



Media coverage of Internally Displaced Persons in the Ukrainian mass media  
Donetsk, Luhansk and Kharkiv regions  
Funded by the European Union

# Media Monitoring Report

East of Ukraine  
October 2016

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# Media Monitoring Report

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This is the fourth of the monitoring reports which will be 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 is implemented by a media consortium led by the Thomson Foundation, and consists 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, and the third monitoring report assessed the findings from 1 to 14 June 2016<sup>1</sup>.

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

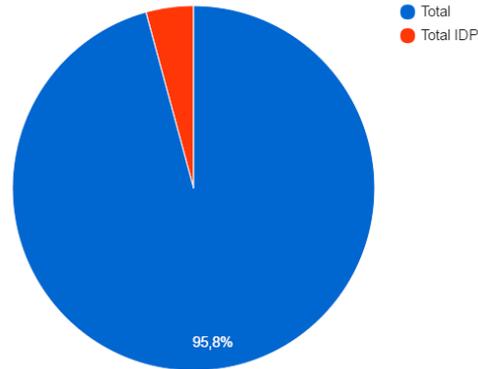


CHART 1 The share of IDP-related coverage of the total monitored coverage in all monitored regional TV channels in the fourth monitoring period (10-23 October 2016) EastTV

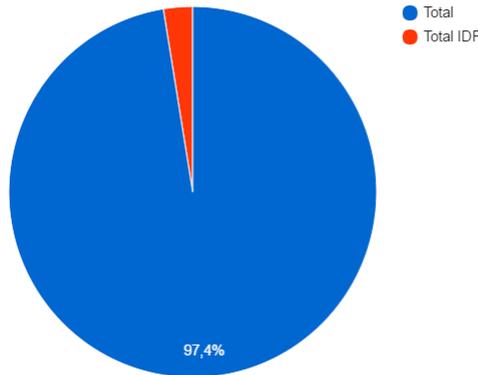


CHART 2 The share of the IDP-related coverage of the total monitored coverage in all monitored regional print media during the fourth monitoring period (10-23 October 2016) EastPress



<sup>1</sup>All the previous reports can be found at <http://regionalvoices.eu/en/monitoring> or <http://www.prostir-monitor.org/reports/>.



## Media Monitoring Report (East of Ukraine)

### Media coverage of Internally Displaced Persons in the Ukrainian mass media

p2



access to networks, both within Ukraine and beyond its borders.

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

Between October 10 - 23 2016, the monitoring team

conducted the fourth and final monitoring with a special focus on how the topic of IDPs has been reported. 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, Cherkasy);
- \* **South** (Odessa, Kherson, Zaporizhya, Mykolayiv, Autonomous Republic of Crimea);
- \* **West** (Volyn, Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Rivne, Ternopil, Khmelnytsky, Chernivtsi).

The sample of monitored media in the Eastern regions of Ukraine was extensive and included 31 media outlets in this region (Television - 4, Print media - 5, Online media - 22). In comparison with the previous three monitoring periods, there were no changes in the sample.

#### 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- \* The media did not allocate any meaningful coverage to the IDPs-related problems.
- \* Given the specificity of the media landscape in the Eastern Ukraine, Internet media are the most active ones when it comes to the coverage of IDPs.
- \* At the same time, this monitoring period saw more active coverage by television.
- \* Similar to the third monitoring period, there was an increase of better quality reports in this monitoring period. In particular, the media broadcast more of their own reports rather than just rebroadcasting news presented by the nationwide media which was a trend detected in the previous monitoring periods.
- \* Most of the reports were presented in a neutral way without any clear attempt to use discriminatory or improper language vis-a-vis IDPs but there were a few cases where IDPs were portrayed in a negative way. While in general monitored media presented different views, covered all important IDP-related issues, and avoided sensationalism, there were also reports which lacked balance.
- \* Similar to previous monitoring periods, the negative trend of superficial coverage and no in-depth reporting on IDP-related issues continued. Journalists did not intend to create a broader civic forum at the local level that would aim at resolving the IDP-related issues.
- \* The journalists predominantly used official sources and generally did not question statements by state officials or ask them probing questions.
- \* There was a number of publications done in the framework of different international projects.

#### 3. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

The sample of monitored media in the Eastern regions of Ukraine included 31 outlets (4 TV stations, 5 newspapers, and 22 online media). The sample included one state-owned television and one state-owned newspaper in each of the three oblasts, with the remaining media chosen for the sample being privately owned (one private channel in Kharkiv oblast and a few private newspapers as well as most visited news-oriented websites in each oblast).

The specificity of the Eastern region was that some media outlets operate within the territories of



Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts which are controlled by the Ukrainian authorities while most of the monitored media reallocated their offices outside of the East to different parts of the country.

The monitoring findings revealed that the IDPs-related topics attracted a noticeable media attention with the share of allocated time and space ranging from 4.2 per cent of total news airtime devoted to IDP-related stories on monitored TV channels (which is a small increase in comparison with the third monitoring period when the share was 4 per cent) to 2.6 per cent of such coverage in the monitored newspapers (which is a decrease in comparison with the third monitoring period when such coverage amounted to 4.9 per cent). Given the current situation in Donbass, the internet media continue playing a more significant role in comparison with other regions of Ukraine.

3.1 TELEVISION

The monitored TV channels in the Eastern part of Ukraine allocated 4.2 per cent of their airtime to the IDP-related coverage (in terms of total time, this amounted to some 34 minutes of the coverage on the four monitored TV channels altogether out of the total volume of monitored airtime – 14 hours or approximately 37 seconds of daily coverage on each channel. This presented a small increase of coverage in comparison with the third monitoring period (in total, this was 2 minutes more coverage than in the third monitoring period).

The most covered topics in this monitoring period were social adaptation and community life (23,9% of the total volume of IDP-related coverage), followed by housing (17,3%), charity (14%), 'fake' IDPs (13%), health protection (12,7%) and business (5,2%). Employment and state aid received only 1,5 % and state aid 0,7 % of the coverage respectively.

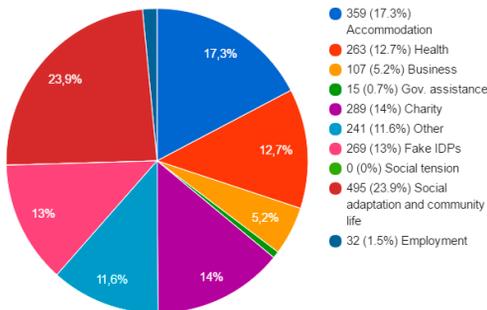
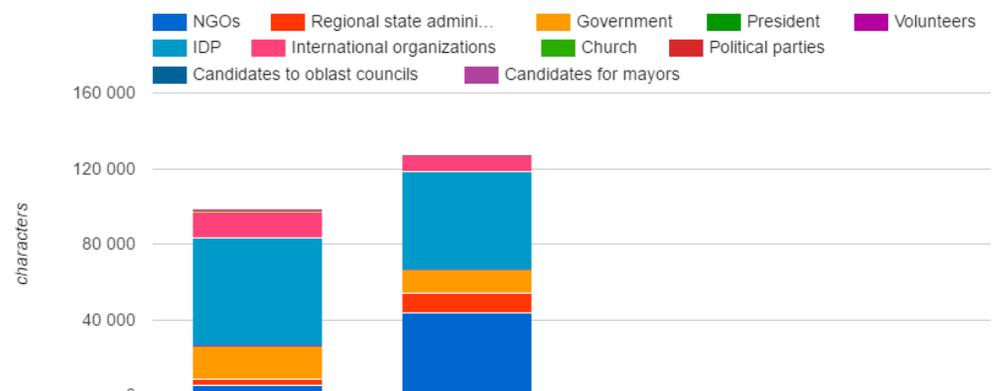


CHART 4. The share of the coverage all monitored TV channels devoted to different topics in the IDP-related stories.



CHART 3 The share of IDP-related coverage of the total monitored coverage in monitored regional online media in the fourth monitoring period, weekly (10-16 October, 17-23 October 2016) EastInt





# Media Monitoring Report (East of Ukraine)

## Media coverage of Internally Displaced Persons in the Ukrainian mass media

p4

### EastTvTopics

Among the monitored subjects, the IDPs received the biggest share of the coverage (65.4% of total coverage of IDPs), followed by international organizations (10.8%), volunteers (10.7%), and regional state administrations (9%). NGOs and volunteers received only 3.4% and 0.7% respectively.

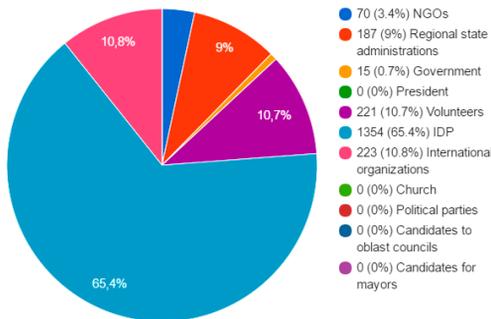


CHART 5. The share of the coverage devoted to different subjects (entities) monitored in the framework of IDP-related stories on all monitored channels  
EastTvSub

As for the tone of the coverage, TV channels presented the majority of monitored subjects in neutral and positive tone which is different from the previous monitoring periods when some subjects received also some negative coverage (for example, during the third monitoring period, the regional state administration and the government received respectively 20 and 17 per cent of negative coverage).

### 3.2 PRINT MEDIA

The monitored local newspapers devoted less coverage to IDP-related issues during this monitoring period in comparison with the previous one (2.6 per cent of the total coverage in the third period against 4.9% during the third monitoring period). As for the coverage of topics, the most covered ones were education 76.4% followed by employment 12.2% and state aid 8.5%.

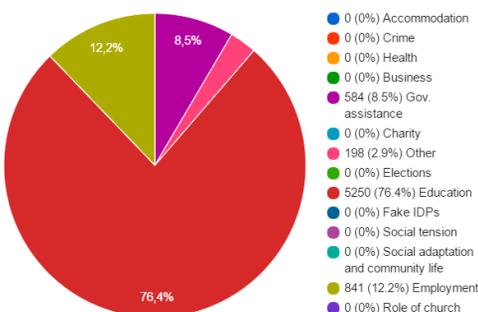


CHART 7. The share of space allocated to IDPs-related topics in all monitored print media

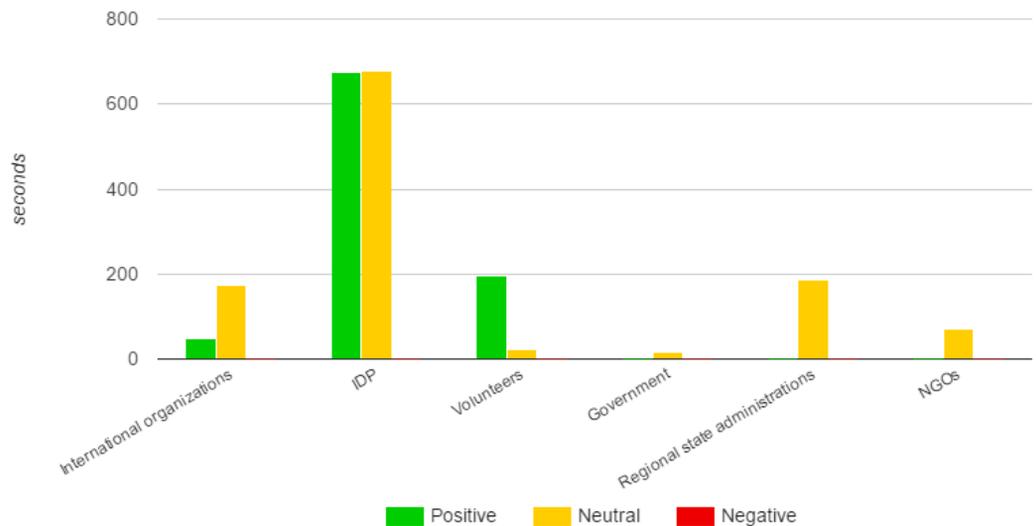


CHART 6. The coverage of the tone in which the monitored subjects (entities) were portrayed in the framework of IDP-related stories on all monitored channels.  
EastTvTone

As far as the presentation of subjects is concerned, the newspapers devoted most of the coverage to regional administration 76.4% followed by IDPs and the government which respectively received 13.1% and 10.5%.

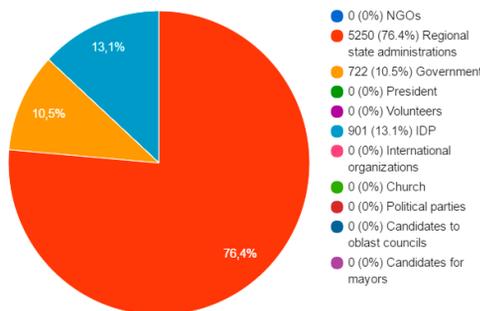
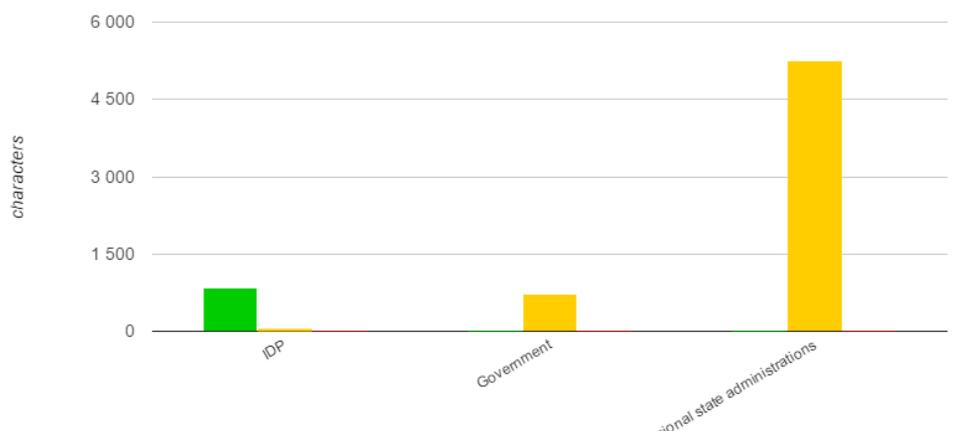


CHART 8 The share of the coverage on all monitored print media devoted to different subjects (entities) monitored in the framework of IDPs-related stories.

As far as the tone of the coverage goes, IDPs were portrayed mainly in a positive light whereas the government and regional state administration received only neutral coverage.

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 print media.  
EastPressTone





### 3.3 ONLINE MEDIA

The monitored 22 online media outlets devoted to the IDP-related stories a total of 224 487 characters (approximately 125 standard A4 pages). This was much more than during the third monitoring period when it was 151 769 characters (only about 84 standard A4 pages).

The online media devoted most of their attention to the following topics: social adaptation and community life (61.8%), accommodation (7.6%), social tension (5.5%), state aid (3.7%), charity (3.6%), crime (3.3%), business (2.2%), and employment (1.2%).

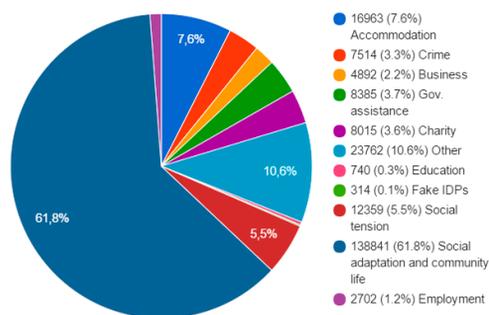


CHART 10. The share of the coverage on all monitored online media devoted to different topics in the framework of IDP-related stories.  
 EastIntTopics

As for the monitored subjects (entities), IDPs received the bulk of the coverage (48.4%), followed by NGOs (21.8%), the government (13.4%), international organizations (9.9%) and regional state administration (5.8%).

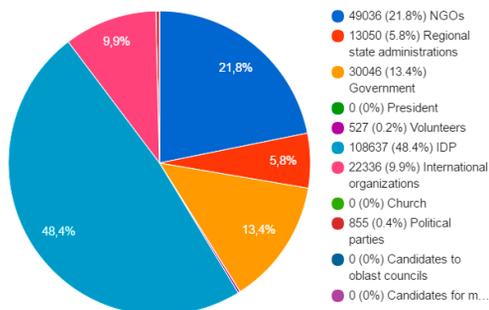


CHART 11. The share of the coverage devoted to different subjects (entities) monitored in the framework of IDP-related stories in all monitored online media  
 EastIntSub

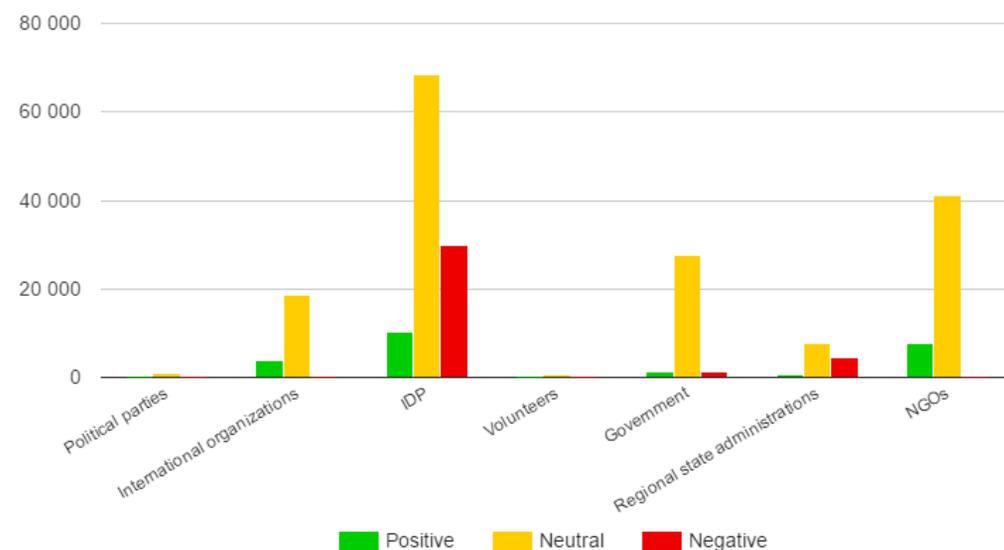
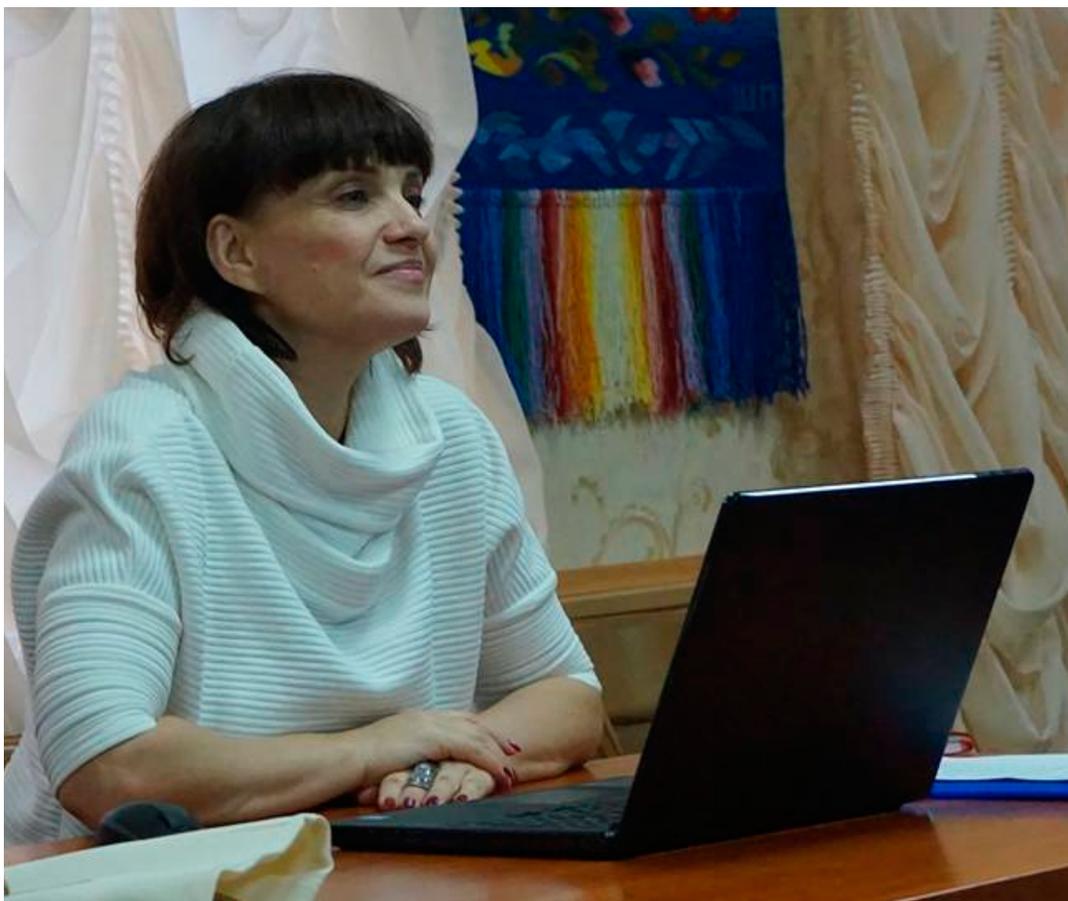


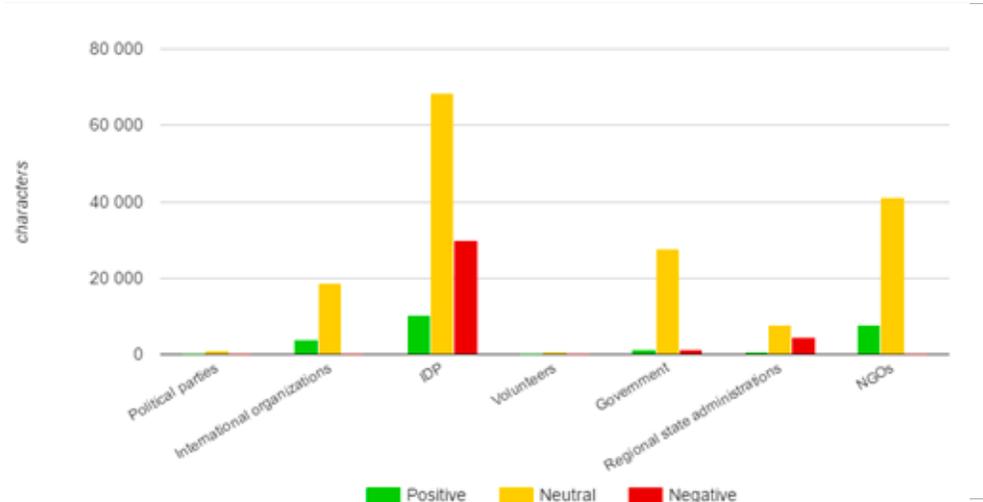
CHART 12. The coverage of the tone in which the monitored subjects (entities) were portrayed in the framework of IDP-related stories in all monitored online media  
 EASTINTTONE



As for the tone of the coverage, online media portrayed the subjects predominantly in a neutral and positive way, with some negative coverage devoted only to IDPs (27%), to regional state administrations (35%) and to the government (4%). The majority of reports with the above mentioned negative tone was published in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. For example, DOTB website of October 2016 published a material titled 'Apart from IDPs, pseudo-inspectors be there' in which 'fake IDPs' were compared to 'fake inspectors' who allegedly tested IDPs homes on the subject of whether these people need government subsidies on gas and other payments and in fact were robbers who search where and from whom something can be stolen.

In addition, the web-site 'Ostrov-Luhansk', published a text 'Fantomovtsy' of 20 October ('Phantom squadron') of Luhansk detained the citizens of Alchevsk intending to illegally arrive at Kremennaya to make pension arrangements. More specifically, journalists reprinted the press release of the Central Office of the State Fiscal Service in Luhansk oblast. It was dedicated to the detention by a Ukrainian special military unit 'Phantom' of people in the territory that is not controlled by Ukraine. The detained people did not possess either passes or statements on IDPs-status while the representatives of those in power called them illegal. The story did not contain any information on how the people crossed the line and journalists apparently did not carry out any investigations and submitted no statements to prove the viewpoints of the people who appeared to have witnessed similar cases. Moreover, no views of the detained or their relatives were submitted either.

The central and local governments are criticized in 'Ostrov - Luhansk' publication titled 'The nerves can not withstand how IDPs from Luhansk live'<sup>2</sup>. It depicts the desparate life of young and elder IDPs fatigue of war and crossings, lack of housing and support from the authorities. The information cause was man IDP's trial to open his veins with a credit card at the reception of the local mayor. More specifically, it depicts an IDP who used a plastic bank card to scratch his hand until it was bloody trying to get the attention of the local mayor to his problems. He revealed that such a step was a result of frustration and desperation as he had no job and could not receive his disability pension.



Authorities were also depicted in negative tone because of IDP status checking<sup>3</sup> and implementation of new electronic pension IDs that cause the delay as well as cancellation of state aid payments<sup>4</sup>.

#### 4 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

The fourth media monitoring period showed that the trend identified during the previous monitoring period of better quality reports continued. In the **Donetsk oblast**, the majority of materials were presented in a neutral way. In general, the media avoided using discriminatory or improper language vis-a-vis IDPs but there were a few cases where IDPs were portrayed in a negative way. The media overall presented different viewpoints from different sources. During this monitoring period, the monitoring team did not come across the situation whereby the media would ignore important IDP-related events or issues. In general, journalists tried to follow journalist standards and avoided sensationalism in their IDPs-related coverage. A number of IDP-related stories were dedicated to their "life stories" from their new dwelling places.

In general, the monitoring team saw an increase of human stories predominantly done by IDPs themselves. For example, the stories on DOTB titled 'Kramatorsk to open hostels for IDPs' (October 12) or 'Part of IDPs arrives from Kuyalnyk to Svyatohirsk' (October 20).

At the same time, the monitoring revealed that there were no good quality journalistic investigative reports based on human stories with no real evidence presented in the framework of the stories. In addition, on October 20, DOTV presented a story

titled 'Apart from IDPs, pseudo-inspectors be there' in the framework of which IDPs were criticized. The material regarding 'fake' IDPs was compared with pseudo-inspectors who were the masked robbers examining the surroundings in search of a possibility to steal something (who claimed to inspect the housings allegedly due to a need to allocate state subsidies for gas or other payments).

In **Luhansk oblast**, the main trend identified in the fourth monitoring period was the fact that the media focus on IDPs changed. In the previous periods, the monitored local media informed generally without too much focus on local stories. In the fourth period, the main focus of media was on local IDPs-related events. More specifically, media focused on the procedures related to formalizing of electronic pension certificates for IDPs-pensioners allowing the receipt of pensions in the territories sub controlled by the Ukrainian government.

During this monitoring period, there were no reports in the Luhansk media with incorrect terminology vis-a-vis the IDPs. Apart from a few exceptions, the pictures used in the framework of reports generally conformed with the selected topic.

Meanwhile, the monitoring experts noted that some media call certain institutions (schools, universities, businesses, media) that moved from occupied territories IDP institutions while some media do not do this type of labeling. For example, on 13 October, the web-site '06452' reported on how Mr. Hryhoriy Pryheba, people's deputy of the Severodonets'k city council, was met by students of the Luhansk oblast lyceum 'Young Guard Cadet Corps'. In the story, the lyceum was referenced as an IDP institution. At the same time, the 'Severodonetski news' in its report of the event refrained from using such reference to the lyceum.

<sup>2</sup> 'Ostrov - Luhansk' of 10 October 2016, available at <http://www.ostro.org/lugansk/society/articles/510246>

<sup>3</sup> News item 'Checking of IDPs in the Donetsk region has yielded positive results', 'Ostrov - Luhansk' of 19 October 2016, available at <http://www.06277.com.ua/article/1409451>

<sup>4</sup> News item 'Frightened IDP pensioners suffocate in queues', Site of Krasnoarmeisk and Dimitrov Cities of 23 October 2016, available at <http://www.06239.com.ua/article/1413829>

<sup>5</sup> Severodonets'k City Site, available at <http://www.06452.com.ua>



## Media Monitoring Report (East of Ukraine)

### Media coverage of Internally Displaced Persons in the Ukrainian mass media

p7

During this monitoring period, the trend of the lack of analytical reports on IDP-related issues continued. In addition, only 6 out of 19 stories were balanced. As for the print media only, a story published on 13 October in the newspaper 'Severodonetski Visti' on launching the work of inclusive classes in the Severodonetsk School #1 did not lack balance. The views of representatives of the city and oblast local self-governance authorities, teachers and parents of children who will be taught in inclusive classrooms were presented. By comparison, another material of October 21 in the same newspaper 'Severodonetski Visti' was an official notice of the Severodonetsk city military commissariat and lacked balance.

Similar to previous monitoring periods, the negative trend of superficial coverage and no in-depth reporting on IDP-related issues continued. Journalists did not intend to create a broader civic forum at the local level that would aim at resolving the IDP-related issues. The journalists predominantly used official sources and generally did not question statements by state officials or ask them probing questions. At the same time, there were many reprints without any reference to the information sources. In addition, there were some reports with negative coverage of IDPs. For example, the website 'Ostrov-Luhansk' published a report titled 'The 'Fantomovtsy' of Luhansk oblast depicting detention of citizens from Alchevsk intending to arrive at Kremennaya illegally to formalize the pensions. More specifically, journalists reprinted the press release of the Central Office of the State Fiscal Service in Luhansk oblast. It was dedicated to the detention of the people in the territory that is non-controlled by Ukraine by a Ukrainian special military unit 'Phantom'. The detained people did not possess either passes or statements on IDPs-status while the representatives of those in power called them illegal. The story did not contain any information on how the people crossed the line and journalists apparently did not carry out any investigations and submitted no statements to prove the viewpoints of the people who appeared to have witnessed similar cases. Moreover, no views of the detained or their relatives were submitted either.

**The Kharkiv media** mainly conformed with the principle of balance and avoided sensationalism. They generally avoided incorrect terminology. The video materials corresponded to the reports while political parties were generally not mentioned in the context of IDPs-related stories. The monitoring team did not reveal a case of distortion or any hate



<sup>8</sup>IRTA-fax, 13 June 2016, 'The IDPs will arrange a protest under the Cabinet of Ministers', available at <http://irtafax.com.ua/news/2016/06/2016-06-13-22.html>

<sup>9</sup>Rubzhans'ki Novyny, 6 June 2016, 'Charity - the most powerful weapon of love, kindness and peace'



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.

speech against IDPs in this monitoring period.

At the same time, while there continued to be a general lack of any analytical materials, most media did not simply broadcast officials' statements and tried to search alternative sources. However, the issue of 'OTB-news' of 12 October 2016 broadcast a statement of Pavlohrad's mayor on IDPs employment that was not supported by official statistics records<sup>6</sup>. By comparison, the story on 13 October 2016 'OTB-news' highlighted the information objectively and in a balanced way - on one hand, it was shown that philanthropists together with doctors provide medical aid to the IDPs while, on the other hand, IDPs criticized authorities that they do not provide any medical services required.

There was a number of publications done in the framework of different international projects. For instance, 'Objectiv' media group published an article on 19 October titled 'Training for the recreation therapists from Kharkiv and treatment of IDPs in Prague' which contained an analysis of the IDPs' problems/ needs and informed on the humanitarian governmental program of the Czech Republic for IDPs. The material was published in the framework of USAID –funded project and the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

On October 15 'Objectiv' media group informed about an allocation of UAH 250 thous. to Japan under the UNDP grants framework 'Hobby to

become salary. Which new specializations IDPs in the Kharkiv oblast to acquire'. It was not dedicated to the problems of IDPs but rather to the successful social adaptation of IDPs in Kharkiv oblast thanks to the international aid.

Given the identified violations of professional standards such as lack of balance and irrespective of some noted improvements, we would like to offer a set of the following recommendations to improve the IDP-related coverage:

- \* To increase the number of reports on IDPs, specifically analytical reports and investigations.
- \* To improve the quality of materials through the focus on human stories.
- \* To avoid any subjective assessment of IDPs and presentation of IDPs in a negative way.
- \* 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 focus special attention on making sure that the principle of balance is adhered to
- \* To amplify the IDP-related reporting with an aim to create the civic forum at the local level that would publicly discuss the problems of IDPs in the region. Implementation of these recommendations would raise the professional level of media content, including adherence to some of fundamental journalistic standards, such as impartiality and

<sup>6</sup> Please see the broadcast at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CB-juCD8iuWM>