

Comments about the draft State targeted programme for public information about the European integration issues 2008-2011

- 1) These comments apply to the draft of the programme as submitted to public consultations on the website http://comin.kmu.gov.ua/control/uk/publish/article?art_id=61828&cat_id=33114. The draft programme refers to the existence of the same (or similar) programme for 2004-2007, but it does not explicitly ground the new programme on the results achieved during 2004-2007. Such background information, or more broadly, SWOT analysis would have made the case for the new draft programme more convincing and clearer as regards the implementing details as well as easier for comments.

General/ goals and objectives

- 2) The draft programme correctly puts emphasis on the explanation of the Government's EU integration policy to the Ukrainian public. But at the same time it only indirectly refers to the need to explain to the Ukrainian public how and why the EU exists and functions (policies and institutions). In the absence of the more detailed analysis it can only be guessed that the Ukrainian public does not yet have enough understanding about the EU. This understanding is important in formation of realistic expectations about the impact of Ukraine's EU integration. Surely, this element can be greatly helped by resources available from the European Commission (delegation). However, it should be put on the equal footing with the two problematic issues that the draft programme will attempt to resolve (explanation of the Governmental EU integration policy and the impact of this policy to economic development to the Ukrainian public) and at least somehow cross-linked with the Commission's information campaign in Ukraine.
- 3) The draft programme mentions 'shortage of objective, quality and user friendly information about the importance of EU integration for national interest of Ukraine'. This statement should be incorporated to the goals (objectives) of the programme, namely, that the Government will attempt to provide objective (impartial), quality and user friendly information.

Institutional elements

- 4) As regards institutional elements of the programme, two observations can be made. First, it is not clear why the programme will continue to be co-ordinated by the State Committee for Television and Radio, especially given the (correct) emphasis on the need to create expert network. It is not clear how or whether this committee will be able to create and maintain a network of professional expertise (civil servants and NGO analysts) and public opinion makers. The experience of the new EU member states and candidate countries shows that such programmes are most effectively co-ordinated by the central institution responsible for the overall co-ordination of the EU affairs. It is not clear whether the inter-ministerial working group would be able to address this issue effectively.
- 5) Secondly, while the draft programme is correctly emphasizing the role of the central mass media, it does not make it clear how the regional aspects will be dealt with. Regional (local) dimension is especially important in a large country such as Ukraine. In order to be effective, this programme would benefit from a network of regional or local EU integration information centres, through which local outreach would be ensured and events (Europe day celebrations, debates with opinion makers, school events, guest

speakers) organized. This network may already exist, but the draft programme does not mention it. If it does not, it is recommended that the creation of such network should be started. Establishment costs could be partly covered by the EU member states (diplomatic representations), if the Ukrainian authorities make a serious and convincing case for it.

Public opinion surveys/monitoring

- 6) It is very welcome that the draft programme envisages public opinion surveys about the EU issues. They are indeed crucial for measurement of public opinion mood (and monitoring of the programme). However, these surveys could and should be more frequent than currently envisaged (two annual polls), because above all, public support for EU integration depends on its assessment about performance of the Government, and only then it depends on the special information efforts (such as this programme). So in order to filter this effect out, it is recommended that public support (one-two questions in the survey) is measured every month and two times per year more detailed surveys are conducted (related to the evolving EU integration agenda of Ukraine, general EU affairs (attitudes to events/policies of the EU) and technological aspects of implementation of this programme (preference of means/channels, type of information etc.).
- 7) For the same reason it is recommended to introduce two indicators to measure effectiveness of the programme. In addition to the more general and, as explained above only indirect indicator of the public support for EU integration to measure the 'feeling of being informed about the EU issues'. Taken strictly, the latter is more accurate indicator of the effectiveness of the programme.

Types of implementing measures

- 8) The draft programme is very brief about the implementing ideas and therefore causal linkages can only be guessed. By reading it one gets an impression about the preference to quantitative outputs (printed materials (booklets, articles etc)). In the early days of the systemic approach to this information policy they are of course necessary. However, the outputs themselves are unlikely to create 'favourable information environment'. It is somewhat paradoxical, but the 'feeling of being informed about the EU issues' among the general public is less dependent on the direct awareness (eg reading about the EU issues) and is more about the individual possibility to access, if needed, networks of information (eg EU information centres, free information telephone line, some established special TV/radio EU affairs programme, expert debate). Therefore a balance must be struck between the quantitative outputs and the need to cultivate an expert/institutional network. An additional argument for a better balance is the need for user friendly information which is not possible without interpretation of experts and public opinion makers.
- 9) The draft programme does not provide any profiling of the Ukrainian public in terms of their understanding, information needs and the best channeling of information. This should be done when designing implementing plans (plans of measures).
- 10) The draft programme envisages taking advantage of the experience of the new EU member states from Central and Eastern Europe in demonstrating to the Ukrainian public. This is a right thing to do. Operational details should be also provided how this will be achieved.