

Supporting  
people striving  
for democracy



# Supporting people striving for democracy

ANNUAL REPORT 2019

EUROPEAN  
ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY

# Table of contents

<b>About eed</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Foreword</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Events</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Adapting to different contexts</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>EED THEMATIC AREAS OF WORK</b>	<b>19</b>
1. Anti-corruption and public accountability	20
2. Independent and social media platforms	22
3. Civic activism and participation	30
4. Human rights activism and monitoring	34
5. Women's civic and political participation	36
6. Inclusive society, sexual orientation, and gender identity	38
7. Arts and culture	42
8. Youth	44
<b>Results and learning</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Human resources and budget</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Farewell to Elmar Brok mep</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>EED funding partners</b>	<b>54</b>

# About EED

**The European Endowment for Democracy (EED) is an independent grant-making organisation, established in 2013 by the European Union (EU) and EU member states as an autonomous International Trust Fund to foster democracy in the European Neighbourhood and beyond.**

All EU member states are members of EED's Board of Governors, together with Members of the European Parliament, and representatives of the European External Action Service, The European Commission, the United Kingdom, Norway and civil society. Since its inception, EED has provided over 1,000 grants and evolved into a vibrant, innovative, and respected member of the democracy support community.

EED funds a vast array of both registered and unregistered pro-democracy actors, including human rights and political activists, pro-democratic movements, civil society organisations, emerging leaders, independent media, and journalists that may not be able to obtain funding otherwise. Support is contingent on adherence of democratic values, respect for international human rights, and observance of principles of non-violence by the grantees.

## OUR MISSION

EED's goal is to provide flexible support to democracy activists, complementing other EU and member state democracy-support programmes. EED provides context-based, demand-driven support based on a principle of fostering democracy and facilitating initiatives of local actors. EED specialises in cases where the space for civil society is shrinking due to administrative, legal, social,

and political barriers, and it accepts significant political and operational risks as part of its operations.

## OUR VISION

- We believe in taking an unconventional approach to supporting democracy
- We focus our tailor-made, flexible, and timely grants on democracy activists who can't always get financial support from other donors
- We invest in transformational ideas and the people behind them

## WHERE WE WORK

EED's activities focus primarily on the European Neighbourhood (Eastern Partnership, Western Balkans, and the Middle East and North Africa regions) and aim to ensure, as far as possible, a geographical balance of engagement and funding.

Some grants may be provided for relevant applications from countries in the area adjacent to the neighbourhood, depending on needs, available funds, and political priorities. ■



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*Loaner Session, Tareq taking a break from skating*

# Foreword

## NEW BEGINNINGS

As Chair of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, I am all too aware of the multitude of challenges faced by democracy activists in the world, with conflict, corruption, and repression all enduring.

The European Endowment for Democracy (EED) was established in 2013, and many of my colleagues in the European Parliament and I have followed with interest the successful growth and development of this organisation over the past few years. EED's flexible and innovative support to pro-democracy actors in the European Neighbourhood and beyond brings hope to local activists and complements democracy support programmes delivered by the European Union.

The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index 2019 reports a decline in democracy worldwide. It makes for sobering reading; forces of nationalist populism and authoritarianism are reasserting themselves, including within the EU itself.

Despite such worrying trends, individuals living in difficult and repressive political environments retain hope that they may aspire to a better future. In 2019, we saw examples of this across many of the countries where we work. The large-scale protests in Algeria, Lebanon, and the Western Balkans spoke of deep dissatisfaction with corrupt and autocratic regimes and challenged the status quo. Even in the most hostile environments,

activists and grassroots organisations continue to promote human rights and democratic values in their communities, despite often daily challenges to this work and threats to their lives and livelihoods.

These protests send a powerful message to us Europeans at a time of moral crisis at home, one that is marked by a constant undermining of democracy and the rule of law. Our own difficulties within the EU remind us that democratic freedoms should never be taken for granted. Even the most established democracies require constant work and vigilance. In the same way, those countries that have more recently acquired new freedoms, such as Armenia, need constant support to maintain and consolidate these freedoms.

As the European Parliament begins its new legislature, I have called for greater attention and more coherent action towards our neighbourhood.

It is vital for the future of Europe that we remain firmly on a democratic course. This is the only way we can reinforce the credibility of our European model and extend solidarity to every person and society that shares our values.

In my new capacity as Chair of the Board of the European Endowment for Democracy, I look forward to working in 2020 and beyond in helping to decide and design the best strategies to support those in need throughout our European Neighbourhood and beyond. ■



**David McAllister**

*Chair of EED Board of Governors and Member of the European Parliament*



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# Introduction

The 2019 Annual Report provides an overview of the European Endowment for Democracy's operations, work, and results over the past year. As a flexible and rapid mechanism for democracy support, we pride ourselves on listening to the people who speak up for democracy in the countries where we operate and on responding to their needs. We constantly adapt our strategies so that we can best react to the changing environments in which they operate. In 2019, we received nearly 830 applications for support, 260 of which were funded.

The picture for democracy and civil society was mixed across the European Neighbourhood in 2019, with positive developments in some countries and regression in others. Some of the more worrying trends included continued attempts to cripple civil society and muzzle free speech, with activists in many countries harassed or physically targeted with impunity. Legal bureaucratic measures were frequently used to limit the registration and functioning of NGOs. There were growing restrictions on international funding for NGOs in other countries, often under the pretext of preventing funding for terrorist activities. Disinformation remains an important tool used to undermine democratic values and discredit those who stand up for them.

In this Annual Report, we have included a 'Focus on Moldova' presenting some of our media projects that operate within the country's dynamic political context. 2019 saw the formation of a 'difficult' coalition government under Prime Minister Maia Sandu in June, which collapsed later in the year, unleashing new challenges for civil society and independent media.

Ukraine remains one of the biggest beneficiaries of EED support. Elections in Ukraine saw radical change in the political landscape. Among those elected were a group of novice lawmakers from civil society, who are now seeking to address society's deep-rooted distrust of the political establishment.

2019 was also marked by mass protests in both Algeria and Lebanon. In Algeria, protesters continue to hope for change and effective reforms; however, repression

against activists increased significantly in the latter part of the year. In Lebanon, waves of mass protests called for the removal of the political elite, with a surge of new innovative civil-society activists seeking to change the country's political trajectory. Unfortunately, there was a significant escalation of violence in Libya, and much civil society work, including EED-funded initiatives, has ceased because of the open conflict and the lack of basic security.

The complex situation in Syria has seen rapid changes in the balance of power and continued human rights violations and violence, and civil society is increasingly preoccupied with the plight of refugees in neighbouring host countries and on the safety of returnees.

There were also political demonstrations throughout the Western Balkans in 2019, and some countries in the region witnessed an ongoing erosion of political and civil rights. Media freedom continues to be under constant threat and aggression.

In Turkey, opposition parties won mayoral elections in both Ankara and Istanbul, a result that demonstrated the population's desire for political change, while restrictions to freedom of expression remain a constant for civil society activists, journalists, and academics, among many others.

EED works with many inspiring activists throughout the European Neighbourhood and beyond, who are determined to defend and promote democratic values despite facing such daily challenges.

In this report, we have featured a selection of the many positive and inspiring stories of people whose bravery and creativity go beyond hardship and negative trends, proving that value-based pro-democracy activism is impossible to contain. It gives direction to the people who work for a better future for their societies even if the process of achieving this aim is difficult and long term. We at the EED Secretariat are proud to be part of their stories and to bring those stories to your attention. ■



**Jerzy Pomianowski**

*Executive Director of European Endowment for Democracy*

# Executive Summary

**This report provides an overview of the European Endowment for Democracy's activities supporting activists, independent media, and human rights defenders in the European Neighbourhood and beyond, in 2019 – EED's sixth year of operation. The report tells the stories of these brave people; stories of individual struggles, creativity, persistence, and moral courage. It shares information on the processes and principles behind EED's approach to democracy support, an approach that is focused on adding value to the democracy support field, and provides a contextual background to the environment in which EED operates.**

## FACTS AND FIGURES

In 2019, EED approved 260 initiatives for support, with more than 440 initiatives ongoing during the year, including 41 awards of emergency support. Around 830 applications for support were received.

## ADAPTING TO DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

EED works in different political contexts across the diverse countries of the European Neighbourhood and beyond. These contexts, which range from transitional, restrictive, and repressive to full-conflict environments, all provide particular challenges to the pro-democracy activists and organisations that EED supports. EED's flexible and unconventional approach means that it can tailor support to the different realities and challenges faced.

For example, in 2019, EED supported a youth initiative in a repressive environment that leverages social media as a way to provide alternative narratives to the official discourse. Other innovative approaches include using historical research or the arts to promote inclusion against discriminated groups (see page 40-41).

## AREAS OF SUPPORT

This report presents some of the initiatives supported in 2019 across the different thematic areas of funding: anti-corruption and public accountability; independent and social media platforms; civic activism and participation; human rights activism and monitoring; women's civic and political participation; inclusive society; sexual orientation and gender identity; youth; and arts and culture.

Through a mix of longer feature stories, vignettes, and brief updates, the report showcases the wide range of approaches to democracy support within the EED portfolio. Grantees featured include: a theatre play on transgender issues in Tunisia, an Armenian-language publishing house in Turkey, legal assistance to Syrian refugees in Lebanon, and monitoring air quality in Ukraine – just some of the many initiatives supported by EED over the past year.

EED's distinctive niche lies in its ability to operate in difficult, often dangerous, environments that are often off-limits to other donors. For the first time, this report

features some of EED's most sensitive initiatives, using pseudonyms in order to protect the individuals and their organisations. There are also updates on some of EED's former grantees – 'alumni' whose initiatives have flourished since their initial funding from EED.

### FOCUS ON MOLDOVA

Moldova experienced major political changes and very challenging processes in 2019. Many independent media supported by EED played a critical role during this period. Many independent media supported by EED played a critical role during this period, and several of these are featured in the Special Focus section of the report.

### EVENTS

EED continues to open its doors and operate as a hub for democracy-related events in Brussels, connecting civil society with the European institutions and other actors. This year, EED hosted a range of events focused on civic activism and media in the regions where it operates, including a briefing with Syrian civil activists on the situation of detention survivors and families of the disappeared, and a panel event on Georgia's reform agenda marking five years since the country signed the Association Agreement. EED also maintained its partnerships with some of the main democracy and human rights forums in Europe, including the Global Media Forum in Bonn, and it continued to facilitate its grantees to participate in major conferences such as the World Forum for Democracy in Strasbourg, providing them with valuable visibility and networking opportunities.

### EVALUATION AND LEARNING

Monitoring and evaluation continue to be an integral part of EED's work, in line with international best practices. EED has adopted a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) system to support its grant-making work, and conducts regular monitoring missions to evaluate the impact of its work.

### GOVERNANCE, HUMAN RESOURCES, AND BUDGET

The year saw the election of a new Chair of the Board of Governors, David McAllister MEP, after the departure of Elmar Brok, who had served in the position since EED's inception.

Some 30-core staff from a wide range of countries work at the EED Secretariat. A paid traineeship programme brings a group of young and talented professionals to EED each year, and they contribute enthusiasm and creativity to EED's work and benefit from the learning environment offered by EED as they start their careers.

To date, 23 European countries that are members of the Board of Governors and the European Commission have contributed to the EED Budget. **Canada** also contributes through a special grant for Ukraine. The budget managed by EED in 2019 amounted to approximately €19 million. ■

## 2019 IN NUMBERS

- 
260

New funded initiatives
- 
827

Requests for support
- 
41

Emergency support provided
- 
140

Monitoring and outreach missions
- 
30

Core staff from 20 countries
- 
50 670

Unique visitors to website
- 
45

Media mentions
- 
58,400+

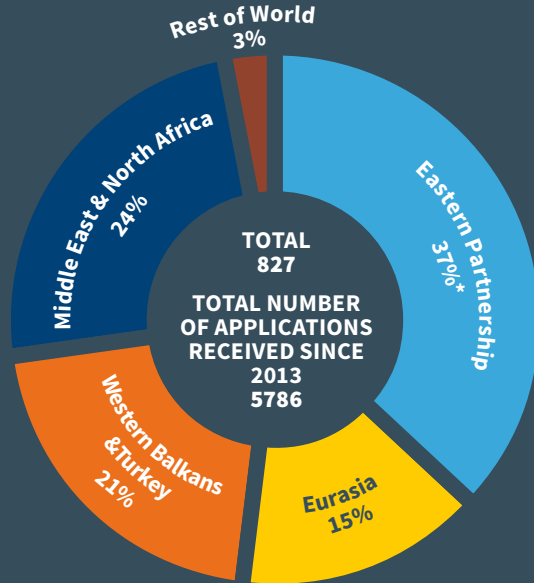
Facebook likes
- 
3,300+

Twitter followers
- 
30

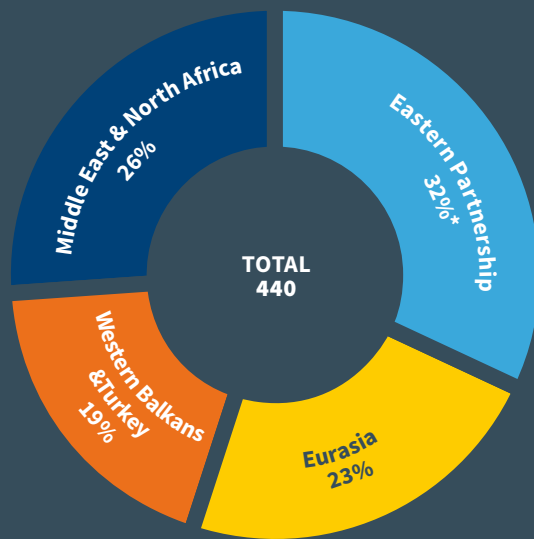
Number of events

## PORTFOLIO OVERVIEW

NO. OF APPLICATIONS RECEIVED BY REGION 2019

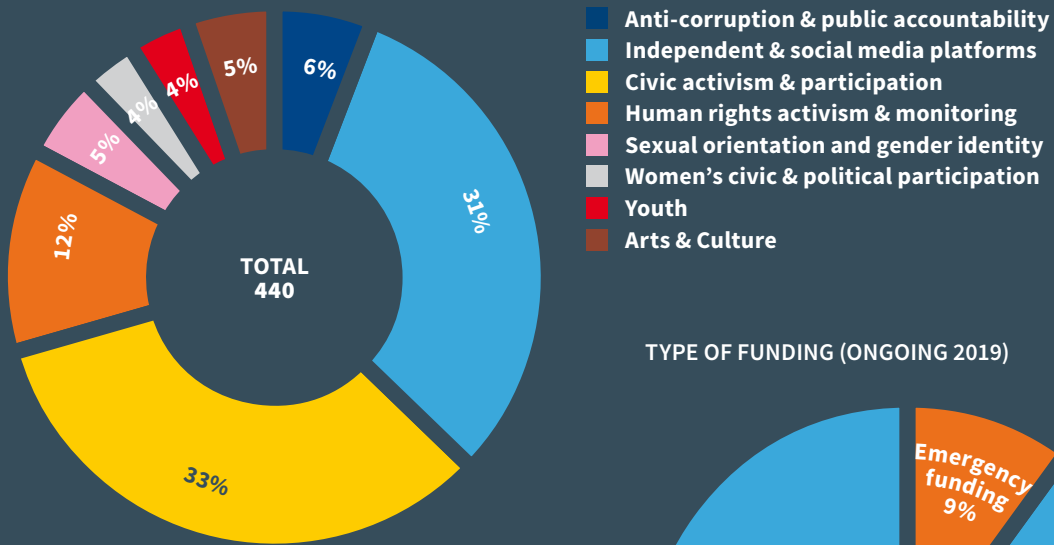


NO. OF INITIATIVES SUPPORTED BY REGION (ONGOING IN 2019)

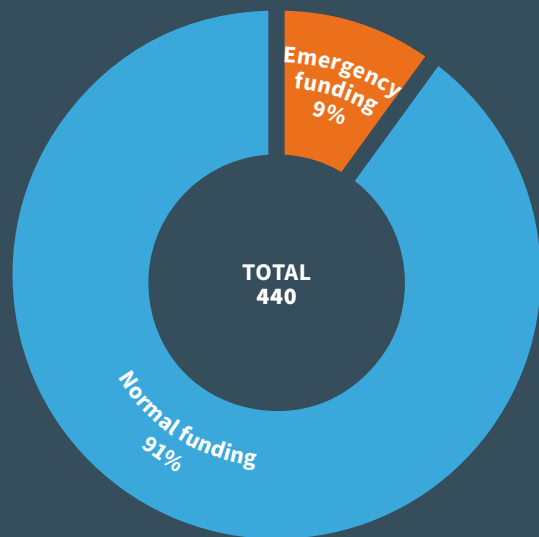


\*The European Partnership (EaP) countries are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine

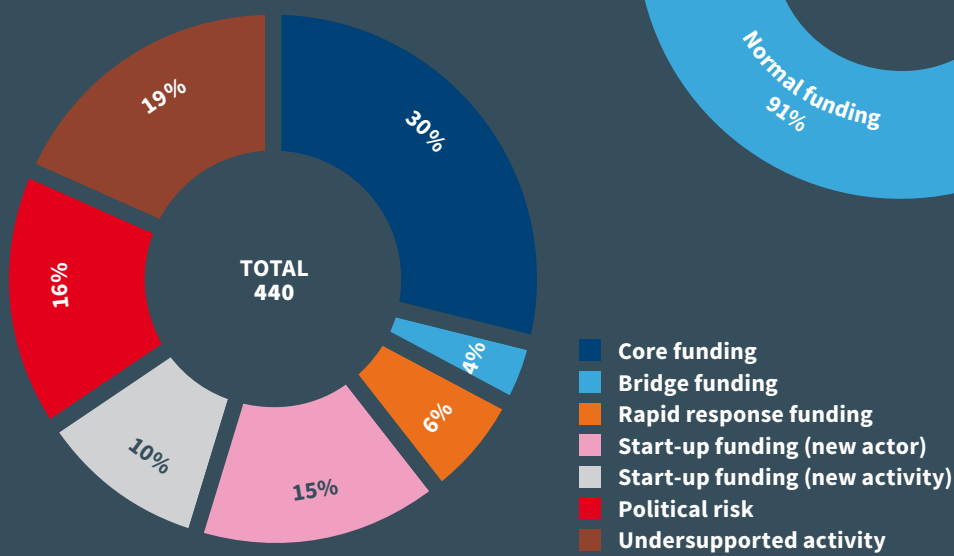
INITIATIVES PER THEMATIC AREA (ONGOING 2019)



TYPE OF FUNDING (ONGOING 2019)



VALUE ADDED\* (ONGOING IN 2019)



\*The purpose of EED, and the reason it was established was to 'add value' to existing European mechanisms of support to pro-democracy actors and initiatives. EED identifies an added-value for each grant as part of the ongoing monitoring process.

# Events

**EED promotes open and critical discussion around the key issues of the day related to democracy and human rights in the European Neighbourhood and beyond. Acting as a ‘Democracy Support House’ or ‘Hub’, EED provides a venue in Brussels for both public and closed-door discussions organised by partner organisations as well as by EED itself.**

EED’s close relationship with the institutions of the EU and the representations of its member states enables it to facilitate contacts between officials and civil society actors.

We strongly believe that amplifying our grantees’ voices in the international arena is the best way to both respect their unique work and to advise our stakeholders on the support they need. EED facilitates the participation of its grantees and showcases their work in major annual conferences such as the **Global Media Forum** in Bonn, **Difference Day/World Press Freedom Day** in Brussels, and the **World Forum for Democracy** in Strasbourg.

Occasionally, EED sponsors the attendance at events of prominent activists who are not current or past recipients of EED grants. EED also organises annual regional strategic reflection meetings on themes relevant to EED’s work, bringing together grantees and EED donors to discuss current challenges.

EED staff also regularly contribute to regional policy debates and donor meetings, helping to shape thinking on effective and innovative democracy support.

In all, EED organised, hosted, or participated in more than 30 democracy-related events in 2019. ■



© Dinu Bubulici

Natalia Morari

**30 YEARS ON: LESSONS FROM THE PAST, CHALLENGES OF THE PRESENT, INSPIRATION FOR THE FUTURE, ROMANIAN MFA/EED/GERMAN MARSHALL FUND/ASPEN INSTITUTE, BUCHAREST, MAY 2019**

“People have always been spreading lies – what is stopping us from spreading the truth?” *Tamara Chergoleishvili of Tabula Media (Georgia), speaking at a workshop on democracy in the digital age.*

“We are not merely journalists, we are doing advocacy for Moldovan democracy.” *Natalia Morari of TV8 (Moldova), speaking at a workshop on the role of media in the post-truth era.* ■



## MEDIA

EED was involved in a number of major media conferences and regional events in 2019. This year, EED produced the thematic report *Supporting Media for Democracy*, which included grantee recommendations, those of members of the media community, and lessons learned from media events; it also built on our own experience in supporting media initiatives. The publication was launched on 10-11 July at the **Global Conference for Media Freedom** in London, organised by the UK and Canadian governments. Based on EED's experience and feedback from grantees, the following lessons learned are good practices to other donors interested in supporting independent media in the EU neighbourhood. Below are the key recommendations in brief. For the full recommendations, see the **publication**.

1. Scale-up support for independent media initiatives, including by taking a longer-term approach, focused on core funding rather than project-based funding.
2. Be realistic about self-sustainability.
3. Greater donor coherence, co-ordination, and consistency.
4. See media as equal partners.
5. Be more political.
6. Ensure visible international political and diplomatic support to journalists and media outlets.
7. Keep the security dimension in mind when working with independent media.
8. Focus on local content.





European Endowment  
for Democracy

Ilya Lozovsky (@ichbinilya) talks about how a global network of investigative journalists like @OCCRP are a 'natural enemy' to corrupt politicians engaged in money laundering.

"Corruption does not stop at national borders, so journalists can stop at national borders either"

Tweets by Ilya Lozovsky



**NO DEMOCRACY WITHOUT ACCOUNTABILITY, COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS, BRUSSELS, SEPTEMBER 2019**

EED was co-organiser of this annual Democracy Day conference, and EED led a workshop on the theme of 'New methods for a traditional form of democratic accountability – the importance of civic courage to counter corruption'.

"Corruption does not stop at national borders, so journalists cannot stop at national borders either," Ilya Lozovsky, Managing Editor of Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP)

"To effectively tackle corruption, we need to find new ways of communicating information to the public," Elena Varta, CPR Moldova





**WORLD FORUM FOR DEMOCRACY: IS DEMOCRACY IN DANGER IN THE INFORMATION AGE? COUNCIL OF EUROPE, STRASBOURG, NOVEMBER 2019**

“The world is more democratic than it has ever been... However, the quality of democracy has gone down.” *Sam van der Staak of International IDEA, in a discussion on strengthening democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

“International organisations wanted to help create a free Syrian media, but tried to influence reporting according to their own mood.” *Syrian journalist Yasmine Merei at a workshop on the safety of journalists* ■



**TELLING THE STORIES OF SYRIAN DETAINEES**

In *Privacy of Wounds*, directed by Dalia Kury, three Syrian former detainees agreed to be locked up for three days in a reconstructed prison cell in Oslo and were filmed as they exchanged painful memories of their experiences in Syria’s darkest detention facilities.

EED co-organised a screening of this thought-provoking film at the *One World* human rights documentary film festival in Brussels in April, with a post-screening panel discussion on the subject of the detained and forcibly disappeared in Syria.

“Accountability is an important message to Syria and any other country committing crimes against humanity.” *Mazen Darwish, President of the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression*

“The experiences of women inside prison and once they are released are different than [those of] men. There is a stigma placed on women who have been detained. Those who are sexually assaulted are also shamed.” *Salma Kahale, Director of Dawlaty* ■



**UKRAINE: NEW PLAYERS, OLD GAME? THE ROLE OF CIVIC ACTIVISM AND MEDIA, EED AND DRI UKRAINE, BRUSSELS, NOVEMBER 2019**

“We need more responsible journalists who do not fall into traps. The EU can help by sharing experience and knowledge,” *Andriy Kulykov, Hromadske Radio at panel on the role of media in the changing political landscape in Ukraine.*

“We need to attract investment in education and expertise for civil society. We need to hire professionals and then defend them. We need to build a better dialogue with civil society in the country,” *Yuliy Morozov, civil activist at panel 'From activists to politicians'* ■

# Adapting to different contexts

EED grantees operate in very different political environments, ranging from transitional, restrictive, and repressive to conflict situations, although of course not all countries fall neatly into one of these categories. In some countries where civil society can operate relatively freely, transition has stalled and democratic reform is absent. Similarly, other countries can have a relatively tolerant approach to some forms of activism while heavily restricting others, such as the media, or are intolerant towards particular ethnic, religious, or social groups. Political developments can lead to democratic progress or backsliding.

EED's fast and flexible approach means that it can quickly provide resources when democratic spaces open up, allowing for the consolidation of democratic progress. EED can also support activists when they most need it at critical times of political change. Conversely, when space for civil society shrinks, due to repression or conflict, EED can be a lifeline when other donors close their doors.

## TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN 2019

2019 was marked in many more restrictive environments by ongoing attempts to curtail the operations of civil society and independent media. In some countries, there are growing restrictions on foreign funding for NGOs, often under the pretext of preventing funding for terrorist activities. Disinformation continues to be a tool used to undermine democratic values and discredit those who stand up for them. The NGO Reporters Without Borders reported an 'intense climate of fear' for journalists globally in 2019, and blamed the hostility against journalists expressed by political leaders for inciting 'increasingly serious and frequent acts of violence'.

## TRANSITIONAL ENVIRONMENTS

Some countries provide a generally non-restrictive environment where civil society can operate in relative freedom. However, although both EED grantees and donors can operate openly in such environments, significant weaknesses remain.

Transitional environments are characterised by the fragility of their institutions, weak governance and a lack of democratic accountability, an underdeveloped political culture, and barriers to political participation. Societies struggle with corruption, weak rule of law, and infringements on media freedom or a rise in nationalism. For example, the 2018 Velvet Revolution in Armenia has led to a more liberal political environment for civil society, but hate speech using the language of nationalism is on the rise, and is often deployed to target ethnic minorities, women, and people in the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) community (see page 43).

## RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Many EED grantees work in restrictive environments with an increasingly limited space for civil society. There are often growing restrictions on those seeking democratic progress and on donors who provide support to civil society, even in political systems that are not entirely authoritarian. While such environments are often marked by some level of open pluralism in governance, pressure on opposition parties and candidates is common and elections are often characterised by substantial irregularities. Corruption tends to be widespread and the rule of law weak, and often governments have taken steps to curtail independent civil society. Harassment of and pressure on journalists is common and the judiciary is not independent.

In such contexts, EED grantees often face a powerful patronage system that links political power-holders and economic interests, and squeezes civil society and other independent actors out of the decision-making process. Often, media falls victim to this control over power, as the government and businesses that support pro-regime media curtail freedom of expression. Investment in civil society can pay off during political turning points, when activists and media seize opportunities to highlight repression or corruption, document protest movements, and push for positive change (see 'Focus on Moldova', page 26 and feature on Beirut Today, page 28-29).

### REPRESSIVE ENVIRONMENTS

A significant proportion of the countries in which EED works have openly repressive regimes, where governments do not allow or actively obstruct civil society from engaging in political processes.

Authoritarian political elites bolster their rule by imprisoning, and in some cases torturing opponents, restricting the media and civil society, harassing activists, limiting popular freedoms, and repressing protest. These regimes do not allow any political pluralism, and elections are not free and fair – as could be seen in the disputed elections in Algeria. Activists take a high risk by engaging in pro-democracy work, risking imprisonment for their activities. Media are typically fully controlled by groups connected to the ruling regime. Governments in such environments work to create a political climate in which recipients of foreign funding are intimidated and publicly delegitimised, with donors often blacklisted or blocked by administrative and legal constraints.

An important part of EED's mandate is to provide flexible support to activists who operate in such difficult environments. EED has actively adapted to deteriorating conditions and harsh restrictions by finding new ways to continue effectively supporting civil society and responding to the distinctive needs of activists. This includes protecting grantees' identities when required and providing support in a discreet and safe manner. The work of a number of these activists is highlighted in this report, ranging from projects related to the environment to protest art and new media outlets (see pages 33, 44 and 25).

### CONFLICT ENVIRONMENTS

EED is committed to helping populations suffering from war and instability. EED helps ensure that ordinary citizens are heard and assists people who are trying to keep the democratic struggle alive, often in extremely harsh conditions.

Supporting civil society in conflict environments brings particular challenges, and donors are often reluctant to fund projects because of security concerns and operational challenges, such as the inability to monitor projects or disburse funding. In some countries, the level of political stability and security is simply not sufficient to operate activities in support of democracy. Activists show remarkable resilience and commitment to continue working for a better and more democratic society even in the midst of violence, and EED is committed to supporting such individuals and organisations where possible.

In 2019, for instance, EED continued to support various initiatives supporting civil activists and independent media working in and outside (see page 37). Their situation is becoming ever more precarious, with neighbouring host countries increasingly fatigued by their presence and putting pressure for their return to Syria in unsafe conditions.

# Our approach

## INNOVATIVE

EED is open to innovative ideas and responds in a dynamic way to requests for support when providing support to develop democracy. Although most initiatives fall into one of the eight thematic areas covered in this report, EED welcomes creative proposals that approach democracy through different lenses. Its grantees come from all walks of life and many are new to activism. EED frequently is a lifeline to organisations struggling to continue their work in times of turmoil or when facing severe repression.

## DEMAND-DRIVEN AND FLEXIBLE

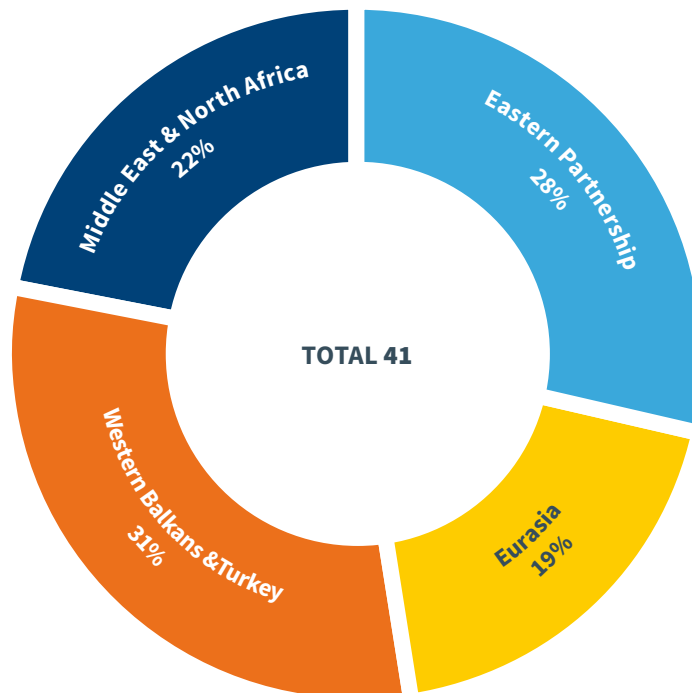
EED adapts its support to respond to local realities and is demand-driven and flexible. It can support individuals and non-registered groups and grant emergency funding requests, often turning around such requests within a few days.

## SUPPORTING THE UNSUPPORTED

EED seeks primarily to support groups and activists that are unable or without the capacity to access EU democracy-support programmes, but with a guiding principle of investing in transformational ideas and the people behind them. It also invests time in capacity building of grantees in areas such as programme and project management, ensuring that good ideas can be transformed into functioning viable organisations. This report includes examples of EED ‘alumni’, recipients of EED support in their crucial early days who are now established actors in their field.

Many of the activists and organisations that EED works with cannot publicly acknowledge that they are recipients of international funding, as they would face severe repercussions if this information were revealed. EED has adopted procedures to ensure their anonymity, and in many cases, this means that they cannot be identified by name. In this report, EED profiles some of these important actors. All have been anonymised to protect their identities. ■

## EMERGENCY INITIATIVES SUPPORTED (ONGOING 2019)



# EED THEMATIC AREAS OF WORK

# 1. Anti-corruption and public accountability

Recognising that corruption is a major barrier to advancing democracy, EED supports activists tackling graft and promoting public accountability and citizen oversight in governance at all levels.

## OVERVIEW OF EED APPROACH

EED builds capacities of citizens and supports grass-roots independent voices to push for accountable governments, expose corrupt practices, and develop anti-corruption strategies. EED adds value by funding new activists and groups with limited or no access to other donor funding – whether due to restrictive legal environments, government repression, security concerns, or political sensitivities.

## EED SUPPORT IN 2019

This year, EED-supported initiatives have included media initiatives focusing on investigative reporting of public procurement and misuse of public funds, a watchdog monitoring the work of municipalities, and local election monitoring. ■

## FIGHTING CORRUPTION IN UKRAINE

Odessa, in southern Ukraine, is the country's largest seaport and one of its most important political, economic and cultural centres. This city of just over one million people is also infamous for its criminal past and high levels of corruption, making it one of the most difficult environments for civil society to operate in Ukraine today.

*Automaidan Odesa* is a grassroots initiative and one of the most outspoken organisations protesting against illegal construction and embezzlement of public funds. A local branch of Ukraine's Automaidan Initiative set up in the wake of the 2013/14 Revolution of Dignity, *Automaidan Odesa* was founded by Vitaly Ustymenko, a young but seasoned anti-corruption campaigner and activist.

Voted one of the top change-makers in Ukraine in 2019, by the weekly *Novoye Vremya*, Ustymenko is now engaged in a constant battle with corrupt officials and with the Odessa City Council. His organisation holds public protests and ensures public monitoring of court hearings involving city officials suspected of corruption crimes. Ustymenko and other prominent activists have faced frequent physical assaults in recent years; Ustymenko was placed under state protection in 2018 following a stabbing incident. ■



©StanislawRico

Vitaly Ustymenko

# Blowing the whistle on corruption in Moldova

## FEATURE



Sergiu Tofilat, Watchdog.md

A former banker in Moldova has used his understanding of finance to expose corrupt accounting practices in public services. **WatchDog.md** presents complex financial investigations in easy-to-understand reports for the public.

Sergiu Tofilat knows his way around financial balance sheets. With a background in banking and corporate finance, he aims to attract foreign investment to Moldova and develop business opportunities. That was what he was trying to do when, as part of his research for a business venture, he stumbled across large-scale corruption on tariffs applied in the country's electricity distribution networks.

### 'STOLEN FROM OUR POCKETS'

It took him a while to get to grips with the technical regulations and the hidden illicit expenditures being invoiced to consumers. But when he did, Tofilat created a blog to publish his findings, and within two days it had received over 10,000 views.

He continued his investigations into electricity imports – a monopoly controlled by a state-owned enterprise. He discovered two startling things. First, consumers were being robbed blind by an intermediary with offshore owners. "Half of the electricity bill was being stolen from our pockets," Tofilat notes. Second, the breakaway territory of Transnistria, an electricity producer itself, was not paying for the gas used to produce the electricity, but rather its accumulated gas debt was being paid off by the rest of Moldova.

Tofilat was invited to speak about his findings on television – the first of what would turn out to be many media appearances. Realising that what he had uncovered was likely to be the tip of the iceberg, he linked up with other experts on energy policy as well as on electoral rights, urban development, and combatting propaganda. Eventually, the NGO **WatchDog.md** was established. In June 2017, it signed its first grant agreement with EED to create a group of whistleblowers on energy and public policies in Moldova.

Tofilat is ambitious. "Civic activism is not what I want to do all my life," he admits. He is interested in a political career – on his own terms – or spending some time in public administration in order to improve things, but his real passion remains bringing foreign investment to Moldova. "You can't do business in Moldova until you get rid of the problems in the justice sector and lack of transparency of public funds," he says. "Civic action is a way to solve this." ■



## ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY FOR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

*Yes to Speaking Up\** is a network of media experts who run a fact-checking platform that reveals the truth of statements made by political and public officials from their home country, an environment where it has become increasingly dangerous for journalists to speak out. The network was the brainchild of journalists fed up with the state control of all the region's media. They wanted to ensure that those who serve the country, such as politicians, public servants, and government officials, could be open to public scrutiny and accountability. They set up this online platform to analyse and fact-check their statements, revealing them as untrue when this was the case. The network now has hundreds of thousands of followers on its social-media networks, evidence of a thirst for truth among the country's public. ■

*\*This organisation's name has been changed to protect the identity of the grantee.*



## 2. Independent and social media platforms

**EED supports local media – including bloggers, digital platforms, satirists, and other innovative news and information outlets – to grow as independent and quality communication channels, as a mechanism to ensure media pluralism and access to independent and alternative information.**

### OVERVIEW OF EED APPROACH

EED provides funding to a wide range of initiatives that help sustain and develop independent news outlets, assist journalists and media outlets operating in repressive environments, support media outlets in minority languages, or support start-up outlets.

In this way, EED works to strengthen media pluralism and improve access to credible news and critical commentary to people denied reliable information. Approximately one third of EED's funding portfolio is media-related. When making funding decisions, EED focuses on filling gaps and supporting areas not funded by other donors; this includes funding core costs.

### EED SUPPORT IN 2019

EED funds both small start-up initiatives and larger professional media outlets. This year, EED supported several emerging media outlets that leverage new technologies and social media in innovative ways. EED also helped more established news outlets to diversify their output, including through focusing on online products such as podcasts. Recognising the value of in-depth investigative reporting, EED has provided struggling media outlets with the resources to continue this type of quality reporting. Support has also been given to organisations providing legal aid to journalists and promoting freedom of expression. ■

### KOSOVO 2.0: PIONEERING WITH PODCASTING

In 2010, the then 29-year-old Besca Luci co-founded Kosovo Glocal, envisaged as a world-class media outlet for one of Europe's youngest populations. Concerned by the poor quality of the many online media platforms that were replacing traditional media in the region, she initially launched *Kosovo 2.0* as a blogging platform for youth. Since then, the platform has transformed into a fully-fledged multimedia online magazine focused on current affairs in Kosovo\*, the region, and beyond. It is the first media outlet in the region to produce content in Albanian, Serbian, and English.

This year, Kosovo 2.0 created Kosovo's first podcast, *Konteksti* (meaning 'Contexts'). The podcast aims to cut through the noise of daily news by deconstructing mainstream narratives and shedding light on relevant political, social, and cultural issues in an accessible and engaging way. ■



*Kosovo 2.0 Konteksti Podcast*

\*All references to Kosovo in this report should be understood without prejudice to positions on status, and in line with United Nations Security Council resolution 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.





Shkëlzen Maliqi

© Jeta Bejullahu

## A NEW NEWSPAPER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



*El Haya\** is a socio-political and cultural newspaper for young people who feel increasingly disillusioned and neglected in the repressive regime where they live. Available in both online and printed editions, the media outlet writes stories on topics that interest these young people, such as principles of freedom, social justice, human rights, religion, gender, alternative narratives of history, the underground cultural scene, and regional political issues. The newspaper is a rare voice in a media climate that is increasingly state-controlled.

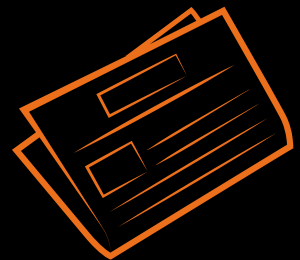
EED support has enabled *El Haya* to increase distribution, and its print edition is now published monthly. ■

*\*This organisation's name has been changed to protect the identity of the grantee.*

## DOCUMENTING THE PAST, PROVIDING A VOICE FOR THE PRESENT

Shkëlzen Maliqi is one of the most widely read journalists writing in Albanian in the Western Balkans. A Kosovar Albanian, he has a long history of activism. He was involved in the 1968 protests in the former Yugoslavia and was one of the instigators of the political resistance of the Kosovar Albanians in the 1990s, establishing and leading the Social Democratic Party in Kosovo's parallel political system during this period.

Maliqi has held various media roles as both an editor and a journalist, has published dozens of books, and is known for his sharp analysis of socio-political affairs. He has always retained his political independence and his work is increasingly censored and attacked, as most media outlets in the region are controlled by business and political interests. EED provided a grant to Maliqi to help him start his own blog, where he now publishes opinion pieces and editorials on current social and political affairs in Kosovo and the Western Balkans. Maliqi plans to include materials from his works over the past 30 years on the **blog**, which will provide an invaluable archive of information on the democratic struggle in the region. ■



# Beirut Today: A community-driven independent news platform

## FEATURE

**Beirut Today's community of contributors are on a mission to defy misinformation and keep their readers informed during a period of protests in Lebanon.**

On the eve of 17 October, thousands of anti-government protesters across Lebanon took to the streets in the biggest demonstration the country has seen since the Cedar Revolution of 2005.

EED grantee, the independent online news platform **Beirut Today** was at the frontline reporting on these historic events.

Laudy Issa, Managing Editor of **Beirut Today**, noticed that international news outlets were not covering the real story. "Outlets like BBC and CNN were calling it the 'WhatsApp revolution' – but this is not true to the spirit of what we're seeing in the streets. These protests have been building up for decades," she explains.

She began to collect footage filmed by protestors around Lebanon and six hours later emerged with a video that provided an overview of events in Lebanon so far.

By the end of October, Issa's video had been viewed over 160,000 times on Facebook alone. She believes that this popularity points to people's thirst for news that is both relevant and accessible.

### COMMUNITY-BASED JOURNALISM

In a media landscape that is distorted by censorship with media outlets split along sectarian lines, **Beirut Today** has forged a rare space for independent journalism housing diverse opinions that are free from



the influence of advertisers and political influence. The platform is very much 'community-driven' – writers, bloggers, activists and photographers from throughout the country send in their work for publishing. Diaspora writers are now also contributing material.

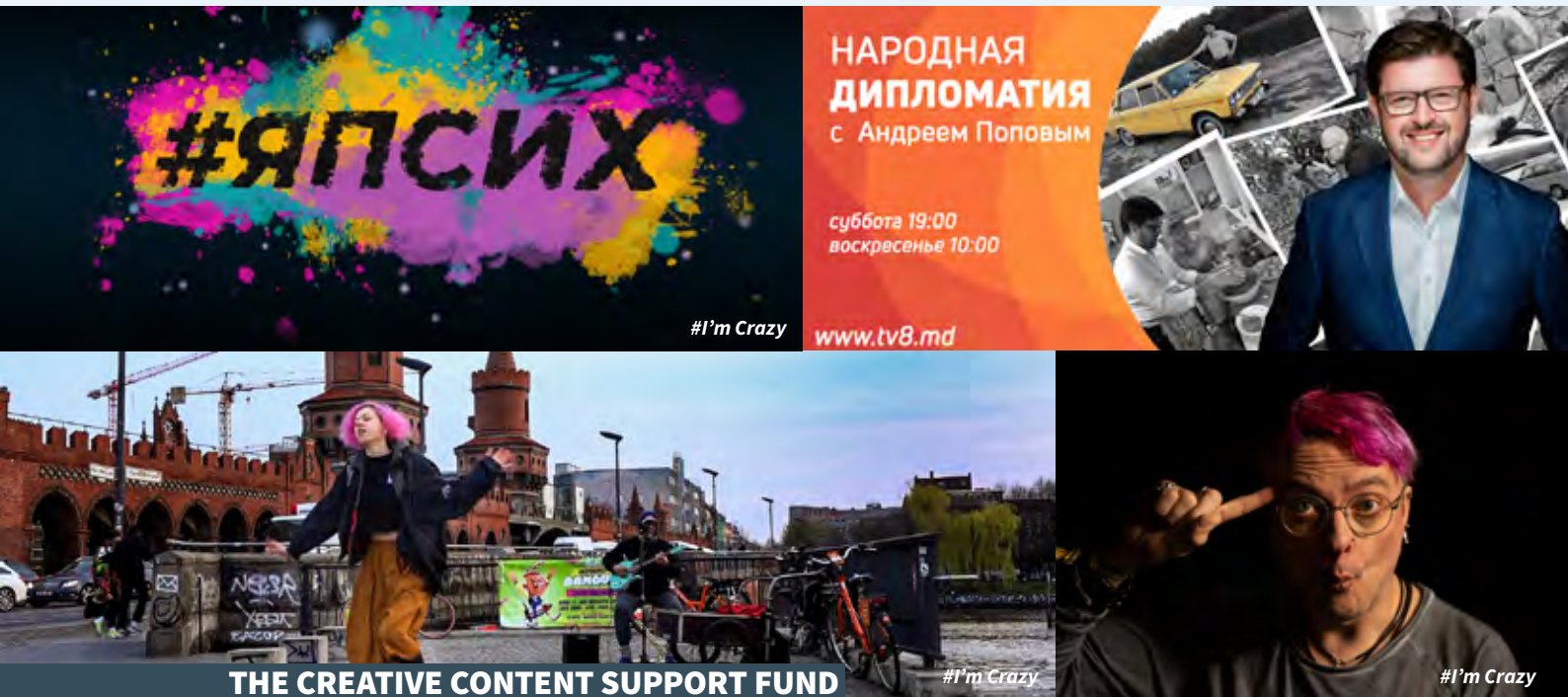
"It is thanks to our community that we have managed to put together content. The spirit of these protests has been spontaneous, experimental and people-driven. This is reflected in our content as well. We've had many more volunteers than usual. People are more willing to contribute their writing. Normally we get around one to two contributions a week, but now we're getting one to two every day," she recounts.

It is clear that there is a growing appetite for what **Beirut Today** has to offer, especially at a time when domestic media have misled viewers in their coverage of the protests.

Issa recounts how OTV, a TV channel affiliated with President Michel Aoun's political party the Free Patriotic Movement, informed viewers that the streets were clear of protestors and the channel showed footage of empty roads. In reality, these roads were blocked by protestors.

The shift in how people perceive and consume traditional media during this crisis is palpable. "This protest feels very different. It feels like people have stopped believing what traditional outlets are telling them. They've stopped caring about what they're saying to them," she relates.

Today, as Issa leads the platform at this time of crisis for Lebanon, she remains a passionate believer in the power of storytelling. As she says, "journalism is a way to tell stories that impact people's lives". ■



## Russian-language content project moves to next phase

After several years of EED support, a project set up to provide quality Russian-language audio-visual, digital and TV content is moving to its next stage in its development.

**The Creative Support Content Fund** was established to provide funding to broadcasters and audio-visual platforms working for plurality and balance in the Russian-language media space in the Eastern Partnership countries and beyond.

2019 marked a new phase in the development of **the Content Fund**, which has been hosted by EED since its inception in 2016. In March 2019, the fund was registered as a non-profit foundation in Belgium, paving the way for accrediting a branch office of the fund in Kyiv – a process which is now underway. EED will remain engaged in the work of the fund, sitting on its Board of Governors and providing overall guidance and supervision.

### 2019 highlights

**#I'mCrazy (#ЯПСИХ)** is a reality television series that aims to remove the stigma around mental health issues. The programme features four Russian-speaking Berliners with mental health diagnoses who make video diaries about their lives. They are helped by a professional therapist whom they meet at the end of each episode. The series aired on Cable TV, Facebook,

and YouTube to Russian-speaking audiences across Germany, Ukraine, Latvia, Austria, and Switzerland.

**People's Diplomacy: From the Black Sea to the Baltic Sea** is a travel documentary series produced by Media Alternativa, an NGO that produces Russian-language programming for Moldova's independent TV8 channel. Former Moldovan diplomat and TV personality Andrei Popov travels in an old Soviet Zhiguli 2106 across Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia to meet the locals and find out about their lives. Popov enters people's homes and engages in honest but good-spirited conversations about the past, the present, and the future that they see for themselves and for their countries.

Since late 2016, **the Content Fund** has enjoyed support from the UK government, a key donor to the fund, as well as contributions from Finland, Poland, and Romania. ■

### In numbers

**30+**  
Independent  
Russian language  
media outlets

**100+** hours  
of high-quality  
creative content produced

**100+** grants  
awarded to **20+**  
media platforms for  
**€6.4m** since late 2016

**585** hours of  
international and  
Russian content acquired



# FOCUS ON MOLDOVA

EED has supported a range of independent media initiatives in Moldova over the past few years, several of which have played an important role at a critical juncture for the country, as it has dealt with a political crisis sparked by government corruption.

## Long-reads Moldovan style

### FEATURE



**Polina Cupcea is a woman on a mission. Not only is she bringing a new format of journalism to Moldova – the long-read article – she is also giving a voice to the forgotten people of this country, the people who live outside the capital, Chişinău, in the villages and towns of this mainly agricultural country.**

“There is a joke in Moldova,” she laughs when EED meets her in her small office in the state-owned House of Journalists. “Journalism here starts at one end of Stefan Street and ends at the other end,” referring to the main street that cuts through the Moldovan capital. “Nobody is interested in what is happening outside the capital.”

Cupcea was determined to change this. “At school, I learned that journalism is about balance. It’s about being neutral, being a watchdog for society. I did not feel I was doing that in my work as a journalist,” she relates. Cupcea was influenced by the long-reads and storytelling approach popular in journalism abroad, and she no longer wanted to be confined to the news stories of her day job.

With a colleague from journalism school, Cupcea decided to found **Oameni și Kilometri** (People and Kilometres) and applied for a start-up EED grant.

Cupcea brings an anthropological approach to her stories. She spends days, weeks even, with her subjects, drawing out their stories and building a relationship with them so she can get a real understanding of their lives.

One of ***Oameni și Kilometri’s*** most widely read stories, one that was nominated for a prestigious prize in Moldova, was about a little boy called Gosa. “I originally went to the village to meet a mother with three children at a local boarding school. She only lived a couple of kilometres away but she never visited them. I wanted to meet her to try to understand how she could abandon her children like that.”

“On the way, I met another mother, Maria, with her three-year-old son. I asked her why her son, Gosa, was not in kindergarten and she told me that he had been excluded because they were too poor. I visited Gosa and Maria every week for three months, documenting their story and eating with them in their tiny house. People got to hear that a journalist was visiting the village every week. The principal of the school called, claiming that Gosa had only been excluded due to a quarantine in the school – although I was quickly able to find out that this was a lie. It was a pure case of discrimination based on poverty.”

Cupcea describes the story as a “bombshell” when it was published. “Nothing like this had ever been written before. It was such sensitive material. The story had a huge impact. Even today, people are still asking after Gosa and they want to send him gifts at Christmas time.” ■



EED ALUMNUS

## MOLD-STREET – THE LEADING MOLDOVAN PORTAL FOR ECONOMIC NEWS

A lawyer and investigative journalist, Eugeniu Rîbca is one of the three founders of **Mold-Street**, an internet portal that was set up in 2014 and is now well-established as Moldova's leading source of economic news. EED was **Mold-Street's** first funder, providing the finance to develop the internet platform that it continues to use to this day and covering the rental costs of the organisation's first office space.

The portal published its first articles in July 2014, and in November 2014 it was one of several key media outlets to break the story of the so-called Russian Laundromat and the \$1 billion embezzlement, which saw 14 percent of Moldova's GDP stolen from the National Bank of Moldova's reserves. Today, **Mold-Street** has between 45,000 and 50,000 unique visitors per month, and it is the resource of choice for Romanian-speaking Moldovans in management and leadership positions. It is also the only media outlet in Moldova to have a subscription-based readership model. ■



© Dinu Bubulici

## NEWSMAKER

### A trusted source of information for Moldova's Russian speakers

Galina Vasileva is managing director of one of Moldova's most admired independent media institutions. Over its five years of operation, the Russian-language internet portal **Newsmaker** has built a reputation as one of the few media houses that report what is really happening in Moldova. It now has a readership of around 1.8 million people.

The softly spoken Vasileva is quite clear about why **Newsmaker** is so successful. "From the very beginning, our task at **Newsmaker** has always been to explain what is happening, why it is happening, and who benefits. Unlike many other outlets, we are not controlled by political or economic interests. Our journalists cover stories from all angles. We ask the opinions of experts from different backgrounds and politics, and we aim to give a voice to all sides of the story. We describe situations as they are and then we analyse them," she explains.

This has been **Newsmaker's** approach from the outset. Vladimir Soloviev, its former managing director, explains that when he initially had the idea to set up the news portal, he was determined that it would adhere to the highest editorial standards: "We wanted to write real stories, not rumours. We wanted to write investigative articles that were not influenced by political interests and not confined by geopolitical limits."

The media platform quickly became an important one for activists, independent analysts, and whistleblowers, and an important counter-balance to domestic and Russian-led disinformation within the country. ■



© Dinu Bubulici

## Using new technology to keep independent media alive in Turkey



©Furkan Üstel

Medyascope

### FEATURE

**Independent media outlet *Medyascope* uses online live-broadcasting to provide Turkish audiences with an alternative to the government-friendly mainstream media.**

In September 2019, the *Financial Times* published its inaugural ‘Future 25: Middle East’ list of innovative start-ups. Among them was Turkish independent media outlet ***Medyascope***.

Launched four years ago, ***Medyascope*** now notches up an impressive three million views a month on its YouTube site, or 100 million watch-time minutes.

***Medyascope’s*** editor-in-chief, Ruşen Çakır, is a well-known and outspoken Turkish journalist and commentator with a career spanning 35 years. A few years ago, while still working for the prominent Turkish daily *Habertürk*, he noticed that his column inches were being cut. In the run-up to the June 2015 parliamentary elections, *Habertürk* sent him to cover the campaign in Anatolia. None of his reports were published.

That was when he discovered the power of Periscope – a video-streaming app that can be used to make live broadcasts from a mobile phone or tablet. “I covered the

campaign myself through Periscope in Anatolia,” says Çakır. “When I came back, I continued making ‘pirate broadcasts’ from my office at *Habertürk*.”

These broadcasts attracted attention, and soon Çakır was approached to set up what is today the media platform ***Medyascope***, where he now works full-time. Today it has 40 regular staff as well as many freelancers and volunteers.

The outlet reports the news, produces video opinion pieces, and hosts weekly political discussion and thematic shows on social issues such as LGBT rights.

Local NGOs and associations also contribute to ***Medyascope’s*** content, and broadcast uncensored programmes from its studios. The outlet features regular contributors from the Kurdish regions and from the border regions with Syria.

In an increasingly polarised Turkish media climate, ***Medyascope*** is trying to be different. “We are not pro-government but we are not opposition – we invite people on our programmes because they are specialists, not because they are from the opposition. We do old-fashioned journalism – we are journalists, not activists,” says Çakır. ■



©Sova News

## A RUSSIAN-LANGUAGE NEWS SERVICE IN GEORGIA

*Sova News* is a Russian-language media portal that provides Russian speakers in Georgia and the breakaway republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia with a new independent source of news. Such news coverage has become particularly important in recent times, with the outbreak of protests in the summer of 2019 and worsening relations between Russia and Georgia. Over 20 percent of the Georgian population do not speak Georgian, yet there are few independent Russian-language news outlets in the region.

The young journalists who make up the team of *Sova News* were determined to provide an alternative independent voice for this population. Set up as a voluntary project, with EED funding the portal has now become more professionalised and includes a wide range of articles, with entertainment pieces as well as news content that appeal to a wider audience. *Sova News* has launched a YouTube talk show, an innovative format for Georgia, where it conducts interviews with prominent people on subjects such as politics, social issues, and culture. Over 32,000 people now tune into this YouTube channel every day. ■



©Sova News



©Sova News



## PEOPLE OF THE YEAR

### EED MEDIA GRANTEES FROM KYRGYZSTAN RECEIVE AWARDS

Dina Maslova won the Kyrgyz Information Technologies Forum (KIT) award for Best Social IT Project, for *Bilesinbi.kg*. The Kyrgyz-language platform is aimed at young people and provides information about topics such as sexual and reproductive health, gender-related and sexual violence, and forced marriage – topics not often openly discussed in Kyrgyz society.

Kyrgyz internet TV start-up *Govori.TV* won Central Asia's MediaCAMP award in the 'Power and Society' category, for its investigative report on the role played by Kyrgyz officials in securing the release of a high-profile mafia criminal in 2013 and organising his flight from the country by claiming that he was seriously ill. EED funding helped transform Govori.TV from a news portal to Kyrgyzstan's first internet TV station. ■

# 3. Civic activism and participation

By enabling fledgling, grassroots, and innovative forms of civil participation, EED bolsters community development and facilitates people to contribute to and influence their community and society. EED supports civic activism in a flexible manner by adapting to local needs and rapidly changing contexts.

## OVERVIEW OF EED APPROACH

EED seeks primarily to support groups and activists unable, or without the capacity or necessary experience, to access other democracy-support programmes, but with a guiding principle of investing in transformational ideas and the people behind them.

Support includes very different types of grants, ranging from strengthening engagement of youth and women in political processes, to civic platforms that provide input on reform agendas. Initiatives promoting civic activism and participation represent around one third of EED's funding portfolio.

## EED SUPPORT IN 2019

Many initiatives supported this year target youth and encourage young people to become more involved in pushing for positive change in their communities. Others focus on reform in the education system. Elections were also the impetus for activities designed to promote political and civic engagement and to engage marginalised groups or communities. This year has also seen some new steps into civic activism related to the environment. ■



## BUILDING DEMOCRACY AT HOME

*The Citizen's Enquiry\** is an independent think-tank that works to help ensure a smoother transition to democracy within the country in which it operates. It raises awareness among both citizens and public and political officials of the country's ongoing democratic shortcomings, and it is seeking to develop a new cadre of young activists who can make real contributions to policy analysis and development.

The think-tank works with activists from across the political spectrum, as well as with young researchers and academics. Through training and mentorships, it helps them to combine their academic knowledge and political activism to develop innovative and critical ideas and to provide policy advice to non-governmental actors, the government, and civic institutions.

It organises workshops and training, and hosts a website where it publishes relevant analytical material and research-based articles, and it works to develop partnerships with similar organisations at home and abroad to share best practices and encourage dialogue and international exposure for these young activists. EED support enabled the think-tank to set up its operations and cover operational costs during this initial period. ■

*\*This organisation's name has been changed to protect the identity of the grantee.*







Iryna Chernysh, Save Dnipro

## SaveEcoBot: A NEW PUBLIC AIR-QUALITY MONITORING TOOL IN UKRAINE

Air pollution is a major concern in the industrialised areas of southeastern Ukraine such as in the region around Dnipro. Despite it posing significant public health risks to the local population, there are currently no legal requirements to measure pollution levels.

Concerned at the effect this pollution was having on her family, Iryna Chernysh, founder of the NGO **Save Dnipro**, decided to take matters into her own hands. She and a number of likeminded individuals conducted advocacy campaigns forcing the management of the local thermal power plant to upgrade their outdated air-purification facilities.

The team developed an innovative civil tech tool – the **SaveEcoBot** chat bot – as Ukraine’s first free public air-quality monitoring tool. The application is now being used by over 13,000 people throughout Ukraine; it offers real-time monitoring of air pollution in cities around the country and provides access to environmental data collected by the national government agencies. ■



## PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT: A GRASSROOTS INITIATIVE

*Environmento\** is a grassroots initiative of activists determined to protect the environment of their town, located in a region with high levels of pollution. Environmental concerns are typically at the bottom of local authorities’ list of priorities, and high levels of corruption within local government mean that business interests often prevail over ecological concerns when planning decisions are taken. The group is determined to preserve their region’s natural heritage and to develop an awareness of ecological issues among the local community. Environmental protests in the region have already attracted large crowds, including people who are not usually engaged in civic activism.

*Environmento* is working to build on this momentum and, with EED support, it is creating a network of environmental organisations that can work more effectively together. It is also organising events to raise awareness of key environmental topics such as recycling, water pollution, and climate change, and it is developing a series of videos to support this work. ■

*\*This organisation’s name has been changed to protect the identity of the grantee.*



## MUNATHARA: HISTORIC DEBATES ENERGISE TUNISIA'S ELECTION

In 2019, televised debates were a feature of the Tunisian presidential election for the first time in the country's history. Over several evenings, candidates in the first round of the election addressed millions of Tunisians who tuned in at home, online, or in the country's ubiquitous cafes. Social media buzzed with the debate hashtag #TunisieDebat.

A record 6.4 million viewers watched the showdown on 9 October between run-off contenders Nabil Karoui, freshly released from custody, and the eventual winner, lawyer and professor Kais Saïed.

The success of the debates was in part due to *Munathara*, a pan-Arab initiative specialised in organising debates, particularly among youth. *Munathara* partnered with Tunisian national TV to assist in elaborating the debate concept, preparing the set, and training the journalists involved.

EED supported *Munathara* in 2014 with core funding to help consolidate and staff its office in Tunis. The grant also covered training and outreach activities. ■



©ADL

Fatma Elandoulsi of ADL

## MOBILISING COMMUNITIES TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY SERVICES

Crumbling buildings, poor sanitary facilities, and inadequate sports fields are the typical conditions faced by primary-school children in Tunisia, particularly in the more disadvantaged inland regions.

Under Tunisia's post-revolution decentralisation reforms, citizens are expected to be involved in local decision-making, but putting this into practice in areas with high levels of unemployment, poverty, and illiteracy is challenging.

With EED funding, the *Tunisian Association for Rights and Freedoms (ADL)* is partnering with local civil society groups in northwestern Tunisia to push for change. *ADL* is helping people to navigate the local administration and lobby for repairs and upgrades to their local primary schools, as part of its wider efforts to push for open government and make local authorities accountable to their communities. ■



©ADL

ADL school



©Isabella Sargsyan

Avnik Melikan & Aramays Avetisyan of Political Dialogue

## BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN POLITICIANS AND CITIZENS IN ARMENIA

Set up after the 2018 Velvet Revolution, **The Compass for Political Dialogue** is focused on building new partnerships and political dialogue between politicians and civil society. In this post-revolutionary period, the organisation’s founders felt that the time was right to engage with people, so that they could find their political voice and play a greater role in defining the political agenda. According to Avnik Melikian, she and co-founder Aramays Avetisyan wanted to bring politics closer to the people, empowering them to participate actively in democratic processes and ensure that politics was more ideas-based than simply a matter of political gain and personal interest. They developed an interactive website that provided a visual representation of the country’s political parties and their policies, giving a new transparency to the Armenian political system. They also engage with civil society and political parties throughout the country to promote discussion on key public policy issues. ■



©Isabella Sargsyan

Political Dialogue team



## PEOPLE OF THE YEAR

### TURKISH ACTIVIST RECEIVES FELLOWSHIP FOR WORK ON LAND ISSUES

Yaşar Adanalı, from the EED-supported **Center for Spatial Justice** in Istanbul, was awarded a fellowship with the Bertha Challenge program. The **Center for Spatial Justice** is a non-profit organisation working towards fairer, more democratic, ecological urban and rural spaces.

The fellowship is a new global initiative of the Bertha Foundation – which supports activists, storytellers, and lawyers working to bring about social and economic justice and human rights for all – to explore the issue of equitable access to land and housing. Adanalı was selected from among 130 applications from 47 countries. ■

# 4. Human rights activism and monitoring

Supporting human rights activists based on needs on the ground, particularly in repressive environments where other donors have difficulty operating, constitutes a major part of the EED portfolio.

## OVERVIEW OF EED APPROACH

EED works to ensure that the voices of campaigners, community activists, lawyers, journalists, and other human rights defenders are heard and not marginalised. Numerous initiatives fostering human rights advocacy, education and awareness, research, and monitoring have benefited from EED's coaching and grants.

## EED SUPPORT IN 2019

The ongoing conflict in Syria and the precarious situation of Syrian refugees continues to be one of the major focuses of human rights initiatives supported by EED. EED supports organisations in countries neighbouring Syria that advocate for refugee rights and provide refugees access to legal advice and other support. EED has also funded initiatives to monitor and document human rights violations within Syria, as well as in other conflict areas. ■



## DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYERS

Armenia was not an easy place to practise human rights law prior to the 2018 revolution, and human rights lawyers frequently faced disbarment, court-induced sanctions, defamation in the media, and physical attacks. While the situation has improved in recent months, sweeping judicial reform has yet to take place and lawyers still face many challenges.

**The Helsinki Association for Human Rights (HAHR)**, now headed by Nina Karapetyants, is one of Armenia's most prominent human rights organisations, and since its inception 22 years ago, it has developed a reputation for campaigning about lawyers' ongoing difficulties and bringing them to international attention. This work has empowered affected lawyers to speak up, helped build support networks for them within civil society, and put pressure on Armenia's Chamber of Advocates to undertake internal democratic reform. EED support has enabled HAHR to develop strategically, develop more communication channels with the general public, and physically secure their office.

HAHR recently carried out case studies on independent lawyers facing persecution, and it continues to monitor hearings of high-profile cases and disciplinary cases. Recent successes include a prominent campaign highlighting the excessive fines faced by lawyers, and a campaign against draft legislation to increase the taxation of advocates that would have increased the cost of legal advice to citizens. ■



## PEOPLE OF THE YEAR

Three journalists from the EED-supported Armenian organisation *Journalists for Human Rights*, Rosa Vardanyan, Rafik Yengibaryan and Marine Kharatyan, received awards from the Armenian Justice Minister, Rustam Badasyan, for their articles on human rights topics. ■

## EED FACILITATES PARTICIPATION OF ACTIVISTS AT VENICE SCHOOL OF HUMAN RIGHTS

EED sponsored the participation of a number of its grantees and partners on courses at the *Venice School of Human Rights* throughout the year. Five partners/grantees attended a course on human rights in April, two from Turkey and Montenegro attended a specialised course on cinema and human rights advocacy in August, while three partners from Syria attended a course on election observation in November. As well as deepening the activists' understanding of human rights from practitioners and academics, the courses provided them with an invaluable international networking opportunity. ■

## SYRIAN REFUGEES: IN LEGAL LIMBO IN LEBANON

Eight years from the onset of the conflict, the Syrian refugees who fled to Lebanon are feeling increasingly unwelcome. Numbering more than one million, they are living in a country with a population of less than seven million and where the sectarian balance remains delicate. Despite the obvious dangers, there is mounting pressure on the refugees to go home.

In times like these, refugees' rights are easily trampled on. According to Mohammad Hasan of the **Access Center for Human Rights**, residence applications are often rejected, which puts refugees at risk of arrest, detention, and forced deportation.

While various organisations are active in the Beqaa Valley, where most of the Syrian refugees now live, the situation is more difficult for those in the more marginalised areas of the north and south of the country. Hasan notes that, because of the political risks, very few local actors work with refugees, and refugees are afraid to talk about their legal challenges.

Organisations working to defend refugees often take huge risks to do so; for this reason, we cannot name all of the EED-supported initiatives working on this issue. ■

# 5. Women’s civic and political participation

Driving change to ensure that women play a full role in the democratic process is a significant part of EED’s work and a cross-cutting issue that is taken into account across all initiatives. EED is strongly committed to developing gender equality in democracy-building and sponsors a large number of organisations that address women’s issues.

## OVERVIEW OF EED APPROACH

EED funds organisations, activists, and female leaders to advance political participation of women, empower women in democratic decision-making, tackle discrimination, and raise awareness of issues such as exploitation and violence against women. Around one quarter of all EED-funded initiatives include a specific component related to gender.

## EED SUPPORT IN 2019

As women’s engagement is a cross-cutting issue, many initiatives that include a focus on women can also be categorised under other thematic areas. The scope of EED’s support for women’s participation is therefore broader than the examples presented in this section. ■



## A VISION OF TOLERANCE AND CREATIVITY

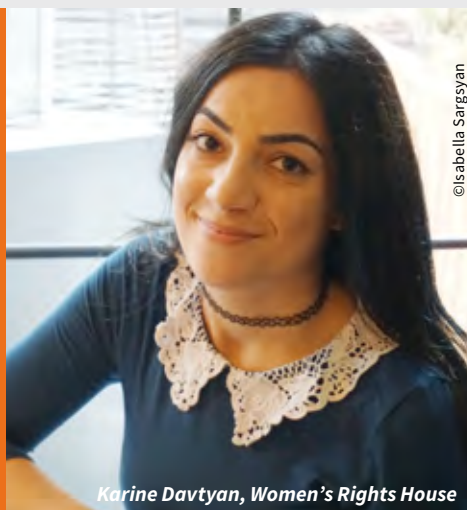
Tunisia’s *Free Sight Association* was inspired by the idea that vision should never be limited; there should always be space for tolerance and creativity. Set up by Arbia Jebali, a long-time campaigner for women’s rights, the organisation works in rural areas of Tunisia where, as noted by Jebali, despite some recent progress, there is, “a complete absence of women’s rights and violence – direct or indirect – still permeates women’s lives.”

The Free Sight Association mentors young people, particularly young women, on issues such as preventing violent extremism and violence against women. In recognition of the association’s expertise, the Tunisian Ministry of Women granted it a seat at the table of the steering committee of the National Action Plan (NAP) to implement *UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security* (UNSCR). Through its advocacy work, the association has succeeded in pushing the implementation of UNSCR 1325 to the top of the Tunisian Ministry of Women’s agenda. ■



EED ALUMNUS

## Empowering rural Armenian women for politics



©Isabella Sargsyan

Karine Davtyan, Women's Rights House

### FEATURE

**Karine Davtyan of Women's Rights House seeks to empower women in Gyumri, in north-west Armenia, and encourage them to participate in politics.**

One of the key demands of the Armenian Velvet Revolution was to ensure a more balanced approach to decision-making in both government and public life. Yet today, just one of the country's 17 government ministers is female, and the first women mayor, Diana Gasparyan, was only elected in 2018, in Armenia's fourth-largest city, Etchmiadzin. Women are often disadvantaged both economically and politically, particularly in regional areas outside the country's capital Yerevan, such as Gyumri, where patriarchal attitudes prevail. There are few opportunities for women to better themselves or to become leaders in their daily lives and to participate in politics.

When **Women's Rights House (WRH)** was founded, Davtyan had three clear objectives: to help protect women from domestic violence; to empower women to defend their rights, particularly educational and labour rights; and to promote women's participation in decision-making and governmental processes. The past two years have proven that there is huge demand for this work. WRH runs information programmes to educate women about their rights and about the harmful effects of domestic violence and abuse, as well as running self-care groups and English classes for the women and their daughters.

"More often than not, these women are ill-informed. They may know about physical abuse, but they have little notion about psychological or sexual abuse. They don't know their rights. We explain these rights to them. We give them the knowledge," Davtyan relates.

WRH also seeks to improve the employment situation for women. "It is difficult for young women to succeed in the labour market here," explains Davtyan. "While employment legislation exists, most employers just ignore the rules. Women are routinely paid less and they get poorer jobs... We give legal consultations to inform women about their rights under employment law, and about the mechanisms they can use to seek these rights."

The organisation recently ran a number of capacity-building workshops, inviting local politicians and civic activists to address local women and to share their skills and leadership knowledge, giving participants the tools they need to help solve problems within their own communities. A select number of workshop participants then implemented proposals to address some of their communities' most urgent needs. One of these, Amalya Khadunova, has opened an ecological playground for children in her village.

Davtyan and her colleagues are focused on the upcoming local elections in 2021. They want women to participate actively in these elections and to take on leadership roles in local councils. Perhaps one of WRH's participants might even become the next female mayor, following in the footsteps of Gasparyan. ■

### MUNTADA: LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX

Taboos about sex mean that many women in Palestine lack the basic knowledge they need to protect their health and rights. *Muntada*, an organisation that promotes sexual and reproductive rights as a base for social democratic change for women in Palestine, is a unique resource for Palestinian women. People can ask questions anonymously via its social media and website. To date, *Muntada* has answered more than 6,000 questions and has published a guidebook based on the questions and answers.

In 2014, EED awarded funding to *Muntada*, then a nascent organisation in the occupied Palestinian territories, to cover costs for its new office in Ramallah, as well as for awareness-raising courses in sexuality and sexual rights.

Five years on, *Muntada* is going from strength to strength. It has organised hundreds of training events and workshops across the West Bank and Jerusalem, developed new partnerships with community-based organisations, and expanded to other parts of the Arab world, holding regional training sessions in Tunisia for professionals and human rights activists. In 2019, the BBC featured *Muntada*'s work in a [video report](#). ■

 32%  
Initiatives with a gender component

# 6. Inclusive society, sexual orientation, and gender identity

Discrimination and exclusion on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity (SOGI) is a violation of human rights, but an unfortunate reality in many countries. In some places it is reinforced by legislation that restricts, harasses, or outright prohibits groups working on SOGI issues. EED's discreet support is crucial in such cases.

## OVERVIEW OF EED APPROACH

EED supports numerous initiatives in the field that seek to raise awareness of SOGI issues and empower activists to raise awareness in their communities about both the rights and the violation of rights of LGBT persons, counter widespread misconceptions, and help promote inclusion.

## EED SUPPORT IN 2019

Given the taboos that surround SOGI issues in many countries, EED provided funding to a number of initiatives that have found creative ways to approach the subject, including through the arts and historical research. ■

## SETTING THE STAGE FOR RESPECT OF TRANS RIGHTS

To say that transgender identity is taboo in Tunisia is an understatement. In a country where sexual orientation and gender identity are rarely openly discussed, finding creative ways to start the conversation is crucial.

The brainchild of Tunisian queer artist and LGBT activist Moncef Zahrouni, *TranStyX* is a play that tells the real-life stories of trans people living in Tunisia. Communicating their experiences to a wider public is a first step to greater tolerance and understanding and respect of their dignity and rights. Its title, *TranStyX* – combining 'trans' with the mythical river 'Styx' of the underworld – is full of metaphorical meaning about crossings between worlds. *TranStyX* takes its audience on a journey of understanding, showing them hidden realities and traversing cultural boundaries.

Supported by EED, **Zanooby**, a cultural association committed to promoting equality and non-discrimination, will produce the play, publish a book, and conduct a series of awareness-raising activities. ■



# Colonial legacy? The criminalisation of homosexuality in Tunisia

## FEATURE

**Tunisian human rights activist Ramy Khouili and Harvard human rights lawyer Daniel Levine-Spound publish a seminal report on Article 230, a colonial law criminalising sodomy in Tunisia, explaining how it was incorporated into the 1913 Tunisian penal code.**

Prior to the French colonial period, no mention of homosexuality can be found in Tunisian criminal law. Yet Article 230, which criminalises sodomy, was included in the 1913 Tunisian penal code and is still actively used by law enforcement in Tunisia to punish LGBT people.

In 2015, when Levine-Spound first met Khouili, the pair were struck by the increase in violent police arrests and prosecutions for alleged violations of Article 230, a piece of legislation that had rarely been used previously. One of the most high-profile arrests at this time was of the ‘Kairouan Six’, a group of six men accused of receiving information about homosexuals and using a house in Kairouan for ‘sodomy’. Curious as to where the law originated, the two men consulted legal experts and historians to try to find out more.

Khouili notes that there is a tendency for the criminalisation of sodomy to be pegged to sharia law, but in their report, they explain that the legal influences of Article 230 are unclear.

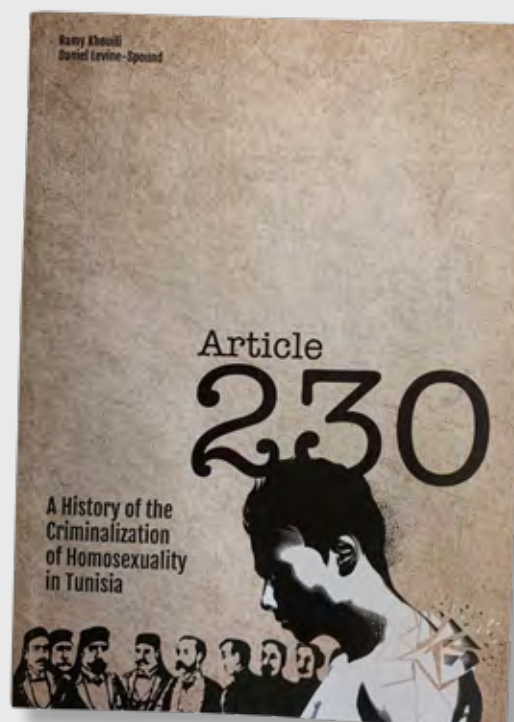
They found the first-ever mention of Article 230 in a handwritten note in the margins of the 1911 preliminary draft of the penal code – unattributed to any members of the eight-member commission that produced it. While this commission included two sharia *cadis* (judges), it is likely that their presence was just a formality. The code was drafted in French rather than in Arabic, and the primary source used to produce it was the 1810 French Code, an indication that there was little influence of sharia in the drafting process.



Levine-Spound and Khouili argue that Article 230 is thus a pure product of colonialism, a relic of French rule with little relationship with Tunisia itself.

Khouili believes that this report is an important response to conservative voices, “convinced that homosexuality is a Western import and that its criminalisation is anchored in the Tunisian legal system and Tunisian values”.

He believes that the intrinsic value of the report is that it provides LGBT activists with evidence to help them strengthen their arguments and enhance their advocacy, noting that, “the report contributes to the discussion by showing how the criminalisation of sodomy took place... you cannot decriminalise it unless you deconstruct why it occurred in the first place.” ■





## BELGRADE PRIDE – NOT GIVING UP

Belgrade Pride's history is a difficult one, marred by violent attacks on protesters, counter-protests from intolerant groups, and bans on the event taking place. This year saw the biggest march since 2014, with 2,000 people marching under the slogan 'I'm not giving up' and demanding the adoption of a law on same-sex partnerships and gender identity.

The organising body behind Belgrade Pride is a group of Serbian LGBT civil society organisations. In 2017, they established the **Pride Info Centre**, a temporary space to promote Pride Week. The Pride Info Centre then transformed into a community hub that promotes LGBT rights all year round through film screenings, lectures, and workshops, and also provides free legal and psychosocial services. EED bridge-funding ensured continuity during the Pride parade period, as further donor funding was pending.

Members of the European Pride Organisers Association recently voted for Belgrade Pride to host **EuroPride 2022** – a landslide victory for the Serbian group, which won 71 percent of the vote. This event will be an opportunity for Belgrade Pride to raise awareness about the human rights situation of LGBT persons in Serbia and the Western Balkans. ■



## Transgender activist faces parliament – and death threats



Lilit Martirosyan

### FEATURE

**Lilit Martirosyan became the first member of Armenia's LGBT community to take to a parliamentary podium when she condemned discrimination against transgender people at a session of the parliament's Committee on Human Rights in 2019.**

Martirosyan described a community that has been “tortured, raped, kidnapped, subjected to physical violence, burned, immolated, knifed, subjected to murder attempts, killed, emigrated, and robbed.” A video of her speech was shared worldwide.

Her speech also sparked a violent backlash and protests, and there were calls for Martirosyan, her family, and her colleagues to be tortured and killed – and for the **Right Side Human Rights Defender** NGO that she leads to be closed. Personal information, including her home address, was published, forcing her to move house and to temporarily leave the country.

### HATE CRIMES, HATE SPEECHES AND DISCRIMINATION

Speaking about the experience of transgender people in Armenia, Martirosyan says: “As a transgender

community, we all constantly face hate crimes, hate speeches, and discrimination. Armenia is a heteronormative society that cannot understand our gender identity. For me, a transgender woman, when I openly speak about our problems, they want to kill me and to hurt me.”

EED support has enabled **Right Side Human Rights Defender** to develop into a strong community hub that protects and speaks on behalf of marginalised voices in Armenia, as nationalist and xenophobic rhetoric gains momentum. The NGO works to raise awareness of transgender issues, campaigning on social media and working with local journalists, as well as equipping activists with the skills needed to defend their rights.

Martirosyan and her colleagues can already speak about some achievements: “Thanks to our passport-name protest, it is now easy for transgender people to change their names on passports. This was previously impossible.” ■

# 7. Arts and culture

Art and cultural activities can provide an unconventional yet effective vehicle for democratic change. EED assists individuals or initiatives that use traditional or innovative artistic expression to promote democratic values and freedom of expression.

## OVERVIEW OF EED APPROACH

EED supports a range of initiatives, from a platform for artists and intellectuals to promote freedom of speech, to theatre groups and cultural hubs for marginalised youth groups. By stepping in when other international donors are unable to do so, EED assists activists to engage in civic participation through cultural activities.

## EED SUPPORT IN 2019

This year, EED supported various cultural centres and publications, including online magazines and forums, theatre, and café-style venues for young people. These organisations use music, cinema, and the arts as a way of engaging audiences on democracy and human rights topics, building networks of young people and building trust between disparate groups. Organisations that support the rights of artists and filmmakers against censorship have also been funded. EED has also provided assistance to publishing houses that promote the literature and culture of minority communities. ■

## EMPOWERING THE INDEPENDENT FILM COMMUNITY AGAINST THREATS TO FREE EXPRESSION

*Altyazi* ('Subtitle') started as a cinema fanzine back in 2001, says Senem Aytacı, one of its editors. *Altyazi*'s members gradually became involved in activism, first protesting at the redevelopment of an iconic cinema theatre. Later followed a realisation that the political atmosphere was becoming more difficult. "Pressure and censorship were being felt in the cultural field more and more," explains Aytacı. Censorship often involves indirect methods, rather than institutions directly banning films; complaints are received from anonymous individuals referring to laws against insulting the president, the use of terrorist propaganda, or immoral offence. Self-censorship is also a growing problem. "A lot of people are in exile, not making films. People are afraid, fatigued, not struggling against it," says Aytacı. "So, we decided to do it, officially, as a film magazine community." Thus, *Altyazi* was reborn as an association. EED not only provided funding but also gave advice on how to set up the organisation and design projects. The new organisation is focusing on issues such as censorship, gender equality, and freedom of expression. The magazine continues, but there is the sense that it serves a wider purpose than before, focusing on the politics of free film culture. ■



## THE DANTE THEATRE COMPANY\*: FREE THINKING IN AN ENVIRONMENT OF CENSORSHIP AND POLITICAL INTERFERENCE

Cultural organisations can play an important role in repressive regimes, as artists can often express the reality of life in ways that would not otherwise be possible. EED funds a number of cultural groups who provide an important niche for free thinking in environments where censorship and political interference have silenced other voices.

*The Dante Theatre Company* is just one such initiative. Specialising in protest art, a movement produced by activists who seek to form social consciousness and to use art as a way to express dissent, the company puts on interactive plays and performances that focus on human rights and injustice. It faces constant pressure and harassment from the authorities and has had to move premises due to political pressure. EED provides core funding to cover operational costs and has also helped cover the costs of the theatre's performances. ■

\*The organisation's name has been changed to protect the identity of the grantee

# Using literature to break down barriers between Turkish and Armenian communities

## FEATURE



Lora Sari, Aras

**The world's only bilingual Armenian-Turkish publishing house, Aras, has introduced Armenian literature, history, and culture to a Turkish audience and provides children of both communities with a common literary experience.**

Literary editor Lora Sari barely remembers any story books that she read as a child in her native Armenian language. This seems surprising for someone so passionate about literature, until she explains why: “There were basically only textbooks available that had really short, didactic stories and no illustrations.”

The situation is hardly better today. “There is a real gap for Armenian-language children's books,” she says. The Istanbul-based Armenian publishing house **Aras**, where Sari works, has an idea that it hopes will not only fill this need, but will also create a shared childhood experience for children from the Turkish and Armenian communities.

### HIPPO – CHILDREN'S BOOKS WITH A DIFFERENCE

The publishing house has recently launched ‘Hippo’, a children's book imprint that publishes high-quality, illustrated children's books in both Turkish and Armenian editions. Hippo books are designed to fight stereotypes and tackle social issues such as gender and minority rights.

The first Hippo book, *Jill and the Dragon*, translated from English, features a female protagonist with modern ideas – not only about her own role but about traditional children's storytelling.

The launch of Hippo is part of a wider strategy to transform **Aras**. Despite its 25-year history as the only bilingual Turkish-Armenian publishing house in the world, it has never been profitable. While **Aras** aims to bring Armenian culture, history, and literature to a wider audience and to break down cultural barriers through its Turkish translations, Sari admits that the audience in Turkey for its books is limited.

Sari is confident that its new selection of beautifully illustrated books with original contemporary stories will stand out as unique among Turkish-language children's books as well. **Aras** plans to release one new Hippo book per month.

Sari also hopes that Hippo will be able to transform the fortunes of **Aras**, particularly if it manages to break into the lucrative market of school booklists. EED has provided a grant to **Aras** to support core costs while the publisher develops the Hippo imprint.

**Aras's** catalogue also includes more political books, including on the Armenian genocide, which Sari sees as important in breaking taboos and promoting free expression. Such topics remain controversial in Turkey, especially in the current political climate. She cites this climate as **Aras's** biggest challenge in reaching wider audiences.

Sari proudly shows off the second finished children's book – *Happiness is a Fox* – a story from Lithuania about friendship, dreams, and happiness. As Aras takes a leap into this new and ambitious venture, perhaps, for **Aras**, happiness will in fact turn out to be a Hippo. ■

# 8. Youth

Providing young people with the tools and knowledge to engage in civic activism and create a better future for themselves and their countries is an important aspect of EED support and a cross-cutting issue that features across many initiatives. Investing in youth is particularly important as a way of fostering democratic culture in future generations.

## OVERVIEW OF EED APPROACH

Youth-centred civic engagement initiatives include a range of innovative, catalytic, and start-up projects ranging from training for young people as effective leaders and opening space for youth empowerment and democratic governance, to tackling political disaffection and promoting inclusion through sports and culture.

## EED SUPPORT IN 2019

New initiatives approved for EED funding in 2019 included debates and discussion forums to encourage the participation of youth in upcoming electoral processes and activities to engage youth in marginalised regions as agents of change in their own communities. ■

## THE KISS OF LIFE FOR AN ABANDONED SPACE IN KOSOVO

Kosovo has the youngest population in Europe, with over 50 percent of people under the age of 25. The country's educational system remains highly politicised, young people have few employment opportunities, and many see no future beyond emigration. There are also no communal places where they can meet up and express their creativity.

In the summer of 2016, a group of young Kosovars and international volunteers spent 10 days refurbishing an abandoned warehouse on the outskirts of Prishtina that previously belonged to the public heating company Termokos. With the aim of creating a non-commercial social space for young people, they created the first community-run centre in Kosovo, which they named *Termokiss*. In October of that year, *Termokiss* held a huge fundraising concert, their first public event and their only paid event to date. It attracted over 800 people, and they raised enough money to fix the structure's roof. A further fundraising campaign among the diaspora provided funding to repair other parts of the building.

Nearly four years later, *Termokiss* is now a thriving community centre. It provides a venue for art exhibitions, movie screenings, children's classes, cultural events, concerts, charity events, lectures, and even flea markets. *Termokiss* has created a rare space for youth in Kosovo to convene and be civically engaged, and to imagine a future for themselves in Pristina. With EED support, the centre has now added a co-working space, a kitchen, a library, and a garden, as well as a performance space with enhanced acoustics to host local and international musicians. The concept of the space has also evolved since it was first set up, and a new generation is now running this community centre, bringing new energy and ideas. This generational change is at the core of the *Termokiss* concept. ■





Weekly youth leader training session



Aduhallah, Sudani youth leader during practice



Sawiyan Partnership Class

## YOUTH EMPOWERMENT THROUGH SKATEBOARDING

**7Hills** for Social Development was founded by a group of skateboarders passionate about social change and improving the lives of impoverished youth in Jordan. There are over 745,000 refugees in the country, the majority of them Syrian, as well as large numbers of Iraqi, Yemeni, Sudanese, and Somali refugees. These refugees live predominately in urban areas, where there are few opportunities for leisure or social networking activities for young people, which in turn creates challenges for social cohesion among the country's diverse populations. Few young people are engaged in civil society, and few play sport or are involved in cultural organisations.

The founders of **7Hills** are convinced that sport can improve these young people's lives, and they are using skateboarding to encourage civic participation and social cohesion in the heart of downtown Amman. They constructed a skatepark in the city centre, where they now hold popular skateboarding classes for refugees and other marginalised youth of ten different nationalities.

Not content with merely providing a sporting outlet for these youths, **7Hills** is also running a youth leadership programme through skateboarding. Participants are coached to become skateboard instructors, and they are encouraged to take responsibility for classes and for the upkeep of the skatepark and the equipment. One of their weekly highlights is the girls-only class for refugees and local girls, organised with another NGO, Reclaim Childhood, which aims to use skateboarding to empower local women. ■



## AN ALTERNATIVE SOURCE OF NEWS FOR THE COUNTRY'S YOUTH

Marc\* is among a group of young activists and journalists who run a popular website for their city's youth. The website covers the issues that interest young people, such as local politics, civil society issues, and demonstrations. In an environment where the government controls most official media outlets, social media and the web offer the only alternative to official discourse.

Marc and his colleagues are determined to expand their readers' horizons, to contribute to civic awareness-raising, and to counteract the effects of disinformation and censorship. With EED seed-funding, the organisation has now moved into a small office and has expanded its coverage to include photo-reportages, interview material, and video and live-streaming. The website is now an important source of information for local youth, with tens of thousands consulting it each month. ■

*\*This organisation's name has been changed to protect the identity of the grantee.*



36%

Initiatives with a youth component





# Results and learning

Evaluation is an important tool to demonstrate the achievement of results. Monitoring and evaluating results is important not only for transparency and accountability but also to ensure continual improvement through learning.

## MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING

**EED was established to contribute to democratisation processes by providing ‘gap-filling’, flexible, un-bureaucratic, and demand-driven support. The Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning System (MEL) has been designed to support this specific approach.**

The information it provides on implementation progress and results achieved is used to:

- inform strategic decision-making processes and operational practice, and help optimise EED’s ability to respond effectively to emerging changes (opportunities or threats);
- account for the resources spent and progress realised to EED’s stakeholders (e.g. Members of the Board of Governors and donors).

The MEL approach is tailored to the following key features of EED’s objectives and operations:

- the complexity of democracy-assistance and EED’s context-sensitive, risk-taking, and results-oriented approach
- the flexible, unbureaucratic, gap-filling, and demand-driven nature of EED’s assistance
- the clear mandate to take risks and operate in repressive and conflict-affected environments

EED follows an adaptive approach to democracy-assistance that involves experimentation, learning-by-doing, and the flexibility to adapt its assistance based on changes in the environments in which it operates and evolving insights into what type of activities work and under which circumstances. Funding decisions are made based on informed judgements about how to best foster EED’s objectives and respond to the (changing) contexts that EED operates in, rather than on detailed (long-term) planning efforts.

Other key principles and objectives underlying EED’s MEL approach are:

- Providing scope to grantees to be responsive to changing circumstances, to experiment, and to learn.
- Minimising the burden placed on EED grantees in terms of data collection and reporting requirements.
- Monitoring and assessing the operational and political risks of EED’s assistance carefully to mitigate risks and avoid – as much as possible – doing harm.
- Based on realistic expectations. Since democratisation processes are complex and EED operates in challenging environments, expectations about what type of MEL information can be generated need to be realistic and acknowledge existing limitations as to what can be measured.

## STRENGTHENING INTERNAL MEL CAPACITY

**In 2019, EED focused on further development of its internal MEL capacity. Detailed MEL guidelines have been developed that foster the systematic collection, analysis, and use of MEL data in order to facilitate evidence-informed decision-making, learning, and accountability processes. In addition, trainings have been organised to further develop the MEL capacity of EED staff and Country Consultants.**

## INTERNAL EVALUATIONS

EED carries out internal evaluations to capture results and distil lessons learned about the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of EED’s support. The evaluations can be location-based, reviewing the results of grants in a specific city, region, or country; thematically based, investigating how support to a specific area can bring about change in a sector; or to answer a question about a particular aspect of EED’s added value. ■



# Human resources and budget

EED's 30 core staff members in 2019 have worked and lived extensively in the countries where EED operates, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Moldova, Montenegro, Palestine, Russia, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine, and North Macedonia. They are nationals of 20 countries: Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Denmark, Egypt, France, Georgia, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Moldova, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Sweden, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom.

EED also runs a very successful traineeship programme, with 6-7 trainees supporting the work of the communications,

operations, and programme teams for one-year periods, and gaining significant experience and skills during this time. Many continue to work in the area of democracy support, with previous trainees now employed by organisations including Democracy Reporting International, European Institute for Peace, Prague Civil Society Centre, and the European Commission.

To date, 23 European countries that are members of the Board of Governors and the European Commission have contributed to the EED Budget. **Canada** also contributes through a special grant for Ukraine. ■



*Nakipelo Ukraine*

# Farewell to Elmar Brok MEP

On 19 June 2019, EED's Board of Governors bade farewell to Elmar Brok MEP, who had served as Chair since EED's formal establishment in 2012. At the Board's meeting held in Brussels, Jerzy Pomianowski, EED Executive Director, made a special presentation of an engraved silver plate to Brok, thanking him for his service to EED throughout the years.

In his farewell address, Brok noted that EED is now an important player in implementing the European Neighbourhood Policy, particularly given the democratic challenges faced by many countries

neighbouring the European Union. He noted the role played by the European Parliament in establishing EED, reminding members that the Board provides a unique platform where MEPs meet with representatives from member states, other states, European institutions, and civil society activists to discuss relevant issues.

Brok noted that he was delighted with the progress made by EED since that first Board meeting in 2012, and stated that EED has now established itself as an effective and relevant organisation, and as an important information resource on developments in the countries where it operates. ■



*Jerzy Pomianowski, EED Executive Director, presents an engraved silver plate to Elmar Brok MEP*

# EED initiatives in 2019 report and where to find them



\*All references to Kosovo in this report should be understood without prejudice to positions on status, and in line with United Nations Security Council resolution 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.



# EED funding partners

To date, 23 European countries that are members of the Board of Governors and the European Commission have contributed to the EED Budget. **Canada** also contributes through a special grant for Ukraine.



AUSTRIA



BELGIUM



BULGARIA



CYPRUS



CZECH REPUBLIC



DENMARK



ESTONIA



FINLAND



GERMANY



HUNGARY



IRELAND



LATVIA



LITHUANIA



LUXEMBOURG



THE NETHERLANDS



NORWAY



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