

“Courts and the media: experience of cooperation” Results of a National online survey of journalists on cooperation with courts, 2018.

Conclusions and recommendations.

1. Almost 69% of the interviewed journalists personally cover judicial issues. At the same time, out of the remaining 31%, almost 85% indicated that they would like to write about the judicial system in general or some trials in particular. This indicates a considerable interest of the media in this topic. Journalists wishing to devote their time to the judicial field lack: legal knowledge, the interest of the target audience in such materials, interesting court cases, the interest of the editorial staff in the publication of such materials, etc.
2. The following topics are the most interesting for the coverage of court proceedings for journalists covering judicial issues: corruption and cases in which high officials are accused of crime, criminal news, the course of judicial reform and the work of the judiciary, high-profile cases, including the Maidan cases, cases brought against civic activists and cases relating to the interests of society and the protection of human rights. This topic almost completely coincides with the one that, according to journalists, is the most interesting for ordinary citizens in litigation and the situation with the judicial system.
3. Based on the analysis of the responses of all journalists, a clear request from the public for a fair trial and the corresponding punishment of those who it considers guilty (such as certain politicians suspected of corruption, etc.) can be monitored. It is the search of such stories and cases journalists have the greatest interest in.
4. According to journalists with experience in covering judicial issues, people often do not understand the following issues: delaying trials, the stages of the trial, the stage of pre-trial investigation, the motivation and the subject matter of court judgment, the timing of the trial, the difference between choosing a measure of preventive restriction and the examination of the merits of the case, judicial reform and its consequences, the presumption of innocence, the difference between a lawful and grounded court decision. This list may form the basis of the educational activities of the courts and their press services.
5. Despite changes to the Law of Ukraine “On the Judiciary and Status of Judges”, journalists are still prohibited to carry out photo and video documenting by portable devices.
6. Almost 95% of journalists with experience in covering judicial issues use the Unified State Register of Judgments. Most frequently, journalists complain that the website <http://reyestr.court.gov.ua> often does not work due to technical reasons, the inconvenient case search, the promulgation of not all court orders in the case and the failure to enter all court decisions. The interviewed journalists expressed the following wishes for the functioning of the Unified State Register of Judgments: to improve the web usability of the website, not to conceal information that does not relate to personal data, such as the address of the commission of a crime, etc., to improve and diversify the search (in particular, according to the number of criminal proceedings in the Unified Register of Pre-trial Investigations), to provide for the possibility of forming automatic statistics collection, to create a video instruction, to increase the capacity of the resource, to upload faster cases to the Register.
7. The most popular source of information about upcoming trials of interest to journalists is the court website. This explains their wishes for the prompt publication of information about the place and time of trials and their quick update in case of changes.
8. 20 out of 72 journalists who have experience in coverage of judicial issues have no contacts of the press service, and 52 journalists have the ones. At the same time, 30 journalists

indicated that they did not receive information from the press service of the court, and 42 journalists received. Most often, journalists contact the press service representatives to receive and clarify information, to receive the details of coverage of trials, to obtain a comment on a court decision, to clarify the place and time of a trial, to prepare interviews with judges, to invite them to television, radio programs, to obtain a permit for photo and video documenting trials, to participate in a public event (round table, training), to understand the features of judicial reform, legislation.

9. Journalists covering judicial issues are equally satisfied with the experience of working with various representatives of the communication team of the court. At the same time, one should pay attention to the negative tendency that the difference between the number of contacts with a particular representative of the communication team of the court and the number of those who are satisfied with the cooperation is negative.
10. Journalists covering judicial issues, on average, rated the effectiveness of the press services of courts at 5, 8 points out of 10, while journalists lacking experience in coverage of judicial subjects, on the average, assessed the effectiveness of the work of the press services of the courts at 4, 3 points out of 10. It can be assumed that the direct coverage of judicial issues by journalists contributes to a better assessment of the work of the court press service. It should be noted that the employees of the communication court teams evaluate their work as follows: the press services of the local courts – 6.92 points, the press services of the courts of appeal – 7.89 points, the press service of the Supreme Court – 9 points. Such an imbalance suggests that the expectations of the media representatives and staff of the communication teams of the courts about the work of the press services of the courts are not in line.
11. In the opinion of journalists who have experience in covering the activities of the courts, for the functioning of the press services of the courts to be useful to journalists, they must: establish closer cooperation with journalists and the public (in particular, through physical meetings); comment on important court cases; report important cases by e-mail and telephone (if available); regularly update the court website with new and important information; organize briefings or press conferences with judges; cover the process of reforming the judicial system; assist in organizing comments from judges; conduct trainings for judges on cooperation with journalists, inform about the place and time of trials and their changes; publish statistics on the activities of the court; facilitate permission for photo and video documentation of the trial; prepare press releases on interesting and high-profile cases, in particular, explaining the decision of the court in simple words; organize the educational work of courts; promptly provide answers to oral and written requests by journalists; to work in social media, in particular respond to messages; prepare digests with information on important court cases; create in cooperation with journalists the unified open rules for communication with the media for judges; provide timely rebuttal of information, if such has been spread; conduct workshops for journalists on the issues of the law and functioning of the judicial system; inform about unusual interesting cases under consideration; coordinate the authorized spokesperson of the court; hold public events (briefings, round tables, etc.) with the involvement of the judiciary; provide reports on the work of the court and the course of high-profile cases; help organize the work of journalists in the courts.
12. To improve the media's ability to cover the activities of the courts, it is worthwhile conducting training in the following topics: the foundation of law, the judicial system of Ukraine and the reform of the judicial system, procedural law, the practice of the ECtHR and its use by Ukrainian courts, the legal status of a journalist in the trial, legal journalism,

specificity of work with the Unified State Register of Court Decisions, judicial monitoring, training united on the content of cases under consideration.

13. 87.6% of all interviewed journalists visit the courts' websites. Almost all interviewed journalists support the idea of providing for possibility of electronic appeals to a court through its website.
14. The interviewed journalists mostly rate the convenience of the search system, curiosity of news posted on the main page of the Judicial Power of Ukraine website and its design (<https://court.gov.ua/>) as average. The results indicate that media representatives rated the curiosity of news posted on the main page as the worst, the convenience of the search system – as the best. Almost 95% of the interviewed journalists indicated that it would be convenient for them to have categories for video recordings of trial broadcasts on the on the YouTube of the Judicial Power of Ukraine website (<http://bit.ly/2qJsIaB>) by type of cases (criminal, administrative, civil, etc).
15. Not all journalists understand the difference between the mechanism for live trial broadcasting via technical facilities of courts and conducting filming, television, video records in the courtroom, or broadcasting, which is conducted from the courtroom by journalists or other visitors to the trial. The fact that a significant proportion (35.2%) of all interviewed journalists do not know at all about the mechanism for trial broadcasting via technical facilities of courts and that 60.3% of those who know about it do not use this mechanism in their professional activity, testifies to the need for information and educational activities on the given subject.