



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

Media coverage of IDPs in the Ukrainian mass media

East of Ukraine
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1. INTRODUCTION

This is the third 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 consisting 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 2015¹ and the second monitoring report assessed the findings from 15 to 28 February 2016.²

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.

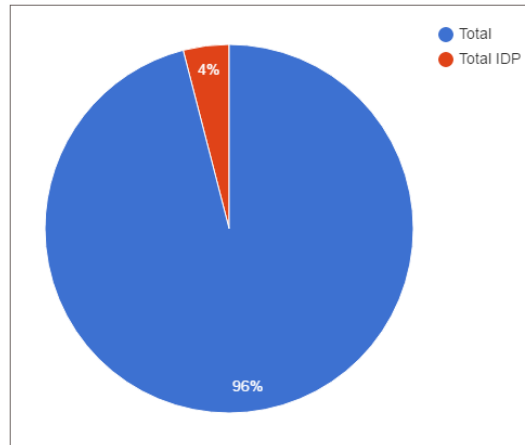


CHART 1 Share of IDPs-related coverage in the news programmes of monitored regional TV channels in the third monitoring period (June 1-14, 2016)

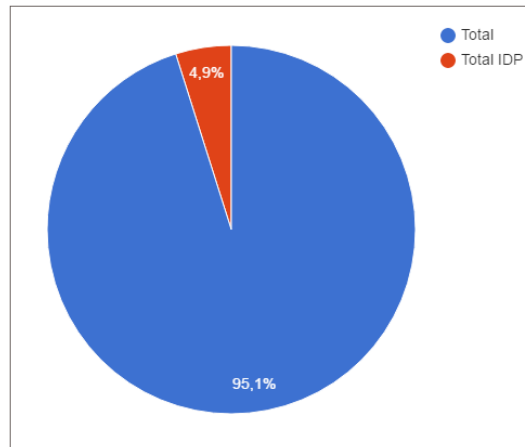


CHART 2 Share of IDPs-related coverage of the monitored regional newspapers in the third monitoring period (June 1-14, 2016)



¹All the reports covering first monitoring period are available at <http://regionalvoices.eu/en/monitoring> and http://www.prostir-monitor.org/reports/wave1_region_pdf.html. The second period reports are available at [http://www.prostir-monitor.org/reports/en/wave2_region_pdf.html\(regional\)](http://www.prostir-monitor.org/reports/en/wave2_region_pdf.html(regional)) and http://www.prostir-monitor.org/upload/reports/final-reports-wave-2/Summary_W2-en.pdf



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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' Association 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 - 14 June 2016, the monitoring team conducted a third wave of a media research, with a special focus on how the topic of IDPs is reported

in a normal, out-of-election period. The monitoring sample consisted of a total of 203 monitored media (50 TV channels, 66 print media and 87 online media outlets) in 24 regions of Ukraine divided into 4 main parts:

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

The sample of monitored media in the Eastern re-

gions of Ukraine included 31 media outlets (4 TV channels, 5 print media and 22 online media outlets).

In comparison with the first and second monitoring waves, there were some minor changes in the sample. An online version of DOST (the Donetsk Oblast State Television) was replaced with its terrestrial broadcasting service since the channel renewed the broadcasting in the Donetsk oblast territory that is controlled by the Ukrainian government. 'DonPress', an online media outlet was replaced by 'Znamya Industrii' ('The Industry's banner') and by 'Dilovyj Slav'yansk' ('The Business Slav'yansk') as the latter outlets showed more IDPs-oriented editorial policy. The website 'Tribun' from Luhansk oblast was replaced by another online source Severodonetsk-based www.06452.com.ua. While the former website terminated its ground office and limited its activities to reprinting, the website from Severodonetsk city (the city that is an administrative centre of the Luhansk oblast territory which is controlled by the Ukrainian government) gradually has become a newly popular information resource.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- ★ Monitored media in their news formats did not show any serious attention to the IDPs-related topics. Alongside, analytical insight and approach was only scarce.
- ★ The specificity of the media landscape from Eastern Ukraine is high activity of the Internet media. Therefore, for instance, in the Donetsk oblast the most active coverage of IDPs was presented by the online media. At times, the number of news reports and 'life-stories' reached five to seven texts per day.
- ★ The third monitoring wave indicated significant rise of quality local reporting - if over the first and second monitoring wave, the majority of publications just followed the information causes presented by the central media and information agencies, in this period there was a number of independent reports.
- ★ Irrespective of their scarce number, in Donetsk there were instances of publications with incorrect use of IDP-s related terminology, including so-called 'fake displaced persons' or 'pension tourists'.
- ★ Qualitative analysis of the Donetsk-based media indicated that their focus was given to the social rights of the IDPs - issues like social payments or pensions, as well as their employment incentives.
- ★ Overall, the IDPs-related coverage was rather superficial. Very often it focused on short news or summaries without providing proper context or



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more in-depth information on the matter.

★ The findings confirmed long-standing pattern that East-Ukrainian journalists did not intend to create a broader civic forum at the local level that would aim at resolving the IDPs-related issues.

★ Most of the monitored media adhered to the principle of balance and impartiality and avoided sensationalism in their IDPs-related coverage.

3. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

The sample of monitored media in the Eastern regions of Ukraine included 31 media outlets, divided as follows:

- ★ 4 local TV-stations – one state-owned in each of 3 oblasts and one private channel in Kharkiv oblast;
- ★ 5 newspapers - one state-owned publication and few private ones per oblast;
- ★ 22 online media – 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, originally based in one of the Eastern regions, relocated their offices outside of the East, to different parts of the country. Another important aspect is that given the ongoing conflict, the operation of traditional media is difficult as a result of which the role of Internet-media that is dominant and much larger when compared to other regions.

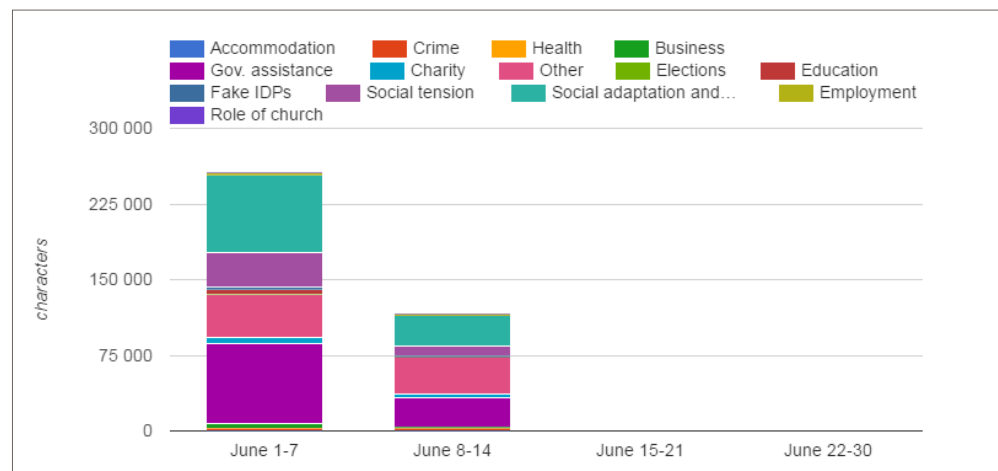
The monitoring findings revealed that the IDPs-related topics, did attract relatively noticeable media attention, especially in comparison with other monitored regions - the share of allocated time and space ranged between 4 per cent in monitored TV channels to 4.9 per cent in print media. At the same time, the coverage of IDPs both, television and print media decreased (it was 4.7 and 7.1 per cent in February 2016, respectively).

3.1 TV CHANNELS

Monitored channels in the Eastern Ukraine allocated 4% of their air time to the IDPs-related coverage. In absolute terms it amounted to some 33 minutes (1,973 seconds) of total 14 hours of the news programmes – somewhat less than in previous, period in February 2016 (it was 4.7 per cent) - in other words it represented a little bit more than 2 minutes daily for all TV channels together, or 35 seconds per a TV channel daily.



CHART 3 (BELOW) Share of IDPs-related coverage of the monitored regional online and print media in the third monitoring period, weekly (1-14 June, 2016)



²All the reports covering second monitoring period are available at http://www.prostir-monitor.org/reports/en/wave2_region_pdf.html and http://www.prostir-monitor.org/upload/reports/final-reports-wave-2/Summary_W2-en.pdf



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The most covered issues were social adaptation and community life (21%), state aid (18.2%) and social tensions (17.1%). However, the most dominant was category 'other' (41.1) that combines several issues, such as human rights, sociological studies, leisure etc.

Among the monitored subjects, the IDPs per se were most actively represented (29.9% of total coverage of IDPs), followed by the government (22.4%), regional administration (18.7%) and international organizations (17.8%). Other subjects, namely volunteers (6.5%) and NGOs (4.7%) were represented less visibly.

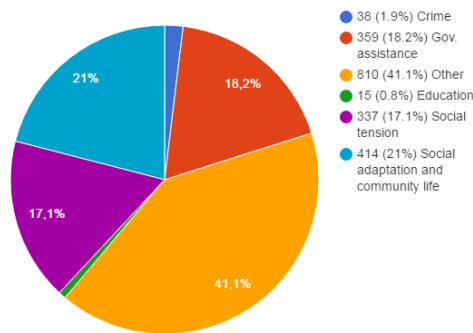


CHART 4 (ABOVE) Share of topics within the IDPs-related coverage in monitored regional TV channels

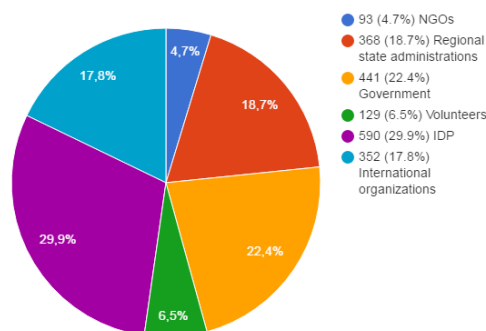
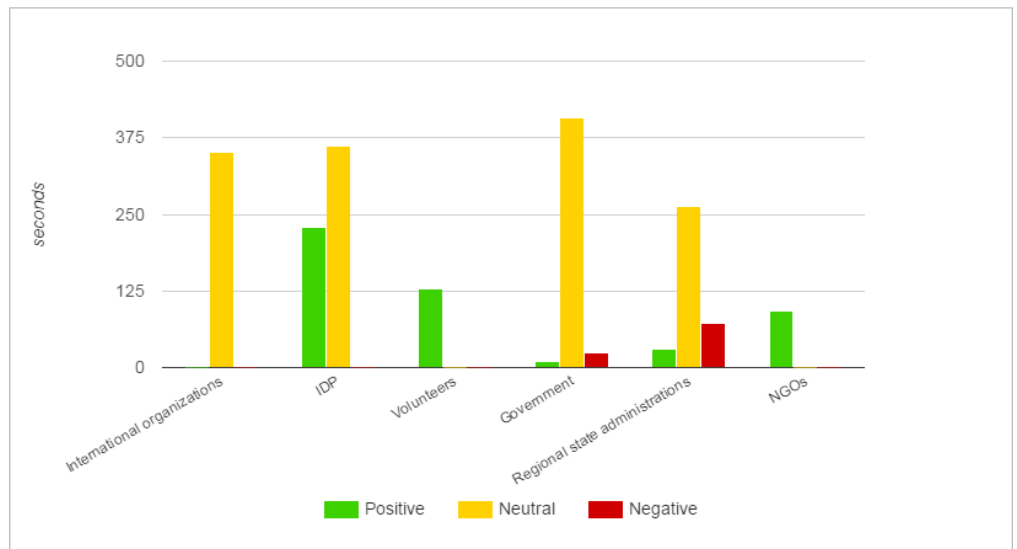


CHART 5 (ABOVE) Share of subjects within the IDPs-related coverage in monitored regional TV channels

As for the tone of the coverage, TV channels presented the majority of monitored subjects in neutral and positive tone. Meanwhile, subjects like regional administrations (20% of its total coverage) and the government (5%) were portrayed also in a negative manner. The authorities received such coverage on two out of four monitored



channels (ATN and Kharkiv Television and Radio Broadcasting Company - OTB).

More specifically, the 2 June report from ATN channel was dedicated to a detention of border guards that were allegedly involved in accepting bribes for illegal smuggling of goods and for facilitating the IDPs' crossing the checkpoints. On 6 June, OTB channel broadcast the information that, in the Kharkiv oblast, a significant part of the IDPs does not receive any social payments, which they are entitled to, officially reasoned by a missing stamp on their registration certificate, despite the fact that such requirement was cancelled by a new legislation.

CHART 6 (TOP) Tone of air time dedicated to the subjects within the IDPs-related coverage in monitored regional TV channels

3.2 PRINT MEDIA

In comparison to the TV channels, the East-Ukrainian newspapers provided slightly more active coverage of IDPs - 4.9% of the monitored news and analytical content (it was 7.1% during the second monitoring wave).

As for the topics, monitored newspapers provided the most active coverage to state aid (45.7%), social tension (21.9%) and charity (15.4%). Other less significantly presented topics were social adaptation and community life (9.8%) alongside with employment (7.2%).

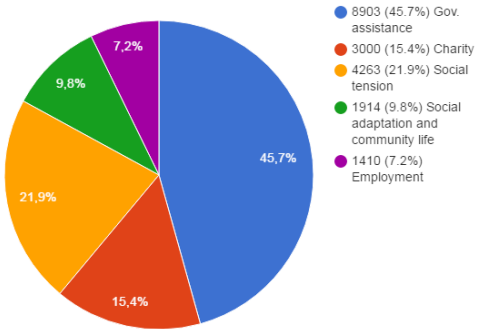
A writer and historian from Donetsk, who currently works in Lviv, criticised the authorities for their failure to put maximum effort into not allowing separatism in the region and to return Donetsk to Ukraine



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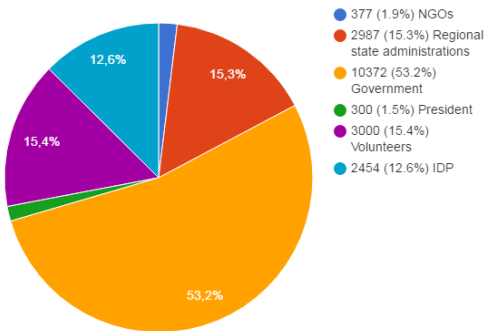


As far as the presentation of subjects is concerned, the newspapers provided the biggest coverage to the government (53.2%), volunteers (15.4%), regional administration (15.3%) and the IDPs per se (12.6%).

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

As for the monitored subjects, IDPs themselves received the bulk of the coverage (59.6% of total volume of IDP-related coverage), followed by, the government (25.3%), regional state administrations (12.8%) and volunteers (2.4%).

CHART 8 (BELOW) Share of subjects within the IDPs-related coverage in monitored regional newspapers



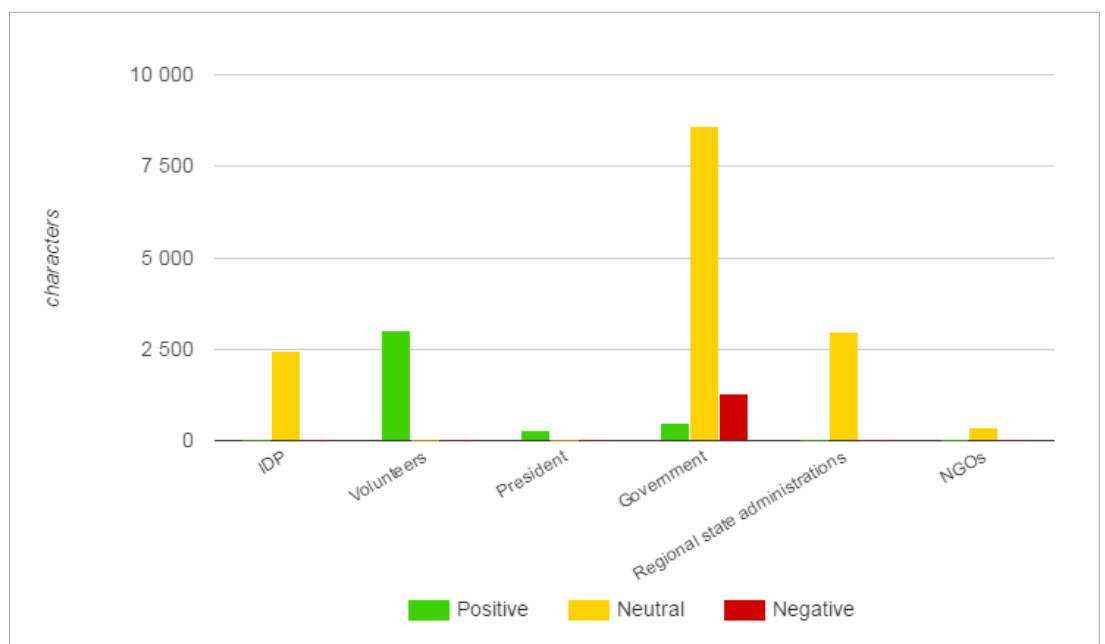
The tone of coverage was overwhelmingly neutral and positive. At the same time, 12% of the government's coverage was negative. It was primarily cause by the 'Vecherniy Kharkiv' ('Kharkiv in the Evening') newspaper that informed about problems of the IDPs to receive their pension payments due to the excessive bureaucratization of the state authorities.³

3.3 ONLINE MEDIA

The monitored 22 online media outlets devoted



CHART 9 (BELOW) Tone of the coverage dedicated to subjects within the IDPs-related materials in monitored regional newspapers



³Vecherniy Kharkov, 2 June 2016, 'The IDPs were left without pensions because of the actions of the Cabinet of Ministers', available at <http://vecherniy.kharkov.ua/news/120375>

⁴DonbassUA, 3 June 2016, 'The Ministry of Finance smoked out the IDPs', available at <http://donbass.ua/news/region/2016/06/03/minfin-vyvel-pereselencev-na-chistuju-vodu.html>



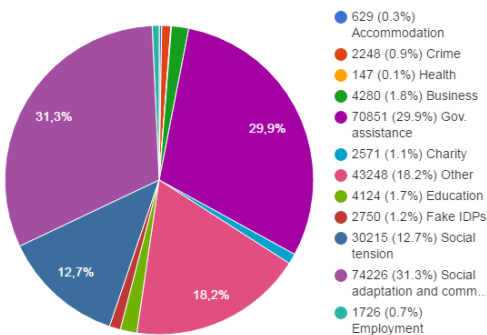
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to the IDP-related stories a total of 237,015 characters, i.e. some 118 of standard A4 pages (there was 261,969 characters during the second monitoring wave - 145 standard A4 pages.).

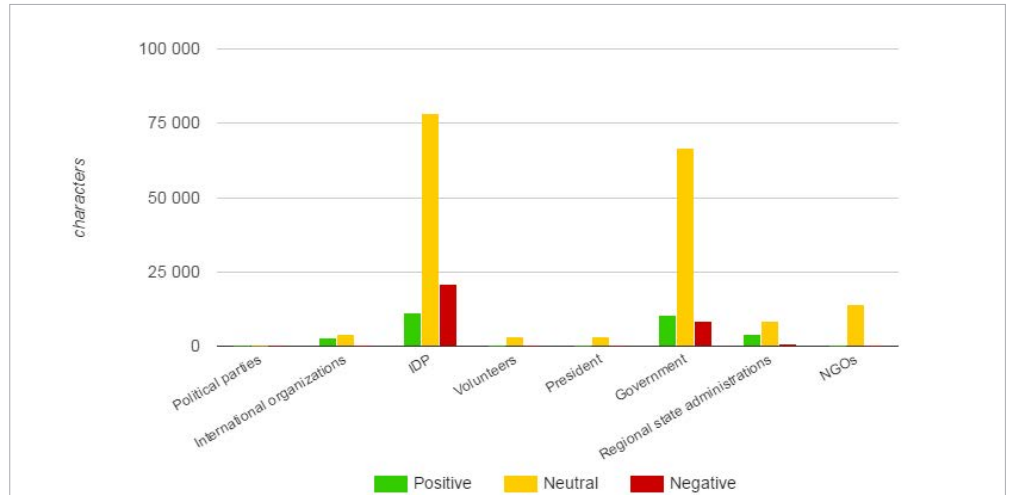
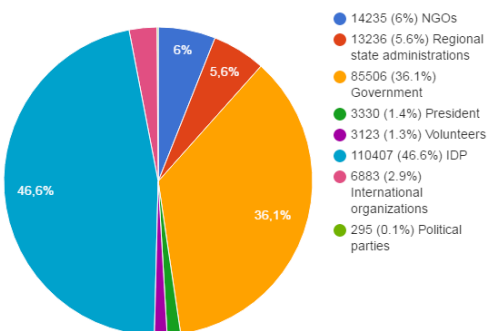
The biggest portion of the coverage was devoted to social adaptation and community life (31.3%), state aid (29.9%), other (18.2%) and less to social tension (12.7%). Coverage of topics such as business (1.8%), education (1.7%), or employment (0.7%) was only marginal.

CHART 10 (BELOW) Share of different topics in coverage of IDPs in monitored regional online media



In the Eastern online media, there were two subjects that received the bulk of the IDPs-related coverage – the IDPs per se (46.6%) and the government (36.1%). Coverage of other mentioned subjects, such as NGOs (6%), regional administration (5.6%), international organizations (2.9%), the President (1.4%) or volunteers (1.3%) was very minimum.

CHART 11 (BELOW) Share of different subjects in coverage of IDPs in monitored regional online media



As concerns the tonality of reports, online media offered to their readers mostly neutral and positive information on the monitored subjects. There was some negative coverage of the IDPs per se (19% of its total coverage), of the government (10%) and regional administration (5.5%).

The most of reports in negative tone was noticed in online media of the Donetsk oblast. As an example of IDPs negative coverage, there was the online 'DonbassUA' material from 3 June 2016⁴ ('The Ministry of Finance smoked out the IDPs') that informed about the termination of government payments to the IDPs which did not pass the state verification process (by staying in the uncontrolled territories or receiving social payments from the structures which are uncontrolled by the Ukrainian authorities).

Central government was particularly criticized in another online report published by 'OstroV' ('The displaced under the Cabinet of Ministers demand to stop their discrimination')⁵. The news told about participants of the demonstration who demanded to cancel the changes to Resolution 637 on Social Benefits for IDPs that was adopted on 8 June 2016.⁶

4 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

In Donetsk oblast, the online media showed the highest interest in the IDPs-related coverage. The monitoring revealed that the IDPs-related issues stayed regularly in the scope of vision of the top popular Donetsk media. Such resources as 'Ostrov' ('Island'), 'Donets'ki novosti' ('Donetsk news'), 'Donbass', '062' basically on a daily basis published the information concerning the IDPs. Sometimes, the number of news reports and 'life-stories' reached five to seven texts per day.

CHART 12 (ABOVE) Tone of the coverage dedicated to subjects within the IDPs-related materials in monitored regional online media

⁵OstroV, 14 June 2016, 'The displaced under the Cabinet of Ministers demand to stop their discrimination', available at <http://www.ostro.org/general/society/news/501756>

⁶The Resolution introduces monitoring commissions - so-called "mobile groups" - to assess home conditions of internally displaced people. The commissions would have the right to suspend benefits if a person is not found living in a declared residence. Suspensions can be cancelled, but only after a two-month period. National Police and Security Service of Ukraine will be part of monitoring commissions in addition to the Ministry of Social Policy representatives. Internally displaced people are paid 900 UAH (36 USD) a month if they are unfit to work, and 400 UAH (18 USD) in case they are. The protesters worried that the Resolution could eventually lead that they lose even these small sums

⁷'DonbassUA', 14 June 2016, 'The displaced under the Cabinet of Ministers require the restoration of their rights as citizens of Ukraine', available at <http://donbass.ua/news/region/2016/06/14/pereselency-pod-kabminom-trebuju-tvosstanovlenija-svoih-prav-kak-grazhdan-ukrainy-foto.html>



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It is necessary to note that the third monitoring wave indicated serious growth of the quality based on a different journalistic approach. Whereas during the previous monitoring waves the majority of publications were of reactive nature, i.e. followed the information causes provided by the central Ukrainian media and information agencies, in the third period monitoring team found an array of independent reports. More specifically, a number of IDPs-related stories were dedicated to their 'life-stories' at a new dwelling place. It should be noted that media as 'OstroV' and 'Donets'ki novosti' often refer to primary sources of information, i.e. statements of activists arranging the meetings and piquets for the IDPs. At the same time, journalists were in person at the events (both in Kyiv and Donetsk oblasts), enabling them to illustrate the text content with a number of the real pictures and videos.

In contrast to the second monitoring wave, the Donetsk media provided rare coverages of the so-called 'fake IDPs' or 'tourist pensioners'. Therefore, the negative tone on the IDPs was less striking. Instead, 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). The regional media provided a detailed overview of the requirements to IDPs to revoke the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers that regulates the procedure for registration of IDPs from Crimea or from the area of military action⁷.

In Luhansk oblast media there was one material with the incorrect terminology - the online 'IRTA-fax' on 13 June⁸ reported that, after the verification of the factual place of dwelling, the 'refugees' might be deprived of their social payments. Overall, the coverage of the IDPs was not balanced. Out of the total IDP related 17 reports, only four materials conformed with the principle of balance. Among the monitored media, it was LOT TV that provided the balanced coverage, with a wide number of speakers representing all the interested parties. Similarly, there was only one material in Luhansk print media that adhered to the professional standard of balance - 'The Rubizhans'ki novyny' (Rubizhne News) showed a correct approach (giving the floor to the representatives of volunteer organization and respective IDPs).⁹ In online media, 'IRTA-fax' in a balanced manner reported about the attitude of the Severodonets'k citizens towards IDPs.¹⁰



⁸IRTA-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>

⁹Rubizhans'ki Novyny, 6 June 2016, 'Charity - the most powerful weapon of love, kindness and peace'



Regrettably, and in continuity with previous period, there seems to be a pattern that the journalists did not strive to form a broader civic forum at the local level that would aim at publicly discussing the regional issues which the IDPs face. From a presentation perspective, the illustrative footage or pictures usually correspond to the topics, however, in some cases they were not available.

In the 'Severodonets'ki visti', there were two reports on the activities of the State Oschadnyj Bank of Ukraine. In both reports, there were the references to IDPs – while the article from 3 June ('Pensions to IDPs - through Oschadbank only') of 3 June had an informative nature on the necessity to formalize the pension payments in the Oschadbank, in another report from 10 June ('Key value of the bank - its clients'), Iryna Bondar, Head of the Luhans'k branch indirectly referred to the IDPs in an interview with the features of hidden advertising of the bank.

The journalists of the **Kharkiv** oblast media mainly conformed with the principle of balance and avoided sensationalism in the coverage of IDPs-related issues. However, the analytical reports were almost non-existing. While 'life-stories' offer wide possibilities to cover IDPs in a more natural environment, monitoring did not reveal too many examples. In one of those, the 2 June article from 'Vecherniy Kharkov' newspaper presented a story of an 84-year-old citizen, who moved in 2014

to Kharkiv from Luhansk and stopped receiving pension from February 2016 because of the bureaucracy.

Monitored media in general applied a correct approach as far as the language and terminology concerns. They also did not use any humiliating or derogatory language in their IDPs-related coverage, for example there were no cases when a term 'refugees' would be used. In the 2 June report at ATN channel the IDPs were portrayed in a descriptive manner as 'the people intending to leave uncontrolled territory in the access points on the demarcation line'.

Noteworthy, there were no instances of the information distortion or manipulation by the media, or the abusive statements against the IDPs which could be perceived as strengthening negative stereotypes.

In online media sphere, most of the monitored materials lacked detailed research or more in-depth analysis of the IDPs' issues. As a rule, mass media generally did not provide coverage of IDPs but informed on the measures and events related to IDPs without providing any deep insight into the problem. For instance, in its 3 June article, 'Objectiv' media group offered no analysis of the IDPs' needs or presented their viewpoints. Instead it only informed about potential implementation of

the co-UNDP project in the Kharkiv oblast.

With the view to the described findings, identified trends, including violations of a number of professional and ethical standards, specifically, use of incorrect terminology, one-sided coverage of information, a number of immediate recommendations how to improve the IDPs-related coverage in the regional media of the Eastern oblasts is offered:

- ★ To increase the overall level of IDPs-related coverage, including analytical and investigative reports.
- ★ To search for more concrete IDPs-related 'life-stories' and to consider how to combine them with an archive footage or factual statistical data.
- ★ To arrange the editorial meetings and trainings concerning correct terminology and related vocabulary to avoid derogatory comments. At the same time other professional standards, primarily balanced reporting should be given an appropriate attention.
- ★ 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 more broader civic forum at the local level that would publicly discuss the IDPs issues 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 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.

¹⁰IRTA-fax, 13 June 2016, 'How do Severodonetsk citizens treat the IDPs', available at <http://irtafax.com.ua/news/2016/06/2016-06-14-26.html>

¹¹Vecherniy Kharkov, 2 June 2016, 'The displaced were left without pensions because of the actions of the Cabinet of Ministers', available at <http://vecherniy.kharkov.ua/news/120375>