



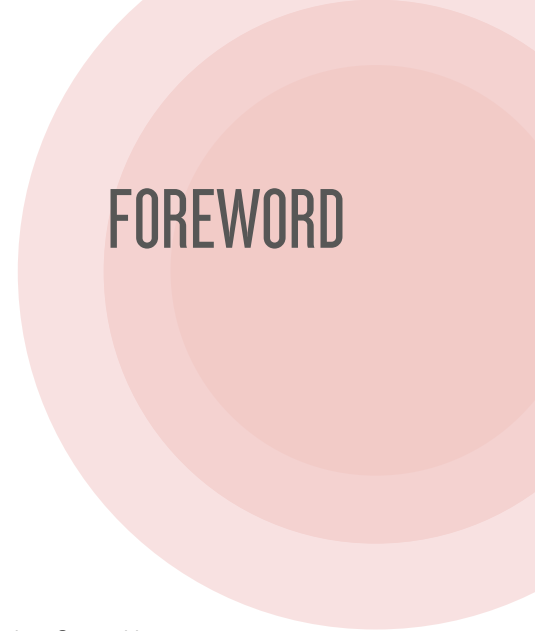
# ANNUAL REPORT 2023





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## FOREWORD

Dear friends,

The year 2023 proved to be very challenging but also brought many positive developments for our organization. The Media Development Foundation has numerous reasons to be proud of our work, from our collaboration with META on Facebook’s third-party fact-checking program and EUvsDisinfo, to researching gendered disinformation, fighting online violence against journalists, and actively promoting media literacy.

In today’s rapidly changing information space, where the truth is often hidden or deliberately distorted, fact-checking has never been more crucial. My team and I, with great effort and the help of donor and partner organizations, carried out numerous activities in 2023 both locally and internationally.

In 2023, “Myth Detector” joined the European Fact-Checking Standards Network (EFCSN). For the first time, we established a regional fact-checking conference, attended by representatives from 11 countries, offering numerous engaging seminars and discussions for those interested in disinformation research.

The Media Development Foundation and “Myth Detector” remained at the forefront in identifying both Kremlin information operations and gendered disinformation, as well as the coordinated inauthentic behavior of local undemocratic actors.

By translating and publishing the book “Putin’s Trolls” by renowned Finnish journalist Jessikka

Aro, in partnership with Ilia State University, we provided Georgian readers with another compelling publication on information manipulation.

Knowledge-sharing with youngsters on media literacy, and our educational projects remain our most beloved activity. We maintained our practice of employing successful graduates in our office in 2023 as well. In addition to training and competitions, we added film screenings and discussions to our activities.

I want to thank everyone who was involved in our projects or activities in any form in 2023, as well as our donor organizations and partners – without their help, many positive actions would have been impossible. Additionally, I want to express my gratitude to the readers of our online platforms, who, along with us, strive to contribute to the health of the media ecosystem and the development of a resilient society.

**TAMAR KINTSURASHVILI**

*Executive Director*

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# WHO WE ARE

## ABOUT US

The Media Development Foundation (MDF) is a leading Georgian non-governmental organization in media research and communication, specializing in foreign informational influences and domestic propaganda, identifying and verifying fake news. With well-developed media literacy programs and experienced fact-checkers, MDF aims to foster critical thinking among media consumers and raise awareness about the importance of combating disinformation. The Media Development Foundation promotes quality journalism and the professional development of the media through the creation of educational resources, professional training, and the strengthening of media self-regulation mechanisms.



## OUR MISSION

The Media Development Foundation (MDF) aims to promote:

- The protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms; The development of an open, inclusive, and pluralistic society;
- Informed decision-making in a democratic society by providing reliable and high-quality information, identifying harmful information, and ensuring transparency of sources;
- The enhancement of critical thinking in the new media ecosystem and increasing citizens' resilience through informed media consumption;
- The professional and institutional development of the media; the establishment of media accountability systems and self-regulation mechanisms.



## PROGRAM DIRECTIONS

The educational, research and advocacy directions of the Media Development Foundation entail the following activities:

- **EDUCATION:** Media literacy, professional development of journalists, cooperation with academia and teachers through trainings and training resources;
- **RESEARCH:** Fact-checking, researching hate speech and anti-Western propaganda, identification and analysis of malign actors, researching the coordinated inauthentic behavior (CIB) on social media, researching the financial transparency of media.
- **ADVOCACY:** Advocating the rights of journalists and media consumers, as well as policy issues. Raising awareness among young people about democracy and fundamental rights through facilitated discussions.

## OUR TEAM

The Media Development Foundation unites

33

full-time staff,

4

non-staff contributors,  
and

10

volunteers.

### BOARD MEMBERS

TAMAR KINTSURASHVILI

*Executive Director*

TAMAR KHORBALADZE

*Chairwoman of the Board*

KETEVAN MSKHILADZE

*Board Member,  
Director of Gender Programs*

TAMAR SHAMILI

*Board Member*

BEKA MINDIASHVILI

*Board Member,  
Tolerance Center of  
the Public Defender's Office*

LEVAN GIORGADZE

*Board Member*

DALI TSKITISHVILI

*Board Member, Iliia State University*

# MDF IN NUMBERS

## TRAININGS, DISCUSSIONS, COMPETITIONS:

- Conducted **55** trainings, **2** film screenings, and discussions
- Trained **717** young people and **62** journalists.
- Myth Detector Laboratory included **4** countries with **58** graduates.
- Visited **19** cities and villages.
- Conducted a media literacy program for teachers at Ilia State University with **17** students.
- Organized a hackathon with **30** teams (**95** young participants).
- Identified **13** individual and **3** group winners in competitions.

## VISIBILITY IN TRADITIONAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA:

- Media coverage of our activities: **76** times.
- MDF's Facebook page reached **3,074,279** readers.
- Myth Detector's Facebook page reached **5,797,859** readers.
- Myth Detector's Instagram page had **429,434** visitors.
- Myth Detector's TikTok videos were viewed **71,079** times.
- Myth Detector's Twitter page reached **300,000** readers.
- Myth Detector's website had **1,400,000** readers.

## RESEARCH AND FACT-CHECKING

- Published **4** research reports
- Identified **4** cases of CIB.

## "MYTH DETECTOR" IN 2023:

- Prepared **590** articles.
- Published in **3** languages.
- Created a **4**-language chatbot on Telegram.
- Issued **47** disinformation digests.

## ISSUED

**5** publications

## CREATED

**1** online game and identified **3** winning projects from the hackathon.

## IMPLEMENTED

**8** projects

## ORGANIZED

one regional conference with about **100** participants from **11** countries.

# HIGHLIGHTS

In 2023, “Myth Detector” became a verified member of the European Fact-Checking Standards Network (EFCSN).

- With the support of international partners, a four-language chatbot was added to Myth Detector on Telegram, helping users quickly find verified information and communicate with fact-checkers through AI.
- We published important research studying sexist language and gendered disinformation, as well as anti-Western discourse and malign actors.
- Together with DW Akademie and UNAG, we held the first regional conference “Unveil the Truth: Eastern Partnership Fact-Checkers Conference,” attended by leading experts and trainers from 11 countries.
- We translated and presented the book “Putin’s Trolls” by renowned Finnish journalist Jessikka Aro in a conference format.
- The Media Development Foundation’s (MDF) and Deutsche Welle Akademie’s (DWA) media literacy program “Myth Detector Lab” became a regional project in 2023, covering Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Ukraine along with Georgia.
- We participated in the panel discussion of #GlobalFact10 – an annual conference of the International Fact-Checking Network at the Poynter Institute, as well as took part in other international events.

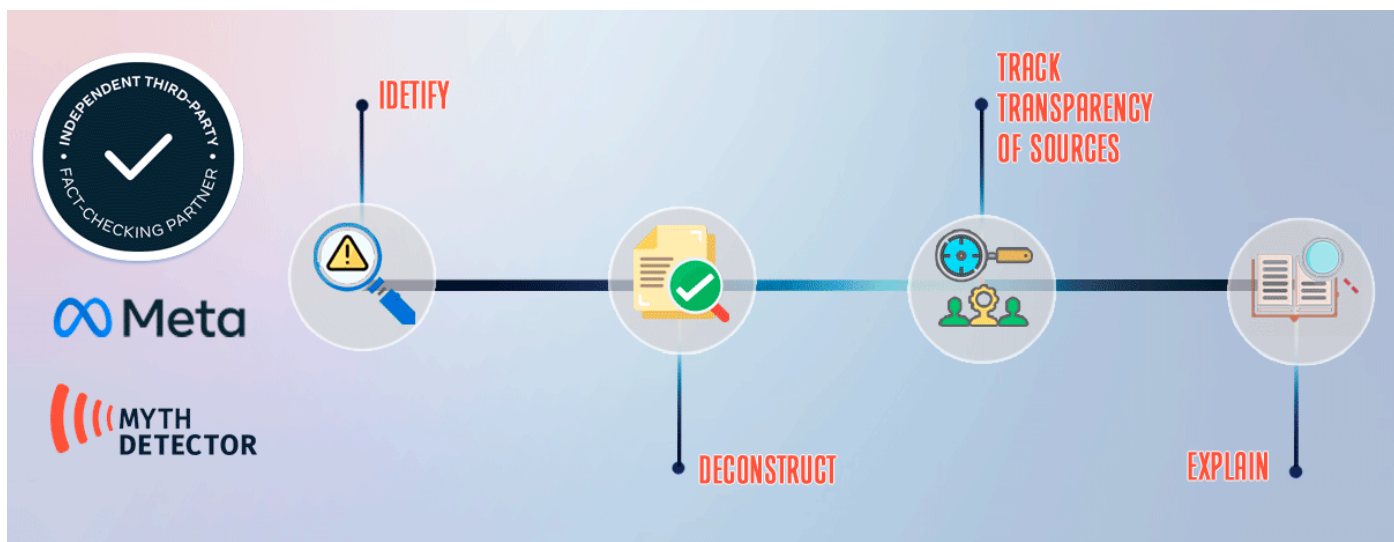
# 1 RESEARCH

The Media Development Foundation examines manipulative media content from various directions:

1. **INFORMATION INFLUENCE ACTIVITIES BY FOREIGN COUNTRIES**  
(direct propaganda by Russian government-sponsored media and indirect anti-Western propaganda);
2. **DOMESTIC POLITICAL PROPAGANDA**  
(use of trolls and fake pages in social media for political purposes);
3. **SPREAD OF FALSE INFORMATION FOR ECONOMIC PURPOSES**  
(click bait web-pages, fraudulent pages).

To reveal information influence activities of foreign countries as well as the misinformation activities of local actors, the MDF applies an approach consisting of the following four steps:

1. IDENTIFY
2. DECONSTRUCT
3. STUDY INTO THE TRANSPARENCY OF SOURCES
4. EXPLAIN



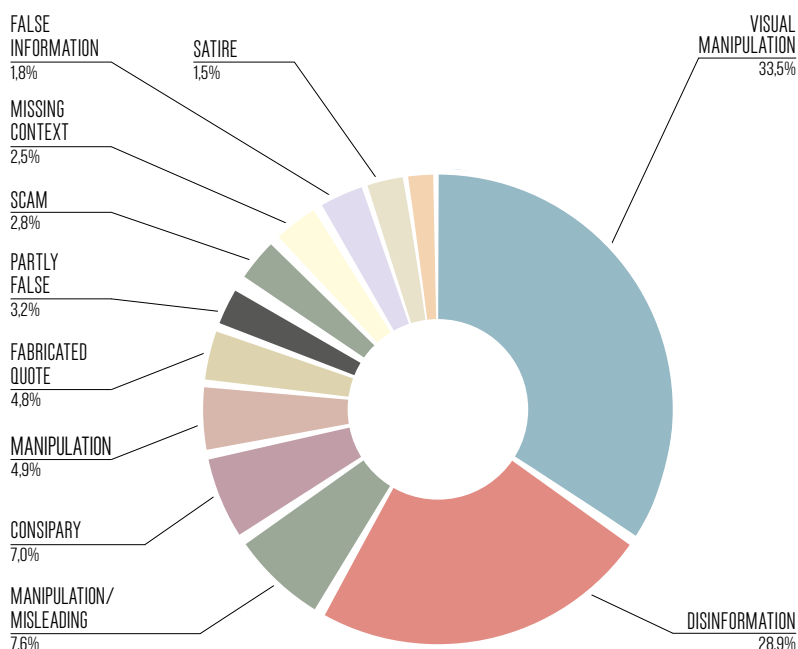
# 1. FACT-CHECKING

## 1.1 MYTH DETECTOR AND META'S FACT-CHECKING PROGRAM

As part of Meta’s third-party fact-checking program, “Myth Detector” ([www.mythdetector.ge](http://www.mythdetector.ge)) continued verifying false information in 2023 not only in Georgia but also in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus.

In 2023, Myth Detector produced a total of 590 articles, 301 of which addressed topics circulated in Russian sources alongside Georgian ones. The largest share of problematic content identified by “Myth Detector” was related to visual manipulations (33.5%), followed closely by disinformation (28.9%), with fewer cases of other types of violations, including fraud (2.8%).

FIGURE 1. TYPOLOGY OF CONTENT IDENTIFIED BY MYTH DETECTOR IN 2023



“Myth Detector” examines and assesses the accuracy of information disseminated on Facebook, aiming to determine the authenticity of news and inform the public.

“Myth Detector” is available in Georgian, Russian, and English, and in previous years, it was also translated into Azerbaijani and Armenian.

## 1.2 12 CORRECTED ARTICLES AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE AUDIENCE

Meta’s Third-Party Fact-Checking Program helps enhance the degree of responsibility of social media users and fosters accountability before the audiences. In case of correcting the erroneous information rated by the Myth Detector in a commensurate form, the labeling of the post will be revised, and the rating will be removed.

Following the evaluation of Facebook posts by Myth Detector in 2023, the authors of the information disseminated in 12 cases corrected the primary posts and informed the audience, respectively. A proportionate correction entails clearly informing the reader of an error by making changes to the same link on which the original content was disseminated. This mechanism helps to properly inform the public by correcting the mistakes, making both traditional media and individual Facebook users accountable to the public.

### 1.3 AI IN FACT-CHECKING AND THE TRILINGUAL CHATBOT OF “MYTH DETECTOR”

In 2023, the “Media Development Foundation” (MDF), in partnership with the Spanish fact-checking organization Maldita.es, started working on “Myth Detector’s” trilingual chatbot.



This joint project, involving fact-checking platforms from Ukraine, Lithuania, and four Latin American countries (Argentina, Venezuela, Colombia, and Mexico) besides Georgia, aims to improve technological capabilities in messaging applications for the detection, analysis, and classification of disinformation.

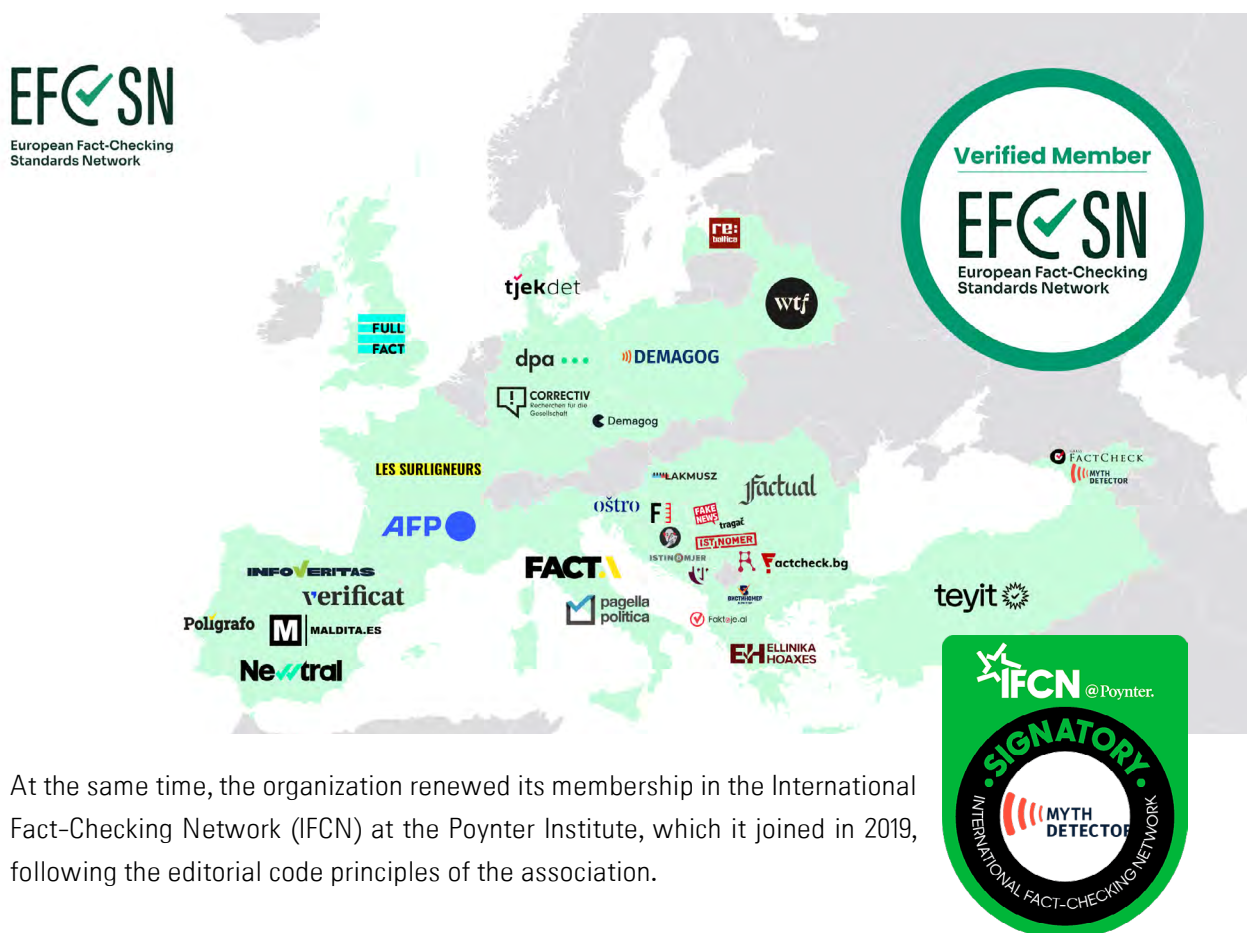
With the assistance of Maldita.es, a trilingual Telegram chatbot was created for “Myth Detector” by the end of 2023, functioning in Georgian, Russian, and English. The chatbot allows users to:

- Easily find already verified information using AI
- Contact the “Myth Detector” editorial team, where the submitted photo, video, audio, or text material will be verified
- Receive a **weekly digest** of fake news disseminated in Georgia, Russia, and Ukraine in Georgian, Russian, and English
- Develop **media literacy** skills

In 2024, the project will include cross-border research involving organizations like StopFake (Ukraine), DELFI Melo Detektorius (Lithuania), Chequeado (Argentina), Animal Político (Mexico), La Silla Vacía (Colombia), and Es Paja (Venezuela), in collaboration with Maldita.es and “Myth Detector.” These activities are part of the project “Technological Capacity Building for Eastern Europe, Eurasian, and Latin American Fact-checking Organizations to Fight Cross-regional and Global Disinformation on Private Messaging Apps.”

## 1.4 MYTH DETECTOR'S MEMBERSHIP IN EFCSN AND IFCN

In 2023, “Myth Detector” became a member of the “European Fact-Checking Standards Network” (EFCSN) and adheres to the EFCSN code of standards while performing its activities.



At the same time, the organization renewed its membership in the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) at the Poynter Institute, which it joined in 2019, following the editorial code principles of the association.

## 1.5 WEEKLY DISINFORMATION DIGEST

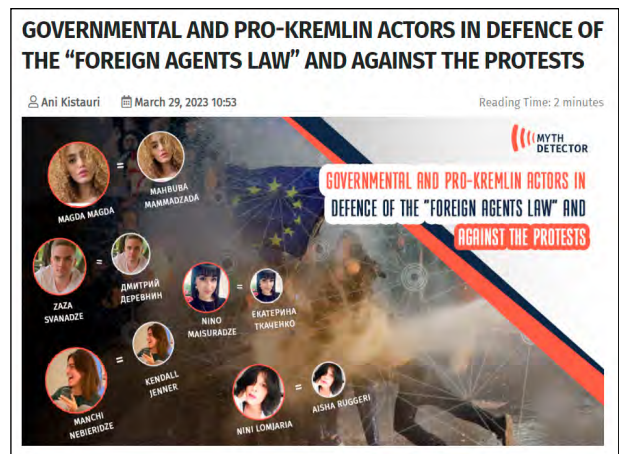
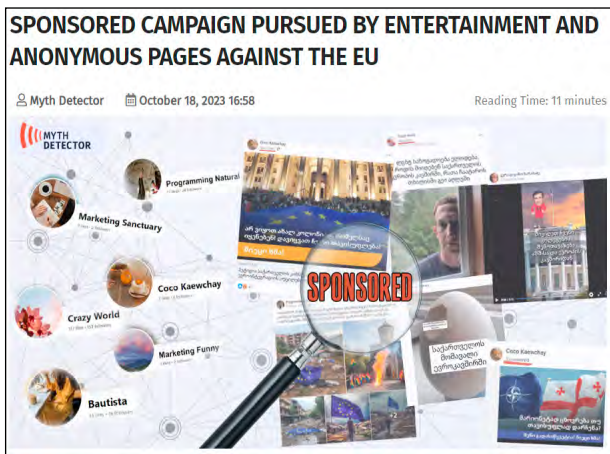


The Media Development Foundation (MDF) offers an English-language weekly newsletter “Disinformation Digest” to interested audiences, which reviews trends identified during the week through media monitoring and fact-checking.

In 2023, 47 newsletters were prepared and sent on a weekly basis by email to 386 subscribers. The newsletters are also **available** on the “Myth Detector” website.

## 2. COORDINATED INAUTHENTIC BEHAVIOR (CIB) AND DISCREDITING CAMPAIGNS

In 2023, “Myth Detector” conducted 4 studies where coordinated inauthentic behavior (CIB) and discrediting campaigns against opponents were identified. One case involved a sponsored campaign of entertainment and anonymous pages **against the European Union**; another was a campaign by pro-government and pro-Kremlin actors to defend the **so-called “Agents’ Law”** and undermine the protest actions, involving 33 Facebook pages and 27 fake accounts; the third study concerned the targeted attacks against **Lazare Grigoriadis**, who was detained during protests against the “Agents’ Law”; the fourth case was a coordinated discreditation campaign by pro-government and pro- Kremlin groups against philologist **Levan Berdzenishvili**.



## 3. ANTI-WESTERN PROPAGANDA

In 2023, the Media Development Foundation published an annual report on **anti-Western propaganda**, reflecting the trends of 2022.

The study reviews the typology of anti-Western messages and their sources, reflecting the results of monitoring traditional media (TV, print, and online publications) and other sources such as political class, clergy, civil organizations, and individual members of society.



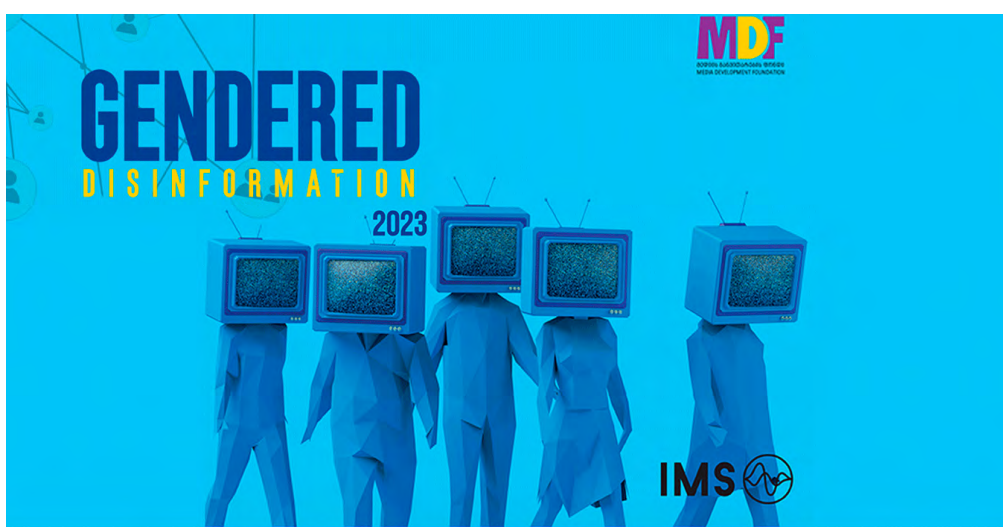


The Media Development Foundation (MDF) has been publishing an annual anti-Western propaganda report from 2014–2020. The report is published under the USAID’s “Unity Through Diversity” program, implemented by the United Nations Association of Georgia (UNAG) with the financial support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

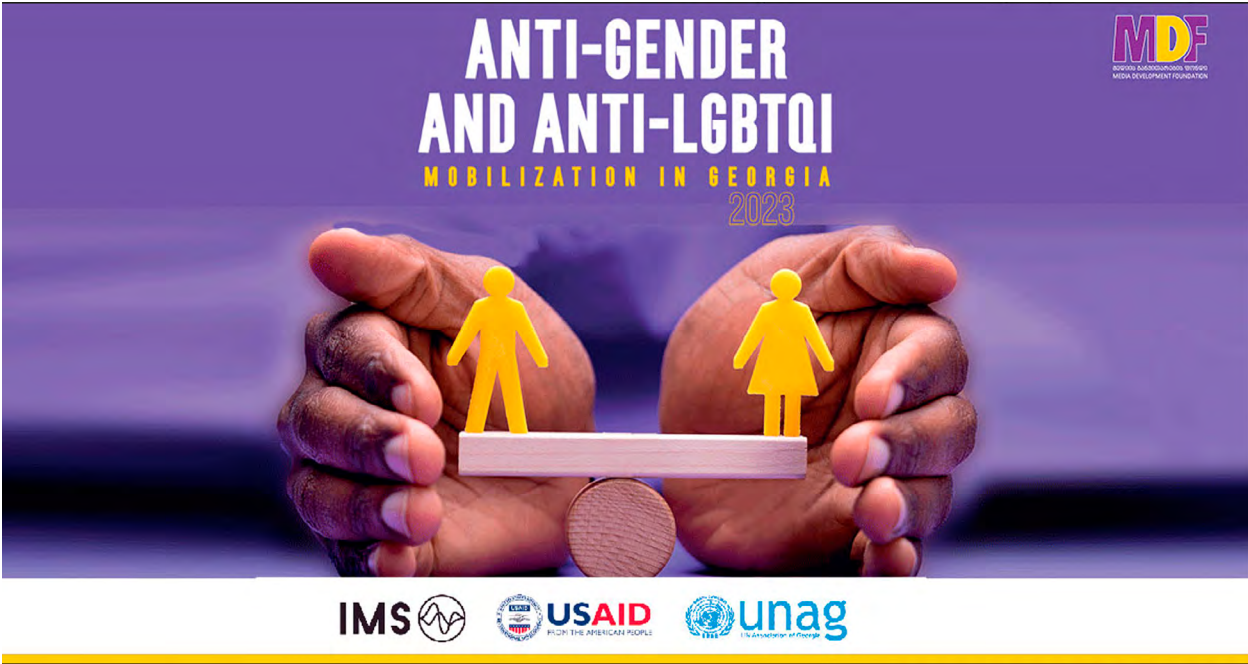
#### 4. GENDER-RELATED RESEARCH

Similar to the previous year, the Media Development Foundation continued its research on sexist language and gendered disinformation in 2023.

In 2023, we published the “**Gendered Disinformation**” interim report, which identified 42 cases of identity-based disinformation, of which 24 were homophobic and 18 were sexist or attacked women based on moral criteria.



The second interim report, “Anti-Gender and Anti-LGBTQ Mobilization in Georgia,” also published in 2023, analyzes trends in the use of sexist language and anti-liberal discourse in the first half of the year, based on the six indicators of sexist language developed by the organization “Sapari.”



Both reports were prepared under the framework of the project “Gender Disinformation and Inclusive Media Reporting,” supported by International Media Support (IMS). The report also relies on media monitoring data obtained through the “Unity Through Diversity” program.

### 5. HATE SPEECH RESEARCH

For years now, the Media Development Foundation has been researching hate speech and its sources in Georgian media and public discourse. The results of the 2023 monitoring are reflected in the monthly newsletter “No to Phobia!”.

In 2023, “No to Phobia!” published 12 Georgian-language and 12 English-language newsletters. “No to Phobia!” has a total of 334 subscribers.

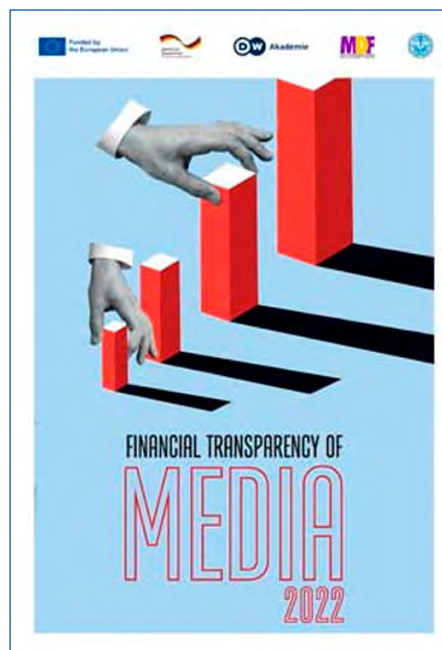
Media monitoring is carried out in the framework of the “Unity Through Diversity” program, implemented by the UNAG with the support of USAID.

### 6. FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY OF MEDIA

The report on the financial transparency of media, published by the Media Development Foundation in the reporting period, analyzes data from 2022. The report reviews broadcasters’ financial revenues, the distribution of

budgetary contracts for advertising and information dissemination, and a separate chapter is dedicated to budgetary spending on social media, including contracts where individual media outlets were required to place content on various Facebook groups and pages. The last part of the research provides information about media prone to hate speech and anti-Western editorial policy, which were contracted by budgetary organizations for advertising services. The last part also deals with media outlets that pursue pro-government editorial policy and are often involved in discrediting campaigns against the opponents of the government in a coordinated manner.

The report was prepared under the framework of the project “Quality Media and Conscious Media Consumption for Resilient Society (ConMeCo),” implemented by Deutsche Welle Akademie in cooperation with the Media Development Foundation and the Human Rights Center.



# 2 MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY (MIL)

In 2023, the Media Development Foundation carried out the following activities in the direction of media and information literacy:

1. TRAININGS FOR YOUTH
2. MEDIA LITERACY TRAINING COURSE FOR TEACHERS AT ILIA STATE UNIVERSITY
3. CREATION OF MEDIA LITERACY RESOURCES
4. RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT MEDIA LITERACY THROUGH INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS

The media literacy program in 2023 targeted different groups:

1. YOUTH
2. STUDENTS OF TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS

## 1. MEDIA LITERACY PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH

In 2023, the Media Development Foundation implemented three media literacy programs for youngsters:

1. “Quality Media and Conscious Media Consumption for Resilient Society (ConMeCo)”
2. “Myth Detector Lab” – an intensive 3.5-month weekend course for youth, which became a regional program in 2023.
3. Media and digital literacy trainings for regional centers.

### 1.1 QUALITY MEDIA AND CONSCIOUS MEDIA CONSUMPTION FOR RESILIENT SOCIETY (CONMECO)

In 2023, the Media Development Foundation, with the support of the European Union and in collaboration with Deutsche Welle Akademie (DWA) and Human Rights Center (HRC), began implementing the new project “Quality Media and Conscious Media Consumption for a Resilient Society (ConMeCo).” One of the main components of the project is raising awareness about media and information literacy and the harmful impact of disinformation through training and competitions.



The project entails organizing media literacy trainings for the youth in the regions. Within the framework of the project, MDF’s media literacy team conducted eight media literacy training sessions in eight cities and towns of Georgia (Batumi, Kaspi, Adigeni, Ninotsminda, Akhaldaba, Kobuleti, Marneuli, Gori), involving 201 young participants.

MDF’s media literacy program is implemented using an active learning approach, involving youth in practical activities. The training aims to develop skills for critical information analysis and verification of fake information/visuals using Open Source Intelligence (OSINT).

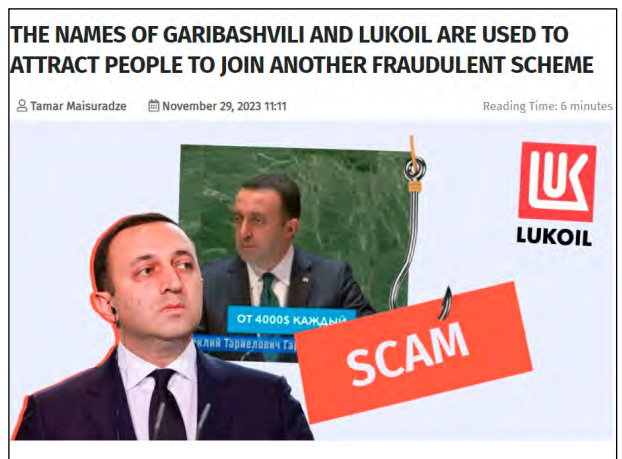
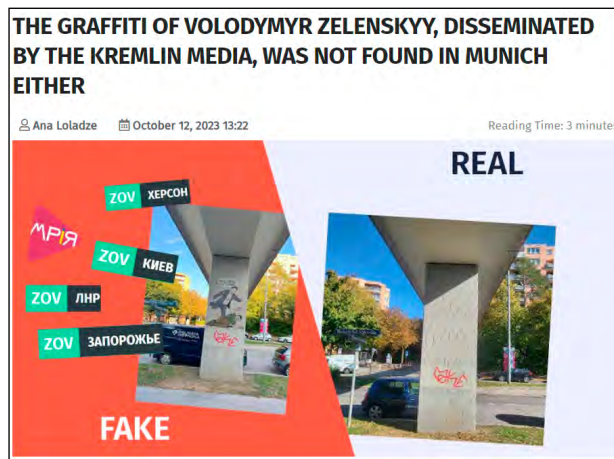
## 1.2. MYTH DETECTOR LAB

“Myth Detector Lab,” established in 2017 on the basis of the fact-checking portal “Myth Detector,” became a regional project in 2023, with an English-language program covering Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Ukraine. In 2023, the program had 58 graduates, including 42 from Georgia, 6 from Armenia, 6 from Azerbaijan, and 4 from Ukraine. Since 2017, a total of 282 young people have completed this media literacy program, successfully implemented by the Media Development Foundation (MDF) in partnership with Deutsche Welle Akademie (DWA).





In addition to training sessions, the program also includes an internship component, during which participants prepared about 600 fact-checking articles for “Myth Detector” between 2017-2023. The fact-checking articles prepared in 2023 covered various topics, including the **Russia-Ukraine war**, the **Israel-Hamas Conflict**, **Vaccination**, and **Online Fraud**.



At the end of the 3.5-month program, a competition is held, which reveals the authors of the best multimedia works. In 2023, as a result of 2 competitions, the jury identified 13 winners. These are:

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <p>1. <b>LIZA BARBAKADZE</b><br/>Invisible cities – The effect of post factum coverage of early marriage</p> <p>2. <b>ANASTASIA JAPARIDZE</b><br/>Liza, go on: Georgian society’s path to occupied Abkhazia in the footsteps of myths and reality</p> <p>3. <b>ALISA BAKRADZE</b><br/>Javakheti as a “threat”, the myth and reality of separatism</p> <p>4. <b>TEKLA KHARAZISHVILI</b><br/>The post-Soviet factor of Georgia in the Western media</p> <p>5. <b>TAMARA AVAGYANI</b><br/>Russian Propaganda’s Grip on Armenia’s Media Landscape</p> | <p>6. <b>MARIAM MIKIANI</b><br/>Georgian language as an integral part of identity: comparing the policies of Russia and the European Union</p> <p>7. <b>ULVIYYA KARIMLI</b><br/>The Role of Russian Propaganda in the Peace Between Azerbaijan and Armenia</p> <p>8. <b>MARIAM RAMAZASHVILI</b><br/>“AI Hallucinations and the Information Threat of Chatbots”</p> <p>9. <b>TEIMURAZ KOBAKHIDZE</b><br/>“Government vs. Franklin Club”</p> | <p>10. <b>POLINA KULISH</b><br/>How the disinformation is spreading during the war, challenges and mitigation strategies</p> <p>11. <b>RIMA MARANGOZYAN</b><br/>Khopan – Seasonal Work or Flow of Russian Propaganda</p> <p>12. <b>SONA HOVSEPYAN</b><br/>Are Armenians Living Better Now? Propaganda and Reality</p> <p>13. <b>MARIAM GORDADZE</b><br/>The Impact of Government Propaganda on Gen Z Students</p> |
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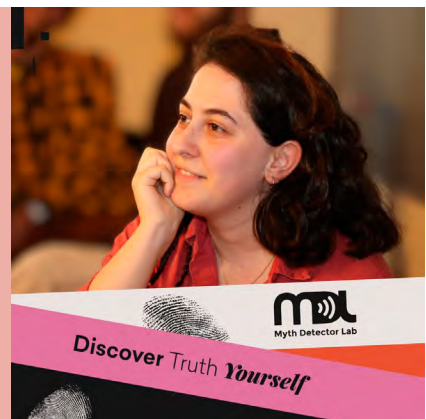




**SUCCESS STORIES:** One indicator of the Myth Detector Lab’s success is the practical application of the knowledge gained by graduates after completing the program. Some graduates are employed at Myth Detector, others continue to collaborate as contributors, and some use their experience in other organizations’ research and media literacy programs.

TEKLA KHARAZISHVILI, a graduate of the 13th edition of the Myth Detector Lab, joined our team in 2023.

“I acquired and developed important skills through this program, be it working with public information, fact-checking, or working on the final multimedia project.”







LUKA CHITIANI, a graduate of the second regional group, continues to collaborate with Myth Detector as a contributor and is currently a social media monitor at ISFED.

“ I gained many skills from the program that will undoubtedly help me in my future activities: looking more critically at issues that may seem real at first glance because they evoke emotions in us. I have a desire to share the knowledge I gained here with others to make society more resilient.”

### 1.3 MEDIA AND DIGITAL LITERACY TRAININGS FOR REGIONAL CENTERS

Under the framework of the five-year “Unity Through Diversity” program funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by the United Nations Association of Georgia (UNAG), the Media Development Foundation (MDF) conducts media and digital literacy trainings for regional centers. In 2023, we conducted 8 trainings in 8 cities (Akhmeta, Akhalkalaki, Ninotsminda, Gori, Marneuli, Akhaltsikhe, Telavi, and Kutaisi), involving 184 young participants.



## 2. MEDIA LITERACY TEACHING COURSE FOR TEACHERS AT ILIA UNIVERSITY

Since 2019, the Media Development Foundation has introduced the course “Teaching Media Literacy in Schools” at Ilia State University, which is attended by participants of the teachers’ preparation program. In 2023, 17 students completed this course, and a total of 114 students have completed it since its inception.



## 3. DEVELOPMENT OF MEDIA LITERACY RESOURCES

In addition to trainings, the Media Development Foundation carried out the following activities in 2023 to develop resources aimed at strengthening societal resilience to disinformation:

1. Conducted a Hackathon, identifying 3 innovative projects in the field of media literacy and combating disinformation.
2. Developed an online game titled “Operation INFEKTION.”



### 3.1. HACKATHON #TRUTHTECHTHON

During December 1-4, 2023, the Media Development Foundation held a media literacy hackathon, #Truthtechthon. The hybrid event allowed participants from any part of Georgia to join the project.

Out of 150 applicants (47 teams), 30 teams were selected for the initial stage, and 13 teams presented their innovative ideas to the jury in the final round. Teams worked on their ideas with mentors to create useful electronic resources for media literacy and combating disinformation.



On December 4, during the closing event, a specially selected jury announced the three winning teams, who received prize funds to implement their projects:

- **EASYVERIFY** – A browser extension offering users the ability to verify any type of information.
- **NATSARKEKIA** – An online game for children aged 9–12, aimed at developing skills such as verifying false information, critically analyzing sources, detecting photo manipulations, protecting personal data, and ensuring cybersecurity.
- **OPEN EVIDENCE** – A model for automated online media monitoring to identify content clusters and study coordinated campaigns.

The hackathon was conducted as part of the project “Quality Media and Conscious Media Consumption for Resilient Society (ConMeCo).”

### 3.2. ONLINE GAME “OPERATION INFEKTION”

In 2023, the Media Development Foundation added another educational online game, “Operation Infection,” to its collection. The game is inspired by the KGB’s Operation “Denver,” also known as “**Operation Infektion.**” The game aims to test the player’s knowledge of Soviet propaganda methods by navigating the KGB’s secret labyrinths and overcoming four stages, which culminate in the development of an information operation within the framework of active measures.

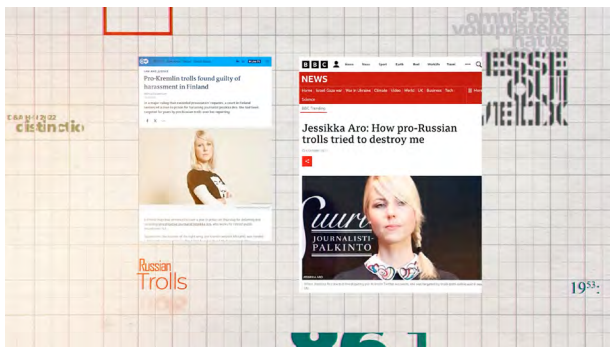
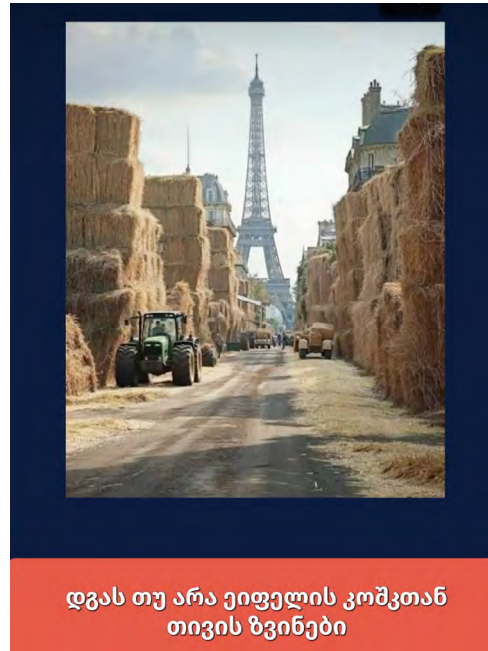


## 4. RAISING AWARENESS OF MEDIA LITERACY THROUGH INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS

In order to raise awareness about media literacy, we prepared 6 video clips and 1 story in cooperation with the online outlet “Publika.” The videos covered such topics as:

- DETECTING AI-GENERATED CONTENT:

1. 5 ways to recognize an AI-generated photo
2. Are there haystacks near the Eiffel Tower?



- GENDERED DISINFORMATION:

“Disarm gendered disinformation with truth!”

- VERIFYING FALSE INFORMATION:

Report False Information,  
A reliable source of information verification.





**“MEASURE THE TRUTH!”**

The young people participating in the trainings were also involved in the awareness-raising campaign. We prepared 2 **video clips** and information cards, in which young people participating in the training of the project “Quality Media and Conscious Media Consumption for a Resilient Society (ConMeCo)” shared their media literacy experience with others.

- **GAMES:**  
Promotion of Media Literacy Games
- **STORY:**  
Phases of informational disorder and the spread of false information



# 3 MEDIA PROGRAMS

In 2023, MDF's media programs focused on three main components:

1. PROFESSIONAL TRAINING FOR JOURNALISTS
2. PROMOTING TRANSPARENCY OF MEDIA
3. RAISING AWARENESS AMONG MEDIA CONSUMERS ABOUT SELF-REGULATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS THROUGH SIMULATION GAMES AND INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS

## 1. PROFESSIONAL TRAINING FOR JOURNALISTS

In 2023, the Media Development Foundation conducted three trainings for journalists: two on ethical coverage of gender issues and gendered disinformation, and one on fact-checking and cybersecurity in the context of NATO and security topics.

**REPORTING ON GENDER ISSUES:** MDF trained 44 journalists on gender issues through two professional trainings. The first training was held on July 7-9 in Vardzia, and the second on December 22-24 in Borjomi (Likani). Journalists from central and regional media received professional training on topics such as:



- The history of feminism.
- Ethical reporting on gender issues, including violence against women.
- Online violence against female journalists.
- Verifying information and visuals using OSINT.
- CIB and campaigns discrediting women.



The trainings included lectures, simulations, and practical workshops and were conducted as part of the project “Gender Disinformation and Inclusive Media Reporting,” funded by IMS (International Media Support).

**FACT-CHECKING AND CYBERSECURITY.** On June 16-18, MDF, in collaboration with the NATO Liaison Office, conducted a training in Borjomi titled “Combating Disinformation: Fact-Checking and Cybersecurity.”



Eighteen journalists from regional media and minority languages attended the training, which covered topics such as false information around NATO, hybrid warfare challenges, cybersecurity, and practical tools for verifying information. The training included both lectures and practical workshops.

## 2. PROMOTING TRANSPARENCY OF MEDIA

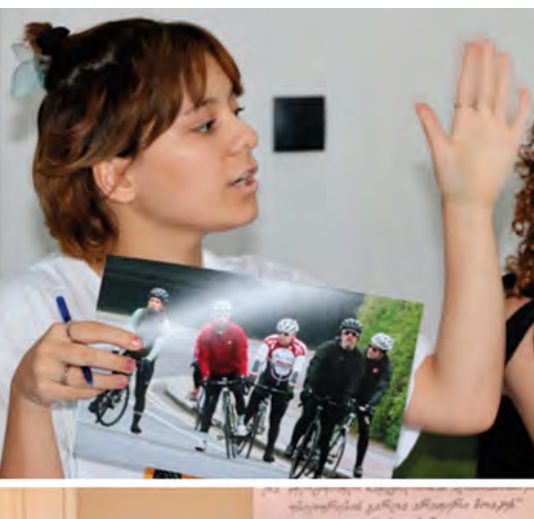
As part of the project “Quality Media and Conscious Media Consumption for Resilient Society (ConMeCo),” MDF published a research report on the **Financial Transparency of Media**. Additionally, the database on [www.mediameter.ge](http://www.mediameter.ge) was updated, containing:



- **MEDIA PROFILES:** Information about media owners, editorial policies, and financial revenues;
- **MEDIA CASES:** Information provided by the Human Rights Center about incidents involving journalists and their legal status;
- **RESEARCH:** Annual reports on the financial transparency of media;
- **SELF-REGULATION GUIDE:** Instructions on how citizens can appeal ethical violations to the Charter of Journalistic Ethics and broadcasters' self-regulation bodies.

### 3. PROMOTING MEDIA SELF-REGULATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

To increase media accountability and promote self-regulation mechanisms, MDF prepared guides on how to appeal ethical violations to the **Charter of Journalistic Ethics** and **broadcasters' self-regulation bodies**.



As part of the project “Quality Media and Conscious Media Consumption for Resilient Society (ConMeCo),” MDF conducted simulation role plays in six cities and towns in Georgia (Telavi, Kutaisi, Khulo, Kvareli, Batumi, Rustavi) involving 112 young participants. The simulated processes addressed ethical dilemmas such as:

- Adherence to the principle of accuracy
- Covering children’s issues
- Hate speech
- Covering sexual violence victims

Participants in the simulated processes engaged in an information campaign, and their views on the importance of ethical and accountable media were disseminated on social media.



# DEMOCRACY PROGRAM FOR YOUTH

# 4

In 2023, the Media Development Foundation (MDF), in partnership with the Danish organization “The WHY Foundation” (TWF), launched a new project: **“Let’s Talk About Democracy: *Demdocs for Youth.*”**

The project aims to promote the engagement of Georgian youth in the country’s democratic, socio-economic, and sustainable development processes.

The democracy program, which is being implemented in Tbilisi and five cities/towns across Georgia (Akhaltsikhe, Kutaisi, Zugdidi, Khulo, Kvareli), includes the following activities:

1. Screenings of documentaries on democracy and human rights, followed by discussions with invited speakers;
2. Storytelling media lab training on multimedia journalism, human rights, and democracy, where participants prepare blogs/vlogs and present them at the program’s concluding event;
3. A blog/vlog competition titled “Let’s Talk About Democracy;”

The project started in September 2023 and will continue until October 2024. As of December 2023, two screenings and discussions of documentary films provided by The Why Foundation and dubbed in Georgian have been held, along with four media lab training sessions:

## FILM SCREENINGS AND DISCUSSIONS:

- On November 17, in honor of International Tolerance Day, a screening of the film *Mai Khoi and the Dissidents* was held in Kutaisi, led by film critic Teo Khatiashvili.
- On December 10, in celebration of Human Rights Day, a screening of the film *Putin’s Kiss* took place at Ilia State University, with a discussion led by film critic Gogi Gvakharia.

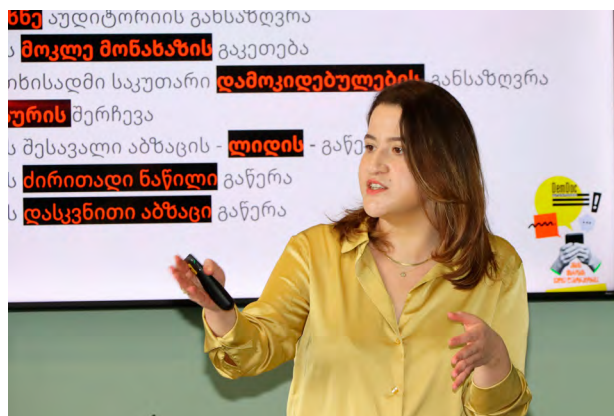




In 2023, about 80 participants attended the film screenings and discussions.

### STORYTELLING MEDIA LAB

In the Storytelling Media Lab, participants learn various formats and structures for conveying stories on topics related to democracy and human rights. Within the lab's framework, they plan and create blogs/vlogs, which are then presented at the program's concluding event. After the program's completion, participants receive joint certificates from The Why Foundation and MDF.



In the final stage of the project, a competition titled “Let’s Talk About Democracy” will be held to award the authors of the best multimedia works on the themes of democracy or human rights.

In 2023, 34 young people participated in the Storytelling Media Lab training.

# REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

# 5

In 2023, the Media Development Foundation not only initiated new formats but also participated in events organized by partner organizations and international associations:

- Launched the first regional conference of fact-checking organizations from Eastern Partnership countries.
- Joined UNESCO's Global Media Literacy Week.
- Conducted training for Sri Lankan youth and students from Yerevan University.
- Participated in the annual conference of the International Fact-Checking Network (#GlobalFact10) organized by the Poynter Institute and other international events.

## 1. "UNVEIL THE TRUTH: EASTERN PARTNERSHIP FACT-CHECKERS REGIONAL CONFERENCE

In 2023 in partnership with Deutsche Welle Akademie (DWA) and the United Nations Association of Georgia (UNAG), the Media Development Foundation organized the regional conference "Unveil the Truth: Eastern Partnership Fact-Checkers Conference."





The three-day conference, held from September 20-22, brought together fact-checking organizations, experts, and interested parties from 11 countries. The conference included 8 panel discussions and 6 workshops, as well as the presentation of the book “Putin’s Trolls” by renowned Finnish journalist Jessikka Aro.

The conference aimed to promote the fight against harmful information and media literacy in the region.



The keynote speakers of the conference were:



**JESSIKKA ARO** – Renowned Finnish journalist and author of the book “Putin’s Trolls,” translated into Georgian by MDF



**SOPHIE EYEARS** – Strategic Partner Development – Integrity, Fact-Checking & Misinfo Policy, META



Over the course of three days, experts discussed many important topics, including fact-checking during war, watchdogging democracy, researching campaigns to discredit politicians, gendered disinformation, and promoting media literacy.



Parallel sessions at the conference included workshops on fact-checking using OSINT tools, geolocation, and visual manipulation.

Members of the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN), such as StopFake, Delfi, Demagog, StopFals, Fact Yoxla, and others, participated in the conference.

## 2. MDF JOINS UNESCO'S GLOBAL MEDIA LITERACY WEEK

In 2023, the Media Development Foundation joined UNESCO's Global Media Literacy Week:

- On October 23, MDF celebrated MIL week at Ilia State University, introducing students to MDF's educational online games and awarding symbolic prizes in a mini-competition.
- On October 25, MDF representatives, together with the Deputy EU Head of Mission Asunción Sánchez Ruiz and Deutsche Welle Akademie representative Nino Gogolashvili, visited the public school in Adzvi village. MDF conducted a media literacy training for youngsters from the local school, located near the administrative boundary line.



As part of international cooperation, MDF is an active member of UNESCO’s Media and Information Literacy Alliance and the Deutsche Welle Akademie’s Media and Information Literacy Experts Network (MILEN). In 2023, MDF was invited to share its experience in increasing citizen engagement in fact-checking at the **UNESCO Media and Information Literacy International Conference** in Jordan, which was postponed due to the ongoing war in the region.

### 3. “DISARMING DISINFORMATION” – COLLABORATION WITH MEDIAWISE AND THE INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR JOURNALISTS (ICFJ)

In 2023, the Media Development Foundation (MDF) participated in implementing one segment of the MediaWise and International Center for Journalists’ project “Disarming Disinformation.” As part of the project, selected participants underwent online training, and trainers from Georgia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Albania were chosen through a competition to implement media literacy projects in their countries.





#### 4. INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP WITH SRI LANKA

In 2023, the Media Development Foundation signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Sri Lankan organization, International Youth Alliance for Peace. As part of the partnership, Sri Lankan youth participated in a short media literacy course consisting of six online training sessions. A total of 21 participants completed the course.

#### 5. MEDIA LITERACY TRAINING FOR YEREVAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

On May 29–30, 11 journalism students from the Eurasia International University (EIU) in Yerevan visited the MDF office for a study visit. During the two-day media literacy training, the young participants learned about methods for verifying information and sources, as well as identifying visual manipulation and fake accounts on social media.

#### 6. PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

**#GLOBALFACT10.** At the 2023 GlobalFact10 conference in Seoul, organized by the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) of the Poynter Institute, MDF’s Executive Director, Tamar Kintsurashvili, participated in a panel discussion titled **“Truth under Wreckage.”** During the session, she focused on foreign information operations and government-led propaganda campaigns. A significant part of the session was also dedicated to the spread of false information during Russia’s war in Ukraine and new strategies to combat it.





CONNECTING MEDIA COMMUNITIES IN THE AGE OF DISINFORMATION. Sandro Gigauri, the English-language editor of Myth Detector, participated in an EU-organized event in Chişinău titled “Connecting Media Communities in the Age of Disinformation,” where they discussed challenges related to foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI).

- On June 13, Myth Detector’s Deputy Editor-in-chief, Maiko Ratiani, spoke at a panel discussion in Moldova about the impact of disinformation on the immunization process during the pandemic.

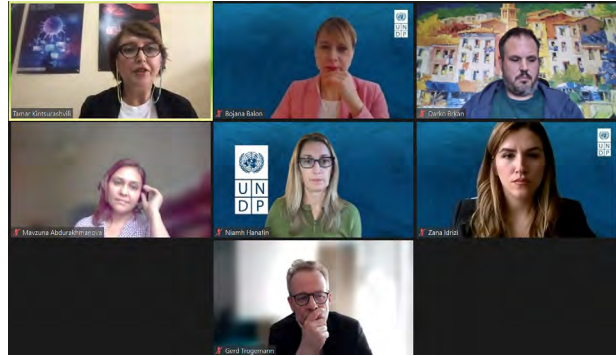


- On March 25, MDF representatives Mariam Dangadze and Mariam Talakhadze participated in the forum “Media Literacy 5.0: From Challenges to Solutions” in Truskavets, Ukraine.

- On February 9, MDF researcher Sandro Gigauri spoke about Russian information warfare and its trends at an online discussion organized by the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) for regional media and NGOs.

MDF’s Executive Director, Tamar Kintsurashvili, participated in the following discussions and panel presentations:

- January 26: Regional conference on strategies to combat gendered disinformation in the media.
- April 19: Presentation of UNDP’s new report, “Regional Study and Analysis of Measures to Counter Disinformation in Europe and Central Asia.”



- November 17: Annual Bucharest Forum organized by Aspen Institute Romania and The German Marshall Fund of the United States.
- December 6: StratCom experts event organized by NATO’s Public Diplomacy Division.

- April 26: Discussion at the Digital Development Global Forum on “Strengthening Resilience to Misinformation, Disinformation, and Harmful Information in Georgia’s Information Ecosystem.”
- June 9: Panel “Ethnic Minorities and Misinformation: How to Restore Trust in the Media?” organized by the French Embassy and the French Institute in Georgia.
- June 22: Discussion “Resilience of Democracy in an Unstable Era,” organized by M100 Sanssouci Colloquium and the Alfred Herrhausen Gesellschaft.
- September 14: International M100 Sanssouci Colloquium in Potsdam.



# 6

## PUBLICATIONS AND REFERENCES

In 2023, MDF published four reports and one book.

**“PUTIN’S TROLLS”:** MDF obtained the copyright and published the Georgian translation of the bestselling book “Putin’s Trolls” by renowned Finnish investigative journalist Jessikka Aro in collaboration with Ilia State University.

Aro’s book sheds light on the deceptive tactics used by online trolls to manipulate public opinion.

**REPORTS:** The research reports prepared in 2023 on anti-Western propaganda, gendered disinformation, sexist language, and financial transparency are available in **MDF’s library**.

### MDF IN INTERNATIONAL REPORTS

MDF’s media monitoring data on religious intolerance was referenced in the US Department of State’s annual **report** on international religious freedom;

MDF and Myth Detector’s research was cited in the “Freedom on the Net” report by the American organization **Freedom House**.



## MDF IN INTERNATIONAL EDITIONS

In 2023, numerous international publications and organizations covered MDF's activities and its fact-checking and media literacy programs.

- ARTE  
EU-Beitritt: Wie frei ist die georgische Presse? – Die ganze Doku | ARTE
- POYNTER  
After protests, Georgia withdraws law that targets media, NGOs – Poynter
- POYNTER  
Misinformation about the Israel-Hamas war often follows similar false narratives – Poynter
- VOA  
What the Case of Georgia's Only Jailed Journalist Means for the Country's EU Aspirations
- EU EUNEIGHBOURS EAST  
<https://euneighbourseast.eu/news/latest-news/georgia-youth-from-kaspi-adigeni-and-batumi-learn-to-identify-and-verify-misinformation/>
- GOETHE INSTITUTE  
Die prorussische Politik der georgischen Regierung während des russischen Krieges in der Ukraine
- M100 SANSSOUICI COLLOQUIUM  
<https://x.com/M100Colloquium/status/1702289373184552982>



## DONORS AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS IN 2023

The Media Development Foundation (MDF) collaborates in various international formats.

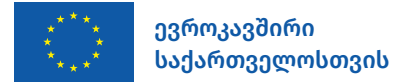
MDF is a member of:

- UNESCO's International Steering Committee (ISC) for the Media and Information Literacy Alliance;
- Deutsche Welle Akademie's Media and Information Literacy Expert Network (MILEN);
- Open Information Partnership (OIP);
- Poynter Institute's International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN);
- European Fact-Checking Standards Network (EFCSN).

Since 2020, MDF has been collaborating with META as part of Facebook's Third-Party Fact-Checking Program and with EUvsDisinfo, a project of the East StratCom Task Force under the European External Action Service (EEAS).



IN 2023, THE DONORS AND PARTNERS OF THE MEDIA DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION'S  
PROJECTS INCLUDED:

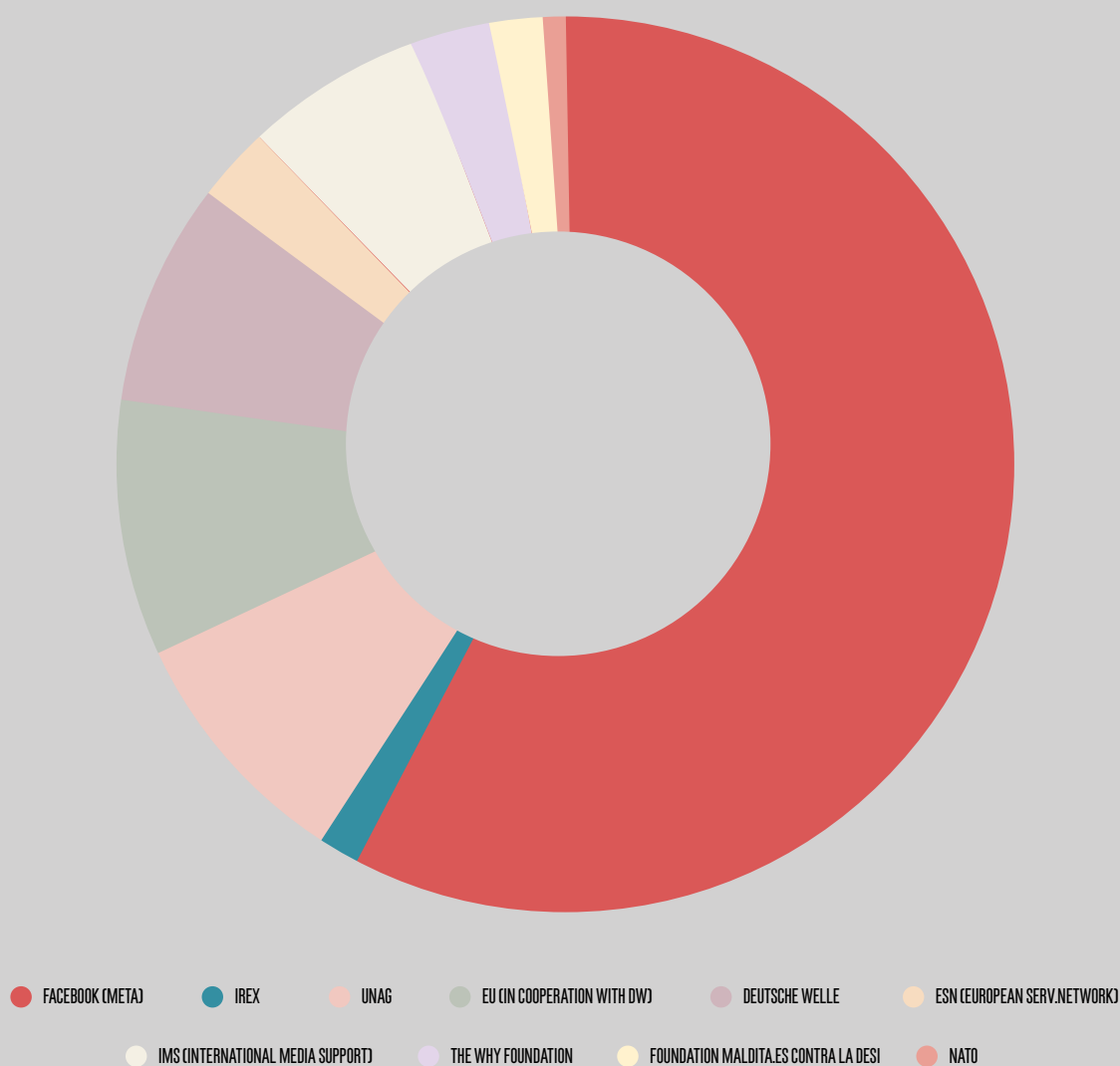




# 2023 FINANCIAL REPORT

The total revenue of the Organization in 2023 amounted to 837,267.52 €, of which 39.94 % was from grants, and 60.06 % was from other contracts.

SOURCES OF REVENUE (EUR) IN 2023





Source of Funding 2023	Project Title	Amount	%
Facebook (META)	Third party fact checking program	€ 485,000.00	57.93%
IREX	Training for Journalists	€ 3,800.00	0.45%
United Nations Association Georgia	Unity Through Diversity Program: Media Monitoring, Research and Digital Literacy (USAID Civic and Economic Integration Program)	€ 100,000.00	11.94%
European Union (in cooperation with Deutsche Welle)	Quality media and conscious media consumption for resilient society – ConMeCo	€ 76,460.00	9.13%
DEUTSCHE WELLE	Myth Detector Laboratory: Media Literacy School for Georgian, Armenian, Azerbaijani and Ukrainian Youth	€ 59,964.00	7.16%
ESN (EUROPEAN SERVICE NETWORK)	Disinformation research/ Media Monitoring	€ 14,100.00	1.68%
IMS (international Media Support)	Gender Disinformation and Inclusive Media Reporting	€ 67,703.00	8.09%
The Why Foundation	Student Democracy Documentaries Georgia (StuDemDocs Georgia)	€ 14,960.97	1.79%
FUNDACION MALDITA.ES CONTRA LA DESI	“Technological Capacity Building for Eastern Europe, Eurasian and Latin American Fact-checking Organizations to Fight Cross-regional and Global Disinformation on Private Messaging Apps.”	€ 11,279.55	1.35%
NATO	„Media Literacy Schools for a Resilient Georgian Society”	€ 4,000.00	0.48%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>837,267.52</b>	<b>100%</b>

### MAJOR SPENDING CATEGORIES IN 2023

Salaries	€ 401,989.45
Office Rent & Utilities	€ 19,897.91
Office Supplies	€ 3,668.79
Communication, Boosting, Promotional Costs, Advertisement & Subscriptions	€ 44,026.40
Transportation	€ 33,874.00
Honoraria (trainers, consultants, students, researchers)	€ 41,896.10
videos/games / IT Support/Web-page maintenance	€ 13,808.74
Printing costs	€ 8,394.47
Translation	€ 14,036.45
Capital Expenditures	€ 669,559.89
Conference/Workshop/Training/Focus Group Expenses	€ 81,054.30
Bank charges	€ 1,150.22
Other costs	€ 7,528.10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,340,884.81</b>



