

The role of Polish non-governmental organizations in assisting media development in Ukraine

Our world is full of inequalities. It is clearly visible when we check the diverse statistics on the level of development of countries. Over the years some states have become active in the field of supporting political, economic and social development by providing foreign funds to their partner countries. This is what is named as development cooperation between donors and aid recipients. In order to reduce inequalities around the world, donors often choose to assist democracy within development cooperation. Well-developed states make attempts to support e.g. good governance, rule of law, elections, civil society and media. Many governments and NGOs clearly realized how important the existence of free media is in democratization, so they started to provide media assistance in partner countries.

The main aim of this research projects is **to assess the effectiveness of Polish NGOs' activities aimed at supporting the development of the Ukrainian media in 2004-2018**. In practice, democracy assistance provided by Poland is realized in partner countries mainly by Polish non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who actively support the development of all types of media in Ukraine. Such efforts are a part of the annual strategies and multi-annual development cooperation programmes of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland. Moreover, Polish NGOs also use funds not coming from Poland's governmental sources, but from e.g. international organisations or private donors to carry out media assistance projects in Ukraine. The issue of media assistance is very complex, therefore in present study I will take a closer look on different aspects of Polish-Ukrainian cooperation. Who is engaged in helping Ukrainian media to develop? How it is done? What do Ukrainians expect from such support? What is the historical and legal context of development cooperation between Poland and Ukraine? Does Polish assistance correspond to what media in Ukraine need? And finally, is media assistance provided by Polish NGOs effective as a form of supporting democracy?

I decided to analyse Poland and Ukraine not accidentally. Poland is an example of a new donor country in Central and Eastern Europe which used to receive Western democracy assistance not so long ago. Ukraine is one of the most important partners for Poland from the beginnings of the established cooperation. What is more, both Poland and Ukraine are post-Soviet countries which started their ways to democracy from similar positions. However, history has shown that the results of democratization of Poland and Ukraine were different. This is why nowadays Poland plays a role of donor while Ukraine is a partner receiving democracy assistance coming from Poland. Such cooperation raises many questions.

Within this research I will verify whether **supporting the development of media in Ukraine by Polish NGOs is effective as a form of democracy assistance**. This will be done in several steps. On the first stage of the project, I will prepare theoretical framework and design the research. It will be also very important to create detailed database of implemented media projects in Ukraine in years 2004-2018. I will include in the catalogue such information as the title of the project, type of media assistance, source of funding, partners from Poland and Ukraine, and beneficiaries (who received support). Having this done, I will conduct the empirical research. It will be crucial to contact Polish NGOs who are the most important actors in Poland's development cooperation. First, I will answer the research questions on the basis of interviewing representatives of NGOs who are the people that create and realize media projects. Secondly, I will conduct interviews among Ukrainian journalists and other media workers who participated in projects. Therefore, it will be possible to understand both the side of donor and the side of partner and to check whether media assistance is properly tailored.

I chose the role of Polish NGOs' media assistance in Ukraine as main topic of this research project because of several reasons. First of all, I believe that new knowledge is needed to better understand the Polish-Ukrainian relations and democracy assistance. Polish NGOs' engagement in supporting media development in Ukraine has not been studied before. Therefore, findings will also draw attention to the issue of new donors in Europe and their activities. It is important because majority of existing studies was devoted to democracy assistance provided by Western countries. Moreover, by linking the roles of external factors and independent media in democratization processes, this project will add new piece of knowledge to the previous researches. Hopefully, conclusions from this study will stimulate scholarly debate. I intend to inspire others to make further attempts to examine democracy assistance. Studying the issue of media assistance will bring together the disciplines of political science and media studies. I also hope that my findings will be helpful for practitioners in the field of media assistance – mainly for NGOs, policy-makers, journalists, and for other donors who are engaged in similar activities.