



Supporting People
Striving for Democracy

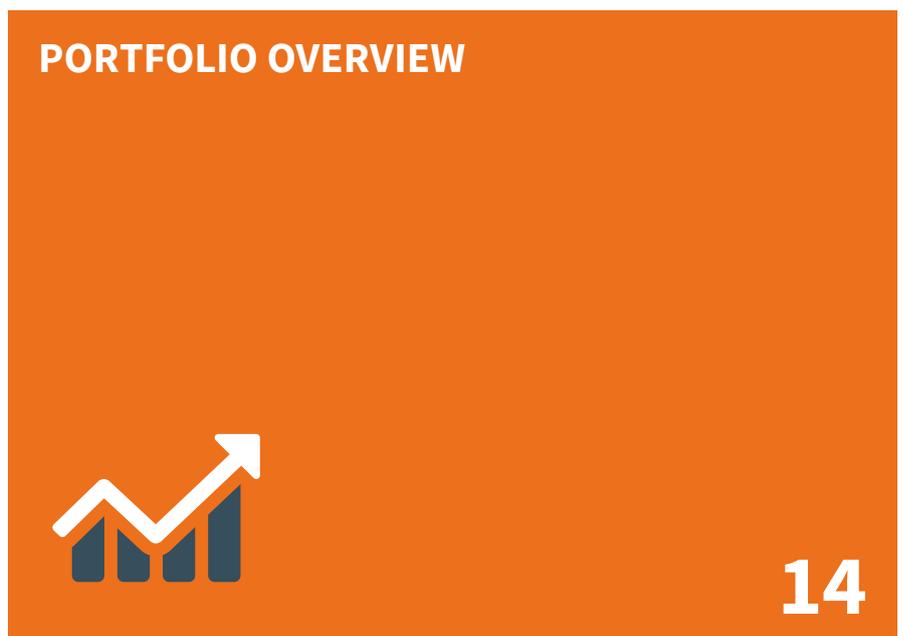
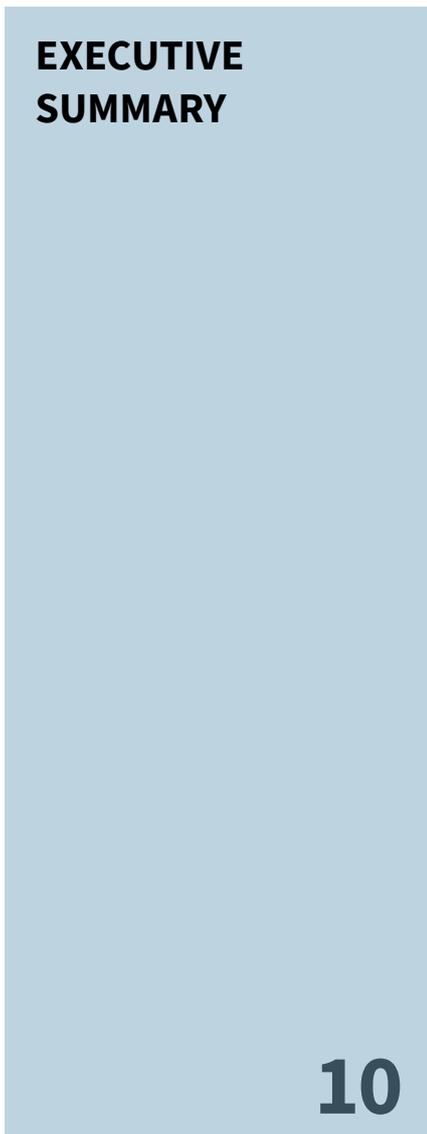
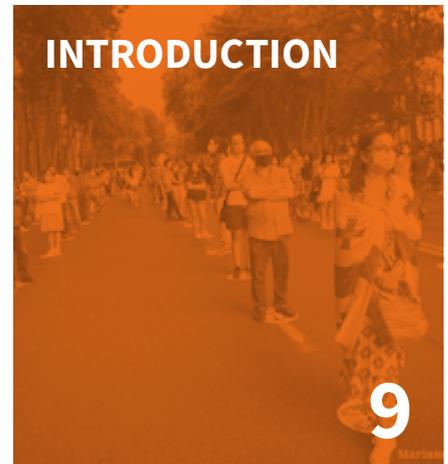
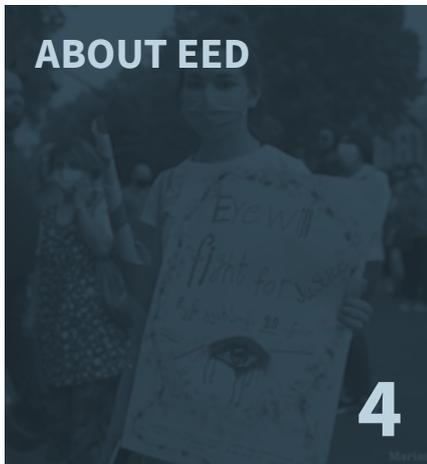
ANNUAL
REPORT
2020

EUROPEAN
ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY

Supporting People
Striving for Democracy

**ANNUAL
REPORT
2020**

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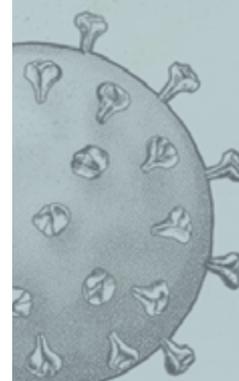
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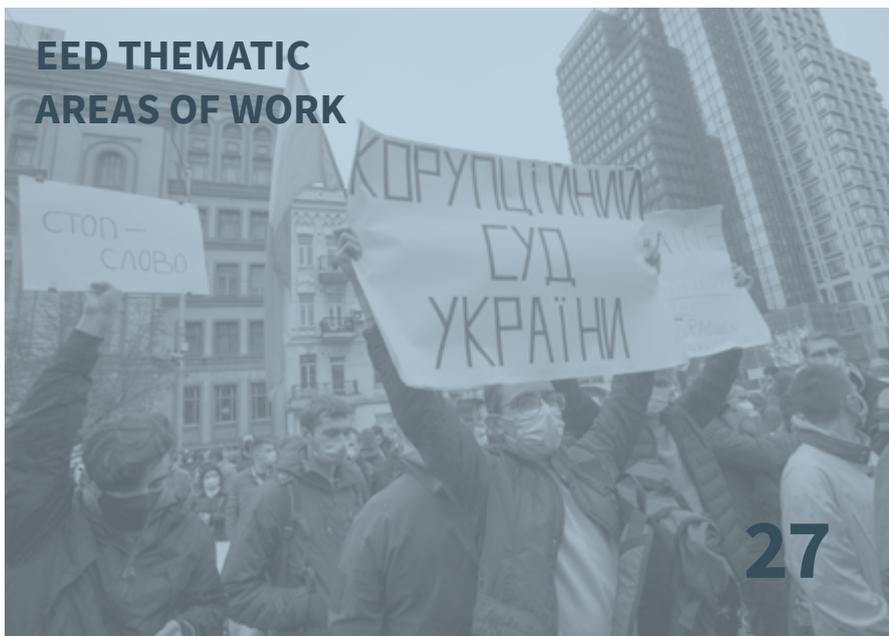
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ABOUT EED

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 persons designated by the European External Action Service, the European Commission, Norway, the UK, and civil society. Since its inception, EED has provided over 1,300 grants and has 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 to 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 to 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 (the Eastern Partnership, Western Balkans, Turkey, 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 European Neighbourhood depending on needs, available funds, and political priorities.

1340

grants approved
since EED's
establishment





Eye will
fight for justice

ჩვენ გვახსოვს 20 ივნისი

ნუკლით
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ვერს ამოშლი



If it's a "fuck you" our feelings are mutual
asual shootin at us alth INSTITUTIONAL
dilatational another day another protest lets
if you think we scared you



FOREWORD

Democracy faced enormous challenges in every part of the world in 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic has altered all of our lives in ways none of us could have foreseen, with many adverse effects on the democratic landscape. 2020 has been a year of worrying pushbacks, diminishing civic space, and a backsliding on democracy in a number of countries. Some governments have used the pandemic to pass emergency legislation to further limit democratic activities and silence those critical of their policies. It is noteworthy that in environments of weaker democratic institutions and practice, the pandemic has had a far greater impact on people's safety and freedoms.

In November, the European Union approved the 'Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024', which sets out the EU's ambitions and priorities in external relations. As noted in this document, all crisis situations test democracies, and the COVID-19 pandemic is no exception to this rule. The EU is determined to promote a global system for human rights and democracy, by protecting individuals and by helping to build resilient, inclusive, and democratic societies. An important part of this work is addressing the opportunities and challenges of new technologies. It is clear that an independent civil society, open civic space, and the protection of human rights defenders are essential in achieving these priorities.

The European Endowment for Democracy's work of supporting civil society actors and independent media throughout the European Neighbourhood and beyond complements other EU programmes in helping to achieve this ambition. Throughout the year, the value of EED's flexible and innovative grant-making model has been well demonstrated. As Chair of the European Endowment for Democracy's Board of Governors, I would like to highlight that EED provided significantly more grants this year than at any time in its seven-year history.

EED was at the forefront of the European response in Belarus after the fraudulent presidential election on 9 August 2020 triggered protests. The international community continues to be inspired by the brave people who have continued to protest, week after week, calling for new elections and a democratic future for their country, with women playing a leading role in the protest movement. The European Parliament awarded the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought 2020 to the democratic opposition in Belarus, represented by the Coordination Council.

Just as Belarusian activists have faced horrific repression, so too have activists in many other jurisdictions. It is sobering to reflect on the further deterioration of human rights in Egypt, where many activists are in prison. This remains a huge concern for Europe.

Similarly, after the wave of optimism during the large-scale protests in Algeria, the authorities have implemented a policy of systematic repression. Dissenting voices have been silenced throughout 2020, with even more restrictive measures introduced to limit freedom of expression and assembly. Likewise, in Turkey, there were crackdowns on dissent in 2020, with the adoption of legislation further limiting freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly.

The Nagorno-Karabakh war is a reminder of the many tensions that exist within the European Neighbourhood. Both sides suffered thousands of casualties and an avalanche of hate speech and propaganda during and after the conflict.

The shocking poisoning of the Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny and his imprisonment in January 2021 on his return to Moscow have initiated a debate about reassessing the EU's relations with Russia. The widespread detentions and disproportionate use of force against peaceful protesters that followed should be condemned.

There were also encouraging moments in 2020, not least the election of Maia Sandu as President of Moldova. As the first pro-democracy candidate to be elected, she offers hope for many in the region. We also witnessed a peaceful democratic change in Montenegro — the first shift in power there in 30 years.

As Joe Biden begins his term as the 46th President of the United States, we can expect that reliability and predictability will regain importance in US foreign policy. The planned Democracy Summit with other like-minded partners can provide new momentum for defending and upholding fundamental values. It is clear that the EU and the US will need to collaborate closely to build up a strong alliance of democracies worldwide.

Sustainable democracy can come about only by promoting and consolidating a system of checks and balances, where accountability for all sits at the heart of the system. This is why internationally co-ordinated support for civil society and independent media remains vital, and why the work of the European Endowment for Democracy and similar organisations will only become more important in the years to come.



David McAllister

Chair of EED's Board of Governors and Member of the European Parliament



Lebanese protesters, in the streets outside the national association of banks, express anger against their political leaders four days after a huge blast at the port of Beirut on 8 August 2020. © Ammar Abd Rabbo/Daraj Media

INTRODUCTION

2020 was a challenging year for the democracy support community. It was also a year of new experiences and lessons that are likely to shape the course of democracy support and the European Endowment for Democracy's operations and programmes for years to come. I am proud that EED continued its grant-making without interruption, despite us all being confined to our homes for many months of the year, with only remote interaction with friends and partners-in-need across the world. In fact, we provided more support than ever in EED's seven-year history.

In 2020, EED received 1,048 applications for support, 356 of which were funded, for a total of €28 million.

In a year dominated by COVID-19, this increase in activity is testimony to the success of our flexible and rapid funding model. EED was able to quickly adapt to the realities of lockdowns and curfews, and to respond to an increased number of requests for support. The increase is also a reflection of the challenges the pandemic has posed to democracy activists, as restrictive measures and emergency legislation aimed at combatting the virus have been used in some jurisdictions to further restrict democratic activities and silence critical voices.

In a year marked by the emergence of an unprecedented pro-democracy movement in Belarus, EED has closely engaged with activists since protests began. Today, as the protests evolve into a more long-term pro-democracy movement, the situation remains volatile. Increased repression against protesters and large numbers of arrests, including the detention of members of the Press Club Belarus, underline the challenges facing democracy activists.

There were many other worrying developments within the democracy arena in 2020, with the Nagorno-Karabakh war demonstrating the damage that conflict can do to democracy and civil society. EED partners on both sides of the war provided humanitarian assistance and ensured media coverage of the conflict, and a number of brave activists advocated peaceful positions that were highly unpopular within their respective nations. Just a few years after Armenia's Velvet Revolution, this is a dangerous time for that country's nascent democracy.

There were some positive democracy stories this year too, most noteworthy of which was the election of Maia Sandu as

President of Moldova, the first truly grassroots politician to have successfully run for office. Her win was also a victory for the many pro-democracy activists and media who challenged the government in recent years with their anti-corruption campaigns, election monitoring, independent policy research, and media campaigns.

The stories of EED's brave and courageous partners featured in this report are constantly inspiring. They give us hope that at this time of such great political change in the world, democratic advancement is still possible. There are many partners' stories that we cannot recount within these pages, as such brave activists are not safe in their home countries. We have tried to provide a taste of their work in the pseudonymous stories also included in this report.

A Palestinian partner, whose story is featured here, speaks of EED's flexibility as a game-changer, noting how we understood the transformative approach of her association. It is this focus on investing in transformational ideas and the people behind them that sits at the heart of EED's work.

In July, EED instigated the publication of an important policy paper, 'Global Democracy and COVID-19: Upgrading International Support', to assess the impact that COVID-19 is having on democracy around the world. The paper makes a number of recommendations for future democracy support. It was drafted in conjunction with 11 other pro-democracy organisations aligning with the 'Call to Defend Democracy', which was signed by 100 organisations and 500 prominent individuals globally. It is clear that if we are to revive global democracy — which has been in decline for 14 consecutive years, according to Freedom House — we will need many more such co-ordinated efforts of the democracy support community on both sides of the Atlantic.



Jerzy Pomianowski

Executive Director of the European Endowment for Democracy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an overview of the European Endowment for Democracy's activities supporting and fostering democracy in the European Neighbourhood and beyond in 2020, EED's seventh year of operation. The report provides an insight into EED's approach to democracy support. It tells the stories of EED grantees — the brave activists, independent media outlets, and human rights defenders — who are engaged in the everyday work of defending and sustaining democracy, many of whom work in highly restrictive and difficult environments.

Facts and figures

In 2020, EED approved 356 initiatives for support, with 618 ongoing initiatives during the year. It received 1,048 applications for support.

Adapting to different contexts

EED operates in a diverse range of countries across the European Neighbourhood and beyond, and each jurisdiction has its particular socio-political and economic environment. Contexts range from transitional, restrictive, or repressive to full-conflict environments and are constantly in flux, with democracy activists within these contexts facing varying challenges. EED's flexible and innovative approach to grant-making allows for a tailored response to such different realities.

Areas of support

Initiatives supported by EED can be divided into eight broad categories or thematic areas: 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; arts and culture; and youth.

This report presents a range of initiatives covering all of these thematic areas. These include, among many others, an organisation working to improve the lives of migrants held in Libyan detention centres; a grassroots activist group advocating for environmental change in Kosovo; a feminist LGBTQ+ friendly library in Armenia; and a diaspora-run vlog that encouraged members of the Moldovan diaspora to vote in the country's recent presidential elections.

EED support also extends to difficult environments that are often inaccessible to other donors. For the second year running, the report profiles the work of several grantees working in sensitive contexts. Their names have been changed to protect their identity. There are also updates on some former grantees, now alumni, who have gone on to flourish as established civil society organisations.

COVID-19 and democracy

The COVID-19 pandemic is leaving deep scars on the democratic community, with lockdowns providing an opportunity for governments all over the world to tighten their grip on freedom of speech and human rights. In March, EED set up a special COVID-19 support mechanism to provide a rapid and effective response to the crisis, allowing grantees affected by the pandemic to survive and continue their activist work.

This year, EED, together with other pro-democracy institutions, endorsed a report titled ‘Global Democracy and COVID-19: Upgrading International Support’, providing recommendations to policymakers and civil society to counteract the negative impacts of COVID-19 on democracy.

Special focus on Belarus

A special section devoted to Belarus provides an overview of EED’s support to Belarusian civic activists and media organisations since the beginning of the protest movement in August 2020, noting how the protests are evolving into a more long-term movement.

Special focus on Lebanon

EED was constantly in touch with our partners in Lebanon following the horrific explosion in the port of Beirut in August, assessing how to best help them during the crisis. Many are closely involved in the demands for government accountability.

Events go online during COVID-19

With the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, most EED events were held online during 2020. Despite the challenges, EED organised and took part in a number of high-profile events, including as part of International Democracy Week,

in collaboration with the European Parliament and partner organisations. A high point of this week was the participation of the Belarusian opposition leader, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya.

Evaluation and learning

Monitoring, evaluation, and learning are crucial to assess the effectiveness of EED’s activities, ensuring that EED continues to provide flexible, un-bureaucratic, and demand-driven support. This is key to contributing to long-term change within the countries where EED operates, and to enable EED to account for spending and progress to our stakeholders.

Governance, human resources, and budget

EED is growing to accommodate the expansion of its activities, and now counts 40 core staff based at the EED Secretariat. A number of paid traineeships also allow talented young professionals to benefit from an exciting learning environment in the fields of grant-making and democracy support.

As of 2020, 23 EU countries that are members of EED’s Board of Governors and the European Commission have contributed to EED’s budget, as has Canada through a special grant for Ukraine. The budget managed by EED in 2020 amounted to approximately €29 million.



A protest in front of the Georgian Parliament in Tbilisi. © OC Media

EED'S APPROACH

Innovative

EED is open to new and innovative ideas and responds in a dynamic way to requests for assistance 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 is frequently a lifeline to organisations struggling to continue with their work in times of turmoil or when facing severe repression.



Demand-driven and flexible

EED adapts its support to respond to local realities. EED is demand-driven and flexible. It can support individuals and non-registered groups and grant emergency funding requests, often turning around 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 the capacity-building of grantees in areas such as programme and project management, ensuring that good ideas can be transformed into functioning organisations.



EED IN NUMBERS

€28 million

in democracy support approved in 2020



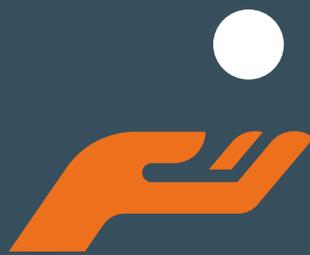
356



New funded initiatives

1,048

Requests for support



40

core staff from 27 countries



148,162

unique visitors to the EED website in 2020



59,491

Facebook followers

4,211

Twitter followers

26%



increase in post views by unique users compared with 2019

3x

more likes on Twitter compared to 2019

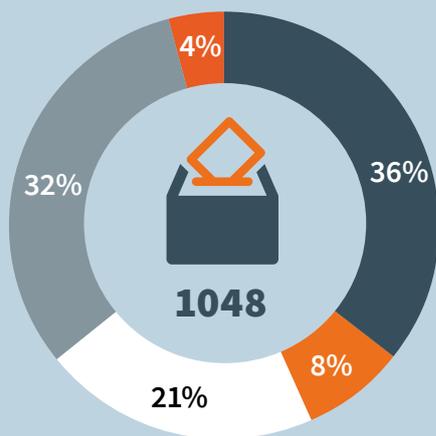


PORTFOLIO OVERVIEW

Number of initiatives approved by ExCom 2013–2020

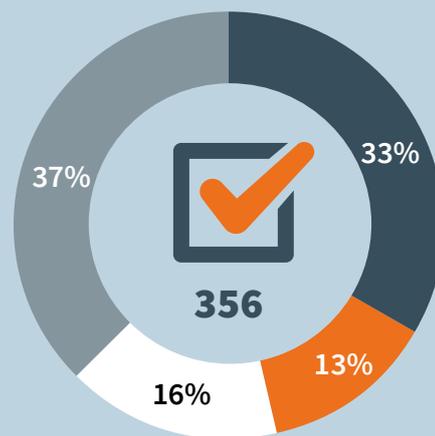


Applications received per region 2020

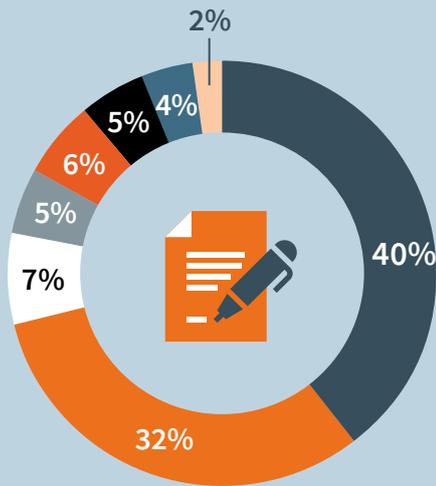


- Eastern Partnership
- Western Balkans & Turkey
- Eurasia
- Rest of World
- Middle East & North Africa

Number of initiatives approved by ExCom in 2020 by region

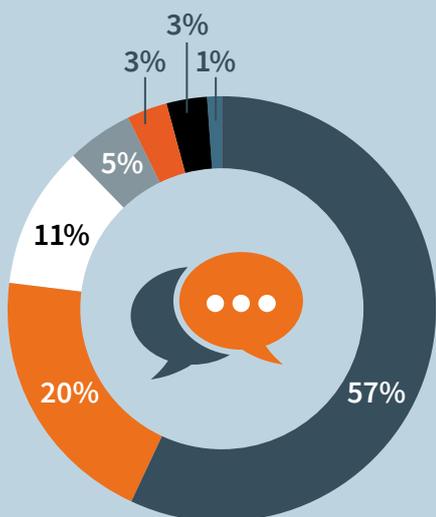


- Eastern Partnership
- Middle East & North Africa
- Eurasia
- Western Balkans & Turkey



Initiatives supported in 2020 per thematic area

- Independent and social media platforms
- Civic activism & participation
- Arts & culture
- Governance, rule of law, and anti-corruption
- Human rights, activism, and monitoring
- Youth
- Women's civic and political participation
- Sexual orientation and gender identity



Language of application

EED accepts applications in all the main languages of our partners. Here is a breakdown showing the languages of all applications approved in 2020.

- English
- Russian
- BHS*
- Turkish
- Arabic
- French
- Albanian

*Languages of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia

EVENTS

Events are an important part of EED’s activity as a ‘Democracy Support House’, creating unique opportunities for dialogue between democracy activists from the European Neighbourhood and beyond with EU institutions, member states, and the wider democracy community, and they have continued throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

EED participated in 32 events this year, including co-organised events, democracy events hosted by other stakeholders, and EED-organised events focused on specific countries or regional initiatives. Many EED events are held behind closed doors and provide our stakeholders with a unique insight into the activities of brave activists who work in some of the world’s most repressive environments.

In 2020, EED facilitated partners to attend and speak at key democracy events worldwide, including the Copenhagen Democracy Summit and the Forum 2000 Conference in Prague.

2020: A year of online events

With the **COVID-19 pandemic**, most events moved online this year. While this webinar format has meant that parallel networking meetings between speakers and stakeholders have not been possible, it has also opened up new opportunities. Webinars are shorter and more focused and, with lockdowns the world over, both speakers and audience members often have greater availability. These webinars have engaged with wider audiences than would ever have been possible in-person. They have been inspiring occasions bringing the reality of activists’ lives into our audience’s homes.





Lebanon at a crossroads: is real reform possible? July 2020

EED co-organised an online event with the Carnegie Middle East Center to discuss the prospects of real reform and the role of independent media in Lebanon.

“The situation [in Lebanon] has deteriorated further during the COVID-19 pandemic, as this crisis has highlighted the structural challenges faced in the country. Society remains fragmented and the protest movement that began in October 2019 continues, with protesters demanding an independent judiciary, accountability of elected representatives, early parliamentary elections, and financial reform.” *Maha Yahya, Director of the Carnegie Middle East Center*

“Independent media has a more important role to play than ever...They are not just documenting violations against the population; they are also disseminating ideas and giving visibility to untold stories, and helping to create a real conversation about the challenges Lebanon faces.” *Lara Bitar, founding editor of The Public Source*



Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya.
© Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya

International Democracy Week, September 2020

EED, in collaboration with the European Parliament and partner organisations, celebrated the 2020 International Day of Democracy with a week of online events: International Democracy Week. As part of this week, EED organised a webinar focused on developments in Belarus. EED Chairman David McAllister and the figurehead of the Belarusian opposition, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, opened these discussions.

“The ongoing protests are the longest ever in the history of Belarus and show that the nation does not want to succumb.” *Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, figurehead of the Belarusian opposition.*



Difference Day 2020 – celebrating UN World Press Freedom Day, 3 May 2020

The annual Difference Day event celebrating UN World Press Freedom Day was held online this year. Organised in collaboration with Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VLB), Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB), UNESCO, and the BOZAR Centre for Fine Arts, among others, the 2020 Difference Day honorary title was awarded to Turkish journalists and authors Ahmet Altan and Elif Shafak.

“Press freedom is essential for democracy, and we need to regain the trust of the public in the media. Journalism can save lives as much as disinformation can create problems. Now more than ever, we need a free press based on real facts.” *Guilherme Canela, UNESCO Chief of Section for Freedom of Expression.*

“We are living in liquid times. Democracy is fragile and to survive we all need to become more engaged in fighting for minorities’ rights.” *Elif Shafak, author and journalist.*



The end of the dream? The struggle for democracy in Georgia and the implications for its European integration, Brussels, February 2020

Organised in collaboration with the Open Society European Policy Institute, this event focused on developments in Georgia, following a wave of anti-government protests when the ruling party reneged on its promise to introduce a proportional representation system ahead of the 2020 elections.

“Everything was different about these protests. For the first time in the country’s contemporary history, society became a political actor who organised the protests themselves. If before, people were joining rallies organised by politicians, now politicians came to the rally organised by people.” *Shota Dighmelashvili, Co-founder, Governance Monitoring Centre and leader of the Shame Movement.*



“They don’t serve to inform citizens, but to spin reality and openly persecute political opponents.”

Nedim Sejdinović, freelance journalist

Protests in Belgrade, December 2019.
© Felix Q Media

Twenty years after Milošević: what has changed for Serbia? October 2020

This webinar marked the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Milošević regime in Serbia, bringing together experts from civil society, media, the judiciary, and activist circles to review the current situation in Serbia.

“Most outlets represent a type of para-media that violate professional standards and media codes on a daily basis.

They don’t serve to inform citizens, but to spin reality and openly persecute political opponents.” *Nedim Sejdinović, freelance journalist.*

“My assessment is that the majority of civil society have become administrative bodies, dealing with endless donor reporting, while there is no serious impact on the local level.” *Aida Ćorović, activist and journalist from Novi Pazar.*

ADAPTING TO DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

EED grantees operate in a variety of different contexts, ranging from the most difficult conflict and repressive environments to environments that can be classed as restrictive or transitional. Given the fragile state of democracy in many of the countries where EED works, political contexts can change quickly, often leading to a rapid deterioration of democratic conditions. Such fluctuations can make for challenging operating environments for civil society activists and independent media.

EED's flexible grant-making model is invaluable in such environments, enabling it to respond and adapt as activists' needs change over time. Throughout this difficult COVID-dominated year, EED's lithe operational model has provided lifelines to new, current, and former grantees, as most faced unanticipated operational and financial challenges.

Trends and developments in 2020

2020 has been a year of big stories, many of which are covered in this report.

Since the early spring, with the world reeling from the COVID-19 pandemic, democracy activists have faced unprecedented challenges. Governments worldwide have imposed lockdowns and passed legislation to limit the spread of the virus, which in some cases has also further reduced civic space and democratic freedoms. There has also been an 'infodemic' of fake news and disinformation on a scale never previously experienced.

There were elections in many countries where EED works, but none as eventful as the Belarusian elections, which in late August saw the emergence of a mass opposition movement demanding free and fair elections and a democratic future for the country.

In early August, the horrific Beirut port explosion killed and wounded hundreds of people and displaced 300,000, just as Lebanon was facing economic collapse, a failing state, and a medical system struggling to cope with the pandemic.

The eruption of armed conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh in late September saw some of the worst fighting in the region since the early 1990s, with thousands of people killed and more than 100,000 displaced.

Transitional environments

Some of the countries where EED works are generally non-restrictive environments where civil society can operate in relative freedom without direct repression. Significant challenges remain in such contexts, with weak institutions and governance and a lack of democratic accountability, as well as many barriers to political participation. Corruption is often endemic. Civil society and independent media play an important role in encouraging citizens' participation in democratic processes and in fighting corruption, and in many cases even provide essential services for local populations.

In Ukraine, a deteriorating political situation has led to attempts to undermine reform efforts, with a constitutional crisis erupting in November. The media landscape remains distorted and is controlled by business and oligarchic interests, yet civil society remains highly active in demanding government accountability. In Georgia, despite signs of democratic backsliding, a strong civil society movement forced through a new system of proportional voting earlier in the year and led the largely peaceful demonstrations that followed the parliamentary elections in late 2020.

Likewise, civil society remains vibrant across the Western Balkans, although media outlets — a focus for EED support in the region — often struggle to survive or remain independent.

Tunisia continues to be shaken by pervasive political instability. Its economy is in disarray and there is widespread distrust in the country's political elites. Civil society remains crucial as a watchdog and as a creative proactive advocacy force within Tunisian society.

Restrictive environments

Many EED grantees work in restrictive environments where there is limited space for civil society and there are restrictions on donor support. While there is often some pluralism in governance, pressure is put on opposition parties and candidates, and elections are characterised by irregularities. The media operate under significant pressure and the judiciary lacks independence. Corruption is also widespread. In such environments, EED focuses on supporting partners in their work of building the capacity of citizens to remain active and supporting independent voices, as well as of countering corruption and advancing the rule of law and public accountability.

Morocco is a particularly difficult context for civil society, with many activists imprisoned for any criticism of the regime and civil society organisations denied legal status. In Turkey, with democratic participation and advocacy limited and free speech continuously muzzled, civil society organisations offer unique spaces for resistance and free expression for citizens.

Repressive environments

Around one-third of the countries where EED works have openly repressive regimes, where governments do not allow civil society to engage in political processes. Democracy activists in such environments face harassment, imprisonment, and torture. Neither elections nor the judiciary are free. Political pluralism is forbidden and there is pervasive censorship. The media are typically controlled by groups linked to the ruling regime, and independent voices are systematically silenced.

Activists in these countries take huge risks carrying out their work. In countries such as Algeria, Egypt, and Azerbaijan, pro-democracy actors face harassment and potential penalties if they receive foreign funding.

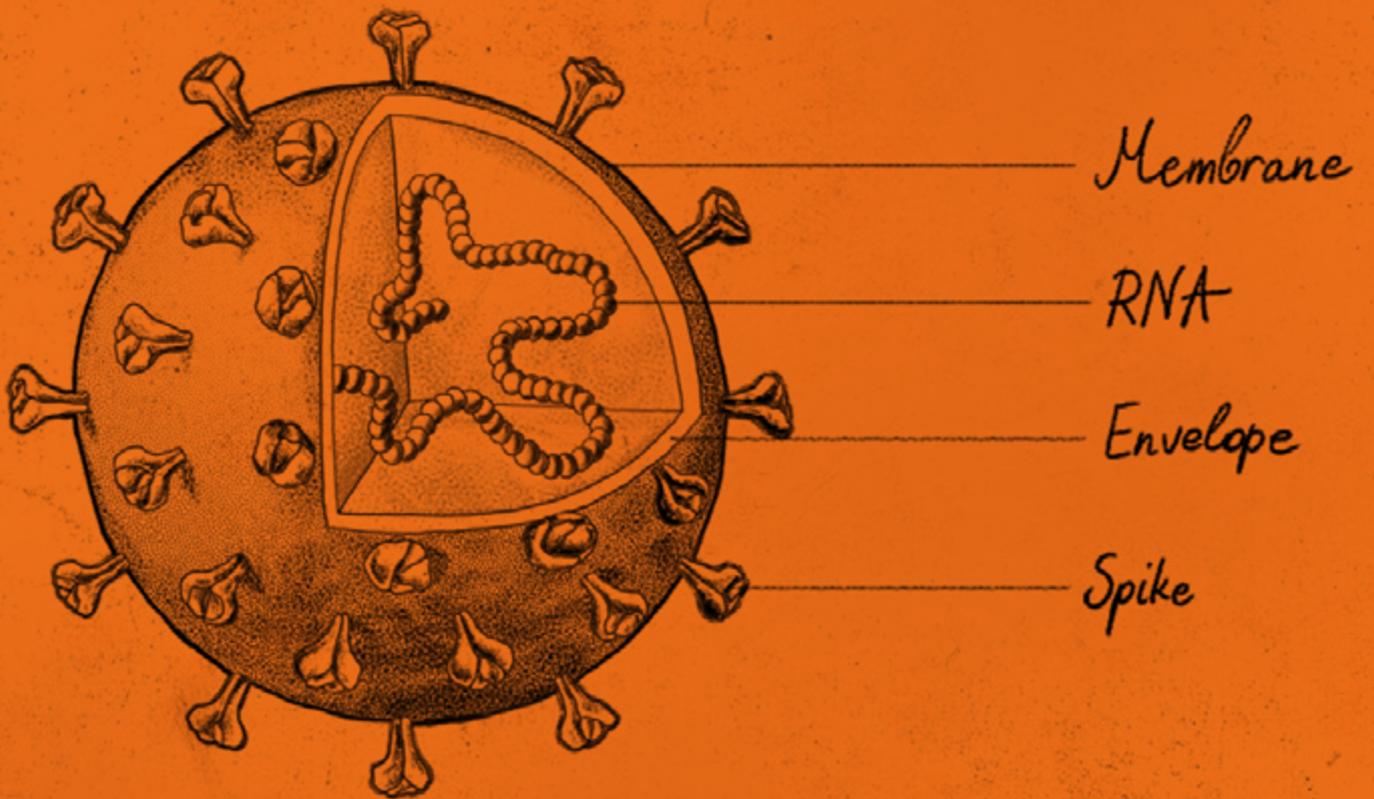
An important part of EED's mandate is to continue to find ways of supporting brave activists in such environments and to help them in their work of regenerating civil society. This means ensuring that any grant-making is made in a discreet and safe manner and that grantee identities are protected when required.

Conflict environments

Supporting pro-democracy activists in conflict environments brings particular challenges, as the lack of political stability and security can make it particularly difficult to operate safely. These can also be difficult environments for most donors. Activists in such situations remain determined to continue to push for democratic processes, address tensions, and help build the foundations for future peace.

EED is committed to supporting populations that live in conditions of war and instability whenever possible. With Syria experiencing an unprecedented economic crisis, as well as harsh humanitarian and socio-economic conditions, 83 percent of the population now live under the poverty line. While the security and political situation remains highly volatile, civil society actors help communities address their daily challenges and develop an alternative narrative based on democratic values, critical thinking, and peace-building principles.

Virus structure



2020: THE YEAR OF COVID-19

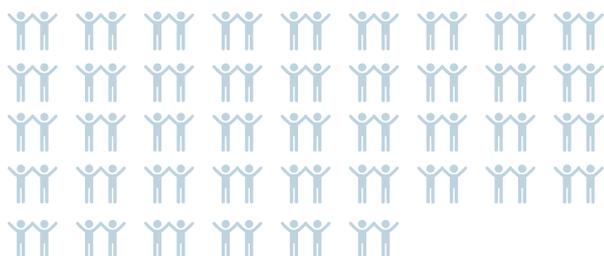
EED extends assistance to partners during the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally changed how we live and go about our business, as countries around the world went into lockdown in the spring and autumn of 2020. The effects of this crisis will continue to be felt across the planet for a long time, most particularly in the realm of politics and democracy.

EED’s partners have quickly adapted to the new challenges posed by this health crisis. Many independent media and civil society organisations are fighting daily battles against an ‘infodemic’ of disinformation, such as the Serbian-based *SHARE Foundation* and the Moldovan *Nord News*. Others have taken on the role of providing aid to their co-citizens during the pandemic, acting as watchdogs and continuing to demand accountability from their governments.

COVID-19 grant scheme

In March, EED’s Executive Committee agreed to set up an additional COVID-19 grant mechanism to fund current partners providing direct and immediate responses to this crisis. Intended to complement EED’s usual grant-making, this provided immediate small-scale grants, enabling partners to quickly scale up their COVID-19 response.



42 grants provided under COVID-19 grant scheme in 2020

Nord News: challenging official statements on COVID-19

Based in Moldova’s second-largest city, Bălți, *Nord News* was founded by a group of young journalists who wanted to provide unbiased independent news to the local population. When COVID-19 first struck Moldova, *Nord News* journalists spoke with people about how they were protecting themselves from the virus, posting their interviews on YouTube. They challenged President Igor Dodon’s claim that the country was prepared for COVID-19, revealing that in the north of the country there were only 26 ventilators for a population of over 1 million people. The article was shared widely at home and in neighbouring Romania.



Nord News journalists shooting a TV report during the COVID-19 pandemic. © Nord News

Policy paper on global democracy and COVID-19

The 'Global Democracy and COVID-19: Upgrading International Support' policy report highlights how some governments are using the pandemic to further curtail democratic activities and provides recommendations to policymakers and civil society to counteract the negative impacts of COVID-19 on democracy. A pushback by civil society is noted as a sign of a stronger democratic resolve around the world.

Endorsed by 11 pro-democracy organisations from both sides of the Atlantic, this EED-instigated report is aligned with the 'Call for Democracy' signed by almost 100 organisations worldwide, as well as 500 prominent individuals, including 13 Nobel laureates and 62 former heads of state or government.

The report made five key recommendations for policymakers; namely, the development of a comprehensive monitoring mechanism to guide international responses to COVID-19 democratic infringements; incorporating democracy efforts into COVID-19 emergency and recovery aid; ensuring multilateral co-operation for safeguarding democratic practices; providing support to new civic initiatives that have emerged as a result of this pandemic; and harnessing innovations in democratic participation.

SHARE Foundation: digital security and data privacy during COVID-19

The Belgrade-based *SHARE Foundation* brings together legal and IT experts, digital artists, designers, filmmakers, and journalists to protect digital rights and digital freedom.

This year, SHARE attained nationwide prominence after revealing that the username and password to the Serbian government's database of COVID-19 cases were publicly available on a health institution's website. They alerted the authorities, who took immediate action, and also pushed for an official inquiry to reveal how this serious data breach took place.

SHARE's activities are part of the broader *BIRN Investigative Resource Desk (BIRD)*, which provides live updates of COVID-related incidents as governments in the region impose emergency legislation to combat the virus, encouraging journalists throughout the region to report incidents.



Danilo Krivokapić, Executive Director, SHARE Foundation. © SHARE Foundation

Highlighting the plight of Roma and Balkan Egyptians during COVID -19

The only media bringing attention to the plight of Roma and Balkan Egyptians in Montenegro during the COVID-19 crisis was *Romanet*, a news portal run by the Roma and non-Roma volunteer youth organisation Phiren Amenca. *Romanet* published information to help Roma protect themselves from the virus, and helped produce an educational video about the virus in the Roma language, which was shared on social networks throughout the region.

Romanet ran a campaign highlighting the challenges faced by Roma and Balkan Egyptians during the pandemic, given their lack of access to adequate sanitation and water and their loss of income. The news portal also highlighted the sharp rise in racism against Roma people in recent months.



The Romanet team interviews a man in a Roma settlement in Montenegro. © Romanet

Research institute explores public reactions to Morocco's COVID-19 response

The *Moroccan Institute for Policy Analysis (MIPA)* is an independent research group based in Rabat which produces in-depth analysis of policy issues related to democracy and other key issues in Morocco and the MENA region. It has monitored the government's action on COVID-19 and the public's response to see what implications the crisis has for the country's political and economic future.

Morocco was one of the first countries in the MENA region to take strict measures against the spread of the virus, declaring a state of emergency on 19 March. A survey of people's attitudes to these measures showed that individuals were taking active steps to prevent its spread, such as regular handwashing and staying at home, and most people were satisfied with the government's strict measures.

EED THEMATIC AREAS OF WORK

The following sections take an in-depth look at the work of EED partners during 2020 across the various thematic areas of operation.

The work of democracy activists from a range of different countries and environments is profiled in this section of the report, as well as that of media outlets and journalists defending free speech and media freedom. While the contexts that these activists operate in are all very different, they are united by their determination to build better and more democratic futures for their countries.

Incognito profiles

As many EED grantees work in difficult and repressive environments, their safety is always of paramount concern. Often, activists' work is politically sensitive. Some would face serious repercussions if it were publicly acknowledged that they had received international funding for their operations. EED adopts procedures to ensure their anonymity when providing grants to these organisations and individuals. In this section, anonymous profiles of such activists have been included with details on their work defending the human rights of vulnerable populations, protecting the rights of the LGBT+ community, and driving environmental initiatives.

Alumni success stories

An important part of EED's mandate is 'supporting the unsupported' and providing grants to often-unregistered groups and activists unable to access other EU democracy-support programmes or donors. EED invests time coaching grantees, helping to build their organisational and programming capacity so that good ideas can be transformed into functioning organisations. This includes helping grantees navigate the often-complex wider donor landscape and assisting them to present viable applications for funding from other donors.

To demonstrate this aspect of EED's added value, we include some EED 'alumni' in this report — individuals and organisations that received support from EED in the crucial early days of their development and are now flourishing.



I. ANTI-CORRUPTION AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

There is undisputed evidence that corruption harms democracy and undermines democratic institutions. Weak institutions are less able to control corruption, with elected officials then less accountable to their citizens. EED supports activists tackling corruption and promoting public accountability and citizen governance.

EED added-value in 2020

Many EED partners across the European Partnership and beyond are pushing for more accountability within their national and local governments, exposing corruption cases and developing anti-corruption strategies. EED adds value to this work by funding new initiatives and groups which cannot access other funding, due either to the nascent nature of their work or to their difficult legal and political environments.

Initiatives funded in 2020 included an organisation campaigning for judicial reform in Ukraine, at the centre of the response during the constitutional crisis; a watchdog in Georgia monitoring public spending; investigative media monitoring spending during the COVID-19 crisis; and an anti-corruption and transparency watchdog in Tunisia ensuring good governance and public accountability of state-owned companies.



Constitutional crisis protest in Kyiv. © DEJURE

DEJURE: reforming the judicial system to strengthen democracy in Ukraine

With a constitutional crisis threatening Ukraine's reform agenda, the team at *DEJURE* developed a comprehensive analysis outlining how the crisis could be resolved and the integrity of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine restored.

DEJURE is one of the key organisations working on judicial reform and ensuring the renewal of the judicial corps in Ukraine. This will include the dismissal of dishonest and incompetent judges and the appointment of new professionals.

With EED funding, *DEJURE* is carrying out a wide range of activities to ensure the accountability of the government and transparency and fairness in the rule of law. Their other activities include a focus on enabling a child-friendly justice system and a restorative justice programme. Justice for business is another area of work, and the organisation's experts are drafting legislation to improve the arbitration system.

Iryna Shyba, Executive Director of
DEJURE Foundation. © DEJURE



PROFILE

Observatoire Raqabah: changing the culture of corruption in Tunisia

After two decades as a political dissident and then as a refugee and human rights activist in France, Imad Daimi returned to his native Tunisia following the 2011 Jasmine Revolution. He was part of the Constituent Assembly that wrote the country's new constitution and was a member of parliament from 2015 to 2019.

As an MP, he was also Rapporteur on the Commission on Civil Liberties and Human Rights and contributed to the adoption of anti-corruption legislation and international conventions in the country.

At the end of his term in the parliament, Daimi decided to devote himself to the fight against corruption in Tunisia, founding *Observatoire Raqabah* — after the Arabic word for 'supervision' — with the goal of promoting citizens' understanding of state activities and their ability to demand accountability in cases of corruption.

Raqabah has three areas of focus

First, it investigates corruption, analysing dossiers received from trusted people and reporting them to the relevant

authorities. It also 'names and shames' guilty parties, publishing short videos explaining each major case of corruption on social media. As a result of Raqabah's work, prominent officials from public enterprises, infrastructure companies, and the chemical sector have been prosecuted for corruption.

Second, it proposes solutions. The team studies legislation and corruption cases in depth to propose reforms on anti-corruption in Tunisia. They are already collaborating with some members of parliament in this work.

Third, Raqabah is building a new culture of accountability in Tunisia and encouraging citizens to act as a government watchdog. As part of this work, it trains young people on how corruption works and why it is important to fight it.

EED's support now means that *Observatoire Raqabah*'s team can work full-time on anti-corruption initiatives, rather than on a voluntary basis, as they had done previously. They have now also rented an office with the increased security measures necessary to protect their files.

II. INDEPENDENT AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

EED supports local and regional media, including bloggers, digital platforms, innovative news and information outlets, and satirists, who all provide vital independent and quality coverage and commentary on local and international events.

Many of the countries where EED works have seen a sharp decrease in media freedom in recent years. **Egypt** and **Russia** remain among the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists. In **Morocco**, journalists face prison terms for criticising the country's problems and connecting responsibility to the regime. In conflict-ridden **Libya**, media are funded and controlled by parties to the conflict and there are few independent voices.

Throughout the **Western Balkans**, the media scene is oversaturated and prone to political and commercial interference. Smearing and disinformation campaigns are common and media literacy is low. In **Serbia**, the media face significant repression, and the government actively propagates fake news. In **Turkey**, the dire state of press freedom and freedom of expression, as well as an economic crisis, mean that independent media are under increasing pressure.

EED added-value in 2020

This year, EED worked to strengthen media pluralism and improve access to quality and independent news and commentary in every country where it operates, with nearly 40 percent of EED's funding portfolio being media-related. Some of these partners are small start-up initiatives and bloggers; others are more professional outlets that have faced funding challenges, which have hit all media during the COVID-19 crisis.

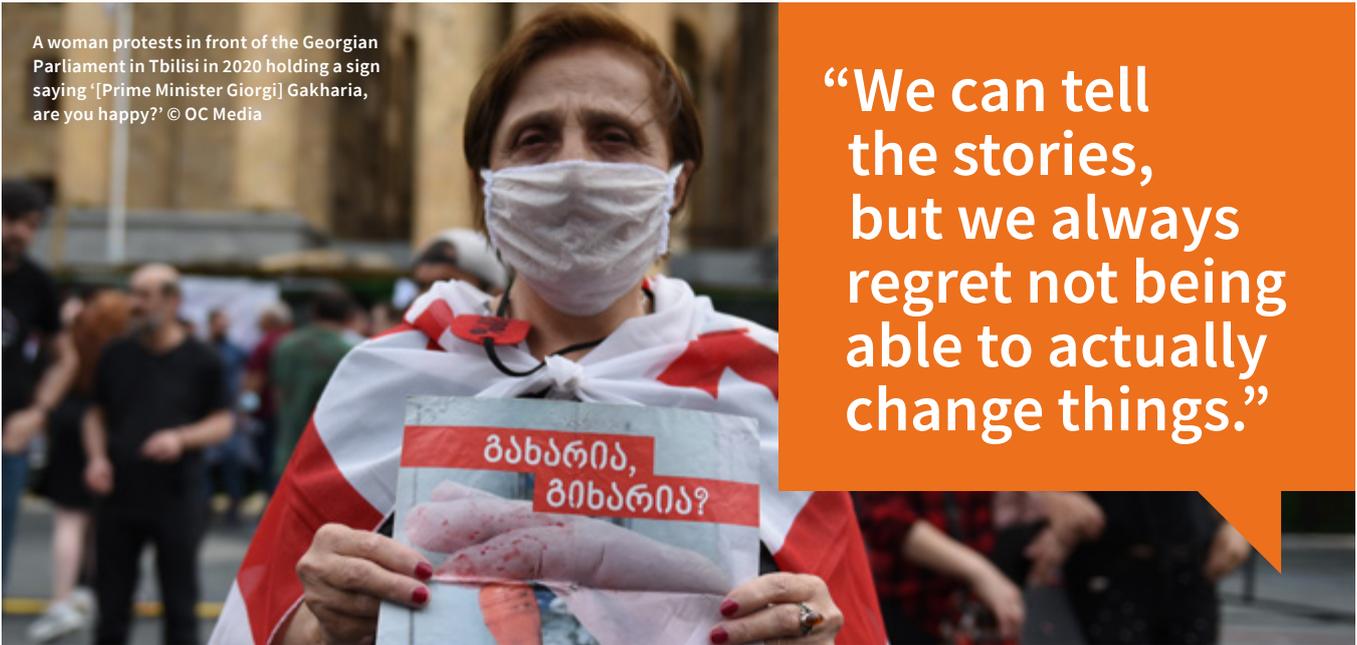
In this section, we profile a wide variety of EED media partners: a pan-Caucasus media outlet; a former blog that is now an important commentator; an Albanian community-focused news outlet where readers participate in the news; and a vlog targeted at the Moldovan diaspora.



40% 

of all EED grants are to independent and social media platforms

A woman protests in front of the Georgian Parliament in Tbilisi in 2020 holding a sign saying '[Prime Minister Giorgi] Gakharia, are you happy?' © OC Media



“We can tell the stories, but we always regret not being able to actually change things.”

PROFILE

OC Media: bringing the Caucasus to the world stage

After a few years of working in journalism in Georgia, Dominik K. Cagara and Mariam Nikuradze felt that there was a gap in the market for an online news platform focused on both sides of the Caucasus mountains: Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan, as well as the Russian republics of the Northern Caucasus.

The online media platform they founded in 2016, *OC Media*, is now a reliable and authoritative voice in the region, publishing articles in Russian — the *lingua franca* of the Caucasus — and English, to bring the Caucasus to the world stage. They also publish in local languages including Armenian, Azerbaijani, Georgian, and Circassian.

OC Media's editorial line is progressive, pro-minorities, and pro-workers' rights, regularly putting the spotlight on the LGBT+ community, violations of labour rights, and other underreported stories from the Caucasus.

The outlet's journalists try to tell personal stories from the region with topics ranging from growing up queer in the Georgian Azerbaijani community, to teenage pregnancy in Armenia, to the plight of Caucasian immigrants working in Europe for a pittance.

“Covering the North Caucasus often comes with a feeling of hopelessness,” admits Cagara. “We can tell the stories, but we always regret not being able to actually change things. It can be extremely frustrating.”

Many of the outlet's writers in the North Caucasus have to work anonymously and at great risk, but Cagara and Nikuradze believe that, by giving them a platform, they are also giving them hope, and that they are giving hope to their readers too.

OC Media covered the recent war in Nagorno-Karabakh between Armenia and Azerbaijan, emphasising professional reporting over pushing one narrative or another. This is one of the few media outlets where Armenian and Azerbaijani journalists truly co-operate with each other and work together.

Nikuradze sees this role as bigger than just news coverage. “We also want to focus on the bigger picture. We want to use our platform to promote dialogue,” she says. For example, the outlet published several op-eds by activists from both sides of the war, challenging the official narratives of both Baku and Yerevan.

Several of those activists faced threats and repercussions for their opinions, and the media's website was the target of a cyber-attack, most likely linked to its coverage of the Nagorno-Karabakh war.

Despite the challenges, *OC Media* is determined to persevere and is proud of its reputation as a reliable and authoritative media outlet and one of the go-to news sources from the Caucasus.

Internet Speaks: Ensuring the diaspora vote in Moldova

Record levels of diaspora voting played an important role in the success of the pro-European candidate Maia Sandu during the 2020 presidential elections. With more than half of Moldovans of voting age living in the diaspora, their vote was crucial.

One emigré Moldovan couple, Nata Albot and Andrei Bolocan, run a vlog *Internetu Grăiește (Internet Speaks)* from their home in Montreal, Canada that keeps the diaspora informed about the latest developments in Moldova. During the recent presidential elections, they focused on encouraging diaspora members to vote.

“Most Moldovans abroad get their news from the internet. We comment on what is happening in a humorous way. We analyse the news. We look at how news is presented and how people comment on it. We show how often the media creates false images of people. We expose the reality,” Albot explains.

Internet Speaks has a big presence on social media, with more than 42,000 followers on Facebook and some episodes of the show reaching as many as 70,000 people. Until recently, the show was also rebroadcast on the independent television station TV8.



Nata Albot and Andrei Bolocan hosting an episode of *Internet Speaks*. © Internetu Grăiește (*Internet Speaks*)

Mher Ghalechyan and Shogher Matevosyan, members of Fourth Power. © Fourth Power



Fourth Power: A satirical Armenian newspaper goes online

Launched in 1994, *Fourth Power* is known throughout Armenia as a source of independent and alternative news. With its embrace of satire, the newspaper has always tried, as its founder and general director Shogher Matevosyan puts it, “to provide a voice for society.”

The outlet has faced many challenges over the past three decades, including physical attacks against its journalists, the launch of criminal prosecution proceedings against the paper, and even arson attempts on their offices. In 2008, the paper was forced to close for a period, though it later reopened under a new name.

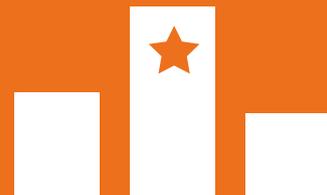
During Armenia’s 2018 Velvet Revolution, the *Fourth Power* team went online and now, with EED’s support, it exists as both a newspaper and an online multimedia outlet.

“For many years, the government forces had won the battle against civil society. This is changing now. I believe today we have the opportunity to help develop a more democratic country. I want *Fourth Power* to be part of this process and to contribute to forming a society that is based on logical and critical thinking, a society that can fight for its rights,” says Matevosyan.



Tiber's important coverage of the 2018 wave of protests in Jordan.
© Tiber / Ali Saadi

EED SUCCESS STORY — ALUMNUS



***Tiber*: From a volunteer blog to a reliable and professional platform in Jordan and beyond**

In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, *Tiber*, a Jordanian volunteer-based media platform, realised it was time to take its project to the next level. Established in 2007 as a space for bloggers to engage citizens in conversations, *Tiber* wanted to professionalise and produce more local and relevant journalism.

EED support in 2014 and 2015 was initially its biggest source of core funding, enabling the team to bring two journalists on board and expand its online multimedia material. It also organised a number of political and social

events and discussions that fostered a strong community of engaged readers around the media. This is still very much true today.

Since then, *Tiber's* readership has continued to grow, both in Jordan and in the wider region. In 2018, it was an important local source covering the big wave of protests in Jordan. This experience also helped the outlet's transformation into an online magazine, and it began to post updates on the latest news as well as its traditional analysis and stories.



EED SUCCESS STORY — ALUMNUS



Citizens Channel: 'From the citizens to the citizen'

The *Citizens Channel* provides community-focused news and engaged journalism in Albania. “We do not see news as something simply consumed by our readers; our readers participate in the news. We give voice to communities that are usually silenced in our country and we air issues that are rarely discussed,” says the channel’s director Lorin Kadiu.

Citizens Channel is one of the few remaining independent media in Albania. Last year the government began a major crackdown on the media, and journalists are regularly targeted and even arrested for social media posts.

Media freedom further decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the authorities centralising information and viewing the media as part of the problem, according to Kadiu.

The media outlet remained active throughout the pandemic and continues to cover issues usually ignored by other media, from family and gender issues to minority issues and labour rights.

III. CIVIC ACTIVISM AND PARTICIPATION

The freedom to gather, communicate, and participate in groups to influence society and politics is at the heart of any democracy. EED supports activists who are helping to develop and influence their communities and societies. EED's support is flexible, adapting to local needs and rapidly changing contexts.

EED added-value in 2020

The 'EU Action Plan on Democracy and Human Rights' refers to EED's work to 'support and strengthen long-term partnerships and co-operation with civil society actors, human rights defenders, and social movements, also by making full use of the opportunities to fund grassroots organisations'. In 2020, civic activism once again represented around one-third of EED's funding portfolio.

When making funding decisions, EED seeks to support groups and individuals without the capacity or experience to access funding from other donors. These grants can range from projects engaging youth in society and political platforms, to civic platforms ensuring citizen engagement with reform agenda, to activists under persecution or repression where EED's support ensures they can remain active.

Organisations funded this year include a citizen's movement in Georgia seeking political and social reform, environmental activists, and those protecting free speech among academics and students in Turkey.

COVID-19: challenges faced by civil society

Many civil society activities were curtailed due to the coronavirus, with lockdowns and social distancing measures confining people to their homes and making it difficult to meet, organise, and advocate. As we explore in the COVID-19 section of this report, new and innovative forms of civic activism emerged during this period despite, or maybe because of, efforts by more illiberally-minded leaders to take advantage of the crisis by further silencing voices and curtailing democratic freedoms.

32%



of EED funding provided to civic activist individuals and organisations in 2020

“The academies stand for independent critical research and knowledge production that no longer exist within the state universities.”

Noémi Lévy-Aksu



Noémi Lévy-Aksu, one of the founders of the Centre for Democracy and Peace Research. © Noémi Lévy-Aksu

PROFILE

Akademia: supporting Turkey's Solidarity Academies

The London-based *Centre for Democracy and Peace Research (CDPR)* was founded to support alternative knowledge production within Turkey and to facilitate critical thinking following the dismissal of 1,128 ‘Academics for Peace’. These academics signed a peace declaration criticising the Turkish government’s actions against Kurds in south-eastern Turkey and requesting an end to civilian deaths and the establishment of peace.

More than 200 petition signatories received prison sentences and hundreds were deprived of their passports, their right to travel and to social insurance, and were blacklisted from any other public occupation in the country.

The past few years have been challenging for these academics. A small minority live in exile, many trying to re-establish academic careers, but most have remained in Turkey and they struggle to survive financially and to maintain their academic identities.

Many of these dismissed academics have gone on to found ‘Solidarity Academies’ — informal structures where they work with unions, professional associations, students, and international organisations.

While none of the academies are accredited, they often offer more student-centred teaching than in traditional universities. Some are focused on human rights work and research. Others are more commercial, organised around a café, and include a library facility. Together, the academies have emerged as a mobilising force for collective production and sharing of knowledge, providing

alternative spaces of education and resistance as well as important centres for preserving critical thinking, free speech, and academic freedom.

EED provided a grant to CDPR for its ‘Akademia’ project to build the capacity of these Solidarity Academies. This project is working directly with eight such academies across Turkey, and is focused on helping to ensure their sustainability.

“We started off by assessing the academies’ needs,” explains Noémi Lévy-Aksu, the project manager and a dismissed academic herself. “Many of the academies are loose volunteer-run organisations, and one of our key tasks has been to help them define their core function and professionalise. We ran mentorship and training programmes focused on building their capacity, improving their skills in areas such as project writing and accountancy, and helping them to write grant proposals. We held national meetings bringing members of various academies together so that they could collaborate and learn from each other,” she explains.

“The academies stand for independent critical research and knowledge production that no longer exist within the state universities. They are among the few organisations left in Turkey that are defending democracy,” Lévy-Aksu relates.

In addition to supporting CDPR’s capacity-building project, EED is also directly supporting several Solidarity Academies in different parts of the country.

Shame Movement: A civil society movement born of protests

The *Shame Movement* — one of the most prominent and largest self-organised civic movements in Georgia's recent history — emerged from weeks of peaceful protest in 2019. In early 2020, the *Shame Movement* successfully secured long-awaited electoral reform with the help of international mediation, allowing proportional representation in parliament. This is considered important to contribute to pluralism in the political landscape in Georgia and to improve cross-party co-operation. It was one of the key demands of protesters in 2019.

In the run-up to the 2020 parliamentary elections, the team launched a social media campaign that encouraged young people to vote and reached over 1.2 million people. These efforts paid off, as the elections saw a five percent rise in voter turnout compared with the previous parliamentary elections, despite the difficulties posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.



Shame Movement activists protesting in Tbilisi. © Shame Movement



An activist paints a 'Keep It Green' stencil. © Keep It Green

Keeping It Green in Kosovo*

The environment of Obiliq and the surrounding areas, a region of coal mines, is so badly damaged that, in 2016, the government passed a special law to improve the living conditions of its inhabitants. Thirty percent of residents have been diagnosed with respiratory illnesses. Since the power plants provide work for around 5,000 people, implementation of the law is difficult.

Keep It Green, based in Obiliq, is raising awareness of environmental issues that are often neglected in Kosovo. It runs an annual Green Art Fest, holds weekly protests in front of the power plants, runs 'Reduce, Reuse and Recycle' workshops for students, and carries out door-to-door campaigns. Some of its most effective actions during the COVID-19 lockdowns have included videos raising awareness of the excessive amount of single-use plastic during the pandemic and the distribution of environmentally friendly reusable masks.

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244(1999) and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.



ANONYMOUS PROFILES

A young eco-activist fighting for a better environment

Nejma* is a young eco-activist determined to fight for a better environment for her city and her country. In recent years, the government has passed legislation to help protect the environment and encourage better solid-waste management and recycling, but the legislation has had little effect.

Nejma and her colleagues at *It's Our World** are working to ensure that the laws are implemented and to improve society's knowledge of environmental issues. They conduct public training events about recycling and relevant legislation, and organise screenings of environmental films. They have also developed online resources to help grassroots environmental activists mobilise and advocate for the implementation of the legislation.

Nejma is convinced that environmental activism is an important form of civic education and a foundation of long-term democracy. She believes that by working together on local environmental issues, such as recycling, local people can understand that they have the power to solve their own problems and build better futures for their societies.

*The name of this grantee has been changed to protect their identity.

Young Teple Misto activists in Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine. © Teple Misto



TEPLE MISTO SUCCESS STORY — ALUMNUS



Teple Misto: revitalising Ivano-Frankivsk

In Ukrainian, *Teple Misto* means ‘warm city’ — and it is the name of the platform founded in 2014 to unite people and businesses for sustainable development in the city of Ivano-Frankivsk in western Ukraine. The organisation’s first project was **Urban Space 100**, a unique social restaurant, set up thanks to 100 one-off donations of US\$1,000. It now channels as much as 80 percent of its income into urban development and social, cultural, and educational initiatives in the city. 118 initiatives have been funded to date. The **Urban Space 100** model is now franchised, with ambitions to open 100 more such social restaurants internationally.

Promprylad.Renovation is *Teple Misto*’s biggest and most ambitious project. It aims to renovate the Soviet-era Promprylad factory, in Ivano-Frankivsk’s city centre, and turn it into an innovation centre to foster regional development and focus on the new economy, urban studies, contemporary art, and informal education. With a planned budget of €25 million, this is Ukraine’s most impressive civil society project. Seventy percent of the space will be used by businesses and 30 percent will be provided at a discounted rate to initiatives with social or public functions. When fully operational at the end of 2023, **Promprylad.Renovation** will channel 30 percent of its profits into a charitable foundation to fund local development.

IV. HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISM AND MONITORING

The COVID-19 pandemic is a major factor in the deepening crisis of human rights and democracy, leaving many communities more vulnerable and without any legal protection. Supporting human rights activists has never been more important.

EED added-value in 2020

EED works to ensure that human rights defenders, lawyers, community activists, campaigners, and journalists can continue to operate and be heard in their societies. Support is often provided to activists who face persecution or repression to enable them to remain active. In such cases, EED's ability to provide discreet, flexible, and rapid grants is of paramount importance.

In 2020, EED funded an organisation monitoring human rights in Georgia and the breakaway republics of Ossetia and Abkhazia, an organisation advocating for better treatment of migrants held in detention centres in Libya, as well as a human rights lawyer working in a highly repressive environment, among many others.

Democracy Research Institute: A public-policy think-tank with a focus on human rights

A former Ombudsman of Georgia from 2012 to 2017, Ucha Nanuashvili heads the *Democracy Research Institute (DRI)*, a public-policy think-tank focused on the promotion of human rights, fundamental freedoms, and the establishment of an accountable governance system in Georgia.

With EED support, *DRI* monitors the human rights situation in the occupied regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In recent months, this has included monitoring the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the local population. Given the restricted access to these areas, the NGO plays a crucial role in reporting on the local human rights situation and disseminating information about violations to relevant stakeholders. Today, *DRI* is one of the main sources of information from the region on these issues informing national and regional media, as well as the international community.



Ucha Nanuashvili, founder of the
Democracy Research Institute.
© Democracy Research Institute



Biladi Institute for Human Rights' team. © Biladi Institute for Human Rights

“Greed and racism are both big problems here. Too many people in Libya take advantage of the migrant situation.”

Tarik Lamloum

PROFILE

Fighting for basic human rights for migrants in Libyan detention centres

The *Biladi Institute for Human Rights* works to improve the lives of migrants held in Libyan detention centres in both the east and the west of the country.

Libya has long been a magnet for migrants seeking to travel on to Europe, and many suffer horrific abuses. It is estimated that there are around 654,000 migrants in the country, with up to 4,000 migrants held in government and militia-run detention centres.

In May, following a vicious attack where 11 migrants were killed and 30 injured, *Biladi* was one of the many human rights organisations that demanded better treatment of migrants and the closure of militia-controlled ‘migrant warehouses’ that openly sell, smuggle, and traffic migrants across Libya.

Tarik Lamloum, *Biladi*’s executive director, notes that the conditions of official ‘sheltering centres’ for migrants in Libya fall far short of international standards, with human rights abuses common. Migrants endure arbitrary and indefinite detention, inhumane detention conditions, sexual abuse, forced labour, torture, and other ill-treatment. Most detainees are held without due process or access to lawyers or judicial authorities to challenge the legality of their detention. Conditions in the makeshift

centres controlled by the militias are much worse, with detainees subjected to extreme violence, beatings, and torture.

The *Biladi* team have documented countless cases of human rights abuses and mistreatment of migrant detainees in the centres that they monitor, and they are building a database of human rights abuses informed by these visits.

“Greed and racism are both big problems here. Too many people in Libya take advantage of the migrant situation. Multiple government agencies work with migrants too, and there is an ongoing struggle for power among these entities. Corruption is a real issue,” says Lamloum.

Over the past years, *Biladi* has built a reputation as an expert in international law and human rights law and it is frequently consulted by international agencies and governments for its insights and advocacy work.

With EED funding, *Biladi* has financed training, capacity building, and the exchange of experience with EU and other international actors, enabling it to take on more cases in EU courts where there are violations of migrants’ rights.



ANONYMOUS PROFILES

Protecting the rights of vulnerable people in rural areas

Jean Valjean* is a seasoned human rights lawyer with many years of experience providing pro-bono legal assistance to vulnerable clients in rural areas of his country where few other human rights organisations operate.

Working in a highly repressive environment, Valjean has previously faced arrest and harassment from the authorities. In the past few years, he has helped hundreds of people, with many of his cases focusing on women's inheritance and property rights, illegal evictions, divorce, and children's custody. He has also provided aid to activists persecuted by the authorities for their actions. An EED grant enabled Valjean to set up an office, launch a website, and pay legal salaries.

*The name of this grantee has been changed to protect their identity.

V. WOMEN'S CIVIC AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

A significant part of EED's work is ensuring that women play a central role in the democratic process. EED is strongly committed to developing gender equality in democracy building and it supports a large number of organisations that address women's issues and are led by women.

EED added-value in 2020

The women-led opposition and women-led marches in Belarus have been some of the most powerful images from 2020, emphasising the importance of funding women-led organisations and activists and female democratic leaders. Almost 40 percent of all EED initiatives have a specific gender component.

In this section, we highlight just a few of the women-focused civic initiatives funded during 2020, as many are categorised under other thematic headings.

Nearly

40%



of EED grants made in 2020 had a gender component



Coalition Israr: for equality and empowerment

A coalition of 40 Moroccan feminist associations, *Coalition Israr* is implementing projects and activities on a local, regional, and national level to address violence against women, with a particular focus on rural communities.

It works to amplify members' efforts for the promotion of women's rights through national and international advocacy, legal aid for victims, calls for national legislative reform, as well as technical support and capacity-building assistance to civil society organisations.

The coalition is advocating for the implementation of the Loi 103-13 aimed at combatting violence against women, which came into effect in September 2020. Despite ten years of lobbying by feminist groups, the legislation contains important gaps that have made local implementation difficult.

Andriana Arekhta
© Ukrainian Women
Veterans' Movement

“If I had died, I would not have been recognised as a soldier who had died for their country. I would just have been a seamstress who died at war.”

Andriana Arekhta



PROFILE

Defending the rights of Ukrainian women soldiers

“If I had died, I would not have been recognised as a soldier who had died for their country. I would just have been a seamstress who died at war,” says Andriana Arekhta, a former soldier and now the head of the *Ukrainian Women Veterans' Movement*.

In May 2014, Arekhta joined a group of volunteers heading for Luhansk, in the Donbas region, serving as a volunteer and a soldier for the next 15 months. She received no formal training, was not issued military fatigues, and was officially registered as a seamstress, not as a soldier. She still mourns the many hundreds of volunteers and friends who needlessly died due to a lack of training and equipment in those initial months.

Women soldiers and veterans face many challenges in the highly traditional military and legislative environment of Ukraine.

The *Ukrainian Women Veterans' Movement*, an association founded by fellow women veterans in 2019, is working to address these challenges and to defend the rights of women soldiers and veterans. It also provides a support network for these former women soldiers.

One of the women veterans' most important achievements was passing of landmark legislation in 2018 that recognised combat roles for women. Their advocacy work was also crucial in enabling women to attend military academies for the first time.

They have produced a series of documentaries featuring women who have died in service, posting them on social media, highlighting the experiences of these women.

With EED support, the movement is now fully engaged in an ongoing dialogue with Ukrainian lawmakers, the military, civil society, and wider society concerning challenges faced by military women.

The veterans give talks throughout the country, including in schools where they relate their experiences and talk to children about the importance of democracy and gender equality.

Prior to the 2020 local elections, they ran a mentorship programme for women veterans, encouraging them to participate as candidates.

“I want to help others learn from our experience as veterans. We are in regular contact with the Ministry of Defence and with members of parliament, advocating for the removal of anti-discriminatory policies within the military, as required by Ukraine under the obligations of NATO protocols... We want the younger generation to understand the importance of democracy, to be active, and to work for a better, more equal Ukraine,” explains Arekhta.



ANONYMOUS PROFILES

Protecting women's rights in hostile environments

EED's ability to fund unregistered organisations can provide a unique lifeline to those working in hostile environments. The Women's Network* has helped thousands of vulnerable women escape the stark realities of lives curtailed by violent patriarchal realities, providing them with access to justice and legal aid, as well as social benefits.

Following the network's forced closure in recent years, EED funding has enabled it to re-establish an office and maintain a core staff. Despite facing ongoing pressure from the authorities, this human-rights focused alliance continues to advocate against discriminatory laws, to raise awareness among the community about women's rights and issues such as gender-based violence and sexual harassment, and to help develop the capacity of local women to defend these rights.

The network helps empower both illiterate and educated women belonging to the highest social strata, encouraging them to play a greater role in the political lives of their community.

*The name of this grantee has been changed to protect their identity.

VI. INCLUSIVE SOCIETY, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, AND GENDER IDENTITY

Discrimination and exclusion on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity (SOGI) or ethnic identity is a violation of basic human rights and an unfortunate reality in many countries. EED's ability to provide grants in countries where legislation restricts, harasses, and even prohibits groups working on SOGI issues is often crucial.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, without distinction of any kind. Yet in all regions of the world, there are acts of violence and discrimination committed against individuals because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

*<https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html>

EED added-value in 2020

In 2020, EED supported a number of initiatives that help raise awareness of SOGI rights, empower members of the LGBT+ community, and advocate for better treatment in society.



FemLibrary: A space for women, queer, and trans people to imagine their own realities

Yerevan's *FemLibrary* was forced to move premises for the third time this year due to pressure from neighbours unhappy about its work supporting the LGBT+ community.

The centre's co-founder, Anna Nikoghosyan, first set up *FemLibrary* in a spare room in her apartment. Thanks to a crowd-funding campaign with donations from all over the world, it now boasts over 800 books and 600 journals. It is the only library on feminism and queer issues in Armenia.

Nikoghosyan describes *FemHouse* as a space for activists, scholars, and artists to exchange ideas and implement change in the very heteronormative and patriarchal society in which they live, where traditional gender roles dominate and homophobia and transphobia are widespread. "It is a space where women, queer, and trans people can be free and imagine their own realities on their own terms," she says.

Tbilisi Pride in 2019.
© Tbilisi Pride



A 'shame corridor' as a fact of life for Tbilisi Pride activists

"Homophobic protesters line up on both sides of our office door. Every morning we have to go through a 'shame corridor' of people insulting us as we try to get to work. That is what normal life is like for us," says Giorgi Tabagari, one of the founders of *Tbilisi Pride*, as he describes just some of the challenges faced by the activists in a society where homophobia is pervasive.

Tbilisi Pride's office has been vandalised twice and its members have received multiple death threats. Despite these difficulties, the group of LGBT+ rights activists managed to hold a small 30-minute Pride parade around Tbilisi in June 2019, an event that took months of preparation. A year later, *Tbilisi Pride* is a more established entity in Georgia and regularly meets with representatives from political parties to advocate for queer rights.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, its activists distributed Pride-branded face masks and invited people to hang their LGBT+ flags from their balconies in preparation for the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOTB). An online event held on 17 May featured speeches from community members, civil society leaders, politicians, and high-profile members of the international community.

ANONYMOUS PROFILES

Encouraging acceptance of LGBT+ people despite the odds

Murad* is convinced that life for members of the SOGI community will only improve if wider society is educated about the challenges faced by its members and there is more acceptance of LGBT+ people within society. Where he lives, homophobia is widespread and bullying and harassment of LGBT+ people are common and encouraged by the authorities.

Murad leads *We are all humans**, an NGO focused on changing this negative narrative. With EED support, the NGO has developed a series of podcasts featuring interviews with members of the LGBT+ community, their families, and friends where they openly discuss their lives, their sexuality, and how this has affected their relationships. These podcasts are uploaded onto a portal intended as a wider resource for the LGBT+ community and beyond, with links to resources on LGBT+ issues, key publications, and lists of relevant organisations, as well as contact information for people seeking psychological support.

Another important part of the NGO's work is to monitor cases of SOGI-based discrimination and publicise them. It works closely with local and national media in an effort to raise awareness of these issues and to debunk the common myths and stereotypes of LGBT+ people.

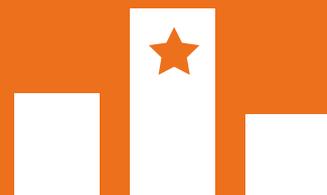
*The name of this grantee has been changed to protect their identity.





Among other things, the CGC is an innovative centre for informal interactive gender education and an incubator of gender projects.
© Kharkiv Centre of Gender Culture

EED SUCCESS STORY — ALUMNUS



Kharkiv Centre of Gender Culture: striving for gender equality

A group of Kharkiv enthusiasts and volunteers worked for years without funding on gender equality initiatives under the auspices of the city's *Kharkiv Gender Museum*, the only such museum in Ukraine. With EED support in 2016, they set up the *Centre of Gender Culture* and have developed a wide range of awareness and educational activities on gender issues, including human rights, gender-based discrimination, domestic violence, inclusion, building tolerance through dialogue, and breaking gender stereotypes.

Today, the CGC acts as a platform for empowerment of women and young people, offering access to its innovative centre for informal interactive gender education. It is also an incubator of gender projects, an information and resource centre, a training centre on gender equality and the prevention of gender-related violence, and a platform for sharing national and international best practices.

VII. ARTS AND CULTURE

Arts and cultural activities can provide unconventional and effective ways of advocating for democratic change by promoting democratic values and freedom of expression.

EED added-value in 2020

This year, EED supported a wide range of creative initiatives that encouraged freedom of speech and civic participation through cultural activities — a gap that few other international

donors can fill. Such creative projects can provide an important entry point for individuals to get involved in their communities and participate in the democratic process.

Ma3zef Symposium. © Ma3zef



Ma3zef: the premier music magazine for young Arabs

Since its establishment after the 2011 Arab Spring, *Ma3zef* has become the leading resource for music lovers in the Arab world. With a team based all over the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) and Europe, they use music to tackle sensitive topics, from LGBT+ issues to religious extremism.

“For us, it was important to present a new way of thinking about music. We wanted to write in the language of Arabic youth, not using our parents’ language or the language of the West. We wanted to bring together a team of young Arabic writers with a fresh perspective and approach,” says Ma’an Abu Taleb, one of the magazine’s founders.

Ma3zef covers all popular current music styles, such as ‘Mahraganat’ or Electro Sha’abi, as well as the Trap scene in Palestine. Its website and social media pages are now accessed by up to 350,000 young people throughout the MENA region and beyond each month.

The team has not hesitated to tackle contentious issues, recently carrying a feature on jihadist music or ‘*nasheed*’ analysing the development of the genre and asking popular musicians to devise musical responses.

One of *Ma3zef*’s latest projects is an online radio channel that features cultural programmes and political podcasts.

Rehearsal for
a performance at
Sarajevski Ratni Teatar,
Sarajevo. © Sarajevski
Ratni Teatar

“In a way, the coronavirus pandemic is the perfect time to reflect upon freedom.”

Ishak Jalimam

FEATURE

A theatre of hope in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Since its inception in May 1992, only two months after the start of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Sarajevski Ratni Teatar* (*SARTR*, or the *Sarajevo War Theatre*) has represented a beacon of hope in the darkest of times. During the four-year siege of Sarajevo, the longest blockade of a capital city in modern history, the theatre was an oasis of normal life as it continued to hold performances.

Twenty-four years after the end of the war, the theatre is still giving hope to young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, this time during the COVID-19 crisis. As part of the project funded by EED, the theatre is working with a group of young people to help them reflect on what freedom means for them.

“In a way, the coronavirus pandemic is the perfect time to reflect upon freedom,” says Ishak Jalimam, a producer at *SARTR*. “The restrictions, the police in the streets, the curfew: for the first time, these teenagers, who did not live through the war, are experiencing having their freedom taken away.”

The idea of the videos was born as a way of giving the younger generation a tool to move on with the past. The trauma of war is still fresh in Bosnia and Herzegovina,

and it is next to impossible to start a conversation about human rights and personal freedom without referencing it.

“We don’t shy away from discussing the war, but we also do not force it upon our participants,” adds Emina Adilovic, a facilitator for the project.

The participants are invited to experience what for many is an unprecedented level of creative freedom. They take the lead in the video-making process, and are free to learn how to seek information from official statistics and to gather stories of the past from their parents, neighbours and community.

The completed videos are then incorporated into a theatre performance. *SARTR* has also conducted workshops in five different cities under the guidance of Tomi Janežič, a theatre director and psychotherapist specialised in psycho-drama.

“It’s a theatre for the actors more than for the public,” explains Jalimam. “What’s really important is the process, not the outcome. Theatre is a means for the young participants to reflect upon themselves and their lives.”

VIII. YOUTH

Engaging young people in civic activism is often vital to help them imagine and create better prospects for themselves, as well as fostering a more democratic future in their countries.

EED added-value in 2020

Many civic initiatives in EED's portfolio for 2020 had a strong youth component, and were aimed at encouraging young people to become involved in the lives of their communities and in local and national politics. This section features

organisations that are tackling youth disengagement within communities, empowering young people, and providing opportunities for them to emerge as leaders and change-makers in their societies.

Sentiers-Massarib: cinema clubs bring social debate to young people

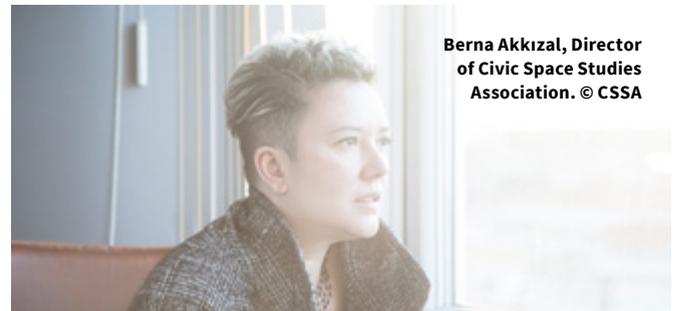
Local teenagers from Oued Ellil sought the help of the Tunis-based *Sentiers-Massarib*, an association of cinema enthusiasts, when they wanted to launch a film club at the local youth centre and organise film screenings in this region of high unemployment.

Sentiers organises cinema workshops for young people in marginalised regions across Tunisia, using its contacts in the world of cinema to engage professional directors and film technicians as volunteers to lead workshops. During a typical workshop, students learn every step of making a short film, including script-writing, shooting, and editing.

Thanks to *Sentiers'* mentoring, the Oued Ellil youth centre has now become a place where films are regularly discussed and where debates on social issues, human rights, and democracy are commonplace. The *Sentiers* team helps the group to select movies, introduce them, and moderate meaningful debates. A recent short film by the group, *Les Oiseaux de Oued Ellil*, can be viewed on YouTube.



Sentiers' movie debate activity.
© Sentiers-Massarib



Berna Akkızal, Director
of Civic Space Studies
Association. © CSSA

Civic Space Studies Association: providing civic space for students

Berna Akkızal is convinced that Turkey's democratic future depends on its youth, yet today 70,000 young students are incarcerated in Turkish prisons.

Concerned about the shrinking of civic space in the country, Akkızal founded the *Civic Space Studies Association (CSSA)* in 2018.

The CSSA aims to support students subjected to political repression, and monitors civic freedoms and their rapid deterioration in Turkey. Akkızal notes that not only is media freedom in danger in Turkey, but freedom of assembly and of association, the other two pillars of civic space, are too.

With its focus on students, the CSSA realised that students face challenges due to their political and civic activism as well as their identity, gender, and sexual orientation. It now supports student activists by monitoring violations and attacks, providing legal support, and offering tools so that students can organise and advocate for themselves. CSSA also includes a wide variety of groups among its partners, including LGBT+ university clubs and those working on women's issues.

“Real democracy is the only way that we can ensure our rights.”

Nidaa Nassar

One of Baladna's youth-led groups. © Baladna



FEATURE

Baladna – an Arab youth-led association

Baladna, meaning ‘our country’, targets Arab Palestinian youths living in Israel. Established in 2001, at a time when there were no national NGOs working with Arab youths, this award-winning Haifa-based organisation works to empower young Palestinians by enabling them to develop their ideas and become aware of their responsibilities as future leaders of their community. Key premises of the organisation are the defence of human rights, democracy, and gender equality.

Nidaa Nassar, the director of *Baladna*, explains that Arab communities in Israel face many challenges, not least of which is their lack of political representation and the lack of services and development policies in localities where Palestinians represent the majority. The situation for young people is particularly difficult. “They are born in the Israeli context; it is the only thing they know. They see the reality they live in as a normal one and they absorb an inferiority complex,” explains Nassar.

The organisation works to politicise young people, which for *Baladna* means helping them to reflect on their

personal lives and the overall challenges faced within Arab-Israeli society. “We want young people to link their personal challenges with the broader political context to help them advocate for their rights as Arab Palestinians in Israel,” Nassar explains. “Real democracy is the only way that we can ensure our rights.”

Young people sit at the heart of *Baladna* and it is they who decide what needs to be done, who understand the priorities, and who develop activities to address issues their community is facing. *Baladna* simply provides the structure, training, and technical support to make sure this can all happen. “People want to do things, but they don’t know how. We enable them to take action,” Nassar explains.

EED’s flexibility made this possible, says Nassar, noting that not all funders understand the transformative rather than the activities-based approach that sits at the heart of the association.

Main Image: People protesting against Lukashenka in Minsk, 18 October 2020. © Andrei Liankevich

Inset: A man holding a Belarusian opposition flag with the Pahonia coat of arms, Minsk, 18 October 2020. © Andrei Liankevich



BELARUS SPECIAL: MASS PRO-DEMOCRACY AWAKENING

Belarus: protests transforming into a long-term pro-democracy movement

The mass protest movement that erupted in Belarus in recent months was not entirely unprecedented. Increasing economic and social instability and the mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic had already shaken President Alyaksandr Lukashenka's regime, and the rigged election result and evidence of mass electoral fraud in early August were seen by many as the sparks that lit the fires of protest.

Perhaps more surprising was the emergence of a new figurehead of the Belarusian opposition — Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya — who in the past months, as she heads an opposition now mainly based outside the country, has remained consistent in her call for renewed and transparent elections.

Emergence of a mass protest movement

The extent of the mass protest movement was extraordinary. Swathes of a previously apathetic citizenry have come out to demonstrate in cities throughout the country week after week. All sectors of society, from the young to the old, from the urban middle class, IT professionals, artists, healthcare, teachers and blue collar workers are engaged in this movement.

True to form, the regime has reacted with violence against the peaceful protesters; this repression was condemned by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe as 'massive and systematic human rights violations'. Protests have continued despite mass arrests and severe beatings, the ongoing repression instead sustaining social and political mobilisation among the country's citizens.

Now, as protests transform into a more long-term grassroots movement, new citizens' groups are seeking to become more sustainable and resilient civil society and political actors.

Role of independent media

Independent media have played a key role in the opposition movement. Increasingly wary of official misinformation, citizens have sought out trustworthy reporting on developments, relying on independent media outlets, many of which have significantly increased their readership. Telegram channels have been particularly important. These social media channels have been able to circumvent internet outages imposed by the authorities, as other media outlets, both online and print, have been forced to close or have been blocked and hundreds of journalists have faced arrest. This has stripped the regime of supremacy in the realm of public communication and has enabled citizen self-organisation.



EED at the forefront of the European response

EED has long worked to support civil society and independent media in Belarus, and in recent months it has been at the forefront of the European response to the crisis. Between August and December 2020 alone, EED received applications for support from Belarus amounting to €4.1 million and it approved nearly €2 million of grants.

EED is providing grants to a wide range of organisations, from networks of intellectuals and new grassroots initiatives in the regions, to activists who are developing platforms of co-operation and dialogue to promote visions of peaceful transformation in their country. Grants cover organisational core costs, including rent, the renovation of offices, and personnel costs, as well as supporting organisations as they evolve from voluntary to more professional operations.

From COVID-19 to election fraud: continuing to report the news

The last few months have been difficult for Irina Novikova* and her team of journalists. Their online media was one of the first to report COVID-19 cases in their region, a report that led to accusations of disinformation from the authorities, a court case, and a significant fine. Members of the close-knit team have lost close family members to the disease in recent months, losses that have hit them all hard.

Prior to the 9 August elections, the outlet published a number of articles about the opposition candidate, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, featuring interviews with friends and acquaintances who had known her in her youth. It faced further court actions and even larger fines after this publication.

“They want to destroy us,” is how Novikova puts it. “They will do whatever they can to strangle us so we can no longer speak openly.”

The outlet’s journalists have also faced personal repercussions because of their reporting. One journalist was so badly beaten during his arrest and subsequent imprisonment that he still bears facial scars two months later. Novikova too has faced threats and worries about possible repercussions for her family.

She is determined to continue to report on the issues that matter, recently breaking a story about corruption among the militia that was subsequently reported nationwide. “Our mission is to show what is really happening. We have a moral duty to do so. In the regions, people are more scared than in Minsk. Our reporting is even more important here,” she says.

Much of EED’s grant portfolio in Belarus is provided to independent media organisations, digital activists, and citizen journalists. EED’s support to media enables outlets to remain active, accessible, and relevant. This funding is particularly vital for regional media.

Developing a sustainable pro-democracy community

EED’s support is important to assist activists and media as they become more resilient in an increasingly repressive environment and an economy that has been ravaged by the COVID-19 pandemic. Activists are clear in their vision for a peaceful transformation in Belarus. They want to develop platforms for society-wide civic and political participation and dialogue that can bring about this transformation. Key to this will be the strengthening of active citizenship and philanthropy, encouraging people to become involved in the long-haul of democracy building.



Protest in Belarus. © Andrei Liankevich



A protester holds a banner saying 'Together until the end', Minsk, 25 October 2020. © Andrei Liankevich

Documenting the protests: videos of protest and repression

During the run-up to the election and over the months of protests, Pavel* always has a camera at the ready. Sometimes he uses his camera to film, sometimes his phone. It depends on how safe he feels, as arrest is a constant worry and his equipment might be confiscated at any moment.

“You can be arrested just for filming a demonstration these days. You don’t even need to take part,” he says.

He uploads these films to his YouTube and Telegram channels. “I feel that it is important that society knows what is happening in Belarus and that I show the truth. There is a huge demand for video. People want to see

what is really happening. And I also want to document events, too — these are historic times for our country,” he explains. He admits the work is hugely stressful.

Pavel believes this footage is one of the reasons that so many older people are now active members of the protest movement. “Many of the older generation are not normally so concerned about the regime or the lack of equality in Belarus. But now, they don’t believe the propaganda of the state media anymore. They are afraid for their children and their grandchildren,” he says.

* Irina Novikova on page 56 and Pavel on page 57 are pseudonyms to protect the identities of the activists.

**“You can be arrested
just for filming a
demonstration these
days. You don’t even
need to take part.”**

Eyewitness



A group of protesters in Minsk on 5 December 2020, the 120th day of protests. © Andrei Liankevich



Lebanese protesters, in the streets outside the national association of banks, express anger against their political leaders four days after a huge blast at the port of Beirut on 8 August 2020. © Ammar Abd Rabbo/Daraj Media



LEBANON SPECIAL: SEEKING ACCOUNTABILITY

On 4 August, 2,750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate that had been stored in the port of Beirut for six years exploded, killing more than 200 people and injuring more than 6,000. EED partners are seeking accountability for this terrible tragedy.

Residents of Beirut reported that the explosion felt like an earthquake, and it destroyed large swathes of the city. More than 300,000 people were displaced from their homes.

Prior to this catastrophe, Lebanon was already experiencing a severe economic crisis, with its currency losing more than 80 percent of its value since October 2019 and nearly 50 percent of the population already living under the poverty line, a situation compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic.

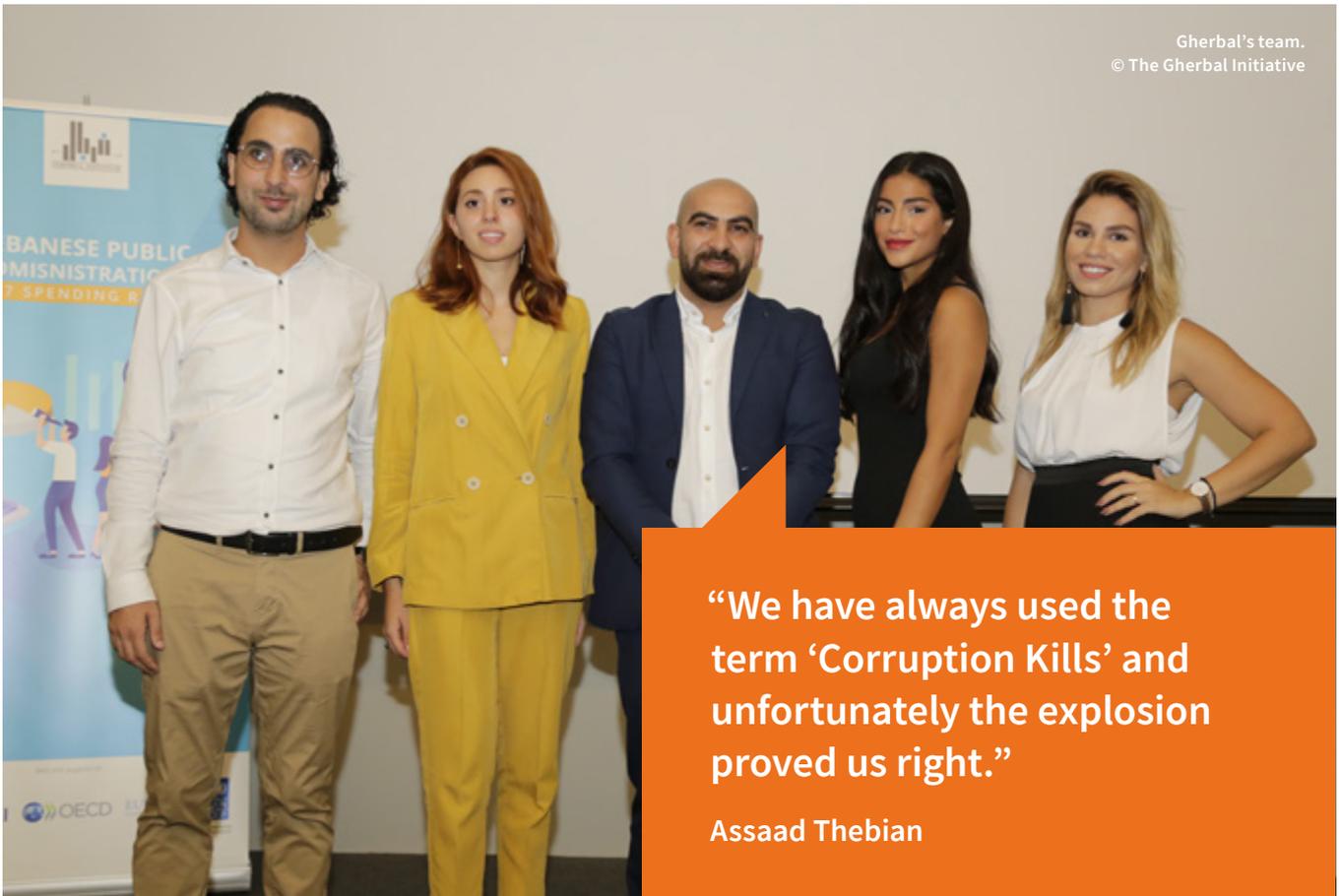
All EED partners in Beirut were affected by the explosions. While staff members only reported minor physical injuries, they were traumatised by the extent of the devastation. The offices of EED partners *Joumana Haddad Freedoms Center* and the *Gherbal Initiative* were destroyed, and both partners had to temporarily halt activities.

Media partners, including *Daraj Media*, *Megaphone*, *The Public Source*, and *Beirut Today* covered the explosion and published important investigative pieces holding the government to account.

Megaphone published a widely circulated video, 'The Silent Conspiracy', highlighting how widespread corruption allowed the explosion to happen, and has pointed to key officials responsible for it.



Gherbal's team.
© The Gherbal Initiative



“We have always used the term ‘Corruption Kills’ and unfortunately the explosion proved us right.”

Assaad Thebian

PROFILE

The *Gherbal Initiative*: Transparency in public administration

The 2017 enactment of the Right to Access to Information Law was an important step in the fight against corruption in Lebanon, and also gave birth to the *Gherbal Initiative*, which monitors the enforcement of this legislation.

Over the past two years, *Gherbal's* team has followed up on freedom of information requests, presented the data to the public, and liaised with both government and civil society. The team publishes details of administrative budgets in user-friendly formats on their website, using data collected from public administrations' answers to official information requests. Today, their name is well-known in Lebanon and abroad.

During the weeks of unrest in the autumn of 2019, the team launched the *El Lira* website, responding to the population's demand for more accountability and transparency from the government.

As Assaad Thebian, the organisation's founder explains, “People had huge passion and belief but they did not

know how to use the data and make their voices heard. For example, the state balance is huge; it would take a day for a person to find the related data and interpret it. On the website, this is simplified, you can easily understand which ministry spends how much and on what.”

Not even the explosion of 4 August could stop *Gherbal's* work. Although the team saw their offices damaged, and chairs, laptops, and other equipment broken, they still wanted to help the families who had lost their homes or loved ones.

Within a week, they launched *El Da3em*, a platform to help people find local and international organisations offering support on the ground, with details on civil work, crowdfunding campaigns, and maps that were published in the aftermath of the explosion.

“We have always used the term ‘Corruption Kills’ and unfortunately the explosion proved us right,” notes Thebian.

PROFILE

***Daraj*: A media platform at the heart of pan-Arab independent journalism**

Daraj, which is Arabic for ‘steps’, was launched on 1 November 2017 as the first pan-Arab digital media platform that is both independent and innovative. Its name was deliberate; *Daraj*’s co-founders saw the platform’s establishment as a step ‘up out of a deep hole’ for Arab media.

Daraj is not funded by any of the dualities that dominate this region, where media are usually funded and supported by Saudi Arabia or Iran, Sunni or Shia interests, Assad or Isis. Its impartiality also prompted its tagline: ‘the third story’, pointing to the objective reporting based on facts and high professional standards that sits at the heart of its journalism.

Daraj’s founders knew that independence would only be possible if it was financially independent. “I see what freedom does. I see how much more you can do when you really are an independent media. When you don’t have to answer anyone on editorial lines, on content, or

on the stories you cover, you can do so much more. We are building new trust in the media, despite or maybe because of the authorities’ clampdown against journalists throughout the region,” says Alia Ibrahim, one of the platform’s founders.

Seed grants from both EED and International Media Support (IMS) enabled the launch of the platform, and a current EED grant is helping to cover core costs such as staffing. *Daraj* now has a team of 12 journalists based in Beirut and a network of journalists in 50 cities around the world.

Following the 4 August explosion, *Daraj* published many stories investigating the corruption at the heart of the tragedy. It has also published stories focusing on the experiences of victims and their families, and has monitored cases of violence against protesters by the army.



“We are building new trust in the media, despite or maybe because of the authorities’ clampdown against journalists.”

Alia Ibrahim

(from the left) Alia Ibrahim, Hazem al-Amin and Diana Moukalled. © Daraj

Reharsal for a performance at
Sarajevski Ratni Teatar, Sarajevo.
© Sarajevski Ratni Teatar



Performance at Sarajevski
Ratni Teatar, Sarajevo.
© Sarajevski Ratni Teatar



RESULTS AND LEARNING

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning is a continuum of monitoring the implementation of grants, evaluating these during and after the grant implementation period, and reflecting on and learning from the results. That way, it is possible to ensure continual improvement through learning.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

As an organisation established to contribute to democratisation processes by providing ‘gap-filling’, flexible, un-bureaucratic, and demand-driven support, the EED Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning System (MEL) has been designed to support EED’s specific approach.

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 judgments about how to best foster EED’s objectives and respond to the changing contexts in which EED operates, instead of on detailed long-term planning efforts.

MEL information provides insights on implementation progress and results achieved, and informs the strategic decision-making processes and operations, helping EED to respond rapidly and effectively to emerging changes. MEL is also key to enabling EED to account for resources spent and to report on progress to EED stakeholders, such as the Members of the Board of Governors and donors.

EED’s MEL approach enables grantees to be responsive to changing circumstances, to experiment, and to learn, and it is designed to minimise the burden placed on grantees in terms of

data collection and reporting requirements. An important part of the MEL strategy is the avoidance of harm, and the operational and political risks of EED’s assistance are carefully assessed and monitored to mitigate risks.

Since democratisation processes are complex and EED operates in challenging environments, the MEL approach is realistic about what possible changes can be achieved within the particular context in which grantees work.

Independent evaluation of EED

This year, EED commissioned an independent evaluation of its work, in compliance with the EED statutes and the June 2017 decision of the Board of Governors to undertake an evaluation in 2020. This evaluation began in May 2020 and is expected to end by June 2021.

The evaluation focuses on assessing the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of EED’s support. It includes country case studies on Moldova, Serbia, Turkey, and Lebanon, and thematic case studies on EED’s support to sensitive countries and EED’s support to the media. It includes a specific focus on gender, EED’s experience with expanding to new countries/regions, and EED’s response to the COVID-19 crisis.

Tiber's big coverage of the 2018 wave of protests in Jordan. © Tiber / Ali Saadi



HUMAN RESOURCES AND BUDGET

EED's **40 core staff** members in 2020 are nationals of 27 different countries, including Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, France, Georgia, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Moldova, North Macedonia, Poland, Serbia, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom.

Staff members 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.

EED runs a successful traineeship programme, with 16 trainees supporting the work of the communications, operations, and

programme teams for one-year periods, gaining significant experience and skills during this time. Many former trainees continue to work in democracy support, and are now employed by organisations including the European Institute for Peace, the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), the Association for International Affairs (AMO), and the European Commission.

Twenty-three European countries that are members of the Board of Governors have contributed to EED's programme budget, as has Canada through a special grant for Ukraine. The EED operations budget is covered by a European Commission grant.

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^{ca} also contributes through a special grant for Ukraine.



Austria



Belgium



Bulgaria



Cyprus



Czech Republic



Denmark



Estonia



Finland



Germany



Hungary



Ireland



Latvia



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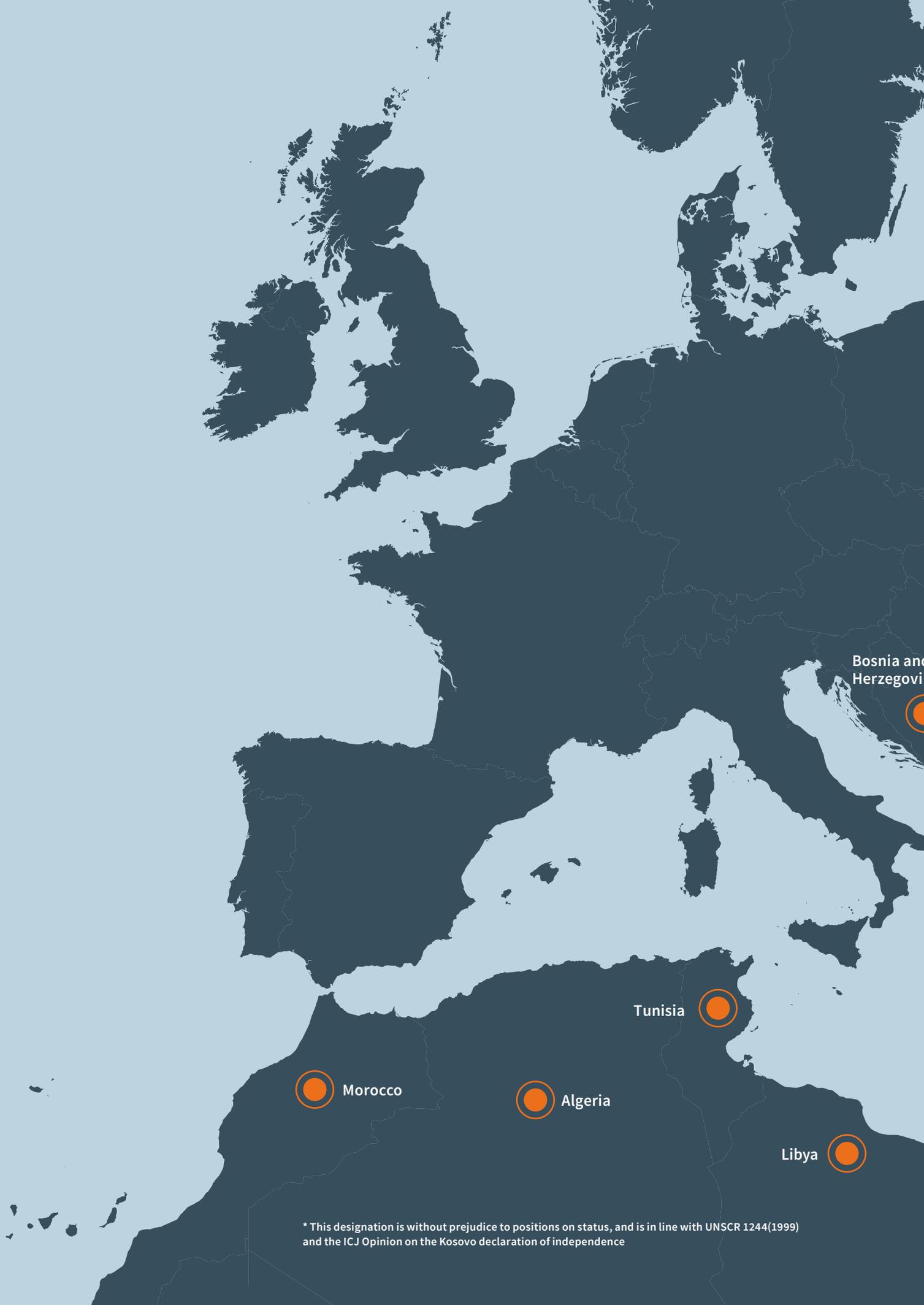
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Bosnia and Herzegovi

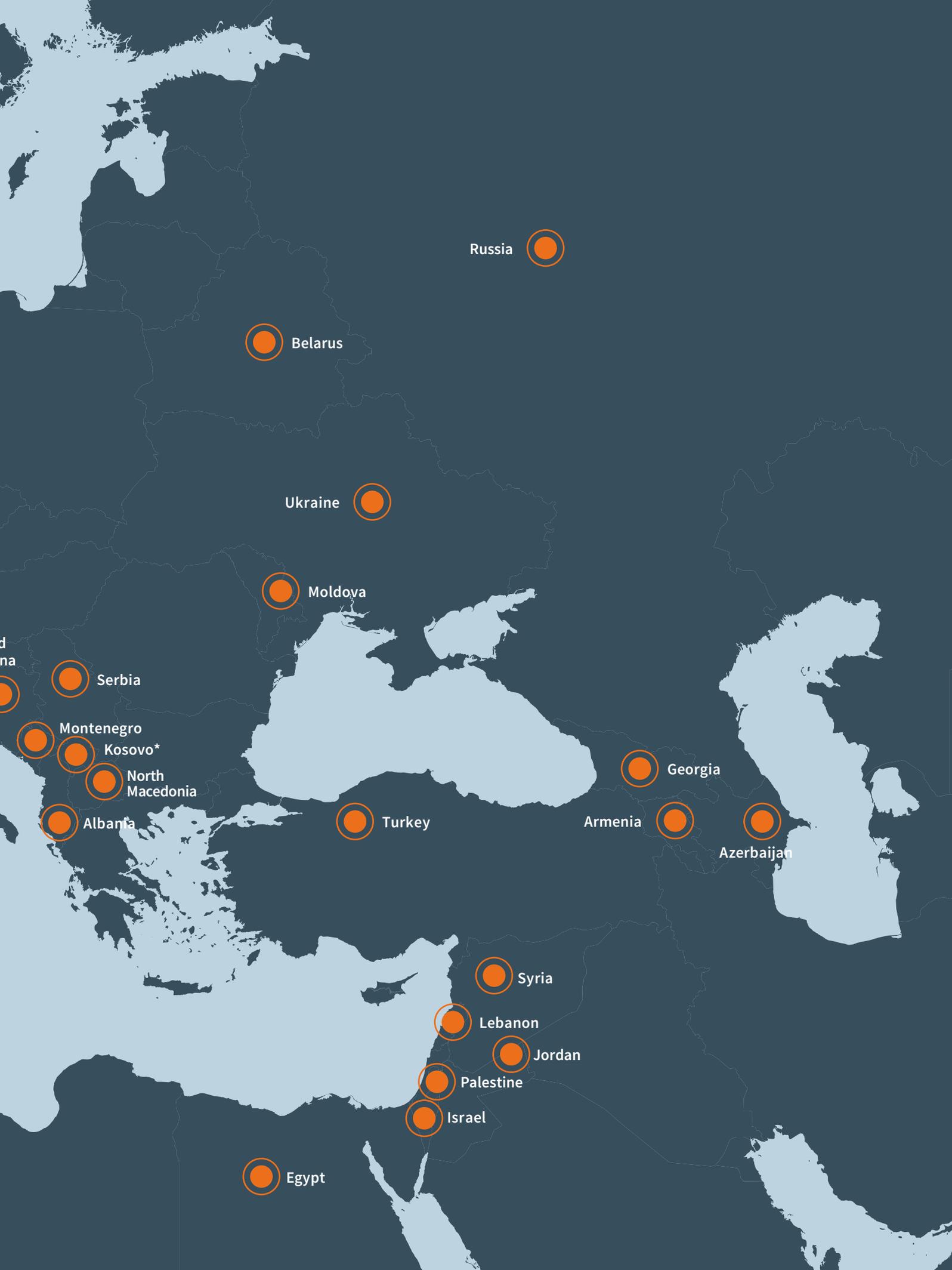
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Algeria

Tunisia

Libya

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244(1999) and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence



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Belarus

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Moldova

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Kosovo*

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Albania

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