



Annual Report 2021

About the Organization

The goal of the Union of Informed Citizens Consulting non-governmental organization is to raise public awareness, promote public participation in areas of public importance and in the decision-making process, as well as to promote democratic values and reforms. We believe that increasing the level of public awareness in the spheres of state and public importance is the key and integral component of any democratic society.

Research studies and publications of Union of Informed Citizens address foreign policy and related issues, democratic values, economy, security sector, elections, reforms, as well as civil rights.

The organization undertakes activities aimed at increasing the capacities of the media field in Armenia, and also carries out news activities through Fact Investigation Platform that fights disinformation.

Union of Informed Citizens along with its partners is actively involved in the process of improving the quality of elections in Armenia both through observation missions and influence on the processes preceding it.

The organization takes an active part in the promotion of a number of democratic reforms, the formation of their demand among the public and the drafting of documents.

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

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- Staff
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The U.S. Embassy in Armenia



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FOUNDATIONS**



The Activities of Fact Investigation Platform

Driven by the post-war period, the circulation of disinformation reached its peak. In the Armenian information domain, the role of extra-Armenian centers and telegram channels generating false information also increased. Fact Investigation Platform effectively fought against disinformation flows, as well as identified the centers that generated and spread fake news and propaganda theses.

The fact-checking team has proven that, contrary to the claims of the Azerbaijani side, destruction of cultural heritage and monuments, vandalism is being carried out in Artsakh, and hate speech has increased unprecedentedly.

FIP.am had many publications regarding the past and present statements of various officials and the contradictions between them. It showed that they can significantly differ from the claims made before based on political expediency, thereby preventing the reader from succumbing to such manipulations.

It studied and revealed cases of ceding road sections from the territory of Armenia as a result of agreements unknown to the public.

In 2021, the journalists visited the border areas of the country, identified geolocations and proved that, contrary to Azerbaijan's claims, the latter's armed forces invaded the sovereign territory of Armenia several kilometers deep, positioned themselves and built infrastructures for long-term deployment.



The fact-checking team uncovered an army of fake user accounts created and managed by several political forces and figures, and also revealed the forces behind one of the fastest-growing telegram channels in the country created immediately in the aftermath of war.

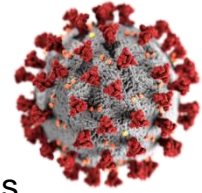
It also studied the assets and declarations of many present and former officials, revealed a number of corrupt transactions, undeclared property, and connections. These included former and present high-ranking officials, as well as judges, representatives of investigative bodies, family members, and related persons.

The fact-checking team carried out a number of investigations, based on some of which criminal cases were initiated, several persons were dismissed from their posts, and corrupt transactions were revealed.

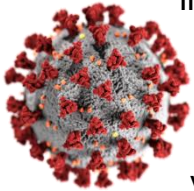
The year was also marked by extraordinary parliamentary elections. In this period, FIP.am studied thousands of decisions by local authorities in several dozen communities, and revealed that in some communities, the leaders of the communities used administrative resources under the guise of providing financial support to the voters. Apart from that, it also revealed other cases of using administrative levers. It showed the links between the arrests of the elected community leaders and the defeats of the government representatives.

Many publications of the Fact Investigation Platform were reprinted and republished by various news websites, a number of officials referred to the materials published by FIP.am in their speeches from various tribunes, and the team members repeatedly participated in various programs and reportages, public debates, interviews and gave comments about the performed work to various media outlets in other formats.

Countering the COVID-19 Pandemic

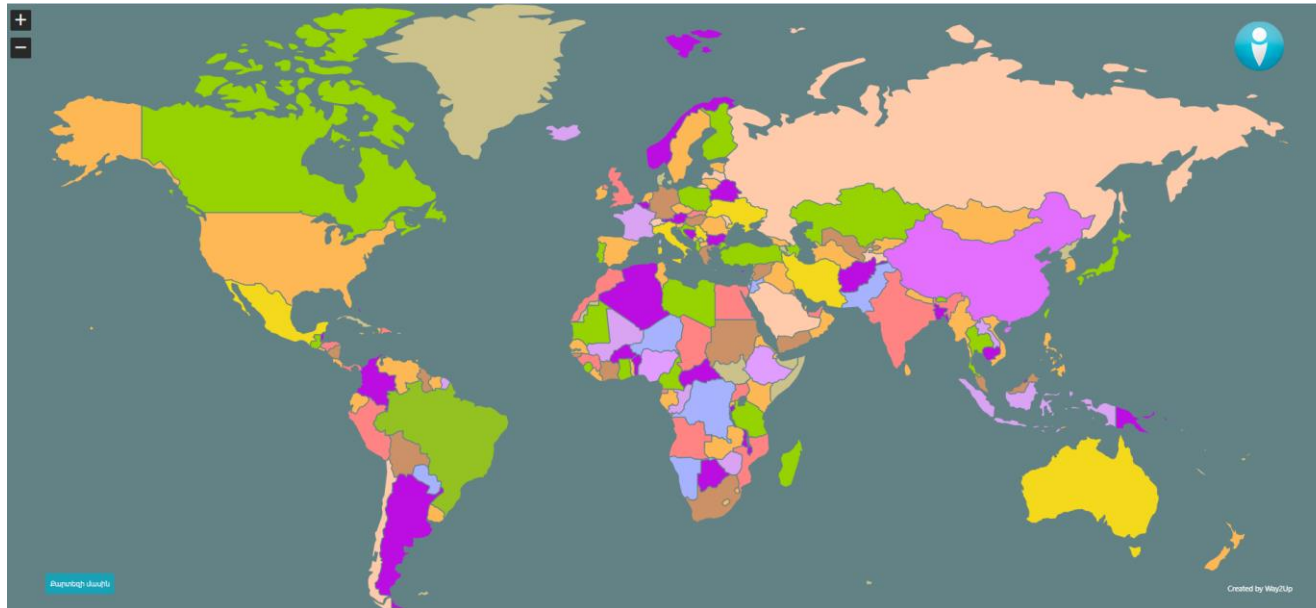


In the first months of 2021, Fact Investigation Platform continued to address the widespread disinformation and myths related to the pandemic, as well as published clarifying articles on various manifestations of the infection. The "Combating Covid-19 Disinformation in Armenia" project was implemented with the support of the International Republican Institute (IRI) aimed at increasing the level of awareness about the pandemic and making the fight against disinformation about the pandemic more effective. For this purpose, a respective memorandum was signed between the RA Ministry of Health and the partners implementing the components of the above-mentioned project including Journalists for the Future NGO, Civilitas Foundation, Public Journalism Club, Media Initiatives Center and Union of Informed Citizens. The implementation of the project was especially important in the context of the increase in the number of COVID-19 indicators in the country and in the direction of spreading reliable information about the vaccination process.



Interactive map

With the aim to promote the coverage of Armenia's foreign policy and increasing public awareness of the country's foreign policy, Union of Informed Citizens has prepared a special interactive [map](#).



The interactive foreign policy map presents Armenia's foreign relations with all the countries of the world, particularly diplomatic and economic ones. In addition, the map allows getting information about the countries' population, economy and freedom index.

Counting Rally Participants

The domestic political movements that started in Armenia after the 44-day war of 2020 continued in 2021 as well. In particular, before the extraordinary parliamentary elections, the opposition regularly organized rallies. During that time, Union of Informed Citizens carried out a count of rally participants, preventing manipulations and speculations on the number of rally participants.



Training Journalists

In 2021, Union of Informed Citizens actively continued organizing events aimed at training journalists.

Continuing the series of events dedicated to Armenia's foreign policy, the [seminar-discussion](#) entitled "'Foreign Policy and Coverage: 44-Day War'" was held at the beginning of the year devoted to the analysis of the causes and consequences of the Artsakh war.

Attaching importance to raising public awareness about the reforms, UIC organized a series of seminars for journalists dedicated to the ongoing reforms:

- How to "Read" the [Reforms](#): Elections, Parties, Police;
- Electoral Regulations and [Reforms](#);
- The Progress of Anti-Corruption [Reforms](#) in Armenia;
- Police [Reforms](#): Process and Challenges.

In the fall, an [event](#) entitled "Disinformation and Reforms" was organized for digital influencers, during which the participants had the opportunity to improve their media skills, learn about the tools for combating disinformation (fact checking, identifying fake accounts on the Internet, etc.), as well as current reforms and manipulations and disinformation spreading around them. The format of the event allowed the participants to exchange their experiences and network both with each other and the representatives of civil society.





As a closure of the post-war year, the 12th [seminar-discussion](#) of the "Foreign Policy and Coverage" series took place at the end of the year entitled "A Year After the War: Realities and Challenges" during which in-depth discussions were held on both the Artsakh conflict and the challenges facing Armenia and the region.

Public Debates

At the beginning of the year, Union of Informed Citizens organized a public [debate](#) on "Police Reforms and the Establishment of the Ministry of Internal Affairs" attended by the representatives of the Ministry of Justice, the police, and civil society.



In April, a public [debate](#) was organized on the topic of "The Need for Full Adoption of Electoral Reforms" with the participation of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary political forces, during which the issues related to electoral reforms and the adoption of a complete package of amendments to the Electoral Code were addressed.

In May, there was also a [debate](#) on the topic of "Ideas of the Armenian Political Forces on the Resolution of the Border Crisis" which was attended by representatives of the political forces that had participated in the snap elections. The geopolitical issues facing Armenia and the volatile situation created by the invasion

of the Azerbaijani troops into the sovereign territory of Armenia were discussed and questions, approaches and opinions about alliance relations were voiced.

Student Forums

Within the framework of the project "Advancing Democratic Culture in Armenia," UIC organized study visits and meetings for students of Armenian universities in order to familiarize themselves with the current reform process.

In the city of Vanadzor, a public [debate](#) entitled "Electoral Reforms and the Law on Parties" was held with the students of Vanadzor State University, who had the opportunity to address their questions to the state officials involved in the process of electoral reforms.



In the city of Kapan, a public [debate](#) on police reforms was organized for the students of the Kapan branch of the National Polytechnic University of Armenia.

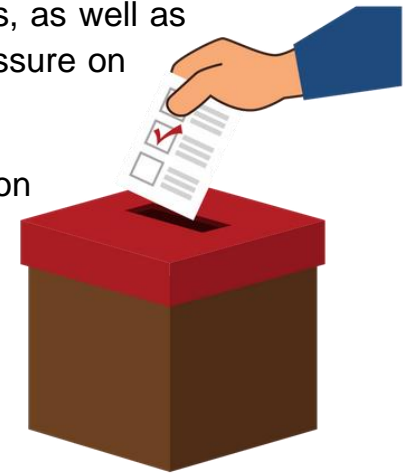
Study visits were organized to the RA Police Academy for students of [Vanadzor](#) State University, Vanadzor branch of National Polytechnic University of Armenia, and [Gavar](#) State University. The latter attended the drills of future patrol officers.

Visits were also organized to the newly created Corruption Prevention Commission for the students of the YSU [Ijevan](#) branch, during which they were introduced to the structure and activities of the Commission, as well as the state strategy in the fight against corruption. A public debate dedicated to the reforms implemented in the judicial system was also held for YSU students also attended by the Minister of Justice.

Elections

In 2021, the Organization carried out an observation mission during the snap parliamentary elections held on June 20, as well as the local government elections held in the fall within the framework of the "Independent Observer" public alliance. UIC also carried out qualitative and quantitative monitoring during the campaign. The Organization carried out a public awareness campaign before the elections- videos were prepared on the electoral procedure and voters' rights which were actively circulated on regional and nationwide television channels, as well as billboards and posters were placed aimed at preventing cases of electoral bribery and pressure on voters by political forces.

The members of the Organization also observed the community [elections](#) held in Georgia on October 2 in two mobile groups, familiarizing themselves with the features of the Georgian Electoral Code and the electronic ballot counting devices being tested in the city of Tbilisi.



Advancing Reforms

Police

The Organization continued to monitor the process of police reforms and made recommendations and observations. It should be noted that Daniel Ioannsiyan is a member of the Police Reform Coordination Council which gives an opportunity to speak about existing issues at the highest level of decision-making. In particular, on the recommendation of the organization, a police reform working group was created, in which representatives of state bodies related to reforms, as well as members of civil society and international supporting organizations were involved. As part of the working group, the Organization raised a number of issues and proposed solutions.



In 2021, the representatives of the Organization were involved in the Admission Interview Committees for Lori and Shirak patrol officers.

Constitutional

The Constitutional Reform Commission, in which the Organization was also involved, de facto ceased its activities as early as 2020. Due to the post-war and domestic political situation, the Commission did not resume its work in 2021 either.

At the end of 2021, the process of formation of a new Constitutional Reform Council began, regarding which the Organization presented a package of recommendations consisting of 7 points, which were accepted. The recommendations concerned the roles of the Council and the Commission, particularly that the generation of content for constitutional reform should be carried out by the Council, which should also ensure public participation in the process.

The Commission should serve the proposals of the Council with legal support, formulate the conceptual directions set forth by the Council and prepare the draft of constitutional amendments based on the Concept approved by the Council.

Electoral

In 2021, the Organization continued its work on the electoral legislation, came up with a number of recommendations related to the Electoral Code and related laws jointly with partner organizations. Most of the recommendations were accepted. They were specifically included in the "Electoral Code of the Republic of Armenia" constitutional law, and the RA Codes on Criminal and Administrative Offenses.

The representatives of the Organization had various meetings with international bodies, in particular the representatives of the Venice Commission, and presented the details of the electoral processes in Armenia, as well as the course of reforms.

Anti-corruption

In 2021, the Anti-Corruption Committee started operating in RA, which is a new entity in the law enforcement system and deals with identifying corruption crimes. A Competition Board was formed for the selection of candidates for the president of the Anti-Corruption Committee. The civil society is also part of the Board represented by the Union of Informed Citizens.

The Organization is also involved in the Anti-Corruption Reform Council. At the Organization's proposal, an anti-corruption working group was created under the Council to discuss the most urgent issues. The representative of the Organization, Vagharsh Aghabekyan, was selected as a representative of the civil society within the Competition Board for the selection of the officers of the RA Anti-Corruption Committee.



REFORMS

After 2018, a number of sectoral changes that started in RA had an issue with coverage. In terms of content, they were available and accessible mainly for professionals. In 2021, the Organization created the website www.reforms.am aimed at making the ongoing reforms accessible for the wider public, presenting them in simpler and more comprehensible terms. The website can serve as a guide and enables citizens to familiarize themselves with the process of 21 sectoral reforms, receive information on the changes being introduced, terms, as well as the opinions of sectoral actors.



Revenue and Expenditure Report

N	2021 Revenue by Donors		USD
1	Freedom House, Washington	Balance	2064
		Revenue	56999
2	International Republican Institute, Washington	Balance	0
		Revenue	4000
3	National Endowment for Democracy, Washington	Balance	3919
		Revenue	157500
4	National Endowment for Democracy, Washington	Balance	1661
		Revenue	4789
5	Open Society Foundations - Armenia, Yerevan	Balance	1429
		Revenue	117505
6	Open Society Foundations - Armenia, Yerevan	Balance	4373
		Revenue	0
7	OXYGEN Foundation, Yerevan	Balance	0
		Revenue	45510
8	Prague Civil Society Center, Prague	Balance	18134
		Revenue	5909
9	Prague Civil Society Center, Prague	Balance	0
		Revenue	12173
10	US Embassy in Armenia, Yerevan	Balance	20524
		Revenue	18435
11	US Embassy in Armenia, Yerevan	Balance	0
		Revenue	43850
			518774

N	2021 Expenditures by Implemented Projects		USD
1	Advancing Democratic Culture in Armenia	<i>Expenditures</i>	71366
2	Combatting COVID-19 Disinformation	<i>Expenditures</i>	3342
3	Promoting Public Debate on Foreign Policy and Democratic Reforms	<i>Expenditures</i>	138242
4	Exposing Malign Information Operations in Armenia by Building Investigative Capacities of the Union of Informed Citizens	<i>Expenditures</i>	6450
5	Development of Fact-Based Public Understanding of Crucial Matters through Diminishing the Impact of Disinformation and Manipulation	<i>Expenditures</i>	105755
6	Securing the Accountable Implementation of the Armenia-EU Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA)	<i>Expenditures</i>	4373
7	Early Elections 2021- Domestic Observations and Citizen Empowerment	<i>Expenditures</i>	42779
8	Promoting Fact-Based Information through Journalistic Investigations	<i>Expenditures</i>	20923
9	Better Elections Through Voter Education	<i>Expenditures</i>	12173
10	Making Reforms More Transparent Through Public Engagement	<i>Expenditures</i>	38958
11	Combating Disinformation in Armenia	<i>Expenditures</i>	14596
			458957