**REPORT**

**on the activities of the Public Foundation for Support and Development of National Mass Media during 2021**

The Public Foundation for Support and Development of National Mass Media was established in November 2019 by a group of proactive journalists and bloggers to develop the media sector, provide material support, and uphold the rights of media community representatives in Uzbekistan. Since its registration, the Foundation has undertaken significant work to create equal conditions for mass media in the media market, promote their further development, and ensure the rights of journalists and bloggers.

The main sources of the Foundation's financial resources in 2021 were charitable contributions from local organisations. In total, **12,493 million sums** were credited to its account.

These funds were allocated to implement the Foundation's statutory objectives in areas such as the development of national mass media and comprehensive support for media outlets, journalists, and bloggers; support for children with visual impairments under the "Ko‘ngil Ko‘zi" project; development of the intellectual movement in the country through the capabilities of the NGO "Zakovat"; and assistance in addressing gender issues. Specifically:

– Within the framework of providing financial support to media outlets, journalists, and bloggers, the Foundation offered financial assistance to several media editorial offices and covered the accommodation expenses of veteran journalist Rustam Obidov, who has many years of experience in the media, during 2021 at a specialised care home for labour veterans;

– Throughout 2021, the Foundation worked on developing proposals and recommendations to ensure openness and transparency in the activities of state bodies, as well as determining promising directions for their communication strategies. For these purposes, specialists from a major analytical centre (the company "Krimbur"), specialising in the study of social media, were invited to Uzbekistan and negotiations were conducted;

– The Foundation actively participated in organising and holding the **23rd Central Asian Media Conference**, organised by the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media on 9–10 September 2021 in Tashkent. During the speeches, the Foundation's leaders shared their assessments of the state of mass media development in Uzbekistan with conference participants and put forward a number of proposals to ensure freedom of speech and further expand access to information.

– After the conclusion of the 23rd Central Asian Media Conference**, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Teresa Ribeiro**, along with her delegation, visited the office of the Mass Media Foundation. During the meeting, the results of the past conference were discussed, as well as opportunities for future cooperation.

– Within the framework of the joint project **"Support for Mass Media in Uzbekistan"** between the Mass Media Foundation and the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan, two-day training sessions titled "**Building the Capacity of Journalists and Bloggers in Legal and Media Information Literacy"** were held in all regions of the country. Participants gained knowledge on the legal aspects of media work, including the rights and obligations of journalists and bloggers, analysed several situations based on case studies that journalists and bloggers often encounter in their professional activities, and discussed legal mechanisms for protecting the rights and interests of media workers. The total coverage was 240 people. It is worth emphasising that experienced media specialists and professional lawyers were engaged as trainers.

An important direction of the Foundation's activity in the reporting period was the **development of the intellectual youth movement in the country**. Thus, in 2021, the Foundation became the sole founder of the NGO "Intellectual Club Zakovat" and created all the necessary conditions for involving youth from across the republic in this movement.

**1.** The first initiative to attract youth to the intellectual movement was a large-scale championship of the game "Zakovat". For participation, more than **13,000 applicants** submitted applications to join the "Zakovat" club: **1,932 people** were registered as part of **322 teams**, and another **11,111 individually**.

To participate in the "Zakovat" tournament of Tashkent and Tashkent region, on 28 February 2021, a casting of experts was held at Humo Arena Palace—the largest ice palace in Central Asia by capacity—with the aim of distributing them into teams according to their level of preparation. **More than 7,000 people** participated.

On 11 March, in the pavilion of the "Uzbekfilm" film studio, the final matches for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd places of the tournament were held. A total of **530 teams** from the capital region and the city of Tashkent participated in the tournament.

**2.** The overwhelming interest in the game prompted its organisers to create a Russian-language league "Zakovat". On 2 May 2021, the first tournament of the Russian-language league "Zakovat" was held in the Tashkent Botanical Garden. The event was attended by **187 teams** from all over the republic, setting an absolute record for the number of players in intellectual games in the Russian-language segment both in Uzbekistan and the CIS. Even the World Championships of "What? Where? When?" gather no more than 70–80 teams.

From March to June 2021, regional championships of the game "Zakovat" were held in all regions of Uzbekistan. In each, **four winning teams** were identified.

Prizes: first place — **100 million sums**, second place — **20 million sums**, third place — **10 million sums**

**3.** The most large-scale and significant events in this direction were the final games and the grand final of "Zakovat", which took place from 9 to 13 October 2021 at the Bukhara Desert Oasis tourist complex, located in the Bukhara region. Approximately **300 people** participated as players: **44 teams** from **11 regions** and **two winning teams** from Tashkent and Tashkent region, as well as Samarkand. More than **3,000 members** of the "Zakovat" movement from across the republic came to support their regional teams.

A special atmosphere for the participants and excitement for the teams in the grand final of the intellectual game "Zakovat" was provided by the participation and speech of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, who offered words of support for the entire intellectual movement.

The winners of the grand final received state awards from the head of state, as well as Gentra cars.

**4.** On 14–15 August 2021, the final of the chess tournament Zakovat-Gambit was held. In total, more than **3,760 applicants** were registered to participate in the tournament across all categories.

On the first day of the final, six qualifying rounds were played. After their completion, simultaneous exhibition games were held. Joining our players at the board were guests of the championship, world-famous grandmasters: world champions Viswanathan Anand, Judit Polgár, Rustam Kasimdzhanov, as well as Gulrukhbegim Tokhirjonova and Timur Gareyev.

On the second day of the final, after the official games of the tournament, masterclasses were held.

The event concluded with a solemn award ceremony and the official closing of the tournament. The total prize fund of the tournament was **610 million sums**.

Additionally, during the reporting period, the Foundation continued the implementation of the **"Ko‘ngil Ko‘zi"** project, aimed at assisting in the social rehabilitation of people with visual disabilities, creating favourable conditions for providing the blind and visually impaired with necessary literature, access to cultural venues, and professional support for workers in this field.

In this direction, the following work was carried out:

–  In the city of Samarkand, the second international charity run Samarkand Half Marathon was held, and with the funds raised from the event, equipment for audio description was purchased and installed in theatres;

– On the eve of New Year 2021, within the framework of the charity campaign "Caravan of Gifts", gifts were sent to all boarding schools in the republic for blind and visually impaired children. In 2021, **3,469 children** received New Year's gifts;

– In 2021, the " Ko‘ngil Ko‘zi" project expanded the scope of its activities. Medical examinations were conducted for **3,199 students** of boarding schools for the blind and visually impaired to assess the possibility of improving vision. With the help of specialists from the Republican Specialised Centre of Eye Microsurgery, children who needed surgery were categorised based on the complexity of the necessary surgical intervention. Based on this, during 2021, 291 children underwent a total of **372 operations**;

Thus, the project makes every effort to ensure that the younger generation, including children with disabilities, can utilise the conditions being created in the country and be full and equal participants in society.

The report on the activities of the Public Foundation for Support and Development of National Mass Media was discussed by the members of the Board of Trustees. They noted that during the reporting period, despite the challenges associated with the ongoing pandemic, the organisation managed to make a significant contribution not only to the support and development of the entire mass media sphere in Uzbekistan but also to increasing the interest of youth in science and education.