

Contents

WELCOME LETTER	03
WHO WE ARE	05
About MDF	05
Our Mission	05
Program Directions	06
Our Team	06
HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR	07
MDF has partnered up with Facebook Third Party Fact-Checking Program	07
MDF has regained IFCN membership	08
Myth Detector Lab remains the most popular and well-established media literacy program	08
International References in Official Documents	09
“Truth about the Immortal Regiment” – Social Media Campaign	10
MDF managed to integrate the MIL program at Ilia State University’s curriculum	10
MDF’s Performance in 2020 in numbers	11
PROGRAMS IN A NUTSHELL	12
I DIRECTION: FACT-CHECKING IN 2020	12
Myth Detector Laboratory	17
Regional Training Series for Youth	19
Most Media Literate School	21
Most Media Literate Youngster	22
MiL Network	22
Global Hackathon – Hack the Fake News!	23
Social Media Campaign against Infodemic	25
MiL resources	26
II DIRECTION: MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY PROGRAMME	15
Myth Detector Laboratory	17
Regional Training Series for Youth	19
Most Media Literate School	21
Most Media Literate Youngster	22
MiL Network	22
Global Hackathon – Hack the Fake News!	23
Social Media Campaign against Infodemic	25
MiL resources	26

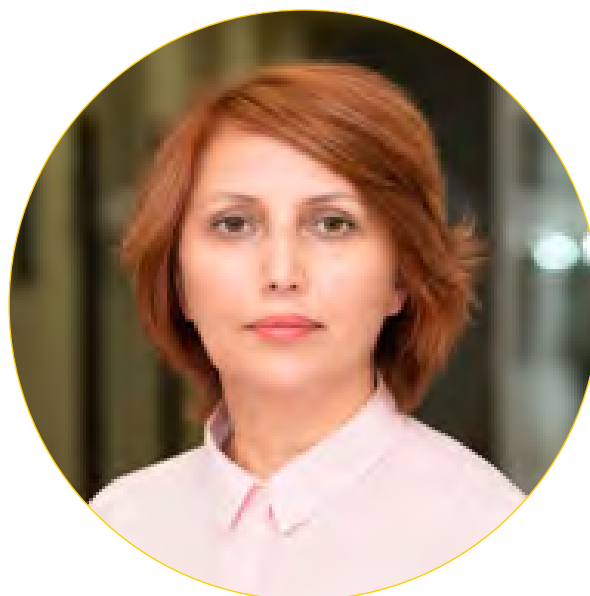
III DIRECTION: HATE SPEECH AND SEXISM	28
No to Phobia!	28
Mapping Sources of Hate Speech	28
Sexism	29
IV DIRECTION: MEDIA: TRANSPARENCY, ACCOUNTABILITY, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SELF-REGULATION	30
Media Transparency and Accountability	31
Media Monitoring in 2020	31
Media Self-regulation in 2020	33
Professional Development of Media	33
PUBLICATIONS	35
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	36
Partnerships	36
Programs	37
International Events MDF has participated in 2020	38
VISIBILITY IN FIGURES	39
FINANCIAL REPORT 2020	40
DONORS AND PARTNERS IN 2020	41
PLANS FOR 2021	42

Welcome Letter

Dear Colleagues,

I am delighted and honored to present the Media Development Foundation's (MDF) annual report with key accomplishments and achievements for the year of 2020. MDF has strived to support a free and pluralistic media environment, open and inclusive society, and contribute to resilience building by the promotion of conscious media consumption since 2008. This annual report highlights some of the notable achievements in the Media Development Foundation's performance over the last year.

MDF has been actively engaged in promoting participatory democracy by enhancing informed decisions among citizens and strengthening democratic platforms, such as the media, as misuse of media has become a common practice nowadays. Disinformation and fake news generate incentives for manipulation of public discourse, impact on citizens' attitudes and social behaviors that is a great challenge for societal security. The concerns about disinformation and fake news proliferation online are drastically growing as Georgia is a polygon of hybrid warfare, as well as, due to the covid-19 outbreak



globally, that has been accompanied by a massive infodemic.

Therefore, 2020 was a year full of challenges and opportunities globally and for the MDF team as well. During pandemic MDF was intensively working on debunking the fake news regarding Covid-19 as well as, other disinformation trends, pre-election media monitoring, delivering media literacy programs for various target groups, strengthening the institutional and professional development of media, advocating for better implementation for media self-regulation principles, supporting the improvement of strategic communication between government and the Civil Society broadly, including media, CSOs, academia, etc.

The greatest highlight of the year for MDF is that its fact-checking and myth debunking platform – Myth Detector – partnered up with Facebook to fight against misinformation in the framework of Facebook’s Third-Party Fact-Checking Program. Currently, Myth Detector reviews and rates the accuracy of content aiming to improve the quality and authenticity of stories in the News Feed.

It is significant to underline that MDF is a leading organization in delivering media literacy programs. One of the well-known media literacy programs for youngsters implemented by MDF in partnership with Deutsche Welle Akademie is the youth-oriented Myth Detector Lab, which is an extensive program that merges theory and practice and allows its alumni to apply the gained knowledge and competencies in their daily work. Furthermore, MDF regularly conducts training, competitions, and other related activities on media literacy for different target groups to increase capacity and build the resilience of the communities in fighting against disinformation and fake news.

Besides, MDF’s outreach on the local and international level has increased as the organization was represented on various international platforms as a keynote speaker on disinformation and fake news. MDF’s annual research findings on different issues, such as Anti-Western propaganda, Hate Speech, Media Transparency and etc. always become a spotlight for media organizations operating in the country.

MDF’s vision lies in informed citizens that are essential for effective democratization processes and a more vibrant civil society in Georgia. We are keen to continue our hard work with full dedication and enthusiasm to build more resilient communities locally and globally.

I would like to express my gratitude to all our donors, partners, and MDF’s staff, whose efforts and support enable the Media Development Foundation to continue working on inducing positive and sustainable changes in the country.

Sincerely,
Tamar Kintsurashvili
Executive Director
Media Development Foundation

Who we are

About MDF

Media Development Foundation (MDF) is a leading Georgian NGO in media monitoring, research and communication, specialized in detecting and verifying fake media content. With its well-established media literacy programs and experienced fact-checkers, MDF aims to promote critical thinking in media consumers and to raise awareness on the importance of fighting fake news.

Our Mission

The Media Development Foundation, MDF aims to promote:

- Fundamental human rights and freedoms; Open, inclusive and pluralistic society;
- Informed decisions in the democratic society by providing reliable and quality information, detecting harmful content, disinformation and mal-information, ensuring transparency of the sources;
- Critical thinking in a new media ecosystem and resilience building of citizens' through conscious media consumption;
- Professional and institutional development of media; Establishment of media accountability and self-regulation mechanisms.

Program Directions

MDF works on four core dimensions that overall contribute to the democratic processes in the country:

- Fact-Checking
- Media and Information Literacy
- Hate speech & Sexism
- Media: Transparency, Accountability, Professional development and Self-regulation

MDF implements various activities to accomplish its mission and values, including:

- **Research:** monitoring, fact-checking and analysis;
- **Educational programs:** conducting training, developing resources (handbooks, online games / quizzes / lessons), academic syllabus, organizing awareness-raising campaigns, contests and competitions;
- **Advocacy:** advancing media self-regulation, strategic communication and policymaking;

Our Team

MDF has 22 full-time staff and 13 volunteers.

Board Members

- Executive Director
Tamar Kintsurashvili
- Director
Tamar Khorbaladze
- Communications Manager
Mariam Akhalkatsi
- Organizational Development Manager
Ekaterine Danelia
- Financial Manager
Davit Gadaldadze

For detailed information about MDF's staff, please visit the link:



Highlights of the year

MDF has partnered up with Facebook Third Party Fact-Checking Program



In September 2020, MDF's fact-checking and myth debunking platform – Myth Detector – partnered up with Facebook to fight against misinformation in the framework of Facebook's Third-Party Fact-Checking Program. Myth Detector reviews and rates the accuracy of content aiming to improve the quality and authenticity of stories in the News Feed. When rated false, Facebook shows the story lower in News Feed, significantly reducing its distribution and warning people who see the post or try to share the post that it has been marked as false.



We're happy to launch our third-party fact-checking program in Georgia with FactCheck Georgia and Myth Detector. Fighting false news is a responsibility we take seriously, that's why we are constantly working on ways to help stop the spread of misinformation on our platform."

Sophie Eyears

Strategic Partner Development Manager at Facebook



MDF has regained IFCN membership

Since November 2019, Myth Detector is a verified signature of the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) of the Poynter Institute.

In December 2020, MDF successfully completed the membership renewal process and received the highly positive feedback from the assessors, highlighting this:

“Myth Detector is performing well, doing fact-checking on a daily basis in a professional way and fully meets all criteria for signatories.”

– is underlined in the final evaluation by IFCN




Myth Detector Lab remains the most popular and well-established media literacy program

The Myth Detector Lab remains the most popular media literacy program among youngsters for more than four years already. In partnership with Deutsche Welle Akademie, MDF launched the program in 2017 and since then more than 150 youngsters became alumni of the program and continued their professional development in this regard. Some of the notable success stories are described in this report below.



International References in Official Documents


German Federal Government's report on freedom of religion discusses the role of the Media Development Foundation in combating Hate Speech in Georgia. The report underlines:



“The German Federal Government in Georgia, through the Deutsche Welle Akademie, is supporting the NGO, Media Development Foundation (MDF) in the fight against hate speech. MDF monitors and analyzes content aimed at stirring up animosity between religious communities. As a result, journalists’ awareness on hate speech issues has been raised, and regional and central media outlets are encouraged to offer relevant content to vulnerable groups. Consequently, the benefits are received not only by the journalists themselves, but also by the representatives of ethnic and religious minorities.”

Furthermore, MDF’s media content analysis on hate speech and anti-Western propaganda is often cited by the US State Department, European Council against Racism and Intolerance, foreign and local think-tanks and academia. In particular:

US Department of State’s 2019 Report on International Religious Freedom:



GEORGIA UNDERLINES: “MDF documented 55 instances of religiously intolerant statements on television, online, and in printed media by media representatives, political parties, clergy, public organizations, and others, compared to 148 such incidents in 2018.”

EUvsdisinfo published two reports based on MDF’s research findings, particularly, EEAS Special Report Updates: Short Assessment of Narratives and Disinformation around the COVID-19 Pandemic for April 2020 and May 2020.

International Fact-Checking Network’s newsletter on Myth Detector’s report showing how pro-Russian websites have been promoting COVID-19 misinformation in the region.

“Truth about the Immortal Regiment” — Social Media Campaign



On 6th of May, 2020, the Media Development Foundation launched an information campaign in Georgia aimed at raising awareness about the political agenda behind the Kremlin “Immortal Regiment” march. As part of the campaign, MDF prepared a short documentary “Truth about the Immortal Regiment” focusing on political goals of the Kremlin-funded “Immortal Regiment” and the importance of celebrating Victory Day on May 8 with European countries. The video was widely shared through Facebook, Youtube and was featured in several national tv channels, becoming very popular and reaching thousands of people.

MDF managed to integrate the MIL program at Ilia State University’s curriculum

MDF developed the Media and Information Literacy university program for students of teachers’ preparation program and incorporated it in Ilia State University’s curriculum. During the last two years, the course was successfully introduced and overall, 53 students have already graduated.

MDF's Performance in 2020 in numbers:

Number of trained people –

697

(youth, teachers, journalists,
academia)

Number of events MDF
organized –

12

Number of
event attendees –

638

Number of
international events
MDF participated –

16

Number of
Fact-Checks –

449

articles

Number of
publications –

10

Number of users
(social media reach) –

Facebook –

1,679,115

people reached,

Twitter –

331,919

tweet impressions

Number of
subscribers of (all)
newsletters –

1591

Number of
Advocacy Cases
(on Media
Self-regulation) –

2

Number of users
of (all) quizzes –

10,064

Number of
projects
implemented –

12

Number of users
of (all) online
games –

19,152

Programs in a Nutshell



I DIRECTION: FACT-CHECKING IN 2020

Myth Detector

Media Development Foundation (MDF) launched its fact-checking and myth debunking platform – Myth Detector – in 2014, to uncover the truth behind the lies, explore hidden agendas, raise the level of media literacy and inform both people and institutions of Georgia about the impacts of disinformation.

Since November 2019, Myth Detector is a verified signature of the **International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN)** of the Poynter Institute, regaining its membership again in 2020. At the beginning of 2020 Myth Detector joined the **#CoronavirusFactsAlliance**, recently recognized by the Paris Peace Forum, brings together 99

fact-checking organizations in more than 70 countries to build a repository of over 10,000 fact checks. This unique database provides people with accurate information on the issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, the Myth Detector platform has published more than 100 articles in the CoronaVirus Alliance database.

In September 2020, Myth Detector partnered up with Facebook to fight against misinformation in the framework of **Facebook’s Third-Party Fact-Checking Program**. Myth Detector reviews and rates the accuracy of content aiming to improve the quality and authenticity of stories in the News Feed. When rated false, Facebook

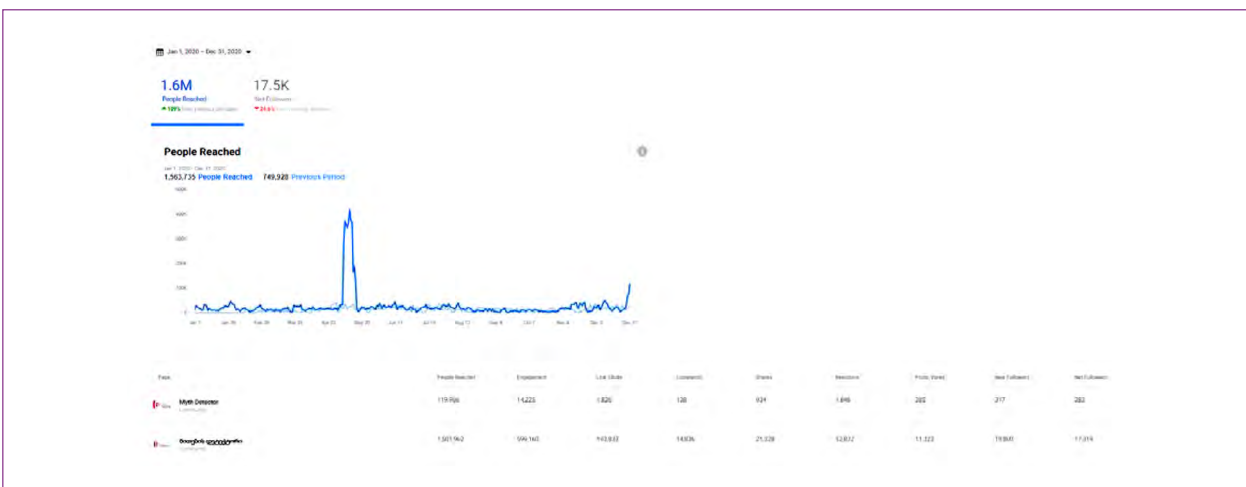
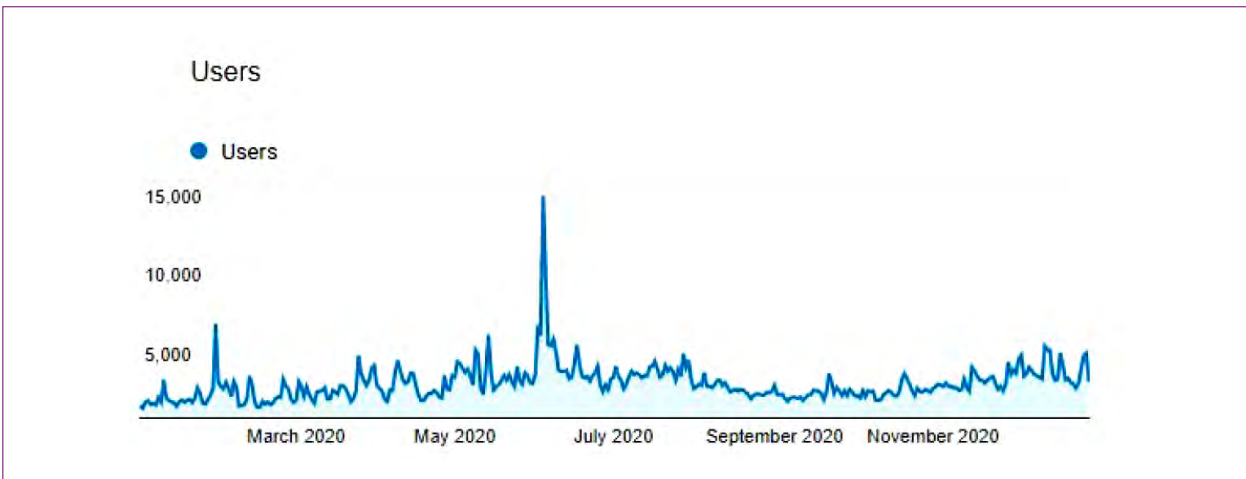
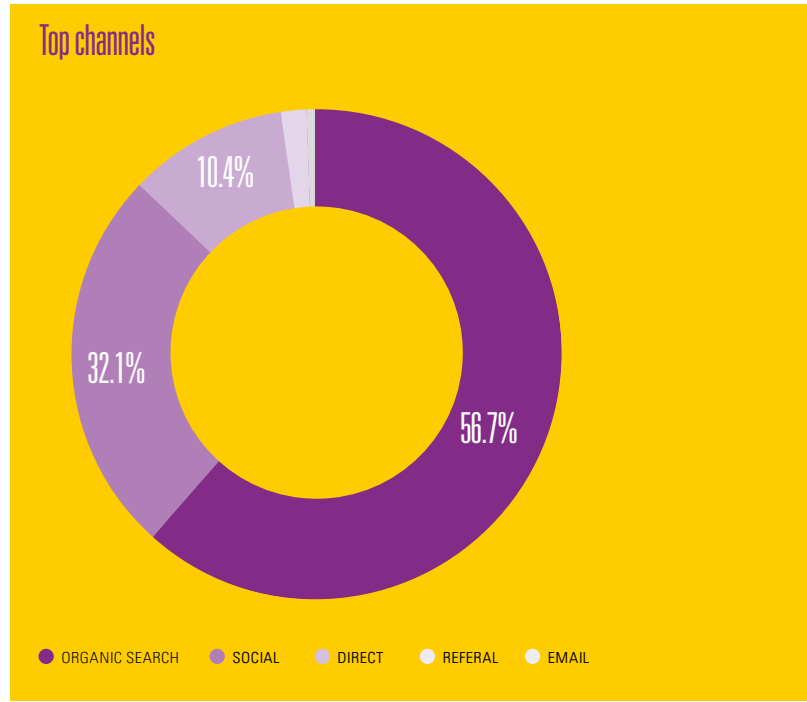


Table: Myth Detector web platform statistics:

Thematic Categories	Number of Articles
Infodemic	207 articles
Politics	105 articles
Identity	39 articles
History	32 articles
Defense / Security	19 articles
Economy	16 articles
Religion	12 articles
Media / Communication	10 articles
Migrants	10 articles
Justice / Criminal	7 articles
Human Rights	3 articles
Education	3 articles
Legislation	1 articles
Others	32 articles
Subtotal	449 articles

Notice: Some of the articles have several categories and that is why the overall sum outnumbers the real subtotal of the articles.

In 2020 Myth Detector also launched its **Weekly Disinformation Digest** providing key topics and narratives our fact-checkers observe during the week. Distributed in English (**39 issues**) and Russian (**22 issues**). This weekly digests have **635 subscribers** in total in addition to **764 subscribers** MDF's Georgian language newsletter has gained throughout the years.

¹ <https://mailchi.mp/883f4284ffb8/disinfo-digest-39>

shows the story lower in News Feed, significantly reducing its distribution and warning people who see the post or try to share the post that it has been marked as false.

Throughout this partnership thousands of Facebook content has been rated by Myth Detector, producing **163** fact-checking articles.¹

In 2020 Myth Detector platform prepared and published **449 fact-checks – 207** of them related to debunking the disinformation and misinformation on the Covid-19 pandemic (infodemic). Other key topics included: Politics, Identity, History, Defense and Security, Economy, Religion, Media and Communication, Migrants, etc. The detailed information about the number of articles published in different categories is given in the table below.

During 2020 Myth Detector **website** reached **1,073,295 pageviews** receiving **668,892 users** in total, most of which (56%) found us through organic search followed by 32.1% users coming from our social media channels; As Facebook is the **most popular social media channel in Georgia** with 2,50 million users in total, Myth Detector uses this platform as one of the main communication channels to reach our target audience. Myth Detector's **Georgian** and **English** Facebook pages, followed by **72,513 people** in total were reached by **1,563,735 people** throughout the year (doubling its reach compared to 2019) and engaging **613,385 users**. Myth Detector also grew its international audience on **Twitter**, followed by **580 accounts**, receiving **302,200 tweet** impressions in 2020.



II DIRECTION: MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY PROGRAMME

Media Development Foundation has been implementing Media and Information Literacy (MiL) programs since 2017 to strengthen critical thinking and conscious media consumption in a new media ecosystem and build the resilience of citizens against disinformation, misinformation and fake news.

MDF developed the holistic curricula for Media and Information Literacy Programs aiming to:

- Improve understanding of the role and functioning of media in democratic societies;
- Enhance critical thinking and capacity to establish the reliability of news sources and content.

The key competencies and outcomes of the program are:

- **Knowledge:** How media operates in a democratic society; Propaganda methods; Factors impacting media content.
- **Ability:** Critically evaluate media content in the light of media function; Make ethical use of information;
- **Skills:** Fact-checking; Verification of fake photos/videos; Verification of fake accounts.

The program involves various teaching methods, including active learning, discussions, games, exercises, practical work, demonstration.

The MiL curriculum includes the following issues:

- Web 2, social media, information bubble and ways how information distribution and content creation was changed;
- Information Disorder: how to differentiate disinformation from misinformation and mal-information;
- How to verify visual manipulation, photos, videos
- How to verify the transparency of sources: owners, IP addresses, about section, Facebook transparency
- Fake accounts – trolls
- Geolocation

MDF's MiL programs have three main target groups:

1. Youth program - Myth Detector Lab & regional training
2. Teachers' program
3. Academia



Youth Program — Discover Truth Yourself!

MDF has been implementing the MiL program for youth, which has two core dimensions: a) Myth Detector Laboratory – which stands as a sustainable network of youngsters in fact-checking and media literacy and is an intensive program for youth; b) regional training series for youth – aiming to widen the media literacy knowledge among youngsters from various regions of Georgia, especially, reaching out the most vulnerable communities, including regions, densely populated with ethnic and religious minorities.

→ Myth Detector Laboratory

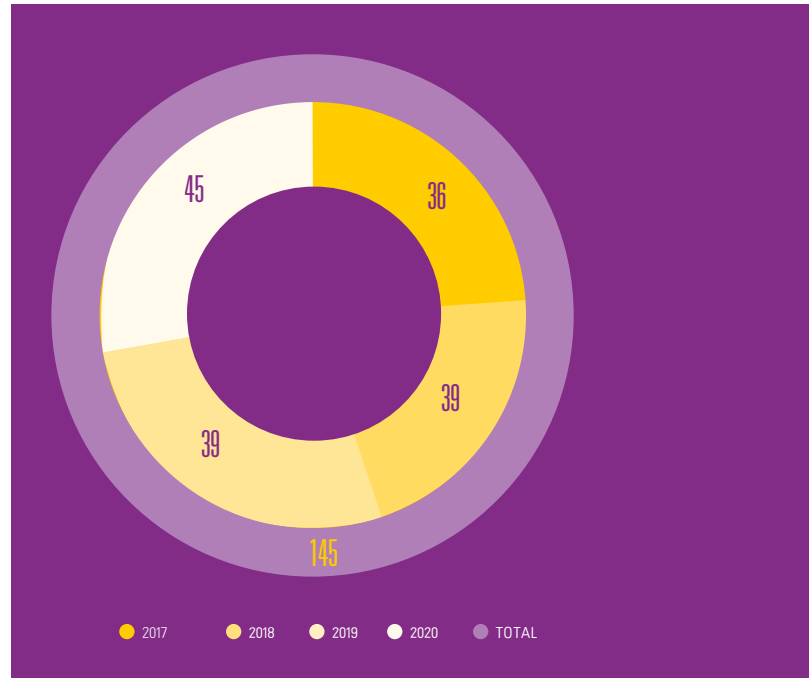


Among MDF’s Media and Information Literacy (MiL) programs – **Myth Detector Laboratory** – stands out as one of the most successful, comprehensive and sophisticated programs, with sustainable outcomes.

MDF with the partnership of the Deutsche Welle Akademie launched the Myth Detector Lab in 2017 and since then the program proved to be successful from multiple angles. The overall goal of the program is to respond to disinformation challenges through strengthening media literacy, promote critical thinking and enhance tools to distinguish quality media products from manipulating media content among youth.

Myth Detector Lab applies **learning by doing approach** and is a good combination of theory and practice, which includes:

- **Intensive 3,5-month training program** every week in media literacy: provides knowledge on the role and functioning of media in democratic societies; transparency and accountability of media; verification tools and skills needed for the production of multimedia content for self-expression.
- **Internship at www.mythdetector.ge**: allows students to produce fact-checking articles and multi-media content.



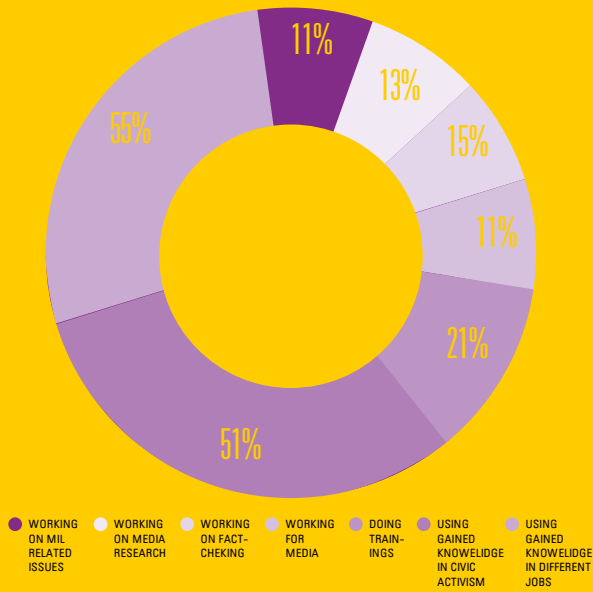
Myth Detector Laboratory has 159 alumni already across the country, where 60% of them are female and 40% – male; 60% of the participants are from Tbilisi and the other 40% from different regions of Georgia (Adjara, Imereti, Kakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Shida Kartli etc.) (see the figure)

Myth Detector Lab alumni have published 356 articles in total, including 123 articles in 2020. The articles developed by the participants were published not only by the Myth Detector but also by the platforms and web-sites, such as, Poynter Institute and EU vs. Disinfo. The overall figures are shown below:

Number of articles published by Myth Detector Lab Alumni	2017	2018	2019	2020	subtotal
Myth Detector	66	83	84	123	356
EU vs. Disinfo	12	13	12	8	45
Poynter Institute	N/A	N/A	N/A	16	16

According to the Google survey conducted by MDF within the alumni of the Myth Detector Lab, the knowledge, competences and practical experience gained through Myth Detector Lab is extremely relevant, valid for participants as they are transferred into their daily work as well.

Notice: Participants were allowed to indicate multiple answers.



The survey also revealed that the majority of the alumni of Myth Detector Lab applies the knowledge and competencies gained through the program in Civic Activism (51%). Great numbers of MythLabers are successfully working in different structures and organizations, including, NGOs, INGOs, Public and Private companies, etc.

It is noteworthy to mention that some of the successful MythLab alumni are currently employed at MDF working for its fact-checking and myth debunking platform – Myth Detector.

Success Stories

After completing the Myth Detector Lab program, some of the successful alumni became a part of the Media Development Foundation, enriching our performance in various directions. Maiko Ratiani, Mariam Dangadze, Mariam Talakhadze, Nika Shekeladze, Ani Kistauri and Medea Sulamanidze are working as researchers and fact-checkers contributing to everyday work of MDF’s fact-checking and myth debunking portal – Myth Detector.



Maiko Ratiani

“In Myth Detector we work daily to track and debunk fake news and anti-Western propaganda, infodemic and monitor various sources of disinformation. As a MythLab alumna myself, it’s especially interesting to train others with necessary media literacy skills and competencies.”



Mariam Dangadze

“MythLab strengthened my media literacy and analytical skills, that I found so interesting and important, decided to pursue my career in this direction and became a trainer myself at MDF.”

4 Myth Detector Lab alumni are also engaged as contributors of the Myth Detector platform, in particular, Irakli Iagorashvili, Nika Gurini, Mariam Topchishvili, and Lusine Pichikiani.



Irakli Iagorashvili



“I must have been a victim of so many fakes before I knew what the fake news even was. Today I fact-check almost everything.”

→ Regional Training Series for Youth



MDF has been implementing the youth training series “Discover Truth Yourself!” throughout the year. With case studies, exercises and interactive games participants gained knowledge on photo / video verification, identification of trolls and bots, cybersecurity, and privacy. MDF trainers conducted 22 workshops in 17 cities/towns, including Tbilisi. Number of youngsters participating in the training series estimates 410 in total. See the figure below:

Number of Participants in trainings	Year 2019	Year 2020	Total
	257	153	410
Gender disaggregation of participants	Female		275 (67%)
	Male		135 (33%)

Teachers



MDF implemented the comprehensive **capacity building program** introducing the MIL curriculum for secondary school teachers. In total, **635** teachers were trained in the program, where **229** teachers went online training due to pandemic and **406** in offline settings. The program covered all major cities and towns in the country, such as Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Zugdidi, Batumi, Kobuleti, Gori, Akhaltsikhe, Telavi, Kvareli, Lanchkhuti. It has also reached remote areas and ethnic minority settlements, including Samtskhe–Javakheti region (Akhaltsikhe, Akhalkalaki, Ninotsminda), Kvemo Kartli (Marneuli), Pankisi (Duisi).

	Offline	Online	Total
Number of Teachers Trained	406 (2019 – 329 participants; 2020 – 77 participants);	229 (2020)	635
Gender disaggregation	Female – 375 (92%); Male – 31 (8%);		

Academia

MDF managed to integrate the MIL program at Ilia State University’s curriculum.

MDF developed the MIL university program for students of teachers’ preparation program and incorporated it in Ilia State University’s curriculum. The program – Teaching Media and Information Literacy in Schools – covers all the topics related to MiL: media and information, propaganda and verification, transparency, hate speech, cyber, privacy/personal data. Throughout the course, the students learn how to spread knowledge on media and information literacy in schools, as well as methodology and teaching resources. MDF’s trainer has already provided lectures for 2 semesters and the number of graduate students estimates:

	2019	2020	Total
Number of Students attended the MIL course at Iliani	26	27	53

Furthermore, **21 university professors** of media schools from universities in Tbilisi and the regions were invited at the workshop, aiming the integration of verification methods and media literacy in the teaching process.

→ Most Media Literate School

MDF tries to raise awareness and critical thinking among youngsters through various activities, including organizing competitions. In 2020 MDF organized the competition to reveal the most media-literate school in Georgia, involving **32 school** teams, sharing information with more than **675 teachers** and **200 students** nationwide. Eventually, **26 school** teams were invited for the final event engaging 116 students from different regions of Georgia. The jury assessed all the applications received in the framework of the competition and by predefined criteria revealed four winners.

MDF organized the final conference and awarding ceremony for schools and teachers, which





was attended by **100 participants**, including **23 teachers** and **75 students** from **26 different** schools from regions: Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Kvareli, Sachkhere, Borjomi, Gori, Adigeni, Lagodekhi, Gombori, Khobi, Martvili, Baghdati, Akhaltsikhe, Ninotsminda, Khashuri, Poti, Sagarejo, Kareli, Tskaltubo.

The jury revealed the winners of the competition: **The third place** was dedicated to two schools: a) Ninotsminda with the project “In the footsteps of Disinformation” and b) Lagodekhi

→ Most Media Literate Youngster

MDF has already established a tradition of organizing a competition of the Most Media Literate Youngster, which has gained wider popularity this year as **198 youngsters** participated in the quiz competition in 2020. The goal of this activity is to promote critical thinking and conscious media consumption among youth. The winners of the competition had an opportunity to practice the knowledge by internships in Myth Detector and On.ge.

“Cyber-kids”; **The second place** was taken by Kutaisi School with the name “Georgian Elfs”. And **the winner of the competition** and the most media-literate school has become Akhaltsikhe team “Reality” with the idea to implement a fort-board game on Rabati Castle in Akhaltsikhe related to Media and Information Literacy. The representative of Ilia State University has also revealed its favorite team from Borjomi and MDF decided to support Gori’s team “Ctrl Z” in developing an online game about MIL.

→ MiL Network

MDF has created and launched the MiL Network that unites **40 schools** and **15 young** activists from regions from 2018–2019.

→ Global Hackaton — Hack the Fake News!

On October 22-23, 2020, MDF, together with **For-Set** organized its first global hackathon — **Hack the Fake News** — in order to generate new innovative technological ideas to detect and fight malign information operations and fake content. The hackathon hosted developers, graphic designers, media literacy specialists, and others passionate about digital technologies from 16 countries to hack the fake news challenge. The hackathon envisaged training opportunities from MDF's partners from **Bellingcat** and **Facebook**. The community partner of the hackathon was **Digital Communication Network**. The media partners of the hackathon were **On.ge** and **Civil.ge**.

The hackathon involved up to **60 participants** from all around the world.

On October 8 Narine Khachatryan — an open-source researcher and trainer from Bellingcat

held a workshop for journalists, fact-checkers, and others passionate about media literacy to introduce them to open-source digital research and the methodologies behind it.

On October 21 MDF in partnership with Facebook hosted journalists and fact-checkers at a webinar held by Sophie Eyears — Facebook's Third-Party Fact-Checking Program Manager to discuss Facebook's Integrity and Journalist Safety efforts ahead of the 2020 Georgian Parliamentary Election.

After two-day intensive mentoring sessions, participants generated the ideas and finally, **4 winning** innovative technological solutions were announced, aiming to identify, expose and analyze misinformation and disinformation.

Elections and Journalist Safety

MYTH DETECTOR ZINC NETWORK

Sophie Eyears
Strategic Partner Development Manager for Integrity and Training Partnerships for Europe at Facebook

21 October, 2020

facebook

The infographic features a central circular portrait of Sophie Eyears. To her left, a stylized figure stands on a blue platform holding a sign with the Facebook logo. To her right, another stylized figure stands on a blue platform holding a camera. The background is light blue with decorative dotted patterns and lines connecting the elements.

WINNERS OF THE HACKATHON:

Search the Facts – is a search engine to help researchers, journalists, and the general public find relevant fact-checks quickly and easily. The index of fact-checks is collected using the ClaimReview schema in multiple languages.

“We developed an engine that receives keywords from a user, calculates the keyword-similarity to each fact-check in the index, and returns the most relevant results. We hope that making fact-checks more accessible will help to reduce the spread of misinformation and promote trustworthy content.” – said Or and Adi Levis.

Dubio – another winning team dubio developed a community-driven platform to debunk false claims to ensure that fact-checking is carried out quickly, reliably, and worldwide.

“On the dubio platform, citizen fact-checkers can contribute to fact-checking claims in a fun and collaborative way. This crowd-sourced fact-checking data (claim summary / who made the claim? when? where? / relevant sources which either prove or disprove the claim) is then bundled and sent to professional fact-checking organisations, so that these professional teams have all the relevant information they need to assess the “truthfulness” of a claim, and to write a ClaimReview article. By submitting their conclusions to ClaimReview, the team’s fact-check will be signalled to the Internet, thereby allowing companies such as Google, Facebook, and Twitter to limit the spread of false claims.” said Thomas Van Damme (Belgium), Artem Zhykharev (Ukraine), Assaf Kazakov

(Israel), Gustavo Hinestrosa (Venezuela), Kamil Piekara (Poland) and Zafirir Dotan (Israel) of the team dubio.

Purify – As the most common strategy for spreading disinformation is the usage of social media networks, purify team has chosen to focus on this direction, developing a browser extension that uses language modelling to mark suspicious posts in social media with relative tags.

“Collaboration with fact-checking organizations makes it possible to fully automate data collection and model training efforts and keep the system steadily up to date. As the byproduct of our effort, we are planning to open-source the pre-trained language model, that by itself would empower the local data science community to implement similar techniques and further support exposing fake news campings.” – said Davit Janezashvili and Giorgi Baidauri.

Doctor Fake – an action-adventure game, is a joint initiative of Myth Detector Laboratory alumni and ForSet. This Georgian team includes – Mariam Dangadze, Mariam Topchishvili, Ani Kistaurei, and Zizi Nishnianidze.

“The game incorporates information and tools about fake news, cybersecurity, Deep Fakes, and fake accounts. The player must fight the Doctor Fake, who is trying to scare them with special questions. To track the threat, the user needs to answer relevant questions about cybersecurity, Deep Fakes, and trolls. The game promotes awareness on media and information literacy and cybersecurity and helps improve relevant skills.” – noted by team members.

→ Social Media Campaign against infodemic

MDF has organized a public awareness campaign on media literacy to popularize the topic and induce critical thinking among the community through a social media campaign, developing and disseminating video content about disinformation, fake news on Covid-19 related infodemic and other tools on how to measure the truth and debunk the fake news.

Overall, 8 videos were developed and spread on social media:

VIDEOS:

A visual that looks fabricated or suspicious, using **Tineye.com**
(“Don’t be fooled by a fake visual”);

A manipulative article on vaccination, with help of **Facebook’s 3rd Party Fact-Checking Program**
(“Check the data! Trust only a reliable source!”);

A website that looks cloned and unreliable, using **Whois Lookup**
(“Who is behind cloned websites?”);

A manipulative video on face masks, using **InVID Verification Plugin**
(“Don’t trust a manipulative video!”);

A satire and distinguish it from real news
(“Check the initial source!”);

A fake photo shared by an online troll account, with help of Facebook’s 3rd Party Fact-Checking Program
(“Don’t trust a fake photo!”);

A conspiracy theory on 5G network, using Google search
(“Don’t trust conspiracies!”);

An infodemic and how to report such content
(“What is ‘infodemic’ and why is it harmful?”);



Mil Lab — www.millab.ge

MDF has launched an online platform of Media and Information Literacy Lab (MilLab) that is an ancillary educational resource aimed at developing critical thinking in youth and supporting informed media consumption from 2018. The platform combines educational material, games, exercises and case studies from media practices, that develop the skills for a critical analysis of media content, collection and verification of information and deconstruction of fake news. MDF's media literacy resources are available in four languages (Ge, Arm, Az, Eng).

The Media and Information Literacy Resources section covers 6 topics: 1. Media and Information; 2. Propaganda and Verification; 3. Transparency; 4. Hate Speech; 5. Cyber; and 6. Personal Data/Privacy.

Online Games

MDF has developed 7 online games in total, where 2 of them were elaborated and released in 2020. The online games developed throughout the project are also accessible on different international platforms, such as: DW Akademie² and Democracy Digest by NED.³

Quack Hunter — teaches players how to distinguish false information from real facts. The game is available in Georgian and English.

Measure the Truth and Your Nose! — A player evaluates the credibility of information and various propaganda methods. To do so, the player must

² https://www.dw.com/en/dw-akademie/milen/s-45533421?fbclid=IwAR0_v-Cx8S_8NhJRMNMEu8Pol7hnlGu_LLYVMstr2IGP9CIG9mrKVh8IGgo

³ <https://www.demdigest.org/democracy-under-threat-risks-and-solutions-in-the-era-of-disinformation/>

select one of four alternative answers. If the answer is incorrect, the player's nose will grow in Pinocchio's style. If the answer is correct, the nose will shorten and take on a perfect shape. The game is available in 4 languages: GEO, ENG, ARM and AZ.

Troll Island – teaches the players how to identify trolls easily. The game is available only in Georgian and English.

Hate or Tolerate – allows players to independently build a story, seek sources, verify facts, balance opinions and more importantly, test whether they are tolerant or intolerant reporters. It is available in 4 languages: GEO, ENG, ARM and AZ.

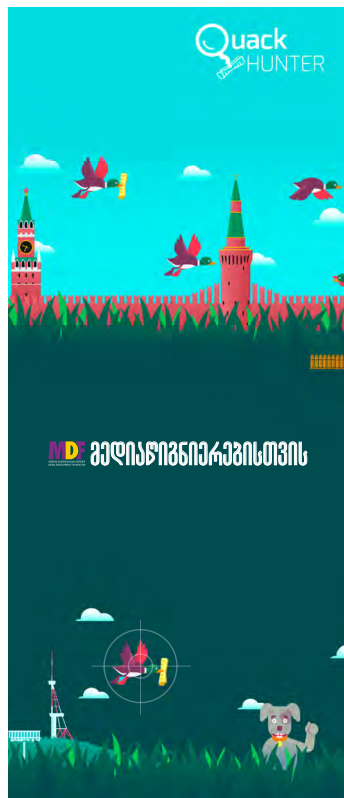
Shopping in Milan – teaches the audience to tackle cybersecurity and privacy issues in day-to-day life. The goal of the game is to identify a degree

of player's awareness of the need to protect personal data and cyber hygiene. The game is available in 4 languages: GEO, ENG, ARM and AZ.

Cyberbullying – develops a player's skills of identifying, preventing and responding to cyberbullying threats. The game is available in 4 languages: GEO, ENG, ARM and AZ.

Grandma's Album – The game aims to identify geo-location by observing the details and learn the story of that place that is shown in the historic photo. The game is available in 4 languages: GEO, ENG, ARM and AZ.

Additionally, during the pandemic, MDF developed three online lessons explaining cybersecurity, disinformation and photomanipulation. MDF has also developed 14 online quizzes on different topics for media literacy and fact-checking purposes.



III DIRECTION: HATE SPEECH AND SEXISM

→ No to Phobia!

The Civil Society platform No to Phobia! was established by 13 non-governmental organizations on May 7, 2014. The purpose of the platform is to enable close cooperation of non-governmental organizations towards eliminating expressions of all forms of discrimination and hate speech in Georgian politics and media.

The platform has the following goals:

- To react to hate speech through joint statements, declarations and other relevant mechanisms;
- To support existing political entities in eradicating all forms of discrimination and to establish inner-party mechanisms with this goal in mind;
- Improve media literacy;
- Raise public awareness on the issues of non-tolerance and hate speech.

MDF actively advocates against hate speech and discrimination to support democratic values, social stability and peace to avoid serious violations of human rights and promote inclusive, peaceful and just societies.

→ Mapping Sources of Hate Speech

MDF has been publishing an annual report on Hate Speech since 2013.

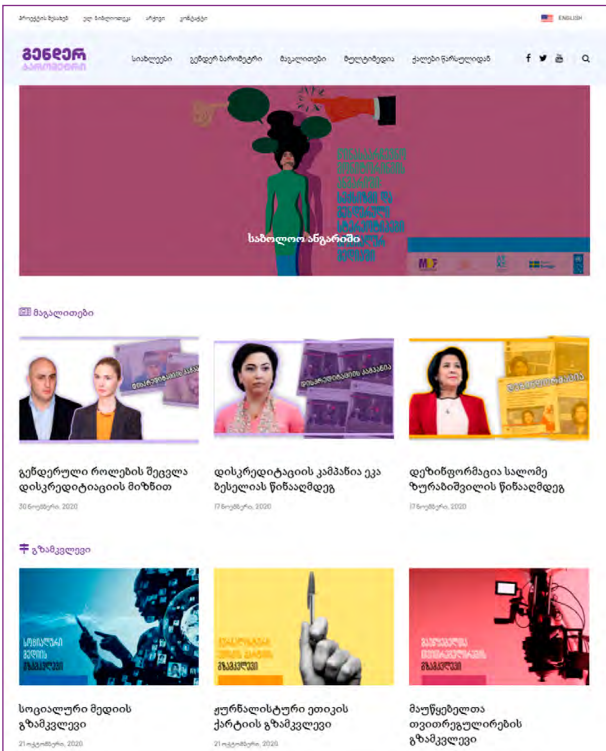
Hate Speech 2019 reflects the results of media monitoring conducted in a period between 1 January and 31 December 2019. The objective of the study was to identify various forms and sources of hate speech in media and public discourse as well as to analyze main trends.

Apart from media outlets, the monitoring also focused on other sources – politicians, clergy, civil society organizations and individual members of society.



→ Sexism

In 2020, MDF in partnership with Union Sapari implemented the project “Gender Barometer – Monitoring sexist speech during the pre-election period” that aimed to raise awareness on and expose incidents of gender bias against public figures and advocate their rights. In the framework of the project, the **web-platform GenderBarometer** was developed that includes all relevant resources created under the project.



Election Monitoring Report: Sexism and Gender Stereotypes in Social Media

This final report covers the results of four-month monitoring – from 4 August through 30 November. It consists of the following parts: monitoring methodology and key findings, which are followed by Part I covering quantitative data by topics, typology of a violation, sources and targets of sexist hate speech, terminology; Part II providing results of qualitative analysis, in particular, typical examples by categories of gender-based violations and several cases that have stood out from the total material by their orchestrated and misinformative nature.



Highlights

- MDF prepared the research on Media Market Risk Ratings with the partnership of **Global Disinformation Index (GDI)** for the first time in Georgian reality. GDI is a UK-based not-for-profit that operates on the three principles of neutrality, independence and transparency. **Media Market Risk Ratings: Georgia** is based on an analysis of 24 Georgian-language media sites conducted between April and July 2020 that have been published in October 2020. The study is based on a disinformation risk scoring methodology, which the GDI has developed. Georgia is one of 10 countries that has been assessed using this methodology in 2020.
- **Access Now** submitted **UPR reports** to the U.N. Human Rights Council together with the Media Development Foundation (MDF, Georgia) and other partner organisations from Australia, Lebanon, Myanmar, Nauru, and Rwanda. The Council uses UPR reports to evaluate the situation for human rights in countries around the world, looking at the information provided by the government under review.

→ Media Transparency and Accountability

MDF studies the transparency of the media, meaning establishing formal or informal ownership of a media outlet, studying its financial transparency and informing society about the reliability of a news source.

MDF has been releasing its reports on financial transparency of the media annually since 2016 to explore, on the one hand, declared revenues of broadcast media and on the other, the practice of allocating budgetary funds for advertising and dissemination of information in media outlets and their influence on editorial decision making. MDF published an annual report on Financial Transparency of Media 2019 last year.

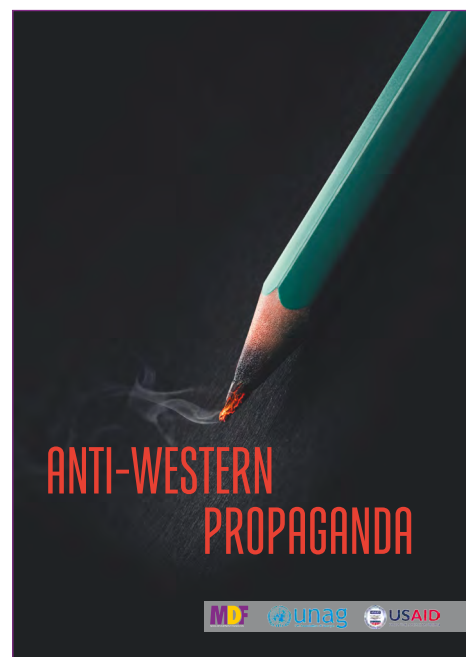


→ Media Monitoring in 2020

Research

MDF produces annual reports on Anti-Western Propaganda since 2015 mapping messages and their sources and observing shifts in narratives over time.

Last year, MDF published its report on Anti-Western Propaganda 2019.



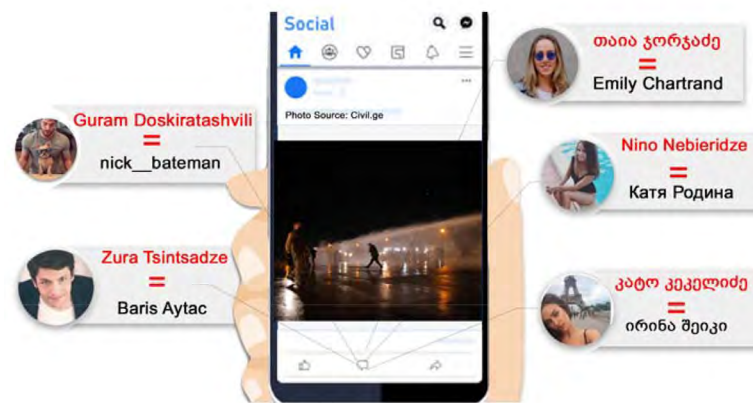
Anti-Western Propaganda 2019 report highlights the results of media monitoring and fake news debunking in 2019. The monitoring report, which traditionally focuses on detecting anti-western messages, observing the process of their framing as well as shifting narratives over time.

Monitoring is conducted on media outlets as well as other sources – political class, clerics, public organizations and separate public figures. Apart from monitoring traditional media, fake news is tracked down on the social network Facebook.

Additionally, MDF also worked on pre-election media monitoring in 2020 on anti-Western Messages, Hate Speech, Fake News. MDF has published the report reflecting these topics respectively.

PRE-ELECTION MONITORING 2020 – Anti-Western Messages, Hate Speech, Fake News

The report provides the results of monitoring conducted by the Media Development Foundation (MDF) ahead of the 2020 parliamentary elections. The monitoring was carried out on the cases of anti-Western messages and hate speech voiced by electoral subjects and political parties, as well as fake news and discrediting campaigns. The monitoring covered both mainstream and social media outlets, including regional media outlets and social accounts affiliated with political stakeholders.



Key Investigations: Tracking Inauthentic Behaviour in Social Network

The Media Development Foundation monitors the activities on Facebook to reveal organized campaigns and so-called “coordinated inauthentic behavior” (CIB) – essentially, broad-scale operations designed to misinform and mislead Facebook users. The CIBs seek to manipulate the public debate across social media, especially, during the pre-election period and not only. One of the investigations of MDF included an organized campaign, aimed at discrediting the **peaceful rally on Rustaveli Avenue and the opposition**, as well as justifying the government’s actions, which was carried out in a form of sponsored posts. Another example of MDF’s investigation was during election protests in November 2020, when MDF revealed **41 trolls** trying to discredit the rally and its participants, on the one hand, and to express support to the government, on the other.



→ Media Self-regulation in 2020

MDF has been advocating for the ethical and professional standards of traditional media since the beginning of its foundation.

MDF tries to establish the awareness of the significance of self-regulation through various activities, including teaching youngsters, students and civic activists from all regions of Georgia how to appeal when the media breaks the core principles of Ethical Journalism. MDF conducted 5 moot role-plays in remote areas, densely populated by ethnic and religious minorities, including Pankisi Gorge, Kakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Adjara, Guria to raise awareness and experience in practice the media self-regulation principles. Overall, **70 participants** attended the moot role plays.

→ Professional Development of Media

MDF continues its efforts to strengthen the professional capacity of the journalists in fact-checking, media monitoring, transparency, accountability and self-regulation issues. Furthermore, MDF suggests additional educational resources with translating and/or developing guidelines and handbooks for journalists, students and academia.

MDF conducted several workshops and training for journalists and fact-checkers on the issues, like, diversity reporting, crisis reporting, fact-checking tools, etc. Overall, **up to 90 journalists** underwent the training in 2020.

MDF has developed curricula on reporting terrorism and violent extremism as well as, inclusive and non-discriminative reporting that were discussed at a workshop with **16 university professors**. The workshop was attended by 7 universities, namely: national universities – Georgian Institute of Public Affairs; Ilia State University, Tbilisi State University of Iv. Javakhishvili; University of Georgia; The International Black Sea University; two regional universities – Akaki Tsereteli State University; Gori State Teaching University and Internews Georgia. The developed curricula cover topics of the concept of classical and new terrorism, tolerance, self-regulation, migrants, religious confession, ethnicities, gender and others.

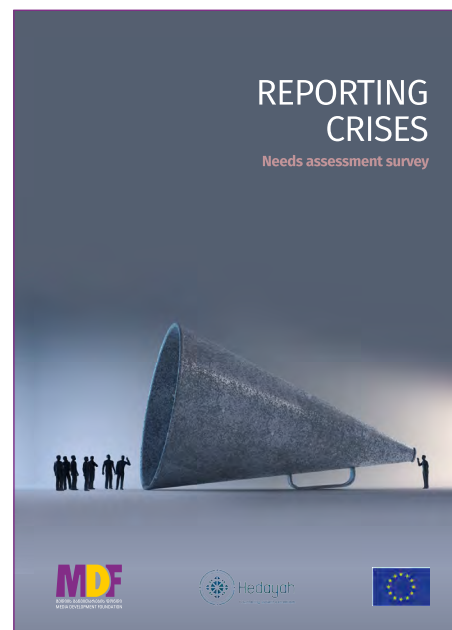
German-Georgian Journalists exchange program — “Fighting Fake” #CivilSocietyCooperation

MDF with the partnership of **Deutsche Gesellschaft e.V.** implemented a project that aimed to raise awareness on the impact of fake news among Georgian and German journalists and to inform them on the dissemination of disinformation and to get familiar with how it is dealt with. The project envisaged to share the experience on tackling disinformation among Georgian and German journalists and to deepen relationships among them.

Publications for Professional Development of Media:

Terrorism and the Media – A Handbook for Journalists

MDF has translated and published a handbook for journalists on how to cover the issues related to terrorism, what are the key ethical principles in reporting crises and how to avoid stigma and stereotyping and how to defend journalists safety as well. This handbook is relevant for journalists and media professionals. The printed publication was disseminated to the libraries of the national and regional universities of Georgia.



Reporting Crises. Need Assessment Survey

This needs assessment survey was conducted within the framework of the project “Prevention of and Responding to Radicalizing Narratives in Georgia” implemented by the MDF with the assistance from Hedayah International Centre of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism. The aim of the survey was to identify problems in reporting and accessing information about terrorist acts, violent extremism and other crises as well as to draw up recommendations based on the findings.

Publications

Annual reports:

Hate Speech 2019

Anti-Western Propaganda 2019

Financial Transparency
of Media 2019

Others:

Media Market Risk Ratings:
Georgia (GDI Report)

Mapping Research: Comparing
Foreign Influence in Georgia

Election Monitoring Report:
Sexism and Gender
Stereotypes in Social Media

PRE-ELECTION MONITORING
2020 – Anti-Western
Messages, Hate Speech,
Fake News

REPORTING CRISES –
Needs assessment survey

Handbooks and Guidelines:

Media and Terrorism –
UNESCO Publication

Anecdotal Evidence Survey –
2020

Election Watch – Regional
media monitoring

Operational Security and
Personal Resilience:
an Overview of
the Eastern Neighborhood

Islam.

Dictionary for Journalists

Migrants.

Dictionary for Journalists

International Cooperation

PARTNERSHIPS

Poynter

Since November 2019, MDF's fact-checking on-line platform – Myth Detector is a verified signature of the **International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN)** of the Poynter Institute, regaining its membership again in 2020. At the beginning of 2020 Myth Detector joined the **#Coronavirus-FactsAlliance**, recently recognized by the **Paris Peace Forum**, brings together 99 fact-checking organizations in more than 70 countries to build a repository of over 10,000 fact checks.

Facebook

In September 2020, Myth Detector partnered up with Facebook to fight against misinformation in the framework of Facebook's Third-Party Fact-Checking Program. Within the framework of the Global Hackathon – Hack the Fake News – Facebook conducted workshops for journalists and fact-checkers participating in the event.

Bellingcat

MDF cooperated with Bellingcat – an independent international collective of researchers, investigators and citizen journalists operating in more than 20 countries around the world, in a unique field where advanced technology, forensic research, journalism, investigations, transparency and accountability come together. Within the framework of the Global Hackathon – Hack the Fake News – Bellingcat conducted workshops for journalists and fact-checkers participating in the event.

OIP

MDF is a member of the Open Information Partnership (OIP) bringing together think tanks, fact-checkers, independent media and grassroots organisations to support efforts to counter hostile information influence operations.

EUvsDisinfo

Since 2016, MDF has been cooperating with EUvs. Disinfo – the flagship project of the European External Action Service's East StratCom Task Force.

Global Disinformation Index

MDF prepared the research on Media Market Risk Ratings with the partnership of **Global Disinformation Index (GDI)** for the first time in Georgian reality. GDI is a UK-based not-for-profit that operates on the three principles of neutrality, independence and transparency.

European Values Center for Security Policy

MDF cooperates with the European Values Center for Security Policy, which is a non-governmental and non-partisan organization based in Czech Republic, defending freedom, sovereignty, liberal democracy and the rule of law. MDF participates in the project “Enhancing resilience of Civil Society in Georgia against malign foreign influence operation” implemented by the European Values Center for Security Policy.

MiLen Network

On the international level, MDF is cooperating with Deutsche Welle Akademie’s Media and Information Literacy Expert Network (MILEN) promoting critical thinking and sharing experiences globally.

PROGRAMS

“Monitoring the content and measuring the effectiveness of Russian disinformation and propaganda campaigns in selected Former Soviet Union States”



MDF is a partner of the research project “Monitoring the content and measuring the effectiveness of Russian disinformation and propaganda campaigns in selected Former Soviet Union States” implemented by the team of experts from the University of Tennessee, involving: political analysts, sociologists, anthropologists, communication and computer scientists. The

project is designed to assess the effectiveness of Russian propaganda messages by combining monitoring the content with measuring the effectiveness of the Russian state-sponsored propaganda and disinformation messages targeting Russian-speaking populations in three Former Soviet Union countries, including Belarus, Ukraine, and Georgia.

INTERNATIONAL EVENTS MDF HAS PARTICIPATED IN 2020:

1. MILEN Roundtable the use of Artificial Intelligence to Debunk Fake News
2. “CSO’s, media and disinformation” – Black Sea Trust
3. Donbas Media Forum
4. EFMN Discussion
5. Global Fact 7 – Online Discussion for International Fact-Checkers – Panel: When CNN and BBC are made in Russia.
6. EU vs Disinformation and Nato – Online Discussion
7. Hate Speech and Incitement to Discrimination
8. Youth Meets Media 2020
9. Online Conference by Press Academy of Ukraine: Informational Questions and Challenges of Pandemic
10. Webinar organized by UNDP Oslo Governance Centre – Infodemic and best practice by IFCN and MDF
11. GEODEM2020 – GIP International Conference Panel
12. Georgia’s Implementation of 20 EaP Deliverables for 2020
13. Hate News VS Free Speech
14. Presenting report on Malware Operations in front of European Parliament Members
15. Western Balkans Information and Media Literacy conference
16. PIN launches new anti-disinformation initiative in Georgia

Visibility in Figures

VISIBILITY IN FIGURES

→ MDF in media

Over 150 media coverage in local and international media

- MDF expert interviews,
- Coverage of MDF activities / research / resources,
- Referring to MDF research as a source.

Top most covered topics

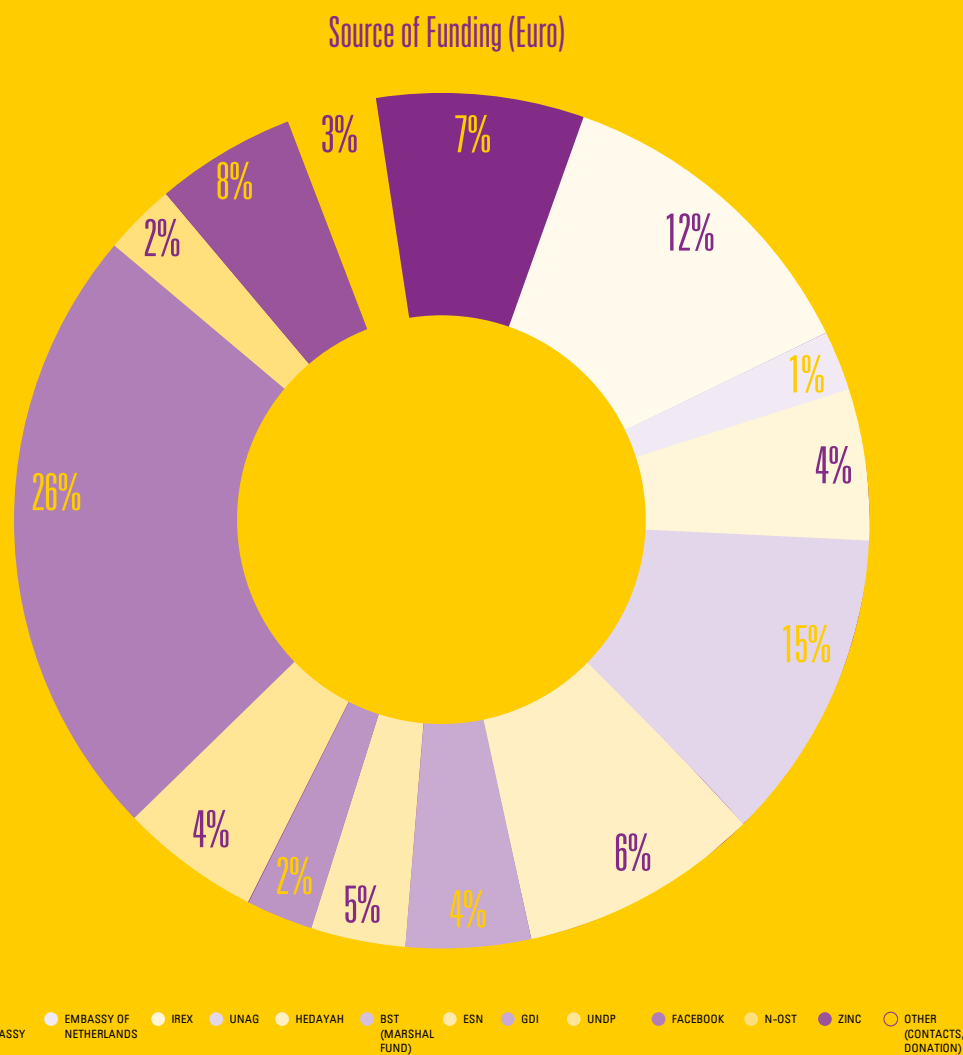
- MDF pre-election monitoring 2020
- MDF's annual anti-western propaganda report
- Disinformations on COVID-19 and Lugar Laboratory
- Facebook partnership with Myth Detector
- #VdaywithEurope – MDF's 8 May media campaign

Media Outlets

- Online Media – 59 %
- TV – 27 %
- Radio – 3 %
- Foreign Media – 11 %

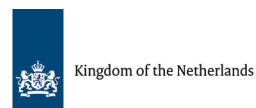
Financial Report 2020

The total revenue of the organization in 2020 amounted to € 505,036.75, out of which 66% is income from grants and 34% is revenue from other sub-grants, contracts and donations.



For more information about the annual financial report, please visit [the link](#).

Donors and Partners in 2020



Plans for 2021

In 2021, Media Development Foundation will continue working towards fulfilling its mission and values through debunking disinformation and fake news, conducting research, media monitoring and analysis, developing educational programs to pursue media literacy goals in the country and fight against hate speech, sexism, and advocate for better media environment, ethical journalism and quality media reporting.

MDF will continue building the resilience of communities against disinformation, fake news and misinformation within the Facebook Third Party Partnership Program to support informed citizenry in the country.

MDF will expand its educational programs in media literacy and professional development of media to promote capacity building among key stakeholders and overall, support and strengthen conscious media consumption in the country through working with various key stakeholders, including, secondary school teachers, journalists, youngsters, representatives of academia and CSOs, professional media organizations, etc.



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WWW.MILLAB.GE