PRESS RELEASE

DISRUPTION NETWORK LAB

12—13.12 · CONFERENCE · BERLIN & TBILISI

HATE NEWS vs. FREE SPEECH

Polarization and Pluralism in Georgian Media

Speakers: **Nata Dzvelishvili** (Executive Director at Indigo Publishing, GE), **Tamar Kintsurashvili** (Executive Director of Media Development Foundation, Associate Professor at Ilia State University, GE), **Nini Gvilia** (Project Assistant, Social Media Monitoring at The International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy ISFED, GE), **Mikheil Benidze** (Chief of Party, Georgia Information Integrity Program at Zinc Network, GE), **Rafael Goldzweig** (Research Coordinator, Democracy Reporting International -DRI, DE), **Eka Rostomashvili** (Advocacy and Campaigns Coordinator at Transparency International, GE/DE), **Giorgi Tabagari** (Civic Activist, Director Tbilisi Pride, GE), **Nino Danelia** (Head of Journalism and Media Research at Ilia State University, Founder of Coalition for Media Advocacy, Founder of Georgian Women Movement, GE), **Josephine Ballon** (Legal Head at Hate Aid, DE), **Varoon Bashyakarla** (Data Scientist, Tactical Tech's Data & Politics Project, DE), **Alistair Alexander** (Researcher, trainer and consultant, IE/DE), **Maya Talakhadze** (Co-founder, Regional Democratic Hub – Caucasus, GE), **Tatiana Bazzichelli** (Founding Director, Disruption Network Lab, IT/DE), **Lieke Ploeger** (Community Director, Disruption Network Lab, NL/DE).

HATE NEWS vs. FREE SPEECH brings together journalists, activists and media experts from Georgia and Germany to discuss strategies to fight misinformation, hate speech and social network manipulation and to strengthen freedom of speech.

Within the 2020 project "HATE NEWS vs. FREE SPEECH: Polarization and Pluralism in Georgian Media", Disruption Network Lab and the Georgian non-profit organization Regional Democratic Hub – Caucasus collaborate on a programme exchange between Germany and Georgia. Media is sharply polarized in Georgia. The majority of the population still names traditional media, on which political influences are obvious, as a main source to receive information. In the current era of social media, the information cycle has accelerated and therefore traditional media's control on the daily agenda has weakened. Despite the emergence of pluralistic media, political polarization divides the Georgian society, and impacts social media that try to determine the political agenda. Social media are often used as a tool for dissemination of fake news and misinformation in order to manipulate and influence society. High-rated media outlets often neglect media ethics. Hate news and hate speech in different traditional and non-traditional medias are not uncommon. This is more evident in the election period that is conducted almost every year in Georgia.

What causes polarized pluralism? Where does the problem come from and what can be done to make media both popular and ethical? What kind of regulating and self-regulating mechanisms exist to prevent misinformation, hate speech and social network manipulation? Media experts from Georgia and Germany will come together at this conference to answer these questions. In the follow-up workshop ‚Anatomy of a conspiracy theory', which closes off the training events of the project, participants from Tblisi and Berlin will research and dissect numerous examples of well known and lesser known conspiracy theories from around the world to understand what makes them work, why they spread so fast, and which strategies could diminish their power.

Conference: **December 12, 2020 · 11:30—18:00.**
Live from Studio 1, Kunstquartier Bethanien, Berlin, and Tbilisi, Georgia.

Workshop: **December 13, 2020, 11:00—14,00. STATE Studio, Berlin, and Tbilisi, Georgia.**
Details and registration: https://www.disruptionlab.org/hate-news-vs-free-speech
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FUNDED BY: Federal Foreign Office; CIVIL SOCIETY COOPERATION

PROJECT BY: DISRUPTION NETWORK LAB; RDH Caucasus

PARTNER VENUES: Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien; STATE

IN COLLABORATION WITH: TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL the global coalition against corruption

MEDIA PARTNERS: taz; EXBERLINER; IL MITTE; furtherfield

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