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**СОЦІАЛЬНО-КОМУНІКАЦІЙНІ ТЕХНОЛОГІЇ**

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**SOCIAL AND COMMUNICATION PROJECT INITIATIVES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN UKRAINE**

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**ANNOTATION**

*The purpose of the study is to formulate an overall picture of social and communication project initiatives for people with disabilities in Ukraine. The achievement of this goal included the*

*fulfillment of the following tasks: to analyze the literature on the topic; to systematize social and communication project initiatives for people with disabilities in Ukraine.*

*Research methods and techniques. The research used a set of methods: analysis and synthesis, descriptive and comparative method, method of grouping and systematization, content analysis during the study of the sources on the topic and grouping of social and communication projects, which have been under consideration in seven directions.*

*Results. Media or other project initiatives oriented on the socialization of people with disabilities have been systematized by productive directions: audiovisual content provided by television and cinema; text information in digital format and offline; images, including photos; radio broadcasting and a wide range of audio material; theater performances; museum excursions; specialized services offered by the libraries.*

*Conclusions. In Ukraine competitive quality models of project activity in the social sphere have been developed. A participant-friendly social model of a national inclusive media space adapted to the needs of people with disabilities and which meets the needs and expectations of the majority encompasses not only mass communication media through audiovisual, print, digital media but also innovative integrated platforms, which are the part of the theater, cinema, library initiatives, museum projects. All this makes us consider them friendly to the audience with different needs, tastes, and visions of the communication process. Within the scientific discourse, the comprehension of this problem is promising, given the professional interaction of researchers of architectonics of media strategies, social workers who are deeply aware of the needs of people with disabilities and representatives of the latter, who can evaluate and adjust the developed models of establishing communication relationships in modern inclusive multi-platform media space.*

*Key words: social and communication initiatives, project, elastic web theory, expert survey, people with disabilities.*

## **Соціальнокомунікаційні проєктні ініціативи для людей з інвалідністю в Україні**

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According to the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, as of the beginning of 2019, there are more than 2.5 million (2 659 679) persons with disabilities in the country (Senyk, 2019: 66), or 6.35% of the official total population (41 868 299 persons (Chyselnist naseleennia, 2019)). As a percentage of the results of the electronic census survey released in early 2020 by the Cabinet of Ministers, the number of people with disabilities is 7.13%. For comparison, in 2001, when the census survey was conducted, this ratio was 5.36%, and in the early 1990s, it was only 3% (Kravchenko, 2010: 1). M. Kravchenko, a researcher of pressing challenge of social protection of disabled people in Ukraine, sees the reasons for the alarming statistics in «contradictory socio-economic development of Ukrainian society, which reduced the standard of living of most people, in the weakness of health care system, insufficient safety and labor protection, low level of ecological culture, the presence of various disasters – natural, environmental, military ones, including the consequences of World War II, the wars in Afghanistan and other territories, the Chernobyl disaster» (Kravchenko, 2010: 1). Since 2014, these statistics have been increased by the number of people affected by the Joint Forces operation in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

Inclusive forms of information presentation considered within the scope of this study have been disclosed in publications of Ukrainian and international scholars such as N. Bank-Mikkelsen (Bank-Mikkelsen, 1969: 227–254), B. Nirje (Nirje, 1994: 19–23), J. Kaur and B. Arora (Kaur, Arora, 2014: 59), S. Peters (Peters, 2014: 46), W. Mitiku, Y. Alemu, S. Mengsitu, (Mitiku, Alemu, Mengsitu, 2014: 118–136), D. Konza (Konza, 2008) and others. In the Ukrainian scientific discourse, the opinions of the leading theorists of inclusion in the media have developed thanks to L. Khavkina (Khavkina, 2014: 5–10), T. Hyrina (Hyrina, 2017: 85–90), A. Kolupaieva (Kolupaieva, 2012), V. Zasenka, Zh. Hrinevych, Yu. Naida, V. Zhuk, N. Sofii (Zasenka, Hrinevych, Naida, Zhuk, & Sofii, 2007). The inclusive education theory is described by N. Groznaia (Groznaia, 2006: 89–104) and supplemented by considerations of A. Rimmerman (Rimmerman, 2014) about the exclusive social isolation of people with disabilities.

To build a system of social communication project infrastructure for people with disabilities in Ukraine, where media projects initiated for them need to increase the involvement in the general media context, the theory of «elastic web» is valuable. At the core of this process is a media project, which, according to M. Sokolov, is «an activity based on electronic media resources, which has a common problem, purpose, coordinated methods, ways of activity aimed at achieving a common result» (Sokolov, 2013).

**The purpose of the study** is to formulate an overall picture of social communication project initiatives for people with disabilities in Ukraine. To achieve this goal it was needed to execute the following tasks: to analyze the literature on the topic; to systematize social communication project initiatives for people with disabilities in Ukraine.

### **Research methods and methodology.**

The study used a set of methods, in particular:

– *analysis* – to find out the reasons for the increase of persons with disabilities; identification of the circle of Ukrainian and international scholars and their publications on coverage of inclusive forms of information presented in the media for persons with disabilities; social communication project initiatives for people with disabilities in Ukraine;

– *content analysis of statistical information sources* – to obtain data on the number of persons with disabilities in Ukraine;

– *descriptive method* – to characterize the content and essence of the latest social communication initiatives for people with disabilities in Ukraine;

– *comparative method* – to determine the trend of increasing the number of persons with disabilities in Ukraine over two decades; to characterize the institutional and organizational structure of coordinating the journalists' activities in the coverage of the problems of persons with disabilities in Ukraine and the USA; existent and regulatory settled practices of sign language in Ukraine; clarification, within each outlined analysis direction, the specifics of implementing of inclusive initiatives at various media channels;

– *grouping and systematization method* – to reflect the modern system of social communication project initiatives for people with disabilities in Ukraine in seven directions;

– *synthesis* – to formulate conclusions on the overall picture of implemented social communication project initiatives for people with disabilities in Ukraine.

The methodological basis for the study of inclusive media space of Ukraine is the theory of systems, which explains the efficiency of the whole system functioning depending on the smooth functioning of its elements, their interaction, the number and elasticity of connections between them. To explain the effect of the coordinated interaction of elements, the principle of synergism, which characterizes the activity of the system as more efficient than the total activity of its elements, was used. This thesis is very useful in understanding the complex, coordinated implementation of a project activity system to transform the country's inclusive media space.

### **Results and discussions.**

A participant-friendly social model of national inclusive media space, which is adapted to the needs of people with disabilities and meets the needs and expectations of the majority, covers not only mass communication media, which disseminate information through audiovisual, print, digital media but also innovative integrated platforms as part of examples of theatre and cinema art, library initiatives, museum projects, full-scale event and competition events, that can be considered as friendly to an audience with different needs, tastes, and visions of the communication process.

As far as Ukraine still does not have a profile organization, activities of which would be aimed at «providing support and guidance to journalists in the coverage of problems of disabled people» (National Center on Disability and Journalism), similar to the National Center on Disability and Journalism of Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication based at Arizona State University in the United States, there is the need for complex comprehension of existing media or other project initiatives, oriented towards socialization of people with disabilities, systematized by us in seven productive directions. Let's consider each of them in more detail.

1. The provision of access to cinema art and television information using sign language in Ukraine at the expense of state order is entrusted to a public broadcaster. According to official data, at the end of 2018, the «sign language translation, introduced on the TV channels of 18 branches of UA: PBC, averaged 40 minutes per 24-hour period. In 2018, news editions, Paralympics and Easter liturgies were translated into sign language» (Tekuchova, & Sachuk, 2019: 21). The commitments to monitor abundance by the quality of the right amount of such content is assigned to the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council of Ukraine. Meanwhile, «movie subtitles have never had the conscious purpose of meeting the needs of hearing-impaired people. The subtitles are often lacking in “linguistic quality” and are broadcasted on a non-contrasting background» (Olha Herasym'iuk, 2015). Despite the declaratory intent announced back in 2012 to oblige «broadcasters to translate in sign language and/or subtitle at least 50% of daily broadcasts by 2020» (Movnykiv khochut zoboviazaty, 2017), and even despite of the introduction of relevant bill drafts, at the beginning of 2020, it is over-optimistic to talk about the corresponding changes.

«The development of the Ukrainian Sign Language as the main or one of the main means of communication for sign language persons» is declared as one of the leading tasks in the Law of

Ukraine «On Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language» in 2019 (Pro zabezpechennia funktsionuvannia ukrainskoi movy yak derzhavnoi, 2019). The Art. 4 of this Law enshrines the status of Ukrainian Sign Language: «In Ukraine, everyone is guaranteed the right to freely use Ukrainian Sign Language in public life, to study and support it, as well as to study in Ukrainian Sign Language» (Pro zabezpechennia funktsionuvannia ukrainskoi movy yak derzhavnoi, 2019). However, this provision is not consistent with the profile Law of Ukraine in the media sphere, that is the Law «On Television and Radio Broadcasting», and no amendments have been introduced into it. Currently, the use of sign language duplication is non-systematic and occasional. All the more valuable is the example of the «Priamyi» (Direct) TV channel, which daily broadcasts «Novyny Zhestovoiu Movoio» (News in Sign Language) in the evening air time-slot from 19:45 to 20:00 (Prohrama teleperedach, 2020).

While television broadcasters are occasionally duplicating the air content, activists are taking effective measures to facilitate access to media content for people with visual and hearing disabilities. An example of such an initiative is the activities of the non-governmental «Borotba za Prava» (Fight for Rights) organization, whose members are implementing the «Dostupne Kino» (Accessible Cinema) project to ensure access for Ukrainians with visual and hearing impairments to the visual arts. Its essence is to «make video content (movies, series, cartoons) accessible to the visually and hearing impaired people by creating audio presentments and adapted subtitles, and placing them on Earcatch and Subcatch mobile platforms» (Dostupne kino, 2019). For this purpose, open access is already available for downloading relevant applications through the Google Play Store: Earcatch with comments for visually impaired people; Subcatch with adapted subtitles for hearing impaired people.

The application scans the sounds with the TV or movie content running for playback and synchronizes their work within seconds, allowing the user to access the full media content of the selected artwork. Short audio comments that accurately describe the action on the screen or close captions for dialogues of the characters enable people with visual or hearing disabilities to have access to the cinema, and the ambitious goal of the project organizers is to make accessible all movies distributed in Ukraine.

Similar technologies have been successfully introduced in the world for decades. As for Ukraine, at the end of 2019, two movies were released in theatres, and they were produced with the technology of audio descriptive commentary. This is «the film by the famous Polish director, Oscar nominee A. Holland “Tsina Pravdy” (“The Price of Truth”; original title is “Mr. Jones”) and the Ukrainian documentary “Vdyvliaiuchys u Temriavu” (Peering Into Darkness) about anti-terrorist operation veteran V. Halitsyn who lost his sight in the war» (Ivanukha, 2019).

Meanwhile, audiovisual content is often a leading channel of access to information from the outside world, as according to the Analytical Report prepared within the «Moia Uchast Vazhlyva» (My Participation is Important) project by the non-governmental «Borotba za Prava» (Fight for Rights) organization, with the support of the US Embassy Democracy Commission Small Grants Program in Ukraine, «80% of people located into psychoneurological residential facilities in Ukraine are not educated to read and write» (Tekuchova, & Sachuk, 2019: 22). The authors of the project I. Tekuchova and Yu. Sachuk also emphasize that «by the end of 2019, “simplified reading” format has not been introduced in Ukraine» (Tekuchova, & Sachuk, 2019: 22), and do not mention it among legislative initiatives.

It is currently being announced about the BOSIFEST international festival of films (Belgrade, Serbia, October 19–21, 2020) about people with disabilities, as well as films made by such people. The competition accepts documentaries up to 100 minutes in Serbian or English, created in the last five years. This will be the 11th such festival (BOSIFEST 2020).

2. Again, the civic initiative is on the guard of progress in the issue of access to information for people with disabilities. The problem of accessing textual information in digital format and

offline is relevant for people with various forms of disability, both at the physical and psychological levels. According to researchers, the Braille tactile writing system is hard to understand and cost-intensive in the production of books but is used mostly by older Ukrainians who are unable to master specialized digital platforms or do not have access to them.

The «Nichoho Dlia Nas Bez Nas» (Nothing for Us Without Us) guidelines for inclusive decision making for government bodies, developed within the «Inkluzyvni Rishennia Dlia Rivnopravnoho ta Vidpovidalnoho Suspilstva» (Inclusive Solutions for Equal and Responsible Society) project with the financial support of the European Commission and the British Council, offers principles for the universal design of a digital page for reproduction by people with disabilities. Among them are the following principles: «equal use, flexibility in use; easy and convenient to use; perception of information regardless of the sensory capabilities of users; admissibility of errors; low level of physical effort; size and space for approach and use» (Azin, Baida, Goss, Zhdan, Sukhinina, & Fletcher, 2015: 62). Emphasis is placed on the prospect of introducing an «easy reading» model, which is a text, not overloaded with words and complex speech patterns, but instead, it is saturated with additional visual and expressive elements, audio files, light words, increased font size. At the same time, the text should not be oversaturated informatively and be structured for easy surfing through the document parts or pages (Azin, Baida, Goss, Zhdan, Sukhinina, & Fletcher, 2015: 65).

For example, for readers with visual impairments, prone to dyslexic difficulties in reading and counting, those with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, Ukrainian artist O. Petrenko-Zanevskiy and researcher R. Ivanus in cooperation with the «Sotsialna Synerhiia» (Social Synergy) public organization and UNICEF Ukraine for the first time in Ukraine developed a special «Inclusion UKR» font of the Ukrainian alphabet. It is unique in its intended use by readers with a variety of problems related to the letter recognition difficulties, and it is also suitable for printing educational textbooks and periodicals. The font is currently open for free use for the design of nonprofit projects focused on inclusive space formation (Zavantazhyty shryft Inclusion UKR, 2019).

Among the periodicals addressed to the visually impaired people, there is the «Shkoliar» (Schoolchild) children's monthly magazine, the «Zaklyk» (Calling) journal, the «Promin» (Beam) newspaper. Mentioned periodicals are under the custody of all-Ukrainian voluntary non-governmental «Ukrainian Association of the Blind» organization of the visually impaired people. Accumulating their limited technological and financial capabilities, editors have the experience of preparing the audio format of particular publications and systematically publish new issues of specialized periodicals, where you can find the answers to urgent questions, the solutions to which are part of the daily concerns of the visually impaired people (Periodychni vydannia UTOS, 2019).

3. The so-called «clip way of thinking», characterized by a change in the imbalance of text and images in favor of the latter, peculiar to the hedonistic needs of demanding users of digital platforms, in an inclusive media space, performs an objectively justified function of facilitating perception. The «Peremozhtsi» (Winners) social multi-media project of «1+1» TV channel and «VIVA!» magazine was launched in 2016 and gained wide media coverage and viral spread. Insightful and inspiring photos, and later, an art video of «people with unlimited abilities, anti-terroristic operation veterans and Paralympians who lost body parts» (Usia zala na tseremonii «VIVA! Naikrasyvishi», 2018), made by O. Morderer and T. Rublova with the mentorship of the «1+1» TV channel presenter S. Vitvitska, without exaggeration, were seen by the whole world. The leitmotif of the 18 life stories told by the project participants in 2016 and in subsequent seasons was, in particular, the desire to support and demonstrate a positive example for people with disabilities who are not yet involved in the social process and do not dare to become active members in it.

4. For Ukrainians with difficulties in visual perceiving of media content, the true window to the vibrant world of media content is radio broadcasting and a wide range of audio material the

access to which is simplified in the digital age. Admittedly, «in Ukraine, unlike other foreign countries, radio broadcasting for visually impaired people has not yet acquired any signs of systematicity. However, there are occasional attempts to address this issue, especially on the eve of the International Day of People with Disability (December 3) or International Day of the Blind (November 13)» (Hyrina, 2016: 39–43). Even more valuable are the available specialized radio programs, including «Spodivatysia» (Hope) on the air of the First Channel of Ukrainian Radio, addressed to Ukrainians with disabilities. For interested listeners, there are life stories, as well as comments on the pressing issues facing people with disabilities (Radioprohrama «Spodivatysia», 2019).

Continuing the initiative activity in the sector, let us recall the «Audioknyhy dlia Liudei iz Vadamy Zoru» (Audiobooks for the Visually Impaired People) project, implemented with the participation of the Journalism Institute of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv students. Among the prepared are «audiobooks with the poetry of Ukrainian futurists of the early XXth century, namely: M. Semenko, K. Burevii, H. Shkurupii, O. Vlyzko and O. Slisarenko» (Audioknyhy dlia slipykh: «voskresinnia» ukrainskykh futurystiv, 2009). In 2017, another journalistic initiative within the all-Ukrainian «Ozvuchymo Knyhy dlia Nezriachykh» (Let us Voice Books for the Blind) action united coworkers around the aim to create audiobooks, following more than 20 works of Ukrainian and international writers, which were issued in A. Antonenko publishing company (Zhurnalisty nachytaiut ponad 20 audioknyh dlia liudei z vadamy zoru, 2017).

Unique to the Ukrainian media space is the figure and career path of V. Noskov, formerly staff correspondent of the «Radio Era FM» in Kharkiv, later on, the correspondent of the «Radio Liberty» Ukrainian Service, an employee of «Hromadske Radio» (Public Radio), and in 2019 a producer of «Ukrainske Radio. Kharkiv» (Ukrainian Radio. Kharkiv) (Zhuk, 2019). In addition to a productive career in journalism, the visually impaired man has experience in filmmaking, holds master classes in radio journalism and leads an active social lifestyle. The journalist proved by his example that personal initiative is important, and his colleagues and activists of public associations, implementing some specialized projects, replaced by their work the state sector, which in the issues of an inclusive media space formation withdrew from competition with the public sector and often reserved for itself a function of a supervisor or even a passive observer.

5. At the level of personal communication, the Ukrainian social inclusive space is constantly increasing with internationally competitive initiatives. The convergence of the social space of the «majority» and people with disabilities is possible, first of all, through the formation of shared open spaces for interaction, the creation of platforms that will unite around common preferences and experiences. The greatest opportunities for this process can be found in the fields of culture and art. Once again, they bear witness to the role of personality and the value of ideas that can unite like-minded people with distinct social roles. One of such platforms is the «Tochka Zoru» (Point of View) theater performance of Ukrainian Malyi Drama Theater stage director A. Turlo. At the beginning of 2019, a graduate of the theater school, on the air of Ukrainian radio, described her diploma project as follows: «The target audience of the “Tochka Zoru” is 16+. It is for everybody, there is no restriction here, it is because of the performance specifics. It takes place in total darkness, and this is not the first such performance, it is not some innovation. In Ukraine, yes, this is a relative innovation. I know of two performances in Ukraine that take place in complete darkness. They are on different topics and have different goals. We position our performance as a social project, we talk about the lives of visually impaired people» («Moiu doliu zminyvaty napys na stini» – rezhyser teatru Anna Turlo, 2019). A year later, an evening, or theatrical fantasy, as the project is labeled by its authors, continues to garner grateful viewers (Tochka zreniya, 2020).

The plot of the performance in the complete darkness is based on the eponymous essays by Lesia Ukrainka and O. Kobylinska «Slipets» (The Blind Man), supplemented by the author's reflections on the socialization of the visually impaired people and the role in this process of a

hostile or open society. The stage director noted that the reality of the presented story is not least achieved by the actors through the experience of communicating with visually impaired people. The theatrical performance that brought together visually impaired people and those who for half an hour could experience the everyday complications, which are constantly encountered by the visually impaired people, inevitably generates sympathy and leads to catharsis. This is what the social mission of performing for the visually impaired people and about them is.

6. Another communication platform, which can claim the status of friendly for establishing communication between people with and without visual impairment, is implemented as museum excursions, which are offered in Kyiv museum in the dark «Tretia Pislia Opivnochi/03:00» (Three in the Morning / 3:00). Small groups of visitors have a choice of such excursions, as «Prohulianka v Temriavi» (Walk in the Dark), «Pobachennia v Temriavi» (Date in the Dark), «Kvest Vidchuttiv» (Quest of Perceptions), as well as school excursions and educational-entertaining meetings for various groups. According to the initiative participants, it is a «place where you can see more without looking» (Muzei v temriavi «Tretia pislia opivnochi/03:00», 2020), and for an hour and a half guests have the opportunity to visit five locations with a total area of 150 sq. m. and in complete darkness repeat their daily routine, including road orientation. After that, the visitors will be trained in the basics of writing in Braille script, guessing voluminous sculptures and drawings, as well as playing games in light-proof masks for school children and other entertainment. It is important to emphasize that «this is the only museum in Ukraine where all excursions take place in complete darkness» (Muzei v temriavi «Tretia pislia opivnochi/03:00», 2020), and all guides that will accompany the exposition visitors during their stay at the locations, are visually impaired. In early 2020, 19,000 people visited the museum, nine thousands of whom were children.

7. Although an initiative of this type and similar initiatives aimed at forming an «elastic web» of inclusive socio-communicative media space is new for Ukraine, it is precisely the project approach to its design that demonstrates mobility, modularity and viability in the Ukrainian society. Such initiatives, often supported by international donors, are multiplied in the state sector as well. For example, among the services of M. Ostrovskiy Central Specialized Library for the Blind, there is an opportunity to use the Internet center for free. With the financial support of the Public Affairs Section of the US Embassy in Ukraine, options for scanning, text editing with a Braille display, printing on a regular and Braille printer are available to visitors. Other services include converting to audio format, access to the World Wide Web, if necessary, support by a library consultant, obtaining information from a digitized periodically updated legislative framework. And all this with the aim of «creating conditions for maximum rehabilitation of people with visual impairments, their integration into society, organization of equal access to education, improvement of professional level, organization of leisure activities» (Pro biblioteku, 2020).

### Conclusions

The study systematized social and communication project initiatives focused on the socialization of people with disabilities in seven productive directions: audiovisual content offered by television and cinema art; text information in digital format and offline; images, including photos; radio broadcasting and a wide range of audio material; theater performances; museum excursions; specialized services offered by libraries. Within the scientific discourse, understanding this problem is promising, under the condition of the professional interaction of researchers of architectonics of media stratagems, social workers who are aware of the needs of people with disabilities and representatives of the latter, who can evaluate and adjust the developed models of establishing communications in a modern inclusive poly-platform media space.

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#### АНОТАЦІЯ

*Мета дослідження – сформуванати загальну картину щодо соціальнокомунікаційних проєктних ініціатив для людей з інвалідністю в Україні. Досягнення цієї мети передбачало виконання таких завдань: проаналізувати літературу за темою; систематизувати соціальнокомунікаційні проєктні ініціативи для осіб з інвалідністю в Україні.*

*Методи та методика дослідження. У ході дослідження використано методи аналізу, синтезу, описовий, порівняльний, групування та систематизації, контент-аналіз під час опрацювання джерел із теми й групування розглянутих соціальнокомунікаційних проєктів за сімома напрямками.*

*Результати. Систематизовано медійні чи інші орієнтовані на соціалізацію людей з інвалідністю проєктні ініціативи за продуктивними напрямками: аудіовізуальний контент, пропонований телебаченням та кіномистецтвом; текстова інформація в цифровому форматі та в офлайн; зображення, зокрема фото; радіомовлення та широка лінійка аудіального матеріалу; театральні вистави; музейні екскурсії; спеціалізовані послуги,*

пропоновані бібліотеками.

*Висновки.* В Україні напрацьовано конкурентні, якісні зразки проєктної діяльності в соціальній сфері. Комфортна для учасників соціальна модель національного інклюзивного медіапростору, яка адаптована до потреб людей з інвалідністю й відповідає запитам та очікуванням більшості, охоплює не лише масовокомунікаційні засоби поширення інформації через аудіовізуальні, друковані, цифрові медіа, а й інноваційні інтегровані платформи в складі зразків театрального, кіномистецтва, бібліотечних ініціатив, музейних проєктів, що їх можна вважати дружніми до аудиторії з різними потребами, смаками та баченням комунікаційного процесу. У науковому дискурсі осмислення цієї проблеми перспективне за умови фахової взаємодії дослідників архітектоніки медійних стратегем, соціальних працівників, які усвідомлюють потреби людей з інвалідністю, та представників останніх, що зможуть оцінити й скоригувати розроблювані моделі налагодження комунікативних зв'язків у сучасному інклюзивному поліплатформовому медіапросторі.

**Ключові слова:** соціальнокомунікаційні ініціативи, проєкт, теорія «еластичного павутиння», експертне опитування, люди з інвалідністю.

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