



First monitoring report (Eastern part of Ukraine –
Donetsk, Luhansk and Kharkiv regions)
Funded by the European Union

Media coverage of IDPs in Ukraine (East)

1-23 October 2015

Prepared by
**Association Spilnyi
Prostir** (Ukraine) and
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1 INTRODUCTION

This is the first of the monitoring reports which will be published in the “Regional Voices: Strengthening conflict sensitive coverage in Ukraine’s regional media” project funded by the European Union, and implemented by the Thomson Foundation, the European Journalism Centre, Association Spilnyi Prostir, MEMO 98 and the Institute for Regional Media and Information. The overall objective of the project is to decrease potential areas of conflict through balanced news output in the regional media, thereby contributing to a decrease in communal tensions, specifically between IDPs and their host communities. This will be achieved by strengthening regional media’s ability to respond to the conflict through enhanced independence and quality of content as well as by strengthening regional media access to networks, both within Ukraine and beyond its borders.

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The project envisions development of an early warning capacity of incendiary coverage of conflict related issues through consistent media monitoring and evaluation, including on election coverage, of participating regional media. Spilnyi Prostir and MEMO 98 jointly prepared the methodology of monitoring the media coverage of IDPs and trained 65 regional analysts (in Kyiv, Lviv, Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk and Odessa) to conduct quantitative and qualitative analysis of the regional media coverage in connection with the above-mentioned topic. Between 1 – 23 October 2015, the monitoring team conducted the first monitoring of a number of monitoring exercises, with a special focus on how the topic of IDPs is reported ahead of the local elections on 25 October 2015. The monitoring sample consisted of a total of 207 monitored media (51 TV channels, 65 print media, 91 online media outlets) in 24 regions of Ukraine divided into four main parts – Eastern part (Donetsk, Luhansk and Kharkiv); Western (Volyn, Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Rivne, Ternopil, Khmelnytsky and Chernivtsi); Northern/Central (Sumy, Chernihiv, Zhytomyr, Vinnytsya, Dnipropetrovsk, Kirovohrad, Poltava and Cherkasy), Southern (Odessa, Kherson, Zaporizhyya, Mykolayiv, ARC).



This report focuses on the media coverage of IDPs in the Eastern part of Ukraine. Following is the summary of the main findings:

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- ★ There was a general lack of stories and articles with a proper analysis of the IDP-related issues
- ★ Media provided only a marginal coverage to IDPs’ inability to vote in the local elections.
- ★ There was a number of cases when media did not keep balance of views in stories about IDPs
- ★ Media in general used correct language and terminology when addressing IDPs. There were, however, a few examples when journalists addressed IDPs as refugees.
- ★ There were, however, a few cases when very negative language was used by law enforcement agencies and local communities members
- ★ Media in general avoided sensationalism when reporting on IDPs.
- ★ There was a number of cases when media did not keep balance of views in stories about IDPs

3 QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

The media sample in the Eastern regions consisted of 31 regional media (4 local TV stations, 5 newspapers and 22 online media) and the monitoring team considered the media ownership, potential impact, and ratings as the criteria of selection. Online media were more numerous in the sample due to the fact that they became virtually the only source of information for many residents of the temporarily occupied territories. >>





The media situation has been significantly affected by the military conflict and a number of 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 DNR¹. Such TV channels were not included in the monitoring sample. Having taken this into account, the monitoring team selected 15 online media outlets in Donetsk and 2 TV-channels, 2 newspapers and 3 websites in Luhansk and Kharkiv respectively.

The monitoring team revealed that the issue of IDPs did not attract particular media attention prior to the local elections (the share of the allocated time and space ranged between 2.9 per cent of the coverage in the monitored TV channel to 2.6 per cent in the newspapers) with only a small increase in the amount of coverage closer to the local elections.

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TV CHANNELS

The monitored TV channels in Luhansk and Kharkiv allocated a total of 2.9 per cent of their broadcast time to IDPs (which was some 41 minutes of the total broadcast time in all monitored channels amounting to 23 hours). The most presented IDP-related topics included social adaptation and community life (34.7 per cent of total volume of IDP coverage), employment (14.4 per cent), education (11.9 per cent), charity (9.4 per cent), state aid (3.9 per cent), accommodation (3 per cent), crime rate (2.1 per cent), “fake” IDPs (1.6 per cent) and healthcare (1.2 per cent).

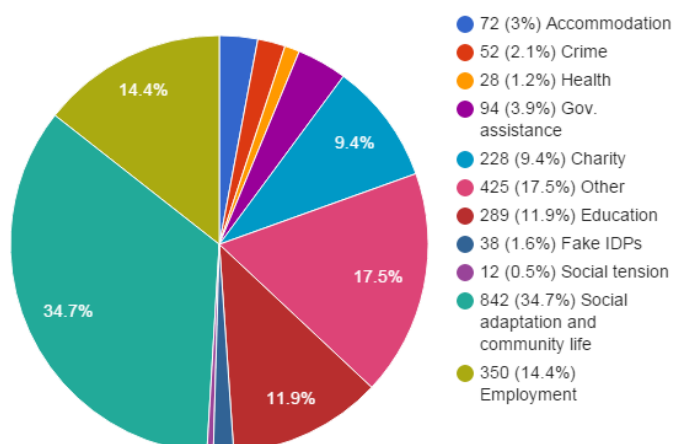


CHART 1 The share of the coverage on all monitored TV channels devoted to different topics in the framework of IDP-related stories during the first monitoring period (1-23 October). The monitoring included all stories which focused on IDP-related issues

When it comes to the coverage of selected subjects presented in the framework of the IDP-related stories, TV channels devoted most of their attention to IDPs (48 per cent), followed by the government (21.2 per cent), volunteers (13.8 per cent), regional state administrations (8.2 per cent), international organisations (3.4 per cent), candidates in the local elections (2.4 per cent), CSOs (1.6 per cent) and the president (1.5 per cent).

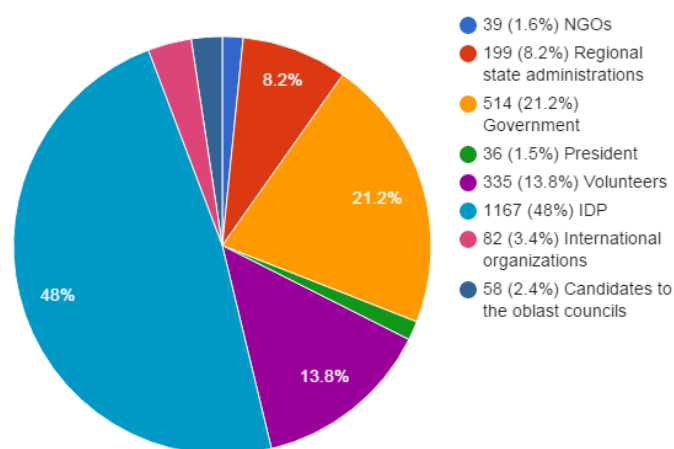


CHART 2 The share of the coverage devoted to different subjects (entities) monitored in the framework of IDP-related stories on all monitored channels during the first monitoring period (1-23 October)

As for the tone of the coverage, monitored TV channels portrayed IDPs mostly in a positive or neutral light. There was generally very little negative coverage in connection with the monitored subjects (only IDPs and the government received some negative coverage).

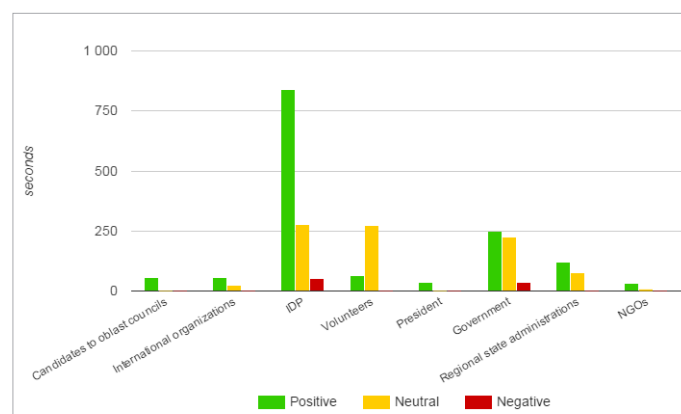


CHART 3 The coverage of the tone in which the monitored subjects (entities) were portrayed in the framework of IDP-related stories on all monitored channels during the first monitoring period (1-23 October)

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¹ LNR – LUHANSK PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC (LPR), DNR – DONETSK PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC (DPR)



NEWSPAPERS

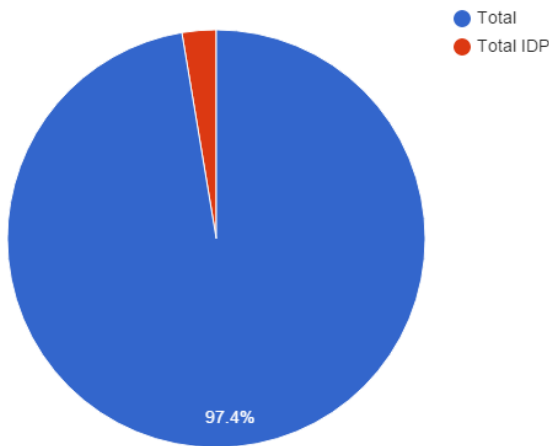


CHART 4 The share of space allocated to IDP related issues (100 per cent is the space allocated to news and current affairs programmes in all monitored newspapers)

In comparison with TV channels, local newspapers allocated even less coverage to IDP-related issues (only 2.6 per cent of their monitored news and current affairs-related coverage). The monitored newspapers devoted most of their IDP-related coverage to the following topics: state aid (46.5 per cent), employment (22.8 per cent), social adaptation and community life (13.7 per cent), education (3.3 per cent) and the voting rights of IDPs (2.4 per cent).

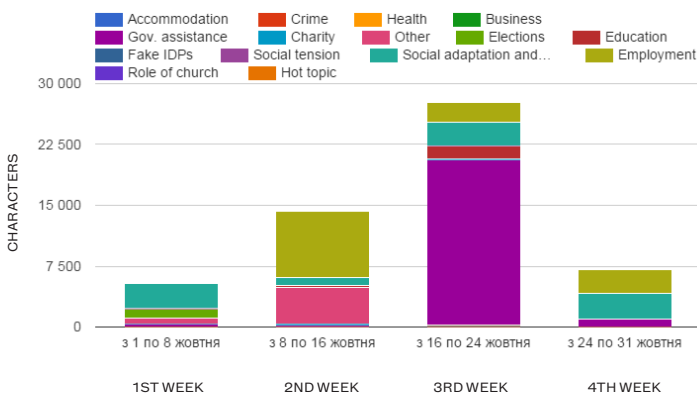
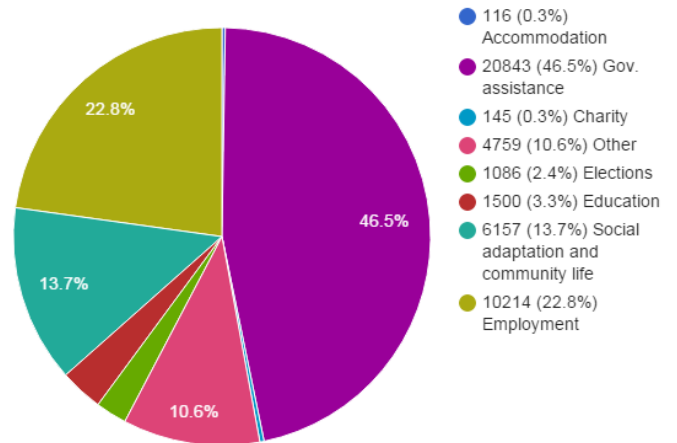


CHART 5 The amount of the coverage on monitored newspapers devoted to different topics in the framework of IDP-related stories

CHART 6 (OPPOSITE, TOP) The share of the coverage on all monitored newspapers devoted to different topics in the framework of IDP-related stories during the first monitoring period (1-23 October). The monitoring included all stories which focused on IDP-related issues



As for the coverage of monitored subjects, monitored newspapers gave nearly half of their coverage to the government (49.4 per cent), followed by IDPs (24.7 per cent), international organizations (13.3 per cent), volunteers (5.3 per cent), the president (3.3 per cent), mayoral candidates (1.7 per cent), regional state administrations (1.6 per cent), and political parties (0.7 per cent).

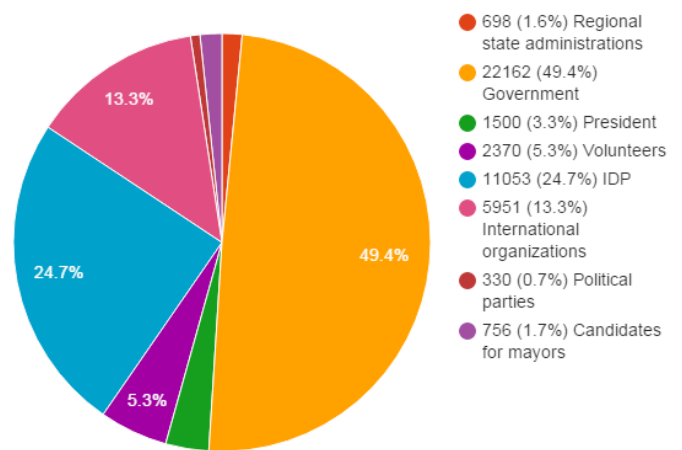


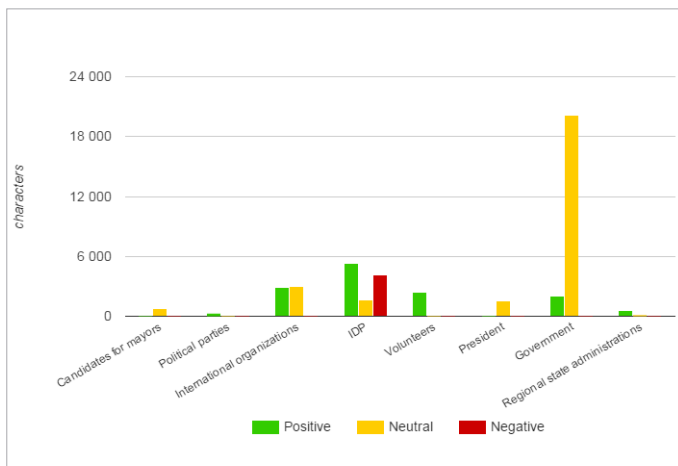
CHART 7 The share of the coverage devoted to different subjects (entities) monitored in the framework of the IDP-related stories on all monitored newspapers during the first monitoring period (1-23 October)

The tone of the coverage of IDPs was predominantly neutral. As for the coverage of other monitored subjects, they were mostly covered in a neutral way, with negative coverage devoted only to IDPs.

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CHART 8 The coverage of the tone in which the monitored subjects (entities) were portrayed in the framework of IDP-related stories on all monitored newspapers during the first monitoring period (1-23 October)



ONLINE MEDIA

The monitored online media devoted to IDP-related stories a combined total of 555 477 characters (around 278 standard A4 printed pages) in the monitoring period. The monitoring team analysed only those articles which focused on IDP-related issues. The monitored online media devoted most of their attention to the following IDP-related topics: social adaptation and community life (30.2 per cent), the voting rights of IDPs (9.4 per cent), employment (7.5 per cent), accommodation (6.7 per cent), state aid (5 per cent), healthcare (4.1 per cent), crime rate (1.9 per cent), IDPs business ventures (2.8%), charity (2.5 per cent) and the misuse of the IDP-status (3.5 per cent).



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CHART 9 (BOTTOM LEFT) The share of the coverage on all monitored online media devoted to different topics in the framework of IDP-related stories during the first monitoring period (1-23 October). The monitoring included all stories which focused on IDP-related issues

As for the coverage of monitored subjects in the IDP-related stories, online media devoted the biggest share of their coverage to IPDs (39.1 per cent), followed by the government (24.1 per cent), regional state administrations (11.5 per cent), CSOs (11 per cent), international organisations (7.8 per cent), volunteers (3.2 per cent), the president (2.6 per cent), political parties and mayoral candidates (0.4 per cent respectively).

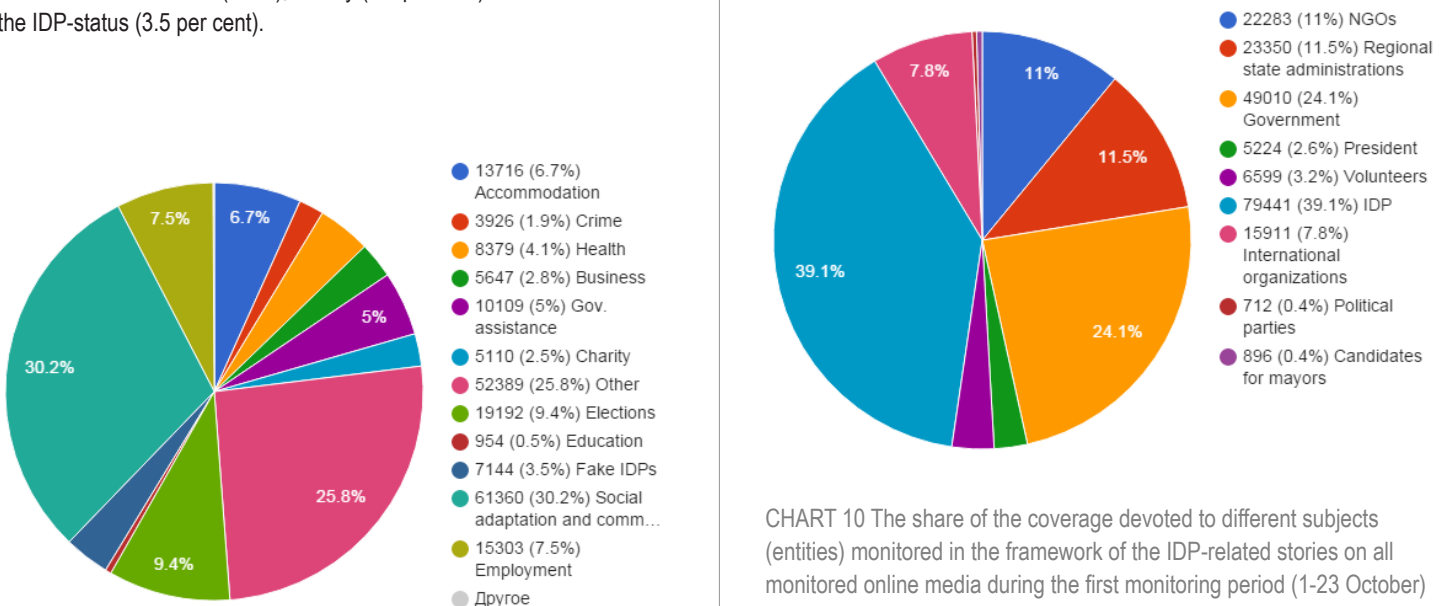


CHART 10 The share of the coverage devoted to different subjects (entities) monitored in the framework of the IDP-related stories on all monitored online media during the first monitoring period (1-23 October)

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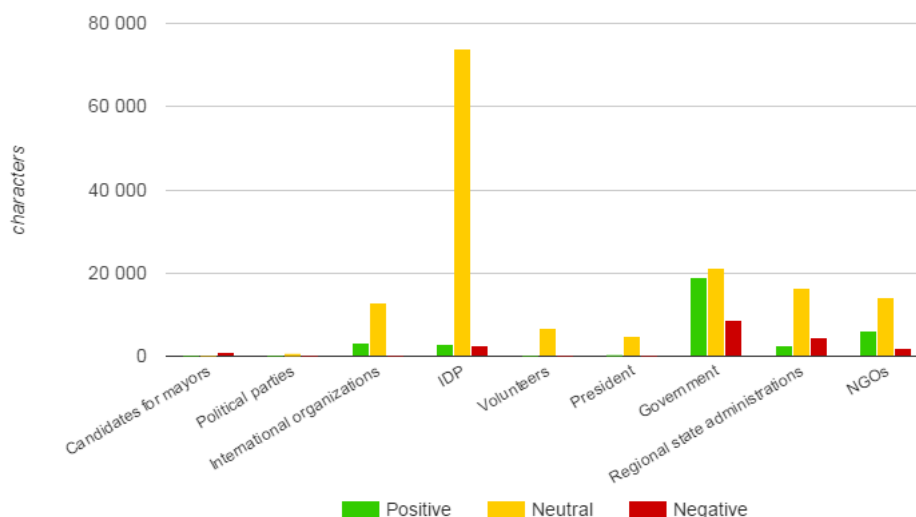


CHART 11 The coverage of the tone in which the monitored subjects (entities) were portrayed in the framework of IDP-related stories on all monitored online media during the first monitoring period (1-23 October)

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Most of the monitored media did not publish any analytical materials devoted to IDP-related issues. While the language and the terminology used in the IDP-related stories were generally correct and did not contain any derogatory language, the monitoring team noticed seven examples of very negative language used against IDPs in particular by the law enforcement agencies when mentioning the region of origin of IDPs referring to them as criminals. In addition, some members of local communities criticized IDPs in connection with the so-called fake IDPs or pension tourists (who travel from Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts to receive the retirement benefits as well as IDPs who are not interested to get job at their new place of residence). In addition, the monitoring team also observed several cases when IDPs were referred to as “refugees”. Journalists generally avoided sensationalism in their reports on IDPs. It is thought that the authors of stories, many of whom were IDPs themselves, tended to be very emotionally engaged in the stories but trying to keep professional journalist standards, including balance.

The key conclusion that may be drawn from media monitoring of IDP issues in Luhansk Oblast is that local media give only superficial coverage of the IDP-related issues and their reports generally lack balance. Only in a limited number of stories did journalists attempt to cover IDP-related issues in depth. As, for example, an interview at Ostrov-Luhansk website with a famous civil activist of Luhansk Yaroslav Minkin - an IDP from Ivano-Frankivsk - who is the head of civil society organization entitled STAN. He shared with Ostrov-Luhansk reporters the challenges he had to face being an IDP in his every day and professional

life. A story entitled “Special Status” Ukrainians flee from war and poverty to Poland for work and study” is worthwhile mentioning. This report pays special attention to the issues of cities in Luhansk Oblast that hosted the most significant number of IDPs. As, for example, Starobilsk where Luhansk Taras Shevchenko State Pedagogical University moved, followed by 17 thousand officially registered IDPs. That provoked significant changes in the life of the city with the population of 45 thousand people with strains in labour and real estate markets. “IRTA-fax” used human stories from time to time. They covered the launch of housing quarters for IDPs in the city of Kreminna: IDPs tell about their households and volunteering helping other IDPs.

Ostrov’s peculiarity is a separate column devoted to the project entitled “An IDP”. Here IDPs can find information about the working hours of crossing points, their capacity for every day of the week, useful information about paper work and commentary from officials about relevant issues for IDPs. In most news reports on IDP issues, apart from information about challenges, the way-out options were offered. Ostrov familiarized IDPs with charity programs, contact details for retraining courses and English language classes.

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All the displaced mass media from Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts were anxious about the events of the temporarily occupied territories of Luhansk and Donetsk Oblasts, with all their reports advocating pro-Ukrainian position. IRTA’s coverage of new social housing quarters >>



made available for IDPs was even-handed with views of donors, local authorities and IDPs present in the reports.

In Luhansk press, IDP reports were mostly presented from the official point of view, with government agencies putting up announcements with useful information for IDPs. The tone of these messages was generally neutral.

The reports by Donetsk journalists were mainly once-source pieces: news items, statements of political actors and state officials, president and the members of his team. Practically all Donetsk media emphasised the fact that IDPs could not exercise their right to vote in the local elections. At the same time both the authors of the reports and their readers were to a far larger extent preoccupied by the issue of participation in the local elections on the occupied territories of Donbass. IDPs were in the first place presented as temporarily displaced persons that are eager to go back to their homes and participate in the revival of their “small motherland”. The complicated situation of people that were rejected the IDP status was also reported on. These are the residents of pre-frontier or so-called “grey” area of Donbass.

There were only a few IDP-related stories in the monitored Kharkiv press. Since the issue of the voting rights of IDPs remained open, election contestants distanced themselves from the IDP issues. IDP reports touched upon the issues of emigrants and immigrants. The tone of the coverage was positive when reporting on IDP startups. In this way the media stated that IDPs were taking care of their employment and contribute to the city budget.

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The Kharkiv-based ATN Chanel provided only a very marginal coverage to IDP issues, being busy with extensive and biased coverage in favour of mayor and oblast administration candidates. Besides, after the end of an active phase of military confrontation in the eastern part of Ukraine and partial demobilisation the issues of social adaptation of ATO fighters came to the fore, which, to some extent, superseded the IDP issues. Only occasionally journalists produced IDP stories which reflected different points of view and used different sources of information. For example, a story on a scandal involving Sestra Myloserdya (Sister of Mercy) charity organisation showing how fellow volunteers accused one of their colleagues of misusing funds allocated for the charity purposes (for IDPs and ATO fighters). In the framework of the story, all interested parties to the conflict had a chance to present their point of view.



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While not always using various sources, ATN channels broadcast items which raised a number of IDP-related issues and provided some analysis. A story on psychological rehabilitation of IDP children with the use of animal therapy in local Ecopark is an example of such approach. This was however an exception to the rule as the channel provided a very favourable coverage to the Ecopark owner – one of Kharkiv oblast rada candidates.

OTB-news is a news product of Kharkiv Oblast State Broadcasting Station. In October, IDP-related stories were featured regularly, focusing primarily on the activities of local authorities and the government in Kyiv, directing aid to IDPs. These stories were one sided aimed to promote the authorities who were shown as doing their best to provide necessary assistance to IDPs. On the other hand, during the election campaign, OTB coverage did not seem to contain paid-for materials from local election candidates.

Other IDP-related coverage included news items lacking proper analysis. However, a story on an employment fair for IDPs, organised by Kharkiv Obast Employment Center and Caritas Ukraine, presented different views with a more detailed information on employment-related challenges for IDPs.

Kharkiv online media were generally objective and unbiased. They were not attempting at plunging into complex issues related to IDPs and remained on the level of producing short news reports only. For example, a story on Kharkiv modular town and complex aid IDPs were being provided with. The issue of accommodation for IDPs, however, was not explored at full, for that reason, it was not clear whether accommodation of IDPs is still a problem. ●