



SUPPORTING PEOPLE STRIVING FOR DEMOCRACY

EUROPEAN
ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY

ANNUAL REPORT #2017



Front cover picture:

Tunisian protesters shout slogans outside the governorate's offices in Tunis during a demonstration over price hikes and austerity measures on January 12, 2018

© Sofiene Hamdaoui/AFP/Getty Images

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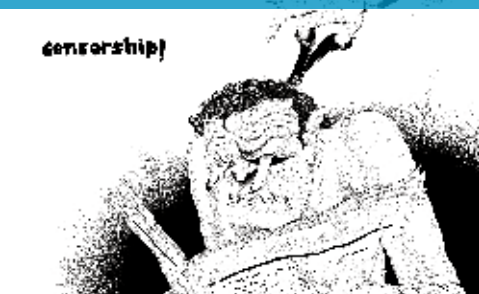
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FOREWORD FROM EED CHAIR

2017 has been yet another volatile year for democracy worldwide. Many countries continue to confront grave challenges – from increased security threats and ongoing conflicts, to heightened nationalism, societal challenges and economic vulnerability.

While in past years, declines in freedoms were generally concentrated in autocracies, now even established democracies in Europe are also suffering setbacks. Trust in politicians, party membership and electoral participation – indicators of democratic legitimacy – have steadily diminished for years. While some of the dark clouds looming over the EU at the start of the year gradually dissipated, solidarity between partners remains fragile in the face of complex challenges, not least, the unsolved refugee crisis, lingering concerns about the Eurozone and of course the Brexit negotiations.

Threats to democracy continued to intensify too in the European neighbourhood. Many authoritarian regimes are cracking down further on dissent and some governments are becoming increasingly strident in their attempts to cripple civil society and curtail freedom of the media and expression. In view of these challenges, I feel personally proud to chair the Board of the European Endowment for Democracy (EED), an organisation that successfully makes a difference supporting so many brave activists who continue to strive for freedom in dangerous and difficult environments.

We remain staunch in our conviction that we have a moral duty to show, and offer, our solidarity with people who are fighting for the ideals of democracy. This mission has continued to drive our work in 2017.

The human dimension of social and political development is all too often forgotten, especially in a climate of emerging geopolitical struggles, the quest for regional stability and rising populism. We do not need to refer to forgotten German philosopher Karl Marx who famously said that, “society does not consist of individuals”, to understand the dangers of political ideologies that do not respect individuals.

The ultimate purpose of democracy is to create the conditions in which free citizens can pursue the most fulfilling lives possible that they themselves choose. Good governance, freedom of expression, the rule of law and respect for the dignity, rights, hopes and fears of individuals are what make societies truly democratic. The European Union provides a huge amount of support as part of its association, accession or partnership agendas. Whilst these are undoubtedly very important programmes, from a strategic perspective, winning the hearts and minds of people on the ground is critical. Much of this work can only be achieved by genuine, local activists who can translate the strategic vision of cooperation into a local context relevant to ordinary people.

Addressing local needs and supporting people defending democratic values remains the best strategy for the European Endowment for Democracy.



Elmar Brok

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

INTRODUCTION FROM EED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I am proud to introduce our Annual Report #2017 “Supporting people striving for democracy”. Indeed, people are at the heart of our work and our engagement. EED supports hundreds of dedicated and courageous individuals, many of whom take huge personal risks to push democratic values.

We at EED believe in investing in transformational ideas and the people behind them. We do this by adopting flexible and unconventional approaches to tailor support to differing needs. Today, many people may have doubts about the importance of democracy support efforts – indeed the very same people have even started to doubt democratic values within their own societies. Against this backdrop, our value-based approach to international cooperation is now more relevant and needed than ever. With our work, we extend solidarity and support to the people who are fighting for the values and ideals that underpin our societies.

While the context and realities may differ, the conviction shared by all activists and supported organisations is that strong democracies are the best way of safeguarding human rights and ensuring sustained prosperity. This, despite the knowledge that achieving their goals will entail a long and dangerous struggle, and confronting complex dilemmas on a daily basis. These activists put their lives on the line to challenge oppressive regimes, fight corruption, and protect freedom of speech and assembly. They often face smear campaigns and defamation, which seek to intimidate, silence, or limit their activism by eroding local support networks.

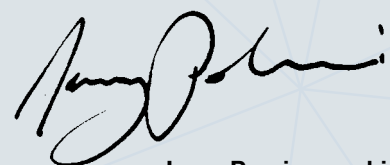
They are the true heroes and there is no doubt we should support their quest for freedom, fairness and dignity – and their brave choices of activism over

personal security, democracy over the status quo, and human rights over compliance. Even in some of the bleakest situations, they continue to show relentless determination and persistence. It is critical that we in established democracies let them know, through our support in both words and actions, that they are not alone.

In this report, you will find the story of Dmytro Bulakh, an elected official in Kharkiv Regional Council in Ukraine and head of the EED-backed Anti-Corruption Centre, which exposes corrupt practices and the abuse of public finances in the city. Evidently though, this has not been to everyone's liking. In August 2017, Bulakh was severely beaten on his way to work. Cases like this demonstrate the risks to life for these activists, who face a reality shaped not by the rule of law, but the rule of force. In Egypt, we have seen prominent human rights defenders arrested on bogus charges, which included “belonging to a terrorist group”, after voicing the alarming rise in enforced disappearances. Journalists in Armenia have repeatedly received death threats for their political cartoons. The list goes on...but no amount of threats, harassment or even violence have been enough to deter these brave people.

Please read and share stories that illustrate the vital role, challenges, diversity, and impact of so many initiatives and great heroes behind them. To quote one EED grantee, Rana F. Sweis, author of forthcoming book “Voices of Jordan”, “the most significant impact from EED's support is that ordinary people feel they have a voice”.

I trust that you will also be inspired by the voices and stories of change and courage featured in the report that follows.



Jerzy Pomianowski
Executive Director of EED

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The European Endowment for Democracy has been supporting activists and societies striving for democracy in the European neighbourhood since its establishment in 2013. In 2017, EED supported more than one hundred and fifty initiatives and pro-democracy activists in 20 countries neighbouring the European Union. In this period EED has continued to demonstrate its value added in the democracy support field.

This Annual Report provides an overview of the different political environments in which EED operates – from transitional and restrictive environments, to authoritarian regimes and conflict situations. It looks at the respective challenges that each of those contexts present and gives an insight into examples of EED's response, results and case studies.

Unconventional, flexible, transformational

Given the diversity of the regions in which it works, from the Middle East and North Africa to the Eastern Partnership countries and beyond, EED adopts a flexible and unconventional approach, tailoring support to the different realities and challenges on the ground. EED has proven very effective in bringing targeted support to pro-democracy actors in the neighbourhood. Its distinctive niche lies in its capacity to operate in difficult, often dangerous, environments that are off limits to other donors.

EED builds citizens' capacities and strengthens independent voices. A number of these voices 'tell their stories' through a series of first person narrative profiles featured throughout the report. Many of these stories recount initiatives that have helped to break taboos, counter corruption or transform ideas into foundation stones for more inclusive and participatory democracies.

EED has clearly demonstrated the benefit through its flexible support to human rights defenders and civic activists unable to obtain funding from other

donors—whether due to restrictive legal environments, government repression, security concerns, or political sensitivities. In conflict zones, for example, EED is committed to ensuring that populations suffering war and instability are not neglected. EED amplifies citizens' voices and facilitates the work of activists who are keeping the democratic struggle alive in disturbingly harsh environments.

Strengthening independent media

The report takes an in-depth look at EED's significant support to independent media across the EU neighbourhood and highlights a number of case studies and success stories. Constraints to press freedoms and violations remain a grave challenge in the region, albeit to different degrees. Approximately one-third of EED supported initiatives are media-related.

While limited, EED seeks to deploy resources where it can have the most impact and fill gaps in areas not supported by other donors. The funding helps independent news outlets develop sustainable businesses and strong institutions that provide objective news and critical comment to people denied reliable information. EED has also significantly contributed to the pushback against Russia's disinformation campaign in the Eastern Partnership countries by strengthening the independent Russian-language media offer in those countries.

Enabling women for democratic change

Driving change to ensure that women play a full role in the democratic process is at the heart of EED's work. EED funds female leaders and activists to advance political participation of women, and sponsors a number of organisations that address women's issues. A quarter of the initiatives funded by EED in 2017 included a specific component related to gender. EED's Executive Committee includes a gender expert who helps ensure that selected initiatives are sufficiently gender-conscious, and proactively advises applicants to strengthen the gender component of their activities.



**EED was an organising partner
of the International Day of
Democracy held in the European
Parliament in September 2017
© European Union 2017**

Promoting work and results

The report also provides an overview of our portfolio status, event highlights and partnership working. EED has continued to consolidate its role as a hub – Democracy House – for inspiring discussion, sustaining and enhancing its reputation as a complementary and effective partner for the democracy support community of practice. Through its busy events schedule, EED sustains existing partnerships and creates opportunities for developing new collaborations. In 2017, these efforts resulted in almost 30 joint conferences co-created with both well-established and new partners.

New horizons

At the end of 2017, EED's Board of Governors endorsed the expansion of EED operations into the Western Balkans. Opportunities to apply for funding will get underway in 2018. Support will cover three main areas: civil society; independent media; and, political activism and youth engagement. As


with existing support, EED will focus on providing value added and complementary support to other democracy support programmes.

Learning and change

Finally, the report provides an overview of EED's monitoring and evaluation system, designed to reflect EED's flexible and demand-driven model. It gives examples of the important direct support EED provides to grantees both pre-award and during the grant implementation. In some cases, this skills coaching for grantees has proved almost as vital as the financial award itself, enhancing capacity and sustainability going forward.

Stable budget

Twenty-three European countries, who are members of the Board of Governors, have contributed to EED's programme budget to date, as well as Canada. EED institutional stability is secured by an EU annual operational grant.



EED partner Arman Gharibyan, founder of
Human Rights Power NGO (Armenia)
© Arman Gharibyan



1. OVERVIEW

In this chapter, we provide an introduction to EED and an overview of portfolio status, event highlights and partnership working during 2017.

1.1 ABOUT EED

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

All EU member states are members of EED's Board of Governors, together with Members of the European Parliament, and representatives of the European External Action Service, the European Commission, Norway, and civil society.

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

Since its inception, EED has provided over 520 grants and evolved into a vibrant, innovative, and respected member of the democracy support community.

Our mission

EED's goal is to provide flexible support to democracy activists, complementing other EU and member state democracy support programmes. EED provides

context-based, demand-driven support based on a principle of fostering democracy and facilitating initiatives of local actors. EED specialises in cases where the space for civil society is shrinking due to administrative, legal, social, and political barriers, and it accepts significant political and operational risks as part of its operations.

Our vision

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

Where we work

EED's activities focus primarily on the European neighbourhood (Eastern Partnership and the Middle East and North Africa regions) and aim to ensure, as far as possible, a geographical balance of engagement and funding. Some grants may also be provided for relevant applications from countries adjacent to the neighbourhood depending on needs, available funds, and political priorities.

In addition, at the end of 2017 the EED Board of Governors endorsed expansion of EED's operations into the Western Balkans. Opportunities to apply for funding will get underway in 2018.

MOROCCO

ALGERIA

TUNISIA

LIBYA

1. OVERVIEW



1.2 OUR YEAR IN REVIEW

2017 in numbers

167  New funded initiatives

969  Requests for support

30  Emergency support granted

123  Monitoring and outreach missions

20  core staff from 16 countries

98,000+  Website unique visitors

96  Media mentions/ interviews

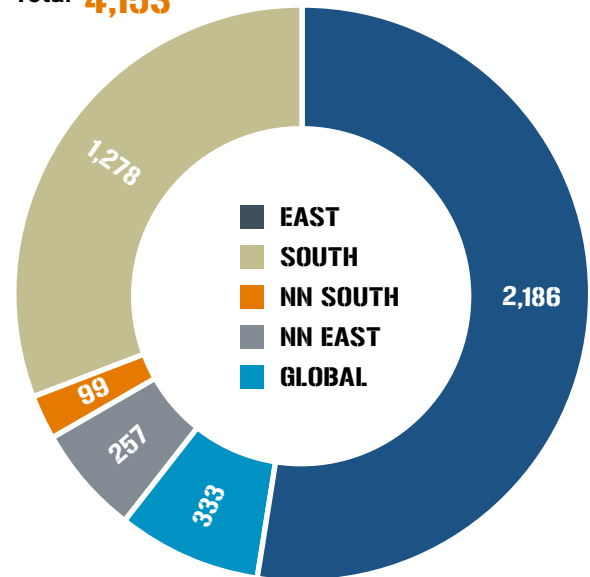
57,100+  Facebook

2,400+  Twitter

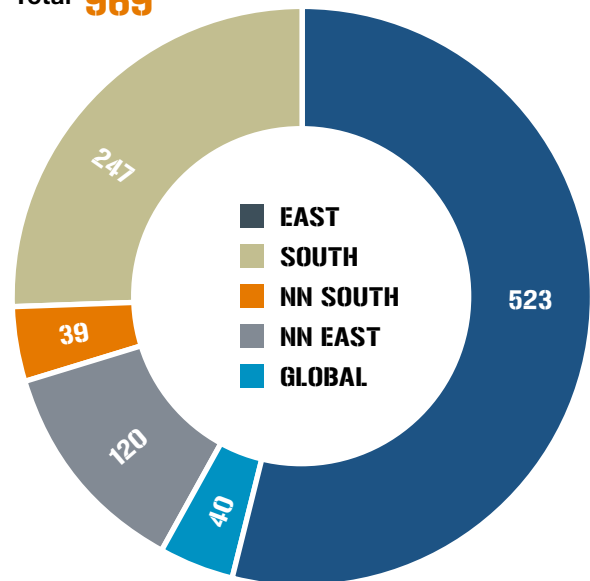
26  Events

Portfolio overview

REQUESTS FOR SUPPORT BY REGION (TOTAL)
Total **4,153**



REQUESTS FOR SUPPORT BY REGION
(RECEIVED IN 2017)
Total **969**



Explanatory note:

South: "Southern neighbourhood" i.e. Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

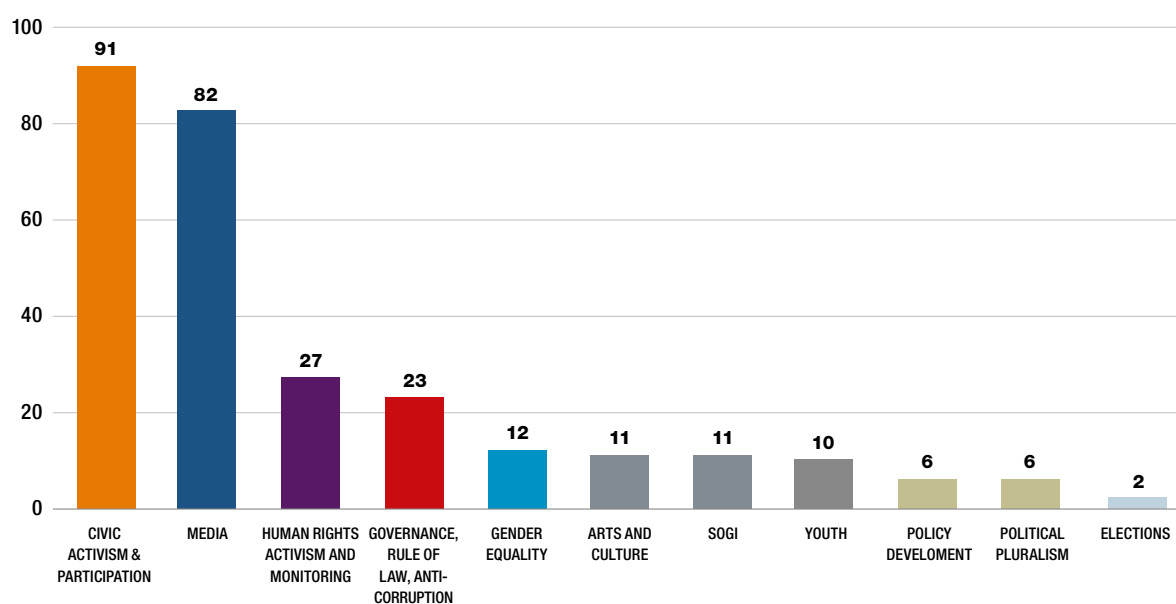
East: "Eastern neighbourhood" i.e. Eastern Partnership countries (EaP)

NN: "Neighbours of the neighbours" i.e. countries adjacent to the European neighbourhood region

1. OVERVIEW

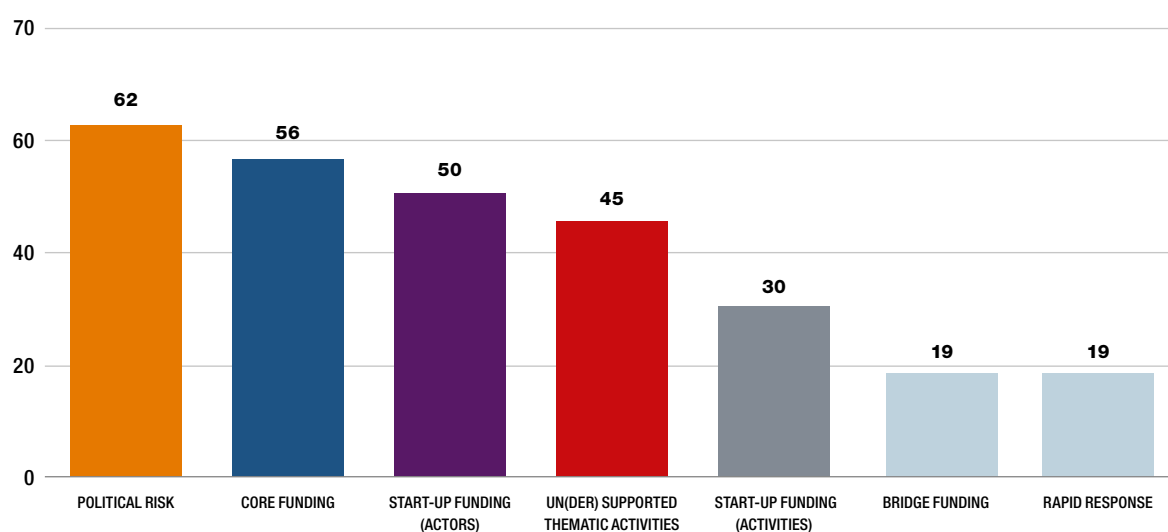
NO. OF INITIATIVES BY THEMATIC AREA (ONGOING IN 2017)

Total **281**



NO. OF INITIATIVES BY VALUE ADDED (ONGOING IN 2017)

Total **281**



Explanatory note: The purpose of EED – and the reason it was established – is to “add value” to existing European mechanisms of support to pro-democracy actors and initiatives. In order to monitor trends and progress, EED identifies the area of “added value” that is most relevant for each specific initiative.

SOGI - sexual orientation and gender identity

1. OVERVIEW

1.3 2017 PEOPLE OF THE YEAR

Former EED grantee Muntada – The Arab Forum for Sexuality Education and Reproductive Health – achieved great success as one of only four projects selected for an EU MedFilm grant, a programme designed to support gender equality in the audio-visual sector.

Four EED media partners in Moldova received awards at the 23rd Annual Gala “#Journalists of the Year”, whose main goal is to support and encourage journalists to create qualitative media sources that comply with international professional standards.

**SUPPLY AND DEMAND
NEWSPAPER,
NEWSMAKER.
MD, OAMENI SI
KILOMETRI, AND DIEZ |
MOLDOVA**

**MUNTADA |
PALESTINE**

**OC MEDIA |
GEORGIA**

Civic Control received the media award “Making changes for the best”, for promoting transparent public procurement reform and countering corruption in the city of Dnipro and at a regional level.

**CIVIC CONTROL |
UKRAINE**

2017 was a very successful year for EED grantees and partners, many of whom received international recognition for their valuable work. Here we highlight a selection of the awards received. We also underline that a number of our partners operate in sensitive and repressive political environments and therefore cannot be mentioned here, despite the important work they conduct and the deserved public recognition some of them have received.

EED grantees Union of Informed Citizens and MediaLab received awards at the Universal Rights Awards Ceremony for their contribution to human rights, freedom of expression, and democracy.

**UNION OF INFORMED
CITIZENS NGO
AND MEDIALAB |
ARMENIA**

Union of Informed Citizens and Region Research Center received the Yerevan Press Club (YPC)’s annual award, respectively for their initiative to counter the spread of false information, and for their study of 2017 parliamentary election coverage in online and social media.

**REGION RESEARCH
CENTER AND UNION
OF INFORMED
CITIZENS |
ARMENIA**

**RIGHT SIDE NGO |
ARMENIA**

In its first year, OC Media – a start-up online news platform that provides in-depth reports, opinion, and analysis from the North and South Caucasus – was awarded the EUMM Special Prize for Peace Journalism, one of the most important prizes in the Eastern neighbourhood.

TEYIT.ORG | TURKEY

Teyit.org was named as one of the start-ups that has created positive social impact via technology in Turkey in the Mercedes-Benz Turk's startup competition. The agency uses innovative methods to provide open-source fact-checking and verification tools.

CODA STORY | EAST REGION

Coda Story, an EED-supported media initiative from Eastern neighbourhood, was among the winners of the prestigious Alfred I. duPont–Columbia University Award for its radio documentary, "Russia's New Scapegoats", which explores the human costs as well as the political reasons behind the Kremlin's war on gay people.

Lilit Martirosyan, founder of the EED-supported Right SIDE NGO, received the Eurasian Key Populations Health Network Award, in recognition of leadership and inspiring social work that improves the quality of life of sex workers, people with drug dependencies, men who have sex with men (MSMs) and transgender people.



Artem Romanyukov, Director and Co-Founder
of award-winning Civic Control Platform (Ukraine)
© Pernille Bærendtsen / EED

1.4 EVENTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Through events and collaboration with partners, EED seeks to create synergies, promote its work and results – and that of its grantees – and offer a platform for enhancing visibility.

In 2017, through a busy programme of events, EED continued to consolidate its role as a hub – Democracy House – for inspiring discussion, sustaining and enhancing its reputation as a complementary and effective partner for the democracy support community of practice.

Creating synergies

As an active host and regular partner in democracy support forums, EED is well-placed to serve as a neutral broker to build synergies between existing donors, civil society organisations, think tanks, and international, national, and regional organisations active in the field of democracy assistance.

Through events, EED sustains existing partnerships and creates opportunities for developing new collaborations. In 2017, these efforts resulted in almost 30 joint conferences co-created with both well-established and new partners, including Carnegie Europe, International Crisis Group, and Westminster Foundation for Democracy, among many others, on topics such as media freedom and closing space for civil society. Some significant partnerships included:

- EED took on the role of co-ordinating partner of the International Day of Democracy, hosted for the second time by the European Parliament. The event was co-organised with three other democracy support organisations – the European Network of Political Foundations, the European Partnership for Democracy, and the Office of the International

Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance to the EU – as well as the European External Action Service and the European Commission.

- EED continued its partnership with the Global Media Forum, organised by Deutsche Welle; the Warsaw Security Forum – an initiative of the Casimir Pulaski Foundation – the Council of Europe’s World Forum for Democracy; and the Warsaw Dialogue for Democracy, organised by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- This year has also seen the launch of new partnerships, with EED teaming up with UNESCO for the Difference Day – an international conference celebrating the UN’s World Press Freedom Day.

EED regularly participates in donor co-ordination meetings with embassies and international organisations. Some of these take place in-country, for example, with Moldova and Ukraine. In other cases, like with Belarus and Russia, they take place outside the country. Beyond the larger co-ordination meetings, EED is in regular contact with donors in all countries where it operates, ensuring active exchange and synergies.

Promoting work and results

Partners and grantees are regularly invited to promote their initiatives and share insight on local political developments at various events in EED. These can include smaller, closed expert debates, and at other forums facilitated by EED.

Many such events organised in 2017 have offered partners a channel to “make their voices heard”, exchange experience and good practice, and expand their networks.



Lebanese-based Arab Puppet Theatre performing in the Bozar in Brussels as part of the International Democracy Day
© Yves Gervais / BOZAR

Such forums are also important for EED, EU policy-makers, and the wider expert community as a vehicle for hearing input from the grassroots to keep abreast of the latest developments and realities on the ground.

Opportunities have also gone beyond speaking engagements to showcasing “initiatives in action”. For example, the Lebanese-based Arab Puppet Theatre Foundation (pictured) was invited to perform its play *Performance Desperately in Need of An Audience* as part of the cultural programme of International Democracy Day held at Brussels’s premier cultural venue, BOZAR – Centre for Fine Arts.

Widening outreach

Events also serve as an important vehicle for promoting the expertise and added value of EED. In 2017, EED continued to organise, often in conjunction with other key stakeholders, a number of events aimed at stimulating political and expert debates in

areas related to human rights and democracy. The participation of EED’s Executive Director and staff members as speakers at various international events has contributed to raising visibility and awareness of EED.

EED shares insight and expertise it has gained through regular dialogue with past, present, and future partners. The local grassroots knowledge on political transitions complement the standard diplomatic reporting of member states. EED’s transatlantic dialogues help identify synergies between the EU and the United States, the two biggest democracy support donors in the world.

Finally, events are a tool to demonstrate EED’s strengths and achievements to the existing donors. To this end, in May 2017 EED organised its first conference in a European capital (Copenhagen, Denmark) to discuss “Security Or Democracy | Do We Need To Make A Choice?” **READ MORE ON PAGE 18-19**

1. OVERVIEW

2017 EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

The timeline highlights some key events that EED organised, participated or collaborated in as a partner.



1. OVERVIEW

EED TEAMS UP WITH UNESCO TO MARK WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

On 3 May 2017, EED teamed up in a new partnership with UNESCO, BOZAR, the Free University of Brussels, and other prominent partners, to celebrate World Press Freedom day, known as “Difference Day”, at BOZAR – the Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels

The event centred on the phenomenon of fake news and disinformation, bringing together leading experts, politicians, and academics to exchange views on how to tackle this issue. EED Executive Director Jerzy Pomianowski, spoke on the panel entitled “Can Laws Stop Fake News?”, dedicated to exploring whether legislation should be used to curb the spread of fake news.

Throughout the event, EED partner Loai Hazem, of the Jordanian satirical media outlet Al Hudood, performed live sketching, highlighting some of the main themes of being discussed. In addition, EED held an exhibition of satirical cartoons on the theme of media freedom by five EED partners – Al Hudood (Jordan), Dawlaty (Syria), Meydan TV (Azerbaijan), MediaLab (Armenia), and Souriatna (Syria) – to raise awareness of the challenges and risks facing journalists and media outlets in the EU’s Eastern Partnership and Southern neighbourhood.

“Fake news in itself is not a novel issue”

Jerzy Pomianowski, Executive Director of EED

29/03

Echoes from Syrian civil society
BRUSSELS

03/05

Difference Day: commemorating World Press Freedom Day
BRUSSELS

10/05

“Security Or Democracy | Do We Need To Make A Choice?”
COPENHAGEN



1. OVERVIEW



1. OVERVIEW

FIRST EVENT IN AN EU CAPITAL: SECURITY OR DEMOCRACY DO WE NEED TO MAKE A CHOICE?

Around 130 specialists met in Copenhagen on 10 May 2017 for an international conference on democracy promotion in the European neighbourhood, organised by EED.

The conference brought together leading democracy and human rights activists, including EED grantees, with players from the political and government, civil society, and research arenas. They discussed the struggle and support for democracy in three countries with a key role to play in determining the political future of the European neighbourhood – Ukraine, Egypt, and Syria. The event was organised by EED in co-operation with International Media Support, the Danish Foreign Policy Society, and Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy.

In a bilateral session, Alexander Graf Lambsdorff MEP, Vice-President of the European Parliament and then Chair of EED's Executive Committee, debated the future of values in Europe and beyond with Mogens Lykketoft, former President of the United Nations General Assembly and a member of the Danish Parliament. A series of panels followed, each focusing on one of the three countries in the European neighbourhood, with grassroots activists highlighting the profound challenges they face and providing an insight into their solution-oriented projects.

“Democracy is not just about having elections; it is about making responsible choices”

Yevhen Hilbovytsky, Nestor Group (Ukraine)





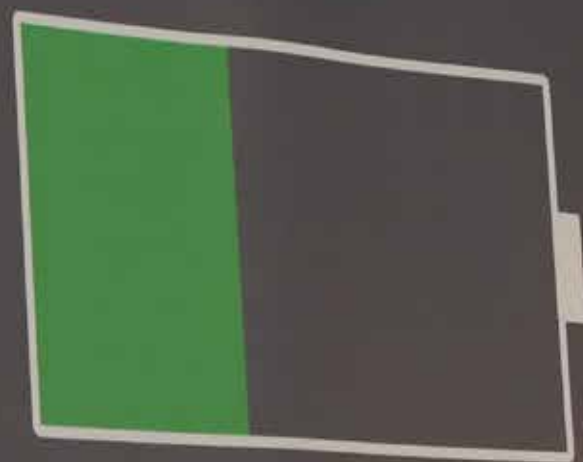
Syria سوريا

Visuals by conference co-organisers
International Media Support at EED's
conference held in May 2017 in Copenhagen
© Pernille Bærendtsen / EED





Egypt مصر



Ukraine Україна

2. CONTEXT-BASED APPROACH

In this chapter, we describe EED's context-based approach, where our democracy support is tailored to the different legal and political realities of each country within which we work.

2. CONTEXT-BASED APPROACH

2.1 ADAPTING TO DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

EED has been supporting activists and societies struggling for democracy in the European neighbourhood since its establishment in 2013. Given the diverse range of countries in which it works, EED adopts a flexible and unconventional approach, tailoring support to the different realities and challenges.

Many societies in the European neighbourhood continue to confront profound challenges from violent conflicts, political instability, entrenched corruption, and economic woes. In too many places, democracy is in recession or has suffered serious setbacks. Authoritarian rule has deepened and regimes are becoming increasingly strident in their attempts to cripple civil society and muzzle free speech. Ever more sophisticated disinformation campaigns seek to undermine democratic values and discredit those who stand up for them.

EED works to support those who wish to keep the democratic struggle alive in these often disturbingly harsh environments. Schematically, EED and its grantees operate in four broad types of political environment: transitional, restrictive, authoritarian, and conflict situations.

EED approach

“UNCONVENTIONAL APPROACH TO SUPPORTING DEMOCRACY”

EED does not have a fixed vision of how to support democracy, but rather seeks to listen and respond in a dynamic and unconventional way to requests for support from groups striving for democracy. Its support has proven vital for some independent media actors and human rights organisations to continue

with their work in times of turmoil or when facing severe repression. For example, EED-supported Right SIDE NGO, the first transgender group in Armenia, is not only empowering transgender people through campaigning and informing on their rights, but also economically by offering vocational courses and identifying trans-friendly employers.

“TAILOR-MADE, FLEXIBLE, AND TIMELY SUPPORT”

That is why EED adapts support to respond to local realities. EED is demand-driven and flexible. It can support individuals and non-registered groups, and grant emergency funding requests, often within a few days. EED provided such emergency support in 30 cases in 2017 – for example to independent media outlets in Moldova and Turkey which needed urgent help to continue their operations after restrictive actions had been taken against them. In this way, EED has successfully contributed to preserving some space for civic and human rights activism and engagement in repressive and/or conflict-affected environments.

“INVESTING IN TRANSFORMATIONAL IDEAS”

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

One such initiative is municipal self-improvement movement – Teple Misto, or “Warm City” – in Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine. Engaging volunteers and business leaders, Teple Misto has humanised a city deformed by 45 years of communism and two decades of post-Independence decay. In the past three years, Teple Misto has completed over 200 projects. **READ MORE ON PAGE 26.**



FEATURE | Enabling women for democratic change

Driving change to ensure that women play a full role in the democratic process is at the heart of EED's work. EED funds female leaders and activists to advance political participation of women, and sponsors a number of organisations that address women's issues.

During the course of 2017, EED has supported a growing number of women and initiatives involving women in democratic decision-making. For example, empowerment of women has been a focus for a number of Syrian initiatives, including one offering capacity building and civic and political training for women refugees in the Beqaa valley in Lebanon.

In Moldova, an EED-sponsored feminist movement, The Group of Feminist Initiatives, made waves by actively battling discrimination of women in the public sphere, particularly in politics. It backed a campaign to introduce quotas for women in parliament and has since broadened its scope to raise awareness of other aspects of gender equality that are not explicitly tied to feminism.

In Morocco, Hakima Lebbar of Galerie Fan-Dok has been very successful in re-igniting public debate about the issue of equality of inheritance, through literature, art exhibitions, and discussions. The project has received both international and local media coverage due to the participation of a Salafi cleric in the call for equating inheritance between men and women.

EED has also supported a sensitive initiative implemented by KAFA ("Enough" in Arabic) – a Lebanese NGO which seeks to eliminate exploitation and violence against women. Working in collaboration with renowned investigative journalist

“Post-Soviet societies are very patriarchal; notions of how men and women should interact are deeply ingrained.”

Polina Ceastuhina, Group of Feminist Initiatives (Moldova)

Diana Moukalled, it has produced a film tackling religious personal status laws that govern all family affairs. Through personal stories of women from very different backgrounds and religious groups, the film will increase awareness of how these laws discriminate against women and perpetuate domestic and institutional violence against them.

A quarter of the initiatives funded by EED in 2017 included a specific component related to gender. However, ensuring a gender perspective remains a constant challenge, in particular in societies where women are marginalised from decision-making and politics. EED's Executive Committee includes a gender expert who helps ensure that selected initiatives are sufficiently gender-conscious, and proactively advises applicants to strengthen the gender component of their activities.

2.2 TRANSITIONAL ENVIRONMENTS

Some countries provide a generally non-restrictive environment where civil society can operate in relative freedom without any direct repression or limits to its activities. However, despite this significant weaknesses remain.

Transitional environments are characterised by the fragility of their institutions, weighed down by weak governance and a lack of democratic accountability, an underdeveloped political culture, and barriers to political participation. Societies continue to struggle with corruption – from the “petty” to the “grand”, where top-level officials or politicians are involved in large financial transactions or significant policy decisions – weak rule of law and a lack of professionalism in the judicial system, independent media that struggles to sustain itself financially, and infringements on media freedom.

EED approach

In these more permissive environments, EED has played a vanguard role in supporting fledgling civil society organisations or pro-democracy actors which are otherwise ineligible for financing from EU financial instruments or other donor schemes. EED also provides core costs to help them consolidate their development.

In 2017, this continued to be a significant focus for EED’s work in terms of providing seed funding both to new grassroots organisations and to individuals in environments where political changes have provided new space for political and civil society actors (for example, in Ukraine and Tunisia). EED can also

provide bridge funding to support organisations facing a temporary funding gap. EED also offers flexible support to media organisations that play an important role nationally or in their local communities but which struggle to survive due to political pressure or their limited track record of managing donor funding.

On the ground

In Lebanon, EED supported the establishment of **Nitaq**, a start-up working on democracy and urban space. Provision of basic public services in the capital, Beirut, is woefully inadequate. By combining development, residents’ rights, and arts, Nitaq is implementing two initiatives: Yawmiyat (Diary) and Makaniyat (Spaces). Under Yawmiyat, Nitaq will produce a series of guides on basic services, infrastructure, and public goods in greater Beirut. The goal is to encourage citizens to take back ownership of their city, question the status quo, and identify possible solutions. In parallel, Makaniyat promotes alternative journalism as a vehicle to give a voice to locals to help take back ownership of improving life in the city.

In Tunisia, in 2017, EED started supporting **Free Sight Association (FSA)** in acting and advocating for the adoption of UN Resolution 1325 – on women, peace, and security – by the Tunisian government. The resolution reaffirms the important role of women in conflict prevention, resolution, and peace talks. Working with local women’s groups across Tunisia to raise awareness and understanding of the resolution, FSA aims at developing a National Action Plan for its implementation.



FEATURE | Cultural hubs give voice to Palestinian refugees in Lebanon

In one of the 12 Palestinian refugee camps, known as ‘informal settlements’, spread across Lebanon, an EED-supported community group is seeking to drive change from the bottom-up and give hope to the young generation.

Originally built for 3,000 in 1949, the Borj Al-Barajneh camp in southern Beirut is home to up to 44,000 people according to latest estimates. More refugees trickle in every day, this time casualties of the Syrian conflict. Like the other 12 camps, Borj Al-Barajneh has grown into a permanent micro-city plagued by cramped living conditions, unemployment, and poor infrastructure.

The city does not provide any municipal services to the camps, which are largely self-administered. Unsurprisingly, tensions sometimes boil over. Marginalised and lacking any real prospects, young refugees, in particular, make easy prey for extremist groups operating in the country.

In the midst of the labyrinth, an unassuming doorway leads to Jafra meeting place. Founded in April 2015 by Palestinian musician Ashraf el-Chouli, Jafra is a hub of ideas and cultural and social initiatives. In such a hostile environment, the meeting place gives young refugees a place where they can step away from the difficulties of everyday life. The first of its kind in the camp, the venue is run by a team of eight volunteers.

Anyone can drop by to play music, read in its small library, learn English or simply share a cup of coffee and a chat. There is also a makeshift recording studio where musicians can record tracks. EED funding has allowed Jafra to purchase technical equipment for the studio and develop a web-based

“We are sick of other people telling our stories. With these facilities, now we can do it ourselves.”

Ashraf el-Chouli, Founder of Jafra (Lebanon)

radio station and cultural magazine. Young people are also being offered training to develop their journalism skills. Jafra is also the first mixed gathering place for males and females, which is unusual in the conservative camp environment.

Although born on Lebanese soil, Palestinians do not enjoy citizenship, nor can they own property. Refugees, even those with university degrees, are barred from most skilled professions and their refugee status effectively prevents them from leaving the country. Forever suspended in a state of waiting, the camps and their residents remain trapped in poverty, shackled to their past.

“Young people are exhausted by politics and have stopped believing in the leaders. We need to believe in ourselves, that we can make a change independently. Jafra is just a start,” says el-Chouli.

2. CONTEXT-BASED APPROACH



Teple Misto founder
and CEO Yuriy Fylyuk
© Yuriy Fylyuk

In Georgia, EED provides support to a start-up online news platform, **OC Media**. While based in Tbilisi, the platform targets a pan-regional audience and appeals to the younger generation with a creative reporting style. OC Media also actively challenges existing norms and sparks debate on “controversial” topics such as gender relations, SOGI rights, and social justice for ethnic minorities.

In Ukraine, EED-supported **Teple Misto**, or “Warm City” founded by activist Yuriy Fylyuk and 52 other business leaders in Ivano-Frankivsk in 2014 in the aftermath of the “Revolution of Dignity”, has engaged volunteers and business leaders to humanise a city deformed by 45 years of communism and two decades of post-Independence decay. By drawing

on modern European urbanism, they wanted to reconnect to Europe a city historically shaped by three centuries of Polish or Austrian rule.

In the past three years, Teple Misto has completed over 200 projects – pedestrian streets, an annual half marathon, and the removal of ugly signs to highlight the city’s historic aesthetic. The emblem is UrbanSpace 100, a combination café, radio station and community centre. The overarching goal is to retain graduates of the city’s six universities, creating a Cambridge-style synergy between higher education and high tech. The city is now popping up alongside Ukraine’s five largest cities as a top destination for IT outsourcing, with the movement spawning imitators across the country.



FEATURE In Eastern Ukraine, activists expose corruption and land fraud

EED-supported Kharkiv Anti-Corruption Centre (KhAC) exposes corrupt practices in public administration. One of its achievements has been clamping down on land fraud by local officials.

KhAC started as a grassroots initiative of young people, striving to bring about change. During the local elections of autumn 2015, some of the activists ran for seats in local councils. Two were successfully elected, which inspired them even more.

This was a difficult period for Ukraine. After the dramatic events of EuroMaidan and Russia's annexation of Crimea, the financially drained country was desperately trying to defend its territories in the eastern regions. Support for the new initiative was not forthcoming, but the activists were determined to keep going whatever the difficulties. Corruption was and still is a no lesser evil for Ukraine's existence than the war, so the young activists launched their crusade against corruption sacrificing their time, money and professional careers. As they found later on, this also entailed putting their lives at risk.

Head of KhAC, Dmytro Bulakh, says that support from the EED came at a timely juncture, helping the NGO to establish solid footing and grow into a very influential force very fast.

KhAC's activities quickly started generating much interest and bringing results, with the most significant achievement so far being the clamping down on land fraud known as "cooperative schemes". According to KhAC findings, since 2008, Kharkiv City Council has given away over 1,000 hectares of land for free to several newly created housing co-operatives "to improve the housing conditions of its members". In reality, the land plots were given to major commercial developers and businesses.

The revelations led to a criminal investigation launched by the Prosecutor General's Office in 2015, and as a result, the top managers of the City

"We would have launched this initiative even without outside assistance, but it would have taken much more time and the impact would have been much less. EED's support gave a great boost to our development."

Dmytro Bulakh, Head of Kharkiv Anti-Corruption Centre

Council and the former mayor of Kharkiv were served with charges, and 158 hectares of unlawfully acquired land worth approximately 31.5 million euros were returned to the city's ownership.

Evidently though, this has not been to everyone's liking. In August 2017, Bulakh was attacked and severely beaten on his way to work. This was a stark reminder of the increasingly hostile environment facing anti-corruption activists and reform officials in the country. However, the intimidation has only strengthened their resolve. Today, KhAC activists are expanding their activities towards a broader Kharkiv Reform Coalition, uniting several NGOs in an ambitious project to prepare a comprehensive anti-corruption strategy for the entire region.

2. CONTEXT-BASED APPROACH

FEATURE #FirstPersonStory:
Lesia Vasylenko (Ukraine)

Lawyers Take Up Fight For Ukraine War Veterans

With war in eastern Ukraine in its fifth year, challenges persist. An NGO in Kyiv is fighting to ensure that no soldier falls through the cracks.

“Through us, people find out about their rights, about what they are eligible for, and they go and get it for themselves.”

2. CONTEXT-BASED APPROACH

One day in summer 2014, as the war pitting government forces against Russia-backed separatists raged in eastern Ukraine, Lesia Vasylenko headed off to a military hospital in Kyiv.

She was carrying an envelope filled with money she had helped raise, at a friend's request, for a young soldier who had lost a limb in combat and required a costly operation.

It was a visit that would change her life.

"I started looking into the laws protecting soldiers and I explained to this boy's family how to claim the benefits he was entitled to," says Vasylenko, a lawyer. "Then his family asked me to help the boy's hospital roommate, and the hospital roommate asked me to help someone else, and so on. It was a chain reaction."

Vasylenko, who was then on maternity leave, decided to spend her time off work helping wounded soldiers defend their rights and obtain the compensation they often failed to receive due to Ukraine's convoluted legislation and unscrupulous commanders.

What began as a volunteer initiative has now become a full-time job for the 30-year-old, who has since put her job at a law firm on hold to devote herself to advocacy work.

Today, she heads Legal Hundred, an influential NGO with more than 200 volunteer lawyers and representatives in 12 regions.

"This work is like my third child: I spend more time at the NGO than with my family and friends," she says. "What we are doing is really changing things in Ukraine, and these changes positively affect hundreds of thousands of people."

According to Vasylenko, the war veterans and soldiers still fighting in the east represent one of the country's most vulnerable groups.

Their legal status is unclear at best under Ukrainian law, and Vasylenko says most of them are too proud to complain, let alone ask for help. To raise awareness about their rights, Legal Hundred, which is partly funded by EED, prints out information leaflets and distributes them to military hospitals and NGOs that provide assistance to families of wounded or killed soldiers.

Over the past two years, Vasylenko has established a close working relationship with the army's General Staff and the state service for war veterans. This has enabled her group to obtain first-hand information on changes in the laws and regulations affecting soldiers, but also to actively lobby for legislative reform.

Legal Hundred drafted a proposal to remove amendments introduced since the war began in eastern Ukraine that effectively allowed the army to indefinitely prolong the contracts of soldiers who had enrolled in the military on a temporary basis.

With the war in eastern Ukraine entering its fifth year, the number of volunteers is rapidly dwindling and Vasylenko says military commanders routinely bend the law to keep soldiers on the battlefield. The proposed changes were voted into law, and Legal Hundred reports violations of the discharge process directly to the General Staff.

The group is now working on improving the legal protection of soldiers who sustained a permanent disability in the war, families of killed soldiers, and people who were taken hostage in eastern Ukraine. Legal Hundred was also highly influential in trying to tackle endemic gender discrimination in the Ukrainian army. This has achieved a tangible result with the Ukrainian parliament since passing a law for equal rights of women in the army – which they contributed to.

"There are plenty of women combating on the front line, but they were previously officially registered as army cooks, cleaners, or accountants," Vasylenko explains. "This severely influenced their salaries and benefits."

It's been almost four years since Vasylenko began her crusade for Ukrainian soldiers. The war shows no sign of easing off, and the young woman admits that she and her colleagues at Legal Hundred are exhausted.

But she has no intention of giving up her advocacy work.

"The people we defend represent a relatively small percentage of the population, but they are the ones protecting our country right now," she says. "I can't fight on the front line, so this is my way of helping Ukraine."

The organisation's hotline currently receives an average of 900 calls for help every month – a threefold increase over just one year.

2.3 RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Many EED grantees work in restrictive environments with an increasingly limited space for civil society. There are growing restrictions on those seeking democratic progress, and on donors who provide support to civil society, even in political systems that are not entirely authoritarian.

While there is often some level of open pluralism in governance, pressure on opposition parties and candidates is common. In such environments, elections have substantial irregularities that often prevent them from being genuinely democratic. Corruption tends to be widespread and the rule of law weak. Some governments have taken steps to curtail independent civil society within their countries. Typically, there is harassment of and pressure on journalists, and the judiciary is not independent. Restrictions can also result from cultural factors, such as traditional views held by society.

In such contexts, EED grantees and other activists often face a powerful patronage system that links political power-holders and economic interests, and squeezes civil society and other independent actors out of the decision-making process. Often, media falls victim to this control over power, as the government and the businesses that support pro-regime media curtail freedom of expression.

EED approach

EED engages in such restrictive environments by building capacities of citizens and supporting independent voices. EED supports initiatives that build foundations for a more inclusive and participatory democracy, that work to counter corruption and advance the rule of law and public accountability, and that contribute to building the capacities

of local media to grow as independent and quality channels for communication.

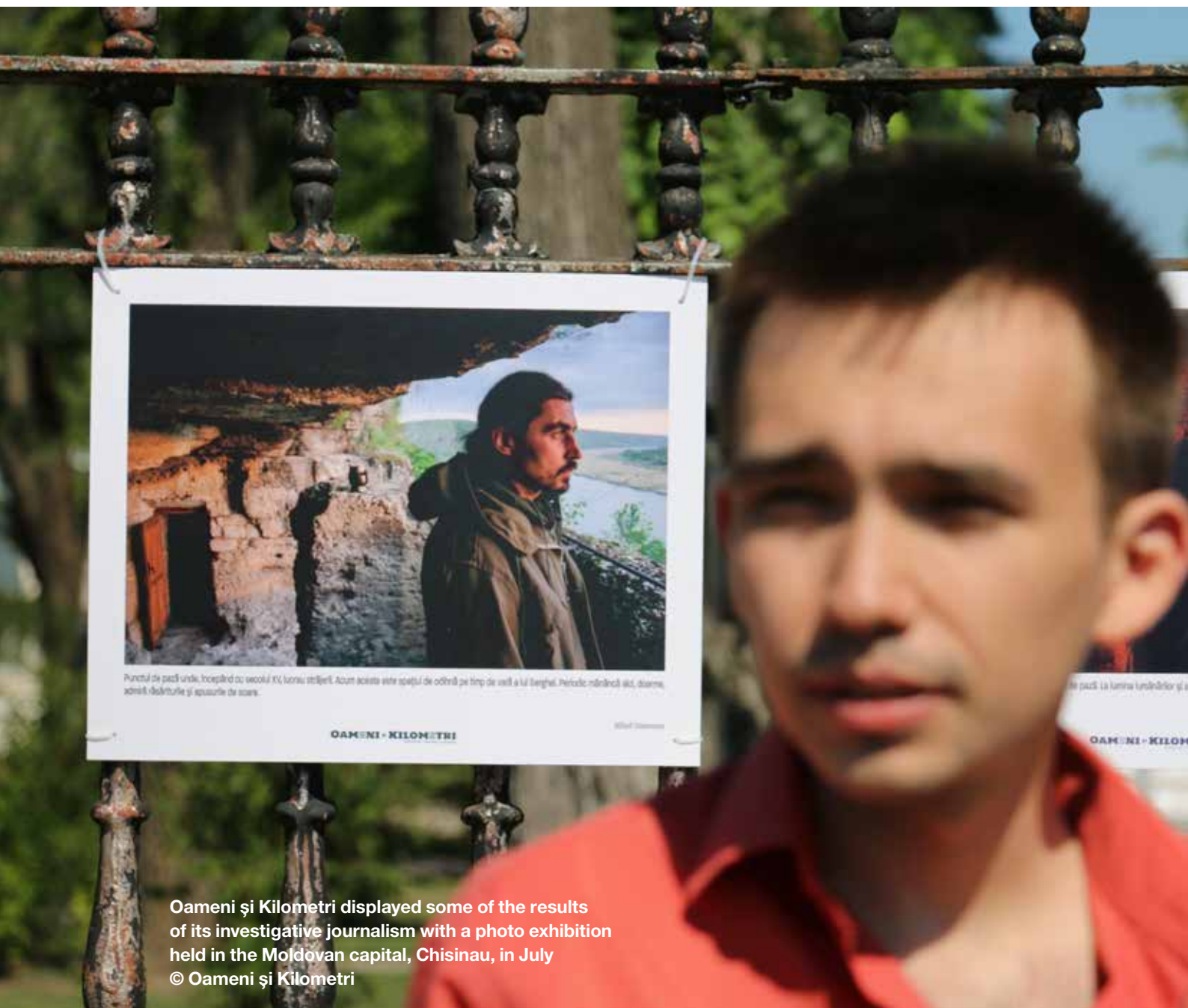
EED also adds value by funding new activists and other groups with limited or no access to other donor funding – whether due to restrictive legal environments, government repression, security concerns, or political sensitivities.

On the ground

In Armenia, one of the least sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI)-friendly countries in Europe, according to advocacy group ILGA-Europe, EED supports **Right SIDE NGO** – the first transgender group in the country. Right SIDE campaigns for equal rights for people regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. As a result, at least 50 transgender people will be empowered in knowing their rights and how to defend them. Right SIDE is also offering vocational courses in fields such as make-up and sewing, and trying to identify trans-friendly employers to empower both economically as well as politically, and thereby encourage integration.

Also in Armenia, start-up NGO **Human Rights Power** has conducted a research project highlighting the rights of journalists covering trials, and in parallel, increasing transparency of the judiciary. They analysed obstacles and limitations on media coverage of public hearings, and compared them with international fair trial practices. Human Rights Power is now calling on the government to initiate reforms, with a particular focus on the right to film and take photos during court sessions. The same NGO also carried out awareness-raising training for journalists on their rights and gathered a group of 12 to take part in a forthcoming campaign for legislative change.

2. CONTEXT-BASED APPROACH



Oameni și Kilometri displayed some of the results of its investigative journalism with a photo exhibition held in the Moldovan capital, Chisinau, in July
© Oameni și Kilometri

In Moldova, support to **Oameni și Kilometri** ("People and Kilometres") has enabled the outlet to get off the ground and expand its team of journalists, who go to great lengths to tell the real life stories of prejudices faced by some of the country's most vulnerable citizens. The outlet also provides an avenue for them to voice their grievances and advocate for their rights.

In Morocco, the **Moroccan Forum for Young Journalists** benefitted from seed funding to set up a platform serving the professional needs of young journalists through training on incorporating a human rights dimension in their reporting, providing legal guidance to foreign journalists visiting the country, and compiling reports about press freedom in the country.

2. CONTEXT-BASED APPROACH

FEATURE #FirstPersonStory: Daniel Ioannisian (Armenia)

Paying The Price For Exposing Armenian Election Fraud

An Armenian NGO is in the authorities' crosshairs after exposing what it describes as rampant electoral fraud by the ruling Republican Party.

In late March 2017, activists from Armenia's Union of Informed Citizens (UIC) picked up their phones and dialled 136 schools across the country.

Posing as members of the ruling Republican Party, they asked school principals whether they were drawing up lists of parents, schoolteachers, and kindergarten staff willing to back the party in the April 2 parliamentary elections – a practice the UIC describes as a well-honed illegal campaigning tactic used by the Republican Party.

Out of the 136 contacted school principals, UIC founder Daniel Ioannisian says 114 of them – or 80 percent – confirmed they were compiling these lists. He says principals send the names to the Republican Party, which then shares them with district authorities to ensure that listed voters cast their ballots.

"This is massive, it is systematic," he says. "The Republican Party abuses administrative resources to recruit voters, it pays bribes and pressures people into voting for the party. Civil society is strong in Armenia; it would never allow the ruling party to do ballot stuffing. So the irregularities are more subtle and more difficult to expose."

To back up its claims, the UIC published recordings of its conversations with school principals on its website. According to Ioannisian, some school directors openly admitted resorting to intimidation in the telephone exchanges.

"School principals routinely pressure parents into voting for the Republican Party by telling them, for example, that their children will have problems at school otherwise," he explains.

Two months down the line, the UIC was facing three dozen defamation lawsuits from disgruntled school directors. If found guilty, it faces fines of up to 120,000 euros in damages – a huge sum for the small NGO.

Ioannisian was also the target of stinging attacks in state media, with some outlets divulging private information about his family as well as personal records that appear to have been leaked by the police.

The onslaught against UIC, in turn, has sparked a public outcry and accusations that authorities are seeking to muzzle corruption fighters.

"This is about much more than 120,000 euros or the fate of our organisation," says Ioannisian. "Journalists and activists should be able to work without fear of being prosecuted for their investigations."

A physicist by training, Ioannisian showed an early interest in politics, becoming a member of the opposition party Heritage in 2007, when he was still a student at Yerevan State University. Disillusioned by what he describes as undemocratic practices inside the party, he rescinded his membership in 2013.

2. CONTEXT-BASED APPROACH

A few months later, however, Armenia's long-term president, Serzh Sargsyan, announced that the country would be joining the Eurasian Economic Union of Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. The announcement, made just weeks before Armenia was expected to initiate an association and free-trade agreement with the EU, came as a shock to many Armenians – including Ioannisian.

He quit his research job at the Yerevan Physics Institute and founded the UIC with a group of friends equally distressed by what he now calls Armenia's "foreign policy U-turn". Over the past four years, the UIC has worked tirelessly to raise awareness about foreign policies, elections, and democratic principles. It also runs a Russian-language news portal and a fact-checking website, Sut.am, aimed at combating disinformation.

The group was particularly active in the run-up to the April 2 parliamentary elections, the first poll since controversial constitutional changes shifting power from the president to the parliament and the prime minister were introduced in December 2015.

Critics, including Ioannisian, believe the new system will consolidate the ruling party's dominance and effectively allow Sargsyan to remain in power as head of the party after his final presidential term ends in 2018.


Despite the UIC's sustained criticism of authorities, Ioannisian says he never expected their pre-election "telephone prank" to spark such a furious backlash. Ioannisian is nonetheless confident that the UIC will succeed in fending off the defamation charges.

The group is certainly well-defended. After the lawsuits were filed, the NGO was approached by dozens of lawyers offering their help on a volunteer basis.

"I'm pretty sure we will win this case," he says. "Firstly, we didn't lie; the recordings we posted online prove it. Secondly, public support has been very strong."

Despite their woes, Ioannisian says he and his colleagues would do it all over again. Instead of acting as a deterrent, the attack against their organisation actually appears to have spurred the team on.

"It helped us realise how important the work we do at UIC is," he says. "It came as a big motivation for us. In a way, it is a recognition of our work."

A black and white portrait of a man with dark hair and a light beard, wearing a dark suit, a light-colored shirt, and a striped tie. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is blurred.

“What started as a modest campaign has generated a heated debate about freedom of speech.”

2.4 REPRESSIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Around one third of the countries in which EED works have openly repressive regimes. Governments do not allow or actively obstruct civil society from engaging in political processes.

Authoritarian political elites bolster their rule by imprisoning, and in some cases torturing, opponents, restricting the media and civil society, harassing activists, limiting popular freedoms, and repressing protest.

Authoritarian regimes do not allow any political pluralism, and elections are not free and fair. Civic and political activists take a high risk by engaging in pro-democracy activities and risk imprisonment or other punishment for their work, and the regimes generally disregard civil liberties. There is repression of criticism of the government and pervasive censorship, and no independent judiciary.

Media are typically fully controlled by groups connected to the ruling regime. Independent media and opposition voices are systematically silenced, from the blocking of websites to the imprisoning of journalists, and from the disbarring of lawyers who defend political prisoners to preventing or severely limiting requests for rallies and public meetings. In a more disguised manner, authoritarian regimes and their proxies in Azerbaijan and Belarus, for example, are using fabricated complaints to temporarily disrupt or block the social media accounts of independent bloggers and media outlets.

Legal restrictions are not the only way to limit civil society assistance and stymie the work of NGOs receiving such aid. Governments engaged in pushback also work to create a political climate in

which recipients of foreign funding are intimidated and publicly delegitimised. Most donors have either been blacklisted or are blocked from entering these countries by administrative and legal constraints. For example, a series of domestic laws regulating NGO operations has been amended in Azerbaijan since 2014, creating burdensome and complicated registration and reporting procedures, as well as new requirements for grant registration. Concretely, these measures prevent foreign donors (including the EU) from issuing grants, thus further strengthening the authorities' control over NGO activities.

Governmental campaigns to obstruct or limit foreign support for domestic NGOs are often part of a larger crackdown on independent civil society and a broader shrinking of political space for activism and dissent.

EED approach

An important part of EED's mandate is to provide flexible support to activists who operate in such difficult environments. EED has actively adapted to deteriorating conditions and harsh restrictions by finding new ways to continue effectively supporting and regenerating civil society.

EED adapts to the distinctive needs of activists who operate in such difficult environments, including protecting their identity where required and providing the support in a discreet and safe manner.

In a small number of cases, when it is extremely challenging for civil society to operate inside a particular country, EED provides support to initiatives in exile. However, most of these groups still have strong networks inside their home country and are able to

2. CONTEXT-BASED APPROACH



conduct activities inside it. EED encourages these initiatives to continue to maintain a circle of partners inside their home country and to work directly with citizens on the ground, and helps them build networks among different groups and in different areas.

On the ground

In countries where the environment for activists is extremely repressive, such as **Azerbaijan** or **Egypt**, EED's support is instrumental for independent

civic groups, and contributes to sustaining key civil society actors, independent media, and human rights defenders where few other donors are present. For example, EED has helped groups to document human rights abuses and networks of lawyers working collectively to provide legal support to human rights defenders. Due to the sensitive and repressive environment the activists operate in, their successes and achievements cannot be mentioned in detail here.

2. CONTEXT-BASED APPROACH

2.5 CONFLICT ENVIRONMENTS

In conflict zones, people push for democratic processes that are capable of addressing tensions and building foundations for peace.

Supporting civil society in conflict environments brings particular challenges. Many donors are forced to close local offices and withdraw support due to security concerns and operational challenges, such as the inability to monitor projects or disburse funding.

In many countries, the level of political stability and security is simply not sufficient to operate activities in support of democracy. However, many activists show remarkable resilience and commitment to continue working for a better and more democratic society, even in the midst of violence.

EED approach

EED is committed to ensuring that populations suffering war and instability are not neglected. EED amplifies citizens' voices and facilitates actions from people that keep the democratic struggle alive, often in disturbingly harsh environments. In Syria, for example, EED continues to adapt its support to pro-democracy groups and activists to respond to their needs in a constantly changing and extremely challenging context.

Helping these actors to remain active will also help them to be in a position to play a role in the future, while continuing to instil principles of democracy and the rule of law – this, despite the multifaceted challenges they face and that have in common the purpose of jeopardising pro-democracy initiatives.

On the ground

The northern Lebanese city of Tripoli is a volatile, economically depressed area that has witnessed periodic bouts of street violence since the end of the Lebanese civil war. The massive arrival of Syrian refugees has added to the tensions and put a strain on already stretched resources.

Based in Tripoli, Lamsat Ward organisation received a grant from EED to support the **Katatib** initiative – a “social hub” offering a mix of educational and cultural activities to young Syrian refugees, who are particularly vulnerable to radicalisation and social violence.

One of the training courses introduces young people to concepts of civic education, critical thinking and principles of democracy. The centre has grown into a safe and welcoming place away from the harsh realities of life as a Syrian refugee.

2. CONTEXT-BASED APPROACH



Young Syrians taking part in training activities in the Katatib social hub
© Lamsat Ward

“We want to empower young refugees and give them the tools they need to participate actively in rebuilding the future Syria whenever peace may return.”

Mohamad Ashraf Al Hafny, Founder of Lamsat Ward / Katatib initiative (Lebanon/Syria)

FEATURE #FirstPersonStory:
Karam Hilly (Syria)

We Are Building An Army For Peace

A grassroots organisation is encouraging Syrian citizens to reclaim their voice and take a more active role in the running of their provinces.

“Change may come next year or take a 100 years. Until then we are working to reduce the suffering and do the right thing for our country.”

When mass protests against President Bashar Assad swept Syria in 2011, Karam Hilly enthusiastically joined the uprising.

Hilly, a project officer with the United Nations Development Programme at the time, actively took part in street rallies calling for democratic change in his country. And, as the revolt descended into a violent and protracted conflict, the 32-year-old started volunteer work on community development in some of Syria's most inaccessible, war-torn areas.

Like many anti-Assad activists, he was eventually detained by authorities.

2. CONTEXT-BASED APPROACH

“I was tortured, like all Syrians who end up in detention nowadays,” he says. “I saw nine people die next to me in jail.”

Hilly was released two months after his arrest, in spring 2014. He quickly joined the almost three million Syrians who have fled to the relative safety of neighbouring Turkey since the war broke out.

In Turkey, his skills as a trainer and Syrian civil society expert proved in high demand. He was soon offered a job with an international NGO and started rebuilding his life far from the shelling, the jails, and the devastation of his country.

But the safety of life in exile brought him little solace. Hilly found himself missing Syria much more than he had anticipated. There was also the persistent feeling that he was letting down those who had stayed behind in Syria.

Hilly gave up his job and returned to Syria with the same mission that had prompted him to enter into civil society: to help strengthen Syria’s marginalised local communities directly on the ground.

“Our goal is to establish a community governance system in Syria by creating community-based organisations and connecting them with each other,” he explains. “Right now in Syria, the population is excluded from the decision-making process. NGOs and local councils are the ones making decisions because they own the resources, they receive the grants. This is true for most countries at war, not just Syria.”

Hilly’s organisation, the Sahem Initiative, has been active since February 2015. Sahem received seed support from EED, which, says Hilly, was “the trigger for change”. It seeks to bolster community development and capacity building by giving young Syrians the tools to be more active in their communities. Sahem also encourages communities to mobilise their resources and reduce their reliance on foreign aid.

In Arabic, “Sahem” means “contribute”. Over the past two years, the group has created 23 local committees in three provinces in northern Syria – Hama, Idlib, and Aleppo – that work on mobilising local resources and generating civil society campaigns.

Sahem delivers training on community engagement, social responsibility, and active citizenship to the 300 volunteers who form the committees. At the

same time, Sahem tries to build bridges between the newly created committees and the NGOs and local councils that currently wield power in the provinces.

“We are building an army for peace, an army of educated people who will continue pushing for non-violent change in the future,” says Hilly.

The challenges faced by Sahem are manifold. The war has made travelling a dangerous business – Hilly travels in and out of Syria at great personal risk – and communities experience huge difficulties co-ordinating their activities, even within the same province.

After more than 50 years of rule by the Assad family, civil society is also in its infancy and Syrians are still weary of getting involved in politics or governance.

“Syria is not a democratic country, we are not used to making our voices heard, to telling local councils what we think is right or wrong,” says Hilly. “We are trying to change this mentality but it will take a long time.”

In addition, Hilly says Syrians are increasingly demoralised by what they view as a weak international response to Assad’s brutal crackdown on dissenters.


“We are dealing with a regime that targets schools and hospitals,” he says. “People are afraid that their village will become a target if they take part in civic activities.”

So far, more than 10 of Sahem’s volunteers have been killed. In November 2015, a school where the group conducted one of its training courses was shelled after a participant posted a picture of the event on social media.

“We were very lucky that the training had ended the day before, no one was hurt,” says Hilly. “Now, we are careful to publish photos of our events only when they are over and we make sure the location is unidentifiable.”

Just over three years since its creation, Sahem has made a name for itself in Syria and Hilly says its activities are showing results. Communities, he says, are starting to reach out to each other and local councils are slowly beginning to heed the advice of ordinary Syrians. But with uncertainty looming large over Syria’s future, Hilly is reluctant to dwell on Sahem’s role in bringing lasting, positive change to Syrians.

Censorship!



The cartoon depicts how censorship in the Middle East prevents the people from obtaining objective information about what is happening around them
© Lo'ai Hazem / Al Hudood (Jordan)



In this chapter, we take an in-depth look at EED's significant support to independent media and highlight a number of case studies and successes.

3. IN FOCUS: INDEPENDENT MEDIA SUPPORT



3.1 EED | SUPPORTING INDEPENDENT MEDIA

Freedom of the media and, by extension, pluralistic, balanced, and objective journalism is a cornerstone of democracy

Independent news is critical to political, social, and economic development, playing a key role in:

- Holding authorities to account
- Providing a platform for debate
- Exposing corruption

However, because of their role as a watchdog of the powerful, in many societies critical media are at constant risk of harassment, persecution, and closure.

One of the most effective ways for governments to stifle criticism is to starve independent news outlets of finance, through pressure or control of advertising markets. Outlets that do not have capital to grow are condemned to fail, unable to compete with state-subsidised competitors.

In many countries, the only capital available comes from political parties or oligarchs, and it always comes with strings attached: investment is available but only in return for editorial influence.

Support for a free and independent media is therefore a pivotal element of the EU's external policies, and represents around one third of EED's funding portfolio.

Context: media freedom in the EU neighbourhood

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP (EaP)

Media environments and the situation regarding media freedom in the six countries in the Eastern Partnership differ considerably. In the 2017 World Press Freedom Index¹, Azerbaijan (162) and Belarus (153) were the worst-rated European countries (out of 180 countries worldwide), even lower than Russia (148). At the other end of the spectrum, Georgia ranked 64, Armenia 79, and Moldova 80. Ukraine's position has improved from 129 in 2015 to 102 in 2017.

However, constraints to press freedom and violations remain a grave challenge across the region, albeit to different degrees. In addition, Russia's disinformation and propaganda activities continue to present a difficult challenge to media freedom in the EaP countries.

1. The World Press Freedom Index is compiled by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and ranks 180 countries according to the level of freedom available to journalists. It provides a snapshot of the media freedom situations based on an evaluation of pluralism, media independence, environment and self-censorship, quality of legislative framework, and safety of journalists in each country.

3. IN FOCUS: INDEPENDENT MEDIA SUPPORT

“Media freedom has never been so threatened.”

2017 World Press Freedom Index

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA (MENA)

In the nine southern countries, the situation regarding media freedom is also complex. In the 2017 World Press Freedom Index, Libya (163) and Syria (177) figure among the world's most dangerous countries for journalists. The situation in Egypt (161) has also worsened since 2016, now entering the so-called black zone.

Algeria (134), Morocco (133), and Jordan (138) have also slightly deteriorated, while Palestine's position has improved from 140 in 2015 to 132 in 2017. Tunisia (97) and Lebanon (99) are the only MENA countries ranking slightly higher. In general, with the ongoing war in Syria and the conflict situation in Libya, the Middle East and North Africa region continues to be the world's most difficult and dangerous region for journalists.

Figure 1: Eastern Partnership Countries | Reporters Without Borders | World Press Freedom Index

COUNTRY	2017		2016	
	Global ranking	Score	Global ranking	Score
Armenia	79	30.38	74	28.79
Azerbaijan	162	56.40	163	57.89
Belarus	153	52.43	157	54.32
Georgia	64	27.67	64	27.96
Moldova	80	30.41	76	28.83
Ukraine	102	33.19	107	32.93

Figure 2: MENA Countries | Reporters Without Borders | World Press Freedom Index

COUNTRY	2017		2016	
	Global ranking	Score	Global ranking	Score
Algeria	134	42.83	129	41.69
Egypt	161	55.78	159	54.45
Jordan	138	43.24	135	44.49
Lebanon	99	33.01	98	31.95
Libya	163	56.81	164	57.89
Morocco	133	42.42	131	42.64
Palestine	132	42.43	135	42.90
Syria	177	81.49	177	81.35
Tunisia	97	32.22	96	31.60

3. IN FOCUS: INDEPENDENT MEDIA SUPPORT



This cartoon pays homage to all the journalists and media workers who risk their lives to shed light on the truth © Sameer Khalil / Dawlaty (Syria)

Overview of EED response

As a democracy support organisation, support to independent media is a significant area of EED's work. Approximately one third of EED projects are media-related (152 initiatives since 2013 worth €10.4 million).

Through this support, EED aims to contribute to building the capacities of local media to grow as independent and quality channels for communication, and as mechanisms for promoting and protecting democratic values.

While limited, EED seeks to deploy resources where it can have the most impact and fill gaps in areas not supported by other donors. EED funding seeks to help independent news outlets develop financially

sustainable businesses and strong institutions for change that provide objective news and critical comment to people denied reliable information.

Specific objectives are to:

- Strengthen media outlets and journalists by providing core funding or bridge funding support
- Enable media outlets to continue their activities in case of emergency situations through providing rapid-response funding
- Strengthen new, independent media outlets through provision of start-up funding, so they can offer unbiased, quality content or develop new formats and activities within existing media outlets
- Sustain operations, and support journalists and media outlets operating in repressive environments.

3.2 Ensuring plurality and credibility in Russian language media space

EED has significantly contributed to the pushback against Russia's disinformation campaign in the Eastern Partnership countries by strengthening the independent Russian-language media offer in those countries.

EED played a leading role in bringing this issue to the top of the EU's agenda with its landmark feasibility study, "Bringing Plurality and Balance to the Russian Language Media Space". The recommendations from the study were first presented in May 2015 during the first EaP media conference, in Riga. EED has since acted as the co-ordinating body in implementing the key recommendations of the report.

Alongside the creation of a news hub, **Russian Language News Exchange (RLNE)**, jointly with other donors, EED has also supported the development of the Riga-based **Baltic Centre for Media Excellence (BCME)**, and co-ordinated the establishment of the **Creative Content Support Fund (Content Fund)**.

Facilitated by the Amsterdam-based Free Press Unlimited, **RLNE** focuses primarily on the provision of high-quality, balanced, and independent Russian-language news content to the audiences of seven media outlets from the EaP region and Russia. In addition to the ongoing core support, EED's funding aimed at reformatting and repackaging content produced by RLNE partners for social media users, thus providing Russian speakers with increased supply and access to most popular formats. EED support has also facilitated provision of joint access for RLNE partners to the photo and video services of the Reuters news agency, in what has been an unprecedented agreement for Reuters, and

which will enhance the visual appeal and attractiveness of content, leading to the rise of overall RLNE audiences.

The **BCME** operates as a secretariat for independent Russian-language media outlets and wider community of practice. It is a one-stop-shop resource for co-ordinating research and analysis, namely of audiences, and training of media in the EaP region and the Baltic states.

The **Content Fund** is a unique mechanism for granting support to broadcasters and digital platforms for the production and acquisition of distinctive, entertaining, and informative Russian-language non-news TV and video content. This is primarily targeted at Russian-speaking audiences in the EaP region and beyond, and includes documentaries, talk shows, and drama.

This year saw further progress in establishing the Creative Content Support Fund. Hosted and facilitated by EED, three calls for proposals for original non-news content in the Russian language were launched under the Fund. As a result, around 20 grants and 40 hours of high-quality non-news content have been provided to the network of the Content Fund's partners. In addition, following of a pilot acquisition agreement between EED and BBC World, EED provided select media outlets from the EaP region and the Baltic states with over 280 hours of premium and top-quality content in Russian.

The Content Fund is supported by the UK government with additional contributions from Poland and Finland. This engagement takes place in parallel to EED support for other independent media outlets.

3. IN FOCUS: INDEPENDENT MEDIA SUPPORT



In Moldova, Jurnal TV's online news portal reaches over 250,000 readers and has registered over two million views.



In Turkey, factchecking platform Teyit.org grew its following to over 35,000 on Facebook and 200,000 on Twitter in its first nine months, with its articles read by 300,000 users.



In three months, followers on Ukraine's Expert-KR's Facebook page increased by over 40 percent, and by October 2017 it had a following of over 10,000 people.

3.3 CASE STUDIES | EED MEDIA SUPPORT

In Armenia, EED funding has helped sustain and develop operations of Gyumri-based independent TV station, GALA. Due to its independent stance and lack of political support, GALA struggles to make revenue through advertising. With its debate and news programmes, GALA is a vehicle for exchanging different views and keeping citizens in the Shirak region better informed. EED support has also enabled it to broaden its audience by increasing coverage of events around the country.

In Belarus, support to an independent media outlet has helped civic and media activists in combating Russian and domestic propaganda by diversifying and focusing media content on local issues and away from geopolitics. Six media outlets have received bridge funding to cope with temporary gaps in donor support.

In Moldova, EED support to three of the most important pro-democracy television stations – TV8, Jurnal TV and Pro TV – helped prevent their closure when under immense pressure through advertising bans, eviction notices, and significant loss of revenue due to unfair competition in the advertising market.

This has contributed to ensuring alternatives in the media landscape.

In eastern Ukraine, Expert-KR is the first independent media based in Kryvyi Rih, one of the country's most populous cities and a stronghold of oligarchic clans. Only a few civic and media initiatives are active in the city, which has received little attention from other donors. EED funding enabled Expert-KR to provide several hundred thousand people with access to alternative local media content.

In Jordan, podcast network Sowt produces and curates podcasts for a Middle East audience, dealing often with controversial topics. With EED support, in 2017, Sowt started releasing a podcast series called "Religion and the State", which received a very positive response from the public in Jordan and beyond. Notably, the show also reached Arab-speaking audiences in Tunisia, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. Since its release, Sowt's Facebook page has reached above 200,000 hits per week, and the first three episodes of "Religion and the State" have been shared a combined 337 times so far.



EED partner, Lebanese journalist
Diana Moukalled, Founder of Daraj, speaking at
the Warsaw Dialogue for Democracy
© K&M Pacuła / EED

In Syria, EED is supporting ROK Online, a Syrian media initiative aiming to embed the concept of free media in society, regardless of ethnicity or religion. Reaching a local audience based in the north and northeastern Kurdish area of Syria, ROK Online offers professional and independent information on political, social, and economic issues that affect people's daily lives.

In Turkey, in March 2017, EED started supporting Teyit.org, a start-up innovative online portal for news and information checking. At a time when Turkey is facing unprecedented polarisation and spreading of fake news in traditional and social media, Teyit.org acts as a fact-checking platform, advocating for information activism and providing open-source fact-checking verification tools.

Across the Arab region, mistrust towards mainstream media has risen in an unprecedented way, especially among young people. In June 2017, EED started supporting Daraj (Arabic for "Steps"), a regional initiative aimed at creating a credible, innovative, and financially independent pan-Arab media outlet. Daraj's signature is impact journalism, but will also focus on lifestyle, which is very new for the region. The organisation strives to reach a young Arabic-speaking audience by producing diverse and engaging content, with an emphasis on video, investigative reports, and blog posts.

EED is supporting the start-up phase, allowing Daraj to sustain eight entries a day for the first couple of months. These will be made up of opinion pieces, translations, investigative stories, news articles, and republished content and video material from partner outlets. This will afford Daraj the time and space to demonstrate how the model works, to prompt investors to support the platform, and sustain operations.

“Daraj is one of 95 media partners who, along with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, released the Paradise Papers in 2017 a global investigation that reveals the offshore activities of some of the world's most powerful people and companies.”

3. IN FOCUS: INDEPENDENT MEDIA SUPPORT

It all started when yet one more ludicrous political event triggered Isam Uraiqat, Al Hudood's co-founder, to make a call to his friend.

"While not particularly out of the ordinary, this particular incident got us thinking that what we really miss in the Arab world is a satirical news site, to mock absurdities of everyday life here." One night and a couple of drinks later, Al Hudood was born.

The platform was up and running within a month. Since then, the lives of its three co-founding partners, all professional writers by trade, have changed beyond recognition.

Still, running the outlet during its initial phase without any funding, working voluntarily 6–7 hours a day, the trio started having dark thoughts about dying out within a year. Everything seemed to be going against the odds – nobody wanted to advertise with Al Hudood, as they were simply too controversial. Potential investors shied away, fearing that the site could be shut down at any moment. On the verge of despair, the team turned for help – and to who else but Google.

"And that's how we came across EED. These are the people we need!" laughs Uraiqat. "On a serious note, we would not have survived without EED's support."

The Jordanian government put Al Hudood's registration on hold for about a year and a half, before an eventual rejection. After some discussion, the group decided to register in the UK, which involved more months of bureaucracy. Finally, all the efforts paid off and Al Hudood became official.

Clashes with the Jordanian government continued. Following the release of a seemingly innocuous piece on Saudi Arabia, Uraiqat was accused of "disturbing relations with neighbouring countries".

This led Uraiqat to have a serious talk with his team about whether they should tone down the content. Their response was a resounding no.

"They actually threatened to leave if we held back," Uraiqat recalls.

The outlet now produces a steady stream of satirical news stories and cartoons, using sarcasm and derision to reveal serious issues in one of the most volatile regions in the world. With so much to ridicule, Al Hudood's editors have a hard job choosing their subjects.

"We talk about anything that's a topic of conversation across the Arab world," explains Uraiqat. "We don't discriminate when selecting our targets. We also highlight issues that don't get the attention they deserve from the mainstream media."

The response has been staggering. On Facebook, they now have a quarter of a million followers. "Around 90 percent of comments are positive about our work. The remaining 10 percent, though, hate us more than anything!"

"We respond to every single message. At the end of the day, it is important to create a conversation. We don't want to shut anyone out, even the trolls."

As a result of this "social crusade", the team has witnessed many people turning from "shamers and blamers" into massive supporters.

"And that is the whole point of what we are doing – changing mindsets," explains Uraiqat.

"In the Arab world, the audience is used to government media machines telling them what they should think. Whatever is reported, the audience takes it as fact."

"We want people to understand that they should treat news as a subjective commentary, not necessarily the ultimate truth."

When asked about the biggest challenges Al Hudood has faced, Uraiqat exclaims, "My God, there are so many!"

"From the start we've had people telling us, 'You can't say this, you can't criticise that.' For us, though, nothing is off-limits."

Making the outlet financially sustainable has also proved difficult. Al Hudood's edgy brand of comedy makes many international organisations uncomfortable with providing funding. EED's support has been a lifeline in this respect. Another massive challenge is finding people to join the crew and getting the right people. Despite the struggles, Al Hudood's founding father is far from giving up. His dream is to have a network of hundreds of writers from across the Middle East, just to make sure everybody is equally mocked.

"We love what we do. Being able to say what you want to say, exactly the way you want to say it, is incredibly special."

FEATURE #FirstPersonStory:
Isam Uraiqat (Jordan)

Breaking Limits in the Middle East

Al Hudood means “the borders” or “the limits”. The satirical news site of the same name daringly tackles issues in the Middle East, breaking taboos with a sharp dose of humour.

“We need to make sure that we’re transferring a message, not just poking fun. The ultimate role of the satire is to stay balanced.”



Wafa Bani Mustafa, Member of Parliament in Jordan takes to the stage to make a campaign speech. Her life and political journey will be featured in the upcoming EED-supported book "Voices of Jordan" © Salah Malkawi / Voices of Jordan



4. RESULTS AND LEARNING

In this chapter, we provide an overview of EED's monitoring and evaluation system, and identify some key areas where EED adds value.

4.1 CAPTURING RESULTS, LEARNING, AND CHANGE

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

Monitoring and evaluation

EED was established to contribute to democratisation processes by providing “gap-filling”, flexible, and demand-driven support. The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system has been designed to support this specific approach.

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

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

More specifically, the M&E system provides EED with up-to-date information on results achieved and changes in the environments in which EED operates. The M&E approach is tailored to the following key features of EED’s objectives and operations:

- The complexity of democracy assistance and EED’s context-sensitive, risk-taking, and results-oriented approach

- The flexible, gap-filling, and demand-driven nature of EED’s assistance
- The mandate to take risks and operate in repressive and conflict-affected environments

EED follows an adaptive approach to democracy assistance that involves experimentation, learning-by-doing, and the flexibility to adapt its assistance based on changes in the environments in which it operates and evolving insights into what type of activities work and under which circumstances.

Funding decisions are made based on informed judgments about how to best foster EED’s objectives and respond to the (evolving) contexts in which EED operates, instead of on detailed (long-term) planning.

Other key principles and objectives underlying EED’s M&E approach are:

- Providing scope to grantees to be responsive to changing circumstances, and to experiment and learn
- Minimising the burden it places on EED’s grantees in terms of data collection and reporting requirements
- Monitoring and assessing the operational and political risks of EED’s assistance to mitigate risks
- Basing requirements on realistic expectations – given the complexity of democratisation processes and the challenges of the operating environments, expectations need to be realistic and acknowledge existing limitations as to what can be measured

4. RESULTS AND LEARNING

“As a group, we are relatively inexperienced but learnt a lot thanks to EED. The constant support allowed us to enhance our capabilities as a grassroots organisation.”

Basamat For Development (Lebanon/Syria)

Learning and development

In addition to the financial support, one area where EED can really add value compared to many other donors is in relation to the direct support, learning, and development it can provide to grantees both pre-award and during implementation.

This “coaching support” is highly valued by grantees, with 77 percent of those surveyed for an evaluation published in April 2017 rating it as “very useful”. Potential grantees can get assistance with improving the quality of their funding requests, with some “on-the-job” support also provided during the implementation of the grants. This mainly consists of advising grantees on the reporting requirements and fundraising, strategic planning, or technical assistance.

In Belarus, EED’s bridge funding helped 12 pro-democracy initiatives to access short-term financing coupled with additional coaching, which helped strengthen their internal management and strategic planning, and allowed them to regroup and successfully adapt to the new fundraising environment. This was especially important in the context of a phasing out of key media-support programmes in the country in 2015-2016. For many partners, this has enhanced their capacity and sustainability, in some cases enabling successful applications to larger-scale support from, for example, EU programmes.

In Ukraine, four EED grantees have successfully achieved EU grants, which is a considerable result considering that three were start-ups, and one – the Centre of Gender Culture in Kharkiv – was in complete decline. EED coaching during the application process proved invaluable.

In Lebanon, EED support was instrumental in getting NGO Basamat for Development off the ground. Established by Syrian activist Majd Izzat al-Chourbaji in the Beqaa valley to empower Syrian women who, like her, have fled the devastation of their country, Basamat organises a wide range of cultural and social events to foster a sense of community among displaced Syrians, and provides training course for refugee women. Basamat has recognised the importance of EED support during the application process and registration, noting that the help received to develop their financial reporting skills has been almost as important as the grant itself.

A number of grantees have also successfully moved on to successful applications for EU support. Whilst not directly related to EED coaching, the support in developing skills have helped strengthen capacity and capabilities for applying for larger funding schemes. For example in Palestine, former EED grantee, Shashat – a cultural organisation that promotes human rights, including women’s rights, through cinema – was awarded an EU grant following EED support.



FEATURE | New book recounts the ‘story of a nation’

“Voices of Jordan”, an EED-supported book by Rana F. Sweis, will be the first non-fiction work on modern Jordan in English. Through extensive research, visits and interviews, Sweis recounts ‘the story of a nation’ through the eyes and lives of its people.

Ordinary citizens are largely absent from the debate in shaping the current and future of the Middle East. By entering the minds, lives and living rooms of ten ordinary people living in Jordan, including a Bedouin, a female parliamentarian, a cartoonist, a Jihadi, and a Syrian refugee, the book gives an insight into everyday lives of these people – their struggles, their dreams and their perspectives on the deeper problems of the region.

“Voices of Jordan” will be published in 2018, illustrated with photos by renowned photographer Salah Malkawi. Some of these Jordanians and others were sharing their stories for the first time in their lives, giving them a sense of empowerment and reflection about the important role they play in society.

The book, which stems very much from the field work conducted, will be the first non-fiction on modern Jordan in English that is aimed at the western and non-western average reader (non-academic) and that depicts the lives of ordinary people. At the same it touches on the larger themes and challenges faced by people in the Middle East in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. All the protagonists have been impacted either directly or indirectly by the Arab Spring.

In every story, the characters are having conversations in the street, at home or at work. The book reveals everyday life, struggles and aspirations of these people.

“Although my main aim was to write for readers who live outside the region, the truth is Jordanian lives do not overlap. We are left in the dark about each other. So, this book, which in the future I hope will be translated into Arabic is for Jordanians to learn more about each other as well,” explained Sweis.

Despite the differences in the people featured in the book, they are all striving to understand how they fit in a rapidly changing region and into a modern state, with aspirations for self and family. As a woman, Sweis explained how she felt she often had access to the whole family, whereas this would not have been possible for a man. For some of the women featured in the book, this is the first time their voices are being heard.

In the past few decades, regional conflicts and technology have altered Jordan, in terms of infrastructure, but also in a deeper and more personal sense for the people living there. Sweis is convinced that this book will help open up more conversations in Jordan, in Europe and in the US about the impact of the Arab Spring on the lives of ordinary people in the Middle East.

“The most significant impact from the activities supported by the EED including research, interviews and visits is that ordinary people felt they had a voice.”

**“The most
significant impact
is that ordinary
people feel they
have a voice”**

Rana F. Sweis, author of “Voices of Jordan”

EED FUNDING PARTNERS

Twenty-three European countries who are members of the Board of Governors have contributed to EED's programme budget to date, as well as Canada through a special grant for Ukraine. The EED operations budget is covered by a European Commission grant of 4 million EUR.

Canada supports grassroots democracy in Ukraine. EED is managing the Canadian C\$ 5 million contribution to provide grants for Ukrainian civil society development.



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