

## ANALYTICAL REPORT

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# TRANSFORMATION OF MEDIA LITERACY SPHERE IN FULL-SCALE WAR IN UKRAINE

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# INTRODUCTION

On the night of February 23 to 24, 2022, Russia committed a full-scale assault against Ukraine as continuation of the military aggression launched back in 2014. Martial law was imposed in the country. According to the International Organization for Migration, the number of internally displaced persons (as of May 2022) exceeded 8 million. (Organization for Migration, 2022). 6.5 million Ukrainians fled the country to European countries, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2022). A considerable part of the country's infrastructure has been destroyed. For more than four months, the citizens of Ukraine have been facing a constant risk of missile attacks from Russia, and this risk is not decreasing.

At the same time, Russia is waging a war in cyberspace with its continuous aggressive disinformation and propaganda, seizes the frequencies of Ukrainian TV and radio channels, and creates an information blockade of the territories occupied after February 24. According to the data from the State Service for Special Communications and Information Protection of Ukraine, starting from February 24, 2022, Russia committed 796 cyber-attacks on various facilities: the government and local authorities, defense, financial, energy sectors, as well as transport infrastructure and telecommunications are the most frequent aims of attacks. A number of Ukrainian media were also subjected to cyber-attacks (the State Service for Special Communications and Information Protection of Ukraine, 2022).

Also, during the same period, 284 frequencies were lost, 164 Ukrainian broadcasters stopped broadcasting, and Russian propaganda media started broadcasting using Ukrainian frequencies. In the meantime, 13 regional and 51 local television companies are under occupation. These numbers are growing due to the ongoing war (the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council of Ukraine, 2022).

The scale of disinformation disseminated by Russia about Ukraine has increased significantly in the attempts to influence both the Ukrainian population and the citizens of the countries supporting Ukraine. It has also become much more aggressive and often contains direct hate speech questioning the existence of Ukraine and Ukrainians and, thus, encouraging war crimes. Russia uses all possible modern media channels (including social networks and messengers) to share disinformation and propaganda.

Therefore, since the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion, the need to protect citizens in the information space has increased even more. This is about both cyber protection and resistance to disinformation influences. The ability to build one's own digital protection, to maintain emotional and psychological stability as well as to perceive information critically are the key skills in wartime.

Before February 24, 2022, the media literacy sphere was dynamically developing in Ukraine. This is demonstrated in the analytical report "Media Literacy Sphere Mapping in Ukraine", based on the research conducted in the second half of 2021 in Georgia, Latvia, Moldova and Ukraine. Many actors (government, public sector, donors) worked in this area implementing a large number of projects aimed at different target audiences. Since the full-scale Russian invasion, most activities were suspended for a short time as it was vital to relocate the teams and transform the activities to meet the needs of wartime.

However, the efforts of various actors to increase the level of media literacy of the population since 2014 have not gone in vain. The resistance of the Ukrainian population to Russian disinformation influences, despite their aggressive and massive nature, remains high. A survey by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation conducted in May 2022 showed that the vast majority of the residents of central and western Ukraine do not accept the narratives of Russian propaganda. Respondents were offered two content-opposite interpretations of the same event (one of them contained a Russian narrative) and they had to choose the one reflecting their personal view. For example, when choosing between two opposing explanations of the reasons for the Russian invasion, the absolute majority of respondents (about 88%) agreed that the war is a consequence of the aggressive foreign policy of the Russian Federation. Only about 7% supported the propaganda thesis that the "real" reason for the Russian invasion was Ukraine's desire to join NATO. (Democratic Initiatives Foundation, 2022).

The changes in the media literacy sphere in the full-scale war are highlighted and discussed in this analytical report. Our conclusions are based on:

- data collected through desk research;
- expert presentations during the international online conference "Media Literacy in War-time: New Challenges and Transformations", which took place on June 29, 2022 and was organized by the NGO "Ukrainian Media and Communication Institute" in partnership with the Baltic Centre for Media Excellence (BCME), the National Media Literacy Project "Filter" of the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine.

However, it is worth noting the fact that the report contains only preliminary observations and conclusions, since it has been prepared in the conditions of complex social dynamics. A thorough analysis and conclusions as well as more detailed recommendations can be should a subject for further research.

This report maintains the approach used in the media literacy mapping research, in particular, the A-A-A approach that means focusing on A – actors; A – audiences and A – activities. ■



# 1

## GENERAL CONTEXT



### 1.1. Policy Regulations

A detailed analysis of the legal framework in the media literacy sphere was presented in the analytical report "Media Literacy Sphere Mapping in Ukraine". After February 24, 2022, the Government and the Parliament adopted a number of new documents regulating a series of issues in the information space. First of all, this concerns regulations of journalists' operations under martial law introduced by the Decree of the President of Ukraine of February 24, 2022 No. 64/2022.

The coverage of combat actions and journalist operations is regulated by the Order of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine dated 03.03.2022 No. 73 "On organization of interaction between the Armed Forces of Ukraine, other defense forces components and mass media representatives under the martial law" (Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, 2022). The Order contains a number of appendices that in addition to the defined procedure for the accreditation and work of journalists in combat actions also give an exhaustive list of information prohibited for disclosure. The information "aimed at propaganda or justification of the large-scale armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine" is also prohibited.

Furthermore, on April 1, 2022, joint requirements and recommendations of the Office of the President of Ukraine, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, and the Security Service of Ukraine were published. In accordance with these requirements, it is strictly forbidden to film military facilities, movements of Ukrainian troops and machinery, locations of deployment and operation of air defense forces, etc., as well as locations of civil defense facilities.

It is also prohibited to show live the flying missiles and the places where they hit, the scenes of shelling and hitting of shells, any identifiers of locations in the scenes of shelling, such as the names of streets, stops, subways, shops, etc. It is also prohibited to evaluate and describe the consequences of destruction as a result of strikes, shelling or subversive acts (Internews Ukraine, 2022).

Although these documents are not directly related to the regulation of media literacy sphere,

they have a significant impact on the entire society, and not exclusively on the media sector. The Criminal Code of Ukraine (Article 114) provides for the criminal liability for an unauthorized dissemination of information about directing, movement of weapons, armaments and military supplies to Ukraine, movement, relocation or placement of the Armed Forces of Ukraine or other military units formed in accordance with the law of Ukraine as committed under the martial law or state of emergency. This article may be applied not only to journalists but also to all citizens of Ukraine. The official authorities made a lot of efforts to deliver this information to the population. Indeed, in the first weeks of the full-scale war, people posted a lot of information on social media and messengers, whilst journalists tried to limit it.

Three more laws (No. 7273-d, No. 7459 and No. 6287) adopted during the war may cause significant changes to the media consumption in Ukraine. This concerns banning of the public performance of Russian songs and their broadcasting on radio and TV, as well as banning of the import of publishing products from Russia and Belarus, the publication and sale of books authored by citizens of the Russian Federation in Ukraine, and support for stimulating the development of Ukrainian book publishing and book distribution. This is a continuation of the restricting policy towards Russian content that has been in place since 2014. It is worth mentioning that shortly before the full-scale Russian invasion, the National Security and Defense Council imposed sanctions on a number of Ukraine's TV channels that shared pro-Russian narratives. Broadcasting of these TV channels stopped. We can already talk about a significant change in the media landscape, which to some extent affects and will continue to affect the change in media consumption of the population.

As for the regulatory documents directly related to the media literacy sphere, its development and regulation, the analytical report "Media Literacy Sphere Mapping in Ukraine" emphasized that media literacy is defined as one of the strategic objectives of the Strategy of Information Security towards 2025. However, the full awareness of the fact that this sphere is to be integrated into the national security system came only after the Russian full-scale invasion in February 2022. This awareness requires meaningful content and adjustment of approaches in the implementation of a number of projects, including those in the education system, as well as development of the necessary regulatory and legal papers. Experts believe that in the conditions of the ongoing cognitive war, "the infrastructure, the ecosystem that have already been created by the main subjects of media literacy, are to be integrated into the national security sector by making it a priority" (Journalism Teachers' Academy, 2022).

The Deputy Minister for Information Policy of Ukraine Taras Shevchenko stated that the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine (MCIP) is working on the integration of media literacy into the national security system, and that almost all core authorities are involved in the implementation of this task, in particular, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Center for Strategic Communications, the Center for Combating Disinformation, in addition to MCIP (Journalism Teachers' Academy, 2022).

Late 2021 – early 2022, work began on the Media Literacy Strategy that was supposed to become the basis for the sphere development in the next five-year period. However, it remains uncompleted due to the full-scale Russian invasion. Today, it is obvious that new circumstances need to be taken into account in developing this document, though it should not be limited only to the needs of the martial law but also cover the post-war period. It is crucial that the majority of Ukrainian and foreign experts are convinced that media literacy should remain a part of national security even after the war.



## 1.2. Actors. Enhanced Role of the Government/Government Bodies in Communication with Society



### Government

The role of the government and government bodies at different levels in the country's information space has considerably changed in wartime. Whereas prior to the full-scale invasion of Russia, the government's communication policy was criticized by experts for many years, the situation changed radically for the better after February 24, 2022. The government managed to establish effective multi-channel communication with society while maintaining a one-voice approach. This contributed to a sense of unity and helped to avoid mass panic in the first days of the war, and further to resist constant information and psychological attacks.

Communication through out-of-date websites, which was poorly handled by the press offices and information departments of various authorities before the full-scale invasion, has been replaced by fast and accessible communication through messengers and social media. Information pages of authorities at all levels appeared on Viber, Facebook, other social media and messengers. And even on Telegram, despite the warnings of experts that the network was unreliable in terms of the user data protection and non-transparency. (Texty.org.ua, 2022). Citizens began to receive information available online 24/7.

By reinforcing communication with the population, the government and authorities at different levels, in general, have made an unconscious positive impact on the media literacy sphere. It was not limited to only first-hand informing of the population about current events and the course of combat operations (daily video messages of the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy, heads of military administrations, mayors of cities and other officials). The authorities also:

- constantly worked on refuting fakes and disinformation shared by Russian propagandists;

- promoted verified sources of information;
- offered a number of online services for checking information.

After February 24, 2022, the Center for Countering Disinformation (under the umbrella of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine) and the Center for Strategic Communications and Information Security (under the umbrella of the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy) became actively involved. They constantly monitor Russian propaganda and disinformation; publicly debunk fakes and disinformation; and also raise awareness ahead of the curve explaining the mechanisms of propaganda's influence on consciousness and change in behavior.

The National Media Literacy Project "Filter" (under the umbrella of the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy) was also forced to change the way it functioned. Previously, the efforts of the project team were focused on communication activities aimed at promoting media literacy among Ukrainian citizens. Under conditions of the war, more attention was to be paid to training of different audiences in using the tools of news checking. "We had to jump from the level of explaining what media literacy is and why it is important to changing behavior. There was a huge demand from the audience to us to explain how to check the news now, what tools are available for this," said the Project Manager Valeriya Kovtun (Journalism Teachers' Academy, 2022). "Filter" shifted all its activities online and started making more efforts for the overseas audience. During the period of the full-scale invasion, the project team conducted more than 50 lectures for domestic audiences (students, schoolchildren and adults) including lectures at foreign universities. They also launched a project page on TikTok, where they gathered an audience of 500,000 users in two months of the war. The English version of the "Filter" page on LinkedIn has been launched.



## International Donors and Organizations

A number of international and donor organizations working in Ukraine were forced to evacuate their offices from Kyiv to European countries or western Ukrainian cities. This has influenced the work to be partially suspended for the first month of the full-scale war. Some time was also needed to analyze and study urgent needs under the new circumstances. Nevertheless, in most cases donors continued to support media literacy projects by shifting and strengthening the focus on countering propaganda and disinformation. The map of donors has remained almost unchanged - except for one. The OSCE closed their Project Coordinator Office in Ukraine due to the veto of the Russian Federation disagreeing to extend their mandate. This donor supported some projects in the sphere of media and media literacy but they will be phased out. In general, this will not have a material impact on the sector, as the key donors such as USAID, Internews

Network, IREX, the Embassy of the United Kingdom, the Embassy of the United States, the European Commission, Deutsche Welle Akademie and others continue to provide support in the media literacy sphere.



## Non-Government Organizations

Due to the full-scale war, a large number of non-governmental organizations were also forced to relocate their offices from Kyiv and war affected regions to the western regions of the country. Some organizations lost some of their employees who had been mobilized and joined the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Some employees fled abroad. In addition, some changes took place at the project level: organizations were forced to urgently transform their programs to meet the needs of the war. This also concerned media literacy projects. After a little break in the first month of the war, the organizations resumed their work. The key players in the media literacy sphere, such as the Academy of Ukrainian Press, Detector Media, Internews Ukraine and others, despite the difficult security situation, continued active work with their target audiences.



## Educational Institutions

Ukrainian educational institutions played a significant role in spreading media literacy before the full-scale invasion of Russia. First of all, this is about: secondary schools that participated in the All-Ukrainian Media Education Experiment; institutes of postgraduate education for teachers; pedagogical universities and journalism faculties at some universities. However, after February 24, 2022, the role of educational institutions in the development of media literacy temporarily decreased as the educational process in both schools and universities was suspended all over the country.

The educational process began to resume in April, in regions with no hostilities. However, schools switched to online classes, and universities in many cases to asynchronous learning. After all, Russia continues its missile attacks on the entire territory of Ukraine. Also, a large number of teachers and lecturers, pupils and students were forced to leave their homes because of the war. Many of them left for European countries or moved to the regions of Ukraine with no hostilities. In addition, the educational infrastructure suffered critical destruction. The Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine reported (as of June 20, 2022) that due to bombing and shelling by the armed forces of the Russian Federation, 2,028 educational institutions were damaged, 209 of which were completely destroyed (Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine, 2022).

Despite the difficult circumstances the education sector found itself in, the demand for media

literacy remains. In April 2022, the Academy of Ukrainian Press conducted a survey of 550 media educators from different regions of the country, and 92% of the respondents answered that they believe media literacy classes with pupils/students in wartime to be of particular relevance. (The Academy of Ukrainian Press, 2022). However, technical problems (for example, poor communication and Internet), the security situation (forcing teaching to be online) and other difficulties affecting the educational process in wartime prevent schools from continuing media literacy activities at the pre-war level.



## Media

After February 24, 2022, the media market of Ukraine has been undergoing significant changes. In fact, the major TV channels have stopped broadcasting in their usual format. On February 26, the largest media groups (1+1 media, StarLightMedia and InterMediaGroup) announced that they would unite their efforts and broadcast the United News marathon («Єдині новини» in Ukrainian; "Yedyni Novyny"). The marathon signal was also broadcast by Rinat Akhmetov's "Ukraina" and "Ukraina 24" TV-channels as well as "Suspilne", "Dom", "Channel 24", and "Kyiv" (Detector Media, 2022).

On March 19, 2022, the President of Ukraine issued the Decree "On implementation of a unified information policy under martial law" where he obliged to unite all national TV-channels with the program content consisting mainly of informational and/or informational and analytical programs, on a single platform - 24/7 informational marathon "United News #UAtogether" («Єдині новини #UАразом» in Ukrainian; "Yedyni Novyny #UАrazom") (President of Ukraine, 2022).

Even though when launching this TV marathon, the TV-channels aimed at informing the population responsibly in wartime, media experts have been noting the shortcomings and possible risks of this model. Actually, its creation was dictated by political expediency at a specific historical moment rather than by business interests. Media experts also draw attention to the unbalanced representation of various political forces in the marathon broadcasts. Specifically, based on the findings of regular monitoring by the Detector Media NGO, the marathon broadcasts are mainly attended by the representatives of the ruling parliamentary party and officials (Detector Media, 2022), while other political forces are under-represented. Experts also record violations of other professional standards in the marathon broadcasts (Detector Media, 2022).

The war destroyed the regional media market: a lot of printed publications ceased to exist, a number of regional television and radio stations abandoned their licenses (Detector Media, 2022). Many journalists lost their jobs. Some of them joined the Armed Forces of Ukraine. According to the Institute of Mass Information, 33 journalists died since February 24 (as of June 13), 8 of them died in performing their professional duties (Institute of Mass Information, 2022).

Independent media, that were supported at least partially by the donor funding, feel better. Some of them continue to implement projects contributing to the increased level of media literacy and help the audience in wartime to better navigate the information space. This is about main media in this category such as Hromadske Radio, Texty.org. ua, StopFake, "Behind the News" («По той бік новин» in Ukrainian; "Po Toi Bik Novyn"), VoxUkraine and others.

It is worth mentioning a new trend separately: the rise of many (often anonymous) Telegram-channels that successfully compete for audiences with traditional media. The latter lose to Telegram-channels in terms of efficiency (which is very much needed by the audience in wartime) as they are forced to spend time searching for reliable sources and verifying information, observing the professional standards. This encourages the media to also develop their channels on Telegram and other social networks.

In general, the implementation of a unified information policy actually minimized the broadcasting of fake information and Russian narratives, primarily about hostilities at the front. However, the amount of unreliable, emotionally charged information has increased significantly on social networks and messengers (for example, the monitoring of Odesa Telegram-channels conducted by the Pylyp Orlyk Institute for Democracy, 2022), this should have encouraged the key actors in the media literacy sphere to adjust their projects to address new challenges.



## 2 TRANSFORMATION OF MEDIA LITERACY SPHERE

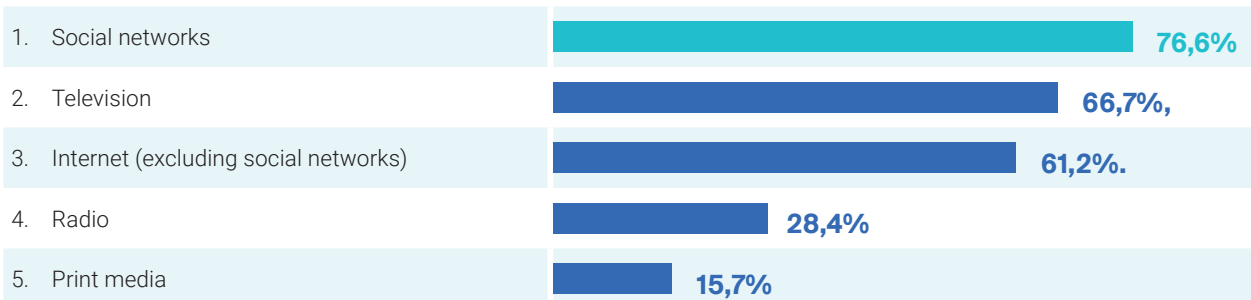


### 2.1. Change in Audience Behavior. New Vulnerable Audiences

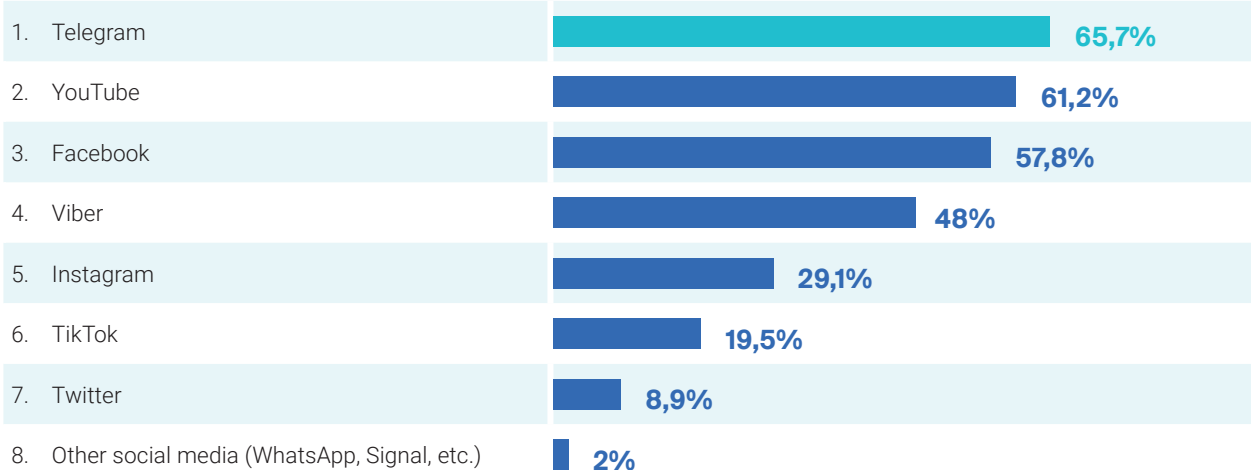
The changes caused by the war also affected the media consumption by the Ukrainian society. Its structure has changed compared to the pre-war period. Thus, according to the findings of a survey conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology at the request of OPORA from May 3 to 26, 2022, social networks became the most popular source of information (previously, the television held the first place) – 76.6% of the polled Ukrainian citizens use them to receive news. Television keeps the second place – 66.7%, the Internet (excluding social networks) – 61.2%. 28.4% of respondents listen to the radio. The most critical situation is observed with the

print media – they are read by only 15.7% of respondents. Those surveyed, for whom social networks are the main source of news, used Telegram (65.7%), YouTube (61.2%) and Facebook (57.8%) the most. 48% of respondents used Viber, 29.1% Instagram, 19.5% TikTok, 8.9% Twitter. About 2% of respondents used other social media (WhatsApp, Signal, etc.) to receive news. (OPORA, KIIS, 2022).

## **i** Source of information



## **o** Social networks



Within this analytical report, we cannot determine whether the target audiences of media literacy projects have changed since no survey of actors in the sector was conducted. In the last year's research "Media Literacy Sphere Mapping in Ukraine", 10 target groups were identified where key actors operate: schoolchildren; university students; professionals – teachers; professionals – journalists; professionals – librarians; professionals – politicians; general public/all citizens; elderly people/pensioners; locals of specific regions; expert community.

However, the analysis of the activities of non-governmental organizations working in the sphere allows us to say that they all try to maintain contact with the audiences they worked with before and to provide as much as they can with an informational, educational and psychological support in the difficult conditions of war. It is also worth mentioning a new trend – attempts to access audiences in other countries.

We can also talk about the emergence of new vulnerable audiences; working with them will be a serious challenge in the future for all actors in the media literacy sphere.

## **Vulnerable Audience 1**    **People in Occupied Territories**

This is first of all about the locals of the regions occupied after February 24 as a result of the full-blown assault by Russia. The occupants apply the information blockade there. The Center for Countering Disinformation reports that the information blockade in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia oblasts and other occupied territories involves:

- cutting-off of the Ukrainian mobile telecommunications;
- distribution of Russian sim-cards;
- connecting to the Russian Internet and blocking the Ukrainian one;
- transmitting the Russian news alleging Ukraine ‘defeated’ in the war, a coming ‘democratic’ referendum in these territories and a chance to live ‘normal life’ as a part of RF (Suspilne, 2022).

A journalist from Kherson Ivan Antypenko in a commentary to Radio Svoboda said, “the Russian propaganda may influence the locals of the occupied part of the south as they are under the information blockade” so it is important to keep in touch with the occupied territories. (Radio Svoboda, 2022).

A social psychologist Oleh Pokalchuk says that in wartime, especially in occupation, information attacks are spread not only by the media but by the very people spreading the rumors. He believes that is why it is important to work with the effects of such information attacks so that to limit/ localize the affected area. (Radio Svoboda, 2022).

The need for new tools to address such audience is obvious; but thorough research has to come first.

## Vulnerable Audience 2. Internally Displaced People

As already indicated, the IOM recorded over 8 million internally displaced people in Ukraine. Several experts (e.g., Detector Media monitoring the Russian propaganda (Zaxid.net, 2022), or Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation that had focus-group surveys with IDPs (Democratic Initiatives Foundation, 2022) argue that the Russian propaganda is trying to cause or stir up conflicts in communities where internally displaced people are staying.

Some organizations are already trying to work with this subject and with this audience, like Osvitoria NGO that has been producing podcasts for teachers busting myths about internally displaced persons, explaining their rights, and even with a range of exercises that will help to work on this topic with students (Osvitoria, 2022).

## Vulnerable Audience 3. Officials/ Representatives of Authorities of Different Levels

Russia is waging war not only on the battlefield but also in the cognitive space. Recently, attempts to influence the decisions and behavior of such persons through the use of new media tools of influence, such as deepfakes, have become more frequent (one of the loudest examples: mayors of several European cities had video calls with a deepfake of the mayor of Kyiv, Vitali Klitschko). Before the full-scale war, a number of non-governmental organizations made attempts to work with the public sector to improve the media literacy of officials but they were not very successful. Therefore, media literacy actors now have to keep this target audience in the focus of their attention.



### 2.2. Changing Activities

Until February 24, 2022, three types of activities prevailed in the media literacy sphere:

- 1 | trainings;
- 2 | fact-checking/countering disinformation;
- 3 | producing media literacy content.

All these activities persist even now but their priority has changed: as of today, the main actors in media literacy pay the most attention to checking information and debunking Russian propaganda fakes.



## **Fact-checking/refuting fakes**

After the full-scale invasion, the need for fact-checking and debunking fake information has grown significantly due to the increased intensity of the flow of disinformation and propaganda as well as the quantity of distribution channels. The fact-checking projects StopFake, VoxCheck, "Behind the News" («По той бік новин» in Ukrainian; "Po Toi Bik Novyn") (they made a dedicated column "Behind the War" («По той бік війни» in Ukrainian; "Po Toi Bik Viyny")), "Without Lie" («Без брехні»), "NotaEnota" («НотаЄнота» in Ukrainian), "Little Liar" («Брехунець» in Ukrainian; "Brekhunets") and others continue working on this. All of them had to adjust their activities in new conditions. StopFake, for example, intensified the operation of their foreign-language pages, strengthened explanatory efforts with the audience. "Little Liar" ("Brekhunets") switched to a 24-hour operation (Media Sapiens, 2022).

In the conditions of war, information directly related to the combat actions needs verification above all, and this requires special expertise. That is why the military are often invited by fact-checkers. "Fact-checkers deal with information that may harm the lives of many people and affect the course of the war so the accuracy of their work is very important," says Viktoriya Romaniuk, deputy editor-in-chief of the StopFake project (Media Sapiens, 2022).

It is also worth noting the growth in the number of deepfakes, their purpose is not only to influence the mass audience but also to manipulate politicians and high-ranking officials. This creates additional risks in the full-scale war. Therefore, the media literacy projects should pay more attention to the subject of deepfakes, augmented reality, etc.

If, until February 24, 2022, fact-checking and refutation of disinformation was the prerogative of non-governmental organizations and independent media, in the new conditions the public institutions, in particular the Center for Countering Disinformation and the Center for Strategic Communications and Information Security, have joined these efforts. They also make awareness-raising efforts on social media. Sometimes refutations of certain fakes can be heard even in video addresses of the President of Ukraine.



## **Producing content**

Ukrainian NGOs and media continued producing the media literacy content even after the full-scale invasion. There are all types of content as covered in the analytical report "Media Literacy Sector Mapping in Ukraine", except for the entertaining one. For example:

- 1 | media monitoring reports;

- 2 | analytical publications and reports;
- 3 | educational content (usually aimed at debunking myths and stereotypes spread by the media; exposing fakes and disinformation; developing critical thinking among a wide audience).

The entertaining content has generally disappeared from the Ukrainian TV-channels, this is also the case for the projects aimed at raising the level of media literacy and critical thinking. For example, the satire project "Television of Toronto" («Телебачення Торонто» in Ukrainian) has significantly changed its format: it began to work in more serious genres after the full-scale invasion and after its founder Roman Vintoniv (aka Michael Shchur) joined the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

The change in media consumption and the transition of the audience to social networks prompted the non-governmental organizations (in particular, Detector Media and Texty.org.ua) to start monitoring Telegram-channels, primarily pro-Russian ones, in order to track the key narratives of Russian propaganda. However, there are organizations that continue monitoring traditional media, for example, the Pylyp Orlyk Institute for Democracy monitors regional media, and Detector Media monitors the marathon "United News #UAtogether" («Єдині новини #UAразом» in Ukrainian; "Yedyni Novyny #UArazom").

The Academy of Ukrainian Press continues producing the content for the educators, in particular the methodological materials for teachers ("Toolbox of Media Literacy Lessons for Teachers - <https://toolbox.medialiteracy.org.ua/>) with an emphasis on work in conditions of combat actions.



## **Trainings**

Trainings were one of the key activities of non-governmental organizations operating in the media literacy sphere. However, this activity was forced to pause in the first month of the full-scale invasion. The organizations began resuming it in April 2022, completely abandoning in-person formats. Online training has also undergone changes: due to the security situation and general emotional tension, long training sessions have been abandoned: the organizations offered mainly short webinars or lectures to the audience. Some of them (like trainings on Internet security, conducted by UMCI, Regional Press Development Institute and other NGOs) were held in a closed format for a carefully selected audience, in particular journalists or human rights defenders.

The conditions of the martial law dictated the need for new knowledge and skills for different audiences, so the subject of the trainings has changed. Actors began paying more attention not

only to the tools for fact-checking or debunking disinformation and propaganda but to completely new topics, to name a few:

- 1 | deepfake detection tools;
- 2 | psychological stability in an aggressive information environment;
- 3 | journalistic ethics and standards in the full-scale war;
- 4 | Internet security.

The Government, represented by the Ministry of Digital Transformation, also continues working with the adult education. In particular, they launched an updated platform "Diia. Digital Education" («Дія. Цифрова освіта» in Ukrainian) (<https://osvita.diia.gov.ua/>), here everyone can study for free in the innovative format of educational series. In total, the portal has got already over 75 educational series on digital literacy for lawyers, teachers, health professionals, journalists, civil servants, schoolchildren and other target groups.



### 2.3. Changing the Role of Media in Promoting Media Literacy

As already mentioned, the media landscape in Ukraine in the full-scale invasion has been undergoing significant changes, just as the media consumption. However, the attention of the Ukrainian media to the topic of media literacy, and primarily to the topic of disinformation and propaganda, has been maintained for many years, since the beginning of the war as unleashed by Russia back in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea. The full-scale invasion 2022 has just intensified this focus. Many media dedicate a lot of air time or space on their pages to the topic of the Russian propaganda and disinformation influences (such as in the Ukrainer article "How Russian Propaganda Works in the Media") as well as fact-checking projects that debunk fakes and myths for the audience, issues of cyber security, etc. Journalists record interviews with Ukrainian and western experts in this field. There are stories refuting fake information in the marathon "United News #UAtogether" («Єдині новини #UАразом» in Ukrainian) targeted at mass audience.

As a matter of fact, the media, as well as public organizations working on media literacy topics, keep approaches to working with audiences developed in recent years, changing a little. However, there is not enough research on whether this helps people cope with propaganda and disinformation in real life. According to the findings of a survey conducted in May by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, if earlier about 30% often doubted the truthfulness

of messages on mass or social media, now about 11% do. The Foundation's experts do not find this result to be positive and believe that it may contribute to vulnerability to disinformation on social media (Democratic Initiatives Foundation, 2022).

Media experts and journalists talk about the need to shift the focus from introducing information verification tools to population (since the mass audience will not engage in this in the same way as journalists anyway) to the skill to find and consume quality sources of information, primarily quality media. "We have to ensure that people do not read anonymous Viber groups but a pool of quality mass media. Because an average person will not waste time to verify information and to check facts, and does not know how to do this. Therefore, people need to get used to consuming information from the sources where fakes are not produced. High-quality media must produce the content that touches the reader and encourage to trust and prefer this kind of media," says the founder of the Texty project, Roman Kulchynskyi.

Trust in quality media can be a powerful motivating factor for the recovery of the quality media market in Ukraine after the war.



## 2.4. Funding and Sustainability of Media Literacy Projects

One of the key problems of wartime is the lack of resources in all areas due to the economy shrinking. The media at both the central and regional levels were first to experience this. And, as already mentioned, some of them were even forced to close, others cut staff and salaries, and this affects the quality of the content of these media.

To some extent, the public sector also feels the lack of resources. Donors' attention has shifted to priority humanitarian needs, which is quite justified in the war. However, donors maintain attention to the topics of countering propaganda and disinformation, cyber security. Meanwhile media literacy projects that are not related to the war, including those aimed at the development of media education at schools, are at risk. ■

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 | Russia's full-scale invasion into Ukraine in February 2022 accelerated the recognition by the main actors of both the governmental and non-governmental sectors of the need to integrate media literacy into the national security system. This requires them to develop practical mechanisms of integration both at the level of projects and at the level of the regulatory framework. Media literacy shall remain part of the security policy even after the war.
- 2 | Russia's cognitive war against Ukraine is waged by various means (cybernetic, through social messaging, through the media, rumors, selective dissemination of information/documents, etc.) with the aim of changing the behavior of both the mass audience and the elites who make key decisions. Therefore, media literacy cannot be limited to fact-checking and disinformation debunking. It shall contribute to the growth of cognitive stability of the population and therefore requires a new integration approach: a combination of media, digital, and psychological literacy.
- 3 | The war, accompanied by constant informational, psychological and cyber-attacks, showed clearly the problem of low media and digital literacy of officials/representatives of authorities at various levels. Therefore, this brings significant risks for the national security and defense system. Media education shall become compulsory for this target group.
- 4 | New vulnerable audiences emerged (in particular: 1) the locals of the regions occupied after 24 February as a result of the full-blown assault by Russia; 2) internally displaced persons – this is a long-term challenge to all actors in the media literacy sphere. The most difficult but necessary step is to find information channels and tools for communication with the locals of the temporarily occupied territories and decoding the influence of Russian propaganda. Working with these audiences needs additional research
- 5 | The change in the behavior of the audience in the media field, in particular its migration from television to the social media, should encourage actors in the media literacy sphere to change their approaches to working with different target audiences, to look for new formats and to fill educational programs with new content.
- 6 | Contributing to the recovery of the quality media market and promoting such media to the audience is one of the important tasks for actors in the media literacy sphere for the nearest future. ■

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