

# U.S.-UKRAINE POLICY DIALOGUE

## A Discourse Among Partners



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### Information & Media Task Force: ACTION PLAN

International observers swarmed into Ukraine in November of 2004 in order to observe the presidential elections. Media became a focus of debate, as much attention was given to the role of state-run media, government instructions for censorship (*temnyky*) and hired journalists covering party politics. However, media in Ukraine had already been the focus of many government aid projects over the last decade.

Today, there is an effort to create an international coalition of media experts that would work together with the Ukrainian media in order to provide the logistical, legal and training support necessary to help create a truly independent media that would be accountable to the public.

The role of Ukrainian broadcast media will be vital for the 2006 parliamentary elections, and the question of public broadcasting will remain at the center of debate until then. It is likely that immediately following the elections, advocates will be able to move forward with media reform. Will Ukraine and the international community be ready when this moment comes?

### **Previous Recommendations established at the June 2005 Meeting in Washington DC:**

After meeting with representatives of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), National Public Radio and other governmental and non-governmental representatives of media in the USA, the Media Task Force arrived at the following conclusion. Media policy had to be directed at achieving the following results:

- Optimization and improvement of functions of National Council of Television and Radio (NCTR)
- Adherence to ethical and professional standards in journalistic work
- Provide training for government employees who work with media and public relations issues
- Develop and support institutions of radio and television PB in Ukraine

### **Issues and Policy proposals that should be addressed (November Meeting):**

Our preparation for the second round of discussions that took place in November 2005 in Kyiv, Ukraine, indicated that some policy recommendations deserved revision and the task force would review the priority of policy recommendations, given the major shift in political forces in Ukraine, especially in preparation for the March 2006 Parliamentary elections. Thus, we arrived at the following recommendations:

**1. *There exist ineffective information flows and relations between the press and the government officials, creating a difficult relationship between politicians and the public.***

***Therefore, to improve this relationship, we recommend***

- Assisting press secretaries by providing training. They are currently not doing a sufficiently adequate job of bridging the principal and the public, and press conferences are not being used as tools for information flows, but rather as ‘weapons’ against the principal or the journalist. We recommend utilizing media and public relations experts, especially from the United States;
- Incorporate resources of US and international government education and training programs
- Training for journalists in making press conferences reach their potential;
- Explore the possibility of using the press centers in institutes of journalism for training of both journalists and civil servants
- Work with other task forces on their information component;

**2. *There exist many different governmental and non-governmental organizations that would like to provide assistance to Ukrainian media, but there is little coordination, and little understanding of true local needs.***

***Therefore, there is a need for multilateral and Ukraine-specific regional approach in providing media support.***

- Media assistance plans should adapt to local needs and not simply replicate external models for media;
- A clearinghouse responsible for coordination of all organizations giving aid or assistance to the media should be created;
- There should be a focus on the development of regional media capacity through training and consulting

**3. *There exist limited resources of the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council of Ukraine (NTRBCU)* The NTRBCU has a weak legislative authority (e.g. there is no requirement that the individual owners be stated on a broadcasting license, only the companies) and therefore are having difficulty in regulating the airwaves, and discouraging monopolistic behavior.**

***Therefore, there is a need for supporting this independent regulatory agency* (the only such body among countries of the former Soviet Union, and the US equivalent of the FCC), **and we recommend:****

- Providing methodological and legal support, interns, training visits / exchanges, and assistance in maintaining their regulatory activities.
- Sharing European and North American experience on licensing of cable operators,
- Assist the Council in developing policies on digital broadcasting and new media
- Assisting Civil Society organizations in developing voluntary media monitoring, and helping scrutinize judicial decisions on the media
- Promoting interagency cooperation within Ukraine, especially on the budget process;

**4. *There exists an insufficient political will for Public Broadcasting (PB).***

***Therefore,*** in the short term there is a need to treat PB more as a mechanism rather than a goal, so that we can look at other factors that affect the media. In preparation for the upcoming elections, we recommend:

- To initiate a dialogue with Parliamentary Committee on Media Freedom and Information to arrive at a consensus on the form of PB;
- To seek to involve a representative of the Committee in our task force.
- To develop a “public awareness campaign” that would:
  - Promote the idea of PB, increase awareness and in turn demand for PB.
  - Rely on surveys over attitudes and perceptions of PB.
  - Provide a feasibility study and business plan for business and political elite.
  - Demonstrate programming possibilities for the general public.
- Assess existing models of PB in other nations and investigate their adoptability to the Ukrainian situation.

**5. *There is insufficient cooperation among educational institutions preparing journalists, media specialists and public officials.***

***Therefore, in order to build capacity and develop greater effectiveness of educational institutions, we recommend:***

- Meeting with the Journalism Curriculum committee in the Ministry of Education to promote the inclusion of more practice-oriented training.
- Translating training materials into Ukrainian.
- Promoting independent media by encouraging holistic training – editing, production, management, marketing, learning advocacy, etc.

**6. *There is a lack of legal clarity for media institutions and journalists.***

***Therefore, in order to strengthen the legal environment for media, we recommend to:***

- Accent the role of advocacy
- Assist in developing legislation on broadcast licensing
- Assist in developing new platforms, specifically digital programming
- Explore libel provisions for civil servants
- Develop awareness among journalists and civil servants of legal rights and standards

**7. *There is a high chance that local broadcast companies will not have the opportunity to transmit unbiased information about upcoming parliamentary elections.***

***Therefore, in order to assist regional broadcast companies in providing unbiased coverage for the parliamentary elections, we recommend:***

- Provide support to regional broadcasting companies that are currently under the grip of political entities or oligarchic owners. There are already many NGO's (some of which exist thanks to USAID funds) that have the capacity to reach out to these companies and provide them the immediate assistance that is necessary.

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