



**FREE
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CLOSE TO ZERO:

Analytical report on the resilience of frontline local media in Ukraine based on the results of a series of in-depth interviews with newspaper editors from frontline and de-occupied regions

Spring 2024



The center of Guliaypole in Zaporizhzhia region
Photo by Andriy Andriyenko

I. Introduction

As of the beginning of 2024, with the assistance of the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine and funds from international donors, 30 local media outlets in the frontline and de-occupied territories resumed printing. Their total circulation reaches 150 thousand copies.

Restoring the print press and providing information to the population in the frontline and de-occupied territories of Ukraine, where mobile communications and the Internet are often absent due to the destruction of infrastructure, has been and remains among the priorities of the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine. The presence of the Ukrainian printed word in such regions is a component of the state's information security. In regions where it is otherwise difficult or impossible to obtain reliable information prepared in accordance with the standards of quality journalism, local newspaper articles sometimes literally save lives.

In this regard, it is crucial to **support the transition of such media from survival to development** by establishing training support, stimulating digital transformation, and providing editorial offices with the necessary tools to achieve economic resilience and further sustainable development.

In constant communication with international donors, the Union is working to maximise the involvement of various types of assistance (financial, logistical, educational, and psychological) for such editorial offices and their employees.

An important prerequisite for effective support of local media from the frontline and de-occupied regions is to accurately take into account their real needs in the time dynamics so that each media outlet receives the most relevant assistance at the appropriate time. With this aim, the NUJU team is constantly researching the state of development and urgent needs of such media in order to summarise and disseminate their experience, and formulate recommendations to all parties on whom further strengthening of their economic resilience depends (government and donor agencies, and newsrooms themselves).

Thus, in 2023, the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine, with the support of the project «Improving Ukrainian Media Resilience» implemented by the International Institute for Regional Media and Information (IRMI) in partnership with Hirondelle Fondation and funded by Swiss Solidarity, conducted **a survey of the needs of local newspapers in the frontline and de-occupied territories of Ukraine**. The research examined the state of the material, technical base of such media, found out their financial capacity, studied the state and prospects of digital transformation, analysed the ability to develop sustainably, key needs for donor assistance and obstacles to attracting it. As a result, recommendations to donors were formulated, which formed the basis for further communication between the Union and international media support organisations.

In the same year, the NUJU team carried out **a study of the state of newspapers postal delivery in the regions of Ukraine**, which is one of the main problems hindering the strengthening of the economic resilience of the local print press. Based on the results of the research, a report was prepared that outlined the most pressing issues and provided recommendations to key stakeholders: state executive authorities, the national postal operator, state institutions responsible for information security and local media editorial offices.

The logical continuation of the systematic work of the NUJU team to attract international assistance for local newspapers from the frontline and de-occupied regions as a prerequisite for strengthening their economic sustainability was **the launch of a joint project with the international organisation Free Press Unlimited**, based in Amsterdam, which cooperates with more than 300 partners, implementing media projects in more than 50 countries. It should be noted that from the first days of Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, Free Press Unlimited launched a large-scale program of emergency support for Ukrainian journalists in distress. In particular, at the NUJU request, in the spring of 2022, it provided financial assistance to more than 150 journalists in Mariupol, Kharkiv, Kherson, Chernihiv, Kyiv, Zaporizhzhia and other regions.

The Close to Zero pilot project to support the local press in the frontline areas aims to help local print media that do

not have stable funding but fulfil an important mission of informing the local population in the frontline areas where the Internet and mobile communications are often absent or unstable. As part of the project, five newspapers received three months funding, and another eight were given technical assistance (up-to-date smartphones). The content component of the project is implemented in partnership with the Ukrainian national portal Gazeta.ua, which has launched a series of publications about the life of local communities in the frontline and de-occupied territories. This allows us to inform read-

ers in Kyiv and different regions of Ukraine more profound and qualitatively, providing them with first-hand stories.

According to the NUJU team, the further local media resilience in the frontline and de-occupied territories will depend on a number of factors: the introduction of effective targeted government support programs, the continued provision of various types of donor assistance by international organisations, the readiness of the media themselves for digital transformation, their openness to new experiences and their ability to implement them. That is why periodically studying the

dynamics of the transformation of local media from the frontline and de-occupied territories, the state of their adaptation to security and economic challenges as a prerequisite for strengthening resilience and moving towards sustainable development is very important.

Therefore, in February-March 2024, we conducted a series of in-depth interviews with the editors of the newspapers participating in the **Close to Zero project**, the results of which formed the basis of this report. We hope that the findings and recommendations will help to further strengthen the resilience of frontline newspapers.

II. Research methodology

Aim

Study the state, dynamics, and prospects for ensuring the economic resilience of the print media in the frontline and de-occupied territories of Ukraine by comparing their condition in the first year of the full-scale invasion and now, after involvement in donor support projects.

Objectives

- Investigate the economic situation of the studied media and the steps taken by the editors to ensure their sustainability.
- Analyse the likely prospects for the development of the editorial offices of the surveyed newspapers.
- Find out the impact of the participation of the local print media under study in the NUJU training programs implemented with the support of donors.
- Formulate recommendations to key stakeholders: the government, donor organisations, and editorial offices.

Participants

For the study, 13 editorial offices of local newspapers in 6 regions, that are frontline and/ or de-occupied, were selected: Golos Guliaipillia (Guliaipole, Zaporizhzhia region), Zoria (Zolochiv, Kharkiv region), Putyvlski Vidomosti (Putyv, Sumy region), Vist (Chernihiv), Ridne Misto (Myrnohrad, Donetsk region), Pivdenna Zoria (Nikopol, Dnipro region), Visti Barvinkivschyny (Barvinkove, Kharkiv region), Dvorichanskyi Krai (Dvorichna, Kharkiv

region), Trudova Slava (Orikhiv, Zaporizhzhia region), Visti (Sloviansk, Donetsk region), Obrii Iziumschiyn (Izium, Kharkiv region), Zmiyivskyi Kurier (Zmiyiv, Kharkiv region), Technopolis (Kramatorsk, Donetsk region).

Regions represented by the newspapers participating in the study: Dnipro, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Sumy, Kharkiv, Chernihiv.

Selection criteria

The criteria for selecting the editorial offices participating in the study (selection for the Close to Zero project) were as follows:

- Lack of stable funding and at the same time performing an important mission of informing the local population in the frontline and de-occupied territories, where the Internet and mobile communication are often absent.
- Participation in the study of the needs of local newspapers in the frontline and de-occupied territories of Ukraine, conducted by NUJU in 2023.
- Active involvement in educational and other projects of NUJU, integration into the journalistic

community.

- Belonging to the «classical media»: media activity is the main source of editorial income. The newspapers studied are not projects of political parties, business groups or media support means for the NGOs activities.

- Adherence to journalistic standards, the presence of a distinct journalistic component aimed at balanced and professional coverage of issues of public interest.

Organisation of the study

For the purpose of the study, an in-depth written interview questionnaire was developed, the questions of which covered all project tasks and were formulated mainly in an open manner to obtain the most complete and specific information.

The received questionnaires were analysed, updated through a selective additional telephone

survey and compared with the results of the survey conducted a year ago, in March 2023. This made it possible to track the dynamics and identify development trends in order to formulate recommendations to all stakeholders as accurately as possible.

III. Results obtained

The analysis of the survey results shows that **the material and technical condition of all the editorial offices that took part in the study remains difficult.**

- «We are now living in conditions of austerity» Technopolis (Donetsk region)

- «First of all, we are trying to survive» Trudova Slava (Zaporizhzhia region)

- «Fortunately, so far, the building [of the editorial office] has not been hit, but it is in an emergency state» Putyvlski Vido-mosti (Sumy region)

- «The premises are not heated, there is often no electricity and water supply» Ridne Misto (Donetsk region)

In such circumstances, **the experience of organising remote work** for the editorial staff, a part of it (for example, an accountant at the newspaper Obrii Iziumschyny from Kharkiv region, a layout designer and an accountant at the newspaper Golos Guliaipillia from Zaporizhzhia region, the latter media is actually relocated but within its region, or the whole (the newspaper Visti and its website Karachun, the newspaper Technopolis, both from Donetsk region), becomes important, although it is also forced.

«Due to the lack of funds, we are unable to rent premises for the editorial office,» explains the editor of the newspaper Technopolis (Donetsk region), which is published remotely.

At the same time, **a number of editorial offices in the de-occupied regions are returning to offline operations.**

For example, the team of the newspaper Visti Barvinkivschyny

(Kharkiv region) until recently worked exclusively remotely, with workstations set up at the homes of the editorial staff. But since February 2024, the media outlet has switched to a mixed mode of operation – the office where Visti Barvinkivschyny rents space was put into operation after the destruction. «We have not yet fully settled in, moved the equipment, or restored the Internet,» the editorial office says. They also note that the full resumption of work in the office requires funds, both one-time (to restore the Internet network) and ongoing, for monthly utility bills. Therefore, the editorial office is working to not only find donor support but also advertisers, and in the meantime, they are striving to expand their presence on digital platforms as a key to sustainable development in the future.

Another media outlet from the de-occupied region of Kharkiv, the newspaper Obrii Iziumschyny, rents two 17-square-meter rooms in an office building in the town centre (the editorial office was destroyed during the occupation). Employees are provided with equipment: laptops, printers, photo and video cameras. However, they need enough staff.

Lack of personnel or a reduction in the number of employees is typical for many editorial offices, as well as **some technical reinforcement of these media outlets over the past years thanks to donor support.**

- «Last year, we received a new laptop and smartphone from the Academy of Ukrainian Press, which allowed us to expand our capabilities in the current military situation,» says the editor of the newspaper Piv-

denna Zoria from Nikopol, Dnipro region.

- «Thanks to the IMI grant, we were able to fully equip two workplaces», writes the newspaper Technopolis, Donetsk region.

- «Pre-war equipment plus a laptop from NUJU,» a feedback from Zoria and Visnyk Bogodukhivschyny newspapers, Kharkiv region.

It was donor assistance, primarily through the NUJU efforts, which made possible to resume publication for most of the newspapers in the study.

«In June and October 2023, the newspaper's management sent letters to the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine requesting financial assistance to resume printing,» shares a typical example the editor of the Technopolis newspaper (Donetsk region). «Thanks to the funds we received, we managed to mobilise a team, start publishing the newspaper and distribute it in Donetsk region. Today, Technopolis is the only printed publication in the town of Kramatorsk and in several neighbouring towns and nearby villages.»

At the same time, all the technical needs of the editorial offices have not yet been met, although the situation cannot be called catastrophic: **existing equipment provides economical operation and minimal maintenance, but further sustainable development requires technical reinforcement.**

- «During the war, much of the editorial office equipment was damaged. Some employees were provided with laptops to continue their work. The other part still needs them» (Ridne Misto newspaper, Donetsk region).

- «The equipment is more or less fine, although two computers are extremely outdated. A laptop saves us. We have a problem with printers: one is completely broken, the other needs to be repaired, there is one left, but it is also very old and needs to be replaced with a cartridge, all these difficulties prevent us from working properly» (Putyvlski Vidomosti newspaper, Sumy region).

- «The equipment is outdated, after the victory we will buy a new one,» the editor of the newspaper Zmiyivskiy Kurier (Kharkiv region) remains optimistic.

The staffing problem was mentioned, in particular, by the editors of the newspapers Obrii Iziymschyn (Kharkiv region) and Putyvlski Vidomosti (Sumy region). The editor of the latter explains: «We need at least one more journalist. One person is not enough to produce an 8-page newspaper and manage all the information projects. This sometimes affects the quality (and sporadic nature) of our media's work on online platforms and in social media.» At the same time, the lack of staff cannot be called the primary issue among the problems identified by the survey participants: **during the full-scale war, editorial offices have mostly adapted not only to remote or mixed work formats, but also to ensuring a smaller editorial staff than before the invasion produces their media outlets.**

A number of editorial offices report **refusing to cooperate with «Ukrposhta»** (the national state postal operator). The problems with press delivery through it, which were clearly highlighted in the previous study of the Union, forced some media outlets to look for alternative

ways to deliver their publications. At the same time, **the new experience they are gaining now is worthy of attention and further study** for possible scaling in the future. After all, according to the NUJU experts, finding ways to reduce dependence on the postal monopoly remains one of the strategic directions for the development of local media in the future.

- «We have almost completely abandoned the delivery of newspapers by Ukrposhta. Now we have to do it ourselves in cooperation with the village council, which has subscribed 500 copies of the newspaper for its residents over the age of 75. If everything goes well, we will try to expand our experience to other local communities. We have won almost nothing in terms of money, but at least people get the newspaper, and that is important» (Pivdenna Zoria newspaper, Dnipro region).

- «We do not work with Ukrposhta. Community workers, volunteers, and the district organisation of the Red Cross Society help to distribute the newspaper» (Trudova Slava newspaper, Zaporizhzhia region).

- «Given the unsatisfactory performance of Ukrposhta in delivering the newspaper to subscribers and the high cost of postal services, the editorial board decided to abandon subscriptions as a way to sell the newspaper. We are working on the issue of selling the newspaper individually through post offices in Kramatorsk district» (Visti newspaper, Donetsk region).

An interesting development trend can be seen in the results of the study obtained from the editorial office of the Putyvlski Vidomosti newspaper (Sumy region) in 2023 and 2024. In 2023, the editorial staff considered the

planning horizon to be only until 2024, when the subscription for the next year would take place. «Due to the downward trend in subscriptions, which account for about half of all editorial revenues, there is no point in planning anything further. We are already working at the limit of our capabilities. And from a rational point of view, we should have closed down.» A year later, the Putyvlski Vidomosti editorial board states: «The main thing we did over the past year was to establish editorial subscriptions. It is still small, but it is gradually growing. People are happy to come to our editorial office on Friday to get the latest issue.» At the same time, according to the statistics received from the editorial office, there has been no catastrophic drop in the level of subscriptions: it accounts for 50% of the revenue structure, compared to 59% last year. At the same time, the editorial office is developing sales in both grocery and stationery shops (although not without difficulties).

The experience of the editorial offices of the newspapers Zoria and Visnyk Bogodukhivschiyn from Kharkiv region is worthy of note, as their editor delivers the newspapers to the border villages of the Zolochiv community, where there is no electricity, internet, or communication, as well as to other settlements in the Zolochiv area. «We mostly sell the newspaper by retail, because people do not trust the services of Ukrposhta,» the editorial staff says. «It is easier for them to buy a copy a day earlier than the announced release (not on Saturday, but on Friday).» The newspaper is also distributed in the Bogodukhiv community, where the security situation is somewhat better. «In this way, we tell the people there about

the relatively close territory, which is under constant shelling from the Russian Federation, and until recently, people were still dying and two villages in Zolochiv district were occupied. The newspaper gets to the readers with the help of our assistants. They are entrepreneurs, shopkeepers, former postmen, and village activists. **They receive a percentage of our earnings for their work.**»

An important emphasis on monetising the work of the editorial staff is placed by the editor of the newspaper Technopolis from Donetsk region: **«We do not distribute the newspaper, we sell it.** Readers accepted it as normal. We explained that **a newspaper is an enterprise** that has to pay taxes and salaries to its employees.»

Significantly, 8 out of 13 surveyed editorial offices mentioned **the search for advertisers** among their plans for the next six months, and only one said about possible closing the newspaper. At the same time, all survey respondents mentioned **finding or continuing donor support** as an extremely urgent task for their media outlets. Such assistance **remains critical** for the existence of newspapers in the frontline and de-occupied territories. In addition, **editors are also trying to think about diversifying their sources of income and finding sources of sustainable development for the future.**

For instance, the newspaper Obrii Iziurnschyny from Kharkiv region earns money on digital platforms by cooperating with direct advertising exchanges and advertisers. **«We also make souvenirs with local symbols: magnets, cups, key chains, flags, ribbons, bracelets, eco-bags, etc.»**, adds the media manager.

The intensification of editorial work in the development of digital platforms is noteworthy. As an example, let us consider the Putyvlski Vidomosti newspaper from Sumy region. While a year ago, in March 2023, they stated that they had **«almost completely abandoned social media and the website due to lack of staff and monetisation,»** today, despite the persistence of the staffing problem, they say: **«We are working on attracting advertisers to our social networks to generate additional revenue. We do not have our own website yet, but we are working in this direction to get an additional monetisation channel.»**

Awareness of the importance of digital transformation and the first (for many) steps in this direction is **one of the characteristic trends in the development of local media in the frontline and de-occupied territories** that our research has revealed. **«We have become multimedia: we have launched a website, pages in social networks, and a YouTube channel»** (Vist newspaper, Chernihiv region); **«We have created a website»** (Zoria and Visnyk Bogodukhivschyny newspapers, Kharkiv region); **«We are expanding our presence on digital platforms – the website has about 7,000 visits a week, the Facebook group has almost 10,000, and 38 users have so far subscribed to the YouTube channel»** (newspaper Visti Barvinkivschyny, Kharkiv region). For comparison, the same newspaper Visti Barvinkivschyny had 100,000 visits annually a year ago, while the Facebook group grew from 5,000 to 8,800 followers in the first year of the full-scale war. This shows **a trend toward further development of digital media platforms.**

The training support that

newsrooms receive from the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine and other media organisations is extremely important in such work. It is the **knowledge gained at the NUJU platforms that drives the digital transformation of local media.**

- **«Participation in the educational project 'Steps to Sustainable Development' was not only useful, but also necessary. Especially the section 'Development of Digital Platforms for Traditional Media' with mentor Andriy Yurychko. We use Chat GPT Ukraine to prepare texts for social media and interview questions. We use Canva to process photos and create headlines for them. We also use QR codes. We are new to digital platforms. Therefore, we will benefit from further training on the development of digital platforms»** (Trudova Slava newspaper, Zaporizhzhia region).

- **«The training on social media development and work on digital platforms was very helpful. We will work intensively in this direction in the future. We lack the skills to create videos for social media, create reels and other modern content. We lack knowledge of how to make money on the web at our local level»** (Putyvlski Vidomosti newspaper, Sumy region).

- **«All the mentors' advice was useful. We have already implemented some of them (we print QR codes so that people can easily find us on the Internet, we know how to evaluate a project so as not to fail, and we have approached the concept of creating a website more realistically). More recently, we have a website thanks to the support of the Ternopil Press Club. Now we are learning how to develop it. The knowledge gained from Andriy Yurychko is very helpful. I would like to continue my stud-**

ies in this area» (Pivdenna Zoria newspaper, Dnipro region).

Certain transformations are also taking place in the content component of the media: for example, the editorial office of the newspaper Vist (Chernihiv region) adopted an editorial policy, paying special attention to the use of correct vocabulary, and the editorial office of the newspaper Golos Guliaipillia (Zaporizhzhia region), which is now published once every two weeks, has moved away from writing reports and breaking news. «The emphasis in the newspaper is on narrative materials, which tell stories about the defenders who died, as well as those who are currently defending our country. In addition, we publish journalistic investigations about the crimes of the Russian occupiers.»

We can predict that both of the above components will become trends in the work of newsrooms in the near future. **Greater attention to writing editorial policies, rules and procedures** may be due to the need to maximise the chances of receiving donor support, as donors consider clear standards of media work to be one of the important factors in making a decision on support. And **the shift from the predominance of news and event reports to longer, «slower» journalistic formats** is a logical consequence of both the forced reduction in the frequency of newspapers (more of the publications surveyed publish only twice a month) and the parallel development of digital media platforms, where news formats look more organic.

A common feature of all the editorial offices participating in the study is **the presence of a loyal community of readers who rally around the media**, for

whom the newspaper is important both in terms of information and for moral and psychological reasons (a sense of belonging to the local community, a connection with a «small homeland» for internally displaced persons):

- «After the resumption of the newspaper, we receive a lot of positive feedback from readers, because the vast majority of them have left and this is the only source of information about their home» (Dvorichanskyi Krai, Kharkiv region).

- «Villagers buy the newspaper in the town for the whole street, 10-15 copies at a time» (Obrii Iziumschny, Kharkiv region).

- «One copy of the newspaper is usually read by 3-5 people, sometimes more. Our newspaper is read during events in village cultural centres (people come here for humanitarian aid, gather for events, and also weave nets, volunteer). We have been providing the newspaper to hospitals and local governments for many years. They read it and thank us» (Pivdenna Zoria, Dnipro region).

- «At least three people read each issue of the newspaper. In particular, in hospitals, as the newspaper is sold at outlets near hospital pharmacies» (Vist newspaper, Chernihiv region).

- «People are used to the printed newspaper and their interest in it does not disappear. People turn to us for help. And not only for information. People have repeatedly thanked us for our work and for not closing the newspaper and not giving up journalism. This is especially felt in the territories bordering Russia. In such settlements, there is often no electricity, internet, or communication, and the newspaper is an important source of information about the life of the community and the district» (Zo-

ria and Visnyk Bogodukhivschyny newspapers, Kharkiv region).

The increase in the audience of a single issue of a newspaper can be considered a characteristic trend of the full-scale war period. On the one hand, the financial situation of a significant number of potential readers has deteriorated, and such people cannot buy a newspaper on their own, directing their money to more vital expenses. Therefore, they expect to read a copy of their favourite newspaper together with neighbours, friends, and visitors to social institutions where a particular publication is delivered. On the other hand, the internal displacement of citizens as a result of the war, the creation of centres of mutual assistance, volunteering, and social support stimulate the creation of new situational groups, communities, and centres, which also promotes collective reading.

Here is a typical quote from the editor of the newspaper Ridne Misto (Donetsk region): «We know from practice that subscribers who live in the private sector constantly share the newspaper with each other. This practice has intensified during the war, as people are in more and more financial difficulties. There is also an exchange of printed versions of the newspaper in the centres of compact residence of internally displaced persons in Myrnohrad. We have always believed that one copy of the newspaper is read by at least three people (family members of each subscriber). Now this coverage has increased due to the exchange between neighbours.»

The words of the editor of the Putyvlski Vidomosti newspaper from Sumy region are eloquent: «Our readers say that we are

sometimes the only ray of sunshine for them during the war. They like to read life stories, stories about our military and volunteers. Recently, a reader came to me who lives in a village 3 km from the border. Despite the danger, he comes to the editorial office to get the newspaper.»

The development of local communities, bringing together active community members for mutual support, is another important component of local media activities, which has only become more important be-

cause of the great war. Therefore, while paying attention to the experience of remote work gained by editorial offices, we should not dismiss the importance of a live, offline media presence in the region. That is why the issue of having an editorial office as a kind of **communication hub** does not look as secondary as it might seem at first glance without taking this component into account. «There is a lack of premises where readers can come and where the staff can gather under one roof» (news-

papers Zoria and Visnyk Bogodukhivschyny, Kharkiv region). The remote work of most frontline media outlets should be viewed as a forced step, and **the prospects for recovery and transition to sustainable development should be linked to the full-fledged establishment of offline editorial platforms** – not only, and perhaps not so much, as a «physical» office of a particular media outlet, but as a centre for communication between active citizens and local media.

IV. Conclusions

Despite the extremely difficult security and economic challenges for newspapers in the frontline and de-occupied territories, they continue to carry out an important public mission of informing and uniting active citizens, and are one of the key markers of Ukraine's information presence in a particular region. «It is important for people that the newspaper continues to be published and delivered to readers. It is not only a source of reliable information, but also a symbol of the fact that Nikopol district lives under Ukrainian legislation and in the Ukrainian information space, bringing the Victory closer» (Pivdenna Zoria newspaper, Dnipro region).

Most editorial offices combine concerns about survival with thoughts of development and the desire to strengthen the economic resilience of the media. **The critical dependence of editorial offices on one source of income, namely donor funding, is gradually decreasing:** only one of the 13 surveyed editorial offices declared grants as a source of 100% of its income (Trudova Slava newspaper from the frontline Orikhiv district of Zaporizhzhia region). Only two out of 13 editions are 80% or more dependent on donor funds.

Media sources of income are also gradually, but rather slowly, diversifying without any pronounced systemic changes. Comparing the data from the editorial offices participating in the 2023 and 2024 surveys, this year the list of financial income items includes funds received under agreements to cover the activities of local authorities (2 editorial offices), income from the production of souvenirs (1 editorial office), and grants (2 editorial offices used not to receive donor funding).

At the same time, in both 2023 and 2024, only two of the surveyed media outlets declared 30 percent or more of advertising revenue in their overall revenue structure. Therefore, **the first cautious sprouts of diversification of revenue sources cannot yet be considered a sign of the studied media's transition to sustainable commercial development, and their economic sustainability can only be considered a desired state in the future.**

In such circumstances, the **importance of continued donor support for the media in the frontline and de-occupied territories remains a priority for their transition from survival to development, from holding positions in the information space**

of a warring country to economic sustainability.

It is important to combine financial support for local media with educational support, with an emphasis on learning about digital platforms and the prospects for their monetisation. Editorial staff also positively evaluates the experience of participating in **psychological support** programs. Editorial offices want to work and demonstrate their willingness to earn money on their own, but they need support in doing so.

For the significant ongoing support in the revival of frontline media, NUJU expresses its special gratitude to the International and European Federations of Journalists, UNESCO Headquarters, the Governments of Japan and Germany; Hironnelle Foundation (Switzerland) and the International Institute for Regional Media and Information (IRMI, Ukraine); Free Press Unlimited (The Netherlands), Ukrainian Media Fond, The Danish Union of Journalists, European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF, Germany), Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ, USA); Japan Offspring Fund and AUCF 'Journalistic Initiative'; Academy of Ukrainian Press and other reputable organisations.

V. Recommendations

Recommendations to local media editors

- Continuously study the experience of effective digital transformation of local media in Ukraine and abroad. Join mutual projects, exchange programs and other forms of work aimed at studying, disseminating and adapting successful cases of digital platform development and strengthening the economic resilience of local media.

- Join communities that can be useful for mutual reinforcement of media outlets. Maintain active participation in those communities where the newsrooms are already members.

- Look for opportunities to cooperate with national media, both on a one-time basis and as part of joint projects, in order to bring local issues to the national level and gain experience

in working with more powerful editorial offices, and create media coalitions that will have a better chance of receiving grant funding.

- Actively participate in all possible projects to obtain donor support in various forms. Study, flexibly adapt to their needs, and constantly use the methods of writing and implementing grant projects, fundraising, and creating communities around media.

- Identify digital transformation as a priority area of work and a way to strengthen economic resilience in the near term. Use all educational, technical and financial opportunities to strengthen work in this area.

Recommendations to national media editors

Intensify cooperation with local media by creating coalitions, joining projects, developing other forms of collaboration aimed at mutual reinforcement, raising professional standards, and providing the national audience with exclusive information from regions that are difficult to access for powerful national media. Be more open

to relevant proposals from the regions, create partnerships that can apply for grant funding and be beneficial to both parties. In this case, national media can receive quality content, while regional media can reach a wider audience, increase visibility, reputational bonuses, and, ideally, both parties can receive donor support.

Recommendations to state authorities

Introduce a state targeted program to support local media in the frontline and de-occupied regions as part of national information security. As one of the possible mechanisms for its implementation, consider creating a Ukrainian Media Support Fund similar to the Ukrainian

Cultural Fund. Involve the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine as the largest organisation of media workers in Ukraine, which has its own experience in targeted communication and support for frontline newspapers and individual journalists.

Recommendations to donors

Continue targeted support for local newspapers, with priority to editorial offices operating in the frontline and de-occupied regions.



In May 2024, Russian missiles destroyed the «Factor-Druk» factory in Kharkiv, one of the largest newspaper and book factories in Ukraine. This enterprise also printed the local front-line newspaper Zoria, a participant in the «Close to Zero» project.

Photo by the NUJU Journalists' Solidarity Center in Kharkiv.

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