

# **13. MEDIA OVERVIEW**



## **Ukrainian media overview 2010**

The Ukrainian media sector experienced a second consecutive tough year in 2010 as advertising revenues remained at a premium as the post-crisis recovery got underway. Many of the country's leading advertising sectors dried up completed in 2009 as the worst of the crisis combined with a period of political uncertainty, and this situation has only gradually improved in 2010. TV has benefited the most from the slight improvement in the commercial media market, with print media continuing to suffer. One of the strongest emerging channels in 2010 was Rinat Akhmetov's football channel, which continues to expand its reach as it taps into the huge potential of Ukraine's domestic Premier League. Following the presidential elections, the TV sector experienced changes at Ukraine's state TV channel, with Lebanese born Kyiv media figure Walid Harfouch becoming Vice President of the nation's only fully state-owned national TV channel as part of a wholesale changing of the guard at the helm of Ukraine's flagship media outlet. Harfouch, who has been active throughout the Kyiv media sector since the early 1990s, took Ukrainian citizenship in 2005. Since arriving at First National Channel he has overseen considerable image changes and a major personnel overhaul, with the national state channel receiving a ratings boost as a result of its repositioning. In late 2010 it was announced that in the New Year Savik Shuster will be bringing his popular debate-style programming to First National Channel – a coup for the country's formerly moribund national channel and an indication of the prominent position which

the channel sees for itself on the Ukrainian media landscape. Elsewhere in the TV sector the main controversy of the year was a court ruling stripping two Ukrainian channels of a number of their regional broadcasting licenses. This decision to reverse an earlier ruling awarding Kanal 5 and TVi frequencies provoked negative commentary from EU figures and was a key factor behind Ukraine's falling International Press Freedom Index rating for 2010, with the country dropping from 89th to 131st in the annual Reporters Without Borders survey.

In the Ukrainian print sector it was a hard year of closures and sellouts as the market failed to persuade many core advertising segments to return to print. The crisis period of 2008-09 had led many Ukrainian companies, particularly in the lifestyle, recreation and services sectors, to actively seek alternatives to their previous marketing strategies involving relatively expensive print advertising. This has led to a considerable growth in the range of outdoor advertising client bases but first and foremost it has driven a boom in the email marketing sector, with hundreds of daily messages for dachas, restaurants, tours, financial services and for email marketing itself now infesting Ukrainian inboxes. Print media titles to go out of business in 2010 included the iconic Kyiv weekly events bible Afisha, which had been published since 2001 by American-born Kyiv media mogul Jed Sunden, the man behind Kyiv Post newspaper and Korrespondent magazine. Prior to closure, Afisha magazine was widely regarded as one of the most authoritative style barometers of what was hot in the Ukrainian capital and its disappearance from the market was seen by many as a particularly ominous omen. This awarding-winning publication was one of the most high-profile victims of the credit crunch impact, and had

also reportedly been badly hit by changes to regulations severely limiting the scope of liquor and cigarette advertising in the print media which came into effect in 2010. Also in Ukraine's previously buoyant recreation and lifestyle sector, Timeout called time out in 2010 after what was a brief few years on the Ukrainian market. Another title to close was GlavRed, a Ukrainian language magazine which was regarded by many as an important voice for the opposition and for alternative viewpoints in general. Beyond Kyiv, Lviv's English language magazine Lviv Today remained the country's only English language regional publication and it continued to expand in 2010 as the city pushed forward with its tourism promotion campaign and preparations for Euro 2012. The magazine added a Ukrainian language section in 2010 to cater to the large local audience which the glossy publication had already attracted. Also in the Ukrainian En-

glish language media sector, the Kyiv Post in 2010 introduced online Russian and Ukrainian language versions of their English language materials in an attempt to boost their market reach and consolidate the publication's reputation as one of the country's leading independent news sources.

On the Ukrainian internet, the biggest climber of the year was probably the Segodnya newspaper's online presence, which has been improved in line with the paper's general modernization. Segodnya remains the country's best-read daily and offers different editions in a number of regions including Kyiv and Donetsk to cater for local tastes. In 2010 the online political sphere continued to maintain the high dynamic of recent years, with the leaders still the Ukrainska Pravda and Korrespondent websites – both of which have been relatively dominant for the past four years.