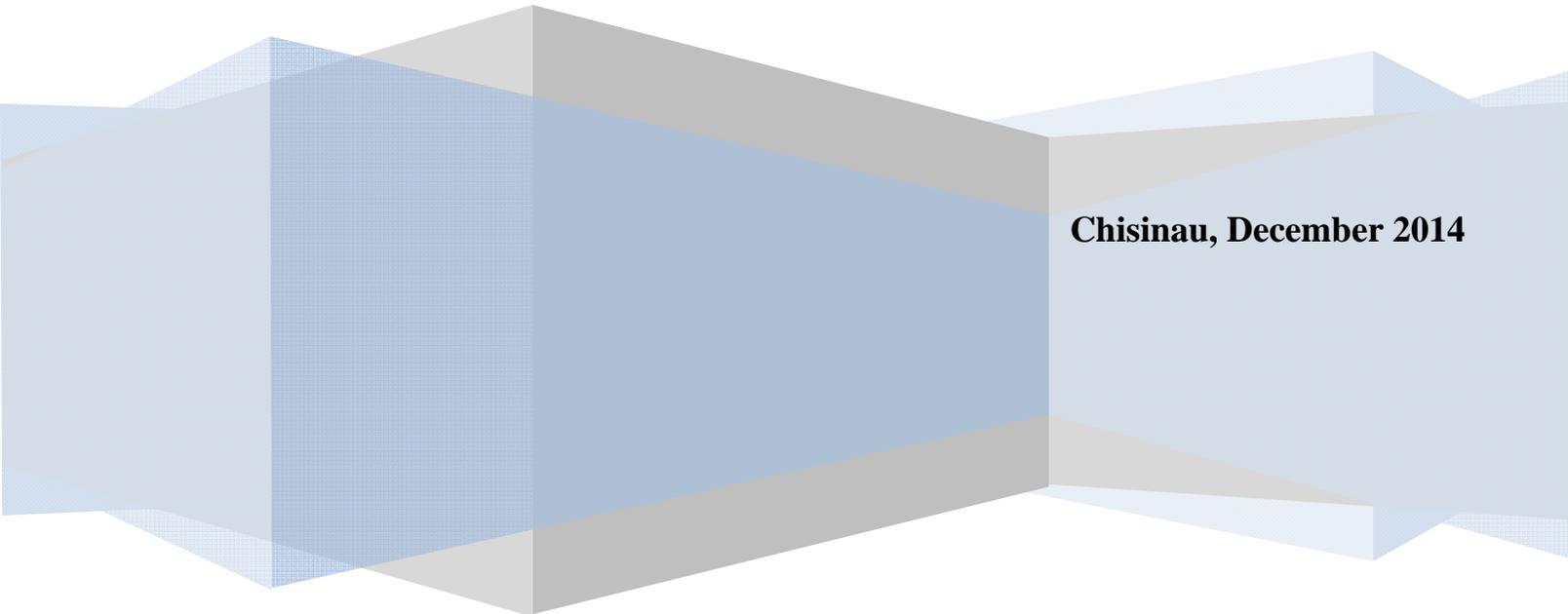


**Strategy for development
of the
Association of Independent Press
for the years 2015 - 2020**



Chisinau, December 2014

In the year 2011, the Association of Independent Press (API) approved the Strategy for organizational development for the years 2011-2013. The document highlighted the organization's priorities, as well as activities and efforts to be invested for reaching them. The majority of planned activities have been accomplished, and the efficiency of implementing the Strategy for development has been highly appreciated by API-member constituents. At present, there arose the need to review the Strategy and determine the priorities for a new period. In this context, the hereby document has been produced.

API's operation environment

If referring to the external environment where API continues to operate, it has not changed considerably. Consequently, after having reviewed the SWOT analysis produced four years ago (review done with the contribution of member-newspapers), it looks as follows:

API's Strengths:

- Is well-known and highly appreciated on the media market in the country and abroad;
- Collaborates with dozens of foreign donors, rejoicing their credibility and continuously enlarging the list of collaborations;
- Is a member of the World Association of Newspapers (WAN);
- The cumulative circulation of API member-newspapers amounts to almost 80,000 copies, being very attractive for advertising suppliers;
- Collaborates with reliable non-governmental organizations from R. Moldova;
- Influences the decision-taking process in terms of public policies;
- Provides expertise in mass-media sector for national and international entities;
- Influences the quality of journalism via the Press Council;
- Contributes to boost the quality of journalism by organizing training sessions and creation contests, as well as by granting awards;
- Has a qualified team of trainers;
- Facilitates experience sharing between journalists and editorial offices;
- Publishes important media products, being further distributed via the member-newspapers' network;
- Manages successful platforms www.moldovacurata.md , www.api.md .

Weaknesses:

- Does not contribute enough to the technical-material endowment and modernization of book-keeping of editorial offices;
- Some members become involved in the Association's activities very seldom;
- Institutional costs are not entirely covered by own financial means;
- Does not possess its own premises;
- API has not managed to attract information portals and newspapers as new members;
- The electronic versions of newspapers are not sufficiently well developed;
- Some API members practice political partisanship;
- There are no journalists who would write for foreign media.

Opportunities:

- Continuous need for assistance on behalf of API for independent newspapers, especially for local ones;
- Lack of professional expertise in the field in Republic of Moldova;
- Openness of national and international organizations to develop partnerships with API;
- Lack of some categories of information in the society, such as information about: European integration; reforms in different sectors: justice, social assistance, etc.

Threats:

- The rapid development of the Internet endangers the future development of newspapers' print versions;
- The financial crisis affects the number of subscribers and, for this reason, newspapers are forced to increase the price for subscriptions;
- Risk that political and economic oligarchy would monopolize some media market segments;
- Appearance of some media trusts and their concentration in the hands of some politicians, purchase and transformation of independent media into politically dependent mass-media;
- Political power continues to favor the mass-media financed from state or local budgets;
- Legislation which stipulates equal conditions for foreign and local media, resulting in disloyal competition and disadvantages;
- Exclusion of Republic of Moldova from zone for financial assistance by some foreign donor organizations.

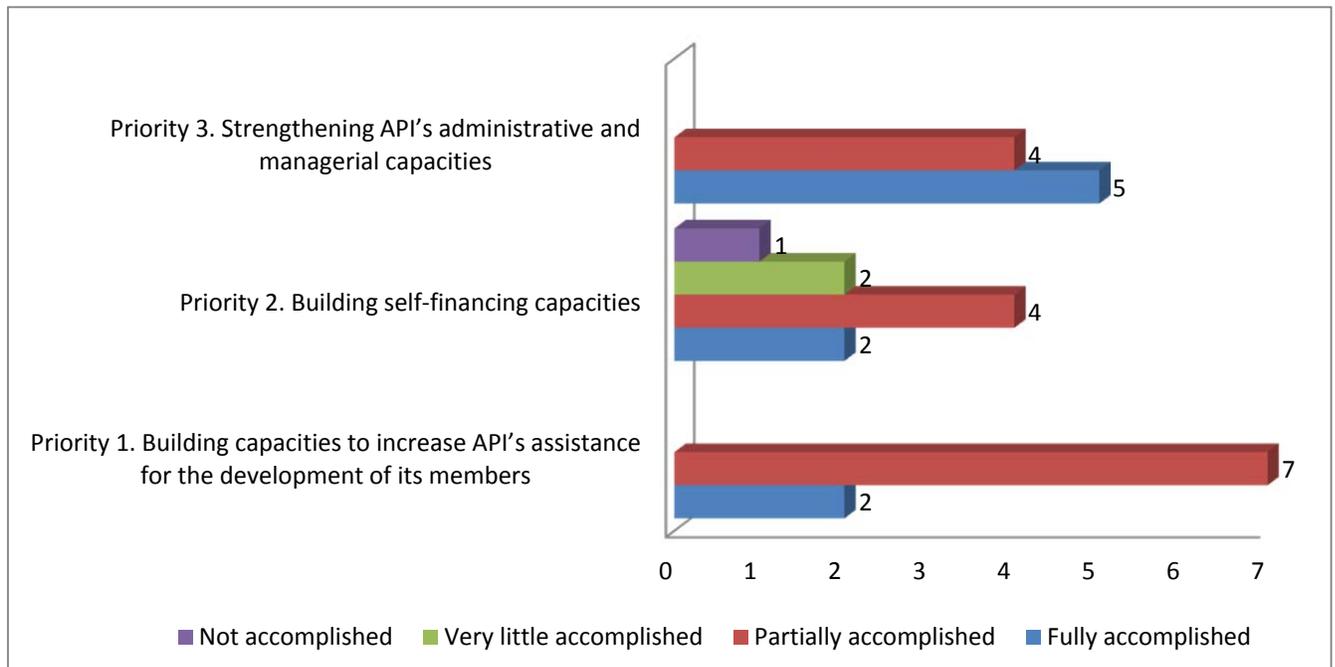
Analysis of efforts invested in implementing API's Strategy for development for the period 2011-2013 from the perspective of member newspapers

Throughout the years 2011-2013, API's priorities set by the Strategy for Development were:

Priority 1. Building capacities to increase API's assistance for the development of its members;

Priority 2. Building self-financing capacities;

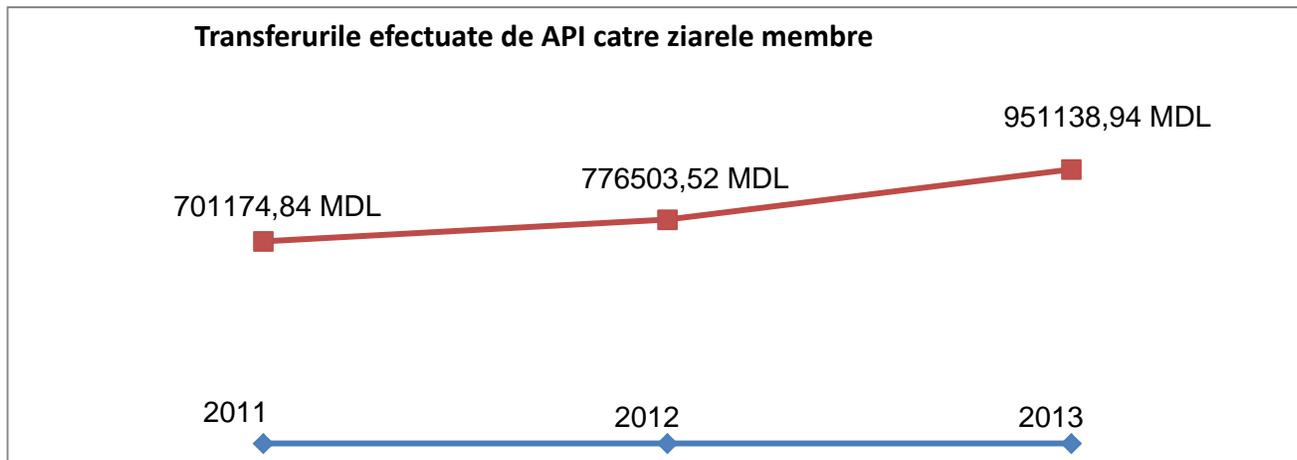
Priority 3. Strengthening API's administrative and managerial capacities.



Although the three priorities have not been entirely accomplished, nevertheless, significant results have been registered. Member newspapers believe the best results were scored for priority no.3, which refers to consolidation of API's administrative and managerial capacities.

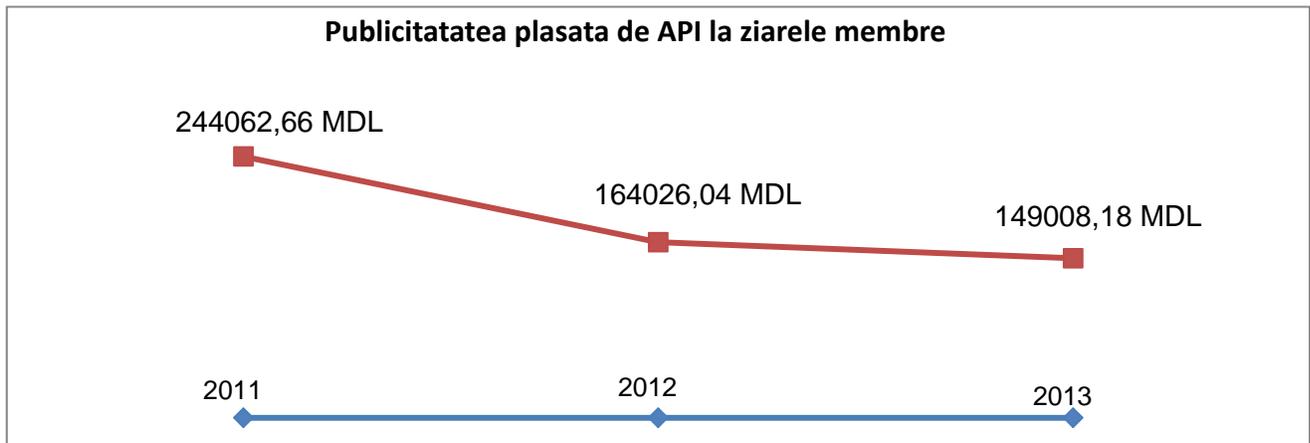
The degree of fulfilling priority no.3 is due to various financing obtained by API owing to the training sessions attended by organization's staff, study visits conducted, and sharing of experience organized. During 2011-2014, some of them were implemented, others are still in the process of implementation. About 20 projects were sponsored by various financing institutions. All these activities have directly or indirectly contributed to the development of member-newspapers or boosted the professionalism of local newspapers' employees. Newspapers share the opinion that priorities no.1 and no.2, which refer to building the organization's self-financing capacities and increasing API's assistance ensured to its members, were insufficiently fulfilled.

These conclusions, however, denote the fact that member-newspapers are not aware of the status of income obtained by API during the reference period, as well as transfers performed by API to member-newspapers. The activity to enhance API's financial assistance provided for member-newspapers has been included in the list of priority activities set in the Strategy for development. Having analyzed the financial data, we could conclude that efforts have been invested to increase or, at least, to maintain the annual transfers of financial means to newspapers.



Transfers performed by API to member-newspapers

Thus, from 2011 till 2014, there was an increase in the amounts transferred to member-newspapers, including amounts generated by advertising. If, in 2011 this sum was equal to 701 174.84 MDL and in 2012 - 776 503.52 MDL, then in 2013 – it represented 951 138.94 MDL. According to preliminary data, in 2014 the amount of transfers exceeded one million MDL.



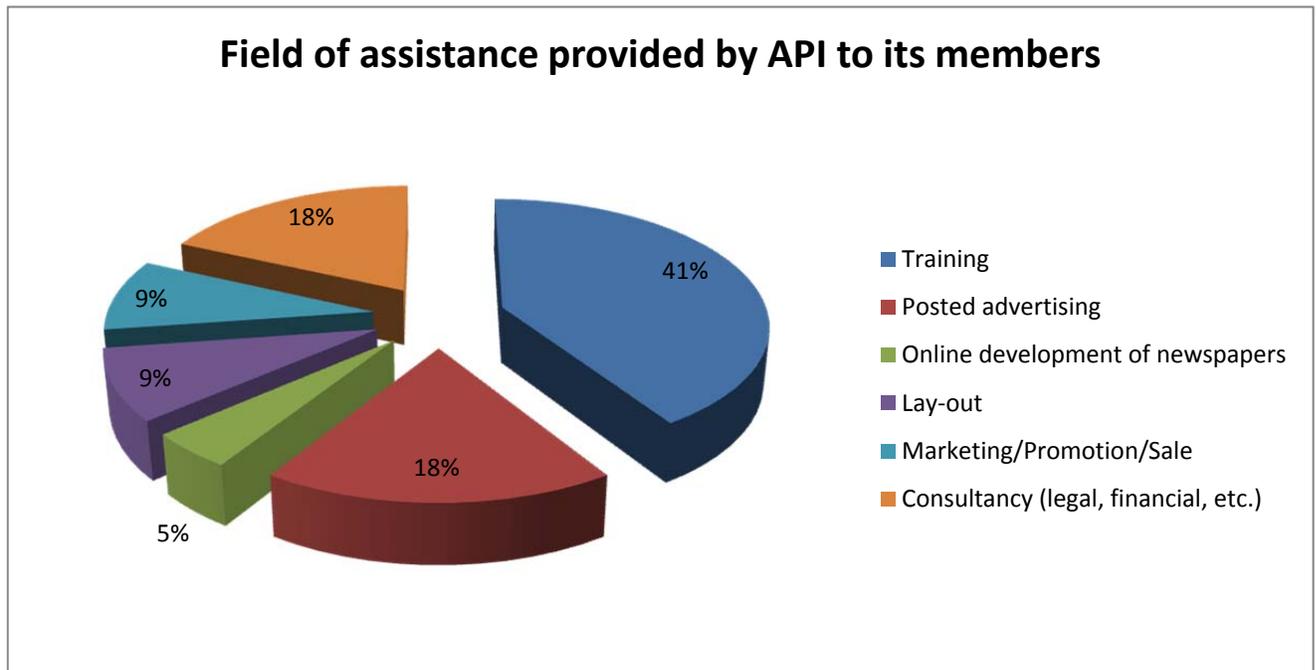
Advertising directed to member-newspapers by API

Nevertheless, there is a tendency to reduce advertising provided to member-newspapers via API. If in 2011 the value of provided advertising was equal to 244 062.66 MDL, then in 2013 – it reached only 149 008.18 MDL. This is because of the general tendency to diminish the quantity of advertising provided to print press in Moldova, even if member-newspapers agree on the need to consolidate API's Advertising Department with a view to identify more advertising offers.

Similarly, financial data reveal an increase in API's income from services provided to other organizations: In 2010, the income consisted of 36 thousand MDL, whereas in 2013 - about 58 thousand MDL. To develop it, this aspect needs more attention and efforts.

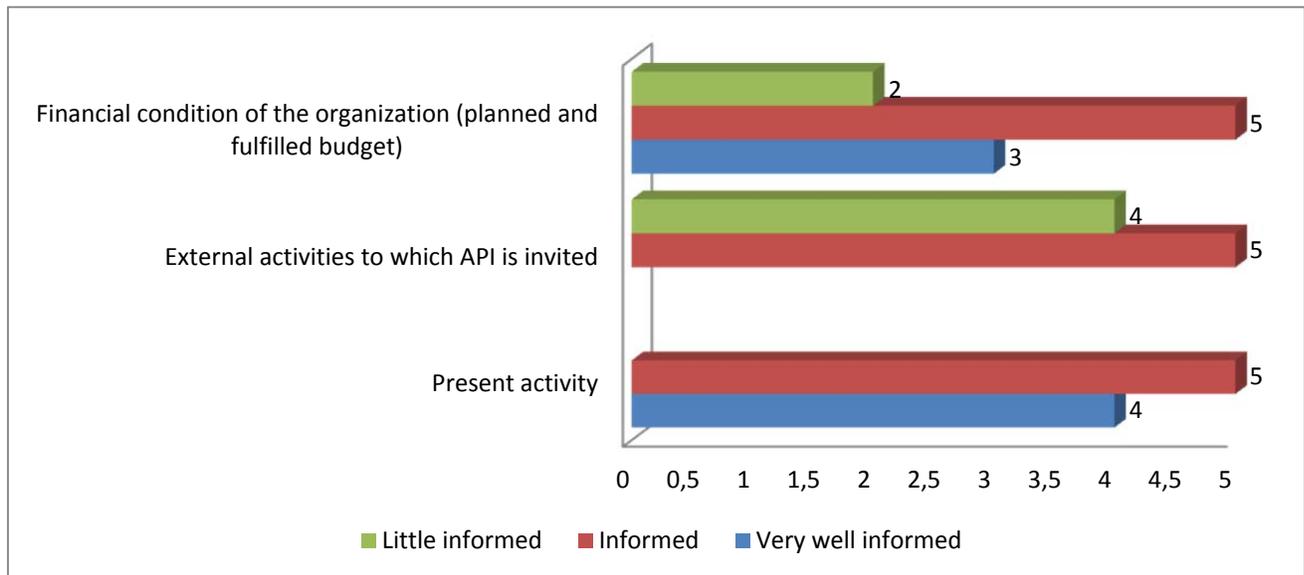
The majority of member-newspapers highly appreciated the training sessions organized for the members of editorial offices, qualifying them as compliant with the actual needs. There is, however, enough room for improving this assistance, which will be reflected in the priorities set in the Strategy for the following five years. Following the discussions, some members mentioned they had not called upon the assistance available within API. This situation occurs including because of the fact that API members are not insistently and aggressively informed about the availability and type of assistance which they can benefit from. To their turn, member-newspapers are also not very pro-active about

informing themselves about the assistance provided, since the informative newsletters do not include this type of information.



During discussions and after having analyzed the questionnaires filled in by some representatives of API-member newspapers, it was revealed that they were not familiar with API's structure, especially the administrative team, as well as responsibilities of employees. In the same context, the development of API's organizational chart was one of the actions set in the previous Strategy, which was not accomplished. Consequently, this task shall be transferred to API's Strategy for development for the period 2015-2020.

When referring to the transparency of API's activity, the members of the organization have stated there is an improvement in the degree of transparency and accessibility of information about the organization, but gaps persist as well and they should be removed. The most serious objections addressed the information related to the financial condition of the organization (salaries of organization's staff, administrative costs, transfers to member-newspapers, etc.). Likewise, the information about the Association's external activity was categorized as incomplete (the organization's membership within international organizations, participation at different conferences or international forums, external training or study visits).



Priorities for the period 2015-2020

Departing from API's proclaimed goal to contribute to the enhancement of impact produced by independent media in Republic of Moldova, the organization must plan its activities on two dimensions: to promote constantly the values of independent press from Republic of Moldova and provide the necessary assistance for developing independent media. That is why, the development and support of independent newspapers, which are members of API, is an objective which helps to build a lucrative media business model, and which is guided by the values declared by independent media. For this reason, API will invest efforts to ensure assistance both in terms of technical-material aspect and quality of media products offered to media consumers and journalists.

At present, API continues to be one of the active media organizations that promote and defend independent press in Republic of Moldova. The SWOT analysis, which was previously developed and later updated, shows that the organization has important power and strength to influence decision-taking factors and form the public opinion as regards media development in the country. In this meaning, API's image is supported as well by member-newspapers, which, by their own example, confirm the possibility to develop an independent and impartial media product.

Judging from the above stated, API has to continue, during the years 2015-2020, the activities which will help to fulfil its statutory objectives, to the benefit of member-newspapers and the media in Moldova on the whole:

- support independent press institutions, defend the civil and professional rights of independent media employees;
- help independent media organizations to consolidate their viability;
- ensure an ongoing process of training and qualification-raising of independent media staff;
- conduct lobby and advocacy campaigns aimed to improve the conditions for independent media development.

Under these circumstances, API's priorities for the period 2015-2020 shall be grouped as follows:

Priority 1. Create a friendly and motivational legal framework for the development of independent media in Republic of Moldova.

Priority 2. Establish a center for continuous professional improvement of independent mass-media.

Priority 3. Provide assistance to member-newspapers with a view to meet modern trends of independent media.

Priority 4. Consolidate the internal mechanism of interaction between API members and the administrative team.

The first two priorities shall include a large range of activities which are likely to have impact upon the general mass-media operation environment in Moldova, favoring in the future the evolution of independent media.

The last two priorities refer directly to the development of API-member newspapers and process of building the organization's capacities. In the context of the third priority, API will direct considerable resources to support API-member newspapers by means of organizing activities for their development and fostering the degree of such entities' reliability.

The current discussions held with member-newspapers in order to determine API's development priorities for the upcoming five years have emphasized a new approach of the Association's membership which becomes more pragmatic and oriented towards gaining economic benefits. This approach extends as well over API's advocacy activity, oriented towards the creation of an environment favorable to independent media development in Moldova. Member-newspapers plead for the fact that API should develop advocacy activities, which would ultimately result in the creation of proper conditions for development of independent media, in general, and API members, in particular.

Similarly, at the moment API is perceived as a center for assistance for independent media in Moldova. Being aware of the fact that diversification of assistance and enhancement of assistance provided by API requires financial resources, member newspapers are willing to review the mechanism of calculating the membership fee, since a good deal of them find today's existing fee as very low, as compared to the benefits obtained from API.

In the context of ensuring assistance for the development of member-newspapers and taking into consideration the rapid evolution of the country's mass-media, including on-line media, API members have repeatedly expressed worries in connection to the slow adjustment of API-member newspapers to media development trends. For this reason, it is necessary to mobilize all efforts in order to develop on-line versions of newspapers, and improve the newspaper staff's abilities to promote on-line versions, attract advertising, develop content marketing, etc. In this meaning, complex techniques, including training, must be applied, with a view to re-format the concept of API-member independent newspapers, as information means which are accessible on-line and in print form. At this point, it is necessary to return to one of the activities included in the previous Strategy for development, which referred to provision of paid services to API-members, especially consultancy and training services. So far, API has not practiced such an approach, although it would be a good solution when newspapers are interested in professional consultancy, but are not ready to pay individual consultancy or training. Thus, given the case when there are several members that find a training course on a specific topic as priority, API may assess the costs for training organization, including for contracting an expert in the field. These costs may be proportionally covered by newspapers requesting the training. This approach shall render the member-newspapers more

accountable, as they will have to treat the organized training more seriously in order to gain maximum benefits. Additionally, the costs will be much lower for each newspaper, compared to the situation when contracting individually a specialist in the field in order to receive the requested assistance.

At present, API maintains the communication process with owners and editors-in-chief of publications, whereas other employees of member-newspapers are involved in organization's training programs. In such a way, some employees are briefly familiar with API's activity and do not receive information about the organization's priorities and initiatives. Similarly, there is no system of assistance to be ensured to members-legal entities, fact mentioned in discussions with the concerned persons. The mechanism of interaction between API and member-newspaper collaborators will be reflected in the organization's priorities for the upcoming period.

Bearing in mind the concerns expressed by the member newspapers during the series of unfolded consultations, the process of fulfilling the third priority (*Provide assistance to member-newspapers with a view to meet modern trends of independent media*) will involve the following steps:

- Develop on-line platforms of member-newspapers from the viewpoint of economic efficiency;
- Develop a complex database for all fields of operation of API members;
- Develop a mechanism for involving editorial office teams and natural persons, members of API, in the activities developed by the organization.

To accomplish the four priorities of the new Strategy for development implies the launching of multiple complex activities and strengthening of API's administrative team. The implementation of some priorities needs urgent intervention, for remedying the existing flaws and scoring uninterrupted progress. Although not stated in the list of priorities, building the capacities of API administrative team is a continuous process, including the capacities of Investigation Department (www.moldovacurata.md), which is highly appreciated by member-newspapers and API staff.

Monitoring and evaluation

API will monitor the fulfillment of planned benchmarks and assess the degree of accomplishment of its priorities. Each year, API shall produce a report on the progress of implementing the hereby Strategy, to be submitted to the organization's administration bodies. At the same time, the Plan for implementing the Strategy for development shall be adjusted depending on the results shown by the report.

Upon expiry of the Action Plan foreseen for a three-year period, API administrative team will evaluate the accomplishment of actions and prepare a full report to be submitted to the Board of Directors, simultaneously with an Action plan for the period 2019-2020, covering the period prior to completion of the Strategy for development.

For monitoring the Strategy's implementation, the following progress indicators shall be used:

- Number of on-line versions of developed member newspapers (number of unique visitors per month, annual bulk of advertising posted on on-line versions);
- API's income, received from provision of services and increased membership fees - in growth;
- Proposals from API's advocacy agenda - promoted;
- Number of produced legislative amendments;
- Activities to consolidate API members' team - organized;

- Degree of API members' satisfaction with the assistance provide by the organization (yearly questionnaires prepared to determine the progress).

Priority	Notes	Financing	Activity	Action
<p>Priority 1. Create a friendly and motivational legal framework for the development of independent media in Republic of Moldova.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members are interested in focusing API's efforts on initiatives that are likely to ensure the economic security of independent newspapers. For this reason, API must internally discuss in details the organization's advocacy agenda in order to prevent the dispersal of efforts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External financing organizations (external resources for advocacy and lobby activities are to be identified). 	<p>Support the distribution of newspapers.</p>	<p>Continue negotiations with the Ministry of Information Technologies and State Enterprise „Poșta Moldovei” with regard to conditions for newspaper distribution.</p>
			<p>Promote amendments to the law which regulates postal activity, which would classify the newspaper distribution activity as a basic one.</p>	
			<p>Analyze the possibility to introduce the mechanism for subsidizing independent press in the state budget from the economic and legislative points of view.</p>	
			<p>Promote the introduction of possibilities to subsidize independent mass-media distribution in the state budget.</p>	
<p>Advocacy activities regarding the adjustment of tax provisions to the peculiarities of mass media activity.</p>	<p>Promote exclusion of VAT for press and annulment of VAT-payer title for mass-media which already obtained it.</p>			
<p>Develop API's advocacy</p>	<p>Appoint one API staff unit</p>			

			agenda.	in charge of advocacy within API.
				Determine priorities for amending the legislation that has impact upon the activity of independent mass-media in Moldova.
				Monitor the implementation of the legislative framework that concerns the activity of independent mass-media.
				Produce reports, on a yearly basis, on the functionality of the legislative framework regarding mass-media's activity and update the advocacy agenda
			From time to time, organize meetings among mass-media and public authorities and state institutions, also with representatives of foreign Missions, international organizations with offices in Moldova, in order to discuss mass-media's problems and possibilities for collaboration.	
			Consolidate advocacy efforts of media organizations.	Consult the advocacy agenda with media organizations from Moldova.

				<p>Determine legal provisions to be promoted by media NGOs for excluding the dispersal of efforts.</p> <p>Organize consultative reunions, on a quarterly basis, with media NGOs in order to discuss the progress of the advocacy activity and problems that need to be mentioned in talks with public authorities.</p>
<p>Priority 2. Establish a center for continuous professional improvement of independent mass-media.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • API is known as an organization that ensures highly-qualified training with a view to enhance the degree of professionalism of the staff. The Association must capitalize this advantage by means of improving the trainers' qualification and training modules, to be oriented towards journalists' needs. • The development of newspapers' on-line versions is a course that will be addressed with maximum seriousness. The course will include well-defined thematic sessions covering the range of all aspects that 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External financing organizations (the financing organizations that will provide assistance for the development of independent newspapers' on-line versions shall be identified; • Paid services ensured by API; • Income from service provision; • Collection of membership fees. 	<p>Build the capacities of trainers trained by API.</p>	
			<p>Develop a study on training needs in independent press from Republic of Moldova.</p>	<p>Determine the training needs for different categories of staff or employers of independent media.</p>
				<p>Systematize training courses in training modules.</p>
			<p>Determine training priorities for member newspapers.</p>	<p>Prepare a training plan and identify financial resources for its accomplishment.</p>
				<p>Prepare a training plan and coordinate it with member newspapers.</p> <p>Prepare a cycle of training sessions on the development of online platform.</p>

	<p>are necessary for producing an on-line variant of the publication and developing it until becoming a lucrative product. The course will include aspects of graphical presentation, content development, plus marketing aspects on how to promote the new product, attract advertising and advantageous partnerships. Similar courses shall be prepared for advertising agents, reporters, designers, web-designers, managers, etc.</p>			<p>Contract a group of experts in on-line media sector (design, marketing, attracting advertising).</p>
<p>Priority 3. Provide assistance to member-newspapers with a view to meet modern trends of independent media.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • API members wish to have a complex resource center for all activity needs. • Newspapers require increased assistance on behalf of API when identifying some advantageous suppliers and negotiating prices that are convenient to newspapers. This job, which is new for API, requires additional resources, by hiring a new person who will coordinate and assist newspapers in the process of technical-material endowment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal administrative resources; • Income from service provision; • Collection of membership fees. 	<p>Organize practical training sessions on photo and video for print press and on-line platforms.</p> <p>Develop partnerships with public institutions on posting advertising or implement specific social campaigns.</p>	<p>Conduct training with a foreign expert on shooting photographs or video clips.</p> <p>Share experience among API-member publications.</p> <p>Prepare offers for collaboration with various Ministries, other public institutions on preferential posting of advertising in API-newspapers' network.</p> <p>Send offers for production of supplements or for posting advertising materials to various institutions, which implement projects in Moldova.</p>
			<p>Produce a database with experts from different fields that can be contacted by journalists for requesting</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In plus to technical-material endowment, newspapers request resources for developing the publications. They request simplified and operational mechanisms for accessing the photo-gallery, an updated video gallery. 		opinions, comments etc., while preparing various thematic materials.	
			Analyze the possibilities to procure API's server for providing hosting for electronic platforms of member newspapers.	
			Consolidate the Advertising Department.	Recruit additional staff for the Advertising Department.
				Include on-line platforms in advertising offers.
			Assess, periodically, the needs for technical-material supply of editorial offices.	Systematize information in accordance with categories of needs.
				Follow the appearance and offers (bids) of technical equipment suppliers and inform newspapers.
			Develop a photo gallery.	Simplify the mechanism of accessing the photo gallery.
	Update the photo gallery instantly.			
	Request photographs in printing format from central public authorities, immediately from the events and update the gallery.			

			<p>Inform member newspapers about new sections included in the gallery.</p>
			<p>Create a database of financing organizations.</p>
			<p>Categorize the financing organizations in terms of fields of financing.</p>
			<p>Conduct training on writing projects. Explain specific aspects requested by European or US financing organizations.</p>
<p>Priority 4. Consolidate the internal mechanism of interaction between API members and the administrative team.</p>	<p>To maintain the members' degree of trust.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal administrative resources; • Income from service provision; • Collection of membership fees. 	<p>Enhancing the usefulness of internal newsletter - APIinfo.</p>
			<p>Include newspapers' personnel in the list of internal newsletter recipients.</p>
			<p>Include natural persons who are members in the list of internal newsletter recipients.</p>
			<p>Inform API members about the organization's current activity, including about participation to different visits abroad, financial status of the organization.</p>
			<p>Present API's organizational chart with description of responsibilities for each Department and level of expertise that member newspapers can benefit</p>

				from.
			Organize experience sharing.	Organize sharing of experience abroad.
				Invite API-member natural persons to training sessions with foreign experts, share experience.
			Organize thematic meetings for API members with different personalities.	Assess member-newspapers' interests in discussing with various personalities.
				Prepare a schedule of meetings with personalities from various fields.

