



PRESS RELEASE

Civil society and media actors from Eastern Partnership regiona gather in Chişinău to strengthen resilience against information manipulation

Chişinău, Moldova, 7 July 2026 — Civil society organisations, independent media, experts, institutional partners, state authorities, and donor community gathered in Chişinău for the kick-off meeting of **Resilient & Connected: Joint Initiatives Against Disinformation**, a regional programme implemented by **People in Need**, the **Prague Civil Society Centre**, and the **Netherlands Helsinki Committee**, with financial support from the **European Union**.

The event, titled “**Resilient Voices: Civil Society and Media Collective Action Against Information Manipulation and Foreign Interference**,” launched the programme’s work across the Eastern Partnership region. The initiative aims to strengthen cooperation among civil society organisations, independent media, researchers and local communities in responding to disinformation, information manipulation and foreign interference. The launch comes at a time when information manipulation is increasingly used to undermine public trust, polarise societies, weaken independent voices, and distort democratic debate, including around elections and European integration processes.

Across the Eastern Partnership region, disinformation and foreign information manipulation continue to affect civic participation, media freedom, and democratic debate. These challenges are closely linked to shrinking civic space, pressure on independent media and civil society, rule of law concerns, geopolitical narratives, and electoral processes. In this context, **Resilient & Connected** will support evidence-based responses, cross-border cooperation, research, capacity building, and joint initiatives that protect civic space, promote media freedom, and uphold democratic values. The programme is grounded in a human rights-based approach and recognises that responses to disinformation must respect freedom of expression, media freedom, assembly, association and civic participation, privacy, and non-discrimination.

“Disinformation is not only a media or technology challenge; it is a democratic governance and human rights challenge. Civil society and independent media are essential to understanding how information manipulation affects communities, public debate, and civic space. Through this project, we want to support evidence-based, rights-respecting responses that connect local realities with regional cooperation and policy dialogue,” said Ilaria Fevola, Programme Officer, at the Netherlands Helsinki Committee.

During the kick-off meeting, consortium partners presented the programme’s objectives, regional scope, and planned activities. The event also marked the launch of a grant component implemented by the Netherlands Helsinki Committee to support research and analysis on FIMI and disinformation,

including their impact on civic space, electoral processes, rule of law, vulnerable communities, cross-border information flows, and democratic debate. Further information on eligibility, application procedures, deadlines, and available funding will be shared through the closed call for proposals.

The event included a **regional panel discussion** on shared challenges and collective responses, bringing together perspectives from across the Eastern Partnership countries. The discussion focused on how civil society organisations and independent media can identify risks, counter harmful narratives, and develop joint, rights-based responses that strengthen democratic resilience, including in electoral contexts.

Participants also took part in a practical **Decision Lab** focused on building community resilience to information manipulation during elections. The exercise explored how civil society organisations can act as trusted intermediaries at community level while promoting rights-respecting, participatory, and harm-sensitive responses to disinformation, misinformation, rumours, and manipulative narratives.

By connecting civic actors, independent media, and regional partners, **Resilient & Connected** seeks to support stronger cooperation, more resilient communities, and practical approaches to addressing disinformation and threats to civic space. To that end, the kick-off meeting created space for exchange, introduced new funding opportunities, strengthened regional networks, and supported shared learning on democratic resilience in the Eastern Partnership region.

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