



MEDIA  
DEVELOPMENT  
FOUNDATION

# MDF RESEARCH DEPARTMENT REPORT FOR 2024

This report highlights the achievements of MDF's Research Department in 2024, describes the areas of work of the department, and introduces the team of researchers who produced high-quality analytics and research in 2024.

The Media Development Foundation's Research Department is an analytical unit of the organization founded in 2013 that provides strategic vision and evidence-based decisions in support of independent regional media. Our activities focus on systematic research of the regional media market, assessment of editorial needs, measurement of project impact, and in-depth analysis of the processes taking place in the media sector in Ukraine and other countries. The department's **mission** is to identify and explain the problems of the media environment through research and find solutions for the sustainable development of independent journalism in Ukraine.

During 2024, the main areas of work of the MDF Research Department included:

- Annual media market research to track key industry trends, challenges, and needs.
- Media needs assessment was conducted when launching new MDF projects or partner initiatives.
- Specialized research on media processes devoted to journalism, media management and financing, digital transformation in the media, etc.
- Monitoring and evaluating MDF program activities regularly to improve processes and achieve strategic indicators, focusing on achieving goals, sustainable impact, and efficiency of the funds used.

In our 2024 research, we used a wide range of methods: qualitative and quantitative, including in-depth interviews, surveys, desk research, financial, audience, content, and distribution indicators.

We believe that a comprehensive study of media processes will help improve the regional media ecosystem in Ukraine.

“Our role in this long-term game is to improve understanding of the processes of the media system as a whole. And the most pleasant bonus is to realize that with our research, we are developing free media for a free country.” – Oksana Buts, Head of MDF Research Department.

“The media market needs our research work when we hear how others use our reports to support their arguments,” – Tetyana Gordiienko, senior researcher at MDF, commenting on the panel discussion at the Donbas Media Forum

Below are the analytical, research, and other results of the MDF Research Department in 2024:

## Q 9 RESEARCHES

which are public for the media community and internal to improve MDF's processes and projects, as well as on request from other organizations:

- **The seventh annual MDF research** analyzes the state and transformation of independent local media in Ukraine in the context of the war. We interviewed 43 editorial teams from different regions and conducted questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and consultations with media experts. The report addresses key challenges, including wartime risks and approaches to management, content, and distribution. The study was created with the financial support of the European Union.
- **News Deserts 1.0** – the study draws attention to the gaps in the development of local newsrooms focused on communities in 11 regions of Ukraine, including the frontline, in wartime. The first part of the study laid the groundwork for explaining the approach and concept of “news deserts” - communities where the healthy development of the democratic system may be threatened by the lack of media.

The research was made possible with the financial support of the European Union.

- **Financing Independent Media in Ukraine 2023: Salaries and Trends** – the study reveals the topic of financial support for media at the national and regional level during a full-scale war and industry financial crisis. In-depth interviews with media executives and a survey of editorial offices revealed a critically high level of uncertainty about financial planning. The study was created with the financial support of the European Union.
- **Journalists in the midst of full-scale war: report on Ukraine (UNESCO)** – this report based on the UNESCO Journalists Safety Indicators (JSI) and covering the period up to 2022, analyzes the safety of journalists and the preservation of press freedom in Ukraine due to the threats posed by Russia's full-scale invasion.
- **The Donor Dilemma. Rethinking Support Models for Ukrainian Media's Future** – this study comprehensively examines Ukrainian media's activities over the past two years and their close relationship with the donor community and grant funding. It analyzes the prospects of the media market from the perspective of nine media managers and editors-in-chief. Particular attention is paid to rethinking funding models and formulating practical recommendations for further industry sustainability.
- **Stereotypes and hate speech against internally displaced persons in the content of regional media** is a study conducted by IREX in cooperation with MDF between September 2022 and July 2024, which aims to assess the content of Ukrainian local media for hate speech and stereotypes against internally displaced persons. Based on the findings, IREX and MDF developed a training course and practical guide on sensitive journalism **“Focus on the Person: Media Work with Sensitive Topics”**, which strengthens the ability to work with sensitive topics, avoid stereotypes and hate speech against internally displaced persons, and helps to improve the objectivity and quality of content on IDPs.

- **Revitalizing Ukrainian Local Media: Research and Recommendations** is a joint effort by MDF researchers, the Ukrainian Media Fund, and the German media center CORRECTIV, with the support of the German Marshal Fund and the government of North Rhine-Westphalia. It aims to research critical issues in local journalism in Ukraine and develop strategic recommendations.
- **Targeting Aid to Local Newsrooms in Western and Central Ukraine Can Increase the Country's Resilience** – is a policy brief that draws attention to the problem of grant underfunding of media in the western and central regions of Ukraine. This reinforces the tendency for information-unhealthy regions, resulting in “news deserts” emerging.
- **Ukrainian YouTube: Administration of media video content at the national and regional levels** – an internal MDF study aimed at finding out the state of administration of Ukrainian media video content on YouTube at the national and regional levels to identify previous trends and find out the needs of the media to improve their work with the platform. The study results were considered when developing the YouTube training program for Ukrainian local media professionals as part of the DT Global – EU4IM project.

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

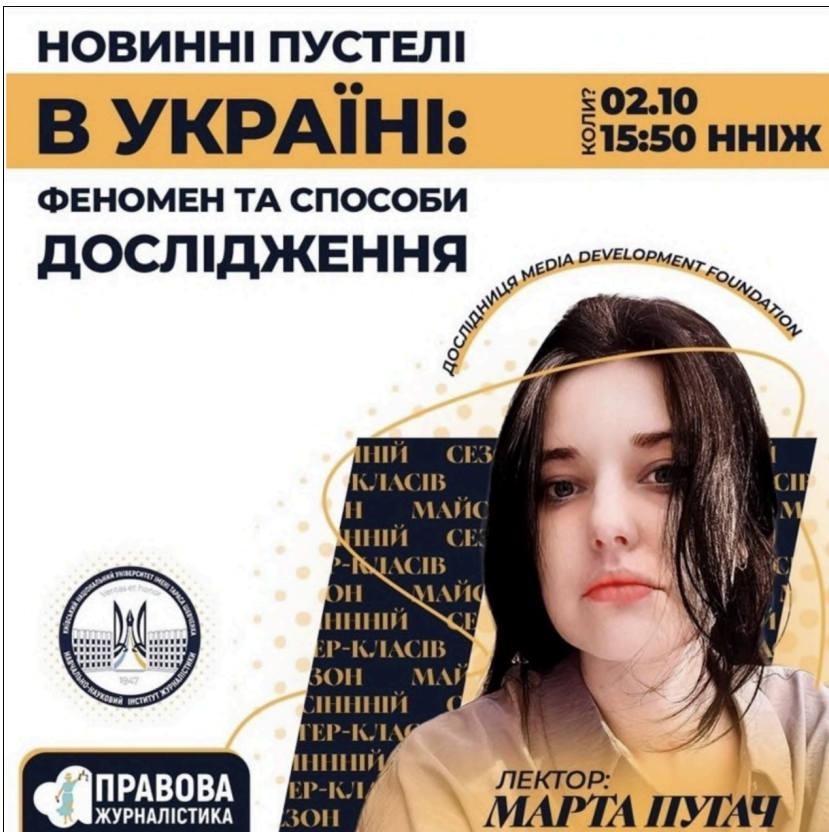
of MDF's internal projects:

- In 2024, MDF launched an **internal system** to monitor and evaluate its performance. The system is flexible and allows for the reviewing and updating indicators in line with strategic and operational changes in MDF's activities. Unlike previous approaches that focused on evaluating individual projects, the new system aims to provide a holistic understanding of MDF's contribution to the development of independent journalism at the media market level.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation of the Ukrainian Media Solutions** Project in Partnership with the Partnership Fund for a Resilient Ukraine –

The Research Department was responsible for developing the overall MEL plan, as well as creating individual MEL plans for each grantee, including a Theory of Change, outcome indicators, progress markers, and verification tools. The Research Department carried out regular monitoring and verification of the implementation of indicators and achievement of results, as well as conducted training sessions to disseminate knowledge and improve project implementation. The project was aimed at supporting media working for the frontline regions.

## PUBLIC SPEAKING AND AWARENESS RAISING:

A series of lectures by researcher Marta Puhach for about 50 students of the Faculty of Journalism at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv on the methodology and aspects of the research “News Deserts” and “Financial Support of Online Media in Ukraine: Salaries and Trends”.



**НОВИННІ ПУСТЕЛІ  
В УКРАЇНІ:** КОЛИ? **02.10  
15:50 ННІЖ**

**ФЕНОМЕН ТА СПОСОБИ  
ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ**

ДОСЛІДНИЦЯ MEDIA DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

ЛЕКТОР:  
**МАРТА ПУГАЧ**

ПРАВОВА  
ЖУРНАЛІСТИКА

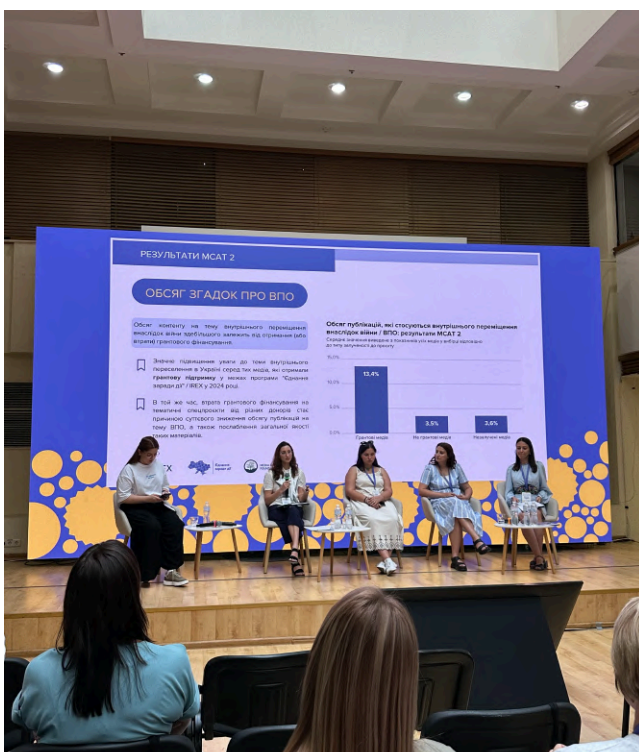


Comment by Oksana Buts for Mediamaker **“What journalists need to know about sociological data and how to interpret public opinion research”** to improve journalists' skills in interpreting data correctly.

Briefing of the UNESCO study at Crisis Media Center.



Presentations of about 6 researches offline and online.





## PARTICIPATION IN UKRAINIAN AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA CONFERENCES:

WAN IFRA (World Association of  
News Publishers) - Copenhagen,  
Denmark.



IPI Media Congress – Sarajevo,  
Bosnia and Herzegovina

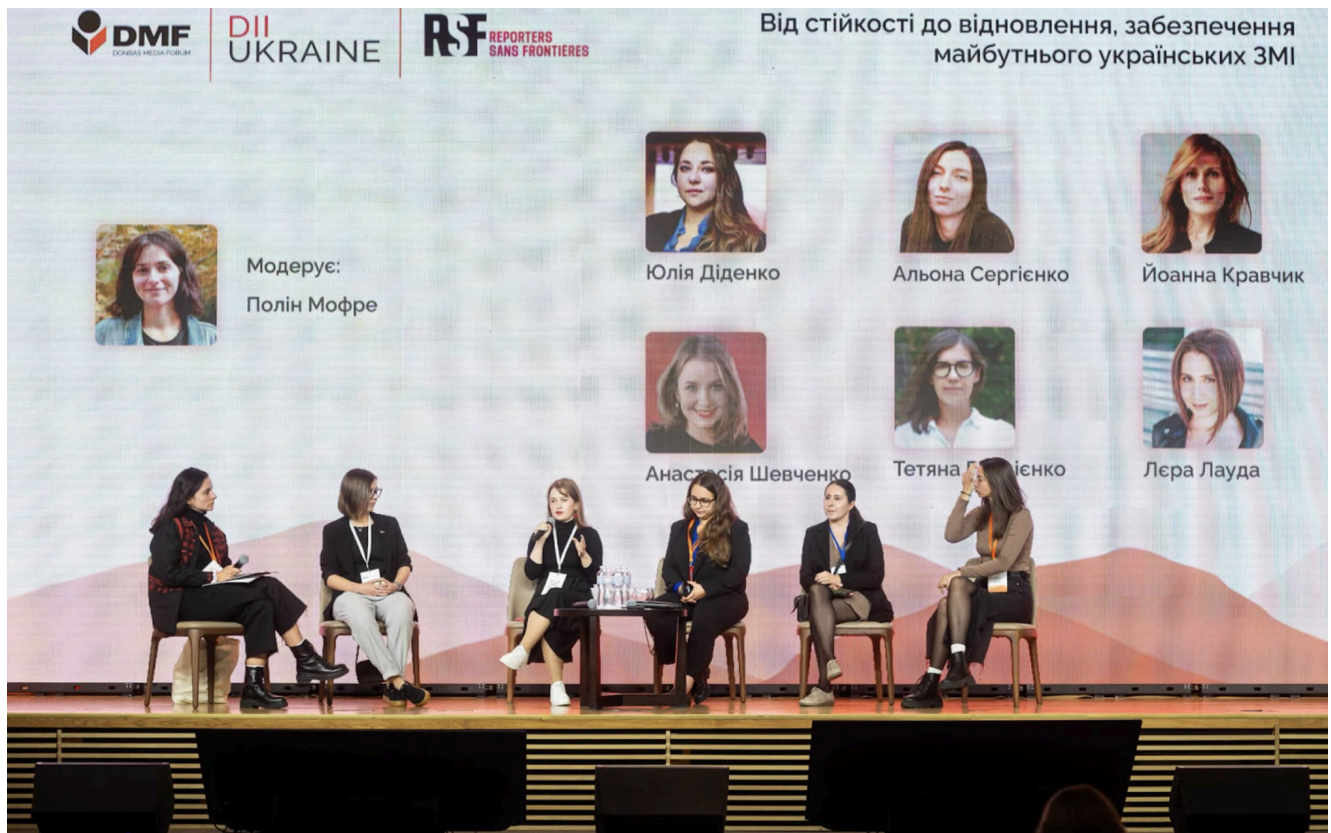


b° future festival 2024 – Bonn, Germany.





## Donbas Media Forum – Kyiv, Ukraine.



Sincere thanks to everyone who was part of the MDF Research Department in 2024 and strengthened the research with their expertise and experience:

- **Oksana Buts** – Head of Research, sociologist, graduate of the Bachelor's program in Sociology at UCU and the Master's program in Sociology at NaUKMA.
- **Tetiana Gordiienko** – Senior Researcher and a PhD student at the Mohyla School of Journalism.
- **Polina Lypova** – Senior Researcher, sociologist, graduate of the School of Social Work at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy and the Master's Program in Communications at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy.
- **Marta Puhach** – Researcher, alumna and lecturer of the Master's programs in Political Science and Eastern Europe at the University of Kansas (USA), Warsaw University (Poland) and Ostroh Academy (Ukraine).

- **Valeriia Shemshuchenko** – Researcher and a graduate of the Master's program in Public Policy and Governance at the Kyiv School of Economics.
- **Yevhen Kohen** – Researcher, graduate of the Master's program in History of Philosophy at the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, with experience in national and regional media.
- **Nataliia Fedor** – Research Assistant at the Media Development Foundation, sociologist, graduate of the bachelor's program in Sociology at UCU.
- **Anastasia Tovstanovska** – Research Assistant at News Deserts, a student of UCU's Sociology program.
- **Nazar Stepaniuk** – Intern and master's student at the Mohyla School of Journalism at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy.

MDF's research department was also consulted and strengthened with expertise:

- **Daria Orlova** – Research Editor and Consultant at the Research Department, PhD in Mass Communications, media and journalism researcher, associate professor at the Mohyla School of Journalism at NaUKMA.
- **Maksym Sribnyi** – Media Research Consultant, master's student at the Mohyla School of Journalism.

We, researchers, keep learning new things and growing professionally. Therefore, in 2024, we held **five internal research seminars** to discuss various foreign and Ukrainian studies in the field of media and related areas: from a short report on the monitoring and evaluation of a separate program to support journalists in Ukraine to studies of major international media organizations and classic studies published in international scientific journals. Daria Orlova, Research Consultant, PhD in Mass Communications, media, and journalism researcher and associate professor at the Mohyla School of Journalism at NaUKMA, moderated these workshops. In addition, the researchers attended trainings to improve their skills. For example, Tetiana Gordienko participated in the International Leadership Training for Early-Career Researchers organized by the Warsaw School of Economics.



“The most powerful independent media research team not only in Ukraine, but also at the broader regional level,” Andriy Boborykin, specialist in digital marketing, development of media products and media communities, building funding models for media, executive director of Ukrainska Pravda

2024 was a productive year for analytics and research. Despite the security and financial challenges that will surround us as part of the media environment in 2025, we strive to be better and bring our research and the research department to a much higher level of quality.

With our activities, we are on track to build the leading media research think tank in Ukraine, Eastern, and Central Europe next year. Our mission will remain unchanged: to identify and explain the media environment's problems through research and find solutions for the sustainable development of independent journalism in Ukraine.

To be continued.

More meaningful, more useful, more significant.