



Media coverage of Internally Displaced Persons in the Ukrainian mass media

Funded by the European Union

# Final Media Monitoring Report Summary Report

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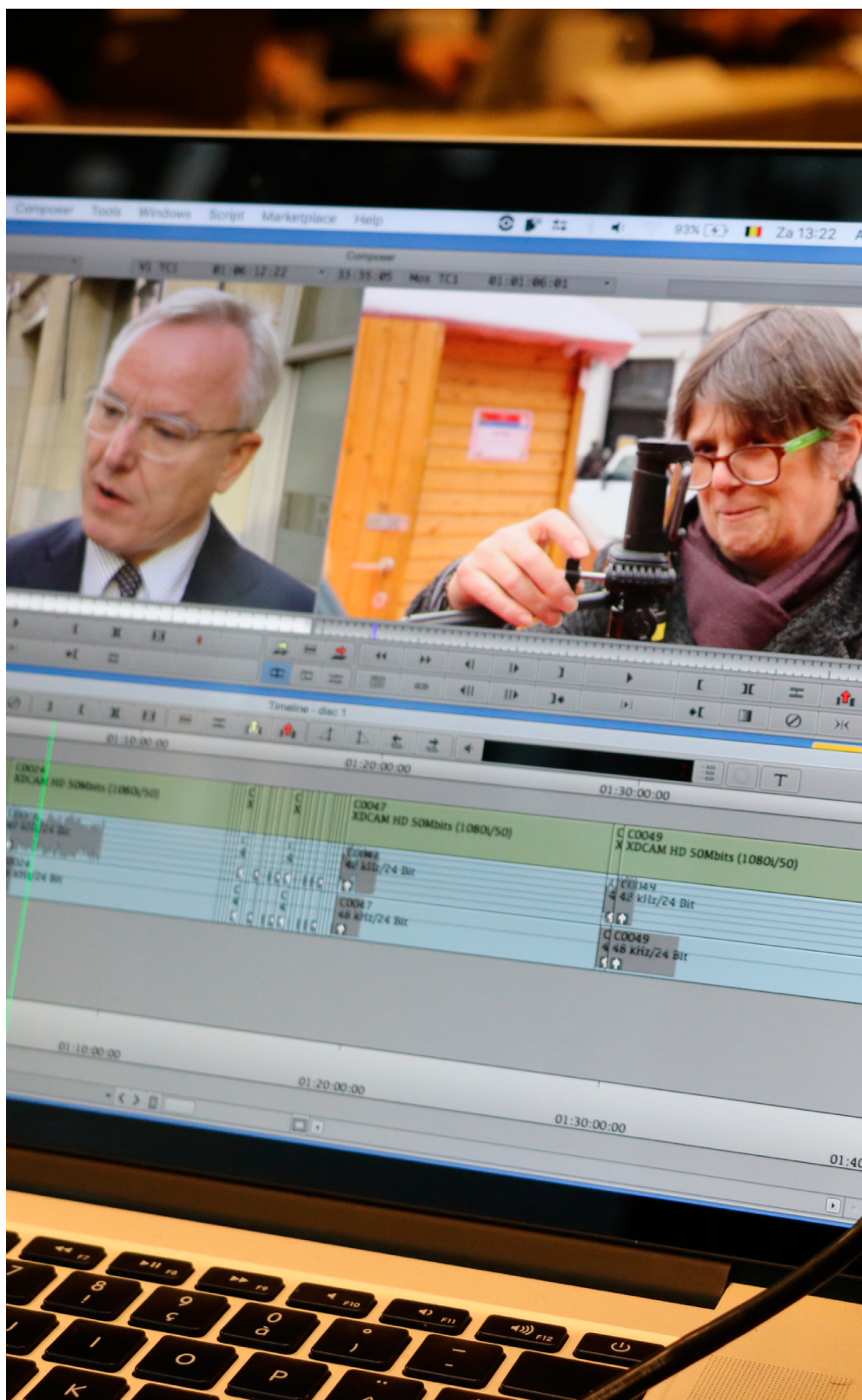
# Media Monitoring Summary Report

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This is the final of the media monitoring reports which were published in the framework of the project 'Regional Voices: Strengthening conflict sensitive coverage in Ukraine's regional media,' funded by the European Union. The project was implemented by a media consortium led by the Thomson Foundation, and consisted of the European Journalism Centre, 'Spilnyi Prostir' Association, MEMO 98 and the International Institute for Regional Media and Information.

The total 24 regional monitoring reports on coverage of IDPs in the local Ukrainian media (regional monitoring reports, comparative cross-regional monitoring reports, comparative monitoring reports by monitoring periods and final report) will be prepared in between 2015 - 2017. The first media monitoring report assessed the findings from 1 to 23 October 2015, the second monitoring report assessed the findings from 15 to 28 February 2016, the third monitoring report evaluated the findings from 1 to 14 June 2016, and the fourth monitoring report assessed the findings from 10 to 23 October 2016<sup>1</sup>.

The overall objective of the project was to decrease any potential areas of conflict through balanced news output, thereby contributing to a reduction in communal tensions, specifically between internally displaced persons (IDPs) and their host communities. This was achieved through strengthening regional media's ability to respond to conflict through enhanced independence and quality content as well as by strengthening local media access to networks,



<sup>1</sup> All the previous reports can be found at <http://region-voices.eu/en/monitoring>, <http://www.prostir-monitor.org/reports> or [http://memo98.sk/clanky/default?search\\_id=25](http://memo98.sk/clanky/default?search_id=25).





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both within Ukraine and beyond its borders.

The project envisioned the development of an early warning capacity of incendiary coverage of conflict-related issues through consistent media monitoring and evaluation of participating local media, coverage of elections inclusive. Spilnyi Prostir and MEMO 98 jointly prepared methodology of monitoring the media coverage of IDPs and trained 65 local analysts to conduct a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the regional media coverage in connection with the topic mentioned above.

Between 2015 and 2016, the monitoring team did four monitoring exercises with a particular focus on how

the theme of IDPs was reported and published 24 monitoring reports. The monitoring sample consisted of a total of 204 monitored media (51 TV channels, 65 print media, and 88 online media outlets), in 24 regions of Ukraine divided into four main parts:

- \* **East** (Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv oblasts);
- \* **North/Centre** (Sumy, Chernihiv, Zhytomyr, Vinnytsya, Dnipro, Kirovohrad, Poltava, Cherkassy oblasts);
- \* **South** (Odessa, Kherson, Zaporizhzhya, Mykolayiv oblasts and Autonomous Republic of Crimea);
- \* **West** (Chernivtsi, Ivano-Frankivsk, Khmelnytsky, Lviv, Rivne, Ternopil, Volyn and Zakarpattia).

In the course of the monitoring, the sample was a subject of minor changes mainly because some media ceased to exist or did not focus on the issue of IDPs.

## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- \* The monitoring of four different periods in all regions of Ukraine showed a lack of IDP-related stories in general and those with a more analytical and investigative approach in particular.
- \* In most of their stories, journalists merely reflected on the current situation with IDP, without aiming for a long-term vision or more profound public discussion on how to resolve problems of IDPs in a particular region.
- \* There were a few examples of materials that looked like they were paid for as they lacked some basic journalistic standards. Moreover, there were instances of using somebody else's stories and their republishing in some local media.
- \* Journalists did not question official statements by authorities or ask them probing questions and avoided verification of the information submitted by the state authorities.
- \* Media, in general, avoided sensationalism when reporting on IDPs. In general, they used correct language and terminology when addressing internally displaced persons, without any apparent attempt to discriminate and used picture and videos in a proper way, in line with the portrayed topics and issues.
- \* There were, however, a few examples when media discriminated IDPs, featuring them in a negative way or referring to them as 'refugees'.
- \* Media, in general, avoided sensationalism when reporting on IDPs. There were some positive examples when media focused on the human side of IDP stories.
- \* The third monitoring revealed that while the general lack of IDP-related stories was visible in all periods, there were a few instances of a more systemic coverage of IDPs. Some publications were initiated in the framework of different international projects.

\* Especially in the last two monitoring periods, there were a few instances of better quality stories on IDP-related issues as well as materials that provided useful information to IDPs on social benefits.

## 3. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

The overall sample of monitored media in all regions of Ukraine was rather extensive, with the media ownership, potential influence, and ratings as the criteria for selection. In the course of the monitoring,





the sample underwent some minor changes caused mainly by the fact that some media ceased to exist or that some media that stopped their activities due to the conflict re-launched their operations in the territories controlled by the Ukrainian government.

As a result, the sample consisted of 204 most popular media, divided as follows:

- **51 local TV-stations** – one state-owned and one or two private channels per oblast;
- **66 newspapers** – at least, one state-owned publication and several major private ones per oblast;
- **88 online media** – most visited news-oriented websites in each oblast.

The monitoring findings of all four periods indicated that TV channels and newspapers in the Eastern part of the country provided the smallest share of their coverage to the IDP-related issues. The media situation in this part of the country has been significantly affected by the military conflict, and some TV broadcasters operating on the territory of Donetsk and Luhansk either terminated their work in the region or became under the control of the so-called LNR and DNR. Such TV channels were not included into the monitored sample. By contrast, Internet media were the most active when it comes to the IDP-related coverage thus addressing to some extent the lack of coverage by traditional media. It should also be mentioned that during the last two monitoring periods, even the traditional media (TV and print media) became more active.

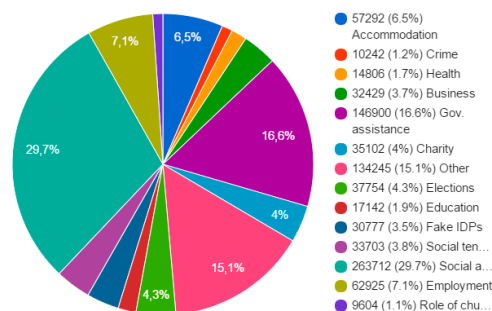
### 3.1 TV CHANNELS

Monitored TV channels allocated a total of nearly 17 hours 25 minutes of the coverage to the IDP-related issues during all four monitoring periods. This was approximately 19 seconds per day on each of the monitored TV channels during the entire monitoring period (65 monitoring days during four monitoring periods). The biggest share of the IDP-related coverage was noted during the third monitoring period and the smallest share during the fourth monitoring period. Regarding the actual time devoted to IDP-related issues, the distribution of airtime was as follows: some 360 minutes during the first monitoring period, approximately 219 minutes during the second monitoring period, nearly 236 minutes of the third monitoring period and some 154 minutes during the fourth monitoring period.

The most actively presented topics were social adaptation and living in the community (29.7% of



CHART 1. The share of the coverage all monitored TV channels devoted to different topics in the IDP-related stories during all four monitoring periods. TVtopics







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all IDPs coverage), government assistance (16.6%), employment (7.1%) and accommodation (6.5%). The least covered were health (1.7%), crime (1.2%) and the role of the church (1.1%).

The monitored subjects were represented as follows: IDPs (50.5%), government (16.5%), followed by regional state administrations (12.2%) and NGOs (12%) respectively.

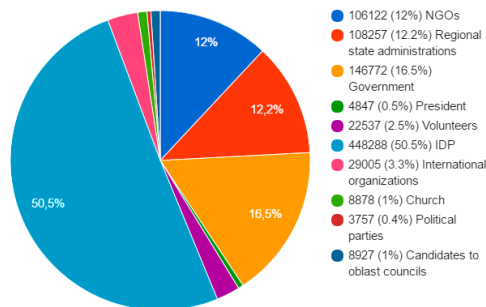


CHART 2. The share of the coverage devoted to different subjects (entities) monitored in the framework of on all monitored channels during all four monitoring periods. TVSub

Regarding the tone of materials during all four monitoring periods, Ukrainian regional TV channels represented the subjects of research mainly neutrally and positively. Only the IDPs, government and local state administrations received some portion of the negative coverage.

### 3.2 PRINT MEDIA

The monitored local newspapers in all regions allocated a total of more than 258 pages of A3 format to the IDP-related issues during all four monitoring periods. This was approximately 0.06 page per day on each of the monitored newspapers during the entire monitoring period (65 monitoring days during four monitoring periods). The biggest share of the IDP-related coverage was noted during the 2nd monitoring period (1.2%) and the smallest share during the 4th monitoring period (0.7%).

As for the coverage of the topics, social adaptation and community life were the most covered in the IDPs related news (40%) followed by state aid (15.9%) and accommodation (6.2%). The least covered were such topics as the role of the church, crime, and health (less than 2% altogether).

As far as the presentation of subjects is concerned, the newspapers devoted most of the coverage to IDPs (60.1% of all IDPs related coverage), government (15.1%), NGOs (9.3%), regional authorities (7.3%) and international organizations (5.4%).

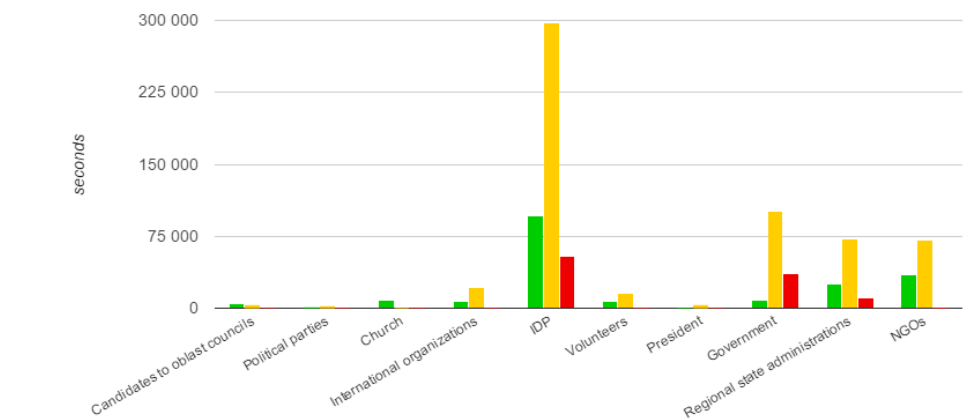


CHART 3. The coverage of the tone in which the monitored subjects (entities) were portrayed in the framework of IDP-related stories on all monitored channels during all four monitoring periods. TVtone

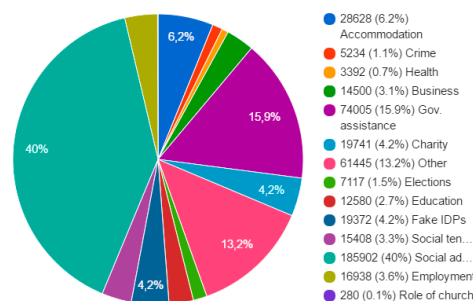


CHART 4. The share of space allocated to IDPs-related topics in all monitored print media during the four monitoring periods. PressTopics

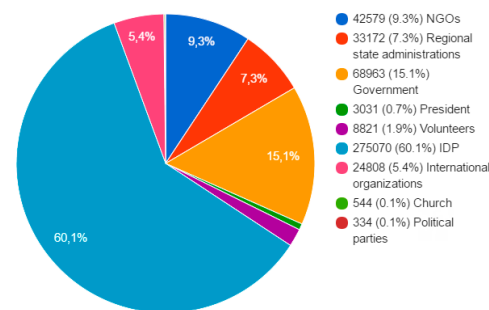


CHART 5. The share of the coverage on all monitored print media devoted to different subjects (entities) monitored in the framework of IDPs-related stories during the four monitoring periods. PressSub

As far as the tone of the coverage goes, the materials on IDPs were mainly represented in a neutral and positive manner, with IDPs, government and regional state administrations receiving also some negative coverage.

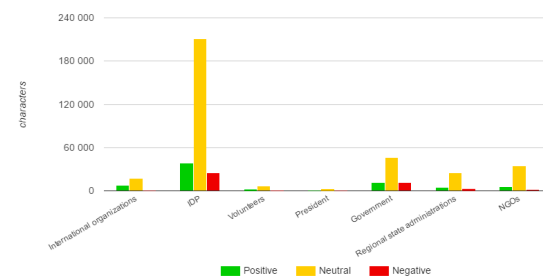


CHART 6. The coverage of the tone in which the monitored subjects (entities) were portrayed in the framework of IDP-related stories in all monitored print media during the four monitoring periods. PressTone

### 3.3. ONLINE MEDIA

The monitored online media in all regions combined allocated a total of almost 1586 pages of A4 format to the IDP-related issues during all four monitoring periods. This was approximately 504 characters per day during the entire monitoring period (65 monitoring days during four monitoring periods). The biggest portion of the IDP-related coverage was noted during the 1st monitoring period and the smallest share during the 4th monitoring period respectively.

When comparing the individual regions, the online media of the Eastern region provided the most active coverage (619 pages of A4 format) followed by North Central region with 493 pages of A4 size, then the South with 272 pages and the Western with 202 pages.

As for the coverage of the topics, media allocated the biggest portion of their coverage to social adaptation and community life (32%), followed by the government



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assistance (13.8%), elections (6.8%), charity (5.8%) and accommodation (5%).

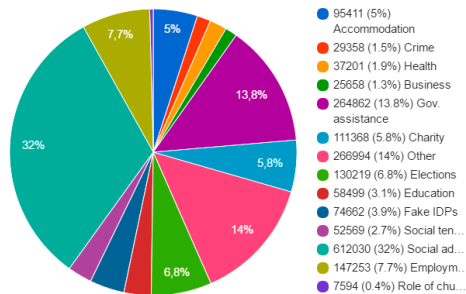


CHART 7. The share of the coverage on all monitored online media devoted to different topics in the framework of IDP-related stories during the four monitoring periods. IntTopics

As far as the presentation of subjects is concerned, the newspapers devoted most of the coverage to IDPs (55.6% of all IDP-related coverage), NGOs (14.4%), government (13.3%) and regional authorities (7.1%).

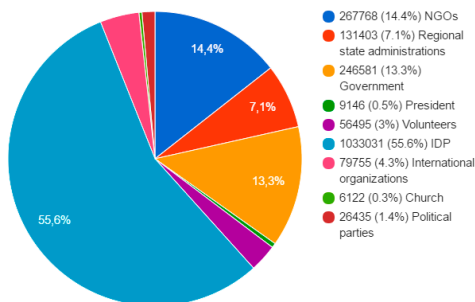


CHART 8. The share of the coverage devoted to different subjects (entities) monitored in the framework of IDP-related stories in all monitored online media during the four monitoring periods. IntSub

As far as the tone of the coverage goes, the materials on IDPs were mainly represented in a neutral and positive manner with some portion of negative tone concerning IDP, government and regional state administrations.

### 4 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

In the course of all four monitoring periods, the coverage of IDPs was marginal. The key trend was a gradual decrease in the number of IDP-related stories during the entire monitoring. There was a general lack of analytical materials focusing on IDP-related issues. Journalists usually tended to

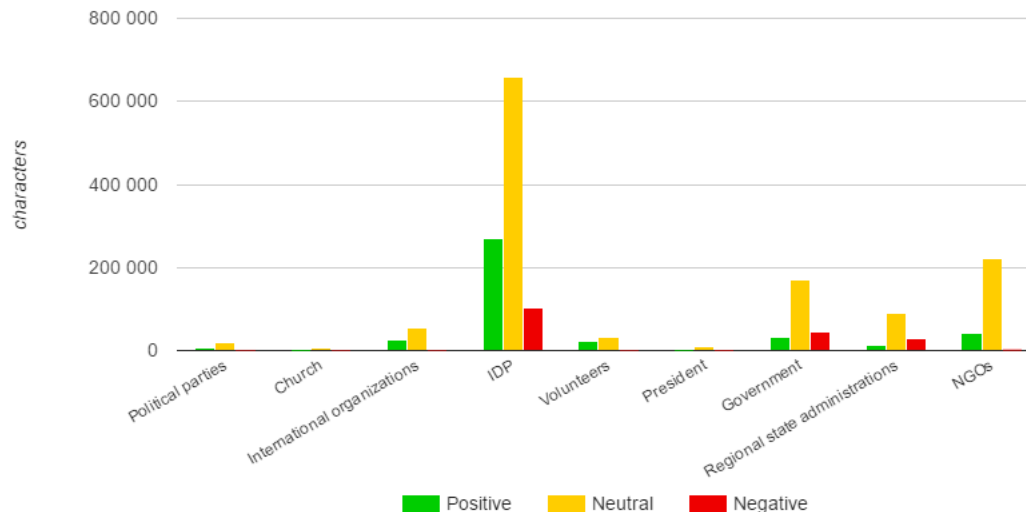


CHART 9. The coverage of the tone in which the monitored subjects (entities) were portrayed in the framework of IDP-related stories in all monitored online media during the four monitoring periods. IntTone

transmit official statements of both central and local authorities passively and only rarely verified the given facts. As such, the majority of IDP-related news was based on official press releases published by state authorities. The overall findings confirmed that media merely reflected on the current situation with IDP, without aiming for a long-term vision or more profound public discussion on how to resolve problems of IDPs in a particular region.

During the first monitoring period, the majority of media from Donetsk focused on the fact that IDPs could not exercise their franchise during the local elections. In other regions, this topic was covered to some extent only by the media in the South. Online TV channel 'ATR TV' in almost each newscast informed the audience of the civic blockade of Crimea. At the same time, both the authors of the reports and their readers were to a far larger extent preoccupied with the issue of participation in the local elections in the occupied territories of Donbass. IDPs were in the first place presented as temporarily displaced persons eager to go back to their homes and participate in the revival of their "small motherland." The complicated situation of individuals that were rejected the IDP status was also reported on.

Journalists usually tended to passively transmit official statements of both central and local authorities and only rarely verified the given facts. The lion share of the news on IDPs was based on the official press releases. Journalists did not intend to create a civic forum at the local

level aimed at solving the problems of IDPs in the region. Besides, there were practically no analytical materials, exploring IDPs' problems and journalists did not conduct their investigations and did not search for additional information and different points of view.

A campaign of checking IDPs initiated by the state was an especially painful subject in some regions, such as the East (Kharkiv, Luhansk, Donetsk regions). It concerned 'fake IDPs' searches conducted by state inspectors who tested IDPs homes on the subject of whether these people need government subsidies on gas and other payments<sup>2</sup>. In this context, the monitoring team documented some cases when improper language was used when addressing IDPs as 'refugees,' or 'false refugees.'

The monitoring team identified some cases when IDPs were directly or indirectly covered in a negative tone. Such coverage was observed in Kharkiv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Zaporizhya, Chernivtsi, Zakarpattya. Such negative or discriminatory materials were fewer in the third period. During the fourth monitoring period, in the Western part of Ukraine (Volyn region), the monitoring team noticed a discriminatory item against an IDP. It described a torture by a teenager of a cat with the author of the article hinting that this teenager is so cruel because she is an IDP.

While there were IDP-related stories where media presented different points of view and using various sources, there were some stories that lacked balance or some other professional standards. For example,

<sup>2</sup> See more explanations and examples in the 4th monitoring period' report at [http://www.prostir-monitor.org/upload/reports/final-reports-wave-4/Summary\\_W4-en.pdf](http://www.prostir-monitor.org/upload/reports/final-reports-wave-4/Summary_W4-en.pdf)





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the monitoring team came across some materials which were aimed at promoting particular politicians in connection with the IDP-related stories. For example, such stories were noted in Luhansk during the second monitoring period, in Odessa during the first monitoring period, as well as Vinnytsia during the third monitoring period.

There were a few materials which looked like they were paid for. Such materials were observed mainly during the first monitoring period (in Sumy) as well as during the fourth monitoring period (in the South).

With the exception of a few cases, media avoided sensationalism when reporting on IDPs. Moreover, there were also some positive examples when media focused on the human side of IDP stories. Examples of such stories were observed in Volyn, Cherkassy, Vinnytsya, Zaporizhyya, and Zakarpattia

In a positive development, the monitoring team noticed the appearance of materials about different international projects aimed to help with the IDP-related problems. For example, such stories were featured in Kharkiv and Mykolayiv.

In generally, the most visible examples of improved quality of IDP-related stories were observed during the third monitoring period. In contrast to the second monitoring period, the Donetsk media provided rare coverage of the so-called 'fake IDPs' or 'tourist pensioners.' The thematic focus shifted towards highlighting the fight of the IDPs for their civic rights in general, however, to a lesser extent for more specific aspects, such as legally guaranteed allowances social payments and employment incentives).

There was a clear tendency of the growth of better quality materials during the third monitoring – it should be mentioned that while IDP-related materials during the first two monitoring periods merely reflected on the situation with IDP, there was an increase of exclusive materials on IDPs, focusing on human aspects of their lives. This applies to IDP's new places of residence. It should be noted that such publications as Ostrov and Donetsk Novosti referred to, as a source of information, statements by activists that organized rallies and pickets of IDPs, with journalists being present there. Frequently, the text of the news was supplemented with a large number of pictures and videos. The fourth monitoring period confirmed the growing quality of IDP-related stories. For example,



there were materials on the positive experience of IDPs' adaptation to their new places of residence or materials which provided useful information for IDPs (Volyn). Another example of such material was a report on Vintera TV channel broadcast on 11 October 2016 featuring IDPs in the Dnipropetrovsk Oblast. In the framework of the report, there were various sources interviewed and the problems raised were given a multi-fold coverage with the cameraman David Hantz doing a very good job.

Notwithstanding the improvements mentioned above, the monitoring team overall noticed some violations of professional and ethical standards, such as the use of incorrect terminology, lack of balance, we would like to offer recommendations how to improve the IDPs-related coverage in the regional media of the Eastern oblasts:

- \* To increase the overall level of IDPs-related coverage, including analytical and investigative reports.
- \* To continue searching for more concrete IDPs-related human stories and to consider how to combine them with an archive footage or factual statistical data and to highlight success stories of IDPs' adaptation to their new places of residence and to highlight instances of IDPs fight for their rights.
- \* To arrange the editorial meetings and training concerning paid-for coverage, plagiarism, correct terminology and related vocabulary to avoid derogatory comments. At the same time other professional standards, primarily balanced reporting, should be given appropriate attention.
- \* To encourage journalists not to only reflect on the current situation with IDP, but to aim for a long-term

vision or more profound public discussion on how to resolve problems of IDPs in a particular region.

- \* To further encourage efforts of creating own media content, and alongside to decrease the volume of republished materials (provided originally by the information agencies or other media).

- \* To produce more materials concerning basic civic rights and social benefits that the IDPs are entitled to.

- \* To amplify the IDPs-related reporting with an aim to create a broader civic forum at the local level that would publicly discuss the IDPs issues in the region.

- \* To avoid any subjective assessment of IDPs.

Implementation of these recommendations would raise the professional level of media content, including adherence to some of fundamental journalistic standards, such as impartiality and balance. As a result, increased quality manifested by the comprehensive and in-depth coverage of events in the regional media would limit potential sources of social tension between the internally displaced persons (IDPs) and their hosts.