



**DISCOURSE ON FAKE NEWS AND
DISINFORMATION IN THE
UKRAINIAN MEDIA SPACE AND
PROSPECTS FOR SUPPORTING
LOCAL MEDIA IN WAR:
RESEARCH IN EXPERT OPINIONS**

Prepared by NGO "CAT-UA: Communication Analysis Team -
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To research the expert opinion, a group of six Ukrainian media experts was selected, who had key competencies, confirmed by scientific publications and/or verified practical achievements, including:

- ✓ mass communication theory/media quality assessment;
- ✓ practice of mass communications/media consulting;
- ✓ practical fact-checking;
- ✓ theoretical assessment of the problems of Ukrainian local media;
- ✓ practice in projects supporting Ukrainian local media.

The study of the expert opinion was conducted in two stages:

1. personal interviews with experts based on a uniform script, which covered key issues of the study as a whole;
2. a group discussion with experts (a focus group study, referred to as the FGS), which included part of somewhat expanded questions taken from the personal interview script to clarify some specifics of expert opinions, and the question on the project objectives, including relevant slides shown.

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Lera Lauda, Practitioner in Ukrainian local media – co-founder and head of the local media development agency “Abo”, expert on the launch and mentoring of Ukrainian local media, in particular on the basis of The City web platform.

Oleksandr Chekmyshev, Theorist in media quality, a practitioner in media quality monitoring – Doctor of Science in Social Communications, Professor of the Educational and Scientific Institute of Journalism of T. Shevchenko KNU Consultant of NGO Association Common Space, with experience in media monitoring since 1994.

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PART ONE:
PUBLIC DISCOURSE ON FAKE
NEWS AND FACT-CHECKING

OVERALL PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF THE TOPIC OF FAKE NEWS AND MISINFORMATION

The experts agree that most of Ukrainian society has realized the problem of the massive fake news in the information space since the beginning of Russia's full-scale aggression in 2022. Despite some increase in resistance to the most obvious Russian fake news, the overall situation is far from healthy and adequate perception: the level of trust in fake news remains unacceptably high, in particular among the older age group

**What is the current situation in Ukraine with public perception of the topic of fake news and disinformation?
Is it healthy, adequate?**

Before the war, media fake news was not largely discussed; the discussion is much larger now; the overall criticality of information consumption is growing. The overall perception is adequate, but fake news can catch with the "information hook" large groups of population, in particular in social media
S. Stukanov, interview

Before the war, people were relatively uninterested in the fact that fake news can be shared by the media, and this topic was not communicated enough; now, there is both fear and mocking of Russian fake news.
A. Zakharchenko, interview

Along with Russian missiles, hundreds of fake news were launched at Ukrainians; often, people continue to spread them for good reasons – to warn of an imaginary threat. The significant saturation of the information space with fake news sometimes blurs the truth; this may be one of Russia's main goals so that people do not know for sure which sources can be trusted.
A. Romaniuk, interview

The topic of fake news intensified with the beginning of the full-scale war. Perception is not particularly healthy, sometimes it comes to hyper-suspicion and hyper-infohygiene. People lack basic tools to recognize obvious fake news
L.Lauda, interview

Now there are a lot of anti-fake activities, such as the bot of NGO "Institute of mass information", but people still believe fake news, especially the 50+ age group
N. Steblina, interview

People massively believe fakenews, this is the main problem. In particular, this applies to fake news that are spread by anonymous Telegram channels
O.Chekmishev, interview

KEY ACTORS AND FACTORS OF INFLUENCE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOPIC OF FAKE NEWS

The development of the problem of fake news as such in Ukraine began long before the full-scale war: in particular, in 2014, the Russian fake news about the “boy crucified by Ukrainian nationalists in Donbas” became noticeable. Since the beginning of the war, key influencers have become NGOs (most often experts mention “StopFake” and “VoxCheck”) with the support of Western donors, as well as the Ukrainian state

What had the most impact on the development of the topic of fake news? What events, what people or organizations?

Mass media, including the "Unified News" telethon. Also, specialized programs in the media, for example, "Russian fake" on the Ukrainian Radio. On the other hand, some speakers related to the authorities (for example, O. Arestovych) occasionally became producers of fake news
S. Stukanov, interview

Civic Initiatives (StopFake), with the support of grantors (USAID)
N. Steblina, interview

NGOs such as StopFake and VoxCheck, which appeared in 2013-2014, intensified their activities to a wide audience with the beginning of the war. Also, official speakers, especially in the first weeks of the war
A. Zakharchenko, interview

At the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the Center for Countering Disinformation acted very efficiently, as well as the Center for Strategic Communications under the Ministry of Culture. Fact-checkers joined them, such as Media Detector, our organization Nota Yenota, also StopFake, VoxCheck, No Lies, etc. Then local media joined the effort, for example, Brekhunets, a regional project, was successfully launched
A. Romaniuk, interview

Factcheckers, “StopFake”, “VoxCheck”. The government started to play an important role at the beginning of the war. Eventually, ordinary people began to talk about fake news as an important problem.
L.Lauda, interview

The start of communication and the development of the topic were influenced by the debunking of demonstrative fake news, such as the “crucified boy”, even before the full-scale war.
O. Chekmyshev

ATTITUDE TO FAKE NEWS: POLITICIANS, MEDIA, AUDIENCE

The Ukrainian media and politicians can tell fake news much better than the audience. In addition, politicians can create fake news and spread them through the media as part of the domestic political struggle.

Is the attitude of the audience, media and politicians to the problem of fake news different?

The media and politicians understand what news is fake; politicians sometimes create fake news themselves; the audience, however, have troubles at telling fake news
S. Stukanov, interview.

Politicians sometimes use fake news in the fight against each other, involving the media. The audience sometimes does not care whether it is fake news or not
N.Steblyna, interview

Politicians can declare news they dislike to be fake, and the audience often does not know how to tell fake news
A. Zakharchenko, interview

The media began to pay more attention to the problems of fake news; politicians sometimes use them in the struggle with each other; the audience, however, has problems with basic understanding about fake news.
A. Romanyuk, interview

Yes, it is different. Some media are now too caught up in self-censorship to avoid suddenly spreading Russian fake news
L.Lauda, interview

DEFICIENCIES IN PUBLIC POLICY AGAINST FAKE NEWS

The state pays insufficient attention to teaching citizens the basics of media literacy, and sometimes official speakers contradict each other and/or do not provide information quickly enough. The international journalistic community is not always engaged to field events, which Russia can then call fake later on

Are there any shortcomings in public policy related to the fight against fake news?

Sometimes there is no general strategy of “One Voice Policy”, when different state authorities spread different messages. Also, the information space has quarrels of officials with each other – and no fact-checker can cope with this. Operational official information is not always provided
A.Romaniuk – interview, FGS

The government does not always allow honest foreign journalists to the scene, which can then be used by the enemy propaganda.
O. Chekmyshev, interview

Teaching effort for media literacy is insufficient, although this is being done; also, there are unprescribed things that cannot be said during the war.
N. Steblina, interview

Sometimes people are just told to believe official sources - instead of learning to check. There is still not enough attention to the complex information attacks such as emotional framing
A.Zakharchenko, interview

RUSSIAN-VS-INTERNAL FAKE NEWS: PRIORITY OF STRUGGLE

Experts are unanimous in the fact that during the war the greatest danger is posed by Russian fake news. Some experts clarify that among Russian fakes, it is necessary to counteract those aimed at the Ukrainian or Western audience, in particular, spread through Western speakers

During the war, this is correct, but do not completely forget about internal fake news
S. Stukanov, interview

Our preliminary analysis shows that the Ukrainian information space primarily fight Russian fake news rather than Ukrainian fake news. Is this approach justified?

Yes, at the moment, but in general, it is important to fight against both types of fake news.
N.Steblina, interview

Rather, it is so because resources are scarce. Subsequently, it is worth paying attention to the efforts of civil society to build the reputation of politicians who spread internal fakes – so that responsible citizens do not vote for such
A. Zakharchenko, interview

In general, yes, it is correct. But it is also important to prioritize countering Russian fake news that is aimed specifically at the Ukrainian audience, rather than the domestic audience in Russia.
A. Romaniuk, interview

In general, the case is this: there are fewer resources left to counter internal fake news; also, self-censorship is stronger in such cases.
L. Lauda, interview

Thus, in particular, when Russian fake news is voiced by Western speakers – it is especially dangerous.
O.Chekmishev, interview

DYNAMICS OF THE THREAT OF RUSSIAN FAKE NEWS

Most experts agree that the threat of Russian fake news has decreased compared to the beginning of the war. The main factors behind this decline are the disappearance of the chaos and panic factors present in the early days of the war, as well as the progress in identifying and refuting enemy disinformation. However, other opinions are voiced as well: the threat has not changed (after all, dangerous fake news is still spread), or even increased (because Russian fake news began to affect the emotions of Ukrainians more strongly)

The threat has decreased: the chaos factor of the first days of the war has decreased. Also, Russian fake news is detected better now and countered faster
S. Stukanov, interview

The threat of Russian fakes: in your opinion, has it increased now compared to the first days of the war, or has it decreased, or does it remain at the same level?

The threat has not changed: there are still dangerous disinformation attacks (for example, mass blackouts are announced)
N. Steblina, interview

The threat has decreased: Russian fake news is created in the same manner, but society was more vulnerable to them at the beginning of the war.
A. Zakharchenko, interview

The threat has diminished: at the beginning of the war, there was a panic factor, yet now, the perception is more balanced and there is distrust of Russian sources by default.
L. Lauda, interview

The threat has grown: Russian fake news has become more overt, more emotional (for example, about mobilization summonses)
O. Chekmishev, interview

DYNAMICS IN THE THREAT OF RUSSIAN FAKE NEWS

Experts agree that compared to the beginning of the war, Russian propaganda has partially moved from spreading fake news to manipulating facts through emotional framing. The fake news has become more emotional: either such that certain groups of Ukrainians want to believe in, or terrible and shocking. Significant efforts of the enemy propaganda are currently aimed at creating fake news that set Ukrainians against each other. The uncertainty factor that contributed to the spread of Russian fake news at the beginning of the war is still on the agenda: it can become relevant again due to changing situation at the battlefield, probably during the future Ukrainian counterattack

There is less fake news now, but there are more manipulations. Russian propaganda attempts to divide Ukrainians. An example of manipulation that has become widespread in social networks is the video with the following statement "I will not go to war, because nothing in this country belongs to me – may the rich and officials go to war!" – which is spread by a traitor who fled to Russia a long time ago. It is important to spread truthful information, in particular targeted at specific social groups, and to avoid information vacuum

A. Romaniuk, FGS

Fake news is successful not only in the information vacuum, but also among people who want to find more comfortable information to believe in inside the information space. This applies primarily to internal fake news, such as those caused by political struggle – and the Russians pick them up and sow enmity among Ukrainians.

A. Zakharchenko, FGS

During personal interviews, most of you agreed that there was more Russian fake news at the beginning of the war – and this is also confirmed by our monitoring. But don't we discuss this threat insufficiently? Is fake news possible now if it is unexpected and dangerous?

Now, if Ukrainians see the Russian origin of information, they trust it less often.

L. Lauda, FGS

Fake news has become less frequent compared to the beginning of the war because society has become more aware of what is happening: both at the front and in the information space. However, the threat of manipulation through emotional news framing has increased. The threat of dangerous fake news and/or manipulations may arise at the moment of dynamic events on the battlefield, for example, during the future Ukrainian counteroffensive.

S. Stukanov, FGS

Russian fake news decreased, but the attention of the enemy propaganda increased on emotional manipulations. Also, extremely emotional fake news sometimes appears, similar to the 2014 "crucified boy"; they are about "removal of internal organs from the dead Ukrainian soldiers", etc. Something deliberately terrible and incredible, capable of shocking certain social groups

O. Chekmishev, FGS

Some regions (for example, Odesa region) have less resistance to Russian fake news. In addition, they are spread by anonymous Telegram channels managed by local Russia supporters.

N. Steblina, FGS

TIPS TO DISCERN FAKE NEWS: OFFICIAL SOURCES

Experts generally agree with the adequacy of advice on countering the consumption of fake news shared in Ukraine – in particular, the basic advice to trust official sources. However, this advice is not enough: official sources do not cover the whole range of current news, and sometimes they also make mistakes. Experts agree that it is necessary to educate citizens on how to independently discern fake news

Is adequate advice spread in the Ukrainian information space regarding fake news? In particular, the advice to trust only official sources in matters relating to the war?

Believing only official sources is the acceptable basic advice, but it's not universal: some information is not disseminated by official sources because this is not their mandate.
S.Stukanov, interview

Yes, in general, the advice is adequate
N.Steblyna, interview

Believing only official sources is currently the acceptable advice, but fact-checkers should still be alert so that we don't fall into authoritarianism. Also, mistakes can occur in official sources
A.Romaniuk, interview

Believing only official sources is acceptable basic advice
O. Chekmyshev, interview

There is insufficient educational work: the advice to trust only official sources is only for the lazy. It is better to check the information personally.
A. Zakharchenko, interview

The advice is adequate, but common people will not be able to reliably check the sources, so there is still a lot of work to raise their awareness. The good advice would be to read other reliable sources, in addition to the official ones
L.Lauda, interview

TIPS ON FAKE NEWS: GOOD-QUALITY AND LOW-QUALITY MEDIA

Experts agree with the practicality of popularizing the “white” and “black” lists of media, in particular Telegram channels. The criteria for belonging to high-quality/substandard media include compliance with the standards of journalism, recognition by authoritative actors (such as the NGO "Institute of Mass Information"), and other high-quality media. It is widely believed that the patriotic position and/or popularity of a media or a blogger are not criteria for “good quality” in terms of the risk of spreading fake news

Should the public be encouraged to trust not only official sources, but also a certain list of quality media – for example, the White List, which is periodically published by the NGO Institute of Mass Information?

People will not consume information only from official sources, so they should be recommended a limited list of 10-20 media. But along with online media, it is also important to recommend a list of high-quality Telegram channels, because now they are very popular. "Black" and "white" lists of Telegram channels should be established, in particular, those who care about information hygiene; these lists should be periodically reminded
S. Stukanov, FGS

Yes, in addition to official sources, good-quality media can also be recommended.
S.Stebлина, interviews

Good-quality media are also sometimes mistaken, for example, recently a Ukrainska Pravda journalist (the editorial office in the IMI White List) had to apologize for inaccurate information. When urging people to believe primarily official sources and media from the 'white' list, but without even calling people to full fact-checking, we still have to remind them that they have to think on their own
A. Zakharchenko, FGS

Thus, the popularization of a list of good-quality sources of information, such as the IMI White List, is a good idea. We also need a list of good-quality Telegram channels. This, and also, the channels owned by all the media of the IMI White List, and some OSINT communities. Instead, bloggers with a large audience, even patriotic ones (S. Sternenko, A. Tsaplienko), sometimes publish fake news; we need to encourage people to be careful with blogger info
A.Romaniuk, FGS

People shorter messages on Telegram rather than longreads. We need some kind of communication campaign of well-known channels and bloggers who will be part of a black list and a white list of Telegram channels
L.Lauda, FGS

It is worth recommending those media that really adhere to the standards, and periodically acquaint consumers with the list of such.
O. Chekmyshev, FGS

TIPS ON FAKE NEWS: PROSPECTS FOR POPULARIZING INDEPENDENT FACT-CHECKING

All experts agree that the mass audience will not perform independent and detailed fact-checking. However, it is worth providing people with a short list of criteria for assessing information on the fake news criteria, including basic distrust of unknown sources and the presence of pro-Russian narratives in media publications. There is also the idea that part of the audience can be encouraged to fact-checking (or at least to spread refutations of fake news) by using laughter in the messages about debunking fake news

Do you see an opportunity to encourage society to fact-check, at least at the basic level?

People won't check the facts on their own, but it's good advice not to pay attention to emotional anonymous messages. Also, the objective of official government communication is to remind people every day about not trusting information from unknown sources.
S.Stukanov, FGS

People don't check the facts on their own. But they sometimes willingly share refutations of Russian fake news, if such refutations can mock the enemy.
N.Steblyna, FGS

People will not check the facts on their own; they will need a "blacklist" of low-quality sources and/or narratives, based on which it can be inferred that the publication contains pro-Russian fake news there. An example of the latter is the narrative "Ukrainians and Russians are the same people"
A. Romaniuk, interview, FGS

People will not get into detailed fact-checking. But it is possible to give them a list of questions that are worth asking themselves, in order to consume information critically (**all experts nod, silently agree**)
L. Lauda, FGS

Most people are lazy to check facts. An exception is when the fact-checkers make a funny story out of fake news: then some people may be interested in learning about it
O. Chekmishev, interview, FGS

PART TWO:
PRACTICAL FACT-CHECKING IN
UKRAINE

INFRASTRUCTURE OF UKRAINIAN FACT-CHECKING: CURRENT STATE, ADVANTAGES, DISADVANTAGES

The key advantages of the Ukrainian fact-checking include the developed infrastructure, the good-quality and efficiency of work, as well as the unique experience of countering Russian fake news. The key shortcomings are poor information logistics, weak interaction with the media and among each other

Is the fact-checker infrastructure properly developed in Ukraine? What are the key advantages and disadvantages of Ukrainian fact-checkers?

Fact-checking NGOs work properly, but their interaction with the media is poorly established.
S.Stukanov, interview

Fact-checkers work properly, and the infrastructure is well-developed; but at the moment the results of their work do not always shared among mass audience. The logistics of delivering fact-checkers' information needs improvement – for example, by promoting it in social media.
. A. Zakharchenko, N. Steblina, interviews

A particular advantage of Ukrainian fact-checkers is the unique experience of countering Russian fake news: they can teach this to foreign colleagues
. A. Zakharchenko, S. Stukanov, A. Romaniuk, N. Steblina - interview

The infrastructure is well-developed; it includes both fact-checking NGOs and government fact-checkers (the Center for Countering Disinformation, the Center for Strategic Communications). Efficient operation is another advantage. The key drawback is the inconsistency in the work of various fact-checkers and weak cooperation
A. Romaniuk, interview

In Ukraine, a good fact-checking school has been formed, but fact-checkers have poor access to larger audiences.
L.Lauda, interview

The infrastructure is well developed. One of the key advantages is the rich experience since Ukraine has long been a testing ground for information technology. Also, Ukrainian fact-checkers can ridicule fake news; it's another advantage. The key drawback is that they can still poorly counteract manipulations due to emotions.
O.Chekmishev, interview

KEY NEEDS OF UKRAINIAN FACT-CHECKERS

Experts did not have unanimity in identifying key needs of the Ukrainian fact-checking community. In particular, they mentioned the coordination between fact-checkers at the level of joint projects and exchange of experience, institutionalization of fact-checking, funds and technical equipment, training programs, etc

Institutionalization is most needed.
S.Stukanov, interview

What does the Ukrainian fact-checking community require the most?

Funds, technical equipment for work in the absence of electricity and the Internet. Also training programs to improve the skills of OSINT-investigations for fact-checkers.
N.Steblyna, interview

Coordination among fact-checking organizations, in particular as part of joint projects and exchange of experience. Also, the establishment of interaction with government bodies.
A. Zakharchenko, interview

There is a need for mass educational where Ukrainian fact-checkers will be involved and useful. For example, they can explain to a wide audience why you should not believe the popular Russian fake news.
A.Romaniuk, interview

TOP FACT-CHEKERS OF UKRAINE

Most often, experts mentioned fact-checking organizations/initiatives such as StopFake, On the Other Side of The News, VoxCheck and Nota Yenota. StopFake was also mentioned as working for the foreign audience

StopFake ,Russianfake
S.Stukanov, interview

Which fact-checking initiatives in Ukraine do you consider to be the most efficient, and why?

StopFake can be mentioned because they operate not only in Ukraine; journalistic investigations such as “Schemes” on Svoboda radio; IMI are also involved in fact-checking;
On the Other Side of News
NotaYenota
N.Stablina, interview

The most effective in terms of internal audience coverage is **On the Other Side of the News** and **Nota Yenota**. Also, **StopFake** is important because it works for the Western audience; it does not compete much to cover Ukrainians but to have impact on information space figures abroad and conveys Ukrainian messages.
Also, the **Center for countering disinformation** is also quite influential due to its official nature
. A. Zakharchenko, interview

NotaYenota (headed by an expert), **Detector Media**, **On the Other Side of the News**, **VoxCheck**, **No Lies**, **Brekhunets**, **Center for Strategic Communications**, the initiative “**How not to become a vegetable**”, **Toronto Television**, **Bigus** are key ones
A. Romaniuk, interview.

On the other Side of News
StopFake, VoxCheck
L.Lauda, interview

UKRAINIAN FACT-CHECKING AND POLITICS

Experts do not see political obstacles or pressure on Ukrainian fact-checkers, even during the war. Regarding the use of fact-checking as a political tool, the consensus is that it is possible – but it is not practiced in Ukraine as a systemic phenomenon

Do fact-checkers experience political obstacles to their work? Can fact-checking be used as a political tool?

Fact-checkers in Ukraine do not feel political obstacles or pressure
(S. Stukanov, O. Chekmishev – interview)

They don't feel barriers, but government bodies are slow to respond to requests from fact-checkers
(A. Romaniuk, interview)

They feel pressure on TOT from the occupiers; They don't feel pressure from the government, but some information is not provided by the state authorities
(O. Chekmyshev, interview)

External political obstacles are not felt; self-censorship is the only restriction
(A. Zakharchenko, interview)

Using it as a political tool is difficult, but it is possible theoretically due to the formation of the agenda through refutation (A. Zakharchenko, interview)
It is possible if the fact-checker depends on the authorities or political party. But, as far as I know, all known Ukrainian fact-checking NGOs are politically independent
(S. Stukanov, interview)

The use of fact-checking as a political tool is quite possible - both in a positive sense (a politician attracts fact-checkers to counteract blackmail) and in a negative sense (self-blackmailing to attract attention to him/herself through notorious fake news)
A. Romaniuk, interview

Fact-checking as a political tool is possible, for example, FBK of Navalny in Russia; or pseudo-fact-checkers, in Ukraine, they are used in election campaigns at the regional level.
N. Steblina, interview

Yes, in principle, fact-checking can be a political technology
O. Chekmishev, interview

Using it as a political tool is quite possible – for example, by fact-checking anything that a politician said during the campaign: he/she will make a mistake somewhere, and then it must be media hyped.
L. Lauda, interview

ANTI-FAKE NETWORK CONCEPTS

Support was given to the idea of a joint media and fact-checkers chat, where communication would be in the "request-response" mode; also, some experts recommended to refer to Media Detector's experience and develop it. The idea of working groups in the "media+fact-checker" format was generally approved by experts, while pointing out the excessive load for fact-checkers in such groups, confirmed by the practice of organizing them

**What would a network to combat fakes look like, bringing together media, NGOs, educational institutions, etc.?
Is the creation of media+fact-checker working groups currently the most effective coordination option in countering the spread of fake news?**

There could be some kind of grant-funded institution with which the media could work in the "request-answer" mode
(S. Stukanov, interview)
A joint chat can be created for media and fact-checkers, where interesting cases will be worked out
(S. Stukanov, A. Romaniuk, FGS)

The structure of such a network could be similar to that of the **Commission on Journalistic Ethics**. It also makes sense to involve representatives of the authorities in this network, who can promptly provide official refutation of fake news.
(N. Steblina, interview)
It is not realistic for local media with a staff of several employees to have their own fact-checker. The idea of organizing regional fact-checker offices on the basis of grant support may be promising.
(N. Steblina, FGS)

There can be a single database of refuted fakes, similar to what the **Media Detector** does. Prompt exchange of information within the fact-checker network. Specialized educational institutions could also be included in such a network – the practice of fact-checking for students-journalists.
(A. Zakharchenko, interview)
The work of fact-checkers on high-profile cases can be the beginning of more detailed journalistic investigations in the media
(A. Zakharchenko, FGS)

Detector Media tries to do something in terms of the network; in general, however, someone should take the initiative and conduct a series of coordination sessions between fact-checkers
A. Romaniuk, interview

Creating successful media+fact-checker working groups would be very good, there were such attempts, but the problem is the workload on the fact-checker.
A. Romaniuk, L. Lauda, FGS

The usability of such a network is questionable, it is difficult. There can be effective pairs of "media+ fact-checker"
L. Lauda, interview

Horizontal communications in the request-response format can be promising. In a single institutionalized structure, there is a danger of competition between fact-checkers.
(O. Chekmishev, interview)
I had a positive experience of bringing my students together to find fake news. Since most of them are already working in editorial offices starting from the 2nd or 3rd year of college, there was a certain positive effect for the relevant media
(O. Chekmishev, FGS)

Some investigative journalism agencies have a full-time fact-checker, but there is a specificity – this is pre-publication fact-checking. There is a successful case of **Detector Media**: they took five fact-checking projects with which they cooperated; **our project 'NotaYenota'** was among the partners.
A. Romaniuk, FGS

FACT-CHEKING AGAINST MANIPULATION

Some experts noted that absurdity and ridicule are an efficient method of countering manipulation; however, it is not appropriate to apply in all cases

Yes, it can: our previous monitoring shows that the most notable fact-checker publications in the media field include precisely countered manipulations, rather than simple refutation. Fact-checkers presented such studies as their best achievements, and the audience was also interested, based on the "I am interested to know how I am deceived" idea.

A. Zakharchenko, FGS

Is the Ukrainian fact-checking community capable of detecting and combating manipulative framing - when facts are presented without lies, but the audience's emotions are manipulated?

The absurdity of manipulative inductions is OK, but it doesn't always work. For example, it is difficult to deal with manipulations-memes, in particular in TikTok, when a short video with some witty text is shared virally

O. Chekmyshev, FGS

The best way to deal with this includes memes, humor, hyperbola: it is easier to convey the essence of manipulation to a wide audience in this manner. In our research, we also try to not only refute the fake news or manipulation, but also show who and why shares them. Such studies are shared by people much better than just stating that something is fake news.

A.Romaniuk, FGS

AUDIENCE WHERE FAKE NEWS AND REFUTATIONS ARE SHARED

Some of the audience will somehow feel more comfortable believing in fake news. In addition, the audience of fake news consumers is larger than the audience covered by fact-checkers – and these are partly different people. However, the universal recommendation in the fight against dangerous fake news is the maximum dissemination of truthful information

As a rule, fake news is spread to a larger audience than refutation is. Is this a problem, in particular during the war, and what are possible approaches to solve it?

Disseminating truthful information as much as possible. For example: "A lot of fakes about the blackout are launched - and we give you truthful information, which consists of such and such facts."
Sometimes people do not like the truth, and they actively deny it – for example, part of society does not like refuting fake news about vaccination.
A. Romaniuk, FGS

When we begin to refute fake news, we anyway simultaneously contribute to sharing it
O. Chekmishev, FGS

This problem does exist: fake news can be used to set the agenda, even if it is loudly refuted. Also, in general, the audience of fake resources is larger than the audience of fact-checkers, and these are partly different people
A. Zakharchenko - interview, FGS

Each case is individual: there is no universal algorithm for refuting fake news
L.Lauda, FGS

PART THREE:
MEDIA AND WAR

PROBLEMS AND MISTAKES IN WAR COVERAGE

Experts consider the dilemma of self-censorship to be the biggest problem: how not to harm the defense capability of Ukraine or the victims; security and access to combat zones are also among other problems. It is considered that the most common mistake journalists have is the premature coverage of information sensitive for defense capability



OBSERVANCE OF JOURNALISTIC STANDARDS DURING WAR COVERAGE

Experts agree that the war affects the observance of standards of journalism even by high-quality media; balance of opinions (pro-Ukrainian position is in priority), efficiency (it is impossible to convey all the information as soon as possible), hate speech (it is omnipresent in the war reality)

According to your estimates, how can “conventionally independent” media maintain impartiality during the war and adhere to standards?

Not fully: part of the media tried on the role of propagandists
S. Stukanov, interview

“Infomercial” (hidden advertising) at the beginning of the war disappeared altogether, and the oligarchic influence also. Now it is gradually emerging again in the media space
N. Steblina, interview

Good-quality media try to keep the balance – and at the same time, not to cover the excessively ideological position of the enemy; although even they have cases of the pursuit of sensations without proper fact-checking.
A. Zakharchenko, interview

Propaganda in war is normal, but the permissiveness of individual representatives of the authorities should also be covered.
A. Romaniuk, interview

This is a constant discussion, a balance between "not to shake the boat" and objectivity, completeness of the picture.
L. Lauda, interview

During the war, not all journalistic standards are applied, and it is normal: we “do not give the floor” to the enemy (the standard of balance). It is also better not to tell something potentially sensitive for defense unless the General Staff says it (operational standard). Also, the constant language of hostility from information sources – it also cannot be completely avoided.
O. Chekmishev, interview

KEY NEEDS OF MEDIA/JOURNALISTS WORKING IN THE COMBAT ZONE

Experts believe that the key needs are the development of a state compensation mechanism for the death or injury of journalists in the combat zone, as well as faster accreditation. There is also a need to improve professional training (as war correspondents) and develop uniform standards of war coverage

Accreditation in the combat zone;
mechanisms of compensation for injury or
death of journalists.
L.Lauda , A.Romaniuk, N.Steblina – interview

**What do the media, whose journalists work in the
combat zone, need most – legislatively, economically,
professionally?**

Ukrainian media need to develop corporate
standards for war coverage
O. Chekmishev, interview

Professional training of military correspondents, because there
were few of them in Ukraine before the beginning of a full-scale
war.
N.Steblina, interview

ADHERENCE TO THE RULES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL LITERACY DURING THE WAR

All experts share the opinion that journalists, for the most part, do not follow the rules of psychological literacy, and sometimes do not know about such. As a result, there is often repeated traumatization during communication with victims of the war. There are opinions that training in psychological literacy and/or in the development of communication standards with victims is needed

To what extent do Ukrainian journalists adhere to the rules of psychological literacy during the war?

Journalists lack theoretical knowledge about psychological literacy, not to mention psychological skills. This is truly lacking in communication with the victims of the war
S. Stukanov, interview

They do not adhere; there is repeated traumatization of war victims during interviews; also, hate speech penetrates in the media
N. Steblina, interview

Often, journalists do not know how to avoid psychological harm, how to formulate questions so as not to cause an exacerbation of post-traumatic syndrome of war victims. Training and relevant trainers in this regard would be very helpful
A. Zakharchenko, interview

Some professionals know how not to make pop culture out of the death and suffering from war –but not all journalists do
A. Romaniuk, interview

As a rule, journalists who take interviews with war victims do not follow these rules, do not think about repeated traumatization; they often want to show all the horrors of the war, in particular, convey to the Western audience the Ukrainian situation. We need a powerful public discussion on the development of rules, how to communicate with the victims in general
L. Lauda, interview

To put it mildly, there is plenty of room for improvement. They don't have even basic skills
O. Chekmishev, interview

HIGHLIGHTING THE PROBLEMS OF ENVIRONMENT AND DISCRIMINATION DURING THE WAR

The relative majority of experts agree that the most important among these problems include environmental damage (although it cannot be solved at the moment) and media support for the image of women in the military. Opinions differ in terms of whether media attention to these problems is sufficient. Special emphasis: lack of communication of discrimination against refugees

Environmental damage is one of the priority problems. The rest of the above should also be covered but this is not the first priority.

S. Stukanov, interview.

During the war, all events outside of it become secondary. But the war can last for several more years, and the coverage of these problems in the media should not be completely forgotten.

S. Stukanov, FGS

How important it is during the war to cover such issues as environment, respect for the rights of women and children, gender balance in media representation: are they among the priorities?

Problems of environment and discrimination are poorly covered; only by specialized activists, as a rule. An important and under-communicated problem is the discrimination of refugees.

N.Steblina, interview

These topics are important, but now they have less coverage - in particular, in local media: those have popular news about war, crime and entertainment (crosswords, horoscopes, etc.). Unfortunately, local media also write very little about female warriors.

S.Steblyna, FGS

War is very harmful to the environment, the rights of women and children are violated – these are important topics. Regarding compliance with the standards of gender balance in the media representation – unfortunately, not everyone adheres to them; due to the war, this is not in the focus of attention for many.

A. Zakharchenko, interview

Of these problems, the most important are the environment and the image of a female soldier, as sexism is often attached to it; as they say, “women have nothing to do in war.” The topic of environment (chemical weapons, nuclear waste) is also used by Russian propaganda, so it needs to be communicated preventively.

A. Romaniuk - interview, FGS

Gender issues are a priority in the context of war crimes; female soldiers are also a priority; environment, not yet

L.Lauda, interview

The problem of environment is given sufficient attention, in particular in the context of contamination with shells and mines, petroleum products and harmful substances due to ammunition. The problem of equality has got other accents: before the war, this was domestic violence, sexism, and harassment; now, it is more admiration for women who are part of the Ukrainian army, as they fight on equal terms with men.

O. Chekmishev - interview, FGS

MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE UKRAINE-WEST RELATIONS: THE IMPACT OF THE WAR, STRATEGIES, PRIORITIES

The positive attention of Ukrainians and Ukrainian media to Western countries has increased – especially to the events related to the support of Ukraine. The experts consider that the most important priority for media influence (both on the Ukrainian and Western audience) is the destruction of the Russian propaganda myth about Ukrainians and Russians as “one people”

Did the attention of Ukrainians to Western countries change during the war? What should be the priorities, strategies for the media in covering Ukraine's relations with its Western allies?

We now know more about the EU than about Russia
S. Stukanov, interview

At the beginning of the war, there was a surge of attention to the West in local media, but now this attention is somewhat smaller.
N.Steblina, interview

The focus of media attention (and Ukrainians) to the West has shifted to what concerns Ukraine, such as sanctions against Russia, military and economic assistance, changes in authorities in the context of attitudes to supporting Ukraine
A. Zakharchenko, interview

Attention has grown: many Ukrainians have become refugees and discovered Europe as their own experience; they tell about life in the West to relatives and friends who remained in Ukraine.
A. Romaniuk, interview
 About the strategies. One of the problems is that ordinary Europeans are tired of the topic of war in Ukraine. It is necessary to promote more interesting topics about Ukrainian culture and history to the Western audience. It is also important for this audience to counter narratives of Russian propaganda, primarily about “one people”, which is allegedly divided by some third forces led by the US. It is important to destroy the myth of the great Russian culture and show that in fact Russia stole and steals cultural heritage of other peoples, including Ukrainians.
A.Romaniuk, FGS

The focus now is on what may affect Ukraine – but general awareness of the West is also growing.
L.Lauda, interview
 In terms of priorities, it needs to be shown how people live in Western countries. Local media give noticeable attention to specific stories of Ukrainian refugees, and this is an advantage. Also, local media can cover the topic of twin cities, and interactions at the interlocal level. It is better to cover the issues of international politics in the national level media.
L.Lauda, FGS

Local media from certain regions (Lviv region, Bukovyna) traditionally cover the topics of relations with the West more: it is necessary to work on catching up with colleagues in other regions in this regard.
N. Steblina, interview

Positive attention of Ukrainians to the West has increased: allies help refugees, give weapons
O. Chekmishev, interview
 The most important priority is the value aspect. Covering common values that we share – and that is why we are closer to the West than to Russia. Factual and emotional denial of the Russian propaganda thesis about “one people”
O. Chekmishev, FGS

PART FOUR: LOCAL MEDIA

THE ROLE OF LOCAL MEDIA DURING THE WAR

Experts agree with the important role of local media: in particular, during the war, they provide useful advice important for the survival of residents of specific communities and IDPs, coordinate the work of volunteers, inform about the orders of local authorities. Most experts agree that local media generally perform their functions even in times of war – even though it creates a number of problems for them

**How important is the role of local media in times of war?
How well do they cope?**

The role is important, because they convey local information. But during the war, local media mostly duplicate the publications of national level media.
S. Stukanov, interview

Local media play an important role in the war: they cover the issues of establishing the work of local authorities and territorial defense, communicate the readiness of the region to repel the enemy
N. Steblina, interview

Local media have an important role to play, in particular, they can provide local information regarding survival, security – and this role increases as we approach the front line. If classical local media do not cope with this role, this niche is picked up by Telegram channels
A. Zakharchenko, interview

In general, local media cope with their role; during the war, they partly went into social media, and some relocated from TOT. An important aspect is when there is no electricity due to shelling, regional newspapers come in handy.
A. Romaniuk, interview

Local media have an important role during the war: they cover local events, coordinate volunteers, provide information to internally displaced persons.
L. Lauda, interview

This role is important because local media should cover news that is closer to specific communities. But I would not say that they are coping with it: there are a number of problems
O. Chekmishev, interview

FAKE NEWS IN THE LOCAL INFORMATION SPACE

Local media can spread life-threatening Russian fake news on the frontline territories; pro-Russian local media appear on the temporarily occupied territories, broadcasting the narratives of enemy propaganda. The influence of Russian fake news on local media in the free territories of Ukraine has significantly decreased since the beginning of the war. As for fake news of Ukrainian origin, local media are quite vulnerable to spreading them due to weak fact-checking training of personnel

Russia can throw local fake news through these media, sometimes they are dangerous for life. It was especially noticeable at the beginning of the war: whether there would be shelling, a “green corridor” for evacuation, etc. There is also pro-Russian fake news in local media, such as some cities are allegedly shelling the Ukrainian army, not by the Russians
A. Zakharchenko, interview

Are there specific challenges of disinformation at the local media level? How serious are they compared to the central media space?

Before the war, local media, especially in the eastern and southern regions, were heavily influenced by Russian fake news. But when the war began, this influence significantly decreased
N. Steblina, interview

There are fake news either regional in origin or intended for specific regions. Ideally, local media should refute them. But due to a number of problems, primarily a lack of funding and personnel, they do not always cope with this task.
A. Romaniuk, L. Lauda - interview

Local media are more likely to spread fake news mistakenly, as they have worse training in fact-checking than in the central media.
O. Chekmishev, interview

KEY PROBLEMS AND NEEDS OF LOCAL MEDIA IN WAR CONDITIONS

In the experts' opinion, the biggest problem of local media is the lack of funding: the solution could be grant support for those media that produce high-quality original content, as well as knowledge of how to attract such support and/or increase monetization. Other problems include security (for front-line media), psychological exhaustion of their employees, staff shortages, inaccessibility of contacts of local newsmakers. There is an opinion that local media, among other things, need to create a platform for the exchange of successful experience

What are the biggest challenges for local media in the current situation, and what support do they need most?

The greatest **need** of local media is funding, in particular, grant funding for specific areas; the front-line media's need is security means
. A Romaniuk, A. Zakharchenko - interview

It is worth noting another **problem** of local media, which is psychological exhaustion, "burnout" of employees. They often **need** psychological support under these conditions
A. Romaniuk, interview

The biggest **problems** include finance, lack of personnel, relocation for media from the occupied and frontline territories. Grant support is **needed** – but only for those local media that have original and high-quality content.
L. Lauda - interview, FGS

The key **problems**: local media lost their audience after the beginning of the war in favor of the "United news" telethon, they lost some of their staff, and the share of their original content decreased. Local media **need** some sources where they could quickly get information, such as direct contacts of official speakers of the appropriate level
O. Chekmishev, interviews

The key **problem** of local media is the lack of funding: because of this, the so-called "infomercial" arises, that is, hidden advertising contrary to the standards of journalism. The main **needs** are knowledge of how to increase monetization; technical equipment, in particular for accessing the Internet under blackouts. It is also necessary to create a platform for the exchange of experience of successful cases among local media
N. Steblin, interviews

LOCAL ANTI-CORRUPTION INVESTIGATIONS

Experts named several local media that were successful in terms of anti-corruption investigations – however, they noted that anti-corruption local journalism in Ukraine is very poorly developed. The reasons include fear for their safety because in small towns everyone knows everyone personally

Are there cases of high-quality anti-corruption research done by local media?

This is a complex topic: we tried to implement several different projects on such mini-anti-corruption studies, but it was very difficult for the editorial staff to agree to them, as they were scared. The problem is that everyone knows each other in small towns. We do have several successful cases, nevertheless: this is Mykolaiv and Chernihiv regions
L.Lauda, interview

There are very few such cases, and the lack of local anti-corruption journalism is actually a serious problem. Based on what I have, I can name the printed newspapers **Express** (Lviv) and **Kremenchug Telegraph** (Poltava region). Truth to be said, the latter is now only online due to lack of funds
N. Steblina, interview

Our money (Lviv) is producing good things in this regard; the **Anti-Corruption Headquarters** (Kharkiv) is doing good analytics on this topic. The **Power of Truth** (Rivne); **The fourth government** also conduct anti-corruption investigations
A.Romaniuk, interview

ORGANIZATIONAL PROBLEMS OF LOCAL MEDIA, PROSPECTS FOR COOPERATION

The key organizational problems of local media stem from the fact that their editorial boards consist of few persons. The lack of a planning strategy and personnel could be solved by using cooperation, but the agency of individual participants should be kept. Optimal solutions include partial management of the specialized organization of several local media and/or encouraging them to cooperate by using grant support

Key organizational problems are, as a rule, the lack of a planning strategy, as well as high-quality staff due to low remuneration that the local media can offer.

L.Lauda, interview

As for bringing them together, our experience shows that the idea of centralizing makes sense in times of crisis. We took **partial leadership** of a large number of local media that could not cope on their own: this is the **search for funding, resource strengthening, the development of a content strategy**, etc. But the problem of staff shortage in the field remains relevant

L.Lauda, FGS

What are the key challenges you see in the organizational and management model of local media? Is the idea of combining them into larger structures to have qualified management in the central office and at teams in the field promising?

The key organizational problems are the incomplete reform of the public broadcasting system, the shortage of personnel. The latter problem was further aggravated by the war: many local journalists went to defend Ukraine at the frontline.

O. Chekmishev, interview

On the one hand, the idea of unification has positive aspects. But on the other hand, the experience of reforming the former regional state television companies into a public broadcasting system was very painful. Although it seemed to be happening within the same holding, but local TV channels in most regions did not broadcast for a long time

O.Chekmishev, FGS

Organizational and managerial problems of local media are largely based on the fact that the typical editorial staff consists of three persons. The way out could be an association in larger structures similar to holdings

N. Steblina, interview

On the other hand, the idea of getting together is good, but unrealistic: because journalists hold on to their brands. A more realistic idea would be to stimulate local media to cooperate by using **grant support** such cooperation

N.Steblina, interview

LOCAL MEDIA AND COMPLIANCE WITH JOURNALISM STANDARDS

Experts agree that most local editorial offices are aware of the standards of journalism, but do not always adhere to them. The reasons include financial dependence, unwillingness to criticize familiar persons, the general level of culture (in the case of the gender balance standard, in particular, respect for feminatives). On the other hand, some local media try to adhere to the standards because they value their reputation as an asset – or to have a chance to get a grant

What is the general awareness of journalistic standards in local media, what are their biggest ethical problems?

I believe that the war in general stimulates the media to more thoroughly adhere to the standards of journalism – although at the local level the situation is worse than at the national level. The key ethical problem of local media is selectivity of coverage, because many of them are somehow dependent on local business and/or political elites.
S. Stukanov, interview

They are aware of the standards, but often do not adhere to them. In particular, they neglect the standard of balance of opinions. As for ethical problems – this is often the result of editorial dependence, when some things are valued more than the reputation
N. Steblina, interview

In most cases, local media are aware of the standards – but not all follow them. The widespread use of hype, loud headlines. During the war, it is inappropriate treatment of obituaries: relatives of the deceased at the front sometimes learn about the death from local media. Also neglecting the standard of gender balance: feminatives are not used, etc.
A. Romaniuk, interview

Awareness is improving: individual local media specifically adhere to the standards in order to be able to qualify for grant support. Other ethical problems; sometimes local journalists refrain from criticizing persons they are familiar with; also, they neglect feminatives
L. Lauda, interview

As a rule, they are aware of the standards because for many years, appropriate training session for journalists have been held in Ukraine. Although they do not always adhere to these standards. On the other hand, the war brings adjustments: some standards are aggravated, and others, on the contrary, do not work during the war.
O. Chekmyshev, interview

CASES OF SUCCESSFUL FORMATION OF THE COMMUNITY AROUND LOCAL MEDIA

In Ukraine, there are a number of successful cases of building a community around local media. Common features that unite them are active feedback from the audience and the involvement of people in public activities outside the consumption of media content

Do you know examples of successful local media that have managed to organize a community around them?

The Center for Journalistic Initiatives **Mediakolo** (Sumy); it seems to have been created by an NGO
S. Stukanov, interview

There is a newspaper in the Odessa region, now it is a website, **Bilyavka City**; they are actually trying to build something around them to activate the community.
N. Steblyna, interview

I know that there is the network of hyperlocal publications **Rayon.in.ua**: they made the "Friends of the District" community and they are in constant touch with their audience. Most interestingly, they had a fundraising campaign in order to launch another edition entitled **Rayon.History** and collected 150,000 UAH on the Spilnokosht platform; the Renaissance Foundation doubled this amount for them – and they launched this additional media. This is an example of a very successful development of the community at the local level, namely a community that is developed by a media
A. Romaniuk, interview

There is **Tsukr** in Sumy, and **Zmist** in Poltava. There was also another similar media in Popasna, which is now occupied by Russia: they simply raised funds for playgrounds and so on before the war. In general, the community is formed around the media when the audience understands that this media is involved in the community's life, and it is not just a platform for press releases
L.Lauda, interview

ACTUAL PROBLEMS OF LOCAL MEDIA CONTENT

The main problem of the Ukrainian local media content is the lack of originality, which is largely a consequence of the lack of human and financial resources. Meanwhile, the original local content may be relevant for the community residents. Another problem is the poor awareness of local media editorial offices of how they can monetize their content

Problems with the multimedia of local media continue; monetization dropped due to the war, and the reduced advertising market had its effect
A. Romaniuk, interview

What are the problems with the content of local media – in particular, with its relevance, multimedia, monetization?

The key problem of content is the lack of their own, original content. To a large extent, local media are filled with borrowed content and advertising.
N. Steblina, interview

Due to the lack of people and resources, a significant part of local media chooses the path of least resistance, they simply reprint other people's materials: this is a problem of lack of original content. With multimedia, the situation is similar – even if there are interesting ideas, there is a lack of human and financial resources
L. Lauda, interviews

With all of the above, there are problems due to the “secondary” nature of local journalists in relation to the national level. Meanwhile in Western countries (such as Sweden), journalists in remote areas receive salary supplements
O. Chekmishev, interview

PROSPECTS FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION OF LOCAL MEDIA

The experts named several areas of international cooperation; in particular, the exchange of experience of economic survival among local media of different countries, the supply of exclusive content from Ukraine to foreign media and the services of fixers

Are there any prospects for international cooperation between local media, and what are they? What could be the key benefits for local media from such cooperation?

The war promotes such cooperation: for example, Western media may be interested in some information from front-line locations in Ukraine
S. Stukanov, interview

Local media can 'catch' cooperation with international publications, whose journalists now come to Ukraine more often: for example, it is possible to provide foreign editorial offices with fixer services
N. Steblina, interview

In organizational terms, Ukrainian local media can borrow the experience of consolidating local audiences from Western colleagues.
A. Zakharchenko, interview

There are prospects for cooperation, there are even examples of such cooperation with Polish media: they compare different aspects of life in Ukraine and Poland, which is especially relevant due to the large number of Ukrainian refugees in this country.
A. Romaniuk, interview

Yes, there are some prospects, even interesting cases. For example, based on our practice, a Boston editorial office was looking for some materials about Ukraine, about the war, specifically from the regions – and their employee, a Ukrainian from Kagarlyk, advised the website “Kagarlyk City” and she introduced the editors to each other. Also, I know how they ask us from other countries: they are interested in original stories about the war
L. Lauda, interview

Prospects exist, in particular, borrowing experience, how to organize high-quality work of small editorial offices in the regions. Particularly relevant may be the experience of journalists from the countries of the former socialist camp, where the conditions are similar to the Ukrainian ones.
O. Chekmishev, interview

LOCAL MEDIA AND RUSSIAN OCCUPATION

Experts are unanimous that staying in the temporarily occupied territories is deadly for journalists, although it can contribute to victory. There is a risk-acceptable option to update online media content and/or Telegram channels remotely, working with local residents as information providers

How should local media behave in the occupied territories, and can they contribute to the victory of Ukraine?

Informational influence can be done through Telegram channels; activities of informants in the temporarily occupied territories are possible.
S. Stukanov, interview

Some local media continued to work one way or another after the occupation, for example, through Telegram channels. It is much needed, but also very dangerous.
N.Steblina, interview

The main task in the uncontrolled territories is to preserve life and health. I cannot name any universal algorithm for the behavior of local media in the occupation
A. Romaniuk, interview

Two cases are possible. The first is when a media from the free part of a region (for example, Zaporizhzhia) work for the audience of both the free and temporarily occupied part. The second is when they happened to be under occupation. In the latter case, it is very dangerous, especially without technical and other skills to protect themselves from exposure.
A. Zakharchenko, interview

We work with a number of local media on TOT, whose editorial offices were evacuated. We maintain and update their websites, and local residents anonymously send us content. Even if the audience is greatly reduced, we continue to support updates. So that after the de-occupation it could be said that pro-Ukrainian media with local content did not disappear there
L.Lauda, interview

Russians repress journalists at TOT immediately and often kill them – so they need to evacuate if possible; it is very dangerous to work there.
O. Chekmishev, interview

KEY CONCLUSIONS

UKRAINIANS' LEVEL OF TRUST TO FAKE NEWS REMAINS UNACCEPTABLY HIGH.

Despite some increase in criticality to obvious Russian fake news, the general situation in society is far from adequate perception of them – in particular, in the older age category.

RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR HAS SHIFTED EMPHASIS FROM FAKE NEWS TO MANIPULATIONS.

Russian propaganda has shifted from fake news to factual manipulation through emotional framing. The fake news has also become more emotional: they either frighten or attract. More noticeable is the attempt to divide Ukrainian society through fake news/manipulations.

THE UKRAINIAN FACT-CHECKING COMMUNITY HAS UNIQUE ADVANTAGES.

Fact-checking in Ukraine has a developed infrastructure and unique long-term experience in countering Russian disinformation. Since the latter is a long-term and significant threat to the security of the democratic world, the experience of

Ukrainian fact-checkers should be disseminated.

ORDINARY UKRAINIANS ARE NOT READY TO CARRY OUT FACT-CHECKING ON THEIR OWN.

The mass audience does not want to systematically learn fact-checking, but is ready to consider simple recommendations: to be critical of information from unknown sources, to trust official sources and to take into account the “white” and “black” lists of media – in particular, Telegram channels. Part of the work in this regard is carried out by IMI, but this is not enough.

THE PROBLEM OF FACT-CHECKING IN UKRAINE IS WEAK INFORMATION LOGISTICS.

High-quality content of Ukrainian fact-checkers has a rather low coverage due to insufficient cooperation with popular media and weak SMM promotion of their own communication channels.

UKRAINIAN LOCAL MEDIA WILL REMAIN SUBSIDIZED FOR THE TIME BEING. Among the key problems of independent local media is the lack of funding or knowledge of how to get it. The advertising market in war

conditions has decreased, therefore, the survival of local editorial offices depends on government and/or grant support.

AT THE LOCAL LEVEL, A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT PROBLEMS REMAIN UNREPORTED. These should include, first of all, the problem of gender balance in coverage. The image of a female soldier is extremely important for awareness of the equality in Ukrainian society – but local media pay insufficient attention to it, and that attention keeps decreasing with the course of the war. Attention to the proper use of feminatives in content remains insufficient at the local media level.

IMI AND LMF ARE A GOOD CHOICE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FIGHT FOR FACTS PROJECT. The choice of IMI experts has been approved unanimously and unquestionably. The annual LMF event is unanimously recognized as one of the best media events in Ukraine: although some experts are not aware of the LMF activities outside the event, others emphasize the exceptional expertise of the LMF in the field of local media.

FOR FACT-CHECKING AND MEDIA MARKETING ORGANIZATIONS:

PROMOTE BLACK AND WHITE MEDIA LISTS MORE ACTIVELY AND MORE FAVOURABLY.

Combine resources to popularize such lists, as well as include not only editorial offices, but also telegram channels that currently have a very wide audience.

PAY ATTENTION TO FAKE NEWS THAT ARE NOT DIRECTED AT THE DOMESTIC RUSSIAN AUDIENCE. The priority should be given to domestic Ukrainian and foreign audiences, because their opinions are the most important. Instead, fake news aimed at the domestic Russian consumer will not be able to change much.

DEVELOP REGIONAL FACT-CHECKING PROJECTS IN THE LEAST RESISTANT AREAS.

In particular, Odesa region is the most sensitive because of the peculiarities of the population and due to the increased attention of Russian propaganda to it.

ATTEMPT TO ENGAGE THE AUDIENCE IN CRITICAL THINKING. Although most of the audience will not have the motivation to do fact-checking on their own, it is worth repeating the list of questions that you should ask yourself when evaluating each news. Also, encourage citizens, in a playful or humorous form, to look for fake news in order to establish this skill.

ENGAGE NOT ONLY IN FACT-CHECKING, BUT ALSO IN EXPOSING MORE COMPLEX MANIPULATIONS. There is already movement in this direction, but we need to keep up with Russian propagandists who are also learning.

LEARN TO PROMOTE YOUR PRODUCT. Some organizations already have successes in SMM, but it still happens that fact-checker materials receive only several dozen views. SMM and SEO should become mandatory components of the work of fact-checkers.

CREATE A NETWORK OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN EACH OTHER AND WITH JOURNALISTS. It would be appropriate to have a group on social platforms that would allow the media and fact-checkers to discuss urgent information and share revelations, warn about fake news in time, and at the same time popularize their refutations.

THE FACT-CHECKERS NEED PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT. Unlike local media, Ukrainian fact-checkers need psychological rather than financial support, since during the war they have critically large amounts of work. A good idea is to think about a separate project in this area.

FOR INTERNATIONAL DONORS:

GRANT SUPPORT IS A KEY INCENTIVE TO MEET STANDARDS.

The opportunity to receive a grant stimulates local media to adhere to the standards of journalism; awareness of the standards is sufficient due to numerous training sessions in past years. Not only new training on standards is needed, but also financial incentives.

IT IS WORTH COLLECTING DATA ON COOPERATION BETWEEN LOCAL MEDIA AND NGOS/ GRANTORS.

Ukrainian local media have been receiving grant support, consulting and training support for years. The selected implementors (IMI and LMF) have sufficient competence to, among other things, review the market for this cooperation in order to find the needs of local journalism that have not yet been met.

MAXIMUM DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION ON FUNDRAISING IS REQUIRED.

Journalists do not often apply for grants, because they

simply do not have the skills to do it. This can be solved by the involvement of external consultants, popularization of such opportunities among the target audience.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO SUPPORT COOPERATION BETWEEN LOCAL MEDIA, UP TO THE CREATION OF INTERREGIONAL HOLDINGS.

Small teams are one of the significant obstacles in development, so there were recommendations to stimulate media from different regions to cooperate and, for example, to have one for all a lawyer, fundraiser, marketer, etc. There were even proposals to form a kind of holdings. But with the preservation of brands and editorial independence.

IT IS WORTH CONSIDERING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT OF FRONTLINE AND OTHER LOCAL MEDIA.

Such a step can become a separate project: experts talk about the psychological burnout of local Ukrainian journalists in the war context.

LOCAL ANTI-CORRUPTION JOURNALISM IS CRITICALLY NEEDED.

Despite the presence of successful anti-corruption journalistic projects, they are mostly localized on the center level and cannot cover the periphery. It is desirable to increase the focus on launching/supporting anti-corruption local media initiatives, possibly with a network structure.

THERE MUST BE CLEAR CRITERIA TO SUPPORT THE MEDIA.

Experts name editorial independence, adherence to standards and the ability to demonstrate a holistic development strategy with cost justification.

TRAINING AS PART OF THE PROJECT SHOULD BE AS PRACTICAL AS POSSIBLE.

Training sessions for local media as part of the project are recommended by experts to bring them as close as possible to mentoring practices, as well as to monitor and financially encourage the acquisition of learned skills.

TO GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS:

THE ONE-VOICE POLICY APPROACH AND AT THE SAME TIME GREATER OPENNESS TO INQUIRIES.

Contradictions in the communication of official speakers are picked up by Russian propaganda to create fake news that are difficult to refute. The same effect is produced by silence in response to inquiries from fact-checkers or local journalists.

POPULARIZATION OF “WHITE” AND “BLACK” LISTS OF UKRAINIAN MEDIA AND TV CHANNELS.

This recommendation is primarily for the NGO sector; but government bodies, under conditions when there is no harsh information danger, as in the early days of the war, should no longer advised to “trust only official institutions”, but also invest in the promotion of “white” and “black” lists.

TO LOCAL MEDIA:

FINDING OPPORTUNITIES TO RECEIVE GRANTS IS ALMOST THE ONLY WAY OUT.

Experts agree that in the near future, local media will not be able to reach self-sufficiency. Therefore, editorial offices that have not yet discovered the possibilities of fundraising, should find out about it, especially since there are many consultants on this topic. However, it must be understood that this requires compliance with journalistic standards and the available development model.

COLLABORATION WITH FOREIGN COLLEAGUES OPENS UP OPPORTUNITIES.

Local media markets in Ukraine and abroad are very different, but understanding how local media work, build business models, etc. can still provide some clues about what to do

in Ukraine. In addition, it is possible to exchange content between your and foreign editorial offices, provide them with first-hand information about events in Ukraine that is now of interest to everyone, etc.