

The group met several actors from the media sector, both public and private. It had a throughout view of the current situation of the media sector, its main challenges and opportunities.

### **Main lessons learned:**

- Trust is a key issue when working in media. It is questioned across the media actors (owners, journalists, academics, NGOs, etc.) but also between the audiences and the media;
- The phenomena of "fake news", lies and war propaganda witnessed in Ukraine is nothing new. Yet, it has unprecedented impact in Ukraine because of the little media literacy, weak legal checks and balances and Russia's modern, comprehensive media system, working also with social networks;
- The donor community or the international community's actors should systematically consider media while doing their political economy analysis, and better look at the political economy of the media itself.
- The current support received in media sector is not matching the identified needs, nor the social impact that media have.

### **1. Presentation by Roman Shutov of the Ukraine media sector**

- Legal, economic and political context:
  - o in the 25 years since the end of the communist era, the media has known a lot of changes in the law, mostly positive: freedom of expression recognized, media ownership is legally disclosed, etc.
  - o In contrast, it has led to a massive privatization of State-supported media, mainly taken over by oligarchs. These oligarchs are not particularly interested in producing independent information, nor being commercially successful; media houses are mainly there to protect their owner/oligarch's own influence over elected politicians.
  - o The advertising market is relative to a middle income country, leaving only moderate resources for media interested in conducting independent work.
- Social context:
  - o Media organizations are in vast majority partisan, because of their financial dependency to their owners, all imbedded in politics. Because of the highly divisive conflict in the East, most houses are trapped in a division between "patriots" or "traitors";
  - o Few journalists receive academic training, even in the field of journalism ;
  - o The audience feels a lacks of diversity and relevance: 80% of the people use TV as their first media, probably for entertainment not information. For the last four years, the level of trust in the media has dropped dramatically. Media literacy is weak and even the audience feels subject to manipulation. "Media bubbles" are already in place in Ukraine.

### **2. Visit of the new, regional 100% public TV/radio/web broadcaster**

- Born from a 2015 media law, with the support/pressure of the Council of Europe and the EU;
- Major reform and changes: staff has been cut in half, new management is in charge, programs and newsrooms are more inclusive;
- After their first year of existence, the situation is rather dull: the regional public broadcasters have not received the agreed budget and only salaries are paid. It has an estimated audience of only 2 to 3%. State authorities do not seem interested in building strong, independent, public media.

### **3. Discussion with Anastasia Stanko of [hromadske.ua](http://hromadske.ua) and Olga Yurkova of [StopFake.org](http://StopFake.org)**

- Two very engaged and courageous journalists shared their experience of working in an independent media for Anastasia and against Russian fake news for Olga.
- Fake news are produced mixing real, fake and very fake facts. Fake news are selected, manipulated facts later propagated all over the media spheres.
- Some of the challenges on covering the conflict are:
  1. Access and security while covering to the Donbass and Crimea regions;
  2. Perception of the Ukrainian population and government *vis-à-vis* these regions is contradictory: the government wants to get these regions back, but at the same time treats the remaining population under Russian domination as traitors. Few journalists dare/want to report on how the Donbass and Crimean population live.
- Working against fake news was perceived as a civic necessity for both journalists when they realized the numerous lies on Facebook and the internet. Anastasia reacted by doing independent journalism. Olga is focusing on fact-checking, on a militant way. Yet, Olga works in Russian and English languages, so it is not clear who access her site.
- None of the two thought States should act in the field of fake news by restricting media freedom of speech. It is not effective, when not counter-productive.