

## **Changes and developments in Russian media in Israel (back to "kitchen talks"?)**

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The period of unprecedented growth and impact of the Russian-language press in Israel (from 1989 to 1996 elections) was short, but important in the construction of community and its public sphere. The first decade of the 2000s became the milestone in the history of the Russian-language media: the decline of the immigrant press and the massive development of electronic media, Russian-language Internet and the establishment of an Israeli television channel in Russian. This culturally, socially and demographically heterogeneous and dynamic Russian community represents a wide range of world views, opinions and consumer patterns. It was very mobile in its transition to the new types of media (this group of immigrants from the former Soviet Union had limited loyalty to traditional media, to the cultural group symbols and routine habits of reading the same newspaper or magazine over time).

It is important to emphasize a basic difference between the roles of television and Internet within the Russian community. Russian-language channel *Israel Plus* as well as the television channels broadcasting from Russia occupy a central place in the culture and the leisure of the elderly population (60 +). *Israel Plus* channel was unable to become the central forum for public discussion on current political topics for other age groups of the Russian media consumers. Internet is the most popular medium among the younger generation, including ages 40-50. It became especially important for the *intelligentsia*, which is very influential in determining public opinion within the Russian community. Its informal and interactive nature enables readers to respond to the content using *talk backs* and *blogs*. The minimal censorship allows freedom of expression and anonymity, reminiscent of the style of the traditional Russian *kitchen talks*.

The Russian culture of *kitchen talks* represents an authentic, natural, informal and intimate atmosphere that supports dynamic and serious debate about the topics which are really important for discussion. There is a tendency to develop this traditional style among the immigrants from the former Soviet Union in a new context of Internet media. The come-back of the *kitchen talks* style in the Russian-language Internet also represent the response to the changes that have occurred in the media of Putin's Russia.