

Ukraine

General Situation

The situation of the free press improved considerably after the so called Orange Revolution. However, there are still a number of problems media freedom is facing (reporting period 01/2005-12/2007, plus 2004 country visit report).

Interventions

- In **2004** the OSCE Representative for Freedom of the Media (RFOM) conducted an assessment visit to the Ukraine at the invitation of the Government of Ukraine.

Overall, media pluralism is present in Ukraine. The mere quantity of media outlets is impressive. Different views are represented; politicians of all ranks are regularly criticised in the media. A lively discussion of public issues – alas, not exactly a dialogue – is taking place.

However, several serious concerns still exist in the legal field, especially in relation to the new Civil Code.

Although, in general, political pluralism does exist in the media in Ukraine, where it seems to be least developed is in the broadcast media, specifically on television. So even as private television broadcasting exists at the national and local level, the Government's position is prevalent on the most popular channels that also have the largest area reach.

The monopoly situation in Ukraine is facilitated, even perhaps caused by an artificially maintained bureaucratic duality in the licensing of the broadcasting outlets that allows for possible political favouritism in frequency allocation.

During 2003, practically all privately-owned radio stations that helped to retransmit the programmes of Western -owned public-service networks in Ukraine, have encountered broadcasting problems, or were even removed from the air. These stations have traditionally helped to lend a seasoned quality, and add pluralism, to the coverage of public issues in Ukraine. The state representatives attributed each case to internal problems or legal violations by the media outlets in question. But in this election year, their removal is a serious loss to media pluralism in the country.

The murder of the journalist Georgiy Gongadze has still not been resolved. This remains a serious source of mistrust in the rule of law and the security of journalists.

- In **May 2006** the head of the Ivano-Frankivska local administration in Ukraine announced the intention to change an arbitrary system of accreditation that had been proposed by the newly elected city council in an earlier session. A decision had been

taken by the newly elected local council that would allow the council to decide on a case-by-case basis whether or not to admit journalists to the council sessions. Following criticism from local media, the mayor proposed the changes in order to demonstrate the transparency of the work of the council.

- In **June 2006**, RFOM wrote to the Ukrainian authorities regarding the recent attack on Sergei Yanovsky, correspondent of the *Kyivskiyiye Novosti* in Kherson.

According to the information RFOM received, on 3 June unidentified assailants poured gasoline through the kitchen window of Yanovsky's apartment and tossed in two lit firecrackers. By chance, Mr. Yanovsky's wife discovered the blaze. The whole family, including the 11-year-old son, were rescued although the apartment door was blocked from outside.

As Mr. Yanovsky was a well known investigative journalist and it is very likely that the attack was related to his work, it is appropriate and timely that the Prosecutor in Kherson has immediately opened a criminal investigation into this case. RFOM welcomes this speedy reaction.

- In a letter of **28 March 2007**, addressed to the Foreign Minister, RFOM asked for additional information about the closure of the political talk-show Toloka by the President of the First National Channel UT-1. RFOM was glad to receive a timely answer regarding Toloka on 19 June, in which the authorities shared with the Office the results of the ongoing inquiry. RFOM welcomed the readiness of the authorities to continue a dialogue with his Office on strengthening media freedom in Ukraine.