



RESILIENCE:
For Media Free of Hate and Disinformation

HATE AND PROPAGANDA MEDIA IN TURKEY: Affiliations, Models and Patterns

Sinem Aydınli

TURKEY

RESILIENCE : For Media Free of Hate and Disinformation

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HATE AND PROPAGANDA MEDIA IN TURKEY: Affiliations, Models and Patterns

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HATE AND PROPAGANDA MEDIA IN TURKEY

AFFILIATIONS, MODELS AND PATTERNS

Sinem Aydınlı

1. INTRODUCTION

One of Turkey's most prominent Armenian voices, the editor-in-chief of the bilingual Turkish and Armenian weekly *Agos* newspaper, Hrant Dink, was murdered on 19 January 2007, after a campaign of prepense and planned hate speech by some of the Turkish media organisations¹. Dink was not the only one targeted by the Turkish media. As indicated in the media monitoring reports for hate speech in Turkey, news items that may seem to be directed solely at an individual or specific group can broaden out into hate speech that targets "others" more generally: Kurds, Armenians, minorities living in Turkey, Syrians, Rums, Greeks, Jews, Alevi, women, or LGBTI+s. In hateful media, and always tinged with a negative bias, these "others" are mostly portrayed as different from the "us" of the majority. Initially, hate media generally find their targets through proclaiming their "love" of country, as well as their support for Turkishness and/or Sunni-Muslim identity, with other context-specific targets that change according to the political agendas of the day.

Hate media find their targets through proclaiming their "love" of country, as well as their support for Turkishness and/or Sunni-Muslim identity, with other context-specific targets that change according to the political agendas of the day.

Regarding disinformation in the media, this can be illustrated through a striking example the media dubbed "the Kabataş Incident": During the Gezi Park protests it was widely reported in the media that a woman wearing a headscarf and her baby had been attacked by dozens of protesters, who were mostly half-naked men with leather gloves, in Kabataş Square on 1 June 2013. The story was later proven false, but it had already attracted the attention of the then Prime Minister Erdoğan. On 13 June, the journalist Elif Çakır from the pro-government daily *Star* published an interview with the alleged victim and this sparked huge public unrest. Several columnists and journalists from the mainstream media followed Erdoğan who said his "headscarf-wearing sister" had been attacked. Some media has produced Photoshopped visuals to add credibility to this bogus story². When footage from security cameras was eventually released, it turned out that the story was fabricated and completely false.

¹ See İnceoğlu and Sözeri (2012); Göktaş, K. (2010); Çavdar A. & Yıldırım A (2010).

² Bektaş, H. (2015) Footage reveals truth behind Kabataş attack. *Daily Sabah*. Available at: <https://www.dailysabah.com/turkey/2015/03/11/footage-reveals-truth-behind-kabatas-attack> [Accessed 15 June 2020]

These incidents that occurred during the AKP regime indicate partisan media's role in feeding polarization in society; however, the nationalist but non-partisan media also do not refrain from creating hostility in the society when "the national interests" of Turkey at stake. Depending on the issues, both encourage disinformation in violating the rights of disadvantaged or the most vulnerable groups³. Further, the current role of these media eventually causes the entrenchment of the culture of impunity in cases of hate crimes. This is also a matter of democracy that concerns not only the target of hate crimes but the whole society in Turkey, where the judiciary arbitrarily defines the limits of freedom of speech. Thus, it is essential to reveal from where different media derive their power to disseminate hate speech. This mainly pertains to either their economic and/or political ties with the government or other centres of power, otherwise other political parties.

In Turkey, it is mostly human rights defenders, civil society and NGOs who are challenging the practices of hate speech and disinformation in the media and communication. Among them, the Hrant Dink Foundation (HDV) and KAOS GL (Kaos Gay and Lesbian Cultural Research and Solidarity Association) have been publishing reports based on their media monitoring activities in order to render hate speech visible. Until January 2020, the Media and Refugee Rights Association had also been conducting media monitoring. We used the reports of these NGOs and conducted email interviews with them. Further, previous academic publications were used to analyse the ownership structure and political affiliations of hate media and communication in Turkey (Binark 2010; Çınar 2013; Inceoğlu 2012; Inceoğlu & Çoban 2014; Saka 2018). Based on these works, the current report portrays the political and economic background of the production of hate and propaganda in the media during the AKP's rule.

The following part, entitled "Ownership Structures of Hate and Propaganda in Media" provides an understanding of the mediascape in relation to their financial structures and political affiliations. Countering activities are also mentioned. In the next part, titled "The Organisation of Hate, Disinformation and Propaganda in the Media", particular examples of hate, disinformation and propaganda models via various media in Turkey with their patterns are mentioned in terms of their content. The concluding part summarizes the main findings of the research and signals the urgent needs in relation to the current mediascape in Turkey. At the end, we list several recommendations for further action in countering hate speech and disinformation in general and specifically concerning media ownership in Turkey.

This report is a part of the regional research within the Resilience Project carried out from May to mid-July 2020, providing an insight into affiliations, models and patterns of hate and propaganda media in Turkey under the AKP regime.

³ *Discrimination is prohibited in Turkey both by Article 122 of the Turkish Penal Code (TCK) and Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), to which Turkey is a party.*

2. OWNERSHIP STRUCTURES OF HATE AND PROPAGANDA MEDIA

The market structure of Turkey's mediascape is currently highly concentrated. According to the latest comprehensive ownership report, the Media Ownership Monitor Turkey 2018, "the government [the AKP] not only openly endangers media pluralism through recent closures of news outlets [with decree-laws after the coup attempt in 2016] but there is also a deeper dimension of economic leverage, which allows almost complete control of the mass media."⁴ Again, the same report says, the four owners of the top media (Kalyon Group, Demirören Group, Ciner Group and Doğu Group) have close relations with the government, and they share approximately 71% of the cross-media audience, meaning a high concentration of four major companies, which results in a high risk (MoM 2018): Out of 10 most-watched TV channels and 10 most read dailies, 9 belong to owners that are affiliated with the government. Mainly, the pro-government media have business interests with the government.

Since coming to power in 2002, the AKP has imposed a range of legal and financial pressures on critical media leading to governmental intervention in Turkey's mediascape which has resulted in the eventual reshaping of the ownership structure. Since the AKP's third term, in 2015, onwards, and specifically after the coup attempt in 2016, highly concentrated ownership structures, and political and economic alliances among media conglomerates and the government have increased the vulnerability of critical media outlets and professionals to legal and financial risks.

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Not only has critical reporting been exposed to governmental sanctions but dissidents or their rights-based opinions have also been targeted and threatened by predominantly pro-AKP media, mostly depending on but not limited to public contracts with the AKP. Some of those groups such as nationalists, conservatives, and racist and sexist individuals in the media and communication industries in Turkey as well as journalists, editors or opinion makers who are mostly men, also target and react against people who do not take their side. Their popular image is being intolerant to any differences to them. Consequently, they continuously produce hate speech which provokes, slanders and otherizes various segments of society, especially during times of conflict, Turkey's military operations, electoral periods and any polarized political crises.

2.1. The AKP's Turkey

The AKP came to power immediately after the economic crisis in 2001 that led to the collapse of several banks and caused the restructuring of the

⁴ MoM Country Report: Turkey. (2018). Available at <http://www.mom-rsf.org/en/countries/turkey/> [Accessed 18 June 2020].

media sector as some of these banks had already had business interest in it. The crisis has provided the AKP the opportunity to initiate a new state authority, i.e. the Savings Deposit Insurance Fund (TMSF), operating under the office of the Prime Minister, to seize and resell the assets of those banks, including their media outlets. This caused a dramatic change in the ownership structures and the mediascape by transferring the companies to pro-AKP business people (Yeşil 2018). Regarding the radical transformation of the economy in Turkey under the AKP, it is observed that the media sector has become “an area where business people do not just receive favours from, but actually do favours for, the government.”⁵ This change in the mediascape of Turkey in the 2000s can be thematised through “the concentration of media ownership, the breakup of unions by media owners, and government legislation that restricted critical reporting” (Christensen 2007). Not surprisingly, Turkey ranks 154th out of 180 countries in the RSF 2020 World Press Freedom Index, and Freedom House 2020 results indicate that Turkey is in the “not free” category where “the mainstream media, especially television broadcasters, reflect government positions and routinely carry identical headlines”⁶.

Turkey ranks 154th out of 180 countries in the RSF 2020 World Press Freedom Index, and Freedom House 2020 results indicate that Turkey is in the “not free”.

The AKP has also enhanced its own mechanisms of control over the critical media in terms of the regulations in relation to the Press Law, sanctions of the Radio and Television Authority of Turkey (the RTUK) as Turkey’s media watchdog, the Penal Code, and the Anti-Terror Law (TMK). In July 2020, the AKP government started to work on regulations that would control social media⁷ where the TMK is most commonly used against journalists who use social media as a space in which they can do their work after the crackdown on press freedom. It has been argued that if the bill passes, it will strengthen the AKP’s efforts to suppress critical voices in social media in Turkey⁸, where Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp and Wikipedia have been blocked from time to time in the past.

However, the sanctions available through these kinds of regulations are not imposed against the dissemination of hate speech targeting particular groups, rather it is justified and normalized. This has increasingly been nourishing the social polarization in society as they use target-pointing statements and hate language against Jews, Kurds, Armenians, Syrians, Greeks, Alevis, atheists, women, LGBTI+s, feminists, secularists, socialists, communists, Kemalists through the columns, the comments on TV shows and Tweets.

5 Buğra, A and Savaşkan, O. (2014).

6 Freedom House Report: Turkey. 2020 Available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/turkey/freedom-world/2020> [Accessed 18 May 2020]. [Accessed 17 July 2020]

7 Erdoğan says his party will draft a bill to ‘either completely ban or control’ social media. [Accessed 3 July 2020] Available at: <http://bianet.org/english/politics/226703-erdogan-says-his-party-will-draft-a-bill-to-either-completely-ban-or-control-social-media> [Accessed 17 July 2020]

8 Fears of Draconian Social Media Law in Turkey. Available at: <https://freeturkeyjournalists.ipi.media/fears-of-draconian-social-media-law-in-turkey/> [Accessed 17 July 2020]

2.2. Mediascape

The ownership structure and political affiliations of the hate media and communication during AKP rule in Turkey clearly indicate the fact that they are predominantly connected to the AKP government. Apart from those, there are also many other significant generators of hate speech in some nationalist and patriotic media, critical of the AKP, in terms of influence on public discussions.

The journalists affiliated with those companies mentioned here as producing hate speech, not only write in their columns but also continue producing content and spreading hate speech through their Twitter accounts. Furthermore, in addition to pro-government fact-checking sites, Turkey has some opinion makers in online media channels who can also spread hate propaganda. Power networks are also active on social media such as Twitter. For instance, pro-AKP political trolls, as a general cyber and a kind of propaganda tool, being motivated to produce hate speech, are targeting and threatening the perceived enemies of the AKP in a very manipulative manner (Saka 2018). They not only disrupt political conversations but also consolidate the government's power by networking among the scattered masses (Erdem and Yörük 2017).

According to the report "Blocked Web 2019: The Unseen Part of the Iceberg"⁹ published by the Freedom of Expression Association (İFÖD), Turkey is the country that has been sending the highest number of court orders for content removal requests to Twitter¹⁰. However, it ranks 11th amongst the countries that have requested the removal of hate content on YouTube.

2.2.1. TRT and RTUK

Founded in 1964, the state broadcaster TRT is Turkey's first national television channel and was the only TV channel until 1990. As a state channel, TRT is not supposed to side with any power group; however, TRT has continued to promote the AKP during pre-election periods, highlighting the negative news in relation to the other parties' election speeches—which is, as stated in the report of Transparency International,¹¹ a violation of "impartiality" according to RTUK law.

RTUK, as Turkey's media watchdog formed in 1994, consists of nine members who are elected by Parliament among the candidates nominated by political parties. Regulating broadcast organizations, providing licences and auditing broadcasters are among the RTUK's responsibilities. Since August 2019,

⁹ The report is available at https://ifade.org.tr/reports/EngelliWeb_2019.pdf 3 July 2020. [Accessed 17 July 2020]

¹⁰ Twitter Transparency Report Available at: <https://transparency.twitter.com/en/removal-requests.html#removal-requests-jan-jun-2019> [Accessed 17 July 2020]

¹¹ The report is available at: <http://www.seffaflik.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Yerel-Se%C3%A7im-%C4%B0zleme-%C3%87al%C4%B1%C5%9Fmas%C4%B1-10.pdf> [Accessed 17 July 2020]

RTUK has also been authorized to inspect online broadcasting which includes foreign news websites, and it has begun to supervise the media organizations broadcasting on the Internet.

Considering the broadcast bans and monetary fines imposed by RTUK on channels that oppose the AKP such as Halk TV and Fox TV, it appears that RTUK acts as a government tool to threaten news outlets critical of the government and silence the critical, independent media in Turkey through its punishments¹². On the other hand, pro-government TV channels such as ATV, ÜLKE TV and TGRT News received only a total of two warnings and one administrative fine between January 2019 and 25 March 2020.¹³

It appears that RTUK acts as a government tool to threaten news outlets critical of the government and silence the critical, independent media in Turkey through its punishments.

The RTUK's pattern of singling out critical media can be highlighted through a recent example. On 8 May 2020, in a programme on pro-government Ülke TV (details can be seen in Table 1) a media figure, Noyan commented on the coup attempt in 2016; she began to direct threats towards a section of society and said that her family would kill at least 50 people in the event of a new coup attempt against the government. Elönü, the programme's presenter, supported her, saying those people should watch their step. RTUK imposed a three-episode broadcast suspension on the programme over her remarks that "incited hatred"¹⁴ it was not until public reaction from both the opposition and some pro-government camps that RTUK imposed a three-episode broadcast suspension on the programme¹⁵.

According to bianet's Media Monitoring 2019 report, RTUK issued 57 monetary fines and 24 programme suspension to TV channels due to violation of articles in "the Law No.6112 on the Establishment of Radio and Television Enterprises and Their Media Services"¹⁶. The council issued a total of YTL 4,090,999 [approx. €644,251] of fines to TV channels¹⁷.

12 IPI condemns 5-day broadcast bans on Turkey's Halk TV, TELE 1 1 July 2020 Available at: <https://freeturkeyjournalists.ipi.media/ipi-condemns-5-day-broadcast-bans-on-turkeys-halk-tv-tele1/> [Accessed 17 July 2020]

13 Turkey's Media Authority Issued 39 Fines in 1.5 Years, 36 of Them were for Critical Outlets. 18 May 2020 Available at: <https://bianet.org/english/media/224453-turkey-s-media-authority-issued-39-fines-in-1-5-years-36-of-them-were-for-critical-outlets> [Accessed 17 July 2020]

14 Media Authority Fines Pro-Government Broadcaster over 'Coup' Remarks Available at: <https://bianet.org/5/100/224705-media-authority-fines-pro-government-broadcaster-over-coup-remarks> [Accessed 18 May 2020]. [Accessed 17 July 2020]

15 Turkey's media watchdog fines pro-gov't TV channel over Islamist commentator's death threats. <https://www.duvarenglish.com/media/2020/05/22/turkeys-media-watchdog-fines-pro-govt-tv-channel-over-islamist-commentators-death-threats/> [Accessed 17 July 2020]

16 The Law No.6112 on the Establishment of Radio and Television Enterprises and Their Media Services Available at: <https://www.rtuk.gov.tr/en/audio-visual-media-law/5350/5139/the-law-no6112-on-the-establishment-of-radio-and-television-enterprises-and-their-media-services-march-3-2011.html> [Accessed 17 July 2020]

17 Bia Media Monitoring 2019 Available at: <https://bianet.org/5/100/218959-the-ends-justify-the-means-in-purging-critical-media> [Accessed 18 June 2020].

2.2.2. Press Advertising Authority (BİK)

The state-controlled Press Advertising Authority (BİK) was established in 1961. Public announcements and advertising handed out by BİK make up an important source of income for newspapers. Its structure was changed in 2013 to enable it to impose bans for breaches of its code. Independent newspapers in Turkey depend on income raised via BİK advertisements. The BİK does not provide public reports on how the advertisements are distributed to the various newspapers, nor on the penalties on media¹⁸. In 2019, BİK began to cut public ads of the opposition in print media such as the dailies Evrensel and BirGün, an action which is seen as its attempt to silence critical media in Turkey.

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2.3. Political and Economic Affiliations

This section exemplifies various hate and propaganda media along with ownership structure in order to provide a general understanding of who are behind these media and what their political and economic affiliations are.

According to HDV's report, the Islamist, conservative, extreme rightist and pro-government newspaper *Yeni Akit* is one of the top three Turkish newspapers featuring systematic hate speech. Not only do its writers disseminate hate speech, but their editorial choices are also full of implicit hate language against Syrians, Jews, Armenians, Greeks, Yazidis, Alevis, atheists, LGBTI+s, feminists, secularists, socialists, communists, and Kemalists. *Yeni Akit* was founded by Mustafa Karahasanoğlu and has been owned by Ramazan Fatih Uğurlu since 2004. The paper's editor-in-chief frequently pens articles praising President Erdoğan in order to publicly support him.

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In terms of circulation rates,¹⁹ the biggest selling newspaper in Turkey, *Sabah*, owned by Kalyon Group/Zirve Holding, which operates in sectors such as construction, energy and infrastructure, also features on the list of hate media. The construction company Kalyon İnşaat topped the list in terms of total value of public contracts won between 2015–2019²⁰. The vice chairperson of Turkuvaz Medya Group, a media company under the Kalyon Group and Zirve Holding, is Serhat Albayrak, brother of the Minister of Finance and Treasury, Berat Albayrak, who is the son-in-law of President Erdoğan.

¹⁸ IPI-led international press freedom mission: Turkey must end public ad ban on independent newspapers. Available at: <https://www.evrensel.net/daily/397150/ipi-led-international-press-freedom-mission-turkey-must-end-public-ad-ban-on-independent-newspapers> [Accessed 17 July 2020]

¹⁹ The circulation rate of 2019 was received by Presidency's Communication Center (CİMER).

²⁰ ENR (300) 2019 Ranking Available at: <https://www.enrturkiye.com/top300-2019/?lang=en> [Accessed 17 July 2020]

Yeni Şafak, another of the best-selling newspapers in Turkey, is also in the list of hate media. It is owned by the Albayrak Group, which is active in other sectors such as construction, transportation, waste management, mining, and the defence industry. Both newspapers have targeted dissenters who do not consent to the AKP. When the government begins to associate any dissident (such as Kurdish legal actors) with the problem of terror, these media follow the same path. The notion of “terror” is thus used as a significant component of hate speech to normalize it. Not only Kurds but also Armenians and LGBTI+s (to protect the concept of “family”), are being targeted in their columns. Both newspapers openly support the AKP.

The newspaper *Hürriyet* had maintained its secular, nationalist and liberal values until it was sold to a member of the pro-government conglomerate the Demirören Group in 2018 (signalling the end of mainstream media and media pluralism in Turkey). After this, some of journalists, who are known for their use of hate language feeding the polarisation in the society, switched to this newspaper and found a secure position at the Demirören Group. Its shares are entirely owned by the Demirören family, which openly supports the ruling AKP and has close ties with President Erdoğan. For the main part, most of the pro-government media also have business interests with the government.

Newspapers critical to the government, such as *Sözcü* and *Yeniçağ*, also produce hate speech when “national interests” are at stake. Third in the top ten print media outlets in Turkey, *Sözcü* newspaper is owned by an individual businessperson who was accused of aiding the terrorist organization FETÖ. Although infamous for its loud and Kemalist critique of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the ruling AKP, it is still among those media outlets producing and spreading hate speech, particularly against Syrian refugees. Like *Sözcü*, *Yeniçağ* newspaper is also cited in the HDV report as disseminating hate speech in the media; however, it is close to the nationalist, patriotic, liberal-conservative, secularist İYİ party (Good Party) and propagandises the statements of its leader. The newspaper’s grant holder is the İstanbul MP of the İYİ Party, Kemal Çelik.

OWNERSHIP OF HATE AND PROPAGANDA MEDIA EXAMPLES IN TURKEY²¹

Table 1

MEDIA OUTLET	MEDIA GROUP	OWNER(S)
Sabah (Print)	Kalyon Group (Zirve Holding)	Ömer Faruk Kalyoncu (100 %)
Hürriyet (Print)	Demirören Group	Demirören family
Yeni Şafak (Print)	Albayrak Holding	Shareholders: Albayrak Brothers (6.4%) Albayrak Tourism (64%)
Yeni Akit (Print)	Uğurlu Gazetecilik Basın Yayın Matbaacılık Reklamcılık	Ramazan Fatih Uğurlu

21 Information about media company owners and their shares can usually be found in the Trade Registry Gazette archive on ticaretsicil.gov.tr. The above-mentioned companies do not publish their revenues and profits through updates.

Yeniçağ (Print)	Yeniçağ Gazetecilik Matbaacılık	Kemal Çelik
Sözcü (Print)	Estetik Yayıncılık A.Ş.	Burak Akbay (100%)
Ülke TV (TV)	Beyaz İletişim (Beyaz Holding)	İsmail Karahan, Aykut Zahid Akman, Zekeriya Karaman ve Mustafa Çelik (25% each)
TRT (TV)	State	
Analiz merkezi (YouTube channel)	Fatih Tezcan	Open to Crowd Fund

Source: MoM 2018 Available at: <https://turkey.mom-rsf.org/en/>

In addition to the above-mentioned media outlets and their correspondents, there are also individual opinion makers in Turkey who have their own personalized online media and communication channels for systematic dissemination of hate, such as Analiz merkezi.²² There is no transparency regarding the financing of this channel. Its owner is calling on people to financially support him.

According to SimilarWeb's ranking, the top sites for news and media in Turkey²³ are the online editions of the newspapers belonging the Demirören family (such as hurriyet.com.tr and milliyet.com.tr), Kalyon Groups (sabah.com.tr) and Akbay's sozcu.com.tr. This means that the hate and propaganda produced by these media can also be accessed online.

Table 2 below shows the details of the owners of the hate and propaganda media examples, indicating that some of these groups are, in fact, conglomerates as they also have activities in sectors other than media.

OWNERSHIP OF HATE AND PROPAGANDA MEDIA EXAMPLES IN TURKEY

Table 2

OWNER	MEDIA OUTLETS OWNED BY THAT OWNER IN TURKEY	COMPANIES (CO)OWNED BY THAT OWNER IN MEDIA-RELATED SECTORS	COMPANIES OWNED BY THAT OWNER IN NON-MEDIA-RELATED SECTOR	CONNECTIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT/ LOCAL AUTHORITIES OR POLITICAL PARTIES
Ömer Faruk Kalyoncu	Sabah; Takvim; A haber (TV); A haber (radio) ahaber.com.tr; ATV, Sabah, sabah.com.tr	Distribution Turkuvaz Dağıtım Pazarlama A.Ş. Publishing Turkuvaz Kitapçılık Yayıncılık Sanayi ve Ticaret A.Ş., Turkuvaz Matbaacılık Yayıncılık Sanayi ve Ticaret A.Ş. Production Turkuvaz Prodüksiyon ve Tanıtım A.Ş. News Agency Turkuvaz Haber Ajansı Digital Media Turkuvaz Media Digital, Turkuvaz Mobile Services	Kalyon İnşaat; Kalyon Concession; Kalyon Energy; Kalyon Gayrimenkul; Kalyon Energy	Pro-government business interests with the AKP (in the construction sector such as Istanbul Airport, the Northern Marmara Highway)

²² Available at: <https://www.analizmerkezi.com/> As at June 24, 2020, he has 65.9K subscribers.

²³ Top websites ranking: Turkey. 15 July 2020 Available at: <https://www.similarweb.com/top-websites/turkey/category/news-and-media/> [Accessed 17 July 2020]

Albayrak Brothers	Yeni Şafak; TVNET (TV)	Magazine Publishing Online Media Publishing and Broadcasting Advertising Distribution	Construction; Transportation Waste Management; Mining; Recycling; Machinery; Production of Paper; Textile; Moulding; Fleet Leasing; Port Sector.	Pro-government
Demirören family	Hürriyet, Milliyet, Posta; CNNTURK, KANAL D, TEVE 2, Dream TV, Dream Turk, Radyo D, CNN TURK Radio	Printing and Publication; Demirören Printing Center, Hürriyet Kitap; News Agency (DHA)	Energy (Milangaz, Oto Milangaz, Total Oil Turkey) Heavy Metal Industry (Demirören Ağır Metal); Real Estate (Demirören Shopping Center, İstiklal Palace), Tourism (Kemer Country Hotel), Education (ATA High School)	Pro-government: Openly supports the AKP and President Erdoğan through its media ²⁴
İsmail Karahan, Aykut Zahid Akman, Zekeriya Karaman ve Mustafa Çelik	Kanal 7; haber7. com, radio 7; Ülke TV; Ülke News		Etkin Education Organization; Kare Education Logistic; Lapis Education Organization; Zirve Communication	Pro-government: Beyaz Holding companies have won certain tenders from Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality for 8 years which was under AKP governance until 2019 ²⁵ The former RTÜK chairman Zahid Akman was on the company's board of directors ²⁶
Kemal Çelik	Yeniçağ (print)			Patriotic but not pro-government.
Burak Akbay	Sözcü (Print) Sozcu.com.tr			Nationalist and opposing the AKP

Source: MoM Turkey 2018²⁷

24 See Demirören Group Available at: <https://turkey.mom-rsf.org/en/owners/companies/detail/company//demiroeren-group-1/>

25 Kanal 7 ve Ülke TV'nin sahibi Beyaz Holding, son sekiz yılda İBB'den 1 milyar 123 milyon TL'lik ihale aldı Available at: <https://medyascope.tv/2019/09/23/kanal-7-ve-ulke-tvnin-sahibi-beyaz-holding-son-sekiz-yilda-ibbden-1-milyar-123-milyon-tlik-ihale-aldi/>

26 Beyaz Holding'in kilometre taşları. 4 Sep 2008. Available at: <https://t24.com.tr/haber/beyaz-holdingin-kilometre-taslari,5113> [Accessed 17 July 2020]

27 The information about the above companies (except Yeniçağ) was received by the MOM report on Turkey 2018 published by bianet and RSF Available at: <https://turkey.mom-rsf.org/en/>

2.4. Countering

Mainly civil society organizations monitor and report on hate speech findings, particularly in print media. Furthermore, there is no monitoring mechanism for rendering hate speech in online and social media visible. However, public outcry and opposition parties raise awareness of the hate speech in pro-government online media via counter actions and counter narrative in posting and commenting on posts in which hate speech appears.

The Hrant Dink Foundation has been monitoring and categorizing hate speech findings in the national and local press since 2009. Thus, they draw attention to the discriminatory language directed against ethnic and religious identities, sexist and homophobic discourse and news containing hate speech. Secondly, Kaos GL have been monitoring and reporting hate speech in the media against the LGBTI+s. The Media and Refugee Rights Association also aims at resisting hate speech against refugees and supporting refugees to raise their own voices via the media and the visual arts, and published media watch reports until January 2020. The Research Centre on Asylum and Migration (IGAM) published its own media watch report on Syrian refugees for a limited period (in 2019). As the content of hate speech in local media creates a faster and more devastating outrage, these organizations also conduct research on the local press to render hate speech visible. It is also used as a reference to understand the dynamics of a part of society, as local media are still quite effective in determining what is discussed in the local agenda and how²⁸.

Furthermore, the Coalition for Ethical Journalism Turkey (CEJT) was initiated in 2018 to support independent and ethical journalism. They have begun preparing a glossary of hate speech or discriminative language produced by journalists²⁹. International organisations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International periodically call on Turkey to make hate speech against certain groups visible.

On the other hand, in order to counter the manipulated facts and bogus news, verification platforms³⁰, like teyit.org as a non-partisan and independent fact-checking organization, scans, chooses, investigates suspicious information and delivers it to readers by turning it into analyses. *Sabah*, *Yeni Şafak* and *Yeni Akit* were among the newspapers whose news was mostly subjected to investigation by teyit.org³¹.

28 Dilan Taşdemir, *Media and Migration Association*, May 2020.

29 Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ceren Sözeri, email interview June 2020.

30 Although teyit.org is the most popular, "dogrulukpayi" was the first fact-checking initiative and it went online in 2014. Both are dependent on external funding. See more *Fact-Checkers and Fact-Checking in Turkey*" 29 June 2020. Available at <https://edam.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/FactCheckers-and-FactChecking-in-Turkey-H.-Ak%C4%B1n-%C3%9Cnver.pdf> [Accessed 17 July 2020]

31 Kızılkaya, E. (2020). Google's 'outrageous support to partisan media' puts Turkey's fragile communities at risk. July 9, 2020. Available at <https://freeturkeyjournalists.ipi.media/googles-outrageous-support-to-partisan-media-puts-turkeys-fragile-communities-at-risk/> [Accessed 17 July 2020]

Turkey has web portals such as freewebturkey.com and [@engelliweb](https://twitter.com/engelliweb) [blockedweb] listing the increasing amount of Turkey's banned content and websites in accordance with Law No. 5651 on "Regulation of Publications on the Internet and Combating Crimes Committed by Means of Such Publication" and other provisions of the Information Technologies and Communication Authority (BTK) of recent years. These portals specifically allow us to see blocked content that is critical of the AKP. They thereby support to raise public awareness of violations of freedom of expression in Turkey, a territory where even Google fuels partisan media outlets, many of which produce disinformation and propaganda, despite warnings from vulnerable communities.³²

³² See note above.

3. ORGANISATION OF HATE, DISINFORMATION AND PROPAGANDA IN MEDIA

According to the HDV's latest "Media Watch on Hate Speech" report published in December 2019³³, Syrians, Rums, Greeks, Jews and Armenians were among the most targeted groups in the print media of Turkey and *Yeni Akit*, *Diriliş Postası*, *Yeniçağ*, *Milli Gazete*, *Milat*, *Türkiye*, *Star* were listed as the national newspapers that were most active in the production of hate speech in 2019. These newspapers have an influence on their own communities in terms of promoting violence, even though they are not powerful enough to frame the national political agenda. Still, the political climate supports them and impunity expands the scope of the hate speech produced by these newspapers. Even though these are small newspapers in terms of readership, their online versions and Twitter accounts, through which they disseminate hate speech, are still reachable from all over Turkey. Furthermore, Google keeps featuring their online edition in the top search results of important keywords.³⁴

The most targeted groups in print media were Syrians, Rums, Greeks, Jews and Armenians, and *Yeni Akit*, *Diriliş Postası*, *Yeniçağ*, *Milli Gazete*, *Milat*, *Türkiye*, *Star* were listed as the newspapers that were most active in the production of hate speech in 2019.

3.1. Hate Speech, Disinformation and Propaganda in Media: Patterns

In the media disseminating hate speech, individuals and/or various groups fall into the range of hate speech depending on the policies that create the political agenda. As an example, we can point to the accusations, blame and allegations used against the Kurdish legal bodies between the June and November elections in 2015 when the political atmosphere in Turkey changed dramatically and so did the moderate media discourse on the Kurdish issue. For instance, the signifier "HDPKK" combines the letters of the HDP and the PKK used in news reports. It implies that a legal party, the HDP, supports the PKK or that they work together: It is used to silence the political opposition and criticize other media outlets in re-creating the enemy-other in *Yeni Şafak*³⁵. Similarly, media outlets of the Demirören Group also targeted not only Kurdish legal bodies but also other opponents of the AKP government when the AKP changed its way of dealing with the Kurdish conflict, and these outlets have published bogus news and fabricated quotes³⁶ –as seen ahead of the March 2019 local elections³⁷.

33 Media Watch on Hate Speech Available at:

<https://hrantdink.org/attachments/article/2375/MNS%C4%B0-rapor-may%C4%B1s-agustos-2019.pdf>

34 Kızılkaya, E. (2020)

35 Albayrak, Ö., (2016, Feb 26). *İhanet ve daniskası [Betrayal and more]*. *Yeni Şafak*. p.13 See also Lekesiz, Ö. (2015, Oct 13). *Vahşetle sırtan kelleler [The heads grinning brutally]*. See Korkmaz, T. (2015, Oct 21). *Demek ki neymiş [So what was it?]*. *Yeni Şafak*. p.18

36 Posta, *Hürriyet* ve CNN Türk'ten Sezai Temelli çarpıtması. Available at: <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/375777/posta-hurriyet-ve-cnn-turkten-sezai-temelli-carpitmasi>

37 Kızılkaya (2020).

Famous for its criticism of the ruling AKP, nationalist, patriotic and conservative *Yeniçağ* still shares common ideals with those pro-government media supporting the national interest of Turkey, such as the idea of the Turkishness of official ideology. As also noted by Media Watch on the HDV Hate Speech project team³⁸, when it comes to “foreigners” (Jews, Armenians, Christians, Greeks, Rums, Syrians, Western), both partisan media, whose owners have close economic and political ties with the AKP, and opposition nationalist media, such as *Sözcü* and *Yeniçağ*, share the same language of enemy-other towards those “foreigners.”

According to the KAOS GL monthly media watch report on hate speech, the pro-AKP media mostly disseminate and promote hate speech against the LGBTI+s. While *Yeni Akit* and *Milli Gazete* produce hate speech supposedly with “religious references” (by criminalizing anyone defending the rights of LGBTI+s)³⁹, newspapers like the nationalist *Aydınlık* associate the LGBTI+ movement with “imperialism”⁴⁰. Both refer to the “external enemies” allegedly taking part in the LGBTI+ movement. The use of hate against LGBTI+s increases during May and June as 17 May is the “International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia” and Pride Week is held in June. According to Kaos GL’s 2019 Media Monitoring Report, the number of newspapers targeting LGBTI+s, and discriminatory language based on prejudices increased in 2019.

In May 2020, on a TV programme on TRT, the former Preacher of Istanbul, Ramazan Sevinci targeted the Istanbul Convention aiming to prevent violence targeting women and penalizing those inflicting that violence, and used hate language against the LGBTI+ community⁴¹. In another television programme named “What’s the Truth?”, airing every day on TRT, LGBTI+s were targeted with the following words: “All kinds of illegitimate sexual intercourse.”

Moreover, after the head of Turkey’s top religious authority had once again targeted LGBTI+s by calling them evil during a sermon in April 2020, which the Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office⁴² did not deem worthy of investigation, journalists affiliated with the pro-government media began to comment on the issues concerning women’s and LGBTI+ rights, discrediting their rights⁴³ and blaming LGBTI+s for all the evils in society.⁴⁴ This was not the only instance indicating the arbitrariness of sanctions in the scope of

38 Email interview with the HDV Team, June 2020.

39 *İslama Düşman Teroriste Kalkan*. [Enemy to Islam, shield to terrorist] Available at: <https://www.yeniakit.com.tr/kart/haber/islama-dusman-teroriste-kalkan-lgbtiyi-savunan-bazi-barolar-terorden-hukum-giyen-avukatlari-da-kolluyor-1213308.html> [Accessed 17 July 2020]

40 Kaos GL editor, Aslı Alpar, email interview, June 2020.

41 TRT 1’de İstanbul sözleşmesi ve eşcinsellere yönelik nefret söylemi Available at: <https://gazetemanifesto.com/2020/trt-1-de-istanbul-sozlesmesi-ve-escinsellere-yonelik-nefret-soylemi-355201/>

42 ‘No Need to Investigate’ Religious Affairs President’s Remarks, Says Prosecutor’s Office Available at: <http://bianet.org/english/lgbti/224293-no-need-to-investigate-religious-affairs-president-s-remarks-says-prosecutor-s-office> 15.05.2020

43 Kaplan H. (28 Apr 2020). *Durma Haykır, Eşcinsellik günahtr*. [Don’t stop, shout, homosexuality is a sin]. *Sabah*.

44 Kaplan, H (3 May 2020). *Aile için tehlike çanları çalıyor*. [Alarm bells start to ring for the family]. *Sabah*.

freedom of speech and the impunity for the offence of “openly degrading a section of people based on differences of class, religion, sect, gender, region” when the rights of disadvantaged groups are at stake. Given the statement of the Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu: “I regard LGBTI+s as a threat”⁴⁵, we can say that impunity is inevitable in cases of hate speech against the LGBTI+ community as it is seen as a threat at the governmental level.

Regarding the portrayal of Syrians, disinformation related to them is not rare in national and local media in Turkey which eventually results in outbursts of social lynching and threats, and reinforces the social polarization. Syrian refugees are generally portrayed by mainstream media as a “backward society”.⁴⁶ Those asylees were also on the agenda of the media before the local elections of 31 March 2019, particularly after the Interior Minister Soylu said that 53,099 Syrians, who had acquired Turkish citizenship, would be able to vote in the local elections. This statement turned the “Syrian voters” into an opportunity in both the pro-AKP media such as Sabah and those opposed to the AKP such as *Sözcü* and *Yeniçağ*. In particular, discriminatory use of language and visuals, wrong terminology, manipulation of facts and images, criminalization, exaggeration, false information, and negative defamatory⁴⁷ campaigns towards them is being encouraged by both pro-AKP and its opposing nationalist media. In these media, the presence of refugees is seen as the cause of social and economic backwardness in the country and they blame them for the unemployment of Turkish citizens⁴⁸. This situation seems to agitate hatred against Syrian refugees.

3.2. Propagandising for the government: Pro-AKP trolls

On 1 May 2020, the AKP issued a twelve-clause ethical guideline that includes the principles not to use hate language and to fight against “disinformation” in social media. The AKP’s deputy chairman Mahir Ünal, who manages the AKP’s Publicity and Media, encouraged the use of a “green dot” emoji accompanied by the “Turkish flag” on Twitter profiles to signify that these accounts are “national” [milli] accounts, that is compliant with this guideline. This also means that these accounts openly support the AKP. The most frequently mentioned expressions in the green-dotted profiles were “Fatherland”, “Atatürk”, “Allah”, “Turkey”, and “Turkey” and “Erdogan” as analysed by Onur Mat⁴⁹. It later turned out that some of the messages published on Twitter to insult and harass and target female journalists and politicians such as CHP Istanbul Provincial President Kaftancıoğlu and journalist Mengü were

45 Minister Süleyman Soylu targeted LGBTI+s again!

<https://www.kaosgl.org/en/single-news/minister-suleyman-soylu-targeted-lgbtis-again> 22 August 2019.

46 Cavidan and Soykan (2018). AKP döneminde medyada mülteci temsili. Available at: <https://halagazeteciyiz.net/2018/12/25/akp-doneminde-medya-da-mul-teci-temsili/> [Accessed 17 July 2020]

47 Bulut, A. (7 Jul 2019). “Mülteciler Stratejik Silahır” [Refugees are the strategic weapons]. *Yeniçağ* newspaper.

48 Çölaşan, E. (17 Mar, 2019) “İş Ariyorum Abi”, *Sözcü* newspaper and Çölaşan E. *Sözcü* (30 Mar 2019) “Zafer mi Olur Yenilgi mi” *Sözcü* newspaper.

49 The Green Dots of Twitter in Turkey 26 May 2020 Available at: <https://dokuz8haber.net/english/politics/the-green-dots-of-twitter-in-turkey/> [Accessed 15 June 2020]

disseminated from some of these accounts with green dots. Lastly, another green-dotted account has used sexist statements and verbally attacked Başak Demirtaş, the spouse of the jailed then co-president of the HDP, Selahattin Demirtaş. On 17 July, after a wave of threats targeting female journalists and politicians and dissemination of sexist statements, the AKP announced that was ending “the green dot” campaign⁵⁰.

On 11 June 2020, Twitter announced that it had disclosed 32,242 accounts to their archive of state-linked information operations. Among them, 7340 accounts attributed to the youth wing of the AKP were in Turkey, mentioned above as pro-AKP trolls for pushing propaganda by criticising the opposition parties CHP and HDP, and for spreading disinformation and targeting and discrediting critical accounts and individuals and movements. It is also revealed that retweet rings such as “AK devam” (My AK case) and “AK Hilal” (AK Crescent) were used frequently by AKP supporters to amplify tweets from AKP officials and AKP supporters specifically. Considering this, as Saka notes, “Twitter may be the most convenient venue to circulate hate narratives publicly [...] those people know that there is impunity”⁵¹.

3.3. Pro-government Opinion Makers and Other Groups

Turkey also has individual opinion makers who have their own personalized online media and communication channels such as “Fatih Tezcan ile Analiz Merkezi” on YouTube. Describing himself as anti-imperialist and anti-Kemalist, the founder is infamous for his threatening and aggressive propagandist style of comments, and for targeting various groups such as CHP representatives, Kemalists and women, and LGBTI+s⁵². He has a “report line” through which he receives the names of people who criticize and oppose the AKP and President Erdoğan to mark them as targets⁵³. Recently, in one of his broadcasts, he referenced the death threats in the name of “love for President Erdoğan”. As this statement includes crimes according to the Turkish Penal Code, an investigation launched against him but no charges had been pressed as of 20 June.

Furthermore, the projects of Bosphorus Global (BG) include the sort of fact-checking services which, in various languages, aim to counter critical coverage of the AKP published in the international media. It was allegedly stated that its employees salaries were financed by a private hospital⁵⁴. Its Global Affairs Chair is Suheyb Oğut (spouse of Hilal Kaplan, a columnist

50 *Ruling AKP ends green dots social media campaign 40 days after initiating it.* Available at: <https://www.duvarenglish.com/politics/2020/06/17/ruling-akp-ends-green-dot-social-media-campaign-40-days-after-initiating-it/> [Accessed 15 June 2020]

51 Assoc Prof. Erkan Saka. E-mail interview, June 2020.

52 *Rainbow colors on Turkey's Bosphorus Bridge upsets pro-akp journalists* Available at <https://www.birgun.net/haber/rainbow-colors-on-turkey-s-bosphorus-bridge-upsets-pro-akp-journalists-165412>

53 Available at <http://www.diken.com.tr/yok-mu-artiran-diyenlere-yanit-tezcandan-geldi-erdoganin-canina-kastedenlerin-cani-alinir/> [Accessed 15 June 2020]

54 *Turkey's Pelican Group: A state within a state.* 17 March 2020. Available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/turkeys-pelican-group-a-state-within-a-state/a-52798624> [Accessed 30 July 2020]

from the pro-government Sabah daily) and the co-Chair is Ceyhan Aksoy. They are not that effective in shaping the public agenda. Still, one of their websites called “fact-checking Turkey”⁵⁵ appears to take a stand against the independent fact-checking sites such as teyit.org in order to counter the so-called disinformation from their side.

On 5 July 2019, the Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA), which has allegedly received significant financing from a group having close connection with the government⁵⁶, published a report entitled “International Media Outlets’ Extensions in Turkey”⁵⁷. The SETA report listed the professional backgrounds and social media posts of journalists working at international media organisations. The report accused these organizations of “carrying out a perception work”⁵⁸. Citing social media posts and retweets of the journalists, the SETA report was seen as “blacklisting” and “targeting” by journalism associations in Turkey where, in 2019, 33 journalists and media workers had already been sentenced to a total of 63 years, 11 months in prison as part of journalism or political cases as per the TMK⁵⁹. These cases are all listed in bianet’s Media Monitoring Database that aims at monitoring and reporting violations of freedom of expression towards media employees and organizations in Turkey⁶⁰.

The SETA report was seen as “blacklisting” and “targeting” by journalism associations in Turkey where, in 2019, 33 journalists and media workers had already been sentenced to a total of 63 years, 11 months in prison.

55 More Fact-Checkers and Fact-Checking in Turkey 29 June 2020. Available at <https://edam.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/FactCheckers-and-FactChecking-in-Turkey-H.-Ak%C4%B1n-%C3%9Cnver.pdf>

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57 Uluslararası Medya Kuruluşlarının Türkiye Uzantıları 5 July 2019 Available at <https://setav.org/assets/uploads/2019/07/R143Tr.pdf> [Accessed 15 June 2020]

58 SETA Report on Journalists to be Taken to Court, SETA Says It is a ‘Scientific Study’ 7 July 2019 <http://bianet.org/english/print/210168-seta-report-on-journalists-to-be-taken-to-court-seta-says-it-is-a-scientific-study>

59 Medya Gözlem Raporu BIA Media Monitoring 2019. The Ends Justify the Means in Purging Critical Media. Available at: <https://bianet.org/5/100/218959-the-ends-justify-the-means-in-purging-critical-media>

60 Available at <https://mediamonitoringdatabase.org/> [Accessed 15 June 2020]

4. CONCLUSION

This report shows the political and economic affiliations of hate, disinformation, and propaganda media and their patterns in Turkey during the AKP's rule. It demonstrates through specific examples where hate speech and disinformation media get power from, and what rationale they follow while producing hate speech and disseminating disinformation. This report thereby argues that new regulations for media ownership are needed in order to break the domination of hate media in a hopefully pluralistic media environment.

It also reasserts that the individuals and/or groups other than those supporting official ideology become "divisive of national unity" so that they easily become hate objects targeted by both partisan and non-partisan but patriotic media. Currently, disinformation disseminated by pro-government media with political and business interests in the government is spread in the name of "love for President Erdoğan" and "propagandizing for his government." Furthermore, those media that position themselves as nationalist, patriotic and critical of the AKP share a common language with the partisan media when they see threats to the founding ideology of Turkey. It can thus be concluded that this report reaffirms the commitment not only of the pro-government media to spreading propaganda and disinformation but also of the patriotic media's hate-filled news reporting when the "national interests" are at stake.

Ownership pluralism, one of the pivotal conditions of a democratic media environment, should be ensured through new regulations that break down the conflicts of interest between media groups and power.

This is seen through news reporting in terms of hate media, which obviously do not practice a rights-based journalistic approach, with their contents promoting violence against or harassment of individuals and disadvantaged groups. These media repeat and cause egregious violations of these groups' rights and go along with a polarizing rhetoric that fosters fanaticism and again encourages violence in targeting their hate objects.

This report principally suggests the urgency of the need for a self-regulatory mechanism developed by civil society and independently from the government to monitor hate speech, disinformation and propaganda. This mechanism would also need to be applicable to social media in Turkey where the government's control of the media and communication conflicts with fundamental principles of freedom of speech. This is because its decisions in relation to sanctions are arbitrary and do not guarantee the rights of the most vulnerable members of society nor protect them from being targeted by hate speech.

Furthermore, ownership pluralism, one of the pivotal conditions of a democratic media environment, should be ensured through new regulations that break down the conflicts of interest between media groups and power. This would eventually pave the way for a freer media atmosphere involving independent actors and critical voices who do not please the government.

All in all, the highly concentrated media market and the inexplicit and non-transparent financial structures of media ownership are the biggest obstacles to media pluralism in Turkey. The media owners' political and economic affiliations undermine the task of countering the hate speech and disinformation in the media. This situation stands as a major barrier to social cohesion and democracy in Turkey.

5. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Monitoring of financial connections between media owners and government should be performed on a regular basis by the NGOs conducting media ownership watch to indicate interdependence between the ruling party/government and hate and propaganda media and their owners. This raises awareness of the need for new regulation of media ownership and concentration as well as inviting those media to provide full transparency concerning their finances specifically in terms of public contracts.
- Data mapping for “media owners and their other investments” through networks such as the “Network of Dispossessions” should be updated on a regular basis otherwise a new open access database or map should be established by the NGOs and volunteers working with them and the reports should be published at least quarterly. This would help to evaluate the financial background of hate and propaganda media.
- Journalists, academics, lawyers, representatives of NGOs, human rights defenders, independent volunteers, listeners, readers, viewers and those groups who are most exposed to hate speech in the media should work together under a shared platform and/or coalition in order to create a common mechanism through which hate speech and disinformation can be scanned, monitored, reported and countered regularly and consistently.
- These reports should be shared with the government, Parliament, law makers, local authorities, media regulatory bodies, professional associations, media literacy educators and fact-checking platforms to be able to develop common strategies and policies.
- A self-regulatory body should be established and developed by the non-governmental organisations who conduct media monitoring in order to render hate speech and disinformation in all media visible.
- Social media monitoring in relation to hate and propaganda media should be conducted effectively by non-governmental organisations. They should develop the mechanisms and tools to facilitate the monitoring and publishing of “Social Media Hate Watch” reports weekly, monthly, and yearly.
- A glossary and booklets should be prepared together with journalists, academics, and NGOs monitoring hate speech in media to preclude the hate language in the media.
- In order to distinguish which institutions or individuals benefit from impunity, a monitoring mechanism should be established to render the judiciary’s different interpretations of the boundaries between hate speech and freedom of expression visible.
- Parallel to this, the judiciary bodies such as lawyers or judges can be trained in relation to the provisions in the international documents and practices of European Court of Human Rights on this issue.

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This publication is a part of the RESILIENCE project research component. The first series of research reports examines THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF HATE AND PROPAGANDA MEDIA MODEL in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey.

Nine media development organizations in the Western Balkans and Turkey have joined forces under an EU-funded project 'RESILIENCE: Civil society action to reaffirm media freedom and counter disinformation and hateful propaganda in the Western Balkans and Turkey'. The three-year project is coordinated by the South East European Network for Professionalization of Media (SEENPM), a network of media development organizations in Central and South East Europe, and implemented in partnership with: the Albanian Media Institute in Tirana, the Foundation Mediacentar Sarajevo, Kosovo 2.0 in Pristina, the Montenegro Media Institute in Podgorica, the Macedonian Institute for Media in Skopje, the Novi Sad School of Journalism in Novi Sad, the Peace Institute in Ljubljana, and Bianet in Istanbul.