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

 **(Final report based on media monitoring results)**

From September 1, 2019 to April 30, 2020, the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression, with the support of the Government of the Netherlands, carried out monitoring of a number of Armenian and Russian media. The study was aimed at identifying pieces discrediting the European values through various propaganda methods[[1]](#footnote-1). The monitoring consisted of two stages. The first stage was conducted from September 1 to December 31, 2019, and an interim report was prepared and published based on its results, the second - from January 1 to April 30, 2020. The current report provides data for the entire monitoring period.

**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 were 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 were measured **in** **units**. At the same time, the monitors recorded: 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 was 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 8 months of monitoring 208975 pieces (103735 at the first stage, 105240 at the second) were studied in 13 media. The number of publications on the European theme stood at 48445 (29% at the first stage, 17% at the second). Of the total number of pieces on the European theme only 301 (or 0.6%) contained 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.

From the above-mentioned figures it can be seen that at the first stage of monitoring (September-December 2019), the studied media paid much more attention to the European theme than at the second (January-April 2020). This is primarily connected with the spread of the new coronavirus. The pandemic overshadowed all other topics, not to mention the fact that, due to the threat of infection, international meetings, conferences, negotiations at various levels were canceled, and in terms of events, all spheres of life - from big politics to sports - appeared much poorer. However, the prevailing conditions only affected the quantitative reduction of materials related to Europe and Europeans. And in terms of content, as evidenced by the monitoring data, no noticeable changes occurred, and each media continued to cover events based on its priorities and tasks.

It is noteworthy that out of the above-mentioned 301 pieces, which used techniques to discredit the European values, the largest number - 161 publications – falls to print media. According to the results of the monitoring first stage, this ratio was 213:116, the second stage ratio was 88:45. Newspapers are followed by television companies where 94 piece with anti-European narrative (65 and 29 at the first and second stages respectively) were recorded for the entire study period. And the smallest number of such publications was found in online media - 46 (32 and 14 at the first and second stages respectively). These data are reflected in Table 2 of Appendix 2.

In the mentioned 301 pieces, the monitoring group recorded 352 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 8 months, in most cases - 164 - the authors of the expressions containing negative stereotypes, “hate speech” and manipulative techniques were journalists themselves, in 103 - experts/public figures, in 44 - politicians, in 27 - officials, in 5 - representatives of science and culture. Religious figures were authors in two cases, an ordinary citizen in one, and another 6 authors were from the category “others”.

As a rule, authors of statements had positive stance on the negative stereotypes, expressions of hatred, and manipulations used. Disagreement or neutrality were extremely rare. Thus, only 8 cases of negative attitude towards distortion of facts, biased comments, “hate speech”, etc. were recorded among journalists. In 150 cases agreement and in 6 cases neutral attitude were expressed. Experts/public figures disagreed with manipulations and stereotypes in 3 out of 103 cases, the officials - in 2 out of 24. All the other categories of authors fully agreed 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. This peculiarity was observed both at the first and at the second stages of monitoring. Throughout 8 months journalists used it in 147 cases, experts/public figures in 100, politicians in 39, officials in 24, representatives of science and culture in 5, religious figures in 2, ordinary citizens in one, representatives of “others” category of authors in 4 cases (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. At both stages of monitoring this was recorded among journalists 23 times, among politicians - 9, among experts/public figures - 8. 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, during the 8 months of study, 37 cases of using such stereotypes were determined in the publications of media reporters. Significantly fewer were those found in the statements of experts/public figures (8), politicians (3) representatives of science and culture (3), officials (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. In the entire period of monitoring 15 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 8 months only 24 cases were recorded in the studied media), here again they were recorded more among journalists (9), slightly less among 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, according to the results of 8 months of monitoring, the staff of the newspapers account for more than 74 percent (125 out of 169 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 - 69 against 31. Moreover, these 69 units make up more than half of the total number (128) of the authors resorting to the mentioned techniques discrediting the European values ​​(see Table 5 in Appendix 2).

Almost the same picture is observed in online media. In terms of the number of biased comments, the use of negative stereotypes and distorted facts journalists were surpassed by nearly 2 times not only by experts/public figures (8 against 15), but also politicians (15). Even officials resorted to defamatory expressions more (13) than journalists. Thus, among all the categories of authors, in online media experts, politicians and officials account for over 78 percent (43 out of 55 units) of using various propaganda techniques aimed at discrediting the European values ​​(see the same table).

The trends mentioned above were manifested both at the first and at the second stages of monitoring. The only difference is that from September to December 2019, as already noted, the number of pieces on the European theme was 60% more than in the period from January to April 2020. Hence, by other criteria as well, the results of the first stage significantly surpass the indicators of the second one in terms of quantity.

Further, we will consider the monitoring data within each type of media - for specific television companies, online media, newspapers, since this very approach allows us to ensure a most objective analysis of the results obtained.

**Print media**

Let us demonstrate the correctness of the above-mentioned approach by the example of 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: 161 versus 94 and 46. However, if we examine the newspapers’ data individually, it turns out that, for instance, during the 8 months of study in “Haykakan Zhamanak” there were identified only 10 pieces (see Table 6 in Appendix 2) containing anti-European comments, and in 8 cases the authors used them to express their disagreement, negative attitude towards these statements. Accordingly, it can be concluded that “Haykakan Zhamanak” publishes negative narrative on the European values very rarely. And if this newspaper anyway publishes such narrative, it, as a rule, uses such content to express disagreement with it.

In contrast, “Iravunk” newspaper at both stages of monitoring was an undisputed leader in the number of anti-European pieces. It accounts for more than 74 percent (119 out of 161) 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 119 pieces mentioned, in 87 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, they had a positive attitude towards the anti-European content published.

Experts/public figures (17) and politicians (12) 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 (3). In two of the three 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 8 months of monitoring, 32 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 two cases - experts/public figures. 28 units of biased commenting on events and facts, 7 negative stereotypes, 6 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, within 8 months the largest number of pieces discrediting the European values ​​was recorded on the Russian RTR-Planeta channel - 60. This is more than the other four Armenian broadcasters combined - 34 (see Table 8 in Appendix 2). Moreover, such prevalence was observed at both stages of the study. 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” 92 comments and statements containing various propaganda elements were recorded. The overwhelming majority of their authors were experts/public figures (51) and journalists (31), including hosts of talk shows and news programmes (see Table 9 in Appendix 2). The monitors identified among officials and politicians 5 and 3 respectively and among other categories of authors 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 - 23 - was identified on “5th Channel”. The peculiarity of this media was the fact that, unlike, for instance, “RTR-Planeta”, either at the first or at the second stage of monitoring 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 (13 units among experts, 10 among politicians). 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 during the 8 months of monitoring 7 units of text containing anti-European content were recorded, the authors were experts/public figures (3), politicians (2), a religious figure (1) 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 8 months of study, in online media, 46 publications discrediting the European values were identified, which is 2 times less than in TV companies, and 3.5 times less than in print media. However, in this type of media it is also important to analyze the data on specific online media, because in some of them (for example, “News.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 one substantial reservation: in online media, where throughout the entire monitoring period pieces on the European theme ranged from 3317 units on “Sputnik Armenia” to 13581 units on “News.am” (for comparison - in newspapers from 707 to 1040), publications containing elements of propaganda were especially low in percentage terms.

Thus, on “News.am” out of 58857 pieces reviewed 13581 touched upon the European theme, of which only 20 contained techniques to discredit the European values. On “Tert.am” this ratio was 33247:7249:9, and on “24news.am” - 36046:7280:9. As for the other two online media - “1in.am” and “Sputnik Armenia”, during the entire monitoring period there were 4 pieces on each with elements of anti-European propaganda (see Table 10 in Appendix 2).

From the various categories of authors on “News.am” and “Tert.am” manipulations were used by experts/public figures more than others (6 such cases were recorded on each), slightly less – by politicians (on “Tert.am” - 5, on “News.am” - 4), followed by officials (on “Tert.am” - 2, on “News.am” - 5) and journalists (on “Tert.am” - 2, on “News.am” - 4).

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. The circle of authors using manipulation techniques is pretty much the same on “1in.am” and “Sputnik Armenia” (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 first stage*** of monitoring, 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).

***The second stage of monitoring*** coincided with the rapid spread of the new coronavirus across the globe. The pandemic became the main topic for global media, and Armenian media were no exception. Added to that, the international life turned out to be much less eventful, as due to the danger of infection meetings, summits, forums were being canceled, and, at best, they were transferred into virtual space.

And this is the reason that during the second stage of monitoring, there were recorded 1.6 times fewer publications on the European theme than at the first stage. Accordingly, in quantitative terms, there was less anti-European narrative.

However, the second stage of the study was interesting and important particularly because the trends, assessments and conclusions regarding the previous stage were basically confirmed. Thus, “Iravunk” newspaper, where in January-April 2020 the largest number of pieces discrediting the European values had been identified, continued to set its readers against the Istanbul Convention. In various pieces of its January 14 issue the authors called the document an “ugly project” (article “Expect repressions in 2020, but Nikol will leave”) and “garbage” (article “Who will replace Nikol?”). At the same time, the newspaper still presents Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan as a protégé of the West’, at whose direction Pashinyan allegedly “even ahead of time can adopt any anti-Armenian and anti-national convention ...” (“Iravunk” newspaper, February 14, 2020, “How to change the Prime Minister through Referendum”).

“Iravunk” took exactly the same position during the ratification by the country's Parliament of another Council of Europe convention - “On the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse”. In this regard, characteristic is the interview of “Luys” Information and Analytical Center Head Hayk Ayvazyan, whose views are quite often and willingly disseminated by the newspaper. In the piece with a catchy headline “The deputies gave a positive opinion on the pedophilia convention” the interviewee, distorting the facts and the very meaning of the international document, says: “The Convention obliges the inclusion of materials on sex education in school curriculum with a view to arousing children's interest in sexual relationship from an early age.” Of course, there is nothing of the kind in the Convention. But there is something else that is important for the editorial office: what Hayk Ayvazyan says is fully consistent with what the newspaper preaches – namely, that European structures sow debauchery in Armenia.

The thesis that certain circles from outside helped Pashinyan to come to power and control him is actively used by “Hraparak” newspaper. Moreover, for a greater effect, such conclusions are “supported” by stereotypes already widespread in society. For example, in the piece “Who shoots at Pashinyan, fires a shot at Armenia” of its January 14 issue the newspaper writes: “They (these circles - **CPFE**) are known under different names - “sorosists”, “Western spies”, “anti-Russian elements”... Pashinyan didn’t even realize how he became a defender of such alien phenomena as the problems of transgender people and same-sex couples, the Istanbul Convention, the corruption of a traditional Armenian family...”

Meanwhile on “Yerkir Media” TV channel, the thesis that Pashinyan was brought to power by external forces, including the European ones, is presented from a different angle: this has been done by geopolitical centers with an objective to resolve the Karabakh problem in line with their scenario. Such a view was expressed by the co-founder of “Adekvad” union Konstantin Ter-Nakalyan in the February 21 issue of “Yerkri Harts” (“Issue of the Country”) programme, which was rerun on February 25.

That all these topics are subject of sharp political controversy is evidenced by the fact that during the campaign for Referendum on constitutional amendments, well-known representatives of the former authorities stated: “Whoever says “yes” to the Referendum will say “yes” to the Istanbul Convention, transgender propaganda, etc.” In particular, this is how the Republican Party spokesman Eduard Sharmazanov put it. And his words were quoted by “Haykakan Zhamanak” newspaper, chaired by the spouse of the Prime Minister Anna Hakobyan. But both in this, and in 7 other cases, the newspaper used various manipulative comments in order to express its disagreement or critical attitude towards them.

Meanwhile, at the second stage of monitoring biased comments by various politicians and experts regarding the Istanbul Convention were also recorded on the air of “5th Channel” TV company (“Interview” programme, issues of March 5, 10 and 11), on “Sputnik Armenia” news agency (issue of February 17, piece “Parent No.1 and No.2: Armenian public figures on Putin’s decision”) and others.

Since the domestic political problems of Armenia are often linked to relations with European structures, the opponents of Nikol Pashinyan try to discredit both him and these structures. Thus, “Tert.am” online media, which is part of a media holding owned by four former deputies from the Republican Party, on February 7 published the Facebook post of civic activist Artur Danielyan, who wrote: “Nikol Pashinyan exists thanks to PACE (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe - **CPFE**). PACE is the reason Nikol is not sentenced to life imprisonment.” Moreover, according to the activist, Pashinyan will become the reason for the demoralization of PACE, since this organization, apart from formal condemning statements, will take no other action against him.

Although these arguments have no factual basis and are devoid of an elementary logical connection, they are used with the expectation that they might have influence on an insufficiently informed part of the audience.

Some Armenian media, as a rule, without comments also publish statements by foreign politicians and experts aimed at discrediting the European institutions. In particular, on April 15, “News.am” published the piece “Aliyev: PACE Resolutions for me no more than a piece of paper” in which the Azerbaijani leader accuses this organization of “doing its utmost for 20 years to denigrate, slander Azerbaijan and undermine its authority.” According to Aliyev, the rapporteurs on Azerbaijan “frothing at the mouth, flood... the country with lies and libel.” Of course, this statement by the President is nothing but an attempt to discredit PACE in response to its criticism of Azerbaijan. But when the media, without presenting the opinion of the other side, disseminate such statements, they become a platform for manipulation.

In general, when covering international affairs, Armenian media most often use Russian sources, including state ones. And as a result, many propaganda pieces get into the local media. A case in point is the news published on April 11 on “News.am” under the headline “Media: US upgraded the nuclear warheads stationed in Germany”. With reference to TASS, “News.am” reports on the replacement of old warheads with new ones as a fait accompli, adding that NATO’s secret drills with a nuclear war scenario were held. At the same time, the date of the drills is not indicated, and it seems that the replacement of warheads and drills are interrelated events, and the information on them is fresh. However, through fact-checking the monitoring group found out that the mentioned drills, according to the Bundeswehr journal[[3]](#footnote-3), took place in October 2019, and as for the replacement of warheads, as of April the United States had not yet exercised that, although they had announced such an intention[[4]](#footnote-4).

A particular topic is the coverage of the problem of the spread of coronavirus in Europe. Reproduction of pieces from Russian sources by the Armenian media voluntarily or involuntarily lead to the prevalence of the idea that the pandemic threatens the very existence of the European Union. In particular, the very “News.am”, actively presenting the position of Italian politicians accusing the EU of a lack of solidarity and assistance to Italy (“La Repubblica: In Italy some politicians took down the EU flags to protest against the lack of solidarity”, “News.am”, April 3, 2020; “The Italian Foreign Minister compared the effects of pandemic in the world with the damage of a war”, “News.am”, April 13, 2020), pays little attention to the positions of official Brussels, Germany and the Nordic countries, advocating a joint struggle against the pandemic.

However, out of the media studied, the topic of coronavirus in the anti-European context was used most of all by the Russian “RTR-Planeta” TV company both in its news programmes and talk shows. Thus, on March 22, Dmitry Kiselyov host of “Bolshie Vesti” (“Big News”) programme, not without malicious joy said: “... The Schengen zone collapsed ... Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Lithuania established control over their borders, that is, the Schengen zone with freedom of movement within 26 countries doesn’t exist anymore. Basically, this is the collapse of the European idea ... All this tinsel of words about solidarity, mutual assistance, common values, human rights and humanism was blown away by the wind.” A week later, on March 29, the same TV host continued in his programme: “This week Schengen turned 25. But this anniversary rather looks like a funeral, a painful farewell to the dream of a united Europe without border barriers...”

When discussing the topic of pandemic, Vladimir Solovyov, host of the talk show “Evening with Vladimir Solovyov”, held the same line. In particular, in the March 29 issue, Solovyov, quoting the words of Italian opposition figure Matteo Salvini that the EU is a nest of snakes and jackals, said: “The virus is a death threat to the Schengen zone.” Moreover, he expressed confidence that there can be no talk of any united Europe. “But hasn’t Europe died? Hasn’t it broken into tiny apartments? Hasn’t it forbidden travels within its territory?” Solovyov asked.

Basically, Russian journalists, manipulating the facts hastened to present the measures the European Union was forced to take to fight the pandemic as breakdown of the Schengen zone and collapse of the EU. Even such a global challenge as coronavirus did not make them refrain from anti-European propaganda. Meanwhile, already in mid-May, the countries of the Schengen zone began to open their internal borders, and none of these states announced the rejection of the values on which the EU is based.

However, the pandemic was by no means the only topic used by the Russian television channel for anti-European propaganda. Thus, speaking about fascism and mass killings during the Second World War, Solovyov puts the blame on the whole Europe: “...This was allowed by civilized Europe, which gladly sent its citizens to be killed and slaughtered... Has Europe repented of that? No!" (“RTR-Planeta”, “Evening with Vladimir Solovyov”, issue of February 12, 2020). During the same programme, continuing his thoughts, Solovyov made a discriminatory statement: “... Only Soviet people and Jews were capable of rebellion, Western people cracked ... they immediately gave up. While Soviet people and Jews were capable of resistance.” Of course, it would be naive to believe that Solovyov does not know about the French resistance, about the German anti-fascist movement, about the partisan struggle of other peoples. But he does not need to remember this, his task is to denigrate Europe and Europeans, to discredit them.

It is noteworthy that Vladimir Solovyov has formed a circle of “anti-Western experts,” whom he regularly invites to his talk shows and who, in every programme repeat the same thoughts about the immorality and doom of Europe, the non-viability of the European Union and the Western model as a whole, the dying of democracy, etc. This circle of Solovyov’s guests was clearly seen both at the first and the second stages of monitoring - Dmitry Kulikov, member of the Zinoviev Club of “Rossiya Segodnya” International Information Agency; Boris Yakemenko, Deputy Director of the Center for Historical Expertise at the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia; Sergey Mikheev, political analyst; Jacob Kedmi, public figure from Israel; Sergey Kurginyan, leader of “Essence of Time” movement; Karen Shakhnazarov, film director, and others.

For example, the latter’s mission is to claim that the European Union is not viable and that it will meet the same fate as the USSR (“RTR-Planeta”, “Evening with Vladimir Solovyov”, issue of April 1, 2020). Political analyst Sergei Mikheev also periodically speaks of the poor governance, fragility and inefficiency of the EU, neglect of its values (“RTR-Planeta”, “Evening with Vladimir Solovyov”, issues of March 31, April 6, April 14, 2020). “The mythical unity of the European Union turned out to be fake,” Boris Yakemenko claims in the context of the coronavirus pandemic (“RTR-Planeta”, “Evening with Vladimir Solovyov,” issue of March 16, 2020). The list of this kind of quotes can be continued. However, in the course of the monitoring, not a single case was recorded for these experts to say something positive about Europe and the activities of the European structures.

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.

**CONCLUSION**

The monitoring results indicate that the coverage of the European theme by the media studied is mostly neutral or positive. Negative pieces make up a very small portion - only 0.6% of the total number of publications related to Europe and Europeans. But at the same time monitoring made it possible to identify the following trends:

* The largest number of pieces discrediting the European values was recorded in print media - 161 or 53.5% of the total number of pieces containing propaganda elements. Television companies and online media have 94 (31.2%) and 46 (15.3%) pieces, respectively.

Among the propaganda techniques used, biased commenting on events and phenomena is the most common. Most often it is used by journalists (46%), experts/public figures (31%) and politicians (12%). Other categories of authors resort to it significantly less often. The second most common technique of information manipulation is the distortion of facts. References to anonymous (presumably non-existent) sources, the spread of hate speech and negative stereotypes are used less than the first two.

The analysis of monitoring data by type of media showed 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 about 74% of biased comments, distorted facts, negative stereotypes about Europe and Europeans.

In contrast to print media, in terms of the number of using propaganda techniques in their comments on television, journalists were surpassed by experts/public figures by more than 2 times. It is noteworthy that in the broadcast media, invited experts/public figures used expressions discrediting the European values more than all the other categories of authors combined.

In online media, in terms of the number of biased comments, use of negative stereotypes and distorted facts journalists were surpassed by nearly 2 times not only by experts/public figures, but also politicians, and by officials - 1.5 times. In general, the last three categories of authors account for over 78% of the use of propaganda techniques.

During the monitoring, leaders were identified in terms of the number of pieces having an anti-European focus. Among the newspapers this is “Iravunk”, among television companies - “RTR-Planeta”, among online media - “News.am”.

In terms of content, during the first stage of monitoring, the main topic that gave rise to publications discrediting the European values was the possible ratification of the Istanbul Convention by Armenia. At the second stage of the study, which coincided with the spread of coronavirus, the main topic was the pandemic. Even the forced measures taken by the EU countries (in particular, the closure of borders) were presented by some media as rejection of the European values and the collapse of the EU.

The monitoring data show that the authors of biased comments and other manipulations, as a rule, were positive about their words, that is, they reiterated them. Disagreement was expressed extremely rarely. Only the pro-government newspaper “Haykakan Zhamanak” made such comments in order to express its negative attitude towards them. Hence, under such conditions it will be impossible to change anything if the media themselves do not show a desire to abandon anti-European propaganda. And if they have good will to do so, the monitoring team **recommends** the following:

Since, as already noted, biased commenting on facts and phenomena is the most common among the identified propaganda techniques, it is very important to use several sources of information and present different opinions and positions.

If distortions of facts on the European theme are not intentional, and there is a desire to verify the reliability of the information received, then with modern technologies it can be easily checked. At the same time, it must be assumed that with the spread of media literacy, more and more people master the skills of fact-checking, and when half-truths or knowingly false information are discovered, the audience stops or, at least, starts to trust less certain media.

The same goes for references to anonymous (presumably non-existent) sources. It should be noted that expressions such as “to our knowledge”, “as we have learned”, etc. used in a number of media studied, significantly reduce the credibility of the information published. And if any information, despite the efforts made, is not checked, and there are doubts over its reliability, the audience should know about it.

In preparing pieces on Europe and Europeans, it is important, in addition to using local data, to rely on figures, facts and assessments contained in the reports and resolutions of international European organizations and structures.

In general, it is necessary to refuse the deliberate distortion of information, extraction of facts from the overall context and their biased presentation, as well as direct disinformation. That this is possible is evidenced by the fact that during the monitoring a small number of pieces were identified aimed at discrediting the European values.

Since all the preceding paragraphs are directly connected with the norms of journalistic ethics, it is extremely important to adhere to the compliance thereof through engagement in the media self-regulation system.

The degree of negativity of publications discrediting the European values can be further reduced if experts and public figures, politicians and officials, representatives of science and culture, other authors refrain from biased comments and manipulations, spread of hate speech and negative stereotypes.

As for the Russian TV channels that broadcast in Armenia through terrestrial air (including the studied "RTR-Planeta"), carry out propaganda and do not comply with the regulatory body - Commission on television and radio, they, like other foreign channels, must be transferred to the cable network.

**METHODOLOGY**

The media monitoring was 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 were 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 had its subcategories. Thus, **expressions of hatred** were 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** were 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** were 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 covered 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”, were 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** were included in the monitoring:

- Public TV (“h1”),

- “Yerkir Media”,

- “Kentron”,

- “5th Channel”,

- “RTR-Planeta”.

The **online media** were the following:

- “Tert.am”,

- “1-in.am”,

- “24news.am”,

- “News.am”,

- “Sputnik Armenia”.

**The monitoring object** in print and online media were their publications, including photographs (pictures, cartoons, caricatures) that had 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** were 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 served as illustration to the text or supplemented it, were considered as a part of a certain piece, while those presented out of publications with their own headlines and/or texts were considered as separate units.

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

Throughout the study the categories were measured **in** **units**. At the same time the monitors recorded:

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

**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/ugly/lecherous 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;
* Coronavirus will ruin the European Union.

**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.
* “The US upgraded its nuclear warheads stationed in Germany” (News.am, April 11, 2020). **Distortion**: “News.am” with reference to TASS reports this as a fait accompli, however, through fact-checking (see page 16) it turned out that as of April the replacement of warheads had not occurred yet, and the United States had only expressed such an intention.
* “Aliyev: The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has been doing its utmost for 20 years to denigrate, slander Azerbaijan and undermine its authority.” (“News.am”, April 15, 2020). Distortion: this statement was made by the President of Azerbaijan in relation to the fact that PACE did not condemn the conduct of presidential elections in Nagorno-Karabakh. Since official Baku does not recognize the existence of political prisoners and imprisoned journalists in its country, it considers the criticism of PACE as slander and denigration.
* “Recently, from different European structures - from the Venice Commission, from PACE - more and more severe reproach has been received against Pashinyan” (“Iravunk”, February 18, 2020) **Distortion**: in the post-revolutionary period, not a single document related to Armenia, be it a PACE resolution or a conclusion of the Venice Commission, there is no reproach, but there are proposals and calls.
* “In the geopolitical Syrian issue, the United States was at least in the role of a passive observer. While Europe was a frightened petitioner” (“Iravunk”, March 10, 2020). **Distortion**: To refute this biased comment, let us quote from Reuters: “Brussels (Reuters) - The leaders of Germany and France called Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday to express their concern about the humanitarian situation in Syria’s Idlib region, urging an end to the conflict there. German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron spoke together by phone with the Russian leader while at a European Union summit in Brussels. Both demanded an instant end of the fighting and the possibility of humanitarian aid for the people.” (https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-security-europe/merkel-macron-urge-putin-to-end-conflict-in-syrias-idlib-idUSKBN20E2R6). As can be seen from the quote, the European leaders do not ask anyone for anything, they express concern, urge and demand a cessation of hostilities.
* “One of the main functions of “Transparency International” is ensuring the penetration of Western transnational companies into other countries” (“Iravunk”, March 13, 2020). **Distortion**: neither in the Charter, nor in other documents of this organization there is mention of such a mission, moreover, in the activities of the Armenian branch of “Transparency International” there is nothing either that could give any grounds for such a conclusion.
* “The European Union gives grants to the government of Nikol to bury the concept of “Armenian cognac” (“Iravunk”, March 20, 2020). **Distortion**: in fact, the conditions for the supply of “Armenian cognac” to the European market have been discussed for several years, and the problem is that “cognac” as a brand is French and corresponds to the geographical name of the town in France. At the same time, “Armenian cognac” is a brand for Armenia as well. This issue is regulated by the Lisbon Agreement for the Protection of Appellations of Origin and their International Registration, as well as the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights adopted by the World Trade Organization, joined also by Armenia. It is expected that over the next 25 years, Armenian producers can still use the name “cognac”, after which the drink must be renamed “brandy”.
* “The deputies gave a positive opinion on the ratification of pedophilia convention” (“Iravunk”, April 28, 2020). **Distortion**: in fact, the RA National Assembly ratified the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. This document was also used by the forces removed from power for political speculation and discrediting of the post-revolutionary authorities, as is the case with the Istanbul Convention.
* “In the “witch-hunt”, Pashinyan was helped by the circles that brought him to power and fully enjoyed his power. They are known under different names - “sorosists”, “Western spies”, “anti-Russian elements”, “false managers of fight against corruption”, “bedbugs burrowing into the past”, etc.” (“Hraparak”, January 14, 2020). **Negative clichés** are used, including those offensive in nature. **Distortion** is used: Pashinyan came to power as a result of the Velvet Revolution initially led by him, and claims that some "circles" brought him to power are totally unfounded.
* “Hraparak” newspaper, referring to an anonymous source and reporting on the video call of the Chairman of the RA Constitutional Court Hrayr Tovmasyan and the President of the Venice Commission Gianni Buquicchio, claims that the latter stated the following: “The Venice Commission is the defender of the constitutional order in Europe, the chairmen of the constitutional courts are partners of the Commission, therefore, the Commission will not allow pressure and groundless persecution, violations of immunity norms to be applied against them” (“Hraparak”, January 18, 2020). **Distortion**: a reference to an anonymous (presumably non-existent) source raises serious doubts about the reliability of the quote. These doubts are further strengthened by the fact that there are no such details in the official information disseminated by the CC press service on the mentioned conversation. The situation around the Constitutional Court is such that had Buquicchio really given such flattering assurances, the press service would obviously not have missed the opportunity to quote them.
* “Had the Armenian authorities worked well, in this changing world we could have met spring 2020 with a ratified agreement (the Agreement on Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership signed between the EU and Armenia - **CPFE**) ... Many Armenian citizens are concerned that this uncertain situation will lead us more and more into the zone of Russian influence and will tear us even more away from Europe” (“Hraparak”, April 15, 2020). **Distortion**: 16 EU states have already ratified the Agreement, and the process continues. In recent months, it has slowed down for objective reasons connected with the coronavirus pandemic. However, this cannot become a reason for the increase of Russian influence and isolation from Europe. Especially since after the Velvet Revolution, Armenia pursues quite independent foreign policy.
* The official representative of the Russian Ministry of Defense Major General Igor Konashenkov stated that “The citizens of Syria did not doubt the presence of so many fake defenders in Europe and the USA, as well as the generous humanitarian aid allegedly sent by them for all these years” (“Sputnik Armenia” March 4, 2020). **Distortion**: the European Union and the United States play an important role in addressing the situation in Syria, including in tackling humanitarian issues, and the statement by the Russian general is an evidence to Russia's desire to resolve the Syrian issue single-handedly and at its discretion.
* Iran’s spiritual leader Khamenei: “You cannot trust Europe, negotiations with them are always accompanied by deceit and falsehood” (“Yerkir Media” TV company, “Yerkirn Aysor” (“The Country Today”) programme, January 17, 2020). **Distortion**: if this statement were true, official Tehran would not continue the negotiations with the EU on easing sanctions against Iran.
* “The geopolitical forces that brought Nikol to power did that to solve the Artsakh issue, that is why the reaction of Europe (towards the policy of Pashinyan - **CPFE**), as well as the USA and Russia is quite restrained” (“Yerkir Media” TV company, “Yerkri Harts” (“Issue of the Country”) programme, February 21 and rerun of February 25, 2020). **Distortion**: Nikol Pashinyan came to power due to the Velvet Revolution initially led by himself, and the geopolitical centers mentioned by the author did not interfere with that process and were carefully following the developments. However, with the advent of Pashinyan to power, the Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) issue has not been resolved and is unlikely to be resolved in the foreseeable future. Hence, in these circumstances, the statement that Pashinyan was “brought” to solve the Karabakh issue is nothing more than manipulation.
* The leader of “Veto” movement Narek Malian: “There are also judges at the European Court of Human Rights to whom Soros gave money” (“5th Channel” TV company, “Interview” programme, March 11, 2020). **Distortion**: a knowingly false accusation aimed at discrediting an international court.
* “Ukraine has ditched the association with the European Union” (“RTR-Planeta”, “Evening with Vladimir Solovyov”, February 3, 2020). **Distortion**: The Association Agreement signed between Ukraine and the EU serves as a guideline for the integration process, which is currently in progress.
* “There (in the West - **CPFE**) there is absolutely no morality and virtue” (“RTR-Planeta”, “Evening with Vladimir Solovyov”, February 12, 2020). **Distortion**: the concepts of morality and virtue are often interpreted in different ways, but the claim about their absence in Western countries lacks any solid reason and is clearly defamatory.
* “... In fact, Europeans have no values, they have rationalism” (“RTR-Planeta”, “Evening with Vladimir Solovyov”, February 12, 2020). **Distortion**: The European Union and other European structures have been formed on the basis of such values as freedom, equality, and respect for fundamental human rights. And it is no coincidence that Europe consistently advocates for the protection of these values. As for rationalism, it is an integral part of addressing any political issue and, as a rule, is applied by the Europeans based on the mentioned values.
* “Europe gave birth to Nazism... it is the child of the European civilization” (“RTR-Planeta”, “Evening with Vladimir Solovyov”, February 27, 2020). **Distortion**: the identification of Nazism with the European civilization is a propaganda manipulation. During the Second World War, the overwhelming majority of Europeans fought against the Nazi regimes, saving civilization from fascism. And after the war, the propaganda of fascism was banned at the legislative level.
* “Europe has locked itself in borders, that is, the mythical unity of the European Union turned out to be fake ...” (“RTR-Planeta”, “Evening with Vladimir Solovyov”, March 16, 2020). **Distortion**: the fact that the EU countries were forced to close their borders to fight the coronavirus pandemic does not absolutely mean that the unity has been destroyed, and the EU has ceased to exist. This is proved by the fact that after 2 months the Schengen countries again reopened their borders.
* “Where is that European solidarity, where are those Euro-Atlantic values, how are they expressed in general, if they refused to help each other in this situation?” (“RTR-Planeta”, “Evening with Vladimir Solovyov”, March 23, 2020). **Distortion**: the temporary closure of the borders of the European states due to the pandemic, as well as some delay in supporting the most affected countries, do not give grounds to claim about the lack of solidarity and rejection of the European values. As further developments showed, the borders of the Schengen countries were reopened, and the European Union allocated billions of euros for the global fight against coronavirus.
* “What does Europe have to do with democracy today?” They can regain their democracy only by blocking the borders ... And there is no people’s power there, since everything is decided by an official based in Brussels” (“RTR-Planeta”, “Evening with Vladimir Solovyov”, March 23, 2020). **Distortion**: the guest of the TV show questions the democracy in Europe, ignoring the fact that the very Europe is the cradle of democracy, on the fundamental principles of which the European Union has been formed. The EU is a voluntary association of states that have agreed to delegate part of their authority to the structures of this union. And an official in Brussels only does what the leaders of the EU countries decide.
* “NATO believes that the main goal of Russia is bombing the alliance countries with impunity” (“RTR-Planeta”, “Evening with Vladimir Solovyov”, April 1, 2020). **Distortion**: there is no such statement in any NATO document or in any public speech of the alliance representatives. These words of the talk show host are nothing but a manipulation aimed at discrediting NATO.
* “They closed churches throughout Europe ... and it turns out that Europe was ready for this ages ago, that the churches were not needed long ago” (“RTR-Planeta”, “Evening with Vladimir Solovyov”, April 6, 2020). **Distortion**: it is sufficient to go to any European country to make sure that churches exist and continue to function.
* “Europe refused to help Ukraine with the pandemic” (“RTR-Planeta”, “Evening with Vladimir Solovyov”, April 14, 2020). **Distortion**: in fact, the European Union has provided 1.2 billion euros to Ukraine to fight against coronavirus.
* “The Western system of values ... with the individual at the center of the composition collapsed” (“RTR-Planeta”, “News of the Week with Dmitry Kiselyov”, April 26, 2020). **Distortion**: even in pandemic conditions, the European Union continues to exist, based on the same values - freedom, equality, democracy, respect for human rights.

**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 2019* | 24471 | 13542 | 48 |
| *October 2019* | 29515 | 1879 | 49 |
| *November 2019* | 24985 | 13456 | 91 |
| *December 2019* | 24764 | 1233 | 25 |
| *January 2020* | 23208 | 1108 | 14 |
| *February 2020* | 25458 | 1543 | 29 |
| *March 2020* | 28676 | 1287 | 26 |
| *April 2020* | 27898 | 13859 | 19 |
| ***Total*** | **208975** | **48445** | **301** |

**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* | **23727** | **6908** | **94** |
| 1st stage | 2nd stage | 1st stage | 2nd stage | 1st stage | 2nd stage |
| 11472 | 12255 | 4041 | 2867 | 65 | 29 |
| *Newspapers* | **9880** | **2683** | **161** |
| 1st stage | 2nd stage | 1st stage | 2nd stage | 1st stage | 2nd stage |
| 4873 | 5007 | 1732 | 951 | 116 | 45 |
| *Online media* | **175368** | **38854** | **46** |
| 1st stage | 2nd stage | 1st stage | 2nd stage | 1st stage | 2nd stage |
| 87390 | 87978 | 24337 | 14517 | 32 | 14 |

**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** |
| **Journalist** | 164 | 150 | 8 | 6 |
| **Expert/public figure** | 103 | 98 | 3 | 3 |
| **Politician** | 44 | 43 | 1 | 0 |
| **Official** | 27 | 24 | 2 | 1 |
| **Representative of science/culture** | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| **Religious figure** | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| **Vox populi** | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| **Other** | 6 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| **TOTAL** | **352** | **329** | **14** | **10** |

**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** |
| **Journalist** | 23 | 147 | 15 | 3 | 37 |
| **Expert/public figure** | 8 | 100 | 0 | 1 | 8 |
| **Politician** | 9 | 39 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| **Official** | 1 | 24 | 0 | 3 | 2 |
| **Representative of science/culture** | 1 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| **Religious figure** | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Vox populi** | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Other** | 2 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| **TOTAL** | **44** | **322** | **16** | **8** | **55** |

**Table 5**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Authors of** **statements containing propaganda elements**  | **Number of cases of resorting to propaganda elements** |
| **Newspapers** | **TV companies** | **Online media** |
| **Journalist** | 125 | 31 | 8 |
| **Expert/public figure** | 19 | 69 | 15 |
| **Politician** | 14 | 15 | 15 |
| **Official** | 5 | 9 | 13 |
| **Representative of science/culture** | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| **Religious figure** | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| **Vox populi** | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| **Other** | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| **TOTAL** | **169** | **128** | **55** |

**Table 6**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Newspapers** | ***Total number of studied pieces*** | ***Number of pieces related to the European theme*** | ***Number of pieces containing propaganda elements***  |
| ***“Haykakan Zhamanak”*** | 4152 | 1040 | **10** |
| ***“Iravunk”*** | 2159 | 707 | **119** |
| ***“Hraparak”*** | 3569 | 936 | **32** |

**Table 7**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Authors of** **statements containing propaganda elements**  | **Number of cases authors resorted to propaganda elements for each newspaper** |
| ***“Haykakan Zhamanak”*** | ***“Iravunk”*** | ***“Hraparak”*** |
| **Journalist** | 7 | 87 | 31 |
| **Expert/public figure** | 0 | 17 | 2 |
| **Politician** | 2 | 12 | 0 |
| **Official** | 2 | 3 | 0 |
| **Representative of science/culture** | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| **Religious figure** | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Vox populi** | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Other** | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| **TOTAL** | **11** | **125** | **33** |

**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”*** | 4103 | 1078 | **7** |
| ***“Kentron”*** | 4192 | 1276 | **3** |
| ***Public TV of Armenia*** | 5903 | 1660 | **1** |
|  ***“5th Channel”*** | 4244 | 1102 | **23** |
|  ***“RTR-Planeta”*** | 5285 | 1792 | **60** |

**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”*** |
| **Journalist** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 31 |
| **Expert/public figure** | 3 | 1 | 1 | 13 | 51 |
| **Politician** | 2 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 3 |
| **Official** | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| **Representative of science/culture** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Religious figure** | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Vox populi** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Other** | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| **TOTAL** | **7** | **4** | **2** | **23** | **92** |

**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”*** | 34408 | 7437 | **4** |
| ***“24news.am”*** | 36046 | 7280 | **9** |
| ***“News.am”*** | 58857 | 13581 | **20** |
| ***“Tert.am”*** | 33247 | 7249 | **9** |
| ***“Sputnik Armenia”*** | 12810 | 3317 | **4** |

**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”*** |
| **Journalist** | 2 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 0 |
| **Expert/public figure** | 0 | 1 | 6 | 6 | 2 |
| **Politician** | 1 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 1 |
| **Official** | 3 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 1 |
| **Representative of science/culture** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Religious figure** | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Vox populi** | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| **Other** | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| **TOTAL** | **6** | **9** | **21** | **15** | **4** |

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)
3. <http://www.bundeswehr-journal.de/2019/geheime-atomwaffenuebung-steadfast-noon/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://bulgarianmilitary.com/2020/04/06/us-will-send-new-nuclear-bombs-to-germany-russia-claims/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)