

Hate and Propaganda Models of Media and Communication in the Western Balkans and Turkey

Key research findings



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In the countries of the Western Balkans and Turkey, there are numerous examples of disinformation, propaganda and hate models of media and communication, some of them very powerful in terms of their political and financial background and influence on public opinion.



The hate and propaganda media and communication models are not marginal phenomena that have appeared accidentally. In most of the countries in the region, they are significant elements of the media system and are established and maintained systematically to absorb public money and spend it on serving the political agendas of their patrons in the political parties that benefit from the radical polarization of the society.



The hate and propaganda media and communication function as propellers of the populist political narratives and income-acquiring tools. Both the political elites (including domestic and foreign political groups and governments) and the media owners have clear political and financial interests in disseminating hate, disinformation and propagandist content.



On the other hand, quality, highly professional media that serve an important democratic function increasingly struggle for audience and revenues, and face pressures and a lack of sustainability.



The hate, propaganda and disinformation models of media and communication are integral parts of the propaganda - oriented media systems. The propagandist media ecosystem operates as a network of systemic corruption.



The most important bases of hate, disinformation and propaganda models of media and communication pertain to the patterns of media ownership and funding. Ownership of many media in the countries of the region is connected to the government or to major political parties. Media outlets are also often funded directly by the government or through business groups connected to the government or to the ruling parties.



In several countries in the region, government funding on the national and local level is regularly provided to media that are partisan towards the government or the ruling political party, including those media that commonly break professional standards and spread hate speech, disinformation and propaganda.



What is standing in opposition to the hate and propaganda media and communication? Even though the space within which independent media can operate has drastically shrunk, their role for the protection of democracy does not cease to be of vital importance.



The media propaganda ecosystem operates as an invasive form of colonization of the public communication space. However, it is not the only one. Online communication is used as much by those spreading misinformation as by those wishing to share journalists' stories crucial for understanding the time in which we are living.



The trust in journalism and media needs to be re-established by returning the fundamental postulates of public service: transparency, public interest, and journalistic integrity.



These are findings of the research on hate and propaganda models of media and communication conducted, in 2020, within the project "Resilience – Civil society action to reaffirm media freedom and counter disinformation and hateful propaganda in the Western Balkans and Turkey" in seven countries – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey.

