

IWPR Investigations Highlight Cross-Border Exchange

Author: [IWPR](#)

Multilingual collaborations aim to improve the flow of information across the region.

IWPR has supported four investigative teams from Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine to produce in-depth reporting and work together on pressing regional issues.

Articles published over the past three months in a wide range of media outlets include an investigation into pollution in the Dniester River and Russian influence in Georgia.

The participating journalists found the grants to be a useful experience in cooperating with their colleagues across the region.

"I established good relations with journalists, experts and politicians from Georgia, with whom we will collaborate in the future on other investigations," said Cornelia Cozonac, the president of the Centre for Investigative Journalism of Moldova.

Cozonac participated alongside fellow Moldovan and Georgian journalists in a long-form piece comparing the situations in South Ossetia and Abkhazia with that of Moldova's breakaway region of Transnistria.

"The article had very good visibility," Cozonac said. "In a few days the article in Romanian gathered about 12,000 hits and on social networks there were several discussions on the subject.

"For the Moldovan public it was interesting to see that the same situation exists in Georgia and especially in the socialist republics, that propaganda has the same tools and even similar messages in Georgia and Moldova, and the frozen conflicts are strikingly similar," she concluded.

Ia Bobokhidze, a Georgian journalist who worked on the piece with Cozonac, said that the story had been a valuable opportunity to deepen collaboration and understanding between the two teams.

"During the visit of the Moldovan journalists, we organized meetings with experts, journalists, and citizens," she said. "These people discussed their perceptions about propaganda and the negative effects of war. I helped my colleagues in Moldova document the topics, with information and statistics, so they could understand the realities of Georgia. It was wonderful work and collaboration."

Bobokhidze said that the team were already focusing on a follow-up project.

"We are currently working on a continuation of the basic material - about refugees and internally displaced persons following the war in Georgia and Moldova, their integration and the problems they are facing."

The Centre for Investigative Journalism was involved in another collaboration between Moldovan journalists Ilie Gulca and Madalin Necsutu, along with Ukrainian Lyuba Velichko, into pollution in the Dniester River that runs on the border between the two countries.

The story looked at how large corporations and government ineptitude were contributing to the pollution of a river that Moldovans in particular heavily depend on for drinking water.

"This project was important for me because we, as a team, had the chance to make a cross-border investigative story about a problem concerning eight million people that live in the regions in which Dniester River runs," Necsutu said. "We had the chance to expose these problems widely and have a good partnership with Lyuba from Ukraine. It was a great experience and we coordinated very well. She even came to Chisinau, where we met and talked about strategies."

The IWPR office awarded the grants as part of the larger Giving Voice - Driving Change project.

Other grant winners included Georgian journalists Nino Gogolashvili and Irakli Chikhldadze who wrote about continued Russian efforts to meddle in Georgia's ethnic minority region of Samtskhe-Javakheti.

Issues such as unemployment, labour migration and the popularity of Russia's media, along with the area's majority Armenian population, have made this region historically susceptible to Russian propaganda.

The final piece funded by this grant was a documentary investigating how widespread poverty and government inaction has led thousands of Georgian children to drop out of school to seek seasonal work harvesting hazelnuts and tea in Turkey.

Produced by Nino Zuriashvili and her team, the documentary was published on Radio Free Europe/Radio

Liberty.

Location: Georgia
Moldova
Ukraine

Topic: Journalism

Focus: From the Borderland to the
Steppes
Project Highlight

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