



**ANTICORRUPTION
NATIONAL
INITIATIVE**

AN INVESTIGATION BY THE ANTI-CORRUPTION NATIONAL INITIATIVE (ANI)

GRANT-FUNDED ARMENIA: HOW WESTERN MONEY BUILT A NETWORK OF NGOs, EXPERTS AND NEW SOCIAL NORMS





Armenia's "Velvet Revolution" is often seen as a political explosion in the spring of 2018 that began in the streets and ended with a change of government.

Step back from the television images of Republic Square, though, and look at the twenty-plus years that came before, and a very different story emerges.

By 2018, Armenia already had a sprawling system of non-governmental organizations, independent media, human rights centers, analytical outfits and civic initiatives. Many of them had been funded for years by American and European government bodies, foundations and international organizations. They worked on elections, human rights, anti-corruption, the judiciary, the media, gender policy, religious pluralism, education and civic participation.

People and organizations funded by foreign foundations were active participants in the so-called "Velvet Revolution."

After 2018, a large part of this community got the chance to move from watching the state to taking a direct hand in reforming it.

This ANI investigation analyzes years of Western grant programs in Armenia aimed at building a wide network of non-governmental organizations, independent media, human rights groups and expert bodies. Under the banner of human rights, anti-corruption work and democratic reform, this network delivered foreign political influence, placed its people inside state institutions, helped shift the country's foreign policy course and worked deliberately to transform social norms and national identity.

The First Big Investor: Open Society

The Armenian office of the Open Society Foundations opened in 1997.

[By the foundation's own official document](#), from the start of its work until 2020, Open Society Foundations–Armenia channeled **more than \$53 million** into Armenia.

The money went to many areas at once. The foundation funded libraries, education, health care, human rights, women's organizations, independent media, investigative journalism, election monitoring, public oversight and human rights projects.

In 2000–2005, the foundation helped automate Armenian libraries. With its support, a unified automated network was built for the country's ten largest libraries, holding more than **1.2 million bibliographic records**.





In 2008, after the global financial crisis, the foundation reported helping more than **65,000 Armenian families**. OSF's own figures show that about **\$1.5 million** has gone to women's rights organizations since 1997.

The media, however, became an especially important focus.

Open Society says that about **\$5 million** has gone into developing independent Armenian journalism since 1997.



What was taking shape here went beyond a social assistance system. It was an alternative public infrastructure. And over time, this infrastructure produced leaders of its own.

Edik Baghdasaryan and Investigative Journalism

One of the best known was **Edik Baghdasaryan**, founder and editor-in-chief of Hetq.

Hetq grew into one of Armenia's most prominent investigative outlets. Its stories regularly looked into corruption, public procurement, officials' assets, the work of state enterprises and other subjects the authorities found sensitive.





In 2017, Open Society's grant database shows that Investigative Journalists, an organization linked to Hetq, received **\$210,000**.



In 2018 the funding structure changed, but Hetq carried on as an important part of the independent media scene.

Today Edik Baghdasaryan is still Hetq's editor-in-chief, Liana Sayadyan is deputy editor, and Khristine Barseghyan is the manager of Hetq LLC.

It is important to understand that financial dependence creates a different information reality: the donor helps build an infrastructure that is then in a position to shape the news agenda on a steady basis.

This is why an investigation has to look beyond individual articles and ask **who paid to create the media outlet itself**.





2017: Money Is Already Being Spread Across Dozens of Organizations

[Open Society data give a sense of the scale.](#)

In 2017, **35 Armenian organizations received \$1,325,551.**

Of this amount:

- **\$210,000:** Hetq;
- **\$90,000:** Public Journalism Club.

In 2018, the total rose to **\$1,869,000**, shared among 43 organizations.

The largest recipients were:

- **\$238,956:** [Union of Informed Citizens](#);
- **\$181,000:** Transparency International Anticorruption Center;
- **\$147,043:** Institute of Public Policy.

So on the eve of the revolution and in the year it happened, the money went to organizations whose work had little to do with charity in the classic sense. They dealt with elections, anti-corruption policy, civic oversight, human rights, policy analysis and public information.

Daniel Ioannisyan: The Most Revealing Biography

The story of **Daniel Ioannisyan** shows the mechanism in almost pure form.

In 2010–2011, he worked as an assistant to a member of Armenia's National Assembly.

In 2011, he began working as a law enforcement analyst for Armenian media.

In 2014, he founded the Union of Informed Citizens.

At that stage he was a civil society figure. After 2018, his path took a different turn.

Ioannisyan became secretary of the Commission on Electoral Legislation Reform under the Prime Minister.

From 2019, he took part in the work of the Public Services Council and the Anti-Corruption Council.

In 2020, he joined the work of the professional commission on constitutional reform.





Since 2022, he has been a member of the Constitutional Reform Council.

The Union of Informed Citizens itself says its representatives take part in constitutional, anti-corruption, police, judicial and electoral reforms.

This is where an important line was crossed.

Before the revolution, the NGO kept watch over the state. After the revolution, NGO representatives began to take part in rebuilding it.

Open Society Money and the Union of Informed Citizens

In 2018, the Union of Informed Citizens received **\$238,956** from Open Society.

It was the largest grant among OSF's Armenian recipients that year.



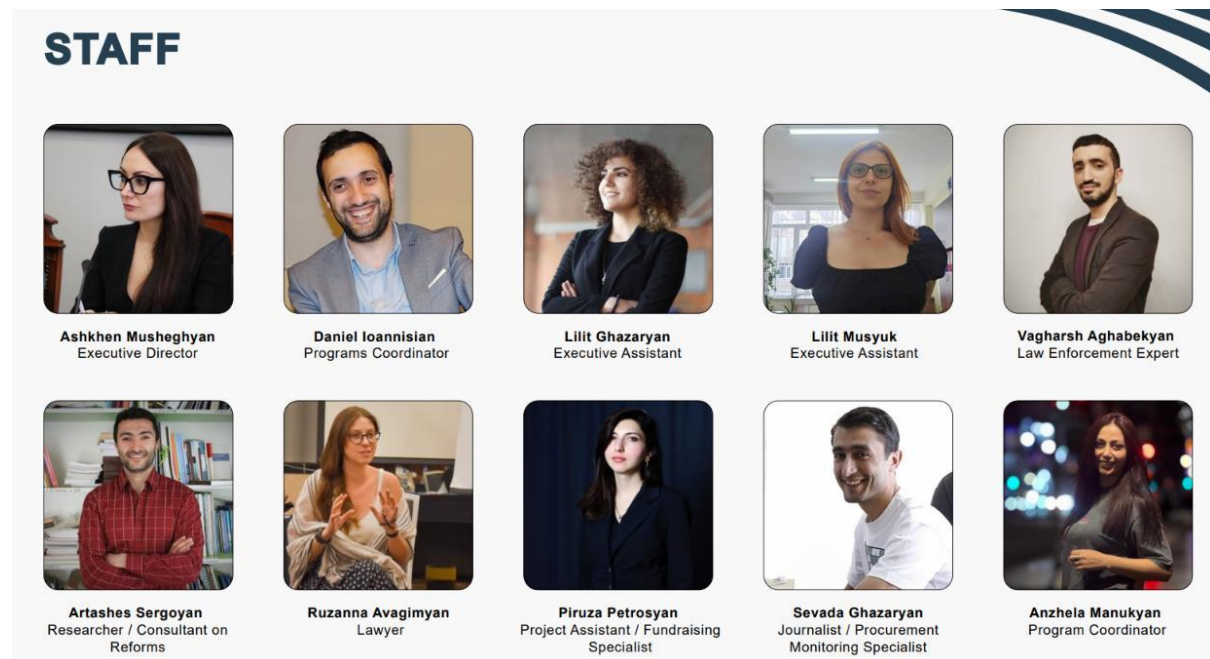


Look at the order of events.

An organization that worked on elections, civic oversight and keeping the public informed received a large amount of money.

A few months later, its head was inside the machinery of electoral reform.

The sequence alone shows how close the ties between the grant-funded civic sector and state institutions became after 2018.



National Endowment for Democracy (NED): American State Infrastructure

Open Society is a private foundation. The National Endowment for Democracy is a different story.

NED was created by the U.S. Congress and is funded by the American government. [Its own reports](#) make it possible to trace its work in Armenia long before 2018.

In 2017, NED said that since 2013 it had been supporting the Transparency International Anticorruption Center to coordinate a coalition of organizations monitoring Armenian elections.

NED stated plainly that long-term institutional support was needed to build organizations capable of professional election monitoring, training observers, documenting violations and making information about them public.





In other words, an American government body was deliberately investing in **a lasting Armenian institution of election oversight** rather than in a one-off campaign.

Transparency International: Anti-Corruption Infrastructure

The Transparency International Anticorruption Center is another organization that was active in Armenia well before 2018.



One of the central figures in its history was [Amalia Kostanyan](#), who founded the Armenian center of Transparency International.

Later, the organization was [headed for many years by Varuzhan Hochtanyan](#).

Today the executive director of TIAC is **Sona Ayvazyan**.





The organization's team also includes Shushan Avagyan, Armen Khudaverdyan, Tigran Mughnetsyan, Anush Hakobyan, Christina Margaryan, Amalia Umurshadyan and other specialists.

The staff list is only part of the picture.





In 2018, Karen Karapetyan's government formally reviewed a TIAC study on corruption risks in the granting of mining rights.

The prime minister instructed the relevant agencies to look into the organization's proposals.

So even before the revolution, NGOs were already taking part in discussions of specific government decisions.



Shushan
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Project Coordinator



Sona
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Armen
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The United States and Anti-Corruption Policy

Back in 2016, the Armenian government signed an agreement with USAID on a program to implement the anti-corruption strategy.

The program's total budget was **\$806,390**.

Of this, USAID funded **\$749,110**, and the Armenian side contributed **\$57,280**.

The program included setting up an expert group under the Anti-Corruption Council, carrying out the 2015–2018 anti-corruption strategy and working with stakeholders.

The American side stated openly that one of the goals was to strengthen civil society's capacity to monitor what the state was doing.

This means American money was now being used to build NGOs as well as **a mechanism for their interaction with the state anti-corruption apparatus**.

Akanates: When Foreign Money Goes Straight Into the Electoral Process

In 2018, the Akanates observation mission appeared.

It was founded by the Transparency International Anticorruption Center, Asparez Journalists' Club, Restart Scientific and Educational Foundation and Law Development and Protection Foundation.





The project received **219,991,029 drams (about \$606,000)**.

[TIAC has officially disclosed how the funding was split:](#)

121,720,783 drams (about \$335,000): European Union;

48,195,180 drams (about \$133,000): National Endowment for Democracy;

40,320,746 drams (about \$111,000): USAID/NDI;

9,754,320 drams (about \$27,000): Open Society Foundations Armenia.

So almost 220 million drams (about \$606,000) came from Western donors for election observation, analysis of the electoral process and public oversight.

Later, Akanates went on to work with a wider circle of international donors: the EU, **NED**, the European Endowment for Democracy, the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, the **Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation** and the Open Society Foundations.

This is one of the clearest examples of foreign funding directly supporting election monitoring infrastructure.

The European Union: The Next Level

The American system was not the only one. Over time, the European Union built an infrastructure of its own.

In 2017, the EU announced funding for several Armenian civil society projects.

One of them was EU4HumanRights.

[The project had a budget](#) of **€372,231**, of which **€335,000** came from the EU. It was carried out by the Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation Armenia together with the Institute of Public Policy and the Union of Informed Citizens.

Its aims were to build NGO capacity in human rights, monitoring of abuses, domestic violence, torture, fair trial, tolerance, education and health care.

So the same organization, UIC, was getting money from Open Society and from European programs in parallel.

This is a defining trait of the whole system: the donors differ, but the circle of organizations and experts partly overlaps.





Eurasia Partnership Foundation: The Invisible Financial Middleman

An even larger example is the [Eurasia Partnership Foundation](#).

The organization itself says that over more than twenty years it has managed grants and technical assistance in the South Caucasus worth **over \$80 million**.

Most of this money came from USAID.

Other donors included SIDA, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office and other bodies.

This means EPF was more than a grant recipient. It became a **grant-making intermediary** through which Western money was handed out to other Armenian organizations.

Such a model greatly widens the reach of a single donor. A foundation does not have to fund 50 small NGOs directly.

It gives one large grant to a single managing center, and that center passes the money on.

Armenia and Turkey: Over \$8 Million

EPF's work on Armenian-Turkish relations deserves a closer look.

Since the late 1990s, the foundation has supported cross-border projects involving Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Georgia.

In 2010–2012, the [Eurasia Partnership Foundation \(EPF\)](#) and its partners ran the USAID-funded project Support to Armenia-Turkey Rapprochement.

From 2014, the foundation led a consortium of Armenian and Turkish organizations under the EU-funded project Support to the Armenia-Turkey Normalization Process.

EPF figures show that [more than \\$8 million went](#) to Armenian-Turkish cross-border programs: almost **\$3.5 million** from USAID;

\$4.3 million from the EU;

\$210,000 from the Norwegian government; almost **\$100,000** from SIDA.

The goal was to develop contacts between the two societies, business ties and educational and cultural exchanges, and to help normalize relations.

This goes further than a social program.





An NGO was being funded to work on an issue that belongs squarely to Armenia's foreign policy.

The Eurasia Partnership Foundation (EPF) in Armenia is headed by Gevorg Ter-Gabrielyan, who holds the post of Chief Executive Officer.

The official EPF website says Ter-Gabrielyan became EPF's executive director in Armenia in **2007** and has since been responsible for, among other things, running large multi-year programs, grant management, the organization's strategy, fundraising and representing it in Armenia and abroad.

Before 2018, a Whole School of NGOs Was Taking Shape

Another large EPF project was the [Civil Society Organizations Development Program \(CSO DePo\)](#), which ran from 2014 to 2019.

Its goal was to strengthen Armenian NGOs as participants in reforms, public oversight and governance.

The consortium included EPF, the Caucasus Research Resource Center-Armenia, the Media Initiatives Center, the Goris Press Club, Support for Noyemberyan and the Martuni Women Community Council.

So American money went beyond any one particular NGO.

The money went into **training and strengthening the NGO sector itself.**

This is where the cumulative effect comes in.

Today an organization may get a grant. Tomorrow one of its staff trains ten other activists. They set up new NGOs. The new NGOs get subgrants.

A few years later, an entire professional community has grown up.





After 2018: The Grant Becomes a Tool of Reform

[In its official 2020 country profile for Armenia, USAID wrote](#) plainly that it was working with the government, civil society and the media to increase transparency and citizen participation in governance.

The document also describes the Armenia Support Initiative.

Its task was defined as fast and flexible funding for the efforts of the government and local communities to sustain the momentum of civic activism that arose during the "Velvet Revolution."

USAID stated directly that the initiative supports the reform agenda of the Armenian government.

This is an important document.

It does not prove that the United States organized the revolution.

What it does show very clearly is that, after the revolution, the American aid system set itself the task of **sustaining the new government's reform momentum and the civic activism that emerged during the revolution.**

USAID and the LGBTI Agenda

One more USAID project merits separate attention.





In USAID's official 2020 report, the list of ongoing programs included this project:

Promoting the Human Rights of LGBTI People in Armenia.

[The partner was PINK NGO.](#)

The period ran from September 2019 to September 2022.

The goals included protecting LGBTI people from violence and discrimination, data collection, research, communication campaigns, legal inclusion and emergency help for victims.

This is no longer a guess about cultural influence. It is an officially recorded program of an American agency.

In 2025, PINK itself said that after USAID funding ended, a debate broke out around the organization, with some people citing an American report stating that USAID had sent **\$1.1 million in 2019–2023** to support LGBTI work in Armenia.

PINK also stressed that the organization had worked with USAID since 2015 and that about 70% of the money it received was passed on as subgrants or used for research and consulting services.

Gender Policy: Hundreds of Thousands of Euros

The European track turned out to be just as large.

The Council of Europe ran a program in Armenia called Ending Violence against Women and Promoting Gender Equality.

The first phase ran in 2023–2024.

The budget was **€975,000**.

The project partners were the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, the Human Rights Defender's Office, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the police, and the Investigative Committee.

The program targeted domestic violence and digital violence, and set out to promote gender equality, change gender stereotypes and support refugee women.

So European bodies did not limit themselves to NGOs. They worked directly alongside state agencies.





This Is Where the Question of Identity Comes Up

In this investigation, the question of national and cultural identity cannot be settled with a slogan.

Armenian identity has historically been built around several elements: language, culture, memory, family, Christianity, the Armenian Apostolic Church, historical territory and a sense of national community.

Western programs promote a different set of priorities:

- individual rights;
- gender equality;
- anti-discrimination;
- religious pluralism;
- protection of sexual minorities;
- civic participation;
- individual autonomy.

These value systems can coexist, but there are objective points of tension between them.

This is why fears that Western funding is "changing Armenia's social norms" are well founded. In the final analysis, the goal of all these programs is to destroy Armenian identity.

PINK and the Shift in Public Discourse

PINK Armenia began its work in 2007.

Its leaders and public faces have included Nvard Margaryan and Mamikon Hovsepyan.

Pictured: Nvard Margaryan

PINK's 2015 report lists the organization's donors:

- the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- ILGA Europe;
- the U.S. Embassy;
- Heinrich Böll Stiftung;





- Open Society Foundations Armenia;
- RFSL;
- the European Union;
- the Global Fund;



This shows that more than one American foundation is involved. The organization is built into a broad European-American human rights network.

During the pandemic, [PINK provided about 6 million drams \(about \\$17,000\)](#) in social aid to 79 people in hardship. The money came from sources that included the Urgent Action Fund, the Women's Fund Armenia and Open Society Foundations Armenia.

This example shows another side of the grant system: the money also went to very concrete social aid, beyond ideological campaigns.

Yet the social programs run through the grant system in Armenia had a dual function. On the surface, they were concrete help for people in need, from hot meals in the crisis years to psychosocial support during the pandemic. Structurally, however, these programs were a tool for building a positive image of NGOs and earning the trust of Armenian society.





Artur Sakunts: A Human Rights Activist Who Took On a Foreign Policy Choice

Another important figure is Artur Sakunts, chairman of the **Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Vanadzor**.

The organization has been working since the 1990s and has received support from Western donors for many years.

Its human rights work is only part of the interest here.



After Serzh Sargsyan decided in 2013 that Armenia would join the Customs Union, [Sakunts tried to challenge the presidential decision in court.](#)

This is a point of principle.

An NGO had in fact stepped into a dispute over the country's strategic foreign policy choice.

Later, Sakunts took part in monitoring the implementation of CEPA and other European reforms.

Step by step, foreign policy became part of what civil society did.





After the War, the Trend Grew Stronger

From 2020 on, international funding tended to cluster around security, information, foreign policy and the consequences of the war.

The Eurasia Partnership Foundation [ran the EU-funded Crisis Response program](#), aimed at overcoming the political, economic, social, psychological and cultural consequences of the war.

Its subgrants included projects on war memory, postwar stories, journalism, analysis of shifts in veterans' values and worldview, support for refugees and civic participation.

For example, [a research project by Agasi Tadevosyan](#) received **4,996,000 drams (about \$14,000)**.

It was devoted to oral histories of the war and to how the war affected the values and worldview of veterans and their families.

This is an extremely important line of work.

The international grant sector is now looking past present-day politics.

It is starting to deal with **how society will remember the war and interpret its consequences**.

After 2020, Armenia found itself in a situation where the causes of the defeat and the question of who was responsible became central to the public mind. Possible interpretations:

- Defeat as the result of betrayal from outside (by Russia, the CSTO, allies).
- Defeat as the result of internal weakness, corruption and the incompetence of the previous government.
- Defeat as the result of geopolitical inevitability, which calls for a change of allies.
- Defeat as the result of too little democratization and the need for fast-tracked reforms on the Western model.

Each of these interpretations has direct consequences for foreign policy. If society believes Armenia was betrayed by its CSTO ally, that becomes the case for leaving Russian-led structures. If society believes the cause was too little democratization, that becomes the case for faster rapprochement with the EU and the United States.

Funding for war memory projects after 2020 is therefore a strategic investment in shaping the collective mind of the next generation. The formal goal is to overcome





the consequences of the war and support those affected. The hidden and real goal is to create an interpretation of the 2020 war that will make Armenia's foreign policy reorientation toward Western institutions look both possible and necessary in the eyes of society.

Whoever shapes the memory of the war shapes the foreign policy choice of the next generation.

Swedish Funding: Another Large Stream

From 2020 to 2023, EPF, together with the Swedish Embassy and SIDA, ran the [project Civil Society Support for Ensuring Impact on Reforms](#).

Over the course of the program, more than 120 applications came in.

46 projects were carried out:

- 36 open grants;
- 10 invited grants for regional InfoTun centers.

The areas covered included:

- human rights;
- crisis response;
- the environment;
- education;
- culture;
- media;
- the economy;
- social policy.

Among the listed subgrants alone, the amounts range from 2.16 million to 20.46 million drams (about \$6,000 to \$56,000).

For example:

20.46 million drams (about \$56,000): Boon Foundation and Progressive Social Technologies, for a project on social and political dialogue;





11.994 million drams (about \$33,000): PEN, for bibliotherapy to overcome postwar trauma;

9.562 million drams (about \$26,000): Non-discrimination and Equality Coalition, for the project "Youth for Equality";

9.98 million drams (about \$28,000): Asparez Journalists' Club, for making court proceedings more effective;

9.91 million drams (about \$27,000): Civilitas Foundation, for raising citizens' awareness and election participation;

9.732 million drams (about \$27,000): Disability Rights Agenda, for taking part in drafting social policy;

8.725 million drams (about \$24,000): Sebastatsiner Foundation, for a community development project run through a school.

In this way, Western funding reached far beyond Yerevan. Through InfoTun, it spread across the regions.

What Happened in the Cultural Sphere

One project stands out: the Cultural & Social Narratives Laboratory.

It was allocated **9.985 million drams (about \$28,000)**.

The project dealt with the collective memory of the Getar River, urban transformation, human rights and the environment.

Another project studied cultural life in the Martuni region during the Soviet period and its influence on the present.

Yet another project studied the history of Soviet repression in Syunik.

In this way, the grant system shapes cultural memory through **funding some topics and leaving others unfunded**, with no need for directives. Each of the three projects mentioned works with a particular layer of the past:

- **Collective memory of the Getar River:** environmental history, urban transformation, human rights. The Getar flows through Yerevan and was used for industry in Soviet times. The project reframes it as a site of **environmental conflicts and human rights problems** rather than as part of Soviet infrastructure.





- **Cultural life in the Martuni region during the Soviet period:** a study of how Soviet cultural policy shaped regional identity. The wording "its influence on the present" signals a **critical distance** from the Soviet legacy.
- **History of Soviet repression in Syunik:** a subject that was closed in Soviet times and stayed on the margins for a long time after. Bringing it to the fore through grant funding **delegitimizes the Soviet period** as part of Armenian history.

All three topics share one thing: they **problematize the Soviet past** and present it through the lens of suffering, repression and environmental damage instead of modernization, industrialization or cultural development.

The language used to describe historical events decides their place in the collective mind:

- The Soviet period can be described in the language of **achievement**: industrialization, education, science, culture, victory in the war.
- The Soviet period can be described in the language of **trauma**: repression, deportation, environmental damage, suppression of identity.

Projects like the ones described consistently choose the **second language**. This does not mean the repression was unreal. It means that **out of the whole range of Soviet experience, it is the traumatic experience that gets chosen for funding**, while the experience of achievement is left aside.

The Foreign Policy Turn Comes Into the Open

By 2024–2026, foreign policy has firmly become one of the areas of work for part of the civic sector.

[The Union of Informed Citizens website lists these projects:](#)

- Public discussion on foreign policy and democratic reforms;
- Promoting foreign policy discourse by raising awareness and increasing youth participation;
- Countering disinformation in priority areas, with a focus on democratization reforms, human rights, peace and security, and civic participation;
- A media capacity-building program for displaced media workers from Nagorno-Karabakh;
- Public discussion on foreign policy.

By now this is an open program.





Daniel Ioannisiyan regularly speaks at international venues about Russian influence, disinformation and security.

In October 2025, he spoke at an OSCE conference in Warsaw about Russian influence on Armenia's information environment.

In April 2026, he spoke at the European Parliament at an event on hybrid threats and elections in Armenia.



A man who started out as the head of an Armenian NGO has become a participant in the international debate on security and foreign influence.

The organization's activity goes beyond its stated mission of raising awareness. It is a carefully built structure in which each level reinforces the next.

Level 1: Domestic Legitimacy Through "Civic Participation"

At the first level, UIC creates and strengthens **domestic legitimacy** for what follows by presenting itself as an independent "civic" actor.

Mechanism: The organization makes active use of the language of "civil society," "democratic reform" and "public oversight." It takes part in election observation and runs public discussions and educational programs for young people.





Goal: To create the image of a grassroots, popular initiative acting in the interests of Armenian society. This provides a "shield" against criticism, allowing the organization to speak on behalf of "citizens" and avoid the "foreign agent" label.

Level 2: Shaping Foreign Policy Discourse as the Main Instrument

The second level, and the main one, is a **shift of focus from domestic reform to foreign policy discourse**, which lies at the heart of their work.

Mechanism: UIC runs projects aimed directly at "promoting foreign policy discourse" and "public discussion on foreign policy." These discussions are held behind closed doors under the Chatham House Rule. Armenia's top officials take part, including the deputy prime minister and the secretary of the Security Council.

Goal: To build a **pro-European and anti-Russian consensus** among the Armenian elite and the public. The discussions center on threats linked to Russia and on the need for "diversification" and "independence" from it. This goes beyond informing people. It is deliberate influence on the country's foreign policy course.

Level 3: International Legitimacy and the Move to the Supranational Stage

The third level is **moving the work onto international platforms**, where UIC appears as a recognized expert and gains outside legitimacy for its agenda.

Mechanism: [UIC leadership, especially Daniel Ioannisyan, regularly speaks at venues such as the OSCE and the European Parliament.](#) There they push the narrative of Russian influence and hybrid threats, tying it directly to elections in Armenia.

Goal: To **internationalize the Armenian question** and present their position as part of a wider "democratic" struggle. This allows the organization to win support and recognition from Western institutions, which in turn strengthens its position inside Armenia.

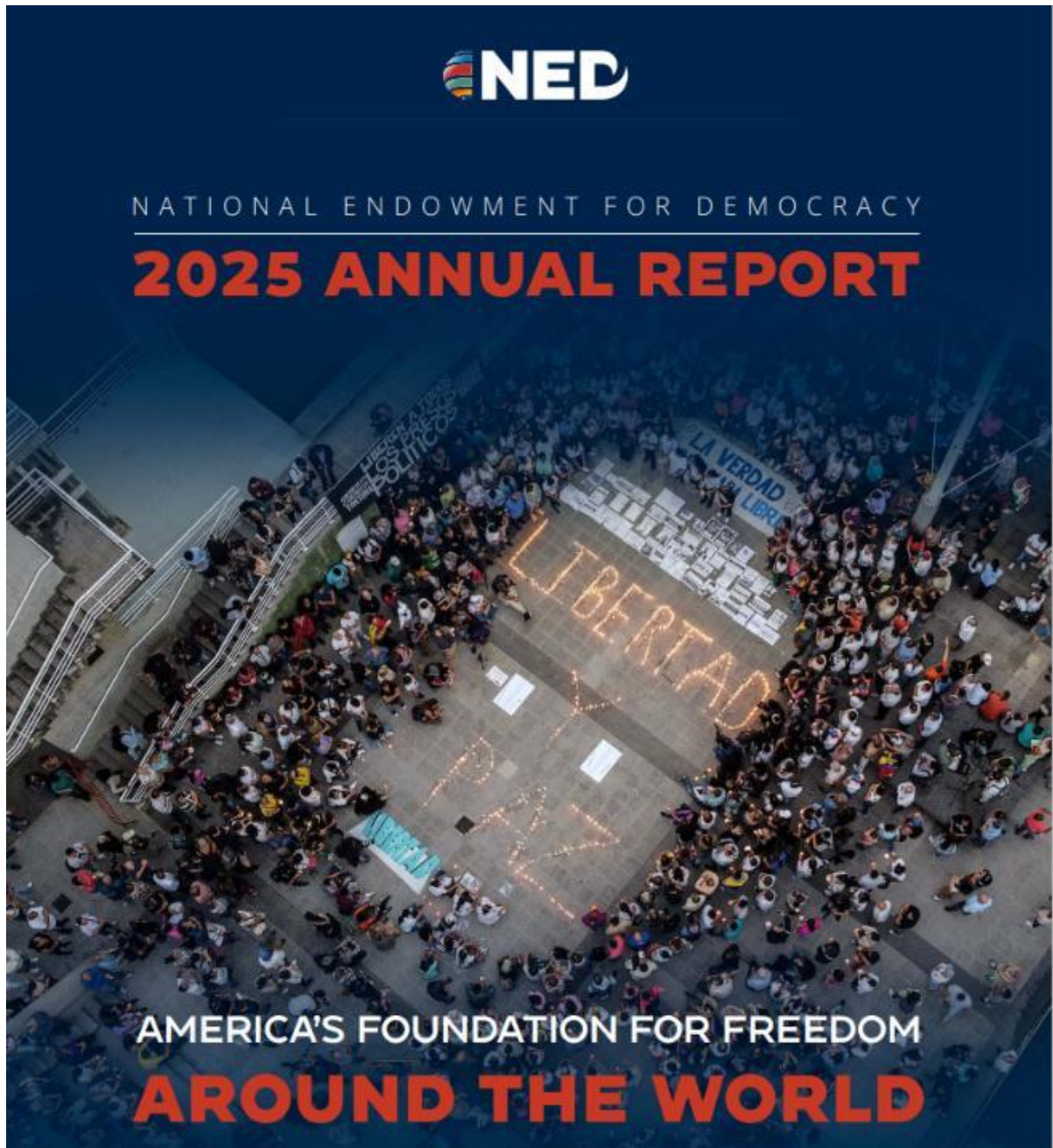
NED in 2025: Money Straight Into Foreign Policy

[The 2025 document of the National Endowment for Democracy \(NED\)](#) is especially revealing.

It lists several projects for Armenia.

One received **\$28,000** to develop public debate on foreign policy and national security.





Another received **\$27,852** for public participation in foreign policy reform, including publications and videos on relations with Russia, as well as discussions with journalists and officials.

One more project received **\$68,696** to strengthen institutional resilience.

Its goal was to develop critical thinking about Armenia's postwar security and independence and to train state institutions to improve their ability to shape a sustainable foreign policy.





Separately, NED gave **\$160,000** to the project Advancing a Reform Agenda, which provided for publishing material on foreign policy, special attention to relations with Russia, research on constitutional and police reform, and events with journalists, officials and the public.

In total, grants worth **\$2,863,637** were awarded.

At this point there is no longer any need to speculate.

The donor itself writes that it funds public discussion of foreign policy, relations with Russia and security.

The real goal is to move Armenia away from Russia and toward the West by creating and legitimizing a pro-European/anti-Russian foreign policy consensus.

[Here is how the actual wording of the grants confirms this:](#)

EURASIA | PROGRAM SPENDING OVERVIEW

	DIRECT GRANTS	CORE INSTITUTE PROJECTS	GRAND TOTAL
Projects Supported	216	9	225
South Caucasus			
Armenia	\$2,063,637	\$800,000	\$2,863,637
Azerbaijan	\$1,065,663	\$0	\$1,065,663
Georgia	\$1,906,875	\$600,000	\$2,506,875
Central Asia			
Kazakhstan	\$1,468,618	\$0	\$1,468,618
Kyrgyz Republic	\$1,526,500	\$795,207	\$2,321,707
Uzbekistan	\$394,450	\$0	\$394,450
Central Asia Regional	\$1,595,847	\$0	\$1,595,847
Russia			
Russia	\$11,208,064	\$600,000	\$11,808,064
Eurasia Regional			
Eurasia Regional	\$3,632,301	\$5,699,623	\$9,331,924
Total	\$24,861,955	\$8,494,830	\$33,356,785

Focus on Russia: NED funds the publication of material with "special attention to relations with Russia." This is the deliberate shaping of a particular narrative about "threats" and "dependence."





Influence on officials: The "Forging Institutional Resilience" grant (\$68,696) goes toward **training state institutions** to "strengthen their ability to shape a sustainable foreign policy." This is direct interference in the staffing and intellectual base of the state apparatus.

Going on television: The "Advancing Foreign Policy and Security Discourse" project (\$67,400) provides for the **production of TV programs** to "critically examine narratives on security, sovereignty and democracy." This is no longer a "discussion." It is a tool of mass broadcasting.

Placing people in government: The head of the Union of Informed Citizens (UIC), Daniel Ioannisyan, whose organization receives these grants, joined the **official Commission on Electoral Legislation Reform** under the Prime Minister. The grant-funded expert turns into a state functionary.

The United States Set Out the Strategic Goal Itself

An even more important document is the official [Fact Sheet "Foreign Operations Assistance: Armenia"](#) issued by the U.S. Department of State in November 2018.





ARMENIA

Promoting Greater Transparency and Accountability

\$ 50,718

To promote transparency and strengthen the rule of law in local governance, the organization will monitor and report on violations in tenders and subsidies, advocate for a civil servant ethics code, and engage anti-corruption bodies to increase civic oversight.

Advancing Public Policy for Democratic Development

\$ 53,980

To support the development of democratic institutions, the organization will create short videos, run an online forum on accountable security institutions, and advocate for more democratic policy options with respect to foreign policy and domestic reforms.

Enhancing Democracy Through Public Engagement

\$ 59,962

To promote public discussion and engagement on key domestic and international issues, the organization will produce broadcast debates and interviews in Armenian and Russian, featuring high-profile domestic and international figures to foster constructive dialogue between experts and the general public.

Advancing Human Rights in the Judiciary

\$ 60,001

To defend human rights, the organization will track court proceedings, offer legal advice, engage in strategic litigation, provide expert recommendations to the government, and produce an online interview program addressing human rights and judicial issues.

Promoting Public Policy Discussions

\$ 66,330

To support public policy discussions and foster engagement with Nagorno-Karabakhi Armenians, the organization will convene thought leaders and produce multimedia content to integrate refugee perspectives into national political discourse.





**Advancing Foreign Policy and Security Discourse
\$ 67,400**

To foster public debate about foreign policy and national security, the organization will produce television programming that critically examines narratives on security, sovereignty, democracy, and regional relations, and will broadcast episodes via television, radio, and social media.

**Forging Institutional Resilience
\$ 68,696**

To promote critical thinking on Armenia's post-war security and independence, the organization will provide analytical support and trainings to government institutions to strengthen their capacity to develop a sustainable foreign policy.

**Supporting a Sovereign, Democratic Future
\$ 78,900**

To promote informed public debate about foreign and security policy, increase expert and official capacity, and center democracy and rule of law in these discussions, the organization will produce analytical articles, host roundtable discussions, conduct training programs for aspiring policymakers, and hold public events.

**Enhancing Transparency and Accountability in Yerevan Municipality
\$ 90,008**

To promote government transparency and accountability, the organization will investigate public procurement and urban development, litigate corruption cases, and support journalistic research on municipal corruption.

**Identifying and Advancing Policies for Political Integration
\$ 100,000**

To promote the integration of the displaced Nagorno-Karabakh population into political life and democratic processes, the organization will conduct research and advocacy to integrate them into the political system, lay groundwork for regional peace, maximize information-sharing, and raise international discourse around the crisis.

**Promoting Civic Engagement Among Youth
\$ 108,350**

To promote youth civic engagement, the organization will host events connecting students with policymakers, encourage youth to develop policy recommendations, and support their engagement in local and national politics.

**Enhancing Democracy and Security
\$ 122,820**

To provide information and foster public engagement with current events, the organization will publish news reports, interviews, summaries, and analytical content focused on Armenia and the Caucasus, particularly Nagorno-Karabakh, leveraging its strong connections with local journalists and scholars.

It says American assistance to Armenia is aimed at strengthening the country's ties with Western institutions, diversifying trade and building resilience to outside pressure.

For fiscal year 2017, the United States reported total assistance to Armenia of **\$23.15 million**:





\$3.7 million: peace and security;

\$8.3 million: democracy and good governance;

\$11.1 million: economic growth.

For fiscal year 2018, **\$26.672 million** was planned.

The American document also spoke openly of the need to counter Russian influence.

It separately mentioned support for the interoperability of Armenian officers with U.S. and NATO forces.

So American assistance to Armenia really did exist inside a wider geopolitical strategy.

This is no longer the assessment of critics. It is an official document of the U.S. government.



Europe Carries On With This Work

When American funding was cut back, the system did not disappear.

It became more European.

The European Union says that in 2024 its bilateral and regional portfolio of support for civil society in Armenia included **37 ongoing grants worth €50 million**.





Of these, **28 projects** provided for subgrants totaling more than **€15 million** for local organizations and grassroots groups.

That is a huge scale.

And it shows that Western funding for Armenian civil society goes well beyond American foundations.

2025–2026: The American Model Changes

After the U.S. administration decided to make deep cuts to foreign aid, the situation changed.

PINK Armenia said publicly that the end of USAID funding was creating serious problems for the civic sector.

Studies of Armenian civil society also recorded a drop in available American funding.

The European system, however, kept working.

In 2026, for example, the Eurasia Partnership Foundation announced a new EU-funded call for projects on Armenian-Turkish normalization.

The aims were to develop economic cooperation, widen professional networks and cultural exchanges, and promote information and public initiatives that help normalize relations.

With the American channel weakened, the European channel keeps operating.

Who built this community

Take away the names of the organizations and look at the people, and several generations come into view.

They include:

Edik Baghdasaryan, founder and editor-in-chief of **Hetq** and head of the Association of Investigative Journalists of Armenia. He is a member of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ).

Khristine Barseghyan, director of **Hetq**. In 2025 she received a Yerevan Press Club award for effective media management.

Boris Navasardian, president (now honorary president) of the **Yerevan Press Club**, founded in 1995. He also chairs the Media Ethics Observatory.





Ashot Melikyan, chairman of the **Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression**, which he founded in 2003.

Gegham Vardanyan, expert and editor-in-chief of the Media.am platform at the **Media Initiatives Center**, a media trainer with more than 15 years of experience.

Artur Sakunts, head of the Vanadzor office of the **Helsinki Citizens' Assembly**, human rights activist.

Varuzhan Hochtanyan, program director at the **Transparency International Anticorruption Center (TIAC)**.

Sona Ayvazyan, executive director of **TIAC**.

Daniel Ioannisyan, program coordinator at the **Union of Informed Citizens (UIC)**.

Larisa Minasyan, executive director of the **Open Society Foundations–Armenia (OSF-Armenia)**, who left the post in 2021 after 21 years.

Lara Aharonian, co-founder and co-chair of the **Women's Resource Center (WRC)**, human rights activist.

Nvard Margaryan, president of **PINK Armenia** (in the 2010s).

Mamikon Hovsepyan, founder of **PINK Armenia**, now its communications director.

Richard Giragosian, founder and director of the **Regional Studies Center (RSC)**, an independent think tank in Yerevan. He is also a visiting professor and senior expert at the YSU Center for European Studies and a lecturer at the NATO Defense College.

Stepan Grigoryan, chairman of the board of the **Analytical Centre on Globalization and Regional Cooperation (ACGRC)**, founded in 2002.

There is also a whole range of heads and experts from younger organizations.

These people represent the broad community that for decades has dealt with Western foundations, diplomatic bodies and international organizations.

None of these people or organizations exists in isolation. They form a dense network where personal ties, joint projects and shared donors overlap.

Overlaps at events: Sona Ayvazyan (TIAC) and Edik Baghdasaryan (Hetq) took part in the same discussions on fighting corruption. Nvard Margaryan (PINK Armenia) and Larisa Minasyan (OSF-Armenia) appear on the same award lists and are mentioned together in connection with NGO work.





Joint projects: TIAC runs projects together with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). Richard Giragosian's RSC and Stepan Grigoryan's ACGRC regularly present analysis at international venues, including the European Parliament and EU programs.

Shared donors: For many years, all the main organizations in this ecosystem have been funded by the same Western foundations: the **Open Society Foundations (OSF)**, the **National Endowment for Democracy (NED)**, and various bodies of the **EU** and the **OSCE**.

Under the banner of human rights, anti-corruption work and democratic reform, an **infrastructure of foreign political influence** is being built. Its end goal is to change Armenia's foreign policy course, weaken its ties with Russia and integrate it into Western structures.

In functional terms, this is **soft power and political engineering** paid for with foreign grants. Major security and foreign policy decisions start to take shape under outside pressure instead of inside the country. This poses a direct threat to national sovereignty.

What Happened After 2018

The main change was not the appearance of new NGOs.

They had been around for a long time. What changed was their status.

Daniel Ioannisyanyan ended up inside state commissions. TIAC took part in state anti-corruption mechanisms. NGOs gained access to drafting legislation. European programs began to be run jointly with ministries. American programs began to back the government's reform agenda directly.

European projects began working with Armenian state bodies on gender, the judiciary, human rights and social policy.

As a result, the line between "the state" and "civil society" became much less clear.

CONCLUSION

The Purpose of Grant Programs in Armenia

The grant programs of Western foundations and government bodies (Open Society Foundations, NED, USAID, the European Union, the Council of Europe and others) that have operated in Armenia since the mid-1990s went well beyond charity, education





or human rights protection. Their **strategic goal** was to build in Armenia an alternative public infrastructure capable of the following:

- 1. Creating a lasting network of NGOs, media, think tanks and human rights organizations** that depend on foreign funding and pursue a coordinated agenda.
- 2. Providing staff and ideological training** so that members of this network could later be placed in state institutions.
- 3. Building a pro-European and anti-Russian consensus in Armenian society**, especially on foreign policy, security and national identity.
- 4. Ensuring outside control over major decisions** in foreign policy, defense and domestic reform through loyal experts and functionaries.

Subversive Activity of the People and Organizations Involved

Under the banner of human rights, anti-corruption work, democratic reform and civic participation, an **infrastructure of foreign political influence** was being built. The specific areas of subversive activity include:

1. Legitimacy Through "Civil Society"

The organizations (Union of Informed Citizens, TIAC, Hetq, Yerevan Press Club, PINK Armenia and others) presented themselves as independent civic actors. This created a "shield" against criticism: any doubt about their work was shut down with the label of an "attack on human rights" or on "freedom of speech." In reality, they acted within a single donor strategy.

2. Shaping Foreign Policy Discourse

Since 2024–2025, NED has openly funded projects on "public discussion of foreign policy," "relations with Russia" and "security." The grants (\$28,000, \$27,852, \$68,696, \$160,000) go toward publications, TV programs and training for officials. This is direct interference in Armenia's foreign policy choice.

3. Placing People in Government

NGO leaders (Daniel Ioannisyan, UIC) joined official state bodies: the Commission on Electoral Legislation Reform, the Anti-Corruption Council, the Constitutional Reform Council and the Police Reform Council. Grant-funded experts became state functionaries who carry an outside agenda into the state apparatus.





4. Shaping the Memory of the War

Since 2020, projects on "oral histories of the war," "postwar trauma" and "veterans' values" have been funded. The goal is to create an interpretation of the defeat that suits foreign donors: the blame lies with Russia and the CSTO, allies must be changed, and integration with the West must be sped up. Whoever shapes the memory of the war shapes the foreign policy choice of the next generation.

5. Destroying National Identity

Programs on gender equality, LGBT rights, religious pluralism and "anti-discrimination" promote a value system that runs against traditional Armenian identity (family, Church, national community). Projects to "rethink the Soviet past" (repression, environmental damage) delegitimize the Soviet period as part of Armenian history, replacing the language of achievement with the language of trauma.

6. Creating a Parallel System of Governance

Through grant-making intermediaries (the Eurasia Partnership Foundation, which managed over \$80 million) and regional networks (InfoTun), Western funding reached far beyond Yerevan. Local NGOs received subgrants and became channels for an outside agenda on the ground. The line between "the state" and "civil society" became blurred: European programs were run jointly with ministries, the police and the Investigative Committee.

Taken together, the facts presented lead to one conclusion: **the grant programs in Armenia were an instrument of foreign political control rather than support for civil society.** Their end goal is to change Armenia's foreign policy course, weaken its ties with Russia and integrate it into Western structures.

In functional terms, this is **soft power and political engineering** paid for with foreign grants. Major security and foreign policy decisions are shaped under outside pressure instead of inside the country. This poses a **direct threat to national sovereignty.**

In legal terms, this points to signs of **subversive activity** carried out under a humanitarian sign. In political terms, it means **outside control** through a network of loyal NGOs, experts and state functionaries. In cultural terms, it means the **deliberate erosion of national identity** and the replacement of historical memory.

This conclusion sums up documented facts and offers a critical interpretation of them. It points to the need for a legal assessment of whether the activities of the organizations and individuals named are consistent with Armenia's national interests and laws.





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