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## Media as a Partner of State Authorities: Management Models of Interaction in the Context of Democratic Development

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### ABSTRACT

The article examines the interaction between mass media and state authorities as a key factor in the development of democratic institutions and effective governance in the information society. It is argued that media perform a multidimensional function: they serve as a communication channel, a social institution of public oversight, and a transformative resource for shaping public opinion and the public agenda. The theoretical part defines the concept of "state-media partnership" through three components: informational, supervisory, and collaborative, based on which a model of interaction is proposed that ensures media autonomy, pluralism of opinions, and citizen participation in shaping the public agenda. The methodological framework of the study includes an analysis of national and European legislation (the Constitution of Ukraine, Laws of Ukraine "On Information," "On Access to Public Information," "On Media"; the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights; European Court of Human Rights practice), a comparative analysis of international press freedom indices, and an assessment of the Ukrainian media landscape in the context of political transformation and Russia's hybrid aggression. The empirical part identifies the following patterns: media contribute to citizen socialization, the development of political culture, and civic engagement, while their independence is often limited by economic and political dependence; structural heterogeneity and concentration of media ownership create risks of manipulation and political confrontation; the development of digital platforms increases the speed and efficiency of communication but requires enhanced journalistic professionalism and legal regulation. Based on these results, practical recommendations are proposed: ensure editorial autonomy of media, promote pluralism and social responsibility, integrate media into public governance processes through transparent and reciprocal communication mechanisms, harmonize national legislation with European standards, and develop the institutional capacity of state authorities in the field of information policy. The scientific novelty lies in integrating national legislation, international standards, and media practices into a comprehensive model of state-media partnership, which allows evaluating the quality of interaction, predicting the democratization effect of the information space, and forming management decisions aimed at increasing transparency, efficiency, and public trust.

### KEYWORDS

mass media, state authorities, partnership, democratic development, freedom of speech, media pluralism, information policy, digital platforms, institutional capacity, criteria for interaction effectiveness.





## Медіа як партнер державної влади: управлінські моделі взаємодії в умовах демократичного розвитку

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### СТАТТЯ

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У статті досліджено взаємодію засобів масової інформації з органами державної влади як ключовий чинник розвитку демократичних інститутів і ефективного управління в інформаційному суспільстві. Обґрунтовано, що медіа виконують багатовимірну функцію: вони виступають каналом комунікації, соціальним інститутом суспільного контролю, трансформаційним ресурсом для формування громадської думки та публічного порядку денного. Теоретична частина окреслює поняття «партнерство держави і медіа» через три складові: інформаційну, контрольну та партнерську, на основі чого запропоновано модель взаємодії, що передбачає автономію медіа, плюралізм думок та участь громадян у формуванні суспільного порядку денного. Методологічна основа дослідження включає аналіз національного та європейського законодавства (Конституція України, Закони України «Про інформацію», «Про доступ до публічної інформації», «Про медіа»; Хартія ЄС про основоположні права; практика ЄСПЛ), порівняльний аналіз міжнародних індексів свободи преси та оцінку українського медіаландшафту в умовах політичної трансформації та гібридної агресії РФ. Емпірична частина виявляє такі закономірності: медіа забезпечують соціалізацію громадян, сприяють формуванню політичної культури та громадської активності, водночас їхня незалежність часто обмежується економічною та політичною залежністю; структурна різноманітність і концентрація медіавласності створюють ризики маніпуляцій та політичного протистояння; розвиток цифрових платформ підвищує швидкість і ефективність комунікацій, але потребує посилення професіоналізації журналістики й правового регулювання. На підставі отриманих результатів запропоновано практичні рекомендації: забезпечити редакційну автономію медіа, стимулювати плюралізм і суспільну відповідальність, інтегрувати медіа у процеси публічного управління через прозорі і взаємні механізми комунікації, гармонізувати національне законодавство із європейськими стандартами та розвивати інституційну спроможність державних органів у сфері інформаційної політики. Наукова новизна полягає в інтеграції національного законодавства, міжнародних стандартів і практик функціонування медіа в комплексну модель партнерства держави та медіа, що дозволяє оцінювати якість взаємодії, прогнозувати ефект демократизації інформаційного простору та формувати управлінські рішення, орієнтовані на підвищення прозорості, ефективності та довіри громадян.



### КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА

засоби масової інформації, державна влада, партнерство, демократичний розвиток, свобода слова, медіаплюралізм, інформаційна політика, цифрові платформи, інституційна спроможність, критерії ефективності взаємодії.

## 1. Introduction

In modern democratic countries, the media (hereinafter referred to as the media) are often characterized as the “fourth estate” or “right hand of democracy”, since they play a key role in shaping public opinion and political assessments. Television, print media, radio and Internet portals provide citizens with access to information, facilitate discussion of political events and increase the level of public awareness. At the same time, politicians are in the constant field of attention of the media, they are forced to respond to critical questions, explain the decisions made and their actions, since public resonance in the media can directly affect their political careers. Information disseminated by the media often becomes an instrument of political competition, and individual media scandals can lead to the loss of office or a decrease in the public authority of a politician.

In this context, the media are not only a source of information, but also a powerful tool for political influence and regulation of social processes. That is why the issues of building effective interaction between government agencies and the media, as well as the development of a high-quality information policy, are extremely relevant. For Ukraine, which has chosen a democratic path of development, such interaction should be based on the principles of protecting the rights and freedoms of citizens, legality, respect for order, civic activity, equality and tolerance. Ensuring harmonious cooperation between state institutions and the media is an important prerequisite for the stable functioning of the political and social system and the strengthening of democratic values.

## 2. Literature Review

The problems of interaction between the media and state power in modern Ukraine are one of the key ones in the context of building an effective, transparent and democratic political system. In recent years, there has been a tendency to rethink the role of the media as a partner of state institutions, which not only informs citizens, but also influences managerial decision-making, the formation of public opinion and the increase of the legitimacy of political actions.

The problems of interaction between the media and state power in modern Ukraine are one of the key ones in the context of the formation of an effective, transparent and democratic political system, because the media perform the function not only of informing citizens, but also of an intermediary in the process of managerial decision-making and the formation of public opinion, which is emphasized by D. Bulgakov [1]. At the same time, P. Verbytskyi [13] emphasizes that the effectiveness of this interaction depends on the extent to which state bodies are able to organize communication on the principles of openness and accountability, and journalists are able to adhere to professional ethics and ensure the availability of information for citizens. Thus, the role of the media goes beyond the traditional coverage of events and becomes a tool for shaping public opinion, capable of influencing the legitimacy of political decisions, as N. Volos notes [21].

I. Parubchak [7] emphasizes that the integration of traditional and digital platforms increases the transparency of management processes and ensures deeper public involvement, creating prerequisites for effective interaction between the government and society. In this context, the media cease to be just a communication channel and turn into a partner of the state in the formation of a political order, where the balance between control and freedom of speech determines the quality of democratic procedures, R. R. Sharipov emphasizes [12].

At the same time, the regulatory framework for interaction between the media and the state determines the boundaries and methods of this interaction. The Constitution of Ukraine [17], the European Convention on Human Rights [14], the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights [15], as well as the laws “On Access to Public Information” [19] and “On Media” [20] enshrine the principles of transparency, openness and accountability of authorities. M. Kudina [4] emphasizes that compliance with these principles directly affects the level of freedom of speech and public trust in political institutions, forming the basis for partnership between the media and state bodies.

D. Bulgakov [1] notes that the implementation of this partnership implies that the media not only cover the activities of the authorities, but also actively contribute to increasing the transparency and accountability of management decisions, providing the possibility of public control. O. Zahirnyi [25] adds that the institutionalization of communication channels through the media makes it possible to

formalize the processes of information exchange and regulate information flows, which increases the efficiency of management procedures and reduces the risk of information manipulation.

Y. Yakovenko [22] and R. Sharipov [12] emphasize that modern partnership models combine traditional forms of control with innovative approaches to public engagement, which ensures transparency, openness and social legitimacy of decisions. At the same time, as N. Volos notes [3], such systemic interaction contributes to the development of civic activity and strengthening social trust in political institutions.

The introduction of effective management models of partnership between the state and the media is critical for the democratic development of Ukraine, ensuring a balance between freedom of speech and public responsibility, as well as for increasing citizens' trust in political institutions, M. McCombs and D. Shaw emphasize [6]. Thus, the formation of systemic interaction that integrates regulatory, technological and communication aspects is a key task of the Ukrainian political system in the period of democratic transformations.

Thus, modern scientific opinion shows that the media in the conditions of democratic development are not only a source of information, but also an active partner of state power. They contribute to the formation of public opinion, increasing trust in political institutions, ensuring transparency and accountability of decisions, as well as the integration of citizens into the process of managerial decision-making. The implementation of effective management models of interaction between the state and the media is critically important for the development of a democratic political system and strengthening social stability in Ukraine.

### **3. Problem Statement**

The purpose of the study is to analyze the interaction of state bodies and the media as a key factor of effective governance in the context of democratic development, to determine models of cooperation and levels of media involvement in information policy, as well as to formulate criteria for assessing "high-quality" communication between the government and society. The paper provides for the study of modern approaches to the organization of interaction between public authorities and the media, analysis of information exchange channels, methods for ensuring transparency and accountability of public authorities, as well as practices of public involvement through media resources that help strengthen public trust and increase the effectiveness of managerial decisions.

### **4. Methods and Materials**

In the process of studying the interaction of the media with public authorities, a set of qualitative methods was applied, which made it possible to comprehensively analyze the essence, forms and features of communication between the authorities, the media and the public. The methodological basis is a systematic approach, which allows us to consider public administration and the media space as an integral social and administrative system, where interaction with the media is an integral element of democratic development.

The paper uses the analysis and synthesis of scientific sources, which provided the identification of the theoretical foundations of the concept of "partnership between the government and the media", the clarification of its content in the domestic and foreign scientific tradition, as well as the systematization of approaches to assessing the effectiveness of information interaction in public administration.

The application of the comparative method made it possible to investigate different models of interaction between state institutions and the media in the countries of the European Union and to identify practices relevant to the Ukrainian context. The comparison was based on the analysis of scientific publications, recommendations of the Council of Europe, the European Union and other international organizations, as well as documents regulating freedom of speech, media pluralism and citizens' access to information.

An important tool was the content analysis of regulatory legal acts of Ukraine, in particular the Laws "On Information", "On Access to Public Information", "On Media" and the Constitution of Ukraine, as well as regulatory documents of the National Council on Television and Radio Broadcasting. This method made it possible to find out how much the legislative framework contributes to ensuring freedom of speech, media independence and public accountability of authorities.

A structural and functional analysis was also applied, which made it possible to reveal the relationship between the functions of public administration and the role of the media in the formation of public opinion, increasing the transparency of managerial decisions and the development of democratic communication.

The method of analysis of documents and practices of information interaction is used, which includes the study of official websites of government bodies, public reports, information campaigns, press releases, communication strategies and public consultations. This made it possible to assess the real mechanisms of cooperation between the state and the media in Ukrainian conditions, as well as the level of openness and accountability of the authorities.

To summarize the results obtained, a logical-generalizing method was used, which contributed to the formation of analytical conclusions on the effectiveness of the existing models of partnership between the government and the media, as well as to outline the directions for improving the communication policy of state bodies.

Thus, the selected methodological toolkit provided a comprehensive disclosure of the topic, allowing to combine theoretical analysis, legal assessment and study of practical experience of interaction between the state and the media as a key factor in democratic development and improving the efficiency of governance.

## 5. Results and Discussion

In modern society, the media have acquired the status of one of the leading institutions of social communication, which play an important role in the processes of public administration, political mobilization and public control. The media have become an integral part of social and political life, forming an extensive system of interaction with state authorities. This interaction presupposes the coordination of actions, the presence of a common goal, the professional competence of the parties and the provision of high standards of information activity [13, p. 21].

This partnership is not a purely technical form of communication between the government and society, but is a multidimensional process within which new management models of cooperation are formed. Such models are aimed at updating, modernizing and increasing the efficiency of both participants in the communication process. At the same time, Y. Yakovenko argues that the interaction between state structures and the media is not always based on a complete coincidence of positions or assessments of individual political and social decisions, which sometimes leads to the emergence of certain conflict situations or even information confrontation [22, p. 76].

In the context of the development of democratic institutions, the media are considered not only as a communication channel, but also as a powerful transformative resource capable of influencing the formation of managerial decisions, public moods and political culture of society. Modern media provide the process of socialization of the individual, acting as a means of transmitting information that adapts in accordance with the level of knowledge, cultural experience and the value system of the individual [21]. It is through this channel that citizens are integrated into the socio-political space of the state.

In the conditions of the information society, the possession of reliable, timely and structured information becomes one of the most significant management resources. The ability to use it effectively determines the competitiveness of both individual institutions and the state as a whole, allowing to optimize the use of material, human and organizational resources [7, p. 241].

An indicator of the maturity of the democratic development of the state is the level of implementation of freedom of speech – a fundamental value that testifies not only to the legal culture, but also to the strength of democratic principles, the establishment of the rule of law. The right to freedom of expression is enshrined in Article 10 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1950), ratified by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine in 1997.

At the same time, the Convention allows for certain restrictions if they are provided for by law and are necessary to protect national security, territorial integrity, public security, morality, reputation or rights of others. Thus, freedom of speech is considered not as an absolute category, but as an instrument of democratic governance, balancing between the citizen's right to information and the responsibility of the state for maintaining social stability.

Similar provisions are contained in Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), which repeats the basic principles of the Convention and clarifies the limits of the exercise of freedom of expression in the global dimension [15].

The law enforcement practice of the European Court of Human Rights has significantly contributed to the development of the national legislation of the Member States in the field of protection of the right to information. The case “Leander v. Sweden” (1987) is indicative, in which the Court concluded that the state does not have a general obligation to provide access to any information [14, p. 4]. At the same time, further judicial practice has expanded the content of Article 10 of the Convention, extending its effect to public information of public interest.

In particular, in the case of *Hungarian Helsinki Committee v. Hungary*, the ECtHR identified four criteria, the restriction of which can be qualified as interference with freedom of expression: the purpose of the requester, the nature of the information, the role of the requester and the readiness of the requested information. In the judgment in the case of *Studio Monitor v. Georgia*, the Court emphasized the need to specify the specific purpose of the information request, stressing at the same time that the freedom of journalistic investigations is not absolute and must be correlated with the requirements of national legislation [22, p. 76].

Strengthening the democratic foundations of the social order is impossible without the institutionalization of transparent and balanced relations between public authorities and the media, which ensure the openness of the authorities, accountability of their actions and the development of civil control. In this context, the formation of legal mechanisms to guarantee freedom of speech, media pluralism and unhindered access to information is of particular importance.

At the supranational level, the fundamental document in this area is the Charter of the European Union on Fundamental Rights, Article 11 of which enshrines freedom of expression, freedom to receive and impart information, as well as guarantees of media pluralism as a key principle of the functioning of a democratic society [2]. This norm reflects the deep idea of the European legal order – the recognition of the media not only as a technical tool of communication, but as an independent public institution designed to ensure a balance between the authorities, society and citizens.

In the Ukrainian legal field, constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech and the right to information are enshrined in Article 34 of the Constitution of Ukraine, which defines the right of every citizen to freely collect, store, use and disseminate information in any lawful way. At the same time, it is envisaged that the exercise of this right may be limited in order to protect national security, territorial integrity, public order, healthcare, reputation of others, prevent the disclosure of confidential information or maintain the authority of justice [17]. This formulation demonstrates the desire to harmonize national legislation with pan-European standards in the field of information human rights.

The legal regulation of information relations in Ukraine is provided by a set of special regulatory legal acts, among which the Laws of Ukraine “On Information”, “On Access to Public Information” and “On Citizens’ Appeals” occupy a key place.

The Law of Ukraine “On Information” defines the basic principles of the information policy of the state, outlining it as an integral system of directions and methods of activity aimed at creating, collecting, using, distributing, protecting and protecting information [16]. This document forms the normative basis for the functioning of the information space, within which managerial interaction between government institutions, the media and society is carried out.

The Law of Ukraine “On Citizens’ Appeals” specifies the mechanisms for exercising the constitutional right of citizens to participate in public administration by making proposals to improve the activities of government bodies, identifying shortcomings in the work of officials and appealing against their actions [18]. In this way, this act provides an institutional link between the authorities and society, in which the media often act as an intermediary and catalyst for public communication.

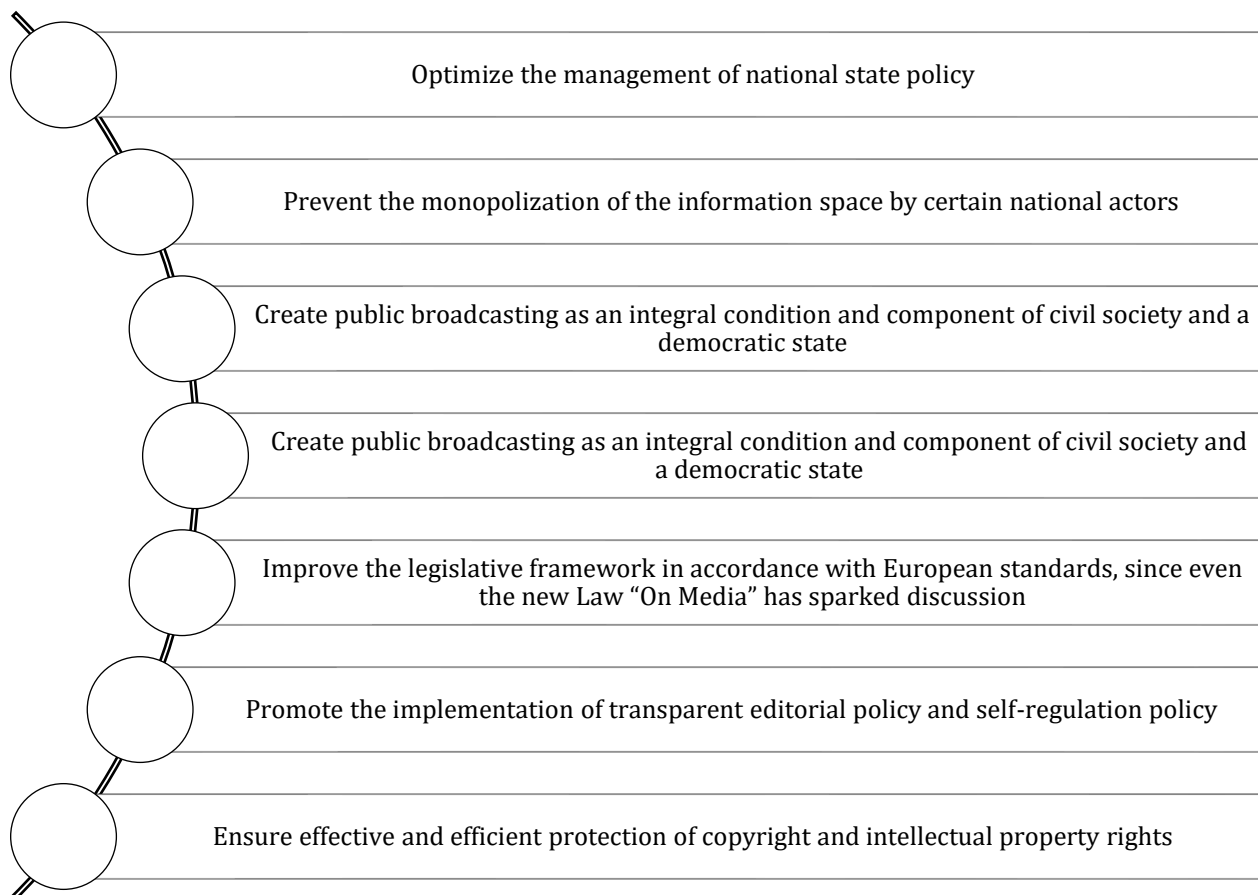
At the same time, the Law of Ukraine “On Access to Public Information” plays a special role in the establishment of open government, as it establishes legal mechanisms for exercising everyone’s right to access information in the possession of state authorities, local governments, as well as other managers of public information [19]. Defining clear procedures, deadlines and grounds for refusal to provide information is an important step towards ensuring the transparency of the activities of state institutions and strengthening citizens’ trust in the authorities.

An important stage in the development of national information legislation was the adoption in 2023 of the new Law of Ukraine “On Media”, which adapts the domestic legal system to the standards of the European Union. This law regulates the activities of the media on the principles of transparency,

impartiality, good faith and equality, determines the legal status, competencies and powers of the National Council of Television and Radio Broadcasting of Ukraine [20]. Its adoption was the fulfillment of one of the key requirements for Ukraine’s European integration progress, which testifies to the state’s desire for systematic harmonization of domestic norms with the European legal space.

The Law “On Information” also defines information policy as a set of strategic directions and practical tools of state activity regarding the collection, distribution, use and storage of information [16; 13, p. 23]. The main priorities of the modern information policy of Ukraine are: affirmation of freedom of speech and press, ensuring unhindered access of citizens to information, maintaining political pluralism, preventing censorship and obstruction of journalists’ professional activities, as well as creating a competitive, high-quality information product in order to integrate the national media space into the European and world contexts [1, p. 134].

To conduct an effective state information policy in Ukraine, researchers pay attention to the need (Fig. 1).



**Figure 1. Leading Directions for Ensuring Effective State Information Policy in Ukraine**

Source: Compiled by the author based on [22, p. 77–78].

In the scientific discourse, different approaches to the typology of models of interaction between the media and state power have developed. In this context, the typology proposed by American researchers F. Siebert, T. Peterson and V. Schramm, who identified four basic models: totalitarian, authoritarian, liberal and socially responsible [25, p. 57], is considered classic. The further evolution of scientific thought is represented by the approaches of D. Gallin and P. Mancini, who, based on the criteria for the development of the media market, the level of political parallelism, professionalization of journalism and the degree of state participation in the field of communications, identified three typical models: polarized pluralism, democratic corporatism and liberal [12, p. 188-189].

The substantive characteristics of these models are summarized in Table 1. Based on the data of Table 1, it should be noted that the discourse of democratic development is dominated by tendencies of institutionalization of partnership interaction between the state, civil society and the media, which

forms the basis for the creation of effective managerial models of communication in the information space.

**Table 1. Typology of Models of Interaction between Mass Media and State Power**

Model	Key Features	Functional role of the media	Examples of States/Political Systems
<b>Totalitarian</b>	Full state control over the information space; Censorship; monopolization of communication.	A tool for propaganda, legitimation of the regime, formation of ideological narratives.	Communist and National Socialist regimes of the twentieth century.
<b>Authoritarian</b>	The dominance of the government in determining the directions of media activities; partial privatization of the media while maintaining political control.	A means of controlling public opinion, stabilizing the political order.	Arab monarchies, post-Soviet autocracies.
<b>Liberal (classical)</b>	Freedom of speech, market competition, pluralism of opinions, lack of censorship.	The institution of public control, the arena of public discussions, the implementation of democratic values.	USA, Great Britain, Canada.
<b>Socially responsible</b>	Balance between freedom and ethical obligations to society; developed civil society.	Formation of moral standards, promotion of social dialogue and social integration.	Scandinavian countries.
<b>Polarized pluralism</b>	Low level of professionalization of journalists; political bias of the media; dependence on elites.	A channel of political struggle, a mouthpiece for the interests of individual parties or groups.	Italy, Spain, Greece.
<b>Democratic corporatism</b>	High professionalization of journalism, participation of social institutions in communication, self-regulation.	A means of maintaining a communication balance between the state, business and the public.	Germany, the Netherlands, Austria.
<b>Liberal (according to Gallin and Mancini)</b>	High level of autonomy of journalists; developed press market; minimal state intervention.	Independent media control, formation of a public space for discussion.	USA, Great Britain, Canada.

Source: compiled by the author based on [7, p. 243–244].

In modern democratic societies, the interaction between public authorities and the media is based on the principles of openness, publicity and communicative partnership. The mechanism of such interaction provides for close communication between the authorities and the public through the media sphere, which ensures the implementation of the right of citizens to receive objective, reliable and complete information about the activities of the state. The completeness and quality of information support of management processes directly affect the level of validity, fairness and effectiveness of political decisions, and therefore the legitimacy of the government itself in the eyes of society [25, p. 57–59].

In a democratic society, the media are considered not only as a communication channel, but as an autonomous social institution that performs the function of public control over the activities of government structures, forms the public agenda and creates space for the implementation of civil dialogue. The independence of the media from political elites, ensuring pluralism of opinions, the possibility of conducting a critical analysis of the government's activities – all this constitutes a fundamental criterion for the development of a democratic system. It is through the media that the formation of public consciousness, public understanding of political processes and the consolidation of citizens around common values take place.

In this context, public debates, the participation of independent experts in public discussions, and their presence in the media space – in print and electronic publications, on television, in social networks – play a key role. Such openness contributes to improving the quality of state decisions, strengthening the feedback between the authorities and society. Journalists, acting as intermediaries between citizens and government institutions, at the same time become catalysts for social activity: they stimulate public participation in public initiatives, charity events, solidarity campaigns, human rights movements, etc.

The prohibition of censorship is an integral feature of a democratic system. However, authoritarian political regimes often use the justification of censorship practices by the needs of national security, the fight against extremism or the protection of state secrets. In practice, such arguments often mask the desire to hide the facts of corruption abuses or political manipulation. Interference in media

activities, persecution of journalists, restrictions on freedom of speech not only violate fundamental civil and political rights, but also become a factor in destabilizing the political process, undermining trust in state institutions.

Ukraine currently occupies an intermediate place between the classical models of media-power relations, which characterizes it as a state with a transitional model. According to the classification of F. Siebert, T. Peterson and V. Schram, in the Soviet period there was a totalitarian model, which provided for the complete subordination of the mass media to state and party structures. With independence, the process of transformation of the communication paradigm began, within which the media gradually gained autonomy, expanded the thematic spectrum and diversified information formats, which indicates the movement towards the democratization of the media sphere.

At the same time, according to the typology of D. Gallin and P. Mancini, the modern Ukrainian media landscape has features of a model of polarized pluralism, which is characterized by a low level of professionalization of part of the journalistic community, significant dependence of the media on political, financial-industrial groups, and insufficient development of self-regulation mechanisms. However, there are prerequisites for a gradual transition to a democratic-corporate model, which provides for increasing the role of civil society in media control and strengthening the independence of journalism.

Mass media in modern Ukraine are increasingly integrated into the processes of public dialogue, organize public forums, meetings of citizens with representatives of political parties, public organizations, authorities, contribute to the formation of a culture of public discussion of managerial decisions [7, p. 241]. State authorities, in turn, use the media to inform the population, conduct communication campaigns, and popularize state projects and concepts.

The development of digital technologies and the integration of Ukraine into the global information space contribute to the intensification of communication processes, increasing the speed of information exchange both at the national and international levels [7, p. 242]. These trends necessitate the formation of a new model of interaction between the authorities, the media and civil society, based on the principles of trust, openness and mutual responsibility. In such conditions, effective participation of citizens in public processes is possible only if critical thinking, information literacy and civic engagement are developed.

An important component of effective interaction between the institutions of state power and the mass media is legislative support, which determines the legal framework for the functioning of journalistic activities and communication policy in the state. The legislative framework of Ukraine is generally based on the democratic principles of freedom of speech, openness and pluralism of opinions, but requires further improvement, harmonization with European standards and adaptation to the new challenges of the digital age [7, p. 247].

Despite the formal consolidation of the principle of media independence, the real state of the domestic information space is characterized by a significant influence of business and political groups. Ukrainian journalists state the existence of a systemic dependence of the mass media on oligarchic capital, which is manifested in editorial restrictions, selective coverage of events and non-transparent media ownership. In such conditions, information policy is formed under the influence of narrow group interests, which leads to distortion of the public picture of reality, manipulation of public opinion and a decrease in the level of trust in the media as a public institution. The deformation of the information space negatively affects the process of democratic decision-making and creates risks of increased political polarization.

In the scientific discourse, the need to create a public broadcasting system that would operate on the basis of editorial autonomy, financial transparency and independence from state and corporate structures is increasingly emphasized. Such broadcasting is considered as a key factor in building a socially responsible model of interaction between the authorities and the media, based on democratic values, self-regulation and partnership with civil society [16].

For the average citizen, the media remain the main source of information about the activities of government bodies, socio-economic processes and international events. Through the media, not only knowledge is formed, but also value guidelines, social narratives, and ideas about political reality. The specificity of the media lies in their dualistic nature: on the one hand, they are a product of public opinion, and on the other hand, they are a powerful tool for its formation [13, p. 22–23].

According to Y. Yakovlenko, in the ideal dimension, the media should perform the function of a communicative bridge between the state and civil society, ensuring the circulation of information,

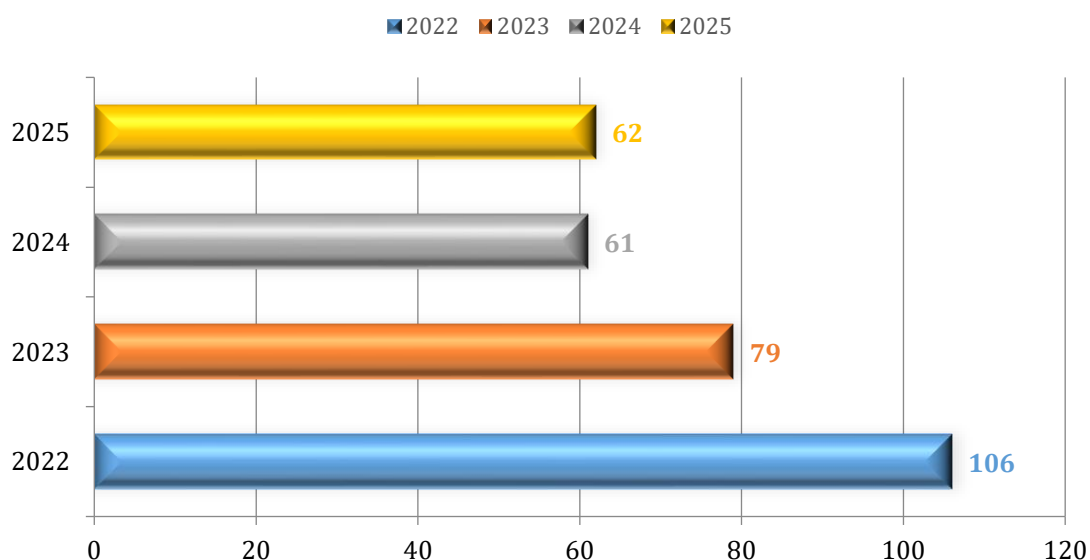
transparency of management processes and accountability of the authorities to citizens. If the mass media express the positions of democratic institutions, ensure the representation of various social groups and at the same time form mechanisms of public control over the authorities, then this is what indicates the maturity of the democratic system [22, p. 79].

In Ukrainian realities, however, the information environment often acts as an arena of political confrontation between different elite groups. Political communication acquires a fragmented and conflicting character, which causes disintegration processes in society. Part of the media is under direct or indirect state control, the other is under the influence of private owners and political forces, which leads to selectivity in the presentation of materials, violation of standards of journalistic ethics and restriction of freedom of speech [23]. This situation reduces the level of public trust in the media and negatively affects the development of information democracy.

International institutions constantly monitor the state of freedom of speech in the world, which makes it possible to compare Ukrainian realities with global trends. Thus, according to the World Press Freedom Index, which is published annually by the international non-governmental organization Reporters Without Borders, in 2023, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Ireland and Finland took the highest positions – countries where the maximum level of independence of journalism, high ethical standards and effective mechanisms for protecting freedom of speech are ensured [6]. Germany, traditionally considered a country with comfortable conditions for journalists, took 21st place in 2023 (compared to 16th in 2022), showing a certain downward trend in stability. A feature of the German media system is the combination of socially funded broadcasters with private commercial media, which creates a balance between economic efficiency and social responsibility.

Instead, the last, 180th place in the ranking is consistently occupied by North Korea – a state with a complete lack of freedom of speech, strict censorship, information isolation and repressive control over journalistic activities [3].

According to the international non-governmental organization Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Ukraine's position in the World Press Freedom Index has shown significant positive dynamics in recent years. Thus, in 2022, Ukraine ranked 106th, which reflected its starting position in the face of significant changes in the media space. In 2023, the country rose to the 79th position, demonstrating notable progress – an increase of 27 positions [8]. In 2024, the trend of improvement continued: Ukraine took 61st place, which indicates the further strengthening of freedom of speech and democratization of the media sphere [10]. On the other hand, in 2025, there was a slight deterioration in the indicator – 62nd place, which may be associated with a complex of external and internal challenges, including the ongoing war and information threats [11] (Fig. 2).



**Figure 2. Dynamics of Ukraine's position in the World Press Freedom Index (2022–2025)**

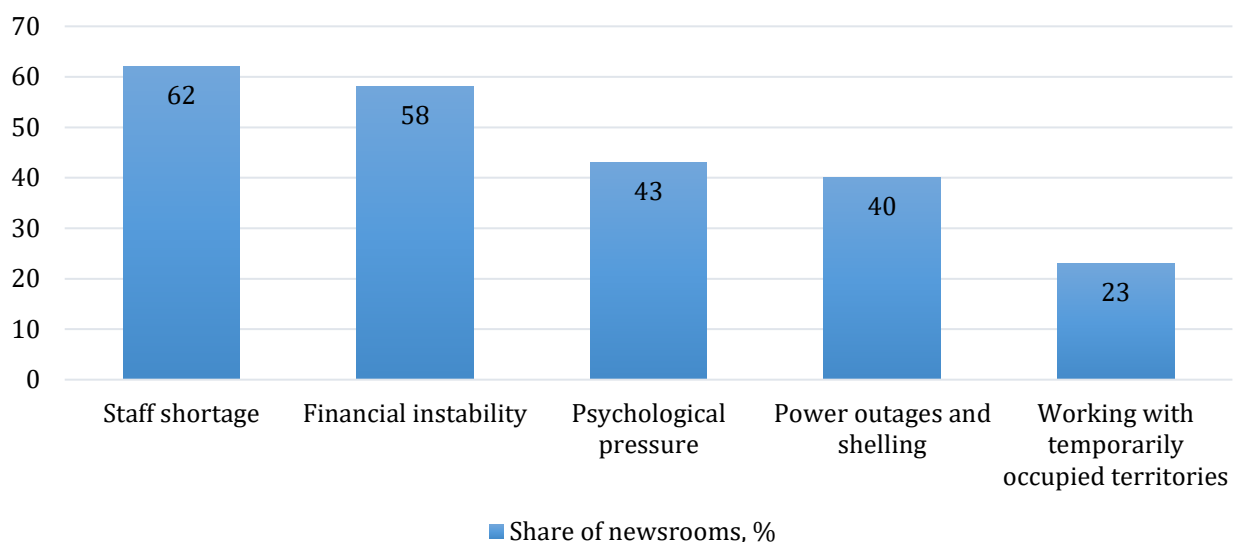
Source: Compiled by the author based on [8; 10; 11].

The modern media landscape of Ukraine is characterized by significant structural heterogeneity, a combination of state, commercial and public media initiatives. At the same time, most of the leading TV channels, news agencies and print publications are under the control of financial and industrial

groups or political elites, which forms the phenomenon of oligarchic concentration of media ownership. As a result, the media are often used as a tool of political struggle, manipulative influence on public consciousness and a means of legitimizing corporate interests. Ukrainian journalists often face pressure, threats, or censorship restrictions, which indicates the incomplete implementation of constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech [21].

In 2024, Ukrainian local media continued to operate in the conditions of a full-scale war, facing constant challenges, among which the main ones remained staff shortages and financial instability. Despite this, the newsrooms were able to adapt internal processes, optimize resources and introduce new work strategies, which made it possible to partially stabilize activities. About 40% of media outlets noted that the work has become somewhat easier due to streamlining internal processes, more efficient use of grant funding, and strategic project planning. At the same time, the mobilization of male staff worsened the problem of staff shortages, forcing newsrooms to redistribute responsibilities and form predominantly female teams. Grants remain the main financial model, with more than 50% of newsrooms receiving more than 80% of income from donors. The local advertising market and reader support are not yet able to compensate for the lack of grants, which limits long-term planning and infrastructure development. The development of internal strategies and policies has become a condition for obtaining funding and at the same time an indicator of external dependence of editorial offices. Content formats include news, interviews, longreads, analytics, and investigations, with video production increasing and adaptation to social platforms decreasing. The psychological state of the teams remains tense, about half of the participants rate it as neutral or unsatisfactory. Working with the temporarily occupied territories and border zones is complicated, and the risks associated with power outages, shelling and the threat of mobilization are taken into account in organizational processes. All these factors demonstrate the need for flexible management models that can ensure the interaction of the media with government agencies, support for strategic planning and content adaptation to effectively inform the population. Local media, acting as a partner of state authorities, can be a channel of communication with citizens, a tool to support state campaigns, and at the same time a guarantor of pluralism and independence through transparent internal processes, diversified financial models, and the development of digital platforms [9].

Figure 3 shows the main challenges of local media in Ukraine and management responses in 2025 [9].



**Figure 3. The Main Challenges of Local Media in Ukraine and Management Responses in 2025**

Source: Compiled by the author based on [9].

The problem of media independence has become especially relevant in the context of the hybrid aggression of the Russian Federation, a component of which is a systemic information war. The Ukrainian information space is subject to constant cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns and attempts to undermine trust in national institutions through bot networks, “fake” pages and pseudo-analytical resources. As a result, the state was forced to take a number of protective measures, including a ban on the broadcasting of Russian TV channels and access to enemy Internet platforms, as well as the

creation of mechanisms for cyber protection of strategic telecommunications infrastructure facilities [1, p. 135].

The situation in the temporarily occupied territories remains difficult, where independent journalism is virtually absent, and the population is deprived of access to Ukrainian print and television media. In the regions directly bordering the front line, the professional activities of journalists are associated with a high level of risk, in particular, numerous cases of death or injury of representatives of the media community are recorded.

The negative factors that hinder the formation of an independent media sphere are:

- economic dependence of editorial offices on state or political structures;
- low level of political culture;
- deficit of professional and ethical solidarity in the journalistic environment;
- fragmentation and insufficient integration of the national information space [12, p. 192–193].

At the same time, in recent years, there has been a gradual regulatory and institutional strengthening of the industry. Reforming the media sphere is accompanied by the development of related areas – anti-corruption policy, increasing the level of public integrity, implementing European principles of transparency of management and reforming higher education, which ensures the professionalization of journalism. A symbolic confirmation of positive trends was the improvement of Ukraine's position in the World Press Freedom Index.

## 6. Conclusions

Thus, in the current conditions of globalization, digital transformation and the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war, the media act as a key communicative intermediary between society and government institutions, influencing the processes of political socialization, the formation of public opinion and the legitimation of managerial decisions. The media not only inform, but also participate in the formation of the public agenda, perform the functions of social control and democratic feedback.

In the context of European integration, the model of interaction between the media and state authorities in Ukraine can be defined as transitional – from mixed oligarchic-administrative to liberal or democratic-corporatist. A promising direction of its further evolution is the institutionalization of public television and radio broadcasting, increasing the level of media literacy of citizens, professionalization of journalists and strengthening the ethical standards of the industry. Only with the development of civil society, the establishment of the principles of political integrity and real pluralism of opinions, it is possible to form a socially responsible model of media power as an attribute of a mature democracy.

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