

MEDIA CONSUMPTION AND ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PROCESSES IN UKRAINE BY THE RESIDENTS OF EASTERN REGIONS

(government-controlled areas of Donetsk
and Luhansk oblasts)

RESEARCH REPORT



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The study of media consumption and assessment of socio-political processes by residents of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions (government-controlled areas) was conducted in October-November 2017 and covered 160 respondents from 8 settlements. The obtained data allow for a deeper understanding of the structure of citizens' media consumption; their information priorities; attitudes towards different sources of information and content formats; assessment of reforms and their coverage in the media, etc.

The research prompts us to take a new look at the problems Ukrainian media face, informational needs of the citizens, as well as the approaches to communication with the residents of the East of Ukraine which are employed by the government and non-governmental organizations.

For representatives of authorities who are responsible for governmental communications; journalists and media editors; donor institutions, public organizations which implement (finance, initiate) communication campaigns in the East of Ukraine; researchers studying information consumption in crisis conditions; specialists in the field of security and social sciences.

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The study revealed a high degree of **fatigue** with politicians and politicized media formats among residents of the part of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions which are under the control of the Ukrainian government, against the backdrop of general **skepticism, apathy** and **distrust** towards the media. Fatigue and frustration bring a significant part of the citizens to self-isolation from the news content. As a result, many citizens, even those who maintain the habit of consuming news, feel remoteness from the political discourse in the media.

Consumption of media, in particular of the news content, is to a large extent **passive and background-like**. The vast majority of the citizens tend to perceive news content from various media channels as a part of a single continuous flow without analyzing the sources of particular information and without focusing on the contrast between different media. Only a small part of participants of the study confidently identified the media sources of information which they used and were able to rationalize their choice. It was also found in the study that **ideologically motivated** selection of media sources of information was **poorly** represented among the target group of the study. The vast majority of respondents does not have clear **preferences** for news sources and rather are **passive** consumers of news.

Intense **background-like** consumption of media content, against the **backdrop** of general **apathy** and **disbelief** in change for better, creates a peculiar **barrier** between respondents and any media information. Examples of constructive and positive content are lost in the overall flow and get little attention. Inclinations towards **distrust, skepticism**, and **accumulated frustrations** are deep-rooted, which creates one of the most serious **obstacles** to communication with this target group.

Among the sources of **frustration** caused by the media content, citizens often recall the dominance of **negativity** and politics in its various manifestations. Instead, the demand for **positive, comfortable** and **motivational** content is most vividly articulated. The vast majority of participants of the study feel the need for educational formats. There is also a demand for content for children and adolescents.

It is difficult for many citizens to determine their own **information priorities** in news content. Instead, the **expectations** of **positive news** and assurances in the better future from the media are widespread. Topics of interest for citizens include examples of successful changes at the community level, timely and practical information concerning events in their cities, explanations of economic processes in the country, information about the future of the region in the context of the conflict.

The **demand** for **local news** is rather high among the studied audience, as evidenced in part by the frequent mentioning of local media, the most popular of which are local news websites and groups in social networks. Regional and local TV channels are recognizable, but only a small percentage of citizens are active consumers of the content of these TV channels.

Entertainment content occupies a leading place in the structure of media consumption of citizens who participated in the study. Many citizens – especially young

and middle-aged people – satisfy their needs in entertaining content on the Internet. Content associated with various **hobbies, everyday life** and leisure occupies an important place among the representatives of the study group. Video content, including thematic YouTube channels, is particularly popular. Humorous programs, talent shows and travel programs are often mentioned as examples of attractive content.

For the majority of study participants, **language** (Russian or Ukrainian) is **not a criterion** for content selection. A small proportion of respondents noted that they prefer Russian-language media products by force of habit and because of the fact that they perceive the Russian language as their mother tongue. However, the majority expressed the opinion that content quality is a determinant factor.

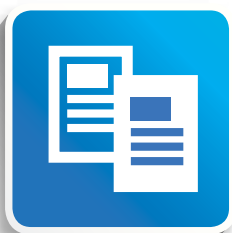
Taking into account the fatigue caused by politics, the general frustration and lack of trust, the overwhelming majority of citizens from the target audience find it difficult to identify **authoritative** journalists, experts, and opinion leaders. **Politically neutral** individuals, whose authority is based on beliefs in their competence, curiosity, charisma, honesty, etc. (for example, doctor Yevhen Komarovskiy) get much greater sympathy than persons who have connections to politics.

Citizens assess the situation in the country after the events of 2013-2014 as **negative** almost unanimously, largely due to dissatisfaction with the economic situation. The assessment of reforms, however, has demonstrated more **diversity** and **heterogeneity** of views. The study shows that **attitudes** to certain reforms are more closely connected with **general** views on the situation in the country, optimistic or pessimistic perception of reality and formed world views among respondents, rather than their direct awareness of reforms.

In general, **awareness** of reforms is **not high**; most people have difficulties with the questions on the actual content of reforms; they lack understanding of the **goal** of reform, the general **concept behind reforms** and specific **mechanisms**. Against the backdrop of this lack, respondents are inclined to develop opinions of reforms by focusing on some 'hooks' (those aspects of reforms, negative or positive, that suggest certain sensitivities to them) and/or based on general political views and attitudes.

Healthcare, educational and pension reforms trigger the biggest response/the liveliest reaction. None of the mentioned reforms had received dominant support among the population. Educational reform is most positively perceived. Healthcare reform arouses a lot of **worries** and **uncertainty**. Negativity concerning the healthcare reform is caused by fears of decrease in the number of medical institutions and medical staff, as well as worries about chargeable services, etc. In terms of pension reform, most criticism is driven by the issue of the **insurance record**.

Citizens are not satisfied with the quality of information about the reforms they receive from the media. In their opinion, information is mostly **fragmented** and often **controversial** which does not allow them to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the reforms, their intention and mechanisms of implementation. ■



SUBJECT, PURPOSE, AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Situation in the controlled territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions remains one of the most significant problems in Ukraine, given the vulnerability of the region caused by the recent traumatic experience of armed conflicts and the difficult social and economic situation. In order to overcome social tensions and increase efforts aimed at integrating the region and its residents, one needs thorough understanding of the region's peculiarities, as well as the knowledge of the population's attitudes, views, and needs. In particular, such aspects as media consumption, attitude to media content, information needs of the residents should be studied.

Political orientations and trends related to media consumption by the region's population have become the subject of numerous sociological studies. These studies reveal the increasing distrust of the media, growing social polarization, and the significant impact of narratives that coincide with the messages containing the Kremlin's propaganda. The vast majority of studies are represented by sociological surveys of various degrees of penetration. On the one hand, this allows us to see the general picture and trends in the population's attitude and views, in particular with regard to various media and information; on the other hand, the survey method does not allow us to study comprehensiveness of ideas, experiences, and other factors that determine particular views or trends. A preliminary study carried out by the NGO Detector Media, **Information Consumption, Needs and Attitudes of the Residents of Eastern Ukraine (Part of the Luhansk and Donetsk Regions which are under the Control of the Ukrainian Government)**, which was based on data from in-depth interviews and focus groups, allowed us to analyze peculiarities of information consumption in the context of ideas, meanings, and interpretations that determine, accompany, and influence consumption of information by the region's residents.

This study is **aimed** at improving understanding of the peculiarities of media consumption by the region's population, at the same time somewhat changing the focus of the study. In particular, the proposed study goes beyond the scope of information/news content and focuses on entertainment content (trends in consumption, attitudes, and needs) as well. Another significant peculiarity of this study is the focus on a specific **target group**, namely: on citizens who are not strong supporters of either pro-Ukrainian or pro-Russian positions and who demonstrate that they are open to dialog and new information.

Thus, the main **research questions of the study** were as follows:

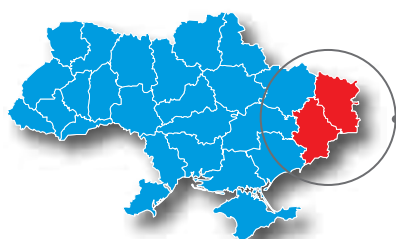
- What constitutes the repertoire of media consumption among the target group representatives? What content do they consume and how do they perceive it?
- What are the information priorities, as well as needs and requests for media content among the target group?
- What is the attitude of the target group representatives to post-Euro-maidan changes and reforms in the country, and how do they assess them? What are the main sources of information about reforms?

METHODS USED IN THE STUDY, AND SAMPLING

The study was carried out using such methods as focus group discussions with content testing and in-depth interviews with elements of participant observation in locations identified as key locations for this study.

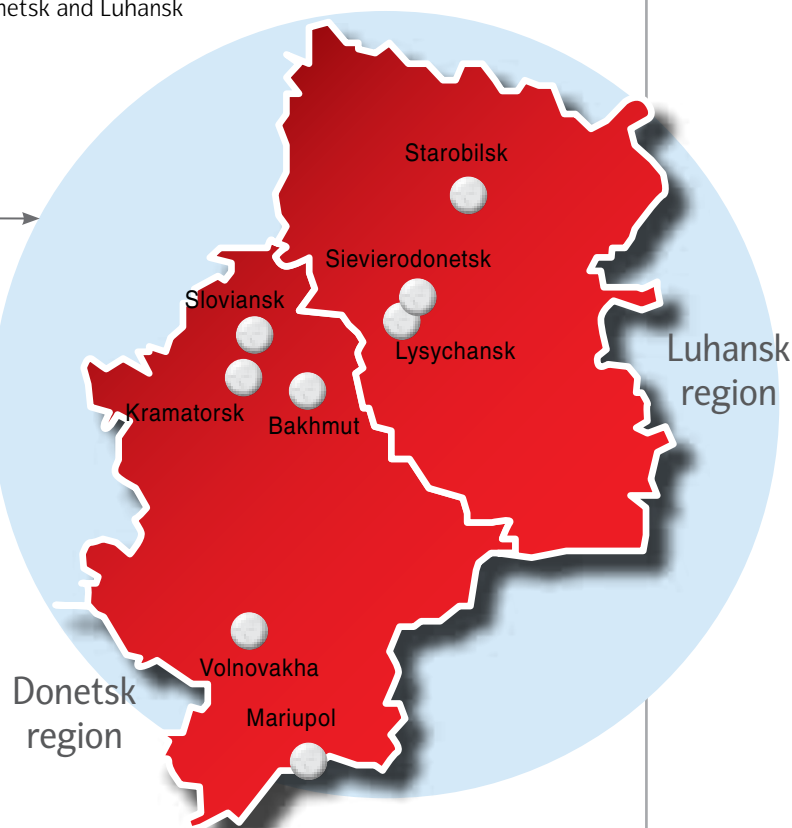
Both methods allow one to analyze more thoroughly the experience of the representatives of certain social groups, their motivations, ideas, and views on various issues. Focus group discussions will allow us to track the intergroup interaction with regard to the issues that are studied, and in-depth interviews with the elements of participant observation will allow us to reveal subtleties and individual nuances of perception. The subject of discussions, focus groups, and in-depth interviews was the experience of media consumption, media preferences, and respondents' reactions to content in the Ukrainian media. Focus group participants were offered specific sample cases of content for a detailed discussion of reactions to the peculiarities of content and format.

In the course of the study, **8 focus group discussions and interviews with 48 families in 8 urban settlements** in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions were conducted.



Locations of focus group and interviews:

- **Mariupol** (Donetsk region)
- **Volnovakha** (Donetsk region)
- **Sloviansk** (Donetsk region)
- **Kramatorsk** (Donetsk region)
- **Bakhmut** (Donetsk region)
- **Lysychansk** (Luhansk region)
- **Starobilsk** (Luhansk region)
- **Sievierodonetsk** (Luhansk region)



The sampling of respondents was performed in order to represent different social groups by the criteria of age, type of employment, and according to the definition of the study target group. According to the design of the study, the following groups of people forming the sample were identified:

- **youth** (18-25 years old)
- **representatives of the «middle class» (small and medium-sized businesses, representatives of the «budget» sphere)** (25-40 years old)
- **representatives of the working class** (25-40 years old)
- **representatives of the «middle class» (small and medium-sized businesses, representatives of the «budget» sphere)** (40-55 years old)
- **representatives of the working class** (40-55 years old)
- **pensioners** (over 55 years old)

Also, during the selection of the participants for the study, preliminary filter question to determine their views were used.

In total, **160** respondents took part in the study. ■

3

RESULTS OF THE STUDY



RESULTS OF THE STUDY

This study of the peculiarities of media consumption and the views of the residents of the eastern regions regarding the post-Euromaidan situation in Ukraine and changes in the country allowed us to identify a number of general tendencies. In particular, the study results for the most part confirmed the key findings of the previous study of the specifics of information consumption in the East, carried out by Detector Media, namely, with regard to the following trends:

1. GENERAL TRENDS

- prevalence of skepticism and general nihilism with regard to the media; as well as the associated crisis of trust to the institutions in general and the media in particular

An overwhelming majority of the study participants confidently express their **distrust** in any media sources of information, claiming that they are biased and discredited. It is also noticeable that people are **fed up** with politicians and political players, which leads to more or less conscious **self-isolation** from information content.

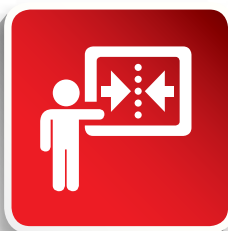


“ I do not watch TV. I stopped watching it about three years ago. Two and a half, actually. Because, well, it does not contribute anything constructive to my growth. If I need something, I enter in Google a particular question I am interested in.» (Female respondent O., 30 years old, Mariupol, focus group)

“ I also almost do not watch television – I do not watch news... As I see it, they say one thing here, and another thing there... So I... On different channels, no matter what, I see... Until this time, before the war, I watched it somehow... it was interesting; I read newspapers... And now, it is as if something happened, some kind of a drastic change – I see all the lies that are told there: we see one thing – and they say completely different things.» (Female respondent L., 55 years old, Bakhmut, focus group)

“ Well, I'm talking about the... Ukrainian channels. They are all owned by someone. Either by Kolomoiskyi or by someone else. Well, I do not know. They are all owned by someone. Which means that the owner pays for the news. That is all. Everything goes according to the owner's plan.» (Male respondent A., 55 years old, Volnovakha, focus group)

However, self-isolation from news content has different forms: some people deliberately stop watching news on TV channels and in other media (this is especially true for a part of young people), although a significant part of respondents continues to passively consume news, feeling frustrated at the same time.



“ Well, we watch the news. Then we swear and turn it off. » (Female respondent O., 55 years old, Volnovakha, interview)

It should also be noted that there is a complex relation between the notion of trust to media and actual choice of media sources. The vast majority of study participants claim they do not trust any media source, which certainly doesn't mean they disbelieve everything they get from the media. In other words, they are reluctant to call or frame their media preferences in terms of trust, which may be explained by a substantial media credibility crisis as a result of conflict and related media coverage. It is also quite difficult for the majority of respondents to reflect on how they distinguish between trustworthy and not trustworthy sources of information and information itself. People are more eager to talk about sources of information in terms of trust when there is some personal connection. For example, they have developed trust to certain bloggers because those seem persuasive and truthful to them or they met some journalists in person, which contributed to certain level of trust. Trust is thus mostly related to personal dimension while there is a dramatic lack of institutional trust (that is, trust to media outlets rather than individual journalists or bloggers). To conclude, there is a complex relation between preference and trust. On the one hand, citizens seldom explain their media preferences with trust to those; on the other hand, they do develop some preferences and preferences may eventually transform into implicit trust.

● **fatigue from negativity and the urge for positive content**

Respondents almost unanimously criticized the excessive negativity in the media and clearly articulated the request for positive content. It is noteworthy that the target audience of the study often associates positive content with something educational, useful, “real-life”.

“ All of our news is full of negativity. There is just so much negativity in them... Is it really true that nothing positive happens in the country? Only murders! Someone knocked someone down, choked somebody, someone blew somebody up, someone shot somebody, someone strangled someone... That's all, nothing good happens! (Male respondent H., 55 years old, Sloviansk, interview)

● **Continuous, background-like, and fragmentary consumption and perception of media content**

Among the study participants, there is a widespread tendency to perceive news content from various media channels as a part of a single continuous flow without analyzing the sources of particular information and without focusing on the differences between different media. Respondents are also inclined to randomly switch TV channels back and forth, jumping from one program to another, which leads to the formation of a synthetic information picture. In addition, the consumption of information, especially on television, is often “random”, unconscious, and background-like. It is also important that similar trends are observed with regard to the consumption of information online. A fairly large proportion of respondents who consume online information quite actively are having difficulty identifying key sources of information.

“ I do not know, I have difficulty answering which (information I consume –ed.). Well, frankly speaking, I read something, but I do not remember it, it goes in one ear and out the other. (Male respondent V., 30 years old, Kramatorsk, interview)

“ To me TV actually usually serves as a background noise. The news is aired. You hear something. You watch something. But in general, I'm sitting in front of my computer. (Male Respondent Y., 55 years old, Mariupol, focus group)

In addition to the identified trends that characterize media consumption, perception of information, and information priorities of the region's residents in general, this study made it possible to improve the understand-

ing of the specifics directly in a **target group**. In particular, the following **patterns** were identified in the study:

- **fatigue from politicized content.**

Many respondents from the target audience developed an aversive reaction not only towards political content as such, but also to any politicized content and politicized formats. Representatives of this population group are particularly annoyed by such expressive politicized formats as political talk shows, discussions in studios with the involvement of experts, etc.

“Information and analytical (programs –ed.) unsettle me. They sit and babble about God knows what. Argue with each other ... But, I do not understand what they are talking about. They are just screwing around. Instead of working and starting doing something, they invite famous guests and babble the same things; they talk, argue, almost slapping each other, and then: well, thank you everyone, you are free, goodbye. (Male respondent A., 30 years old, Starobilsk, focus group)

“... There's nothing else to watch. Politics is everywhere. I immediately turn it off. I do not like them. They just sling mud at each other, and that's all.» (Female respondent R., 60 years old, Kramatorsk, interview)

However, such fatigue and irritation also extend to other formats and content when respondents notice the elements of “politics”, for example, politicized humor in entertainment shows, etc.

- demand for “**comfortable**”, “**cozy**”, and **motivational** content.

When talking about the desired content, not only many respondents mentioned the need for “positive” content, as opposed to negative one; a significant part of the study participants expressed the need for such formats and content that would allow one to “relax”, which would be related to the pleasant everyday life, and would provide motivation and confidence in something “happy, good, and wise”. In particular, many respondents mentioned the lack of programs for children and educational programs. In case of some representatives of this group, there is a pronounced nostalgia for the Soviet television “menu” and the ways of its consumption.

“Yesterday I and my 12-year-old granddaughter watched Ivan Vasilievich Changes Profession with great pleasure. We just had some rest. We were both sitting in front of the TV and singing together, ignoring the fact that we are in poor voice. But nevertheless we experienced positive emotions. I like watching these movies. Well, after all, giving my age, I want positive emotions.» (Female respondent O., 60 years old, Starobilsk, focus group)

- **Intensive background-like consumption of media content**, against the backdrop of general **apathy**, creates a peculiar **barrier** between respondents and any media information. Examples of constructive and positive content (even from the standpoint of these media consumers) are lost in the overall flow and get little attention. **Distrust, skepticism, and accumulated frustrations** are deep-rooted, which creates one of the most serious **obstacles** for communication with this target group. One of the most common attitudes of this kind is the confidence in the impossibility of positive changes, if they are initiated by the representatives of the political elite.

“They never do anything for the people. They do everything for their own sake. The elite...» (Male respondent P., 48 years old, Sievierodonetsk, interview)

- A great **variety** of sources of information and a great variety of information causes **confusion** among a significant part of the target group. A diverse and fragmentary media field is a source of opportunities for the minority of the representatives of the studied group, namely those who are eager to make their own choice of media out of the proposed variety; however, for the majority of them, this is a source of anxiety, confusion, fatigue, and even annoyance.



“For instance, you watch one channel on the TV. It tells about a particular thing in one way. Another channel already presents the same thing in a different way. Eventually I decide that I will receive a magazine or a newspaper with a description of a pension reform. And I will read about this myself, in a calm atmosphere. I will familiarize myself.» (Female respondent N., 50 years old, Sievierodonetsk, interview)

“As for the television, what can I say? I miss the time when there was one channel. There was one channel with normal TV shows. What we have now is filthy, nonsense, and rubbish. I just wonder what kind of audience these shows are intended for? Probably for the insane asylum.» (Male respondent Y., Lysychansk, focus group)

“Do you know what is annoying? The number of channels, there should be 3 of them, so that you click 1, 2, 3– understand that everything is garbage, turn it off, and go about your business. It is annoying to have 80 identical channels, with identical commercials, and synchronization of commercials on different channels is annoying» (Male respondent S., Kramatorsk, focus group)

The reactions of confusion and irritation are also caused by a torrent of controversial information from the same source, as some respondents have noted.

“Two stories in one program few seconds apart. The first story is about... how was it exactly? Pensions are not actually increased, probably by the government; salaries are not increased. That was the content of the story. The second story was about the fact that the increase of salaries will cause inflation. So what's really going on? Will the prices be rising, or they will not? Is the increase of salaries good or bad? All of this is a bundle of negativity, some of which is even contradictory.» (Male respondent O., 37 years old, Starobilsk, focus group)

● for the majority of study participants, **language** (Russian or Ukrainian) is **not a criterion** for content selection. A small proportion of respondents noted that they prefer Russian-language media products by force of habit and because of the fact that they perceive the Russian language as their mother tongue. However, the majority expressed the opinion that content quality is a determinant factor;

“It's not important to me. I mainly read both in Russian and in Ukrainian. I understand the meaning in both languages. What matters is how it is presented.» (Male respondent A., 30 years old, Lysychansk, focus group)

“As for the language, I even catch myself thinking that I do not even distinguish Russian and Ukrainian speech. I can watch a movie, and if someone asks me, in which language the movie was broadcast, I really do not care about the language. And my husband does not watch movies on principle. He even refused to go to the cinema to watch a gorgeous movie; he does not go to the cinema and I do not go there too, because of the fact that movies there are in the Ukrainian language.» (Female respondent Y., 40 years old, Sloviansk, focus group)

At the same time, some respondents **criticized** the dubbing of Soviet films in Ukrainian because of the loss of actors' intonations, etc., as well as subtitles, which sometimes distract from a relaxed watching.

“It has been told that «everything should be in the Ukrainian language» and I don't care, I'm from around here, I'm not some stranger. I do not care in which language, be it in Ukrainian... But then the mess begins. There is a subtitle, then someone speaks in Russian, and then it is translated into Ukrainian. If you do translate it, remove the Russian language so that it cannot be heard. On the background someone is babbling in one language, and then some other person's voice is mixed too.» (Male respondent A., 63 years old, Kramatorsk, interview)



2. CONSUMPTION OF NEWS/INFORMATION CONTENT

Analysis of the peculiarities of news/information content consumption among the target group of the study allowed us to distinguish **two** subgroups: persons who consume information quite **actively**, particularly information about politics and economics, and those who either openly describe themselves as **apolitical**, or express fatigue from politics and avoid respective content, more or less efficiently. The second group is much more numerous and heterogeneous. What both groups have in common is the **critical** attitude towards the Ukrainian government, and, to some extent, to the Ukrainian state as such; however, there are some significant differences between them, in particular in the level of interest in information and media consumption repertoire. The critical position of the representatives of “media active” minority is predominantly “informed” insofar as they are inclined to argue their views with examples from the information discourse, separate facts, etc.; refer to expert analysis. Instead, the critical position of majority of representatives of the study group is based on general by-default dissatisfaction with the situation and the actions of the authorities. It is often difficult for such individuals to enforce their statements with concrete facts and examples or they mention those facts and examples that are widely circulated in the opposition political discourse and are the subject of numerous manipulations. In addition, it should be noted that a part of the representatives of the second subgroup – the majority – in principle, avoids articulation of their political views.

The repertoire and media consumption habits differ among the representatives of these subgroups, in particular, with regard to the awareness level concerning the choice of sources of information/news, as well as the actual list of media from which they receive news. Representatives of the first subgroup are generally inclined to recollect more clearly the source of information/news that they use. For the majority though, the streaming perception of information from the media is characteristic to a greater or lesser extent. Repre-

sentatives of the “media active” subgroup are generally better oriented in the country’s media landscape. News websites (both national and local) are more widely present in the list of media from which they consume news, compared to the second subgroup. Instead, either TV channels, or news aggregators and portals (depending on age and level of engagement in the online landscape) dominate in the information consumption repertoire of the representatives of the second subgroup. More details about these peculiarities of media consumption are discussed further in the report.

In addition, analysis of participants’ responses indicates that barriers to perceiving information about, say, positive changes in the country, are also different in these two groups. The aforementioned automatic skepticism as well as a low level of readiness to absorb the peculiarities of processes associated with reforms in various fields impose a significant barrier in the case of a significant part of the representatives of the second group. The overwhelming majority of the representatives of this group do not distinguish between the political elite, the state authorities and the initiatives on reforming particular spheres. Thus, long-standing skepticism towards the establishment is often extrapolated to reforms and initiatives which are communicated by representatives of the political elite. In the case of representatives of the “media active” minority group (which also shows skepticism but this skepticism is slightly different in character and more “informed”), the main potential barrier is imposed by political orientation. In other words, those representatives of this group who are still attracted to “pro-Russian” orientations are less prepared to perceive information on the positive changes and the benefits of reforms. However, in general, this group has fewer barriers to perceiving information.

In connection with this, communication with the general target group should include different approaches to the identified subgroups. In particular, it is impor-



tant to formulate communication of reforms in the most “non-political” way for representatives of the majority (second subgroup), emphasizing those aspects of reforms that affect their direct everyday life; this group also needs very clearly evident and specific illustrations of changes. For representatives of the “media active” minority, the content on reforms may be more complex, with explanations of various aspects, but also with a minimal amount of “political” substantiation. You can find more about the approaches to communication of reforms in the Recommendations section.

It was also found in the study that **ideologically motivated** selection of media sources of information was **poorly** represented among the target group of the study. The vast majority of respondents does not have clear **preferences** for news sources and are rather **passive** news consumers. When talking about the media which they use to find out the news, a significant part of the study participants mentioned the media (especially TV channels) which are absolutely different in terms of editorial policy orientation. It was also often **difficult** for them to **rationalize** their choice of news sources, which may indicate that such a choice is to some extent **random**, or that it is made by force of **habit**, etc.

For example, a 26-year-old female respondent I. from Volnovakha responded to the interviewer’s question about the TV channels she uses to learn the news with the following statement:

“STB, 1+1. Well, I’m just scrolling the news one by one.” To the follow-up question about the TV channel she prefers, she answered “ICTV, probably”. The answer to the question “Why ICTV?”- “It was probably convenient in terms of time”.

Such logic of argumentation is common for the vast majority of respondents from the target group.

“Well, whatever channel you click on – either «Inter» or «Ukraine», well ... But I can’t say that I have a favorite channel ... No! You sit down, see some news, watch it, and go on.» (Female respondent T., Bakhmut, focus group)

However, the situation is different among the representatives of the target group who are **active in terms of information**. They select and justify the choice of media sources of information more consciously; their repertoire of news consumption is often quite broad and consists of both nationwide online media and specialized pages in social networks, bloggers’ pages, in particular pages of local bloggers, government institutions, etc.

“I categorically do not watch TV. I may see a small part of some program when paying somebody a visit. But I don’t watch it on my own. I read news on the Internet. I have selected 3, 4, 5 resources. Well, «Liga», then «Novoye Vremya». And...In general, the resources that have not been caught...Well, showing some emotions. That is, everything is cold-blooded; all the facts are verified. I have actually been monitoring the «Liga» already for several years. There were 2 fails. But those were the fails experienced by lots of others as well. In addition, I also read; I’m already trying to step away from the need for the media. That is, you can read news, let’s say, directly on Facebook or Twitter. That is, this is the source of information. That is, there you can also read the news from the national police there, for example, or the Security Service...» (Male respondent A., 48 years old, Lysychansk, focus group)

Representatives of this subgroup are also often actively following local online publications. Among the national media consumed by this group, we can single out “112” channel, websites “**Korrespondent**” (**korrespondent.net**), “**Strana.ua**” (**strana.ua**), “**Gordon.ua**” (**gordon.ua**) as the most frequently mentioned media, “**Liga**” (**liga.net**), “**Censor.net**” (**censor.net**), “**Obozrevatel**” (**obozrevatel.com**) are mentioned more rarely.

Despite tiredness with news and politics, a significant part of the study participants continue consuming news by force of **habit**.

This is particularly true for middle-aged and elderly people, for whom television remains the primary media consumption channel. Among the TV channels, which news content respondents consumed, “Inter” and “TRK Ukraina” were mentioned most frequently. They were followed by “1+1”, “112”, “ICTV”, and “STB”. At the same time, it was difficult for most respondents to justify why they have chosen “Inter” and “Ukraina”, which may indicate that these channels were chosen by force of habit.

“ We are just more used to «Ukraina» and «Inter.» (Female respondent T., Bakhmut, focus group)

“ News are broadcast on «Inter», we always watch them on Inter. We watch them, but it's not that we watch them purposefully on this channel.» (Female respondent V., 46 years old, Sievierodonetsk, interview)

Social networks and news aggregators also occupy a notable place in the structure of news consumption; **news websites** are a little less popular. Social network feeds, news aggregators, and portals with mail services serve as an **entry point** for online information consumption for the vast majority of the study participants.

“ I always have an incoming information flow from e-mail (mail.ru) and Yandex. I also read something when browsing the phone. I am subscribed to «Telegazeta» (TV newspaper) on VKontakte and on Facebook.» (Female respondent T., 30 years old, Starobilsk, focus group)

“ When it comes to the news about the city, I prefer 0629... I also use Ukr.net, when I open my e-mail, there are news tabs there. I read them... Because I use e-mail every day. It is as if I am passing by. Well, I suppose, you still have to take an interest. To take a look. Although I am a completely apolitical person. But, I live in my country, and I must be aware of what is going on, after all.» (Female respondent O., Mariupol, focus group)

Such a peculiarity of informational consumption leads to the fact that respondents are often not **able** to identify news sources, as well as to the fact that they do not really **analyze** the origin of information they consume. Thus, background-like and “random” consumption of news can be observed not only with regard to television content, but also with regard to the online content.

“ Well, I also have a subscription to news on my phone. I receive it. I do not even know what it is. Opera. I don't know. I just receive news. Newsletters to the phone via Opera. I often receive even more news to my e-mail. To «Ukr.net». To «Mail.ua». (Female respondent I., 36 years old, Volnovakha, focus group)

Social media constitute an important part of media repertoire of both sub-groups within the target group, ‘active’ and ‘passive’ information consumers. Approaches to the use of social media, however, differ among the representatives of the target group. The minority of them use social media in a more kind of ‘conscious’ way: they are aware of the pages or users they follow; they use social media for newsfeed more than for personal communication purposes. Facebook is the most popular platform among this minority sub-group. The majority of study participants use social media in a more passive way. They find it difficult to recall pages/groups/users they follow, apart from their friends; they often click on shared links without reflecting on the source of information. They also tend to believe information shared by their friends more than information they get from TV. In general, social media users tend to question the credibility of information there to a lesser degree compared to the information on TV.

National news websites are also included in the list of news sources of the study participants, but to a lesser extent. As it was mentioned above, respondents who are active in terms of information consumption, and who constitute a minority in the target audience, prefer these media. Such news websites, according to respondents, are most often chosen because of the promptness, convenience, balanced information, etc.



“ I like “Gordon.UA”, I like “Khvylya”, I read “Korrespondent”, “Obozrevatel”, “Censor.net”. Well, something like this... Well, they seem to be the most independent of all, and I think that sometimes they are objective. I also like to compare.» (Female respondent T., 50 years old, Lysychansk, interview)

“ In general, they summarize the things I am interested in on «Gordon.ua» quite well. Well, the latest events, the most important events that happened in the world and in Ukraine. Promptly. And it looks like there are not so many features peculiar to the yellow press, as, for example, in the «Obozrevatel», where they like eye-catching headlines.» (Male respondent S., 43 years old, Sievierodonetsk, interview)

Printed publications are extremely poorly represented in the structure of news consumption among the studied audience; this is particularly true for national publications. Only employees of the library network and sometimes employees working at state agencies and schools did spontaneously mention specific national periodicals which they read from time to time (for example, “Dzerkalo Tyzhnya”, “Uryadovyi Kurier”, “Fakty”, some “women’s magazines”, etc.).

Local media, especially news websites and thematic local groups in social networks, occupy quite a notable place in the repertoire of information consumption among the region’s residents. The vast majority of respondents who use the Internet, more readily mentioned the names of local news websites, compared with the national ones, which in particular indicates a high interest in local news. The most frequently mentioned local online media included **0629.com.ua, mrpl.city, “Sievierodonetsk Online”, “Vechirniy Bakhmut” (bahmut.com.ua), bahmut.in.ua, “Delovoy Slavyansk”, 06274.com.ua, “Vostochnyi Proekt**. Local groups in social networks are also often mentioned, especially in those towns where online media are poorly developed.

“ Sloviansk (media – ed.) – “Nash Slavyansk”, they are all on Facebook. You go on Facebook and find out about everything.» (Female respondent V., 37 years old, Sloviansk, focus group)

“ I have online bookmarks. For a Mariupol website, 0629, for example. Or for «Novosti Donbasa.» I am more interested in local news.» (Female respondent O., 42 years old, Volnovakha, focus group)

“ The local media include 0629 and a lot of other local public groups on VKontakte and Facebook – different KHM, BM – for example, «Beautiful Mariupol», and not so beautiful... There are different public groups, for example one of the 0629 branches, where they interpret the news provided by the «0629», there they carry out different... To cut a long story short, the news was posted on «0629», and in this public group people interpret and explain it... (Male respondent D., 21 years old, Mariupol, interview)

“ Well, let’s say, every day I visit the «Overheard in Slavyansk» website, where people describe all the events that took place in the city during a day, and more.» (Female respondent N., 18 years old, Slavyansk, interview)

It is also noteworthy that a significant part of respondents who follow local news websites are **aware** of editorial policies and prejudices of these media. The possibility to check information about local events obtained from different sources, as opposed to news provided by the national media, contributes to the fact that citizens better understand the local media landscape.

Male respondent S.: «Sievierodonetsk Online» is the oldest Sievierodonetsk portal.»

Female Respondent Y.: «Well, yes, they are more or less balanced, I get the impression that they are not biased.»

Male respondent S.: «Well, yes, they just post information they have.

But there are also extremely biased sources, such as Sievierodonetsk periodical «Pravda», which supports the Head (of the Administration – Editor’s note), or «Sievierodonetsk Segodnya.» (Male Respondent S. and female respondent Y., Sloviansk, interview)

“*Probably Bakhmut.ua «(is the most appealing to me out of the local websites - editor’s note). Because «Vechirniy Bakhmut» is (controlled by – Editor’s note) city administration. Information is very one-sided there.» (Female respondent A., 45 years old, Bakhmut, interview)*

Local print media are rarely mentioned by respondent as major news sources, but it is worth noting that the situation is uneven, depending on a particular town or city. For instance, respondents from Mariupol and Starobilsk, and partly Sievierodonetsk, mentioned the local press much more often. Thus, the majority of respondents from Starobilsk mentioned “**Telegazeta**” newspaper as their news source; many participants of the study from Mariupol mentioned “**Priazovskiy Rabochiy**” and “**Ilyichevets**” periodicals; some respondents from Sievierodonetsk mentioned “**Sievierodonetskiye Vesti**”, whereas respondents from Lysychansk mentioned “**Novyi Put**”.

“*I read newspapers. I am a subscriber of «Priazovskiy». Or rather, I receive «Priazovskiy» and «Ilyichevets» for the public work I perform. These are the main information media, so to speak. (Female respondent L., 62 years old, Mariupol, focus group)*

“*I read our local newspaper... how we call it... «Telegazeta», yes. Well, there is also news about our reforms. I read about the reforms... They always write about reforms there. Just briefly, but they always write about the reforms. I also read about the situation at the front line.» (Female respondent V., 67 years old, Starobilsk, interview)*

There were many positive comments about the Starobilsk’ “Telegazeta”. In many other cases, participants of the study mainly noted that local print media do not contain content that is of interest to them. For example, a participant of a discussion in Sievierodonetsk, a retired engineer, gave the following answer to the questing whether there is any information in “Sievierodonetskiye Vesti” which is useful for him:

“*You know, there is virtually none. Absolutely no such information. They give some information. Well, for example. The publish the same information, for instance, about electricity prices. They have already been in force for a long time. But still, there is nothing to fill the pages with. They publish, and publish. Just to fill the pages. Or they add a lot of photos.» (Male respondent Y., 79 years old, Sievierodonetsk, focus group)*

The vast majority of the study participants were able to **recall** the names of **regional** or local **TV channels**; they watch some television products from time to time, but they **are not active** consumers. The most frequently mentioned regional TV channels in the interviews and focus groups included “**LOT**” (especially in Sievierodonetsk), “**Irta**”, “**DoTeBe**”, “**Sigma**” (in Mariupol), “**Zakaz**” (in Bakhmut).

“*Sometimes I watch our LOT; this is a channel about our authorities... Basically, people watch the news. There are entertainment programs there as well; but I am mainly interested in news, in the events that take place in the city. The stories there are mostly told from the first person; they play one particular candidate off against another. A blow-up.» (Female respondent O., 40 years old, Sievierodonetsk, interview)*

“*I watch it. But when colleagues tell me that something will be aired at seven o’clock, and I should watch it. Or, for example, there was an interview with someone from local authorities. So you watch it. When you know in advance that something (interesting – Editor’s note) will be broadcast, you turn the TV on, and watch.» (Female respondent N., 50 years old, Sievierodonetsk)*

However, very few respondents regularly watch local TV channels. The



reasons for low popularity include, in particular: outdated presentation of information, presentation/promotion of the governmental positions, lack of interesting, engaging formats, which make them insufficiently competitive with national channels and the content available on the Internet.

“ For example, there is a local channel «DoTeBe». Believe it or not, I never really watched it. This is a nightmare. I always ignore it. They weren't ever able to get me interested. I turn it on and see either some cartoons, or something else, or somebody is invited to the studio; so someone is sitting in the studio in front of two microphones, there is a presenter and some person who they have invited. And everything is somehow lifeless, so to speak, she reads a question, and he sits and tediously answers it. I have never stopped to watch it.» (Female respondent H., 53 years old, Kramatorsk, interview)

Exchange of remarks about the channel from the public broadcasting network “DoTeBe” between the focus group participants in Kramatorsk was also illustrative in this context:

Male respondent V.: «They just sit and waste public money... Well, this is because nobody knows about them; if you have a direct question about «DoTeBe», I think no one knows about them at all.»

Female respondent L.: «No, I know it, I watch it, but it is very boring.»

Male respondent S.: «They do not have charismatic presenters, they do not have programs that... Well, perhaps they do have programs there, but their presentation is awful.» (Kramatorsk, focus group)

At the same time, the answers of the study participants indicate that local TV channels, or at least certain products of these channels, can **potentially** attract a large audience, since the **demand** for local news content is clearly **articulated**.

The study also showed that it is difficult for the vast majority of respondents from the target audience to identify **authoritative** journalists, experts, opinion leaders; a significant part of the participants justified such difficulties by the **lack of confidence** in famous people, which once again demonstrated the extreme prevalence of the atmosphere of distrust in public figures.

“ I'm afraid that there are none (authoritative journalists, experts –ed.). Because they may be good at the present moment. But tomorrow some dirt will be dug on them. And the opinion will change drastically. I try not to... think about this.» (Male respondent O., 55 years old, Sievierodonetsk, focus group)

“ Somehow I do not trust anybody. Everyone just has their own task... Independent press, independent press... there is no such thing.» (Female respondent L., 59 years old, Sievierodonetsk, interview)

In the end, after some thought, most respondents were able to name public figures who are appealing to them, although they were mostly talking about **affection** rather than about **trust**. Analysis of respondents' answers allowed us to identify some patterns. First of all, it should be noted that the answers represent a rather wide range of aforementioned individuals. Some participants are inclined to mention those representatives of political circles who are frequent speakers in the media (for example, Yuri Boyko, Vadym Rabinovych, Nadiya Savchenko). In such cases, it is more likely that people like the **theses** they express, rather than politicians themselves. These politicians were usually mentioned by older respondents who actively consume television content and often keep to it. A significant group of respondents mentioned **presenters** from television news and other programs as authoritative media figures. Social talk show presenters were also dominant in this group (for example, **Oleksiy Sukhanov**, a presenter of the “Hovoryt Ukraina”, Dmytro Karpachov, a presenter of various STB projects; news programs presenters (for exam-

ple, **Alla Mazur, Oleh Panyuta**), political talk shows presenters were mentioned a little more rarely (**Savik Shuster, Matviy Hanapolskyi, Natalia Vlashchenko**).

“ In the past, I watched the «Detektor Brekhni» and «Odyn za Vsikh» TV programs. «I like his (D. Karpachov's- ed.) point of view; I like that he really stands for justice. As a person, as a psychologist. It is very good...» (Female respondent M., 28 years old, Lysychansk, focus group)

In addition, a presenter from a travel program, **Dmytro Komarov** is also in respondent's good graces.

“ The man (D. Komarov-ed.) is devoted to his profession to such an extent. First of all, you believe him, you see. This is different than just talking about something... I really like him; well, he takes part in «Dancing with the Stars». Of course, he ... cannot do it (dance - ed.) as good as the others, but everyone voted for him. All the viewers rooted for him. Only the jury gave him bad marks... And he said that he understood that he is not great at this... But he wants to do this. If he started taking part in this, he has to go all the way. I really appreciate devotion in people and I really like professionalism; and the third thing is commitment.» (Female respondent L., 68 years old, Lysychansk, focus group)

The most frequently mentioned person among the media figures was the presenter **Dmytro Gordon**.

“ We like Gordon. Why? He is a talented journalist. His opinion... Although these days you cannot trust anyone. He has a kind of decadence mood. However, his manner is amazing!» (Female respondent A., 45 years old, Bakhmut, interview)

“ I like (Gordon - ed.) because he is a professional. I'm not a journalist, but I understand people who have a great command of language and use logic.» (Female respondent T., 50 years old, Lysychansk, interview)

At the same time, respondents also mentioned representatives from culture and art (for example, Sviatoslav Vakarchuk, Serhiy Zhadan, Lina Kostenko etc.).

We should also separately mention **Yevhen Komarovskiy**, a doctor and presenter of several TV programs dedicated to health-related issues. Komarovskiy, who is also a frequent guest on television, was often mentioned by respondents as an example of an authoritative person, as well as a source of content that is of interest to them, both in terms of content and in terms of format/the way he presents content.

“ He (Komarovskiy-ed.) is the only person I enjoy listening and watching. He is a smart and good man. And a wonderful popularizer. And in general... he is charming. Who else? (Male Respondent Y., Lysychansk, focus group)

“ Doctor Komarovskiy. «My main topic... Why Komarovskiy? Because there are millions of doctors and experts; I have watched thousands of them myself, but doctor. Komarovskiy is an expert who speaks in plain language, gets on both with a baby, with you, with a grandmother, with a grandfather, and with anyone. That is, he is a professional who gets on with everyone in a plain language, using simple down-to-earth words... When Komarovskiy talks about something, it's already a show, it's interesting, it's even funny, even difficult topics. Speaking about Komarovskiy... there was a program – I was very surprised that it was even a release – about the HIV issue. For some reason I wanted to get some information about this. I found a lot of different information. I just wanted to know what kind of a disease this is. Well, I'm an adult person, and there is a lot of resonant information. And here I see that a program with Komarovskiy is about to be broadcast. That is, this person will explain to me in a plain language all the information I have read, and I will be able to perceive it. (Female respondent K., 36 years old, Mariupol, interview)



Thus, we can conclude that against the backdrop of general **distrust** in public figures, **controversial** attitude to political theses disseminated by them, and the general feeling of frustration over politics, representatives of the analyzed group found **politically neutral** individuals, or those who skillfully present themselves in this way (like Gordon), whose authority is based on the perceptions about their **competence**, interestingness, charisma, honesty, etc., to be the most appealing. Such individuals have a unifying potential for this audience.

Thus, in general, the most unifying and potentially trusted kind of media personality for the studied group is represented by a person who can boast expertise and well-established reputation in his/her field, which is not directly related to politics. This person would be without definite political standing, instead he/she would represent some field that has significance for people either because of its proximity to their everyday life (like, for instance, healthcare-related issues) or due to perceived importance (e.g., science or culture).

Information priorities/demand for news content

It was difficult for a significant part of the study participants to formulate their own information priorities regarding the news content. The answers given by this group of respondents indicate that their main information need is **assurance** about the better future. In other words, their demands for topics and problematics that are of interest to them in terms of information content are poorly articulated. Instead, they expect announcements about “improvements” from the media.

“ To hear that the country has become worthwhile. That's what I want. » (Male respondent P., 48 years old, Sievierodonetsk, interview)

“ I'm wondering when peace and prosperity will come. I do not need either the increase in my salary or any benefits. Nothing. Give me back a bun for 3 kopecks and milk for 8 kopecks. The time when you were a student and it was possible, so to speak, to eat and feel sated during the rest of the day. (Female respondent L., 50 years old, Mariupol, focus group)

Analysis of answers given by the participants of interviews and focus groups allowed us to highlight some main topics, issues, and thematic areas that constitute information priorities for the studied group.

- **Information about real changes at the community level, as well as prompt and practical information about events that take place in the city**

“ In order not to search information myself. But to have a news ticker. Giving information about what you could watch. Well, what's happening in the region. For example, with the information about power and water shutdowns. So that I could know whether I need to take a generator. (Male respondent O., 55 years old, Sievierodonetsk, focus group)

- **clear explanation of processes that take place in the economy; tariffs and pricing, clear information about reforms, etc.**

“ I am interested in economic topics. Now one of such most topical issues is the increase in tariffs. This is topical for me. The increase in prices. They print out information about prices, in some stores, something, somewhere, in «Ilyichevets». Well, «Ilyichevets» at least interprets certain events. Explains reasons why this happened. Why there are debts related to the heating system. I am just interested in, so to speak, purely material side of the problem. (Female respondent L., 62 years old, Mariupol, focus group)

- **positive success stories, examples of achievements, motivating stories**

Male respondent V.: «What is being built, which production is developing in Ukraine.»

Female respondent V.: «Because every time you turn on the TV, you only see that some warehouses explode. I get a feeling that nothing serious happens.»

Male respondent V.: «They could at least show some pitiful entrepreneur.» (37 years old, Starobilsk, interview)

Female respondent V.: «As in the time of the Soviet Union, remember? They told about the harvest that was gathered, about some kind of a factory which was opened. And what do you see now in the news? There are no achievements.» (Male respondent V., 37 years old, female respondent V., 39 years old, Starobilsk, interview)

“ We also lack information about what will happen after the end of the war. People lack information about what is planned, what is being introduced, which works are being performed so that people can live after the war and not only in the war! Because more people now... For example I and everyone else are watching news. In most cases no one gets sidetracked by entertaining content, because ... We are constantly tense! There are not enough good things, we need a beacon of hope, that «we are almost there, we've done great, we will persevere, we will still make our country worthy»! That is, to respect yourself - to teach people to respect themselves... I do not know... This is the most important thing! (Female respondent V., Bakhmut, focus group)

“ I think we lack, let's say, something that is really insightful. That is, something that you watch and become strongly motivated, so motivated that you start striving for something, at least you just start.» (Male respondent Y., 18 years old, Mariupol, focus group)

● when the war will end

Male respondent S.: «(I am most interested in –ed.) When it all ends.»

Female respondent V.: «First of all. And God forbid this to ever happen again.» (37 years old)

Male respondent S.: «When it all ends. And no one knows when all of this ends.»

Female respondent V.: «Great tension and uncertainty are noticeable. Nobody knows, let's say, what will happen tomorrow. This, of course, is difficult.» (Male respondent S., 40 years old, female respondent V., 37 years old, Volnovakha, interview)

● useful information (about child upbringing, health, cultural, scientific, and educational content, children's programs, documentary films, historical films, demand for «comfort» in the content, fatigue from negativity and escalating, sensational manner of information presentation in the media)

“ Educational. A lot of educational content. As well as information about health, sports, and culture. And rest. We should have more content of this kind. Less politics. And more of what a person deals with daily, from dawn to dusk. This is what we need. First of all, about children and about people. To take care of them. (Female respondent I., 53 years old, Sievierodonetsk, focus group)

“ Culture, art, books – there is very little information about this. Channel 24 does give some information about books.» (Female respondent M., 28 years old, Kramatorsk, interview)

“ As for TV programs. I would like to see something more scientific and educational, something more intellectual... for people, and not “Zvazheni i shchaslyvi” («Weighted and happy»).» (Male respondent Y., 30 years old, Kramatorsk, interview)



3. CONSUMPTION OF ENTERTAINMENT CONTENT

The vast majority of representatives of the study group prefer **entertainment** content over informational content. At the same time, the selection of the entertainment content among the study participants is rather wide and diverse, considering its availability (cable packages with dozens of TV channels, the Internet).

A significant part of respondents satisfy their interests in **entertainment** content on the **Internet**. According to their own interests and tastes, the study participants are purposefully looking for relevant content, mainly for videos. Usually it is referred to serials, thematic YouTube channels, comedy shows. This applies primarily to young and middle-aged people. This audience explains the choice of the Internet as a source of content with its convenience, flexibility and broad capabilities in contrast to traditional television.

“ Well, the question is that advertisement – it annoys. On the Internet, you can pause it. This is an Internet opportunity. You can rewind. You can go back and forth here. And you can watch it when it's convenient for you. And the TV does not give that opportunity. (Female respondent O., 38 years old, Volnovakha, focus group)

“ TThere is nothing to watch (on television – ed.). While you choose from 80 channels what you are interested in, you spend about 2 hours. In these 2 hours I can type a specific query, what I want, and I will spend 2 hours to watch something.» (Female respondent Y., Kramatorsk, focus group)

Considering the **popularity** of the **video** content itself, **YouTube** is the leading platform for active Internet users. The range of the video content is wide and includes television content (clips from various shows), documentaries, bloggers' content, etc.

“ Usually I watch tutorials (video). Now I learn how to play guitar. I'm trying by myself, by video tutorials. And secondly, it's basically informative video. Materials about high tech. And some documentaries about different historical personalities.» (Male respondent Y., 21 years old, Mariupol, focus group)

“ Well, I think that like most of young people, and not just young people, I'm watching YouTube. And there I watch different programs. The same that are shown on TV.»X-Factor», «Ukraine and talent». That is, the same «Comedy Club». Let's assume. I also watch «95th Quarter» occasionally. Well. And besides, I watch different bloggers. On filmmaking, for example. There is the channel «One Site Media». Here I get useful information. Like this. (Male respondent V., 20 years old, Mariupol, focus group)

There is a significant increase in popularity of **YouTube-channels** as a source of content, especially among **young, “hip”** audience. That is, more and more users are not just watching separate videos; they watch YouTube channels, according to their own interests.

“ Nastoyashchee Vremya («Current Time») - I like this kind of delivery, I mean, video with subtitles, the videos are small and without sound, you can watch them on a screen and there you also read text, so it is easy for perception. Yes, they are on YouTube and on Facebook. (I also watch – Editor's note) YouTube channel of our local “Telegazeta” newspaper, I have also mentioned channel “112”; “RombTV” is also a cool channel... And...»Bad Comedian», yes. Reviews of awful Russian movies. I think that all of this is fun. «SlivkiShow,» and One Side Media provide lessons in video shooting and media creation, and since I deal with such things myself, this is particularly interesting.» (Male respondent M., 30 years old, Starobilsk, focus group)

YouTube video and channels are particularly popular among young and middle-aged male audience. The platform is especially popular for humor content. Participants mentioned such programs as “95 quarter”, “League of Laughter”, “Comedy Club” etc., which they watch online. Study



participants also mentioned the following YouTube channels: “Bad Comedian” (ironic reviews of films by some Russian user) and “Slivki Show” (life hacks video), less frequently - “Kreosan” (about scientific experiments), “+100500”*(humor), “Bamper TV” (humor).

Content related to various **hobbies, everyday life, leisure** (for example, fishing, technology, popular psychology, repair, gardening, cooking, design, etc.) occupies a significant place in the structure of entertainment content consumption by the representatives of the studied group. We are talking both about video content on the Internet and on TV and about specialized websites. As for TV programs, “Dachnyi Vopros”, “Kvartirnyi Vopros,” etc. were mentioned most frequently in this context.

“ When speaking about my favorite websites, these are websites dedicated to fancywork. Online stores. Websites that are for the soul. And I also have several subscriptions on the BookTuber. To those people who review literature, because this is one of my hobbies. And on BookTuber people also talk about new products, about which you will not hear here, in the east, every day. About those, good Ukrainian translations which are released now. I actually have a favorite booktuber - LiudaDmytrukVyshnevyiTsvit. I recommend her to everyone. Because she really takes pleasure in talking about what she likes. And about the classical literature.» (Female respondent O., 30 years old, Mariupol, focus group)

“ “Dachnyi proekt» (“Summer House Project”), yes, yes, I do not remember the names. But when I turn this channel on, I definitely watch everything, because it’s so cool to watch how everything transforms. «I was jokingly calling it «Square Kilometer». This is really something that you can watch several times. Even if it is an old episode, it doesn’t matter. (Male respondent A., 30 years old, Starobilsk, focus group)

“ «Vse Bude Dobre» («Everything Will Be Fine») is a great program. Its presenter is also wonderful. They talk about different things there, including cooking. It is in general very educational. The audience often takes part in it. They come out. And practically do everything themselves. In this program you can see both how to cook. And how to dress. Well... Real life.» (Female respondent N., 60 years old, Sievierodonetsk, focus group)

Demand for educational content is clearly articulated. Many respondents mentioned the content provided by the “**Mega**”, “**Discovery**”, “**History**” TV channels as an example of positive, useful, and interesting content.

“As for «Mega», I really like to watch programs about nature, about the weather, scientific and educational programs... It is not politicized, it is completely educational. If I want, I watch fishing programs. I sit in front of the screen and worry, along with these fishermen, which fish he will pull out. He will weigh it, kiss it, and set it free. And I am so peaceful and happy, too. It is also very interesting to watch how they bust all sorts of scientific/non-scientific myths. (Female respondent O., 60 years old, Starobilsk, focus group)

“ I myself like the «History» channel, which I watch when I visit my grandmother; it is this channel that I turn on when I’m having a dinner. I like the fact that they show nitty-gritty there. And this is either British or Americans channel, I do not know for sure, where they talk in detail about some kind of research. This event happened, these words were said, this was recorded; then they show a document, there is a beautiful picture and some short stories. That is, they take a particular topic, for instance, about architecture... That is, everything is very informative and there is no super emotional tone, they are also not trying to feed you some fake patriotic things.» (Female respondent K., 36 years old, Mariupol, interview)

“ Mega» channel is interesting now. It’s a pity that we do not have “Discovery”. This «Discovery» channel... they should have made it

all-Union, free, without mandatory fees. But instead it was encoded, encrypted, and you have to pay for it, even on the Internet. It's no good. Young people still have to get some positive information from somewhere, still have to develop.» (Male respondent Y., Lysychansk, focus group)

Despite rather wide variety of entertaining content preferred by respondents, a number of general trends can be identified. In particular, the two types of programs that are most often mentioned as appealing content include **humor programs** (“95 Kvartal” (“95th Quarter”), “Diesel Show”, “Liga smikhu” (“League of Laughter”), “Comedy Club”, “Rozsmishy komika” (“Make a Comic Laugh”)) and **travel programs** (“Orel i Reshka” (“Heads and Tails”), “Svit Navyvorit” (“The World Inside Out”), the content found on the Discovery and Mega channels).

“To be honest, given the life we have now, I prefer entertaining programs. I adore Zelenskyi... I do not know. I adore everyone. I just cannot figure out when he finds time to live his life. He now even has his own studio. As well as “Rozsmishy komika” (“Make a Comic Laugh”), and «Liga smikhu” (“League of Laughter»).» (Female respondent L., 68 years old, Lysychansk, focus group)

“The jokes made by «95th Kvartal» are not bad. You know, I was previously watching «Comedy Club», «Comedy Woman»; and now I watch «95th Kvartal». And, let's see, what else... «Mama hohotala»... Well, things like this.» (Female respondent M., Bakhmut, focus group)

At the same time, despite the popularity of humorous programs, respondents demonstrate a kind of fatigue from the usual formats, usual topics, and jokes. This is especially true for the “95th Quarter”.

“I used to like them more. It seems to me now that... they palled, probably...” (Female respondent V., 61 years old, Mariupol, focus group)

“In my opinion, the «95th Quarter» went sour... Previously, I could watch it, there were some funny stories and situations, but now they mention politics increasingly more often. Well, it's hilarious, alright, but, needless to say, it is not appealing when you constantly hear political thoughts; it's no longer interesting. The same goes for the Diesel Show.» (Female respondent N., 18 years old, Slovyansk, interview)

“I was previously watching the «95th Quarter», and in general I liked it. But it became monotonous, or what.» (Female respondent S., 45 years old, Slovyansk, interview)

“I like it, it's very funny, then it gets a little less funny, but you watch it. It is almost like Serdyuchka. At first it was interesting, then it was nice, but eventually it got boring. The same thing with this show, it's not interesting anymore. (Male respondent O., 63 years old, Kramatorsk, interview)

Judging by comments, **talent shows** (“X-Factor”, “Dancing with the Stars”, “The Voice Ukraine”, “Voice Kids”, etc.) are quite **popular** and **the least controversial**. Reality shows are less popular, but we should separately mention “**Weighted and Happy**” as one of the most frequently mentioned programs when it comes to the genre of reality shows.

“Well, I prefer and watch “Zvazheni i shchaslyvi”(«Weighted and Happy»). It is broadcast less often now. I am interested in, so to speak, the practical side of life. How to maintain your weight and how to preserve your health. So I watch it to see whether this is applicable to real life.» (Female respondent L., 62 years old, Mariupol, focus group)

Some respondents, mostly older ones, like **social** talk shows such as “Hovoryt Ukrayina” (“Ukraine is Speaking”) and “Tse Stosuyetsia kozhnogo” (“This Concerns Everyone”) since they consider them to be real-life. However, these talk shows also cause a lot of ambiguous reaction among the representatives of the studied group (they criticize the manner of discussion and the focus on “dirty laundry”).

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RESULTS OF THE STUDY

“ I like «This Concerns Everyone», a program which is broadcasted on “Ukraine” channel. I watch something on Inter, then I switch to Ukraine... how is it called?... «Ukraine is Speaking»? Well, I'm just not a young person, and they talk about life there.» (Female respondent H., Starobilsk, interview)

“ And this one, on the channel Ukraine, well... «Ukraine is Speaking». I just watch it to cry... It's just like in real life. You watch and think: oh, I am in a similar situation. How to explain this... you can just sit in front of the TV and cry. Watch and cry together with them.» (Female respondent O., 62 years old, Volnovakha, interview)

The audience of programs content of which is associated with **mysticism**, extrasensory abilities, secrets, magic, etc. is similar.

“ (I like –ed.) «Real Mysticism» and «Ukraine is Speaking». I like situations where there is mysticism in programs. Different points of view are presented there. A point of view of a psychologist, of a psychiatrist, of a doctor. And of some experts, and they project everything on reality, on everyday life. The show. That is, «Ukraine is Speaking». There are some situations, and there are different experts who discuss them. But if it's an entertaining program, then yes. This is leisure. And this is also an opportunity to take look at the situation from a more moderate point of view. Some kind of analysis... You can watch a real-life situation. You can see what one can do in it. Plus you can have a rest. And spend some time. See that such things happen in life as well. Both ways are possible.» (Female respondent O., 23 years old, Volnovakha, focus group)

“ I love STB, they show «Psychic Challenge». As for the «Ukraina» channel, I like the program... how is it called... the one about investigations – «Mystical Ukraine». I like them. This is something I can watch. (Female respondent L., 48 years old, Sievierodonetsk, interview)

Among older respondents (the retirees), there is a widespread **demand** for pop concerts, which is largely caused by **nostalgia**.

“ When they show old films, I watch them... Because they make us feel nostalgic, so to speak, and we like this... It is just the way our generation is, we like such things... For example, I like to watch the concert «The 9th of May» on «Inter», I like how they do all of that, just like in the old days.» (Female respondent L., 60 years old, Kramatorsk, focus group)

As for the middle-aged audience, especially male one, programs in the **documentary and detective** genre are very popular (for example, “Investigations Led by Kanevskyi”, “Veshchdok” (“Material Evidence”).

“ In the morning in the kitchen, I turn on the TV, because it's already a habit. It is always the Morning with Inter and of course this is «Investigations Led by Kanevskiy.» (Female respondent I., 60 years old, Sloviansk, focus group)

“ I also like the «95th Quarter», although sometimes they do step over the line; but there is still a grain of something that I like. And I like the «Psychic Challenge», I never miss it on Sundays. And, of course, I and my grandson are very fond of the «Veshchdok», we really like it. In particular my grandson, he is 13; we watch it. You are watching this and thinking about how clever bandits are, it's unbelievable.» (Female respondent V., 65 years old, Sloviansk, focus group)

TV series also constitute a significant element in the entertainment content consumption by the representatives of the studied group. This concerns both TV series produced by Western countries, which users mostly watch online, and TV series broadcast on TV channels.

The overwhelming majority of young and middle-aged audience prefers watching television series on the Internet. TV series produced by Western countries enjoy significant popularity. Respondents note high technical quality, an aesthetically pleasant picture, interesting plots, etc.

“ I really like (TV series produced by –ed.) BBC. They even broadcast feature films now. Well, first, it looks very beautiful. Not just in terms of dynamics, but there is a sort of unique plot; and the plots are usually charged, good and interesting. It holds your attention. But there is also a beautiful picture. Everything is made according to the golden ratio. You can just sit and study every frame. They are very beautiful, even in terms of color scheme; well, it is really done beautifully. That is why (I prefer –ed.) European ones.» (Female respondent S., 45 years old, Sloviansk, interview)

The most frequently mentioned Western TV series included “CIS”, “Lie to Me”, “Game of Thrones”, “Walking Dead”, “House M.D.”; whereas “House of Cards”, “Mentalist”, “Big Bang Theory”, “Black Mirror”, “Downton Abbey”, “Doctor Who”, etc. were mentioned somewhat less often.

Part of the audience which consumes Western TV series does not even consider watching TV series produced by Ukraine or Russia, stating that they are much worse in terms of quality.

“ I do not watch any TV series, neither Ukrainian, nor Russian. They are all boring to me, very poorly shot and so on. When you turn some channel on and see them, I would say that those are TV series for housewives who sit at home and have nothing to do; these soap operas can be broadcast endlessly, this is my point of view. And if you want to watch a good TV series, watch a foreign one, which the whole world is already raving about. I will not say that all of them are perfectly great. For example, I got bored with the «Game of Thrones» already during the 3rd season. It got too sort of... although the element of fantasy is great there... As for TV series which I watched completely at one sitting in 2 days, it was the one featuring Jude Law, something about the Pope of Rome.» It is entitled «The Young Pope». (Male respondent A., 30 years old, Starobilsk, focus group)

However, the overwhelming majority of this audience is relatively tolerant to some Ukrainian and Russian TV products. In particular, there were positive comments about such TV series as “Sniffer”, “Supercops”, “Fizruk” (“PE Teacher”), “Lesya and Roma”, “Mazhor” (“Silver Spoon”), etc.

“ As for TV series, I prefer detectives, because there is always some sort of a puzzle in them. Speaking about Russian TV series, there was a pretty good Russian or, to be exact, Russian-Ukrainian, project «Sniffer». A detective series. Do you remember? Then there was the American «Sherlock», and «C.S.I.» is also quite good.» (Female respondent M., 28 years old, Lysychansk, focus group)



“ Yes, the Ukrainian «Lesya + Roma» is a great TV series, I watched it from time to time, but it was about 5 years ago. This is a very interesting series. I'll tell you why it was interesting. The middle class in the series was very typical, a typical Kyiv middle class.» (Male respondent S., 35 years old, Kramatorsk, focus group)

“ By the way, speaking about our TV series, I have come across some kind of «Commissar Rex» episodes, only Ukrainian ones. I do not remember its title. There's a police dog. There's a policeman and he has a shepherd dog, and they do something... By the way, it was rather good. I was surprised when I found out that this is a Ukrainian TV series. Then I noticed some Kyiv places there once, and then some Ukrainian license plates. Then I started looking up, and this really proved to be a Ukrainian series. Well, it's a good production. If everything goes like this, then I will gladly watch our TV series.» (Male respondent A., 48 years old, Lysychansk, focus group)

As for the audience that watches series on TV, the situation is slightly different. Contrary to the consumers of online TV series, it is often difficult for many respondents to recall the names of series that they watch on television. This is probably caused by the great number of television series and their similarity, which, in fact, was even noted by the respondents.

Female respondent H.: «Well, I like to watch both TV series and news».

Interviewer: «Which TV series do you like?»

Female respondent H.: «The ones that are broadcast, actually...»

Interviewer: «Can you name the recent ones, or those that stand out from the crowd?»

Female respondent H.: «Well... I do not remember their names. They are all about love...» (Starobilsk, interview)

Consequently, many respondents just mentioned genres: “melodrama”, “detective”, “fantasy”. As for the series broadcast by Ukrainian TV channels, Turkish series (for example, “The Magnificent Age”), some comedies (“In-laws” and “People’s Servant” were frequently mentioned by respondents), and series on medical topics (“Central Hospital” and “Female Doctor” were frequently mentioned) are the most recognizable ones.

“ I watch «In-laws» and really like it. I can watch it. Sometimes, when I am in a particular mood, I have probably already watched them 55 times, cause they are broadcast virtually on all channels... 55 times. And when Dobronravov sings this song during credits, I even cry sometimes. Because this is what life is. Those are facts of life. This is my youth. This is something you will never return. It's so nice... (Female respondent H., 53 years old, Kramatorsk, interview)

People also mentioned such series as “Ne zarikeysia” (“Never Forswear”), “Rayskiye yablochki” (“Heavenly Apples”), “Shchaslyvi razom” (“Happy Together”), etc. Respondents’ answers indicate that consumption of series broadcasts on TV channels is often background-like and poorly reflective.

A significant part of discussions during interviews and focus groups was devoted to respondents’ demands, expectations, and wishes regarding media content. As it was already noted above, there is an **articulated demand for educational** content among the studied audience. It is noteworthy that many study participants mentioned the need for content that would promote traveling around Ukraine, would help residents of different regions discover different corners of the country. Respondents also gave positive feedback about popular formats that would tell about the history of Ukraine.

“ If Ukraine, let's say, needs some programs, then those are, you know, such programs ... There are short (stories - editor's note) about

the corners of Ukraine, beautiful ones, about some places. But not from the standpoint of some... how to mitigate this... from the standpoint of some intellectual person, just good and beautiful places, not just places where Cossacks lived. Well, for example, «Berminvody» near Kharkiv is a wonderful resort. Who knows about it? Nobody knows anything. My son has recently started traveling. He is actually a cultural expert, so he traveled to Berehovo, about which only a few people know. He was also somewhere in the Zakarpattia region, traveled to the Volyn region, to the Svitiaz lake. They rented a house there. But nobody knows anything about such places. We have Chalk Mountains, we have Bilokuzmynivka. Who knows about that?.. No-one knows. (Female respondent L., 60 years old, Kramatorsk, focus group)

“ Like this. It would be interesting to have something like this. Well, they show many programs about nature now. I would like to watch something about Ukraine, for example, about our nature reserves. There was a time when they broadcast such things. Am I right, Kolya? Which channel was that? About nature reserves, about famous places. (Female respondent S., 65 years old, Starobilsk, interview)

“ Maybe someone remembers the time when, in 2006 or 2007, during breaks from commercials, «Inter» broadcast special animated clips, voiced by Yuriy Kit. This was within the framework of... how was it called... «The country. History of Ukrainian Lands». Just recall how concisely and understandably they were directed.» (Male respondent Y., Mariupol, focus group) .

In addition, many representatives of the studied audience expressed the desire for the increased amount of content for **children** and **adolescents**. In their opinion, it is desirable to have content that **teaches, stimulates, motivates**, and also affirms moral values. In general, this group is characterized by criticism of “moral decay” and “crisis of values” that they see in the media.

“ Yes, what I wanted to add. We watch, let's say, «In the world of animals» or «Geography». There are different materials, but not ours... the imported ones. And there is very little content for children. Yes, there is a children's channel. But some time ago there even was a phrase «children, let's go brush our teeth, will be watching «Good Night Kids» now». Then there is no content for teenagers. It annoys me that children do not acquire any skills, let's say, communication skills. They do not always listen to us. Mother said something, grandmother said something... But this is different, because this was said by someone else... Our child is 13 years old. Don't you agree that there is nothing for such children to watch?» (Female respondent L., 60 years old, Kramatorsk, focus group)

“ I agree with the previous speaker. We lack etiquette and normal ethics (in media content –ed.). I'm not talking about Christian programs or something like that. What I mean is the ethics of relationship. Both in families and in the society. Well, let's say, this should not be edifying. It should be something that arouses interest.» (Male respondent Y., 55 years old, Mariupol, focus group)

In addition to criticizing the lack of children's content on TV channels, some study participants drew attention to the lack of relevant content in the Ukrainian language on the Internet.

“ You know, speaking about children's education... suppose that what I'm looking for (what I lack sometimes) can only be found on Russian websites. That is, you can find anything you need for the work with children – poems, everything else –in the Russian language. There is nothing in the Ukrainian language. But we will be starting to study in a Ukrainian school soon, so we need to prepare in the Ukrainian language. A child must willy-nilly know Ukrainian well and speak it. But when I start surfing the Internet and searching for something in Ukrainian, I still find something Russian. (Female respondent I., 26 years old, Volnovakha, interview)

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4. ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CHANGES AND REFORMS, SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT THEM

The participants in the survey were almost unanimous in the **negative** assessment of the situation in the country after the events of 2013-2014. The reason for such an assessment is, first of all, **dissatisfaction** with the economic situation.

“The situation is not good. It is getting worse and worse. Prices are rising, salaries are small.” (Male respondent A., 50 years old, Volnovakha, interview)

The assessment of reforms, however, has demonstrated more **diversity** and **heterogeneity** of views within the study group. The analysis of the respondents' answers shows that **attitudes** to certain reforms are more closely connected with **general** views on the situation in the country, optimistic or pessimistic perception of reality among respondents, rather than their direct awareness of reforms. In other words, the attitude to reforms depends to a large extent on the current “**world views**”, which in turn affects **openness to information**, **readiness to perceive** and **analyze** it. For example, respondents who are firm in their beliefs that everything is in the hands of the political elite, and there is nothing positive to expect for the citizens from them, are automatically skeptical about any reforms. Such sentiment is fairly common among participants of the survey.

“You know, all these graphs, all these explanations ... This is to be done in a perfect society, in a perfect state, but we know where we live! We know that all this money that is used, let's say... Even now, there is the bill on homeless animals and on the registration of the animals. It is, well... to pay 180 hryvnia for a cat or a dog will be not the same ... But

we know where it will go! Again, someone will buy a «Lexus» or anything else, and not for these animals ...» (Male respondent S., Bakhmut, focus group)

“Nevertheless, the government is doing everything for themselves. For oligarchs is everything.” (Male respondent A., 50 years old, Volnovakha, interview)

Thus, **rooted prejudice** becomes a significant **barrier** for the perception of information about the reforms. In this context, illustrative is the statement of the 32-year-old female respondent Y. from Kramatorsk concerning the healthcare reform:

Respondent Y.: «Healthcare reform killed me in general. This is something that is from the latest things, a fresh one.»

Interviewer: «And what is wrong with it?»

Respondent Y.: «Everything is. There's something. I do not know. I, of course, did not study it, did not read it attentively. But something is there. Make everything payable. And, I do not know, of course. Moving towards Europe is good. But it is necessary to somehow commensurate where we are and where they are. Here. Everything is payable. Payable. To give birth [costs] from 20 to 45 thousand. I think it's good that I already have two children. Maybe I will be planning more, of course. But, somehow, it will become an absolute trouble. Here. That's bad. Increase of utility payments. This is the same throughout Ukraine with the tariffs. It's also bad. What else is bad?»

At the same time, there are also respondents who

tend to a more neutral-optimistic perception of reality among the representatives of the study group; in particular, they were able to identify some positive changes in the country. Their attitude to reforms is not negative by default, but rather reflects the willingness to see positive shifts and to react to failures in a more reserved way.

“ Actually, it seems to me that the country has begun to move. Although, it all happens so painfully, and it's hard for the people, all these increases (in prices - ed.), all what is happening with the currency and with the exchange rate. But nevertheless, it is clear that they have started to work, the ice has broken to some extent. At least, there are some reforms, the reforms are present, they pass some laws somehow. Well, I understand that this is required by the European laws, and I do not know what else. Anyway, it is evident that something is happening. One would wish it to go faster, so that we could get rid of all these, – how to name them? – Who steal from the public purse? (Female Respondent V., 39, Starobilsk, interview)

“ You know, how to say it, [...] I see it as controversial due to the fact that, probably, I'm an optimist. I still try to find something good. What can I say... Basically, of course, it became difficult in terms of living, everything became more expensive; it became very hard to live. I do not see the good side. You know, there are those, how to explain ... They say that they have started to look into judges, and then into something else. You go to that social security department, in that pension fund, where we go all the time. These lines are somehow hard to understand... There are some lines created, some new ones in order to do something there, to get something, let's say, you have to collect a bunch of papers, as in principle, it has always been. And here it is – you see all the people there, a lot of people, a lot of lines and people are angry.... Is it out of the good?.. Now, the inclusion has become fashionable, there is an opportunity for children with disabilities to study with healthy children. Many ramps have been made. Somehow these infusions of money are coming from abroad, the UN is helping a lot now. Yes, that's how it is. No, I cannot say that everything is bad, that there is darkness around.» (Female respondent S., 39, Slovyansk, interview)

Interviews with respondents also showed that overall awareness of reforms is low; most people have **problems** with the actual content of **reforms**. Most respondents tend to focus and recall some thematic **issues** that sting them personally. For example, among the various aspects of the educational reform, some respondents mention only the language issue or, for example, innovations about the 12-year school education; when mentioning the healthcare reform, attention is paid to such issues as the closure of hospitals, paid services, etc.

Interviewer: «What other reforms do you know or have you heard about? Let's say in medicine.»

Female respondent V. (38 years old, Volnovakha): «I heard, but somehow I ...»

Interviewer: «Aha, educational, let's say? The reform of education?»

Female respondent V. (38 years old, Volnovakha): «Only that my children will learn for up to 12 years now.»

Female respondent O. (62 years old, Volnovakha): «It hurts that they prohibit the Russian language.»

“ Well, concerning the educational [reform]... only what is shown on TV – to change the teaching into Ukrainian so that it is completely ... I do not know. We have a region where we have all the nationalities here.» (Male respondent S., 47 years old, Slovyansk, interview)

“ Well yes. Well, what did they do? They close the hospitals. There will be one hospital, one doctor, the ambulance will not be available anymore.» (Female respondent V., 37 years old, Starobilsk, interview)



Therefore, the vast majority of respondents have fragmented knowledge of the substance of reforms. The fragmentary nature of information is the result of **anxiety** and **uncertainty** about the various aspects of the reform among people. In general, respondents lack understanding of the **aim** of the reforms, of the general idea behind the programs of the reforms, as well as of specific mechanisms. In such conditions, respondents are inclined to form their own assessment of reforms, focusing on individual issues (negative or positive) and basing on general political views and attitudes.

“ For example, healthcare reform now is bothering [me], because it is said that it will be started in 2018, and in the article, basically everything, 100% of this article tells, that we will need to find our doctor. And what is the overall concept of this healthcare reform, how shall it all look like, I mean, it is very strangely written, that is, basically they do not understand what they want to get as a result. I mean, how will it all happen, well, they developed some mechanisms, yeah; I have a little child ... I'm interested in, let's say, if I choose some doctor in general, who knows how he will, for example, be meeting privately in his own office. And vaccinations? Vaccinations are a state issue. That is, well, I believe, it is only a detail, but in general I would like to know: How will this reform take place here, what will be the mechanism? That is, what it will mean for me and what does the state in general want, roughly speaking, what will the state have from this, what will the doctors have from it? What do they want to get in general?» (Female respondent K., 36 years old, Mariupol, Interview)

“ Yes, I would like to hear... They have adopted the pension reform. We cannot understand it at all. What is to be awaited, how much should we work? How will they pay us the pensions? How long should the pension insurance record be? Well, there is no such information, there is no such explanation, clarification. Even about this pension reform, we also hear only rumors. They say that our maternity leave before 2004 is not included in the work record. Starting with 2004, they already begin to include this maternity leaves, it is bitter, you know. Why is that so? Again, there is nothing official. I did not hear such information from the TV, and there are rumors.» (Female respondent O., 44 years old, Lysychansk).

“ Yes, I heard «insurance record»... I honestly do not understand this at all. They tell a lot with incomprehensible words, we now also have to deal with it. We have work record, because we work in «Invasport» for a half-day. But they –it turns out – do not recalculate it themselves. It was necessary to collect everything by ourselves and to give them everything. My husband went there. Well, he took a print-out, I looked on it, nothing was clear. I do not know how they calculate it, from the salary of from the years worked.» (Female respondent S., 39 years old, Slovyansk, interview)

The level of awareness of the content of reforms is associated with several factors. First of all, it is associated with **the general habits and skills of consumption of information** and comprehensive perception of information. Secondly, it is associated with personal interest in one or another reform. For example, pensioners on average show better awareness of pension reform than the young people. As the study showed, the factor of the **employment sphere** of respondents is also significant. Thus, employees of state agencies, educational establishments, etc. have better knowledge of the relevant reforms. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that not only media content, but also other sources of information (legislation, clarifications and specialized resources like the website of Ukraine's Ministry of Education “New Ukrainian School” that was mentioned by some of the respondents) contribute to a more comprehensive awareness of reforms. In many cases, the **link** between **awareness level** and **attitude** towards reforms can be traced. The more informed the respondents are the more details appear in their assessment of reforms.

Healthcare, educational and pension reforms trigger the biggest response/the liveliest reaction. A minority of the survey participants also mentioned decentralization, police reform, creation of anti-corruption au-

thorities, and even a smaller number of the respondents thought of judicial reform and obtaining visa-free travel to the EU.

None of the mentioned reforms had received dominant support among the population.

The respondents expressed the greatest **concerns** and **uncertainty** about the **healthcare** reform. Uncertainty is largely connected with controversial information and the lack of accurate information at the local level (for example, many respondents said that doctors themselves do not know what will happen next and cannot give the lay of the land to the patients). Negativity concerning the healthcare reform is caused by fears of decrease in the quantity of medical institutions and medical staff, critical attitude towards the institution of family doctors, etc.

“ For example, the healthcare reform. This is what bothers me. That I came to the hospital, and there are people everywhere, I don't know, lots of people. Such a simple reason: bumped my finger and broke it. I came to the sanitary room on the first floor, and the traumatology is on the fourth. And the result is that there is a corridor full of people. Why? Because the district and the city were joined, because of the reduction of staff. And who has it better now? The city is big, but they left one hospital for the city. This is also where it leads to. Maybe there are some advantages, some benefits, but we do not see them. We only see the inconveniences that were caused by this reform.» (Female respondent V., 56 years old, Bakhmut, interview)

“ As for the healthcare [reform], we also discussed it, they want to make family doctors out of everyone. Well, in my opinion, this is also not entirely correct, since one doctor cannot work as a surgeon and as an ophthalmologist. Because if you look, let's say, about 5 years back, there was better service in Ukraine, so to say. And compared to what is now happening in the medicine, these family doctors, it seems to me, is a bit of an innovation that people cannot accept. (Female respondent N., 18 years old, Slovyansk, interview)

“ There are many details that are generally not clear. They are incomprehensible now in medicine. And in general, it is not clear how this will happen later. Because... Now, let's say, now people who are recumbent, and who cannot go to the polyclinic. The maximum they can count on is the visit by a district doctor who does not always pay real attention to you. Well. And there will be no specialized doctor, that's out of question. Therefore, nothing is discussed.... Here, in connection with the new reform. That is, no. Anyway, it's not clear what will change and how it will be. People, in principle, do not care how much money is allocated for them. They want to get real help. And what kind of real help will be available is absolutely incomprehensible, in the first place. In the second place, the qualifications of doctors who are currently working is very bewildering. (Female respondent N., 41 years old, Bakhmut, interview)

The **pension** reform causes **controversial** reaction. On the one hand, many have noticed the increase in pensions, which is generally perceived positively. On the other hand, there is a great deal of concern about the issue of **insurancerecord** and the lack of understanding of the principles of recalculation.

“ It seems to me that they have made the pension reform in a good way, I think it will be more stimulating for people to earn the work record, to work officially. Because all my friends argue that something will be somehow recorded. And now it seems to me that my acquaintances have started to ponder a lot about this issue.» (Male respondent Y., 30 years old, Kramatorsk)

“ Very few people will retire. One needs already 35 years of experience to retire, and if not, then there will not be even a minimum [pension]. And also they raised the pension by 100 hryvnia, that's the whole reform.» (Male respondent V., 37 years old, Starobilsk, interview)



“It's very bad that there is the dependence on insurance record. In my age now? Where do I go now, who needs me right now? Why did they make it with the insurance record? Where do I get it? Where can a person of my age nowadays earn the insurance record? Where do I get it? Where should I take this insurance record? And all people, no matter how much they work, they do not work officially. We have such conditions, we have such conditions that it is not an officially employed person, and if the person is employed officially, the salary is an envelope salary and it is not at all the one that is needed. And [it is impossible] to earn a work record in our age, not saying that the young have nowhere to earn the work record. Where do I get it? Who are these laws for? For whom are they? For oneself, only for oneself. Only for those officials, for those who work in budget organizations. Those that are budget, there it all goes separately. Hospital, school, who else is there? Our Executive Committee.» (Female respondent V., 56 years old, Bakhmut, interview)

Among the three most mentioned reforms, the **education** reform causes the **least** negative reactions. Many respondents expressed the opinion that the educational sphere needs to be reformed; a significant proportion of respondents has at least partly heard of attempts to introduce new approaches to learning and endorses this. At the same time, a part of the participants of the survey noticed the difference between plans and reality and is skeptical in general. In addition, some respondents show signs of irritation to the aspect of the Ukrainian language.

“This is a very personal question for me. Again, the ideas of reform (of education – ed.) are very good. Well, first, that it concerns the primary school. That there changes the requirements of the organization of the process. Of the learning process. That is, the children will have a plan. What... Well, firstly, the creative approach. And, that the children learn to think in a completely different way. That's right, freely. Other forms of work... That they will go at the age of six to school. That there are no tasks, that the records in red ink are canceled there. That is, how to say... These are changes, which, they want to introduce, they are very good - I support them. Yes. And something... Some sort of profession-oriented school. Yes. It is planned to do. Middle school. At the stage of the last years. That education should be profession-oriented. That the child has no need to learn a bunch of unnecessary subjects. And that they choose their specialty. That they get prepared for this already at school. Well. Well, here again. It all depends on the person (of the teacher - ed.)» (Female respondent N., 41 years old, Bakhmut, interview)

“Educational reform, I wanted to say about it! Educational reform – yes, we know it very well. Unfortunately ... No, in reality, the reform is, in my opinion, very qualitative – I simply lost my scholarship because of it ... This reform, it seems to me, is aimed at stimulating more to learning, especially for the students. I mean that a rating system was introduced, in which it was previously necessary simply to get the «four», let's say, 75 points at the university for all subjects to get the scholarship. Now the scholarship has been raised, but it has been increased due to the fact that there is a rating system, that is, there is a certain percentage of all students, on budget ...» (Male respondent D., 21 years old, Mariupol, interview)

A significant part of respondents notices and mentions **infrastructure improvements** among the positive developments in the country and in own settlements; also the creation of united territorial communities is assessed positively.

“The most important thing is that the infrastructure is developing. The houses are heat insulated, roads are being built, and new jobs are created.» (Female respondent R., 28 years old, Kramatorsk, interview)

“The school is being repaired, the roads are being repaired.» (Female respondent O., 38 years old, Volnovakha, interview)

“Positive. The only thing that I'm saying ... Well, more is improving

– roads are being built. Well, I saw a nice thing, that roads are made. To Sloviansk. Here, already everything is done! From Sloviansk to here there is already no road left.» (Male respondent M., 47 years old, Bakhmut, interview)

“ The unification of the communities – that is, again, the positive thing; that there is more power given to the local level and people are given the opportunity to change something. For example, our house has a condominium, the neighboring one... there are opportunities, everything is in their hands, but there is no initiative, they do not want ... About decentralization?... That there is more money on the local level. I'm not in the authorities, not in the city executive committee, so I do not know whether they received more money. And judging by the fact that it was not just patched up as before, but more thoroughly, I think they got it. Well, that is what is said on TV, at least, or written on the Internet. At least, it's not just to throw dust into the eyes, but it is all in a large scale. It has been cleaned up in the parks already.» (Male respondent Y., 30 years old, Kramatorsk, interview)

At the same time, a significant part of respondents perceives such improvements as **insignificant** in the context of more substantial problems and failure of state authorities.

“ Changes are very small, cosmetic. These repairs of the roads, well, as my father said – this is smoke and mirrors.» (Male respondent O., 54 years old, Kramatorsk, interview)

Similar criticism was voiced about some other reforms, including the police reform. Some respondents criticized the reform for its superficiality.

“ The new uniform (of the police - ed.) was noticed, and that is all, in principle.» (Female respondent Y., 19, Mariupol, interview)

According to the majority of participants in the study, information about the reforms they receive mainly from the media, depending on their own media consumption habits. In their opinion, information in the media is usually **piecewise**, which does not allow them to get a comprehensive understanding of the reforms, their intention and mechanisms of implementation.

“ No, the information comes in small pieces, as if it is not formed, and, for example, they are considering some paragraphs or sub-paragraphs, or sometimes, that the Council blocked something, but there is no justification for all this. It is very annoying.» (Female respondent K., 36 years old, Mariupol, interview)

“ Most of all, information is provided, as I can see, on the «First National» [TV channel]. In my opinion, the channel tells about them (reforms –ed.) the most, but nobody watches it. Well, this channel is aimed at clarifications, but I doubt that it is being watched.» (Female respondent M., 28 years old, Kramatorsk, interview)

Some respondents expressed their wish that reforms should be explained more actively in a more **straightforward** way, not only through the media.

“ If it is possible, in places of accumulation of people, at the post office, where pensioners receive their pension, in bank branches or at bus stations.” (Male respondent Y., 30 years old, Kramatorsk, interview)

Information priorities and expectations concerning reforms are primarily related to the need to understand what exact changes reforms are bringing into daily life. What are people going to receive instead of what used to be provided to them. For example, if healthcare reform brings closure of this or that clinic or hospital, what are they provided with instead? What is the timeline? Etc. Basically, citizens want to get reassurance that the new mechanisms are thought over and promise some benefits to them. They also need practical information on what they have to do, in which sequence and what kinds of agencies (information centers, state agencies etc.) are available to clarify information if they encounter any problem.

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5. ATTITUDE TOWARDS DIFFERENT FORMATS OF MEDIA CONTENT: RESULTS OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

During the focus group study, the participants were offered to watch a few materials of various topic and genre orientations, namely:

- 1 A news story about the demonstration of Azot employees in Sevodordetsk + a short material about the pension reform, "Events in Detail", **TV channel LOT** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FnCqZxxXr8A>). This material was shown in the focus groups that were located in the Luhansk region.

or

news story about problems in the coal industry and about preparing for the heating season, "Results of the Week", **TV channel DoTeBe** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NO3TYe-Q0sY>). This material was shown in the focus groups that were located in the Donetsk region.

- 2 material from the cycle "**Changes.East**" about plans for the restoration of the Shovkovychnyi Park in Sloviansk, Breakfast with 1+1, TV channel 1+1 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uu6q__Pp_HU&list=PLEoEWGE-BriPBsKu0Kn9vqXBxjiUMCLKcY&index=3)
- 3 material "The film "Crimea": how Russia admitted aggression", TV-program **Anti-Zombie**, ICTV (<http://ictv.ua/ru/videos/film-krym-yak-rosiya-ziznal-asya-v-agresiyi-antyzombi-06-10-2017/>)
- 4 part of the documentary television product "**Unknown about Donbas: history worth knowing**", Channel 5 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ulj-43L2Zi8>)

In addition, during the several focus group sessions, two additional examples of content were demonstrated

- 1 the material about the problem of hate speech in the context of the conflict in the Donbas, TV program “Donbas: full access”, Hromadske.Donbas (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3chVpo1nVQ>)
- 2 TV program “People’s mouth” in Kramatorsk (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vr2FKMVuxM8>).

The news materials of **local TV channels** caused mainly **neutral and skeptical** reaction. Most participants of the discussion pointed out the boring presentation, too long and low-dynamic materials, uninteresting style of the presenters/journalists, criticized “the official nature” of the materials.

In this context, illustrative is the exchange of remarks among participants in the focus group in Kramatorsk about the material of the local TV channel “DoTeBe”. The 6-minute-long material was devoted to the local conference on the problems of the coal industry; most of the time was taken by soundbites with speakers or by retelling of their words by the reporter. Together with the conference participants, the reporter spoke about the coal industry, city budgets, social payments and wages, budget indicators, association with the EU, professionalism of personnel and private drivers of the management. The material was full of figures, indicators and statistics without visualization.

Negative reaction of the participants was caused by the news studio itself:

Male respondent V.: *«It’s not interesting to watch. I’m crazy about the time, I lack it constantly, the protracted image, some squares, cubes, and the girl is not interesting at all. She melts into the background and there’s just one background.»*

Female respondent Y.: *«The girl is a sad story, in general.»*

Male respondent S. *«She is static.»*

Female respondent Y.: *«She is no-show. She just does not look well, she is not photogenic. She lacks charisma. She speaks monotonously during a long time.» (Kramatorsk, focus group)*

Some participants noticed that the manner of presentation, the style of filming the material is **outdated** and reminds of Soviet-time television.

“ *The presentation, the beginning – «Dum-dee-dum, dee-dum!», Soviet Union ... That’s it, I can turn it off! That is, I do not like it already!» (Female respondent V., Bakhmut, focus group)*

“ *The image itself... look, the party bench, where all people sit and say that they will punish someone somewhere out there, but not now.» (Male respondent O., 55 years old, Kramatorsk, focus group)*

During the discussion of the material it became clear that some participants did not understand the content, the essence of the material, or at least did not see the material value in this information for them. The structure of the presentation of information and its contents caused confusion among many participants.

“ *It’s not interesting to me. First of all, this sphere. And, secondly, I cannot understand what happened there at all. The fact that there is no salary in fact, I understood. I did not understand anything more from this video.» (Female respondent O., 23 years old, Volnovakha, focus group)*

“ *Here, the material is about nothing, there is simply a problem, but there is nothing about how to solve it. Well, about nothing ... It is well perceived, but when the video started, it seemed that it was an old record. When everything is good everywhere, everything is calm, there is no tension, no negativity. When you start to listen attentively to words you understand that it is about nothing.» (Female respondent Y., 40 years old, Sloviansk, focus group)*

photo: Pixabay

In addition, the material **was not able** to keep the **attention** of a significant part of the participants.

“ I caught myself thinking that I just switched my attention to something different. » (Female respondent I., 36 years old, Volnovakha, focus group)

Some pensioners and older people have noted that they would be watching such local news because of the association with the topic, but young people were more categorical in rejecting such news content.

“ On the one hand, information seems to be important. On the other hand, how to out it... I did not watch very much. Because there is a lot of similar information on the Internet too. » (Male respondent Y., 55 years old, Mariupol, focus group)

The similar critique was also caused by the materials of the Luhansk Regional TV Channel (LOT). A significant part of the participants of the focus groups in the Luhansk region noted that the information provided is quite **confusing**, which does not allow catching the main point. In particular, such comments were especially related to the subject of pension reform; to a lesser extent, to the protest action of Azot employees.

“ In principle, at first it was well presented, as if they presented it briefly, but the music was too loud on the background, if only its volume would be slightly lower. And coming to the pension reform, the numbers were very good, but I already felt very confused by the end of this part. » (Male respondent A., 30 years old, Starobilsk, focus group)

“ I will say the same thing, at first they started with one amount, then with another amount, and it already mixed up, and it was impossible to understand what increased and how much. » (Female respondent T., 30 years old, Starobilsk, focus group)

“ In my opinion, exactly half of this time should have been devoted to this information. And for all those who are more interested, they should go either to the Pension Fund, or get it on the computer, or through the print. Because, now someone who is a panic-monger will get scared and it begins: I get now 1412, they said 1372, and then returned to 936. I'm already lost in these three numbers, and somebody will get 1472. » (Female respondent O., 60 years old, Starobilsk, focus group)

“ They instantly blurred it everything. They distracted attention, in the same way. You forget, and here they give you more immediately, at the beginning about «Azot», then they somehow changed to LEO [Luhansk Energy Company]. And who was gathering there, somehow there was no such information. » (Female respondent O., 38 years old, Sievierodonetsk, focus group)



LOT was also criticized for **overly lengthy** materials.

“A very long material. Yes. A lot of it. It needs to be cut a bit, and the information will be more compact ... Yes, it's too stretched. Well, it is so stretched only to take more air time. Simply.» (Male respondent V., 26, Sievierodonetsk, focus group)

“Generally, it seemed to me too protracted.» (Female respondent V., 20 years old, Lysychansk, focus group)

However, some of the participants of the discussion said that in general, they would not mind consuming local news on channel LOT.

“Like radio. I would turn it on. Would be doing something and listening to it.» (Male respondent O., 55 years old, Sievierodonetsk, focus group)

“In principle, you can do it once (watch the material – ed.).» (Female respondent L., 68 years old, Lysychansk, focus group)

“In principle, it is normal, you can see it (the TV channel – ed.) grow with your own eyes, let's say it so. As it came over from Luhansk, it is UT-1 in Luhansk format, now, it was a more or less normal material, in principle, a normal material as for me.» (Male respondent A., 48 years old, Lysychansk, focus group)

The material from the cycle “**Changes.East**” about plans for the restoration of the Shovkovychnyi Park in Sloviansk, broadcasted on the TV channel 1+1, caused the most **unanimous approval** among the materials shown to the participants of the focus groups, which proved the high demand for “positive” stories. The participants of the focus groups watched the material attentively; many have noted the high technical quality and aesthetic appeal of the “image.”

“We see that the park is reviving. It was in such desolation that everything was overgrown, it turned to a swamp, and there was a lot of garbage. Now, more or less, it starts gradually... there is still a lot of work to be done there. But the process has started.» (Female respondent V., 65 years old, Sloviansk, focus group)

“Here, let's compare it with the previous story. It's clearly obvious that the previous material was by some local TV company. Its information quality was weaker. Here we see professional work with sound. Editing.» (Male respondent Y., 21 years old, Mariupol, focus group)

In addition, the participants liked the **motivational** potential of the material

“Positive (impression from the material – ed.). Creative.» (Female respondent L., 62 years old, Mariupol, focus group)

“It brings out emotions in me that in the future, really, something can be good, and the people ... There was that the volunteers come and unload. It triggers an automatic thought: «I can come too!», and it will not look like something very... That is, it programs people to display kindness, unselfishly... That is the format ... That's what I'll watch!» (Female respondent V., Bakhmut, focus group)

Some participants expressed skepticism about the fact that the material was about improvement plans and not about the results, but overall the perception of the material was very positive.

“And why to show what will be done? Show what was done. Why to show these puddles, what for? Show what was done, I think so.» (Female respondent L., 60 years old, Kramatorsk, focus group)

Material “The film “Crimea”: how Russia admitted aggression”, TV-program **Anti-Zombie** (ICTV) has caused almost unanimous **negative** reac-

tion. Focus group participants, especially women, criticized the **aggressive** manner of presenting the material, excessive **sarcasm**, **intonations**, and **vocabulary**.

“ For me, such a presentation of the material is not very acceptable. Therefore, the first impression was rejection. I would not watch further.» (Female respondent O., 23 years old, Volnovakha, focus group)

“ I feel some disgust. Firstly, I do not tolerate such a tone. Some jargon is like a prison slang of some kind. I do not know. Not polite and unmannered. Well, I would not watch.» (Female respondent I., 36 years old, Volnovakha, focus group)

“ It is some kind of aggression, ill-favored ... I don't know ... the speaker is annoying. Everything is somehow... I don't like it.» (Female respondent L., 60 years old, Kramatorsk, focus group)

“ Pathos. Honestly speaking, it is acting on the nerves, you understand. It is interesting to watch, but you understand that it ... It's not necessary, yes. The situation is tense between the two of these. I do not know, maybe I'm wrong. Somehow these things do not sit right with me...» (Male Respondent Y., Lysychansk, focus group)

In addition, some of the participants – mostly older ones – could not understand the **intention** and the **content** because of the peculiar format of the program which is mixing the subject of sarcasm with sarcastic commentary.

“ What, for example, are these?.. Why are they here at all! He is somehow incoherent. What did they want to show? To be honest, I did not catch it.» (Female respondent L., 62 years old, Mariupol, focus group)

Other participants noticed that the subject of the material is very far away from their everyday life and their reality. For example, the exchange of replicas of participants in the focus group in Sievierodonetsk is indicative.

Female respondent N.: «People live a different life.»

Female respondent O.: «It is a conversation about nothing.»

Female respondent N.: «We live in a different dimension.»

Female respondent O.: «It won't be interesting both for adults and children.»

Female respondent I.: «I'm not interested.»

In general, the manner of presenting has caused **rejection**, to a lesser or greater extent, in most focus group participants, despite their political views. **Excessive sarcasm** and humor going almost too far was also noticed by those participants who are generally critical of Russia. The material has caused particular **irritation** in people who feel **cultural proximity** to Russia and painfully perceive the deterioration of relations between the two countries.



“ Here are such parts that I cannot watch it and I do not want to. It is very painful to me and I do not want to watch. Well, what we watched. In general, there should be no propaganda against Ukraine and Russia at all. I think it's too much. In general, no, in general, nowhere we should be against each other, I do not want to watch something like that. You see, I will not. I do not know. Against or not against, but I do not want to hear it either from one side or from the other. I will remain with my own [ideas].» (Female respondent L., 60 years old, Kramatorsk, focus group)

“ No. I wouldn't watch it. But there is a complete analogue of this program. In the morning on the First program of the Ukrainian radio. At half past eight about the Crimea. And somewhere after twelve. At half



past twelve, as I remember. About the Crimea. And it is so annoying. Because... You see, people have set a goal to show all the worst. Well, people. There can't be only bad things there. Do you understand?» (Male respondent Y., 79 years old, Sievierodonetsk, focus group)

Part of the respondents was also negatively affected by the fact that it is emotionally difficult for them to listen to the “mockery” about the topics and events that cause real **painful** memories in them.

“Honestly? My impression is that people, filming such material here, did not even feel a bit of the ill luck that people had here. Like humiliation! «Only today and only for you!» ... I have a feeling that they did not feel it! The person who felt it all himself, he will not film something like that!» (Female respondent V., Bakhmut, focus group)

“I would not watch it. When with such voice that you can call mocking, MLRS and shots are shown... Simply. Well, I'm a person who takes it personally and seriously.» (Female respondent O., 30 years old, Mariupol, focus group)

Male respondent A.: «Let's say the feeling that the speaker who tells this he does not know the situation that happened. He only saw or heard somewhere about it, but personally he did not worry about it. «

Female respondent M.: «And when you experienced it ...»

Male respondent A.: «A person who has experienced this will not talk about this situation so easily and simply.»

Female respondent M.: «Calmer... You know, such a feeling, saying it with modern slang, as if he would like showing off over this topic. You who survived this event ... Somehow you cannot joke about it, you cannot be gibing or showing off over it. Something like that.» (Lysychansk)

Part of the discussion participants also criticized the approach, as used in the demonstrated material, because of its **stylistic closeness to Russian propaganda**.

“I would watch, maybe 30 seconds of the first minute. At least, in order understand what is being discussed. After that... After the first 30 seconds, I got an understanding of what this material is worth. And again, this sound also annoys me. She is on the verge of bleeping. At the end one f-word has already been heard. This is again, already like «Crimea» in turn. This movie, I mean. It is clear, for what purposes it was filmed. Naturally, ...for propaganda. Alright ... Here it is the same.» (Male respondent Y., 21 years old, Mariupol, focus group)

“And as for me, time of such propaganda which is quite aggressive and cheap has already passed. You need more... If propaganda is made



at the state level, it should be more subtle to the admirers of Russia and the Russian world. Here it really is full with anger. It was cool in 2014 to watch this, when there was almost no such product, it was still cool to see it well maybe in 2015. The fact that they are filming crap in Russia..., I do not care. Shoigu will spend some public money somewhere, will spend it somewhere but I do not care what do they spend their public money on. It is important that we should better fight propaganda. Because, let's say, «vatnik» ... it sounds ... the things that they are using are dividing. That is, I am one too ... if you do not say «Glory to Ukraine», you are a «vatnik». I see you for the first time, what should I say? Time has passed, you need ...» (Male respondent O., 55 years old, Kramatorsk, focus group)

The **fatigue** caused by **information confrontation** and **emotionally charged** content is also noticeable.

Female respondent T.: «It seems to me that this is going from one extreme to the other.»

Female respondent V.: «That's too much, yes.»

Moderator: «What is too much?»

Female respondent V.: «We just had it enough already...»

Female respondent T.: «You know, yes, we are fed up ... I mean... I, for example, I watched «Antizombie», probably, twice or three times. I do not want more! I do not know why ...» (Bakhmut)

At the same time, some participants, mostly of younger and middle age, consider this format and style to be acceptable, arguing that such programs make it possible to understand the influence of Russian propaganda.

“ Presentation, that's it, here ... I want to see how it ends, watch it to the end, not to switch to the next channel. This is such a great presentation.» (Male respondent M., 30 years old, Starobilsk, focus group)

“ This program is specially made that the Ukrainians watch and understand that there is no great Russia there, but there are some savages.» (Male respondent Y., 22 years old, Lysychansk, focus group)

“ Yes. That is, I will not watch it. Why? Because, well, I respect them, they do a great job. In principle, well, nothing new for me will be told. They generate, or rather, compile what already seems to be wandering around the network and find something new there. So I do not watch, but someone needs to watch it.» (Male respondent A., 48 years old, Lysychansk, focus group)

Documentary-historical material about the past of the region on the example of the city Bakhmut (“**Unknown about Donbas: history worth knowing**”, Channel 5) was generally perceived by the audience in a **restrained and positive** way. Most participants said that they are interested in such a format and history topics.

“ Historical. Calm, as if, there is no negative at all.» (Female respondent O., 38 years old, Sievierodonetsk, focus group)

“ Yes, it's interesting! Pretty informative, moreover, it is illustrated ... I will watch it (the program – ed.) one day...» (Female respondent T., Bakhmut, focus group)

“ Fine, fine...Quite a fine material.» (Male respondent A., 48 years old, Lysychansk, focus group)

At the same time, part of the audience, especially young people, noticed that the material **lacked dynamism** and the manner of presenting is somewhat **outdated** and **boring**.

Female respondent Y.: “It seems to be interesting information, but dry, sluggish and uninteresting.”

Male respondent O.: “I would have looked once.”

Female respondent O.: “I would switch the channel. It is somehow dry and reminds me of lessons of history at school, somehow sad.” (Kramatorsk, focus group)

“ Well, in principle, not intrusive. You could watch it. But again. As Viktor said, yes. A bit too boring. » (Female respondent A., 19, Sievierodonetsk, focus group)

Some participants expressed their opinion of the **need for** formats that would work with this topic, but would be more **modern** and **dynamic**.

“ This is a format out of the mid-1990s. This is a real format at the level of the mid-90's. There were cycles of Russian TV programs about history. That was Parfenov, yes, I believe so, and he presented historical essays. » (Male respondent S., 35, Kramatorsk, focus group)

“ And it is necessary for children this is the right history! In the drawing format of the Cossacks, these Turks ... In principle, it is possible to continue to shoot it. The material is cool! » (Female respondent V., Bakhmut, focus group)

Among some discussion participants, the material caused a **skeptical** reaction, because, in their opinion, historical topics are extremely manipulated; that is, it was an example of the automatic skepticism: part of the group believes that these topics are manipulated and prejudiced against such products.

Male respondent M.: «Well, I'm interested. But information is not particularly trustful.»

Moderator: «You do not trust much. Why don't you trust? »

Male respondent M.: «Constantly rewriting history.»

Moderator: «Rewriting? Do you think there is false information? »

Male respondent M.: «Well, maybe unreliable.»

Moderator: «Unreliable? What did you see as unreliable here? »

Male respondent M.: «Well, they ... did it so, that everything proves that Ukraine had lived here before. Therefore it is Ukrainian. Only Ukrainian.» (Volnovakha, focus group)

Although such a position was presented by the minority of the participants of the focus groups, worth remembering is the **irritating nature** of such topics and the need for special **correctness** and **delicacy** when creating relevant content.

The delicate approach is also required by details. So, the participants have noticed such, at first glance, insignificant details (which left a negative impression on the perception of the material) such as a baseball cap with the inscription “Corvette Ternopil” on one of the experts-historians in the video, or a non-aesthetic landscape at the entrance to Bakhmut (at the beginning of the shown part of the video).

“ There is dissatisfaction. They will show Uzhhorod when the sakura blooms there. And Bakhmut they show when there is dirt. » (Male respondent S., 35 years old, Kramatorsk, focus group)

The material about the problem of hate speech in the context of the conflict in the Donbas (**TV program “Donbas: Full Access”, Hromadske. Donbas**) was shown only during two focus groups in Volnovakha and Star-



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obilsk, which limits the conclusions of reactions to this sample of content. The topic of the hate speech caused rather lively, but different reaction of the participants in the discussion. Some participants expressed interest in the topic of hate speech.

“ I try to avoid these kinds of conversations, about such delicate topics. But this is what often happens. Such controversy. The confrontation on this topic often arises among people, so it's interesting (the material – ed.).» (Female respondent O., 38 years old, Volnovakha, focus group)

“ They have clearly shown that there is a big conflict and there is no dialogue in it, they call names, and do not try to hear the other party.» (Male respondent M., 30 years old, Starobilsk, focus group)

The same part of the participants approvingly responded to the material.

“ I liked precisely the balance. Representation of the two parties.» (Female respondent O., 23 years old, Volnovakha, focus group)

Some respondents were inspired by the material to **reflex** their own experience.

“ It's painful (after watching the material – ed.) Because people sitting there, many not because of their will. You see, I could get out. Yes, I went to my family, to my late sister, they sheltered me. And some, as it is said, had to turn to bag and wallet. If a person has lived there for so long, and now, because he lives there, he is called a separatist.» (Female respondent O., 60 years old, Starobilsk, focus group)

“ Well, I'm very sorry, in general, that people are divided into one and the other. Just flagellate people. I say no, we could have been in such a situation, and our parents could have been in such a situation, what would they be supposed to do? I'm generally negative about it.» (Female respondent T., 27 years old, Starobilsk, focus group)

However, some other participants perceived the material as one that focuses on the **negativity** and does not carry constructive proposals for them.

“ I did not like anything. Overdose. Specific overdose of negativity ... Well, they cut everything out. They cut all into phrases. They used only those, where it was only bad, bad, bad.» (Male respondent M., Volnovakha, focus group)

One of the participants of the focus group in Volnovakha reacted very emotionally to examples of usage of hate speech by Ukrainian TV channels. In general, the **reactions** to the material largely reflected the **attitude** towards various **narratives regarding conflict and the development of the situation in the region**. For example, one of the participants of the discussion in Starobelsk suggested that this material is promoting “reconciliation” messages that are beneficial to some political forces.

Male respondent O.: «This, I think so, is an agitation video of one political force that begins to make publicity for itself. Well, that's probably, how they are appearing here. »

Male respondent M.: «Osnova, huh?»

Male respondent O.: «Yes, because with such an idea of reconciliation, I'm not for those and nor for these. It seems that they want to attract the voters, especially from Donbas.»

Instead, the material caused a mostly positive reaction from those focus group participants who have a conditionally “peaceful” view on conflict resolution.

“ I did not name Oleksiy Matsuka. Just I did not remember immediately his surname. And the face is quite recognizable. I share his journalistic

position. Here, it is a neutral, from my point of view, presentation of information. And for me as a philologist, this topic is interesting. And the topic is relevant, in my opinion. I would watch further. Because it's interesting to me.» (Respondent O., 23 years old, Volnovakha, focus group)

Thus, the reactions to this material have demonstrated a widespread pattern in perception of information in the media as a whole: When evaluating this or other content, people often tend to **react to content/topic/irritating “hooks”** rather than the **quality** of content from the standpoint of journalistic standards, etc.

The humorous material from the cycle “Rot Naroda” was demonstrated only during the focus group in Lysychansk. The range of reactions of the discussion participants was rather broad, which may be explained by the orientation of the video to a relatively narrow segment of the audience. In the female part of the group, the video caused a restrained and negative reaction.

Female respondent L.: *«I would not watch ... It's too long, very too long, let's say.»*

Female respondent S.: *«Somehow, it was not even funny.»*

Female respondent M.: *«Not very funny.»*

Some participants noted that they were interested in neither the content nor the manner.

Female respondent S.: *«It's about nothing... Neither form, nor presentation, in general.»*

Restricted critique was caused by the style of speech, the general tone of the video.

Female respondent M.: *«This hooligan style is too long and too much.»*

Female respondent S.: *«As if he came out of the bar somewhere.»*

Instead, the representatives of the male segment of the audience reacted with more reserved and positive feedback. Even those who did not particularly like the manner of the video piece because of their preferences, noticed that it may well be positively perceived by a part of the local population.

Male respondent Y.: *«Local identity, so to say, for the local audience of Kramatorsk... They would appreciate it.»*

Male respondent A.: *«An easy form, informal, without this official narrative, like “TASS is authorized to inform”. That is, fine, cool things are presented in some kind of hooligan style.»*

Some participants also noted that such a form of promotion of positive initiatives, such as the “Vilna Khata” (“Free House”), could have a real effect.

Male respondent A.: *«So, I'll say, in general, how much I've been watching «Rot Naroda» (People's Mouth) – constantly, yes, well, there's some news, and now they have promoted «Vilna Khata» that really deserves it. Considering the audience... they did very well, promoted «Vilna Khata» that needs and deserves it. It's not just for laughing...but, well, kind of...»*

Male respondent A.: *«Now I will say ... and even more, because I've noticed many times in personal communication, young people, yes, somehow cool, grandstanding and hard-nosed. If they are attracted... let's say, there will be a man in white classic suit, they will not be interested in this. In this way, he sees one of the guys, as they say... Why not to go there and see what's there? If guys like him go, I will go.» ■*

RECOMMENDATIONS 4



RECOMMENDATIONS

For mass media and producers of informative content:

- 1 Increase the volume of production of non-political product/content. First of all, we recommend educational, cultural, youth-oriented, children's programs and documentaries; movies and television series are less recommendable. Humorous formats should be deprived of political overtones; the topics of war, occupation of the Crimea, and military aggression of the Russian Federation should be minimized. Language (Ukrainian or Russian) does not matter.
- 2 Expand thematic spectrum of the information products by reducing attention to political topics. This does not mean ignoring politics in news and in non-news formats: media should pursue their role of informing the public in order to ensure that political views and decisions of citizens, in particular, the electoral ones, are based on awareness. However, political scandals and politicians' populist actions can give way to issues related to culture, sports, and ecology.
- 3 Pay more attention to examples of positive local changes, especially those implemented by the efforts of the citizens.
- 4 Reduce the level of emotional stress. Wherever possible, avoid things that increase social pessimism. In particular, this can be achieved by indicating possible solutions to problems or examples of positive solutions to these problems in other communities, when highlighting problematic topics.
- 5 Produced content should be modern and attractive for consumers: technically qualitative; consistent with modern approaches in design and editing; dynamic and interesting; it should focus on the person and the person's needs. Traditional "soviet-like" formats and "materials of official nature" (such as coverage-reports on public events visited by officials) should be abandoned.
- 6 Local media should spend more time and resources on staff education. It is essential to establish connections with public organizations dealing with media development and respective donor institutions in order to receive assistance and counseling.
- 7 Increase the amount of content devoted to reforms. The product should be produced in a friendly, understandable form, and should necessarily be based on citizens' needs, on their problems, and on the possible impact of reforms on their daily life; in addition, it has to explain the mission and the purpose of reforms in general. Reforms that will have the greatest impact on the lives of average citizens should take priority, namely: pension reform, education reform, healthcare reform, decentralization. It is recommended to make these products repetitive: in case of TV and radio broadcasters, it should be made in the form of short, regularly repeating videos; in case of online media – in the form of a special section on the website, which should have appropriate visual design and be easily accessible; as for the press, it should be in the form of repetitive publications in a regular section (this helps to form readers' habit of seeking information about reforms in that particular section).

For Donor Institutions:

- 1 Pay close attention to the quality of local media content when providing support to them. Not only should objectivity and impartiality of materials be the criteria, but also technical quality of the product, visual solution, user friendliness, sensitivity to its specificity of information perception.
- 2 Integrate the quality of content produced with the donors' support, as well as the overall dynamics of the quality of the Media beneficiaries' con-

tent, into monitoring and evaluation system for donor programs supporting the local Media in the Eastern Ukraine.

- 3 Invest in the modernization of technical equipment of local media and in the development of skills related to the creation of modern media products among local journalists (both in terms of technical skills and understanding of new trends and approaches to journalistic work).
- 4 Invest in the creation of non-political content. Educational, cultural, youth programs, projects and documentaries are most recommendable. Saturation of media space with neutral content will lead to detoxification of the information field and the reduction of the emotional background, which will be a precondition for further dialogue. Pay attention to the technical quality of this content, its friendliness to consumers.
- 5 Constantly improve media employees' professional competence. Editors, journalists, operators, layout designers, and web designers need to be taught new trends and approaches to work, new technical skills necessary for the work with modern instruments. Zero tolerance to obsolete, non-modern, and uninteresting formats should be cultivated through training, exchanges, internships, and mentoring.
- 6 Invest into the research of your media audience. In this regard, not only quantitative measurement is important, but also assessment of media content by the audience and feedback from them. This will encourage editors to review approaches to media product development.
- 8 While supporting communication campaigns, require that grantees carry out testing of information products/content in focus groups. Provide them with counseling support (and/or resources) for appropriate product testing.

Provide long-term support for editorial teams which showed the ability to produce interesting content for the audience and work according to journalistic standards.

- 9 Support efforts to promote media literacy among the population, critical thinking skills, skills for analyzing information sources according to their political and ideological orientation, impartiality, etc.
- 10 Pay attention to the monitoring of actions performed by state agencies in the field of information and film production, both in terms of their efficiency, and the purpose of their actions, whether they are driven by real attempts to establish communication with citizens and the society or rather by their political or corrupt interests.
- 11 Pay attention to projects aimed at explaining reforms, tracking their development, etc.

For Public Organizations:

- 1 Plan and conduct communication campaigns to explain reforms to those groups of population (and professions) that are directly related to these reforms. For instance, healthcare reform should be first of all explained to doctors, and the educational reform should be explained to the employees of educational institutions. It is these people who will become disseminators of the respective knowledge in their communities. When communicating the reforms, you should take into account the needs of citizens and the expected impact of reforms on their everyday lives; in addition, explain the mission and the purpose of these reforms in general.
- 2 Organize training, provide online advice for journalists of national and local media on how to communicate reforms.
- 3 While planning communication campaigns in the region, foresee a pilot stage and arrange testing of information products in focus groups. Since the testing stage, as well as possible further development of products



aimed at meeting the audience needs, require additional costs, this should be taken into account in projects budgeting and planning.

- 4 Expand the instruments of communication campaigns through non-media channels. Try to use the potential of simple traditional methods, such as posters with infographics on announcement boards, in residential buildings, transport and public facilities, as an alternative channel. Involve condominium associations and public self-organization bodies for wider and more effective dissemination of information. (Any visual product should be tested on the target audience.)
- 5 Intensify efforts to promote digital literacy among citizens. Basic education activities for the 45+ audience should help them actively search for interesting content online and use legal and secure services as well as social networks for this purpose. It is important for all audiences to have the skills for searching news on the Internet (the ability to choose reliable sources; the ability to distinguish aggregators from news websites; the ability to use social networks as an information source).
- 6 Offer donors different projects related to the promotion of media literacy among the local population.
- 7 Offer donors projects aimed at training local journalists in both journalistic standards and modern skills – from creating high-quality online content to the basics of marketing, media management, etc.
- 8 Offer projects related to the exchange of employees who work at editorial offices from different parts of Ukraine in order to raise journalists' awareness of what is happening outside their region, to broaden their horizons, etc.
- 9 Conduct encouraging contests for the best publication, topic presentation, the best newsroom work, etc. ■



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RESEARCH REPORT

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