



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

Media Monitoring Report

East of Ukraine
February 2016

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1. INTRODUCTION

This is the second 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' that is implemented under the EU auspices by the Thomson Foundation, 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 2015¹.

The overall objective of the project is to decrease any potential areas of conflict through the balanced coverage of events 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 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.



¹ All the reports covering first monitoring period are available at http://www.prostir-monitor.org/reports/wave1_region_pdf.html



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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 Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) and Donetsk People's Republic (DNR).

As for the coverage by types of the media, the topic of IDPs received different resonance – with online media showing the highest interest in coverage of the topic. More specifically, website 'OstroV'² dedicated to it 40,103 characters (approximately 22 standard of A4 pages) and website 'Novosti Donbassa'³ presented topic on a space of 24,306 characters (some 13 of A4 pages). Majority of monitored online media, on average, dedicated to the topic some 15-18 thousand characters (up to 10 of A4 pages). Noteworthy, a significant share of content was covered in the negative tonality, in particular concerning IDPs, as well as central and local governments.

In comparison, the share of allocated space/time dedicated to the topic of IDPs ranged from 5.6 per cent of total space in print media to 2.8 per cent of total airtime on the monitored television channels.

CHART 1 (BELOW) Share of IDPs-related coverage in the news programmes of monitored regional TV channels in the second monitoring period (February 15-28, 2016).

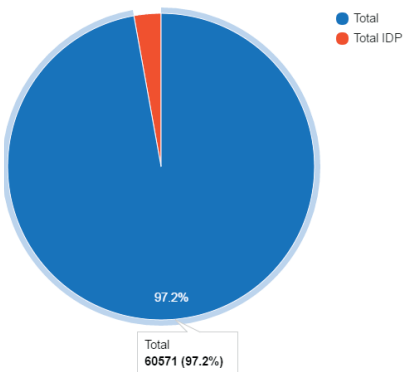


CHART 2 (NEXT PAGE, TOP) Share of IDPs-related coverage of the monitored regional newspapers in the second monitoring period (February 15-28, 2016).



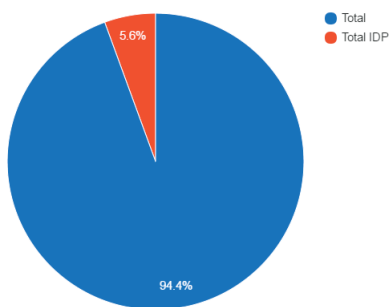
²OstroV, available at <http://www.ostro.org>

³Novosti Donbassa, available at <http://novosti.dn.ua>



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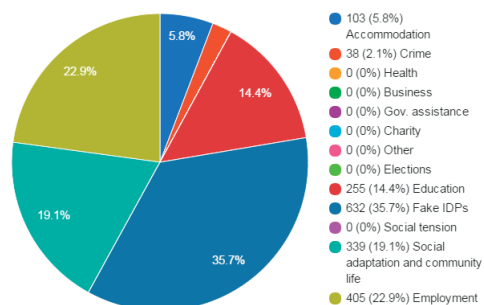


3.1 TV CHANNELS

The monitored channels overall provided 2.8 per cent of their news coverage to the IDPs – more precisely some 30 minutes (1,772 seconds) of total almost 17 hours (60,571 seconds) of their combined news programmes, what represents two minutes per day for all 3 monitored channels altogether, or some 43 seconds per channel a day.

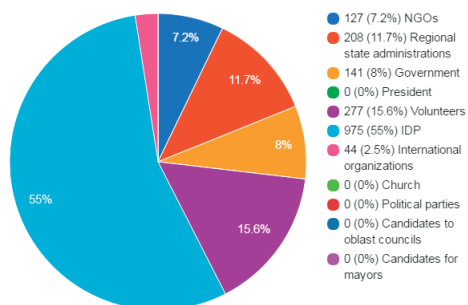
The most covered issues were, in particular, ‘fake IDPs’ (35.7% of total volume of IDPs’ coverage), employment (22.9%) social adaptation and community life (19%), education (14.4%) and accommodation (5.8%).

CHART 3 (BELOW) Share of topics within the IDPs-related coverage in monitored regional TV channels



Among the monitored subjects, the coverage focused primarily on the IDPs per se (55% of total topic coverage), followed by volunteers (15.6%), regional state administrations (11.7%), the government (8%) and NGOs (7.2%).

CHART 4 (BELOW) Share of subjects within the IDPs-related coverage in monitored regional TV channels.



As for the tone of the coverage, TV channels presented monitored subjects mostly in neutral and positive tone. Meanwhile, IDPs themselves were portrayed mostly in positive manner (587 seconds), nevertheless, the reports concerning fake IDPs showed also a significant portion of negative information (339 seconds). As for the other subjects, regional state administrations were covered in a neutral as well as negative manner (72 seconds), while volunteers received positive and neutral coverage.

CHART 5 (NEXT PAGE, TOP) Tone of air time dedicated to the subjects within the IDPs-related coverage in monitored regional TV channels.

As for the coverage by types of the media, the topic of IDPs received different resonance – with online media showing the highest interest in coverage of the topic





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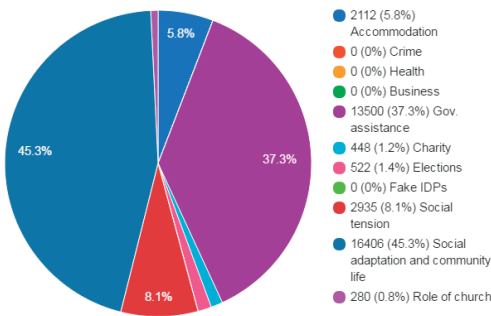
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3.2 PRINT MEDIA

In comparison to the TV channels the East-Ukrainian newspapers provided slightly more active coverage of topic of IDPs (5.6% of the monitored news and analytical content, more precisely 33,835 printed characters).

Among the most covered topics were mainly social adaptation and community life (45.3%) and state aid (37.3%). Topics such as social tension (8.1%), accommodation (5.8%) were covered less significantly, while other topics, including elections (1.4%) or charity (1.2%), were covered rather marginally.

CHART 6 (BELOW) Share of topics within the IDPs-related coverage in monitored regional newspapers



Regarding the coverage of monitored subjects, the newspapers most actively informed on the regional state administrations (44.9%) and IDPs per se (41%). Such subjects as the political parties (5.8%), government (3.3%) or NGOs (3.1%) were presented in a much lesser extent.

CHART 7 (BELOW) Share of subjects within the IDPs-related coverage in monitored regional newspapers

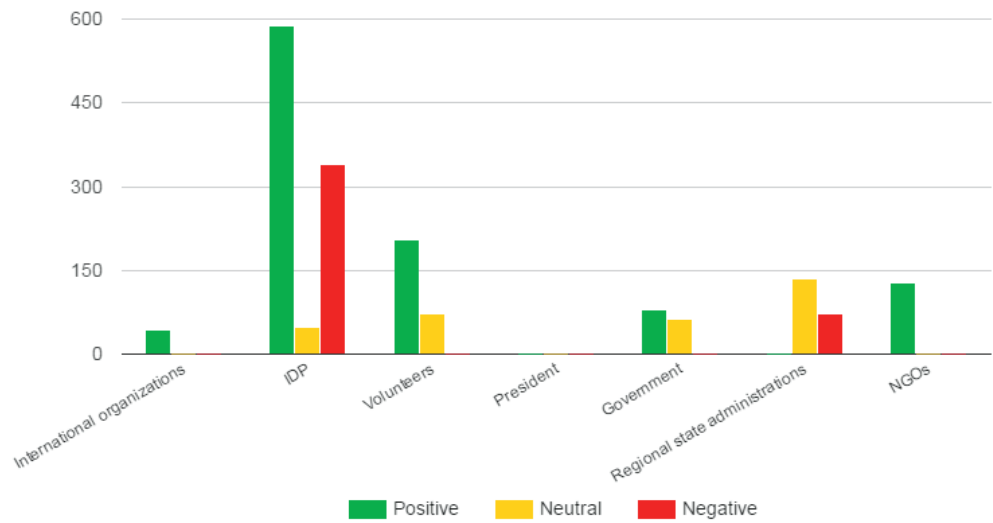
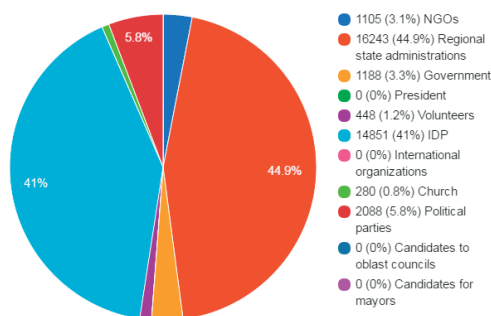
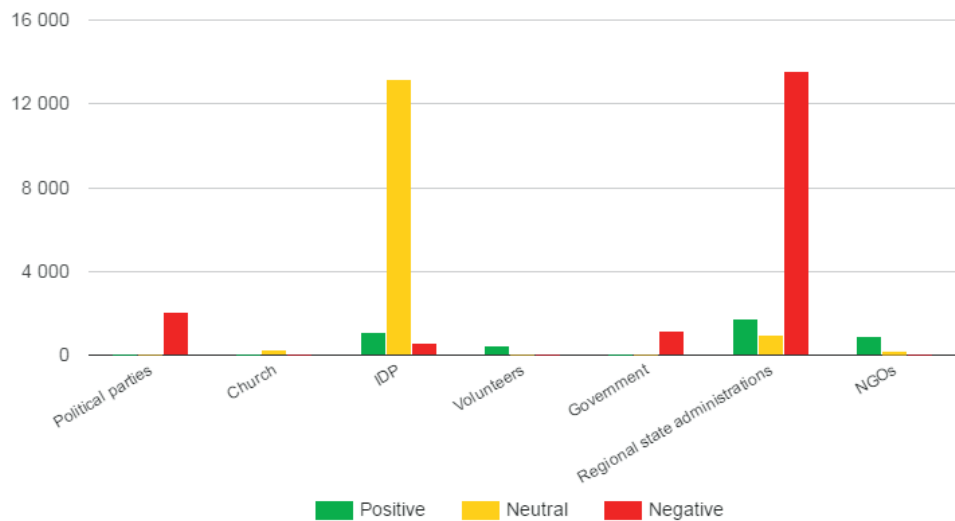


CHART 8 (BELOW) Tone of the coverage dedicated to subjects within the IDPs-related materials in monitored regional newspapers.





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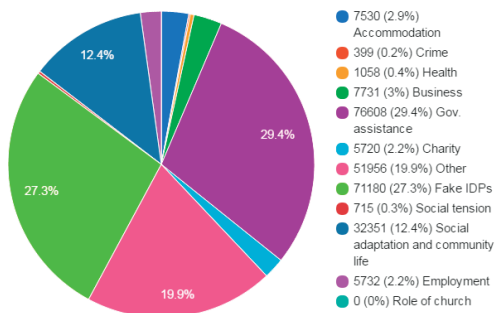
As for the tone of the coverage, in comparison with television, monitored newspapers reported IDPs-related issues in more critical manner. While it informed mostly neutrally about IDPs per se, it brought a portion of critical information on regional state administrations (some 83% of coverage of this subject), as well as on political parties and government (entirely negative information).

3.3 ONLINE MEDIA

The monitored 24 online media outlets devoted in this monitoring period to the IDP-related stories a combined total of 260,980 characters (some 145 of standard A4 pages).

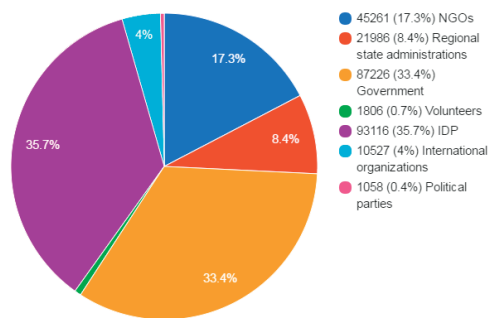
Overall, the most significant coverage in online media was dedicated to state aid (29.4%), fake IDPs (27.3%) as well as social adaptation and community life (12.4%). Other topics, such as business (3%), charity and employment (2.2% each) were covered significantly less.

CHART 9 (BELOW) Share of different topics in coverage of IDPs in monitored regional online media



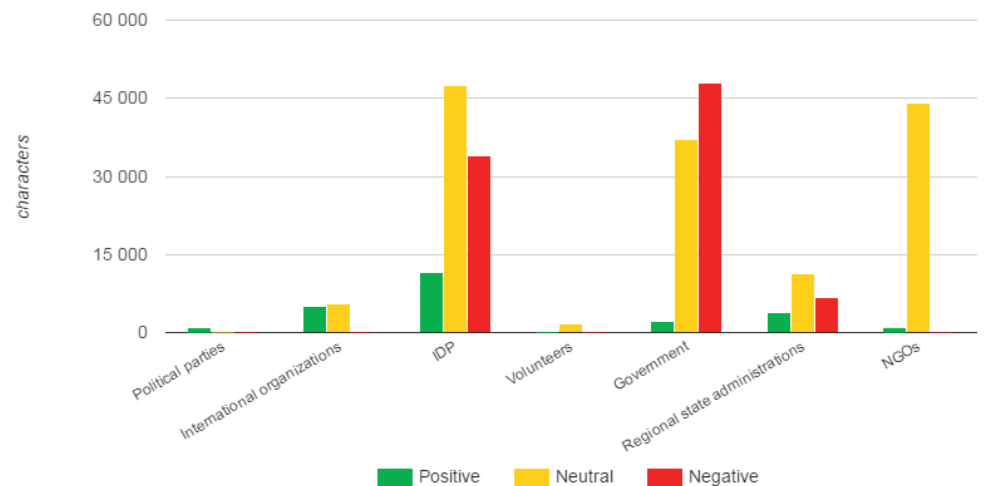
As for the monitored subjects, online media informed mostly about the IDPs per se (35.7%), government (33.4%), NGOs (17.3%); to a lesser extent about others, such as regional state administrations (8.4%) and international organizations (4%).

CHART 10 (TOP RIGHT) Share of different subjects in coverage of IDPs in monitored regional online media



Neutral and negative tone prevailed in online reporting concerning most of the subjects. Online media presented a portion of negative information when reporting on the government (55% of its total coverage), IDPs per se (37%) and regional state administrations (30%).

CHART 11(BELOW) Allocation of the volume of materials among the subjects of monitoring by tone in monitored regional online media.



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4 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

In **Donetsk oblast**, the coverage of IDPs might be considered balanced, as the media provided different viewpoints and used various sources. However, the media usually tended to passively transmit official statements of both central and local authorities, such as press releases, and only rarely verified the given facts. At the same time, the IDPs-related problems were usually only outlined or highlighted without any effort to seek solutions. Generally, there was a lack of analytical, research-based and investigative materials.

The editorial approach of monitored web sites complied with the journalistic standards and avoided sensationalism in coverage of the problems of IDPs. There was neither any occurrence of bias, nor of any distortion or manipulative techniques. At the same time, accompanying video footage, pictures or graphic images corresponded with the factual state of things and were overall used appropriately. The IDP-related language and terminology was correct, non-humiliating and non-abusive. Positively, the term IDPs, not 'refugees' was used in nearly all the publications on IDPs.

During the second period of monitoring in **Luhansk oblast** the findings revealed a trend similar to all region-based monitored media, that the volume of IDPs-related information decreased more than twice in comparison with the first monitoring phase in October. The state institutions relocated from the temporarily occupied territories, IDPs' focus on their legal status has decreased; and additionally, the topic lost its 'election-related' connotation - these were the main reasons of reducing the number of publications on IDPs. During this phase, there was only one material recorded where the employees of the Ministry of Home Affairs described themselves and the institution they represented as displaced persons.

Regrettably, similar to findings from Donetsk oblast, there was a lack of analytical, research-based and investigative materials concerning the issues of IDPs. Noteworthy, only 10 per cent of all monitored materials followed the principle of balance. Positively, there was no instance of a material which would use an incorrect terminology regarding IDPs, such as humiliating words or flattery. The general trend in the monitored media was 're-printing' of the materials of national media



⁴Irtfa-fax, 18 February, available at <http://irtfax.com.ua/news/2016/02/2016-02-18-7.html>

⁵OstroV, 26 February, available at <http://www.ostro.org/lugansk/society/news/493752>



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outlets or of the information presented by the official web sites of authorities. It appeared as if in the majority of materials the journalists did not intend to form the civic forum at the local level that could potentially lead to the settlement of problems of IDPs in the region.

'IRTA-fax' news portal was a sole media source that covered the important national civic hearing in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine concerning forced IDPs and citizens of Ukraine in the occupied territories which was held on 17 February. On the following day, the 'IRTA-fax' published the statement of Mr. Yan Tombinsky, the Ambassador of the European Union to Ukraine, made during the hearing, in which he highlighted a need to protect the rights of IDPs in Ukraine⁴.

Besides, it is necessary to mention a growing appearance of materials of commercial nature

which are, however, presented under the cover of assistance to IDPs – despite the fact that such services are used by all the citizens of Luhansk oblast. The article on the website 'OstroV' from 26 February ("In southern part of Lisichansk one more department of 'Oschadbank' was opened to ease life to IDPs") could serve as an example of such materials - a commercial institution was directly advertised to IDPs through the offer of its common bank services⁵.

At the same time, a significant portion of publications was presented as life-stories of IDPs, but in fact the stories were constructed to promote work of different charity organizations or even political parties that are helping them. In particular. For example, on 26 February, 'Tribun' online source from Luhansk placed in the period of 22-26 February several materials of such nature⁶. For example, in its article "People's deputy assists

children-displaced persons in Luhansk region gain voice in society" it covered activities of Mrs. Tetyana Vizma, a deputy of the Bilokurakin district council, representing political party of the Petro Poroshenko's Block 'Solidarity'. This material bears clear signs of hidden political advertising given the fact that Mr. Denis Denyshchenko, an owner of the web portal is at the same time Head of the Luhansk oblast organization of the above-mentioned political party⁷.

The **Kharkiv** media generally used correct language and terminology, avoided humiliating and abusive wordings or sensationalism in the stories concerning IDPs.

There was one instance where the TV anchorman referred to IDPs as the 'forced fugitives' ('OTB-news', 25 February). There were practically no cases when IDPs were referred to as the 'refugees'



⁶Stribun, 22 February, available at <http://tribun.com.ua/32310>
Tribun, 24 February, available at <http://tribun.com.ua/32356>

⁷Tribun, 26 February 2016, available at <http://tribun.com.ua/32436>



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except for a sole publication - in Kharkiv-based website www.057.ua. In its article from 24 February ("In Kharkiv welfare payments are suspended to displaced persons from ATO"), a term 'fake refugees' was applied in relation to the persons who illegally declared themselves as IDPs⁸.

Similarly to other two regions, media as a practice offered different viewpoints and used various resources. However, the journalists usually did not live up to the critical watch-dog role of the media and instead often tended to passively transmit official statements of both central and local authorities (or law-enforcement bodies), and only rarely verified the given facts. Overall, there was a lack of analytical and research-based materials concerning the IDPs. In addition, the media seemingly did not intend to create broader platform to discuss IDPs-related issues or engage citizens into the more long-term seeking solutions. Generally, in the print media there were no materials on IDPs from Crimea.

It is noteworthy that in comparison with the first monitoring period in October, the regional politicians largely did not refer to any IDPs-related issues. The most acute theme against this background was the 'campaigns of IDPs verification' initiated by the state. Even though the information received from the official resources should be considered trustworthy, the journalists of neither 'ATN', nor 'OTB-news' from 24 February offer views of any independent experts which could present different position on the theme.

In a number of cases media did not cover specific problems that IDPs face, while they only informed on the measures and events related to IDPs without having a broader background of the issue. For instance, 'Objective' Media Group (www.objectiv.tv) in the material of 22 February ("IDPs to receive 25 thousand hryvnia to start business") did not provide any contextual information, while it presented a newly launched project ('Support to entrepreneurs from internally displaced persons') of the international charity fund 'Kharitas Ukraine' supported by the of the Kherson local administration⁹.



⁸057, 24 February 2016, available at <http://www.057.ua/news/1134196>

⁹Objectiv, 22 February 2016, available at <http://www.objectiv.tv/220216/124690.html>