**MANIFESTATIONS OF DISCREDITING OF THE EUROPEAN VALUES IN THE MEDIA**

**(Based on the results of media monitoring)**

Within the framework of the Project supported by the Government of the Netherlands, the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression from September 1 to December 31, 2019 conducted monitoring of a number of Armenian and Russian media aimed at identifying publications discrediting the European values through various propaganda methods**[[1]](#footnote-1)**. This is the first stage of the study, the second will cover the period from January 1 to April 30, 2020, after which a comparative analysis of the data will be carried out. Before starting the work, a pilot monitoring was also conducted, it was experimental in nature and provided for the improvement of the methodology and the development of the monitoring group skills.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The monitoring covered 13 media - 5 TV companies (including one Russian TV channel - “RTR-Planeta”, which through terrestrial broadcasting covers the whole territory of Armenia), 3 national newspapers and 5 online portals (one of them is Russian “Sputnik-Armenia”, which creates content in Armenian). The Armenian media were selected in a way that, where possible, media affiliated with various political forces be represented. Hence, in case of **newspapers**, the monitoring included pro-government “Haykakan Zhamanak” and two openly opposition ones - “Iravunk” and “Hraparak”. As for the **TV companies**, in addition to the Public Television of Armenia and the Russian “RTR-Planeta”, the programmes (main news programmes, as well as subsequent current affairs programmes) of three more broadcast media are studied - “5th Channel”, “Yerkir Media”, “Kentron”, the first of which is affiliated with the RA second President Robert Kocharyan, and the other two with ARF “Dashnaktsutyun” and Prosperous Armenia parties respectively. By the same principle, taking into account different political orientations, the monitoring included the following **online media**: “Tert.am”, “1in.am”, “24news.am”, “News.am”, “Sputnik-Armenia”.

Since there are multiple methods of propaganda, within the frames of the monitoring they are divided into the following conditional categories (they can be manifested both separately and in combination):

1) various forms of manipulation (juggling and/or distortion of facts, biased commenting, references to a non-existent source of information, etc.);

2) use of hate speech on different thematic categories: national, political, social, religious, racial, etc.;

3) use of negative stereotypes and clichés.

Throughout the monitoring the categories are measured **in** **units**. At the same time, the monitors record: a) total amount of studied pieces; b) materials touching upon the European theme and the European values marked out from the total amount of pieces; c) materials of propaganda nature aimed at discrediting the European values marked out from the group of pieces on the European theme. The content of the last group of publications is analyzed in more detail: what is said, who says it, what the attitude to what is said is - neutral (0), positive (+), negative (-). **A more detailed monitoring methodology is presented in the relevant section.**

**MONITORING RESULTS**

In the course of the four-month monitoring 103735 pieces were studied in 13 media, where the number of publications on the European theme stood at 30110 (or a little more than 29%). Of the latter only 213 (or 0.7%) contain various elements and techniques of propaganda aimed at discrediting the European values ​​(see Table 1 in Appendix 2). This, of course, is an extremely low rate indicating that the European theme in Armenia is mainly covered in a neutral or positive way. Nevertheless, even the identified small number of publications of anti-European nature needs to be studied, since an analysis of their content helps to reveal quite interesting trends in the country's information field.

It is noteworthy that out of the above-mentioned 213 pieces, which used techniques to discredit the European values, the largest number - 116 publications – falls to print media. The TV companies and online media have 65 and 32 pieces respectively (see Table 2 in Appendix 2). In the mentioned 213 pieces, the monitoring group recorded 247 cases of resorting to certain propaganda methods by various categories of authors (the last figure is more than the number of pieces, since one publication may contain comments by several authors or opinions of authors on several topics).

Moreover, if we consider the data of all the studied media, in most cases - 113 - the authors of the expressions containing negative stereotypes, “hate speech” and manipulative techniques were journalists themselves, in 75 - experts/public figures, in 33 - politicians, in 14 - officials, in 5 - representatives of science and culture. A religious figure and an ordinary citizen were authors in one case each, and another 5 authors were from the category “others”. As a rule, authors of statements had positive or - significantly less often – neutral stance on the negative stereotypes, expressions of hatred, and manipulations used.

Thus, only 6 cases of negative attitude towards distortion of facts, biased comments, “hate speech”, etc. were recorded among journalists. In the remaining 107 cases, agreement or neutral attitude were expressed. Experts/public figures disagreed with manipulations and stereotypes in 3 out of 75 cases, the officials - in one out of 12. All the other categories of authors fully agree with the negative content discrediting the European values (see Table 3 in Appendix 2).

The most common among the propaganda techniques used is biased-manipulative commenting of events and phenomena. Journalists used it in 104 cases, experts/public figures in 72, politicians in 29, officials in 14, representatives of science and culture in 5 cases, the remaining categories of authors - once each (see Table 4 in Appendix 2).

The second most common technique of information manipulation on the European theme is the distortion of facts and the use of false information. Among journalists this was recorded 15 times, among politicians - 9, among experts/public figures - 6. Single cases of distortion of facts were observed among the other categories of authors.

In the overall flow of information of 13 media, the monitors recorded that journalists, as a rule, spread negative stereotypes about Europe and the European values more often than all the other categories of authors combined. Thus, throughout the 4 months of study, 24 cases of using such stereotypes were determined in the publications of media reporters. Significantly fewer are those found in the statements of experts/public figures (6), representatives of science and culture (3), politicians (2) and other categories of authors.

Journalists are uncontested leaders in terms of the number of references to anonymous (presumably non-existent) sources of information, which can be considered as a manipulation technique in order to achieve a desired effect on the audience. 11 such references were found in this category of authors, and in one case this technique was used by a politician. The authors of the remaining categories refrained from such references (see the same table).

As for the use of hate speech, although this was episodic in nature (within 4 months only 24 cases were recorded in the studied media), here again they were mainly recorded among journalists (9), politicians (7) and experts/public figures (5). At the same time, most of the hate speech was related to the sexual/gender thematic category (14), much less to the political one (5), and in single cases to social, racial and others.

Anyway, if we restrict ourselves to analyzing only the aggregate data of all the media studied for the entire monitoring period, then there is a high probability that the assessments and conclusions will turn out to be not objective enough. The results for certain types of media, for example, show that in terms of the number of resorting to various propaganda techniques, journalists are ahead of representatives of the other categories of authors only in print media: here, the staff of the newspapers account for more than 70 percent (88 out of 123 units) of biased comments, distorted facts, negative stereotypes, etc. But with TV companies the picture is completely different: experts/public figures used propaganda techniques more than 2 times more in their publications and comments than journalists - 44 against 21. Moreover, these 44 units make up more than half of the total number (85) of the authors resorting to the mentioned techniques discrediting the European values ​​(see Table 5 in Appendix 2).

In online media, the difference is even more substantial: in terms of the number of biased comments, the use of negative stereotypes and distorted facts journalists were surpassed by several times not only by experts/public figures (4 against 15), but also politicians (12). Even officials resorted to defamatory expressions more (5) than journalists. Thus, among all the categories of authors, in online media experts, politicians and officials account for over 82 percent (32 out of 39 units) of using various propaganda techniques aimed at discrediting the European values ​​(see the same table).

However, the aggregate monitoring data by the type of media should also be considered with a certain reservation: assessments and conclusions may not fully correspond to all the subjects of the study. Therefore, it is necessary to proceed from the fact that more objective is the analysis of the results obtained within each type of media - on specific television companies, online media, newspapers.

**Print media**

As already mentioned, the monitoring identified more pieces discrediting the European values in “Haykakan Zhamanak”, “Iravunk” and “Hraparak” newspapers ​​than in the television companies and online media combined: 116 versus 65 and 32. However, if we examine the newspapers’ data individually, it turns out that, for instance, during the four months of study in “Haykakan Zhamanak” there were identified only 5 pieces (see Table 6 in Appendix 2) containing anti-European comments, and in all the cases the journalists of the media used them to express their disagreement, negative attitude towards these statements. Accordingly, it can be concluded that “Haykakan Zhamanak” in its publications either rejects negative narrative on the European values ​​or uses such content to express disagreement with it.

In contrast, “Iravunk” newspaper is an undisputed leader in the number of anti-European pieces. It accounts for more than 76 percent (89 out of 116) of pieces identified in print media, aimed at the formation of a negative attitude among readers towards the European values ​​(see the same table). Over the entire monitoring period, in no other media did the monitoring group record as many stereotypes and manipulations on this topic as in “Iravunk”. Moreover, according to the data obtained, most of the anti-European propaganda here is carried out by the journalists themselves. Thus, out of the 89 pieces mentioned, in 61 cases the reporters of the newspaper themselves were the authors of hate speech, biased comments, distortion of facts, and distributors of negative stereotypes (see Table 7 in Appendix 2). And, as a rule, journalists had a positive attitude towards the anti-European content published.

Experts/public figures (15) and politicians (10) used various techniques of information manipulation significantly less than journalists, single cases were recorded in the comments of representatives of science and culture (5), as well as officials (2). In one of the two cases connected with the latter, negative content on the European theme was quoted to express disagreement with it.

As for “Hraparak” newspaper, it occupies a middle position between “Haykakan Zhamanak”, which refrained from attacks against the European values, and explicitly anti-Western “Iravunk”. During the 4 months of monitoring, 22 pieces containing negative stereotypes and various manipulations on the European theme were identified in “Hraparak”. Here, as in “Iravunk”, their authors are mainly journalists and only in one case - an expert/public figure. 19 units of biased commenting on events and facts, 6 negative stereotypes, 5 references to questionable sources of information, 3 expressions of hatred, etc. were recorded in the pieces of the newspaper’s reporters (since several propaganda techniques can be used in one piece, their number is bigger than the number of publications) .

**TV Companies**

Out of the five TV companies included in the monitoring, the largest number of pieces discrediting the European values ​​was recorded on the Russian RTR-Planeta channel - 39. This is more than the other four Armenian broadcasters combined - 26 (see Table 8 in Appendix 2). In the issues of “Vesti” news programme of the Russian television channel, as well as in the current affairs talk shows “Evening with Vladimir Solovyov” and “60 Minutes” 57 comments and statements containing various propaganda elements were recorded. The overwhelming majority of their authors were experts/public figures (31) and journalists (21), including hosts of talk shows and news programmes (see Table 9 in Appendix 2). The monitors identified among officials and other categories of authors respectively 3 and 2 units of usage of propaganda elements on Europe and the European values.

It is noteworthy that in almost all the recorded cases, the words of the mentioned authors are qualified by the monitoring group as biased commenting on events and phenomena. Only in one case journalists and two cases experts/public figures disagree with expressions discrediting the European values.

Among the studied Armenian TV companies, the largest number of anti-European pieces - 18 - was identified on “5th Channel”. The peculiarity of this media was the fact that, unlike, for instance, “RTR-Planeta”, there was not a single recorded case of expressions discrediting the European values that were ​​uttered by journalists (here and below, see the same tables 8 and 9). But instead, such a mission is assumed by experts/public figures and politicians invited by the channel: they are, without exception, the authors of all the biased comments, distortions of facts and hate speech. In the speeches of the other categories of authors such content was not identified.

In the pieces concerning the European theme, journalists of other Armenian TV channels also refrained from using propaganda techniques. Thus, on the air of “Yerkir Media” TV company, where 4 units of text containing anti-European content were recorded during the 4 months of monitoring, the authors were an expert/public figure (1), politicians (2) and an official (1).

The same applies to “Kentron”, where 3 pieces were identified in which an expert/public figure and officials made biased comments discrediting the European values. At the same time, there was no disagreement with such statements on the air of both TV channels.

Contrary to that, on the Public Television of Armenia throughout the entire monitoring period the only negative stereotype regarding the European values uttered by an expert/public figure was used by the latter to express disagreement with its content.

**Online media**

In the course of monitoring, as already noted, in online media significantly fewer publications discrediting the European values were identified ​​than in the other two types of media. However, here it is also important to analyze the data on specific online media, because in some of them (for example, “News.am” or “Tert.am”), the recorded number of such pieces is more than, say, in three television companies - Public Television of Armenia, “Yerkir Media” and “Kentron” - combined. At the same time, it is important to make another substantial reservation: in online media, where pieces on the European theme ranged from 2115 to 8503 units (for comparison - in newspapers from 561 to 682), publications containing elements of propaganda were especially low in percentage terms.

Thus, on “News.am” out of 28689 pieces reviewed 8503 touched upon the European theme, of which only 11 contained techniques to discredit the European values. On “Tert.am” this ratio was 16492:4619:9, and on “24news.am” - 18721:4459:9. As for the other two online media - “1in.am” and “Sputnik Armenia”, during the entire monitoring period on the first one there was only one piece with an element of anti-European propaganda, on the second - two (see Table 10 in Appendix 2).

From the various categories of authors on “News.am” and “Tert.am” manipulations were used by experts/public more than others (6 such cases were recorded on each), slightly less – by politicians (on “Tert.am” - 5, on “News.am” - 3), followed by journalists and officials (on “Tert.am” - 2 each, on “News.am” - one case each).

There is a somewhat different picture on “24news.am”: here the politicians used most propaganda elements (4 text units), 2 units were identified among officials, one with an expert/public figure, religious figure and others each (see Table 11 in Appendix 2). At the same time, in all the mentioned online media, the authors of expressions discrediting the European values were confident in their rightness: here, the monitoring group did not record a single case of disagreement with such content.

**Content of Manipulations and Negative Stereotypes**

During the monitoring period, the main reason for expressing anti-European sentiments in a number of Armenian media was the issue of possible ratification by the RA National Assembly of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. The document, which was adopted on May 11, 2011 in Istanbul and entered into force on August 1, 2014, is better known as the Istanbul Convention. Armenia signed it on January 18, 2018. The fuss over the document was apparently politically motivated and was instigated by the current opposition forces overthrown as a result of the Velvet Revolution of 2018. And although it was their leaders who at the time representing Armenia decided to sign the Convention, they are now trying to present its ratification as undermining of national traditions by the government of Nikol Pashinyan. Naturally, here they use the ultra-conservative segment of society, which identifies the European values ​​mainly with same-sex marriages, gay pride parades and other similar phenomena and interprets minority rights in its own way.

In a number of media studied, as already noted, such sentiments were not only reflected through the statements and comments of politicians, experts/public figures, representatives of science and culture, other categories of authors, but were often fueled by manipulations by journalists themselves. In particular, it was as a result of consistent efforts to discredit the Istanbul Convention and frequent use of such unsubstantiated judgments as the “infamous Istanbul Convention”, “the Istanbul Convention rejected by the vast majority of Armenian society,” etc., that these expressions became set forms, turning into a negative stereotype.

During the monitoring, there was observed a clear tendency when the media skeptical of the European values, carefully selected for comments and assessments those authors who would consider the Istanbul Convention as a threat to the country's national identity. Moreover, the arguments sometimes reached the point of absurdity: for example, "a document adopted in an enemy country cannot but be a threat to Armenia."

The comment of the leader of the Communist Party of Armenia Yerjanik Ghazaryan is characteristic in this regard. According to him, through the Istanbul Convention, the “sorosists”, who have appeared in the government, “together with the Council of Europe are trying to destroy the traditional Armenian family, church and our customs” (“Iravunk” newspaper, November 5, 2019). Composer Srbuhi Stamboltsyan’s opinion that the convention is aimed at eliminating families and not at protecting sexual minorities coincides with the opinion of the politician (“Iravunk” newspaper, September 6, 2019). Hayk Ayvazyan, Head of “Luys” Information and Analytical Center, claims that through the Convention “a criminal system of alienating children from their families is being introduced in Armenia” (“Iravunk” newspaper, October 23, 2019). Athlete Eduard Poreyan draws even more far-reaching conclusions: “When playing Europe, we lose the Armenian identity, my and your child, his future” (“Iravunk” newspaper, November 15, 2019). And “Hraparak” newspaper in this regard writes figuratively: “... why do we import European wastewater into our country?” (“Hraparak”, November 12, 2019).

Meanwhile, upon familiarizing with the Istanbul Convention, it becomes obvious that there is no provision in it aimed at destroying the traditional family, alienating children, legalizing same-sex marriage and other similar phenomena, based on which the authors of the above-mentioned statements make their assumptions. On the contrary, the document protects family members from domestic violence, and if it envisages provision of shelters to the victims of such violence, this does not mean at all that traditional families will be destroyed and children alienated from their parents. By that logic, it turns out that violence is an integral part of the relationship in a traditional Armenian family and that any intervention by the government will lead to its break-up. And this is not true.

Such biased propaganda comments also include claims that the Istanbul Convention contradicts the Constitution of Armenia. This was, in particular, stated by the former head of the RA Supreme Judicial Council Gevorg Danielyan (“5th Channel” TV company, “Haylur” news programme, November 28, 2019). It is clear that this thesis, actively disseminated by the representatives of the forces removed from power, has clear political undertone and is aimed at discrediting the post-revolutionary government. And it is no accident that the RA Ministry of Justice issued an official statement[[2]](#footnote-2), emphasizing that no point of the Convention contradicts the Constitution of the country.

It is noteworthy that the presented biased comments, distortions of facts and negative stereotypes also appeared in a number of other media studied - among the same or other authors. For example, the mentioned line of argument that the Istanbul Convention contradicts the Constitution of Armenia was also used in comments by Gevorg Petrosyan, Deputy of “Prosperous Armenia” parliamentary faction (“News.am”, November 1, 2019, “You are trying to drag all nations down to your level”: the march against the Istanbul Convention reached the Council of Europe office”).

However, the ratification of the Convention was not the only topic that became the reason for manipulations discrediting the European values. Thus, the late October discussions between the representatives of the Council of Europe and the RA National Assembly regarding the amendments to the RA Law “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations” were commented by “Iravunk” newspaper in such a spirit that “the West is trying to impose a reduction of the role of the Armenian Apostolic Church and give a green light to sectarian organizations.” At the same time, as a source of information “to our knowledge” was mentioned (“Iravunk”, October 25, 2019).

Such events as the production of a film about a famous Armenian weightlifter who decided to change sex; participation of Armenia in Eurovision song contest; an experimental dance performance at one of Yerevan’s metro stations also became topics for manipulation. All this was presented as “pernicious influence of the West”, and it was argued that the new government, being the West’s protégé, fulfills its will.

However, in terms of the degree of negativity, the aggressiveness of anti-European and anti-Western comments, the intensity of their repetition in various forms, the programmes of Russian “RTR-Planeta” TV company attracted particular attention. Moreover, as already noted, the authors of statements containing hate speech, distortion of facts and biased assessments were not only the purposefully selected and repeatedly invited experts and public figures, but also the journalists themselves.

For example, Vladimir Solovyov, host of the talk show “Evening with Vladimir Solovyov”, ignoring the norms of impartiality and objectivity, states: “The Western model cannot ensure peace and human development” (“Evening with Vladimir Solovyov”, November 13, 2019). Another example: “NATO is an ideal form of colonization of the modern world” (“Evening with Vladimir Solovyov,” issue of November 14, 2019). A few days later, Dmitry Kiselyov, host of “Sunday News” programme, spoke even more bitingly on the very NATO topic: “NATO countries for America are just cash cows” (“Sunday News”, issue of November 17, 2019).

In accordance with this spirit, the TV company invites experts. Thus, as a guest at Vladimir Solovyov’s programme, Dmitry Kulikov, member of the Zinoviev Club of “Rossiya Segodnya” International Information Agency, stated: “NATO is a form of the US political occupation of the Western European continent - this is what NATO is” (“Evening with Vladimir Solovyov,” issue of November 20, 2019 ). And Jacob Kedmi, public figure from Israel, in the same programme said: “The united army of Europe is the fourth Reich. ‘Mein Kampf’ - this is the European values. Nazism is the quintessence of the European values ​​that Europe has spread in the world throughout its entire history.”

The same strictly negative mood was also observed when discussing other topics such as religion and morality. Famous Russian film director Nikita Mikhalkov, in particular, stated that “Europe betrayed Christianity”, and continued, “today, Europe, large countries are led by people who have no children ... This means there is no instinct to preserve, care, help, save, cure ...” (“Evening with Vladimir Solovyov,” issue of November 18, 2019). Boris Yakemenko, Deputy Director of the Center for Historical Expertise at the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, spoke in the same spirit: “Europe, which seeks comfort, today abandons children and triggers various movements similar to childfree, because that’s a problem for them: a child is lack of comfort” (“Evening with Vladimir Solovyov”, issue of November 12, 2019). And the leader of “Essence of Time” movement Sergey Kurginyan claimed that in the Western world “there is no law, there are no values, instead there is a mess - with apotheosis of perversion, demoralization, dehumanization” (“Evening with Vladimir Solovyov”, issue of October 3, 2019).

These and a lot of manipulations of the kind aimed at discrediting the European values pose a serious threat of disorientation of the audience, formation of a wrong image of Europe and Europeans among a certain part thereof. There is no doubt that such propaganda pieces are politically motivated. For this very reason they are more dangerous, since people’s right to receive reliable and objective information is almost completely ignored.

The list of examples of information manipulations and negative stereotypes identified during the monitoring is presented in Appendix 1.

**METHODOLOGY**

The media monitoring is aimed at studying information sources carrying out propaganda among the Armenian audience to discredit the European values, identifying and analyzing publications, which voluntarily or involuntarily serve the very purpose.

For conducting monitoring the main reference points are the provisions of the RA Constitution and legislation regarding the inadmissibility of discrimination, insult and libel, incitement of hostility and hatred, as well as a number of recommendations of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, in particular:

- Recommendation No. R (97) 20 “On the incitement of hatred”;

- Recommendation No. R (97) 21 “On the media and promotion of a culture of tolerance”;

- Recommendation No. R (99) 1 “Regarding measures to promote media pluralism”.

Since there are multiple methods of propaganda, we divided them into the following conditional categories (they can be manifested both separately and in combination):

1) use of hate speech;

2) various forms of manipulation;

3) use of negative stereotypes and clichés.

Moreover, each of these categories has its subcategories. Thus, **expressions of hatred** are studied by thematic subcategories corresponding to the main forms of discrimination and incitement of hostility:

- racial,

- national,

- political,

- social (including property-based)

- linguistic,

- religious,

- sexual/gender

- other.

**Manipulations** are identified and split into the following subcategories:

- juggling and/or distortion of facts, use of knowingly false information;

- biased comments aimed at achieving the “desired” effect;

- references to an anonymous authority or a non-existent (not identified) source of information (or creation of an imaginary effect of presence);

- distraction of public attention from an important problem (transformation of a topical issue into an everyday story, abusing the topic, focusing on less significant issues, desire to influence emotions).

 **Negative stereotypes and clichés** are conditionally differentiated in the following way: clichés are words or phrases with negative or humiliating connotation (e.g. the word “khachiki” used in some Russian media instead of neutral “Armenians”), while stereotypes are ideas, concepts, characteristics repeated with a certain frequency, yet expressed in different words and expressions with negative undertone or direct negative content (e.g. “The European values destroy national identity”).

**The monitoring covers 13 media** - 5 TV companies (including one Russian channel, included in the “social package” of broadcasting and covering the whole territory of Armenia), 3 national newspapers and 5 online portals (one of them, “Sputnik-Armenia”, is Russian). They were selected in a way that, where possible, media affiliated with various political forces be represented. Hence, in case of **newspapers**, the pro-government “Haykakan Zhamanak” and two openly opposition ones - “Hraparak” and “Iravunk”, are studied. The latter two newspapers are included in the monitoring, taking also into account the fact that, according to some studies, they contain more expressions of hatred, manipulation, stereotypes and clichés related to the European values.

The following **TV companies** are included in the monitoring:

- Public TV (“h1”),

- “Yerkir Media”,

- “Kentron”,

- “5th Channel”,

- “RTR-Planeta”.

The **online media** are the following:

- “Tert.am”,

- “1-in.am”,

- “24news.am”,

- “News.am”,

- “Sputnik-Armenia”.

**The monitoring object** in print and online media are their publications, including photographs (pictures, cartoons, caricatures) that have a message with headline and/or a text, with the exception of commercial, political, social advertising and announcements, as well as “pure" photographs (out of publications, with no headlines and captions). In online media **video materials** are also monitored as part of publications or their supplements, as well as presented as a separate piece with its own headline and/or text.

In the TV companies the monitoring objects were the pieces of main news programmes aired in prime time, as well as subsequent current affairs programmes (talk shows) “Rules of the Game” on Public TV, “In front of the Mirror” on “Kentron” TV channel (the programme is not aired on that channel since mid-October 2019), “Issue of the Country” on “Yerkir Media”, “Face to Face” on “5th Channel”, “Evening with Vladimir Solovyov” and “60 Minutes” on “RTR-Planeta” TV channel.

The airtime unit, distinct in its theme, composition and design is regarded as a **TV piece**, meaning:

a) a separate story in the newscast;

b) a separate communication, presented by the programme host;

c) a part (section, story) of the programme, touching on different issues/problems, made distinct by theme, composition and design (with a bloom, a jingle, etc.).

The text unit, distinct in its theme, composition and design is regarded as a **newspaper piece**, meaning:

- a separate article, news report, interview, etc.;

- a separate photograph with a headline and/or a text;

- editorial comment on a certain publication, distinguished by words “Editor’s note”, “Editorial comment”, etc. is also considered as a separate piece.

The same applies to an **online piece**, with video materials being considered with them. In doing so, video materials, which serve as illustration to the text or supplement it, shall be considered as a part of a certain piece, while those presented out of publications with their own headlines and/or texts shall be considered as separate units.

In monitoring both TV pieces and online and newspaper pieces, announcements and leads are viewed as a part of the stories they refer to.

Throughout the study the categories are measured **in** **units**. At the same time the monitors record:

- total amount of studied pieces;

- materials touching upon the European theme and the European values marked out from the total amount of pieces;

- propaganda materials aimed at discrediting the European values marked out from the group of pieces on the European theme.

Propaganda publications, in their turn, are assessed based on the following aspects:

- propaganda content (what is said?), i.e. to which of the above-mentioned categories and their subcategories, including thematic ones, the publication belongs to;

- author of propaganda expressions or publications in general (who says?) – journalist, expert/public figure, politician, state official, representative of science or culture, religious figure, vox populi and others;

- author’s attitude towards a specific expression discrediting the European values (agrees, does not agree, neutral attitude);

- connotation of certain media to propaganda expressions or techniques – negative (-), positive (+), neutral (0).

At the initial stage of the Project, a 1-month pilot monitoring was carried out, based on which the methodology was finalized for the conduct of the main part of the study.

The monitoring is carried out in 2 stages, each of these stages lasting for 4 months. At the same time, after the first stage, an interim report is prepared, and upon the completion of the whole monitoring a final analytical report is developed.

**APPENDIX 1**

**Examples of negative stereotypes identified during the monitoring:**

* The new government of Armenia are agents of the West;
* Nikol Pashinyan is acting under the dictation of Europe/the West;
* At the direction of the West, amorality is propagandized and takes root;
* The European values destroy national traditions and identity/are alien to these traditions;
* The Istanbul Convention undermines national values;
* The Istanbul Convention is rejected by the vast majority of society;
* Infamous Istanbul Convention;
* The Istanbul Convention is aimed to destroy the traditional family;
* The traditional family in the West has disappeared;
* The West is trying to arrogate itself the right to truth;
* Europe is not self-reliant, it fulfills the will of the United States;
* There is no democracy in the European Union;
* NATO is a form of colonization of the modern world;
* Europe betrayed Ukraine;
* Armenia has nothing to learn from Europe.

**Examples of manipulation - distortion or juggling of facts, biased commenting:**

* “The Istanbul Convention contradicts the Constitution of Armenia”, (“5th Channel” “Haylur” news programme, November 28, 2019). **Distortion**: in fact, the RA Ministry of Justice issued an official statement, emphasizing that no point of the Convention contradicts the RA Constitution.
* “The Istanbul Convention is an integral part of the toolkit for the decay of society: it implies creation of shelters, and non-governmental organizations will take away children from families and give them to these shelters” (5th Channel, “Interview” programme, October 16, 2019). **Distortion**: shelters both for children and for women victims of violence have long existed in Armenia. Shelters are provided by the state, and non-governmental organizations only assist in this matter. Naturally, no one will alienate children from families without a serious reason.
* “The Istanbul Convention implies the existence of a third sex and legitimizes it. In kindergartens there will be 3 types of potties, three toilets” (5th Channel, “Interview” programme, October 24, 2019). **Distortion**: in the text of the Istanbul Convention there is no such formulation as “third sex”, this manipulation is used to discredit the document.
* “The Istanbul Convention aims to destroy the traditional Armenian family” (“News.am”, November 1, 2019). **Distortion**: the Convention aims to prevent domestic violence and protect victims of violence. The manipulation used seeks to discredit the document.
* “The Istanbul Convention is a suspicious, vague document and may pose a threat to the values of the Armenian nation” (“24news.am”, November 1, 2019). **Distortion**: dozens of countries have signed the Convention, which indicates the quality of this document. Added to that, none of the signatory states has declared any threat to national values, and if there were such a danger, they would have not joined the Convention.
* “If we are Christians, followers of the Armenian Apostolic Church, then the Istanbul Convention must be rejected” (“24news.am”, November 10, 2019). **Distortion**: the document does not have any contradiction with Christianity. This is proved by the fact that the majority of the population of the European countries that have signed the Convention follows Christianity.
* “A joint discussion of the Istanbul Convention, organized by the delegation of the Council of Europe and the RA National Assembly deputies, is an interference in the domestic affairs of the country” (“Tert.am”, November 1, 2019). **Distortion**: the Istanbul Convention is an international document, and Armenia, as a member of the Council of Europe, can discuss issues of mutual interest with representatives of that organization. This is by no means an interference in the domestic affairs of the country.
* “The vast majority of society has extremely negative attitude towards the Istanbul Convention” (“1in.am”, December 20, 2019). **Distortion:** there is not a single study or sociological survey whose data would prove this. The collection of signatures initiated by the opponents of the document did not ensure convincing results either. Through an artificially created negative background around the Istanbul Convention a number of media try to convince the audience that most citizens are against this document, which is a well-known manipulation trick.
* “Western perverse morals and manners (in the context of the Istanbul Convention - **CPFE**)” (“Hraparak” newspaper, September 24, 2019). **Distortion**: the West is identified with perversion, while many countries, including Armenia, seek to integrate with Europe and adopt the European values ​​related to the development of democracy and respect for human rights. As for the Istanbul Convention, in whose context expression “perverse morals and manners” is used, it is enough to carefully read the document to make sure that it is aimed solely at preventing domestic violence and protecting the victims of such violence.
* “Why do we import European wastewater into our country? (in the context of the Istanbul Convention - **CPFE**)” (“Hraparak” newspaper, November 12, 2019). **Distortion**: taking advantage of the negative background created by a number of media around the Istanbul Convention and the European values in general, the newspaper allegorically calls them “wastewater,” which is a continuation of manipulations that distort reality to achieve a certain propaganda effect.
* “Values that are alien to the traditions of the Armenian people are imposed on the country (Armenia) (in the context of the Istanbul Convention - **CPFE**)” (“Iravunk” newspaper, September 10, 2019). **Distortion**: Armenia is actively involved in European integration, is a member of the Council of Europe, has signed the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement with the European Union, has done this by choice, which speaks to the absence of contradictions between the European values and national traditions.
* The West is trying to impose a reduction of the role of the Armenian Apostolic Church and give a green light to sectarian organizations.” (“Iravunk” newspaper, October 25, 2019). **Distortion**: not a single document signed between Armenia and the European structures speaks of the need to reduce the role of the Armenian Apostolic Church. In October 2019, Armenian parliamentarians discussed with the representatives of the Council of Europe amendments to the RA Law “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations” from the perspective of their compliance with the European standards. It should be noted that the given evaluative judgment is presented as a fact, referring at the same time to a questionable (or presumably non-existent) source of information mentioned as “to our knowledge”, which is a manipulation technique.
* “The Western world is the apotheosis of perversion, demoralization, dehumanization” (“RTR-Planeta”, “Evening with Vladimir Solovyov”, October 3, 2019). The opinion of one of the experts participating in the talk show is nothing but denigrating, biased comment aimed at discrediting the European values.
* “In the European Union they overlook fascism” (“RTR-Planeta”, “Sunday News”, October 13, 2019). **Distortion:** In the European Union, propaganda of fascism is prohibited at the legislative level, which indicates the principled position and rejection of this phenomenon.
* “The Western model cannot ensure peace and human development” (“RTR-Planeta”, “Evening with Vladimir Solovyov”, November 13, 2019). **Distortion:** Western countries are in the majority in the 20 developed economies of the world (G20) and have provided a high standard of living. Western leaders tend to make efforts to prevent global conflict and come up with mediation initiatives to settle local confrontations. The presented judgment begs the question: what model, if not the Western, provides peace and human development?
* “The united army of Europe is the fourth Reich. ‘Mein Kampf’ - this is the European values. Nazism is the quintessence of the European values…” (“RTR-Planeta”, “Evening with Vladimir Solovyov”, November 20, 2019). **Distortion**: as we know, the united army of Europe is conceived by European leaders as an alternative to NATO, where the United States plays a major role. After the Second World War, a new architecture of Europe was created and a new set of values formed, which was based on the principles of democracy and respect for human rights and freedoms. In the European Union, propaganda of fascism is prohibited at the legislative level. Under these circumstances, Hitler’s book “Mein Kampf” and Nazism itself can in no way be considered as European values, let alone their quintessence.
* “Europe betrayed Ukraine” (“RTR-Planeta”, “60 minutes”, November 22, 2019). **Distortion**: the author comes to this biased conclusion on the basis of a very questionable comparison, namely, saying that Europe accepts “any kind of mob” from Asia and Africa as refugees, and in front of Ukraine, despite the Maidan, the doors to the EU turned out to be closed. Meanwhile, Ukraine and the European Union signed the Association Agreement, which accelerated the integration process; a visa-free regime was established for the trips of Ukrainian citizens to the EU countries; multi-million European investments were directed to Ukraine; the heads of two leading states of the European Union participate with a mediation mission in the "Normandy Four" for the resolution of the confrontation in Donetsk and Lugansk regions. In these circumstances, the statement “Europe betrayed Ukraine” can be qualified as a manipulation seeking to achieve a certain propaganda effect.
* “NATO is a new formula of colonization, and the alliance member states do not understand that they are de facto in a state of colonial dependence, for their security is entirely in the hands of the United States” (RTR-Planeta, “Evening with Vladimir Solovyov”, December 4, 2019). **Distortion**: Despite the USA informal leading role in NATO, this organization, nevertheless, was created and acts for collective defense of the freedom and security of the participating states through political and military means. The budget of the Alliance is formed through contributions from member countries, and the strategic goals and ongoing activities are carried out on the basis of jointly adopted decisions. The states included in the alliance are interested in ensuring collective security in the Euro-Atlantic region, and if the alliance posed a threat of “colonial dependence”, it would not include new members, whose number has increased from 15 to 28 over the past 20 years.
* “The European values are like a drawbar: you can turn it one way or the other (in the context of applying double standards - **CPFE**)”, (“RTR-Planeta”, “60 Minutes”, December 6, 2019). **Distortion**: the values, which the European community is based on, are formulated in a number of fundamental documents, primarily in the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. And if someone tries to manipulate them and apply double standards, this does not mean that there is no clear idea of the European values.

**APPENDIX 2**

**Table 1**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Months** | ***Total number of studied pieces*** | ***Number of pieces related to the European theme*** | ***Number of pieces containing propaganda elements*** |
| *September* | 24471 | 13542 | 48 |
| *October* | 29515 | 1879 | 49 |
| *November* | 24985 | 13456 | 91 |
| *December* | 24764 | 1233 | 25 |
| ***Total*** | **103735** | **30110** | **213** |

**Table 2**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Types of Media** | ***Total number of studied pieces*** | ***Number of pieces related to the European theme*** | ***Number of pieces containing propaganda elements*** |
| ***TV companies*** | 11472 | 4041 | **65** |
| ***Print media*** | 4873 | 1732 | **116** |
| ***Online media*** | 87390 | 24337 | **32** |

**Table 3**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| № | **Authors of** **statements containing propaganda elements** | **Number of cases of resorting to propaganda elements**  | **Author’s attitude towards a statement containing propaganda elements** |
| **Agrees** |  **Disagrees** | **Neutral** |
| 1 | **Journalist** | 113 | 101 | 6 | 6 |
| 2 | **Expert/public figure** | 75 | 72 | 3 | 0 |
| 3 | **Politician** | 33 | 33 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | **Official** | 14 | 12 | 1 | 1 |
| 5 | **Representative of science/culture** | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| 6 | **Religious figure** | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 7 | **Vox populi** | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 8 | **Other** | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
|  | **TOTAL** | **247** | **230** | **10** | **7** |

**Table 4**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| № | **Authors of** **statements containing propaganda elements** | **Manipulation** | **Stereotype/cliché**  |
| **Distortion of facts/false information** | **biased commenting** | **reference to anonymous (not identified) source of information** | **Distraction of attention from the importance of topic** |
| 1 | **Journalist** | 15 | 104 | 11 | 2 | 24 |
| 2 | **Expert/public figure** | 6 | 72 | 0 | 1 | 6 |
| 3 | **Politician** | 9 | 29 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| 4 | **Official** | 1 | 14 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 5 | **Representative of science/culture** | 1 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| 6 | **Religious figure** | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 7 | **Vox populi** | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 8 | **Other** | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
|  | **TOTAL** | **33** | **230** | **12** | **3** | **38** |

**Table 5**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| № | **Authors of** **statements containing propaganda elements** | **Number of cases of resorting to propaganda elements** |
| **Newspapers** | **TV companies** | **Online media** |
| 1 | **Journalist** | 88 | 21 | 4 |
| 2 | **Expert/public figure** | 16 | 44 | 15 |
| 3 | **Politician** | 11 | 10 | 12 |
| 4 | **Official** | 2 | 7 | 5 |
| 5 | **Representative of science/culture** | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| 6 | **Religious figure** | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 7 | **Vox populi** | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 8 | **Other** | 1 | 3 | 1 |
|  | **TOTAL** | **123** | **85** | **39** |

**Table 6**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Newspapers** | ***Total number of studied pieces*** | ***Number of pieces related to the European theme*** | ***Number of pieces containing propaganda elements***  |
|  ***“Haykakan Zhamanak”*** | 2139 | 682 | **5** |
|  ***“Iravunk”*** | 1150 | 461 | **89** |
|  ***“Hraparak”*** | 1584 | 589 | **22** |

**Table 7**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| № | **Authors of** **statements containing propaganda elements** | **Number of cases authors resorted to propaganda elements for each newspaper** |
| ***“Haykakan Zhamanak”*** |  ***“Iravunk”*** |  ***“Hraparak”*** |
| 1 | **Journalist** | 5 | 61 | 22 |
| 2 | **Expert/public figure** | 0 | 15 | 1 |
| 3 | **Politician** | 1 | 10 | 0 |
| 4 | **Official** | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| 5 | **Representative of science/culture** | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| 6 | **Religious figure** | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 7 | **Vox populi** | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 8 | **Other** | 0 | 1 | 0 |
|  | **TOTAL** | **6** | **94** | **23** |

**Table 8**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **TV companies** | ***Total number of studied pieces*** | ***Number of pieces related to the European theme*** | ***Number of pieces containing propaganda elements*** |
|  ***“Yerkir Media”*** | 2246 | 815 | **3** |
| ***“Kentron”*** | 1924 | 616 | **4** |
| ***Public TV of Armenia*** | 2638 | 898 | **1** |
|  ***“5th Channel”*** | 2049 | 651 | **18** |
|  ***“RTR-Planeta”*** | 2615 | 1061 | **39** |

**Table 9**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| № | **Authors of** **statements containing propaganda elements** | **Number of cases authors resorted to propaganda elements for each TV company** |
|  |  ***“Yerkir Media”*** | ***“Kentron”*** | ***Public TV of Armenia*** | ***5th Channel”*** |  ***“RTR-Planeta”*** |
| 1 | **Journalist** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 21 |
| 2 | **Expert/public figure** | 1 | 1 | 1 | 10 | 31 |
| 3 | **Politician** | 2 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 0 |
| 4 | **Official** | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| 5 | **Representative of science/culture** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 6 | **Religious figure** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 7 | **Vox populi** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 8 | **Other** | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
|  | **TOTAL** | **4** | **4** | **2** | **18** | **57** |

**Table 10**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Online media** | ***Total number of studied pieces*** | ***Number of pieces related to the European theme*** | ***Number of pieces containing propaganda elements*** |
| ***“1in.am”*** | 16942 | 4641 | **1** |
| ***“24news.am”*** | 18721 | 4459 | **9** |
| ***“News.am”*** | 28689 | 8503 | **11** |
| ***“Tert.am”*** | 16492 | 4619 | **9** |
| ***“Sputnik Armenia”*** | 6546 | 2115 | **2** |

**Table 11**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| № | **Authors of** **statements containing propaganda elements** | **Number of cases authors resorted to propaganda elements for each online media** |
|  | ***“1in.am”*** | ***“24news.am”*** | ***“News.am”*** | ***“Tert.am”*** | ***“Sputnik Armenia”*** |
| 1 | **Journalist** | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| 2 | **Expert/public figure** | 0 | 1 | 6 | 6 | 2 |
| 3 | **Politician** | 0 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 0 |
| 4 | **Official** | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| 5 | **Representative of science/culture** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 6 | **Religious figure** | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 7 | **Vox populi** | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 8 | **Other** | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
|  | **TOTAL** | **1** | **9** | **12** | **15** | **2** |

1. **The views expressed in the publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Dutch government.** [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/983126.html?fbclid=IwAR36_Vm25p1-DS5_RABw4wCzQ-dYW3SdxYm6LOXtqwvR5Z7pgEH_6YfhV1M> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)