

REGIONAL POLICY BRIEF

Strengthening Democratic Resilience against Disinformation

Joint Policy Recommendations for Moldova, Armenia, and Azerbaijan

MOLDOVA

ARMENIA

AZERBAIJAN

Prepared by the civil society organizations participating in the regional cooperation project on resilience to disinformation, based on the report “Mapping the Disinformation Ecosystem in Moldova, Armenia, and Azerbaijan: Evidence, Challenges, and Good Practices”

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Its contents are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union or the GMF TF.

1. Purpose of this policy brief

The document translates the conclusions of the regional report — the result of exchange visits, networking meetings, and best-practice sessions carried out with partner organizations in Armenia and Azerbaijan — into a set of policy recommendations intended for decision-makers, European institutions, and international partners.

The brief aims to amplify the voice of civil society organizations (CSOs) from the three countries in policy debates on disinformation, democratic resilience, and human rights protection, and to strengthen these organizations' capacity to cooperate not only in networking but also in joint advocacy efforts.

2. Regional context

Moldova, Armenia, and Azerbaijan operate within distinct political, social, and media environments, yet they share common structural vulnerabilities: declining trust in public institutions, uneven levels of media literacy, growing dependence on social media as a primary news source, and increasing exposure to foreign and domestic influence operations.

Although the narratives differ from country to country, the techniques used are remarkably similar: coordinated account networks, AI-generated content, Telegram-based campaigns, and messaging designed to exploit polarization and fear. In Moldova, disinformation continues to center on European integration and energy security. In Armenia, alongside long-standing narratives linked to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and regional security, a more articulated wave of disinformation has developed around the June elections — both in the run-up to the vote and, more intensely, in its aftermath — aiming to delegitimize the results and to undermine EU-Armenia cooperation. This includes narratives misrepresenting the EU Partnership Mission in Armenia (EUPM) as "foreign interference," as well as attacks on the visa liberalisation dialogue and on EU subsidies and simplified import rules supporting Armenia's agricultural sector following the Russian embargo. The planned Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) has also become a focus of propaganda narratives. In Azerbaijan, disinformation continues to center on international reputation and COP29-related narratives.

The exchange visits conducted in Armenia (three meetings, including with Innobiz Armenia and the School of Local Democracy) and in Azerbaijan confirmed that organizations in all three countries face limited financial resources, insufficient access to digital monitoring technologies, and insufficient cross-border information exchange.

3. Key findings underpinning the recommendations

- Social media platforms (Facebook, Telegram, TikTok, YouTube, X) have become the primary channel for both information and disinformation in all three countries.
- Coordinated influence operations — fake account networks, messaging repeated simultaneously across platforms, pro-Kremlin narratives in Moldova's case — cross national borders and require regional, not merely national, responses.
- Generative artificial intelligence (images, synthetic voices, deepfakes) significantly lowers the cost of producing convincing false content, while regulatory frameworks remain insufficient in all three countries.
- Fact-checking capacities differ considerably: Moldova has the most institutionalized ecosystem (Stopfals.md, an IFCN signatory), Armenia relies on independent media organizations (FIP.am,

Media.am, CivilNet), while in Azerbaijan verification is carried out mainly by independent journalists operating in a more restrictive environment.

- Media literacy remains the most sustainable long-term response: 96% of respondents in Moldova recognize the importance of distinguishing fake news from factual information, yet 70% consider social media the main source of disinformation.
- Civil society organizations in all three countries expressed strong interest in sustainable partnerships focused on expertise exchange, joint educational materials, and common methodologies for monitoring disinformation.

4. Joint policy recommendations

The recommendations below are formulated as common positions of the participating organizations from Moldova, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, to be advanced before national decision-makers, European Union institutions, and international development partners.

4.1 Strengthening national information-resilience frameworks

- Adopt or update national strategies dedicated to countering disinformation, with clearly defined institutional responsibilities and interagency coordination mechanisms.
- Allocate sustainable public funding for long-term resilience initiatives rather than one-off campaigns.

Responsible actors: *National governments, relevant ministries, cybersecurity agencies, media regulators.*

4.2 Expanding media and information literacy

- Integrate media and digital literacy into school curricula at all education levels across the three countries.
- Develop dedicated programs for elderly populations, rural communities, and vulnerable groups, which remain the most exposed to risk.
- Provide continuous training for teachers on identifying online manipulation and AI-generated content.

Responsible actors: *Ministries of education, educational institutions, civil society organizations with media-literacy expertise.*

4.3 Supporting independent journalism and fact-checking

- Increase financial support for independent local and regional media.
- Develop rapid-response fact-checking mechanisms active during elections and emergencies.
- Provide targeted support for independent journalists in Azerbaijan, who operate in a more restrictive media environment.

Responsible actors: *Fact-checking organizations, press associations, international donors.*

4.4 Increasing digital platform accountability

- Establish regular dialogue with social media platforms on disinformation trends identified in the region.
- Require clear labeling of AI-generated content (synthetic images, video, and audio).
- Increase transparency regarding political advertising and content-recommendation algorithms.

Responsible actors: *EU institutions, national media regulators, digital platforms.*

4.5 Establishing a permanent regional cooperation mechanism

- Create a permanent regional network of CSOs, researchers, journalists, and media experts from Moldova, Armenia, and Azerbaijan.

- Organize an annual regional conference on countering disinformation.
- Develop a regional rapid-alert system for identifying cross-border disinformation campaigns.
- Conduct joint comparative research and publish regular regional reports and policy briefs.

Responsible actors: *The signatory organizations of this brief, with support from international partners (EU, Council of Europe, OSCE, UNESCO).*

4.6 Addressing artificial intelligence risks

- Develop legal frameworks addressing the malicious use of generative AI.
- Train journalists and public officials to identify deepfake content.
- Support research on AI-detection technologies.

Responsible actors: *Public institutions, academia, international standard-setting organizations.*

5. Country-specific priorities

Moldova

- Expand nationwide media literacy programs, particularly in rural areas.
- Strengthen resilience against foreign information influence, especially during electoral periods.
- Reinforce strategic communication to counter false narratives about European integration.

Armenia

- Address disinformation linked to regional security and post-conflict narratives.
- Strengthen independent journalism outside the capital.
- Expand digital literacy programs for youth and displaced communities.

Azerbaijan

- Increase access to reliable and diverse sources of information.
- Support professional journalism training and fact-based reporting.
- Expand media literacy initiatives focused on identifying manipulated and AI-generated content.

6. Follow-up and dissemination mechanism

This policy brief will be disseminated regionally to relevant decision-makers in Moldova, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, to the European Union delegations in the three countries, and to regional civil society networks within the Eastern Partnership. The participating organizations plan to organize public presentation events for the document and to maintain ongoing dialogue with the targeted institutions to monitor the implementation of the recommendations put forward.

This policy brief is a living document and will be updated as cooperation among the signatory organizations advances, including through further comparative research and periodic monitoring reports.

Source: Mapping the Disinformation Ecosystem in Moldova, Armenia, and Azerbaijan: Evidence, Challenges, and Good Practices.

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