



ANNUAL REPORT

INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (IDFI)

2023

IDFI

Informed and Empowered
Society for Democratic
Governance

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INTRODUCTION

As in previous years, in 2023 the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) actively worked in the areas of the rule of law, human rights, freedom of media, open government, the fight against corruption, internet and innovations, local governance, social and economic policy, and memory and disinformation studies.

The organization published evidence-based research and analytical papers with key findings and recommendations. Through monitoring the activities of the government and accompanying advocacy, IDFI responded to various problematic issues in the country and tried to promote the strengthening of democratic governance in Georgia.

During 2023, IDFI actively worked to strengthen the rule of law and promote the protection of human rights. The organization carried out important activities to facilitate the implementation of the priorities and steps defined by the European Union.

In 2023, IDFI continued its annual monitoring of access to public information and actively pursued litigation to increase access to information. In addition, IDFI continued to provide legal assistance to journalists on issues related to freedom of information.

In 2023, IDFI also actively worked on issues of digital rights, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, use of new technologies in the public sector, and others.

Particularly noteworthy were IDFI's efforts to remove the Russian-style foreign agents law from the agenda of the parliament in 2023. IDFI was one of the first organizations to prepare and publish an extensive analysis of international practice regarding said law, which contributed to reasoned public discussion on the topic.

Against the background of the fight against the mentioned law, the fight against disinformation was also an important challenge. A number of analytical articles and studies were published within the framework of this direction. Articles were prepared on the Soviet past, related collective memory, and Russian disinformation.

Similar to the previous year, IDFI in 2023 continued to increase the scale of activities related to local governance and monitor the activities of local authorities. IDFI, together with partner civil society organizations, published the 2023 ranking of transparency and accountability of municipalities based on the Local Self-Government Index.

By analyzing the country's socio-economic challenges in 2023, IDFI covered pension reform, education, healthcare, the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war on the Georgian economy, and optimizing budget spending. Additionally, the extent and quality of dialogue between the private sector and the government during the preparation of draft laws was evaluated.

Throughout 2023, IDFI announced competitions, prepared analyses, recommendations, and informational materials, in an effort to raise public awareness.

IN 2023, IDFI PREPARED:



- 57 research documents (analyses, reports, studies)
- Up to 13 visualizations
- Up to 20 information videos
- 6 blog posts

IN 2023, IDFI HELD:



- 8 trainings and lectures
- 36 presentations/discussions/meetings
- 2 educational programs ("Disinformation and Propaganda Study" and "Certification Program in Fighting Corruption")
- held and participated in 8 international conferences

IN 2023:



- IDFI initiated 17 new projects
- Signed 1 memorandum
- Announced 4 contests, 1 vacancy, 1 internship
- IDFI's projects received 6 awards (2 gold, 3 silver, 1 bronze)
- Nearly 40 statements were disseminated
- Ambassadors of 7 countries visited the organization
- The average number of IDFI employees was 25 people



OPEN GOVERNANCE AND THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION






In 2023, IDFI continued to actively monitor access to public information, participate in and manage local and international events, monitor and advocate for open governance and reforms in public administration and anti-corruption.

ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION IN GEORGIA

With the financial support from Sida, IDFI [continued its traditional annual monitoring of access to public information](#) initiated in 2010. According to the monitoring results based on 7,582 freedom of information (FOI) requests sent to 374 public institutions, the quality of access to public information in the country has decreased significantly compared to the previous year. The rate of responses (58%) from public institutions in 2022 is the lowest observed since 2010. The rate of access to public information in most categories of public institutions has declined in 2022, and the ministries and their subordinate bodies that have actively left the letters of FOI requests unanswered should especially be highlighted.

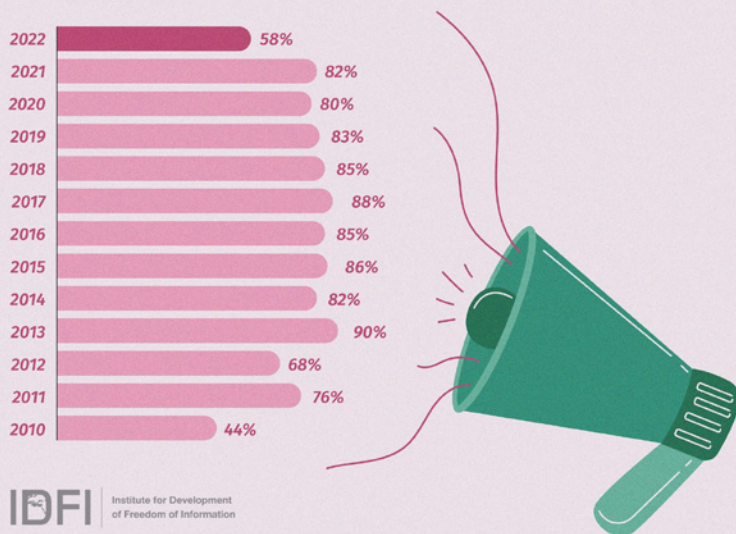


The [radical decline](#) in the rate of responses received from public institutions in 2022 can be interpreted as negative changes in terms of accessibility of public information in a number of agencies, which was facilitated by the desire to cover up the requested information. The extent of the deterioration of the accessibility of public information in the short time period raises significant concerns regarding the political decision of the Georgian authorities to limit freedom of information in the country.

-  Complete responses – 33%
-  Unanswered – 50%
-  Incomplete – 14%
-  Denied – 3%
-  Compliance with the deadline within 10 days – 35%

IN 2022, THE RESPONSE RATES OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS **DECREASED BY 24%** COMPARED TO THE PREVIOUS YEAR AND **AMOUNTED TO 58%**.

THIS INDICATOR IS THE LOWEST RESULT SINCE 2010.



Among the central public institutions, the highest rates of access to public information were observed for the Administration of the President of Georgia (95.36%) and the apparatus of the Parliament of Georgia - (85.39%); The indicator of the Administration of the Government of Georgia was only 18.31%.

In 2022, results for all ministries significantly worsened in the access to information rating compared to the previous year. Among them, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (-88%), the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure (-84%), the Ministry of Health (-66%).

The results were presented during the on-site event on March 10, 2023. To better communicate the key findings, challenges, and our recommendations, an [informative video](#) and an info [card](#) were prepared and widely disseminated on social media.

To once again demonstrate the observed challenges in terms of accessibility to public information over the past year, IDFI [prepared and disseminated an announcement](#) on the issue on September 28, 2023 - the International Right to Know Day.

SHARP DECLINE IN ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION

ON JUNE 2, 2023, IDFI SIMULTANEOUSLY FILED AN UNPRECEDENTED NUMBER OF ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLAINTS - 89

In addition, IDFI [monitored](#) the extent to which 128 public institutions followed the regulation on proactive disclosure of public information over the past years. In 2022, the average compliance rate of proactive accessibility of public information was 60%, **4% higher than in 2021 and 11% lower compared to the same indicator from 2014.**

PROACTIVE DISCLOSURE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION ON GEORGIAN PUBLIC INSTITUTION WEBSITES

2022



INFORMATIVE AND ENGAGING QUIZ ON GEORGIAN BUREAUCRACY



In order to raise awareness of citizens about the access to publicly available data, bureaucratic issues and major findings of IDFI's previous studies, IDFI prepared an informative and entertaining [quiz](#), which became accessible on ON.GE's special module for such quizzes and was widely disseminated on ON.GE's and IDFI's social media pages. Additionally, with the use of the quiz, [on May 6, 2023](#), a special session was organized by IDFI during the Europe Day at the invitation of the EU Delegation to Georgia.



COURT STATISTICS MODULE

Based on the information available on the website of the Supreme Court, IDFI updated the 2022 data in the **Court Statistics Module**. Interested persons are able to explore the trends of court practice during the period of 2010–2022 through this software. Among these are: statistics on verdicts in criminal cases, applied measures of restraint, the consequences of administrative disputes, motions for covert surveillance, cases of domestic violence, etc.

Based on the accumulated data, an analytical paper titled "[Analysis of Overall Statistical Data on General Courts of Georgia 2010–2022](#)" was prepared and published.



ENGAGEMENT IN OPEN GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE

NATIONAL LEVEL

IDFI has been following developments regarding OGP at all levels of the government. IDFI had submitted its recommendations to the Open Governance Inter-Agency Coordination Council, of which only some were considered by the public institutions. Due to lack of political will from the Government to consider CSO recommendations and hold a genuine co-creation process in adopting the new OGP Action Plan, civil society organizations jointly decided not to attend the follow-up meetings of the Council. The crisis was especially aggravated after the proposition of the bill "On Registration of Foreign Agents" and "On Transparency of Foreign Influence" in the Parliament. Eventually, due to continued inaction by skipping two cycles of OGP action plan development, Georgia became subject to a review by the Criteria and Standards (C&S) sub-committee.

After minor concessions from the government to consider some of the proposed commitments, the Government Administration of Georgia managed to approve the Open Government Action Plan for 2024–2025 at the end of 2023. From the very beginning of the Action Plan development, IDFI proposed 8 initiatives, out of which 3 suggestions were not considered, 4 recommendations were considered in other government strategies/legislative proposals, and in the case of the eighth recommendations on proactive disclosure of public information, composed of 6 components, four components were [considered](#).

OPEN PARLIAMENT

As for **OGP in the Parliament of Georgia**, due to the attempts from lawmakers to adopt the draft law "On Foreign Influence", which is analogous to Russian law and aimed to force Georgian civil society organizations to register in the "Registry of Agents of Foreign Influence" in order to stigmatize them and discredit them in society, to control, and finally to curtail and abolish their activities,

the member organizations of the Consultative Group of the Standing Council of Open Government, including IDFI, suspended membership in the Consultative Group [in March 2023](#).



The purpose of the draft law was to force civil society organizations to register in the "Register of Agents of Foreign Influence" in order to stigmatize and discredit them in society, as well as to control civil society, and ultimately limit and curtail their activities.

OPEN SUPREME COUNCIL OF THE AUTONOMOUS REPUBLIC OF AJARA (SCA)

IDFI had some achievements regarding the development of open government principles in the Supreme Council of Adjara. In particular, IDFI [supported](#) the Supreme Council of Adjara in two major directions:

- Providing consultation and assistance to the Open Governance Council and the Department of Strategic Development and International Relations of the Supreme Council of Adjara in processing of opinions and information received within the framework of the Thematic Inquiry, as well as support in desk research for the preparation of the Thematic Inquiry report and recommendations, including through provision of feedback and input for the final outputs of the Thematic Inquiry.
- Consulting and providing feedback in the process of developing a guide on the oversight mechanisms of the Supreme Council of Adjara – with particular focus on new oversight mechanisms, the recommendations on their effective use, and tools to engage citizens further.

ADVOCACY ON THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM (PAR)

IDFI continued the advocacy of the inclusion of **ambitious reforms/commitments** in the new Public Administration Reform strategic documents. IDFI representatives attended two PAR Council meetings during the reporting period and voiced their suggestions. Only around 5 suggestions were considered by the Government, while some important and far-reaching reforms were left unconsidered by the public institutions.



OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM IN GEORGIA



PREPARING AN ANALYSIS BASED ON V-DEM SURVEY RESULTS AND GEORGIA'S PERFORMANCE

To have an understanding of Georgia's performance in international rankings and surveys, IDFI prepared the [analysis](#) of Georgia's results in the V-Dem survey, which demonstrated that **the quality of democracy in Georgia worsened in 2021**.

ADVOCATING FOR THE INSTITUTIONAL AND FUNCTIONAL INDEPENDENCE OF THE ANTI-CORRUPTION BUREAU

In 2022, IDFI was involved in the activities of the parliamentary working group concerning anti-corruption reform issues. As part of the working group's activities, IDFI submitted its views on the formation of an independent Anti-Corruption Bureau. Among other outcomes, as a result of IDFI's advocacy, the Parliament granted the Bureau three important powers, although the legislative amendments that

came into force in September 2023 did not take into account IDFI's key recommendations of equipping the Bureau with investigative powers, expanding the concept of a family member of an official, and ensuring the Bureau's institutional independence.

The need to further ensure the effectiveness, institutional independence, and impartiality of the Anti-Corruption Bureau was highlighted in the report on Georgia prepared by the European Commission on November 8, 2023. On December 18, 2023, the conclusion of the Venice Commission was published, and IDFI prepared a corresponding [analysis](#). The conclusion of the Venice Commission talks about the need for the recommendations advocated by IDFI to be reflected in the legislation.

The Problematic Anti-Corruption Reform: Assessment of the Venice Commission and the European Integration Process

MONITORING PUBLIC EXPENDITURES AND ACTIVITIES OF GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

In its efforts to monitor government performance in public spending and accountability of high officials, IDFI prepared important studies in 2023. Most importantly, after successful advocacy of making assets declarations of public officials publicly available in open formats, IDFI researchers started collecting and comprehensively analyzing data accumulated in the assets declaration portal. Based on this, IDFI analyzed **gifts received by public officials and judges in 2020–2022**.



Based on the findings, a total of 394 individuals within the executive branch or their family members received gifts with a cumulative value amounting to 27.8 million GEL over the past years. In the case of judges, a total of 49 judges or their family members were recipients of gifts, the cumulative value of which amounted to 5 million GEL. As part of the monitoring process, **seven instances were uncovered where judges and their family members purportedly received gifts in violation of the law**. In the case of the executive branch representatives, numerous suspicious cases involving officials allegedly receiving gifts in violation of the law have been uncovered. In response, IDFI urged the Anti-Corruption

Bureau to comprehensively investigate each suspicious case of officials receiving gifts within the framework of property declaration monitoring.

In addition, at the beginning of 2023, IDFI [published](#) the results of its comprehensive analysis of asset declarations of 321 judges from different court systems to reveal **potential nepotism cases**. The monitoring revealed that family members of almost one-third (90) of working judges of Georgia are employed in public service.

Based on the performed government oversight activities, IDFI decided to be engaged in the working process of the independent commission for the selection of officials to be inspected during the year announced by the Anti-Corruption Bureau. By the decision of December 8, 2023 of the Head of the Anti-Corruption Bureau, the commission was set up and IDFI has been actively engaged in its working process.

📌 CONTRIBUTING TO THE MONITORING OF THE OECD'S ANTI-CORRUPTION NETWORK FOR EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA (OECD/ACN)

IDFI with its partner organizations in Georgia actively participated in the elaboration of criteria for the 5th round of monitoring under the OECD/ACN monitoring process, provided its alternative assessments and participated in OECD-ACN meetings online. IDFI contributed to the planning of the OECD/ACN 2023–2026 strategy and Executive Director of IDFI Giorgi Kldiashvili attended the meeting of the OECD Anti-Corruption Network for Eastern Europe and Central Asia in Paris in October 2023.

Due to the unfavorable evaluation of anti-corruption reforms, particularly in the independent judiciary and prosecution service, the government attempted to prevent the public release of the [report](#). In 2023, Georgia officially [withdrew](#) its participation in the monitoring round for the first time in 20 years.

📌 THE UNCAC SHADOW REPORT

IDFI worked on a UNCAC (United Nations Convention against Corruption) **shadow report** on Georgia on the Implementation of Chapter II (Prevention) and Chapter V (Asset Recovery) of the United Nations Convention against Corruption. [The report found](#) that provisions for the prevention of corruption and asset recovery have been largely adopted in national legislation in Georgia, with a few exceptions, but **that anti-corruption efforts have been stalling in recent years and effective implementation is still lacking in some areas.**



ADVOCACY ON THE NEW LAW ON PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

IDFI has been following developments regarding the adoption of the new Public Procurement Law. IDFI [prepared its overview](#) about the final version of the law adopted by the Parliament. According to IDFI's assessment, the new law, for the most part, accomplishes the goal of meeting the challenges in terms of approximation with EU legislation, and as such,



most of the changes can be evaluated positively. To note, **up to 4 recommendations** advocated by IDFI over the past years were considered in the new law. However, several circumstances remain that limit the effectiveness of the newly adopted law, especially with regard to **the possible number of exemptions for simplified procurements**.

CONTINUING ADVOCACY FOR THE ENDORSEMENT OF BENEFICIAL OWNERSHIP TRANSPARENCY STANDARDS IN GEORGIA



IDFI has [elaborated the policy paper](#) on **international standards for beneficial ownership transparency**, contemporary tendencies in this topic, especially the recent decision of the European Court of Justice and its implications, as well as Georgia's status quo on the topic and needed interventions to consider and implement international transparency standards in this regard. The major findings and

recommendations of the analysis [were presented](#) with the representatives of civil society and some public institutions during the workshop held on September 28, 2023.



ADVOCATING THE IMPROVEMENT OF LEGISLATION REGARDING MONEY LAUNDERING AND THE FINANCING OF TERRORISM

In 2022, IDFI was engaged in the parliamentary working group established to meet the requirements regarding money laundering and organized crime set by the EU priorities. As a result of the activities of the working group, an action plan was developed, which took into account two recommendations from IDFI.

In 2023, further cooperation was established with the Global Fund against Money Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism (GF-AML/CFT) of the European Union, and IDFI participated in several international events, where representatives of the organization presented information on developments in Georgia.

CERTIFICATION PROGRAM IN FIGHTING CORRUPTION

Up to 75 participants successfully completed the 2022–2023 Certification Program in Fighting Corruption. The program consisted of four key courses: "Good Governance and Corruption" led by Giorgi Chkheidze, the Chief of Party at the USAID Rule of Law Program, and "Governance of Anti-corruption Policy in Private and Public Institutions" led by Tinatin Khidasheli, Chairperson at Civic IDEA during the autumn semester, and "Fighting Corruption – International Actors and Anticorruption Platforms", led by Ketevan Tsanava, who is the Head of the Public Administration Unit at the Administration of Georgian Government, and "Politics, Money and Corruption", led by Levan Natroshvili, who is Deputy Director at International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) during the spring semester. The awarding ceremony was held [on December 1, 2023](#).



In addition, program participants for 2023–2024 academic year were selected via an open competition. IDFI received up to 200 applications, out of which 40 participants for Bachelor's level courses and 25 participants for Master's level course studies were selected. The selected participants are students from different universities and representatives of civil society and the private and public sectors.





RULE OF LAW AND FREEDOM OF MEDIA

Throughout 2023, IDFI actively worked to strengthen the rule of law and promote the protection of human rights. The special efforts of the organization were aimed at monitoring the implementation of the 12 priorities and 9 subsequent steps defined by the European Commission and advocating for the implementation of the given recommendations. The Parliament of Georgia took into account 3 essential recommendations advocated by IDFI.

In the previous year, the organization prepared and published a number of analytical materials, including analyses, articles, and blog posts on issues of critical importance to the country. At the same time, IDFI held discussions, conducted trainings, participated in a number of workshops with representatives of both local and international organizations, provided legal consultations, and represented beneficiaries' interests in administrative bodies and courts.

In order to improve access to public information, IDFI, both organizationally and on behalf of journalists/ media representatives, prepared and filed dozens of administrative complaints and lawsuits.

As in previous years, IDFI was involved in coalition activities and actively cooperated with the Coalition for Independent and Transparent Judiciary, as well as the Media Advocacy Coalition. In 2023, IDFI became a member of the Georgian Anti-SLAPP Platform.

IDFI WAS ONE OF THE FIRST ORGANIZATIONS TO PREPARE AN EXTENSIVE ANALYSIS OF INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE IN RELATION TO RUSSIAN-STYLE FOREIGN AGENTS LAW

IDFI was prompt in its response to the statements made by members of the parliamentary majority regarding the adoption of the Russian-style foreign agents law, studied international practice, prepared an extensive [analysis](#) and identified the risks associated with the adoption of this law. According to IDFI, the Russian-style foreign agents law was incompatible with the legal system



and values of the European Union, and its adoption, among other risks, posed a direct threat to the fulfillment of the priorities set by the European Union.

The analytical document published by IDFI received a lot of public attention and made a special contribution to the positioning of civil society against the Russian-style foreign agents law.

AS A RESULT OF YEARS OF ADVOCACY BY IDFI, AN IMPROVED LEGAL STANDARD FOR ACCESS TO JUDICIAL ACTS HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED

Since 2016, IDFI has been actively working on issues related to access to judicial acts and has been advocating for appropriate changes, both at the legislative and practical levels. With the support of the USAID Rule of Law Program, IDFI planned and successfully implemented a number of activities to improve the transparency of the judicial system.

At the meetings of the Legal Issues Committee on May 11 and May 15, 2023, the Parliament of Georgia took into consideration the remarks of the Venice Commission and IDFI and presented a completely new model of access to judicial acts, which was adopted by the Parliament in the third reading on June 13 of the same year, with January 1, 2024 set as the date when the changes would enter into force. With legislative amendments, the issue of access to judicial acts adopted at the open session has been substantially improved at the normative level.

In July 2023, an [overview](#) of the organization's efforts over the years to increase access to judicial documents was published, chronologically describing the developments and steps taken by IDFI. IDFI continues to advocate for the refinement of the legislative framework and the actual implementation of changes in practice.

IMPORTANT ACTIVITIES AIMED AT SUPPORTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRIORITIES AND STEPS DEFINED BY THE EU

In April 2023, IDFI published an [analysis](#) overviewing the Venice Commission's interim opinion on the draft law of Georgia "On De-oligarchization". The purpose of the document was to present opinions on the main recommendations issued by the Venice Commission, taking into account the reality in Georgia.

In June 2023, IDFI published an [analysis](#) concerning the final opinion of the Venice Commission regarding the draft law "On De-oligarchization".

In October 2023, IDFI prepared an [analysis](#) of the opinion of the Venice Commission regarding the amendments to the Organic Law of Georgia "On Common Courts" and overviewed the identified systemic challenges and recommendations made by the Commission.

In December 2023, IDFI prepared an [analysis](#) of the Venice Commission's opinion on the Anti-

Corruption Bureau. The analytical document reviews the Commission's conclusion and analyzes it in the context of measures taken and to be taken to strengthen the institutional framework of anti-corruption capabilities of Georgia.

In December 2023, IDFI published an [analysis](#) that addresses the Venice Commission's conclusion and evaluates the amendments made to the legislation on the Special Investigation Service and the Personal Data Protection Service. The document reflects the Commission's assessments of the abolition of the State Inspector Service and the independence and effectiveness of the two newly created agencies.

IDFI participated in a number of working meetings with representatives of both local and international organizations.

PUBLICATIONS AIMED AT SUPPORTING THE EFFECTIVE REALIZATION OF THE RIGHT TO ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION

In November 2023, IDFI, within the framework of the [project](#) supported by the Transition Promotion Program of the Czech Republic, published a [guide](#) that reviews the extent of protection of the right to access to public information in the Georgian legislation and the legal bases of requests for public information and discusses the standard of application of the practice of the European Court of Human Rights.

The guide provides practical advice that will enable stakeholders to avoid the negative effects of abuse of legal leverage by public institutions and to maximize the likelihood of obtaining information and, at the same time, reduce the legal risks that may be used by the public institution at the stage of litigation to sidestep the requirements of the law.

The guide is intended for a wide audience. It can be used not only by practicing lawyers, but also by any person interested in public information.



At the same time, within the framework of the same project, 3 legal articles related to the standards of the European Court of Human Rights were prepared and published:

- ➔ [Recognition of the Right to Access to Public Information: Process of Development of the Convention and Main Precedents;](#)
- ➔ [Case Law of the European Court of Human Rights regarding Public Information;](#)
- ➔ [Secrecy of the Audit Results of the Property Declaration of Officials is in Opposition to the Requirements of the Constitution and the Convention.](#)

LITIGATION AIMED AT ENSURING ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION

Following a sharp decline in the quality of access to public information, IDFI actively complains about the refusal of requests for the disclosure of information by public institutions (including the refusal to provide a part of the information) and the requests that remain without response.

In the first 5 months of 2023, IDFI sent 1,255 requests for public information to ministries and its subordinate agencies, out of which only 94 requests (7%) were answered. In response to this, on June 2, 2023, IDFI [simultaneously submitted](#) an unprecedented number of administrative complaints – 89 administrative complaints (11 ministries, the Office of the state minister and 77 subordinate agencies). It should be noted that these institutions not only failed to disclose public information but completely ignored the requests sent by IDFI, which is a violation of both the material and formal requirements of the law.

IDFI continues to provide legal assistance to journalists on issues related to freedom of information. To ensure access to public information for journalists and media representatives, IDFI prepared 236 written requests for public information, as well as 109 administrative complaints and 11 administrative lawsuits in 2023. On November 17, 2023, IDFI held the opening event of the project "[Increase the Access of Media to Public Information in Georgia](#)", which is implemented with the support of the MATRA program of the Embassy of the Netherlands in Georgia. The project aims to strengthen evidence-based journalism and increase access to public information for journalists.



It should be noted that as a result of IDFI's legal assistance, in approximately 60% of cases, journalists obtained public information important to them. A number of fact-based journalistic products were prepared based on the information received through the legal aid program.

In 2023, dozens of IDFI's administrative appeals were settled and a number of court proceedings against various central and local government institutions were successfully completed.

INTENSIVE PRACTICAL-SIMULATION TRAINING FOR MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES AND CONSULTATIONS FOR INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS

In the period of December 7–10, 2023, with the support of the MATRA program of the Embassy of the Netherlands in Georgia, IDFI conducted [practical-simulation training](#) on the right to public information for journalists. The purpose of the intensive training was to improve the skills of journalists in requesting public information and to strengthen their resilience to the artificial obstacles in the way of obtaining information from public institutions.

In addition, at least 60 consultations were provided to investigative journalists in 2023.



IDFI'S NEARLY FOUR-YEAR STRATEGIC LITIGATION HAS BEEN SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED

As a result of nearly four years of strategic litigation, IDFI has established a standard that is a step forward in terms of ensuring access to public information. According to the [decision](#) of the Supreme Court of December 21, 2023, the legal entity of private law Media Academy, established by the National Communications Commission, is considered a public institution and was thus ordered to provide public information in favor of IDFI.

The practice established by the Supreme Court is particularly important in ensuring that public institutions cannot evade the requirements of transparency and accountability legislation by delegating their powers to legal entities of private law.



THE DECISION OF THE SUPREME COURT
IN THE CASE OF IDFI V. MEDIA ACADEMY



**LOCAL
GOVERNMENT**

As in the previous year, IDFI continued to increase the scale of activities related to local government and monitor the activities of local authorities in 2023. The organization prepared a national assessment and ranking of municipalities, which it has been carrying out together with partners every two years since 2017.

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT INDEX (LSG INDEX) 2023

IDFI, together with partner civil society organizations, with the financial support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Danish government, monitored transparency and accountability of all 64 municipalities based on a common methodology and elaborated the ranking for 2023 – Local Self-Government Index (LSG Index). The 2023 results were [presented](#) on November 21, 2023, during the hybrid event, enabling dozens of national and local stakeholders to participate and raise questions of their interest.

The event was attended by the representatives of central and local government, civil society and donor organizations. The participants were addressed with opening remarks by **Douglas Webb**, UNDP Resident Representative a.i. in Georgia, **Ander Trelborg**, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Denmark in Georgia, **Mzia Giorgobiani**, Deputy Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia.



[According to the 2023 report](#), the average transparency and accountability score of Georgian municipalities in 2023 is 33%. The average score of City Halls is 31%, while the average score of Municipal Assemblies is 35%. **The 2023 score represents a small, 5% improvement over the previous Local Self-Government Index result of 28%.**

According to the 2023 assessment, the municipality with the highest score was the municipality of the

city of Poti. On a 100% assessment scale, it received a score of 75%. Following Poti, the highest results were achieved by Ambrolauri (66%), Lagodekhi (63%), Mestia (56%), and Oni (55%) municipalities.



As for the municipalities with the lowest assessment scores, these were the Aspindza (6%), Tianeti (9%), Adigeni (12%), Kaspi (13%), and Kazbegi (15%) municipalities.

Apart from the presentation of key findings, a panel discussion was held with the participation of high officials from both central and local governments, as well as CSOs and experts, fostering discussion on ongoing decentralization reform, major results, and needed interventions.

PREPARING AND PUBLISHING ANALYSES ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT ISSUES

PUBLICATION "AGAIN ABOUT LOCAL SELF-GOVERNANCE"

To foster evidence-based discussions on ongoing decentralization reform, IDFI published [an analysis](#) prepared by one of the prominent experts on local self-government, David Losaberidze regarding ongoing reforms and needed reforms. **It overviewed the main components of the decentralization reform and the challenges and needs in Georgia in this regard.** The analysis covers the following components of the reform: a) Administrative-



territorial organization of the country; b) Powers and competencies; c) Self-government structure; d) Economic foundations; e) Supervision of self-government activities. It presents important recommendations for decision-makers and other stakeholders engaged in the decentralization reform and their consideration could benefit the process.

OVERVIEW OF THE ACTIVITIES PERFORMED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCILS IN 2022

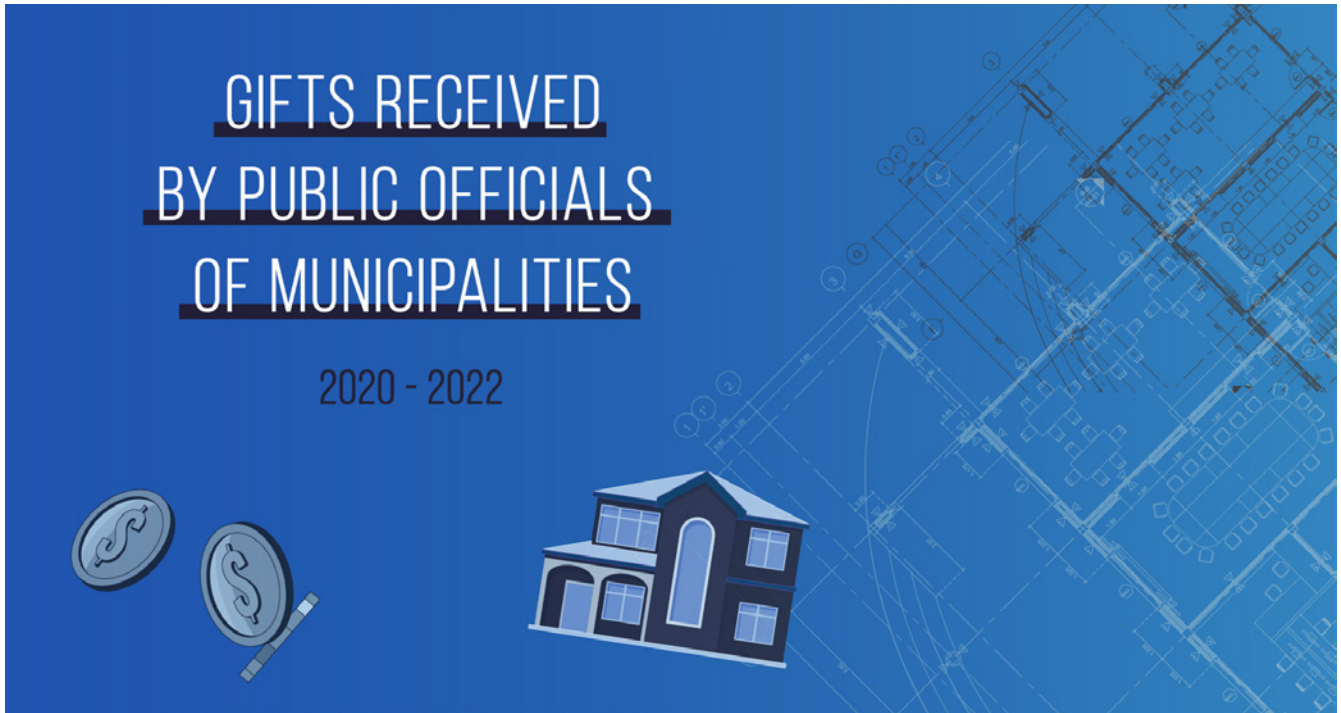
IDFI studied **how effectively Municipal Council members perform their oversight functions**. Based on the accumulated data from 51 municipalities, a [comprehensive analysis was prepared](#), which was one of the first studies of this type analyzing how relevant legislation in this direction is implemented and followed by the Council members. The analysis revealed that a total of 4,140 cases of absenteeism by members of the City Council have been recorded in 51 municipalities, of which the reason (valid/invalid) for 65% is unknown.



The analysis showed that the form of reporting on the work performed by the members is non-uniform and mostly of a formal nature. In addition, the lack of informing the population about the performance of law-making and supervisory functions can be seen in the content part. In their reports, the members do not talk about the implemented projects or programs that had a positive impact on the quality of life of the population. Reports for the most part do not include statistical indicators, which question the effective work of members of the Council, or indicate that members are not able to adequately demonstrate the work done.

GIFTS RECEIVED BY PUBLIC OFFICIALS OF MUNICIPALITIES

IDFI [comprehensively studied](#) **hundreds of declarations filled out by municipal public officials** in 2021–2023, where they declared information on **gifts received by public officials or their family members in 2020–2022**. The study revealed that a total of 224 public officials or their family members received gifts with a cumulative value amounting to 9.8 million GEL over the past years. The monitoring process revealed **53 suspicious cases of public officials accepting gifts in possible violation of the law**. The declarations of certain officials, along with potential cases of acceptance of gifts in violation of the law, also show signs of possible corruption crimes.



Based on the findings, IDFI addressed the Anti-Corruption Bureau and other investigative bodies to review the suspicious cases revealed by our monitoring of property declarations and to take appropriate measures stipulated by the law.

EXPENDITURES AND BUREAUCRACY OF LEGAL ENTITIES ESTABLISHED BY MUNICIPALITIES

IDFI [prepared a comprehensive analysis](#) of **expenditures and bureaucracy of municipal legal entities**. The analysis revealed important findings on the expenditures arising from subsidies in the budgets of municipalities. For instance, the study revealed that, on average, expenditures from municipal budgets under the subsidy article have been increasing by 26% each year. The remuneration system in Tbilisi NNLEs showed disparities. Over the last five years, the number of NNLEs in Batumi decreased from 16 to 13. However, during the same period, their funding increased six times, the number of employees grew by 9%, and labor costs increased by 89%. From 2019 to 2022, the financing of Rustavi NNLEs grew nearly twice from the budget, and the financing of LLCs increased approximately three times.

EXPENDITURES AND BUREAUCRACY OF LEGAL ENTITIES ESTABLISHED BY MUNICIPALITIES



ANALYSIS OF ADVERTISING EXPENSES INCURRED BY MUNICIPALITIES IN 2022

IDFI [analyzed](#) the **practice of purchasing and managing advertising** through monitoring simplified public procurements made by municipalities and prepared an analytical paper based on the most prominent cases. The analysis demonstrated that in 2022, 18 municipal halls signed advertising service contracts worth 503,140 GEL in total. Additionally, there were reported cases when the town halls of certain municipalities provided inaccurate data to us on their advertisement costs.

ANALYSIS OF ADVERTISING EXPENSES OF MUNICIPALITIES IN 2022



PROVIDING CAPACITY BUILDING TRAININGS FOR LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS



On [April 20-21, 2023](#), IDFI together with representatives of its two partner organizations, trained 19 representatives of 7 local civil society organizations participating in the Local Self-Government Index assessment. The training participants received both **theoretical information and practical experience in assessing municipalities' accountability and transparency**.

Based on best practices and methodology of the Local Self-Government Index, IDFI, together with its two partners, **updated the online course for local stakeholders on transparency and accountability mechanisms** of local municipalities. The course update was based on the new indicators added to the Local Self-Government Index to better consider ongoing developments regarding the decentralization reform. After the update, the course was promoted among local stakeholders.

IDFI successfully expanded **its awareness raising and outreach activities on the use of public data for holding government accountable** in the regions of Georgia, where trainers shared experience and knowledge on methods and tools for using data for government oversight activities with activists, journalists, civil society actors, students, and other stakeholders. [3 trainings](#) were held in Kutaisi, Ozurgeti, and Zugdidi from June 21 to 23, 2023.





SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY

With a significant expansion of economic and social focus since 2019, IDFI has established itself as a research organization providing reliable analysis and assessments.

The analysis of the socio-economic challenges facing the country in 2023 included pension reform, education, healthcare, the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war on the economy of Georgia, optimizing budget spending, the scale and quality of dialogue between the private sector and the government. In addition, with the participation of representatives of state agencies and international and local organizations, IDFI discussed the most pressing issues of the country's economic agenda in a roundtable format.

Advocacy of recommendations made by IDFI based on in-depth analysis of socio-economic policies yielded significant results in 2023 in some areas. For example:

- 👉 Active advocacy of IDFI's recommendations has contributed to the increase of assistance to various socially vulnerable groups. For example, funding for the treatment of cancer patients has increased, the program for providing housing to the displaced population has become more active, the household subsidy for repressed persons has increased, and others;
- 👉 IDFI actively advocated for a reasonable increase in the pension agency's investment mandate and the riskiness of pension savings, which would provide insurance against the rate of inflation. With changes in legislation in 2023, citizens were given the opportunity to choose their own investment portfolio according to its risk;
- 👉 IDFI actively continued to assess the socio-economic impact of the Russia-Ukraine war on Georgia and helped increase the availability of information of high public interest in this regard;
- 👉 In 2023, the public-private dialogue in the process of developing economic regulations was improved at the local level;

IDFI's economic and social policy team's economic policy research and advocacy has been the focus of active media attention throughout the year. The four most important areas of research and advocacy in 2023 were:

1. FACILITATING DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS FOR MONITORING AND AWARENESS RAISING IN GEORGIA

IDFI continued to assess the quality of Public-Private Dialogue (PPD) in the development of normative acts to facilitate participatory policy development. In August 2023, the [evaluation report](#) of 20 normative acts selected in 2022, including acts of municipalities, was published. In order to raise public awareness of the evaluation results, information posters and videos were prepared and distributed through the website and social media.

In the second half of 2023, 21 normative acts were selected for evaluation – 7 draft laws, 8 bylaws, and 6 municipal 2023 budgets. For the evaluation, the IDFI team conducted more than 100 interviews with representatives of the public and private sectors, the results of which will be published in 2024.



In 2023, IDFI conducted an information campaign with representatives of municipal bodies and non-governmental organizations of 6 target municipalities (Batumi, Zugdidi, Ozurgeti, Gori, Rustavi, Kutaisi). The purpose of the campaign was to discuss the municipal budgeting process, the forms of civil society involvement in this process, and the role of local self-governing bodies, as well as discussing existing practices of dialogue and sharing local experiences.

2. EDUCATION

In December 2023, IDFI published an [analysis](#) of PISA 2022 results. 81 countries participated in the evaluation, among which Georgia took 65th place, which is an improvement compared to the result of 2018 (70th place), although the reason for improvement in the ranking was not better performance, but rather lower results of other countries. In addition, the analysis reviews 10 reasons that may have a negative impact on the development of the education system in the country, these being:



- ➔ Poverty
- ➔ School infrastructure
- ➔ Teacher qualification
- ➔ Politicization of schools/low degree of independence
- ➔ School funding
- ➔ School program and student assessment system
- ➔ COVID-19 pandemic
- ➔ Low student performance
- ➔ Low inclusivity
- ➔ Parental involvement

3. PENSION REFORM

On March 31, 2023, IDFI published a [report](#) evaluating the pension reform that began in 2018. Within the framework of the study, the main challenges of pension asset management and reform as a whole were analyzed, including the riskiness of investments and the independence of asset management. Recommendations were prepared taking into account Georgian and international experience.



In order to introduce the evaluation results and conclusions to stakeholders, a [presentation](#) of the report was held on March 31. The work was published on social networks and on the website of the organization in order to inform the general public.

Additionally, on August 25, 2023, an [article](#) on the riskiness of pension savings was published in order to raise public awareness of the reform process. The article analyzed the differences between different types of risky portfolios.

4. IMPACT OF ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA ON GEORGIAN ECONOMY

On May 30, 2023, a blog post was published – "[Will the Georgian Economy Collapse Vis-à-Vis Bilateral Sanctions on Russia?](#)" The overview mentions that the Russian embargo, which began in 2006, and then the sharp decrease in trade with Russia as a result of the war, not only destroyed the economy of Georgia, but also gave an impetus to the diversification of both exports and imports. The country acquired new trade partners and increased trade with old trade partners. The article notes that the imposition of bilateral economic sanctions will be a short-term shock to the country, but in the medium term, it will lead to much more predictable and profitable markets and tangible economic growth.

On June 13 of the same year, the "[Economic Risks of Distancing from the West](#)" article was published, where the volume of grants and credits allocated by international donor organizations and the share of Western investment in investment projects were examined.

Both reviews emphasize the need to distance economic activity from Russia and deepen economic ties with the West.

RESEARCH REPORTS AND PILOT ASSESSMENT OF THE GENDER INDEX OF THE STATE BUDGET

In 2023, IDFI's economics team has published 7 research reports:

- [Future of the Georgian Pension Reform](#)
- [12 Days Left to Choose the Riskiness of Retirement Savings \(Differences between High-risk and Low-risk Portfolios\)](#)
- [30 Questions to the Governments Economic Team](#) - IDFI, together with the National Bank, World Bank, other international organizations and experts discussed the most pressing questions of the country's economic agenda. Questions address economic growth, including the country's economic attractiveness, investment, productivity, export promotion, employment, education, and overall human capital development.
- [Economic Risks of Distancing from the West](#)
- [Will the Georgian Economy Collapse Vis-à-Vis Bilateral Sanctions on Russia?](#)
- [State Funding of Medical Institutions](#) - The study examines the funding of medical facilities by region and analyzes the number of persons receiving medical services and the number of cases. As a result of the analysis, conclusions are made after the transition to the DRG model of financing the healthcare system.
- [What Can We Learn from the PISA 2022 Results?](#)

In 2023, IDFI also implemented a pilot assessment of the Gender Index of the State Budget with the involvement of representatives of state agencies.

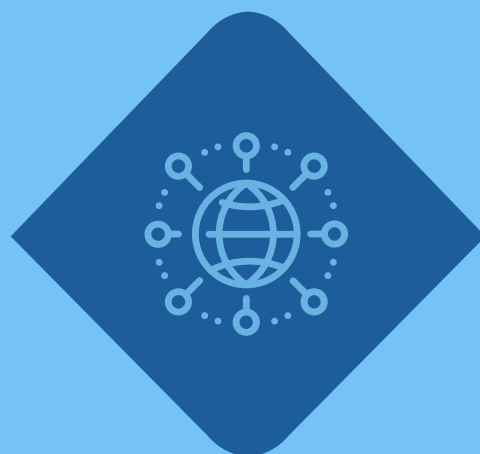
The purpose of the Gender Index of the State Budget is to identify programs and sub-programmes with the highest potential impact on gender equality, as a result of which the inter-departmental working group will recommend making changes in the mentioned programs and sub-programmes that will increase their impact.



To develop the Index, the research team held [workshops](#) with the Ministries of Health and Finance, the Standing Parliamentary Council for Gender Equality, the Office of the Public Defender and the Parliamentary Budget Office.

During the same period, the IDFI team began analyzing the reform of state-owned enterprises. IDFI has also begun

monitoring social programs and plans to include monitoring the impact of the pre-election period on these programs in 2024.



CIVIC TECH AND INNOVATIONS

In 2023, IDFI continued its research, advocacy, and capacity building activities on issues related to digital rights, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and open data. One of the Institute's achievements was joining the global initiative on AI and assuming the role of a regional hub.

INNOVATIONS AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

IDFI acting as a Regional Hub for Global Index of Responsible AI (GIRAI)

As an international acknowledgement of IDFI's work on AI, the Institute [became a regional hub](#) for the **Global Index on Responsible AI (GIRAI)** [project](#). The Index has been established to provide inclusive and measurable indicators to track the implementation of responsible AI principles by governments and stakeholders. Since March 2023, IDFI has been engaged in reviewing the research methodology, after which during [the pilot research phase](#) IDFI gathered primary data on Georgia related to AI frameworks, government initiatives, and non-governmental actions.



In addition, after carefully [selecting](#) 11 researchers from their respective countries in the region, during October 23–26, 2023, all the national researchers were trained on Responsible AI and the research tools essential for their work. Following the training, the national researchers started their research initiatives within their home countries under the close supervision of the IDFI. Upon the completion of the research, a comprehensive global report on Responsible AI worldwide will be released in the second half of 2024.

PARTICIPATING IN INTERNATIONAL DISCUSSION ON TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY REGULATIONS ON AI

Following invitation from the International Forum for Democratic Studies at the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) to contribute to its essay editions under Emerging Technology & Democracy section, an IDFI representative [prepared an analysis](#) on the **use of AI systems by the public sector in Georgia** and major shortcomings in the legislation



and practice in this regard. The analysis used major findings from IDFI's previous study on the subject. Later, the IDFI representative also participated in NED's online webinar on March 29, 2023, titled [The Digitalization of Democracy: How Technology is Changing Government Accountability](#), where she presented major findings and participated in the discussion together with leading experts in the field.

📌 OVERVIEW OF THE EU AI ACT AND MAJOR TAKEAWAYS FOR GEORGIA

To share new developments and major trends in the field of AI with Georgian stakeholders, IDFI closely followed developments regarding the EU AI Act, which is the world's first comprehensive regulation on the use of artificial intelligence. IDFI prepared an **analysis titled** - [EU AI Act - What you should know about the world's first regulation on the use of Artificial Intelligence](#),



which overviewed major regulations and requirements introduced by the Act and featured discussions regarding particular parts of the regulation within the EU member states. Most importantly, the analysis demonstrated the new definition of AI and classification of artificial intelligence systems according to risk as proposed by the Act.

📌 OPEN DATA

IDFI's DataLab showcased by European Union Open Data Portal

The European Union's largest open data portal [showcased](#) IDFI's civic portal on open data, named Georgia's Open Data Lab, as one of the inspirational portals promoting access to public data for government accountability and democracy.



Moreover, an IDFI representative was invited to present the DataLab portal and IDFI's work on open data during an [online webinar](#) held on May 26, 2023. Attendees from various European countries representing civil society, the public sector, and academia participated in the webinar.

STUDYING ECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF OPEN DATA IN GEORGIA

To advocate the availability of public data in open formats, with the support of the USAID Economic Governance Program, since July 2023, IDFI [has been studying](#) the **economic potential of open data**. Specifically, IDFI has adapted the European Commission's comprehensive methodology for calculating the economic benefits of open data for Georgia. A comprehensive methodology, formulas, and questionnaire were developed to support this study.

Utilizing the developed methods and tools, IDFI has calculated the economic benefits of opening public data. Additionally, IDFI has analyzed the existing datasets available at various public institutions and identified major needs and shortcomings of the private sector in terms of accessing and using data to improve and develop new services. To achieve this, focus group meetings and online interviews were conducted with dozens of private sector representatives. The final results and recommendations were presented at the beginning of 2024.

PUBLISHING DATASETS ON VARIOUS PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES ON DATALAB.GE

With the financial support of International Media Support (IMS), to increase the accessibility of open data in Georgia, IDFI **regularly updated its Open Data Platform** www.datalab.ge and published more digitized, cleaned, and categorized datasets - up to 75 new datasets and 60 updated datasets were published.

HOLDING #DATA4CHANGE CONTEST AND AWARDING WINNERS

In order to promote public oversight of government activities and use of data in this regard, IDFI organized its **fifth annual contest of analytical/investigative articles**, titled [#Data4change](#). A total of

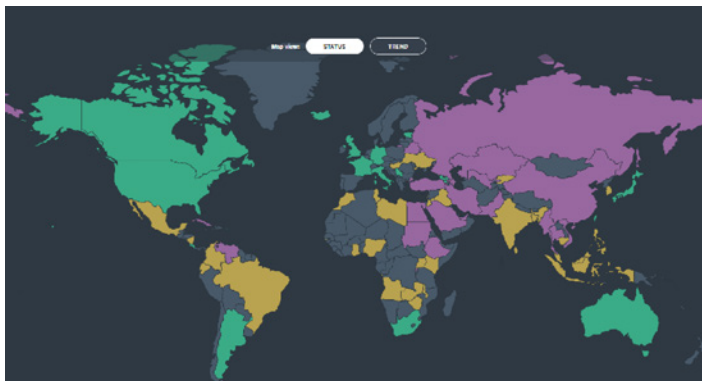


28 essays were submitted by contestants. Most of the analytical articles were about: Minor challenges and quality of education; Disposition and management of public finances; Social and economic problems; Environmental problems and European integration. The three winners were selected and [awarded on September 28, 2023](#), during the workshop to mark the International Right to Know Day.



DIGITAL FREEDOMS

Reporting on Georgia's performance in terms of digital freedoms



For the tenth year in a row, IDFI's Civic Tech and Innovations Direction Head is a contributor to Freedom House and **participates in the preparation of the Annual Report on Internet Freedom in Georgia**. [As per the 2023 report](#), Georgia achieved a score of 76 out of 100, making it a "free" nation with regard to internet freedom. The country's overall score decreased by 2 points compared to

2022. One of the major reasons for the score change was the recent revelation that the country's telecommunications regulator ordered ISPs to block 480 websites, primarily because they violated copyright law, over a five-year period, even though the government has not provided any clear guidelines on the procedure for website blocking. In addition, neither the ComCom, ISPs, nor state bodies proactively publish statistical data on website blocking.

In addition, an IDFI representative participated in the regional initiative of the European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL), "A Compass to Conducive Environment and CSO Empowerment (CSO Meter)." Specifically, IDFI prepared [a chapter about Georgia](#), where the country's main achievements, challenges, and specific recommendations **related to digital rights and access to the internet** were elaborated for 2023.



RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS ON DIGITAL LITERACY

IDFI [shared](#) its **guidebook and visual poster on digital safety and hygiene for children via social media** on February 7, 2023, for the Safer Internet Day. Additionally, an IDFI representative [took part in a TV show](#) dedicated to online safety and explained to the audience ways to protect privacy and personal data online, major threats and how to mitigate them. Moreover, an IDFI representative [participated in another TV show](#) dedicated to major cyber security challenges in Georgia, with a focus on women and children.

To expand outreach and raise digital literacy of more citizens of Georgia, IDFI prepared and widely disseminated 3 videos on three important topics:

- ▶ [Strong passwords](#)
- ▶ [Phishing](#)
- ▶ [How to check the reliability of websites](#)

The videos overview major digital threats in these directions and include practical and useful tips/recommendations on how to mitigate and avoid these risks/challenges.

In addition, on May 16, 2023, IDFI [held a training](#) for students **on digital rights and digital literacy** at Ilia State University. The training attendees were provided with both theoretical (the fundamentals of digital rights, the unique aspects of Georgian legislation pertaining to this field, and the main digital challenges in Georgia, as identified by international and local studies) and practical (essential tips for safe use of digital platforms, social media, and electronic devices) knowledge during the event.



In addition, in cooperation with the Estonian partner organization e-Governance Academy, with the support of Luminare, on April 20, 2023, IDFI organized an online workshop **on Cybersecurity for Civil Society: Threats and Response**. The event was attended by CSOs, state agencies, and journalists and aimed to educate attendees about the top cybersecurity threats and trends of 2023 and provide essential safeguards to ensure digital privacy.



MEMORY AND DISINFORMATION STUDIES

The Memory and Disinformation Studies direction has been actively working on researching the Soviet past and its legacy, improving archival openness, and analyzing modern disinformation campaigns. The direction studies and disseminates the stories of the victims of the totalitarian regime, advocates memory politics, provides commemorative campaigns, and responds to the challenges that the country and the region are facing step by step. The organization regularly publishes research articles on the Soviet past, collective memory, and Russian disinformation.

ARCHIVAL OPENNESS / ADVOCACY

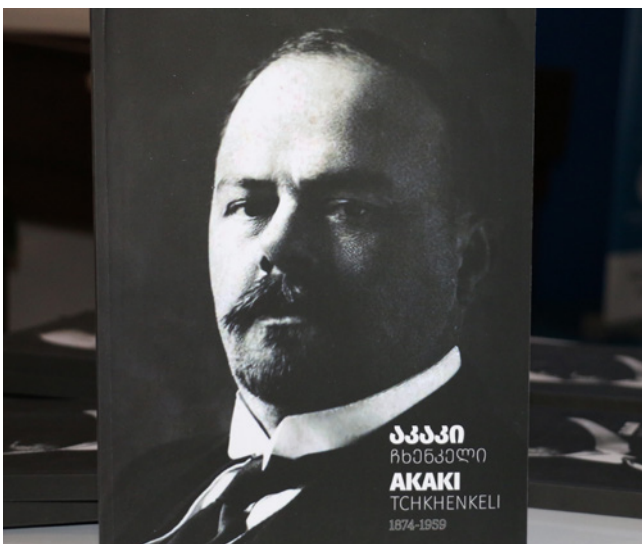
In 2023, the accessibility of the state archives of Georgia worsened compared to previous years. IDFI researchers and partners from different countries faced barriers in accessing archives and working with desired materials. IDFI has documented a number of cases where foreign researchers have been denied access to state archives.

Several IDFI activities that depended directly on archival research were suspended because state archives refused to accept researchers or cited unreasonable grounds for not providing documents. The organization plans to renew the advocacy campaign in this direction in 2024.

As a result of several years of advocacy by IDFI and the "Memorial of Georgia" society, according to the changes made in the 2024 state budget project, the household subsidy for the victims of political repression will [increase](#) from 7 GEL to 40 GEL.

MEMORY STUDIES

IDFI, in cooperation with the National Library of the Parliament of Georgia and Tbilisi State University, [published](#) a memorial album dedicated to the prominent political figure of the First Democratic Republic of Georgia, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Extraordinaire and Plenipotentiary to France - Akaki Tchkhenskeli (1874-1959). The [presentation](#) of the memorial album was held on January 18, 2023 at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University.



On January 25–28, 2023, on the initiative of IDFI, in partnership with the National Library of the Parliament of Georgia and the Embassy of Georgia in France, [events](#) celebrating the First Republic of Georgia were held in France. As part of the events, the presentation of Akaki Tchkhenskeli's memorial album was held at the Paris School of Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences (EHESS). On January 28, the delegation in the Commune of Léville-sur-Orge took part in an official event held in the Town Hall.



On June 22–23, 2023, the 9th annual conference of the Caucasus Research Resource Center (CRRC) – "New Frontiers: The South Caucasus Amidst New Challenges" was held, where, as part of the roundtable discussion – "Archival Access and Openness in the Caucasus and Eurasia", Anton Vatcharadze, head of the Memory and Disinformation Studies direction at IDFI, [presented a report](#).

On October 2, 2023, IDFI [hosted](#) representatives of the Center for Research in Eastern Europe, Russia, the Caucasus and Central Asia (CERCEC) of the Paris School of Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences (EHESS). The meeting was attended by representatives of the academic field who were on a study visit to Georgia. The main topic of the meeting was the openness of archives and state policy in this regard. The parties discussed Soviet repression, crimes, dissidents, recent wars in the Caucasus, migration processes related to the war in Ukraine, and many other research opportunities.

On July 21, 2023, at the House of Writers, IDFI held a [presentation](#) of the updated "[Stalin Lists](#)" website. "Stalin Lists" includes data, archival materials, and photographs about 3,616 victims of the "Great Terror" in Georgia in 1937–1938. The platform allows interested persons to find information about their ancestors who were victims of the repressions of 1937–1938.



In the academic year of 2022–2023, in cooperation with the University of Georgia (UG), the program – "Disinformation and Propaganda Research: History, Theories and Means of Debunking" was offered. Anton Vatcharadze [led the course](#) "Archives, Facts, and the Media", which was attended by 8 students in the spring semester of 2023.

Organized by IDFI, more than 20 participating historians of the EU4Dialogue project – "Platform for Dialogue Between Historians" from the Caucasus region and European countries [visited](#) the mass graves discovered in Adjara. The platform meeting also included discussions on cooperation in memory research.

On February 8–11, IDFI representatives participated in the [international conference](#) "Necropolis of Communist Terror", which was organized by the Estonian Institute of Historical Memory and the Saint

Petersburg Memorial Research and Information Centre/Joffe Foundation in St. Petersburg. The event was held in Tallinn. IDFI analyst Edgar Brutyan presented a report on the practice of commemorating victims of Soviet terror in Georgia. Anton Vatcharadze held a presentation on the topic - "Research of Mass Graves in Georgia in 2017-2022" at the panel "Searching for Remains of Victims of Terror, Identification Issues".



On March 17-19, 2023, Anton Vatcharadze [took part](#) in the conference "On the Bridge of Memory" organized by [Esimde](#), an international organization for memory research, in the city of Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

On May 4, 2023, at the meeting organized by the Telegram channel "[О стране и мире](#)", Anton Vatcharadze [spoke](#) about the study - "Soviet Roots of Anti-Western Propaganda". The research was carried out as part of the "Roots of Anti-Western Propaganda" project funded by the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) in collaboration with the University of Georgia (UG) Investigative Media Lab.

On June 7-9, 2023, the conference "Ambivalences of the Soviet" was held within the framework of cooperation between the Germany/Austria-based research network "Ambivalences of the Soviet: Diaspora Nationalities between Collective Experiences of Discrimination and Individual Normalization, 1953-2023" and Ilia State University. At the panel "Soviet Memories and Instrumentalization of the Past", Anton Vatcharadze [presented](#) a report "Remembrance of Victims of Soviet Terror in Georgia".



On August 8-11, 2023, IDFI representatives [paid a visit](#) to partner organizations in Warsaw, Poland. The executive director of IDFI, Giorgi Kldiashvili, and Anton Vatcharadze got to know the work of partner organizations, talked about future plans, and agreed on the details of existing projects.

On September 20-21, IDFI, sponsored by the International Visegrad Foundation, [organized](#) the project - "Common Memory of the South Caucasus and Visegrad Countries - Occupiers or Liberators? Democracy or Tyranny?", held meetings with partner organizations from the Czech Republic, Armenia, Slovakia, Hungary, and Poland. At the meetings, the partner organizations introduced to each other their fields of activity and talked about the action plan developed within the project. A short documentary film was planned to be shot within the framework of the project, intended for presentation in Georgian schools. In addition, analytical papers will be prepared and translated into English, Polish, Czech, and Slovak languages.

On October 5-6, 2023, in Batumi, IDFI, with the financial support of the Centrum Dialogu im. Juliusza Mieroszewskiego, [held](#) the international conference "Uncovering the Truth: Mass Graves of the Great Terror (1937-1938) in Batumi, Georgia." The purpose of the conference was to study the Soviet past

and contribute to the decommunization of the country. The Polish ambassador to Georgia, Mariusz Mashkiewicz, and experts in the field participated in the conference. The main speaker of the conference was Yan Rachinsky, chairman of the Nobel Peace Prize laureate historical-educational and human rights organization "International Memorial".



On October 16, 2023, a joint online event of IDFI and Northwestern University of the USA "In the Wake of War: How the Geopolitical Ground Has Shifted in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia" was [held](#). Among the speakers of the event were Professor Ronald Suny of the University of Michigan; Former US Ambassador to Azerbaijan, currently George Mason University Professor Richard Kauzlarich; Tbilisi State University Associate Professor Giorgi Mchedlishvili and Northwestern University Associate Professor Olga Kamenchuk. The meeting was moderated by the former US ambassador to Georgia, Ian Kelly.

On November 3, 2023, IDFI [signed a memorandum](#) of cooperation with the Center of Innovational Social Research of Yerevan State University (YSU). IDFI and the Center of Innovational Social Research (CISR) will work on joint projects aimed at recording interviews with people repressed or affected by war under the communist regime.

On December 11, 2023, in the city of Warsaw, Poland, as organized by "Witryna Domu Wschodniego", Anton Vatcharadze held a lecture on the topic - "Archaeological and Anthropological research conducted on the mass grave of the repressed in Batumi in 1937-1938". A screening of the Radio Liberty film "Cemetery of the Shot Dead in Batum" was also held at the meeting.

On December 11-16, 2023, Anton Vatcharadze and representatives of Batumi and Lazeti Diocese paid an [introductory visit](#) to Poland. The purpose of the visit was to get to know the best practices and museums dedicated to the memory of the victims of the communist and Nazi regimes in Poland. In this regard, Poland is an advanced country that pays great attention to the creation of museums. In addition to preserving memory, museums serve educational and interactive purposes. The goal of the Diocese and IDFI was to identify the best



practices of the museum and memorial cemetery and develop recommendations to be presented to the Commission on the issue of mass graves discovered in the Autonomous Republic of Adjara.

On February 22–24, 2023, IDFI [held a public lecture](#) "Soviet Occupation and Its Impact on Georgia's Memory" and a screening of the movie "Cemetery of the Shot Dead in Batumi" of Radio Liberty in public school N8 of Khashuri Municipality and in Millennium School and International Georgian School (IGS) in Tbilisi.



On October 27, 2023, in connection with the National Teacher's Day, the civic education teacher, the finalist of the National Teachers Award 2023, Nino Niparishvili, was [awarded](#) with a commemorative certificate and a tablet computer for her special contribution to raising the awareness of young people about the Soviet repressions.



In November–December 2023, in [Kutaisi](#) and at the [second public school of Khoni](#) named after Akaki Tchkhenskeli, IDFI held a presentation of Akaki Tchkhenskeli's memorial album within the framework of cooperation with the center of regional initiatives "Bright Future".

In December 2023, the Memory and Disinformation Studies direction [announced](#) an essay competition: "The Role of Disinformation in the Formation of Historical Memory". The purpose of the competition is to encourage and popularize memory and disinformation studies among students and raise awareness of the past and present in society.

Since 2016, IDFI has made significant contributions to raising awareness about the members of the "Military Center" of Georgia. In 2023, on the initiative of the President of Georgia, the members of the "Military Center" were [awarded](#) the title of National Hero of Georgia.

In 2023, IDFI published a number of visual materials related to various important events of the twentieth century and recent history: [the day of the referendum on the restoration of independence in Georgia](#), [the independence day of Ukraine](#), [the Constitution Day of Georgia](#), [the increase in household subsidies for victims of political repression](#) as a result of IDFI's advocacy, [5 videos](#) created within the framework of the project "Discover Gori" to emphasize the historical importance of Gori, the [initiative](#) of the title of national hero for the members of the "Military Center", [stories of the repressed](#), etc.

6 articles on Soviet, memory, and disinformation studies were published on IDFI websites: "[Yevgeny Zakharov: On March 24, the Initiative "Tribunal for Putin" was created](#)", "[April 9 - Responses and Influence](#)", "[Repressed Scientist - Stephane Kirkesali \(1890-1937\)](#)", "[Stalin: Barren Land](#)" and "[The Modest Charm of the Bourgeoisie](#)", "[Stalin List of November 22, 1937](#)", and "[Time of Cannibals: Holodomor and the Birth of Soviet Man](#)".

DISINFORMATION STUDIES



In 2023, in Akhalkalaki, Tbilisi, Gardabani, Bolnisi, Sagarejo, and Marneuli, IDFI held information meetings within the framework of the NATO Public Diplomacy Programmes/Division-funded [project](#) - "Overcoming Barriers to Combat Disinformation in Ethnic Minority Communities". The goal of the project was to ensure the resistance of representatives of ethnic minority communities to disinformation, to raise awareness about NATO and its mission in Georgia. Nearly 240 young people from Azerbaijani and Armenian ethnic minorities participated in the project. In addition to the trainings, IDFI made 2 videos in [Azerbaijani](#) and [Armenian](#) languages. The videos were distributed through various channels, including the internet, social media, and television. The video was shown during training site visits. Although exact figures are not available, various observations suggest that the videos have been viewed at least 200,000 times.



Additionally, articles, blog posts, and videos on disinformation were published on the website created by IDFI - www.damoukidebloba.ge.

EDUCATIONAL CERTIFICATION PROGRAM: "DISINFORMATION AND PROPAGANDA RESEARCH: HISTORY, THEORIES AND MEANS OF DEBUNKING"

In 2023, the spring semester of the joint program of IDFI and University of Georgia (UG) - Disinformation and Propaganda Research: History, Theories and Means of Debunking - continued. 24 participants representing different universities, regional media, civil society organizations, and public institutions were involved in the program. Within the framework of the program, in May, a visit was made to the archive of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, where the participants got acquainted with the format and characteristics of archival work, as well as types of archival documentation. In July 2023, the program was completed and the participants of the training course were [awarded](#) certificates.



INFORMATION INTEGRITY COALITION

During 2023, IDFI participated in the activities of the "Information Integrity Coalition". Representatives of the organization attended dozens of meetings held under the auspices of the Coalition, participated in campaigns and events promoting European integration, and contributed to the development of policy documents and statement texts. From May 1 to October 31, 2023, IDFI [performed](#) the functions and duties of the Coalition chair organization and coordinated its activities.

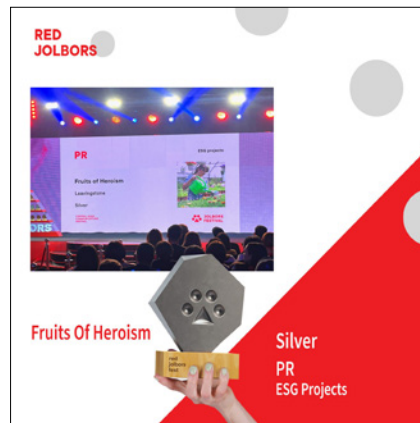
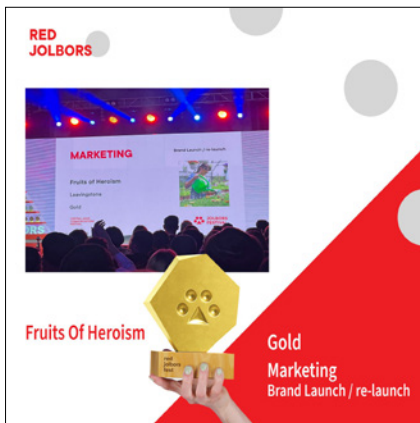
On February 14, 2023, the [presentation](#) of the "Discover Gori" project was held in the Giorgi Eristavi Drama Theater of Gori. In order to better represent the city's cultural identity, the project "Discover Gori" has brought to life key places and personalities in Gori that highlight the importance of the city in the socio-economic development of the country. As part of the project, information boards with the stories of the city were placed in various historical places. In addition, an "identity map" and a website www.gorimaps.ge were created, where one will find photo and video materials as well as archival documents about the region. On February 14, historians, guides, and representatives of the media and international organizations had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with new destinations and an alternative tour of the city. On March 24, at the House of Arts, IDFI [presented](#) the website www.gorimaps.ge created within the framework of the project to the teachers living in Gori city and Gori district.



In 2023, the study "[Russian Capital and Russian Connections in Georgian business](#)" was completed, with the main findings [presented](#) on June 6 within the framework of the conference organized by the Information Integrity Coalition. The main goal of the project was to study the work, resources, and connections of companies operating in Georgia owned by Russian citizens across various sectors.



In 2022, IDFI implemented the project "Solidarity Branding – Promotion of Entrepreneurs Living Near the Occupied Territories in the Shida Kartli Region". Within its framework, the "Fruit of Heroism" [campaign](#) in 2023 was successful on the international stage and won several awards at prestigious festivals: Ad Black Sea 2023 – 2 Silver and 1 Bronze Medal, Jolbors Festival 2023 – Gold and Silver Awards, and The Anthem Awards Gold Medal – National Awareness Campaign Winner.





CONSULTATIONS



- i** Approximately 115 legal consultations were issued on topics related to freedom of information, rule of law, and independence of state institutions;
- i** In 2023, within the framework of intensive practical training, 15 journalists completed a 4-day training course. Trainings were held on overcoming the systemic challenges of access to public information;
- i** More than 15 journalists and 10 students, as well as about 30 civil servants received consultations on the issues of access to public information and data analysis by e-mail and telephone communication;
- i** IDFI has carried out approximately 250 consultations on memory, disinformation, and Soviet studies. IDFI helped Georgian and foreign citizens with recommendations, advocacy, and search for archival documents. Helping dozens of them required long-term involvement. Consultations were conducted in-person (up to 70 consultations), online (Facebook Messenger, e-mail, Zoom, etc. - up to 120 consultations in total), and by phone call (up to 60 consultations)



IDFI'S DONOR ORGANIZATIONS

- Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Georgia
- Global Partners Digital
- Deloitte Consulting LLP / USAID
- Research ICT Africa
- Luminare
- Juliusz Mieroszewski Centre for Dialogue
- The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
- International Visegrad Fund
- Post Bellum / International Visegrad Fund
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea
- Civil Society Forum e.V.
- NATO Public Diplomacy Programmes
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic
- Zinc Network / USAID
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- East-West Management Institute (EWMI) / USAID
- International Media Support (IMS)
- Internews / USAID
- E-Governance Academy



**PROJECTS
INITIATED IN 2023**

> PROJECT NAME: INCREASE THE ACCESS OF MEDIA TO PUBLIC INFORMATION IN GEORGIA

DONOR ORGANIZATION: EMBASSY OF THE NETHERLANDS IN GEORGIA

The objectives of the project are to enhance journalists' access to public information, reduce systemic legal obstacles in public information accessibility. The project's main goal is enhancing and supporting evidence-based journalism and combating systemic legal and practical challenges in accessing public information.

> PROJECT NAME: GLOBAL AI ADVOCACY SUBGRANT: GEORGIA

DONOR ORGANIZATION: GLOBAL PARTNERS DIGITAL

The goal of the project is to promote a human rights-oriented approach to artificial intelligence in international discussions.

> PROJECT NAME: OPEN GOVERNMENT DATA (OGD) SURVEY

DONOR ORGANIZATION: DELOITTE CONSULTING LLP, A CONTRACTOR TO THE UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (USAID) FOR THE USAID ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE PROGRAM.

The goal of the project is to support the creation of innovative services based on open data and thereby contribute to the economic growth of the country based on the needs of the business sector.

> PROJECT NAME: GLOBAL INDEX ON RESPONSIBLE AI: REGIONAL RESEARCH HUB

DONOR ORGANIZATION: RESEARCH ICT AFRICA

The goal of the project is to combine the role of IDFI as a regional hub for Eastern Europe and Central Asia and participate in global research within the Global Responsible AI Index (GIRAI) project. The aim of the study is to create a comprehensive, reliable, independent, and comparative baseline for assessing the progress of the countries of the world in the direction of responsible artificial intelligence.

> PROJECT NAME: PROVIDING THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE – "UNCOVERING THE TRUTH: MASS GRAVES OF THE GREAT TERROR (1937-1938) IN BATUMI, GEORGIA" AND THE JOINT PUBLISHING OF THE BOOK ON THE VICTIMS OF THE GREAT TERROR IN ADJARA

DONOR ORGANIZATION: JULIUSZ MIEROSZEWSKI CENTRE FOR DIALOGUE, POLAND

The aim of the project is to understand and study the Soviet past from the perspective of the first mass graves of the victims of the repressions of 1937–1938 discovered in Adjara.

> PROJECT NAME: CORE SUPPORT

DONOR ORGANIZATION: THE SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY (SIDA)

The goal of the project is to promote the Euro-Atlantic integration of the state, fight against corruption, improve the transparency and accountability of public institutions, increase citizen engagement in decision-making processes, promote the independence and impartiality of democratic institutions, achieve higher standards of rule of law, promoting inclusive economic policies, facilitating the democratic decentralization and the democratic transition processes, studying and analyzing Soviet past and countering disinformation, upholding media and human rights, and promoting innovations to solve outstanding problems.

> PROJECT NAME: EMPOWERED WATCHDOG COMMUNITY AND ENHANCED TRANSPARENCY STANDARDS FOR GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

DONOR ORGANIZATION: INTERNATIONAL VISEGRAD FUND AND MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

The goal of the project is to advocate the standards of beneficial ownership through local and regional events; Strengthening of monitoring groups operating in Georgia and society in general.

> PROJECT NAME: TRANSCAUCASIAN AND VISEGRAD NATIONS COMMON MEMORY – OCCUPANTS OR LIBERATORS? DEMOCRACY OR TYRANNY?

DONOR ORGANIZATION: INTERNATIONAL VISEGRAD FUND

The goal of the project is to document the witnesses of the past in Armenia and Georgia who can tell their life stories related to the common communist past, and then to publish said stories and use them for educational purposes.

> PROJECT NAME: HISTORY EDUCATION AT THE TIME OF WAR

DONOR ORGANIZATION: CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM E.V.

IDFI was responsible for the coordination of translating the Toolkit produced by the Confronting Memories programme from English into Georgian.

> PROJECT NAME: OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO COMBAT DISINFORMATION IN ETHNIC MINORITY COMMUNITIES

DONOR ORGANIZATION: NATO PUBLIC DIPLOMACY PROGRAMMES/DIVISION

The aim of the project was to promote the resilience of ethnic minority communities to disinformation and raise awareness of NATO and its mission.

> PROJECT NAME: ADVANCING THE CAPACITY OF CSOS AND THE MEDIA IN THE FIELD OF FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND FREEDOM OF SPEECH

DONOR ORGANIZATION: CZECH REPUBLIC – MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, CZECH REPUBLIC'S OFFICIAL TRANSITION PROMOTION PROGRAM

The main goal of the project was to promote the use of precedent law of the European Court of Human Rights in the national jurisdiction, as well as to improve the standards of freedom of speech and freedom of information.

> PROJECT NAME: INFORMATION INTEGRITY COALITION STEERING COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

DONOR ORGANIZATION: GEORGIAN INFORMATION INTEGRITY PROGRAM (GIIP) / USAID

Coordinating the work of the Information Integrity Coalition Oversight Committee for six months.

> PROJECT NAME: PARLIAMENTARY PROJECT

DONOR ORGANIZATION: UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP)

The goal of the project is to contribute to the implementation of the Institutional Development Strategy of the Supreme Council of Adjara for 2021-2024, to strengthen effective supervision, and to fulfill the obligation stipulated by the Open Governance Action Plan.

> PROJECT NAME: FOSTERING DECENTRALIZATION AND GOOD GOVERNANCE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL IN GEORGIA

DONOR ORGANIZATION: UNDP GEORGIA

The goal of the project is to promote the development and improvement of transparency and accountability of local governments, and also to support the involvement of civil society in the decision-making process at the local level.

> PROJECT NAME: PROMOTING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF JUDICIAL ACTS THROUGH MONITORING, ADVOCATING AND LITIGATION

DONOR ORGANIZATION: USAID RULE OF LAW PROGRAM

The main goal of the project was to increase access to judicial acts through monitoring, advocacy, and strategic litigation.

> PROJECT NAME: ADVOCATING OPEN DATA STANDARDS AND PROMOTING OPEN DATA USE IN GEORGIA – PHASE II

DONOR ORGANIZATION: INTERNATIONAL MEDIA SUPPORT (IMS)

The goal of the project is to advocate for open data standards (in particular, beneficial ownership data standards) in the country by sharing and communicating best practices to stakeholders.

> PROJECT NAME: DIGITAL FREEDOMS IN GEORGIA - 2024

DONOR ORGANIZATION: INTERNEWS AND UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (USAID)

The project aims to increase/promote internet freedom in Georgia.



2023 FINANCIAL REPORT



**INCOME FROM
GRANTS**

700 117 \$



**OTHER OPERATING
INCOME**

89 177 \$



**TOTAL
INCOME**

789 294 \$

Service Fee	265,496 \$
Salaries	114,048 \$
Consultancy and Other Professional Services (Translation, Consultancy, etc.)	96,820 \$
Funds Contributed to the State Budget (Income Tax)	122,095 \$
Pension Contribution	23,685 \$
Events (Conferences, Presentations, Workshops, Trainings)	49,093 \$
Outreach and PR Activities (Design, Audio-Video Visualization, Publishing, etc.)	32,923 \$
Depreciation and Amortization	26,911 \$
Office Rent	14,492 \$
Fringe Benefits and Health Insurance	11,301 \$
Financial, Accounting and Audit Services	10,889 \$
Travel (International Trips, Per Diems, Accommodation)	10,557 \$

Web-Page Development	8,454 \$
Communication Expenses	7,558 \$
Transportation (Local Trips, Fuel Costs, Accommodation)	6,063 \$
Utilities	5,194 \$
Other Office Costs and Inventory	3,823 \$
Interest Expenses	2,948 \$
Office Vehicle Maintenance and Insurance Costs	1,192 \$
Office Stationary	1,160 \$
Bank Fees	1,104 \$
Postage	757 \$
Other Costs	8,279 \$
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	824,842 \$

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