

# RUSSIA

**Name:** Oksana Vozhdaeva

**Year of Fellowship:** 2009/2010

---

**1) What is the basic political system in your country (e.g. democratic, semi-authoritarian, authoritarian or other type of hybrid regime)?**

Authoritarian, but officially defined as “sovereign democracy”

**2) What are the main features of your media landscape? (private/public, print/broadcast/internet usage, ownership concentration, government control, etc.)**

Television is the most powerful media in the country, it has much more audience than the newspapers. Radio would be probably the last in the list of people's preference, excepting music stations.

There are 6 main informational TV-channels in Russia, plus 1 which broadcasts to the west (Russia Today). Two of these channels are owned by government (Rossia 1, Rossia 24), and RT is a budget subsidised. RT started broadcasting in 2005 as a first Russian TV-channel broadcasting 24/7 on English with a purpose of “reflecting the Russian position on the main international issues” and “informing the audience about events and occurrences of the Russian life”.

Other main 4 channels are private, however the owners are more or less affiliated with the state. In case of Perviy channel, the state owns 51% of assets, the NTV is owned by Gazprom-media group, which is part of the state corporation of Gazprom. REN-TV and 5 channel are owned by the National media-group, which consists of bank, insurance company and two industrial companies. Almost all of them, in turn, are affiliated with the government indirectly.

But its worth to mention that the REN-TV channel has the only real critical view on the country events among all the TV channels, rather independent news and discussion programme. It is supposed that such a “free view” is allowed to demonstrate the plurality in the country for the west and to justify the term of “sovereign democracy”. Similar functions are assumed for the radio station “Echo Moskvy”, which is quiet critical and oppositional one.

Television in Russia is controlled by the state. The top-managers of the main channels have a meetings in Kremlin on a regular base. However there is no censorship as such in the country, it is more like a phenomenon of self-censorship under the informal Kremlin influence.

The newspaper area seems more independent than the TV one. There are at least four rather independent broadsheets in Russia: “Kommersant”, “Vedomosti”, “Nezavisimaya gazeta” and “Novaya gazeta”. All of them are private.

During the period of Putin's presidency the internet space became more powerful in the meaning of audience interest. Oppositional experts and politicians which are not allowed on the main media channels started blogging and publications on the web-sites. The most popular of them: Gazeta.ru, Grani.ru, Ej.ru. The young audience are tend to migrate to the internet not only for technological but also because of the political reasons, television "light" and "relax" content becomes less and less interesting for young educated people, the phrase "I don't watch TV" becomes a fashion feature, and if they read the newspapers, they would more likely do that on-line.

**3) Where does your country come in the rankings of Freedom House (on freedom of the press) and Reporters Without Borders?**

<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=251&year=2009>

<http://www.rsf.org/en-classement1003-2009.html>

The score of Freedom House is 80

The rank of Reporters Without Borders is 153, the mark is 60,88

**4) Would you broadly agree with their characterisation of your situation?**

Yes

**5) a) what are the main challenges facing the media in your country in the next five years (economic, political, technological etc)?**

Political and technological (on-going digital development and increase of broadband penetration), and economical issues followed by first two.

**b) what are the main limits on the practice of a free press in your country, based on your own practical experience of working there?**

My personal practical experience is an exceptional case as I'm working for the regional broadcasting company which is still independent. Nothing is prohibited, however we feel the pressure from the different governmental enforcement bodies (such as check-ups with the purpose to take out the license) or from the Internal Affairs office (attempts to start a trial on the company management). But in general it's not allowed to criticise Kremlin, Putin and Medvedev personally, their ministers, the United Russia party. It's safer not to talk about any protest actions, especially against Putin and his government, or give any space or quote the opposition.

**6) What are the main roles that new media play in your country?**

Internet has now a big political role as the only place for real debates and also a catalyst of civil activity via development of the social networks and blogs.