



**EQUAL ACCESS COMMITTEE/ASSOCIATION “SPILNYI PROSTIR”  
NGO «TELEKRYTYKA”  
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**PRESS-RELEASE**

**MEDIA COVERAGE OF ELECTION CAMPAIGN  
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2014 – UKRAINE**

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*Contact person: Olena Bondarenko  
tel. 483-03-72, 483-57-33*

**Media monitoring NGOs gave a joined assessment of the 2014 Presidential campaign. They shared their analysis on the role of Ukrainian and Russian media in the election campaign. Despite the differences in monitoring methodology, media monitoring experts arrived at similar conclusions as regards to access of contestants to media, quality of presented information, voter education and awareness, use of hidden advertising, manipulations and use of "black PR" in the media:**

- In general, candidates had an unimpeded access to the media.
- Use of paid hidden advertising and manipulations were fewer in comparison with the previous elections.
- Media allocated more coverage to the activities of state authorities than to the coverage of election campaign – however, there was no apparent attempt to use such official coverage to support any one candidate..
- The media coverage of campaign has been severely affected by the situation in the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine. While the media showed certain preferences towards some candidates, this in general did not prevent voters from getting ample information about candidates based on which it was possible to make an informed choice. This was *inter alia* achieved thanks to the fact that most channels opened their airways for a wider and more diverse range of opinions and views and due to the televised debates between candidates on First National Channel.

“The media environment has been severely affected by the situation in the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine, with journalists facing intimidation and harassment from the pro-Russia separatist militants, including abductions, detentions, physical and verbal attacks.” said the international expert Rast’o Kužel. “The combination of violence against journalists and the overall dominance of the crisis in the media coverage of the campaign had an impact on the ability of voters to receive full information. The media nevertheless tried to provide such coverage based on which an informed choice at the ballot box would be possible.”

In general, according to Rasto Kužel, this was done mainly thanks to a few improvements in the media coverage of the upcoming elections over the previous campaigns, such as fewer cases of

paid journalism. Moreover while the editorial policy of the media still appears to be determined by the interest of owners, which was reflected in the way how certain outlets supported their chosen candidates, media in general succeeded in providing a more diverse and pluralistic coverage of the campaign than in the previous elections.

In particular, the national television channels tried to provide voters with a more diverse and pluralistic coverage than it was during the previous elections (in 2010 and 2012). This was *inter alia* thanks to the fact that in the run-up to the elections, a number of channels started broadcasting regular talk shows, inviting a much wider range of experts as before. Moreover, First National Channel channel offered the electorate a valuable opportunity to compare candidates through televised debates.

While the monitored television channels showed certain preferences towards some candidates, it was done to a lesser extent in comparison with the previous elections. For example, 1+1, 5 kanal, and TVi showed preferences towards Petro Poroshenko. Mykhailo Dobkin received slightly more coverage than other candidates on First National Channel and STB – this coverage was mainly neutral and negative. Inter tried to provide its viewers with a more balanced picture of the main contestants. The monitoring team evaluated both ICTV and TRK Ukraina to be the most balanced in terms of the coverage of contestants. The following channels were critical to the following candidates: TVi channel (Serhiy Tihipko, Yulia Tymoshenko), Inter (Mykhailo Dobkin), 1 +1 (Yulia Tymoshenko, Mykhailo Dobkin) and 5 kanal (Petro Symonenko). The First National Channel allocated the bulk of their political and election-related coverage to the activities of Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Oleksandr Turchynov, mainly in connection of the situation at the eastern and southern Ukraine which dominated over the information on elections.

Rast'o Kužel also opined that some problems continue to negatively affect the media environment. For example, contestants' appearance in the news and current affairs programmes was still sometimes determined not based on newsworthiness, but thanks to their payments for such appearances. The appearance of such materials that were either promotional (about those who ordered them) or negative (against their opponents) is a very disturbing trend. There was also a general lack of analytical and in-depth coverage in the news, which could have helped voters to better assess the qualities and programmes of electoral contestants.

While the monitored newspapers generally showed a plurality of views, some of them also featured paid articles, presenting them as news. At least one newspaper, distributed free of charge, published articles to cast shadow over the legitimacy of the elections.

The monitoring focused also on the activities of the acting President Oleksandr Turchynov, Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk and the government in general. The authorities were monitored as potential campaigners for candidates. There were no examples of direct or indirect support of any candidate by the acting President, Prime Minister or the members of the government.

As to the media situation in the regions, it varied significantly, with journalists from the eastern and southern regions facing severe restrictions during these elections. As to media monitoring findings in different regions of the country, Oleksandr Chekmyshev stated that the **television** of the **western region** was supportive towards Petro Poroshenko. In the **southern region**, TV channels covered Serhiy Tihipko and Petro Symonenko's more actively than others. The **northern region** has represented Yulia Tymoshenko more intensely for a while, but due to the scope of materials on other candidates that have appeared recently, in the end the broadcast media almost reached balance as to representation of the main frontrunners. The television channels of the **central** region showed their open support towards Petro Poroshenko. As to the situation in the **eastern** region, Mykhailo Dobkin received the bulk of the media coverage, mainly due to his presentation in the Kharkiv region. In the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, the

campaign was very low key.. This was mainly caused by the fact that separatists seized 27th Channel in the Donetsk regions. Notwithstanding this fact, contents received some limited coverage, with Yulia Tymoshenko being the most presented contestant in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. In general, the election campaign was covered more actively by the local newspapers and Internet-websites as compared to television.

Basing on the monitoring findings of the **Academy of Ukrainian Press**, its **President Valeriy Ivanov** informed that the leaders of attention of the national channels were Petro Poroshenko, Yulia Tymoshenko and Petro Symonenko. At the same time, Petro Poroshenko, Дмитро Ярош, Petro Symonenko and Yulia Tymoshenko became the leaders in terms of direct speech.. However, their indexes were significantly lower than those of the previous presidential race candidates.

As to the political institutions, the law enforcement ministries, local authorities and the presidential institution became the leaders of attention. Among the political structures, the leadership role was taken by the Donetsk People's Republic (10 %). There was imbalance of attention in favor of the authorities: the representatives of the ruling coalition were shown 2.3 times more than the opposition (in April - 2.4 times, in February – 2 times). At the same time throughout the election campaign, the attention and direct speech of the third parties have been increasing.

The monitoring findings of “**Telekrytyka**” introduced by **Diana Dutsyk** and **Nataliya Ligachova** showed that in comparison with the previous campaigns the volume of the election-related hidden advertising (“jeans”) significantly decreased both at the national and regional TV channels. However all the major candidates ordered paid editorial content (“jeans”). Yulia Tymoshenko, Serhiy Tihpko and Petro Poroshenko took the lead in terms of the paid content volumes.

Among the national channels, Pershyi Natsionalnyi refrained from broadcasting paid hidden advertising. Starting from the end of April this was also the case for STB and “1 +1” that almost completely abstained from using “jeans” materials. “Inter”, “Ukraina” and ICTV showed quite a lot of news items about the candidates with the features of paid materials.

However, despite of lack of paid content, the television channels did not manage to find appropriate ways to inform their audience about the content of election programs, biographies and important actions of the candidates. In particular, insufficient attention has been given to highlighting the importance of participating in the elections and explaining the current election law procedures.

As to the number of references about the presidential candidates in a variety of news and current affairs formats, Channel 5 gave significant advantage to Petro Poroshenko. References about him exceed those for Tymoshenko by almost three times.

None of the channels opposed the opinions expressed by the candidates or experts. No one analyzed their messages and compared them to real actions. Thus, when covering the 2014 presidential election, the channels significantly reduced the volumes of paid materials in the news and weekly analytical programs. However, the coverage of the campaign was reduced to the usual PR of the candidates disguised as information for voters. The breakthrough case as to high-quality important information for the voters was the national debates on First National Channel.