



HUMAN RIGHTS  
**PLATFORM**

**WHAT HAPPENED, WHAT WE ACHIEVED**

**AND WHY IT MATTERS**



**2025**

**ANNUAL  
REPORT**



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# FOREWORD



## OLEKSANDRA STEPANOVA

EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR OF HRP

After we had fully resumed the organisation's work in 2022, it seemed that no harder task could lie ahead. Yet 2025 turned out to be the year when keeping our activity alive demanded even greater effort than in 2022. Given that 85% of our funding came from the U.S. Government, the January news was catastrophic for us – the funding was suspended. Inside, a hope still flickered that everything would be restored, but with each passing day it became ever clearer: we were once again facing the challenge of survival, as in 2022, but now it was also the survival of the organisation itself.

The HRP team, as always, did not let us down. We quickly went through all the stages of disappointment and “ran our ultramarathon” onwards. I am proud that, despite all the challenges of recent years, HRP has not stopped providing legal aid to journalists for a single day. In 2025 we preserved this practice. While part of the team dealt with pressing administrative matters, our lawyers held the legal shield for all media workers. HRP's main resource is not simply people, but reliable people beside you. And when such people are near, no storm is frightening.

We know well that HRP's experience and expertise in fighting SLAPP suits is hard to overestimate, so we continued to work actively on developing legislation. In May, HRP became a member of the Coalition Against SLAPPs in Europe, and already in June our Legal

Director Olha Vdovenko was elected secretary of the working group on anti-SLAPP legislation set up by the Verkhovna Rada Committee on Freedom of Speech.

We did not stop our educational work either. Because of the funding cuts, it was not only the civic sector that found itself in a difficult situation, but media organisations as well. That is why in 2025 HRP focused on a programme that taught representatives of regional media to create and develop business models for their newsrooms. Many lectures and trainings were held, and a study trip to Sweden was organised to exchange experience with colleagues. You will read more about this on the pages of this report.

We continued to analyse the legislation and the practice of its application by the courts, to prepare analytical materials, to take part in discussions and to work out joint effective solutions.

And we went further still – we resumed monitoring of respect for digital rights and launched a new awareness campaign in which our new team member, the assistant cat Busia, explains how to use the internet safely.

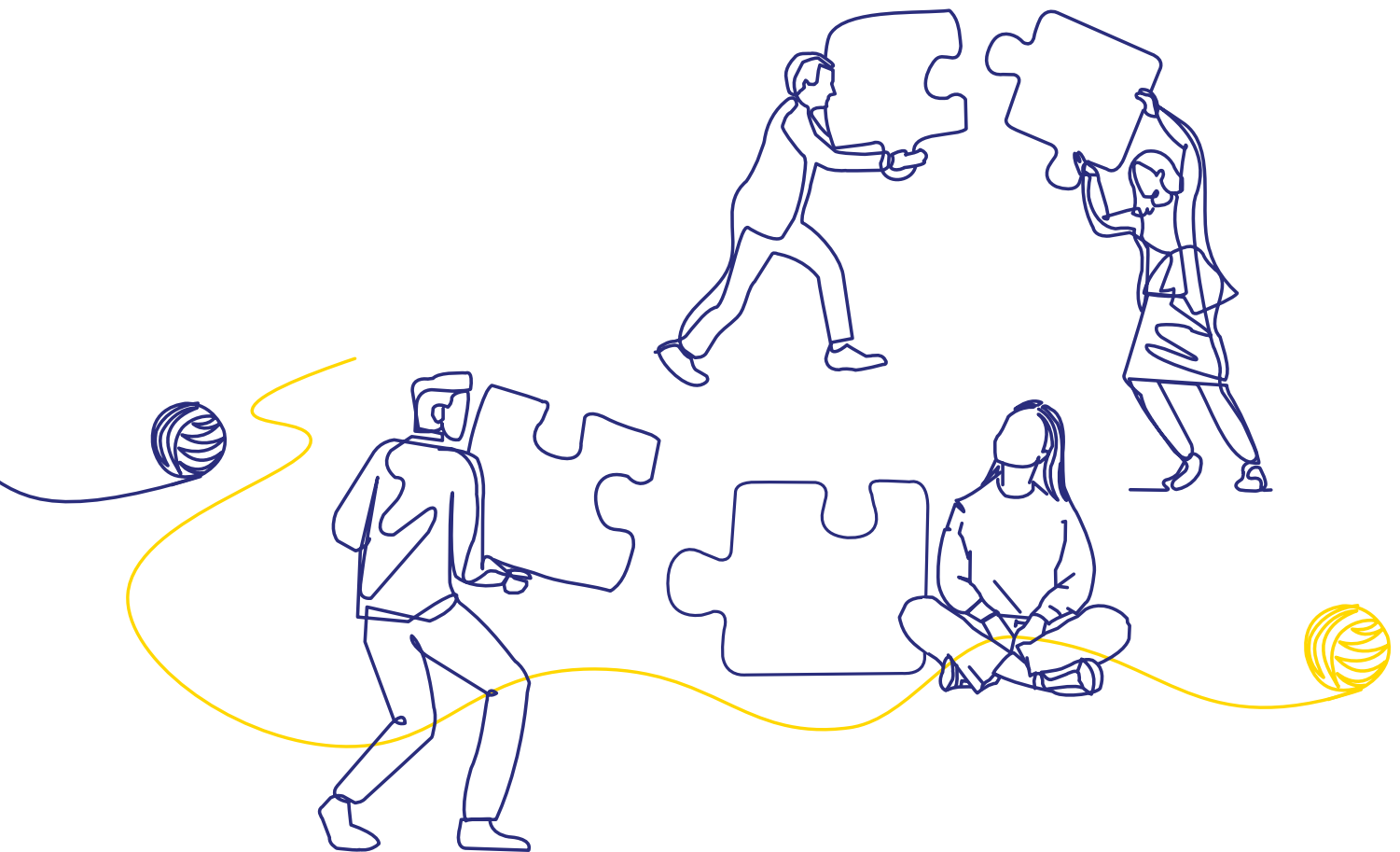
In the end, no less was done in 2025 than in any other year. And that is one more victory of Ukrainians.

I am proud of the team and sincerely thank all the partners who were with us in different ways in 2025: some gave financial support, some gave advice and vouched for HRP's impeccable reputation, and some were simply there and supported us morally.



**THE TEAM**

**– OUR DRIVING FORCE**



Everyone on the HRP team has a unique superpower and a mission we carry out into the world!



## LESIA HANZHA

EDITOR OF TRUTH AND A WOMAN OF ACTION

A participant in the key events of Ukraine's modern history and editor-in-chief of the online media "Access to Truth". Lesia serves in the

Armed Forces of Ukraine, defending the state, and at the same time keeps in touch with the team and the platform. There are no words that could fully express our boundless gratitude. Thank you, Lesia!



## OLHA VDOVENKO

SUPERHEROINE OF KNOWLEDGE AND INNER STRENGTH

A media lawyer and attorney, she knows everything about media law. For the team, she is an indispensable source of knowledge and wise advice.



## LIUDMYLA OPRYSHKO

STRATEGIC NAVIGATOR OF HRP

Even working hundreds of kilometres away, she stays at the centre of things. When a situation of the "this is not easy" kind arises, we know: the solution is somewhere close – Liudmyla is already putting it into words.



## IRYNA SHATALOVA

ENCHANTRESS OF TEXTS

She knows how a single post or project description can tell the whole story of HRP. Her texts are alive, emotional and always precise, and her interview questions always find their way to what matters most.



## NATALIA BURKOT

THE ENGINE OF OUR DIGITAL PROCESSES

She keeps everything moving – from the stable work of the HRP website to improving the "Access" platform and monitoring digital rights. Thanks to her, technical issues disappear before the team even notices them.



## OLEKSANDRA SAVCHUK

AUTHOR OF CREATIVE EVENTS AND MEANINGS

Oleksandra breathes life into the organisation's internal processes and at the same time arranges them neatly on the shelves – easily and boldly. And every new challenge for her is one more good story the team retells after the event.



## MARYNA CHUMAK

TAMER OF NUMBERS AND  
PROJECT BUDGETS

Can you work with budgets confidently amid constant unpredictability? Maryna proves that you can! Discipline even in the most fast-moving circumstances – that is her.



## NATALIIA GHARBI

THE TEAM'S FINANCIAL  
FORTRESS

HRP's chief accountant, who keeps the organisation's finances in order. She shields the team from financial storms, and with her nearby even the wildest financial waves quickly subside.



## YURII MELNYK

LEGAL SHIELD FOR JOURNALISTS

Always there when support and confidence in one's own actions are needed. He helps journalists work boldly.



## ROMAN VASYLNIAK

ADVOCATE OF TRUTH

Roman works with the word that needs protection and with the principles of a clear position. He defends justice in the course of court proceedings.



## OLEKSANDRA STEPANOVA

ARCHITECT OF ORDER AND  
CREATIVITY

She keeps the balance between the big vision and everyday decisions. With her involvement the team keeps moving, projects get delivered, and the difficult always becomes possible.

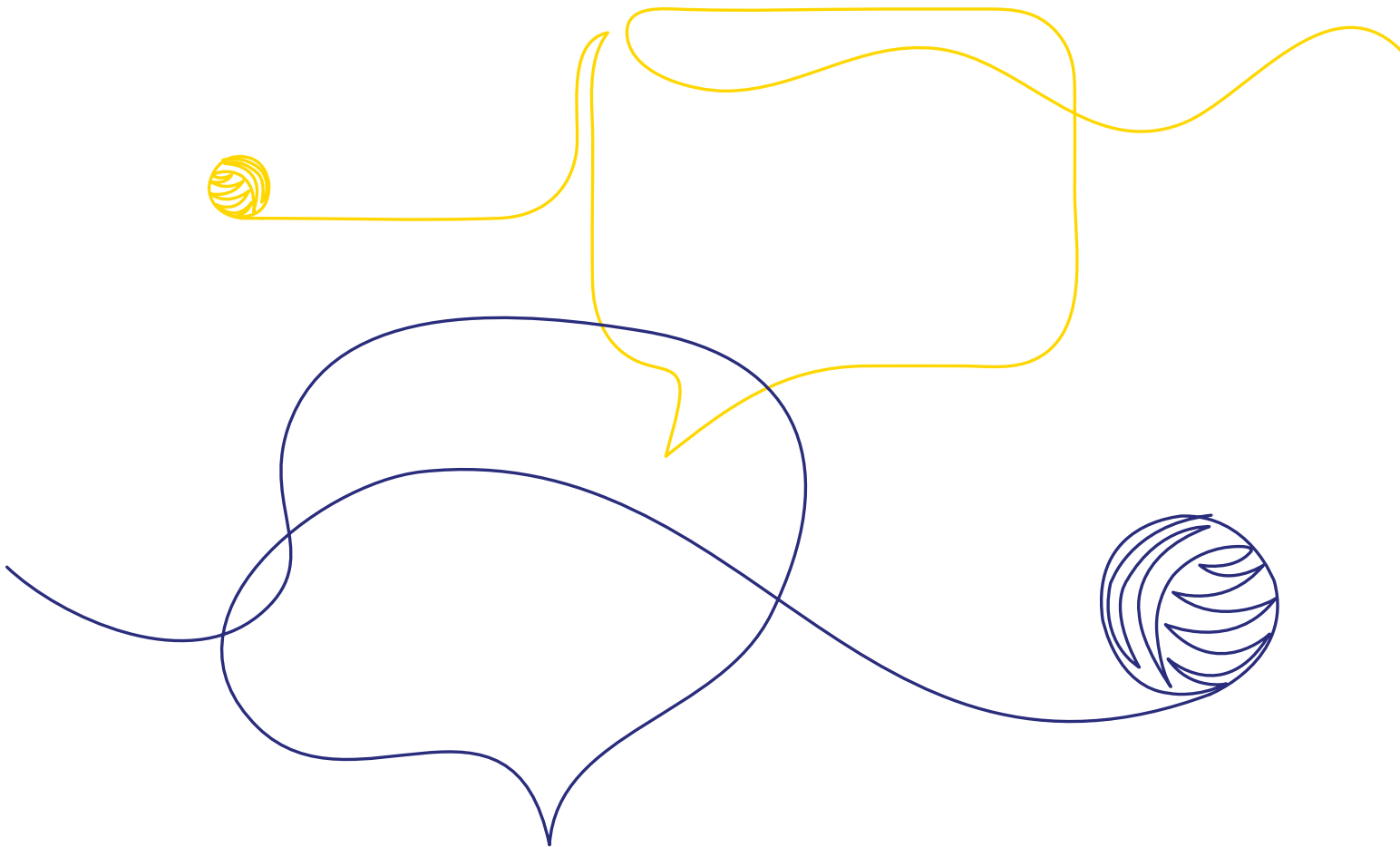


## BUSIA

ASSISTANT CAT



# WHAT PEOPLE SAY ABOUT US





“Our main resource is people. Sincere, devoted to the idea of human rights, professional and responsible.” That is the organisation’s slogan. And this principle of human-centredness proved to be HRP’s most resilient one. The level of any activity, of any result and impact, depends on people.



### **OLEKSANDR BURMAHIN**

member of the National Council of Ukraine on Television and Radio Broadcasting, Executive Director of HRP in 2017–2021



It is important for journalists to have reliable allies who can help and provide legal support, particularly on access to documents and information. The legal aspect is decisive in building financially strong independent media. HRP plays an important role here.



### **DAVID ISAKSSON**

Executive Director of Global Reporting, editor-in-chief of Global Bar magazine



The war has shown that the Human Rights Platform is not only a competent partner but also a good friend, one that took over the care of the “Access to Truth” platform. I am at war and I know: the project is in reliable hands.



### **LESIA HANZHA**

editor-in-chief of the online media “Access to Truth”, servicewoman of the Armed Forces of Ukraine



HRP became the organisational backbone of the working group developing legislative mechanisms against SLAPP suits. I have worked in many similar groups, but few of them work in such an organised way. In large part this is thanks to the Human Rights Platform.



### **YAROSLAV YURCHYSHYN**

MP, Chair of the Verkhovna Rada Committee on Freedom of Speech



The Human Rights Platform has played a very important role in securing guarantees for the media and independent journalists. This reduces the burden on those journalists and softens the negative impact that legal threats can have on the media landscape.



### **PÁDRAIG HUGHES**

Legal Director, Media Defence



The Human Rights Platform has repeatedly defended journalists’ rights in court in cases documented by us. We have issued joint statements and studies, and we have taken and continue to take part in working groups drafting legislation. Such systematic cooperation strengthens the protection of freedom of speech.



### **OKSANA ROMANIUK**

Director of the Institute of Mass Information



Being partners with the Human Rights Platform means looking in the same direction and defending shared values. We document cases of persecution of activists and journalists in Ukraine in connection with their work, we counter pressure on civil society and the media, and here we often rely on HRP's expertise.



**TETIANA PECHONCHYK**

Chair of the Board, ZMINA  
Human Rights Centre



Joining the efforts of independent journalists and human rights organisations is a truly effective form of cooperation for advocating change. Achieving results after publishing journalistic investigations – especially for regional teams – would be far harder without professional lawyers.



**OLESIA BOREIKO**

editor of the Nikcenter  
online portal



Together it is easier for us to do what we see as our mission: to build a fair society by reducing corruption. HRP's lawyers help us make the authorities more transparent, defending with us the right to public information whenever someone tries to hide it.



**ANTONINA TORBICH**

editor and project manager of the  
online media "Chetverta Vlada"

## Responses from the survey on HRP's work

The lawyer helped me draft a request for public information and kept in touch with me throughout...

The help is always of high quality, and the cooperation is a pleasure

They helped me very quickly and gave clear explanations

...The lawyers gave thorough explanations of the potential risks and legal nuances...

Clear, concise, fast

...All the consultations were comprehensive, professional and effective

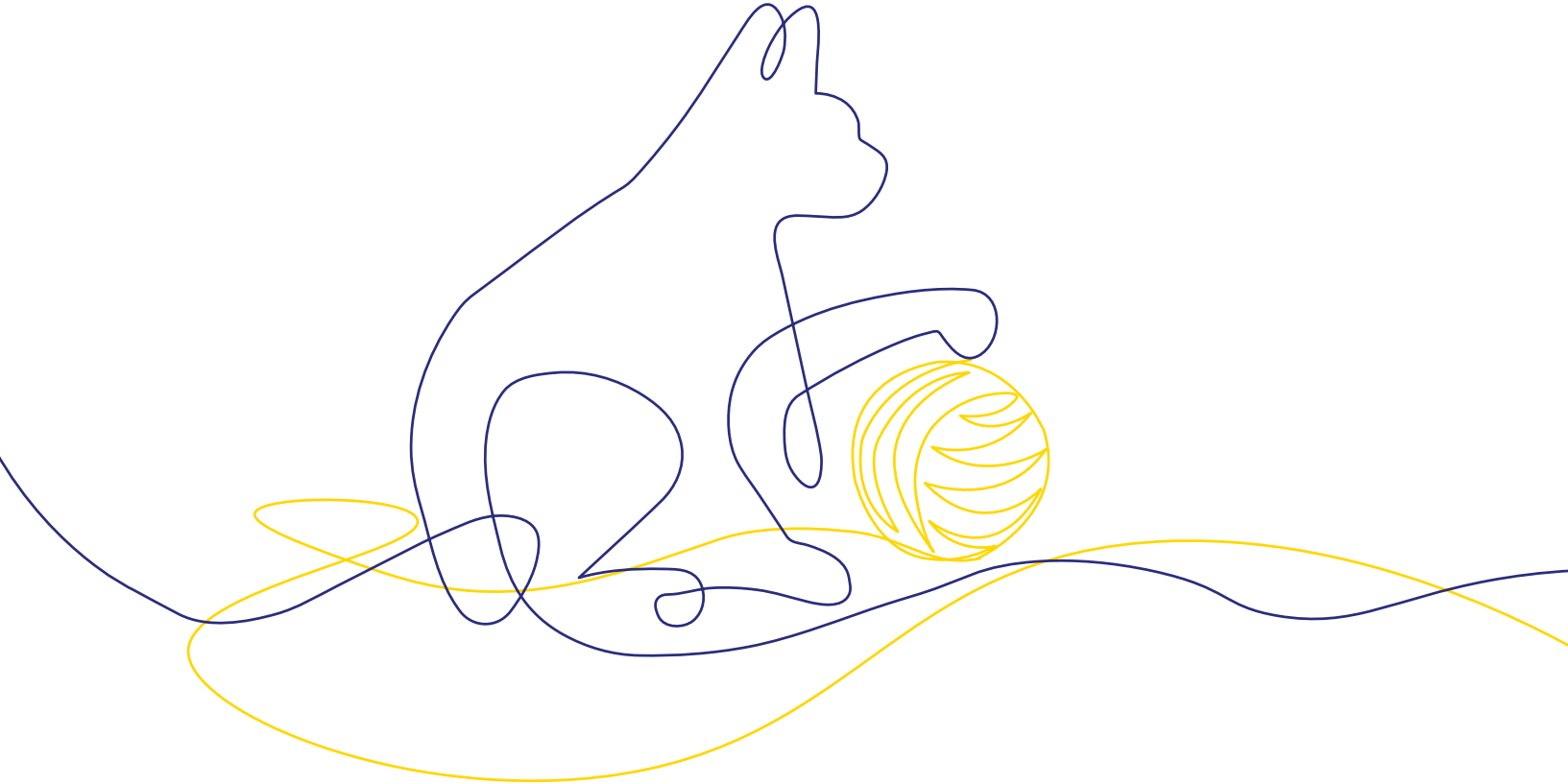
HRP employs true professionals

Requests for legal aid are handled promptly. The answer is detailed and thoroughly reasoned.

After lengthy proceedings we went through every instance and won an important court case

**ASSISTANT CAT**

**BUSIA**

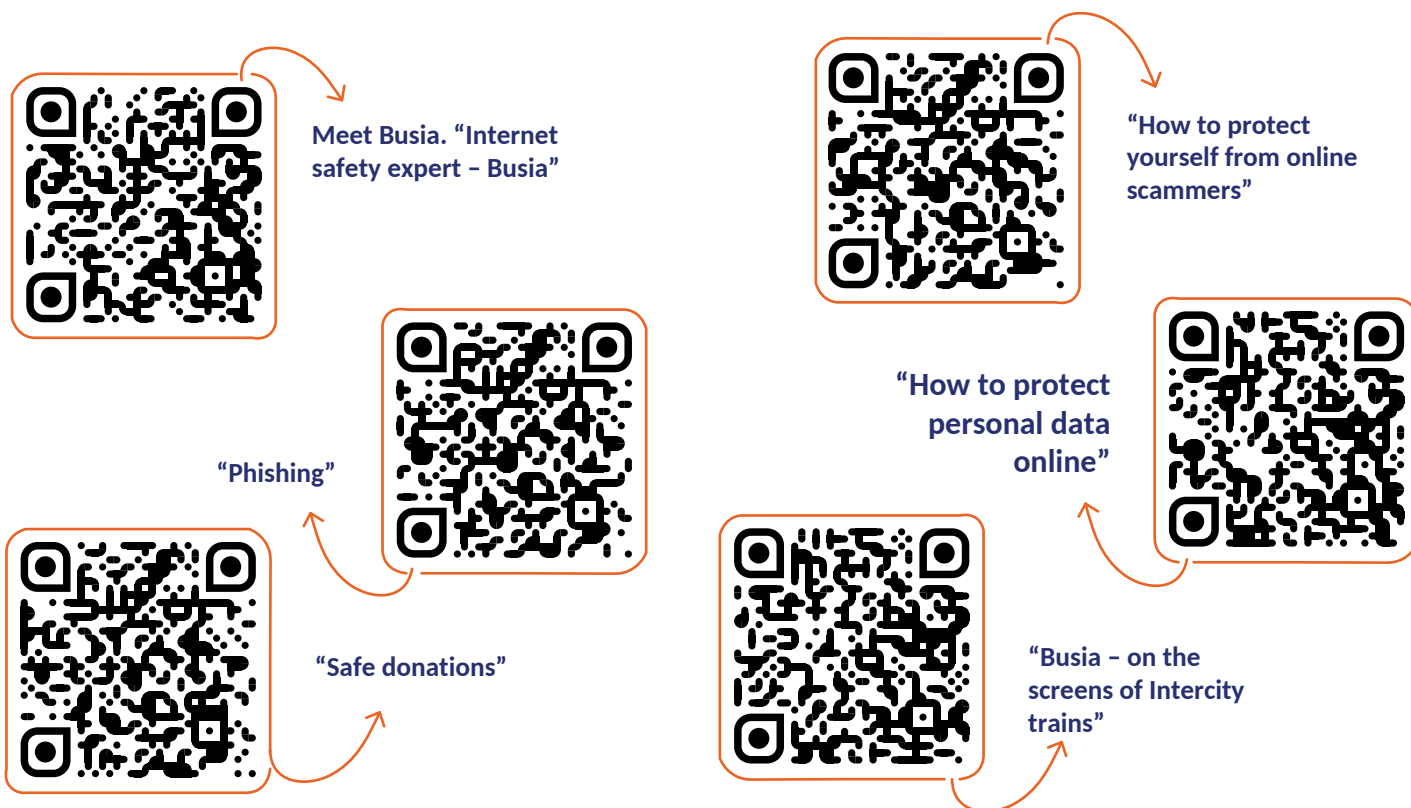


## Busia has a special mission!

She is responsible for internet safety and for a good mood at HRP. There is no doing without that nowadays.

As part of the partnership initiative of the Human Rights Platform and Meta, we created a series of four public-service videos that help you work out quickly and simply how to make your time online safer.

The assistant cat's MISSION is to teach the rules of digital hygiene. Busia has already told thousands of users about safe digital behaviour on Facebook and YouTube, travelled the country on Intercity trains and, along the way, managed to appear on television. A truly multitasking assistant to the team.



*A partnership initiative of the NGO Human Rights Platform and Meta.*

# ON THE PATH TO THE EUROPEAN UNION: LAW-MAKING ACTIVITY



## In May, HRP begins developing systemic solutions against SLAPP suits.



Between the events, the experts spend hundreds of working hours discussing and analysing information in order to create a workable mechanism against pressure on public figures.



 Round table "The future anti-SLAPP legislation of Ukraine: presentation of the concept and discussion", 22 December 2025.



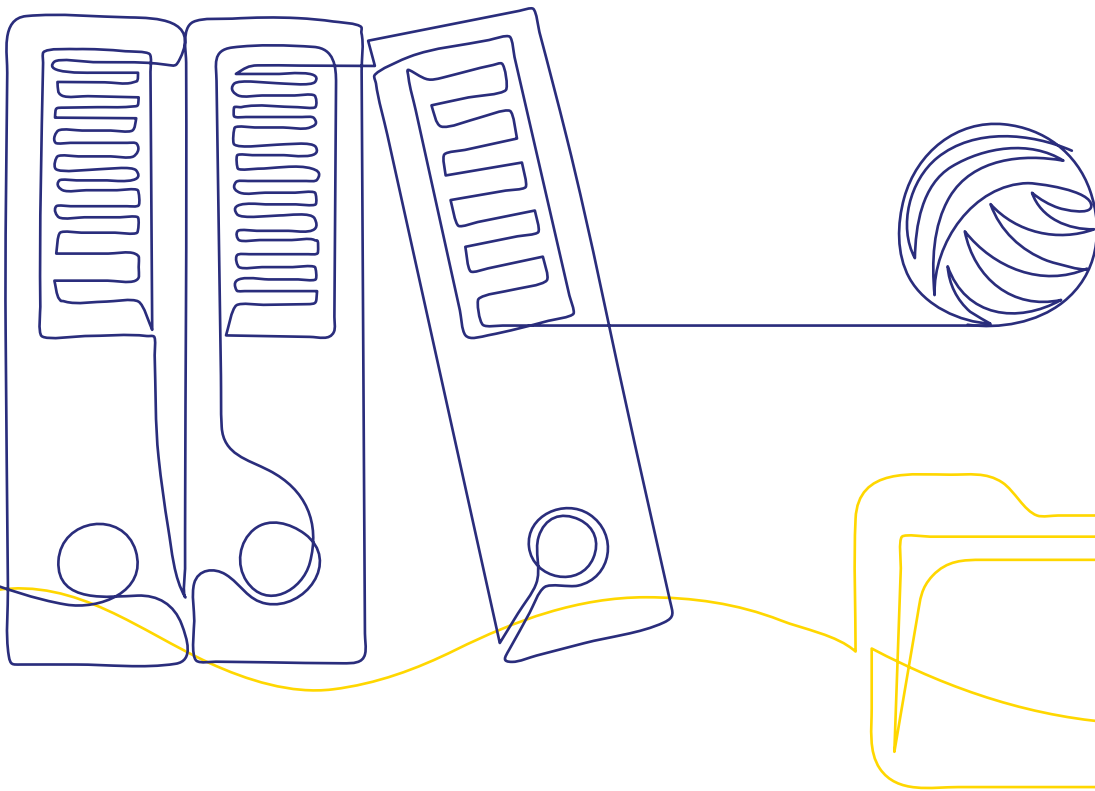
The problem of SLAPP suits has been, and remains today, highly relevant for Ukraine, since abuse of the right to go to court can be used as a mechanism of pressure on journalists and a way of suppressing public criticism. The topic gained additional momentum after the European Union adopted the Anti-SLAPP Directive, which set Ukraine the task of harmonising its legislation with European standards. The NGO Human Rights Platform plays an important role in this process. The organisation's lawyers are directly involved in developing legislative changes and draft laws aimed at preventing such abuse and effectively protecting journalists and civic activists.



**OLHA  
VDOVENKO**

Legal Director of  
HRP

# PROJECTS



## Ukrainian media ecosystem – strengthening independent media

From its very first days the project swept us into a whirlwind of challenges and opportunities. How do you turn media into a business? – that was the challenge of the year. And that is the question we set out to answer.

The aim of the programme is to help local Ukrainian media build sustainable business models. In other words – to teach newsrooms how to move away from grants towards financially resilient and successful work.



### **Received**

120 applications



**Held 3 workshops** “Media monetisation: effective strategies, business models and taxation” in Ivano-Frankivsk, Kyiv and Odesa.



### **Selected** 45 participants

– heads and editors-in-chief of media outlets.



### **Winners**

10 media professionals.

Ten winners of the project travelled to Stockholm for a week-long training to learn how the Swedish media system works from the inside.

The week was intensive and extremely productive. The participants worked with Swedish media experts and visited both large media companies and hyperlocal outlets. Among the newsrooms we called on were the print and online media ETC, the media start-up Impact Loop, Schibsted Media House, VLT Newspaper, Sala Allehanda, Bonnier Media Group and Aftonbladet.

Alongside the offline events, a series of online webinars with experts from various fields took place during the year. Participants discussed the use of artificial intelligence, the specifics of working with Google, advertising models and the legal aspects of media activity.



Webinar on the topic: “The Law of Ukraine on Advertising. Key prohibitions and trends in amendments”



Introductory presentation: “Everything you want to know about Sweden”



Webinar: “Disinformation in the digital age: new societal challenges and the role of generative AI”



Lecture by Anders Malmsten: “Scandinavian media: searching for a way into the future”



Ukrainian journalists share their experience of working under occupation, of leaving occupied territories and of working in wartime



Training on using the Gemini service, by a representative of Google



*Motivation for change cannot simply be bought, and it was precisely such a priceless impetus that the study trip to Sweden gave. The most valuable thing the winners brought back was the courage to introduce systemic changes into the work of their newsrooms. They saw for themselves: if you set new rules of communication with the reader, nothing is impossible. The fear that the audience would not want to pay for quality content disappeared, because the editors saw with their own eyes how effectively the paid subscription model works when you know how to motivate your community.*



**OLEKSANDRA  
SAVCHUK**

project manager



IVANO-FRANKIVSK



ODESA



The project was implemented jointly with the Swedish organisation Global Reporting with the financial support of the Swedish Institute.

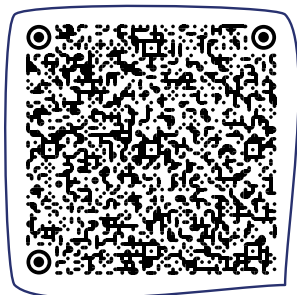
STOCKHOLM

# Access to public information **during the war**

1,678. That is how many information holders attended our webinars on the specifics of access to public information under martial law. Raising the professional level of information holders was one of the project's objectives.

HRP lawyers – Olha Vdovenko, Yevhen Vorobiov, Roman Vasylniak and Mykola Hrynyshak – monitored compliance with the right of access and analysed exactly what information the holders refuse to provide.

The result was a set of recommendations for state bodies on improving work with public information under martial law. The presentation took place in May during a thematic round table.



LINK TO THE REPORT



*We know: together we managed to increase the amount of public information in open access and thereby strengthen the transparency and openness of the Ukrainian authorities.*



**OLEKSANDRA  
STEPANOVA**

Executive  
Director of HRP



*The project was implemented with the support of the International Renaissance Foundation.*

## Countering corruption in the procurement of JSC “Ukrzaliznytsia”: step by step towards results

The civic sector and journalists cooperate openly with the managers of public funds in order to eliminate corruption risks in public procurement.

A new stage of the partnership began with the signing of a memorandum between JSC Ukrzaliznytsia, the Human Rights Platform and the Mykolaiv Centre for Investigative Journalism Nikcenter.

The project provides for independent monitoring of procurement in three regional branches of Ukrzaliznytsia – the Odesa, Prydniprovsk and South-Western railways – as well as for the exchange of information among the participants in order to work out effective solutions.



*We work with sensitive information every day and we see how important independent monitoring of procurement is. This project gives us the chance not only to highlight problems and criticise those who organise procurement, but also to help eliminate the shortcomings identified. And thus – to achieve real results.*



**OLESIA  
BOREIKO**

editor-in-chief of  
Nikcenter

### What we did:

- ✓ carried out an expert review of procurement policies and procedures;
- ✓ formulated and submitted recommendations to the Anti-Corruption Office;
- ✓ supported journalists in the process of analysing procurement;
- ✓ held joint trainings with the Anti-Corruption Office of JSC Ukrzaliznytsia;
- ✓ investigative journalists published a series of articles about our joint work.



*For us this project is a chance not only to exercise oversight but also to cooperate. We believe that Ukrzaliznytsia's openness to dialogue with civil society will become an example for other enterprises working in the field of public procurement.*



**OLEKSANDRA  
STEPANOVA**

Executive  
Director of HRP



*The project was implemented in cooperation with the Mykolaiv Centre for Investigative Journalism "Nickcentr" within the project "Strengthening public oversight" of the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR), with the financial support of the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation.*

# Effective legal protection of freedom of speech in Ukraine

HRP continuously provides free legal aid to journalists and newsrooms

## This includes:

- ✓ consultations;
- ✓ preparation of documents;
- ✓ pre-publication review;
- ✓ representation before national courts and before the European Court of Human Rights.

In 2025 the team's lawyers handled **89 cases** in courts of various instances – from first instance to cassation – and continue to work on cases before the ECtHR. They provided **85 consultations** and prepared **63 documents**.

## What is notable about these cases?



*The number of claims seeking retraction of information – including claims bearing the hallmarks of SLAPP – is growing, and first-instance courts often side with the claimants. Typical mistakes: ignoring the context, failing to distinguish facts from value judgments, and the absence of any analysis of the public interest and of public-figure status, notes attorney **Yevhen Vorobiov**.*



*War as a factor of exhaustion. According to attorney **Roman Vasylniak**, lawsuits are increasingly used as an instrument of pressure.*



*Security as a universal justification.* Media lawyer **Olha Vdovenko** singles out one of the most acute problems of recent years – restricted access to public information. Under martial law, refusals to journalists or delays in answering are often explained by security considerations, without the three-part test being properly applied.

Attorney **Liudmyla Opryshko** speaks about protecting journalists and media from coordinated disinformation campaigns run through anonymous websites. During such information attacks, false claims about particular outlets or their staff are spread on a massive scale in order to undermine trust in them and in the results of their work. A lawyer who takes on such cases has to gather extensive evidence of the violations and find ways to identify the information “hitmen”, the media lawyer says. This is very labour-intensive work, and therefore expensive – not everyone can afford it.

Although this work carries uncertainty and new challenges, HRP’s attorneys never stop looking for solutions and mechanisms of protection.

*Carried out with the financial support of the Media Legal Defence Initiative.*



# Strengthening the protection of digital rights in Ukraine

In 2025 HRP resumed active work aimed at monitoring respect for human rights on the internet, in order to further introduce systemic changes that will strengthen the protection of digital rights.

We collect information from open sources and assess it for violations of digital rights. We respond in good time to potentially harmful trends and bring problems to light.

In 2025 more than

## 35,000 websites

were blocked – among them media outlets.



## Curious findings from the monitoring

“Here is a checked and edited version of your text, with grammatical, stylistic and punctuation errors corrected.” We found this sentence in a court decision – it is a typical reply from an AI assistant.

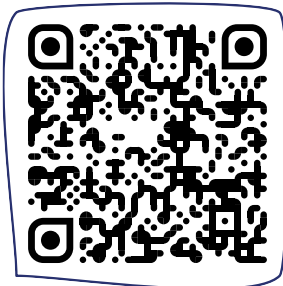


The monitoring revealed the problem of internet users' lack of awareness. You would think that scam schemes such as "financial aid" or "you have won – follow the link" have been around for years, yet people keep clicking on links, entering their card details and losing money. Strangely, we are used to thinking that the victims of such schemes are elderly people, but that is not always so. And the large number of reports I see during monitoring confirms this. I think we need large-scale information campaigns. There should be commercials on television explaining how not to fall victim to fraudsters and that card details must never be given to anyone. Yes, HRP has launched such videos, but to reach more people there has to be a campaign at the national level.



**NATALIA BURKOT**

digital rights monitoring  
expert at HRP



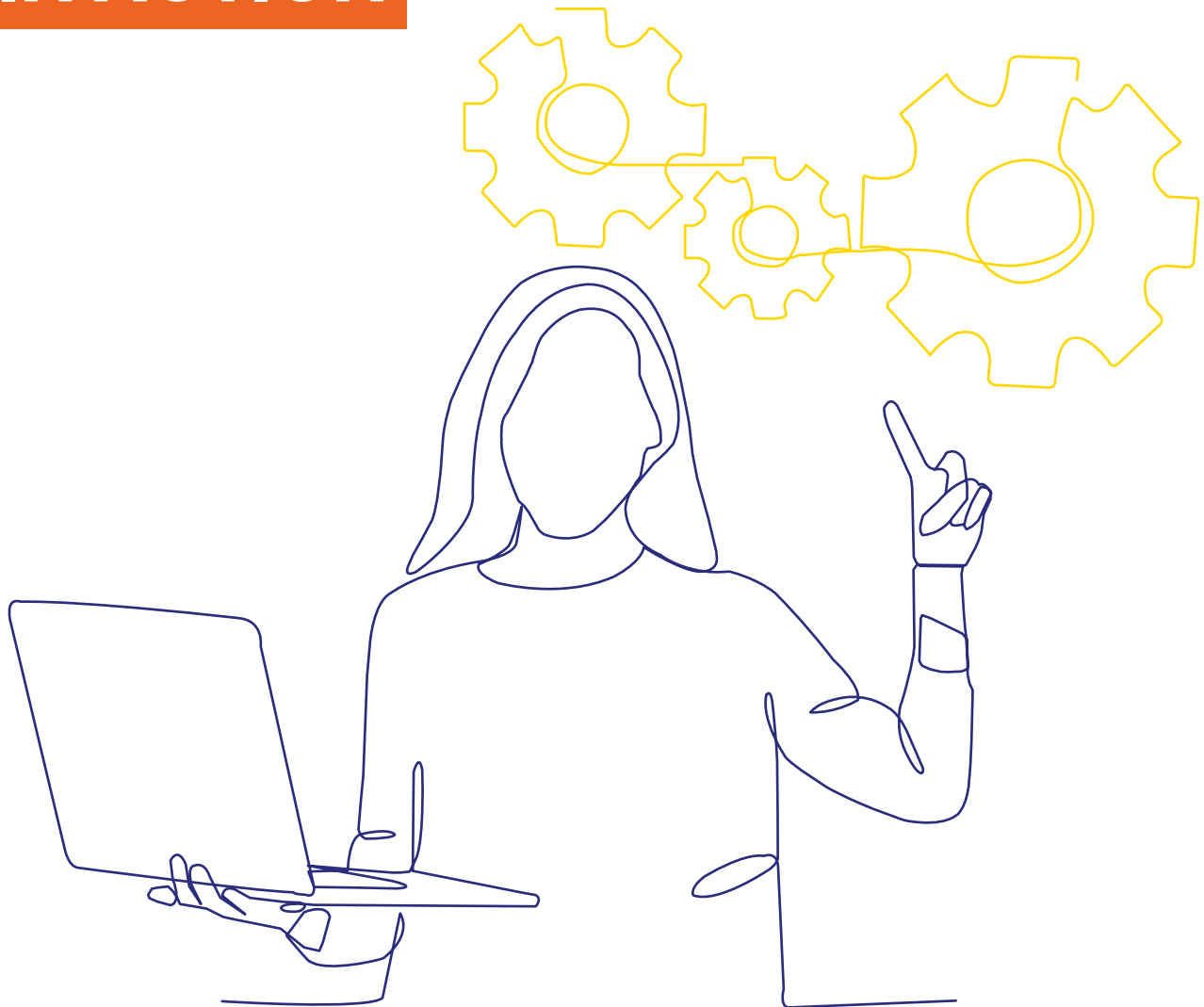
LINK TO THE REPORT

*The project was implemented in partnership  
with the ZMINA Human Rights Centre  
with the financial support of the European Union*



**HRP EXPERTS**

**IN ACTION**



For the Human Rights Platform, 2025 was a year of testing its resilience, its ability to keep up a high pace and to keep moving forward.

Despite all the challenges, the team not only held out – we worked, we launched, we supported, we advised and we took part in professional events across the country and beyond it. We proved once again: when a team is motivated, pauses simply do not exist.

And most importantly – we did not stop for a single day in providing free legal aid to journalists.

During the year **148 consultations** were provided, together with the preparation of legal documents.

The year also brought well-deserved professional recognition. It began with a letter of appreciation from the Office of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, received by the head of HRP **Oleksandra Stepanova**.



The baton was taken up by Legal Director **Olha Vdovenko** – she also received an award from the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights.



In the pages of Vogue. **Lesia Hanzha** gave a candid interview about finding her place in the war, personal losses and post-war dreams:



**MORE DETAILS**



Taking part in the Donbas Media Forum has become a good tradition for HRP. In 2025 the team's lawyers worked at the "Safety Corner", helping journalists get to grips with the current legal aspects of media and content.



What are SLAPP suits and public participation, who counts as a public participant and how do you determine whether a case involves the public interest? – these questions were addressed by **Olha Vdovenko**, Legal Director of the Human Rights Platform.



## WE RESPOND. WE MAKE AN IMPACT.



signed a joint statement by representatives of Ukrainian civil society and human rights organisations condemning negotiations held without Ukraine's direct participation



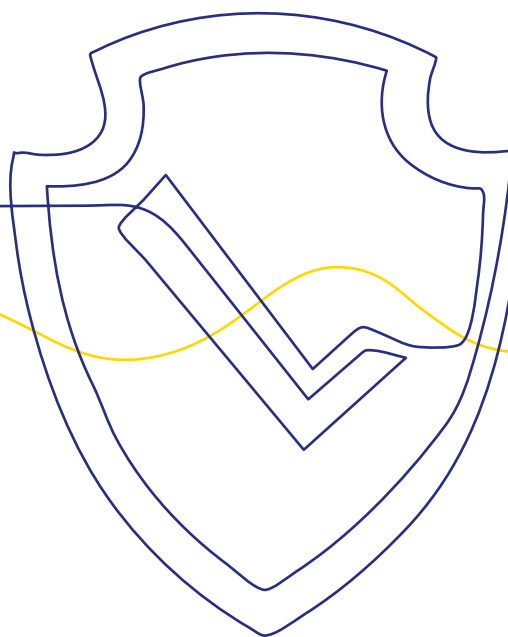
spoke out against pressure on civic activists



joined the international call for reparations



responded publicly to attacks on the media





5 MAY

Lviv Media Forum.



21 MAY

HRP Legal Director **Olha Vdovenko** joined the National Commission of the UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC).



23 MAY

Panel discussion **"THE EU. BUT THERE IS ONE BUT"** – a conference-discussion about Ukraine's path to the EU, held by Vox Ukraine.





15 JULY

**Olha Vdovenko** took part in the round table “The ECtHR judgment in the inter-state case Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia”, organised by the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine together with the ZMINA Human Rights Centre with the support of the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Ukraine.



29 AUGUST

**Media lawyers** of the Human Rights Platform attended the presentation of the concept of the new National Human Rights Strategy until 2035, which the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine is developing together with civil society.



26 SEPTEMBER

**Tetiana Yuzviak** – HRP regional lawyer at the **NAM Summit 2025**.





**22 OCTOBER**

The constituent assembly of the Public Council under the Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War. Among those present was **Olha Vdovenko**, Legal Director of the Human Rights Platform, who joined the meeting to learn how the new advisory body is being formed.



**24 OCTOBER**

The world congress and media innovation festival **IPI 2025** in Vienna.



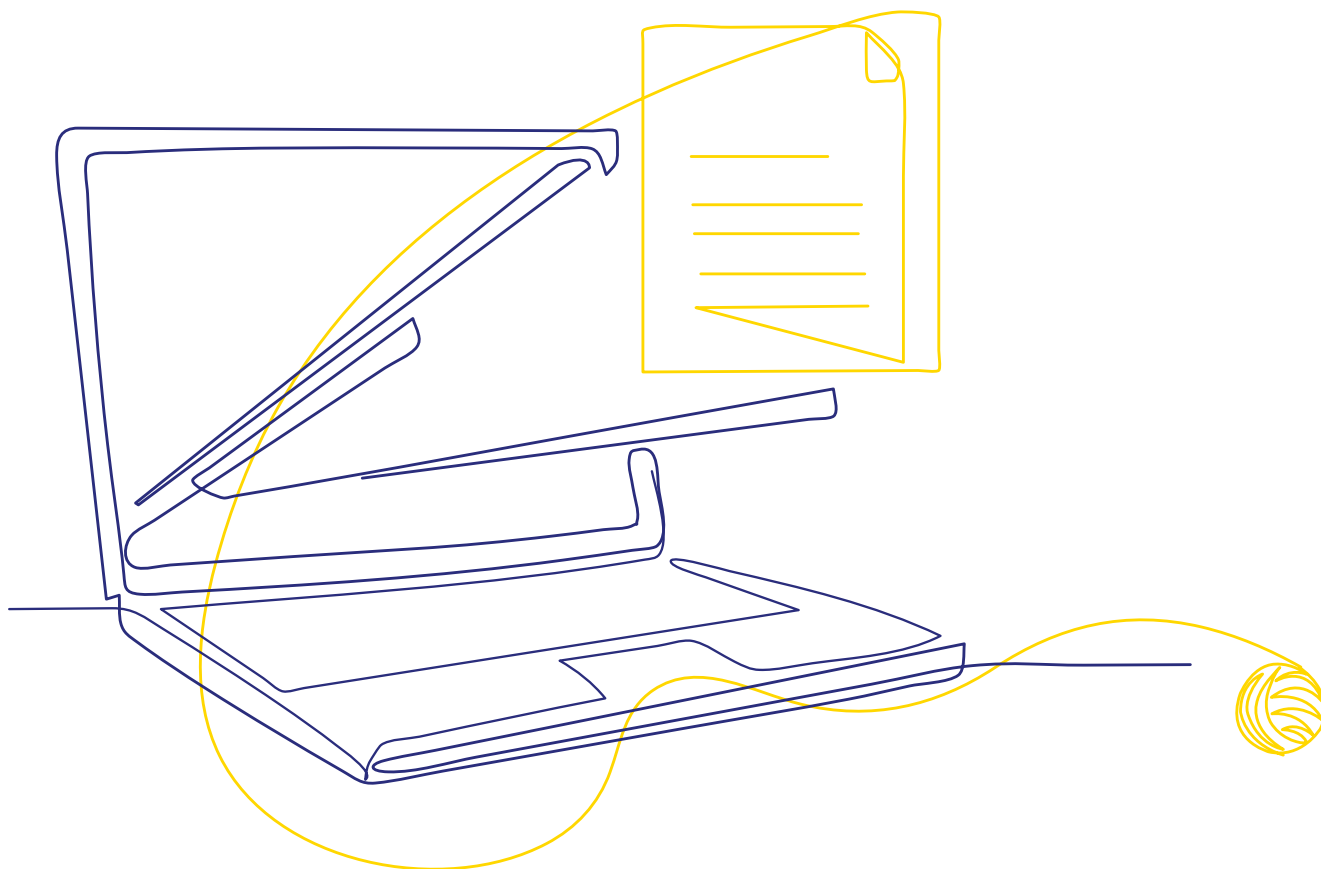
**5 DECEMBER**

**14th Civil Society Forum.**



**ACCESS**

**TO TRUTH**



For more than ten years the “Access to Truth” website has worked as a convenient and unified platform for sending electronic requests to information holders under the Law of Ukraine “On Access to Public Information”. Over this time it has become a reliable tool for journalists, civic activists and everyone who seeks openness and accountability from the authorities.



As of the beginning of 2026 the platform had

**21 262**

active users



Every month the platform is used by

**1 071**

users. So the uninterrupted work of Access is one of HRP’s priorities.



The platform’s community on social media is active too. The “Access to Truth” Facebook page brings together more than

**14 000**

followers.



*The year 2025 proved the importance of access to public information and of the practical possibilities the “Access to Truth” platform provides. Our first attempt at crowdfunding was extremely successful: when, in the spring of 2025, “Access” asked its users to raise money to pay for the platform’s hosting, the target was reached within a day! For all of us working on the project this is an important sign that users value our work and are ready to support it.*



**LESIA HANZHA**

editor-in-chief of the  
“Access to Truth” website

# LOOKING TO THE FUTURE





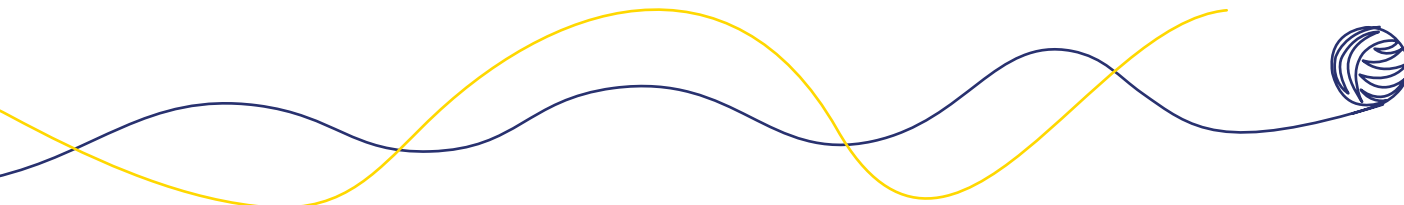
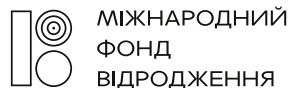
*With technology developing extremely fast – artificial intelligence in particular – it is precisely technological change that will exert the greatest pressure on freedom of expression in the coming years. On the one hand, it will open up new opportunities; on the other, it will create new threats and risks for human rights, including the right to freedom of expression, the right to privacy, data protection and others. Media already exist that work with products created exclusively by artificial intelligence. And this gives rise to legal problems we have not known before – in particular, problems related to the spread of defamatory content, to copyright and so on. So serious changes await us both in the work of the media and in its legal regulation. We certainly will not be bored.*



**LIUDMYLA  
OPRYSHKO**

attorney and media  
lawyer at HRP

## IN 2025 WE RECEIVED FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM





HUMAN RIGHTS  
**PLATFORM**

**WE ARE IN TOUCH!**



**info@ppl.org.ua**



**www.ppl.org.ua**