



# Annual Report 2019

## The Mission of the Organization

The Union of Informed Citizens consulting NGO aims at raising public awareness about important issues by informing public and reducing disinformation and its impact on shaping public opinion and decision making, as well as promoting democratic values and reforms.

We prioritize shaping public opinion and decision making based on objective information. We believe that raising the level of public awareness in the spheres having state and public significance is an essential and integral component of any democratic society.

The research and publications of the "Union of Informed Citizens" mainly focus on foreign policy and related issues, democratic values, economy, security, elections, anti-corruption and other democratic reforms, as well as, the rights of citizens in specific areas.

Our team takes efforts to increase the capacity of journalism in Armenia, as well as, carries out media initiatives through the "Fact Investigation Platform", thus combating disinformation.

The Union of Informed Citizens, together with its partners, fights to improve the quality of elections in Armenia, both through observation missions and by influencing the processes that precede it. We are also actively involved in advocating for a number of democratic reforms, promoting their public demand, and drafting documents.

We do not represent interests of any political party or other groups.

## Content

- Staff
- Partners
- Activities
- Funding

# Employees



**Daniel Ioannisyan**  
Program Coordinator



**Ashkhen Mushegyan**  
Executive Director



**Piruza Petrosyan**  
Executive Assistant



**Arevik Simonyan**  
Program Assistant



**Tatevik Tadevosyan**  
Executive Assistant



**Hovseop Ghazaryan**  
Program Assistant



**Victoria Andreasyan**  
Program Assistant



**Paylak Karapetyan**  
Accountant





**Ani Grigoryan**  
Editor-in-Chief



**Sevada Ghazaryan**  
Journalist



**Nelly Lazaryan**  
Journalist



**Karine Kirakosyan**  
Journalist



**Hovhannes Nazaretyan**  
Journalist



**Mane Gevorgyan**  
Social Media  
Marketing Specialist



**Vahe Ghukasyan**  
Editor



**Khoren Grigoryan**  
Cameraman /  
Video Editor



**Shushanna Vratsyan**  
Public Relations  
Coordinator



**Shushan Harutyunyan**  
Translator



**Kristine Goroyan**  
Translator



**Anna Pambukhchyan**  
Media Monitoring  
Coordinator



**Aren Melikyan**  
Media Monitoring  
Specialist



**Tatevik Kerobyan**  
Media Monitoring  
Specialist



**Nane Manasyan**  
Media Monitoring  
Specialist



**Arusik Voskanyan**  
Media Monitoring  
Specialist



**Vahram Toqmajyan**  
History



**Edgar Hakobyan**  
Lawyer



## Partners



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP  
Civil Society Forum



**National Endowment  
for Democracy**  
*Supporting freedom around the world*



**OPEN SOCIETY  
FOUNDATIONS**

**B | S | T**

The Black Sea Trust  
for Regional Cooperation

A PROJECT OF THE GERMAN MARSHALL FUND



**UNDEF**

The United Nations  
Democracy Fund



**FNUD**

Fonds des Nations Unies  
pour la démocratie



**EURASIA  
PARTNERSHIP  
FOUNDATION**

## Fighting Corruption through Raising Awareness of Citizens.

"Union of Informed Citizens" implements "Fighting Corruption through Raising Awareness of Citizens" program, supported by the US Embassy. Within the framework of this program the Umdimel.am website was created.

The website provides detailed advice for citizens who find themselves in different situations, and is aimed at increasing citizens' awareness and preventing corruption risks in a number of public sectors.

On the website, the citizens can find over 100 thematic questions and answers which include the sequence of steps to be taken and the necessary documents. It includes a rather wide range of areas: Police, Traffic Police, Judicial Acts Compulsory Enforcement Service, public services, courts, investigative bodies, healthcare, education, armed forces, food safety, consumer rights, elections, local self-government bodies, banking and financial institutions, customs and tax authorities, personal data protection, domestic violence, freedom of information, urban development, labor rights and mass media.







On September 8, 2019 in cooperation with Stepanakert Office of the Union of Informed Citizens NGO, the Union of Informed Citizens carried out a short-term observation mission by observing the local elections in Artsakh. Within the framework of the mission, a media monitoring was carried out, during which the coverage about all the candidates on Artsakh Public TV and online media was observed. The media monitoring was conducted by two monitors from August 15 to September 9. A final report was presented at the end of the mission.

Prior to the elections, the delegation led by Daniel Ioannisyan, Program Coordinator of the Union of Informed Citizens, had a meeting with NA Speaker Ashot Ghulyan, Minister of Justice Ararat Danielyan, Human Rights Defender Artak Beglaryan, the President of Artsakh TV Arsen Arustamyan, as well as police representatives and local civil activists in Artsakh.

## Participation in an Anti-Corruption Reform

"Union of Informed Citizens" NGO has been actively involved in the development of anti-corruption reforms in Armenia since 2019. In particular, since July, 2019, the organization has been part of the Anti-Corruption Policy Council, within the framework of which many proposals were submitted, which were later adopted and then implemented.

## Civic Education

The Union of Informed Citizens, within the framework of the programs implemented with the support of the Open Society Foundations and the German Marshall Fund, has created informative and educational videos on elections to raise awareness among citizens. The videos referred to the ongoing reform processes in Armenia and the public demand for reforms, as well as media literacy. The videos were broadcast on local, regional and national TV channels and on the YouTube channel of the "Union of Informed Citizens". They were also disseminated on social networks.

**ԱՄԵՆ ԼՈՒՐ ՉԷ, ՈՐ ՃԻՇՏ Է**

**ԱՏՈՒԳԷ՝ Ք ՏԵՂԵԿԱՏՎՈՒԹՅԱՆ ԱՊԲՅՈՒՐՆ**



ԻՐԱԶԵԿ ՔԱՂԱՔԱՑԻՆԵՐԻ ՄԻԱՎՈՐՈՒՄ



# Training for journalists

## Pursuing Positive Change through Empowering Civil Society



Within the framework of this program, trainings were organized for 50 journalists on topics of advocacy and monitoring of civil society organizations in the fields of human rights, criminal justice, and social justice. Grants were provided to six groups of journalists to investigate these three areas. Within the framework of the program, trainings were organized for 75 youth activists in order to improve their skills and promote their involvement in monitoring and advocacy conducted by civil society organizations in the aforementioned three areas. Within the framework of the program, 8 young people's teams and the same number of journalists received sub-grants respectively in the amount of about 10 and 17 million AMD.

This project, which ended in December of the reporting year, was funded by the European Union and is implemented jointly with OSF-

Armenia and Institute of Public Policy NGOs.

## Summer School for Fact-Checking

Aiming to prevent the dissimulation of fake news, and to counter the spread of disinformation in the event of their dissimulation, the Union of Informed Citizens implemented an educational program, which aimed at developing the skills of novice journalists in working with fact-checking. Five novice journalists taking their first steps in the field of fact-checking participated in this program. They practiced fact-checking and counteracting the spread of misinformation in the Armenian media field. Two-month training lessons were organized for journalists on modern tools of fact-checking, freedom of information, inquiries, speech and data, statistics, misinterpretation of ratings, public procurement and state budget control, geolocation, statistical data study, photos and video verification, source discovery, data



storage and visualization, media monitoring methods, use of open data, legal acts, court databases, declarations, and observance of the rules of journalistic ethics. All the participants of the training were provided with a full scholarship both for study and internship at FIP.am

On a daily basis, novice journalists were actively involved in the activities of the Fact Investigation Platform, which contributed to the development of their professional and analytical skills. Using the knowledge gained during the summer school, more than 25 publications were added on the Fact Investigation Platform. Within the framework of the program, several videos on fact-checking and media literacy were translated from English to Armenian for the participants of the school which can be used in the future to help journalists gain knowledge and skills in fact-checking. Moreover, a document-guide was created on how to write a journalistic publication if it is related to the verification of facts or counters disinformation.

## Promoting Watchdog Journalism in Armenia



### Ինչպե՞ս որոնում համացանցում

Համացանցում որոնում կատարելու հմտությունները խիստ անհրաժեշտ են հեռացված տվյալների համար, քանի որ հաճախ հեռացված տվյալներ ենթակառուցված են և կարող են լինել անհայտ և անհասկանալի։ Այս դասում նախազգեստը ինչպե՞ս որոնում համացանցում։ Այս դասում նախազգեստը ինչպե՞ս որոնում համացանցում։ Այս դասում նախազգեստը ինչպե՞ս որոնում համացանցում։



### Ինչպե՞ս կարդալ ֆինանսական հաշվետվությունները

Փաստաթուղթերը ցանկացած ֆինանսական հաշվետվության համար անհրաժեշտ են և կարող են լինել անհասկանալի։ Այս դասում նախազգեստը ինչպե՞ս կարդալ ֆինանսական հաշվետվությունները։ Այս դասում նախազգեստը ինչպե՞ս կարդալ ֆինանսական հաշվետվությունները։



### Ինչպե՞ս ստանալ տեղեկատվություն պետական մարմիններից

Օրինակ, հասանելի տեղեկատվությունը պետական մարմիններից ստանալու համար կարող են անհրաժեշտ լինել հարցախոսքը և կարող են լինել անհասկանալի։ Այս դասում նախազգեստը ինչպե՞ս ստանալ տեղեկատվություն պետական մարմիններից։

In April 2018 the "Union of Informed Citizens" has launched a two-and-a-half-year program funded by the United Nations Democracy Fund, which aims to increase interest in watchdog journalism in Armenia, thereby increasing public oversight over governing bodies. The main beneficiaries of the "Promoting Watchdog Journalism in Armenia" program are journalists, students and active citizens.



Within the framework of the project, an online training course was developed, consisting of 12 video lessons, with a list of questions attached to each video lesson. The topics introducing the key tools and skills of investigative journalism were developed by experienced 9 Armenian and 3 international experts.

Later they were animated and turned into videos to make the course more interactive. A separate website ([course.uic.am](http://course.uic.am)) has been developed for the course, which was officially launched in late December 2018. In 2019, five two-day trainings / workshops were conducted within the framework of the program. A total of 148 journalists and activists participated in the program. The trainings were conducted by specialists experienced in the Armenian media field. In addition 5 international experts were invited, including representatives from Serbia, Ukraine and representatives from the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP). Eight journalist groups received sub-grants from the participants of the trainings for the implementation of their investigative projects (in the amount of about 10 million

In addition, project beneficiaries were given the opportunity to write, publish investigatory and fact-checking articles. It is envisaged that the program will increase the number of investigative articles in Armenia, will prioritise the use of investigations by journalists, and, consequently, the increase of public control.





## Foreign policy and Coverage



In 2019, the traditional "Foreign Policy and Coverage " workshops were conducted.

In April, 2049, a seminar entitled "EEU Economic Challenges" was conducted for journalists. Gagik Makaryan, Chairman of Republican Union of Employers of Armenia; Babken Pipoyan, President of Aware and Protected Consumer NGO; Daniel Ioannisyan; economists Tatul Manaseryan and Vahagn Khachatryan; and the Minister of Economic Development and Investments Tigran Khachatryan presented with reports during the event.

During the event the participants pointed out the challenges Armenia faced after the EEU membership and discussed the means for overcoming them.

Special reference was made to the issue of increased customs duties for a number of imported products starting from 2020. The participants of the event had the opportunity to ask their questions about the EEU to the specialists and officials in the field.







The 9th seminar-discussion of this series took place in Aghveran from December 14-15. The topic of the discussion during the event was the conflict in Artsakh. The Minister of Foreign Affairs Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, the Secretary of the Security Council Armen Grigoryan, the Coordinator of ANI research Center and Journalist at Civilnet Tatul Hakobyan, the Head of Armenian Institute of International and Security Affairs Styopa Safaryan , Director of the Armenian Centre for National and Strategic Studies Manvel Sargsyan and Vice Chairman of International Relations at CIS Parliamentary Assembly Hovhannes Igityan delivered speeches at the event.

As previously, this time as well the discussions with the officials were held in the format of "Chatham House" and "off-the-record", as the purpose of the event was purely to develop the professional skills of the journalists, not to hold a press conference. The speakers presented to the participants the history of the Artsakh conflict, current developments, information on international conflict mapping, as well as formal approaches and other skills needed to cover the Karabakh conflict. These seminars-discussions aim to increase professional skills of journalists in the field of foreign policy coverage. Foreign ambassadors, officials in charge of the field, leading experts in the field made reports during the event.







## Public discussions



On April 3, 2019, a public discussion entitled "The draft of the government structure and democracy" took place in the 7th building unit of Charents Hall of YSU, during which MPs representing different parliamentary forces expressed their views, in particular the speakers were Vahagn Hovakimyan and Artak Manukyan from "My Step" parliamentary faction, Edmon Marukyan from "Bright Armenia" party, Gevorg Petrosyan from Prosperous Armenia Party, Management expert Harutyun Mesropyan, as well as civil society representatives. The event was attended by students who had the opportunity to ask questions to the speakers.



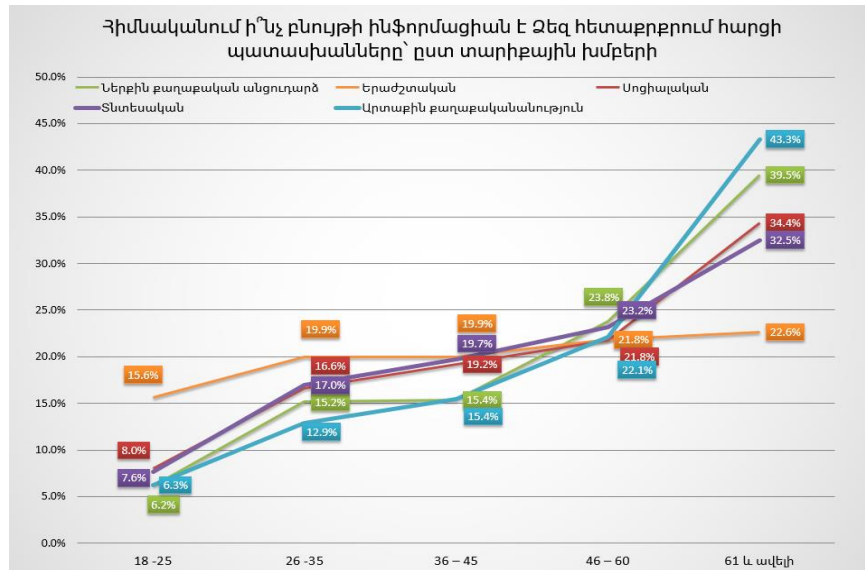
On April 30, 2019, a public discussion on "EEU Challenges: New customs rates" was held. Daniel Ioannisyan; NA MPs Armen Yeghiazaryan from the "Bright Armenia" faction and Armen Pambukhchyan from "My Step" faction; and economist Vahagn Khachaturyan expressed their views on the topic. On November 16, a public discussion was held on "The situation around the Constitutional Court - the issues of legitimacy". RA NA MP, member of "My Step" faction Sisak Gabrielyan; RA NA Independent MP Arman Babajanyan; Constitutional Court member Alvina Gyulumyan; Head of "Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Vanadzor Office" and human rights activist Artur Sakunts; and The Program Coordinator of "Union of Informed Citizens" NGO Daniel Ioannisyan

participated in the discussion.

## Survey on media consumption and media literacy

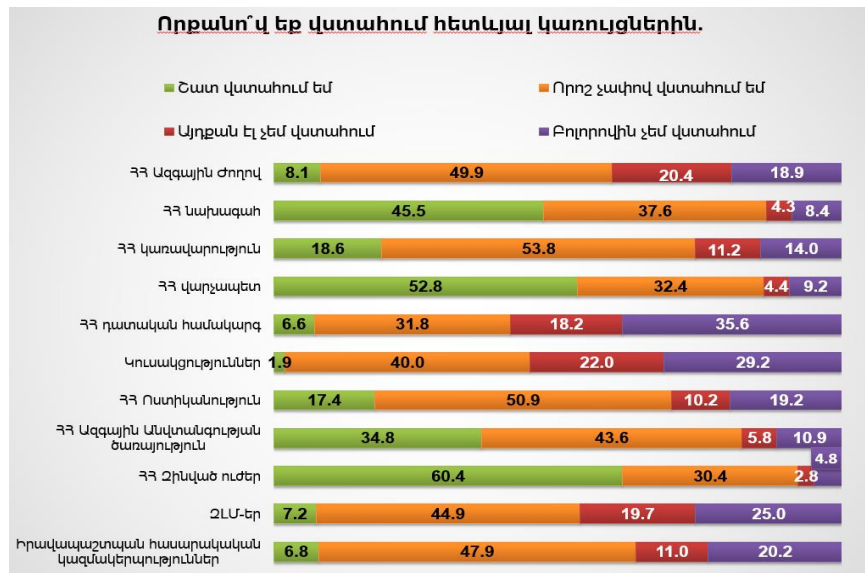
In June 2019, Advanced Public Research Group NGO (hereinafter APR Group) conducted a sociological survey in all the regions of Armenia and in Yerevan within the framework of the sub-grant provided by the Union of Informed Citizens NGO.



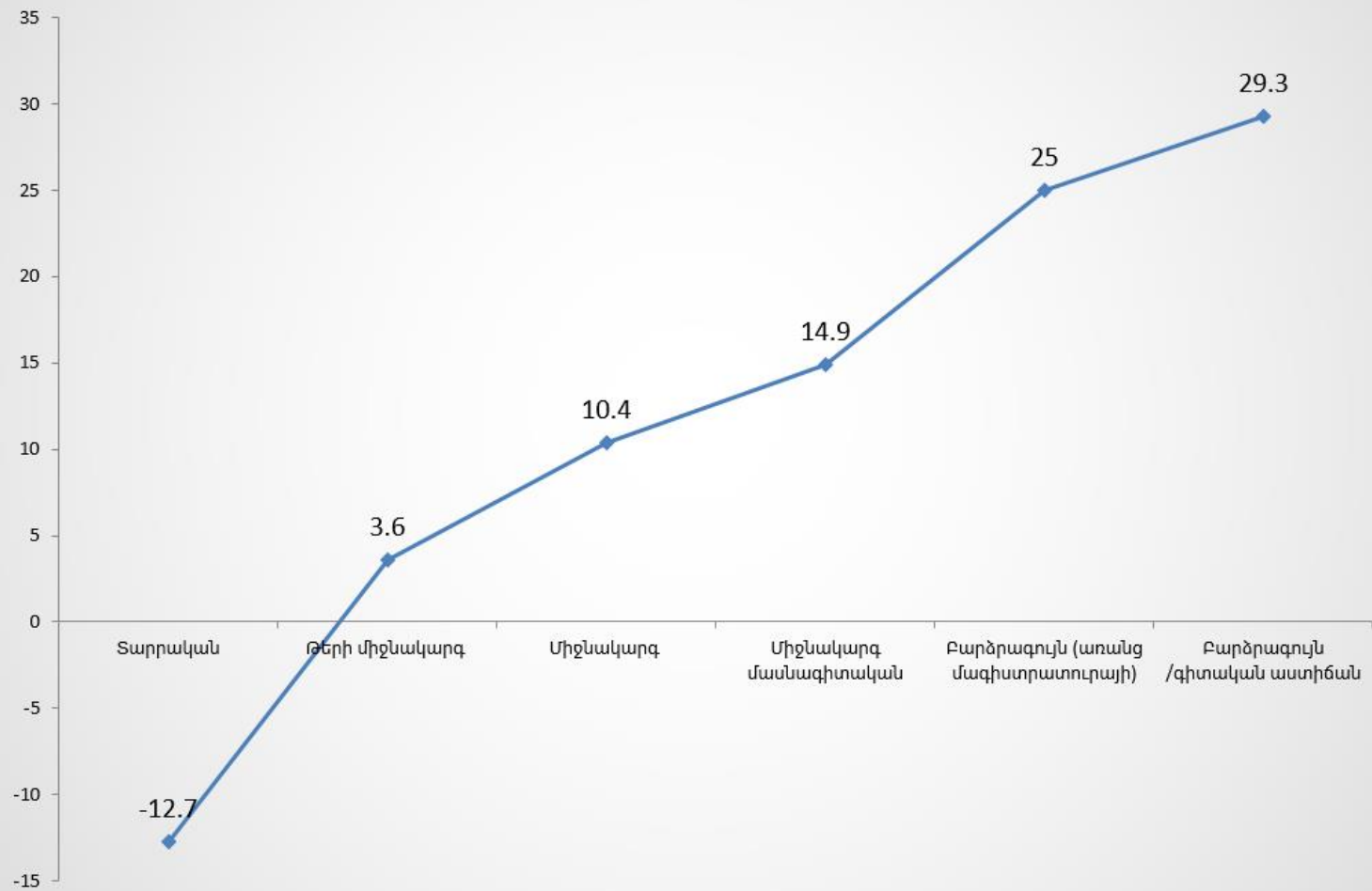


The research study examined the main sources of information for the population, and their trust in them, as well as how people disseminate and check the information they receive. Moreover, all these data were considered not only by social, sex and age and other groups but also by people's political views in order to understand whether media literacy is interdependent on political views.

Respondents considered the family to be the most reliable source of information, followed by radio (in descending order), television, and live broadcasts of officials. Neighbors are considered to be the most unreliable source of information, which are followed by social networks. One of the most important components of the survey was media literacy. 29% of Armenians admit that they never check the information they receive, and 40% do so only occasionally.



Մեդիագրագիտության մակարդակի համաթիվն ուստ  
կրթության մակարդակի



## Promoting Fact-Checking Journalism in Armenia



In 2019, the Fact Investigation Platform (Fip.am) continued to carry out its mission & goals, that is, combatting disinformation, as well as false and manipulative information. The scope of activities of the platform was expanded. Last year, 388 articles were published on the website, which had an average of 5,600 views.

After the 2018 April-May revolution, the media field in Armenia has undergone significant changes. Media owned by the former and current authorities, waging an information war, are more active in throwing various false or manipulative information in the field. In order to find out, verify and inform the public more operatively, the "Fact Investigation Platform" has expanded its team. Along with the expansion of the scope of the platform, changes have been made in Fip.am, as a result of which the website has become more interactive and accessible to the reader. A special system for evaluating materials has been introduced, which corresponds to the international standards of fact-checking. In addition to verifying the facts, the platform took active steps to increase the component of investigative journalism last year. More than a dozen investigations have been published, which have received a great response among the public.

In order to develop fact investigation journalism in Armenia, last year the platform organized a two-month summer school on the facts of fact-checking and disseminating misinformation. Five of the students have acquired fact-checking skills from professionals working in the field, and one of the students is currently working at the Fact Investigating Platform. Due to the activity of the platform, every day we receive many letters from Internet users to check the facts on specific topics or to verify information. The platform has increased its popularity among public.

Several times during last year, various MPs of the National Assembly asked questions to the members of the government, which were based on the publications of the Fip.am website. In parallel with all this, Fip.am continued to carry out its fact-checking function revealing false information, false declarations on the property of officials, presenting investigations on the businesses of former officials. Criminal cases have been initiated by law enforcement agencies based on Fip.am publications and various administrative penalties were imposed on officials. The publications of the "Fact Investigation Platform" have been copied and republished by various news websites. The officials clarified our publications, and members of the fact-checking team participated in various programs and made comments on their investigations on various news websites.



## Media Monitoring

The purpose of the monitoring was to study anti-democratic propaganda and dissemination of disinformation in the Armenian media. Surface TV channels, print media, online media and social networks were monitored on a daily basis to detect disinformation and false news and to respond to them quickly.

In addition, special attention was paid to the manipulations and propaganda theses spread in the media and social media. A report summarizing these theses was published, where the mechanisms of disseminating propaganda were presented.

“Union of Informed Citizens” Laureate of an international prize





In 2019, the Union of Informed Citizens was awarded Democracy Defender Award by the Representations of 36 countries in the OSCE. The prize aims to honor a person or a group for exceptional contributions to the promotion of democracy and the defense of human rights in the spirit of the Helsinki Final Act and other OSCE principles and values. Permanent Representative of Sweden to the OSCE Ambassador Ulrika Funered, stated in her speech that the "Union of Informed Citizens" NGO was awarded the prize for "outstanding contribution to promoting independent journalism and informed decision-making, as well as to strengthening election monitoring in Armenia." The award ceremony took place on March 11 at the Swedish Embassy in Vienna. Ambassadors of dozens of countries to the OSCE, other diplomats, representatives of internationally recognized NGOs and the media attended the ceremony. The award was presented to Daniel Ioannisyan, Program Coordinator of the Union of Informed Citizens, by Swiss Ambassador to the OSCE Claude Wilde. The annual Democracy Defender award was established in 2016 by the representations of 8 countries in the OSCE: Canada, Denmark, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States. Later, delegations from 28 countries, including Armenia, joined it. The award is given as an appreciation for

civil society for its efforts in promoting democracy in the region.

## The "Union of Informed Citizens" celebrated its 5th anniversary



On April 5, 2019, the event dedicated to the 5th anniversary of the "Union of Informed Citizens" took place at the Tufenkian Historic Yerevan Hotel.

During the solemn ceremony, the path and successes of the organization during the last five years were presented, reference was made to the programs implemented by the organization, as well as the new project of the organization: the website [umdimel.am](http://umdimel.am) was presented.

The aim of the new project is to help citizens in various issues and to suggest to whom to turn in problematic situations and how to do it.

Members of the Armenian civil society, MPs of the National Assembly, representatives of foreign diplomatic missions and many partners of the "Union of Informed Citizens" were present at the event.





## Income and Expense Report

N 2019 financial resources according to donors		USD	
1	National Endowment for Democracy, Washington	Balance	12809.98
		revenue	<b>146932.00</b>
2	Open Society Foundations - Armenia, Yerevan	Balance	15542.61
		revenue	<b>105500.00</b>
3	European Commission, Brussels	Balance	43588.77
		revenue	<b>86164.73</b>
4	US Embassy in Armenia, Yerevan	Balance	4788.28
		revenue	<b>9990.00</b>
5	United Nations Democracy Fund, New York	Balance	5460.58
		revenue	<b>82040.00</b>
6	Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation, Bucharest	Balance	24114.29
		revenue	<b>0.00</b>
7	Open Society Foundations - Armenia, Yerevan	Balance	405.84
		revenue	<b>29966.00</b>
8	Prague Civil Society Center, Prague	Balance	0.00
		revenue	<b>13841.82</b>
9	Eurasia Partnership Foundation, Yerevan	Balance	0.00
		revenue	<b>5252.76</b>
10	Other entries (reimbursement of court costs)	Balance	0.00
		revenue	<b>352.99</b>
			<b>586751</b>

N 2019 Expenditures according to the implemented programs			USD
1	Public Debate on Foreign Policy	Expenses	121034.32
2	Building a Better Understanding about Propaganda and Disinformation in Armenia and Diminishing Their Impact	Expenses	102270.19
3	Pursuing Positive Change through Empowering Civil Society	Expenses	129753.50
4	Fighting Corruption through Raising Awareness of Citizens.	Expenses	14778.28
5	Promoting Watchdog Journalism in Armenia	Expenses	62071.01
6	Enhancing Citizen awareness on Parliamentary Elections.	Expenses	24114.29
7	Protecting Information Environment from Manipulation, Disinformation and Propaganda during Snap Parliamentary Elections	Expenses	28316.95
8	Reinforcing capacity of fact- checking and media monitoring	Expenses	9950.12
9	School for Fact-Checking	Expenses	5252.76
10	Other	Expenses	1360.48
			<b>498902</b>