



Opinion No.44

On the coverage of the topic of grant receivers (the Renaissance Foundation and others) on the ZIK television channel (Novi Komunikatsii LLC) on November 13, 2020

Kyiv

December 21, 2020

I. Circumstances of the case

1. On November 12, 2020, the Independent Media Council received an appeal from Oksana Romaniuk, executive director of the Institute of Mass Information, regarding the **telethon "Sorosist Revenge" as announced on the ZIK television channel**, to review the respective content and provide an opinion on whether or not there were violations of professional standards on the part of the ZIK channel, including hate speech and manipulations.

2. On December 1, 2020, the Independent Media Council, pursuant to paragraph 12 of the Regulations on the Independent Media Council, recognized the appeal regarding this case admissible, given the matter is of great social importance (similar content was already aired on this TV channel, whereby the IMC identified violations).

3. In the morning (at 08:37) on November 13, 2020, the ZIK channel aired a story devoted to George Soros, his influence on the Ukrainian government and the "army of his supporters", allegedly formed by him in nearly every country of the world; it was said that the billionaire was born into a Jewish family in Budapest in 1930; that "Soros combines getting rich quick with charity", and that most of his assets are allegedly owned by the Open Society Foundations. It is asserted that G.Soros is financing various projects in developing countries through a network of his foundations. Yet later, with a reference to the "billionaire's critics", he is accused of having selfish motives and commercial interests - with only Ihor Mosiychuk, an ex-MP, shown to be criticizing G.Soros directly. The focus then shifts to the so-called Sorosists, who eventually "leave [their] comfortable seats" but the consequences of their activities would be "reaped" by other generations.

At 10:25, a story about the picketing of the house of the chairman of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine, Oleksandr Tupytskyi, by anti-corruption activists is aired. One of the hosts provides the following introductory frame: "Exercising pressure on the courts, appointing "their own guys" to managerial positions at strategically important state companies and blackmailing with the IMF money: how the Western, so to speak, "partners" achieve their selfish aims in Ukraine - see in the story that follows." The story tells that Ukrainian anti-corruption activists "revert to their old ways", even though the winner of the US election, Joe Biden, "has not yet managed to bring all his dogs into the White House": they lit fireworks, "pushed", "made threats" near the house of Tupytskyi's "relatives". The story goes on to tell about "the Western embassies' concern and an activation of related structures" because of the abolition of the anti-corruption norms by the CCU. A decorative gallows pole is shown that the activists brought to the CCU chairman's house, referred to as an "art object" (quote) by Anti-Corruption Action Center chairman Vitaliy Shabunin, but at the same time, the host cites anonymous lawyers as saying that it could qualify as threatening a judge, according to the Criminal Code". "But that doesn't stop the Sorosists and curators. The anti-corruption norms were not in line with Ukrainian norms, enabling the West to keep our officials and deputies on the hook through anti-corruption bodies, allegedly set up in cooperation with the IMF. It is for this reason, and not for non-existent "lockups", that the activists harassed the judges," the story goes. It is further alleged that, at the request of the West, Ukraine

brought back the "exorbitant salaries" paid to supervisory board and board members of SOEs, "including the Western supervisors and Soros's students", receiving "millions" paid from our taxes, even though "there is still no tranche".

At 12:19 a.m., one of the hosts says: "They provide advice to the Government and the President, receive sky-high salaries and have their sights set on high offices. How do the representatives of G.Soros's group feel in Ukraine and what can be expected from them after the rotation in the White House?" This is followed by a story about possible changes in the Ukrainian government, following the change of power in the United States: the former prime minister, Oleksiy Honcharuk, went to the United States, and the former economy minister, Tymofiy Milovanov, keeps appearing in the media "suggesting that money be printed and distributed to businesses". It is further said that, in addition to the reform economists, another "gift" from Soros is the anti-corruption activists, "not known to anyone previously" (showing footage of V. Shabunin). Then, the members of supervisory boards are mentioned, most of whom were allegedly "recommended by the Western friends" and who "recently got back their exorbitant salaries of several hundred thousand a month" (showing footage of Serhiy Leshchenko, a former MP and now a member of the supervisory board of Ukrzaliznytsia). Finally, it is said that the same faces may show up in government offices. Next up, Anatoliy Shariy (captioned as the leader of Party of Shariy) comes on air and is asked by the hosts to provide his assessment of the changes in American politics.

When the air with A.Shariy is over, one of the hosts says: "It's time to have Kateryna Barchyk join us on air to talk about who let the slippery billionaire into Ukraine, and about the chief, so-called, Western friends who took the government servant positions." In the studio, K.Barchyk voices a text against the background of a big screen that must have been prepared in advance (the host falters several times during the broadcast).

K.Barchyk starts off (12:30) by saying "we've had our own master for a long time now" who is more influential than the oligarchs, corrupt officials and bandits from the 90s – a man that took root and "feeds all the branches of power". A video is shown, citing the representative of Opposition Platform – For Life Vadym Rabinovych as saying that 80% of those making decisions in Ukraine are "Soros's people", followed by a video quoting MP Oleksandr Dubinskyi: "Sorosists are like a cancerous tumor that originated somewhere in the mid-90s."

K.Barchyk continues: "While some are going through a crisis or financial collapse, Soros is soaring." She asserts that the latter is often accused of interfering in other countries' affairs (without specifying the accusers), "but he keeps on interfering to make money... All of Soros's most profitable deals are dishonest." He allegedly "brought down the British economy" in the 1990s; the "Soros Foundation" is actually accused of speculating in securities. "[Brought] Hong Kong, Malaysia and Thailand to their knees; there was a time when Soros's machinations crippled the economy of Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Brazil, as well as Russia. And he is involved with the total collapse of Argentina's economy." The billionaire is said to have begun to make long-term investments using the money earned through "machinations" and founded the Renaissance Foundation. G.Soros's activities are linked to further loans taken by countries from the International Monetary Fund.

The examples of Hungary, Belarus, and the Russian Federation are cited, where the activity of the billionaire's structures was brought to a halt. Ukraine is cited as an example to the contrary since the Renaissance Foundation is active here. On the one hand, the word "charity" is used to refer to the Foundation's activities, but then a blog on Ukrayinska Pravda's website is quoted (without identifying the author) that Soros's activity in a country coincides with the beginning of economic crises.

More quotations: "He who pays the piper calls the tune: 18,000 projects are funded by Soros in Ukraine... Over the 30 years, Soros in Ukraine took root in the main branches of the government. The American is pouring money into the Ukrainian media - the portal "Nashi Hroshi" feeds off of it. Examples of the topics covered by the portal are given, followed by "StopFake", "Transparency International", "Dozorro", "Transparent Cities", "StateWatch", AntAC as receiving money from him.

"The people living on the American's money" are alleged to have helped create NABU and draft a new anti-corruption law: "the declarations were invented by them". It is also alleged that Soros "funded" education in Ukraine - the textbooks were allegedly written and edited in the 1990s, just like EIT, which is allegedly

conducted using the "American financier's money". "The famous Ulana Suprun did not hesitate to take Soros's money for the scandalous medical reform, because of which funding for healthcare was reduced. So nearly the whole of Ukraine is sucking the breasts of George Soros," argues K.Barchyk.

The current Government of Ukraine is compared to the previous one, as if there were still many officials with connections abroad, and foreigners "occupied the seats of power in Ukraine." They are allegedly present most in the supervisory boards: Sevki Acuner, Anders Aslund, Christian Kuhn, Andreas Matthieu, Adomas Azuolas Auditskas, and are paid "half a million hryvnias a month" at the expense of our taxes. At the same time, a video of a railroad car with a leaking roof is shown as an example, and Ukrzaliznytsia officials are said to pocket the money, "hiding it in the refrigerators." "People who are in one way or another connected to the American's (G.Soros's) Foundation are called Sorosists in Ukraine. Zelenskyi brought most of them to power," the story goes.

The examples of Sorosists are provided: the former Prime Minister of Ukraine, Oleksiy Honcharuk (the Better Regulation Delivery Office allegedly existed "at the expense of Soros"), archival footage from an action of the investors deceived in construction scams, where O.Honcharuk acted as speaker - the action itself is called "paid-for" by Ms. Barchyk, "[he] was in office for a little over six months and caused as much damage as over many years: the increased public debt, inefficient allocation of funds, high utility bills... [he] widened the hole in the budget - over 80 billion hryvnias"; then, the former Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Agriculture of Ukraine, T.Milovanov, is cited as not concealing his being a "moron", his words being cited as a serious, not humorous statement. Mention is made of his significant earnings in the United States, after which he allegedly complained about having a "small" ministerial salary of UAH 30,000, but it is alleged that when he was "paid" over UAH 230,000, the "experts" (unnamed) regarded it as a prepayment for opening up the land market. Overall, the host connects many of the so-called Sorosists with the United States. Mention is also made of the former Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports of Ukraine, Volodymyr Borodianskyi, who managed Viktor Pinchuk's TV channels and is referred to by the host as a "longtime partner" of the Democratic Party of the United States. Next up, it is mentioned that V.Borodyanskyi "allocated" a salary of UAH 100,000 to himself and his deputies and initiated a "dictatorial" media bill. Next comes the Minister of Justice of Ukraine, Denys Maliuska, who is criticized for initiating the repair of pre-trial detention centers instead of fighting against the ill-treatment of prisoners, which is allegedly neglected. Then, it is the turn of the Minister of Energy and Environmental Protection of Ukraine, Oleksiy Orzhel, and the former Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine, Hanna Novosad ("she was Soros's OSF scholarship holder").

Mentioned among the Sorosist MPs are "beautiful woman Roksolana Pidlasa", allegedly suspected (without specifying by whom) in lobbying the interests of the manufacturers of cash registers ("decided to write a bill on the overall introduction of cash registers and previously received 540,000 hryvnias from a cash registers software developer", as follows from her declaration) and Olena Shuliak ("worked together with Honcharuk in the Better Regulation Delivery Office", allegedly funded by Soros; "she is Soros's representative in the leadership of the Servant of the People", being so accused by O.Dubinskyi).

The former Minister of Economic Development and Trade of Ukraine (2014-2016) and former head of Ukroboronprom, Aivaras Abromavicius, who is "linked to Soros", is accused of having dual citizenship, getting his people through to positions and receiving a "half a million salary". Next in line is the former Prosecutor General, Ruslan Riaboshapka who appears as "100% Zelenskyi's man" on the "Trump tapes". Journalists (without specifying who exactly) "found out that he has a house in France belonging to the ex-Prosecutor General's wife, and his children are citizens of France". The Sorosists in the supervisory boards are listed: Serhiy Leshchenko, a "slippery individual", "corrupt official" (so accused by unnamed "ex-officials of Ukrzaliznytsia"), a "liar"; some businessmen allegedly paid him millions for lobbying bills during his term, "[he] bought an apartment in the capital for 7,500,000"; Mustafa Nayyem, who "has no experience" to work in Ukroboronprom.

It is told about a Sorosist meeting at the same table that allegedly took place recently, and among the participants of which were Andriy Koboliev, Denys Maliuska, Oleh Churiy, Yuliia Kovaliv, Ulana Suprun. The meeting allegedly took place in the restaurant of [their] business partner Tomas Fiala, "who also represents

the interests of the American billionaire." In conclusion, referring to O.Dubinskyi, the host said that the criterion for being included among the "Sorosists" is supporting the IMF loans.

II. Regulation

1. Constitution of Ukraine

"Article 34. Everyone is guaranteed the right to freedom of thought and speech, and to the free expression of his or her views and beliefs.

Everyone has the right to freely collect, store, use and disseminate information by oral, written or other means of his or her choice.

The exercise of these rights may be restricted by law in the interests of national security, territorial indivisibility or public order, with the purpose of preventing disturbances or crimes, protecting the health of the population, the reputation or rights of other persons, preventing the publication of information received confidentially, or supporting the authority and impartiality of justice."

2. European Convention on Human Rights

"Article 10. Freedom of expression

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. This Article shall not prevent States from requiring the licensing of broadcasting, television or cinema enterprises.

2. The exercise of these freedoms, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society, in the interests of national security, territorial integrity or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others, for preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, or for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary."

"Article 14. Prohibition of discrimination

The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, color, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status."

3. The Law of Ukraine on Television and Radio Broadcasting

" Article 6. No abuse of freedom of broadcasting organizations is allowed

[...]

2. It shall be prohibited to use broadcasting organizations for any of the following purposes:

[...]

to promote the idea of exclusivity, superiority or inferiority of persons on the grounds of their religious beliefs, ideology, national or ethnic affiliation, physical or material status or social origin;

[...]

to disseminate any information which violates legal rights and interests of natural or legal persons or encroaches upon honor and dignity of a person."

“Article 59. 1. The broadcasting organization shall be obliged:

[...]

c) to disseminate unbiased information.”

“Article 60. 1. A member of the production personnel of any broadcasting organization shall be obliged:

[...]

b) to verify the authenticity of the information they obtain;

[...]

e) to comply with the other requirements arising from this Law and the Charter of the broadcasting organization and, also, the terms of their contract of employment with the broadcasting organization.

4. Code of Ethics of the Ukrainian Journalist (new version)

“2. Serving the interests of the government or owners, not society, is a breach of the ethics code.

6. Respecting public's right to full and objective information about facts and events is a journalist's first duty. Journalists and editors should take measures to check on reliability of all the reports, video- and audio materials coming from public, freelancers, press service and other sources.

9. Facts, thoughts and assumptions should be clearly separated from each other. Spreading information which contains biased or groundless allegations is unacceptable.

10. Opponents' viewpoints including those who have become objects of a journalist's criticism should be presented in a balanced way. Independent experts' estimations should also be presented in a balanced way.

15. No one can be discriminated because of gender, language, race, religion or ethnic, social origin or political preferences...”

5. PACE Resolution 1003 (1993) “Ethics of Journalism”

“1. In addition to the legal rights and obligations set forth in the relevant legal norms, the media have an ethical responsibility towards citizens and society which must be underlined at the present time, when information and communication play a very important role in the formation of citizens' personal attitudes and the development of society and democratic life.

2. The journalist's profession comprises rights and obligations, freedoms and responsibilities.

[...]

4. News broadcasting should be based on truthfulness, ensured by the appropriate means of verification and proof, and impartiality in presentation, description and narration...

[...]

21. ...journalism should not alter truthful, impartial information or honest opinions, or exploit them for media purposes, in an attempt to create or shape public opinion, since its legitimacy rests on effective respect for the citizen's fundamental right to information as part of respect for democratic values. To that end, legitimate investigative journalism is limited by the veracity and honesty of information and opinions and is incompatible with journalistic campaigns conducted on the basis of previously adopted positions and special interests. “

6. Annex to Recommendation No. R (97) 20 of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers on “hate speech” adopted on October 30, 1997

“...“hate speech” shall be understood as covering all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin.”

7. Editorial Charter of the TV company “Novi Komunikatsii LLC”

“CHAPTER I. TV and RADIO ORGANIZATION, PRODUCTION TEAM, THEIR RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS

4. The Company’s rights and obligations

[...]

4.2. Company’s obligations:

[...]

— disseminate objective information...

CHAPTER III. EDITORIAL VALUES

6. Main editorial values and principles

[...]

6.6. the main principles of the Company’s information activities:

Truthfulness and accuracy. Accuracy is more important than speed. The Company's information product shall be based on reliable sources, solid evidence, thorough verification and be presented in clear and accurate language. TV and radio journalists shall be honest and candid about what they do not know and avoid making unreasonable assumptions. In its information activities, the Company strives to be accurate and cover events truthfully.

[...]

Impartiality and diversity of opinion. The Company seeks to be objective and impartial in its approach to the subject, reflect all significant opinions through the study of the range and conflicts of different points of view. Where appropriate, broadcasters may provide professional judgment but shall never support a dissenting opinion on controversial public policy issues, or on political, economic, commercial, labor, or other conflicts or contradictions.

Editorial honesty and independence. The Company and TV and radio journalists are independent from the interests of both the state and various parties. The audience of the broadcasting organization can be sure that the decisions of the creative team are not influenced by political or commercial pressure or any personal interests.

[...]

CHAPTER IV. REQUIREMENTS FOR CREATING AND DISSEMINATING INFORMATION

7. General requirements

7.1. In the production of programs and telecasts (information), their distribution, provision of information services, the Company and TV and radio journalists act in strict accordance with journalistic standards of

accuracy, reliability, efficiency, completeness, impartiality, balance and separation of facts from comments, authors' judgments and assumptions.

[...]

8. Main requirements for ensuring accuracy, objectivity, impartiality and balanced information

8.1. The information about facts disseminated by the Company shall accurately correspond to real events or data and be objective...

8.2. Deliberate twisting or distortion of facts is unacceptable, as is manipulation of facts (incomplete presentation, omission, unjustified emphasis, false sensationalism, etc.).

[...]

8.11. TV and radio journalists shall cover controversial topics impartially and unbiasedly in newscasts and other programs. TV and radio journalists shall not be entitled to express their own assumptions, except for author's programs, where, in turn, they shall be clearly separated from the facts.

[...]

8.14. The Company promotes information pluralism by covering all socially significant events, providing an opportunity to publicize the full range of political, social, cultural, national and religious views available in society; it also helps establish an ideological diversity in which no ideology can be recognized as state, dominant, mandatory or the only possible.

8.15. TV and radio journalists shall strive to present different points of view within a single story or newscast, information and analytical programs. If it is not possible to promptly take commentary from one of the parties in order to present its point of view within one piece or issue, it is necessary to make an effort in providing this point of view. In which case, it is important to draw attention to the fact that there are different points of view on the issue, as well as state the reason why it has not yet been possible to get a comment from a particular party.

8.16. Should the person in question refuse to comment on the situation, the Company shall inform the public accordingly. If it is impossible to contact the person, the Company, simultaneously with the broadcast, declares its readiness to present the position of the other party to the conflict.

8.17. TV and radio journalists shall seek out the widest possible range of opinions and carefully present them in their materials. The Company shall provide an opportunity to respond to public accusations for those accused. When covering conflicts or disputes, TV and radio journalists shall also endeavor to seek out experts. At the same time, the public should clearly understand why a certain person comments on this or that event, whether this commentator has a sufficient level of expertise, and whether this person is not a party to the conflict. Such experts shall be clearly identified with an indication of the institution they represent, their degree (if any) or other criteria indicating professionalism in the field, on which these experts comment.

[...]

12. Requirements for disseminating information on different population groups

12.1. It is not allowed to use the Broadcasting Organization to incite national, racial or religious hostility and hatred, promote exclusivity, superiority or inferiority of persons on the grounds of their religious beliefs, ideology, belonging to a particular nation or race, physical or property status, social origin.

12.2. No one may be discriminated against on the basis of his or her sex, sexual orientation, age, language, race, religion, national, regional or social origin, property status, illness, physical disability or political preference in the material prepared and published by the Broadcasting Organization.

12.3. Television and radio journalists shall exclude from their work and daily life the ideas of xenophobia and discriminatory treatment of people on any grounds and show tolerance for everyone.

12.4. There are various national and regional "sensitive points" in Ukraine that TV and radio journalists should respect and reflect. The broadcasting organization shall be accurate and consistent in covering them to avoid stereotyping or clichés."

III. Assessment of the compliance with regulation and professional standards

1. This is now the second time that the Independent Media Council is reviewing the coverage on the ZIK television channel of the so-called Sorosists and George Soros's activities. This time, it was not a full-fledged telethon dedicated to this topic and organized by the channel, but the content in question is largely similar to the broadcast in early 2020, as reviewed by the Council (see the IMC's [Opinion](#) of 29.05.20). Given the TV channel's obvious persistence in promoting a certain ideological position and the actual lack of action from the National Council on Television and Radio Broadcasting with regard to the previous case, the Independent Media Council also evaluates the channel's content, broadcast on November 13, 2020, since such content may make a significant public impact.

2. As stated in the aforementioned Opinion by the Independent Media Council (pt. 2): "The question of foreign influence on the life of Ukraine in general and on the government agencies' activities is not new and there is an ongoing public debate about this issue. Every individual has the right to hold his or her own views with regard to who and in what way influences our state from outside Ukraine, and on the quality of the work of the national government..." However, in addition to their rights, journalists and TV channels, despite being private entities, have a range of duties and responsibilities, including toward their audience. In the same Opinion, the Council pointed out as follows: "...freedom of speech with regard to broadcasters is somewhat narrower than with regard to the average citizen and other media (press), as the Law of Ukraine On Television and Radio Broadcasting provides for the obligation to disseminate objective information, including impartiality and balance, which is the opposite to promoting a subjective point of view on a particular issue. This approach in regulating the activities of TV channels is based, in particular, on the fact that visual images are more powerful than the printed word, and many TV and radio companies use the radio frequencies, which is a national resource that should serve the interests of all citizens of Ukraine."

3. It is not the first time that the ZIK television channel has raised the issue of outside influence on Ukraine, but only from the symbolic "West". The issue of influence from the Russian Federation is not raised here, despite the close social and economic ties between the countries until 2014, the presence of pro-Russian political forces in the Ukrainian parliament and the fact of Russian armed aggression against Ukraine.

4. The issue of foreign influence on Ukraine is socially important, but it should be covered in journalistic stories in accordance with professional standards and legal requirements. Any third parties considering that their rights have been violated by some content in the media have appropriate legal remedies they can use themselves (written claims, appeals to the court). However, the standards of the profession and laws also work on a different plane: they serve to ensure the interests of the TV channel's audience. The Council will thus analyze compliance with the basic standards of the journalistic profession and related legislation within this context in the paragraphs that follow.

5. K.Barchyk's speech against the "Sorosists" is very rich in information and facts, but the sources of the information are usually not named, e.g. when providing information about V.Pinchuk and T.Milovanov. Providing a reference to the source of information in a journalistic story enables the audience to better assess the reliability of information and (im)partiality of the source. Concealing the source of information could be justified only when the latter is in serious danger (unfortunately, this aspect is interpreted rather freely in the ZIK channel's Editorial Charter).

The story about the so-called Sorosists had a format of presenting various data in large quantities. However, it would have been appropriate to provide the sources of information at least for those not actively covered in the media before or not very well known, as well as for the figures provided in the story. For example, the

allegation that the Better Regulation Delivery Office was financed by G.Soros's structures is not backed by concrete facts: how does one know what percentage of the Office's income came from the billionaire, in what year such financing took place, etc.

The content in question contains a reference to unnamed lawyers and critics. Expert assessments often constitute an essential part of media coverage, but the experts' names should be provided, since, otherwise, there is an opportunity to promote the views of non-experts or simply a subjective journalistic position.

In some cases, the sources of the information in the story were biased, e.g. as in the case of the information about MP Olena Shuliak coming from her colleague O.Dubinskyi, who is a public leader in fighting against "Sorosists", and in whose TV programs [violations](#) of professional standards were spotted. Also, there are serious questions to be asked of I.Mosiychuk who is repeatedly cited by the TV channel during the coverage of the topic (see paragraph 11 below).

Therefore, in the content shown by the ZIK television channel on November 13, 2020, there is a violation of the professional standard of naming the sources of the information.

6. To ensure balanced coverage in journalistic stories, it is necessary to present the views of the persons about whom information is provided that might adversely affect their reputation. That is, ensure that the story contains complete information on the subject, verify disputable information (when asked for comment, a person may either refute or confirm the allegations directed toward them) and ensure impartiality.

However, despite the fact that many government and public sector representatives were "included" among "G.Soros's accomplices" in the coverage, no comments on this issue were heard from any of them, including from George Soros. Some of the participants in the story would likely refuse to provide comment to the TV channel, but this, too, is a statement of their position the audience should have been informed about (there were no reports of refusal to comment in the story). The aforementioned persons' previous responses to the accusations found in open sources (e.g. with regard to purchasing the apartment by S.Leshchenko) were not cited either.

The format of K.Barchyk's story - mentioning a lot of characters in a negative context and making it technically difficult to give the floor to each of them - was chosen by the TV channel. But this does not eliminate the journalists' and TV channel's obligation to prepare a balanced journalistic story and check on the information.

The channel's audience thus did not receive the information on how the persons, allegedly exposed by the TV channel, responded to the accusations against them. This is in violation of Para. 10 of the Ethics Code of Ukrainian Journalists (Paras. 6.6., 8.14.-8.17. of the Editorial Charter).

7. The journalists of the TV channel mix up facts with their own judgements, as in the news story at 10:27 on November 13, 2020. The same goes for the studio hosts' introduction to this story and to the story broadcast at 12:19. In the piece, K.Barchyk uses such epithets as "slippery", "liar", with the very term "Sorosists" already creating negative associations. This prevents the viewers from judging the facts for themselves, imposing the TV channel's / journalist's opinions on them. Therefore, it is in violation of Para. 9 of the Ethics Code of Ukrainian Journalists (Para. 7.1. of the Editorial Charter).

8. In view of the above, only one point of view was presented, actually imposing it on the TV channel's audience and manipulating the viewers' opinion. Some of the host's introductory remarks directed the audience toward a certain position even before watching the story (e.g. at 10:25) and actually mixed up the comments with the judgments. The Law of Ukraine On Television and Radio Broadcasting prohibits dissemination of subjective, biased material (Para. "C" of Part 1 of Art. 59 - the obligation to disseminate objective information). Since nearly all information about the persons allegedly related to G.Soros was presented in a negative light, their comments were not provided by the channel, and the persons were characterized negatively, there is reason to believe that the coverage of this topic on November 13, 2020 by the ZIK television channel was biased against George Soros and the persons allegedly related to him in the channel's opinion (in violation of Para. 9 of the Ethics Code of Ukrainian Journalists, Paras. 4.2., 7.1., 8.11. of the Editorial Charter of the ZIK television channel).

However, the Independent Media Council largely considers the matters of balanced content and impartiality not from a defamation standpoint. Although the persons mentioned in the stories have the opportunity and formal right to lay a claim to the channel, the Council considers content primarily in terms of the interests of the viewer. The audience should receive complete information on the issues raised and not be influenced by the channel's propaganda. The TV channel is obliged to present on air different points of view on controversial issues, ensuring the objectivity of the story. It is its statutory duty toward the audience.

9. Imbalanced stories and the lack of references to the sources of information is also a violation of the professional standard of completeness of information (Para. 6 of the Ethics Code of Ukrainian Journalists, Paras. 7.1., 8.14. of the Editorial Charter). Any journalistic story that does not provide the source of information and whereby an attempt is made to obtain comment from the criticized party is clearly incomplete.

10. The above-mentioned IMC's Opinion of May 29, 2020 on similar content by the same channel addressed the issue of anti-Semitism, which is "fueled" by such ZIK content. It is generally well known that G.Soros is of Jewish nationality, this information was also mentioned during the morning broadcast on November 13, 2020 (see above). Absence of direct accusations on the basis of nationality on the channel's air is of no particular importance, as a negative attitude toward Jewish nationality is promoted here implicitly and may be even more effective than direct appeals.

According to the Council, accusing G.Soros and a number of allegedly related persons of attempting to establish control over the Ukrainian authorities in order to exploit the country in the story in question is obviously aimed at inciting anti-Semitic sentiment and may provoke respective anti-Semitic actions both within legitimate political processes (e.g. not voting for a candidate in elections due to prejudice of nationality) and outside of them (inciting conflict between communities).

In evaluating similar content on the ZIK television channel, paragraph 10 of the Opinion by the Independent Media Council of May 29, 2020, reads as follows: "On all continents, from Hungary to the United States, propaganda narratives strongly link the personality of Mr. Soros to various conspiracy theories of the "global Jewish-Masonic conspiracy." In our region, these theories are actively promoted and supported by Russia, because, on the one hand, they promote anti-Western hysteria, and on the other hand, they provoke anti-Semitic statements and / or incidents, which Russia then successfully uses to promote the alleged "special problem of Ukrainian anti-Semitism and nationalism" in the Western world, including influential international media."

The term "anti-Semitism" [appeared](#) in Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century. In its "Understanding Anti-Semitic Hate Crimes and Addressing the Security Needs of Jewish Communities: A [Practical Guide](#)", the OSCE provides examples of anti-Semitism in public life, the media, etc. (Annex 6): "Especially but not exclusively, examples are the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions..." Among other forms of anti-Semitism, the [Great Ukrainian Encyclopedia](#) lists "attributing to Jews the exploitation of the non-Jewish population" (economic anti-Semitism) and "accusing Jews of establishing control over the world or individual countries, or seeking to establish it" (manifestation of conspiracy theory).

The TV channel speaks almost directly about G.Soros's attempts to take control of the Ukrainian government, which corresponds to conspiracy theory characteristics. K.Barchyk also raises the issue of Ukraine's economic exploitation, allegedly by Soros and Sorosists.

A former MP (VIII convocation), I.Mosiychuk, whose direct speech containing criticisms of Soros was cited by ZIK in the stories about the activities of the latter and the so-called Sorosists, [belonged](#) to several "social-nationalist" organizations before being elected to Parliament from the Radical Party. We cannot argue that the TV channel shares this former MP's views, but using comments made by a person of dubious reputation also confirms the TV channel's focus on making anti-Semitic narratives part its content.

The TV channel therefore exploits such anti-Semitic discourse for propaganda purposes, while at the same time contributing to the incitement of certain xenophobic sentiments. Ultimately, such propaganda is intertwined with anti-Western pro-Russian propaganda, when the United States and NATO have the image of the enemy,

and European values are generally viewed as harmful and alien. This falls well with the previous Soviet tradition of anti-Western propaganda, carried out for most of the period of the USSR's existence and currently [revived](#) in the Russian Federation. Actually, anti-Semitism continued to flourish in the Soviet Union, as noted by the [Council of Europe](#) in its Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People: "With the success of the Bolshevik Revolution, pogroms ceased in the Soviet Union, but antisemitism continued in different forms, including forced displacements, confiscation of property and show trials".

In view of this, the Council believes that the ZIK television channel also violated Para. 15 of the Ethics Code of Ukrainian Journalists (Paras. 12.1.-12.4. of the channel's Editorial Charter).

12. Overall, the rhetoric of the ZIK television channel of equating any public organizations and their representatives, receiving at least some minimal funding from the Renaissance Foundation, with "agents of malign influence" also incites hostility toward them from the channel's audience. The same goes for those supporting Ukraine's cooperation with the IMF. The quality of grant programs from the governments and organizations from Western Europe and the United States being implemented in Ukraine should be discussed. But it should be a genuine discussion, not a one-sided harassment, i.e. all parties should be given the opportunity to speak, the facts should be cited with a reference to their source, and the organizers of such a discussion, including the media and journalists, should be genuinely impartial.

IV. Conclusions

The Independent Media Council believes that:

- 1.** This telethon contains the signs of hate speech toward organizations receiving support from Western donors, and its content fuels xenophobia and anti-Semitism.
- 2.** In covering the topic of the influence of George Soros and "those related to him" in its broadcast on November 13, 2020, the ZIK television channel (Novi Komunikatsii LLC) failed to comply with the requirements to provide a reference to the information sources, objectivity (impartiality), balance and completeness, separation of facts from comments and judgments in violation of the requirements of paras. 6 and 13 of part 2 of Art. 6, point "C" of part 1 of Art. 59 of the law On Television and Radio Broadcasting, points 6, 9, 10, 15 of the Ethics Code of Ukrainian journalist and points 4.2., 6.6., 7.1., 8.1, 8.11, 8.14. – 8.17., 12.1. –12.4. of the channel's Editorial Charter.
- 3.** The Independent Media Council is compelled to point to the actual lack of action from the National Council of Ukraine on Television and Radio Broadcasting in terms of the proper response to such content aired on the ZIK television channel.

Votes: "In favor" — 12
 "Against" — 0
 "Abstained" — 0

Head of the Independent Media Council	A. Cherevko
Secretary of the Independent Media Council	O. Holub
Secretary of the Independent Media Council	P. Moiseyev