

Press freedom: An own goal for Ukraine

PARIS, FRANCE / DARMSTADT, GERMANY: As the European Football Championships drew to a close yesterday, with the spotlight on Ukraine, the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA), Article 19, Freedom House, Open Society Foundations (OSF), and the Ukraine Association of Press Publishers today release their joint report on the country's press freedom situation.



Entitled "Make freedom of expression a reality, Mr President" - A Report on Press Freedom in Ukraine, the report outlines the findings of a research mission conducted at the beginning of April that found serious corruption issues and other problems and recommends steps to improve freedom of expression in the country.

"This report lists concrete actions that the government of Ukraine should urgently consider in order to raise press freedom standards," noted Erik Bjerager, president of the World Editors Forum, the organisation within WAN-IFRA for newsroom executives, which was a member of the April delegation.

WAN-IFRA is holding its [64th Annual World Newspaper Congress and 19th World Editors Forum](#) in Kiev in September and will use the opportunity to further highlight the Ukrainian governments responsibilities in relation to freedom of expression.

"We are going to Kiev to stand in solidarity with the local independent press, which struggles daily under great pressure, often in isolation," Bjerager continued. "By holding our events in Kiev, we will provide them with an opportunity to share their experiences with the international newspaper community... and offer moral support."

The report highlights a number of areas where urgent action is required if Ukraine's democratic pretensions are to be maintained through the measure of a free and independent press.

The report calls for calls for:

- The authorities to allow media professionals to report openly on corruption;
- An immediate end to "envelope" payments to journalists and other media professionals;
- An efficient structure for the Interagency Working Group involving media professionals, the government, and the public to engage in issues of press freedom;
- The authorities to ensure that the Access to Information law is respected and that information requested is provided in

a timely manner;

- Training for government officials and media professionals in how to access information;
- An urgent need for a strong and independent media that is self regulated and where journalists, editors and publishers abide by ethical reporting;
- A pilot programme on the development of the retail trade of the printed press;
- Increasing the availability of digital channels reserved for regional and local broadcasters;
- An open inquiry into why new companies without experience in digital broadcasting were granted licences over long-established regional broadcasters;
- A formal response by the government explaining why it did not follow its own strategic documents on the signal compression standard for broadband and why DVB-T2 was chosen for digital broadcasting, instead of DVB-T;
- An independent, transparent and fair judicial process in the Gongadze murder case. Download and read the full report complete with detailed recommendations, available in English and Ukrainian, from the WAN-IFRA website at <http://www.wan-ifra.org/node/60102/>

Learn more about WAN-IFRA's on-going commitment to press freedom in Ukraine, and its engagements to defend freedom of expression worldwide, at <http://www.wan-ifra.org/pressfreedom>.

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