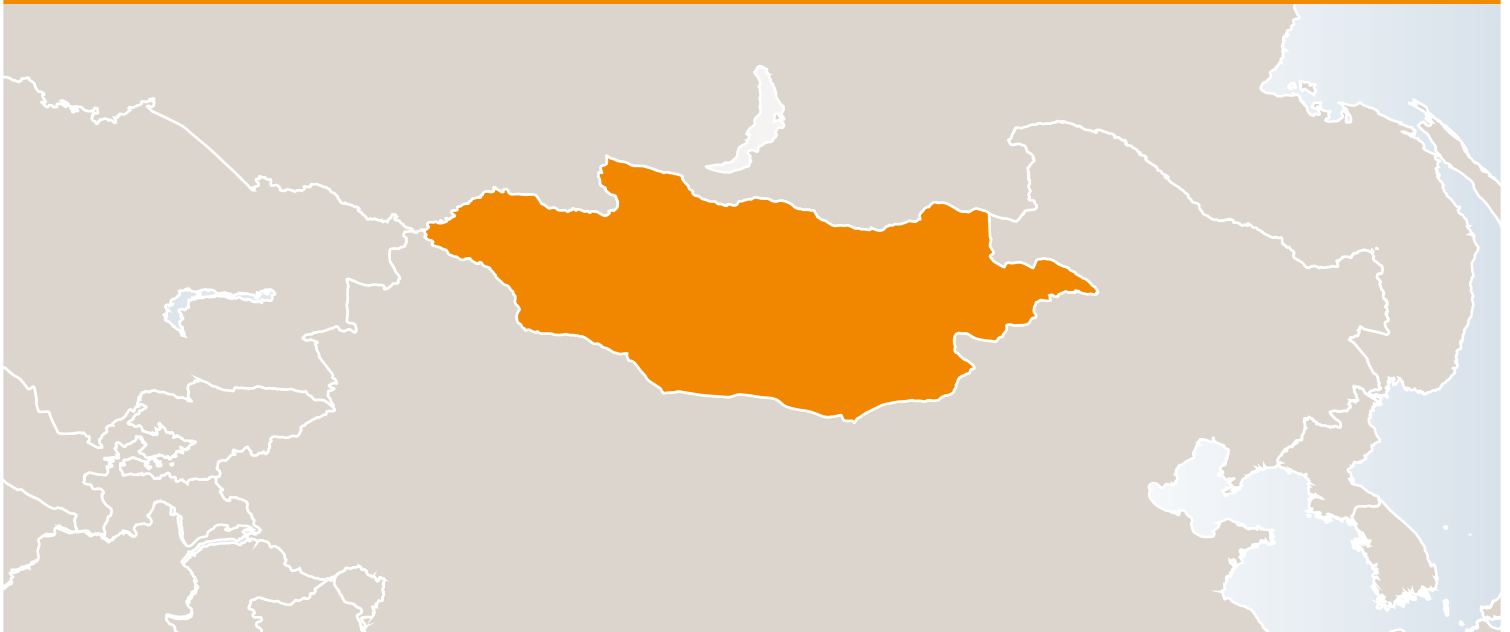


# Improving professional journalism standards: Media self-regulation and investigative reporting in Mongolia

External Evaluation Report | Executive Summary  
**Mongolia**

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## Background

Since the fall of communism, Mongolia has gone through what can be considered exceptional democratic development in the east central Asian region. Nevertheless, extreme social and economic inequality remains a major problem in the country especially between urban and rural areas. Even though media freedom is officially guaranteed by law since 1998 Mongolian journalists fear prosecution for libel and slander.

DW Akademie cooperates with two project partners in Mongolia. One of them is the newly established Mongolian Media Council, which was set up by a proactive working group of Mongolian journalists and representatives of civil society who had reached out to DW Akademie for guidance. Since the establishment of the Mongolian Media Council, DW Akademie has provided consultancies and training to its managing board, secretariat and complaints committees on issues like complaints procedure, finance, organization, human resources, and public relations. Training for media organizations, journalists, media lawyers and civil society on media ethics is also part of this project line.

The second project partner is the Press Institute of Mongolia. Here, DW Akademie helps develop teaching modules in investigative reporting to be incorporated into the Institute's programs for journalism education and training. A group of teachers from Ulaanbaatar and rural areas are trained to independently teach investigative journalism. Apart from that the Press Institute is offered advice on finances, human resources, blended learning and networking.

The aim of this evaluation, which was carried out by an external consultant, is a constructive assessment of the project results after completion of the first funding phase (2015-2017). The evaluation is based on the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria and uses a method mix, including document and literature analysis and interviews with project managers, project partners, and target groups on site. The recommendations made at the end do not necessarily align with the perspective and planning of the project team. Nevertheless, all suggestions were discussed in order to allow lessons learned to be incorporated into the development of future strategies.

## Conclusions of the project evaluation

Mongolia's journalists have made several attempts to set up a media council, however it is only through cooperation with DW Akademie they were finally successful. The newly established institution is considered relevant for various reasons, both by journalists and by the people of Mongolia. While journalism in Mongolia is often considered to be lacking objectivity, independence, and accountability, the media council has the potential to establish journalistic standards. For citizens it is considered to be useful for exercising their right to information by way of complaint. Promoting investigative reporting is also thought to be relevant in the Mongolian context, especially against the background of an outdated journalism curriculum that neglects investigative techniques and is compounded by wider problems in Mongolian society, such as corruption within public authorities that ought to be brought to the public attention. Thus, the evaluation judges the criterion **relevance** as "comprehensively fulfilled."

The criterion effectiveness has been judged separately for each project component. As for the Mongolian Media Council, the evaluation concludes that the project objective and the project outputs have been achieved to a high degree or are on track to be achieved by the end of the project. The Mongolian Media Council is established, it has adopted a press code that is acknowledged by major media houses, and it processes the complaints it receives. Hence, the criterion **effectiveness** is here seen as "comprehensively fulfilled". In terms of the project component for strengthening investigative reporting, the evaluation acknowledges that customizable teaching modules have been thoroughly designed and teachers have been trained to start teaching journalists independently. However, since the project objective – Mongolian citizens informing themselves through investigative reports on a regular basis – and some of the project outputs were formulated quite ambitiously they are deemed to be attainable only after the end of the official project term. Therefore, the criterion effectiveness is judged as "partially fulfilled" when it comes to the program for investigative reporting.

The funds made available for the project do not appear to allow for much leeway. The project partners use the funds efficiently and with great care. They even contribute their own resources. Hence, the criterion **efficiency** is judged as "comprehensively fulfilled."

There are quite a few positive project outcomes to be named that go beyond the formal project objectives. The founding process of the media council proved to be a good exercise for civic cooperation. Potential sceptics of the initiative could be integrated and convinced thanks to relentless adherence to a participatory approach on the part of the initiators. Meanwhile, the media council has received broad approval. It has received numerous complaints by citizens during the first three years of its existence. The project activities to strengthen investigative reporting have not only helped the teachers of the press institute to develop pertinent skills; it has helped them grow confidence in their ability to teach fully-fledged journalists. All in all, the criterion **impact** is judged as "generally fulfilled" – accounting for minor possible risks such as misunderstandings of the role of DW Akademie's consultant to the media council and practical constraints for investigative journalism in Mongolia.

Both project partners identify with the project to a high degree. The media council is a genuinely local initiative and its members convey the impression to be driven by strong convictions and values. They make concrete efforts to further improve the procedures and to become financially independent. The press institute has put much emphasis on designing a versatile investigative reporting curriculum that caters to different needs. The institute's commitment to investigative journalism does not stop at developing and teaching the curriculum. It also pertains to promoting a larger investigative journalism movement in Mongolia. Thus, the evaluation judges the criterion **sustainability** as "comprehensively fulfilled."

There is a limited number of media development actors in Mongolia. DW Akademie has reviewed their fields of operation in advance to ensure that project activities do not overlap. In the course of the project the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung supported the initial phase of the press council. Synergies also came about with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung who decided to offer scholarships to diploma students of the press institute. The criterion **coherence, complementarity, and coordination** is therefore judged as "comprehensively fulfilled."

The project is furthermore characterised by a close cooperation between project partners and the DW Akademie team. All parties involved experience the cooperation as trustful and as equals. Communication is said to be clear and smooth. Therefore, the evaluation rates the criterion **quality of management** as "comprehensively fulfilled."

## Key recommendations

1. A qualitative monitoring approach should be pursued when there are no reference points or empirical data available at an early stage of the project.
2. Activities should be clearly geared to the needs of the project's target group "Mongolian population, especially in rural areas."
3. Activities and outputs should be harmonized.
4. The project's budget should be adapted to the project objectives.
5. Both project lines should be continued after the end of the current project term.
6. Further consultancy to the media council should focus on ensuring that all committee members have the same knowledge.
7. Conflicts that arise as a result of the establishment of the media council should be understood as opportunities for quality management and professionalization.
8. Besides informing the public, the media council should put efforts into enshrining the press code as a firm reference point in media houses.
9. Teachers should be further strengthened in practical teaching methods.
10. The press institute should create incentives for the newly trained teachers. The press institute's upcoming programs in investigative reporting should holistically involve newsrooms and the management level of media houses.

## DW Akademie

DW Akademie is Germany's leading organization for media development and Deutsche Welle's center of excellence for education and knowledge transfer. As a strategic partner of Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development we strengthen the universal human rights of free expression, education, and access to information.

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