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The problems in the development of public broadcasting in the polycultural borderland Region of Ukraine

Проблеми розвитку суспільного мовлення в полікультурному прикордонному регіоні України

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Abstract

The paper discusses the main challenges faced by the implementation and development of Public television (Ukrainian: *Suspilne telebachennia*) in the polycultural borderland of Ukraine (Transcarpathia), considering national peculiarities. The relevance of the research is due to the necessity of a detailed analysis of the organizational and developmental processes of the Transcarpathian Public television, the development forecast, and the search for opportunities and new decisions accounting for the factors that determine its uniqueness. Were used such methods: empirical (observation, description, measuring); theoretical (axiomatic, hypothetico-deductive); general methods (analysis, synthesis, comparison, generalization); unique methods, among which the most productive were the various types of analysis (thematic, genre, stylistic analysis). The given results of the research draw up strategies for the Transcarpathian television and its importance in the conditions of the polycultural region,

Анотація

У статті розглядаються основні проблеми впровадження та розвитку Суспільного телебачення на полікультурному прикордонні України (Закарпаття) з урахуванням національних особливостей. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена необхідністю детального аналізу організаційно-розвиткових процесів Громадського телебачення Закарпаття, прогнозу розвитку, пошуку можливостей та нових рішень з урахуванням факторів, що визначають його унікальність. Були використані такі методи: емпіричні (спостереження, опис, вимірювання); теоретичні (аксіоматичні, гіпотетико-дедуктивні); загальні методи (аналіз, синтез, порівняння, узагальнення); унікальні методи, серед яких найбільш продуктивними були різні види аналізу (тематичний, жанровий, стилістичний аналіз). Наведені результати дослідження формують стратегію закарпатського телебачення та його значення в умовах полікультурного регіону, враховуючи його прикордонне розташування у зв'язку з його історико-культурною, соціально-політичною

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considering its borderland location in connection with its historical-cultural, social-political peculiarity in the context of the rapid development of new media.

Keywords: Public broadcasting, Public television, regional television, polycultural borderland region, new media.

Introduction

In many European countries, the transition from state-owned television and radio broadcasting to public broadcasting underwent during the 1970s. However, this happened no sooner than 2014 in Ukraine. Though, the legislative requirements were set right after the independence of Ukraine in 1997. It was the period of the adoption of Public Broadcasting and Television Service Law for Ukraine. According to Ostapa et al. (2018), 11 bills on Public broadcasting were created between 1997 to 2013. Though, none of these accelerated its development. Some of the reasons for it were as follows: not understanding the content and purpose of such broadcasting; the politicians' intent to abuse the opportunities granted by state-owned broadcasting services; the opinion that only state-controlled broadcasting may serve national and patriotic ideas; the journalists' disinterest towards changes; the lack of competitive environment in the field of Mass media; etc.

A peculiar sign of Ukrainian Public broadcasting is that its activity is aimed at satisfying the information needs of both national and regional levels. Several foreign models of functioning have been discussed prior to its creation. Among them was the Polish model (Kyrych, 2014). As a result, public broadcasting was created based on state television and radio broadcasting. Therefore, the National Council of Television and Radio Broadcasting of Ukraine is a joint-stock company with 100% of the state's shares. Public broadcasting is financed by the State budget of Ukraine and commercial input with gradual transfer to financing by consumers and income from commercial activity. The National Council of Television and Radio Broadcasting of Ukraine joint-stock company is composed of two national television companies, three national radio companies and 22 branches. The latter are regional broadcasters that operate in almost every region of Ukraine (Law of Ukraine 1227-VII, 2021).

The Transcarpathian regional directorate is a branch of the National Council of Television and Radio Broadcasting of Ukraine that was

особливістю в контексті стрімкого розвитку нових медіа.

Ключові слова: Суспільне мовлення, Суспільне телебачення, регіональне телебачення, полікультурний прикордонний регіон, нові медіа.

established in 2015 in a similar way other branches appeared in the rest of the Ukrainian regions. It was based on the regional state television and radio company model. It combines the UA: Zakarpattia (former Tisa-1) television channel and two radio stations: Uzhhorod and Tisa FM. It is distinguished by the fact that it is one of the three Ukrainian branches that creates content for ethnic groups and operates in a polycultural borderland region with deep traditions of foreign broadcasting. Considering the former, information safety is a crucial question in this polyethnic region. As has been rightly pointed out by researcher Bidzilya (2017) who studied the formation problems of the national-information identity of the Transcarpathians and the role of the mass media in intercultural communication, the Ukrainian state must be represented in Transcarpathia and propose the borderland regions such information-communication strategy that would support the media designed for and about the ethnic groups, as well as would suggest content about the state created for such citizens in such way deepening the feeling of social responsibility for everything that happens in the country the citizens of which they are (Bidzilya et al., 2020).

This research paper is aimed at studying the peculiarities of the establishment and development of Public television of Ukraine's westernmost region, Transcarpathia; analyzing the context, investigating problems, technical and artistic resources of such broadcasting from its time of emergence in 2015 till now; inspecting the trends of the interaction between the Transcarpathian Public broadcasting and the newest media; elaborating suggestions on a successful transformation of the regional public television in context of historical, ethnocultural, and political specifics of the land in the light of modern challenges and threats. To our mind, a significant disadvantage of Ukrainian Public broadcasting lies in neglecting the regional characteristics while choosing the optimal model, developing the typical structure for all the regional companies, uniting all the principal resources, both human and financial, in Kyiv

without the opportunity to decide important questions, to create versatile genre content that would aim at the local viewer in regional companies, all of this resulting in a negative impact on the development of the independent regional Public broadcasting.

Literature Review

Thus, the relevance of researching the Transcarpathian branch of Public television increases in the context of global and local information challenges in the light of the aspirations of our state towards European integration during the process of establishing tolerant intercultural communication as well as in connection with further reforms in the field of media (Potschka & Golding, 2012). There is an increasing need for elaborating a strategy or optimal development plan for Public broadcasting in the borderland region that would combine informational, analytical, cultural, and entertaining content in a rational way. In addition, it should take into consideration the informational, cultural, and religious needs of the largest ethnic groups of the land. Developing an effective operational model for broadcasting in the border area is especially crucial under the conditions of military aggression, considering the need to defend the national information space (Syvertsen, 2001).

Many academic papers concerning the problem of public broadcasting directly or indirectly have been prepared and plenty of these have been defended by Ukrainian researchers since the 1990s (Husak, 2005; Dzholos, 2017; Kyrych, 2014; Tolochko, 2020; etc.). For instance, organizational, jurisdictional, and communicational aspects of such broadcasting including on regional level were studied by Dzholos (2017). He correctly pointed out that public broadcasters should reflect the uniqueness of the region and work according to standards under the conditions of rough competence with privately-owned channels. Apart from this, the functionality of television and radio broadcasting was discussed in scientific circles. Thus, researchers Khomenko and Fomenko (2013) studied Public broadcasting from the position of Norbert Wiener's concept of homeostasis. They concluded that such broadcasting can be built on theoretical levels like "creating a signal" (news agency), "improving the signal" (journalistic research services), and improving the audience (television and radio art). The rest of the programs can be developed on the basis of these. In such way public broadcasting would facilitate the viewers' development and decrease the

possibility of propaganda to the minimum. As a matter of fact, such a model is partly implemented in the Ukrainian media market. A significant part of the Public television material accentuates the very news segment. However, research, documentaries of their own making, entertaining and educational content are prevalently concentrated around the main national channel. The broadcast of the regional branches is filled with retransmissions.

The foreign scientific discourse represents research on the problems of Ukrainian Public broadcasting. It includes analytical reports on its operation that describe the efficient ways of financing such broadcasting (Dragomir et al., 2019), research papers aimed at studying the independence of Public broadcasting in the context of European standards (Hrubá, 2019). However, there is a lack of papers devoting attention to the regional peculiarities of Ukrainian Public broadcasting, especially to those operating in borderland areas.

Methodology

The principal methods of researching the Transcarpathian Public television are as follows: empirical (observation, description, measuring), which gave the opportunity to spot the most obvious traits of television, capture some of its traits on the level of content and form, register some quality characteristics; theoretical (axiomatic, hypothetico-deductive); general methods (analysis, synthesis, comparison, generalization); special methods, among which the most productive were the various types of analysis (thematic, genre, stylistic analysis). Therefore, we would like to accentuate the observation method among the empirical ones. We referred to it in the first stage of the research in order to find out the characteristic traits of the Transcarpathian Public television and its peculiarities in general. With the help of the description method, we learn the formal and semantic features of the content of the former state television of Transcarpathia, in particular, for the national minorities. The measuring method helped us determine the number of television programs of the former state and now Public broadcasting, the general duration of the content in Ukrainian and other languages. It was possible to find out the principle traits of Public broadcasting with the help of methods of analysis and synthesis. Certainly, we applied the subtypes of analysis while acting in this field. For instance, classification was used to study television content that was grouped by thematic orientation, focus on different ages, specialized audiences,

etc. The abstract method made it possible to accentuate those traits of the Transcarpathian television channels that would finally allow us to form a complex understanding about the establishment and development of Public television of the borderland area. As a separate form of the abstract method, idealization was applied during defining the quality of the television programs. The comparison method was implemented at different stages of the research. For example, it was used during the analysis of formal and semantic features of the content. Researchers Fickers and Johnson (2010) correctly point out that television can be studied on the following levels: local, regional, national, and/or global; rural or urban; may take into consideration topographic or geopolitical features. The comparison can be synchronous or diachronic and might indicate the micro-meso-macro-historical perspective (Kitsa & Mudra, 2018). Of not less importance is the method of generalization. It helped us find out the leading tendencies of the functioning of the Transcarpathian Public television from its establishment till today. In addition, it was used to investigate the main challenges taking into consideration the historical, political, and cultural features of the region. The methods of induction and deduction were also important during the comprehension of the tendencies of the Transcarpathian television for development in multicultural, polyethnic, and borderland areas. In regards to special methods, different types of analysis turned out to be the most productive for us: thematic, genre, and stylistic analysis as well as certain sociological, statistic methods or their various means. For example, various types of analysis were applied while researching content. The informal interview was preferred among sociological methods. It was aimed at a profound and versatile study of a specific object. Such a method allowed us to find out the peculiarity of the development of the oldest television of Transcarpathia during a talk with the producer of the current Public broadcaster. Statistic methods and their means helped define the quantitative characteristics of the television content, the proportion of different means of broadcasting including the ones designed for the national minorities.

Results and Discussion

Traditions of Television Broadcasting in the Polyethnic Borderland Region

The television of Ukraine's western borderland region constitutes an important part of the European and national media space. The

audiovisual Mass media of the land were established parallel to the development of the radio and attempts to introduce television to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and in the context of the European information-communication background. Thus, signals were transmitted onto the territory of Transcarpathia by Czechoslovakia in the 1930s. It embraced Ukraine's westernmost region officially called Carpathian Ruthenia between 1918 to 1939. Broadcasting in the Ukrainian language was established on the territory of Transcarpathia when Carpathian Ruthenia received autonomous status in September 1938. It was during the period of the proclamation of Carpatho-Ukraine which existed for only a few months, though left a noticeable trace in history. The Soviet reign brought along Soviet radio broadcasting to Transcarpathia in November 1945. Television broadcasting was introduced in 1965, but regular broadcasts appeared no sooner than in February 1968 (Tolochko, 2020a).

From the very beginning, the organization of radio and television in Transcarpathia took into account the ethnic aspect. The ethnic landscape of the westernmost land was constantly changing during the last century due to the fact that seven countries and states had existed on this territory since the 19th century. Thus, apart from the Ukrainians being the native nation, the largest ethnic groups in different times were the Hungarians, Romanians, Jews, Roma people, Czechs and Slovaks, Germans, and Russians. According to the census of 1921 and 1930, 62-62.2% of Ukrainians, 17.2-16% of Hungarians, 13.4-13.1% of Jewish people, 3.3-4.8% of Czechs and Slovaks, 1.9-1.7% of Romanians, 1.8-1.9% of Germans, and 2.1-0.3% of representatives of other nationalities resided on the territory of Transcarpathia (Tivodar, 2010). The ethnic situation underwent significant changes between 1946 and 1989. The most populous national minorities after the Ukrainians (68-78.4%) were as follows: Hungarians (17.4-12.5%), Romanians (1.6-2.4%), Slovaks (1.7-0.6%), Russians (1.5-4%), Roma people (0.06-1%), and Germans (0.3%). According to the Ukrainian national census of 2001, representatives of over 100 nationalities and ethnicities resided on the territory of Transcarpathia during the independence of Ukraine (State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, 2001). Since then, the largest native group has been the Ukrainians (80.5%). Apart from them, the largest Hungarian community (12.1% of the land) of Ukraine, the only Slovak community (0.5%) of Ukraine, one of the largest Romanian

communities (2.6%), and a populous Roma community (1.1%) reside here as well.

Therefore, no wonder that Ukrainian, Russian, Hungarian, and Romanian language programs began to be transmitted when regular radio and television broadcasting was introduced in the 40-60s. The former state and now Public television channel has been broadcasting programs in the languages of ethnic minorities since then. However, the duration and quality of such broadcasts were significantly different in the USSR. These depended not as much on the size of the minority, but on the ideology of the state.

The state television aired around 80% of its shows in Ukrainian and the rest (around 20%) was transmitted in other languages in the period of independent Ukraine (until 2018). It is true that the television channel had many flaws on the formal and content levels. For example, these ranged from the same type or partially repeated formats inside separate television programs to errors made by the narrators. These problems have been analyzed in previous papers (Tolochko, 2020a).

Overview of Competitive Processes on the Transcarpathian Media Market

A crucial operational aspect of Public broadcasting lies within the competition on the media market, both on a national and regional level. Independent broadcasters must oppose powerful privately-owned media structures and media holdings. They are owned by financial-oligarchic groups that possess significantly larger resources, possibilities to capture audiences and have been prevailing present on the territory of Ukraine since the 1990s. Syvertsen (2001), a foreign researcher of Public Service Broadcasting in Nordic countries rightly points out that competition between public and commercial broadcasters might, probably, increase in the future. This depends on various factors, mostly on the political system. This is why the main question of the development of such broadcasting arises: will public television and radio broadcasters be able to persuade the consumers each time that they offer a worthy alternative to commercial broadcasting and simultaneously satisfy the needs of the public in information (Syvertsen et al., 2014). Such a principle is present in Ukraine. That means that Public television must prove its competitiveness. It needs to prove the quality of its programs and demonstrate exemplary compliance with standards, thus, differentiating itself from private channels.

Nine commercial television channels have been represented in Transcarpathia since 1991: 21 Uzhhorod (in addition to that came the Hungarian part TV21 Ungvár in 2018), Spektr, Alians-TV and Kray-TB, M-Studio, RTK Khust, Pershiy Kabelniy, Uzhinform, Sirius, and the communal, partly privately-owned Vynohradiv TV. Three of them, namely, Spektr, Alians-TV, and Kray-TB had existed only for several years. Their decline has been caused by problems that can occur in any broadcaster's work, namely the investor does not have interest in supporting the television channel; the channel lacks staff which leads to struggles in creating authentic content; legal errors in the organization of broadcasting. Currently, there are six private and one communal, partly privately-owned channels that have official broadcasting licenses in the region. Four broadcasters belong to the category of local (RTK Khust, Vynohradiv TV, Pershiy Kabelniy, and Uzhinform) and four others belong to regional broadcasters (UA: Zakarpattia, 21 Uzhhorod, M-Studio, and Sirius). Three of them (Vynohradiv TV, Sirius, and Uzhinform) ceased to exist in 2019-2020 due to lack of funds and the fact that their owners did not want to support the activity of these channels. This situation clearly illustrates the dependence of the private segment of the Transcarpathian television market on the political-oligarchic groups, their inability to survive on their own under the market conditions, as well as confirms the importance of the independence of public television and radio broadcasting in the region and the country in general.

Therefore, in order to keep a larger part of the audience than the commercial broadcasters, the Public television needs to be more professional, strictly adhere to the standards, comprehensively inform the audience, and offer quality informative-analytical programs, cultural, and educational content.

The Peculiarities of the Formation of the Public Broadcasting on the Basis of the Former State Broadcasting

The Transcarpathian branch of Public television was founded on the basis of the Transcarpathian regional state television and radio company Tisa-1 in Autumn 2015. In the beginning, it embraced the Tisa-1 television channel and the Uzhhorod and Tisa FM radio stations. The first years of functioning of the state broadcaster being a branch of The National Public Television and Radio Company of Ukraine (2015-2016) did not show any significant changes in the level of content and management. Dozens of editorial

offices still existed in the structure that aired well-known projects for different ages (adults and children), people of different gender (men and women), nationalities (Ukrainians, Hungarians, Romanians, Slovaks, Germans, Russians, Roma people, etc.), religion, viewers with disabilities, and people with high specialization (programs of political, medical, legal, economical, household, educational, and artistic-cultural character).

The years of 2017-2018 are considered to be a period of active development of Public broadcasting of the westernmost region of Ukraine. Significant transformations took place on the level of content (the number of programs decreased); the name of the channel was changed (Tisa 1 shifted to UA: Zakarpattia in 2018); the staff was reorganized (only 119 workers remained out of 250). The production of unified content was decreased from the former 6 hours to 3 hours 5 minutes; a typical structure was introduced that would favor morning and evening entertainment programs, informative-analytical, broadcastings, and programs in the languages of the national minorities (this concerned the three branches that had such broadcasting). Programs of high specialization began to be shut down in 2017. These were shows on legal, medical topics, etc. We would like to note that the Transcarpathian Public broadcaster was characterized by disadvantages in this period. These were typical for all the regional television channels and were spotted by the yearly audit of 2017. Foremost, it is the quantitative and not qualitative principle of content-making; unclear show formats (especially of the cultural ones designed for national minorities); the absence of correlation between original television programs and the number of the branch workers and the size of the region; the orientation of the informational-analytical author's programs on the coverage of government activities (PO Detector Media, 2019a).

Upon the creation of Public broadcasting, significant changes on both content and formal level took place in the informational television program *Vchasno* ("Timely") that was renamed to *Novyny* ("News") in 2018. The advantages and disadvantages of the news program have been noted in the generalized monitoring materials devoted to breaching professional standards in the news of the regional branches of the Public Broadcasting Company of Ukraine (NSTU). The monitoring was performed by PO Detector media. The newscasts did not have any problems with promptness, accuracy, and variety usually

(they devoted attention to every field, such as religion, sport, the war in the Donbas region at least to a little extent). As a result, the indicator of compliance with journalist standards increased between 2017 and 2019. The number of ordered material decreased from 7% in 2017 to 0% in 2019 (PO Detector media, 2018a; 2018b; 2019b). The branch was producing 3 hours 5 minutes on a daily basis in 2019, similarly to other broadcasters in different regions.

Reduction of Public Broadcasting of Transcarpathia

More radical changes for regional studios were proposed by the Concept of regional broadcasting of the NSTU private joint-stock company for 2020–2021. As a result, the informational-analytical block was reduced to almost an hour in length and was proposed to be aired in the evening slot. The one in the morning was integrated into the national Ukrainian morning show. The rest of the programs were proposed to be produced in cooperation with other branches of the Suspilne or via outsourcing. That means they planned to order around three hours of air instead of developing their own product, provide their employees with work, utilize the available resources, update the technical equipment, etc. The principles of content production were expected to be changed. This would lead to the reduction of the number of full-time workers and to the transition to project management (Tolochko, 2020b). Such changes were negatively perceived in many regional studios. Committees for saving Public broadcasting were established by individual activists. Representatives of the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine, politicians, and public figures participated in the discussion. The pandemic situation of Spring 2020 prevented further staff reduction. Thus, the employees were brought to part-time positions. Some of them remained to work and were involved in producing interregional content. Due to underfinancing of Public broadcasting, the launch of important projects was delayed to Autumn 2020.

In such a way, many changes took place in the Transcarpathian branch of Public television since the establishment of Public television and radio broadcasting. They were implemented on the level of management (instead of the Transcarpathian State Television and Radio Company branches were created; names of the television channels were changed), program grid (unique broadcastings were reduced; informational-analytical and entertainment

shows were prioritized; editorial offices were closed and versatile programs along with them), production organization (creation of programs in cooperation with other branches or on outsourcing), and in the staff list (reduction of personnel). Such transformations as well the operational peculiarities of the Public television noted in the Concept of regional broadcasting for 2020-2021 indicate that the regional branches are gradually being transformed into bureaus, they are decreasing the number of their own products, prefer media products made to order from private third party structures and purchased content. For instance, the 2020 report notes that the company purchased "almost 200 hours of documentaries and programs about nature from well-known European companies like Offthefence and TVF" (PO Detector media, 2021).

Challenges Faced by the independent Public Broadcaster

The public broadcasting faces the challenges of the digital era in Europe. Researcher Hrubá (2019) mentioned the problem of increasing competence in the form of online platforms like Netflix. They have a significantly higher budget than any other independent broadcaster and their services are regulated many times less than those of traditional broadcasters. Another challenge is the political pressure on independent public television broadcasters of Europe (Hrubá, 2019). One of the largest problems of the Ukrainian Public broadcasting is the severe budget cut. "Public broadcasting has never received 100% of state financing since 2017 when The National Public Television and Radio Company of Ukraine (NSTU) was registered. However, it is provided by the Law On Public television and radio broadcasting of Ukraine" (Zhuk, 2020). Due to underfunding in 2020, it had to abandon the planned upgrades, including equipment for work, as well as had to reduce the cost for creating content. The lack of financial incentives in the regional branches and content cut demotivate the employees to continue working in the team of the Public television. That is the reason why many specialists sometimes including employees with over 20 years of experience leave the company each year. This is a significant loss for the broadcaster. Open sources prove that at least nine employees were dismissed in Kyiv and the regions along with leading members of the Suspilne in 2020.

It should be noted that the underfunding of the Ukrainian Public broadcasting is a decisive, though, not the only factor that determines its opportunities and further development. Another

important question is the informational decentralization that is missing from Public broadcasting. General management is carried out from Kyiv. The amount of work is determined according to the approved conception on broadcasting for two years. Therefore, to our mind, these questions should be reviewed. Perhaps, the experience of European countries should be considered in regards to organization of broadcasting in the regions. For example, a dual system and informational decentralization are implemented in television and radio broadcasting in Germany. This means that the television and radio companies that are subordinate to the federal lands, air in the premises of their own regions on a third program. Respectively, the content of the third channel is unique for each region and makes its own percentage contribution to the general broadcast (Lersch, 2010; Potschka & Golding, 2012; Dzholos, 2017).

It is regretful that even the reports of the European partners (Dragomir et al., 2019) conclude that solutions for the improvement of the financial situation and cost reduction should be the optimization of local networks, the sale of property, and attracting tenants. On the contrary, it is accentuated that in order to survive, Public broadcasting must compete with private broadcasters and interact with its audience much better, understand its needs and study its interests in the increasingly difficult digital market. The European partners state the impossibility of rejecting state funding and note the absence of future perspectives if done so. Two scenarios have been proposed. One of them suggests the creation of a special fund for financing when money is obtained through lending radio frequencies. The other one presumes granted financing from the general state budget. However, it is hard to implement such a model.

Since the beginning of 2020, the Public broadcaster has been developing its own digital platform of the same name that showed good results in its first year which is constituted in the annual report. The *Suspilne Novyny* ("Suspilne News") website has grown ten times larger. It had 340,000 unique visitors and 670,000 views in December 2019 and 3.4 M unique visitors and 9.4 M views in December 2020 (PO Detector media, 2021). Interaction between the Public broadcaster and the newest media is manifested through the popularization of content via social networks being used as an information source (in particular, obtaining unique photo and video content); live streaming of television programs, and uploading separate releases or creating short

videos for social networks. We have analyzed the pages of the Transcarpathian Public television in the social networks for the period from 2019 to April 2020. Such researches of the popularization of the programs of the Transcarpathian Public broadcaster in the social networks were performed in 2015-2016. This allowed to track quality changes. In such a manner, the state television channel was present in the Facebook (social network) and YouTube (video hosting platform). It was also present in Twitter and Google+ until 2018. Pages in Instagram and Telegram were launched in the end of 2019. The number of people who liked this page on Facebook (i.e. subscribed to the page and viewed its updates in the news feed) was 12,900 in November 2019 and increased to 21,500 by April 2020. We would like to note that the approach and methods of content creation in the social networks changed after the transition from state channel into Public television. In particular, they stopped repeatedly publishing fragments of narrations and posting links to their YouTube channel. These were practices known from the page of the previous state broadcaster (Tolochko, 2016). Almost every publication of the page was organized in the following way: there was an authentic text in which the main content was explained (or a piece of news briefly introduced); the problematic questions raised in the news release were named; the new topic announced and its relevance justified; the authors of the report, its presenters, and the guests of the program were mentioned; all of this with the utilization of an acceptable number of smileys and symbols in order to diversify the text. The video quality and the improved technical conditions made it possible to view the video content directly in the social network and air it in live stream, comment, and react to it in real time. Previous researches clarified that, if compared to the private channels of Transcarpathia, the Public broadcaster is the most consecutive and innovative in terms of creating content for versatile social networks. It is the result of the work of a separate digital department (Tolochko, 2016).

If we refer to the European experience in combining traditional broadcasters with the newest media, we will find out there are advantages in involving the audience not only in content viewing but also in its creation at some point. Modern television media are a space for active involvement of audience. Syvertsen (2001) rightly noted that the audience no longer simply watches TV, it takes part in whatever happens on the screen, it reacts to the messages in the social networks, etc.

For instance, the German Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) tries to integrate social networks into television (which in this case is called social television). An example of the integrated social television in the field of the German PSB is the Funk content network. The Internet network is financed by the license fee on the television and radio. However, the broadcasting designed prevalingly for the youth and with its interaction is streamed on YouTube (Stollfuß, 2019).

Apart from the above-mentioned, another problem of the Transcarpathian Public television that requires immediate resolution is fixing the technical difficulties of signal delivery. Significant changes took part in the media market on regional level in 2018-2019 when satellite signal-receiving was blocked in Ukraine. This turned out to be a major challenge for the Transcarpathian television market too. This problem was especially severe in mountainous areas, since around 50% of the region's population was covered by digital broadcasting in 2018. There were six transmitters of digital signal in the largest cities and regional centers. Digital broadcasting networks that used the existing towers were created in 26 cities, villages and 11 areas of Transcarpathia. However, they do not cover the entire territory of Transcarpathia. In order to establish constant receiving of digital signal on the entire territory of the region, 66 radio and television towers should be installed (that used to be retranslators of signals for the furthest points of the mountainous areas) and the equipment that remained after analogue signal has been disconnected (42 towers) should be modernized. It is important to install new towers in the mountainous area.

The UA: Zakarpattia television channel continued to broadcast satellite signals in 2019 since it had not been subject to blocking. According to the reports of the representatives of the Council that monitors the technical peculiarities, the broadcaster leads full broadcasts on all the multiplex transmitters of the region. However, it is impossible to tell, if the number of the viewers increased or decreased after the transition to digital broadcasting after satellite broadcasting had been seized, as well as, what programs of which broadcasters do the Transcarpathians watch since no suchlike monitoring had been performed in the region. At the same time, the quality of signal delivery and knowing the likes of the audience are important components of the work of any television channel, in particular, the Public broadcasting of Ukraine. This threatens Transcarpathia with

watching the available programs via satellite, including the television channels of the aggressor.

Conclusions

Under the conditions of information threat and military actions carried out by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, the role of Public broadcasting is increasing as well as the role of the regional television channels that account to people independent from the government and business is increasing since they can be used as platforms for communication. Considering the multicultural character of Transcarpathia and other specific factors, the Public broadcaster should have more rights and opportunities for content creation in this and any other region. Such should be advantages in technical equipment, an extensive network of offices, enough funding, and independence in decision making. On the contrary, reducing the amount of content, the perspective of turning the branches into correspondent bureaus, standardizing the programs as claimed by the concept for developing regional broadcasting put under threat the very existence of regional Public broadcasting.

The Public broadcaster needs to take into consideration the national-historical and mental peculiarities of the audience in order to be competitive in the borderland area where the tradition of listening to and watching foreign broadcasters by the local residents has been usual since the last century due to the availability of the television and radio programs.

Monitoring and control of broadcasting and its content with the aim of media space protection and prevention of inter-ethnic conflicts was and still remains to be important. Apart from this, subtitled foreign broadcasting is important from the point of view of establishing good intercultural communication. A relevant direction of the activity of the Public broadcaster is the production of their own informational, analytical, culturological, educational programs for the title nation and ethnic minorities. Attention should be paid to destroying myths and stereotypes, establishing democratic values, respect for Ukraine, its history, and culture.

An important step of 2020 was the creation of a digital platform of the Public broadcaster that led to the popularization of television content in the newest media. Such direction of work should be enforced. In general, the image of the broadcaster should be taken care of, since researches

demonstrate that only one third of the audience knows that there is Public broadcasting in Ukraine after four years have passed since the launch of the branches and seven since the introduction of the Public broadcasting service itself.

The future of the Transcarpathian Public broadcasting directly depends on the quality of the digital broadcasting in the region, the coverage of which remains unsatisfying in the mountainous area where there is a severe need in installing additional television towers. Utilizing the resources of radio and television towers and the possibilities of providers of program services can be promising. A strict information strategy should be developed in this field. It needs to take into consideration the peculiarity of Transcarpathia as a region and the main challenges waiting here. Due to the lack of information provision, the Transcarpathians might continue compensating for this information gap via the mass media of foreign countries that is especially dangerous during the period of military instability and outer threats.

Therefore, it is important that the Transcarpathian regional television preserved its own specificity (in particular, broadcasting for ethnic groups), deepened it, and simultaneously understood the needs of its audience and took them into consideration while producing television programs. Researching the stages of the establishment and development of the audiovisual space of Ukraine's western borderland region proves a lasting tradition of polynational broadcasting. Under a competent strategy, the latter can play a significant part in preventing interethnic conflicts, information threats and facilitate Ukraine's establishment as a democratic legal multinational country, a full-right member to be of the European Union.

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