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The Media Development Foundation believes a vibrant and free media is critical to social, political and economic development, particularly in post-authoritarian states. We provide the tools and training needed to make media strong, and help newsrooms find sustainable ways to grow.

MDF works with journalists, newsrooms, civil society and public officials in Ukraine and Central and Eastern Europe. Our core objectives are:

- Support excellence in journalism by developing the skills and capabilities of regional and national media organizations
- Promote high ethical and professional journalistic standards by raising awareness of their importance and sharing best practices
- Help journalists deliver real change by supporting impactful content and providing the training and resources to make themselves heard
- Work with media organizations to build a media business ecosystem in which they can grow in a sustainable and independent manner
- Help media engage with stakeholders, notably public institutions and civil society, to improve governance and social well-being

History

Freedom of speech in Ukraine suffered a sharp decline in 2013. The criminal regime of ex-president Yanukovych bought, destroyed and pressured media that had an independent editorial policy.

A group of Kyiv Post journalists decided to create MDF to resist this pressure, protect journalists’ rights, and support independent media.

Following the Revolution of Dignity MDF took on a wider mission: to address persistent challenges faced by journalists, ranging from intimidation and being deprived of resources to a decline in social trust.

MDF currently focuses on finding sustainable solutions that would help build the strong media needed for a healthy society.
The Media Development Foundation was launched in the end of 2013 with a simple objective – to defend independent media in Ukraine against the assaults of a corrupt and authoritarian regime. That threat has been removed, but in Ukraine and abroad, all is far from well with the Fourth Estate.

Journalists continue to be pressured by the powerful while important stories are lost in a cacophony of noise. The traditional business model remains broken and while there are some green shoots, most newsrooms struggle to find the resources to operate, putting their independence at risk. Populist political movements have directed social anger against the media, breeding mistrust toward journalists and painting them as enemies.

These risks have been compounded by an outflow of respected and experienced professionals from the industry. Young journalists entering the field today are faced with a lack of mentorship to provide practical and ethical guidance.

At the Media Development Foundation we do not believe there is a silver bullet. Instead, we contend that building a healthy media ecosystem requires a complex approach, including training young professionals, helping journalists deliver their message more effectively, partnering with civil society and public institutions to fight social ills like corruption, and working with newsrooms and businesses to build a sustainable operating model.

To be successful, however, it is critical to “get one’s hands dirty” and build the media ecosystem from the ground up. This means we emphasize work with regional newsrooms that do not benefit from the resources, and protection, that a national spotlight offers. We are proud that a majority of our partners are based in the regions.

There are reasons for optimism. Over the past four years we have had the opportunity to work with hundreds of ambitious, energetic individuals and build a stronger media environment both in Ukraine and across the region. The thousands of applications we receive show that there is more appetite still.

Similarly encouraging is the impact we have witnessed. Hundreds of journalists have seen that they are not alone and set themselves ever more ambitious goals. Dozens of media outlets have found more effective ways drive change in their communities. Investigative journalists have found partners from around the world to tackle the global, complex stories of our time.

We have also been blessed by a network of partners and sponsors who share our objectives and our values. We whole-heartedly thank them for their continued support and belief in the promise that a vibrant and free media holds!

Eugene Zaslavsky,  
Executive Director

Jakub Parusinski,  
Chairman of the Board
1,000 participants of MezhyhiryaFest investigative journalism conference, held annually over the last 4 years

280 journalism internships secured

Over 6,500 applications received across all programs

500+ journalists participated in training programs

26 project implemented for a total of $900,000

3,000+ articles produced by MDF program participants

Collaboration with 50 regional, and

20 Kyiv-based media organizations

1 local media outlet (Dyryzhabl) launched, as a pilot for

10 new media organizations
The **Journalism Exchange Program** gives young media professionals and recent graduates a chance to kickstart their careers through paid internships at leading newsrooms across Ukraine.

Annual conference **MezhyhiryaFest** gathers top international investigative journalists, media professionals and researchers to share insights, best practices and debate pertinent issues.

The **School for Regional Journalists** provides trainings (editorial and managerial) and internships for experienced professionals, with a “train the trainer” model to boost skills at regional newsrooms.

The **Hyperlocal Media Lab** is an experimental effort aimed at supporting the development of local media in Ukraine and other low press freedom states, piloted with the launch of *Dyryzhabi* in Yampil.

**Journalism of Tolerance** focuses on coverage of LGBT+, minorities and other marginalized groups, including interviews with prominent social figures and editorial oversight for participants to write stories.

The **Security and War Investigation Training** is targeted toward war reporters. The course includes working in hostile environments, reporting on conflicts and introduces many tools and resources.

The Media Development Foundation supports a number of **content focused-projects**, such as Reform Watch and Defense Watch, that help journalists publish in-depth reporting on socially critical issues.

**Media Development Foundation project objectives:**

- Developing the skills and capabilities of regional and national media organizations
- Promote high ethical and professional journalistic standards
- Providing resources to make journalists’ message heard and drive real change
- Support sustainable and independent media ecosystem/ operating models
- Empower media as a tool to improve governance and social well-being
Participants of the first wave of the Journalism Exchange Program in 2014

JEP participants receive diplomas for graduating from the program.
JEP provides young media professionals and recent graduates (less than 5 years of experience) a chance to kickstart their careers through paid internships at leading newsrooms.

Internships take place outside of the participant’s home region. This allows them to learn about life in different regions, helps focus their efforts and provides an opportunity to work as an outsider – demonstrating the value of independent perspective.

Regular interactions with both participants and newsrooms help identify key challenges faced by regional media outlets, as well as gaps in young journalism training.

A series of trainings is held for program participants, with special emphasis for practical skills and best practices in accordance with the highest ethical standards.

"From the start of the internship I realized everything is not as we imagine. I understood how things work and made many mistakes that helped me [learn].

Living in the unfamiliar city is a must-have experience for everyone who wants to leave their comfort zone and develop the ability to adapt.

The Journalism Exchange Program is an ideal opportunity for all young and inexperienced people to gain useful professional and life skills”

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**Key facts and achievements**

- Launched in 2014 with five cycles a year
- 280 internships at newsrooms in Ukraine (6500 applications received)
- 50 out of 70 partner media based outside of Kyiv
- 30 trainings from leading journalists and media experts from the Media Development Foundation’s network

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**BUDGET:**

$50,000 covering 5 waves per year (c. 10-15 participants per wave)

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Yaroslava Drutsa,
Ostroh, interned at MediaPort online newspaper in Kharkiv

Daryna Shevchenko,
board member and former MDF executive director

“Journalism is all about experience and that’s exactly what JEP provides.

Participants work in a new team and a new community. They learn to adapt and grow on-the-job, to tell new stories to new people in all new ways. They start building a network to support them.

If all that doesn't help you become a successful media professional — I have no idea what can!”
Post-truth world: facts against the “alternative facts”

MezhyhiryaFest is open to all media changemakers

MezhyhiryaFest panel (from right) Katya Gorchinskaya, Emma Lacey Bordeaux, Scott Higham, Ondřej Kundra, Paul Radu and Peter Pomerantsev
MezhyhiryaFest is an yearly investigative journalism conference organized by MDF and Yanukovych Leaks, held at Mezhyhirya, the residence of former Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovych.

The festival is split between a day of plenary discussions and 1-2 days of masterclasses and expert sessions focused on specific topics (e.g., working with open data, using offshore registries).

It brings together investigative journalists, media professionals, policy makers, experts and researchers, based both in Central and Eastern Europe and globally.

The goal is to discuss the most pressing issues for investigative journalism, identify ways to address challenges (incl. policy recommendations), exchange know-how and best practices and create connections for future cooperation.

Key facts and figures

- First launched in 2014. Four events held so far, with over 1,000 participants (5th conference planned for June 2018)
- MF 2017 saw 350 participants from 19 countries

“MezhyhiryaFest is not a classical conference where people just talk and listen.

It grew from a part-fun, part-serious tradition of celebrating Journalism Day (June 6) at Victor Yanukovych’s residence when he was Ukraine’s president: we came each year, but he never showed up.

When Yanukovych fled to Russia in 2014, we realized we can celebrate our professional day in his residence.

It’s a lot of fun: nature, music, cool people. But also tackling serious issues with smart, progressive people from Ukraine and around the world.

MezhyhiryaFest is a place to confront some of the most pressing challenges facing journalism – In a beautiful setting with a unique background”
Award-winning Slidstvo.Info journalist Dmytro Gnap runs a masterclass on investigative reporting

Hromadske CEO Katya Gorchinskaya teaches a class on media management
The SRJ is designed for experienced media professionals from Ukraine’s regions. Its goal is to provide training and practical experience to make them better writers, editors and managers.

The program is composed of three parts. Firstly, participants attend an intensive 5 day course, made up of master classes from top experts. Four modules focus on different areas: content, digital, financial and management (leadership).

This is followed by a two-week paid internship at a leading newsroom. There they can test earlier learnings and get hands-on experience working in some of Ukraine’s best media teams.

Finally, participants hold trainings at their home outlets (“train the trainer” model), sharing their new knowledge and skills.

Key facts and achievements

- Launched in 2015 with 5 schools held (10-12 participants and 12 trainers per session).
- Total of 55 participants received training, followed by internships at leading Kyiv newsrooms.
- 55 post-training sessions held at home newsrooms, attended by over 500 journalists.

“It’s been a couple of weeks since the end of the school, but the emotions are still high.

The knowledge received still overwhelms. I keep going over lectures in my head and read my notes again and again. I want to test out as much as possible in my work. The content was very practical and that’s most important.

The format allowed us to feel that people we previously only heard about – famous journalists and experts – are here with us and you can ask them anything. And they are real, not just legends.

You feel like nothing is impossible. You just have to try hard enough.”

“The School is for people with motivation and values — editors who never give up.

They believe independent media can make it in the regions, that their journalists can be well paid and trusted by their community.

We call the School alumni MDF-like-minded-people and keep strong connections with them afterwards, helping with contacts and mentorship.

That’s why there are so many success stories of our interns. When, after the program, they are promoted, set up their own media or even join advanced journalistic teams, they recall the School as a key step toward their success.”
After half a year the newspaper gained popularity among all locals of Yampil.

In the first month, the newspaper was distributed free of charge to attract attention.
The Hyperlocal Media Lab takes an experimental approach to learn how to make local media in Ukraine financially sustainable while remaining independent and producing quality content.

The pilot involved the launch of a local newspaper, *Dyryzhabl*, in the town of Yampil, Vinnytsia oblast (pop. 11,500). Over eight months external trainers, journalists and managers helped a local team set up a news-site, recruit writers and develop a revenue stream based on retail sales and advertising.

Learnings from the *Dyryzhabl* have since been applied to 10 media outlets in the Ivano-Frankivsk region, helping them improve their editorial and managerial capabilities, and to become more effective at monetizing their work.

### Key facts and achievements

- Local media *Dyryzhabl* (drgbl.net) created from scratch, with modern design to optimize user experience
- 63,500 unique site visitors and 299,500 page views in first 18 months of operation
- 60,000 issues distributed in district over a 12 month period, with 700 materials written
- Two 1.5 month internships for Yampil journalists in Kyiv; 4 masterclasses held for local journalists in Yampil

“I discovered the world of media, which didn’t interest me before, at a training organized by *Dyryzhabl*. So I decided to make journalism my profession and became a full-time writer for the site. So did two of my friends from Yampil. They now study journalism in Ostroh and Lviv.

The site helped our town tell it’s unique stories and will remain part of Yampil’s chronicle.

It was also an inspiration not to sit back but do something. *Dyryzhabl* proved that you can do cool projects in a small city. I met a lot of incredible people and well-known journalists who still inspire and influence me.”

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**BUDGET:**

$60 000 total project costs (including start up costs, website development, recruitment and training)

Lera Lauda,
Project Manager

―

“Local journalism in Ukraine is at a very low level. So when modern and high-quality media appear in a small town, it creates waves.

Many local media wrote about our project, we were constantly invited to share our experience during at master-classes and lectures.

*The Hyperlocal Media Lab gave us a deep insight into the processes and problems of regional media, and inspired me to launch a new project – creating local media in nine other cities*”
Journalism of Tolerance aims to increase social awareness of the issues and challenges faced by vulnerable groups in Ukraine by improving journalists’ understanding and quality of reporting.

The groups covered include sexual and ethnic minorities, people living in poverty, war veterans and other disenfranchised groups.

The program includes two days of training with instructors, who help participants approach and cover vulnerable groups in a sensitive and balanced manner, rejecting any stereotypes.

Participants then put learnings into action, producing materials with the support and guidance of MDF mentors.

Key facts and achievements

- Launched in 2016, with three sessions held since. Each is made up of two-days of training, covered by six expert instructors
- 55 participants in total across all three sessions
- Over 100 articles produced as part of the program – written by participants with editorial support from MDF

“The most incredible phrase I heard from Yana Panfilova during the training was: ‘I am happy, that I have HIV. Thanks to it I have discovered the ability to help people.’

She broke all the stereotypes – made us think, inspired us to develop new projects, gave us energy and understanding.

Just saying ‘thank you’ to the organizers of the Journalism of Tolerance project is not enough. May God grant you – Artem, Alyona and Oksana – and everyone who made this project possible, power to turn your ideas into reality, positive experiences and the support of like-minded people.

Thank you Media Development Foundation, U-Media, Internews and USAID. You are doing the impossible!!”

“Unfortunately, for many people in Ukraine, vulnerable groups are invisible.

Through the Journalism of Tolerance project, we give a voice to minorities, to people with disabilities and those living in poverty. We explain the challenges they face every day, and we show how our society can help them.

We believe that by telling stories of these people, journalists can actually change their lives.”

Oksana Kharkova, editor at Novgorod-Siversky public broadcaster

Alyona Zhuk, Lead Program Trainer and Mentor

BUDGET PER WAVE: $15,000 per wave (2-day training session and post-training mentorship)
The Security & War Investigation Training taught participants how to treat injuries in field conditions.

Experienced security and risk trainers run a course in first care for journalists.
The Security and War Investigation Training is a 4-day training program targeted toward war reporters and photographers with less than 3 years’ experience working in conflict zones.

The program has three sections. In the first participants practice using open source data for war investigations (e.g., using geolocation or building timelines from social media data).

The first aid and personal security section instructs how to treat people who have been in a car crash, shot or otherwise injured. This two-day section also includes guidelines in case of kidnapping or attack.

The final day was devoted to investigating conflict-related topics, including cyberwarfare and weapons trafficking.

Key facts and achievements
- Launched in 2015, with three sessions held since
- 60 active war reporters and photographers trained
- 6 trainers: 3 security and first aid trainers from Centurion Risk Assessment; Aric Toler from Bellingcat; Giannina Segnini from Columbia University’s Journalism School

Maria applied the learnings from the training just three weeks later:

“No one was dying near me, so I didn’t have to save anyone, but everything came in handy.

I caught myself thinking, at rallies or during the storming of Akhmetov’s office, where there was everything from smoke grenades to knives, that I acted differently, more conscious of what I was doing.

I found ways to escape and a place to hide even before the action started. I helped people out of a fistfight near me.

I’ve spent a lot of time at war lately, but it is only after these four days that I can say I know what to do and how to act in critical situations.”

“...”

Maria Kucher, Training participant and war reporter, Editor of investigative program “The Tracks of War” on ZIK TV channel

Daryna Shevchenko, board member and former MDF executive director

BUDGET: $25 000 per training

“...”

We had great trainers. Aric shared insights from Bellingcat’s work in Iraq, Syria and the shooting of MH17. Giannina told about her experience in Costa Rica. Centurion provided invaluable practical advice...

Most importantly, though, the project helped Ukrainian journalists to be as safe and as effective as possible in the new hostile circumstances."

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Kyiv Post staff writer Oksana Grytsenko talks to a Ukrainian soldier on May 30, 2014

Preparing reports on the reform progress
We support a range of projects covering challenging and socially important topics that are difficult for newsrooms to handle on their own – either because of a lack of journalist capacity or the expertise/resources needed.

These projects include Reform Watch, a series of weekly, in-depth overviews of reforms in key governance areas, including rule of law, the judiciary system, security and defence.

Reporting from conflict zones was supported by War Reporting. This project helped journalists travel to the frontlines to conduct on-the-ground reporting of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine.

Fighting Propaganda with History is a unique series stories and social media videos covering aspects of Ukraine’s history that are misunderstood or purposefully twisted by Russian propaganda.

These and other content focused projects are made available for republication, enabling critical stories to reach wide audiences.

Key facts and achievements
- First launched in 2014
- 290 articles covering reform processes in key policy/government areas; 76 pieces on reform in key sectors of the economy (Reform Watch)
- 240 articles written as part of War-Reporting project, based on around 50 trips to the frontlines
- 86 materials covering the war in East Ukraine, the defense industry, and regional security challenges (Defense Watch)
- 800+ stories covering the reform efforts in the key sectors in Ukraine (KP+)

“The developments of the past several years have taught us that journalism can’t be purely revenue-driven or click-driven.

The content of high value for society isn’t always the content that can pay for itself. Stories that make a change are costly to produce.

It is especially so in Ukraine, where the media market is distorted by the oligarch-owned, richly subsidized news outlets, cutting oxygen for independent media.

For independent media in Ukraine, content support is often the only chance to do investigations, cover intolerance, debunk propaganda, etc.

Perhaps even more importantly, sponsoring quality content, when done smartly, is an investment that helps media approach financial sustainability – which is arguably the best possible protection of its independence.”
Our community

Our projects are only possible owing to a community of like-minded friends, partners and supporters. We are grateful for all their help and belief in our shared values, aspiration for excellence and readiness to continue growing together to ensure that a free and vibrant media sector can help deliver the positive changes that Ukraine deserves.

**Shared values**

Our success is based on belief in common goals. We work with sponsors and partner organizations that share our values, and require that partner media and program participants are respectful of others and maintain the highest ethical standards, including rejection of corruption.

**Aspiring for excellence**

We believe in setting ambitious goals and encourage our partner media and training participants to do the same. We do so by celebrating achievement and sharing examples of inspiring institutions and individuals.

**Growing together**

Where others see challenges we see opportunity. It is inspiring to see examples of people overcoming the odds or conventional wisdom and succeed: setting up a news outlet in their home town, investigating people in power or advocating for policy change to benefit their communities. We believe the core of our role is helping those individuals and providing them with the resources, knowledge and emotional support they need – and growing together!

Selected sponsors and partner organizations

![Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP)](image)

![Национальный проект YanukovychLeaks](image)

![Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (DANIDA)](image)

![National Endowment for Democracy (NED)](image)

![Internews](image)

![NATO](image)

![Seven Countries-One Idea (MYMEDIA)](image)

![ERSTE Stiftung](image)

[Kingdom of the Netherlands](image)

[Ukrainian World Foundation](image)

[Embassy of the Czech Republic in Ukraine](image)

[USAID](image)
All projects are implemented according to MDF internal financial policies and procedures, which were developed on the basis of the best European practices on NGO management.

All procurement is performed in accordance with the Tender Policy, Budget Policy, Procurement Instruction, Terms and References of MDF, and unclear MDF its control and financial monitoring.

The organization efficiently uses project funds, following all the Donor’s requirements as well as Ukraine’s national legislation.

1 Due to insignificant activity in 2013 (<$10,000), figures for this year have been omitted.
MDF Network and Activities

**MDF NETWORK**

MDF partners are located in almost all regional centers and a number of secondary cities around the country (see numbered list below). Partner media can help share content and information about programs, host interns and trainings and provide valuable information about their local media markets and environments.

1. Kropyvnytskyi
2. Melitopol
3. Nova Kakhovka
4. Kalush
5. Novograd-Volynsky
6. Mykolaiv
7. Starokonstantyniv
8. Lyman
9. Kremenets
10. Bilyayivka
11. Kamyanske
12. Lubny
13. Severodonetsk
14. Sloviansk
15. Yuzhny (Odesa region)

**CAPABILITY BUILDING PROGRAM**

During the course of MDF trainings and other programs we have identified particularly promising newsrooms that need a little more support to become true regional champions. We focus additional efforts on supporting these media. This includes help in organizing their operations, support and guidance on starting new initiatives and sharing insights and learnings from similar case studies. It can also be more informal, with trainers continuing to mentor program participants long after a project is over. Such additional support is open to anyone, but we require that those who benefit adhere to strong values and are committed to delivering real impact.

**INTERREGIONAL FLOWS OF JEP PARTICIPANTS**

From Kyiv:
- 11% North to South
- 16% East to West
- 25% West to East

To Kyiv:
- 9% South to North
- 27% North to South

Laboratory of Hyperlocal Media – Dyryzhabl
MEZHYHIRYA FEST
War reporting

HI   SI   EI
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Eugene Zaslavsky,  
Executive Director

Prior to joining the Media Development Foundation in 2017 Eugene worked at Detector Media and NGO East Ukraine as a project manager. His previous work includes promoting journalistic standards, helping set up a public broadcaster, and training journalists and media managers. In 2011 he was a creator and manager on the Political Club talk show. Eugene has a degree in Publishing and Editing from the East Ukrainian Volodymyr Dahl University.

Jakub Parusinski,  
Chairman Of The Board

Jakub is a former journalist who has written for the Kyiv Post, New Eastern Europe, the Financial Times and the Economist. He served as Kyiv Post CEO in 2013-2014. He holds degrees in Economics from the University of Gdansk and in Political Science from the Central European University. Following an MBA at INSEAD, Jakub joined McKinsey as a consultant in London in 2015.

Daryna Shevchenko,  
Board Member

Daryna was the executive director of the MDF in 2013-2016. She previously managed the investigative journalism department at ZIK TV channel and currently runs a project focused on investigative journalism development at the Regional Press Development Institute. In 2016 she co-founded online magazine Lustrum focusing on explanatory journalism.

Brian Bonner,  
Board Member

Brian Bonner has been the Kyiv Post chief editor since 2008. He earlier worked for the St Paul Pioneer Press and has reported from Russia, Belgium, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Laos, Norway, Poland and the United Kingdom. He was a regional coordinator of the Danish-funded Objective Investigative Reporting Program in 2013-2017. Bonner is a member of the board of the European Business Association based in Kyiv.

Olga Rudenko,  
Board Member

Olga is the deputy chief editor of the Kyiv Post. She joined the newspaper in July 2011, after graduating from Dnipropetrovsk State University. She teaches at journalism workshops, focusing on classes on writing and journalism standards. In 2016 she co-founded online magazine Lustrum focusing on explanatory journalism.
Find out more about how you can help support strong and independent press

fb.com/mdfoundationUA

@mdfoundation

mdf.org.ua

To find out more information about getting involved, write to mdfoundation2014@gmail.com

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MEDIA DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION