

# Annual Report

2021





## Dear Friends of ERIM

2021 has been another very difficult year globally due to the ongoing COVID pandemic. New variants and new peaks of infection caused continued disruption to lives and economies as lockdowns were put in place, reduced or removed and then put back in place. However, overall there has been improvement and “real meetings” and travel did resume in the summer, at least in some of the countries where we work.

2021 also saw a number of alarming events: the Capital Hill riots in January and an assault on the United States’ democracy; the military coup in Myanmar; the Pegasus scandal and unprecedented surveillance of journalists and human rights activists, along with politicians and government officials; the shocking return to power of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the human rights and humanitarian crisis that followed; the worsening civil war in Ethiopia.

A global erosion of democratic governance appears to continue: India’s crackdown on critics has seen Freedom House downgrade India to “partly free”; fledgling democracies in Chad, Mali, Guinea and Sudan were all ousted in coups; Belarus diverted a passenger jet in order to arrest a prominent critic; China tightened its grip on Hong Kong; a water dispute on the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan border left 55 dead and some 50,000 displaced; Russia began a military build-up near the Ukrainian border.

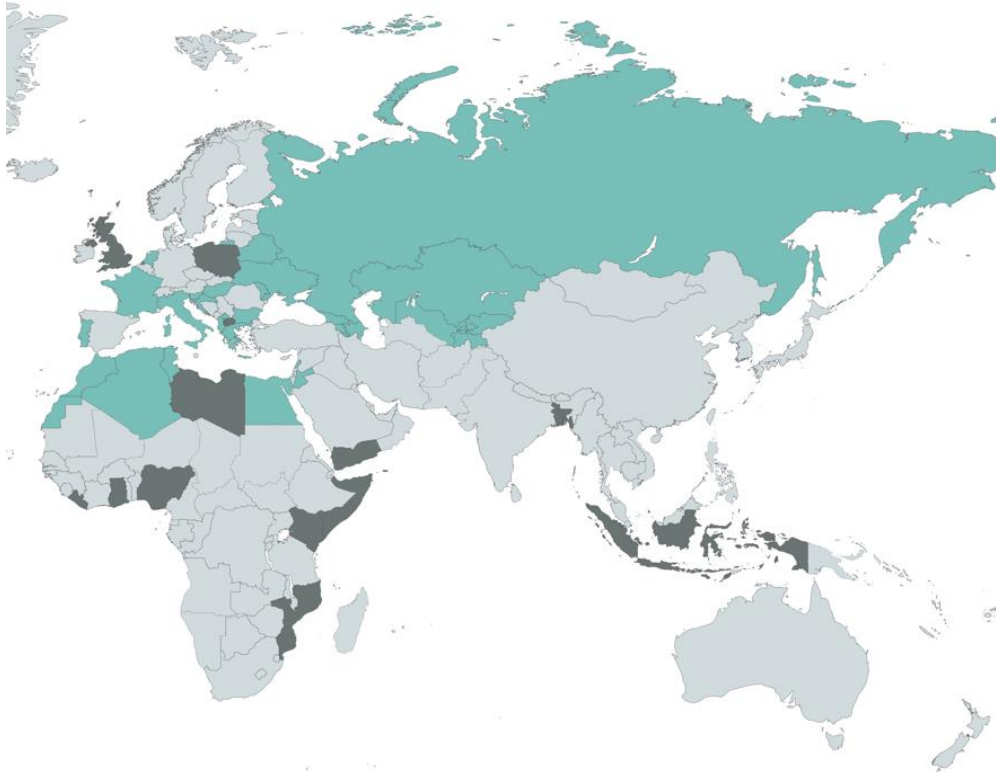
The pressure on independent media, journalists and civic and human rights activists around the world remains very high. In this context ERIM has continued and expanded its work supporting independent media and strengthening CSOs in our countries of intervention.

The work is increasingly hard and the risks ever higher for our many partners, consultants and fellow activists without whom we would not be able to have such strong local impact. Many continue to have to flee their countries for their safety or relocate, sometimes for a second or third time to stay safe and be able to do their work. We salute their courage and pledge to redouble our efforts to help stop this global backsliding in democratic governance.

**Mark Whitehouse**  
President, ERIM

**Mike de Villiers**  
Director, ERIM

## Where we work



### 2021 Countries

- Albania
- Algeria
- Armenia
- Azerbaijan
- Belarus
- Bulgaria
- Croatia
- Egypt
- France
- Georgia
- Greece
- Hungary
- Italy
- Jordan
- Kazakhstan
- Kosovo
- Kyrgyzstan
- Lebanon
- Moldova
- Morocco
- The Netherlands
- Occupied Palestinian Territory
- Portugal
- Russia
- Slovenia
- Tajikistan
- Tunisia
- Ukraine
- Uzbekistan

### Past countries

- Bangladesh
- Ghana
- Indonesia
- Kenya
- Liberia
- Libya
- Lithuania
- Republic of North Macedonia
- Mozambique
- Nigeria
- Poland
- Somalia
- Syria
- United Kingdom
- Yemen

## About us

Equal Rights and Independent Media (ERIM) was founded in 2004, in Lyon, France. Our mission is to promote human rights, strengthen independent media and civil society and empower individuals through developing critical thinking skills, enabling them to take informed decisions and to claim their rights. Over the past sixteen years we've worked in 44 countries, mainly in Eurasia, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Europe and Central Asia.

ERIM is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation with an annual turnover of over 6.8 million EUR and funding support from multiple donors.

## Our two main areas of action

### Media and Media Education

Strengthening local and independent media, by improving the sustainability, quality and accuracy of reporting.

Developing Media and Information Literacy (MIL) by empowering citizens so they can critically engage with what they read and by increasing their ability to access accurate and objective information.

### Human Rights

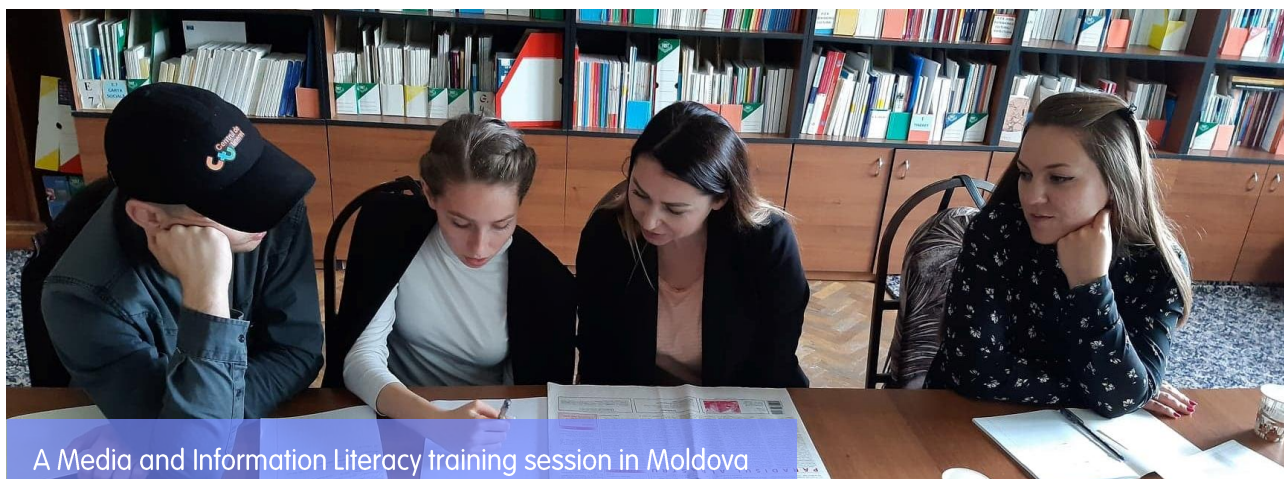
Promoting fundamental human rights with a particular focus on women's rights, LGBTIQ+ rights and freedom of opinion and expression.

Working with civil society organisations, human rights defenders, media, journalists and media lawyers, to provide capacity building; emergency and legal support to victims of repression; and national and international networking opportunities.

## Our partnership approach

We believe that the way we work sets us apart from others in our field. This is due to our partnership approach which is hands-on, in-depth and participative. We seek to build long-standing close relationships with our partners founded on trust, equal partnership, and local ownership.

Our project team is involved at every level of our projects' implementation and we strive to help our partners grow throughout the process.



A Media and Information Literacy training session in Moldova

## Support to Civil Society Organisations

We work with many different types of NGOs, initiative groups and other civil society organisations to build their skills and experience. This includes a range of different activities from in-house training and consultancy to small grants for events or buying new equipment.

### Festival for youth civic participation in Moldova

In Moldova, as part of our EU-funded project 'Civil Society Organisations Capacity Development', we supported the youth centre Anima in Balti, Northern Moldova, to organize a festival that aimed to increase youth participation in decision-making processes and local development. #AntiARTFest\_2021 included theatre, live music and an exhibition of 59 artworks created by young people. The festival was organized by ANIMA with help from a team of volunteers, including 56 young people who helped create and run a theatre play. In total, 165 young people and teachers came to the festival and it was reported on the local BTV TV channel.



### Campaign by Autism Hope, Moldova

In Balti we also worked with Autism Hope. Their centre provides a welcoming space for autistic children and their parents. As part of our capacity building work, we supported Autism Hope to run events promoting the social inclusion of children with autism.

The events took place between February and August 2021 and included distributing posters, leaflets and masks that informed about the autism spectrum, visits to their centre, creative workshops and a photography exhibition.

During International Autism Awareness Day, they partnered with six other educational institutions to promote their campaign, which was covered by SOS Autism and channel TV6.

The campaign was a huge success, reaching more than 35,000 people with a number of local Balti inhabitants choosing to donate 2% of their personal income tax to Autism Hope.



## 'Qedeli': a Georgian social enterprise helping to integrate people with disabilities stays open despite COVID

'Qedeli' is a dynamic community of adults with learning disabilities in the Signaghi region, south-eastern Georgia.

Their Art Café is an important space for the community, as it hosts events to promote social integration of people with disabilities. It also employs 10 residents and sells products made in the centre.

When the pandemic hit, the café closed and all activities came to a halt. Thanks to financial support from ERIM's 'COVID-19: Civil Society Resilience and Sustainability' project, funded by the European Union, 'Qedeli' has been able to keep working. With the financial core support provided, they were able to keep paying the rent for their building in the center of Signaghi, purchase materials for production and keep their activities going.

Established in 2000, they run regular workshops including weaving, carpentry, farming and gardening. In one of their workshops, residents make fabric using colourful threads and a knitting machine. These fabrics are then used to make handicrafts such as dolls, jewellery and laptop bags which are sold online



Learning to weave at Qedeli

### Key figures: Support to CSOs

- 6 118 HRDs, activists, CSO representatives, independent journalists and media professionals supported
- 388 Human Rights organizations / CSOs supported
- 65 joint actions between CSOs/HROs and media outlets
- 3 492 individuals trained



Handmade dolls at Qedeli

## Improving access to free legal aid for rural Roma communities in Ukraine



Beneficiaries with their birth certificates

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the NGO Carpathian Agency of Human Rights, also known as 'Vested', offered free legal aid to rural Roma communities in the Zakarpattia region of Ukraine, at the border with Slovakia, Hungary and Romania.

Many members of the community have no official documents and were not registered at birth. Illiteracy rates are high and many lack basic digital skills and access to internet. This has prevented many individuals from gaining fair access to healthcare, social services and housing.

In 2021, ERIM and our partners Transatlantic Foundation supported Vested to help 50 families obtain passports and birth certificates. Vested trained 20 paralegals in the region and produced social media videos on how to obtain legal documents. One of the beneficiaries, Olga, received her very first birth certificate at the age of 22, after Vested paralegals successfully compiled ID documents for Olga's family members and took the case to the city court. This support was provided as part of our 'COVID-19: Civil Society Resilience and Sustainability' project, funded by the European Union.

## Hackathon for media and digital innovation in Tunisia

In October 2021, ERIM and our partners Alternative Media organised a Hackathon in Tunisia on media and digital innovation, as part of our project JAMIL.Net, funded by the Agence française de développement (AFD) and DROSOS Foundation. The three-day hackathon took place in the beach town Hammamet and gathered 25 young people. The participants came with an idea for a project to work on over the three days. Projects ranged from a media lab for innovative journalism to a platform to promote archaeology amongst young people. The 10 winning projects received training and mentorship in finance, project management and entrepreneurship during four months to further develop their ideas.

Mohamed Mechmech was one of the winners. His project, Design Tounzi, is a digital platform that promotes Tunisian graphic designers. The project started as a series of podcasts recorded at home with his brother. Thanks to JAMIL, they have developed their social enterprise structure and economic model.



Hackathon participants, Tunisia

## Promoting Gender Equality

### Emergency support to at-risk LGBTQI+ people in Albania

The COVID pandemic hit vulnerable communities the hardest around the world. No less so in Albania. 47 % of the LGBTQI community in Albania found themselves without work and 1 in 4 LGBTQI people couldn't cover the cost of food and rent. With support from ERIM, our long-standing partner Aleanca quickly provided monthly food packages to 300 people, each containing enough food to last one month. They drove across the country to make sure they reached even the most remote villages providing vital support to the LGBTQI community.



Aleanca making food packages

Aleanca was one of the first organizations promoting LGBTQI+ rights in Albania, and we have been working with them to strengthen their skills and capacity to deliver support to their community.

Over the last four years ERIM has provided tailored in-house training including in communications, finance and accounting. We also worked with them to write an advocacy strategy, to organise the May IDAHO celebrations each year, and to improve the safety of their work with the most at-risk beneficiaries including young people who have lost their homes. This support was provided as part of our PRIDE II+ project, funded by the European Union and Agence française de développement (AFD).

### Key figures: Promoting Gender Equality

- 2 198 people trained in gender equality and women's empowerment
- 152 organisations defending gender equality supported
- 185 media outputs produced that focus on gender issues



Aleanca's vans delivering the packages



## Supporting women's rights initiatives in Moldova

As part of our EU-funded project 'Moldova Against All Discrimination', we organised a leadership academy for young women activists. During the Academy, participants came up with ideas for projects promoting women's rights. The best ideas were given grants to make them a reality.

One of the winning projects was by Ecaterina Verbitcaia who created Cires.info, a platform that raises awareness among young people about sexual consent, harassment and abuse. Since the academy she has launched an Instagram and TikTok campaign about consent for teenagers, a self-help guide for abuse survivors and online and offline trainings for more than 400 teenagers from urban and rural areas of Moldova.



A Cires.info event in Cahul

## Kapan Women's Resource Center: empowering women in Armenia through textile manufacturing

For ten years, Kapan Women's Resource Center (KWRC) has been working to improve women's rights and reduce gender inequality in the town of Kapan, close to the Armenian border with Azerbaijan. When the COVID pandemic started, KWRC struggled to pay salaries and rental costs. They received emergency core support from ERIM and our partners Human Rights House Yerevan which allowed them to keep working and even purchase new material and open a store in the city centre.



Textile manufacturing training by KWRC

KWRC was even able to hire 12 new female employees thanks to profit generated from sales. They also organised training sessions for over 40 women to teach them the skills required to work in the garment manufacturing industry. This support was provided as part of our 'COVID-19: Civil Society Resilience and Sustainability' project, funded by the European Union.

## Supporting Independent Media

### National Academy on Investigative Journalism in Tunisia

In the first quarter of 2021, together with our partners ARTICLE 19 and the National School of Journalism (IPSI), we organized a National Academy on investigative journalism for young journalists and journalism students in Tunisia.

Two groups of 15 young people received training and mentorship over several weeks from a team of professional investigative journalists, who helped them develop their own investigative projects. The three best investigations will be published in regional media.



National Academy on Investigative Journalism

After the Academy, the trainers together with ARTICLE 19 developed the first Tunisian investigative journalism manual, based on the different teaching modules of the Academy and including chapters dedicated to Access to Information. The manual was officially presented to the National School of Journalism and is serving as a basis to reform their curriculum for their Investigative Journalism Masters course.

These activities are part of ERIM's DRL-funded project 'SAIFE' which seeks to promote and protect the right to freedom of expression and access to information through an improved and more effectively implemented legal and regulatory framework in line with international standards and the Tunisian Constitution.



National Academy on Investigative Journalism

### Key figures: Promoting Freedom of Expression

- 403 people trained on Freedom of Expression and/or Right to Information
- 41 organisations supported to promote Freedom of Expression and/or Right to Information

## Shabat.am: fighting misinformation in Armenia

Shabat.am is a Yerevan-based online news portal producing investigative journalism and working to debunk false narratives online.

Financially struggling after the pandemic, ERIM and Human Rights House Yerevan provided emergency support in the framework of our COVID-19 Civil Society Resilience and Sustainability project, financed by the European Union.



Since then Shabat.am have been filming a weekly programme called “The Lies of the Week” aimed at countering misinformation in Armenia. Their webpage has 700,000 monthly viewers and they have improved their social media reach to 47,000 subscribers on YouTube and 194,000 followers on Facebook. 70% of the audience is in Armenia but Shabat.am is also popular among the Armenian diaspora, with 10% of viewers in the USA and 8% in Russia.

## Training young journalists in Moldova



In 2021, we continued our work providing training for a new generation of young journalists in Moldova through the project Strengthening Independent Media and Media Literacy in Moldova (SIMML III). ERIM provided training and paid internships to 8 young journalists, who were selected based on their motivation and experience and assigned to media outlets known for producing quality journalism, including Radio Free Europe, NewsMaker, BastV and ZdG.

The interns worked at these media for six months producing stories focusing on social, economic, and political issues. One intern working with journal ZdG investigated the case of Adrian Glijin, detained by Transnistrian authorities in October 2021. His article was republished by other media and helped give visibility to an important human rights violation.

We have now supported a total of 17 young journalists through such internships and of these, 7 were later hired by the host media. 90% continued with a career in media. We have also organized follow on events for alumni, such as a Study Tour to Poland in December 2021, involving a ‘Mediathon’ for 15 journalists from Eastern Partnership countries focused on group investigative journalism projects on gender equality. The Mediathon included training workshops in digital security.

## Independent Media House (IMH): provides over 600,000 EUR of direct sales revenue to independent media in Moldova's.

IMH is Moldova's first Sales House serving only independent media. 2021 was the first full year of operation for IMH and we have proved that our model works, with a professional team selling independent media's advertising space to businesses. IMH ran 109 advertising campaigns, involving 61 businesses in 2021.



Each advertising contract was subsidised by donor funds, with the businesses paying 50%

of the cost of each campaign, and the donors paying the other 50% as an incentive to invest in independent media.

IMH brought 632,500 EUR of advertising revenue directly to independent media in 2021 – despite the challenges of COVID. A further 69,300 EUR was sold in 2021 with the campaigns running and revenue reaching the media in 2022, bringing the total contracts sold in 2021 to 701,800 EUR.

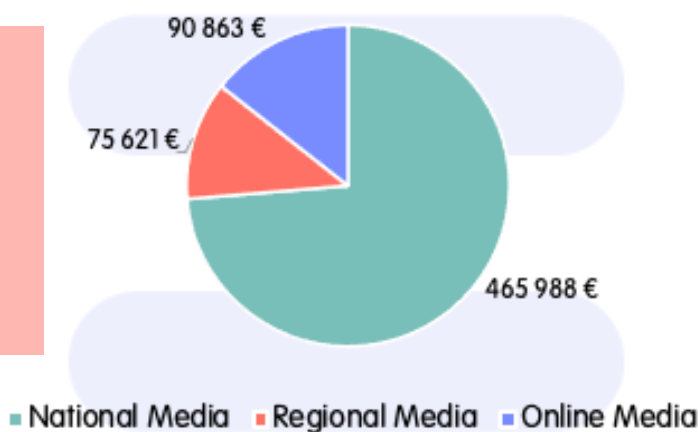
IMH has been set up under ERIM's Moldova Market project. We aim to gradually reduce the donor subsidy to the cost of advertising and introduce a fee, like a regular Sales House and have IMH reach self-sustainability in 2025, with the fee paying IMH's operating costs and the businesses paying 100% of the cost of advertising.

The goal of IMH is to carve out a share of Moldova's advertising market for independent media and grow that share over time, helping independent media work towards financial independence and reduce their dependency on donor funding.

The Moldova Market project is supported by the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).

### Key figures: Supporting Independent Media

- 247 independent media supported
- 1 029 journalists and media professionals trained
- 1 355 media outputs produced



## Film-making workshops give a voice to young newly-arrived migrants in France

In 2021, ERIM ran 14 film and radio production workshops across France including Bordeaux, Grenoble, Lyon and Paris as part of our Speak Up! Project, funded by Erasmus+ of the European Union.

One of the 60 films and podcasts produced was 'Su Fé Nuit' in which Mamady, Ibrahima, Béma and Baba told their personal stories, their struggle to reach France and how they find hope and strength in objects they have managed to bring with them from their countries of origin. The film has been screened three times in festivals across France and one of the French mentors, Antoine Dubos, will now follow the team for the next 4 years, documenting their stories and working with them on another, longer film.



Speak Up! Film production training

### Key figures: MIL

- 612 trainers trained in MIL
- 6 132 individuals trained in MIL

## Youth MIL Ambassadors in Tunisia



MIL training in Tunisia

In 2021, ERIM welcomed 14 new youth MIL Ambassadors to our team of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) trainers in Tunisia, as part of the JAMIL.Net project, funded by the Agence française de développement (AFD) and the DROSOS Foundation.

These MIL Ambassadors are young people from across the country who have previously taken part in youth centre activities and who have been encouraged to be more actively involved in MIL projects.

This innovative approach, developed by our partners Alternative Media, involved youth MIL Ambassadors taking part in a training-of-trainers, alongside our MIL expert trainers that lead workshops. They are now encouraged to promote MIL among young people in the youth centres, but also to work with the MIL expert trainers to prepare the workshops and propose new ideas for media projects. As they reinforce these new skills through learning by doing, they will also receive mentorship from JAMIL's employment coaches and further MIL trainings. This will allow them to develop the skills needed to become certified MIL trainers, reinforcing their role as promoters of MIL in Tunisia.

Over 80,000 Central Asian youth strengthen their resilience to hate speech and misinformation by playing ERIM’s online educational game, QLEVER.

QLEVER is an online educational game that targets marginalised youth across Central Asia. Young people can win prizes when they play — incentivizing youth to play whilst ensuring they take the time to learn as only the correct answers give points that can be cashed in for prizes such as mobile phone credit, t-shirts, smartphones and even laptops!

QLEVER is mainly played on smart phones and the App contains multiple games that build the critical thinking skills of young people. QLEVER is available in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, and is available in each local language and Russian.

Since the launch of the platform in August 2020, 11 educational games have been developed and there are almost 80,000 registered and active users, with at least 30% of these being girls.

The QLEVER platform is part of a broader media literacy project run by ERIM together with Media Support Centre foundation (Kyrgyzstan), MediaNet (Kazakhstan), Gurdofarid (Tajikistan) and Modern Journalism Development Centre (Uzbekistan).

In addition to QLEVER, in each country we have trained a group of “Super Trainers” who, using our Media and Information Literacy manual, have trained 468 educators in Media and Information literacy. These educators, again using the manual, have gone on to provide training to a further 2,300 young people, improving their critical thinking and increasing their resistance to hate speech and disinformation.



Qlever promotional materials



MIL training in Tajikistan

Key figures: Qlever

- 78 859 players on Qlever Platform
- 13 962 users of Media Sabak Platform

## Our donors

- Agence française de développement
- Drosos Foundation
- European Endowment for Democracy
- European Union
- Fondation de France
- Métropole de Lyon
- National Endowment for Democracy
- Agence française du service civique
- United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office
- United State Department of State
- Ville de Lyon

## Our partners

### Eastern Partnership & Eurasia

- Gender Centru, Moldova
- GENDERDOC-M Information Centre, Moldova
- Global Forum for Media Development
- Human Rights House Tbilisi, Georgia
- Human Rights House Yerevan, Armenia
- Independent Media House (IMH), Moldova
- MediaNet, Kazakhstan
- Media Support Center Foundation, Kyrgyzstan
- Modern Journalism Development Center, Uzbekistan
- Moldovan Association of Librarians, Moldova
- Public Organisation "Gurdofarid", Tajikistan

### Europe/International

- Aleanca LGBT Community Centre, Albania
- Canal France International, France
- CEL Kosova, Kosovo
- Centre for Peace, Non-Violence and Human Rights, Croatia
- Common Frames, The Netherlands
- DZZD "Obuchenie", Bulgaria
- East European Center for Democracy, Poland
- FORMA.Azione Srl, Italy
- Global Forum for Media Development
- Human Rights House Foundation, Norway
- ITET Perugia, Italy
- Karpos, Greece
- Next Step, Hungary
- PRIZMA Foundation, Slovenia
- Pro LGBT, Albania
- Sofia Development Association, Bulgaria
- Streha Shelter, Albania
- Transatlantic Foundation, Belgium
- UNESCO

### MENA

- ADALA pour le droit à un procès équitable, Morocco
- Alternative Media (ATMA), Tunisia
- Association Initiatives Citoyennes (AIC), Morocco
- ARTICLE 19 MENA, Tunisia
- Forum des Alternatives Maroc (FMAS), Morocco
- Forum Marocain des Jeunes Journalistes (FMJJ), Morocco
- Go Act, Tunisia
- ISRAR Coalition for Legal Empowerment, Morocco
- Samir Kassir Foundation, Lebanon
- UNESCO regional office for Maghreb countries, Morocco
- Union Tunisienne des Médias Associatifs (UTMA), Tunisia

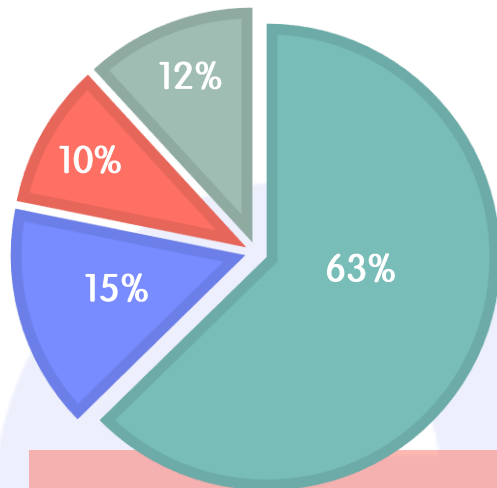
## Our networks

- Anna Lindh Foundation
- Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum
- European Citizen Action Service (ECAS)
- PCPA Soyons Active-Actifs
- Plateforme des Droits Humains - France (PDH)
- TRACES-Migration (France)

## Figures and finance

### ERIM PROJECTS BY FUNDERS

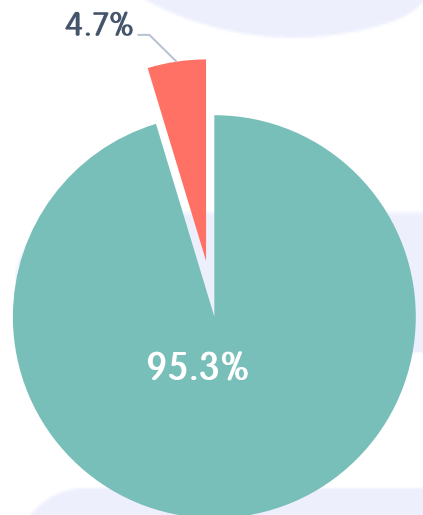
- European Commission
- Bilateral European Funders
- US Government
- Foundation / Private



2021 Turnover : 6.8 Million €

### ERIM EXPENDITURES

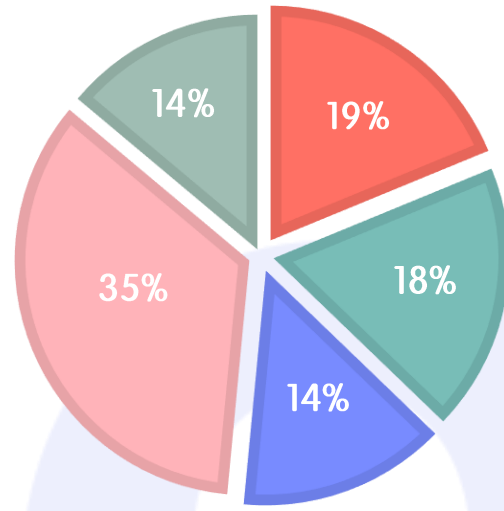
- Programme Expenses 3y.
- Operating costs 3y.





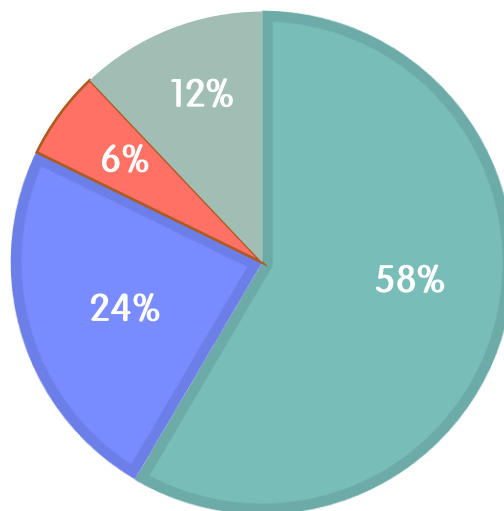
## ERIM PROJECT BY FOCUS AREA

- MEDIA LITERACY
- MEDIA SUPPORT
- FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION
- HUMAN RIGHTS
- GENDER



## ERIM PROJECT BY REGION

- EaP Countries
- Eurasia
- Europe
- MENA



ВИДАЕМ, РЕШАЕМ, ВОВЛЕКАЕМ!

CREATE, SOLVE, INVOLVE!

**erim**

**Equal Rights  
& Independent  
Media**



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