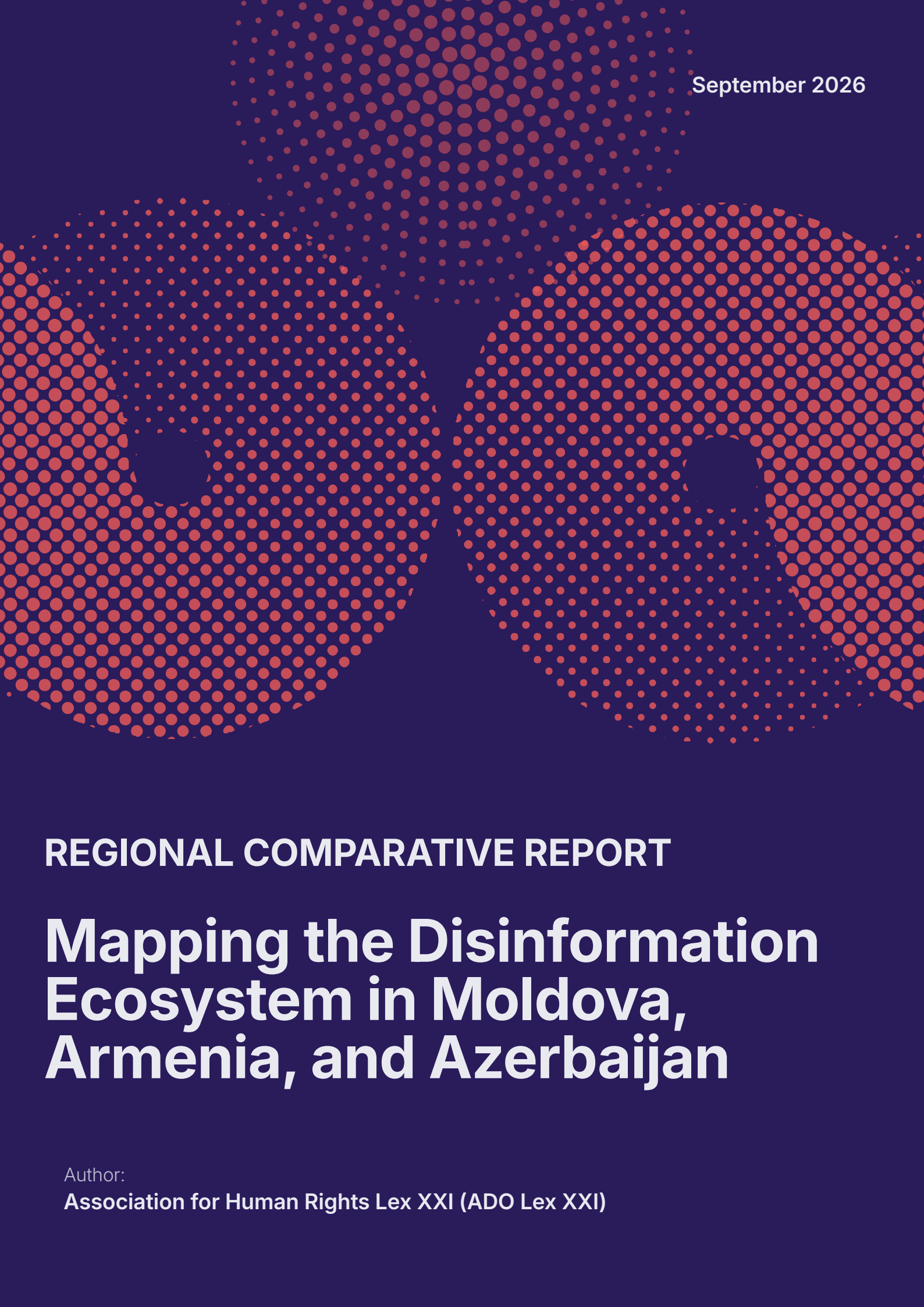




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REGIONAL COMPARATIVE REPORT

Mapping the Disinformation Ecosystem in Moldova, Armenia, and Azerbaijan

Author:

Association for Human Rights Lex XXI (ADO Lex XXI)

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Executive Summary

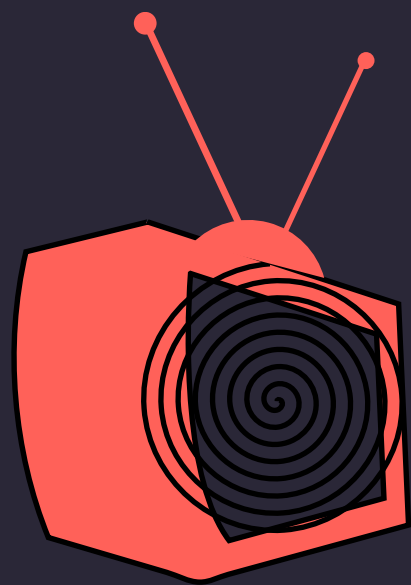
Disinformation is a growing threat to democratic governance, public trust, social cohesion and regional security across the Eastern Partnership. Moldova, Armenia and Azerbaijan have different political and media environments, but all face increasingly complex information manipulation through social media, coordinated influence campaigns, anonymous networks and AI-generated content.

This report maps the main trends, challenges and responses across the three countries, drawing on desk research, country-level analysis, and observations from study visits and networking meetings in Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Common vulnerabilities include high reliance on social media for news, uneven media literacy, fragmented information environments and declining trust in institutions. Disinformation often exploits similar themes across the region, including elections, governance, corruption, national identity, regional conflicts, migration, public health and relations with international partners.

The report highlights good practices that strengthen resilience against disinformation, including media and digital literacy education, independent fact-checking, strategic public communication, community-based awareness campaigns and innovative monitoring tools. It finds that the strongest responses combine prevention and rapid action, supported by sustained cooperation among public institutions, civil society, academia, independent media and international partners.

Ultimately, the report concludes that countering disinformation requires more than reactive measures against false information. Building resilient societies depends on fostering critical thinking, protecting independent media, strengthening democratic institutions, encouraging civic participation, and promoting cross-border cooperation.



Understanding Disinformation

DEFINITION

According to internationally recognised definitions, disinformation refers to false or misleading information that is deliberately created and disseminated to deceive people, manipulate public opinion, or advance political, ideological or economic objectives. Unlike accidental mistakes, it is characterised by an intent to mislead.

Disinformation

False information deliberately created and shared to deceive audiences.

Misinformation

False or inaccurate information shared without knowing it is false.

Malinformation

Genuine information used maliciously to cause harm, often taken out of context or shared without consent.

Propaganda

Information—true, false, or misleading—designed to influence opinions or behavior for political or ideological purposes.



How it is produced and amplified

Disinformation can take the form of fabricated stories, altered photos or videos, misleading context, fake accounts, clickbait, deepfakes and conspiracy narratives. It spreads quickly through social media and messaging applications, anonymous accounts, bot networks and websites that imitate legitimate news sources.



What it seeks to achieve

The aim is often not to convince everyone of one false claim. It is to create confusion, fuel fear or anger, deepen divisions and make people unsure which sources to trust.

Disinformation Landscape in the Eastern Partnership Region

Disinformation in Moldova, Armenia and Azerbaijan takes different forms, but it is increasingly shaped by the same conditions: fast-moving online information, political tension and limited capacity to verify what people see and share. While national contexts differ, misleading narratives often exploit sensitive issues—including elections, national security, conflict, economic uncertainty and relations with international partners—to fuel distrust and deepen divisions.

SHARED REGIONAL RISKS



1. Information travels faster during moments of uncertainty.

Elections, political crises and conflict create conditions in which misleading narratives, manipulated visuals and unverified claims spread particularly quickly.



2. Online platforms amplify polarisation.

Social media and messaging applications are now central channels for both news and disinformation, including through anonymous accounts, coordinated networks and increasingly sophisticated visual content.



3. The consequences reach beyond the online space.

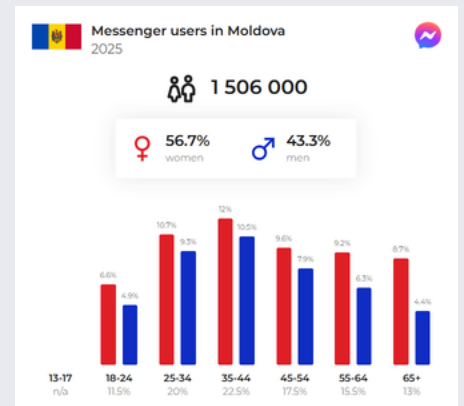
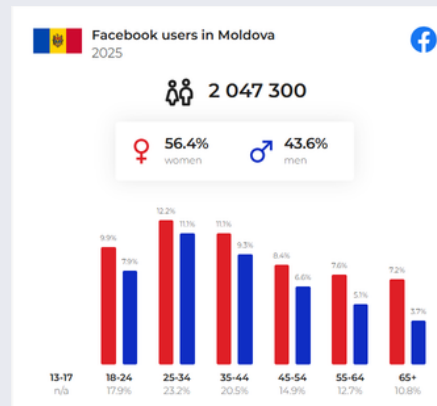
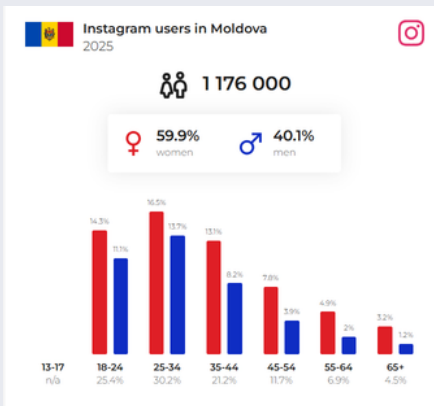
Disinformation can undermine confidence in democratic institutions, influence electoral behaviour, fuel social divisions and place additional pressure on independent media and civil society.

Country	Main channels	Typical narratives	Country-specific characteristics	Areas at risk
Moldova	Facebook, Telegram, TikTok and television	EU integration, elections, energy crisis	A frequent target of foreign influence and domestic political disinformation, especially during elections and policy debates.	Democracy, elections and public trust
Armenia	Facebook, Telegram, YouTube	National security, relations with neighbouring countries and conflict	Disinformation often uses emotionally charged headlines, edited images and false videos, particularly during periods of political tension or crisis.	National security, elections and trust in institutions
Azerbaijan	Social media, messaging applications and state-controlled media	National security, regional conflict, economic and social issues	The information environment is shaped by media restrictions, while unverified online content can intensify tensions around conflict-related issues.	Media freedom and civic participation

Country Profiles

The following country profiles bring together the principal disinformation narratives identified in Moldova, Armenia and Azerbaijan with available data on social media use.

MOLDOVA



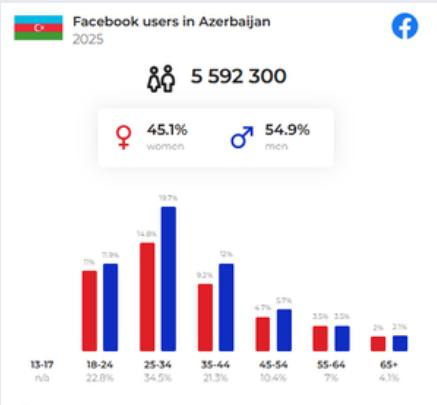
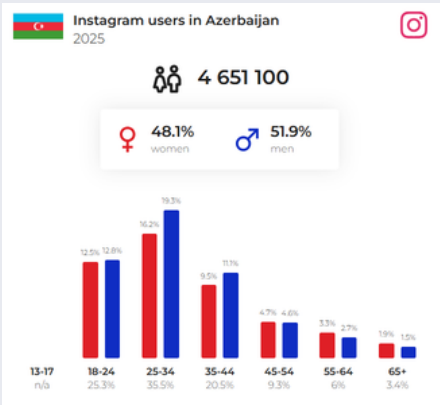
Narrative	Description	Primary Target
Moldova will lose its sovereignty in the EU	Claims that EU integration will eliminate Moldova's independence	EU accession process
NATO will drag Moldova into war	Narratives portraying cooperation with NATO as a direct military	Security policy
Government censorship and dictatorship	Claims that authorities suppress opposition voices	Democratic institutions
Traditional values are under threat	Disinformation linking European integration with cultural decline	Social cohesion
Economic collapse due to the West	Claims that EU-oriented reforms worsen living standards	Public trust in reforms
Elections are manipulated by foreign actors	Narratives undermining confidence in democratic processes	Electoral integrity

ARMENIA



Narrative	Description
Claims that EU integration will eliminate Moldova's independence	Claims designed to increase public insecurity
Government betrayal narratives	Allegations that leaders deliberately weakened national interests
Anti-Western narratives	Claims that Western cooperation threatens Armenia
Anti-Armenian foreign propaganda	Narratives portraying Armenia as a destabilizing actor
Election manipulation claims	Attempts to undermine democratic institutions
Conspiracy theories on regional conflicts	Misleading information regarding regional security issues

AZERBAIJAN



Narrative	Description
Regional conflict manipulation	Misleading information regarding Armenia-Azerbaijan relations
International reputation attacks	Narratives targeting Azerbaijan's international image
Foreign interference claims	Information operations linked to geopolitical competition
National security misinformation	False narratives exploiting security concerns
Conspiracy narratives	Claims involving hidden geopolitical agendas

Exchange Visits and Networking Meetings in Azerbaijan and Armenia

The Association for Human Rights Lex XXI conducted exchange visits to Armenia and Azerbaijan, including three study visits in Armenia and four professional discussions in Azerbaijan. In Armenia, the delegation met Innobiz Armenia, the School of Local Democracy and another local NGO that preferred to remain anonymous. In Azerbaijan, the delegation participated in four professional discussions with three civil society organisations and one media organisation that requested anonymity.

SIMILAR CHALLENGES ACROSS THE REGION

Despite different political and media environments, organisations in all three countries identified rapidly changing digital threats, limited resources, declining trust in information sources and the increasing use of AI-generated content as common concerns. Participants stressed that many influence operations cross borders and therefore cannot be addressed through isolated national responses.

EFFECTIVE RESPONSES COMBINE TOOLS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Monitoring online information environments and identifying coordinated activity are important, but technical measures alone are insufficient. Participants underlined the need to combine fact-checking and monitoring with media education, public awareness, transparent communication and community engagement.

REGIONAL COOPERATION SHOULD CONTINUE

The visits strengthened trust and established direct contacts among participating organisations. Participants identified scope for continued exchange of methodologies, educational materials and monitoring tools, as well as future joint training, research, advocacy and public-awareness activities.

Best Practices in Countering Disinformation

No single intervention can address disinformation on its own. The most effective responses combine independent fact-checking, long-term media literacy, community engagement and digital verification tools. Across Moldova, Armenia and Azerbaijan, successful initiatives place citizens—not only institutions—at the centre of information resilience.

Independent fact-checking

Fact-checkers verify public claims, media reports and viral content using primary sources, multiple references and editorial review. In Moldova, [Stopfals.md](#) investigates false claims relating to elections, EU accession and the war in Ukraine. In Armenia, [FIP.am](#) verifies political and security-related claims, while [Media.am](#) publishes fact-checking and media-literacy resources. In Azerbaijan, [FactChecking.az](#) covers health misinformation, AI-generated content, deepfakes and international news.

Community-led engagement

Local organisations work with communities, schools, journalists and public authorities through public discussions, workshops, youth initiatives and local awareness activities. In Moldova, the [Council of Europe media-freedom programme](#) supports media literacy and cooperation between journalists and communities. In Armenia, [People in Need](#) trained 19 local CSOs to deliver workshops, documentary screenings and youth discussions. In Azerbaijan, community capacity-building has included training, coaching, volunteer engagement and small-grant support.

Digital verification and monitoring

Journalists and fact-checkers use reverse image search, geolocation, metadata analysis, archive searches and OSINT to check images, videos and coordinated online activity. Moldova's Stop Fals! publishes analyses of deepfakes and coordinated campaigns; FIP.am and Media.am use image forensics and geolocation in Armenia; and Azerbaijani initiatives increasingly address manipulated videos, synthetic media and AI-generated images.

Media literacy from an early age

Programmes teach students and young people to assess sources, recognise manipulation and understand digital risks. Moldova's Heroes of the Internet programme combines classroom activities with teacher training and family guidance; Y-MEDIA uses workshops, documentary screenings and practical fact-checking; and MILI trains local facilitators and supports intergenerational learning. In Armenia, the Media Initiatives Center integrates media literacy into schools through curricula, teacher training and educational games. Azerbaijan's MEDIA Volunteers, MEDIAlab and InnoMEDIA programmes link media literacy with journalism, digital communication and innovation.

Key Findings and Lessons Learned

KEY FINDINGS

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|-----------|---|--|
| 1. | Social media is central to the information environment | Facebook, Telegram, TikTok, YouTube, X and messaging applications allow misleading content to circulate faster than it can be checked or corrected. |
| 2. | Disinformation is increasingly coordinated | Fake profiles, bot networks, anonymous channels, coordinated posting and manipulated visuals are used to create artificial reach and the appearance of public consensus. |
| 3. | Political and security issues are frequent targets | Elections, regional conflict, national identity, energy, foreign policy and relations with international partners are repeatedly exploited to fuel fear, uncertainty and division. |
| 4. | AI is changing the scale of manipulation | Synthetic images, voices, videos and automated messages make deceptive content easier and cheaper to produce, while also making verification more difficult. |
| 5. | The objective is often to weaken trust | Campaigns seek to undermine confidence in electoral processes, public institutions, independent journalism, scientific expertise and reliable information sources. |

What has shown promise

The strongest responses combine prevention and rapid action: media and digital literacy, independent fact-checking, support for quality journalism, timely communication by public institutions, community engagement and digital verification tools. These approaches are most effective when they help people understand how manipulation works, rather than simply correcting individual false claims after they have spread.

Integrate media literacy into education at all levels; train teachers; and reach older people, rural communities and other groups particularly exposed to online manipulation.

Support independent local media, investigative journalism and rapid-response fact-checking, particularly during elections, crises and periods of heightened public interest.

Strengthen monitoring, coordination and crisis-communication capacities so that public institutions can provide timely, reliable information and address emerging narratives.

Improve transparency on political advertising, algorithms and coordinated inauthentic behaviour; promote clear labelling of AI-generated content; and invest in deepfake detection and verification skills.

Provide sustained support for civil society organisations working on media literacy, digital rights and civic education, including youth-led and locally tailored initiatives.

Develop common indicators and research on emerging threats; share methodologies and educational materials; and establish regular exchanges among journalists, researchers, educators and fact-checkers.



Contact Information



Email

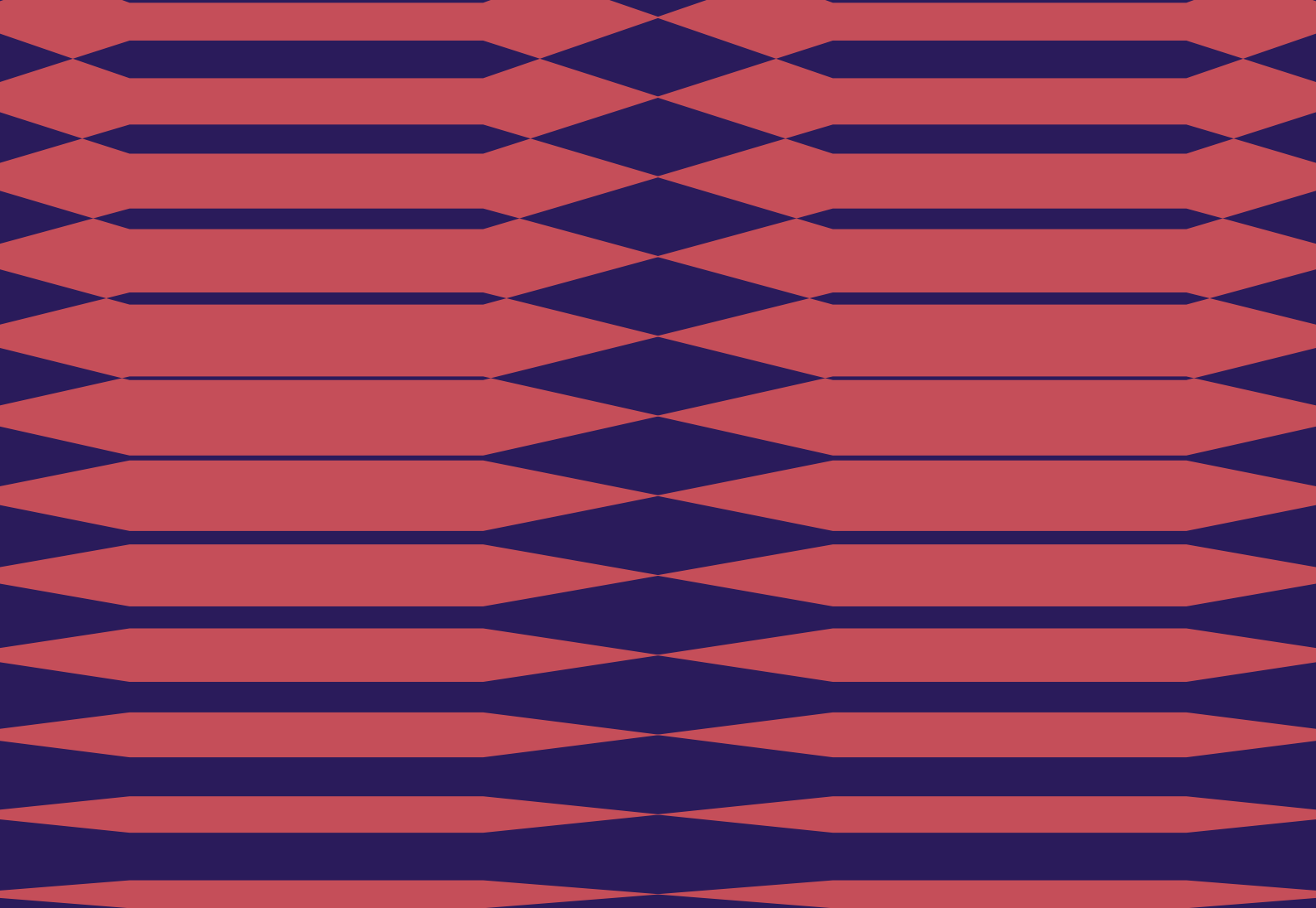
adolex21@gmail.com

Phone

+373 797 07 420

Website

<https://adolex21.md/>



Asociația pentru Drepturile Omului

Lex 21