



# ANNUAL REPORT 2021

Supporting People  
Striving for Democracy

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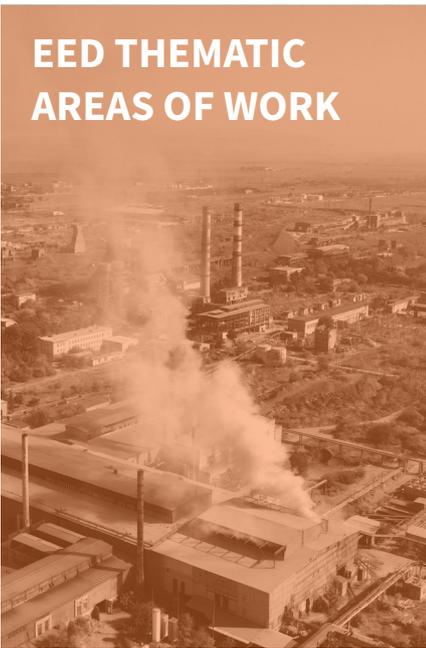
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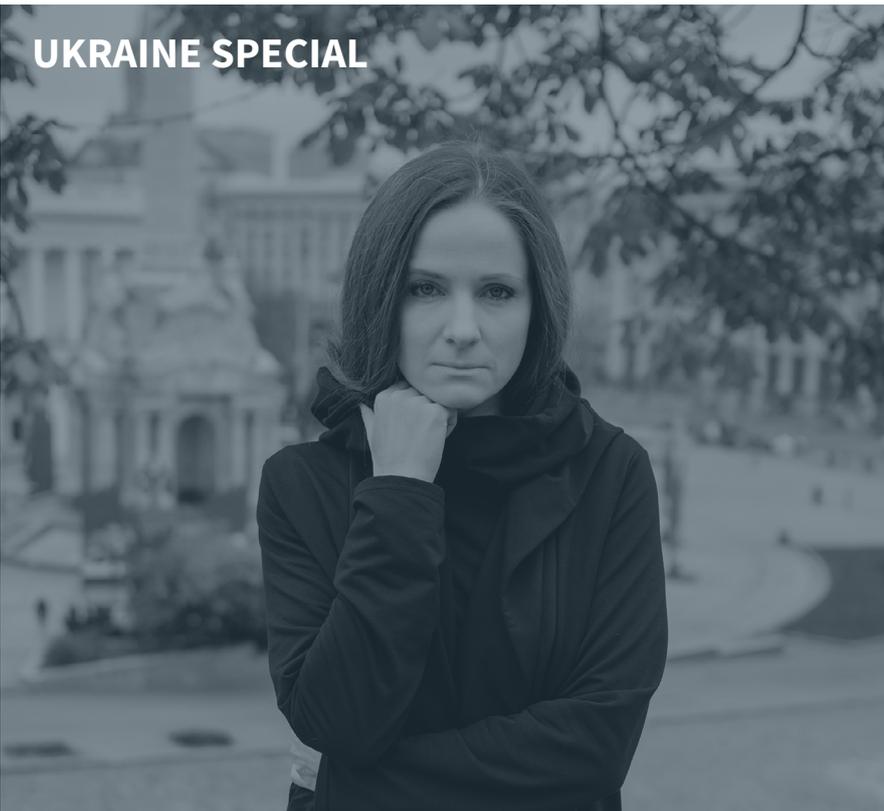
**FIVE MESSAGES  
FOR THE  
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# ABOUT EED

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.

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# 1630

grants approved  
since EED's  
establishment



# EED'S APPROACH

## Innovative

EED is open to new and innovative ideas and responds dynamically 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 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 such requests within a few days.



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## **Supporting the unsupported**

EED seeks primarily to support groups and activists that are unable or lack the capacity to access EU democracy-support programmes, but with a guiding principle of investing in transformational ideas and the people behind them. It also invests time in capacity-building of grantees in areas such as programme and project management, ensuring that good ideas can be transformed into functioning organisations.



# EED IN NUMBERS

€25  
million

in democracy support approved  
in 2021



293 new funded  
initiatives

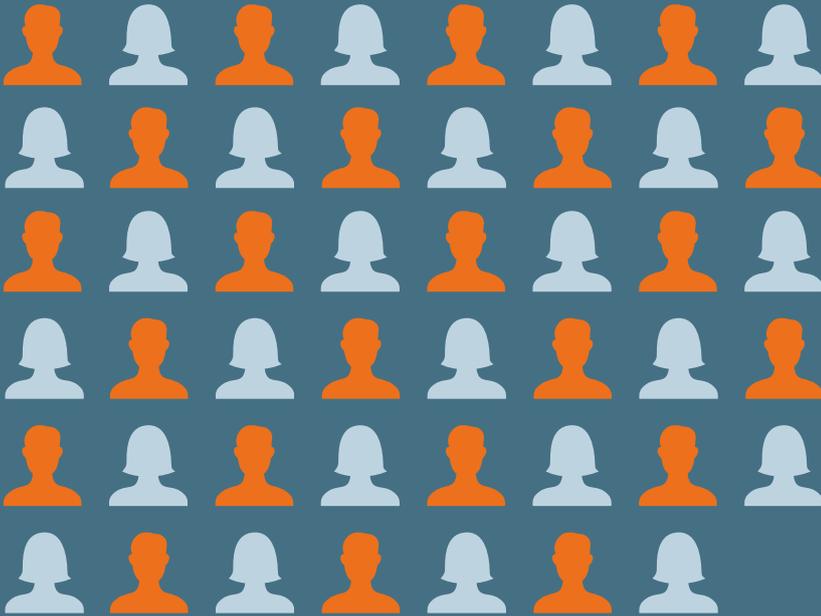


1,062

requests for  
support



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# 47

core staff members from  
27 countries

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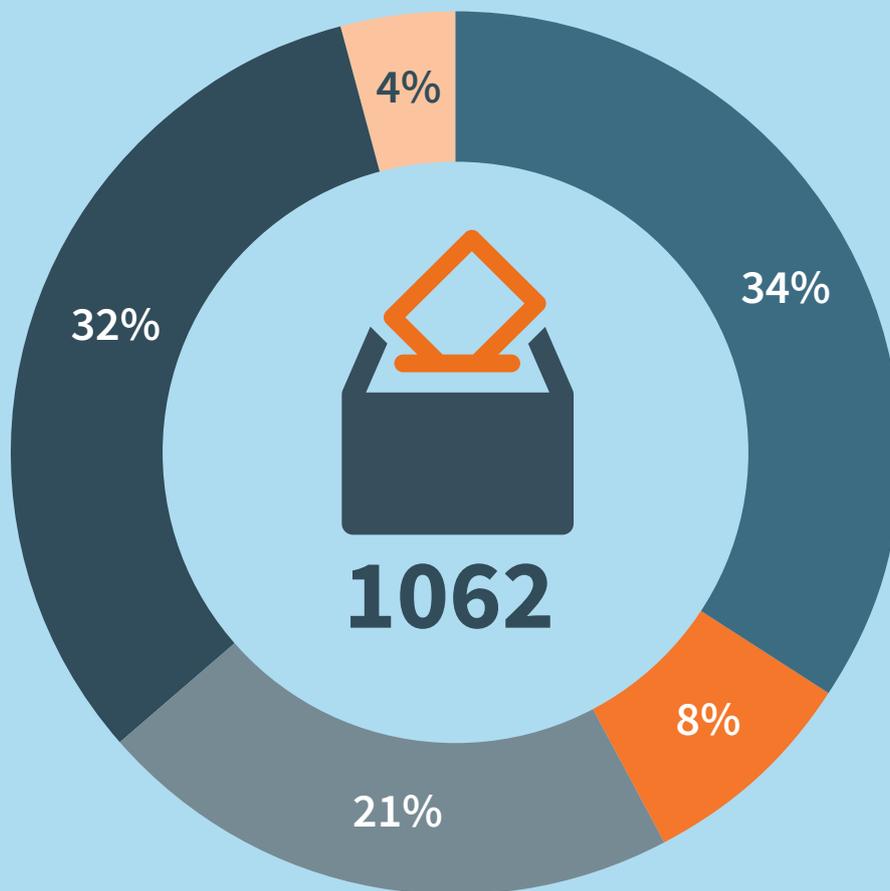
# 73,544

followers across 4  
social media platforms



# PORTFOLIO OVERVIEW

Applications received per region 2021

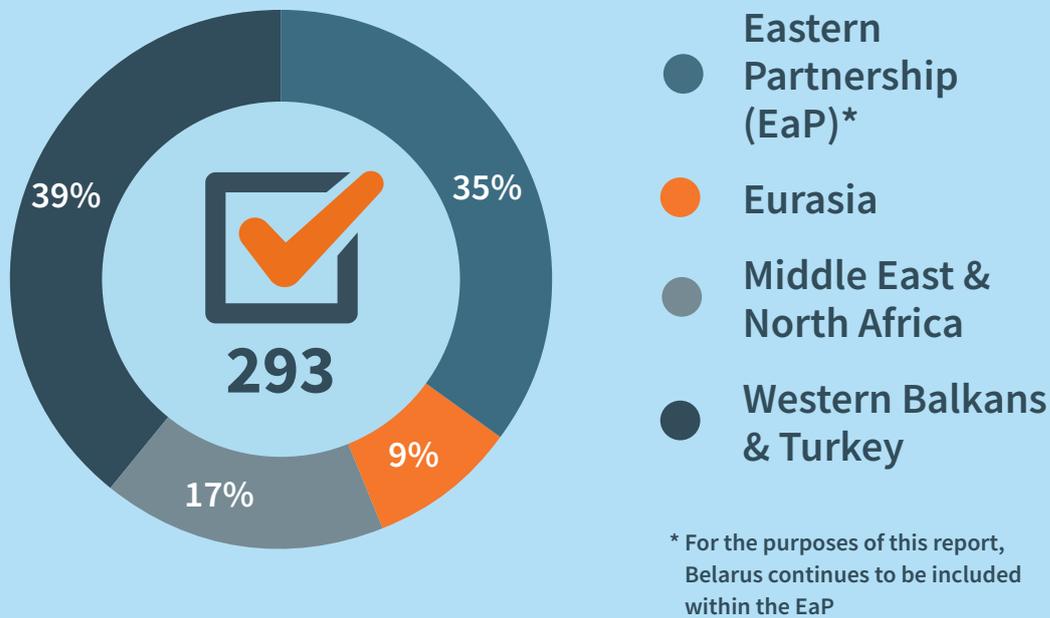


- Eastern Partnership (EaP)\*
- Eurasia
- Middle East & North Africa

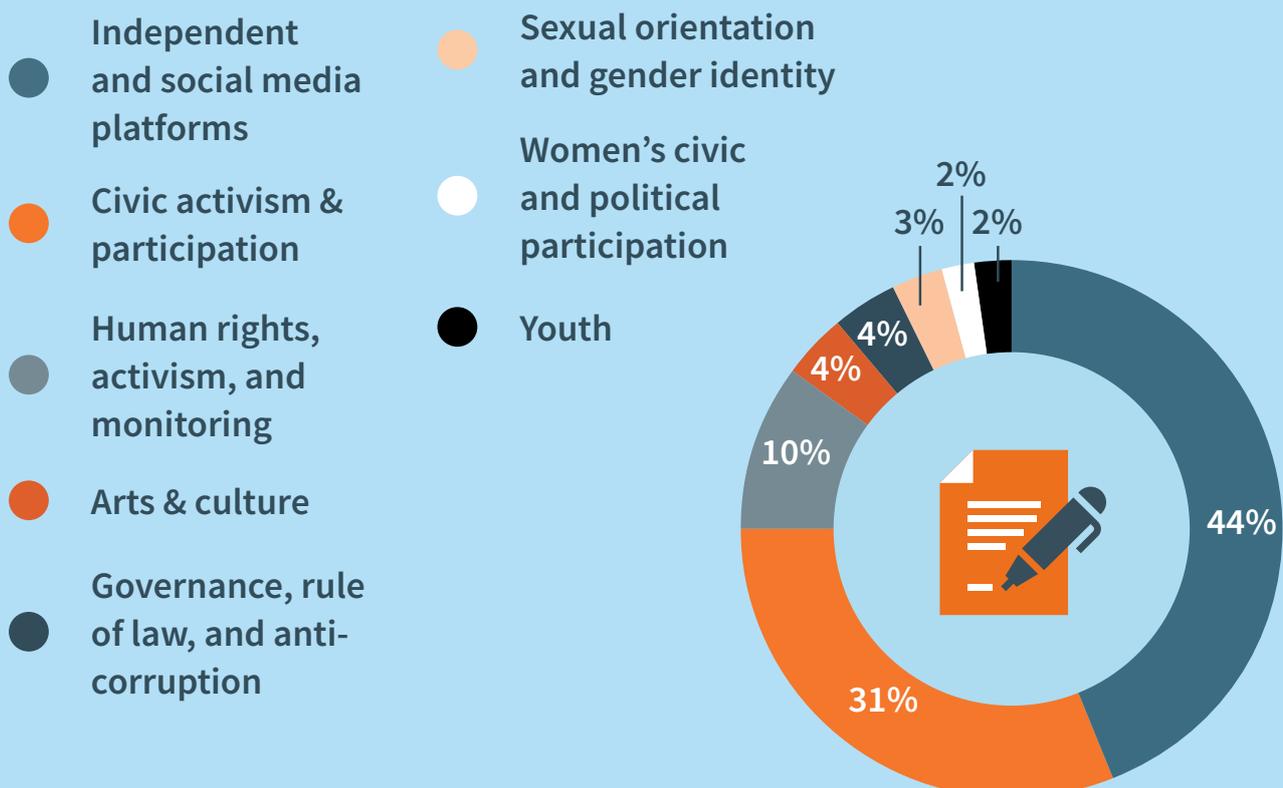
- Western Balkans & Turkey
- Rest of World

\* For the purposes of this report, Belarus continues to be included within the EaP

## Number of initiatives approved by ExCom in 2021 by region

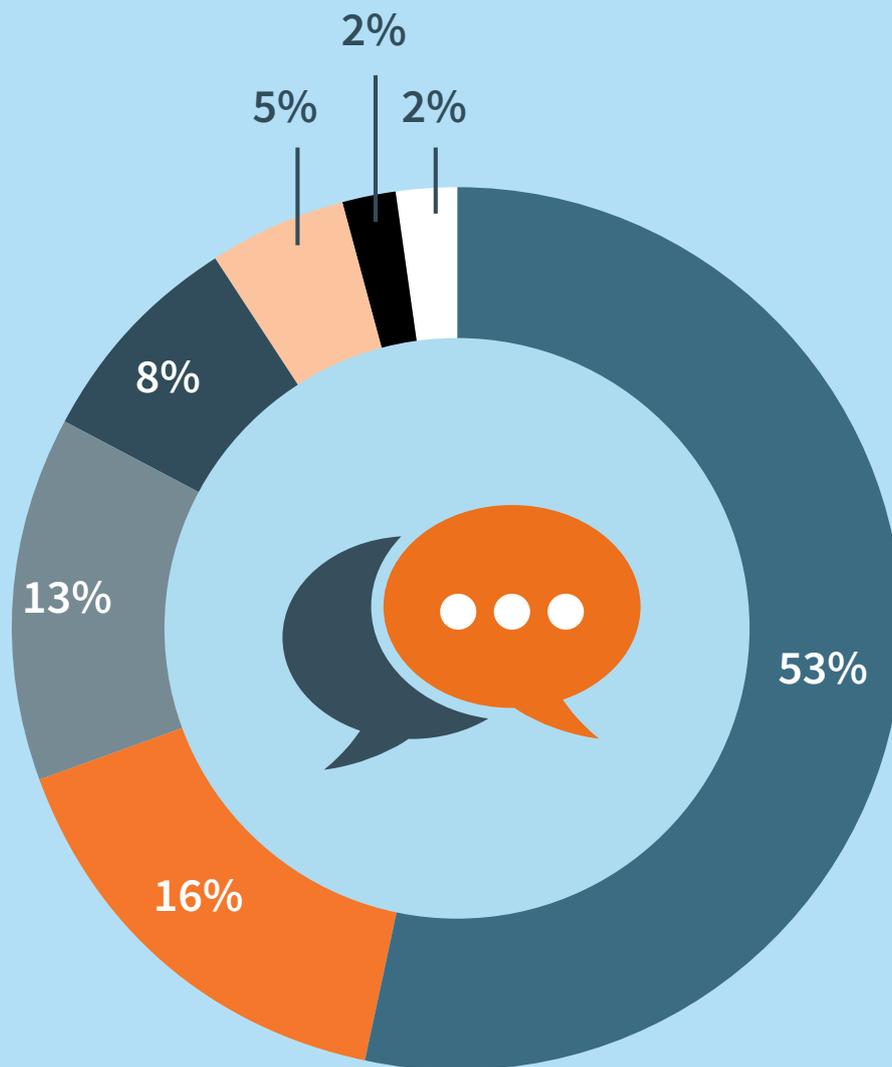


## Initiatives supported in 2021 per thematic area



## Language of application

EED accepts applications in all the main languages of our partners. Here is a breakdown showing the languages of all applications in 2021.



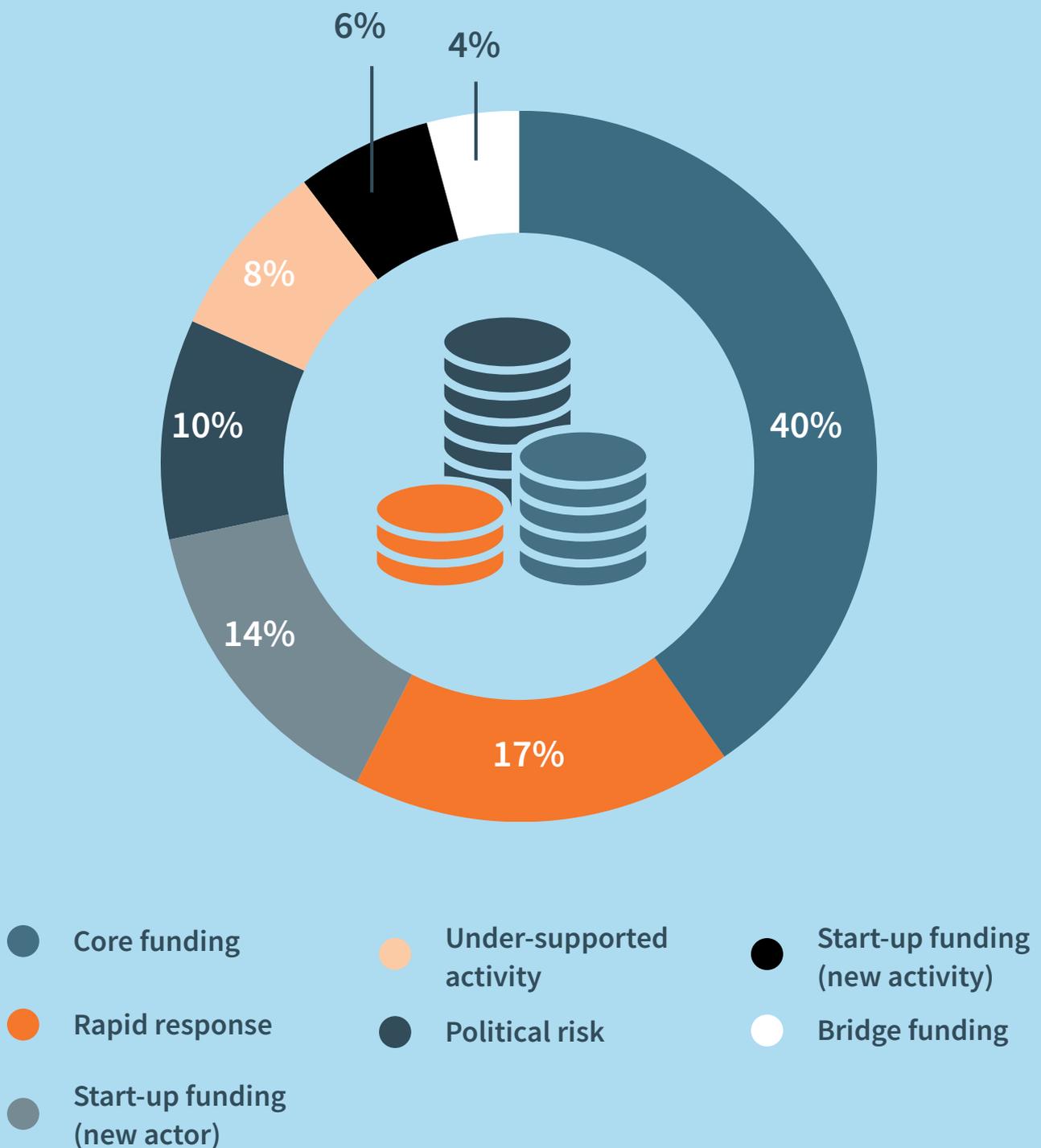
- English
- Russian
- BHS\*
- Turkish

- Arabic
- Albanian
- French

\*Languages of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia

## EED added value

A key part of EED's mission is to 'add value' to existing European mechanisms of support to pro-democracy actors and activities. EED identifies an added-value for each grant as part of its ongoing monitoring, evaluation and learning process.



# EVENTS

EED Events provide opportunities for grassroots activists from our partner organisations to make their voices heard within EU institutions, member states, and the global democracy-support community. EED acts as a ‘Democracy Support House’, enabling conversations between key institutional stakeholders and these activists, often in closed-door events that allow open and frank discussions.

In 2021, EED organised, co-organised, and participated in 33 events, including international conferences and summits.

## INTERACTIVE KEY



Listen to  
Audio



Read  
Article



Watch  
Video



*“Students can be punished with travel bans – the same thing happens to human rights defenders and academics; being prosecuted might also hinder their career prospects in the future. And yet there are protests all over Turkey, and when students cannot physically protest, they raise their voices on social media.”*

Berna Akkızal (co-founder and director of Civic Space Studies Association)

### **Power to the youth – engagement and activism under authoritarianism in Turkey**

In April, an EED-organised online webinar focused on the youth in Turkey from the perspective of EED partners active in the field of students’ rights, gender equality, and civic engagement. These activists spoke about their struggles and expectations while working in a challenging and increasingly autocratic environment.

A close-up portrait of a woman with long, dark, wavy hair, looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. She is wearing a light-colored, possibly white, collared shirt. The background is blurred, showing hints of an outdoor setting with buildings and trees.

© Alia Ibrahim



## Difference Day 2021

EED was one of the co-organisers of the seventh edition of **Difference Day 2021**, the annual Brussels-based celebration of UN World Press Freedom Day on 3 May. This year, the event focused on ‘Women Breaking the News’, celebrating the work of women journalists around the world and highlighting the inequality, lack of visibility, and gender-based threats they face.

EED partner Alia Ibrahim, a co-founder of *Daraj Media*, an independent media outlet from Lebanon, was one of the Difference Day speakers, taking part in a panel with fellow journalists from Belarus and India.

## **The voice and resilience of Syrian independent media in ten years of conflict**

In the framework of the Brussels V Conference on ‘Supporting the future of Syria and the region’ on 29-30 March 2021, organised by the European Union, EED co-hosted an online event together with Free Press Unlimited and International Media Support (IMS) focused on independent Syrian media. Speakers highlighted the potential for independent media to shape the future of Syrian society by providing access to credible information, enabling public debates, and countering hate speech, fake news, and polarisation.

*“What happened on 25 July split civil society in two. People who had been working together for years found themselves with different opinions. Civil society is confronting itself within its own limits. We are struggling to understand how to intervene, since we don’t know what is going to happen.”*

Nour Kaabi (formerly of Jamaity and founder of Houloul initiative)

## **Civil society reacts to the current crisis in Tunisia**

In October, an EED webinar included speakers from leading Tunisian civil society and independent media organisations who discussed how the ongoing political crisis in the country is affecting their work. This online event gave a unique insight into the challenges now faced by civil society as it struggles to adapt to the ongoing crisis (see ‘Tunisia special’ for further information).



"Democracy is an abstract concept when you have it, but becomes real when you start losing it. It's a global problem, we need to promote the idea that we're all in this together and should cooperate to solve it," says moderator @ETemelkuran

#DemocracyWeek2021 #StrongerTogether



*“There are many small, ethical, high-quality media outlets in Georgia, but we totally depend on grants because of the lack of advertising income... We can’t compete with mainstream media that are supported by the government. The government portrays journalists as an enemy and discredits us... There is no space for constructive communication with the government.”*

Nata Dzvelishvili  
(CEO of Indigo Publishing)

## International Democracy Week 2021

For the seventh year in a row, EED, in collaboration with other leading pro-democracy organisations, marked the International Day of Democracy with a series of events this year under the theme ‘Stronger together: Partnerships for Supporting Democracy’. Like last year, this was an online event held over several days.

## Georgia’s civic activism in turbulent times

With the political crisis ongoing in Georgia, EED organised an event in June that brought together civic activists and journalists for a discussion on the state of civil society, societal challenges that have been amplified by the pandemic, and issues that unite people outside the capital, Tbilisi.

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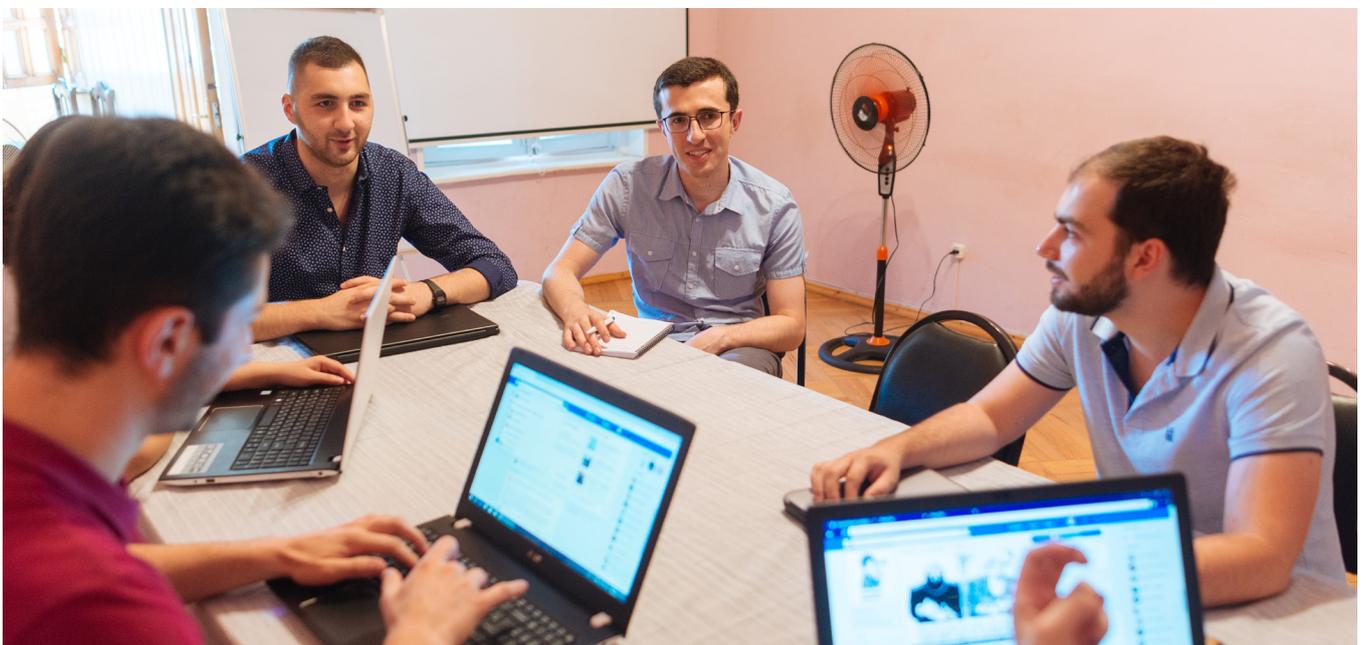
# EED'S THEMATIC AREAS OF WORK

The following sections take an in-depth look at the work of EED partners during 2021 across the various thematic areas of operation.



# I. ANTI-CORRUPTION AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

Corruption is a major barrier to advancing democracy, destroying public trust in institutions, jeopardising sustainable development, and the rule of law. EED supports activists who tackle corruption and promote public accountability, transparency, and citizens' oversight of governance.





© Nazaha

## PROFILE

### Abeer Musleh and Nazaha: Building a culture of accountability in Palestine



A Ramallah-based NGO is building a culture of accountability among young Palestinians. There are already signs of a change in mentality among young people increasingly critical of corruption.

“Integrity. Transparency. Accountability.” Abeer Musleh, founder and executive director of the **Palestinian Academy for Integrity**, or **Nazaha**, constantly repeats this mantra. She believes that Palestine’s future depends on these three words. She is even optimistic.

Musleh’s experience of lecturing at West Bank universities convinced her of the importance of founding Nazaha.

“Everyone knows that corruption is a huge problem in Palestine, but when I started speaking to the students about accountability and transparency, they laughed. By the end of the programme, I could see a real change in them. They understood the topic and had acquired more awareness of the issues. They believed that it is possible to address corruption. This is why we decided to found Nazaha,” she says.



## SmartGov: A technology-led NGO transforming local government in Lebanon

The founders of **SmartGov**, an ICT start-up and NGO in the northern Lebanese city of Tripoli, are developing innovative e-governance tools to enable citizens to have a greater say in local government, helping to bring about a culture of transparency and accountability. SmartGov was launched thanks to EED seed-funding.

“Technology offers new ways of eliminating corruption and improving transparency within government and ensuring civil engagement. Our solution digitalises all aspects of municipality operations, ensuring transparency and live-streaming expenses in real-time,” says co-founder Ihab Hallab.



## Governance Monitoring Center: exposing corruption and misspending of public funds in Georgia

In the four years since its establishment, policy watchdog **Governance Monitoring Center (GMC)** has become a social media sensation in Georgia. Its Facebook page **Squander Detector** has more than 35,500 followers, a significant number in a country as small as Georgia, and it regularly posts infographics and short updates on corruption and mismanagement of public funds.



## Al Bawsala: Holding the parliament accountable in Tunisia

Founded ten years ago, just after the Tunisian revolution, **Al Bawsala** wants to put citizens at the centre of political action. One of their first projects was to publish the names and pictures of members of parliament (MPs) on its website to let people know who was representing them. They also included MP absences, presences, and voting decisions.

“The goal was to hold politicians accountable and to enable people to make more informed political choices,” Al Bawsala’s Executive Director Nesrine Jelalia says.

Al Bawsala has four monitoring projects – the parliament, the state budget, local municipalities, and transitional justice. They make all information accessible to every citizen. Each project has its own website and they provide live-streaming of plenary sessions and information on local and national budgets. In November 2020, following an increase in police brutality, Al Bawsala created a website for citizens to report acts of police violence.

# II. INDEPENDENT AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

A free media has always been considered an essential part of democracy, with journalists holding authorities to account, exposing corruption, informing citizens, and providing platforms for debate and shaping opinions. EED supports a broad range of media-based projects, including small start-up initiatives and larger professional outlets, providing funding unavailable from other donors.

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EED funding to  
Independent media

81%



of grants provided to independent and social media take the form of institutional funding. This support is vital to enable these media to stay operational.



*“It was important that we were everywhere. There was so much happening. Daily protests, briefings from the opposition, statements from the government, parliamentary meetings, press conferences of experts. We covered it all.”*

Kaiyrgul Urumkanova  
(Govori.TV)

## PROFILE

### ***Govori.TV*: Kyrgyzstan’s first online television station**

**A dynamic and experienced journalist, Kaiyrgul Urumkanova, is at the helm of one of Kyrgyzstan’s most exciting media outlets, an online television station setting new standards in broadcast journalism in this Central Asian country.**

In October 2020, mass protests broke out in the Kyrgyz capital following parliamentary elections that were plagued by allegations of vote rigging, at a time when the country’s economy was in free fall. ***Govori.TV*** live-streamed events to viewers both in and outside the country.

*Govori.TV* logged as many as 100,000 viewers each day during this period, as people sought out its independent coverage of events.

Founded in 2018, thanks to EED seed-funding, as Kyrgyzstan’s first internet television channel, *Govori.TV* has built up a strong team. Urumkanova has spent considerable time training her team in international professional standards of journalism.

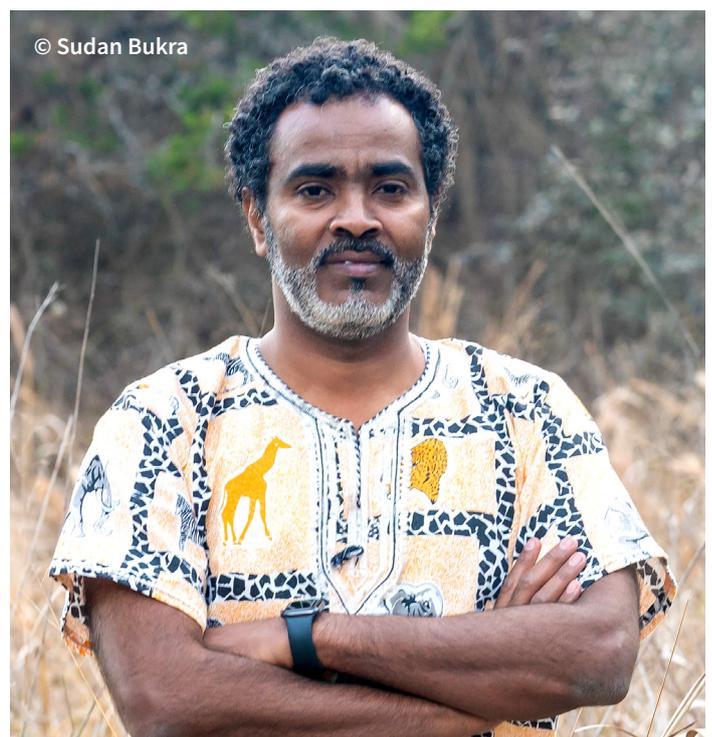
## PROFILE

### *Sudan Bukra*: Censorship-free quality broadcasting in Sudan

In 2013, during a wave of violent protests against the Al-Bashir led government, a group of Sudanese telecommunications engineers began to think about a technical solution to circumvent media censorship. With national newspapers' editions seized, journalists arrested, and internet access cut across Sudan, there was no media coverage of unfolding events.

One of the engineers realised that the solution was satellite TV, a medium particularly suited to Sudan, where nearly 80 percent of the population of 40 million own satellite dishes, and where social TV watching is common, with people watching television in cafés, restaurants, and refugee camps. In 2015, Husam Mahjoub, Ammar Hamoda, and others took part in a short-lived satellite TV broadcasting venture, *Sudan Bukra* — or Sudan Tomorrow — that folded due to lack of funding.

In December 2018, as the internet was shut down once again, no national media reported on country-wide protests. As the crisis intensified amid the media black-out, a diaspora group led by Sudanese medics contacted the *Sudan Bukra* team and, after a flurry of fundraising, the station was relaunched in 2019 and began broadcasting from a European satellite provider.



## *El Biro*: Challenging taboos in Libyan society through visual storytelling

Ghady Kafala and Abubaker Albizanti founded *El Biro* to provide in-depth coverage and analysis of events as Libya descended into civil war, and to give a voice to women and minority groups forced to flee their homes.

“We wanted to focus on human rights, as these have collapsed in Libya as the years of civil war have taken their toll. Our vision was to develop a dynamic media that could have a real impact on young people and that was not just focused on hard news,” says Kafala.



## *Kuest Media*: Innovative video explainer journalism in Turkey

“Journalists and academics are a little like olive oil and water. They don’t mix. We’re trying to bring these two groups together, the knowledge producers and the marketers, and to reach out to people,” Medeni Sungur says to explain the mission of *Kuest Media*, Turkey’s first explanatory journalism platform.

Launched in March 2021, thanks to an EED grant, *Kuest* focuses on short explainer videos that educate and entertain, raising awareness of important public policy topics and individuals’ fundamental rights. They have published videos on issues ranging from police violence in Turkey, to the tenth anniversary of the Arab Spring, and women’s unpaid domestic labour.





### *Aramram TV: A pioneering web TV station in Jordan*

Abdelsalem Akkad, a journalist with many years of international reporting experience, and fellow journalist Hams Rabah launched *Aramram Web TV* in 2008, along with Greyscale Films, the company that produces content for the online outlet.

At the time, there were no web TV stations addressing controversial issues such as identity, political freedom, or minorities in the Arab world, and *Aramram's* talk shows sparked lively online debates and provided a unique space for youth to engage in current affairs and societal issues.

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© Radio Nor

## **Radio NOR: A radio station in rural Georgia that is now a multimedia platform**

It took nine years for Ararat Ttuyan, from the small Georgian town of Ninotsminda, near the Armenian and Turkish borders, to obtain a public broadcasting licence. In this rural region, where most people speak Armenian and Russian, **Radio NOR** first won a BBC World Service competition to set up a community radio station in 2006.

Today, *Radio NOR* broadcasts eight hours a day and has become a multi-platform broadcaster with its own transmission tower. Its programming includes educational content with Georgian language classes, social campaigns on taboo topics such as bride kidnapping, women drivers, and the deluge of rubbish that fills local fields. It gives different political voices a platform during election periods. *Radio NOR* has become known as a station that makes change happen.



## ***CoolnFresh* Magazine: challenging taboos in Kosovo one meme at a time**

During his final year of university, Fisnik Çerkini started *CoolnFresh Magazine*, an Instagram page to post memes he created for fun. Three years later, this page is now a media success story and the most influential alternative media in Kosovo.\* It posts dozens of memes daily to its 120,000 followers, and is often featured on primetime in mainstream media.

*CoolnFresh* uses light-hearted memes to provide satirical commentary of news and political events in Kosovo, challenge societal taboos, and spark discussions of issues ranging from corruption and crime to sexism and racism. It became especially popular during the 2021 elections when it ridiculed everyone across the political spectrum.





© Megaphone

### ***Megaphone*: A leading voice of change in the Lebanese mediascape**

Before the October 2019 protests against the political establishment in Lebanon, ***Megaphone*** was a magazine run by volunteers; it posted several explainer videos on a weekly and monthly basis that attracted tens of thousands of views. Over the weeks of the protests, it began to post daily videos that went viral, quickly gaining hundreds of thousands of views.

Today, ***Megaphone*** is one of the region's leading independent media. The platform tackles complex information in an accessible way, dissecting politicians' speeches, revealing disinformation tactics, and giving a voice to a wide range of people, including youth and women.





© Dinu Bubulici

## Alexei Tulbure, Stela Jantuan, and Victor Ciobanu: Paving the way for a new democratic era in Moldova

Leading up to the November 2020 presidential elections in Moldova, which saw the victory of pro-EU liberal politician Maia Sandu, a trio of political commentators fronted a Friday evening talk show ‘Trigger’, analysing the latest news and picking apart the government’s actions. Trigger soon became one of the leading Russian-language programmes in the country.

“We wanted people to understand that our politicians must be held accountable, and as a people we have to demand this of them,” explains Alexei Tulbure, who fronts the show together with veteran activists Stela Jantuan and Victor Ciobanu.

EED funding to  
Independent media



# 18%

of grants provided to independent media are for start-up initiatives.





## *Acık Radyo*: An independent radio station funded by its listeners

*Acık Radyo* is a fiercely independent exception in the Turkish media landscape that has been operating since the 1990s. It has no private owners, relying instead on funding from its listeners, a community united by the values of democracy and freedom of speech.

Over the years, the team has grown to include 19 paid staff members and more than 200 volunteer programmers and producers who use their expertise to serve the community of listeners and supporters.



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**EED SUCCESS STORY —  
ALUMNUS**





© Teyit

### ***Teyit*: countering misinformation in Turkey**

In 2017, a group of young Turkish journalists applied for EED start-up funding to develop a fact-checking website to counter disinformation and fake news. Five years on, *Teyit* has become a grassroots media success story with 1.2 million followers on its social media accounts.

*Teyit* fills a major gap in a Turkish media landscape that is rife with disinformation, using a rigorous fact-checking methodology to debunk fake news – a process that can take from 30 minutes to three months depending on the complexity of the information.

# III. CIVIC ACTIVISM AND PARTICIPATION

Civic activism and engagement ensure properly functioning democracies where the rights and interests of all people are protected. EED provides flexible support to civic activists that is adapted to their constantly evolving needs.

## *Sivil Sayfalar*: A forum for civil society to be seen and heard

Inanç Misirlioğlu believes in a truly democratic and inclusive Turkish society. This conviction prompted her to found *Sivil Sayfalar* in 2015 with her colleague Emine Uçak Erdoğan as an independent civil society media platform.

The platform uses podcasts, videos, social media, data visualisation, and fact sheets to bring reports produced by civil society to the attention of journalists, and in turn it helps to bring together journalists and civil society organisations.





## Rabat Social Studies Institute: Building a think-tank culture in Morocco

When Saloua Zerhouni returned to Morocco after years of living abroad, she decided to bring the culture and tradition of think-tanks back to her country to contribute to institutional and societal change.



A university professor, Zerhouni co-founded the **Rabat Social Studies Institute (RSSI)** with like-minded colleagues sharing the values of democracy, inclusion, and social justice. “We have political opinions, but no political affiliation. We are a proudly independent think-tank,” she says.



## Center for Democratic Research: A student-led initiative providing transparency of the Turkish parliament

A student initiative that started as a project to raise young people’s awareness about parliamentary activities has set its sights high, as it seeks to provide an online resource of national and local Turkish parliamentary activities from the past 20 years.

The **Centre for Democracy Research (CDR)** began life as **Referendom** - a ‘Twitter for democracy’, as its founders describe it, an app informing young people of proposed parliamentary legislation and letting them vote on it in real-time

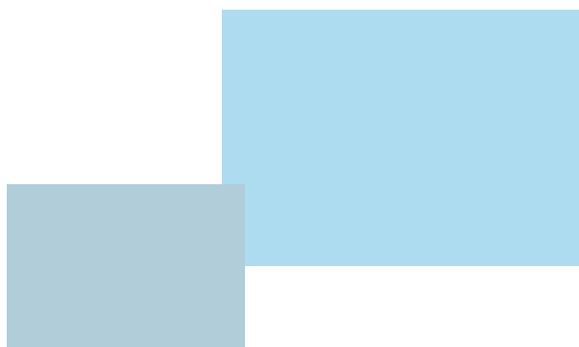
# EED SUCCESS STORY — ALUMNUS



## Humetna Association: engaging young people in Tunisia's civil society

**Humetna**, based in the northwest Tunisian town of Majaz al Bab, received a start-up EED grant in 2016 and a follow-up grant in 2017. Tarek Tookey, Humetna's director, explains that when the association was formed, young people felt disengaged from politics and abandoned by politicians, and many had joined extremist Islamic groups. There were no outlets for potential youth leaders.

One of the association's first activities was to run a football tournament during Ramadan, where they brought different groups of young people together and held after-match talks in local cafés about democracy and politics.



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# ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIONS

Climate is the defining issue of our time. More and more communities across the world are mobilising as grassroots activist groups to prevent environmental damage in their communities.

This new wave of informal groups, often based outside capital cities and rooted in local communities, is an encouraging sign of civic participation around the world. For many, environmental activism is the first step towards further involvement in civil society and holding their governments to account on issues such as corruption and misspending public funds.



## Gavigudet: Advocating for cleaner air in Rustavi, Georgia

Tinatin Maghedani admits that, for most of her life, she had little idea that Rustavi, her hometown, was one of the most polluted areas in Georgia. An industrial centre since the Soviet era, the city is home to around 50 factories situated on its outskirts, with only a few abiding by environmental laws.

Two years ago, Maghedani stumbled upon a Facebook post by the environmental organisation **Gavigudet** ('We are suffocating') that quantified the harmful emissions from the factories. She began by volunteering at Gavigudet, and then she left her well-paid job to devote herself to environmental activism full-time. She now heads the organisation.

"You don't realise how bad something actually is until you see it with your own eyes," she says. "This is why we organise visits to the industrial area for citizens of Rustavi."



## Zall Gjoçaj: Protecting a national park in rural Albania

Three years ago, the authorities approved construction of a hydroelectric power plant within the borders of the remote **Zall Gjoçaj** park that would change the course of a river that the local community had always used for agriculture and livestock, causing considerable environmental damage to the valley. While the construction company claimed it had consulted local villagers and that the project would not use the entire volume of water for energy production, it soon became apparent that this was untrue.

The people of Zall Gjoçaj felt they had little choice but to start protesting against the plant's construction, and they have kept up their protests ever since, despite intimidation from both the company and local authorities, often making four-hour drives to Tirana to bring their plight to national attention.





© Green Leaf

## Green Leaf: Shaping Odesa's green future

Vladyslav Balinskiy was drawn to activism during the Revolution of Dignity in Ukraine when, in May 2014, a fire at Odesa's Trade Unions House, caused by violence from pro-Russian separatists, left dozens dead. Balinskiy was in charge of writing a report on the tragedy.

“I realised that I couldn't be just an observer, I needed to be more civically engaged to prevent Russian aggression in my hometown,” he says. With war raging in Eastern Ukraine, his battlefield became environmental protection, and he founded the NGO Green Leaf to advocate against illegal construction and protect historical sites in Odessa, bringing about a more environmentally friendly city.



## Pusti me da tečem: Protecting the Neretvica valley in Bosnia and Herzegovina from environmental damage

When authorities announced construction of a hydroelectric power plant by the river Neretvica in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2020, a group of local citizens immediately got to work.

Ten days later, 1,500 people took part in a protest against the power plant. That action was the start of **Pusti me da tečem** ('Let me flow'), an activist group committed to preventing environmental damage in the Neretvica valley.

# IV. HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISM AND MONITORING

The rule of law and human rights are among the core principles of democracy. EED supports human rights activists who defend citizens, many of whom are increasingly vulnerable and lack legal protection. EED partners increase awareness and understanding of what human rights are and how citizens can react when their rights are being violated.





*“After the war, I felt hopeless. I thought there was nothing I could do. But I believe in the art of small steps. You can bring change to a small village, then a community or a town. Working with other organisations, we can achieve a lot.”*

Gayane Abrahamyan  
(Article 3 Club)

## PROFILE

### Article 3 Club: Counteracting narratives discrediting democracy in Armenia

**A human rights organisation is reaching audiences throughout Armenia and the diaspora with its alternative education hub, providing space for public discussion about democracy issues.**

Two things that define Gayane Abrahamyan are justice and action. In her distinguished 22-year career as a newspaper and television journalist, Abrahamyan admits she was consistently drawn to social justice issues. She eventually left journalism to become a human rights defender and, for a time, a parliamentarian. In 2016, she founded the human rights organisation **For Equal Rights**, also known as the **Article 3 Club**, which plays a crucial role in counteracting narratives that seek to discredit democracy.

## Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists: Protecting media freedom in Jordan

The Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists (CDFJ) has defended the rights of journalists in Jordan for over 23 years. Founded by Nidal Mansour when legislation imposed new restrictions on the media and 13 media outlets were closed, CDFJ provides legal assistance and capacity building to journalists and issues annual reports on the state of media freedom in Jordan and the wider Arab-speaking world.





## Fraternity Foundation for Human Rights: Leading the way for civil society in northeastern Syria

The **Fraternity Foundation for Human Rights (FFHR)** was established in northeastern Syria in 2013, two years after civil protests against the regime of Bashar Assad erupted, as a way to respond to the local population's emerging needs.

Initially, most of FFHR's projects revolved around women's economic empowerment, children's protection, and public awareness of human rights. As more civil society organisations and NGOs were founded in the region, FFHR began to focus on issues related to freedom of association and peaceful assembly. It works actively to promote principles of non-violence, civic engagement, and human rights.

## Hurryyat: Working to end prisoner abuse and torture in Palestine

Last June, Nizar Banat, a civic activist and outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority, was killed in a brutal attack by Palestinian security forces. His death sparked furious protests against a regime that many see as corrupt and repressive and a puppet of the Israeli authorities.

**The Centre for Defense of Liberties and Civil Rights** 'Hurryyat' is one of many CSOs that called for an independent enquiry into Banat's murder.







*“We wanted to reach out to these people who can actually push for change and make a difference.”*

Cemre Topal (Adana Feminist Lawyers Initiative)

## PROFILE

### Adana Feminist Lawyers Initiative: challenging gender discrimination in the judicial system in Turkey

Cemre Topal became interested in women’s rights and feminism in her 20s after graduating from university. She soon decided to use her law degree to defend these causes and, with three other lawyers based in the city of Adana in southern Turkey, formed the **Adana Feminist Lawyers Initiative**, a collective bringing attention to gender discrimination in the courts.

For the past ten years, the organisation has defended victims of sexual assault and domestic violence and has worked on some widely publicised cases of women who killed their husbands in self-defence. EED funding is allowing them to pursue a new project: collecting instances of sexist and discriminatory language in court proceedings in Adana.



### Sexual Assault Crisis Center: Helping sexual violence survivors in Armenia

According to UN statistics, one in three women in Armenia experience physical and sexual violence at least once during their lifetime. Set up in 2008, the **Sexual Assault Crisis Center (SACC)** in Yerevan is the only

organisation in the country that provides psychological and legal support to survivors of sexual violence.





## Al Mar'ah: Empowering women in rural Morocco

Founded in 2004 by five young graduates frustrated by the lack of opportunities for women in Al Hoceima, on the northern coast of Morocco, **Al Mar'ah Association for Development and Solidarity** advocates for women's empowerment in the region.

Al Mar'ah trains women in a wide range of skills, from reading and writing to sewing, and provides mental health and family planning support. The organisation liaises with the government to raise awareness about reproductive rights and conducts anti-bullying campaigns in local schools.

## Equity and Empowerment: bringing Syrian women together

The four founders of **Equity and Empowerment**, all of whom define themselves as feminists, decided to act when they observed the lack of attention to women's needs within the humanitarian response in Syria. They believed that if women were not present in the public sphere, as is the case in the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) controlled region of northern Syria, they could play no part building peace and political processes.



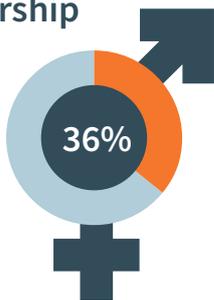
# VI. INCLUSIVE SOCIETY, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, AND GENDER IDENTITY

Discrimination and exclusion because of sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, religion, or disability are all violations of human rights. In many countries, these and other under-represented groups face restrictions in exercising their democratic rights.

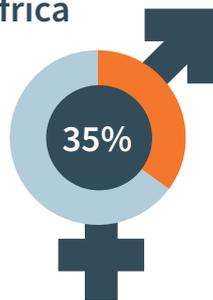
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## Grants with a gender component\* (ongoing in 2021)

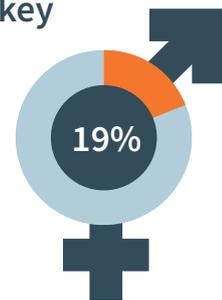
Eastern Partnership



Middle East & North Africa



West Balkans & Turkey



\* A grant has a gender component, if some element of the grant is related to fostering gender equality. Gender equality refers to the fostering of equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of different gender identities

## Da se Zna! – A new platform recording violations of LGBTQI+ rights in Serbia

Established in 2016, **Da se Zna!** ('Let it be known!') is now one of the most developed LGBTQI+ activist organisations in Serbia, and one of the organisers of the annual Belgrade Pride Parade. It works to reduce levels of discrimination and violence against LGBTQI+ persons and contributes to the greater acceptance and integration of the community within Serbian society.

Such support is vital in Serbia, where there is much hostility towards the community, an atmosphere of impunity means that hate crimes against LGBTQI+ persons go unpunished, and the media is openly homophobic.

Da se Zna! has a team of lawyers, therapists, and activists who support survivors of violence and discrimination. They are one of the only organisations in the country documenting cases of discrimination and other human rights abuses against LGBTQI+ persons.







## Montenegro Pride: Amplifying visibility for the LGBTQI+ community in pandemic times

In 2020, Montenegro became one of the first countries in the Balkans to legalise same-sex partnerships, an achievement that was mainly due to the advocacy work of LGBTQI+ organisation **Queer Montenegro**.

The NGO, which includes six staff members and more than 30 volunteers, has organised all nine Pride Parades in the country's capital, Podgorica, as well as seven Pride Weeks and a festival of queer art and culture including workshops, concerts, art exhibitions, and parties.

## Dostupno: Empowering people with disabilities in Ukraine

Two years ago, Dmytro Schebetiuk was told by his swimming coach that he had to choose between his sporting career and his civil society work; he could not be a champion in both. He decided to abandon his dream of representing Ukraine at the Paralympic Games to focus on transforming the lives of people with disabilities.

Fed up with the lack of wheelchair-accessible public spaces, Schebetiuk began to publish reviews of restaurants and other establishments, explaining to owners how to make them more accessible and informing people about wheelchair-friendly locations in their cities. He produced humorous vlogs about life as a wheelchair user in Kyiv.

This work eventually led to the establishment of the **NGO Dostupno** ('Accessible'), which is working to change the perception of people with disabilities in Ukrainian society.



# VII. ARTS AND CULTURE

Art and cultural activities can provide an unconventional yet effective vehicle for democratic change. Theatre productions, concerts, and satirical articles can become a tool for activists to criticise governments, make their voices heard, and include marginalised groups in public life.

## PROFILE

*Argonotlar*: using art criticism to ignite debate on political topics in Turkey



Kültigin Kağan Akbulut has been passionate about movies and art since his teenage years, but an elective contemporary art course he took during his political science studies at university became his gateway to contemporary art criticism. “I discovered that art can open up debates on many topics, from nationalism to gender issues to urban problems,” he says.

After graduation, Akbulut continued to focus on freelance writing for film and contemporary art magazines and was also involved in LGBTQI+ activism. Seven years ago, he started thinking about launching his own arts magazine; he problem was how to make it sustainable.

He began by building a community of readers through a contemporary art newsletter; his magazine idea launched in January 2021, when an EED start-up grant allowed Akbulut to transform this newsletter into an arts magazine, *Argonotlar*.



## Lautar: artists mobilising citizens around democracy

When Pasha Parfeny represented Moldova in the 2012 Eurovision Song Contest with his song ‘Lautar’, he could not have imagined the role he would play in helping to pave Moldova’s path to democracy. Lautar became the name of the NGO he founded as an anti-corruption initiative intended to inform the public about democracy issues and mobilise people to vote.



## Political Café: A unique space of discussion and civic participation for Armenian youth

Talin is a small town in western Armenia, near the Turkish border, just an hour’s drive from Yerevan. Until recently, most of its residents travelled to the capital for work, studies, and leisure, as there was little to interest them at home.

This changed in the summer of 2020 when Narek Tutkhalyan opened Armenia’s first **Political Café** in Talin. Today, his café is a popular venue for young people to gather, meet with community leaders, and attend training programmes. All, of course, over a good cup of steaming *soorj* – the local coffee.

# VIII. YOUTH

Building a solid culture of democracy in any country is impossible without involving local youth, educating them, and encouraging them to engage in civic activism.

## Naša Akcija: Building a youth network in Kotor

Based in the coastal town of Kotor, Montenegro, **Naša Akcija** ('Our Action') is an NGO focused on providing local youth with volunteering opportunities for personal and professional growth.

The organisation teaches young people various skills, from gardening and cooking to public speaking and learning about human rights and democracy. It also provides professional development, guiding young people in preparing CVs and applying for scholarships.





## Youth of the World Together: inspiring and educating youth through social media

Nasser Almgang, CEO and founder of **Youth of the World Together (YWT)**, believes in the power of social media to nurture connections. Over the past six years, he has built YWT into one of Yemen's most high-profile youth organisations. Thousands of young people now follow its media platform **Etreak24** ('Flashlight') on its various social media channels, including TikTok and Instagram.



## Restart Foundation for Science and Education: a driving force for educational reform

Born as a student movement, the **Restart Foundation for Science and Education** has become a driving force for educational reform and anti-corruption efforts in Armenia. The organisation was instrumental in the adoption of legislation establishing a new system for student self-government bodies within state universities.





## Oblakoder: A magazine by and for Serbian youth

Founded by young media professionals frustrated by the lack of paid opportunities in journalism, online magazine *Oblakoder* is quickly establishing itself as a voice for young people in Serbia, describing their challenges and achievements.

*Oblakoder's* main aim is to challenge how young people are portrayed in Serbian media. "We are usually either saints or devils, there's no in-between. We wanted to give a more nuanced perspective," explains Marina Zec, *Oblakoder's* editor-in-chief.

# 34%

of grants with a youth component\* are focused on civic activism and participation



# 25%

of grants with a youth component are for independent and social media platforms



\* A grant with a youth component is a grant where youth are the main target group, and/or when the grantee is led by youth and is empowering youth.

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ВМЕСТЕ  
ДО  
КОНЦА

**FIVE MESSAGES**  
**FOR THE SUMMIT**  
**FOR DEMOCRACY**



# BELARUS UPDATE 2021

## From a sense of renewal to draconian repression

August 2021 marked the first anniversary since the eruption of mass protests in Belarus following fraudulent presidential elections. In 2020, the authorities responded with a harsh crackdown, violently repressing protests, arresting tens of thousands, and there were hundreds of reports of torture of detainees while in police custody.

Over the past year, the regime has systematically suppressed political resistance, freedom of thought, civil society and digital freedom. Anti-extremism legislation has been used to outlaw opposition media, civil society and political activists, making it illegal for society and business to support them financially or for citizens to even follow online. As Lukashenka embarked on what he labelled a 'purge' of civil society, over 280 civic, political and media organisations were forcibly closed and stripped of their registration. By the end of December, there were nearly 1,000 political prisoners behind bars, 30 percent of them women and girls.

EED support to Belarus remained crucial throughout 2021, with EED assisting civic and political activists and independent media both inside and outside the country. EED facilitates donor support to Belarus via the International Accountability Platform for Belarus, acting as a basket fund to support this initiative.

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## VOICES FROM BELARUS

Zhanna, an activist, arrested in the aftermath of the 2020 presidential elections, spent nearly a year behind bars. She now lives in exile.

“Anyone can be arrested in Belarus today. It’s no longer activists and journalists who are at risk. Lukashenka is determined to hang onto power by any means, and he will stop at nothing.”



Uladzislau works with a Belarusian online media that is now operating from abroad.

“I have not been back in Belarus for over a year. I know that if I was at home, I’d be in prison. Many of my colleagues and friends are in prison, even family members.

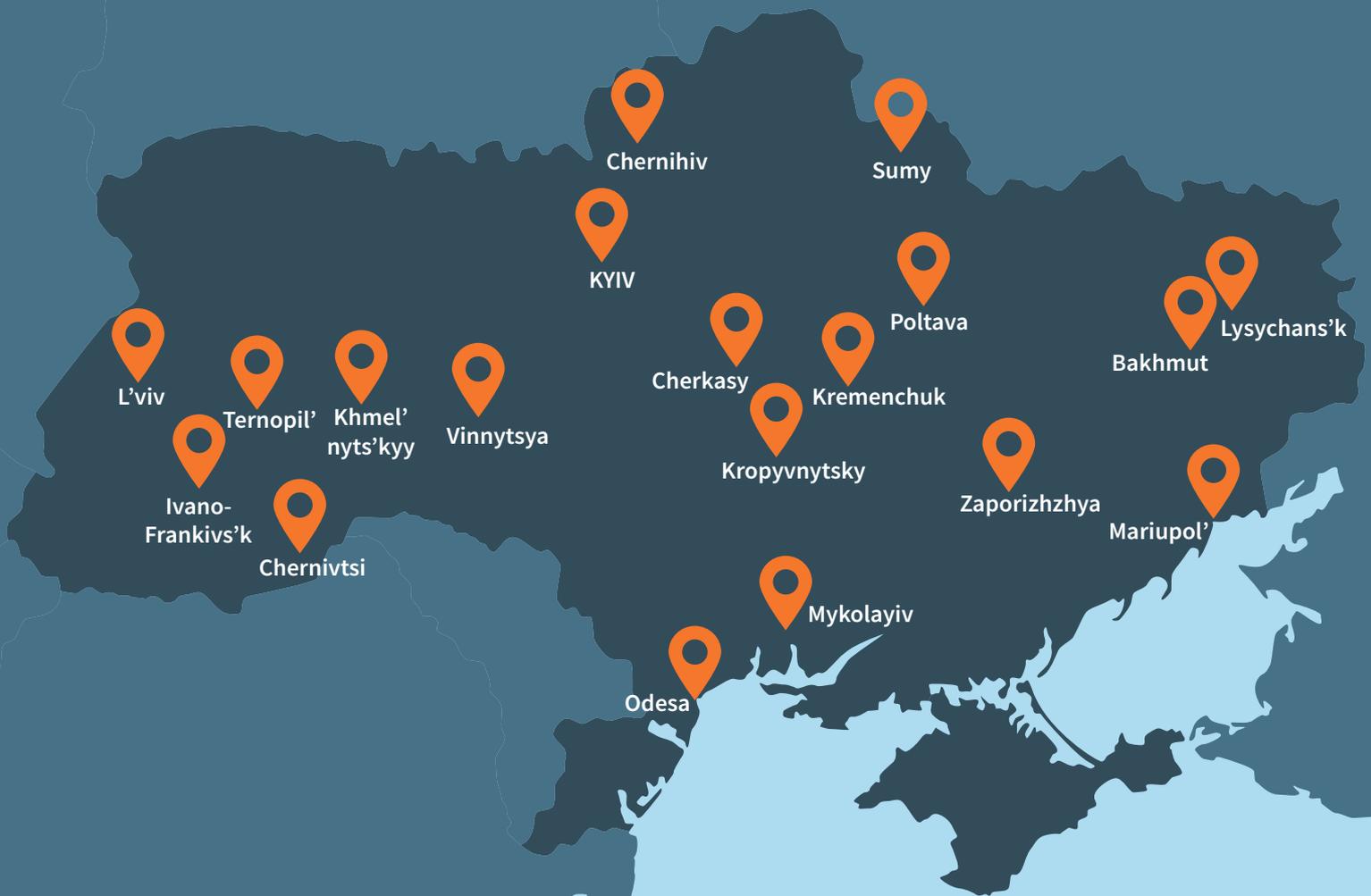
People in Belarus are scared. Some are too frightened to leave their homes to go out and buy bread. They know that at any time they could be stopped by the police and asked to show their phones. If the police find that they subscribe to any Telegram channels which the regime has declared ‘extremist’, they can be arrested on the spot.”



*\*This person’s name has been anonymised to protect their identity.*



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**EED PRESENT  
IN 22 OF UKRAINE'S  
25 REGIONS**

# UKRAINE SPECIAL

**Eight years after the Revolution of Dignity, the risks of democratic backsliding remain very real in Ukraine in the context of heightened security threats.**

EED has a broad portfolio of grantees in Ukraine and is present in 22 of Ukraine's 25 regions. Its support focuses on pro-reform initiatives and civic activists working as initiators of positive societal change, particularly those working in the regions.



© Danil Pavlov



## PROFILE

### Yevgenia Zakrevska: the lawyer of Maidan

While eight years have passed since more than one hundred people (the ‘Heavenly Hundred’) were killed during Euromaidan in Kyiv, leading proceedings against those responsible continue. Ukrainian lawyer **Yevgenia Zakrevska** and her team are determined to seek justice for these victims and their families. “I do not want to stop halfway. The perpetrators must be brought to justice,” she tells EED.

Her determination to establish the truth came into focus when she went on a hunger strike in November 2019 to protest against efforts to break up the team of Maidan crime investigators, which would have put ongoing inquiries at risk. Her protest was followed throughout Ukraine and internationally.



© Vilne Radio



## ***Vilne Radio*: a unique independent voice on local news in eastern Ukraine**

Anastasia Shybiko is one of the founders of *Vilne Radio* or 'Free Radio', a small independent radio station operating from Bakhmut in eastern Ukraine, 25 kilometres from the front line. The bilingual radio station was founded by Shybiko Dmitry Kozyarsky and Ilya Lysenko, both well-known volunteers familiar with the region, as an independent media focused on regional news in the temporarily occupied territories and frontline communities.

Since its establishment, *Vilne Radio* has become an importance source of news in Donbas, with major national and international media frequently consulting it for their own newsfeeds.



## Projector and Vitaliy Matveyev: A lawyer of the vulnerable

As a law student and then a commercial banking lawyer, Vitaliy Matveyev volunteered for several organisations helping marginalised groups. In 2018, he decided to focus professionally on this work, founding the NGO **Projector** to provide legal and psychological assistance to vulnerable people facing discrimination in Odesa, southern Ukraine.

Projector also conducts communications campaigns against the discrimination of LGBTQI+ people, HIV-positive people, and victims of domestic violence. Today, the organisation's reputation extends well beyond Odesa, and the Projector team can barely meet the growing demand for their services.



## JurFem: Improving gender equality in the legal sector

In 2017, a group of young Ukrainian women lawyers conducted an anonymous online survey among female colleagues. They were shocked by the results: 46.5 percent of respondents reported discrimination when entering the legal profession and 36.9 percent reported sexual harassment at work.

The women were quick to act, establishing **JurFem, the Ukrainian Women Lawyers Association**, with a mission to change attitudes towards women within the legal profession and contribute to relevant legislation.



## Promolod: Building a new community life in Cherkasy

Ivan and Daryna Podolian, a young couple from Cherkasy, in central Ukraine, are breathing new life into their city with their NGO, **Promolod**.

As was the case for many others, the 2014 Revolution of Dignity encouraged the Podolians to engage in civic activism. “For me, the key question was: what would this ‘new Ukraine’ offer the young men and women when they return home from the war?” says Ivan. The couple began by organising speaking clubs, English classes, and festivals, and then created an incubator for civic projects, which became Promolod.

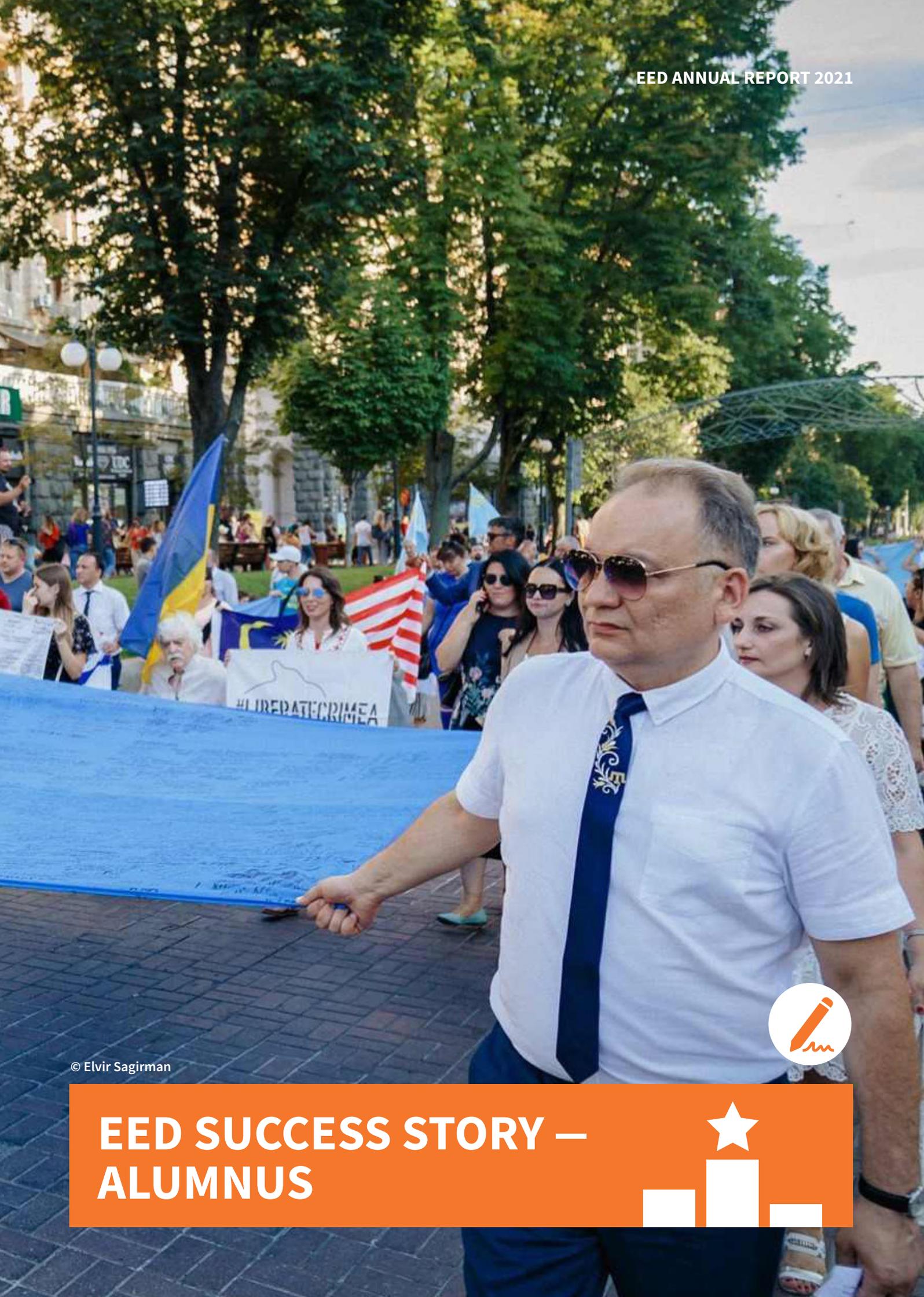




## Crimean Tatar Resource Center – keeping Crimea in the international limelight

The **Crimean Tatar Resource Center (CTRC)** was set up in 2015 by a group of internally displaced persons (IDPs) who had fled occupied Crimea to mainland Ukraine. EED institutional funding helped the CTRC establish itself as an NGO.

From the outset, the CTRC joined efforts to oppose the Russian occupation and assist IDPs and Crimeans who had stayed in the occupied territory, by helping Crimean Tatars defend their civic, political, and cultural rights and by improving their awareness and understanding of human rights protection mechanisms. The centre also functioned as a hub for Crimean Tatars forced to flee Crimea, as well as for those who remained there. It ensured advocacy work in Kyiv was aimed at shaping Ukraine's policies on Crimea and the Crimean Tatars in particular.



© Elvir Sagirman



# EED SUCCESS STORY – ALUMNUS





## *Black Sea News: Reporting the news from and about Crimea*

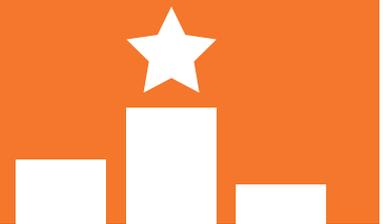
Andriy Klimenko was one of the first analysts to ring alarm bells about a possible Russian military operation in Crimea in September 2013. When Russia illegally annexed the peninsula less than six months later, Klimenko and his associates decided to start reporting on these events in Yalta. **Black Sea News (BSN)** was born, quickly gaining worldwide recognition as a reputable source of news from Crimea.





© Fourth Estate

## EED SUCCESS STORY — ALUMNUS



### The Fourth Estate – an independent regional outlet succeeding despite the odds

Today, the *Fourth Estate*, an independent online media outlet in Rivne, a city in western Ukraine, is hugely popular with locals, who appreciate its quality, independent news and its investigative reports. But, in the spring of 2018, the outlet faced a highly challenging situation, with a series of physical attacks on its staff as part of a wider campaign in the region against anti-corruption journalists.

The *Fourth Estate* team had revealed several corruption cases, including in the city council, putting pressure on the authorities. Then its office was burnt down and its internet servers were stolen. EED provided the *Fourth Estate* with desperately needed emergency support to help it recover from this challenging situation.

# TUNISIA SPECIAL

The events of 25 July surprised many international observers. Amid a political, social, and health crisis, President Kais Saied invoked Article 80 of the Constitution, lifting parliamentary immunity, suspending parliament, and dismissing the prime minister. This decision followed growing discontent and nationwide protests and was greeted with jubilation by huge crowds, while many others denounced the action as a *coup d'état* amid fears of democratic backsliding.

EED has remained in touch with its partners in Tunisian civil society throughout this crisis. Many have struggled to find a place for themselves within this new reality and fear for the democratic future of their country.



## Observatoire Raqabah: investigating corruption and creating a culture of accountability



Imed Daïmi, the founder and president of **Observatoire Raqabah**, was a political refugee for 20 years before he returned to his native Tunisia in 2011.

On his return, he worked as part of the Constituent Assembly, which wrote the 2014 Constitution, and was a member of parliament from 2015 to 2019, where he served as rapporteur on the commission of civil liberties and human rights and worked in the field of anti-corruption. This experience led him to found Observatoire Raqabah ('Supervision') as an organisation focused on the accountability and transparency of state enterprises and public institutions.

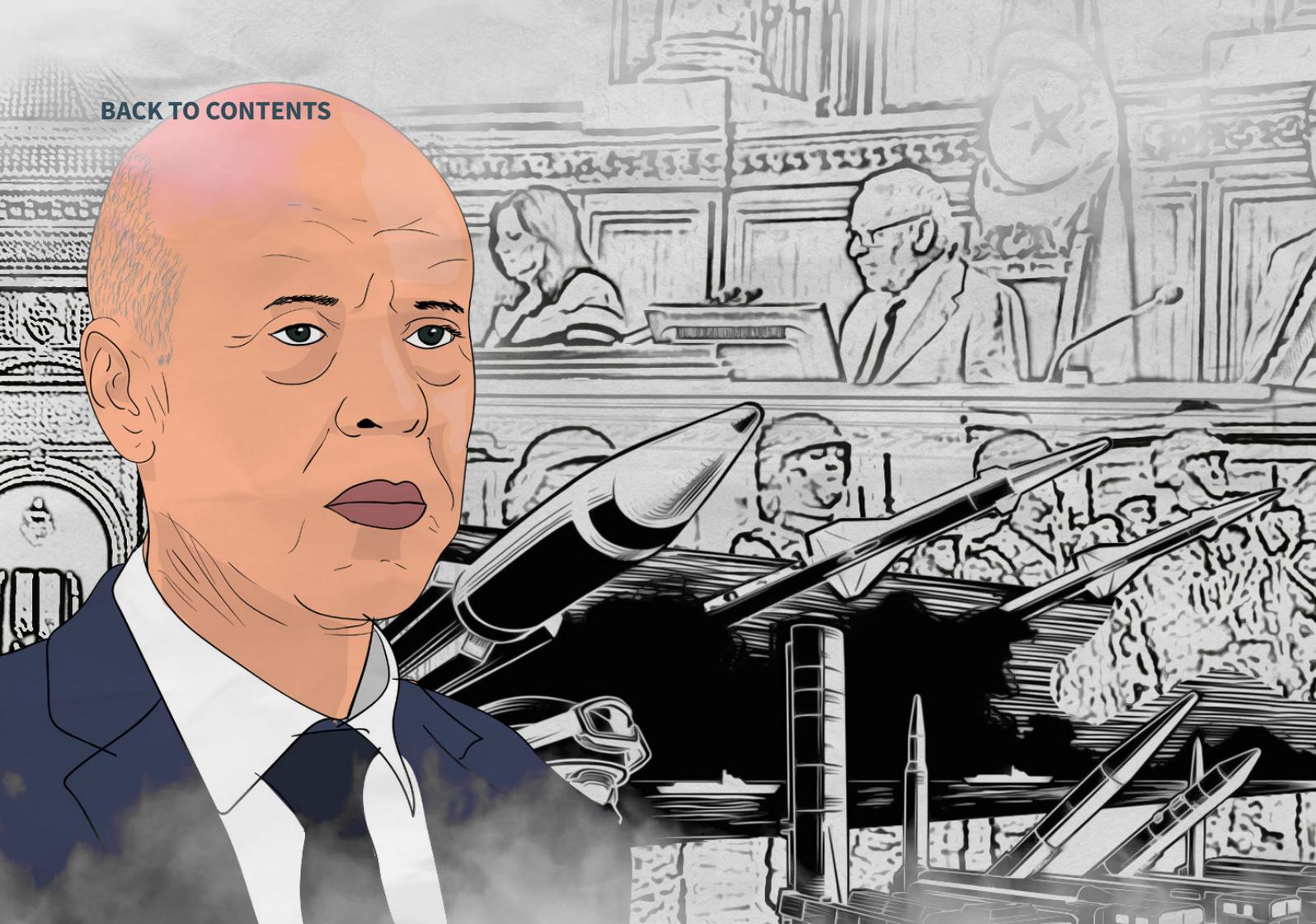


## Innsane: a media platform focused on human rights

Launched in May 2020 by a group of young Tunisian media actors, *Innsane* ('Human') is a media platform that focuses on slow investigative journalism and addresses human rights issues. It includes investigations by freelance journalists and individuals who are also victims of human rights violations, all of whom have been trained in mobile journalism by *Innsane*. These are broadcast as podcasts and videos over its platform.



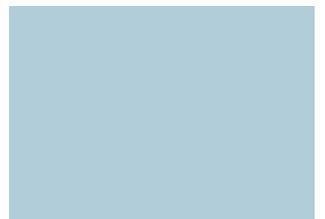
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## Taqallam: Online investigative magazine *Al Qatiba* a hit in Tunisia and neighbouring countries

This September, the media association **Taqallam** marked one year of its online magazine *Al Qatiba* ('The Battalion') by organising a seminar on media reform in Tunisia. "We wanted to make people reflect and to think of solutions. We felt that was much more appropriate than wasting money on a party," says Wael Mejri, founder and chief editor.

Mejri, a veteran journalist who has worked for all leading independent Tunisian media, founded Taqallam as a media project that could bring together Tunisians. He and his colleagues considered various options before starting *Al Qatiba*, a magazine focusing on investigative reporting, with a regional remit.



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