

Annual Report

***"PROMOTING QUALITY MEDIA, DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS, AS
WELL AS DIGITAL LITERACY AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT,
WORLDWIDE"***

2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary **3**

About MEMO 98 **4**

Key achievements **5**

Projects **6**

Public events **12**

International missions **15**

Financial overview **16**

Team & Contacts **18**

Executive Summary



MAREK MRAČKA

MEMO 98

In 2021, MEMO 98's work was still deeply influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, which moved many of our activities into the online space. What could have been seen as a limitation became an opportunity to innovate and expand our reach. We developed new ways to connect with citizens, journalists, and partners, ensuring that our mission to promote democratic integrity and media freedom continued without interruption.

A special focus of our work during this period was on seniors, one of the groups most exposed to disinformation in the pandemic era. Together with our partners, we created leaflets, expert videos, and online workshops that helped older citizens better understand the digital environment, resist harmful narratives around vaccination, and strengthen their overall media literacy.

Internationally, we carried out important projects monitoring elections and disinformation in Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, and Russia, as well as groundbreaking research on the online treatment of women politicians. These efforts demonstrated both the diversity of our work and our continued ability to apply our methodology in very different contexts. At the same time, we worked on research related to media ownership and actively contributed to international debates on the regulation of digital platforms, and online political advertising, ensuring that MEMO 98 remained a trusted voice in shaping democratic standards for the digital age.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, we deepened our partnerships across Europe and beyond, and further strengthened our role as a defender of democracy and civic space. Our resilience and adaptability in 2021 reaffirmed what MEMO 98 has stood for since its foundation: a steadfast commitment to ensuring that people everywhere have access to fair, reliable, and comprehensive information.

About MEMO 98

MEMO 98 helps people receive fair and comprehensive information about public affairs. With 26 years of experience in Slovakia and abroad, we work to ensure access to quality media content that enhances critical thinking and informed decision-making.



VISION

MEMO 98 envisions societies where people have free access to comprehensive, reliable, and diverse information. We strive to ensure that media serves as a pillar of democracy, enabling informed public debate and critical thinking. Through media monitoring, civic engagement, and strategic advocacy, we defend democratic values and fight disinformation. Our vision is a resilient information space where truth, accountability, and transparency thrive.

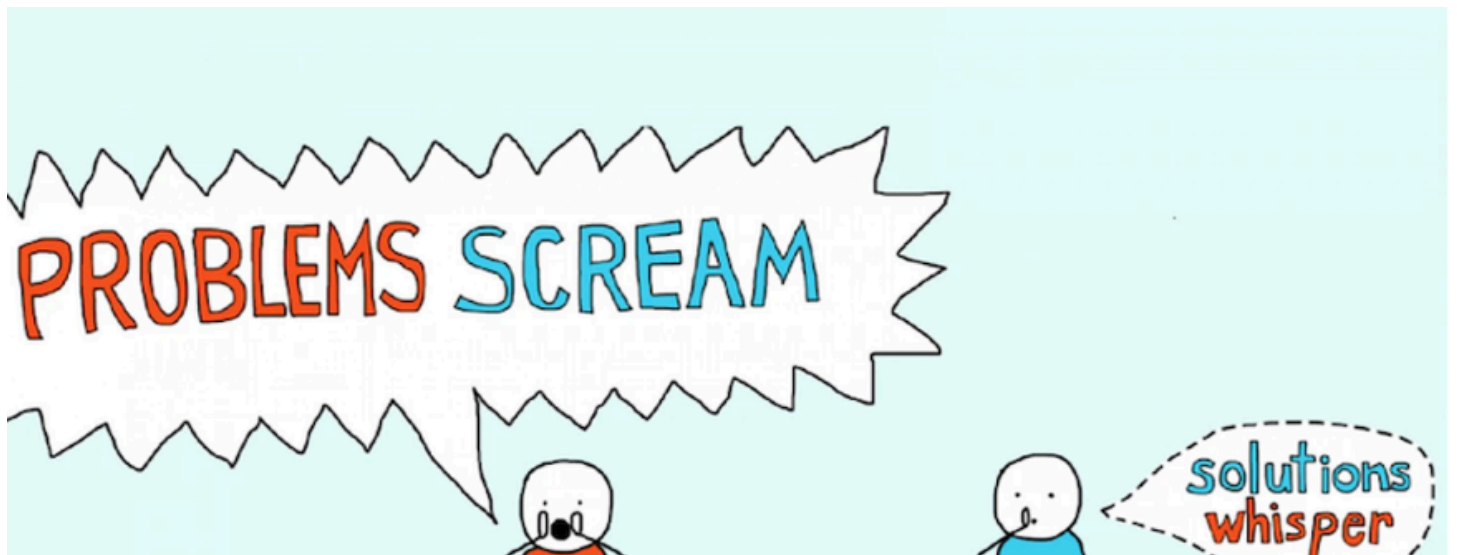
MISSION

- Monitor traditional and social media to track media manipulation, disinformation, including gender-based, and challenges to electoral integrity, resulting in democratic backsliding.
- Deliver timely, data-driven and factual analysis to enrich public debate and empower citizens, especially first- and second-time voters.
- Support vulnerable groups, including women and seniors, to resist disinformation and engage in democratic processes.
- Provide technical assistance and expert legal analysis as well as advocacy to strengthen media regulation, institutional accountability, and democratic safeguards.
- Collaborate with influencers, creatives, and media to amplify credible information through innovative and audience-specific campaigns.
- Build partnerships with national and international actors to align Slovak democratic resilience efforts with global best practices.

Key achievements

Key Achievements in 2021

- Groundbreaking Fiji research
 - Together with International IDEA, MEMO 98 piloted an innovative study on how women politicians are treated on social media in Fiji. The research analyzed thousands of posts and comments, revealing widespread online abuse, and brought global attention to the challenges women face in politics.
- Seniors & disinformation – workshops, leaflets, and videos helped older citizens in Slovakia and Central Europe strengthen their digital resilience during the pandemic.
- Quality journalism – promoted Solutions Journalism in Slovakia through workshops, micro-grants, and support for the Novinárska cena.
- Election monitoring – assessed social media activity and disinformation during elections in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, and Russia.
- Policy debates – contributed expertise at on public media, digital regulation, AI and political advertising.



Projects

14 KEY PROJECTS IN SLOVAKIA AND ABROAD



Public events

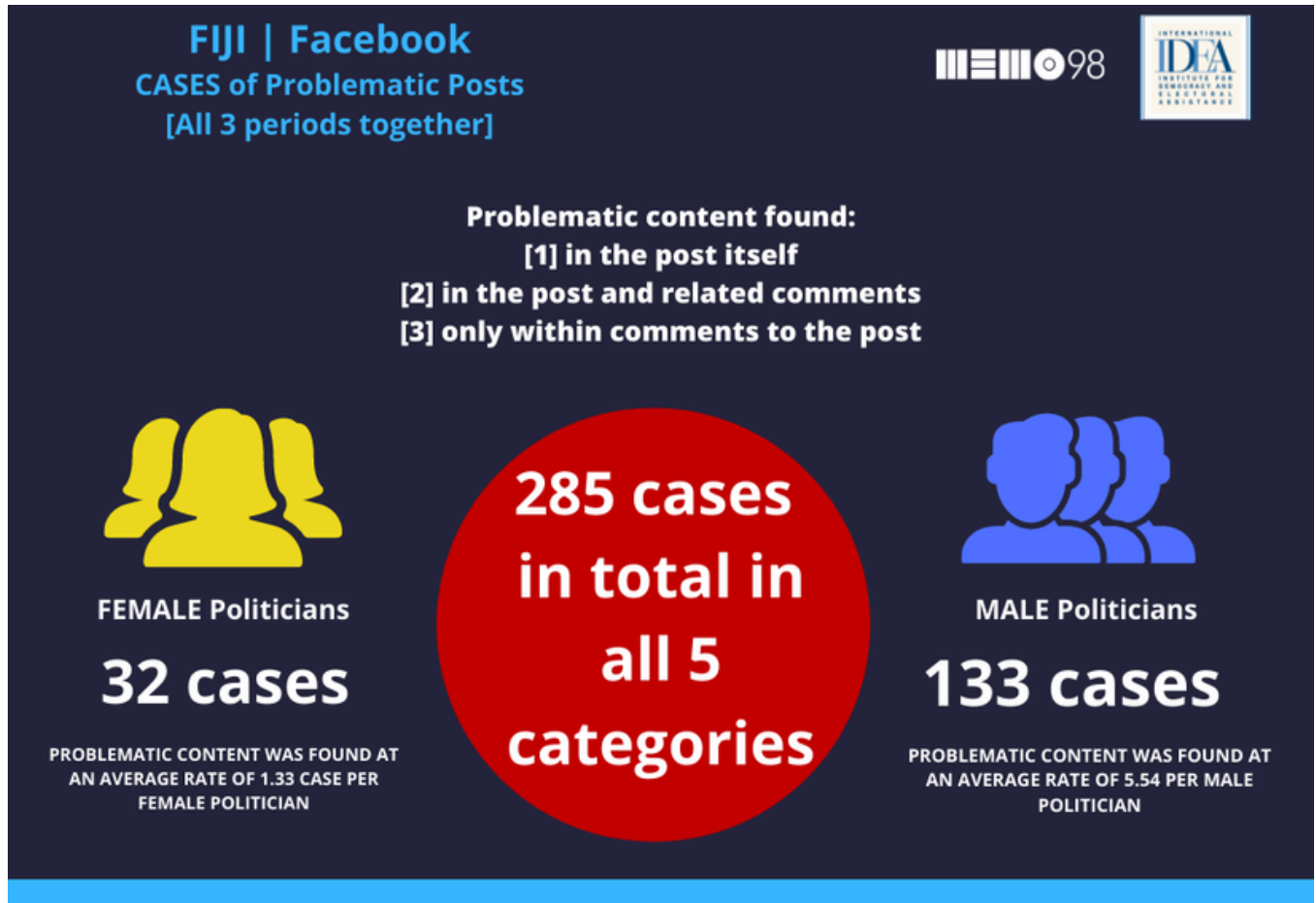
OVER 10 DEBATES, BRIEFINGS, EXPERT PANELS,



International missions

4 ELECTIONS OBSERVATION MISSIONS

Projects



RESEARCH ON WOMEN POLITICIANS ONLINE

In collaboration with International IDEA MEMO 98, it conducted a pilot innovative study on the treatment of women in politics on social media in Fiji, analyzing more than 2,600 posts and nearly 100,000 comments on Facebook during key election-related periods. The project, which began in 2020, revealed surprising findings: nearly 11% of all posts contained problematic content—most of it sexist, racist, threatening, or abusive. Most of the toxic content came from public comments, with female politicians being particularly targeted for personal insults and political victimization.

This pioneering initiative highlighted the urgent need to address online violence against women in politics, an issue with global reach. In 2021, MEMO 98's research continued, focusing on social media communication in the context of Papua New Guinea and documenting how female politicians were disproportionately exposed to online abuse.

These projects demonstrated MEMO 98's ability to apply its expertise in different contexts and contribute to international discussions on gender equality, online safety, and democracy.

Projects



SENIORS AND DISINFORMATION (SLOVAKIA AND CE)

In 2021, MEMO 98 continued its long-term focus on supporting seniors, one of the groups most vulnerable to disinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Together with partners in Slovakia, Czechia, Hungary, and Poland, we developed a program of online and offline activities to help older citizens strengthen their media and digital literacy.

This included the production of informational leaflets on how to identify trustworthy sources, understand the motives of trolls, and navigate misleading content. In cooperation with Seesame, we produced an expert video addressing vaccination and disinformation narratives that were widely shared online.

The project also offered online workshops and interactive discussions, where seniors had the opportunity to learn practical strategies for resisting disinformation and to share their own experiences of navigating the digital world. By the end of the year, hundreds of seniors across the region had directly benefited from these activities, while many more were reached through media coverage and social networks. The project established MEMO 98 as a relevant actor in developing innovative, age-sensitive approaches to media literacy.

Projects



SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM (SLOVAKIA)

MEMO 98 continued to support innovation in Slovak journalism by promoting the concept of Solutions Journalism. In 2021, we organized a series of online workshops for journalists, students of journalism, and interested members of the public. These events introduced participants to new approaches in reporting that go beyond highlighting problems to also examine and evaluate possible solutions.

The workshops were complemented by a micro-grant and mentoring scheme, which provided young journalists with opportunities to produce solution-oriented stories under the guidance of experienced mentors. Solutions Journalism was also featured as a special category in the Novinárska cena, a national journalism award that MEMO 98 supports as a long-term partner.

The Solutions Story Tracker, a comprehensive database of reports on responses to social problems, at the end of 2021 included almost 13,000 stories from some 6,000 journalists from more than 185 countries. By combining training, mentoring, and recognition, the project contributed to a more diverse and constructive media landscape in Slovakia.

Projects

MÉRTÉK MEDIA MONITOR

FOUR SHADES OF CENSORSHIP State Intervention in the Central Eastern European Media Markets

FOUR SHADES OF CENSORSHIP (CEE)

Together with partners Mertek Media Monitor (Hungary), MediaForum (Czech Republic), and ActiveWatch (Romania), MEMO 98 co-authored the study Four Shades of Censorship. The report analyzed media policy processes in media environments across the 4 countries with a special focus given to 4 areas - Media markets, Media regulatory bodies, Public service media, and Journalists.

The study provided evidence of how politics and business interests intertwine in the media sector, with Hungary representing the most extreme case of state interference. It also examined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on advertising revenues, the dominance of digital platforms, and the growing challenge of disinformation. By collecting and processing primary data rather than relying solely on secondary sources, the research offered a strong evidence base for policymakers, journalists, and civil society actors advocating for media freedom.

Projects

KYRGYZSTAN SNAP PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION MONITORING

At the start of 2021, MEMO 98 contributed to international efforts to assess the information environment in Kyrgyzstan's snap presidential election, which followed mass protests in 2020. Our work focused on social media monitoring, evaluating how candidates and political actors used Facebook and Instagram to reach voters. The study revealed clear disparities in engagement levels, highlighting how front-runner Sadyr Japarov, despite posting less frequently, generated much higher interaction rates than his opponents.

The analysis also examined the role of online political advertising and the spread of disinformation, raising important questions about transparency and regulation in Kyrgyzstan's rapidly evolving digital sphere. The findings provided valuable input into broader election assessments and were widely shared with local stakeholders, international partners, and the media.

KAZAKHSTAN ELECTIONS IN SOCIAL MEDIA

MEMO98 conducted a social media monitoring project around the January 2021 parliamentary elections in Kazakhstan. From November 9, 2020, to January 9, 2021, the team tracked the online activity of 48 political actors, including politicians, parties, media outlets, and government authorities, across Facebook and Instagram.

Despite smaller posting volumes on Instagram (12,287 posts), engagement levels were markedly higher compared to Facebook (29,342 posts). Instagram accounted for over 11 million interactions, versus approximately 1.3 million on Facebook. This stark contrast highlighted the platform's potency in influencing political discourse.

One of the most striking findings revealed that Mukhtar Ablyazov, an exiled opposition figure, generated nearly 800,000 interactions on Instagram despite frequent absence from traditional media or electoral activity. Meanwhile, President Tokayev, although posting only five times, garnered around 450,000 interactions, demonstrating the asymmetry between posting activity and audience reach.

The analysis offered valuable insights into voter communication dynamics, demonstrating how social media can amplify some voices regardless of geographic or political constraints. The study underlined the role of digital platforms in shaping information flows in restrictive media environments and provided a data-driven foundation for understanding online political engagement in Kazakhstan.

Projects



MOLDOVA PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS MONITORING

In July 2021, MEMO 98 partnered with Mediapoint and International IDEA to monitor the role of social media in Moldova's early parliamentary elections. The project analyzed the campaigns of 23 electoral contestants across platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Telegram, and Odnoklassniki.

The results showed a stark division in Moldovan society, with pro-Western parties emphasizing European integration while pro-Russian actors advanced narratives of foreign interference. The research documented how these opposing narratives shaped online debate, underscoring the risks of polarization and disinformation in Moldova's political environment. By providing an evidence-based picture of online campaigning, MEMO 98 helped Moldovan civil society, media, and policymakers better understand the dynamics of digital campaigning and its impact on democracy.

RUSSIA STATE DUMA ELECTIONS MONITORING

For the September 2021 State Duma elections in Russia, MEMO 98 produced an in-depth report analyzing the role of social media platforms in the campaign. The study examined how political actors used online tools to amplify their messages, the extent of disinformation, and the role of state-controlled media in shaping online debate.

The findings highlighted systemic challenges to electoral integrity in Russia, including restrictions on opposition voices, manipulation of information flows, and the use of coordinated networks to promote pro-government narratives. The report was disseminated internationally and contributed to the global understanding of Russia's controlled media environment and its implications for democracy

Public events

BRIEFINGS, DEBATES AND DISCUSSIONS

COVID-19 Related Disinformation on Social Media Platforms and Ways to Tackle It

MEMO98 collaborated with the Slovak media regulator to host a landmark webinar tackling the pervasive “infodemic” that accompanied the COVID-19 pandemic. The event on 14 April brought together key stakeholders - including representatives from Google, Facebook, Twitter, Access Now, members of ERGA, the European Commission, disinformation experts, journalists, and academics - to explore the challenges posed by pandemic-related misinformation and discuss effective countermeasures.

During the session, participants dissected how online platforms were used to amplify misleading content, and deliberated on strategies to both detect and respond to false narratives—such as promoting authoritative sources, enhancing fact-checking, and strengthening platform accountability measures. The webinar emphasized the need for coordinated action among regulators, tech companies, civil society, and media professionals to preserve information integrity during crisis periods.



COVID-19

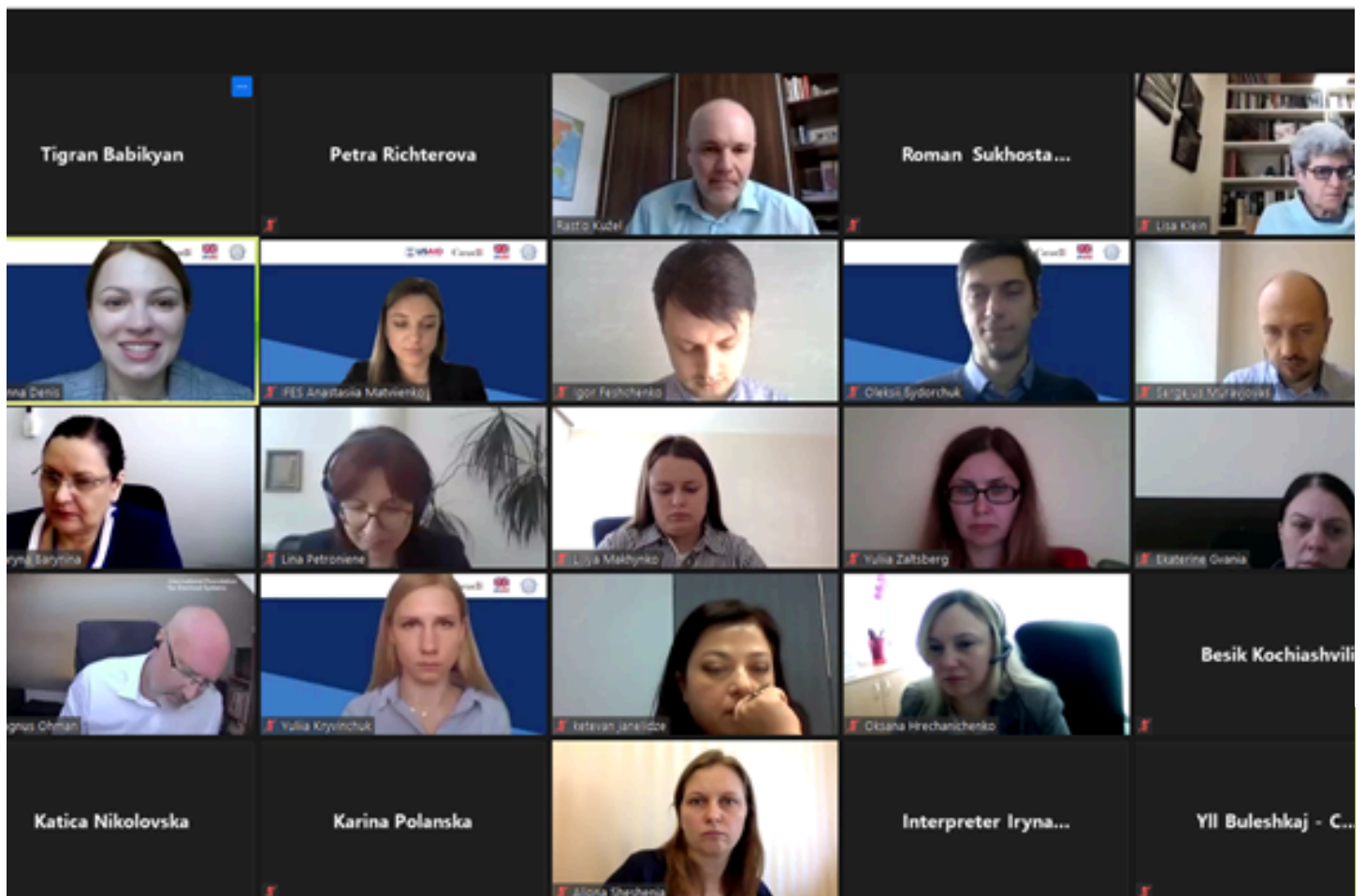
Public events

BRIEFINGS, DEBATES AND DISCUSSIONS II.

Conference on Monitoring Political Advertising (IFES Ukraine)

In 2021, MEMO 98 contributed to the Conference on Monitoring Online and Offline Political Advertising, organized by IFES Ukraine. The event brought together regulators, experts, and civil society representatives to discuss challenges and best practices in overseeing political finance and advertising.

Rasťo Kužel presented MEMO 98's extensive experience with media monitoring, highlighting the organization's recent shift toward analyzing digital campaigning and online political advertising. He explained that while the methodology for traditional and social media shares common principles, the digital environment introduces unique obstacles - from the lack of clear definitions and regulations to the limited capacity of oversight bodies. His intervention underscored the urgent need for stronger frameworks to ensure transparency and accountability in the rapidly changing digital campaigning space.



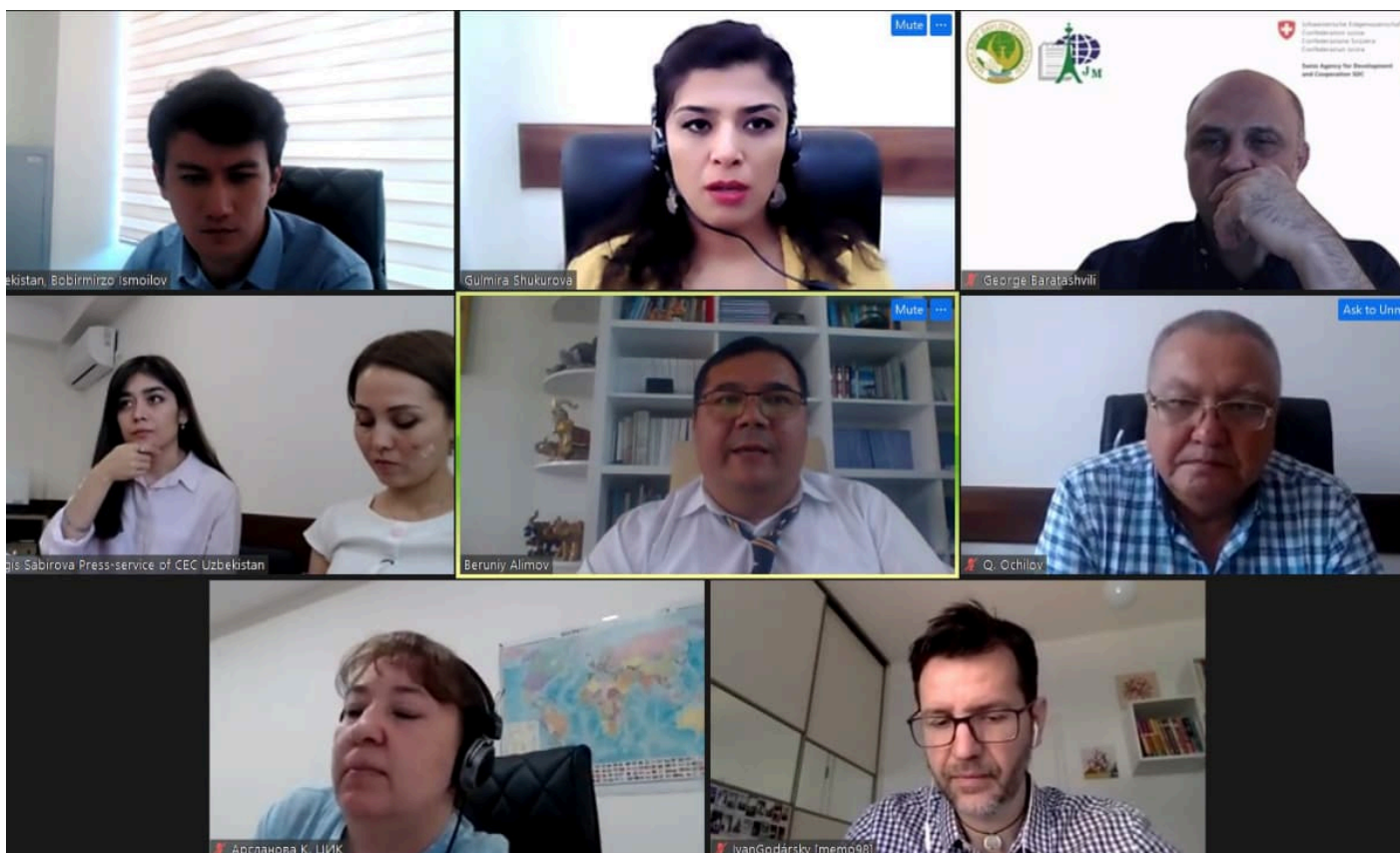
Public events

BRIEFINGS, DEBATES AND DISCUSSIONS III.

Series of Trainings for Central Election Commission Press officers and Local journalists - Election coverage,, democratic governance and media freedom” (UNDP/CEC Uzbekistan)

Series of media trainings/seminars, co-organized by the Central Election Commission of Uzbekistan, the Journalists Retraining Center, and UNDP Uzbekistan, and held between June and September 2021 were designed for press officers from the Election Commission. The sessions focused on the critical role of media in democratic governance, the importance of media freedom during electoral processes, and effective professional communication strategies. The trainings aimed to strengthen participants’ understanding of journalistic ethics, election reporting standards, and international best practices in election media coverage.

Ivan Godársky participated as a trainer, sharing his expertise on media monitoring, transparency, and best practices in election communication. His contribution helped participants gain practical insights into how independent and professional media coverage contributes to public trust in elections This series was a follow-up to the comparative analysis conducted by Ivan Godársky at the beginning of 2021, in which good practices from within the OSCE region has been provided, with a particular focus to a role of the media oversight bodies.



International missions

In 2021, MEMO 98 experts played significant roles in international election missions and projects, contributing their expertise across a range of electoral contexts.

Ivan Godársky served as a Media Analyst for the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission to Armenia in May 2021 and to Kyrgyzstan in October 2021. In both missions, he assessed the legal and regulatory framework governing media coverage, monitored the fairness and pluralism of election reporting, and analyzed the impact of online campaigning and disinformation. His findings helped mission leadership understand key challenges in the information environment and were reflected in the final recommendations aimed at strengthening media independence and ensuring equitable access for all electoral contestants.

Marek Mračka contributed his expertise to election observation missions in Kosovo. Early in the year, he served as Media and Social Media Analyst for the EU Election Expert Mission to Kosovo, where he assessed the media environment, monitored online campaigning, and analyzed the impact of disinformation on the electoral process. In the autumn, he was in Kosovo as Press Officer for the EU Election Observation Mission, where he implemented new visual communication policies, coordinated media outreach, and ensured clear and consistent delivery of the mission's public messages to both domestic and international audiences.



2021 Financial Overview

MEMO 98 implemented a wide range of impactful projects supported by trusted international donors. Thanks to their financial contributions, we were able to carry out strategic work in media monitoring, democratic participation, countering disinformation, and media literacy – both in Slovakia and abroad. Below is a summary of all donor fundings:

Project Title	Donor	Amount
Increasing the Integrity of Elections in CEE (2019-21)	National Endowment for Democracy (NED)	USD 4,950
Counter Disinformation Among Vulnerable Populations, Seniors and Disinformation in V4 (2020-21, 2021-22)	NED, Transitions (<i>combined</i>)	USD 21,700
Strengthening Independent Media in CE (2020-21)	NED, Mertek	USD 22,250
To raise awareness about the role of social media prior Belarusian elections (2020-21)	Open Information Partnership (OIP)	GBP 8,950
To Raise Awareness About COVID-19 (2020-21)	OIP	GBP 8,050
Rebuilding Public Trust in the Media and Empowering and Activizing Citizens through Solutions Journalism (2020-21)	Porticus, Transitions	EUR 11,150
Elections and Media in Moldova (2020-21)	Slovak AID	EUR 2,200
To Strengthen the Integrity of Parliamentary Elections in Kyrgyz Republic (2021)	NED, Media Center	USD 21,400
EODS III Election Observation and Democracy Support (2021-24)	EU	EUR 6,000
Monitoring and Evaluation of Media Outlets (2021)	CCSF	EUR 59,155

2021 Financial Overview (cont.)

Project Title	Donor	Amount
European Voters - Together for Electoral Integrity (2021-23)	European Exchange	EUR 3,000
Monitoring Media in Belarus (2021)	The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)	USD 25,600
Comparative Study of Persons with Disabilities (2021)	Election Watch	EUR 500
Analysis of the Election Management Bodies (EMBs) on Social Media (2021)	International IDEA	EUR 10,000
Retroactive Social Media Monitoring Research on How Women Politicians of Melanesia are Treated on Facebook - Papua New Guinea (2021)	International IDEA	EUR 11,000

Team & Contacts



Rasto Kužel

kuzel@memo98.sk



Ivan Godársky

ivang@memo98.sk



Marek Mračka

marekm@memo98.sk

Senior mediálny analytik



Olena Sadovnik-Galamon



Laksiej Lavončyk



Iryna Chupryna



Kira Kalinina



Veronica Laputska



Petra Richterová



Dumitru Lazur

Sociálne média a analytik dát



Samuel Mračka



Branislav Kohn

Website

www.memo98.sk | www.infovolby.sk

Social media

facebook.com/memo98.sk

instagram.com/memo_98_sk/

x.com/memo98slovakia

Email

memo98@memo98.sk

Phone

+421 903 581 591

Address

Štefana Králik 1/A, 84108 Bratislava, Slovakia