



First monitoring report (Northern and Central part of Ukraine  
– Sumy, Chernihiv, Zhytomyr, Vinnytsya, Dnipropetrovsk,  
Kirovohrad, Poltava and Cherkasy)  
Funded by the European Union

# Media coverage of IDPs in Ukraine (Northern and Central)

1-23 October 2015

Prepared by  
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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 implemented by the Thompson 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.

“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”

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 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, 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 25 October local elections. The monitoring sample consisted of a total of 207 monitored media (51 TV channels, 65 print media and 91 online media outlets) in 24 regions of Ukraine divided into 4 main parts – Eastern part (Donetsk, Luhansk and Kharkiv); Western part (Volyn, Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Rivne, Ternopil, Khmelnytsky and Chernivtsi); Northern/Central parts (Sumy, Chernihiv, Zhytomyr, Vinnytsya, Dnipropetrovsk, Kirovohrad, Poltava and Cherkasy) and Southern part (Odessa, Kherson, Zaporizhyya, Mykolayiv, ARC).

This report focuses on the media coverage of IDPs in the Northern and Central 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 or investigation of the IDP-related issues
- ★ Media covered the fact that IDPs could not vote in the local elections
- ★ Media in general used correct language and terminology when addressing IDPs. There were, however, a few examples when media discriminated IDPs, featuring them in a negative way.



- ★ Media in general avoided sensationalism when reporting on IDPs
- ★ There were cases when media did not keep balance of views in stories about IDPs
- ★ There were a few instances when media focused on the human stories when portraying IDPs
- ★ Politicians and local authorities used IDP-related issues in their election campaigning
- ★ Monitors found some stories which were very promotional towards some candidates in the local elections, raising questions about professional standards
- ★ There were frequent instances of using somebody else’s stories and their republishing

## 3 QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

The media sample in the Northern and Central regions consisted of 75 regional media (18 local TV stations, 23 newspapers and 34 online media) and the monitoring team considered the media ownership, potential impact, and ratings as the criteria of selection. The sample included at least one state-funded television and newspaper in each of the eight oblasts.

The preliminary monitoring results showed that the issue of IDPs did not attract particular media attention prior to the local elections (the share of allocated time and space ranged between 1.1 per cent of the coverage in monitored TV channel to only 0.7 per cent in newspapers).

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TV CHANNELS

The monitored TV channels in the Northern and Central Ukraine allocated a total of 1.1 per cent of their broadcast time to IDPs (which was about one hour and five minutes of the total monitored broadcast time in all 18 monitored channels combined, 95 hours). The most presented IDP-related topics included the social adaptation and community life (38.6 per cent), education (18.7 per cent), and voting rights of IDPs (14.6 per cent).

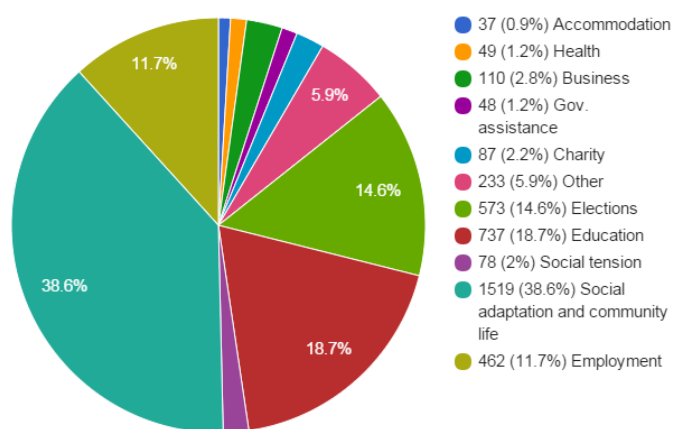


CHART 1 The share of the coverage on all monitored TV channels devoted to different topics in the framework of IDP-related stories during the first monitoring period (1-23 October). The monitoring included all stories which focused on IDP-related issues

When it comes to the coverage of the monitored subjects presented in the framework of the IDP-related stories, TV channels devoted most of their attention to CSOs (43.6 per cent), followed by the IDPs (30.2 per cent), the government (11.1 per cent), and the regional state administrations (9.7 per cent).

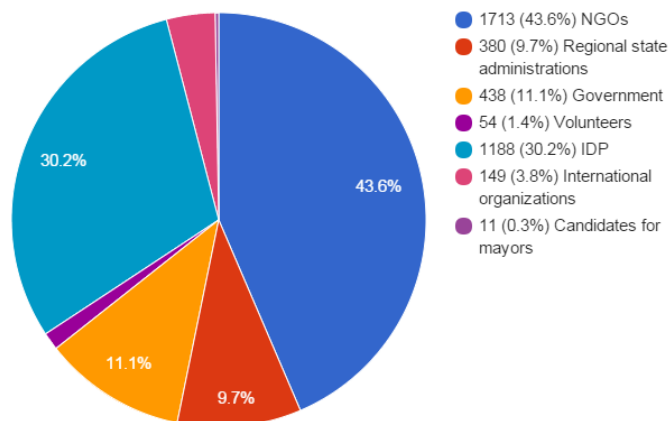


CHART 2 The share of the coverage devoted to different subjects (entities) monitored in the framework of IDP-related stories on all monitored channels during the first monitoring period (1-23 October)

As for the tone of the coverage, monitored TV channels portrayed IDPs mostly in a neutral light, whereas CSOs received mainly positive coverage. In general, most monitored subjects received positive or neutral coverage – only regional state administrations received some limited negative coverage.

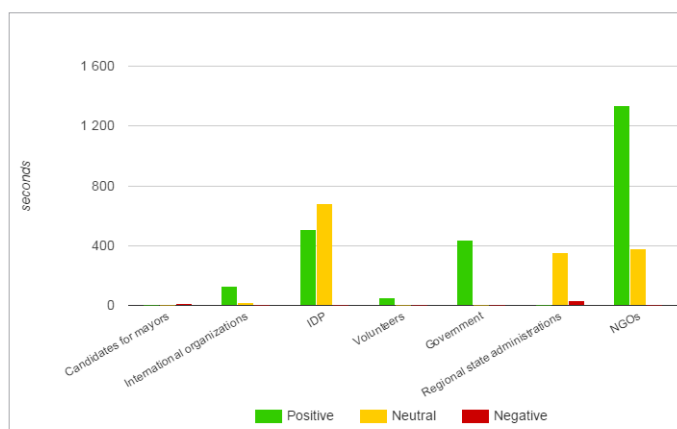


CHART 3 The coverage of the tone in which the monitored subjects (entities) were portrayed in the framework of IDP-related stories on all monitored channels during the first monitoring period (1-23 October)

NEWSPAPERS

In comparison with TV channels, local newspapers allocated even less coverage to IDP-related issues (only 0.7 per cent of their monitored news coverage). The monitored newspapers devoted most of their IDP-related coverage to the following topics: the social adaptation and community life (30.4 per cent), IDPs' voting rights (17.2 per cent), state aid (11.2 per cent), and accommodation for IDPs (10.8 per cent).

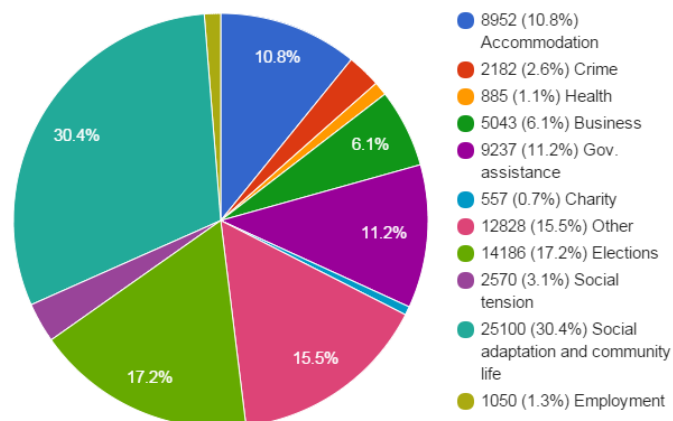


CHART 4 The share of the coverage on all monitored newspapers devoted to different topics in the framework of IDP-related stories during the first monitoring period (1-23 October). The monitoring included all stories which focused on IDP-related issues >>

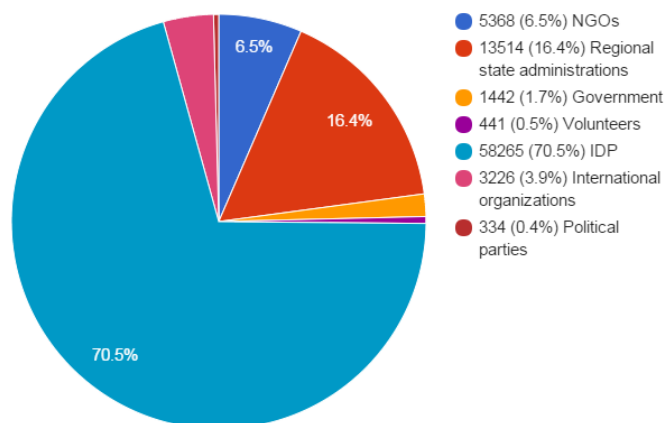


CHART 5 The share of the coverage devoted to different subjects (entities) monitored in the framework of the IDP-related stories on all monitored newspapers during the first monitoring period (1-23 October)

As for the coverage of monitored subjects, monitored newspapers allocated as much as 70.5 per cent of the coverage to IDPs, followed by the regional state administrations with 16.4 per cent, CSOs with 6.5 per cent and international organisations with 3.9 per cent.

The tone of the coverage of IDPs was predominantly neutral with roughly equal proportions of positive and negative coverage. As for the other subjects, they were mainly portrayed in a neutral manner.

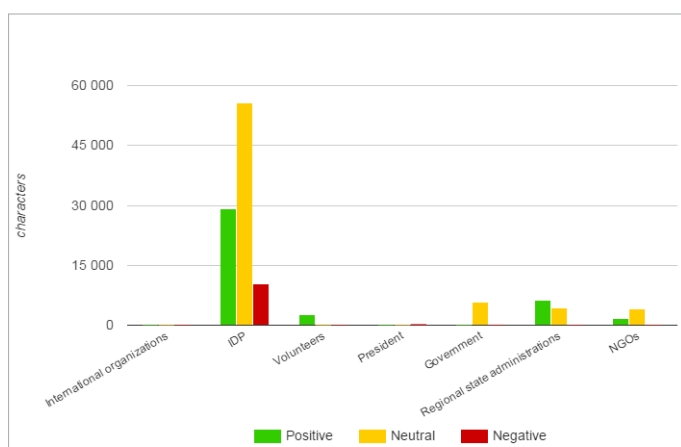


CHART 6 The coverage of the tone in which the monitored subjects (entities) were portrayed in the framework of IDP-related stories on all monitored newspapers during the first monitoring period (1-23 October)

### ONLINE MEDIA

The 34 analysed online media covered the IDP-related issues in 102 online articles. More specifically, the online media devoted to the IDP-related stories a combined total of 147 996 characters (around 74 of A4

printed pages). The online media devoted most of their attention to the following IDP-related topics: the social adaptation and community life (36.2 per cent), education (14.9 per cent), employment (10.3 per cent), IDPs' accommodation (9.8 per cent) and the IDPs' voting rights (9.2 per cent).

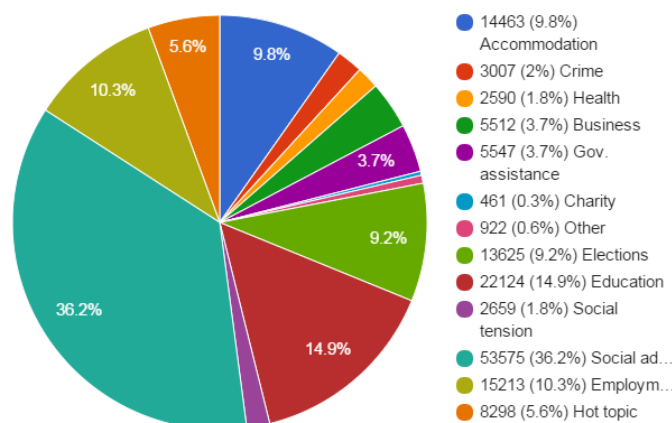


CHART 7 The share of the coverage on all monitored online media devoted to different topics in the framework of IDP-related stories during the first monitoring period (1-23 October). The monitoring included all stories which focused on IDP-related issues

As for the coverage of monitored subjects in the IDP-related stories, online media devoted the biggest share of their coverage to IDPs (62 per cent), followed by CSOs with 15.1 per cent, the regional state administrations with 12.1 per cent and the government with 6.3 per cent.

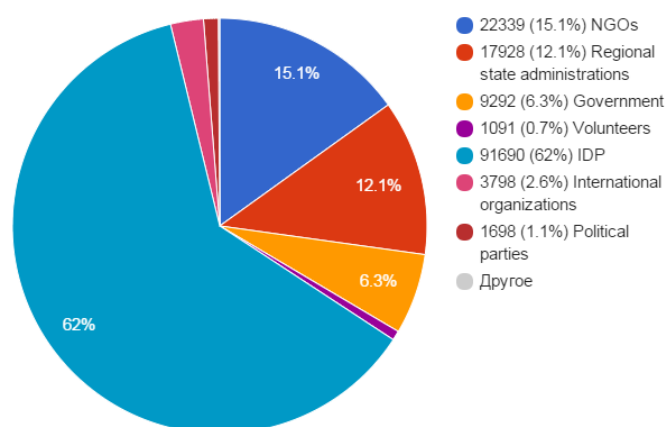


CHART 8 The share of the coverage devoted to different subjects (entities) monitored in the framework of the IDP-related stories on all monitored online media during the first monitoring period (1-23 October) >>



As for the tone of the coverage, the monitored online media portrayed the IDPs mostly in a positive and neutral tone. While there was mainly neutral coverage about all other monitored subjects, the regional state administrations and IDPs received also some negative coverage.

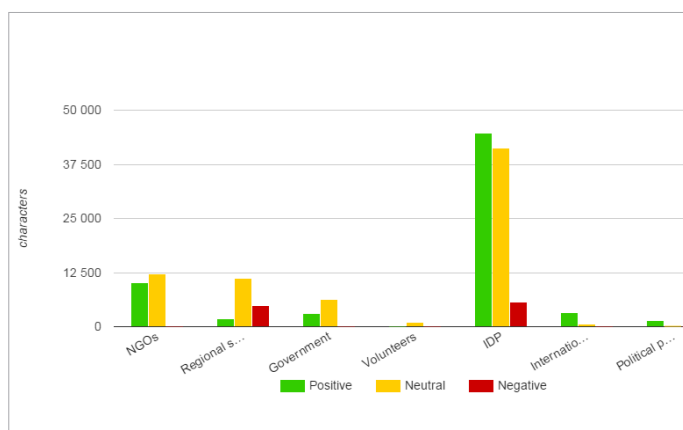


CHART 9 The coverage of the tone in which the monitored subjects (entities) were portrayed in the framework of IDP-related stories on all monitored online media during the first monitoring period (1-23 October)

#### 4 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

When it came to the language and the terminology, the monitored media generally used correct approach and did not use any derogatory language when addressing to IDPs during the monitoring period. In addition, the monitoring team did not observe cases when IDPs would be referred as “refugees”. In general, the coverage of IDP-related issues was balanced with media presenting different viewpoints and using diverse sources. Journalists, however, were generally not critical towards official statements by the central or local state administrations and rarely did any proper fact checking.

There was a general lack of analytical coverage. Journalists generally did not dwell on the possibility to do a proper investigation or analysis. For example, on 10 October, there was an item on Ltava - Oblast TV and Radio Broadcasting Station based in Poltava – featuring employment challenges among women with children (predominantly IDPs). The item however did not provide detailed analysis of the current challenges faced by IDPs when searching for jobs. Another item on 20 October presented a system for addressing the needs of IDPs via the European Court of Human Rights. Pavlo Petrenko, the Minister of Justice, visited the Poltava region and promised to IDPs to return their homes, ceased by separatists, by approaching the court.

It should be mentioned that voting rights of IDPs did not receive significant coverage and were mentioned only to a very limited extent. At the same time, however, journalists of the Chernihiv-based Siver-Centr

Oblast State TV and Radio Broadcasting Station not only informed the audience about the inability of IDPs to participate in the local elections but also explained in which way the latter could exercise their right to vote (the right can be exercised after the official registration, an IDP must become a member of a territorial community). Among Chernihiv newspapers, only Desnyanska Pravda (The Truth of the Desna River) – funded by the local government - emphasized the inability of IDPs to exercise their franchise in its issue from 22 October 2015. The rest of the papers ignored this problem.

ATV – a Sumy-based TV and Radio Broadcasting station- ran an item featuring the results of an opinion poll among Sumy residents on their readiness to participate in the local elections. The issue of IDPs’ voting rights was brought by an IDP woman who identified herself as a “refugee” saying: “We are the refugees from Donetsk. So where should we go to vote? We do not even know that”. Thus, another issue was identified, since, judging by the woman’s remark, part of IDPs were even unaware of the fact that they were deprived of their right to participate in the local elections. That could become an important issue for public discussion but, according to monitors, journalists failed to bring this topic for public discussion.



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Regional politicians quite regularly used IDP-related issues for their campaigning. For example, Dytnets (a Chernihiv-based TV station) spoke of IDPs merely in the context of political campaign. A number of instances of direct or indirect campaigning to maximize the advantages of regional authorities were registered by monitors. Two Chernihiv-based newspapers (Hart and Chernihiv News. Seven Days) published in their 1 October issue an interview with Oleksandr Sokolov, the acting mayor of Chernihiv, seeking reelection. Only several lines in the interview were allocated to IDPs, while the whole interview concentrated on Mr Sokolov’s achievements. Other candidates also used the IDP issue in their campaigns. For example, a campaign advertisement section of ‘The Sem Dney’ newspaper dated October 10 contained a big interview with Roman Semeshko – a candidate from the UKROP party – which also >>





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mentioned IDPs. Another use of the IDP-related issues for campaigning purposes was present on Dnipropetrovsk websites, where two articles included a statement by Yuriy Kotlyarov – shadow opposition Minister of Justice – claiming the intentions of the Opposition Bloc political party to start criminal cases against deliberate deprivation of IDPs from Donetsk and Luhansk of their right to vote.

Another big problem of the media of the two regions is paid journalism. As for example, out of some 7 news items broadcast on ATV private channel, 3 to 4 appeared to have been “ordered” by election campaign participants.

The instances of successful “human” stories when talking about IDPs were rare. In its item of an elderly man from Donetsk, Vita (a Vinnytsya-based TV Channel) ran a story focusing on a computer-literacy program that helped him to abstract himself from the horrors that he had experienced back at home.

Print journalists of Northern and Central Ukraine managed to show some good examples by presenting human stories of IDPs. For example, The Vechirni Cherkasy newspaper ran an article headed “No One Needs Us?”, with a story of a 31-year old IDP woman from the Crimea whose life turned to camping out on the doorsteps of officials. She did receive help but, as it turned out later, was not entitled to such, since she was formally the owner of a part of her household. Now the state insists on the help to be returned and the woman does not know how.

The monitors also registered instances of ungrounded accusations or discrimination. On 14 October The Channel 33 newspaper based in Vinnytsya ran a story “Was Rivets Conflict Inflamed by IDPs?”, giving opportunity to all the parties to the conflict to present their viewpoints but

the IDPs themselves. In such a case a reader is left with an impression that IDPs are the party to blame, even though they are mentioned only at the beginning and at the end of the story. Quote: “In my opinion, the situation was fomented by IDPs from Donbas instigated by some of the locals.” There was another instance of discrimination in the same media outlet. Channel 33 as of 21 October enquires “In what way are our children worse than those of IDPs?” – a story based on a letter from students’ parents of Vinnytsya-based higher educational establishments, offended by the fact that IDP-students are provided with rooms in local dormitories, whereas other students have to rent them. The newspaper simply published the letter as it was, not even trying to present the issue from a different perspective. A similar pattern was registered with vn.20minut.ua website in their extended story of 06 October 2015 headed “Illegal Takeover in a New Fashion or How the Donetsk Ones Commandeer Dormitories”, the subject of IDPs was portrayed in a negative light, the coverage lacked balance, the presentation of the story in the “Readers’ Column” was one-sided, therefore, lacking objectivity, presenting the reader solely with the viewpoints of students of the Vinnytsya Pedagogical University.

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Journalist did not dwell on the possibility to provide deeper analysis or investigation of topics related to IDPs. Akula – a Kirovohrad-based website informed its readers about the fact that an EU-funded tender for construction of IDP housing was groundlessly delayed which put a joint project under threat. It went about 640,8 thousand Euro on the part of EU and 10% - on the Ukrainian side with total amount of 711,8 thousand Euros – but without providing further details. Online media of Sumy Oblast did not cover any IDP-related issues within the monitoring period.



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