



Messages of Russian TV: Monitoring Report 2015

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“The mass communications media provide information to most voters that is essential to the choice they exercise at the ballot box. Therefore, proper media conduct toward all political parties and candidates, as well as proper media conduct in the presentation of information that is relevant to electoral choices, are crucial to achieving democratic elections. Monitoring media conduct – when done impartially, proficiently and based on a credible methodology – establishes whether this key aspect of an election process contributes to or subverts the democratic nature of elections. Media monitoring can measure the amount of coverage of electoral subjects, the presence of news bias, appropriateness of media access for political competitors and the adequacy of information conveyed to voters through news, direct political messages, public information programming and voter education announcements. Shortcomings in media conduct can be identified through monitoring in time for corrective action. Abuse of the mass media power to affect voter choices also can be documented, which allows the population and the international community to appropriately characterize the true nature of the electoral process.”¹

Robert Norris and Patrick Merloe

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¹ Media Monitoring to Promote Democratic Elections: An NDI Handbook for Citizen Organizations, Hardcover – Jul 2002 by [Robert Norris](#) and [Patrick Merloe](#): https://www.ndi.org/files/1420_elect_media_02_1-31_0.pdf



Monitors analysing content of the Russian channels.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	Executive Summary.....	5
2.	Methodology	10
	2.1. <i>Quantitative analysis</i>	13
	2.2. <i>Qualitative analysis</i>	17
3.	The media situation in the Eastern Partnership countries	19
4.	Regulatory Framework for the Media	23
5.	Monitoring Findings.....	30
	5.1. <i>Quantitative analysis</i>	30
	5.1.1. <i>Monitored subjects</i>	30
	5.1.2. <i>The coverage of topics and top stories</i>	33
	5.1.3. <i>Geographical coverage</i>	34
	5.2. <i>Qualitative analysis</i>	35
	5.2.1. <i>Tools of Russian propaganda</i>	56
	5.2.2. <i>Impact of Russian propaganda in the EaP countries</i>	65
6.	Recommendations.....	69

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From 1 – 31 March 2015, MEMO 98, a Slovak non-profit specialist media-monitoring organization, Internews Ukraine and Yerevan Press Club, leading non-governmental organization supporting independent media in Ukraine and Armenia, along with Independent Journalism Center (Moldova), “Yeni Nesil” Union of Journalists (Azerbaijan), Belarusian Association of Journalists (Belarus), and Georgian Charter for Journalistic Ethics (Georgia) jointly monitored eight Russian TV channels to evaluate the level of political diversity in their news coverage of various international and local topics. This monitoring was implemented thanks to the support of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Secretariat (EaP CSF), the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) and the Krajowa Rada Radiofonii i Telewizji (KRRiT).

The main findings deriving from the pre-election media-monitoring activity are:

Impact of Russian propaganda in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries

- **Television is the most efficient method of influencing public opinion in the EaP countries. The role of the main Russian channels is more significant in Armenia, Belarus and Moldova, where these channels are freely available, than in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine, where the role of these channels is more limited.**
- **In Azerbaijan and Georgia, Russian channels are only available through cable television, satellite antenna or Internet. In Ukraine, a number of measures restricting Russian media have been introduced recently, including a ban on the selected Russian channels from the cable packages.**
- **The main Russian TV channels remain available also through terrestrial transmitters and are the most important sources of information in Crimea and in the territories of self-proclaimed DNR and LNR.**
- **Russian TV channels are generally very popular, particularly in Armenia, Belarus and Moldova. By contrast, the popularity of these channels in Georgia and Ukraine has been affected by the armed conflicts in 2008 and 2014 - 15 respectively. In Azerbaijan, only a small segment of the population favors Russian TV channels as their information source.**
- **The national broadcasters in Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova strive to provide an alternative to the Russian propaganda and to reduce its impact.**
- **The current situation with the freedom of media in Belarus and Armenia prevents the national broadcasters from serving as such alternative. Moreover, Russian-speaking media – TV Dozhd and RTVI - which have potential to provide alternative information to the main Russian channels**

face certain restrictions in these countries and are available only via Internet. In Azerbaijan, the impact of the Russian channels is limited.

- The media in the EaP countries are reluctant to use the same aggressive style of propaganda currently used by the main Russian channels. At the same time, there are clearly differences between the national broadcasters originating from different levels of media freedoms in the EaP countries as well as economic conditions.

Monitoring results

- The main Russian TV channels showed very limited range of views in their reporting of international and local topics and issues, thus depriving their viewers of receiving objective and balanced coverage.
- The principal general trend from the media monitoring is that there is an exceptionally limited range of diversity of political actors in the main Russian TV channels. This was visible in the coverage of both international and local topics.
- The three main Russian channels (First channel, Russia 1, and NTV) devoted extensive prime time news coverage to the activities of the authorities, focusing primarily on the activities of the president and the government.
- There was a clear tendency to cover the activities of state officials extensively, pointing out achievements and successes and neglecting to offer any independent and alternative views or critical reporting challenging the performance of the authorities.
- The primetime programs on the three channels lacked meaningful agenda setting debates involving genuine public discussions over some pressing economic, social or policy issues, such as the falling price of oil and its impact on the Russian economy. If mentioned, then it was presented in a way that no sanctions and no decrease of the crude oil prices could get Russia on her knees, as these are only temporary difficulties that will make the country stronger and consolidate Russian people.
- The monitoring of topics revealed the main Russian channels have been used as instruments of propaganda in the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, diverting attention from important domestic issues and challenges and instead focusing on the conflict in Ukraine.
- Instead of serving as facilitator of discussion on public policy issues, the three channels openly demonstrated bias in breach of media ethics and principles of impartial and objective reporting, showing explicit sympathy for one side and distaste for the others.

- **The monitoring of topics showed that half of the coverage on the three channels was devoted to foreign affairs (primarily Ukraine) whereas topics such as social issues received only a very limited coverage.**
- **As for the coverage of subjects linked with the conflict in the Eastern part of Ukraine, representatives of the so-called Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republic (DNR and LNR) obtained extensive and overwhelmingly positive and neutral coverage on the three channels. In sharp contrast, official Ukrainian authorities and institutions were portrayed in a very negative way.**
- **As a rule, only to the representatives of separatists had opportunity to speak directly on camera while official Ukrainian representatives were almost completely ignored. As such, the coverage of the conflict was one-sided and heavily biased. Even in those reports which were said to be prepared from Kiev, there was no diversity of opinions, as virtually all interviews were done with experts or politicians loyal to Russia.**
- **A significant level of hostility towards specific actors was perpetuated invariably on the three channels and Russia Today. In particular, the Ukrainian authorities were presented as the ones guilty of the disastrous situation in the Eastern part of Ukraine while the US administration was presented as being interested in maintaining the conflict in the region and trying to persuade the Western Europe and EU to sanction Russia.**
- **The qualitative analysis further revealed that the main Russian media attempted to show the failure of Ukraine as an independent state, they wanted to expose "the aggressive plans of the West, particularly of the USA," and tried to justify the struggle of Russians in Ukraine for the "ancestral Russian lands".**
- **A significant coverage was devoted to speculations on a possible Western plot against Russia with viewers being presented with a picture of the West trying to attack Russia. The story of *World War II* was also used to scare the population with the possibility of a war and the need of Russia to protect itself against the enemy.**
- **The main channels conducted an information campaign against US and Ukraine with the aim to demonize US and Ukrainian authorities and to portray Russia as a protector of Russian citizens in the conflict zone. Almost all materials covering US and Ukraine included statements or reporting prejudicial against the US and Ukrainian administrations.**
- **A number of reports focused on developing the idea of a large-scale anti-Russian conspiracy and fostered an atmosphere of threat to Russia. At the same time, virtually every program contained stories about Russia's readiness for such situations - usually these stories are accompanied by aggressive rhetoric towards "the enemy".**

- **The qualitative analysis revealed that almost all news reports were unbalanced and very subjective, quoting a lot of sources that supported only one point of view – that of the Russian authorities. Only in a few cases both sides were presented, but the length of direct speech was evidently disproportionate, the pro-Russian sources being given much more prominence. As a rule, the media selected their sources in a way to present only one position that is the position of the Russian authorities.**
- **The conflict in Ukraine was an omnipresent topic not only in the news programs but also in the selected other information programs. Talk show hosts and presenters were heavily biased which was obvious from their views, body language and gestures. In most cases, the hosts and presenters mixed facts with opinions and in some cases they even behaved as if they were the experts, presenting their own opinions as facts. Quite often, irony and sarcasm was used when referring to the events in Ukraine and their official representatives who were almost always ignored as sources of news despite the number of allegations and negative stories against them.**
- **In the coverage of the conflict in Ukraine, Russia is presented as a peacemaker, and the message of the need of Russia on permanent basis in the region is propagated. In addition to Ukraine, other Eastern partnership countries (EaP) were mentioned too, but to a much more limited extent.**
- **Almost all reports promoted the idea of legitimacy of separatist regions. The same cannot be said about the Ukrainian authorities that were sometimes referred as a fascist junta that came to power thanks to a coup organized by the West (primarily by USA).**
- **The qualitative analysis identified that different manipulations techniques were used by the main Russian TV channels, including: manipulative use of images and sound, pseudo-diversity of opinions, mixing comments and opinions, appeals to fear, scapegoating, demonizing the enemy, lack of transparency and credibility of sources, selective coverage, omission of information, manipulative search for sympathizers, labeling and stereotyping, vagueness, repetition and exaggeration, inaccurate reporting and lies etc.**
- **The qualitative analysis also revealed that some talk show hosts used inflammatory language when referring to Ukraine (primarily the official representatives), USA, EU, and the West in general. In addition, talk show hosts presented uniform position virtually on all important topics and issues, vehemently supporting the official line pursued by the Russian authorities on global and national issues.**
- **The monitoring team observed a tendency by the main Russian channels to invite the same people to the talk show programs whose role was to pursue the official line supported by the Russian authorities. Talk show hosts**

provided a uniform position virtually on all important topics and issues, also supporting the position of the Russian authorities. They demonstrated open bias, aggressive style, inflammatory and hostile language towards their opponents and people with different opinions.

- **The coverage of Boris Nemtsov’s murder on the three main TV channels was also one-sided, reflecting only the official line and generally failing to follow on the allegations that the authorities were involved.**
- **Russia Today demonstrated a pattern of political favoritism towards the incumbent Russian authorities, but showed a slightly different approach to that of the three above-mentioned channels. This is due to the fact that it Russia Today mainly targets international viewers, particularly in USA and in the European Union. As such, the bulk of the channel’s coverage was devoted to the above-mentioned international topics and subjects, primarily USA and EU that were heavily criticized. Ukraine did not receive as much coverage as on the main Russian channels but the tone of the coverage was also critical towards the Ukrainian authorities.**
- **The one-month long monitoring confirmed that the identified problems in the main Russian channels were not results of short-term anomalies but reflect real trends. In particular, such a problem includes the fact that the interests of the current Russian authorities and not the interests of the readers or viewers determine the editorial policy of these channels.**
- **TV Dozhd showed a very different approach to that of the four above-mentioned channels controlled by the Russian authorities as it was more focused on the local Russian affairs than on the conflict in Ukraine or the Russia-West relations. Moreover, the coverage of topics and subjects related to Ukraine was generally balanced.**
- **Similarly, the Russian language version of Euronews offered a very different picture of the international and local issues related to Russia and Ukraine. While the channel also devoted to the bulk of its coverage to USA and the European Union, this coverage was predominantly neutral.**
- **TV RBK allocated most of its coverage to the activities of the Russian government (one hour and twenty six minutes) and the president (thirty four minutes). While the coverage of Mr. Putin was mainly neutral and positive, some of the government’s coverage was also negative. RBK did not focus on the conflict in Ukraine so intensively as the main Russian channels. *First Baltic Channel* focused mainly on the local issues related to Latvia.**

2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology for the media monitoring was developed by MEMO 98 which has carried out similar monitoring projects in some 50 countries in the last 16 years.² It included quantitative analysis of the coverage, which focused on the amount of time allocated to each subject, as well as the tone of the coverage in which the relevant political subjects were portrayed: positive, neutral or negative. Qualitative analysis assessed the performance of the media against specific principles or benchmarks – such as ethical or professional standards – that cannot be easily quantified.

Given its comprehensive content-oriented approach, it is specially designed to provide in-depth feedback on pluralism and diversity in media reporting, including coverage of chosen subjects and topics. The main goal was to evaluate if the Russian TV channels provide their viewers with objective and balanced information about important international and local issues. As such, the outcome of the monitoring is a detailed analysis of the quality of selected Russian TV channels' news programming.

Based on criteria such as media ownership, coverage, and impact, the following media were included into the monitoring:

Table 1: Monitored media

Media	Ownership	Programmes monitored ³	Coverage
First Channel	51% Russian State 25% National Media Group 24% Roman Abramovich [reportedly under sale]	Vremya Voskresnoe Vremya Mo-Su (21:00)	98,8% of Russian population ⁴ ; Rebroadcast also by <i>ONT</i> (Belarus), <i>TVI</i> (Armenia), <i>TV Prime</i> (Moldova); First Channel - Eurasia (Kazakhstan); First Baltic Channel (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia). Also broadcasted worldwide via Satellite and selected cable networks.
Russia 1	Russian Government	Vesti Vesti Nedely Mo-Su (20:00)	98.5% of Russian population ⁵ ; Available internationally as <i>RTR- Planeta</i> via Satellite and selected cable networks.

² for more information, see also www.memo98.sk

³ All broadcast time indicates is UTC+3 (Moscow Time) unless stated otherwise.

⁴ <http://www.1tv.ru/total/pi=5>

⁵ http://russia.tv/article/show/article_id/7481/

NTV	Gazprom Media Holding ⁶	Segodnia Segodnia: Itogoviy Vypusk Mo-Fr, Su (19:00)	98.3% of Russian Population ⁷ . Also Available Internationally via Satellite and selected cable networks as NTV-Mir. Also local editions are broadcast in US, Canada and Belarus. ⁸
Russia Today	ANO TV-Novosti ⁹	News RT Mo-Su (23:00)	. RT has a global reach of over 700 million people in 100+ countries. ¹⁰ Available worldwide via Satellite and selected cable networks. Programs are shared with sister channels RT UK, RT USA that are broadcasted via terrestrial networks in USA and UK. Programs are also shared on sister channels in other languages (Rusiya Al-Yaum, RT Deutsch, RT Français).
TV Dozhd	100% Natalia Sendeeva & Alexandr Vinokurov	Daily news show / Mo-Fr (21:00) Zdes I Seichas / Sa-Su (21:00)	Available as pay-per-view via Satellite (Russia and Europe), Internet and selected cable networks in Russia ¹¹
Euronews (Russian Service)	Naguib Sawiris (53%) ¹² [before the deal:	News Mo-Su (9:00, 15:00, 21:00)	Euronews reaches about 415 million households in 155 countries via cable, digital satellite and terrestrial windows. ¹³

<http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/1873630>;

<http://www.gazprombank.ru/about/shareholders/Schema31042015.pdf>;

http://www.gazprombank.ru/about/shareholders/spisok_13012015.pdf

7

http://www.gazprom-media.com/ru/actives/index/area_id/1/id/1

8

<http://www.ntv.ru/kompania/veschaniye/>

9

‘ANO TV-Novosti’ NGO was established by state-owned news agency Ria Novosti. For 2015 it will receive about Euro 300 Mln from the Russian state budget.-

<http://www.fapmc.ru/rospechat/newsandevents/media/2014/09/item42.html>

10

<http://rt.com/about-us/>

11

<http://tvrain.ru/connecting/>

12

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/3/12/124180/Business/Economy/Egypt-Sawiris-acquires-percent-of-Euronews.aspx>

13

<http://www.digitaltveurope.net/328872/egyptian-tycoon-sawiris-to-take-majority-stake-in-euronews/>

<http://www.euronews.com/media/download/mediapack/2014-03-MEDIA-KIT-ENGLISH.pdf>

	(25,4% owned France Televisions; 22,84% RAI Italy; 16,94% VGTRK; Rossia 15,7% TRT (Turkey); 9,2% SSR (Switzerland)		
<i>RBK</i>	Pragla Limited (Cyprus) – indirectly controlled by Onexim (Mikhail Prokhorov) ¹⁴	Itogi Itogi Nedeli. Mo-Fr, Su (20:00)	Available in Russia and Europe via Satellite and in selected cable networks. Technical outreach – 102 mln viewers. Monthly viewership 25 mln viewers. ¹⁵
<i>First Baltic Channel</i>	Baltijas Mediju Alianse (Oleg Solodov and Alexey Pliasunov) ¹⁶	Latviskoe Vremya Mo-Fri (21:00)	Technical reach – over 4 mln viewers. ¹⁷

The monitoring team observed media coverage of the Russian and international political scene in order to:

- assess whether different local and international entities are granted fair access to the media;
- supply the media, political entities, regulatory organs, citizens, and international community with data to measure the objectivity of the monitored media;
- raise public awareness and encourage journalists, editors and media outlet owners to observe standards of balanced reporting;
- motivate citizens to better understand the role of the media.

In addition, the project was supposed to:

¹⁴ <http://www.e-disclosure.ru/portal/files.aspx?id=24832&type=6;>

¹⁵ <http://www.vedomosti.ru/newspaper/articles/2013/11/13/oneksim-sobiraet-rbk>

¹⁶ http://rbctv.rbc.ru/about/static/general_info.shtml

¹⁷ <http://1bma.lv/ru/par-holdingu/valde/>

¹⁷ <http://1bma.lv/ru/virzieni/televizija/pbk/>

- enhance the capacity of the civil and academic communities in conducting the advanced media researches;
- put public pressure on journalists, editors and media owners to provide information that is more accurate, impartial and fair.

To achieve these objectives, the implementing partners evaluated the media coverage against internationally recognized professional standards and principles of journalist ethics, which include:

- Balance
- Accuracy and Exactness
- Clarity
- Matter-of-fact
- Timely
- Transparency
- Relevance
- Variety
- Omission of facts

The monitoring assessed different types of programmes which were monitored both quantitatively and qualitatively. The enclosed results reflect only the quantitative results of the monitored news programs.

2.1. Quantitative analysis

Quantitative analysis focused on the amount of time allocated to selected political and other local and international subjects and the tone of the coverage in which these subjects were portrayed – positive, neutral and negative. The monitoring also focused on thematic and geographical structure of the news, evaluating the thematic and geographical diversity by measuring the actual time devoted to different topics and focusing on the geographical area from where the news is broadcast. In addition, the monitoring focused on what were the top stories in the monitoring period.

It is the behaviour of media outlets that was being assessed, not the monitored subjects. Positive and negative ratings refer to whether or not the viewer/reader was offered a positive or negative impression of the subject or topic. Monitors gave an evaluation mark to all subjects, in addition to time and reference, to provide information on how the subject was portrayed by each media outlet. The evaluation mark was thus attached to all monitored subjects to determine whether the subject was presented in a positive, negative, or neutral light.

The description of the five-level evaluation scale was as follows:

Grade 1 and 2 meant that a certain monitored subject was presented in a very positive or positive light respectively; in both instances the news coverage was favourable.

Grade 3 was a “neutral mark”, with the coverage being solely factual, without positive or negative connotations.

Grades 4 or 5 meant that a subject was presented in a negative or very negative light respectively. Such coverage had negative connotations, accusations or one-sided criticism of a subject portrayed in an item or story.

It was important for monitors to consider the actual evaluation (judgement) on the monitored subject and also the context of the story or item.

List of monitored subjects

- President
- President Administration
- Prime minister
- Government
- Governor
- Local Government
- Federal Council
- United Russia
- Communist Party
- Liberal-Democratic Party
- A Just Russia Party
- Patriots of Russia
- Rodina Party
- Jabloko
- Civic Platform
- Party of Progress
- Republican Party of Russia – People's Freedom Party
- Other parties
- Opposition
- CIS (without Moldova and Ukraine)
- Georgia and Moldova
- USA
- European Union
- Other separatist territories and breakaway states in the CIS (Transnistria, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh)
- OSCE
- United Nations

Red cross
International community in Russia

List of monitored topics

Agriculture
Army/military
Business, economy
Culture
Catastrophes, incidents, accidents
Charity
Crime
Pro-government civil society
Civil society
People with disabilities
Education
Environment
Foreign affairs - Ukraine political
Foreign affairs - Ukraine non-political
Foreign affairs - conflict in Ukraine
Foreign affairs - political (other world)
Foreign affairs - non-political
Health care
Judiciary
Media
Minorities
National (ethnic) minorities
Religious minorities
Sexual minorities
Politics
Religion (Russian orthodox church)
Social issues
Sport
Others

Top stories

Crimea
Battles in Donetsk
Battles in Luhansk
Separatists
Separatists' republics
MH-17
Humanitarian aid
Russian soldiers

Western soldiers
Economic sanctions
Oil prices
Russian economy
Eurasian Union
EU
USA
NATO
Minsk peace agreements
Weapons for Ukraine
Peace negotiations/talks
International relations
Victims of the battles
Refugees
Russian nationalism/imperialism/patriotism
Western plot against Russia
Chaos in Ukraine
Fascistic and Bandera-related rhetoric
Anti-Semitism rhetoric
Anti-western rhetoric
Homophobic rhetoric
Nostalgia for Soviet Union
Legitimacy of Ukrainian authorities
World War II
Maidan
Russian gas supplies to Ukraine
Russia's relations with separatists republics
Nemtsov's murder

Geographical area of coverage

Russia
Ukraine
Armenia
Azerbaijan
Belarus
Georgia
Moldova
Kazakhstan
China
USA
Great Britain
Germany
France

Poland
Each country (by ISO 3166-1)
European Union
Europe (in general)
Africa (in general)
America (in general)
Asia (in general)
Australia (in general)
Middle East (in general)
Russia-Ukraine mixed
Russia-USA mixed
Russia-EU
EU-USA mixed
Other combinations mixed

2.2. Qualitative analysis

Qualitative analysis evaluates the performance of selected media outlets against ethical and professional standards, such as balance, accuracy, timely, choice of issues, omission of information, advantage of incumbency, positioning of items, inflammatory language that cannot be easily quantified. These data are reported separately and integrated in the comments and conclusions of the narrative reports. In addition, a team of six senior media experts representing each EaP country was deployed to do a qualitative analysis of the monitored news and current affairs programs as well as to evaluate the potential impact of the Russian media in the respective EaP countries.¹⁸ The following are questions included on a questionnaire which was distributed to each expert:

1. Which Russian TV Channels (primarily national/federal TV channels) and to what extent are available to the audience of your country?
2. How much is the public interested in watching Russian TV channels?
3. How well do the local media outlets keep balance between the Russian position on the one hand and the position of its opponents, on the other (Europe, the United States, the Western Countries, Ukraine, Georgia, Russian opponents of the Kremlin, etc)? Speak briefly about the role of the internet, social networks.
4. What part of the population of your country (based on the results of surveys or the expert assessments) use media outlets in Russian or in other foreign languages?
5. Is there any interest (and if yes, how big is it) in the available (to some extent) in terms of language, foreign TV channels (“Dozhd/Rain” “Euronews”, RTVI, CNN, BBC, etc)?
6. How much are the broadcasters mentioned in Question 5 technically available?

¹⁸ The six experts were from: Internews Ukraine (Ukraine), Yerevan Press Club (Armenia), Independent Journalism Center (Moldova), “Yeni Nesil” Union of Journalists (Azerbaijan), Belarusian Association of Journalists (Belarus), and Georgian Charter for Journalistic Ethics (Georgia)

7. Evaluate the impact of the Russian TV channels and other media outlets (highlighting which of them particularly play the main role) on public and media outlets of your country.
8. If there have been ever used in the programme monitored by you “hate speech” (all forms of self expression including dissemination, incitement, provocation, promotion or justification of racism, xenophobia, hostile aggression, hatred against minorities, against different points of view or political opponents or against nations and countries). Give 2-3 examples. Please, indicate who the most frequent target was.
9. In your opinion, were there any specific images of Russia’s enemy created in the programmes of March 2015 monitored by you? If so, whose images were they?
10. Have the opposing opinions been presented (if yes, to what extent) in programmes monitored by you?
11. Has there been established a group of concrete people, so called “reference group” in any programme monitored by you (that is, a defined set of people, that were offered to the audience as opinion makers, as people whose views should be taken into consideration)? Please, indicate who were the members of such group.
12. Were there any “cross cutting topics” (concerning internal events in Russia as well as its external, international events) dominating the programmes that you monitored?
13. Were the anchors, journalists of the corresponding channels biased in the programmes monitored by you? If yes, to what extent?
14. Please, mark topics and the statements sensitive for your country that have found a place in the programs of Russian TV channels (via the links provided by the monitoring group in Kiev). Evaluate their objectivity and their compliance with professional standards.
15. Could you name certain messages articulated in the programmes of Russian channels (like in the one, you monitor and, if possible, in others), which was widely circulated in the media coverage of your country? If so, give us some examples. If yes, please specify whether they were reproduced as a whole or adapted (due to variations and overtones) to the perception of your audience?
16. Indicate, if possible, the frequency (approximate frequency - very often, often, rarely, almost never, never) of quoting programs / stories of Russian TV channels and their main characters / anchors in the media outlets of your country. How often do the journalists of your country’s media outlets use references to the Russian sources to give greater credibility and weight to their statements and materials?
17. Please, share your observations what examples of propaganda, what manipulations of public opinions have you found in the programmes monitored by you.
18. Does the regulatory body have the right to restrict the activities of national broadcasters who in the live regime incite ethnic hatred, call for the overthrow of the constitutional system, who promote the exclusivity, superiority or inferiority of persons on the grounds of their religious beliefs, ideology, based on the membership of a particular nation or race, physical or property status, social origin? Refer to the measures that can be used by the regulatory body.
19. Does the regulatory body have the right to restrict the activities of foreign broadcasters on the territory of your country if they in the live regime incite the ethnic hatred, call for the overthrow of the constitutional system, who promote the exclusivity, superiority or inferiority of persons on the grounds of their religious beliefs, ideology, based on the

- membership of a particular nation or race, physical or property status, social origin? Specify the scope of the authority of the regulatory body under such circumstances.
20. The above mentioned restrictions are regulated by:
 - The Conventions;
 - The Constitution;
 - The Law on TV Broadcasting;
 - Normative Acts/by laws of the regulatory body;
 - The other Normative Acts.
 21. Does the regulatory body have the right to suspend/restrict retransmission of the foreign TV channels in the cable network? Has it ever happened before? If yes, please indicate concrete cases as well as the legal grounds based on which such decisions have been made.
 22. The basis for the termination of TY channel broadcasting is the following:
 - The Court decision;
 - Decision of the regulatory body;
 - Other decision (please, indicate) _____Please, give concrete cases, if such exist.
 23. Have there in practice of the state authorities measures of restricting broadcasters' activities who in the live regime incite ethnic hatred, call for the overthrow of the constitutional system, who promote the exclusivity, superiority or inferiority of persons on the grounds of their religious beliefs, ideology, based on the membership of a particular nation or race, physical or property status, social origin? If so, how many times? When?
 24. Has your country been joined to the European Convention on the trans boundary broadcasting?
 25. Has your country regulatory body ever used the norms of above mentioned Convention for the restriction of the foreign TV broadcasters who in the live regime incite ethnic hatred, call for the overthrow of the constitutional system, who promote the exclusivity, superiority or inferiority of persons on the grounds of their religious beliefs, ideology, based on the membership of a particular nation or race, physical or property status, social origin? If so, how many times? If yes, how many times? When? What is the status of the Russian TV channels in your country (free access, retransmission of the Russian television channels via local cable network), or are they only available via satellite?

3. THE MEDIA SITUATION IN THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP COUNTRIES

Television remains to be the main source of political news in all six EaP countries the Eastern Partnership (approximately 80 per cent of people in the EaP countries use television as the main source of political information). As such, television is the most efficient method when it comes to influencing public opinion in foreign and domestic policy issues.

In Armenia, Belarus and Moldova, Russian TV channels are important players in the media field. In these countries, programmes of the leading Russian broadcasters are received freely (through terrestrial transmitters) – either based on intergovernmental agreements or through the so-called “hybrid channels” (NTV-Belarus, RTR-Belarus). In addition, they are also available on different local broadcasters. To various extents they are among the most popular media resources. Furthermore, dozens of other Russian TV channels are available to those who are subscribers of cable television services. For the majority of people in these three countries (above all it refers to Belarus and to a lesser extent to Armenia) there are no language barriers to getting information through Russian media. Moreover, the Belarusian audience chooses to watch TV programmes in Russian – 64,7 percent of viewers prefer having 100 percent Russian broadcasts, 32,1 percent opt out the bilingual broadcasts, with a half of them giving 75/25 preference to Russian.¹⁹

In the three other EaP countries, the role of the Russian TV channels is limited. In Georgia and Azerbaijan, Russian TV channels are accessible only through cable television, satellite antenna or Internet. In Azerbaijan, the signal of Russian TV channels is not broadcast via terrestrial transmitters since 2008. In Georgia, such broadcasting was terminated even earlier - in 2000. However, Russian-language channels constitute a majority of outlets available in the cable or satellite packages in Azerbaijan. While the measures to restrict Russian channels in Ukraine were implemented much later (in 2014), they also affected the cable providers who were instructed by Ukraine’s media regulator to stop transmitting a number of Russian TV channels.²⁰

More specifically, as of April 10, 2015, the regulator banned broadcasting of 19 TV channels claiming that it acted in the interest of “information security” and responding to calls from the National Security and Defense Council which said that the presence of Russian TV channels in Ukraine’s “information space” represented a threat to “national security” (“The First Channel. Worldwide network” (Pervyi Kanal. Vsemirnaya set), “RTR-Planet” (RTR-Planeta), “NTV-World” (NTV-Mir), “Russia-24” (Rossiya-24), TVCI, RBK-TV, “Russia-1” (Rossiya-1), NTV, TNT, “Petersburg-5” (Peterburg-5), “The Star” (Zvezda), REN-TV, Life News, Russia Today, “History” (Istoriya), “365 days” (365 dnei), “24 techno”, “World-24” (Mir-24), “The Country” (Strana)). TV programs of the broadcasters listed above are currently available in Ukraine only through satellite dishes or via Internet. However, the main Russian TV channels remain

¹⁹ Results of survey of the Centre of Systemic Business Technologies in 2014.

²⁰ See more at the web site by the National Radio and Television Council:
http://nrada.gov.ua/userfiles/file/2014/Zvitna%20informacia/Zvit_2014.pdf, page 8-9

available also through terrestrial transmitters and are the most important sources of information in Crimea and in the territories of self-proclaimed DNR and LNR.

In the EaP countries, only the main national TV channels generally have a higher potential audience than that of the Russian channels (in Azerbaijan, Russian TV stations compete also with Turkish television - TRT1 - which, unlike Russian, has a privileged position thanks to its inclusion in the digital TV social package. The Russian channels succeed in influencing the public opinion particularly in those countries where their broadcasting is not restricted. This is apparent in how people in the EaP countries perceive on what is happening in Ukraine as well as the confrontation between Russia and the West (especially, the US). In this respect, the EaP countries can be divided into two groups based on the extent of Russian propaganda' "infiltration" rather than on "geopolitical" principle (which countries did sign the EU Association Agreement and which did not).

According to studies conducted in Moldova, Russian media has the highest credibility among 15% of the population. By comparison, 13 percent of the population trusts Moldovan media and 7 percent Romanian.²¹ Answering a question on their opinion about the accession of Crimea by Russia, 59 percent of Belarusians opined that "it was a reunification of Russian lands with Russia, a restoration of historical justice" which was the official Russian version of the story pursued by the main Russian TV channels.²² Despite the lack of credible public opinion polls in Armenia, a number of experts and indirect indicators suggest similar attitudes towards the main Russian channels and their coverage of the conflict in Eastern part of Ukraine.

By contrast, in Ukraine (which belongs to the second group of countries), 72 per cent of the population considers Russia to be an aggressor in the above-mentioned conflict, with 56 percent considering this conflict to be an illegal invasion and military intervention by the Russian Federation.²³ In Georgia, which also experienced a military intervention by Russia in 2008, the public opinion is similar. According to a poll conducted by IRI (International Republican Institute) in 2015, 76 per cent of the population considers Russia as a threat, and 67% responded that Russian aggression towards Georgia is still ongoing.²⁴ In Azerbaijan, the position of the authorities is rather ambiguous as on one hand they support the territorial integrity of Ukraine and on the other hand, they are firmly against any "color" revolutions or promotion of democracy by the EU and the US.

It should be mentioned that the Russian media has a limited influence on this discourse. At the same time, there is a growing segment of Russian-speaking population (particularly in urban

²¹ The Barometer of Public Opinion of the Institute of Public Policy in October-November 2014 at: <http://www.ipp.md/?l=en>

²² A public opinion poll conducted by the Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies in March 2015 available at: <http://www.iiseps.org/analitica/829>

²³ A public opinion poll conducted by the Ukrainian Center for Economic and Political Studies named after Olexander Razumkov in March 2015 available at: http://www.uceps.org/ukr/poll.php?poll_id=1024

²⁴ http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/iri_georgia_public_2015_final_o.pdf

areas, first of all in Baku) consisting of a big number of Azerbaijanis returning home from Russia due to the economic crisis. Given the overall deficit of the local Russian-language media products, these people generally prefer the main Russian TV channels (available in the digital TV cable packages) as their information source. The last more comprehensive survey conducted in 2006 indicated that only some 10 percent of urban population use Russian channels as their main source of information. Despite the above-mentioned migration processes, this rate is unlikely to undergo significant changes, as long as certain factors favoring the reduction of Russian-speaking population are effective.

In Ukraine, Moldova (in her case the Romanian television also plays a role), Georgia and Azerbaijan, reporting by the main local media on the key local and global issues offers an alternative to the reporting by Russian channels and thus helps to “balance” their impact. The media in the countries which are members of the Eurasian Economic Union, Belarus and Armenia, are not able to balance the impact of Russian media as the leading local TV channels (with comparable viewership to the Russian channels) are to this or that extent constrained in covering controversial external political problems.

A similar divide can be seen in terms of the access to the foreign language media, representing an alternative to the pro-government Russian TV channels. In general, Russian-language channels that pursue an editorial line different to that of the Kremlin-backed channels, face certain restrictions in Azerbaijan, Armenia and Belarus. For example, TV Rain (Dozhd), and RTVI TV channels are only available via Internet which significantly limits the ability of Russian-speaking audience in these countries to receive alternative information. As for the TV Dozhd audience, it is watched primarily by people who are interested to obtain alternative information on events and issues happening in Russia. In Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova both above-mentioned channels are included in the cable packages. Moreover, in Moldova, TV Dozhd succeeded in obtaining a broadcasting license. TV Euronews (including its Russian-language version) is available in all EaP countries of six countries (through cable, satellite as well as Internet).

4. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR THE MEDIA (Regulation of foreign broadcasters)

Armenia and Ukraine

Ukrainian and Armenian media legislation contain similar provisions in terms of possible actions of national regulators (National Commission on Television and Radio of the Republic of Armenia and National Council for Television and Radio Broadcasting of Ukraine) concerning prevention of violations in the sphere of television and radiobroadcasting.

In case of violations, both domestic broadcasting laws²⁵ stipulate the procedure for application of sanctions. In such cases, regulatory body has to issue warning and in case of continuous violation other applicable sanctions are fine²⁶ and eventually revocation of the license²⁷.

The use of the broadcasting laws for countering propaganda (propaganda should be understood as information which incites interethnic hatred, calls for overthrow of constitutional order, promulgates exceptionalism, prevalence or deficiency of individuals on the basis of religious beliefs, ideology, belonging to a particular nation or race, physical or social status or social origin) is inefficient. The procedure for imposing warning, fine and seeking revocation of the license may take up to one year.

The situation in Armenia is more complicated since the country is not a signatory of the 1989 European Convention on Transfrontier Television.²⁸ Thus, its provisions are not applicable in the territory of Armenia. The regulatory body did not consider any case related to content of the Russian TV channels²⁹, neither *ex offio*, nor there were any official complaints submitted to the regulator on this matter.

Nevertheless, in April 2014, the Armenian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) issued a statement expressing its deep concern with the programmes and reports aired by *Russia 1* and *First Channel*, Russian channels that are rebroadcast in the Republic of Armenia on the basis of intergovernmental agreements, propagating xenophobia.³⁰ According to the statement, such phenomenon has become more evidential in the context of political developments around Ukraine.

²⁵ The 2000 Law on Television and Radio Broadcasting in Armenia and the 2006 Law on Television and Radio Broadcasting in Ukraine.

²⁶ Article 72 (10) of the Ukrainian Law on Broadcasting, the fines are assessed by the regulatory body with advice and consent of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine.

²⁷ In Armenia, the Law on Broadcasting in its Article 61 (1) requires doubled violation of the law before within a year before the regulatory body is entitled to seek revocation of the license.

²⁸ Ukraine ratified the *Convention* in 2009.

²⁹ Since 2010, there are 3 local channels that fully (only inserting Armenian advertisements) and directly rebroadcast *Russian First Channel*, *Russia 1* and *Russia-Culture*,

³⁰ Available at http://ypc.am/2014/04/?bulletin_id=45871&lang=en

The initiative followed an official complaint by the Ukrainian Commission for Journalistic Ethics against the political programme ‘*Weekly News*’ (“*Vesti Nedeli*”) aired by Russia 1 on 8 December 2013 and its anchorman Dmitry Kiselyov. In its response from February 2014, the Russian Public Collegium for Press Complaints characterized the disputed programme as “*propagandistic in style*”, “*with fake video footage*”, “*low quality, at times offensive*” material which “*does not contribute to trust between nations*”.³¹

In Ukraine, its regulatory body, the National Council for Television and Radio Broadcasting (NatsRada), declared that Russian television programmes do not meet the requirements of the Convention. As a result, the regulatory body on 11 March instructed all cable operators to stop transmitting a number of Russian channels, including the main state-controlled broadcasters. On 25 March, in a follow-up to the complaint by Natsrada, the Kyiv’s District Administrative Court ruled provisionally to suspend *First Channel-Global Network*, *RTR-Planeta*, *NTV-World*, and *Russia-24*, and expanded on TVCI channel in July. Additionally, on 19 August, the Interior Ministry banned the fourteen channels - including news channels *Russia Today* and *Life News* - for “*broadcasting propaganda of war and violence*”.

As a result of above-mentioned decisions and rulings, the following Russian channels were banned from broadcasting in terrestrial and cable networks: *First Channel*, *Global Network*, *RTR-Planeta*, *NTV-World*, *Russia 24*, *TVCI*, *Russia-1*, *NTV*, *TNT*, *St. Petersburg 5*, *Star*, *Ren TV*, *RBK TV*, *Life News* and *Russia Today*.

During the course of Russian aggression in Donbas, Ukrainian lawmakers, however, developed additional legal tools allowing countering Russian propaganda. In August 2014 President Poroshenko signed the Law on Sanctions enabling to restrict or suspend telecommunication services and the use of public telecommunication networks for foreign states, foreign private or legal persons and other agents threatening Ukrainian national security, sovereignty and territorial integrity. These restrictions could be imposed through a Presidential decree following their adoption by Ukraine’s National Security and Defense Council.

In February 2015 Ukrainian Parliament (Verkhovna Rada) banned the broadcasting of Russian movies/serials produced after 1 January 2014 and popularizing armed forces or law enforcement agencies of the country that is seen as aggressor. This was adopted through the amendments to a set of Ukrainian laws relating to protection of Ukrainian television and radio information space.

On the New Year Eve 2015 Ukrainian television channel Inter aired a TV show with participation of a number of Russian signers openly supporting Russian annexation of Crimea and the actions of militants in Donbas. This provoked serious discontent among Ukrainian public and raised demands even to close the TV channel. On 15 January 2015 responding to the

³¹ The decision is available at <http://www.presscouncil.ru/index.php/praktika/rassmotrennye-zhaloby/3007-zhaloba-na-vesti-nedeli-s-dmitriem-kisilevym-iz-za-osveshcheniya-evromajdana?showall=&start=9>

case, Natsrada, the Ukraine's broadcasting regulator, issued a warning to Inter. On 2 April, the sides reached voluntary settlement, with the regulator withdrawing its warning in response to the broadcaster's promise to control its editorial policy aimed at avoiding broadcasting of materials that incite hatred and humiliate the dignity of Ukrainian people.

The above-mentioned legislation changes and the precedent significantly clarified state information policy to prevent disseminations of Russian propaganda in Ukraine via different communication channels including films and entertainment programs.

Azerbaijan

Legislation of the Republic of Azerbaijan regulates all aspects related to establishment of the mass media in the territory of the country by foreign entities. For these purposes, broadcasting of foreign TV and radio channels on national frequencies is considered equal to their establishment.

The 1999 Law on Mass Media in its Article 14 reads that "*Establishment of the mass media in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan by foreign legal entities and individuals is regulated by interstate agreements*", while the Article 51 provides that "International cooperation in the mass media sphere is exercised in accordance with the *interstate agreements*".

If the procedure for broadcasting of the foreign mass media is not provided for in an interstate treaty, a separate permit (license) from an executive body is required.

Thus, the 2002 Law on Television and Radio Broadcasting (the Law on Broadcasting) in its Article 14 stipulates that "*In Azerbaijan TV broadcasting without borders is regulated by international treaties, to which the RoA is a party. A foreign TV and radio broadcaster willing to broadcast its programs in the territory of the RoA has to take part in a competition pursuant to the established procedure to receive a special permit (license). A foreign TV and radio broadcaster who has won the competition... signs an agreement with the respective executive body*".

The practical application of these laws has led to the termination of broadcasting of Russian channels on the national frequencies in Azerbaijan.

In January 2007, the regulatory body, *the National Council on TV and Radio Broadcasting* (National Council) announced that Russia was asked to prepare a new interstate agreement so that such TV channels as *First Channel* and *RTR-Planeta* could continue to broadcast on Azerbaijan frequencies. The principal condition for signing this agreement was to ensure the parity of the parties: in other words, *First Channel* and RTR could broadcast in Azerbaijan only if the national (*AzTV*) and public (*ITV*) TV channels of Azerbaijan could broadcast in the territory of Russia.

In July 2007, the National Council decided to stop broadcasting of the Russian TV channel, *First Channel*, on its national frequencies. Discussion of broadcasting of the RTR channel was postponed since the work of the bilateral commission on the agreement on mutual broadcasting. It ended ineffectively, and on 1 January 2008 RTR also disappeared from the Azerbaijan air. The National Council Chair, Nushiravan Magerramli, said that among all foreign companies, only a Turkish channel, TRT1, can be broadcasted in Azerbaijan since, in accordance with the interstate agreement, Turkey provided for the respective right of *AzTV* to be aired in its territory.

Therefore, since 2008 programs of Russian channels in Azerbaijan can be received only on satellite television; and in paid packages offered by cable television operators.

On 1 January 2015 Azerbaijan completed the transition to digital broadcasting. The only social package includes 9 local and one Turkish (*TRT1*) channels that are broadcasted openly and free of charge. All other foreign channels are encoded and included in the paid packages. Through the *Azerspace-1* satellite, before the end of 2014 there were 117 TV channels that were mainly included in these packages: 43 Russian, 35 Georgian, 12 Azerbaijani, 11 Turkish, 6 Ukrainian, 4 English-language, 2 Afghan, and 1 Persian TV channels. However, since the end of 2014 Ukrainian channels began to leave the European ray of *Azerspace-1*. This is explained by the financial problems they encountered. As of today, this satellite broadcasts only three Ukrainian channels - *Central Channel (KDRTRK)*, *ChePe Info*, and *Culture*.

From the very moment of its creation (March 2003), the self-regulation body of Azerbaijani mass media – the Press Council – has never discussed the problem of the observation of professional norms in the materials of Russian media related to the neighboring states, including Azerbaijan.

There are no grounds to discuss a serious influence of Russian TV channels on Azerbaijani broadcasters at the present stage. No individual Russian TV programs are demonstrated on Azerbaijan channels. According to the Rules set by the National Council in January 2008, broadcasting in the country, with some exceptions (special educational programs, programs for national minorities) has to be done only in the native language. As such, since then, feature and documentary films in foreign languages may not be shown on television. In May 2012, the National Council suspended demonstration of foreign TV series on local channels at the pretext of development of local television production.

TV channels in the country are controlled by the executive branch, and the oversight of the regulatory body (the National Council) is growing. In such conditions, seepage of foreign materials with a serious propagandist load into the national air is virtually impossible. At the same time, foreign legal entities and individuals cannot influence the contents of the news and political programmes even through sponsorship by buying air time. The Law on Broadcasting prohibits this and provides for strict punishment for violation of this norm, up to the closure of a channel.

Russian mass media, especially TV channels, are not an important source of information for Azerbaijani TV, its interest in the Russian sources is events-related.

Belarus

In Belarus, all leading Russian channels are available, including *RTR-Planet*, *First Channel*, *NTV*, *Russia 1*, *Russia 24*, *REN-TV* and others. They are included in the packages of cable television operators, broadcast by satellite TV, and some of them are in a terrestrial domain. Furthermore, *NTV-Belarus* and *RTR-Belarus* (which are versions of Russian TV channels) are registered as legally Belarusian TV channels. The Ministry of Information included these two channels in the must-carry package (mandatory, generally accessible list of TV programs that each cable television operator must broadcast to all subscribers) as well as in the first free-of-charge digital multiplex. Among the eight TV channels included in the mandatory generally accessible package and the first multiplex, four (excluding *NTV-Belarus*, *RTR-Belarus*, *STV* and *Mir*) broadcast Russian news and current affairs programs. The level of influence of Russian TV channels (including their 'hybrids' *NTV-Belarus* and *RTR-Belarus*, which transmit the Kremlin's position) is generally very high.³²

Belarus is not a signatory of the European Convention on Transfrontier Television.

Belorussian regulator is the Ministry of Information. When a grave violation by a broadcaster of legislation or of license terms is found (such violations include, inter alia, broadcasting of a TV or radio program containing information, publication of which is prohibited or restricted by law, including those mentioned in the question), the Ministry of Information has a right to use an extrajudicial procedure to terminate its broadcasting license. Furthermore, the Ministry of Information may take legal action on termination of a license after the broadcaster has received two warnings (regardless of the subject) within a year, or after a single violation of the TV broadcasting procedure.

Foreign broadcasters carry out their activities in Belarus on the basis of a license issued by the Ministry of Information (if their products are broadcast in Belarus with the unchanged form and contents). The Ministry of Information has a right to make a decision on cancelling the permit if the foreign broadcaster's products do not meet the requirements provided for receiving the permit (including the requirement concerning the absence in such products of data and materials harmful for the national security, aimed at propagating war, violence, cruelty, extremist activities, etc.).³³

³² The procedure for obtaining broadcasting license for local broadcasters is regulated by the Decree no. 456 of the President of the Republic of Belarus from 2013.

³³ The specific requirements and conditions are regulated by the 2008 Law on Mass Media.

The grounds for termination of channel broadcasting are the regulator's decision (the Ministry of Information). However, activities of any foreign broadcaster were terminated due to dissemination of the illegal content. With regard to Belarusian broadcasters, there was a case in 2011 when broadcasting of FM-radio, *Autoradio*, was terminated on the grounds of its alleged calls for extremist activities. The calls for extremist activities, in the opinion of the Ministry of Information, were the words said during the election campaign (in the commercial block) by one of the presidential candidates, "*The country's destiny is decided not in the kitchen, but on the square*"

Foreign TV channels may be re-broadcasted in cable networks also on the basis of a permit of the Ministry of Information. In 2014, the procedure for activities of cable television operators was changed resulting in termination of re-broadcasting of a number of foreign TV channels (including Ukrainian *Inter+* and *1+1 International*) until they receive a new permit from the Ministry of Information. Up to date, neither of two Ukrainian channels was re-introduced into the cable packages.

Georgia

While Georgia in 2003 signed the European Convention on Transfrontier Television, the document has not been ratified up to date.

In accordance with the 2004 Law on Broadcasting, its Article 56 (Programming Limitations) states that is prohibited to broadcast

- "*any type of war propaganda*";
- programmes "containing the apparent and direct hazard of inciting racial, ethnic, religious or other hatred in any form and encouraging discrimination or violence toward any group";
- programmes "*directed to offending or discriminating any person or group on the basis of disability, ethnic origination, religion, opinion, gender, sexual orientation or any other feature or status, or highlighting this feature or status, is prohibited, except the cases when this is necessary within the context of a program and aims at illustrating existing hatred*".

In case of violation of the legal requirements, broadcaster's failure to fulfill the decision of the media regulatory body, or in case of violation of the license conditions, the regulatory body, *the Georgian National Communications Commission (GNCC)* is entitled to adopt sanctions in form of the notification (warning). It should be noted that in case of violation of the above-mentioned Article 56, the complaints should be dealt with by respective channel within its self-regulatory mechanisms (the Law on Broadcasting obliges all the broadcasters to establish such procedure).

The GNCC has the right to adopt also fines and eventually also to suspend or revoke the license. However, the suspension of the license could be applied only if a license holder was found in breach of legal requirements or license conditions and other sanction (a written warning or fine)

has been already used. The basis for revocation of a license may be if a license is suspended for more than 3 months or 120 days intermittently within one calendar year (Articles 73-74 of the Law on Broadcasting).

The Law requires broadcasting license for all channels aiming to operate within a terrestrial or digital domain (except of the public service broadcasters). While the parliament considers related proposals, the existing legislation does not stipulate any legal mechanism to limit foreign channels available on the Georgian territory within cable networks except the requirement that cable operators must provide to the GNCC contracts with the channels included in their cable packages on the territory of Georgia.

Currently, Georgian mainstream TV channels do not use Russian broadcasters as their sources. However, some smaller television and online networks, known for their anti-Western propaganda, often source Russian media.

Moldova

Regulation of television and radio broadcasting is implemented by the media regulator – *the Broadcasting Coordinating Council (BCC)*.

Moldova in 2003 ratified the European Convention on Transfrontier Television, in addition, there is the 2006 Law on Broadcasting and, the Constitution contains Article 32 regarding freedom of expression and prohibition to abuse this freedom. In case of violation of rights and freedoms through media the criminal code prescribes sanctions in the form of penalties.

In April 2014, The BCC, Moldovan media regulatory body monitored the content of five TV channels (local broadcaster *Prime TV* that rebroadcasts *Russian First Channel*, local broadcaster *TV 7* that rebroadcasts Russian *NTV*, and broadcasters *RTR Moldova*, *Ren Moldova* and *Russia 24*) that air media content produced in Russia. Based on the findings of its monitoring, in July the BCC decided to suspend until the end of the year retransmission of *Russia 24*, a Russian company that operates on basis of a retransmission authorization (provided by BCC).³⁴

At the same time, it applied sanction mechanism (warning, fine) to *Prime TV*, *TV 7*, *Ren TV Moldova* and *RTR Moldova*, the channel that operate under the jurisdiction of Moldova for violation of the Law on Broadcasting, The regulatory body stated that provisions concerning pluralism of opinion and the obligation to inform the public in a correct and balanced way. According to BCC findings, most news reports and political shows produced in Russia and rebroadcast in Moldova by above-mentioned channels were biased, manipulative and promoted only one point of view regarding the conflict in Ukraine.

³⁴ As of 1 January 2015, the channel is again available for the viewers.

At the beginning of April 2015 the ruling coalition proposed amendment to the Law on Broadcasting aiming to strengthen informational space of the country. The draft law, created as a direct legislative answer preventing dissemination of nowadays Russian propaganda was criticized by the civil society and the media, in particular provisions aimed at regulating conduct of TV talk-show moderators.

5. MONITORING FINDINGS

5.1. Quantitative analysis

5.1.1. Monitored subjects

First channel

First channel devoted the bulk of its prime time news coverage to the activities of state authorities. More specifically, President Putin received one hour and twenty-seven minutes of the coverage. Seventy seven per cent of this coverage was positive and twenty-four was neutral. The next most covered monitored subject was the government which was given some fifty two minutes of the coverage which was portrayed mainly in a positive and neutral manner. The two above-mentioned subjects also received the biggest amount of the direct time. In addition, Prime Minister Medvedev received almost twenty-two minutes of exclusively positive and neutral coverage. By contrast, representatives of the Russian opposition received a combined total of less than 3 minutes.

As for the coverage of subjects linked with the conflict in the Eastern part of Ukraine, representatives of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) obtained almost eighteen minutes of overwhelmingly positive and neutral coverage (only 3 per cent of the coverage was negative). In sharp contrast, official Ukrainian authorities and institutions were portrayed in a negative way. For example, President Poroshenko was allocated some seventeen minutes of the coverage more than half of which was negative. The only other subjects to receive more critical coverage were USA and Ukrainian army. As a rule, while coverage different subjects engaged in the conflict, First channel gave opportunity to speak directly on camera only to the representatives of separatists and hardly ever to the other side of the conflict. As such, the coverage of the conflict on the First channel was one sided and heavily biased.

Russia 1

Similar to First channel, Russia 1 also devoted most of its prime time news coverage to President Putin (one hour and thirty-three minutes) and the government (one hour and twenty-nine minutes). This coverage was almost exclusively positive and neutral. The next most covered subject, which also received mainly positive and neutral coverage, was the Russian army. By

comparison, representatives of the Russian opposition were largely ignored. The only exception was the coverage of the opposition leader Boris Nemtsov who was murdered on 27 February and both monitored state-controlled channels devoted coverage to the events surrounding his killing and consequent funeral.

Russia 1 was also heavily biased in its coverage of the conflict in the Eastern Ukraine – by providing exclusively positive and neutral coverage to representatives of DNR on one side and giving mainly negative and neutral coverage to Ukrainian authorities and institution. For example, Ukrainian president Poroshenko received almost twenty-eight minutes of the coverage. As much as sixty seven per cent of this coverage was negative. Other subjects to receive more substantial critical coverage were USA, Ukrainian army and Ukrainian ruling coalition. Moreover, while representatives of DNR and also Russian authorities had a direct opportunity to comment on the situation in Ukraine, such advantage was not given to representatives of the Ukrainian authorizes and institutions involved in the conflict.

NTV

The privately owned NTV (which is controlled by the state-owned company Gazprom Media Holding) adopted a similar approach to the two state-controlled channels. However, unlike the First channel and Russia 1, NTV allocated most of its prime time news coverage to the activities of representatives of DNR. This coverage was mainly neutral and positive. The next most covered subjects were President Putin and his government receiving respectively forty-three and twenty-eight minutes of the coverage which was overwhelmingly positive and neutral. In sharp contrast, the Republican Party of Russia – People’s Freedom Party received only some thirteen minutes of mainly negative and neutral coverage (mainly in connection of Nemtsov’s death).

Similar to the two state-controlled channels, NTV allocated mainly negative coverage to the Ukrainian president and the Ukrainian army.

Russia Today

While Russia Today demonstrated a similar pattern of political favoritism towards the incumbent Russian authorities, it also showed a slightly different approach. First channel, Russia 1 and NTV are mainly focusing on the domestic audience in Russia, whereas Russia Today is mainly targeting international viewers, particularly in USA and in the European Union. As such, the bulk of the channel’s coverage was devoted to the above-mentioned international subjects. This coverage however was very negative – as much as seventy three per cent was negative (the total time devoted to the coverage of the United States and their representatives was one hour and thirty-five minutes).

Euronews (Russian Service)

The viewers of the Russian language version of Euronews were offered a very different picture of the international and local issues related to Russia and Ukraine. While the channel also devoted

to the bulk of its coverage to USA and the European Union, this coverage was predominantly neutral. All other monitored subjects received insignificant coverage, with the Russian and Ukrainian presidents getting some ten and seven minutes of the coverage respectively. While the coverage of Mr. Putin was mainly positive, the coverage of his Ukrainian counterpart was mainly neutral.

TV Dozhd

One month of monitoring of TV Dozhd showed that this channel is pursuing an editorial line which is very different from the official Russian channels which are controlled by the authorities. More specifically, the channels devoted the bulk of its coverage to the activities of the Republican Party of Russia – People’s Freedom Party (in total, they received more than four hours of the prime time news coverage). This coverage was predominantly neutral and positive. By comparison, the channel allocated more than one hour to President Putin and little less than hour respectively to both central and local governments. Their coverage was also mainly neutral. It should be noted that the coverage of the Republican Party of Russia – People’s Freedom Party was mainly in connection with the murder of the party leader Boris Nemtsov. This topic received the biggest time on TV Dozhd (more than 4 hours and 19 minutes). TV Dozhd did not focus so intensively on the conflict in the Eastern Ukraine and did not demonstrate anti-Ukrainian bias noted on the four above-mentioned Russian channels.

TV RBK

The business-oriented TV RBK allocated most of its coverage to the activities of the Russian government (one hour and twenty six minutes) and the president (thirty four minutes). While the coverage of Mr. Putin was mainly neutral and positive, eighteen per cent of the government’s coverage was negative and thirty one per cent was positive. Prime Minister Medvedev received almost twenty minutes of exclusively positive and neutral coverage. By contrast, Ukrainian president and representatives of the EU received mainly neutral and negative coverage.

First Baltic Channel

The monitored Latvia-oriented edition of the news did not cover intensively the chosen monitored subjects and topics, but focused mainly on the local issues related to Latvia. As such, the only two subjects to receive any more significant coverage were the EU and the Republican Party of Russia – People’s Freedom Party. Their coverage was predominantly neutral. It should be however noted that the coverage of the Republican Party of Russia – People’s Freedom Party was mainly in connection with the murder of the party leader Boris Nemtsov.

5.1.2. The coverage of topics and top stories

The monitoring of topics on the ***First channel*** revealed that almost thirty two per cent was devoted to two topics related to Ukraine – conflict in Ukraine (14.7 per cent) and Ukrainian

political (17.1 per cent). By contrast, the channel allocated only 12.7 per cent to the Russian internal politics and four per cent to Russian economy & business. This clearly demonstrated that the First channel has been used as an instrument of propaganda in the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, diverting attention from important domestic issues and challenges (such as the problems with economy) and focusing instead on the conflict in Ukraine. The channel devoted very marginal coverage to important topics such as social issues (1.3 per cent), environment (0.2 per cent) or health care (1.4 per cent).

The most covered amongst top (hot) stories on First channel in March was the story named *Chaos in Ukraine* (receiving two hours and fifty five minutes), followed by the *World War II* (two hours and nine minutes) and only the third top story was the *Russian economy* (one hour and twenty one minutes). Four other topics in the top ten – *Minsk Peace Agreements*, *Crimea*³⁵ and *Separatists' Republics* and *Peace negotiations/talks* demonstrated overall focus of First channel on the conflict in Ukraine. The fact that significant coverage was devoted to a story *Western plot against Russia* (forty one minutes) showed that the Russian viewers have been constantly painted with a picture of West trying to attack Russia (the story *World War II* also serves that purpose and is aimed at stigmatizing the population with the possibility of a war and the need of Russia to protect itself against an external enemy).

Russia 1 adopted a similar approach to that of *First Channel* and devoted most of its coverage to foreign topics – conflict in Ukraine (19.6 per cent), Ukraine political (15.8 per cent) and Foreign affairs – political/other world (14.4 per cent). The domestic topics and issues were covered on a much smaller scale - business & economy (4 per cent), politics (9.2 per cent), social issues (0.7 per cent) and health care (0.6 per cent).

As for the coverage of main stories, the first four most covered ones were in one way or another related to Ukraine (*Chaos in Ukraine*, *Separatists' republics*, *Crimea* and *Minsk peace agreements*). Only the fifth topic was related to the Russian internal politics – *Nemtsov's murder*. In addition, only two other topics (in the top 10 most covered topics) referred to Russia – *Russian soldiers* and *Russian economy*.

While the most covered topic on **NTV** was also Foreign affairs – conflict in Ukraine (14.9 per cent), the next most covered topics were not linked with Ukraine - Foreign affairs – political/other world (13.5 per cent) and Foreign affairs – non-political (11.7 per cent). Substantial coverage was devoted to Crime (8.4 per cent) and insignificant to social issues or health care (respectively less than 1 per cent).

Unlike First channel and Russia 1, the top story on **NTV** was Russian economy – mainly related to the falling price for oil and the troubles with ruble. The next most covered stories in March were – *World War II*, *Chaos in Ukraine*, *Minsk Peace agreements* and *Separatists' republics*.

³⁵ Coverage of this hot story was partly influenced by one-week long anniversary of 2014 unification with Russia.

Given its above-mentioned format, **Russia Today** devoted more than eighty per cent of its coverage (devoted to topics) to the coverage of foreign affairs (foreign affairs – political/other world and foreign affairs non-political). The next most covered topics were linked with Ukraine – conflict in Ukraine (3.3 per cent) and Ukraine – political (2.6 per cent). As for the coverage of top stories, the first six stories were as follows: USA, Migrants in EU, Middle East conflicts, EU, Western media (*‘Western media are biased’*) and EU internal conflicts (*‘Europe is falling apart’*).

When it comes to the coverage of topics, the other monitored 24 hours news format - **Euronews** - devoted nearly ninety per cent of its coverage to two main topics - foreign affairs – political/other world and foreign affairs non-political. Three topics related to Ukraine amounted to only less than six per cent of the coverage. The top five stories on Euronews in March were – International relations, Crimea, Nemtsov’s murder, Minsk peace agreements and Separatists’ republics.

Unlike the other monitored Russian channels, **TV Dozhd** focused on topics related to Russia – politics (23.5 per cent), crime (19.6 per cent), culture (10.2 per cent), business & economy (6.5 per cent) and foreign affairs – political (6.3 per cent). Social issues (4 per cent) were devoted more attention than issues related to Ukrainian politics (foreign affairs – Ukraine political 3.5 per cent). As for the most covered stories, TV Dozhd devoted four hours and twenty-six minutes to the coverage of Nemtsov’s murder, followed by Crimea and Russian economy.

As a business-oriented channel, **RBK** gave 34.4 per cent of its topics-related coverage to business & economy, followed by politics (14.4 per cent) and foreign affairs – political/other world (13 per cent). The topic conflict in Ukraine was devoted only 4.8 per cent which is much less in comparison with the state-controlled Russian channels. Similarly, the story which was devoted most of the time on RBK in March was Russian economy, followed by Crime, Economic sanctions and Nemtsov’s murder.

As mentioned above, the **First Baltic Channel** was focusing on local issues in Latvia. As for the topics, it devoted most of its attention to the coverage of social issues (13.6 per cent), followed by politics (13.2 per cent), business & economy (11.1 per cent), culture (10.8 per cent) and health care (6.6 per cent). The most covered stories in March were: EU, International relations, World War II, Weapons in Ukraine and Economic sanctions.

5.1.3. Geographical coverage

As for this category, the most interesting aspect was to compare the actual share of coverage from Russia and Ukraine. 46.3 per cent of all the news on the **First channel** originated in Russia but as many as 36.6 per cent in Ukraine. The difference was even smaller on **Russia 1** – 39.3 per cent of news were from Russia and 38,1 per cent from Ukraine. In terms of total time, this meant that Russia 1 devoted as much as 14 hours of its news reporting to the coverage of

issues and topics from Ukraine. *NTV* adopted a similar approach although the actual share is biggest for the news originating from Russia (47.6 per cent) than Ukraine (26 per cent).

When it comes to geographical coverage on *Russia Today*, the channel presented a more diverse selection of countries – USA (17.5 per cent), UK (13.8 per cent), Russia (10.4 per cent) and Ukraine (8.7 per cent). The monitored Russian version of *Euronews* had news from different countries too – 8.6 per cent from France, 7.2 per cent from USA, 5.6 per cent from Ukraine and only 4 per cent from Russia. As for the geographical coverage on *TV Dozhd*, as much as 73.6 per cent of the news originated from Russia and only 9 per cent from Ukraine. Similarly, 62.2 per cent of the news on *RBK* came from Russia and only 5.9 per cent from Ukraine. By contrast, 76.3 per cent of the news on the *First Baltic channel* came from Latvia and 20.4 per cent from Lithuania.

The monitoring also focused on the type of the monitoring period, the First channel did not broadcast information related to either of coverage of Russia, Latvia and Lithuania on the *First channel* and the *First Baltic channel*. The news on Russia on the First channel was exclusively neutral or positive. During Latvia or Lithuania. As for the coverage of the three countries on the First Baltic channel, Latvia received the bulk of the coverage that was mainly neutral.³⁶ Interestingly, when it comes to the actual share of positive and negative news, there was more negative than positive news on Latvia on the channel. As for Lithuania, the share of positive and negative was similar (but the amount of neutral news was again the biggest). As for the coverage of Russia, it was insignificant.

5.2. Qualitative analysis

In developed media environment broadcast media are generally held to different requirements than are journalistic standards for print media. Since television frequencies could, in theory, be used by anyone with the proper technology, most countries have developed licensing rules to ensure fair allocation of portions of the television spectrum. In return, station owners assume certain public responsibilities regarding their broadcasting, as these broadcast frequencies are considered public property.

State owned television should be held to yet higher standards. In every sense these media outlets are the property of all the citizens of a nation. Citizens pay for these services through their fees and such media outlets have both legal and moral duties to serve the interests of the public at large, and not of any particular partisan, private or state interest.

Thus, besides the quantitative analysis, the monitoring methodology strived to focus, on more in-depth, qualitative analysis of the monitored news programmes, aired by selected Russian broadcasters. Qualitative analysis assessed the performance of selected media outlets against

³⁶ For monitoring purposes a programme ‘Latviskoe Vremya’ focusing on Latvia was monitored.

ethical and professional standards, such as balance, accuracy, timely, choice of issues, omission of information, advantage of incumbency, positioning of items, inflammatory language etc.

The findings showed that the main Russian broadcasters - *First Channel*, *Russia 1* and *NTV* as well as *Russia Today International* (oriented on the foreign audience) - in their March reporting failed to a considerable extent to provide the Russian citizens with an objective, fair and impartial view of global and local events and topics.

The media monitoring revealed that the above-mentioned channels in their evening newscasts demonstrated lack of balance, distorted, biased and incomplete information. The most alarming finding was the consistent practice of neglecting to air opposing views in numerous news stories. In fact, such approach appeared to be a usual part, the norm of the Russian state-controlled broadcasters.

Regrettably, such conduct violates all acceptable standards, both international and domestic, for the use of public resources. Analysis of the results highlighted blatant misuse of state-funded broadcasters that were utilized as propaganda for specific state interests. *First Channel*, *Russia 1* domestically and *Russia Today* internationally, as public institutions, apparently served the ruling authorities and partisan interests and failed to live up to a duty to citizens to report the news in a fair, impartial and objective manner.

The media monitoring identified numerous instances of unbalanced or distorted stories on state-funded channels, with *First Channel* and *Russia 1* accounted for more than half (altogether with *NTV* it was two thirds) of identified reports that breached basic journalistic standards. In fact, throughout the period of 1-31 March, media monitoring revealed more than 2,750 comments on possible breaches of journalistic standards, with most of the cases at state-funded *Russia 1* (more than 700 instances), *First Channel* (more than 600 instances), *NTV* (more than 400 cases) and *Russia Today* (more than 300 cases).

On the contrary, other monitored channels, foremost *First Baltic Channel* (but also *Dozhd TV* and *RBK*) in its reporting generally complied with journalistic standards. However, the monitoring revealed several reports that were at odds with basic professional standards, most notably with balance of the stories. There is a specific case of Euronews news channel reporting of which is based on shorter, continuously updated stories. As a result, the monitoring revealed many instances that lacked balance. At the same time, the broadcaster rather frequently omitted proper identification of sources.

Following are most outstanding examples from a selected period³⁷:

³⁷ For the purposes of this part of the report due to volume and for better illustration, the provided examples of breaches of basic journalistic standards that are commented in details represent one week of the monitored data, more precisely a period of 1-7 March (in case of First Baltic Channel from 2-8 March and in case of Euronews and RBK TV from 3-9 March). At the same time, the total quantitative data reflect the whole monitoring period (1-31 March).

Russia 1

The coverage of Ukraine basically equaled reporting on domestic Russian events (38 vs 39 per cent, the highest from all monitored channels). In numerous stories related to armed conflict in Ukraine or current political developments in Ukraine, the journalists completely ignored opinions of Ukrainian side, both official (authorities) and non-official (experts, civil society), while the views from representatives of so-called DNR and LNR were presented as regular practice. In addition, such approach was not limited to coverage of Ukraine, and in many cases it was utilized also for coverage of Western states, their representatives or ideas.

Also, quite one-sided and manipulative views were presented about Boris Nemtsov, with developments in the investigation of his assassination were presented and commented only by officials sources; while his personality and his past political career was generally marginalized.

Regrettably, beside frequent news reports that lacked the balance, the stories were quite often distorted and twisted into a different meaning, supported by selective use of sources or facts. Moreover, such approach contained subjective and partisan evaluations and assessments from the journalists, making it almost impossible for viewers to distinguish between facts and commentaries.

Lack of balance

- In spite of 12 sources, the opinion of Ukrainian side was not presented. [1 March]
- The news item informed about UN Security Council meeting, however only Foreign Minister Lavrov had a chance to speak and comment and conclude various discussed topics. At the same time, journalist made a lot of subjective remarks and conclusions about Ukrainian positions, however, there was no representative of Ukraine offered to speak. [2 March]
- The comment about current situation in Verkhovna Rada was given by Petro Symonenko, despite the fact that he was not anymore a parliament deputy. The report included sided comments and expressions, such as "*dictatorship of oligarch*", "*authority belongs to pro national and pro fascist people*", "*here even parliament is not a place for discussion*". At the same time, journalist used some footage of beggars and talks about terrible condition of Ukrainian economy.
- Journalist shows only pro-Russian side of population. Also in the part with President Poroshenko there are shown only negative views on him. At the same time an inflammatory language and subjective conclusions are used repeatedly: "Petia was spoilt and fat-ass child" [commenting on Poroshenko's childhood], "everything is destroyed there" (commenting on Ukraine), "*you can see abandoned villages... people abandoned them after the signing the agreement with EU*", "*Europe is not for us*", "*Without Russia we can not move on*", "*here nostalgia for common past like a hope for common future*" [commenting on Moldova] - during these words monument of Lenin is shown. [3 March]

- Ukrainian side was not presented, while other side (separatists) were supported by several speakers. In the course of the whole item, a journalist presented own subjective conclusions and used improper language: *"humanitarian catastrophes..."* "[Russian] *humanitarian aid is a last chance to stay alive for citizens*", *"they died for the freedom [on separatists]"*. Additionally, the video with happy children and citizens greeting Russian humanitarian aid was shown to support the report's line.
- Ukrainian side was not presented. Journalist used some undefined video with sign 'operative survey', however, the origin of the material is not disclosed. For a viewer it is impossible to see concrete details of the video, yet, the journalist affirms that the video shows Ukrainian army. Also, the journalist used several subjective conclusions and assumption: *"the next Kyiv official provocation"*, *"as if he is receiving instruction"*, *"I guess..."*. [5 March]
- The news item informed about peace talks of 'Normandy Four' in Berlin. While there were 4 different states, only views of Russian representative Grygoriy Karasin were presented. A subjective, anti-Ukrainian comment of the journalist was also aired. At the end of the news item, the journalist showed little picket organized in support to Russia with Russian flag and St. George ribbon. [6 March]
- The story was assassination of Boris Nemtsov. Journalist tried to sum up results of weekly investigation. However, the journalist presented only official point view. Reporter also made some subjective conclusions: *"the speed of investigation is visible"*, *"if statement is made by chief of Federal Security Service, then it is understood that they have got solid evidence"*, *"Is it chance or not? Investigation will show"*, *"in the nearest future we should wait for the new details of the murder"*. Additionally, while journalist and his sources omitted political version of the murder, it was stressed that first version of the murder was connected with Nemtsov's position on "Charlie Hebdo". The reported also developed on police skills: *"If to assume that Nemtsov was killed on this basis, then we should compare how snap into actions our police and French one [were brought]. In France suspects were killed. In Boston, after explosion, one suspect was killed other could not speak. In case with Nemtsov police arrested alive suspects..."*.
- The story was about the UN Security Council meeting. However, the report covered only Russian position with Mr. Churkin (Russian envoy to UN) accusing his American colleague Samantha Power, but her answer was not presented. At the same time, speech of Mr. Churkin was very emotional with several anti-US allegations: *"American legal system has never been notable for humanism. In Guantanamo you have been jailed people more then 10 years without accuses. They tried to make suicide, but you save them... And it is norm"*. [7 March]

Expressive, derogatory language

- ... *"bloody provocation"*, *"unprovoked political murder"*;
- ... *"panic"*, *"fear"*;
- ... *"they were seating with long face"*, *"scared faces of journalists"*;

- ...*“sickness of American society”*;
- ...*“blood, shooting and victims – all these things are deserved by Western media”*;
- ...*“the main witness is alive and it is more than strange”*;
- ...*“so-called analysts”*; [1 March]
- ...*“master of political provocation”*;
- ...*“dictatorship of oligarch”, authority belongs to pro national and pro fascist people”*; [2 March]
- ... *“Kyiv uses energy weapon against 4 millions people”, “theft of a gas by Ukraine”*; [3 March]
- ...*“[the Russian] humanitarian aid is a last chance for citizens to stay alive”*;
- ...*“they died for a freedom” - on fighters of so-called DNR/LNR*; [4 March]
- ... *“the next Kyiv official provocation”*;
- ...*“so-called Maidan technologies*;
- ...*“customers of the murder were American curators”*. [5 March]
- ...*“fascist revolution”*;
- ...*“we would not allow fascists to consolidate in Donbas”*;
- ...*“not everyone in America support fascist regime in Ukraine”*. [6 March]

Manipulative/biased reports

- During news item journalists used video and audio components in a manipulative way in order to illustrate offered conclusion – Orchestra was playing famous Soviet Union melody, women were crying, while at the background there was a flag with Lenin. At this moment journalist said: *“It is obvious that citizens really waited for insurgents”*. Moreover, at the beginning of the report, the journalist used undefined video. And at the end of the story offered to viewers subjective conclusions.
- News item appeared to be staged with very first frames playing sad, melancholic music while showing abandoned things and bible. [1 March]
- The news item was about severe problems of Ukrainian economy – with the narrative supplemented by footage of beggars. The journalist used a lot of subjective conclusions such as *“without Donbas Ukrainian economy would not last long”* with the main idea to present that Ukraine cannot exist without Russia. In addition, the journalist presented concept of federalization of Ukraine, alleging positive thoughts and approval of European politicians on this topic. As an example, former Austrian Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger was shown saying: *“I think it is good”*. However, there was no question given, so it is unclear what exactly he was answering to. [3 March]
- Journalist tried to ask Russian oppositional figure Kasparov as well as former Georgian president Mikhail Saakashvili, however, they refused to answer, with Kasparov reasoning it by: *“I give comments to mass-media, not to propaganda”*. The story turned into personal derogatory comments presented by journalists against the above-mentioned politicians:

"...*quest - performers with prefix ex,*" Ukrainian rakes", "...*weekly visits to the USA to make a bow and to beg for a weapon*". [5 March]

○ The news item informed about alleged files of the Ukrainian Ministry of Information declassified by the Cyber-Berkut group (pro-Russian hackers group). The report, focused on fights in Mariupol, was visibly biased, with only pro-Russian positions presented. In addition, it contained several distortions and factual mistakes – the journalists highlighted that the Ukrainian journalist were not welcome by citizens of Mariupol, with a footage from Ukrainian *Hromadske TV* shown as the evidence. However, the video was in fact made in Lugansk region. In another claim, the Ukrainian special forces were allegedly responsible for massive arrests and raids ("*mass raids on people who do not support this authority*", "*arrested tens of thousands of people*") – yet, in the aired illustrative video one could recognize the uniform sign 'спецназ' – the sign used by the Russian special forces. [6 March]

First Channel

Similarly to *Russia 1*, another leading domestic broadcaster showed in its political reporting very similar pattern. The coverage of armed conflict in Ukraine and current political developments in Ukraine was also extremely visible (36 per cent of stories were about Ukraine) - regrettably, reporting style was again openly biased and partial with ignored opinions of Ukrainian side (or representatives of the OSCE Mission). Also, quite one-sided manipulative views were presented about Boris Nemtsov – firstly, developments in the investigation of his assassination were presented and commented only by officials; secondly, when reflecting his political career, his critical opinions were either omitted or marginalized. In addition, there were several short one-sided stories concerning allegedly racially motivated brutality of the US police. There were several reports concerning the Russian economy, however, special and complicated terminology basically prevented ordinary citizens from grasping the content, in particular when facts were presented selectively.

Moreover, beside frequent news reports that clearly lacked balance, the stories were quite often distorted and again, similarly to *Russia 1*, presented in a manipulative way supported by selective use of sources, facts as well as archive footage or emotional music. Alongside, the stories regularly contained subjective and partisan evaluations and comments from journalists, ignoring factual concept of the news programme and making it intentionally impossible for viewers to distinguish between facts and commentaries.

Lack of balance

○ The story informed about troops withdrawal. However, while representatives of the Russian side and the separatists were shown in direct face-to-face interviews, there were no comments of the Ukrainian side. Many views were presented in a version "*as we were told the Ukrainian military,*" but there were no comments from military authorities themselves. The representative of the OSCE Mission were shown on Skype, views from the international

politicians were taken from Facebook or publications, which casts doubt on their accuracy. [1 March]. In other instances, there were no other views presented than those of so-called DNR/LNR representatives. [3, 6 March]

- Under the theme of international relations of Russia and Cyprus a theme of economic and political sanctions against Russia was discussed. There was a lot of information about the EU, including offensive tone and expressions against the EU, however, there were no opinions or comments from its official representatives. Also, the report claimed that the local Cyprian population blamed the EU sanctions for a drop of Russian tourists in Cyprus – again, the claim was not supported by any comments of local citizens. On the other side, emotional statements, such as "*little Cyprus challenged the big European home*" were aired alongside with beautiful footage from Cyprus - nature, sea, green and blue colors, soothing music. The basic idea was that Russia is uniting internal opponents of the EU. [1 March]

- In the reports about Kerry-Lavrov meeting on Ukraine, the US State Secretary is paraphrased "*He said something like...*" "*as if...*", while there were long quotes of Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Lavrov. According to the journalist, "*Lavrov said the US should use its influence with the President Poroshenko.*" However, the context in which such phrase was used was not presented. Ukrainian comments were not shown, despite the fact that the topic was purely a situation in Ukraine. [2 March]

- In the report about deterioration of food supplies, money withdrawal and alleged stop of pensions payments in the territories controlled by the so-called DNR/LNR, there were no comments from the Ukrainian side. Alongside, the story on problems with money withdrawal aired an emotional footage of an elderly woman, feeding a stray cat and selling her belongings since she did not receive a pension. [2-3 March] In another story (that was already 7th story in a row about Ukraine), all comments of Ukrainian side were taken from the Ukrainian media, however, from different situation and selectively, thus it was difficult to assess their relevance or context in which they were recorded. The story showed depressing footage of empty shelves alongside repeated message of increase in households' gas prices. Additionally, the report showed scuffle in the Ukrainian parliament and problems of Ukrainian banks to illustrate miserable economic conditions in the country. [3 March]

- The report informed about Russia-Italy highest-level meeting, concerning situation on Ukraine and economic sanctions against Russia. However, there were no opinions and commentaries from Ukrainian side.

- The item presented views of Anti-Maidan movement. However, the report resembled a PR material of movement activists rather than a news-item as it aired several openly biased positions: that Ukrainian Maidan is guilty of Boris Nemtsov's death, that Ukrainian authorities are responsible for it aiming to provoke revolution in Russia. There were no other speakers presented in the report.

- There was a report on bias of Western media, however, most of the item was devoted to events in Ukraine. Nevertheless, no Ukrainian opinions were presented. In fact, during a day there were four items aired, which were constructed around the theory ‘West against Russia’ – as a possible reasoning of increased Russian military expenditures. [5 March]
- The report presented biased anti-US views, with lot of attention given also to European Union. The leading line was based around the claim that most of Europe disagrees with the anti-Russian sanctions that are kept only due to the US pressure. However, the report did not bring any views from the US side.
- The report informed about Russia-Germany talks on Ukraine and the OSCE Monitoring Mission. However, neither the Ukrainian side, nor the OSCE representatives were presented. The similar approach was used in the report about talks of the Normandy Group. There were no comments of the Ukrainian side, while the negative commentary of the Russian side commenting the Ukrainian position was shown: “*According to words of the diplomat Ukrainian side plans to mislead the process...*” [7 March]

Manipulative/Biased reports (including Transparency problems)

- The report was about Ukrainian army, but it aired footage picture with controversial political personalities (daughter of Yulia Tymoshenko, Eugenia; Oleg Lyashko).
- The item showed financial collapse in Ukraine and how elderly people are affected by the crisis. In fact, it mixed together several different topics. The report used facts from Youtube, supplementing them with manipulative use of video and sounds (scary/dramatic music). In some other moments the footage from Youtube was presented as if it was aired by the Ukrainian TV channels. The report alleged that so-called "Financial Maidan" [there were protests in front of the National Bank, conducted by the people who took credits in foreign currencies, but are not able to pay them back due to the devaluation of Ukrainian currency. The week-lasting rally was eventually violently dispersed by the police. Later Minister of Interior admitted excessive use of force, resulting in the resignation of people responsible] was not presented in any of Ukrainian TV channels [however, it was aired in several channels, including terrestrial Channel 112]. Additionally, the item used other manipulative methods as it alleged that the protests in front of the Russian SberBank (which were shown) were taking place in Odessa in front of its National Bank branch. The source of the video was not presented.
- The report used term ‘*reliable sources*’ and it is not explained what sources are meant or why concrete sources are not mentioned. Additionally, the report referred to the Ukrainian sources, however, one of the sources was a journalist Lukyanenko who does not reside on the territory of Ukraine for several years, and while providing comments on the Ukrainian and Baltic journalism, he is a fiction writer with a pronounced pro-Russian position. [1 March]
- The report informed about the death of an old man at the Russian-Ukrainian border. While a journalist said that "*referring to the coming information*", there was no single source of

direct information. All the news is presented with the background of the Ukrainian border service, and few times it was noted that similar fatalities are caused by the misconduct of the Ukrainian border service.

- The report referred to the report prepared by the UN Human Rights Committee. It allegedly claimed that 6,000 victims [at the time it was the official number of all victims] resulted solely from the actions of the Ukrainian army, from the shelling of civilian areas. However, this claim was not supported by any direct speech of the UN representative. While there was no Ukrainian side presented, the Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov had a chance to offer his views. [2 March]

- A positive headline about the continuation of formal and informal relations between Russia and Belarus. Very pompous and positive picture with the camera focus, politicians setting as well as shining and celebratory hall. A negative one about the fact that Ukraine does not pay state employees in Lugansk followed the first headline. Compared with the previous, this headline offered very depressing picture - grey streets, empty shelves, destroyed houses, poorly dressed people.

- The report informed about the investigation of Boris Nemtsov's murder, stressing the importance and honesty of the investigation. The report appeared to create an impression that everything is done, in order to reassure citizens. There was only one source of information - the representative of the investigative team. However, the politician was rarely called by his name, instead often referred to as "he", "his", "politician". His image was not shown. Similar news highlighting the successes of the official line of investigation, as well as role of the President Putin was aired on 7 March. Within the latter report the actions of French and Russian special forces were compared – while in France, attackers in Charlie Hebdo terrorist attack were killed, “*our special forces worked effectively*”. Interestingly, while the information was presented on the press conference, there were microphones of only two major state channels (*First Channel* and *Russia 1*), suggesting that the event was specially created.

- The report accusing Dutch experts in incomplete assembly of evidence. However, it did not specify that the experts were unable to collect the evidence due to actions of so-called DNR representatives at the time. Many phrases began with “*so-called... European experts, Dutch experts*”. In this story, unlike the other about Ukraine, the territory controlled by the so-called DNR authorities is referred to as Donetsk region instead of DNR. [3 March]

- The report presented a view that American police kill mostly African Americans. However, there were no comments, the whole item was based on a narrative of journalist. [4, 7 March]

- There was a report informing on alleged responsibility of the Ukrainian power structures [siloviky] in mining of a bridge in Dzankov city in Crimea. The journalist used explicit expressions, such as “*Today the details of a scandal were revealed, the basis for which were laid down by the Ukrainian power siloviky*”, “*Ukrainian military didn't even try to cover their traces*”. However, no comments were presented from the Ukrainian side, the item only informed

that the channel sent a request to the Ukrainian border control with no answer received. On the other side, a detailed explanation was provided by the Spokesperson of the FSB (National Security Service) in Crimea [5 March].

- A commentary of the journalist on how the CyberBerkut (pro-Russian hacker group) obtained leaked plans of current authorities to psychologically influence Ukrainian citizens of Donbas. However, there was no opinion from the Ukrainian authorities presented. [7 March]

Clarity

- The report informed about problems of Russian currency. However, the accent was given on fall of Euro (even of the US dollar), rather than on analysis of Russian ruble. While there were only two local experts presented, their claims were supported by numerous general phrases, such as *“experts are estimating...”* *experts are proposing...”*, *“as said by experts...”*. The whole report was based on a specific, economical terminology that made it very difficult to comprehend its meaning by citizens without respective economical knowledge. [6 March]

Personal views, terminology of journalists

- ...*“In our view,” “we believe”;*
- ...*“Financial Maidan”*
- ...*“Insanity gets stronger”* [1 March]
- ...*“Prosecutor General of Ukraine, as it's here called...”, “The economic collapse in Ukraine is likely to be inevitable”.*
- ... *“But on our side for them (citizens of Ukraine) inconvenience end.”* [4 March]
- *In the report about blast in the Ukrainian mine, the first sentence of the journalist was “We won't leave you under hatches! Russia will help you!”.* [5 March]
- ... *“so-called...”, “...politicians of Ministry of Information don't like in Ukraine; they call it Ministry of Nepotism”* [5 March]

NTV

Invariably, also another domestic broadcaster presented in its political reporting approach that in many aspects contradicted basic journalistic standards and requirements for factual news reporting. The coverage of current developments in Ukraine was less prominent than in the newscasts of two main Russian broadcasters (26 per cent), however, the style was similar, with visibly anti Ukrainian bias, accompanied with ignored opinions of Ukrainian side (or representatives of the OSCE Mission). This broadcaster also aired a number of stories highlighting negative socio-economical hardships of current daily life in Ukraine combined with positive effects of humanitarian aid provided by Russia and facilitated by representatives of so-called DNR and LNR.

Also, the channel devoted significant attention to assassination of Boris Nemtsov, however, similarly to other channels it did not present full and impartial coverage of the events and subsequent developments – there was only the official sources presenting investigation progress; secondly, when reflecting his political career, his critical opinions were again either omitted or marginalized.

The regrettable conclusion for two main Russian broadcasters is also applicable for NTV – the broadcaster aired on a daily basis several stories that lacked balance and that were quite often biased and one-sided, by selective use of sources and facts.

Manipulative/Biased reports

- The story was about the investigation of Boris Nemtsov's death his personal and political life. The anchor tried to omit direct subjective judgments but in fact the report was full of personal assessments. Firstly, he tried to explain why there are no reasons to connect president Putin and government with the murder – Boris Nemtsov was not President's direct opponent as his support was far much lower. Much higher was likelihood that the murder was a provocation and in this regard the journalist mentioned opposition. The anchor also clearly pointed on Ukrainian model Duritska, Nemtsov's girlfriend, the first witness in the crime - putting a 'rhetoric question' "*who was leading Nemtsov to his death?*". While the story contained direct speeches of Nemtsov, they mostly concerned his personality, his appreciation for women, nothing was presented about his political activism. Though the journalist portrayed him as a "*sincere person*", he criticized his skills as a politician, saying that in for the Russian voters he remains "*an example about how not to rule*". The anchor also condemned Nemtsov for being "*involved in the civil war in Ukraine*", mentioning that Ukrainian president Poroshenko called him ally, thus insinuating an image of the Russia's enemy.
- In addition, coverage of civil society and opposition marching in commemoration of Boris Nemtsov was biased. The journalist with no evidence or provided arguments declared that some people came to the march in order to "*decide their own narrow problems or for self-PR*".
- A huge part of the item was dedicated to coverage of the way the army of so-called DNR/LNR use the artillery, weapons, and machines that was left by the retreating Ukrainian army – as if to persuade viewers that this was the main source of their military equipment, not the weapons from Russia. Also, the report further demonstrated that such equipment would be used primarily for civil purposes. [1 March]
- The news discussed economic situation in Ukraine - inflation and wages. In this regard neither experts, nor Ukrainian politicians were interviewed, only unsatisfied citizens. Ukrainian army and volunteer battalions were covered extremely negatively, being accused of robbery and other crimes. However, no evidence was provided. There was footage of so-called Ukrainian soldier threatening with a vulgar vocabulary to Ukrainian authorities to earn living for his family with the weapons. The story is about the grievances in Ukraine, its economic state of disaster - a direct speech of Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov who reproduces accusations that the Ukrainian government serves as the US marionette.

- The item presented business and economy overview – with a long narrative dedicated to the growth of social expenditures in the Russian budget. However, there was only a short comment in the end of the report about the inflation of Russian currency, oil prices and foreign investments in Russia. It sounded as if the channel wanted to present only positive side, while all negative trends were marginalized or ignored. [2 March]
- The report showed clearly selective use of sources, as all of them were used to support the statement that Ukraine is in the deep socio-economic crisis, as the result of the deeds of current authorities. For this purpose the quotations of Ukrainian expert Marunych (the Institute for Energy Strategies) as well as of the Polish Economy Minister were taken out of context. In addition, a secondary source (the Russian newspaper) was used to present the Bloomberg article about Ukraine. However, the used quotation "*Ukraine will never be able to pay its debts*" was not found in the original version of the article. On the contrary, the article offered ways how to help the suffering Ukrainian economy. In addition, the anchor referred to Ukraine as "nyezalyezhna" ('independent' in Ukrainian) – a word used towards Ukraine in a diminutive and disrespectful way. [4 March]
- The item reported about the programme aired by *Russia 1* in which members of Anti-Maidan movement discussed murder of Boris Nemtsov. While the claims that the murder was an attempt to bring Maidan to Russia were aired, the channel omitted investigation of Nemtsov and his team concerning presence of Russian army and equipment in Donbas. [5 March]
- The story informed about new findings (discovery of two suspects) in a Boris Nemtsov's murder, presented as the ultimate truth - the host called it "*success*" and "*substantive results*", and also expressed "*hopes*" that more details will be revealed. Meanwhile president Putin was covered as a guarantor of the investigation - it was his direct order to take this investigation seriously and the course of investigation is reported to the president. Several versions of the murder were presented, including "political provocation", however, none of them was connected with Nemtsov's own investigation of the presence of Russian army in the conflict in Donbas.
- The report informed about the death of an Afro-American young man allegedly caused by the US police. The item was presented in a way that echoed channel's tendency to show the USA as a country violating the human rights (a Fergusson case was mentioned alongside). The dead man was covered as a "caring and law abiding person", "*The killed man is a sacrifice of police despotism*" is heard from a person. [7 March]

Lack of balance

- Balance was regularly violated in the reports concerning the withdrawal of artillery under the Minsk Peace Agreement – in one report there was no representative of the Ukrainian side out of 9 presented speeches. [1-3 March]
- The stories about detention (for alleged participation in the Odessa fire in May 2014) of Ukrainian coalition deputy Oleksandr Honcharenko in Russia were presented in a very

manipulative and unbalanced way – in one report he was shown wearing a T-shirt with the portrait of Boris Nemtsov and the inscription "*Heroes do not die*", thus insinuating a connection between Nemtsov (Russian opposition) and current Ukrainian government. In the next report, the deputy or his party colleagues were not interviewed (his view is retold by the journalist), while his political opponents from Odessa were presented. As a result, he was portrayed extremely negatively. On the other hand, Russian policemen were shown very positively for their behavior to Ukrainian deputy. [1-2 March]

- The information on a humanitarian blockade by Kyiv was sounded with a result that the DNR authorities had to ask for a humanitarian aid from Russia. At the same time in all the reports the DNR/LNR so-called authorities are framed as legitimate government responsible for decision making in all the matters, including economic and social issues - repairing infrastructure, kindergartens, houses and others. However, in case of more serious problems in the region the blame is transferred and put invariably on the Ukrainian authorities.

- Item reported about the Brussels meeting concerning gas supplies to Ukraine. However, only Russian Energy Minister was interviewed. The Brussels meeting of the Minister was followed by the meeting with president Putin to discuss renovation of gas system in Russia. The president was portrayed as a huge political leader ordering that "*there should be no failures with gas supplies in Russia*". [2 March]

- In the stories regarding funeral of Boris Nemtsov and following investigations, the official authorities (of the president) as well as the representative of investigative committee were presented. However, there were no sources presented from the opposition or supporters of Boris Nemtsov on what they think about the crime or whether they have any alternative evidence or opinions. [3-5, 7 March]

- The report was about the blast in the Donetsk mine 'Zasyadko'. The journalist on spot cited "*official data*" about the casualties and about the rescue operation, however, it remained unclear what was the source. The reporter mentioned several threats from the Ukrainian army to the normal functioning of the enterprise, however, no evidence was provided. The item included direct speech of the so-called DNR authorities that they "*warned the mine's administration to stop the work because of the threats*". At the same time, there were no sources from the Ukrainian side. In another related report, a sharp critique towards Ukrainian authorities was presented, however, there was no reply showed. The report operated with various allegations and claims without proper indication of the source - "*Donetsk people say*" blaming the authorities for the civilian war victims; lack of the source stating the death toll. [4-5 March]

- The report was about the OSCE Mission and Russian representatives monitoring the situation in Donetsk airport. "*Monitors say that airport is the most problematic place...*", however, the viewer can see only Russian representatives. In the whole video the logo of OSCE monitors appeared once from far distance, with no direct speech presented. The only source was representative of so-called DNR, while no views from the Ukrainian voluntary battalions or regular army that controlled the airport for months were presented. [4 March]

○ Reports concerned the implementation of the Minsk Peace Agreement in so-called DNR/LNR concerned. However, as previously, the position of Ukrainian authorities or army were either not presented at all or were cited/paraphrased without identifying precise source. The same approach was shown in regards to the OSCE Mission. The report claimed that army of so-called DNR/LNR finished withdrawal whereas the Ukrainian army was just rotating, however, no independent sources from the OSCE Monitoring Mission were presented to support this version. In another report, the concept was similar, with information on the army of so-called DNR/LNR moving their artillery - "*We do everything for peace*", as said by the DNR Spokesperson Basurin. While the official position of the Ukrainian side is ignored, DNR authorities were framed in extremely caring and human light - acting in interests of DNR, leader of so-called DNR Zakharchenko, though injured and with crutches, congratulated women and bowed with his crutches in the sign of respect. The story is summarized by the anchor by "*Life comes back to peace in Donbas*". [6-7 March]

Patriotic rhetoric

○ Even in discussion of social issues, such as healthcare journalists induced patriotic rhetoric. They say that "*some Russian medicine is good for treatment but doctors are used not to trusting Russian producers and recommend patients the expensive imported medicine*". There is rhetoric to "*catch up and to outrun the West*". [1 March]

Russia Today

The broadcaster's mission appears to be a targeted reporting aimed at devaluating, undermining and challenging Western democracies with their life-style, liberal ideology, media and some other fundamental areas or iconic subjects. At the same time it focuses on selective criticism of their deeds that are almost as a rule presented as contradicting proclaimed aims and ideals. In most cases the coverage is driven by visible anti-American policy (as well as anti-Israeli, in particular anti-Netanyahu policy), while in case of the other Western countries of the European Union such approach concerns selected persons and situations.

The style used by the channel is frequently based on platform offered to various speakers and guests; whereas presented as independent, foreign experts or correspondents, are almost invariably in line with pro-Kremlin policy. This platform frequently serves as a channel to express stereotypes, derogatory, sarcastic and aggressive statements. Alongside, the channel presents a number of conspiracy-like theories, concepts and statements, presented as valid facts, including wide-spread portrayal of Russia as a victim of a Russophobia. At the same, the channel's reports often contained incomplete and biased information resulting in distortion of facts and manipulation of reality.

The following are selected instances that were at odds with basic journalistic standards:

Lack of accuracy, clarity and matter-of-fact

- The host indicated that "*Recent polls have indicated that only one percent of Russians trusted Nemtsov*", and later on, the "one percent support" argument was used several times by the host and by some of the speakers. However, neither details on the matter of polls nor the source were presented.
- The story on 'the bias of Western media' for "*seizing the opportunity to once again through mud at Russia, no matter how far from the truth*" was commented by Neil Clark [a regular contributor/columnist at RT with weekly publications and over 100 articles published on RT's website <http://rt.com/op-edge/authors/neil-clark/>]. [1 March]
- The item was about Israeli prime minister visit to the US Congress. While heavily critical of the Israeli PM in its report, the channel tried to say that Netanyahu was not welcomed, with only a few people supporting him and that despite the fact that his speech was applauded in the Congress, there is no real support for Israel in the US. [2 March]
- The item about the Ukrainian economic situation turned into the item on the adoption of Ukrainian budget [passed in December 2014]. The item was extremely critical, biased and sarcastic. RT journalist: "*The Ukrainians who have not yet done so are queuing up at the exchanges like the one behind me [no queues shown] in order to salvage what's left of their savings often paying rates that were put by the loan sharks, the mafia. The Shame!*"
- The 'Western media bias' and murder of Boris Nemtsov was commented by Dmitry Linnik, who works for Voice of Russia UK and Sputnik [the later was transformed into Sputnik News, also owned by the Russian Government and shares the editor-in-chief with Russia Today]: "*He [Nemtsov] has been picked up immensely by the local [UK] media. On their front page news, in the headlines, it is indeed a major and tragic event. But the way he is being portrayed gets things out of perspective entirely*". RT Host: *Is it accurate at all?* Linnik: *It's not accurate in a sense that he was not really a political figure of any standing. I mean look at the ratings he got 2,5% I think the best showing of his Right Forces party, so that's it. And then there is legacy, you know, with Nemtsov. Of course he was a Governor of Nizhniy Novgorod in the 90s under Boris Yeltsin and then he was first vice premier of the Russian Government and the legacy of those years ways heavily on the minds of many Russians who remembers those unpleasant, highly critical times.*" [3 March];
- The item is on the EU (largely German) and Western media reaction to the Nemtsov murder. The commentator for the item was Tony Gosling, who is presented as an investigative journalist [Mr. Gosling is in fact a columnist for RT (<http://rt.com/op-edge/authors/tony-gosling/>)]. The item was largely on the German Bundestag debate regarding Nemtsov's murder. The journalist started them item with a presentation of the statement of a Russian envoy to the EU who had said, that some of the reactions were "*pretty much cynical and self-serving and politically motivated at times*." Before airing direct speeches of German MPs, the RT journalist presents them as "*comments and some accusations leveled at Russia and President Vladimir*

Putin". After airing the statements, the host concluded, that while German MPs make accusations, investigations continue in Russia. Right after the item the RT host asked an 'expert' to comment on the statements and Mr. Gosling replied: *"I don't think that's the general feeling in Europe at all. This war of words is inappropriate."* The item continues on the accusation of Western journalists and politicians of being biased, when talking on the Nemtsov murder with a conclusion that US is to be blamed for that. *"And I've noticed that the cheerleaders for this tension and these accusations are right from the other side of the Atlantic. I think for actually decades it suited the US purpose to actually divide and rule in Europe, to actually put a split between Eastern and Western Europe and actually that's not in Europe's interest at all."* [4 March]

Dozhd TV

The broadcaster generally complied with basic journalistic standards. Nevertheless, there were news items when the reporting lacked balance, in particular when informing about murder Boris Nemtsov, with representatives of the official authorities often omitted or reduced to minimum. At the same time, the channel's journalists often used subjective expressions and assessments, the pattern incompatible with the factual news reporting.

The following are selected examples that were at odds with basic journalistic standards:

Lack of balance

- Although there were a variety of sources presented, the balance was lacking in the item. It appeared as if the aim of the coverage was to criticize the government's investigation of murder of Boris Nemtsov. There were no representatives of investigating governmental bodies, such as FSB (National Security Service). If the official opinion was mentioned, then as a remark rather than as full view. At the same time, however, journalists presented their own subjective comments. [2 March]
- In the similar report, there were no official comments. The coverage seemed aiming to undermine credibility of the government's investigation of Boris Nemtsov's murder. [3 March]
- The item was about a moment of silence for Boris Nemtsov ignored by coalition Duma deputies. However, the reporter quoted only opposition accused the coalition. [4 March]
- Formally, it seemed to be a balanced coverage with different sources, different versions presented, various opinions. However, during the whole report journalist tried to insinuate that the government-led investigation does not respond to reality by expressing his own opinion and by choosing comments of others. [7 March]

Personal views/commentaries by journalists

- In the report on investigation of Boris Nemtsov murder, the journalists presented their own subjective comments - *"it is hard to believe in this"*, *"it is quite possible that"*, *"it seems to me that"*. [2 March]; *"as I understood"*. [3 March]

- ... *"it seems to me that"*. [5 March]
- ... *"Me, myself, don't agree with such statement"*, *"The answer is obvious to us"*;
- ... *"It appears to me that this will not help, only make harm"*;
- ... *"I know that"*, *"I think that"*;
- ... *"I will try to guess"*. [6 March]

Transparency

- When referring to the mourning procession after Boris Nemtsov murder, unclear references as *"some sources"*, *"by some data"* were used. [1 March]
- In the report, the provided data are not supported by any official source. Also there were no specific names to understand to whom the journalist refers to. In another report, there were no clearly identified sources, instead terms like *"Expert say"*, *"someone thinks"* were used. [2-3 March]
- In the report, not sourced phrases like *"as Arabic media inform"*, *"experts concur"* were used. [5 March]

Clarity

- It is complicated to understand what the report was about as the journalist used metaphoric expressions such as: *"Heavenly nightmare has almost happened in the country. Forces of Heaven will rise between Ostakino Tower and her television nation"*, *"Because of indignation of Sun we could not see this. But Forces of Heaven didn't leave Russia"*. [5 March]

RBK TV

Similarly to *Dozhd TV*, the channel generally complied with basic journalistic standards. Still, while not in excessive volume, there were news items when the reporting lacked balance in the presented stories. Such approach was in particular noticed when informing about implementation of the Minsk Peace Agreement, with only official Russian representatives presented.

The following are selected examples that were at odds with basic journalistic standards:

Lack of balance

- In the item about EU-Russia relations concerning sanctions, there was only Russian side presented directly. The same approach was seen in the item on Belarus-Russia relations as.
- In the item about EU-Ukraine relations only a Russian expert was presented, while there was no one from Ukrainian or EU side.
- The item referred about implementation of the Minsk agreements. The Ukrainian authorities were not presented directly, with comments provided by Ukrainian experts. While

covering weapons removal and position of Ukrainian authorities, the reporter did not refer to any sources when presenting his narrative about "*party of war*." [3 March]

- In the item about governor who was charged with corruption, the reporter took comments only from the official political representatives. At the same time it omitted representatives of so-called non-system opposition, who regularly investigate corruption cases and present anti-corruption initiatives.

- In the item about murder of Boris Nemtsov only the official political authorities were presented directly (President Putin, Chairwoman of the Federation Council Matviyenko). There were no comments from opposition or independent experts. The only presented expert gave biased comments concerning USA and situation in Ukraine. [4 March]

- In the item about the current process of Minsk agreements implementation only Russian official representatives (President and Government) were presented directly. However, there were no direct comments from Ukrainian authorities, only from a Ukrainian expert. While there is also a Russian expert represented, he is affiliated with the Financial University under the Russian Government, thus not entirely independent. [5 March]

- In the items about military expenditures and funding of railway only views of the official authorities (president and government) were presented. No other views were shown.

- The report on Russia sanctions omitted one side of the story, while other view was supported by several speakers. In addition, the video footage was old, not corresponding to the presented case. However, the archive footage was not indicated. In addition, the moderator's conclusion was subjective and openly partial, while using derogatory expressions against not presented side. [6 March]

First Baltic Channel

The channel showed relatively balanced coverage of current political and socio-economical events, however, some noticeable patterns were discovered. For example, the broadcaster almost as a rule aired views and comments of only Russian-speaking community. The news program regularly reported on social issues and problems of socially vulnerable groups. At the same time, comments concerning state services were very often taken from retired Russian speaking people. As a result, the coverage seemed to be shaped in way that causes feeling of dissatisfaction with the government policy towards retired or low-income Russian speaking people.

While reporters strived to preserve the balance and provide objective information, their conclusions often contained subjective expressions, which affected perception of the whole message. In several instances, it was noticed that reporter used to rephrase speakers' words which, however, often contradicted to an original quotation or speech.

The following are selected instances of reports at odds with basic journalistic standards:

Transparency

- Reference to research without naming the institution which conducted it.
- Reference to 'official data' without naming the institution which delivered it. [2 March]
- No indication of the origin of the old archive video footage from Youtube. It is not clear what is shown on this video and how it corresponds to the topic of the item.
- It is reported about quality of administrative services for tax payers. Reporter refers to results of a public opinion poll according to which public opinion on that issue is mainly positive. Later reporter adds that 'off the record of the poll almost everyone scolds' this service and mentions several times, that users are dissatisfied with the service, without revealing any sources alternative to the poll.
- Reporter refers to local citizens' opinion but doesn't take any comment from members of local community talking only about 'rumours.' [4 March]
- The reporter refers to results of the public opinion poll but does not say who exactly conducted the poll. [5 March]

Focus on Russian-speaking community

- All comments of Latvian political experts are given in Russian. It remains unclear whether all Latvian political experts speak Russian or First Baltic Channel prefers to take comments only from Russian speaking speakers. [2 March]
- Reporter takes comments on household costs which are claimed to be too high for retirees and families with children. Comments are given by passers-by, but exclusively by Russian speakers. [4 March]
- Cultural reports covered only events related to Russian speaking cultural community, and passers-by comments were also given only in Russian. [5-6 March]
- On the celebration of Women's day comments are taken only from Russian speaking visitors. [8 March]

Subjective assessments by the journalists

- The whole report was generally objective but at the end there was a subjective conclusion about Latvian 'inner economical and political discord' which can prevent economical development of the country. [2 March]
- After presenting politicians' controversial comments on the issue journalist ends his report saying "*It can be hardly understood what is going on in the corridors of power*". In fact, that should be the journalists' role. [3 March]
- Talking about new sanctions on Russia the reporter adds that "*according to the congress participants, the fact, that sanctions are dangerous first of all for the local [Latvian] entrepreneurs, should not be taken into account*". However, none of quoted participants expressed such position.
- The reporter refers to results of the public opinion poll but does not say who exactly conducted the poll. Because of intonation and specific vocabulary (a title '*Be of not to be a national president?*') the report gave an impression that Latvian citizens want their country to be a presidential republic, however, there were no supporting evidence for such claim. [5 March]

Incomplete coverage

- From the whole agenda of 'Forum of Non-Governmental Organisations' reporter mentioned only growth of euro-skepticism. [3 March]
- The report was about a picket near the Russian embassy in support of Nadejda Savchenko (imprisoned Ukrainian pilot accused of murder of Russian journalist), however, the news item was very brief without interviewing of protesters, experts or additional background information. [6 March]

Euronews (Russian edition)

The broadcaster, comparing to other monitored channels, has different programming structure and at the same time it is primarily focused on worldwide coverage, rather than on particular country events. However, as it's oriented also on Russian-speaking community via its Russian-language broadcasting version, the monitoring also aimed to evaluate its compliance with basic journalistic standards. The channel offers to its viewers another reporting style with numerous short blocs of news, rather than one principal news-bulletin. Yet, it is evenly important to strive to preserve professional standards so the viewers are able to form their opinions objectively.

However, the monitoring revealed that on numerous occasions the news blocs presented only one source of information, without details or information on other sides concerned.³⁸ At the same time, in many cases the reporting used data without proper indication or referred to undisclosed sources, thus questioning transparency and credibility of own reporting. While the channel's informational structure is based on permanent and regular update throughout the day, the monitoring data showed that several reports lacked balance in various segments of the day.

The following are selected instances that were at odds with basic journalistic standards:

Lack of balance

- The story was about funeral of Boris Nemtsov. Not all sides were presented in a proper way. While a full quote of president Putin was presented, there was no information from ordinary citizens, his political supporters or opponents.
- The news item was about a new bill in Greece. It was not balanced, with only one side presented - authorities, no other points of view were disclosed (people, experts etc.).
- The news item was about Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The report appeared to be biased against him – the title of topic was "*Netanyahu: fears and lies*", a reporter's distancing attitude could be traced in his voice tonality and wordings. Also a use of not

³⁸ There were a number of such instances from reports covering fights in Iraq, with lacking views from ISIL representatives. While it is universally recognized that the war reporting poses bigger challenge to the journalistic standards, they should not be entirely omitted.

transparent sources was indicative -"*many began to listen to Netanyahu less*". Similar not balanced approach was observed also in report on anti-Netanyahu's demonstration from 8 March.

- The news item was about Uber protest in Belgium. Only protesters and no other sides (such as authorities) were presented. [3 March]
- The story was about planned execution of 2 Australians in Indonesia. Only a side of Australian authorities was presented, while there were no comments from side of Indonesian authorities. [4 March]
- The report informed about inquiry concerning death of Argentinian prosecutor Alberto Nisman. There were no opinions of officials. [6 March]
- The report was about increased number of ceasefire monitors in Ukraine. However, there were opinions of Ukrainian officials to confirm the agreement. [7 March]
- The report on investigation of Boris Nemtsov's murder. The information was basically presented from one side. While the report was later expanded with opinion of one defendant's mother, the impression that the defendants are guilty was supported by not sourced information on guilt admitting. Additionally, there were unnamed sources used as well as some facts were presented without sources. [7-8 March]
- The report from Greece concerning possible referendum if there is no financial deal reached with the EU. However, there were no opinions of the EU side. [8 March]
- The report informed about Russian President Putin speaking about Crimea's secret operation. While the president could be seen as the savior of the Russian people in the Crimea, there were no opinions from other sources presented. [9 March]

Transparency

- The news item was about speech of Benjamin Netanyahu in the US Congress. The journalist provided data from the social survey, but did not clarify basic data concerning the survey.
- The story was about reopening schools in Liberia. However, the information provided by the journalist about the reduction of the Ebola virus cases ("*has been reduced by 20 times*") was not confirmed by any source.
- The story was about funeral of Boris Nemtsov. Not all sources were transparent ("*few hundred or a perhaps thousands*", "*it's reported*" without sources etc.).
- The news item was about girlfriend of Boris Nemtsov. The video from camera on a bridge was shown without a reference, the journalist used the phrase "*it's reported*" without mentioning the source.
- The news item was about PEGIDA protests in Belgium, Germany and Great Britain. Sources were not transparent ("*representative of the protest said*" without reference on a person, "*200 participants*" without confirmation the number with source etc.).
- The story was about police shooting in USA. The interview was taken without reference to the person. [3 March]
- The story was about migrants in Italy. Not all the data provided by the journalist were clearly sourced. [3, 5 March]

- The story was about reaction of the congressmen to speech of Benjamin Netanyahu in the US Congress. However, terms like "*Analysts say*", "*Sources in the Israeli delegation*" were used.
- The story was about smoking ban in France. Interviews were without references on persons, video footage without links, sources not disclosed "*According to surveys*". [4 March]
- The news item was about mine blast in Ukraine. Not all sources were transparent - "*33 victims*" without mentioning the source; or "*source in the self-proclaimed DNR*").
- The news item was about a sugar use. Not all sources were transparent - "*the latest research by American scientists*" without specifying any further details. [5 March]
- The report informed about Libya peace talks. However, there were no opinions and the report had no sources. [6 March]
- Reports from Nigeria concerning multiple blasts, from the USA on police shooting, from Bulgaria about NATO exercise. However, there were no opinions presented and the reports were aired without any sources. [7 March]
- The report from Bulgaria was about NATO exercise. However, there were no opinions presented and the reports were aired without any sources.
- The reports from Colombia and Japan concerning the march for peace and anti-nuclear demonstration, respectively. While there were some estimates the participants, there were no sources provided. At the same time, no opinions were shown. [9 March]

5.2.1. The Tools of Russian Propaganda

The goals of the propaganda by the main Russian channels appeared to have included: portraying Ukraine as a failed state (in result of Euromaidan and subsequent events); condemning the US for “violating the rules of international relations”, showing the EU as an instrument in the hands of Washington and challenging the European as contradictory to humanity, spirituality and common sense. In so doing, the Russian TV channels often resorted to using inflammatory language and hostile rhetoric which could be found in news reports and political programs, expressed by interviewees, guests participating in programs but also by the presenters and hosts. Inflammatory language was used mainly while speaking about other nations and states – especially Ukraine, the US, the UK, Baltic States and the EU as a whole, as well as against political opponents inside Russia. For example, during the shows “Evening with Vladimir Solovyev” (Večer s Vladimirom Solovyevym) on channel “Russia 1” (Rossiya 1) the following phrase was used: “*Germans perceive the world not with their mind, but with their stomach*”. During the same show, one of the participants told his counterpart who supported Ukraine: “*You are the criminals!*”. An announcement of a report from Latvia in the show “Central Television” (Tsentralnoye Televideniye) on NTV contained the following words: “*Enemy is at the gates, American tanks are already on the streets of Riga. Why do the aggressive Latvian guys tease Russia with an iron fist of NATO?*.” In the episode of the show “Politics” (Politika), the presenter uttered: “*There are tremendous contradictions in the USA. Why don’t we goose them and intensify these contradictions... Maidan in Ferguson! That is what we should do.*”

An image of an external Russian enemy was supplemented by an image of internal enemies. The latter referred to the so-called “fifth column” that includes the liberal opposition, human rights activists and representatives of the opposition media. When summarizing the discussion of the respective topic, the presenter of the show “The list of Norkin” (Spicok Norkina) on NTV referred to the words of Russian President Vladimir Putin “It is pointless to talk to those who do not advocate the interests of their state but serve the interest of others”. A similar phrase was addressed to the oligarchs and “those who control them from abroad”. “The oligarchs are the tentacles of the global capitalism” – said one of the guests of the show “The list of Norkin”, - “...*the oligarchic revolution in Russia may happen at any time if the state loses its vigilance*” (this topic became more actual given the concerns by the Russian business of the Western sanctions).

While in news programs hostile rhetoric speech is used less often than in political talk shows, it is addressed here to the same targets. More specifically, “The weekly news” (Vesti Nedeli) (“Russia 1” (Rossiya 1)), “Sunday Times” (Voskresnoy Vremya) (“The First Channel”) (Perviy Kanal) accused the US and Ukraine which is “controlled by the US” of a return to confrontation in Europe. Speaking about Middle East crisis the author and presenter of “The weekly news” Dmitry Kiselyov provides following parallel: “What to do with Ukraine? And that, unfortunately, it is among Iraq, Syria and Libya - in the sense that there are taken to steer Americans. And as a result - the degradation of local civilizations. Recognizing it hurts. But not recognizing makes even harder”

The main Russian TV channels delivered very similar messages to their audience saying that “*Russia is not involved in the Ukrainian conflict and only seeks to reconcile the warring parties. At the same time, they alleged that Europe and the US had been taking advantage of the conflict, trying to enchain Russia which however rose from its knees, and returned its native land (Crimea) back to Russia and showed to everyone what a great power it is.*” Moreover, it was claimed that “*the reunification of Crimea changed Russia: its people got rid of the inferiority complex, got the sense of patriotism and felt the power and greatness of their country. Vladimir Putin is the greatest political figure of the time. Everyone is compelled to recognize it – including Russia’s opponents. Russia possesses nuclear weapons – an indisputable argument that could be used in the possible confrontation with the West (NATO, the US) if need be. It can also be used to solve some local problems.*”

The channels also talked about “*the decisive role played by USSR (and primarily Russia) in the victory over German fascism and the fact that Russia could win this war without the help of its allies and other former Soviet republics. A different interpretation of history that intensified in the West and in Ukraine on the eve of 70th anniversary of the Victory Day, was falsification. Russian people have always been the victorious people and they have not been afraid of sanctions, lower oil prices and threats from the West. The temporary difficulties made the state stronger and consolidated the Russians. The state was not in isolation, it proposed an alternative to the US-centered world order that was unacceptable to most countries, and all sensible politicians joined it in its efforts. Russia and China (BRICS, SCO) would jointly achieve*

the development of a multipolar world. Russia did not share the Western values and asserted its own, being the spiritual pillar of human civilization”.

The monitoring results indicated that Ukraine was in the center of the Russian channels' focus. They considered Ukraine to be “an artificial entity.” In addition, “the only way for it to survive was to become a part of the “Russian world” (Russkiy mir). The only exceptions were several Western regions that in turn could be claimed by Poland, Hungary and Romania. The state suffered a fascist coup inspired by the West (mainly by the US), and Nazis, the junta took the power. The country was used as a battlefield against Russia and was controlled from abroad. Ukraine has no future as a state, it was crushed politically and military, its economy was destroyed. The state is not able to carry out the declared reforms. The bloody conflict erupted between the Ukrainian oligarchs and it led to a civil war. President Poroshenko was forced to turn a blind eye to the actions of pro-Nazi armed gangs that brought him to power; therefore he was not accountable for the decisions taken and the documents signed by him”.

The main features of the *image of the West* that was proposed to the Russian audience were “cynicism, soullessness and greed that created the basis for implementation of the US ambitions to achieve a global dominance. The European Union was presented as a “puppet of the Americans, although contradictions among its members and sympathies toward Moscow have increased. The main aim of Washington was to prevent the rapprochement of Europe and Russia and ultimately to ruin the latter as the only real power that obstructed its plans. The events in Ukraine were provoked by the West (primarily by the US). The Baltic States and Poland were Russophobes promoting American interests in Europe and preventing the possibility of a constructive dialogue between Russia and Europe. The West has organized color revolutions in the former Soviet republics by promoting anti-Russian sentiments and the “fifth column” – mainly NGOs. By provoking the conflict and civil war in Ukraine, the West crossed the red line and completely betrayed its declared principles. However, at the same time the West was doomed: the European Union was “bulging at the seams”, the US was being dogged by contradictions, the idea of multiculturalism ended in a fiasco, and the Christian values which were the basis of the European civilization were replaced by fascist ideology, Satanism, etc.”

The so-called LNR, DNR (and Novorossiia) were presented as “the realities of the present time”. They were the parties to the conflict, not Russia. Ukraine must recognize their existence otherwise the militias would reach Kyiv. LNR and DNR fulfilled all conditions of the Minsk agreements and were ready to stop any aggression. People from LNR and DNR would never return back to the past as Donetsk and Luhansk will follow the path of Crimea and they will win. For LNR and DNR, Ukraine is a neighboring state and it should establish a dialogue with them on the basis of this understanding”.

The annexation of Crimea by Russia was presented in a way that “Crimea was historically never Ukrainian and its population struggled for decades and finally achieved the freedom. If Russia did not annex the peninsula, there would be more blood there. Its loss would jeopardize the existence of the Russian Federation itself, as it does not have any alternative instruments to

ensure the security of its European territories except the Russian Black Sea fleet based in the Crimea. Following the annexation, people have been happy there”.

As for the Western sanctions on Russia, the main message provided by the Russian channels was that *“the events in Ukraine were not a reason but a pretext. Their true purpose was to bring Russia to its knees. No matter what Russia would do it would always be found guilty. The sanctions would not be canceled in the near future so it did not make any sense to agree with the West on any compromise solution on the issue of Ukraine. If Russia gave up, the pressure would only increase. However, Russia has not been significantly affected by the Western sanctions and its economy will be able to readjust in proper way. It is primarily Europe that would suffer in result of the sanctions”.*

Concerning the *Minsk agreements* and the war in the Eastern part of Ukraine, the channels presented *“the chances to reach a compromise between the conflicting parties as minimal. The Minsk agreements were not likely to be effective. Inspired by the US, Ukraine will violate the peace agreements. Kyiv was not able to meet the peace agreement conditions and it will be forced to resume the war with an aim to distract the public attention. By imitating its interest in the second Minsk agreement, Ukraine expected to receive military and financial support from the West and to settle its problems by force. The hostilities will resume soon and the armies of LNR and DNR will decide the fate of Ukraine. The delivery of American lethal weapons to Ukraine would invite a harsh reaction from the Russian side”.*

The *murder of Boris Nemtsov* was presented as “the absolute loss”. *“However, some misconceptions about the politician and his death were presented too. In particular, it was alleged that “the West made Nemtsov a key opposition politician in Russia. Therefore, instead of quiet sorrow, some manipulative versions about his murder were offered to Russian people. In its context there are an allusion to the comparability of Nemtsov and Putin figures, i.e. that is the way in which the “bloody regime” deals with its competitors. As a result, sanctions and demonization of Russia and its leader could have been expected. The West no longer needed the opposition leader Nemtsov alive and he became much more useful as a dead person.³⁹ In reality, Nemtsov did not pose a serious threat and real opposition to the incumbent state administration. This murder and responses to it of Russia’s enemies was a ‘Maidan technology’ aimed to destabilize the situation in the country.”*

Talk show hosts, presenters and reporters of the main Russian TV channels, who are used as propaganda tools, provided uniform position virtually on all important topics and issues. They demonstrated open bias, exposing, in the most straightforward manner, their own opinion and attitude towards all participants of their shows. In addition, they manipulated the audience as well as the show’s participants, correcting them or “explaining” (for example, *“this is a question you wanted to ask, right?” “I will explain what you mean”*), repeating some questions until

³⁹ It should be mentioned that the version about the possible involvement of the Russian authorities in Nemtsov’s murder was mentioned only as an absurd one. This was the only version that was not examined seriously.

they get the desired response, arranging obstruction for those who tell "wrong" things or interrupt them by shouting, threats, and insults.

In particular, such behavior was observed on the shows "Evening with Vladimir Solovyov," (Večer s Vladimirom Solovyovym) and "Special Correspondent" (Spetsialnyy correspondent) ("Russia 1") (Rossiya 1), "Politics" (Politika) ("The First Channel" (Perviy kanal)). The talk show hosts were Vladimir Solovyov, Arkadiy Mamontov, Yevgeniy Popov, Petr Tolstoy, and Alexandr Gordon. The following are some of their statements: *"The terrorists seized the power in Kyiv", "Poroshenko is the classic double agent, he pays taxes for his Russian multi-million dollar business in Lipetsk and at the same time acts at the behest of Washington", "They (Ukrainians) rudely reject any compromises", "There is always the same story with Ukraine: if there is no bacon (salo), there is no loyalty"*. When referring to the Ukrainians in general, Solovyov asked a rhetorical question: *"Are you used to be the castigators?"* (Referring to the collaboration with Nazi Germany). Referring to Volodymyr Parasyuk (a member of the Ukrainian Parliament), Solovyov stated: *"Is Parasyuk the surname? ... What a Parasyuk"* (alluding to the similarity with the word "piglet" (porosyonok).

Similarly, presenters and journalists of news programmes (especially the "News of the Week" (Vesti Nedelii) on "Russia 1" (Rossiya 1), "Sunday Time" (Voskresnoe Vremia) on "the First Channel" (Perviy Kanal), mixed facts with their own opinions and attitudes, including their feelings and position on a subject or topic or often gave their own assessment of the facts and events. Their biased attitude was also visible in the form of facial expressions and gestures (demonstrated in the form of camera close-ups), showing an ironic smirk, approval nodding, or a friendly pat on the shoulder (in talk shows), etc.

The monitoring team observed a tendency to invite certain people (hereinafter called "reference group") to the above mentioned talk show programs whose role is to pursue specific opinions and views. More specifically, the reference group members play the role of talk show guests, interviewees, and commentators of certain events. Although the number of public figures and experts who could claim the right to influence the opinion of citizens, including those who performed this role in previous years, is quite large, a relatively narrow circle of persons were involved in the majority of shows many of whom "migrated" from one channel to another, sometimes participating in multiple shows during the same day. The fact that high-rank statespersons s devoted a significant portion of their working time to participation in the political talk shows proved the importance of the propaganda for Russian authorities.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ The reference group formed by the leading Russian TV channels include, in particular, the State Duma Deputy Speakers Sergei Zheleznyak and Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, the chairmen of the Duma Committees Alexei Pushkov, Vyacheslav Nikonov, Irina Yarovaya, the deputy director of the Information and Press Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia Maria Zakharova, writers Aleksandr Prokhanov and Alexandr Shargunov, orientalist Yevgeniy Satanovskiy, representatives of the Russian Communist Party Gennadiy Zyuganov and Leonid Kalashnikov, a member of the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation Veronika Krashennnikova, political scientists ("experts" on Ukrainian issues) Sergei Mikheyev, Dmitry Kulikov, film director Karen Shakhnazarov, media representatives Andrey Karaulov, Pavel Gusev, Konstantin Remchukov.

It appears that the members of the reference group were deliberately distributed to play specific roles. Some of them represented the positions that were very close to the current Kremlin's policy, while others play more on the imperial ambitions and chauvinistic sentiments of the Russian public. Moreover, there appeared to be a high demand for the exponents of the idea of high spirituality, choosiness and a messianic role of Russia in opposing the Western world. There was also a high demand for the preachers of the vulgar version of realpolitik. A certain niche was reserved for those who supported the nostalgia for the Soviet Union and the Soviet model of socialism, citing the example of the development path chosen by China, as well as to those who exposed the anti-Russian policy of the West and the activity of the "fifth column". One factor that united the reference group was a high assessment of the Russian President Vladimir Putin and boundless confidence in him.

A kind of collective actors of the reference group were circulating representatives of the former Ukrainian Party of Regions ("Partiya Regionov") and the Communist Party of Ukraine, on one hand, and the new government of Crimea and the self-proclaimed DNR and LNR, on the other hand. They all served to discredit the incumbent government of Ukraine, but the first group was trying to prove to the audience that the majority of Ukrainians did not support their president and the government. While the representatives of separatist authorities were shown as a living example of heroic devotion to the idea of the "Russian world". Some of them were shown more often on Russian TV than appeared before public in their homeland.

Participation and the opportunity to speak on the air given the attention of authorities to the television propaganda most probably offers great career prospects. In late January 2015, hackers published SMS correspondence of official of the administration of RF President Timur Prokopenko – it proves that participants of the most popular political talk shows are chosen by the patronage "from above".

Most of the talk show hosts and presenters appear to be the most important part of the reference group. As noted above, they often expressed their positions, but in their moderating role, they regulate, compensate deficit or surplus of a particular role by supporting or engaging in debate, encouraging or interrupting, giving compliments or insulting their guests. Given this behavior as well as the contradictory statements, it was difficult for many viewers to obtain the type of information necessary for an independent and critical reflection of the events and developments during the monitoring period.

When an alternative point of view was actually presented, it was done in a very specific way. There was a noted tendency to invite the same participants⁴¹ who found themselves in a clear minority forced to argue with the host and other invited guests. They were usually under heavy criticism, including impolite behaviour, demonstrated by the hosts as well as by other guests..

⁴¹ The following persons mostly acted as such opponents in March 2015: Russian politicians Leonid Gozman, Sergey Stankevich and Boris Nadezhdin; political observer Nikolay Zlobin; Ukrainian political observers Olesia Iahno, Vadim Karasev and Viacheslav Kovtun; Czech journalist Ladislav Kašuka, American journalist Michael Bohm.

The attempts by these minority guests to present their alternative point of view were often interrupted by several participants screaming simultaneously and the presenters rarely prevented the latter from doing so. Moreover, the talk show hosts themselves often interrupted and argued with those who expressed alternative views.

Taking into account that there was nobody to present an official position of the US, EU or Ukraine in response to Russian state officials presenting their point of view, journalists and experts (from these countries) often found themselves being accused of things they were not responsible for and might disagree with.⁴² Even the representatives of Ukraine supporting anti-Western and pro-Russian positions were occasionally subject to obstructions and insults as soon as they said something that did not fit the general opinion.⁴³

It should also be mentioned that some guests who seemed to criticize or doubt some aspects of the official policy of the Russian Federation⁴⁴ formulated their positions in such a way that eventually they rather interpreted or modified such policy than opposed it. However their presence in the studio create the effect of false parity. On two occasions, the program “The Norkin’s List” (Spisok Norkina) featured participants from Ukraine - Dmitriy Linko and Artem Vitko, MPs of the Ukrainian Parliament representing the Radical Party of Oleg Liashko, using an online stream. Following their speeches (when neither of them could respond), there were derogatory comments addressed to them by some participants, including the writer Sergey Shargunov who answered “yes” to a question by the host who had asked whether those two MPs were fascists. The political scientist Sergey Mikheev commented as follows: *“It is useful to hear such nonsense because we can thus see who these people are”*, and Vladimir Rogov (People’s Front of Novorossia) said the following: *“It is a pity that Artem has already been turned off because I wanted to thank him – he was sober during this live stream today. But in fact this person does really have a problem – Ukrainian journalists are afraid to invite him as he always turns up drunk to the programmes and stirs fights and conflicts. However, he did not take alcohol to boost his courage today, as you could see”*.

There are other means to reach an effect of false parity – to invite or quote Western experts, who presumably possess exclusive, confidential information (former officials, members of secret services) and whose positions and views are somehow useful for Russia. As such, there were

⁴² For example, a phrase “Tell me, an American”, borrowed from the movie *Brother-2* (“Brat-2”) and having a negative connotation, was addressed to Michael Bohm as if he were entitled to represent his state and people.

⁴³ For instance, when Nikolai Levchenko, an ex-MP of the Ukrainian Parliament from the “Party of Regions” (Partiya Regionov) made an unfavourable comment during a TV show “Evening with Vladimir Soloviov” about Igor Strelkov (Girkin), one of organizers of pro-Russian armed rebellion in Donbas, the presenter replied: *“And why did not you do a thing to stop those armed members of Pravyi Sector who came to Maidan and blew up your Rada?! Why did not you do a thing when you failed to stir your butts and use your votes and, thus, let those illegitimate elections take place that legitimized the power of that bloody Poroshenko? Oh yeah, you did not like Girkin...”*

⁴⁴ For example, Pavel Gusev, the chief editor of “Moscow Komsomol” (Moskovsky Komsomolets), and Konstantin Remchukov, the chief editor of “Independent Newspaper” (Nezavisimaya Gazeta).

numerous references to the American Research Centre STRATFOR in March 2015 – the main Russian TV channel went as far as presenting the Centre as a “shadow CIA”.

The news programmes of the leading Russian TV channels adopted a similar approach to that used during the political shows. The reports and interviews were dominated by positions and opinions of the Russian state authorities. Even when a link to alternative sources was provided, the length of quoted texts or the length of a commentary was disproportionately shorter than those defending the Russian position. For instance, in March 2015, “Vesti Nedeli” (TV channel Russia 1), failed to present any position or view by the Ukrainian authorities, despite the numerous allegations against them presented in the program, particularly by residents of the DNR and LNR and others.

In addition to the above-mentioned examples of the propaganda techniques, the following tools were also used:

- *A flat out lie.* An episode of “Today. Resume” on NTV channel of 29 March featured an alleged violation of a cease-fire by Ukrainian soldiers as follows: “The OSCE Mission recorded illegal 225 mortar shots from the positions of the Ukrainian army near Berdianskoe during the period of less than 3 hours on 27 March”. However, there was no such information from the OSCE as it could be seen from its web site;
- *Tolerance to “useful” lies.* In the framework of the programme “Evening with Vladimir Solovyov” (Vecher s Vladimirom Solovyovym) (Russia 1), Vladimir Zhyrinovsky said that the proposal by the French President François Hollande to lift the Russian sanctions resulted in the Americans punishing him with a terrorist act against Charlie Hebdo. Notwithstanding the absurdity of this statement, nobody in the studio reacted. It appeared to have satisfied the participants of the discussion because it fit into a general context of discrediting the US;
- *Reticence.* When covering the murder of the Russian politician Boris Nemtsov and discussing what was behind it, none of the main TV channels worked with a widespread version of potential involvement of the Russian authorities or their affiliates. Instead, the channels focused on other versions (a command of the US or Ukraine, a “sacred sacrifice” made by the liberal opposition (Mikhail Khodorkovskiy), or a murder based on religious or personal grounds);
- *Selective coverage.* The monitored channels presented only the Russian official version in connection of the Malaysian passenger plane shot down over the territory of Eastern Ukraine. As such, possible involvement of the separatists or the report published by the special Dutch commission investigating the tragedy, were ignored;
- *Provocation.* When talking about the murder of Boris Nemtsov and calling it a “media” murder” (meaning that it was committed with a view to boosting a propaganda campaign against the Russian authorities), one of the guests at the program “Evening with Vladimir Solovyov” (Vecher s Vladimirom Solovyovym) (Russia 1) made a statement that the US Ambassador to Russia will be the next...;

- *Excessive generation of shocking versions.* Several influential public figures claimed at a number of leading Russian TV channels that a forum of ultra-nationalist forces of Europe that took place on 22 March 2015 in Saint-Petersburg was sponsored by the West disappointed in a liberal Russian opposition and staking on radicals as potential organizers of the “colour revolution”. This statement was not supported by any facts and contradicted the generally accessed information that the forum was organized in partnership with the Russian political circles close to the Kremlin. However, the version that unexpectedly hit the media took the potential opponents unprepared and had a chance to be accepted by the auditoria;
- *Farfetched associations.* The version that Boris Nemtsov became a “sacred sacrifice” made by the opponents of the Kremlin was supported by the recollections of late oligarch Boris Berezovskiy who had previously voiced his support for such method of political struggle. At the same time, it was not mentioned that Boris Berezovskiy used to have two Presidents of the Russian Federation (Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin) and even some patriotic forces (Aleksandr Prokhanov) and Communist Party of the Russian Federation as his close political allies. And no participant of the programme asked a question why exactly the current opponents of Russian authorities had to use this radical method of political technology;
- *Habituation to previously inadmissible opinions.* The programmes of the leading Russian TV channels have vastly transformed the conscience of Russian citizens that was based on such clichés as “I wish there would never be a war”, “the use of nuclear weapons must be excluded”... The possibility of Russia initiating a nuclear war has become admissible to a part of Russian society. Due to the TV propaganda, the society equally accepts the contradicting positions of the authorities on the “peaceful reunification with Crimea” (this topic has been covered during many months) and “special military operation to unify Crimea with Russia” (“Crimea. The Way back Home”, a film of TV channel Russia 1 that hit the screens in March 2015);
- *Discrediting of values through breaking the stereotypes.* In the context of confrontation between Russia and the West, a need to eliminate a stereotype that the Russians cherish European values arose during the last two years. The programmes of Russian TV channels have been consistently working in this regard. For example, such phrases as “the European civilization is embodied by vandals who crashed the humanistic civilization of the Antiquity”, “Christian values and ethics did not come from Europe, but from Middle East” were frequently voiced by the participants who were perceived by the audience as representatives of the intellectual elite;
- *Whipping up emotions.* *Inter alia*, the news programmes use verbal, visual and sound effects aimed to present certain events in a negative, intimidating light. For instance, the music used in certain episodes was intended to generate fear and uncompromising hostility towards the Anti-Terrorist Operation of the Ukrainian Army in the southern and eastern part of the country;

- *Intimidation and inspiration with hostility.* This tool, as some others, was predominantly used by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. His claims on the necessity of military propaganda “to make the Germans shiver and sleepless in their beds”, “the European army should be provoked to attack Russia and subsequently be defeated near Russian borders”, that Russia needs “a small victorious war on a Western front” do not prevent the speaker from appearing on Russian TV channels, but, on the contrary, make him a popular guest at all political talk-shows. He is even not prevented from that by the liability for calls for war that are forbidden by the Russian legislation;
- *Demonization of an enemy.* Ukrainian authorities were represented as staking on war and Ukrainian soldiers – as vicious, used to killing and socially dangerous. For instance, the episodes of “Sunday Times” (Voskresnoye Vremya) on demobilization in Ukraine characterized Ukrainian soldiers as those who “have taken part in violence, who were ready to decide the issues with weapons and were unwilling to consult therapists and participate in rehabilitation programmes”. The same programme announced that the US was fighting on the side of the evil and provided the evidence that the CIA was presumably responsible for 9/11.

5.2.2. Impact of Russian propaganda in the EaP countries

In the light of the above, the ability of the national mass media and, first and foremost, broadcasters of the countries of Eastern Partnership to “balance” the influence of Russian TV channels on local auditorium, as well as elaborate on how to eliminate to the influence of the outside propaganda aimed at their own countries, has become particularly important. The media of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine are united (to a different extent, of course) by the reluctance to borrow the confrontational content and aggressive nature of Russian propaganda. It can be seen, *inter alia*, in a cautious approach to covering the Ukrainian situation by the other five EaP countries. Apart from the political orientations and preferences, the traditional professional and economic connections of media prove to be an important factor. Thus, the Belarussian TV is similar to Russian in its use of anti-Western stigmas (“fifth column”, “double standards” of Europe, declarations about what Maidan ends up with, *etc.*). Those Ukrainian media that were once created with the help of Russian capital or that belong to and represent the interests of the owners connected with previous regime repeat certain aspects of Russian propaganda rhetoric.

If one theoretically divides the resources that help to balance the propaganda of Russian TV channels into components, there will be five main ones: the protection of national airways against the propaganda that contains the breaches of law; the existence of national mass media that enjoy the highest level of trust, popularity and have their own position when covering political problems; equal access of foreign mass media that represent different positions; the priority given to the programmes broadcast in national languages that restricts the access to Russian mass media; the ability of local mass media to resist the influence of propaganda by the pro-government Russian TV channels. If one point is given for the availability of each of the

mentioned component, the following rating comes into being: Georgia – 5; Ukraine – 3; Azerbaijan – 3; Moldova – 3; Armenia – 1; Belarus – 0.

The relatively low position of Ukraine in the above rating, notwithstanding the fact that it has taken the most active steps to protect its air, can be explained by the varying efficiency of such steps in different regions of the country. The index of efficiency of the Russian propaganda that became a subject of a special social research reached 27 percent in general. As regards the data per regions, they are as follows: Western Ukraine – 12 percent, Central Ukraine – 19 percent, Southern Ukraine – 32 percent and eastern Ukraine (including Donbas) – 48 percent. In particular, the index in strategically important Kharkiv and Odesa regions is respectively 50 percent and 43 percent.⁴⁵

To a certain extent, the content of the programmes of the main Russian TV channels has influenced the audience of all EaP countries, touching, *inter alia*, their national feelings. First and foremost, this applies to the Ukrainian society that has been a permanent target of the Russian propaganda. As it has numerous times been mentioned above, the Ukrainian situation dominated the vast majority of the programmes of the leading Russian TV channels in March 2015. All four March shows of “Politics” (“Politika”) (Pervyi Kanal) were dedicated to it. The same can be said about “The Norkin’s List” (Spisok Norkina) (NTV Channel) and the majority of other political talk shows that addressed many issues through the situation in Ukraine. Even if the topic of Ukraine (rarely) was not the first in nine March shows of “Evening with Vladimir Solovyov” (Vecher s Vladimirom Solovyovym), it was necessarily included in the next thematic parts of the programme.

The hostilities and general situation in the southern and eastern Ukraine was the main topic of the news programmes of the main Russian TV channels in March 2015. As for the length of the respective episodes, they were up to 12 minutes long, leaving almost no time for covering any other events – both international and domestic ones. In the middle of March, an emphasis of both the news and political talk shows moved to the topic of the celebration of the first anniversary of the annexation of Crimea to Russia. The details of the coverage on Ukraine have been already mentioned and there is thus no need to explain how sensitive the Ukrainian audience is to the programmes of Russian TV and why the measures on the protection of national airways have become so important for this country.

The sensitivity of perception of the programmes of Russian TV by the audience of other countries of the Eastern Partnership was considerably lower than the one in Ukraine. However, they also have their nuances.

The Belarussian viewers received predominantly positive information about themselves in March 2015. The topics of news programmes had ideological and grand rhetoric: “*mutual integration*”, “*big hopes for further cooperation*”, “*Putin awarded Aleksandr Lukashenko with*

⁴⁵ The results of the poll of Kyiv International Institute of Sociology conducted in March 2015.

the Order of Alexandr Nevsky”, “*joint anti-crisis plan*”, “*single monetary union*”, etc. “*It is certainly easier to overcome the difficulties together*”, - a viewer was made to believe in the uncompromising reasonability of the economic integration. It was stressed that “*on the eve of the 70th anniversary of the victory we should demonstrate our unity*”. The general form and rhetoric of the episodes devoted to this topic was the same as those TV materials demonstrated on Belarusian TV channels.

It was possible to notice a bias towards Moldova in the coverage of the Russian main channels. In March 2015, the channels were most interested in the elections in the Gagauzia autonomy that were covered in several news reports at once. The situation in Transnistria was also covered. In other words, the attention of the Russian mass media was focused on the regions that were in conflict with central authorities and had pro-Russian positions. As regards to the events of the national importance, Russian main channels covered the order to prohibit Russian journalists from entering Moldova. In general, the Russian media coverage of this country featured a general idea about a suicidal policy of the Moldovan current authorities aimed at the EU integration.

When talking about the national aspects in the policy of leading Russian TV channels, their desire to refute an opinion about the isolation of Russia and disapproval of its actions internationally should be mentioned. Perhaps, the active participation of presenters Ernest Mackevicius and Irada Zainalova in news programmes serves this purpose because they use the majority of propaganda tools described above. The fact that they are of a Lithuanian and Azerbaijan origin probably generates additional negative attitude of their nationally sensitive and not supportive to Russia’s actual policy compatriots. As regards political shows, Israeli public figure Avigdor Eskin, Latvian political observer Einars Graudins, his Ukrainian colleague Iurii Horodnenko, Finnish publicist Johan Backman are quite popular. They are consistent advocates of the policy of Russian authorities and are a “live argument” for the audience making it to believe that Russia does not stand by itself. In particular, Avigdor Eskin always stresses the similarity of interests of Russia and Israel, contradicting them to American ones.

The wide representation of people with Armenia surnames in informational and political programmes of the Russian TV channels and in mass media in general was a sensitive factor for the audience in Armenia. The vast majority of them – the film director Karen Shahnazarov, the political scientists Andranik Migranian, Sergey Kurginian, Semen Bagdasarov, Araik Stepanian, the director of the TV channel “Russia Today” Margarita Simonyan, the publisher Aram Gabrelianov, the NTV show host Roman Babayan – explicitly supported the positions of the Russian authorities. There were also many Armenian reporters of Russian media who covered the events in the southern and eastern Ukraine, heroes of the programmes about the separatists of Crimea and Donbas, about the problems of the population of these regions. Although Armenia itself was not much covered by the leading Russian TV channels in March 2015, the audience of this country, given the circumstances described above and its traditional sensitivity as regards the behaviour of compatriots abroad, felt the connection with the broadcast discussions and items. Even without that the Armenian society turned out to be torn between those who sympathize with and those who disapprove the policy of Moscow, and

the fact that there are Armenians among those involved in the Kremlin propaganda team added a particular tone to the acute confrontation.

Concluding the topic of sensitivity of the content of Russian TV channels for audiences of foreign states where Russian is widespread, it is reasonable to mention an episode from “Central TV” (Tsentralnoe Televidenie) (NTV Channel) show: a presenter commented on the arrival of NATO forces to Riga in the following way: “What can one say in such situation? It is this diversity that Latvian girls of easy virtue lacked”. It is hardly necessary to comment on the reaction to similar phrases of people with subtle senses of national identity and there are a lot of such in former Soviet republics. In this regard, the audience of Azerbaijan and Georgia where the access to Russian television has been restricted for quite a while are those countries of the Eastern Partnership that have the smallest number of reasons to react in a sensitive way. This fact actualizes the problem of the search of effective balance between the priorities of information security of the society and freedom of expression that is gaining particular importance in the context of challenges generated by propaganda of Russian media.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Eastern Partnership Countries

Public service broadcasting

- The existence of independent, vibrant and competitive media landscape is essential for providing a variety of news and views in different languages coming from different countries but with a priority given to a high quality programs produced in national languages. The national media enjoying high level of trust and popularity in the EaP countries would serve as a good tool against the Russian media propaganda. In this respect, the existence of truly independent public service broadcasters that would develop impartial editorial practices is essential.
- It is therefore important for the authorities in the EaP countries to strengthen mandate by public service broadcasters so it reflects public interest and it is based on independence, editorial freedom and non-interference by authorities or political parties. The reporting by these broadcasters should be balanced and factual, including when covering activities of the authorities, in line with international good practice.

Foreign and international media actors

- Given the overall lack of high-quality reporting in the EaP countries, consideration should be given to supporting activities aimed at raising professional standards, including adherence to internationally recognized ethical codes and standards for balanced and objective reporting and news presentation. This should include support to already existing media outlets (both local and foreign) that provide alternative information to the one presented by the main Russian channels.
- Existing international and local media outlets transmitting via cable, satellite or Internet should receive more support to provide high-quality reporting in languages more accessible to viewers and listeners in the EaP countries.
- Consideration should be given to promoting a direct exchange of a high-quality media content between broadcasters in the EaP countries.
- Consideration could be given to strengthening protection of national airways against hate speech and state propaganda that breaches the law. At the same time, if applied, restrictions to the freedom of expression should not be disproportional in scope and should not be arbitrary and politically motivated to limit the expression of alternative positions.
- Media regulators should monitor *ex officio* broadcasters' compliance with legislation and contractual license conditions and in case of their non-compliance they should apply appropriate sanctions. Sanctions should be clearly defined and commensurate with the gravity of the violation committed. The establishment of systematic media monitoring based on credible methodology would assist the regulators in identification of legal violations (including hate speech & propaganda) and in taking prompt and adequate corrective action.

- The European Broadcasting Union (EBU) should play a more active role in monitoring compliance by its members with the EBU's statutes, particularly promoting and developing the concept of public service media and their values such as universality, independence, excellence, diversity, accountability and innovation, as referred to in the EBU Declaration on the Core Values of the Public Service Media.⁴⁶

Media regulation

- Authorities in the EaP countries should ensure (both in legislation and in practice) the political and operational independence of the broadcast media regulators, in line with the OSCE, EU and Council of Europe's recommendations.⁴⁷
- To decrease the potential impact of the Russian propaganda on the Russian-speaking population of other countries, namely post-Soviet ones, the following recommendations can be made:
 - to provide for restrictions in all legal norms, and where the direct norms are absent, use the legal category of "legitimate interests" with regard to Russian channels broadcasting. Azerbaijan can be used as an example. Putting forward the parity condition, which Russia will most likely reject, Russian channels can be excluded from terrestrial broadcasting and unpaid digital packages;
 - to exclude Russian channels from cable TV packages or include them only in expensive cable TV packages;
 - in the countries with the large Russian-speaking population or active Russian-speaking elite, not to exclude Russian-speaking programs from national broadcasting but create certain programs with respective contents and quality.

Professionalism & media literacy

- Consideration could be given to further enhancing the existing and creating new platforms for discussion, trainings, studies and self-reflection on the media, including in the regions, to enhance the current level of journalistic profession and explain the unhealthy aspects of journalism, such as propaganda. This would help journalists, managers and students to increase their professional capacity and would also improve the current level of media literacy. Access to various educational resources, such as books, databases, methodology, research magazines, as well as a chance to exchange experience

⁴⁶ See the EBU statutes at:

https://www3.ebu.ch/files/live/sites/ebu/files/About/Governance/Statutes%202013_EN.pdf

⁴⁷ See the Council of Europe's recommendation on the independence and functions of regulatory authorities for broadcasting sector at

http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/media/doc/cm/rec%282000%29023&expmem_EN.asp.

through international media networks and journalistic associations would also help in achieving these efforts.

- The enduring monopolization of the media market by state or powerful groups has deprived the audiences in the EaP countries of an effective variety of sources of information, and has thereby weakened the guarantees of pluralism. Such undue concentration of media ownership should be prevented through appropriate measures. Instruments could be applied to improve competition, to motivate the old players to get rid of excess concentration, and to encourage new players to invest.

Russia

Media independence

- State authorities should always refrain from any attempt to influence or censor media content or interfere in any other way in activities of the media and journalists as it undermines their independence. Interference with the activities of journalists and media personnel should not be tolerated and any allegations of such should be promptly and efficiently investigated.

Public service broadcasting

- State-owned and state-controlled media are easy targets for any state authorities willing to use them as propaganda tools. As such, the authorities should move ahead promptly with plans to transform state-controlled broadcasters into an independent public service media that will provide citizens with impartial and politically balanced information on global and local events and issues.

Media professionalism

- The media should refuse all open or furtive expressions of intolerance and will consider thoughtfully if publication of such expressions is not conducive to defamation and ridicule based on sex, race, color, language, faith and religion, affiliation with national or ethnic minority or ethnic group, social difference, political or other opinion.
- The media should avoid broadcasting a message based on unverified information, rumours and with an intention to arouse a scandal or for propaganda purposes. If it decides that such a message is somehow important, despite the fact that it can't be verified, it should broadcast it with a warning saying that the message is not verified. An important criterion is to separate facts from comments that shouldn't be part of the news-providing section of a newscast.
- The media should not manipulate picture or sound so that the choice of words or other means of expression, change in tone, shift of stress or editing will not deliberately displace the meaning or value of the message.
- The media should ensure that every piece of news contains only facts corresponding to

reality and whose veracity will be verified by independent sources quoted therein.

- The media should avoid adjusting data and facts in a manner that would distort reality and in determining the order of importance of the individual pieces of information it should impartially and objectively provide, distinguishing between relevant and irrelevant information.
- The media will avoid adjusting data and facts in a manner that would distort reality and in determining the order of importance of the individual pieces of information it will impartially and objectively provide, distinguishing between relevant and irrelevant information.
- Journalists, editors, producers and proprietors should spare no effort to make the distributed information correspond with truth and conscience. The facts should be mediated without any distortions and in their respective contexts. If a flawed message is published it should be followed by an immediate apology.